

GI SPECIAL 5K8:



U.S. soldier, Cobra Company 1-3 Infantry in the neighbourhood of Arab Jabour, south Baghdad October 18, 2007. REUTERS/Fabrizio Bensch

Subject: Sgt. King Jeremy

[NOTE: Information that would identify the writer is removed, which is the standard practice to protect members of the armed forces, and their loved ones. **T]**

From: [xxxxxx; Ft. XXXXX]
To: GI Special
Sent: November 05, 2007
Subject: Sgt. King Jeremy

I am a soon to be wife of a soldier, NCO, that served in Iraq with King.

He is held in the hearts of many and did more than most in his life time.

I found your story while doing research. I am an artist being asked to come up with ideas, and many a tattoo is wanted in honor of King out of 8-10 CAV.

It was just as hard to read your account of that day as it is to hear the words of that day being retold from the man I love more than anyone.

I remember talking on the phone with my fiancé the day it happened, he was close to King.

I pray for Kings wife and daughter.

As I sit here while my love sleeps, and I read this, I thank god I can crawl in bed with him, kiss him, letting him know how much I love him.

I can't help but feel guilty, and very lucky at the same time.

Not everyone understands, I think you know what I mean by that.

**Thanks again
[XXXXX]
Ft.[XXXXX]**

REPLY From GI Special: Excerpts]

On reading your letter, I was immediately reminded of another from a long time ago. It's reprinted below. [Following the article on Sgt. King. T]

Your letter, and the one below written 140+ years ago, have in common a clarity and directness of expression, and a fundamental honesty and goodness, that confirms the view expressed from time to time in GI Special that those who serve in the armed forces, and those close to them, are the finest people in America today.

It's an honor beyond measure to receive what you wrote.

Your letter gives good reason to publish again the article in memory of Sgt. King by Iraq veteran Justin C. Cliburn, 1st Battalion 158th FA Oklahoma ARNG, which you found in GI Special, along with your letter.

What you wrote is the finest letter of this war, so far, bar none. There are many troops and loved ones who will find their hearts lifted by your words.

Everyone who has served, or been close to someone who has served, will understand, and thank you.

Limitless respect,

T

MORE:

The Radio

“This August 24th, Remember Jeremy King”



[From GI Special 5H29, August 24, 2007]

07/25/2007 by Justin C. Cliburn
[Iraq Veterans Against The War] [www.ivaw.org/]
Branch of service: Army National Guard of the United States (ARNG)
Unit: 1st Battalion 158th FA Oklahoma ARNG
Rank: SPC
Home: Lawton, Oklahoma
Served in: LSA Anaconda: MSR Patrol, one month. Camp Liberty, Baghdad: PSD/IP
Training, ten and a half months.

When I was in Mrs. Riner’s junior English class at MacArthur high school, we were required to read a short story titled “The Radio.”

The premise was simple. A couple in the 1930s were given a special radio that allowed them to hear all their neighbors’ conversations. At first they were elated, but, ultimately, they were haunted by the miracle of their ability. They could hear all the horrors of society that usually go unnoticed or are covered up and sterilized . . . and they couldn’t turn it off.

They couldn’t change the channel.

It took seven years, but I eventually went back to that story in my head and felt their horror.

August 24th, 2006 was a routine day for my squad in Baghdad. We had gone to Traffic Headquarters and I had gotten to visit with Ali. Business taken care of, we started to make the familiar trek back to Camp Liberty.

It was a hot day, over 120 degrees, and I stood up just a little higher than usual with my sleeves unbuttoned to let the air circulated inside my body armor and clothing. It had been a good day.

Back on Route Irish, we were on the home stretch when the call came out over the radio:

“Eagle Dustoff, Eagle Dustoff, this is Red Knight 7* over”

“This is Eagle Dustoff, over”

“Eagle Dustoff, I need MEDEVAC; my gunner has been shot by a sniper.”

The voice went on to recite the nine line MEDEVAC report and I marveled at how cool, calm, and collected he sounded. My squad leader plotted the grid coordinates and found that this had occurred only a couple blocks away from one of our two main destinations on Market Road.

“Cliburn, go ahead and get down; someone might be aiming at your melon right now”, CPT Ray said. Sergeant Bruesch concurred and I sat down, listening intently to the radio transmissions that I couldn’t turn off if I wanted to.

Five minutes in, the voice on the radio was losing his cool.

“Have they left yet?! He’s losing a lot of blood; we need that chopper now!”

In the background, you could hear other soldiers yelling, screaming, trying to find anyway to save their friend’s life. At one point, I swear I heard the man gurgle.

Ten minutes in, the voice on the radio was furious.

“Where’s that fucking chopper!? We’re losing him! He’s not fucking breathing! Where the fuck are you!?”

Every minute to minute and a half the voice was back on the radio demanding to know what the hold up was. Every minute to minute and a half the other voice on the radio, a young woman’s voice, tried to reassure him that the chopper was the way from Taji. She was beginning to tire herself; I could hear it in her voice. She was just as frustrated as he was.

All the while, there I sat.

Sitting in the gunners hatch, listening life’s little horrors with no way to turn the channel.

No one in the truck was speaking.

The music was on, but no one heard it. There was just an eerie silence.

All I heard was the radio transmissions; I watched as the landscape passed me by in slow motion.

I didn’t hear wind noise or car horns or gunfire or my own thoughts. I was only accompanied by the silence of the world passing me by, interrupted only by the screams of the voice on the radio.

At this point, I was as frustrated as I had been all year. Where the fuck was that goddamn chopper and why was it taking so long?! What if it were me?

Would I be waiting that long? Would this pathetic exchange be included in the newscast if the guy dies?

I was angry, upset, frustrated, and anticipating the next transmission in this macabre play by play account. Forget about TNT, HBO, and Law and Order: THIS was drama. This was heart wrenching.

Seconds seemed like hours; minutes seemed like days.

Finally, after several more non-productive transmissions where Eagle Dustoff attempted to reassure the voice, after twenty minutes and a few more frantic, screaming transmissions by the voice, the man's voice was calm again.

"Eagle Dustoff, cancel the chopper. He's dead."

. . . and that was that. The voice had gone from being the model for the consummate soldier (cool, calm, collected, professional) to the more human screams and frantic pleading for help to solemn resignation.

Now, the voice was quiet.

"Eagle Dustoff: requesting recovery team. We can't drive this vehicle back; we need someone to come get the vehicle and body. Over."

"Do you have casualty's information?"

"Yes. SGT King, over."

I sat in that gunners sling in a fit of rage that I couldn't let out.

I had to be a soldier; I had to keep my cool.

We all did.

I was so angry, I still am, about being an unwilling voyeur, forced to listen to the gruesome play by play of another soldier's life and death.

We had been told that the insurgency was in its last throes, that they were just a bunch of dead enders. No, not this day.

Today, SGT King was in his last throes, and I was there to listen to the whole thing, whether I liked it or not.

A soldier's death isn't anything like the movies. There was no patriotic music; there was no feeling of purpose. It's just . . . death.

I wasn't there physically; I didn't see him, but I was there.

Any sane person would have wanted to turn the channel. No one wants to hear the screams of a man losing his friend, but I couldn't turn it off. We were required to monitor that channel.

Either way, it didn't take long to become emotionally invested in it; was he going to make it? I hung on every word until I got the final, sobering news.

My truck was the only one in the convoy monitoring that net. When we got back to base, no one else had heard it, and SSG Bruesch, CPT Ray, and I didn't discuss it. I don't think we ever did.

A few days later, I felt like I had to find out more about his soldier. I felt like I had lost a friend, yet I didn't know anything but his name and rank.

Looking back on it, I should have just let it go, but I didn't. Using the miracle of the Internet, I found out all I needed to know about the young man.

SGT Jeremy E. King was 23 years old. He was from Idaho, where he played high school football. He had joined the army to get out of Idaho and see the world.

He was one year younger than I was, and he was dead. He sounded like any of a number of teammates I played high school football with.

I've replayed that scene in my head more times than I'd ever want since that day.

I don't believe in fate or karma or any type of pre-destined events, but I often wonder what made that sniper hole up on North Market Road instead of South Market Road, where I often found myself.

I was fortunate enough in my time there to never have to call in MEDEVAC.

I didn't bury any of my comrades, but I will always remember what it was like listening to the miracle of modern communications, the radio, and for the first time in my life being terrified, much like the couple in the story over eighty long years ago.

This August 24th, remember Jeremy King:



Jeremy King

Wednesday, August 30 2006 @ 04:20 AM EDT

Contributed by: River97

Views: 621

Star Telegram -- KILLEEN, Texas - A Fort Hood soldier from Idaho has died in Iraq of injuries sustained when troops came under fire during combat, the Department of Defense said Friday.

Sgt. Jeremy E. King, 23, of Meridian died Thursday in Baghdad.

He was assigned to the 8th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 4th Infantry Division at Fort Hood.

MORE:

From Major Sullivan Ballou, Second Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers, To His Wife, Sarah

Major Sullivan Ballou of the Second Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers, wrote the letter July 14, while awaiting orders that would take him to Manassas, where he and twenty-seven of his men would die one week later at the Battle of Bull Run.

July the 14th, 1861

Washington DC

My very dear Sarah:

The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days - perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write you again, I feel impelled to write lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more.

Our movement may be one of a few days duration and full of pleasure - and it may be one of severe conflict and death to me. Not my will, but thine O God, be done. If it is necessary that I should fall on the battlefield for my country, I am ready. I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in, the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter.

I know how strongly American Civilization now leans upon the triumph of the Government, and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and suffering of the Revolution. And I am willing - perfectly willing - to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this Government, and to pay that debt.

But, my dear wife, when I know that with my own joys I lay down nearly all of yours, and replace them in this life with cares and sorrows - when, after having eaten for long years the bitter fruit of orphanage myself, I must offer it as their only sustenance to my dear little children - is it weak or dishonorable, while the banner of my purpose floats calmly and proudly in the breeze, that my unbounded love for you, my darling wife and children, should struggle in fierce, though useless, contest with my love of country?

I cannot describe to you my feelings on this calm summer night, when two thousand men are sleeping around me, many of them enjoying the last, perhaps, before that of death -- and I, suspicious that Death is creeping behind me with his fatal dart, am communing with God, my country, and thee.

I have sought most closely and diligently, and often in my breast, for a wrong motive in thus hazarding the happiness of those I loved and I could not find one. A pure love of my country and of the principles have often advocated before the people and "the name of honor that I love more than I fear death" have called upon me, and I have obeyed.

Sarah, my love for you is deathless, it seems to bind me to you with mighty cables that nothing but Omnipotence could break; and yet my love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me irresistibly on with all these chains to the battlefield.

The memories of the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most gratified to God and to you that I have enjoyed them so long. And hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when God willing, we might still have lived and loved together and seen our sons grow up to honorable manhood around us.

I have, I know, but few and small claims upon Divine Providence, but something whispers to me - perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar -- that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed.

If I do not, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battlefield, it will whisper your name.

Forgive my many faults, and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless and foolish I have oftentimes been! How gladly would I wash out with my tears every little spot upon your happiness, and struggle with all the misfortune of this world, to shield you and my children from harm. But I cannot. I must watch you from the spirit land and hover near you, while you buffet the storms with your precious little freight, and wait with sad patience till we meet to part no more.

But, O Sarah! If the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you; in the garish day and in the darkest night -- amidst your happiest scenes and gloomiest hours - always, always; and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath; or the cool air fans your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by.

Sarah, do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again.

As for my little boys, they will grow as I have done, and never know a father's love and care. Little Willie is too young to remember me long, and my blue eyed Edgar will keep my frolics with him among the dimmest memories of his childhood.

Sarah, I have unlimited confidence in your maternal care and your development of their characters. Tell my two mothers his and hers I call God's blessing upon them. O Sarah, I wait for you there! Come to me, and lead thither my children.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

High School Friends And Teachers Remember Texas Soldier Killed In Iraq

11/02/2007, By: Nancy Flake, Courier city editor

MONTGOMERY - Before the excitement reaches its crescendo at tonight's District 18-4A football game between Montgomery and Livingston, silence will descend briefly on Bear Stadium as friends and former teachers of Brandon Smitherman pay him tribute.

Smitherman, 21, of Conroe, and Capt. Timothy I. McGovern, 28, of Indiana, died in Mosul, Iraq, Wednesday when an explosive detonated near their vehicle.

They were assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Bliss.

A 2004 Montgomery High School graduate, Smitherman's presence is still felt on the campus, according to English teacher Johnny Johnson.

"I spent a whole year with him. You get real close with those kids and they become like family," Johnson said Thursday. "That's how it was with Brandon. He was an outstanding young man and always had a smile on his face. I just enjoyed him. "I even remember where he sat in the classroom."

Montgomery head football coach John Bolfig remembers Smitherman as "a quiet, coachable kid." Bolfig arrived at the school in 2003 as defensive coordinator, which was Smitherman's senior season with the Bears. Smitherman was a third-string defensive end and also served as a deep snapper on the team's punting squad.

"He was a super kid who was very polite and worked hard," said Bolfig, who has been the Bears' head coach since the 2005 season. "My memories of him were that he was a great kid who always did what we asked him to do. He was the strong, quiet type." Bolfig said several recent MHS graduates have joined the military.

"You see them go into the military and you don't know if they're going to wind up overseas in a combat area," he said. "Then someone like Brandon loses his life for his country. It makes you extremely proud to be associated with someone who was willing to do that.

"His death really brings into reality the sacrifice these kids make."

As of Thursday, at least 3,845 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to the Associated Press count.

Smitherman is survived by his mother, Teresa Smitherman, of Conroe; sister, Adrienne Smitherman, of Conroe; niece, Mernalyn Mae, of Conroe; father, Harvey Smitherman, of Grayson County, and grandmother, Rita Crosby, a longtime Courier employee.

Funeral services are pending.

Baghdad IED: Casualties Not Announced



A U.S. armored vehicle (front) that was damaged in a roadside bomb attack remains on a road in Baladyat district in Baghdad November 11, 2007. REUTERS/Mohammed Ameen

Missile Attack On Camp Echo

11 Nov 2007 Reuters

Guerrillas fired 12 missiles at Camp Echo, which houses Polish, U.S. and other coalition forces, in Diwaniya on Saturday, police said.

They said the soldiers returned fire with six rockets or mortars that landed in Nahdha district. The local hospital said one person was killed and six wounded.

WELCOME TO IRAQNAM: HAVE A NICE DAY



US soldiers from Alpha Company of 1/38 Infantry Regiment outside Baquba, 09 October 2007. (AFP/File/Alexander Nemenov)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Foreign Occupation Soldier Killed Near Tagab Valley; Nationality Not Announced

November 11, 2007 By AMIR SHAH (AP)

A service member with the U.S.-led coalition died of wounds suffered during a gun battle Saturday near the Tagab Valley of Kapisa province, 40 miles northeast of Kabul, the coalition said in a statement. It did not disclose the soldier's nationality.

TROOP NEWS

Ft. Bragg Soldier Reports “Deadly Mistreatment” In Iraq By Officers “Only There To Make Rank” “A Petition For Relief Was Signed By Half The Unit — A Daring Step — But Then Ignored”

Quaker House Newsletter, Fayetteville, N.C., “Early Autumn 2007”

A soldier called on a recent Friday. Let’s call him Art, though come to think of it he never did mention his name. He was back from Iraq, but only for a few days—returning there the next Monday.

He wasn’t calling about the usual—how to get out of the army, or to avoid going back to a combat zone.

Instead, he wanted to know how to make trouble there—trouble that was legal.

How to complain about mistreatment by his superiors.

Deadly mistreatment.

The basics were simple: he was a truck mechanic in a unit that was under persistent insurgent attack. His unit was also grossly under strength.

So after working on trucks all day, he and his buddies were being told to pull nighttime guard duty on the roof of their decrepit, vulnerable “cot,” sarcastic slang for the building.

Guard duty was not only a matter of staying awake and watching for RPGs. There were stacks of heavy sandbags to move around, depending on where the threats were coming from.

Even with all the work and watching, attacks and casualties continued. An RPG blasted through the wall one night a few months ago, and blew the legs off a valued friend. Others had been killed.

Art was exhausted.

He felt his unit was being driven into the ground, and to destruction.

He blamed indifferent officers, who, he said bitterly, “are only there to make rank.”

Most of his buddies felt the same way, he said, One of them had even drawn up a petition for relief, which was signed by half the unit—a daring step— but then ignored.

The response, he said, was, “GIs are always going to complain, that just means you have to work them harder.” Art added that some soldiers had re-enlisted, not for the bonus but simply for the promise of a transfer to another unit.

Although only in his twenties, Art had high blood pressure and was going through a divorce.

He was sick of the war: “It’s all a bunch of stupidity and we’re all fed up with it.”

But he was hardly a budding peacenik. He spoke bitterly of restrictive new “rules of engagement” which he said made it harder for GIs to defend themselves. There were even new security cameras around the unit now—not to protect them, Art was sure, but to gather evidence for court-martialing terrified soldiers who fired back too fast. For his part, “I wouldn’t think twice before shooting Iraqis.”

But as he got ready to return to duty, he asked if there was anything he could do to protect himself and his buddies? Legal ways to rock the boat? Did we have any ideas?

Yes, we had ideas. Three to be specific.

First, he could file a complaint against his superiors, under article 138 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Few GIs know this, but military law authorizes such formal grievances against superiors for abuse or violations of regulations. I suggested he consider writing up such a complaint right before he returned to Iraq.

Second, he could turn the complaint into a memo, and FAX it to the Inspector General of his division; we found the number. FAXes, I pointed out, get delivered faster than snailmail.

And third, he could rewrite the memo as a letter to his Members of Congress, and FAX it to them too, asking them to look into how his unit was being treated. We got him those numbers too.

He took these items down. I cautioned him that while all this was perfectly legal, the army had ways of retaliating against troublemakers. He knew that, he said, but he had had enough.

In fact, come to think of it, after five years in the army, much of it in Iraq, he was fed up with all of it. When he got home from this deployment, he said, he’d call us again for help with a discharge.

I said we’d be here.

But after hanging up, I was thoughtful.

Yes, Quaker House would be ready.

But he'd have to get back home first.

And what are the odds?

Montana Voters Demand Immediate Withdrawal From Iraq

11-07-07 By Emily Darrell, NewWest & 11/08/2007 The Associated Press

Yesterday two Montana cities approved non-binding referendums urging "Congress to authorize and fund an immediate and orderly withdrawal of the U.S. military forces from Iraq in a manner fully protective of U.S. soldiers."

The referendums, similar to ones that have been passed in cities around the nation, appeared on city council ballots in both Missoula and Helena and were approved by 65 and 62 percent of voters, respectively.

In Helena, voters approved a nonbinding ballot referendum that calls for the immediate withdrawal of American troops from Iraq. It passed by a preliminary count of 5,032 votes to 3,108, or 61.8 percent to 38.2 percent.

Missoula residents voted in favor by a vote of 7,897 to 4,421, or 64.1 percent to 35.9 percent.

"I'm ecstatic," said Deborah Hayden a member of the Helena Peace Seekers. "I worked very hard to get (the referendum) passed."

Hayden's son is an Iraq veteran who she said has experienced chronic pain and emotional problems since returning from a one-year tour of duty in Iraq.

"He's 26 years old," she said "and he may be disabled for life."

"I was against (the war) from the beginning, before my son even joined the army," Hayden said.

Hayden believes that the passing of the referendum accurately reflects the dissatisfaction with the war she sees around her.

Hayden said that since the start of the war her car has been covered in anti-war stickers and that she often wears anti-war pins and other accessories. "I've been virtually a rolling billboard saying 'get out of Iraq' . . . and not one person has said anything negative to me."

She said the referendum is just one small part of the anti-war movement, but believes it will send a strong message to our state representatives and that it will have an impact. "We aren't going to stop with this referendum," she said.

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



The casket of Army Spc. Camy Florexil, 23, of Philadelphia, who was killed in Baghdad in July, Arlington National Cemetery, Oct. 5, 2007 (AP Photos/Susan Walsh)

One-Third Of British KIA In Iraq And Afghanistan Due To “Avoidable Blunders And Equipment Problems”

2007-11-11 (Xinhua)

LONDON -- More than one in three British servicemen killed in Iraq and Afghanistan might still be alive if not for avoidable blunders and equipment problems, an investigation by the Independent on Sunday has revealed.

An audit of the 254 deaths in the two conflicts revealed that at least 88 have died in avoidable accidents, friendly fire incidents or equipment shortages, the paper reported.

The 88 cases listed are a conservative analysis, leaving out many others where no inquiry or inquest has been completed and exact circumstances have not been established, the report said.

The study will increase pressure on the Secretary of State for Defence, Des Browne, to honor the Military Covenant, which says that, while people in the military risk their lives in combat, the nation should ensure they are well equipped and look after them and, in the case of their deaths, their families.

“Constitutional Rights” Frauds Rat Out An Honorable Officer; “My Oath As A Commissioned Officer Is To The Constitution Of The United States,” He Said; But Their Testimony Sends Him To Prison

PLN contacted the CCR for a comment on the “morality and commitment” of Barbara Olshansky, who, without even attempting to mount a legal fight, voluntarily surrendered evidence to government authorities that resulted in Diaz’s prosecution. Despite repeated requests, no CCR staff would comment on this story or the role of CCR and Olshansky in Diaz’s court martial.

October 2007 By Alex Friedman, Prison Legal News [Excerpts]

In January 2005, Lt, Commander Matthew M. Diaz was a Navy staff judge advocate serving a six-month tour of duty at the legal office in the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, which houses detained “enemy combatants.”

The previous year, the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) had successfully filed suit on behalf of Guantanamo detainees, resulting in a 2004 Supreme Court decision which held that such prisoners have the right to challenge their incarceration in U.S. courts. See: Rasul v. Bush, 124 S. Ct. 2686(2004).

The military, however, had since refused to identify the detainees making it impossible for the CCR or other agencies to file individual challenges under the Rasul ruling.

Disturbed with the detainees’ treatment and the government’s obstruction of their legal rights, which he believed was unconstitutional, Diaz compiled a list of 550 names of Guantanamo prisoners and mailed it, anonymously, to CCR attorney Barbara Olshansky.

Olshansky had been trying for years to obtain the names of detainees held at Guantanamo, but suspecting the list of names might be classified, she promptly notified federal court officials. The Department of Justice and FBI were called in and the list was eventually traced to Diaz through his fingerprints and computer records. He was charged in July 2006 with five criminal counts related to disclosure of classified information.

At no point did Olshansky or CCR disclose the list of names to the media, file it with the court, or use the information to file individual habeas petitions on behalf of the previously unidentified prisoners at Guantanamo.

Meanwhile, on January 23, 2006, in a Freedom of Information Act suit filed by the Associated Press, a federal court held that the names of the Guantanamo detainees were a matter of public record and must be disclosed. The military complied, releasing the names, ages and nationalities of most of the prisoners at Guantanamo. See: Associated Press v. US. Dept. of Defense, 410 ESupp.2d 147 (S.D.N.Y 2006).

Regardless, Diaz's prosecution proceeded.

Following a court martial hearing before a panel of military officers — which was at least as impartial as the hearings afforded enemy combatants Diaz was convicted May 28, 2007 of four charges.

He was discharged from the Navy and sentenced to six months in prison.

Olshansky willingly testified against Diaz during the trial and was the prosecution's lead witness.

While Diaz acknowledged that he shouldn't have sent the list of names, he maintained that his motives for doing so were valid.

“My oath as a commissioned officer is to the Constitution of the United States,” he said. “I’m not a criminal.”

This was not Diaz's first personal experience with the criminal justice system; his father, Robert Diaz, has been on California's death row since 1984 for allegedly euthanizing patients when he worked as a nurse. According to an investigation by the San Francisco Chronicle, Robert Diaz, who has maintained his innocence, “never received anything even close to a fair trial.” Lt. Commander Diaz noted that his daughter, age 15, was “pretty much in the same position I was when I observed this happen with my dad just observing the injustice.”

The CCR released a statement condemning Diaz's punishment, stating his actions had been “grounded in a strong sense of morality and commitment to the rule of law.”

PLN contacted the CCR for a comment on the “morality and commitment” of Barbara Olshansky, who, without even attempting to mount a legal fight, voluntarily surrendered evidence to government authorities that resulted in Diaz's prosecution.

Despite repeated requests, no CCR staff would comment on this story or the role of CCR and Olshansky in Diaz's court martial.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

A Veterans Day Parade:
“The Opinion Of An Iraq War Veteran
-- Veteran’s Day -- A Shallow,
Contemplated Lie”

“Many Of Us Live Through Life In The
Solitary Confines Of Our Experiences,
Walking Amongst The Living While
Holding Hands With The Dead”



From: J.D. Englehart
To: GI Special
Sent: November 09, 2007

Coming from the opinion of an Iraq war veteran, I can testify that a shallow, contemplated lie --a day of remembrance for all the veterans who sacrificed their lives, limbs, and sanity for the decency of American society--strikes me as a shallow, contemplated lie, and really does not mean a damn thing to me.

And why should it?

To some, this callous attitude towards a national holiday may appear unjustified, or that as a veteran, I may sound ungrateful for it.

But to frame this holiday into a rational context, I have to ask: When the negligence and indifference towards the humanity and respect of a group of people can be so easily redressed once a year on a federally mandated holiday, why should we place any amount of importance on this faux holiday of remembrance, and especially when it insults our intelligence?

In short, veterans, and the day to honor them, hold about as much importance to most Americans as Kwanza does to the Young Republicans of Texas.

For some of my closest friends and me, Veterans Day is every day, and it is a Fact that cannot be so easily praised and cheered with the enthusiastic waving of an American flag.

Many of us live through life in the solitary confines of our experiences, walking amongst the living while holding hands with the dead.

Some veterans, homeless, jobless and hungry, live day to day begging for scraps on the streets, all the while running from the demons that follow them from the war.

Other vets try desperately to placate their own personal hells, to mask their horrible disfigurement and pain by medicating through substance abuse and violence.

Having been turned away from the very hospitals that bear their name, they sit in wheelchairs, with missing limbs, with jaded eyes, inebriated in front of TVs, just to forget, just to make it through the day.

Some veterans will not even be alive to see the big Veterans Day parade, because for some toiled and tired vets, suicide will be the only solution to the all-consuming problem that is their life.

For some of us, Veterans Day is much more than a day off from work, or an all-day shopping spree, or a good excuse to fire up the barbeque grill. It is an unpleasant fact.

It is hiding from the ghosts of our pasts. It is living every day with an unbearable guilt. It is trying to live and maintain in a society that you feel deep in your gut is inherently sick and deranged.

It is living without hope.

As Americans, we only pretend to celebrate the honor of veterans on Veterans Day. Maybe because deep down in our national psyche, we all know that the crimes our politicians commit against helpless people in foreign countries--enforced through the strength of our troops--is ultimately dishonorable, immoral, disgusting, and wrong.

But if we truly believed in recognizing the services of our veterans, we as a people would honor our vets by removing them from the immorality of a criminal war and demand an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of American troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.

If we honestly revered the sacrifices of our soldiers returning home, we as a people would hold our government responsible for guaranteeing that every veteran in this country is afforded with free health and education services to ensure each vet has a fair opportunity to start her/his new civilian life.

In a perfect world, this is how we would honor our veterans in America. Furthermore, it would not be solely an annual event. The duty of a compassionate citizenry forcing

governments to take care of its veterans would be a daily function in our lives...in a perfect world.

The reality is that America has a long history of sending young adults to the collective suicide of war, only to neglect and sweep under the rug those veterans who return home.

From the stolen pensions of veterans in the Revolutionary War, to President Hoover's military assault on the "Bonus Army" of World War I veterans in 1932, to soldiers' Agent Orange exposure in Vietnam to Depleted Uranium exposure to Gulf War and Iraq War vets, each generation has its ugly war story to tell.

When one considers this history of negligence and insensitivity, it's no wonder that most veterans do not think highly of Veterans Day.

Much like Black History Month is to the Civil Rights struggle, or that Columbus Day is to the Native Americans, Veterans Day is the ultimate irony for the war veteran: a government-sanctioned holiday for the purposes of whitewashing the patterns of social inequality throughout the years of America's history.

But perhaps I shouldn't be so pessimistic about yet another great American spectacle. People are always telling me I have the stereotypical "Angry War Vet" complex brought home from Iraq. Maybe it is time I take my doctor's advice, pop a VA prescribed Paxil, and "loosen up" a little bit.

After all, Veterans Day does serve a higher, nobler purpose. Not only does it encourage blind jingoism and unquestioned obedience to the established order set forth by our ruling elite's greed-driven capitalist regime, it also gives millions of Americans a nice and cozy "Patriotic" reason to go shopping this weekend.

Indeed, reverence through consumption, our good ol' American pastime. And on this fine "Veterans Day-Weekend-Blow-Out-Sale-Extravaganza", as long as the American consumer is getting a whopping 15% off on all furniture purchases at IKEA or 0% APR financing for 6 months on their brand new Ford monster truck, at least I know I did my part in fighting for the American Cause.

For God, Country, and the Almighty Dollar.

-Jeff Englehart
Iraq Veterans Against the War
www.ivaw.org

"The single largest failure of the anti-war movement at this point is the lack of outreach to the troops." Tim Goodrich, Iraq Veterans Against The War

"The military are the final, essential weak point of Bush and Cheney." David McReynolds 9.29.07

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.

The Enemy



From: Richard Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: November 07, 2007
Subject: The Enemy

The Enemy

I went to Vietnam in search of the enemy.
When I returned from Vietnam,
I discovered it was
ME.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
November 7, 2007

Photo and caption from the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (For more of his outstanding work, contact at: (hastiemike@earthlink.net) T)

One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
December 13, 2004

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

OCCUPATION REPORT

Remember All That Command Happy Talk About Anbar? Have Some Truth For A Change

November 12, 2007 By Michelle Tan. Army Times [Excerpts]

A PowerPoint concept presented to the top military commander in Iraq earlier this year has grown into a task force capable of investigating major crimes, prosecuting prisoners and restoring confidence in the war-torn nation's legal and justice system.

The Law and Order Task Force, located at Forward Operating Base Shield in Baghdad's Rusafa district, is a collection of soldiers, airmen, Marines, sailors, Coast Guardsmen and civilians from the Justice Department.

An upcoming case will be the prosecution of 10 suspects in the assassination of Sheikh Abdul Sattar Abu Risha, the popular leader of the "Anbar Awakening," a movement to oppose al-Qaida insurgents in Anbar province. Sheikh Sattar was killed in September near his home in Ramadi.

"We got a call saying they had 10 suspects in custody," Walther said. "They asked us to try them here.

"Both the Iraqi and coalition authorities felt the security issues would be difficult to deal with out in Anbar and we could keep them secure here and we could ensure they have a fair trial here."

Good News For The Iraqi Resistance!!

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



A frightened Iraqi woman sees foreign occupation troops from the USA while her home is searched without her consent in the rural town of Narwan, southeast of Baghdad, November 8, 2007. (Erik de Castro/Reuters)

[Fair is fair. Let's bring 150,000 Iraqi troops over here to the USA. They can kill people at checkpoints, bust into their houses with force and violence, butcher their families, overthrow the government, put a new one in office they like better and call it "sovereign," and "detain" anybody who doesn't like it in some prison without any charges being filed against them, or any trial.]

[Those Iraqis are sure a bunch of backward primitives. They actually resent this help, have the absurd notion that it's bad their country is occupied by a foreign military dictatorship, and consider it their patriotic duty to fight and kill the soldiers sent to grab their country.]

[What a bunch of silly people. How fortunate they are to live under a military dictatorship run by George Bush. Why, how could anybody not love that? You'd want that in your home town, right?]

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

**Homicidal Maniac Is The U.S.
Commands' New Hero In West
Baghdad;
And Now, You Can Meet This Dog, Up
Close And Personal;
[Have A Nice Day In Liberated Iraq]**

"Where are Abu Omar's sniper rifles?" Abu Abed asked him.

"I don't know," replied the boy.

"Look, this head of yours, I will cut it off and put it on your chest if you don't tell where the guns are by tomorrow."

November 10, 2007 Ghaith Abdul-Ahad in Baghdad, The Guardian [Excerpts]

On a recent Friday morning in west Baghdad, 20 of Hajji Abu Abed's men were shifting their feet nervously in the dusty yard outside his house as they waited for their leader to emerge.

The men, young and well armed with Kalashnikovs, pistols and hand grenades, were wearing the favoured dress for militiamen in Iraq these days: green camouflage commando uniforms decorated with bits of US army kit - a pouch on one man, webbing on another, a cap here, sunglasses there, a few flak jackets between them. Some bore the insignia of Iraqi army officers.

Around noon, a fighter came running from the large house across the street and shouted: "The Hajji is coming!"

A pick-up truck came speeding into the yard, followed by several saloon cars packed with fighters. In the back of the pick-up, a man with a bandanna swung a big machine gun on its mounting.

The great iron gate opened and Hajji Abu Abed emerged - a squat, chubby fellow with close-cropped hair and a thin goatee and moustache. Half his face was covered with large wraparound sunglasses, a pistol was tucked into his belt and a short machine gun dangled in his hand. Three guards ran in front of him and jumped into a new Toyota saloon. With sirens wailing and men brandishing their guns in the air, the convoy drove the 50 metres from Hajji Abu Abed's house to his headquarters.

Abu Abed, a member of the insurgent Islamic Army, has recently become the commander of the US-sponsored "Ameriya Knights".

He is one of the new breed of Sunni warlords who are being paid by the US to fight al-Qaida in Iraq. The Americans call their new allies Concerned Citizens.

Critics of the plan say they are simply creating powerful new strongmen who run their own prisons and armies, and who eventually will turn on each other.

A senior Sunni sheikh, whose tribe is joining the new alliance with the Americans against al-Qaida, told me in Beirut that it was a simple equation for him.

"It's like someone who brought cats to fight rats, found himself with too many cats and brought dogs to fight the cats. Now they need elephants."

A former intelligence officer and a pious Sunni, Hajji Abu Abed has the aura of a mafia don. And for Abu Abed, like a don, connections are everything. His office is decorated with pictures of him hugging US officers, including the senior commander in Iraq, General David Petraeus, and a Captain Cosper.

On Abu Abed's desk stands a glass box containing a black suede cavalry hat and a letter proclaiming him an honorary US cavalryman. In a silver frame is a picture of him with a female interpreter in military uniform.

As the Hajji settled into his office, a long line of men formed at the door. From a small purse tucked into his belt he dispensed handfuls of Iraqi dinars to his followers as they filed through. He is the only figure of authority many of them have seen for several years.

One old man asked him for an electricity generator; another, carrying a large file, asked him about a US construction contract that he was promised.

Two young boys were seated next to him. One had brought him a leather ammunition belt, and the other handed him the keys to a new pick-up truck Abu Abed had ordered.

The Americans pay him \$400 (£200) a month for each fighter he provides, he said, and he had 600 registered.

His men are awed by his courage, his piety and his neurotic rages.

The turning point came last year, when al-Qaida declared the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq and attempted to impose itself on other insurgent groups. In one instance in west Baghdad, they demanded 25% of all the loot from other insurgent groups' operations. The Islamic Army refused to pay and direct confrontations ensued.

He pulled his pistol out and showed it to me. It was a Glock, supplied by the US to Iraqi security forces. "This belonged to the commander of al-Qaida here," he said. "They called him the White Lion. I killed him and got his gun."

Our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of a big man named Bakr with a bandolier of bullets over his chest. He squatted next to Abu Abed, laid his big BKC machine gun down and spoke to him conspiratorially, covering his mouth with his hand like a schoolgirl.

Bakr was Abu Abed's head of intelligence. "I was told that someone from al-Qaida is in the area," Bakr said. "We will go out, develop some intelligence and then raid the house."

The only vehicles in the streets belonged to our screeching convoy. A few shops were open and people walked past carrying plastic shopping bags. All around us were the traces of battle: craters in the road from improvised bombs, facades pockmarked with bullet holes, a pile of rubble that had once been a building.

Ameriya is a closed zone, surrounded by high concrete walls. Only pedestrians are allowed through the two Iraqi army checkpoints out of the suburb. The "knights" are the only authority inside.

When we arrived at the house where the alleged al-Qaida commander was hiding, Bakr was already in action. He was dragging a plump man into a car, grabbing his neck with one hand and his BKC machine gun with the other.

The horrified man begged them not to take him. "By Allah, I didn't say Qaida is better than you, you are our brothers, just let me go!" A gunman kicked the man and pushed him into a car.

The suspect's brother, still in his pajamas, pleaded, and women in nightgowns stood in the street wailing and begging the gunmen to release him.

The gunmen pointed their guns at the people and pushed them back. A young fighter carrying an old British sub-machine gun fired a burst into the air.

Abu Abed walked into the scuffle. The detained man was not the target.

Someone had overheard him saying Abu Abed's men were "worse than al-Qaida" after Bakr's men raided the house.

Furious at the insult, Abu Abed aimed his gun at the brother. "Al-Qaida is better than us, huh? Did you forget when the bodies were piled in the streets?"

Some neighbours intervened, and the man was released. His brother grabbed him by the arm and pushed him inside.

Abu Abed, shaking his head and waving his gun, walked back to his car, murmuring "Al-Qaida, better than us..."

He stopped in mid-stride and turned to charge with his men back into the house.

They pushed the gate open and ran inside firing their weapons in the air. In the dark kitchen, they grabbed the man again, pushed him to the floor and kicked him. The women were screaming and crying. One of them pulled away her headscarf and wailed, holding on to the man's ripped shirt as Abu Abed and the gunmen dragged him out, kicking and slapping him.

Other fighters fired their Kalashnikovs in the air. The man was shoved into a car, as was his brother.

Abu Abed, screaming and pointing his gun, charged at the crowd. "Qaida is better than me? I will show you!"

He held his gun high and quoted al-Hajjaj, a 7th-century ruler of Iraq, in a hoarse voice: "Oh, people of Iraq, I had come to you with two swords, one is for mercy which I have left back in the desert, and this one" - he pointed his gun at the crowd - "is the sword of oppression, which I kept in my hand."

The convoy drove off, sirens blaring, fighters hanging out of the car windows.

After we had settled again in his office, Abu Abed told me of his grand dreams.

"Ameriya is just the beginning. After we finish with al-Qaida here, we will turn toward our main enemy, the Shia militias. I will liberate Jihad (a Sunni area next to Ameriya taken over by the Mahdi army) then Saidiya and the whole of west Baghdad."

Hours later the Ameriya Knights were on the streets again.

There were rumours that Iraq's Sunni vice-president, Tariq al-Hashemi, was visiting Ameriya for the first time in two years. As we approached the mosque where he was believed to be praying, the street was blocked by his guards.

"Open the road for the Ameriya Knights," yelled one of Abu Abed's men.

"I can't, I don't have orders," replied a gunman.

"Do you know who I am? I am the commander of Ameriya," Abu Abed screamed at the vice-president's commander of guards.

"Who are you? Did you dare to show your faces here before I kicked al-Qaida out? Even the Americans with their tanks couldn't come before I liberated Ameriya." Bakr pointed his gun at the entourage. Guns were cocked on all sides.

"Abu Abed, we all know who you are, but this is the vice-president of Iraq."

"This is Ameriya, not Iraq! Here I rule, I am the commander, I can make sure that you won't show your faces here!"

"We are all Sunni brothers. The Shia militias will be happy to see us fighting; we have the same enemy," said the man.

"You are trying to claim my victory. I will show you!" Abu Abed pushed the officer and went back to his car.

That night, Abu Abed decided to attack another group of Ameriya Knights under his general command.

He suspected their commander, Abu Omar, was allied with the vice-president's Islamic party, which has been trying to control the Sunni area.

"I have to show them there is one commander. If the Americans don't like it, I will withdraw my men," he told me. "Let's see if they can fight al-Qaida alone."

By sunset, his men were gathered in front of the house again. He distributed extra guns and he carried an extra shotgun with his machine gun.

All the way to Abu Omar's HQ he was humming an Islamic verse in a beautiful voice. "Oh prophet, how beautiful your light is, oh prophet of God."

Abu Omar's gunmen, thinking Abu Abed was there for an inspection, took away the coils of razor wire and opened the gates. Then Abu Abed's Knights charged for the third time that day, this time accompanied by gunfire. Bullets whizzed in their confused way and red tracers flashed against the dark blue sky.

Abu Omar's men were rounded up. Some were put in pick-up trucks, others were squeezed in car boots. By the light of headlamps, Abu Abed's men looted weapons, ammunition boxes and radios.

One terrified child was brought for questioning. "Where are Abu Omar's sniper rifles?" Abu Abed asked him.

"I don't know," replied the boy.

"Look, this head of yours, I will cut it off and put it on your chest if you don't tell where the guns are by tomorrow." He tried to put his shotgun in the boy's mouth but his men restrained him.

Back at Abu Abed's HQ, the men were put into cells.

Men in US-supplied blue uniforms were being jailed by men in US-supplied green uniforms.

An American officer, Captain Cosper, visited Abu Abed that night. He sat in the office trying to make sense of what was going on. "They (the Concerned Citizens) are not allowed to detain people or conduct raids," he told me.

In a nearby room, two blindfolded men were being questioned by Abu Abed's men. An American soldier put his head inside, watched for a few seconds and left. "They won't do anything to them while we're here," he said.

When Capt Cosper had gone, the men were beaten up and taken to the cell. Later, one of Abu Abed's men drove up and shouted: "I brought another one." His face was shining with happiness.

"Where is he?" asked a captain.

"In the boot," replied the gunman. "I found him standing in the street behind Abu Omar's building."

"Are you sure you didn't capture Mudhar? I asked him to guard the back."

"No, no, I am sure he is one of them," said the fighter. The captain pulled out a shaking man from the boot like a magician pulling out a rabbit. "Ah Mudhar, I am sorry," said the captain. "I told you he is one of us."

The fighter kissed Mudhar twice and said he was sorry but Mudhar should try not to look so suspicious in future.

Mudhar, still shaky, looked at him. Then, confused and angry, walked away.

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

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