

## **GI SPECIAL 6B1:**

### **COMMENT UNNECESSARY**



Bush speaks at Queensridge in Las Vegas, Nevada, January 31, 2008.  
REUTERS/Larry Downing

# **“Nothing Is Safe In Kabul”**

**“The Taliban Has Taken Back  
Control Of Vast Rural Areas  
During The Past Year And Now  
Has A Foothold Just Outside  
Kabul”**

**They “Demonstrate In The Serena  
Attack That They Could Target  
Westerners Virtually Anywhere And  
Anytime, Even Deep In Kabul”**

# Police Withdrawn From Other Provinces To Defend The Capital

January 30, 2008 By Paul Wiseman, USA TODAY [Excerpts]

KABUL — In the better times that followed the U.S.-led invasion, Kabul's famous Chicken Street used to attract hundreds of foreigners seeking a bargain on Afghan rugs, leather goods and gemstones such as lapis lazuli.

These days, the Westerners have all but disappeared from the downtown thoroughfare in Afghanistan's capital. At shops such as the one owned by Mohammed Hasef, a 36-year-old rug salesman, security fears have become so intense that he even shoos away beggars out of fear they could be wearing suicide vests.

"All of us shopkeepers have to keep an eye out," Hasef says. He hasn't sold a rug in two months.

Such worries have proliferated among Afghans and Westerners alike since the Taliban's audacious Jan. 14 attack on Kabul's five-star Serena Hotel.

The assault on one of the city's best-protected landmarks was the latest — and most dramatic — sign that the Taliban may be gaining strength more than six years after U.S.-led forces invaded to drive the Islamist militant movement from power.

Despite the presence of more than 50,000 U.S. and NATO troops throughout Afghanistan, the Taliban has taken back control of vast rural areas during the past year and now has a foothold just outside Kabul.

The attack on the Serena Hotel has raised questions about whether any place in the country is safe....

**"The Taliban were able to demonstrate in the Serena attack that they could target Westerners virtually anywhere and anytime, even deep in Kabul," says Seth Jones, counterinsurgency specialist at the Rand Corp. think tank.**

**[T]he shattering of the illusion of security has come as a shock for many of the European and American diplomats, aid workers and contractors working here.**

Many Westerners had considered Kabul, unlike Baghdad, a place where they could visit restaurants — and even get a beer or two.

**"One of the joys of Kabul was the ability to go out and socialize," says entrepreneur Saad Mohseni, editor of *Afghan Scene*, a monthly magazine that chronicles Kabul nightlife with photos of carousing foreigners.**

**"We were deceiving ourselves. Nothing is safe in Kabul."**

At the heart of the problem is the dramatic turnaround staged by the Taliban, which had been pushed deep into the mountains in the years immediately following the U.S.-led invasion in 2001.

**[F]oreign powers have tried — and failed — to subdue Afghanistan for decades.**

**Rand's Jones says the Taliban's recent advances are “eerily reminiscent of the Soviet years” during the 1980s, when Russian troops occupied the cities but Afghan resistance fighters commanded the countryside and eventually won.**

“There is a massive distance between the government and the people,” says Issa Noori, principal of a girls' school in Wardak province on the outskirts of Kabul.

“Now there is lots of snow. Many people are sick. They want to go to health clinics. But they can't go. The government can't clean the road. The government is indifferent,” he says.

“The local population is the center of gravity of any counterinsurgency,” Rand's Jones says. “You lose the population, you lose the war. The Afghan government is currently losing the population.”

**The Afghan government is beefing up security in Kabul, adding 1,000 police and doubling a contingent of anti-terrorist commandos: “More police are coming from other provinces,” says Gen. Abdul Manan Farahi, head of counterterrorism at the Afghan Interior Ministry.**

After a day spent contending with Afghanistan and its misery — violence, poverty, corruption — foreign diplomats, aid workers and journalists could always find refuge somewhere.

They could party into the wee hours at the L'Atmosphère bar, swap war stories over beers at the basement Hare and Hound Watering Hole or indulge themselves at the Serena's spa.

**Since the attack, the city's nightspots have been nearly empty — even on Thursdays, party night.**

“A lot of people are keeping a lower profile,” says Felix Kuehn, a German who runs an Afghan news service.

The Taliban has threatened to continue attacking foreigners in the places they go to relax, raising fears that Kabul will become another Baghdad.

Some expatriates have left town. Others are sticking to quiet dinners in their guesthouses instead of venturing out.

**Kabul parties could sometimes attract hundreds of guests, many of them uninvited. Now guest lists are restricted to a few dozen, and the lucky few are warned not to forward the invitation e-mails to their friends, Kuehn says.**

“Business is quiet,” says Serena general manager M. Christopher Newbery. At lunchtime recently, security guards outnumbered visitors in the hotel lobby, and only three tables were occupied for the buffet in its spacious Café Zarnegar.

The hotel is not encouraging new guests to check in until it has finished a review of security procedures in the wake of the attack.

**But “it's not just us,” Newbery says. “It's everywhere in Kabul.”**

L'Atmosphère — or L'Atmo, as foreigners call it — closed for a week after the Serena attack and no longer attracts standing-room-only crowds Thursday nights.

**“Everybody has been in lockdown,” Kuehn says. “If you're facing four trained attackers who are willing to sacrifice their lives, there's little you can do unless you have a small army.”**

In 2002 and 2003, when foreigners poured into the liberated city, Hafizullah Naziri's leather shop could take in \$250 to \$300 a day. These days, he averages \$35. He struggles to pay rent and can't afford electricity or a heater. So he works in the cold semi-darkness.

Back on Chicken Street, merchants say security and business have been deteriorating for a long time. Some trace the problems to a 2004 attack on the street that killed a U.S. soldier and an Afghan girl.

Others point to the bloody riots that broke out in May 2006 after a U.S. military truck careened out of control in a Kabul market, plowing into a crowd and killing five Afghans.

“I haven't seen foreigners for a long time on Chicken Street,” says 8-year-old Fawad, who has just one name. He used to make \$10 to \$20 a day selling matches and maps; now he's lucky to make \$2 or \$3.

However, most agree that the attack on the Serena — so renowned for tight security that embassies would schedule events there — will only make things worse.

**“The Taliban saw they can go into the safest place in Kabul and explode themselves,” says Fardin Sudiqi, 36, who sells scarves and dresses.**

Police and private security guards are out in force. Any pedestrian who gets near the Interior Ministry compound downtown is frisked for weapons.

The Serena attack “knocked the whole world off-kilter,” Jean MacKenzie, who trains Afghan journalists at the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, wrote on her blog.

“Some of us lost friends and loved ones when the Taliban stormed the five-star establishment. ... Others just lost their refuge, the gym and spa where we used to unwind. ...

“But all of us lost whatever illusion of security we had in Kabul.”

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**REALLY BAD IDEA:  
NO MISSION;  
POINTLESS WAR:  
ALL HOME NOW**



A U.S. soldier patrols the Jaji district of the southeastern Paktia province, Afghanistan, near the Afghan-Pakistan border January 28, 2008. (Ahmad Masood/Reuters)

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**IRAQ WAR REPORTS**

**One U.S. Soldier Killed, One Wounded At  
Convoy Support Center Scania**

1.31.08 Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20080201-01

TIKRIT, Iraq – A 316th Expeditionary Sustainment Command Soldier was killed during indirect fire at Convoy Support Center Scania Jan. 31.

Additionally, one Soldier was wounded and evacuated to a Coalition hospital.

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**24 U.S. Troops Injured By Chlorine Gas,  
Four Hospitalized**

1.31.08 Washington Times

Two dozen U.S. soldiers and their interpreters were rushed to a hospital by helicopter this week from Diyala province's "bread basket" after being exposed to chlorine gas while destroying an insurgent explosives cache.

Military sources said all but four of the 26 persons were quickly returned to duty. The remainder stayed longer at the U.S. military hospital at Ballad, northeast of Baghdad, for additional observation.

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## **U.S. Casualties Up In Iraq After 4 Month Decrease**

January 31, 2008 Nancy A. Youssef, McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON — The U.S. death toll in Iraq increased in January, ending a four-month drop in casualties, and most of the deaths occurred outside Baghdad or the once-restive Anbar province, according to military statistics.

In all, 38 American service members had been reported killed in January by Thursday evening, compared with 23 in December. Of those, 33 died from hostile action, but only nine of them in Baghdad or Anbar.

A total of 3,942 American service members have been killed in Iraq as of Thursday, according to [icasualties.org](http://icasualties.org), an independent Web site that tracks the statistics.

In January, the military launched a major offensive in northeastern Diyala province, where nine service members were killed. In addition, the U.S. moved troops to the northwestern Ninevah province, which has become an al Qaida in Iraq stronghold. Seven service members were killed there in January, compared with four in December.

The fact that more Americans have been killed in those provinces has some fretting that the U.S. is fighting another round of "whack-a-mole".....

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## **“Senior U.S. Commanders” In Iraq Want Troop Cuts Stopped [Not Enough Dead U.S. Troops Yet]**

1.31.08 Washington Post [Excerpt]

Senior U.S. military commanders in Iraq say they want to freeze troop reductions starting this summer for at least a month, making it more likely that the next administration will

inherit as many troops in Iraq as there were before President Bush announced a “surge” of forces a year ago.

There are about 155,000 U.S. troops in Iraq now, with about 5,000 leaving every month.

The proposed freeze would go into effect in July, when troop levels reach around 130,000.

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## **TROOP NEWS**

### **Some Words From Camp Pendleton:**

**“She Now Feels Americans Have Put  
Their Lives On The Line Long  
Enough”**

**“I Would Actually Like To See Someone  
In The White House That's Going To Get  
Us Out Of Iraq”**

January 30, 2008 By Phil Willon, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer [Excerpts]

**OCEANSIDE, CALIF. -- The sour economy and ailing healthcare system worry Jaimee Duke, but for the wife of a Marine Corps helicopter pilot at Camp Pendleton, the heart of the presidential campaign comes down to this: Most of the Republicans want to keep U.S. troops in Iraq and all of the Democrats are talking withdrawal.**

**Duke has been a strong supporter of the military mission. She accepts the sacrifice and anxiety of having a loved one at war. But she now feels Americans have put their lives on the line long enough.**

**“I don't know how excited I am about the Republican candidates this time, and I voted for Bush,” Duke, 32, said recently as she relaxed at a city park with her baby and 4-year-old.**

**“I would actually like to see someone in the White House that's going to get us out of Iraq. . . . I would like to see us ask the Iraqis to take care of their own country.”**

[I]n Oceanside, a town of 130,000 bordered by the Pacific to the west and one of the nation's largest Marine Corps training bases to the north, the war is never far away. Pendleton is home to more than 35,000 active Marines and sailors, and their families and the base's civilian employees account for 25,000 more.

The movie lines outside the downtown Regal Cinemas are filled with signature crew cuts, and the rumble of mortar fire breaks the night silence in some well-trimmed neighborhoods.

Camp Pendleton has borne more than its share of casualties in the war in Iraq.

So when Republican hopeful John McCain talked in New Hampshire about keeping U.S. troops in Iraq for 100 years, primarily as peacekeepers once hostilities cease, it rattled nerves.

"Everybody here knows somebody who has died overseas or knows a family who had someone die," said Deputy Mayor Rocky Chavez, a retired Marine colonel and charter school principal. "We see their wives. We see guys walking down the street with prosthetics. We see it. It's real."

While relaxing with his two young children at a park off base, a Marine staff sergeant who has done tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan said he had concerns much closer to home. His wife is recovering from cancer, and he plans to leave the military in seven months.

**The Santa Ana native wants to know what the candidates are going to do to help the veterans of this war, especially if the county plunges into a recession.**

**"A lot of Marines are getting out. Been there, done that," he said. "What's going to happen after the Marine Corps?"**

**"I have no education. Who's going to hire me? How am I going to go to school when I have two kids, a sick wife and have rent to pay?"**

## **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**

# **Leave Restriction Announcement**

2.4.08 Army Times



Soldiers no longer will be able to combine regular passes and special passes with leave without the total time away from home station being charged as annual leave, according to a policy directive issued by Human Resources Command in early January.

Responding to inquiries from the field, officials with the command's Adjutant General Directorate said back-to-back regular passes, special passes and leave absences must be separated by at least one duty day for the entire period not to be deducted from a soldier's annual leave account.

The policy clarification, issued Jan. 4 as MilPer Message 08-004, resolves a conflict in previous policy guidance that was interpreted by some commanders to mean that soldiers would not be charged for regular and special passes when taken back-to-back with leave.

Army policy governing leaves and passes is in AR 600-8-10 (Feb. 15, 2006), and MilPer Message 08-004 (Jan. 4, 2008).

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## **“One Day, The 65,000 Currently Serving Gays And Lesbians Might Choose To Out Themselves”**

## **“We Have A Senior Leadership That Lacks The Skill And/Or The Will To Lead An All-Volunteer Force That, In Fact, Includes All”**

**Finally, DADT is a threat to national security at the strategic level because one day, the 65,000 currently serving gays and lesbians might choose to out themselves, thus devastating military capabilities and readiness, to say nothing of a recruiting and training nightmare.**

January 28, 2008  
Letters To The Editor  
Army Times

On Nov. 30, I spoke on the Mall (in Washington, D.C.) at an event to honor the service of 12,000 patriots who had been discharged from our military under the “don't ask, don't tell” law.

These 12,000 patriots had volunteered to serve their nation and place themselves in harm's way so that 300 million other Americans could live free.

They were well trained and serving honorably but were rejected by their military services because of their sexual preferences, which are legally protected in every other segment of our society.

DADT is a failed policy on three counts: moral, humane and national security.

It is morally wrong because it legitimizes a politically expedient lie of omission that violates military values, such as trust, respect and integrity. What's the effect of justifying lies of omission in other military affairs?

It is inhumane because we ask gays and lesbians to endure the hardships of military service and be subjected to the emotional pressure of being outed — forced into the shadows as second-class citizens by the institution they serve.

**Finally, DADT is a threat to national security at the strategic level because one day, the 65,000 currently serving gays and lesbians might choose to out themselves, thus devastating military capabilities and readiness, to say nothing of a recruiting and training nightmare.**

At the tactical level, it creates a threat in that foreign agents could use the threat of outing gays and lesbians holding high security clearances to secure their cooperation.

Many of our senior leaders defend DADT by saying that “it’s working,” and that having gays and lesbians openly serve would hurt morale and unit cohesion.

I counter that it didn’t work for the 12,000 patriots discharged because of it, nor does it for the 65,000 currently serving.

**To the unit cohesion and morale argument, I counter that gays and lesbians serve openly and honorably in the militaries of all our major allies. Why does it work well for them?**

**I doubt that it’s because young American service members and their junior leaders lack the maturity, humanity and intelligence to serve with and lead gays and lesbians.**

**Perhaps it is because we have a senior leadership that lacks the skill and/or the will to lead an all-volunteer force that, in fact, includes all.**

Maj. Gen. Dennis Laich (ret.)  
Dublin, Ohio

**MORE:**

## **“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Requires Deception To Serve Honorably**

Letters To The Editor  
Feb. 4, 2008

Army Times

Although our military needs Sgt. Darren Manzella's talents (and those of the 65,000 other gay service members currently serving), the Army must deal with the outdated, ill-fated compromise that Congress made law, going on 15 years ago ("Sergeant comes out — but is allowed to stay in," Jan. 21). "Don't ask, don't tell" requires deception to serve honorably.

Imbued with the ideals of "duty, honor, country" during my nine years at West Point (as cadet, staff and faculty), I firmly believe that trust is the foundation of unit cohesion, and any law which mandates equivocation, half-truths and outright lies is repugnant to American values. I fervently pray that our military finds a way to retain Sgt. Manzella, because it's clear that his chain of command needs him.

But if they must fire him, I hope they create a new category called "Most Honorable Discharge."

For his service, openness and honesty, Sgt. Manzella deserves nothing less.

And our country needs a lot more like him.

Col. Stewart Bornhoft (ret.)  
Bonita, Calif.

**MORE:**

**“Congress Should Repeal The Foolish,  
Outdated, Wasteful, Costly And  
Vindictive ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ Statute”**

Letters To The Editor  
Feb. 4, 2008  
Army Times

The case of Sgt. Darren Manzella reminds me of a story I heard many years ago about a famous general who once contemplated purging all gays and lesbians from his medical services department.

He was advised against doing this because precious few doctors, nurses and technicians might be left standing at the end of the day to provide health care.

So, he relented.

This general reflected the culture and prejudices of his time, but he wasn't reckless enough to jeopardize the health of his command needlessly.

Is there a lesson in this story for us today?

Sgt. Darren Manzella and his young comrades in arms represent our "Will and Grace" generation. They understand that the differences among us are no big deal.

It's time for older Americans, especially those serving at the Pentagon and in Congress, to start demonstrating the same high level of maturity on gay issues that their children's generation has already attained.

Congress should repeal the foolish, outdated, wasteful, costly and vindictive "don't ask, don't tell" statute promptly, with or without the Pentagon's support.

Col. E. A. Leonard (ret.)  
Lexington, Va.

#### **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](mailto:contact@militaryproject.org):. Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Replies confidential. Same address to unsubscribe.**

## **Army Corps Engineers Command Got Hundreds Of Millions For Late & Failed Iraq Work**

1.30.08 New York Times

**The Army Corps of Engineers charged the government hundreds of millions of dollars for supervising projects in Iraq that have been identified as having failed or fallen behind schedule specifically because oversight was lax or nonexistent, according to a new report by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction.**

The Corps' rates were on average more than twice as high as those charged by an Air Force office that has also been active in Iraq reconstruction. And the Air Force projects have come under much less criticism than their Army Corps counterparts for shoddy workmanship and delays.

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## **IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP**

# ***Rejection:*** **Iraqis Piss On New Occupation Flag; Even Collaborator Troops Fly The Old One Proudly**



January 30, 2008 By Mohammed, Last of Iraqis Blogspot [Excerpts]

Nothing is like it used to be in my country...or what used to be my country...poor Iraq, everything beautiful in it was destroyed, everything was stolen, they even messed with the most important thing that identifies it, they even messed with the great and beautiful Iraqi flag, I wonder when will they change it's name claiming that it's a Baathiests name or Saddamists name!!!!

It's the last thing remaining for us as an independent nation, it's the thing that remembers us of how we used to live in peace, it's the thing that remembers us of how all Iraqis used to be united, and most important of all it's one of the few things that represents the union of the Shiites and Sunnis in Iraq and this shouldn't be, as I believe they think.

**I join the majority of Iraqis in the rejection of this new ugly flag, now in Iraq you could see the great original Iraqi flag everywhere, a lot more than before, it's on many buildings, great number of cars are rising that flag, as wallpapers of mobile phones, computers and even in facebook unlimited number of groups for the rejection of this flag, and so many people have used the flag as their profile picture.**

**The funny but comforting thing is that many police cars and national Guards Humvees are rising the great old Iraqi flag, what an irony; they represent the authorities and the government but still they don't believe in them or their**

decisions, I don't know what's the point in changing the flag, is it for further division among the Iraqis?



(Graphic: London Financial Times)

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

## **FORWARD OBSERVATIONS**

At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation's ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. Frederick Douglas, 1852

“What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms.”  
Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, 1787.

“When someone says my son died fighting for his country, I say, “No, the suicide bomber who killed my son died fighting for his country.”  
-- Father of American Soldier Chase Beattie, KIA in Iraq

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

## **Dishonorable Anniversary: February 1, 1968**



General Nguyen Ngoc Loan executes Nguyen Van Lem, turning more Americans against the war in Vietnam

Peace History: Carl Bunin

General Nguyen Ngoc Loan executes Nguyen Van Lem a NLF officer.

Saigon police chief Nguyen Ngoc Loan summarily executed Nguyen Van Lem, suspected leader of a Viet Cong assassination platoon, with a pistol shot to the head on the street.

AP photojournalist Eddie Adams's Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of the incident became one of the most famous, ubiquitous and lasting images of the war in Vietnam, affecting international and American public opinion regarding the war.

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## **Honorable Anniversary: February 1, 1960 The Sit-Ins Against Segregation Begin**

Peace History: Carl Bunin

Four black college students sat in at Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, where they'd been refused service, to protest segregation. Similar protests subsequently took place all over the South and in some northern communities.

By September 1961, more than 70,000 students, whites and blacks, had participated, and many were arrested, during sit-ins.



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## **OCCUPATION REPORT**

**While U.S. Troops Die:**

**Bush's Thieving Baghdad Buddies Hard  
At Work:**

**#1: Stealing And Selling Weapons From The  
U.S.**

Diversion Of Weapons In Iraq Continues, IG Says

January 30, 2008 Washington Post

Weapons that the United States provides to Iraqi security forces may still be ending up in the hands of terrorists, insurgents and criminals, the Defense Department inspector general has told Congress.

**#2: Putting Billions In A New York Bank:  
[Very Convenient For A Government-In-Exile  
When They Get Chased Out Of Iraq]**



January 30, 2008 Washington Times

Increased Iraqi oil revenues stemming from high prices and improved security are piling up in the Federal Reserve Bank of New York rather than being spent on needed reconstruction projects, a Washington Times study of Iraq's spending and revenue figures shows.

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## ***Good News For The Iraqi Resistance!!***

### **U.S. Occupation Commands' Stupid Terror Tactics Recruit Even More Fighters To Kill U.S. Troops**



Foreign occupation soldiers from the US prepare to break into an Iraqi citizen's house during an armed home invasion in Baquba on December 10. (AFP/File/Gianluigi Guercia)

**[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!**

## ***Reality Check:***

**“They Want Saddam Back”  
“They Were Bad In Different Ways,  
But At Least People Had Security”  
“There Are Insurgents Controlling  
The Neighborhood Where The  
Hospital Is”  
“Nobody Can Go To The Americans And  
Ask For Help. The Biggest Crime In Iraq  
Now Is To Be Seen Dealing With The  
Americans Or With Other Foreigners”**

January 28, 2008 By Casey Miner, Mother Jones [Excerpts]

If you need a blood transfusion at Baghdad's Al Yarmouk hospital, you can get one—so long as someone's there to donate blood on your behalf. If you need an operation, you can have one of those too—though your only anesthetic might be your friends and family holding you down.

One big explosion can dry up the hospital's saline supplies for a week, leaving the next explosion's victims without the necessary treatment. And where triage is within a war zone doctors and ambulance drivers are regularly threatened and harassed.

Instead of respites from the chaos outside, hospitals in Baghdad are some of the city's most dangerous places. They have also been mostly closed to journalists.

Until now. Iraqi filmmaker and former doctor Omer Salih Mahdi spent six weeks filming life inside Al Yarmouk and out on the streets with the hospital's ambulances.

**Towards the end of the film, the camera stays for several minutes with three people in an ambulance, all yelling and very angry, saying they want Saddam back.**

**“It's how Iraqis think now,” says Dr. Mahdi. “They say that they wish they could go back to Saddam's days. They weren't good days. They were bad in different ways, but at least people had security.”**

*MJ: In the film you describe the lack of anesthesia. But other details, like the bodies in the morgue, don't appear in the film. How did you decide what to show?*

OSM: I wish I could have captured more, but it was very difficult to film inside the hospital or outside in the street.

I was taken and interrogated by the militia, by the Iraqi security forces.

Then on the streets, of course, there are insurgents controlling the neighborhood where the hospital is, and Iraqi military checkpoints where they will be very suspicious if they see somebody inside a car carrying a camera.

They will think he's an insurgent and even shoot him. Several times I thought the film would never happen, because of the difficulties I was facing every day.

*MJ: Based on your experiences in both countries, what is your opinion on how the American media covers the war?*

OSM: I've been told several times that people here blame the media for not covering the war in a proper way. But because I've worked in Iraq with foreign journalists I believe they're doing their best to get the story out. People there are very scared to speak to journalists and very scared of journalists' cameras.

And the Iraqi government itself does not want the truth to go out.

*MJ: I noticed that not a single American soldier appears anywhere in the film, not even in the background. My sense, and I think the sense of a lot of people here, is that American troops have more of a presence, at least in Baghdad.*

OSM: American troops now are decreasing their availability, and handing over responsibilities more and more to the Iraqi government.

At the hospital, the whole time I was there, they came only once, and that was after a huge explosion, so they just came to check on the situation in the hospital. But otherwise they never came again. As it should be, they think that the hospitals are under the control of the Ministry of Health, and that the Iraqi government is taking care of the hospitals.

**At the same time, nobody can go to the Americans and ask for help. The biggest crime in Iraq now is to be seen dealing with the Americans or with other foreigners.**

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# **Bush's "Allies" Aren't Stupid: They're Keeping Their Money: Pay Only 16% Of Their Commitments To Fund His Iraq Disaster**

1.30.08 USA Today

Nearly five years after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, allied countries have paid only 16 percent of what they pledged to help rebuild the war-torn country, according to a new report by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction.

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## **Collaborator Electricity Minister Says No Improvement In Power Supply Until 2011**

January 28, 2008 Falah al-Maamouri, Azzaman [Excerpts]

There has been no improvement in the production of electricity in the country in the past 12 months, Minister of Electricity Kareem Waheed said.

Waheed warned hard-hit Iraqi households not to expect better power supplies before 2011.

Waheed's remarks come as most of the country is currently plunged into darkness with the national grid barely capable of providing two hours of continuous supply a day.

**In a press conference in Baghdad, he gave no figures but it is estimated that his ministry's budget has been in billions of dollars since the 2003 U.S. invasion.**

He said he hoped Iraqis will see 'tangible improvement' by the end of 2008 as new power plants with a total capacity he estimated at more than 1000 megawatts come on stream.

**Correspondents say the minister made similar promises at the start of 2007 but instead of improvement power output plunged to levels unseen before.**

Waheed said lack of electricity and shortages were due to foreign firms' unwillingness to work in the country.

Waheed also blamed lack of fuel which has put key plants out of operation.

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# OCCUPATION PALESTINE

## **Gaza: “A Mass Response To The Dictates Of The Overlord, Israel”**

30/01/2008 By Amira Hass, Haaretz [Excerpts]

The fall of the Rafah wall was a fitting combination of planning and the precise reading of the social and political map by the Hamas government, mixed with a mass response to the dictates of the overlord, Israel.

**Quite a few people in Rafah knew that “anonymous figures” had secretly been destabilizing the foundations of the wall for several months, so that it would be possible to knock it down easily when the time came - but the secret didn't leak.**

The hundreds of people who began leaving Palestinian Rafah right after the wall was breached did so despite the risk, and the precedent of the Egyptians shooting at those who infiltrate through the border.

The leadership and public of Gaza, as two elements of the occupied people, were partners in the courageous and necessary step of breaking the Israeli rules of the game.

The breach of the wall is a clear manifestation of the conception and temperament of a popular resistance among the Palestinian people, which for various reasons, were dormant in recent years.

The Palestine Liberation Organization is concerned, and rightly so, that the collapse of the wall will provide Israel with an additional excuse to finalize the separation of Gaza from the West Bank.

There is nothing new in this tendency: The Israeli siege of Gaza has been developing gradually and persistently since 1991, and intensified during the Oslo years.

But the PLO leadership then did not have the necessary creativity to lay down in time a practical challenge to Israel's consistent, destructive and strangling policy of restricting Palestinian freedom of movement.

No wonder.

Then, like today, Israel worked to heap privileges on senior Palestinian Authority officials and their associates, granting them some freedom of movement. The officials publicly condemned the restrictions on the movement of the general public, while submissively accepting their privileges.

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# **Zionists Bar Gaza Cancer Patient From Entering Israel For Chemical Treatment;**

**“The Israeli Security Services  
Arrested The Father And Informed  
The Son That He Is Not Allowed Into  
Israel”**

**“A Total Of 83 Palestinian Patients,  
Including 16 Children, Died Due To The  
Ongoing Israeli Siege And Blockade”**

January 31, 2008 Saed Bannoura, International Middle East Media Center [Excerpts]

The Israeli Security Services refused to grant a permit to a Palestinian patient, suffering from Intestines Cancer, to leave the Gaza Strip in order to receive medical treatment in an Israeli medical center.

The patient, Mahmoud Abu Taha, 21, from Rafah city in the southern part of the Gaza Strip, was diagnosed with Cancer in August 2007.

Medical centers in the Gaza Strip tried to provide Abu Taha with the needed treatment but the ongoing Israeli siege over the Gaza Strip caused sharp shortages in medicine and medical equipment.

After the health condition of Abu Taha had sharply deteriorated, physicians decided that he needs to receive Chemotherapy again and that he should be transferred to Tal Ha-Shomer Israeli hospital in Ramat Gan.

**Hani, the brother of Mahmoud, told investigators of the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (B'Tselem) that on October 18 last year, Mahmoud received a permit to enter Israel for medical treatment, but when he and his father went to the Eretz crossing, between the Gaza Strip and Israel, and after waiting nearly for two hours, they were informed that he is not allowed to enter Israel.**

Abu Taha waited the whole time in the ambulance of the European Hospital and was breathing through an oxygen mask as he cannot breathe on his own.

**Yet, the Israeli Security Services arrested the father and informed the son that he is not allowed into Israel.**

The family filed another appeal to allow their son into Israel for treatment but did not receive any response yet.

**Physicians For Human Rights in Israel (PHR) received several complaints of similar cases, and said that Israel is using a policy regarding this issue; the policy states that entry for treatment in Israel have two different standards, which means that Israel would allow someone to enter Israel because he is facing death, but will not grant him entry if physicians treating him wants to save one of his body parts.**

The PHR stated that it has testimonies from patients who lost some of their body parts because they were barred from leaving the Gaza Strip for medical treatment.

**But senior officials at the PHR in Israel believe that after Israel declared the Gaza Strip as a hostile entity, even patients who are facing imminent death were not allowed to enter Israel.**

One of these cases is the case of Abu Taha as he could lose his life if not allowed to leave the Gaza Strip for treatment.

**Last week, Palestinian medical sources in the Gaza Strip reported that on Saturday at night (January 26) two patients died in the Gaza Strip after the Israeli Authorities barred them from leaving the Gaza Strip for medical treatment abroad**

The sources added that a total of 83 Palestinian patients, including 16 children, died due to the ongoing Israeli siege and blockade over the coastal region.

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by foreign terrorists, go to: [www.rafahtoday.org](http://www.rafahtoday.org) The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves "Israeli."]

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## **DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK**

**Wall St. Money Dominates Clinton  
And Obama;  
“The No. 1 Source Of Donations To  
Every Major Presidential Candidate In  
Both Parties”**



[Thanks to Ward Reilly, Veterans For Peace]

January 23, 2008; By BRODY MULLINS , Wall St. Journal [Excerpts]

Despite Wall Street's recent woes, people who work in the financial industry continue to dig deep for political donations to Republican and Democratic candidates for president.

**Employees of Wall Street firms are the single largest source of campaign cash, accounting for a total of \$50.4 million in financial contributions to the candidates so far this election cycle.**

**That is more than any other industry sector, according to a Wall Street Journal analysis of campaign-finance data compiled by the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics.**

New York Sen. Hillary Clinton heads to her home state tomorrow for two fund-raisers. The Clinton campaign hopes to raise \$15 million through these and other means to fund her campaign through Feb. 5.

Contributions from Wall Street have favored Republicans, who have collected 54% of donations from financial companies. Wall Street is the No. 1 source of donations to every major presidential candidate in both parties, except former North Carolina Democratic Sen. John Edwards, who is favored by the legal industry, according to the data.



Together, the finance and legal industries are responsible for nearly a quarter of the \$354 million donated to the presidential candidates as of Sept. 30.

Not surprisingly, the two candidates from New York are winning the race for donations on Wall Street. Mrs. Clinton and former New York City Republican Mayor Rudy Giuliani lead with \$12.3 million and \$10.6 million, respectively, in campaign donations from employees of Wall Street firms.

**Employees of Goldman Sachs, Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. and Morgan Stanley rank as the top individual sources of donations to the presidential candidates, according to the data.**

**Goldman employees were the largest contributor to Mr. Obama, the second-largest giver to Mrs. Clinton and the fifth-largest to Mr. Edwards. Goldman employees donated \$369,000 to Mr. Obama and \$350,000 to Mrs. Clinton.**

**Other top Wall Street givers to Mr. Obama include employees of Lehman Brothers (\$229,000), J.P. Morgan Chase & Co. (\$217,000) and Citigroup Inc. (\$181,000).**

**Unlike Wall Street, lawyers heavily favor Democrats with their political donations. Lawyers have donated \$9.6 million to Mrs. Clinton, \$8.2 million to Mr. Edwards and \$7.9 million to Mr. Obama.**

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## **Abstinence-Only?**

# **“Manufactured Ignorance About Sex And Birth Control That Is Being Forced On American Teenagers”**

**With their complete lack of medical or scientific basis as well as a willful ignorance of teenage sexuality, these programs are aimed at scaring and bullying teens into abstinence.**

January 25, 2008 By JEN ROESCH, Socialist Worker

LAST MONTH, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) announced that teen pregnancy rates had risen for the first time in 14 years. One week after this announcement, 16-year-old Jamie Lynn Spears--star of the Nickelodeon hit Zoey 101 and sister of singer Britney Spears--announced that she was three months pregnant.

The right-wing family values brigade was quick to portray Spears' high-profile pregnancy as evidence of a “culture of permissiveness” that was fueling high rates of teen sex, sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. The airwaves immediately filled with commentators concerned that impressionable “tweeners” would think it was cool to get pregnant.

Dr. Miriam Grossman, of the pro-family-values Clare Booth Luce Policy Institute, commented, "No one should be surprised. This incident with Jamie Lynn should be looked at as a logical consequence of the type of education and guidance that we give to young people these days--that sexuality is part of their lives at any age."

In fact, Spears' statement that she was "absolutely shocked" she could have become pregnant should tell us much more about the manufactured ignorance about sex and birth control that is being forced on American teenagers.

\*\*\*\*\*

CULTURAL CONSERVATIVES responded to the CDC report by arguing that U.S. society has become too accepting of teenage sexuality.

"Like casual drug use in the '60s, America's current culture has accepted casual and 'protected' sex as the norm," Dr. Gary Rose, chief executive of the Medical Institute for Sexual Health told the Moonie-owned Washington Times. "There is a critical need for behavior modification--risk avoidance, not mere risk reduction--if these trends are to reverse."

Nothing could be further from the truth.

**The rise in teen pregnancy rates is much more likely the result of an unprecedented expansion of abstinence-only programs in schools.**

**Abstinence-only education was first written into the 1996 welfare reform bill signed into law by Bill Clinton.**

The law includes an extremely restrictive eight-point definition stipulating, among other things, that teenagers must be taught that abstinence is the only acceptable behavior outside of marriage at any age and premarital sex can have harmful physical and psychological consequences, and that birth control can only be mentioned in relation to its failure rates.

When George Bush took office, he dramatically expanded funding for abstinence-only education, funneling hundreds of millions of dollars not only to states but to faith-based community organizations led by the Christian Right. Abstinence-only education got \$176 million in funding for fiscal year 2007; such programs have received over \$1 billion in funding since their inception.

The impact on teenagers has been devastating.

**With their complete lack of medical or scientific basis as well as a willful ignorance of teenage sexuality, these programs are aimed at scaring and bullying teens into abstinence.**

**A congressional report commissioned by Rep. Henry Waxman reviewed 13 curriculum materials used in states across the country and found the following examples of false and misleading information:**

- Condoms fail to prevent HIV transmission as often as 31 percent of the time in heterosexual intercourse.**
- Touching a person's genitals can result in pregnancy; mutual masturbation can cause pregnancy.**
- HIV can be transmitted by tears and sweat, and 50 percent of gay teens have AIDS.**
- A pregnancy occurs one out of every seven times that couples use condoms.**
- A 43-day-old fetus is a "thinking person."**
- Five to ten percent of women will never again be pregnant after having a legal abortion.**
- Suicide is a consequence of premarital sex.**

The consequences of this misinformation has been very real.

**Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation claimed that most young women who became pregnant were properly educated about contraception, and just wanted to have babies.**

**In reality, the statistics show that just over 50 percent of sexually active males and 60 percent of sexually active females had received any education in birth control methods before they first had sex.**

Abstinence-only education programs in schools are reinforced by a whole network of Christian family values advocates. Many of their activities seem to seek a return to an era before the women's liberation movement--an era when women were seen as property.

For example, one focus for abstinence proponents has been "purity balls." At these balls, daughters pledge to maintain their virginity until marriage, while fathers promise to protect their "purity."

The girl then gives her father a ring or cross as a symbol of their virtue, which he is supposed to give to her husband on her wedding day.

\*\*\*\*\*

NUMEROUS STUDIES show that abstinence-only education is ineffective and sometimes harmful.

When teen pregnancy rates were still declining, advocates of abstinence-only programs tried to claim credit.

But a Columbia University and Guttmacher Institute study found that 86 percent of the decline was attributable to increased use and effectiveness of birth control, while only 14 percent could be attributed to teens delaying sex.

**A separate congressionally mandated study found that teens in abstinence-only programs were just as likely to have sex, initiated sex at the same age, and had a similar number of sexual partners.**

**Of the one in six teenage girls who took a chastity pledge, 88 percent broke their vow before marriage, many within a few years. And girls who had taken chastity pledges were less likely to use condoms, and less likely to seek testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases.**

The abstinence-only approach is rooted in a denial of the reality of teenage sexuality. By the age of 19, 70 percent of teenagers have become sexually active. Refusing to face this reality means that teenagers, especially young women, are ill-equipped to take responsibility for their own sexual choices and reproductive health.

**In Europe, teenagers become sexually active in equal numbers as in the U.S., but contraception and comprehensive sexual education are widely provided. In addition, there is little societal pressure to remain abstinent. This goes a long way to explaining why the teen pregnancy rate in the U.S. is dramatically higher.**

The rise of abstinence-only education is part and parcel of a right-wing family values backlash that has attempted to roll back reproductive health choices for women.

When teenage girls do become pregnant, they are faced with severe restrictions on their access to abortion.

Thirty-four states have parental consent or notification laws. Between 2001 and 2005, more than \$30 million in federal funds was given to “pregnancy crisis centers”—anti-abortion clinics that provide misleading information about abortion. In 23 states, state-mandated pre-abortion counseling exaggerates the physical and mental health risks of abortion—for example, asserting a link between abortion and breast cancer, or claiming that women who have abortions may have suicidal thoughts.

This attack on abortion has been accompanied by a cultural backlash as well. Abortion is almost never portrayed on television or in film as a viable choice. Three recent movies center on women who decide to carry unintended pregnancies to term—including a teenager who gives the baby up for adoption. Those who raise abortion as an option are portrayed as callous and indifferent.

The right wing would have us believe that the recent rise in teen pregnancy rates is the result of an overly permissive society and proves the need for more focus on abstinence. In reality, it is just one more sign of the damage being done to teenagers and women in the name of family values.

**Fourteen states have already refused federal funding for abstinence-only education, and 82 percent of Americans support comprehensive sex education.**

**It's well past time to reverse the backlash.**

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