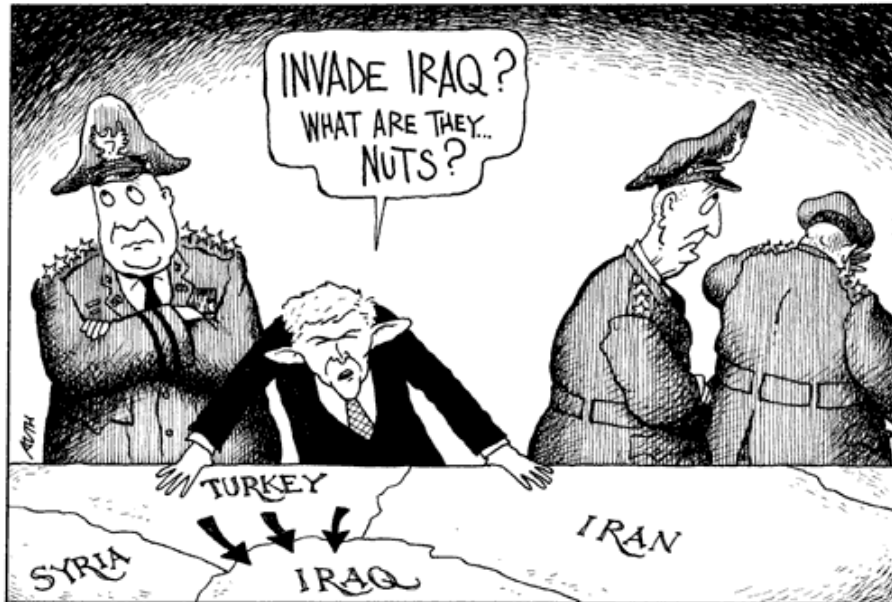


GI SPECIAL 5J20:



“A Lot Of People Have Stopped Fighting The War On The Ground”

“They Go Out And Do What They Call ‘Search And Avoid’ Missions”

“They’re Convinced That We’re Not Going To Win This War, So Why Risk Their Lives”

[Thanks to Dennis Serdel, Vietnam Veteran, who sent this in.]

29 October 2007 World Socialist Web Site [Excerpt]

In New York City, the WSWS spoke to Fernando Braga, one of a number of veterans of the Iraq war who joined in the protests across the country. He left the Army last month, having been deployed for nearly a year in Iraq.

A working class youth from a Brazilian immigrant family in the Bronx, Fernando, said that he joined the Army to get money for college. "That's the main draw," he said. "It sounds good. They gave me an \$8,000 signing bonus, which was more money than I'd ever made in my life. But I wouldn't do it again. I was against the war since before I joined."

"This war is over oil," he said. "They are sending the troops to fight there for years to come. Every politician out there who is running for president, both Democrats and Republicans, is talking about sending our troops around the world and fighting even bigger wars.

"It's not just about Bush; it's about imperialism. Congress has supported this war, and I don't expect it to stop it now. "It's not like Vietnam, when they could cut their losses and get out. Instead, this time they are getting ready to go somewhere else, like Iran, to escalate it."

Fernando said that he was still in touch with fellow soldiers in Iraq.

"A lot of people have stopped fighting the war on the ground," he said.

"They go out and do what they call 'search and avoid' missions. They're convinced that we're not going to win this war, so why risk their lives."

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Soldier Vincent Madero Made A Lasting Impression

October 21, 2007 By Chris Freiberg, Fairbanks Daily News-Miner

They were only married a little more than six months, but the widow of Spc. Vincent A. Madero says he made an enduring impact on her life.

Madero, a 22-year-old California native, died from injuries he sustained from an improvised explosive device Wednesday in Iraq. At the time he was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas, but the soldier leaves behind a young wife in North Pole as well.

He had enlisted in the Army in 2003 after receiving his GED. Vincent met his future wife, Ellen Housley Madero, in late 2004 through mutual friends while he was stationed at Fort Wainwright. Ellen felt an immediate connection to the shy soldier.

“He was so quiet, he seemed really mysterious,” Ellen said. “I knew I wanted to get to know him.”

After some time the two began dating. Vincent brought stability to the life of Ellen and her now 3-year-old son Jamie, who called him “da da.” Vincent talked about adopting the boy in the future.

“He taught us so many things,” Ellen said. “He taught us how to do things right.”

In late 2005, Vincent was sent to Iraq for what became a 16-month tour of duty. The couple kept in touch online, with phone calls and by exchanging a journal in which they wrote notes to each other.

When he returned to the United States earlier this year, he asked Ellen to marry him at a special place off the highway near the Salcha River. She accepted, and the two were wed in a small ceremony in March. It was around that time that Ellen had Vincent’s name tattooed on her stomach. Vincent had her initials tattooed on his left hand.

“He told me that every time he checked the time, he’d be reminded of me,” she said.

Though he grew up in California, Vincent was fond of Alaska. He talked about getting a house with Ellen in North Pole, and eventually becoming an Alaska State Trooper or a firefighter in the state.

“He had never been somewhere so cold, but he learned to love it,” said Vincent’s father, Bias Madero.

Before his scheduled redeployment in August, Ellen and Vincent went on vacation to Stevens Village, where she was born. A friend took him out on a boat there and told him to remember the experience whenever he faced something difficult in Iraq.

“I remember he always called and talked about that,” Ellen said.

Bias said his son spoke little about his time in Iraq, but he was not upset about going back and looked forward to training younger soldiers. Vincent often showed that willingness to help others.

“He had a big heart,” Bias said. “He touched a lot of people.”

In Ellen’s last conversations with Vincent, he was optimistic about the future. He told her to pick out a dress for a ball the couple planned to attend next year, and he talked about renewing their vows at a much larger ceremony when they had saved up the money.

Ellen is now unsure what the future holds, but said she’ll think about him every day.

WELCOME TO IRAQNAM: HAVE A NICE DAY



U.S. soldiers with First Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion 30th Infantry Regiment, pass through a canal during a search mission in the neighbourhood of Arab Jabour in south Baghdad October 18, 2007. REUTERS/Fabrizio

IED Gets A General For A Change



U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Dorko who was wounded in a roadside bombing Monday morning in northern Baghdad, the U.S. military reported. He was the highest ranking American officer to be hurt since the conflict began in March 2003. (AP Photo/US Army)

British Base In Basra Attacked

October 29 2007 IOL

Basra - The British base at Basra International Airport, 25 kilometres north-west of the city, came under Katyusha rocket attack early on Monday morning, media reports said.

British forces fired back at the source of the rockets in Mohandessin neighbourhood, a spokesperson for the multinational forces in Iraq, Major Matthew Bird, told Voices of Iraq news agency (VOI), refusing to give further details.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

IED Kills Foreign Occupation Soldier, Another Wounded; Nationality Not Announced

October 30, 2007 News Limited

A roadside bomb against a US-led coalition convoy killed one soldier and wounded another, a coalition statement said.

Soldiers Say Commanders Of German Elite Troops In Afghanistan Were Irresponsible Drunks; “Life-Threatening Vehicle Training On Mined Territory” “The Company Commander Unintentionally Fired His Gun Once -- Apparently After Hitting The Bottle”

“The Officer ‘Often Drank Until He Fell Over’”

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

October 01, 2007 BY ALEXANDER SZANDAR, MARCEL ROSENBACH, SUSANNE KOELBL UND JOHN GOETZ; DER SPIEGEL [Excerpts]

As members of the German Bundestag prepare to decide whether to extend the German military's mission in Afghanistan, reports of alcoholism and irresponsible behavior by commanders of Germany's "Kommando Spezialkräfte" elite unit are coming to light.

They're athletic, in top physical condition and usually between 28 and 35 years old. While on a mission they often paint their faces black or disguise themselves with sunglasses and balaclavas. The soldiers call themselves "snipers." When they use their laser sights to take aim at the enemy with G-36 assault rifles, they call it "direct action."

Their tough selection process lasts more than three months, an endless series of physical and psychological tests described by one commander as the most strenuous "you can ask of people in a democracy."

The Bundeswehr, or German military, Kommando Spezialkräfte (KSK) is the country's most secretive military operations unit -- Germany's special forces. Intense self-discipline and team spirit are expected. Their home base is in Calw, a peaceful town in the Black Forest. Their barracks lie behind a well-secured double-fence topped with barbed wire.

The KSK is the vanguard of the German military, which has been deployed on an increasing number of missions throughout the world in recent years. The military itself refers to the KSK as "the elite unit."

Members of the KSK have been deployed in Afghanistan repeatedly since December 2001, but their behavior there has not always been what one would expect of an elite unit.

Drunken superiors, life-threatening vehicle training on mined territory and a vigorous trading of beer for United States military intelligence -- these are part of a long list of accusations contained in eyewitness accounts and documents that have just surfaced.

One colonel in Kandahar is said to have been so fond of alcohol that American officers were forced to complain about his presence at mission briefings, during which he was clearly intoxicated.

The German Defense Ministry is not making the investigation any easier. It was forced to admit that a large number of files on KSK missions during the period in question have been "accidentally" destroyed, and it has been very slow to hand over the remaining files.

German Defense Minister Franz Josef Jung of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) only informs the chairmen of the Committees for Defense and Foreign Policy about KSK missions -- and what he tells them is, of course, classified. The vast majority of parliament is left out of the loop.

That makes the new eyewitness accounts from sources close to the KSK and from US soldiers who spoke to SPIEGEL about the deployment of the KSK's 1st Contingent all the more illuminating.

Several KSK soldiers serving with the contingent spoke to SPIEGEL about their mission. A number of them quit the military because of their experiences with it in Afghanistan, where the Bundeswehr engaged in its first true ground deployment since the end of World War II.

In at least one instance, a KSK soldier later contacted the Bundeswehr Operations Command back in Potsdam near Berlin and recommended informing the Defense Minister about "problem cases" in the unit. But this warning apparently never reached then Defense Minister, Peter Struck.

Is the Defense Ministry's sometimes bizarre secretiveness vis-à-vis parliament really only designed to ensure the safety of KSK soldiers, or is it also a way of covering up embarrassing behavior? And why are the members of parliament not allowed to learn exactly what went wrong even years after the end of an operation?

After all, the German parliament or Bundestag will soon vote on whether not Germany will extend its missions with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan.

For most KSK soldiers, the Afghanistan mission began in a camp next to the US military base on Masira, a small island off the coast of Oman. From mid-December to early January 2002, group after group of German soldiers in desert fatigues climbed aboard US transporter planes and took off for Afghanistan.

The planes carrying the German elite forces landed on a dusty runway in Afghanistan's hard-fought southwest. It was bitterly cold that winter -- in December alone 177 local residents froze to death. The KSK soldiers saw rotting Soviet weapons, car and airplane wrecks and all sorts of garbage on the fields along the runway.

They had arrived at Forward Operating Base (FOB) -- their first base during the war on terror, right by the airport in Kandahar, or "Q-Town," as the soldiers had named it.

Even experienced KSK soldiers were pushed to their limits by what awaited them there.

The camp the US military had allotted the small KSK advance guard was about half the size of a soccer field. Aided by 150 Afghans, the KSK soldiers set up their "military camp" under the open sky.

It mainly consisted of two-man tents. Even those soldiers who found shelter indoors were not much better off. The rooms were damp and there was no reliable electricity supply or heat.

It was a "life on the garbage dump," one member of the KSK 1st Contingent noted in his mission diary in early January 2002: "The mood in the camp is very tense."

The poor accommodations and provisions quickly took their toll. Many KSK soldiers fell ill. "Two mission soldiers collapsed today during roll call," one soldier wrote. Other sources spoke of "vitamin deficiency with scurvy-like symptoms."

During this initial period the KSK troops were fighting less against terror and more for their own survival.

Moreover, they lacked their own helicopters and airplanes, or even vehicles suitable for the desert. The Germans didn't exactly get the impression that the US troops in Kandahar had been waiting desperately for them to arrive.

The US troops, who were charged with giving the KSK soldiers their assignments, were guarding a strongly secured prison camp on the FOB and initially kept their distance from the Germans. The KSK troops "often had to beg to be given assignments," and even then were given only "low-level targets," one KSK soldier recalls.

The German troops were really "just a burden" on the US forces, he adds.

Ed H., a US soldier stationed in Kandahar from December 2001 onward, confirms this impression. "Basically, the Germans were not allowed to do anything," he recalls. "They looked around for things to do. They were incredibly bored." He remembers one frustrated German soldier killing time by explaining to him all the finer details of the German pension system.

But then the Germans' reputation abruptly changed. A rumor spread among US troops that at least one thing was worthwhile in the German unit -- its supply of alcohol.

For the US troops, Kandahar -- located in the midst of Muslim Afghanistan -- was a so-called "dry camp." Beer and wine were strictly prohibited. But in the German zone, an e-mail with the subject line "BEER DAY" had already been sent around as early as Jan. 12, 2002. The e-mail explained that the commanding officer had approved "the following beer days: Saturday, Monday, Wednesday, Friday."

Word about the arrival of the German beer spread quickly in Q-Town.

And soon enough a veritable beer bazaar developed, with KSK soldiers trading their lager for warm socks, long underwear, T-shirts and US army paraphernalia.

One source says the KSK used the alcohol trade to "creatively compensate for the material deficits of the German forces." And so the frugal lifestyle of the German troops gradually improved.

Sometimes the "coalition forces" partied together, and at others the KSK contingent's chaplain would organize barbecues and free beers after the Sunday sermon. By Tuesday, the alcohol was flowing again - in one instance prompting a soldier to note the following day that, "Following alcoholic excesses by the troops last night, highly

restrictive rules for alcohol consumption were issued today." By that same evening, however, soldiers popped out the booze again for an "Intel party" to celebrate a change in intelligence personnel.

Indeed, the soldiers openly mocked the alcohol directive.

As well, it was an open secret among the troops on location that the contingent commander himself was fond of drinking. "He was inebriated for long periods of time," one soldier recalls.

A number of participants went even further in their description of the colonel, calling him an "alcoholic" whose drinking habits had already attracted attention even before he joined the KSK.

The officer "often drank until he fell over," another soldier told SPIEGEL.

The company commander also had a "known alcohol problem," one KSK soldier recalls, although "it was not as acute and not as obvious as that of the contingent commander."

According to eyewitness accounts, the company commander unintentionally fired his gun once -- apparently after hitting the bottle.

"Normally you would be relieved of your command for something like that," one member of the unit alleges, "but nothing happened."

Back in Germany, Operations Command in Potsdam reportedly also knew about the problems of the 1st Contingent in Kandahar. KSK Commander Reinhard Günzel traveled to Afghanistan to visit the troops in his supervisory role. Upon his return and in light of the incidents, the commander responsible for special operations, Manfred Gerhardus, asked him to take action. Günzel replied that he had not observed any alcohol problem that would necessitate action.

The inactivity of the responsible officers angered and frustrated some of the soldiers who had been deployed to Afghanistan, who by now were being given assignments by the American troops -- primarily reconnaissance tasks.

"The situation in Kandahar was very unpleasant on the whole," one soldier lamented, looking back on the experience.

"I have never seen conditions like those in this unit anywhere in the German military," he says. "There were disagreements on all levels. The leadership failed."

For many KSK members though -- and the accounts provided by several sources to SPIEGEL were consistent -- the experiences in Kandahar were reason enough to look around for a new job following their return.

"These experiences led me and other members to leave the KSK as soon as possible," one soldier says.

Even those who remained faithful to the unit apparently haven't forgotten what happened, either. Years later, some were still worried the events could be made public - causing further damage to the KSK's reputation.

When media reports about the unit's internal fears of being deployed in eastern Afghanistan were published in the summer of 2005, one member of the 1st Contingent apparently panicked, fearing that another "betrayal" could possibly yield more explosive details.

The soldier sat down in front of his computer and wrote an urgent e-mail to Gerhardus at the Operations Command Potsdam on July 14.

The e-mail's first item mentions the company commander's "alcohol abuse" and "all problems associated with it." It also states the commander's full name.

The second item refers to the "constellation" made up by the contingent commander and the company commander and the "failure of everyone familiar with the problem to act."

The third item is no less explosive: It alleges that the company commander ordered soldiers to participate in "vehicle training" in "mine-infested Afghanistan."

The soldier was well aware of the explosive nature of his remarks, and he ended his missive with the words: "It may be advisable to make the DM aware of these developments" - "DM" being short for the Defense Minister.

Chief of Army Staff Hans-Otto Budde, who at the time was also still the commander of the DSO and therefore the immediate superior of the KSK at the time, has refused to comment on allegations about the elite unit's drinking habits in Kandahar.

SURPRISE - AFGHANS LIKE OTHER AFGHANS ("TALIBAN TERRORISTS") MORE THAN THEY LIKE CHRISTIAN WHITE OCCUPIERS WHO BOMB THEIR HOUSES AND KILL THEIR FAMILIES INDISCRIMINATELY

[Thanks to Pham Binh, Traveling Soldier. The headline is his.]

Oct 22 By DEVLIN BARRETT, Associated Press Writer [Excerpt]

WASHINGTON - President Bush publicly honored a fallen Navy SEAL Monday by presenting his grieving parents with the Medal of Honor — and privately honored their sacrifice by wearing a dog tag they'd given him moments before. The president

posthumously awarded the nation's highest military honor for valor to Lt. Michael Murphy of Patchogue, N.Y. — the first given for combat in Afghanistan.

Murphy, Luttrell and two other SEALs were searching for a terrorist when their mission was compromised after they were spotted by locals, who presumably alerted the Taliban to their presence.

TROOP NEWS

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



The casket of Army Spc. Camy Florexil, of Philadelphia, at Arlington Cemetery Oct. 5, 2007. Florexil was killed in July after an explosive device detonated near his vehicle in Baghdad. (AP Photos/Susan Walsh)

***Pentagon Traitors At It Again:
Nearly 15,000 Troops Deployed
Without IED Training:
Marine Corps Lt. Gen. James Mattis
Lied To Congress;***

Even Those Trained Still Practice Without The Armored Vehicles And Other Tools They Will Rely On To Survive IEDs

It's impossible to assess the costs of inadequate training: There are no statistics on how many of the 1,600 troops killed by IEDs might have lived if they had been better prepared.

Oct 17, 2007 By Peter Eisler, Tom Vanden Brook and Blake Morrison, USA Today [Excerpts]

FORT IRWIN, Calif. — The troops arrive to pure chaos. The wrecked Humvee lies smoking on the road, blown apart by a roadside bomb. One soldier moans on the ground, a leg torn off at the knee. Another slumps unconscious nearby. Iraqis crowd in, pointing and yelling. Snipers lurk on every roof.

Fortunately, the wounded soldiers are only lifelike mannequins. And the entire episode is a training exercise aimed at preparing soldiers for the chief threat they'll face in combat: improvised explosive devices. A half-hour later, the soldiers listen as an instructor ticks off their mistakes: They failed to stop traffic. They were distracted by the crowd. They didn't clear the scene before snipers got in place.

The anti-IED instruction at Fort Irwin's National Training Center is the best the Army has — a true-to-life piece of the battlefield, mocked up in the Mojave Desert.

But tens of thousands of troops have gone to war without this sort of training, a USA Today investigation shows.

In the war's early years, troops were deployed with little or no knowledge of IEDs, even as the devices came to account for 60 percent of combat deaths.

Even today, many troops head to Iraq without the best available training.

Three of the 22 Army combat brigades now in Iraq — nearly 15,000 troops — didn't have time to visit Fort Irwin or one of the three other combat training centers where brigades are supposed to do final pre-deployment exercises.

Regardless of where they train, most soldiers and Marines still practice without the armored vehicles, electronic equipment and other tools they will rely on to avoid and survive IEDs in combat.

Fort Irwin has almost no armored Humvees, though commanders concede that the top-heavy vehicles are far harder to control than standard Humvees in the abrupt maneuvers often needed to survive an IED attack. Camp Shelby, Miss., a National Guard training site, uses fake "surrogates" to simulate the electronic jammers that block the wireless signals insurgents use to detonate IEDs.

Marine Corps Lt. Gen. James Mattis, selected in September to head the U.S. Joint Forces Command, told Congress in his confirmation testimony that all troops are prepared when they reach Iraq.

But Mattis acknowledged that “units are challenged in their readiness by equipment needs ... and (lack of) time to train.”

Many don’t get to practice with the equipment they’ll use in combat because there’s only enough to supply troops already in the theater, he said, and don’t they reach a combat-ready state until “just in time” for their deployment.

It’s impossible to assess the costs of inadequate training: There are no statistics on how many of the 1,600 troops killed by IEDs might have lived if they had been better prepared.

Army Spc. Stephen W. Castner’s complaints about his pre-deployment training still haunt his father. Castner, 27, a veteran of four years active duty in the Air Force, was back in uniform in the spring of 2006 as a National Guardsman doing exercises at Camp Shelby.

Castner’s calls home were full of concerns, especially about the lack of realistic training for IEDs and the shortage of Humvees. His father, a former Army reservist also named Stephen, was so troubled that he wrote to his congressman, Rep. F. James Sensenbrenner, R-Wis.

Two months after the letter went out, Spc. Castner was dead.

On his first mission in Iraq, his Humvee was hit by a roadside bomb while providing security for a long convoy. Blown into a marshy ditch, the truck went unseen in the smoke as the rest of the convoy passed. A short time later, commanders noticed it missing, but by the time they returned and called for a medical evacuation, 25 minutes had passed. Castner’s pulse stopped just as the helicopter got to the hospital; he died from blood loss.

“We had a period there where the Pentagon wouldn’t even acknowledge that there was an insurgency,” said Rep. Vic Snyder, D-Ark., who chairs the House Armed Services subcommittee on military oversight. “So we were behind every step of the way — on training, equipment, technology.”

Even today, with far more robust instructional programs in place, there still isn’t enough time and money to make sure that war fighters get all the best possible IED training.

The three brigade combat teams that skipped training at Fort Irwin didn’t have the 10 days it takes to get soldiers and equipment to and from the base. Instead, the training center dispatched teams of trainers, along with equipment and Iraqi role players, to put the three 4,500-soldier units through final exercises at their home bases.

Then there are the equipment problems.

The conventional Humvees that soldiers use for training at Fort Irwin were replaced in Iraq more than two years ago by a new, armored version that is thousands of pounds heavier, making it much more unwieldy and prone to rollovers. But as the Pentagon struggles to provide enough armored Humvees just for units in combat, there aren't enough for training.

New Iraq Veterans Against The War T-Shirts Available Now; “Purchasing These Shirts Helps Us Raise Much-Needed Funds To Keep Our Numbers Growing”



[Thanks to Dennis Serdel, Vietnam Veteran, who sent this in.]

October 26, 2007 Iraq Veterans Against The War E-Newsletter [Excerpt]

From: Kelly Dougherty - IVAW

Subject: Supporting Veterans and Active Duty Service Members

Yesterday, we launched our online store with two new IVAW t-shirts.

Purchasing these shirts is a great way to show your support for IVAW, and helps us raise much-needed funds to keep our numbers growing.

Visit the IVAW online store at www.ivaw.org/store and check out the two designs - one of them created by an IVAW member from our LA chapter.

Peace,

Kelly Dougherty
Former Sergeant, Army National Guard
Executive Director,
Iraq Veterans Against the War

P.S. IVAW advisory board member and acclaimed documentary film director Patricia Foulkrod is helping IVAW produce a short promotional film. We're looking for good video footage of IVAW members speaking and participating in marches and actions.

If you have footage of our members, please contact Patricia Foulkrod at patricia@thegroundtruth.org for more information.

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



Family Of U.S. Soldier Killed By Mercenaries In Iraq Goes After The Scum Who Did It

October 29, 2007 Suzanne Goldenberg in Washington; Guardian Limited [Excerpts]

A British private security firm hired to protect the oil installations of post-invasion Iraq is being sued for causing the death of an American soldier.

The case against the Erinys security firm, which reportedly has close ties to the former Iraqi exile, Ahmed Chalabi, is believed to be the first brought against a private security contractor operating in Iraq by a member of the US military.

The suit against Erinys, filed last week in Houston, was brought by the father of Specialist Christopher Monroe, who was struck by an Erinys convoy on October 25 2005. He was on guard duty in southern Iraq when he was struck and killed by a speeding Erinys vehicle, the suit alleges.

“The family just didn't have the answers that they were seeking,” said Tobias Cole, a lawyer for the family. “For example, why did their son die on a non-combat mission? There was no reason to have extreme driving, no reason to drive without headlights, no reason to drive at speed through a parked convoy.”

Monroe, 19, was the third generation of his family to serve in the US military and was an eager recruit. He enlisted before finishing secondary school at the age of 17.

The lawsuit alleges the four vehicles in the Erinys convoy were driving at an estimated speed of up to 80mph on a dark road using only their parking lights. The Erinys vehicles were not under fire, and they were not carrying high-profile passengers.

Monroe's right leg was sheared off by the force of the collision, and he was thrown 40ft into the air.

Erinys employees, who were driving in a four-vehicle convoy, had passed through two US checkpoints moments before Monroe was hit, and they had been warned that more US troops were ahead, the suit said.

But it accuses the Erinys team of ignoring the warnings, and driving so fast that they failed to see Monroe or the five-tonne truck he was guarding.

“Although extreme driving manoeuvres may be appropriate for private security contractors at certain times, driving recklessly at a high rate of speed with no headlights through a parked US convoy after being specifically warned is not,” the law suit said. At the time of Monroe's death, Erinys had been providing security to the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Erinys was the subject of a great deal of attention in the summer of 2003, when the firm was awarded an \$80m (£39m), 18-month contract to provide security for Iraq's oil refineries and pipelines. The firm created a new entity called Erinys Iraq.

Erinys has also been caught up in controversy closer to home.

Shortly before his murder, the former Russian security services agent, Alexander Litvinenko, visited the London offices of Erinys where traces of polonium 210 were found.

The first recruits of the 14,000-strong oil protection force raised by Erinys Iraq were members of the Iraqi Free Forces, the US-trained militia that was headed by Ahmed Chalabi, an Iraqi exile who was America's protege in the run-up to the invasion.

Members of Mr Chalabi's inner circle were among the founding partners of Erinys Iraq. Erinys now has about 1,000 employees in Iraq, the spokesman said. Most are UK nationals.

Major Says “During My Own Yearlong Tour In Iraq, The Bad Boys Of Blackwater Twice Came Closer To Killing Me Than Did Any Of The Insurgents”

Blackwater USA has already taken in more than \$1 billion from the public coffers. All in all, that's not a bad take for Erik Prince, the founder of Blackwater and a Naval Academy dropout who served less time under the colors of the nation, in uniform, than my most recent pair of boots.

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

October 12, 2007 By Robert Bateman, Chicago Tribune. **Robert Bateman is a historian and U.S. Army infantry officer.**

I know something about Blackwater USA. This opinion is both intellectually driven as well as moderately emotional.

You see, during my own yearlong tour in Iraq, the bad boys of Blackwater twice came closer to killing me than did any of the insurgents or Al Qaeda types.

That sort of thing sticks with you.

One story will suffice to make my point.

The first time it happened was in the spring of 2005. For various reasons, none of which bear repeating, I was moving through downtown Baghdad in an unmarked civilian sedan. I was with two other men, but they had the native look, while I was in my uniform, hunched in the back seat and partially covered by a blanket, hoping that the curtains on the window were enough to conceal my incongruous presence, not to mention my weapons.

It was not the normal manner in which an Army infantry major moved around the city, but it was what the situation called for, so there I was.

We were in normal Baghdad traffic, with the flow such as it was, in the hubbub of confusion that is generated when you suddenly introduce more than 1 million extra vehicles in the course of two years into a city that previously had only a few hundred thousand vehicles, and no real licensing authority.

As we approached one semi-infamous intersection along the main route used by Blackwater between the International Zone (a.k.a. the Green Zone) and the Ministry of Interior, one of Blackwater's convoys roared through.

Apparently, Blackwater's agents did not like the look of us, the main body of cars in front of them. Their response was, to say the least, contrary to the best interests of the United States effort in Iraq.

Barreling through in their huge, black armored Suburbans and Expeditions, they drove other cars onto the sidewalk even as they popped off rounds from at least one weapon, though I cannot say if the shots were aimed at us or fired into the sky as a warning.

I do know one thing: It enraged me ... and Blackwater is, at least nominally, on our side.

But imagining that incident from an Iraqi perspective made it clear to me that though Blackwater USA draws its paycheck from Uncle Sam, it's not working in Uncle Sam's best interests.

If I was this angry, I can only imagine the reactions of the tens of thousands of Iraqis who encounter Blackwater personnel on a regular basis.

Iraq operates on the basis of an honor culture.

Honor is, arguably, more important than Islam. Being dishonored, in word or deed, or even by implication, is enough to set the average Iraqi man to plotting his revenge. This is a culture in which political assassinations (usually based on honor issues) are not an abstraction but an everyday occurrence.

Every time one of those Blackwater convoys drives an Iraqi civilian off the road because the most important thing in the world is the protection of their "principal," they make a new enemy for the United States.

Every time they ram another car to clear the way (and, yes, I've seen them do that), so that they could maintain their own speed and thereby minimize their exposure to "improvised explosive devices," they make another enemy.

Every time they kill innocent civilians, or wound them, they make whole families of new enemies.

This understanding of the backlash effect from dishonoring an Iraqi is included in a past military counterinsurgency manual, "Instructions for American Servicemen in Iraq during World War II," recently re-published by the University of Chicago Press.

But the reality is that Blackwater USA, from top to bottom, just does not care.

What employees of the private security firm care about, and I have heard this from the Blackwaters with whom I interacted in Iraq, is their paycheck. They care about their huge compensation packages, and about getting home alive to spend them.

Blackwater USA has already taken in more than \$1 billion from the public coffers.

All in all, that's not a bad take for Erik Prince, the founder of Blackwater and a Naval Academy dropout who served less time under the colors of the nation, in uniform, than my most recent pair of boots.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Bomber Kills 28 At Iraqi Police Base

29 October 2007 Reuters & VOA News & The Associated Press

Iraqi officials say a bomber on a bicycle has killed at least 28 police at a police base in Baquba, north of Baghdad.

The bomber struck Monday morning as police recruits gathered for a training session. Twenty other police were wounded in the attack.

The recruits were gathered outside the camp waiting to be allowed inside for the day's training when the bomber blew himself up in their midst.

Resistance Action

28 Oct 2007 Reuters & VOL & AFP & 29 Oct 2007 Reuters

Insurgents wounded a police colonel and his driver when they opened fire on their car in northern Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, and killed a policeman in a drive-by shooting in central Hawija, 70 km (43 miles) southwest of Kirkuk, police said.

Iraqi police say 10 sheiks allied with the United States have been captured by insurgents. The group was made up of both Sunni and Shiite tribal leaders. Police say they were traveling home to Diyala province after a meeting with a government official in Baghdad.

Guerrillas killed a policeman near the city of Falluja, 50 km (35 miles) west of Baghdad, police said.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“The Question That Still Hangs In The Air Is Whether, As In The Latter Years Of The Vietnam Era, The Soldiers Will Take Matters Into Their Own Hands”

“Casualty For Casualty, Support Has Declined Far More Quickly Than It Did During Either The Korean War Or The Vietnam War”

2007-10-28 By Tom Engelhardt, Tomdispatch.com [Excerpts]

As John Mueller, an expert on public opinion and American wars, pointed out back in November 2005, Americans turned against the Iraq War in a pattern recognizable from the Vietnam era (as well as the Korean one) -- initial, broad post-invasion support that eroded irreversibly as American casualties rose.

“The only thing remarkable about the current war in Iraq,” Mueller wrote, “is how precipitously American public support has dropped off. Casualty for casualty, support has declined far more quickly than it did during either the Korean War or the Vietnam War.”

When it comes to the Vietnam analogy domestically, the question that still hangs in the air is whether, as in the latter years of the Vietnam era, the soldiers, in Iraq (and Afghanistan) as well as here at home, will take matters into their own hands....

The three leading Democratic candidates for president, Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and John Edwards, have refused to guarantee that American troops will even be totally out of Iraq by 2013, the end of a first term in office -- as essentially has every Republican candidate except Ron Paul, the libertarian congressman from Texas.

Meanwhile, the American people -- having formed their own Iraq Study Group as early as 2005 -- have moved in another direction entirely. On this, the opinion polls have been, and remain (as Mueller suggested they would), unanimous.

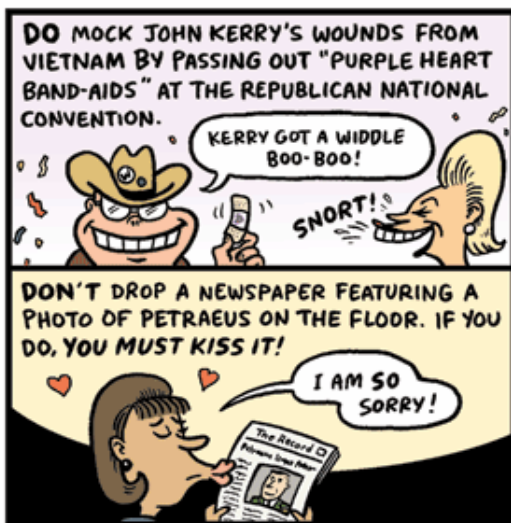
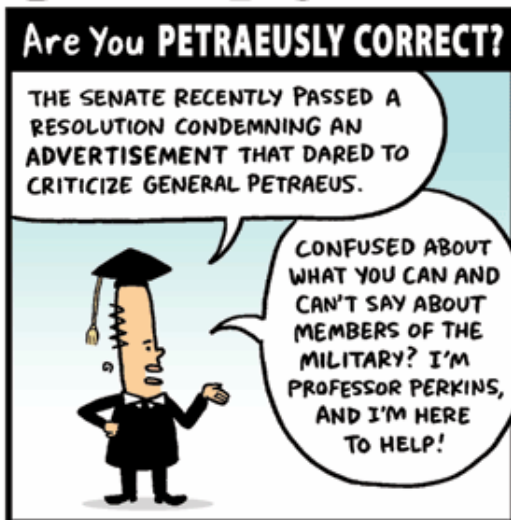
When Americans are asked how the President is handling the war in Iraq, disapproval figures run 67% to 26% in the most recent CBS News poll; 68% to 30% in the ABC News/Washington Post poll; and, according to CNN's pollsters, opposition to the war itself runs at a 65% to 34% clip.

As for “staying” some course in Iraq to 2013 or beyond, that CBS News poll, typically, has 45% of Americans wanting all troops out in “less than a year” and 72% in “one to two years”-- in other words, not by the end of, but the beginning of, the next presidential term in office.

(The ABC News/Washington Post poll indicates, among other things, that, by 55% to 40%, Americans feel the Democrats in Congress have not gone “far enough in opposing the war in Iraq”; and that they want Congress to rein in the administration's soaring, off-the-books war financing requests.)

SLOWPOKE

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* TWO OF WHOM ARE NOW DEAD

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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.

Burma: The Hypocrites Up To Their Necks In Blood

[Thanks to JM, who sent this in.]

October 27, 2007 John Pilger, The Guardian [Excerpt]

The news is no more from Burma. The young monks are quiet in their cells, or they are dead.

But words have escaped: the defiant, beautiful poetry of Aung Than and Zeya Aung; and we know of the unbroken will of the journalist U Win Tin, who makes ink out of brick powder on the walls of his prison cell and writes with a pen made from a bamboo mat - at the age of 77. These are the bravest of the brave.

What shame they bring to those in the west whose hypocrisy and silence helps to feed the monster that rules Burma.

Condoleezza Rice comes to mind. "The United States," she said, "is determined to keep an international focus on the travesty that is taking place in Burma."

What she is less keen to keep a focus on is that the huge American company, Chevron, on whose board of directors she sat, is part of a consortium with the junta and the French company, Total, that operates in Burma's offshore oilfields.

The gas from these fields is exported through a pipeline that was built with forced labour and whose construction involved Halliburton, of which Vice-President Cheney was chief executive.

And when did a British prime minister call on its ally and client, Israel, to end its long and sinister relationship with the Burmese junta?

Or does Israel's immunity and impunity also cover its supply of weapons technology to Burma and its reported training of the junta's most feared internal security thugs? Of course, that is not unusual. The Australian government - so vocal lately in its condemnation of the junta - has not stopped the Australian Federal Police training Burma's internal security forces.

Those who care for freedom in Burma and Iraq and Iran and Saudi Arabia and beyond must not be distracted by the posturing and weasel pronouncements of our leaders, who themselves should be called to account as accomplices.

We owe nothing less to Burma's bravest of the brave.

CLASS WAR REPORTS

***One For Our Side:* Survivor Of Police Terrorism Awarded \$1.35 Million**

From: Alex Vitale

Sent: October 26, 2007 5:34 PM
Subject: [NYC-Justice] Victory for Juanita Young

Victory for Juanita Young and a small victory against police brutality!

Props to a Bronx jury for sending the message that police should not be terrorizing the people!

A Bronx jury determined yesterday that Officer Hernandez DID use excessive force in his arrest of Juanita Young in June of 2003 when she and her family were (illegally) evicted from their home (Hernandez had pushed her down the stairs twice while she was handcuffed and lifted her up by the cuffs).

The jury also determined that Juanita's civil rights were violated when she was held for 35 hours after the arrest. The jury awarded Juanita \$1.35 million, which the city "will most likely appeal" (according to NY1).

Though the jury may not know it, this is also a small victory against the NYPD for their ongoing campaign to intimidate and silence Juanita for her active fight against police brutality.

Juanita remains a powerful force in the struggle, both in organizing other families and others who are against police brutality, and she still has criminal charges hanging over her head (from when she was brutalized and arrested in her home back in November).

Right now her criminal trial is set for January 8, 2008.

If the trial goes forward, pack the court and show the judge, DA, and jury that the people of New York say, HANDS OFF JUANITA YOUNG!

**“This Is The Same Government That
Condones The Use Of Torture To
Obtain Confessions And Information,
And The Same Racist Government
That Targets Blacks For Jail”**

October 26, 2007 By STANLEY HOWARD, Socialist Worker

STANLEY HOWARD was tortured by Chicago police under the command of Jon Burge, and his “confession” was used to send him to death row.

In January 2003, Stanley [Howard] was pardoned by then-Gov. George Ryan, though he remains behind bars today because of another wrongful conviction. Here, Stanley

[Howard] writes on the authorities' latest maneuver to dodge responsibility in the Burge torture scandal.

HAVING SUFFERED immensely for the last 23 years on death row and behind prison walls, I know firsthand how racist, unjust and corrupt the criminal justice system is.

So obviously, I was overwhelmed with pride and joy seeing tens of thousands of people march on Jena, La., on September 20. They traveled from all around the country to express support for the six Jena juveniles who were being persecuted on trumped-up charges of attempted murder, which stemmed from a minor schoolyard fight.

The Jim Crow-style injustice of the Jena 6 case illuminated the double standards in the system for Blacks and whites, and the call for action was sent out through blogs, Web sites and the Internet--a new way of fighting an old enemy in a new era.

The march seemed like it was serving a dual purpose--a call for justice for the Jena 6 and a launching pad for what Revs. Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson, and Minister Louis Farrakhan call "the most major civil rights issue of our time"--the issue of the criminal "just-us-African-Americans" system.

It took less than a week for the new developments in the Burge torture scandal to turn my joy back to anger and show the reality that it's going to take a similar march on Chicago to extract justice for the torture victims.

Last year, special prosecutors concluded in a \$7 million report that fired police Commander Jon Burge and his underlings tortured criminal suspects for two decades. But they claimed it was too late to prosecute the torturers because the statute of limitations has since run out.

Believing that the report was a sham and that it wasn't too late to prosecute, five city aldermen sent a letter to the U.S. Attorney on the same day of the Jena 6 march. "We strongly believe that the federal prosecution of Burge and police helpers is possible, and that the statute of limitations is not a bar," the aldermen wrote.

"Burge and all those involved can be prosecuted for perjury, obstruction of justice and the ongoing conspiracy to cover up their torture scheme."

A recently released report estimated that if the city insists on challenging the lawsuits filed by five of the torture victims, the city could end up paying between \$96 million and \$195 million.

Based on this grim estimate, all major Chicago newspapers and six aldermen demanded on September 25 that Mayor Richard Daley honor the \$14.8 million settlement reached late last year with Leroy Orange, Stanley Howard and Madison Hobley, and reach agreements with Aaron Patterson and Darrel Cannon.

Trying to explain why Mayor Daley lied right before the mayoral election that "no settlement was reached," city attorneys distributed a mindblowing letter on September

26 that they received from the U.S. Attorney's Office late last year, stating that it was investigating the Madison Hobley case.

Hobley was wrongfully tried and convicted of murder and sent to death row. He received a full pardon based on innocence from then-Gov. George Ryan in 2003. And considering the laws against double jeopardy that prevent people from being tried twice for the same offense, there's no way the Justice Department could retry him.

Instead of investigating the largest police corruption scandal in U.S. history, in which over 150 Black men were sadistically tortured by a group of racist cops, they had the audacity to investigate the Hobley case. Only in America could this happen.

I really shouldn't be so surprised at this latest revelation, because this is the same government that condones the use of torture to obtain confessions and information, and the same racist government that targets Blacks for jail, instead of Yale.

With 24 torture victims still incarcerated and the Feds targeting Hobley instead of Burge, Jim Crow is alive and well in Chicago.



The Bankrupt Empire In Crisis:

August Treasury International Capital Flows Numbers Worst In U.S. History; “Another Couple Of Months Of This Sort Of Horrific News And You Can Kiss The Dollar Goodbye”

October 16, 2007 By Dan Norcini,, CIGA & By Julian D.W. Phillips, Goldforecaster.com & October 10, 2007 By Danny Schechter, Zmag.org [Excerpts]

In August, Japan and China led a record withdrawal of foreign funds from the United States in August. Data from the U.S. Treasury showed foreign capital “flowed out of” the US to the tune of leaving a massive \$163 billion shortfall.

With the market still affected by the August crises we can expect the outflow to continue into September's figures and October's.

Asian investors dumped \$52 billion worth of US Treasury bonds alone.

Japan (\$23 billion).

China (\$14.2 billion)

Taiwan (\$5 billion).

Central banks in Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam have all begun to cut purchases of U.S. bonds, or signaled their intention to do so. In effect, they are giving up trying to hold down their currencies because the policy is starting to set off inflation.

It is the first time since 1998 that foreigners have, on balance, sold Treasuries.

And what an impressive outflow in one month we've seen. August's numbers were the WORST on record for the US as foreign capital “flowed out of” the US

[T]he dollar' fortunes are tied to foreign capital flows into or out of the US and not solely to interest rate differentials. This is something that many of today's forex [foreign exchange] traders simply do not understand.

Notice that no matter which method is used to compute the net flows, both fell far, far short of financing the negative balance of trade.

We might be a bit acerbic here and simply say; “STRIKE ONE”.

Another couple of months of this sort of horrific news and you can kiss the dollar goodbye.

In his classic work *The Great Crash: 1929*, J K Galbraith put the decline down to the bad distribution of income; the bad corporate structure; the bad banking structure; the dubious state of the foreign balance; and the poor state of economic intelligence.

He might have been writing about George W Bush's world rather than that of Herbert Hoover.

Remember: you can't rely on what officials are saying to calm us.

One financial website noted: "the time to panic is when officials say, 'don't panic.'"

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

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

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

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