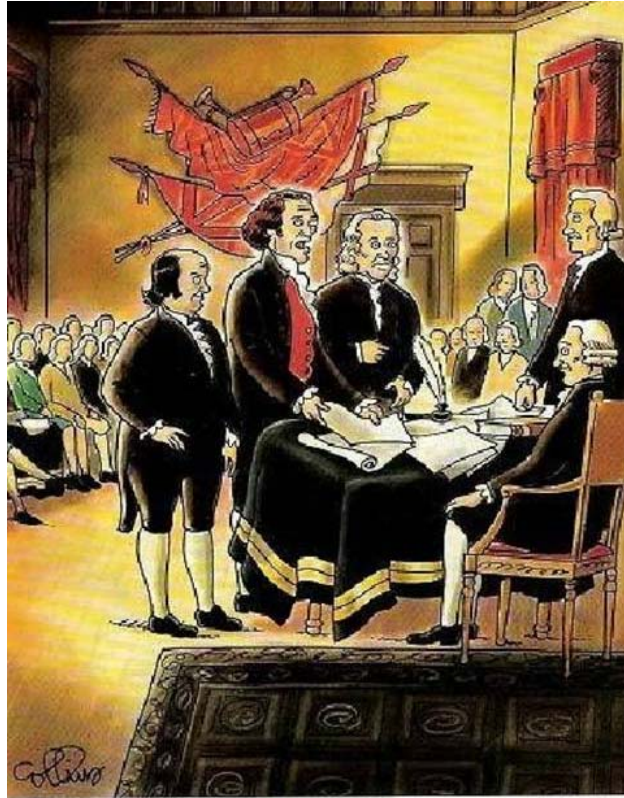


## GI SPECIAL 6B13:

### HAPPY PRESIDENT'S DAY



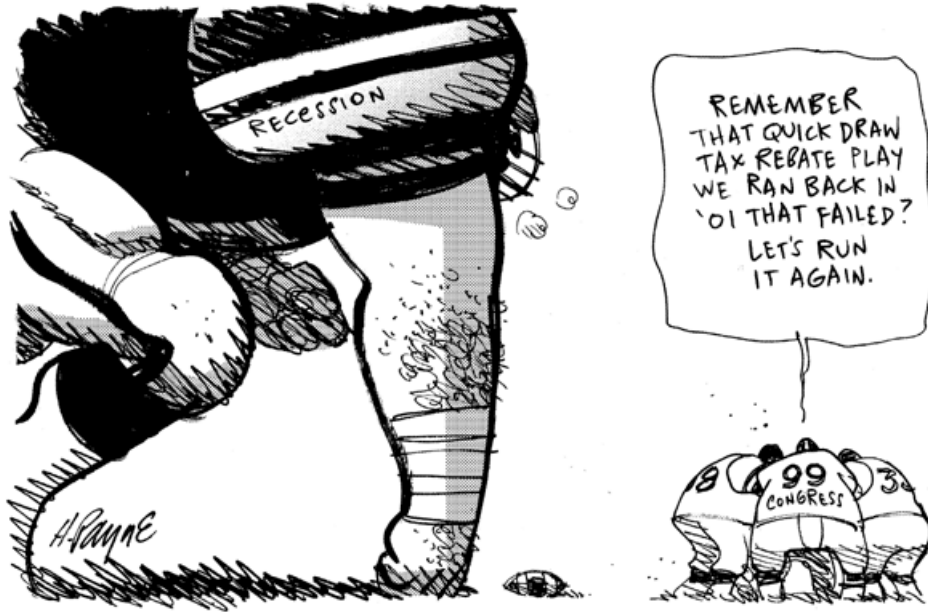
**“I KEEP THINKING WE SHOULD INCLUDE SOMETHING IN THE CONSTITUTION IN CASE THE PEOPLE ELECT A FUCKING MORON.”**

**Americans Say:**

# **To Fix Economy, Get Out Of Iraq:**

## **“Pulling Out Of The War Ranked First Among Proposed Remedies”**

# “Let's Stop Paying For This War” “We Can Use The Money To Pay For Medical Care And Help People Who Were Put Out Of Their Homes”



Feb 8 By JEANNINE AVERSA, AP Economics Writer [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON - The heck with Congress' big stimulus bill.

The way to get the country out of recession — and most people think we're in one — is to get the country out of Iraq, according to an Associated Press-Ipsos poll.

Pulling out of the war ranked first among proposed remedies in the survey ....

**[N]early half said what the government really should do is get out of Iraq.**

**Forty-eight percent said a pullout would help fix the country's economic problems “a great deal,” and an additional 20 percent said it would help at least somewhat.**

**Some 43 percent said increasing government spending on health care, education and housing programs would help a great deal; 36 percent said cutting taxes.**

**“Let's stop paying for this war,” said Hilda Sanchez, 44, of Waterford, Calif.**

**“There are a lot of people who are struggling. We can use the money to pay for medical care and help people who were put out of their homes.”**

# **Quit Whining And Pissing On Everybody In Sight With Your Condescending Bullshit About How Stupid & Apathetic Americans Are**

**“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**

## **DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE SERVICE?**

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

## **IRAQ WAR REPORTS**

### **Two U.S. Soldiers Killed In Diyala, One Wounded**

2.17.08 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20080217-05

TIKRIT, Iraq – Two Coalition Force Soldiers were killed as a result of a small arms fire attack in the Diyala Province Feb. 17.

One Soldier was also wounded and transported to a Coalition medical facility for treatment.

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# Bonaire Soldier Remembered



Miguel Baez

2/11/2008 By Bernie O'Donnell, WMAZ-TV

A central Georgia Paratrooper was one of three soldiers killed, when a bomb exploded in Iraq.

A release from the 82nd Airborne Division said, 32-year old Corporal Miguel Baez was an assistant machine gunner with the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg.

Baez was from Bonaire.

Eyewitness News spoke with friends and family about their memories of the fallen soldier.

Baez's childhood friend Stephanie Sharber says, "When we got the news that he got killed, it just tore my heart up, because he was a loving person, loving person."

Sharber, lived next door to her good friend Miguel Baez III. She heard the news about his death on Tuesday.

"When I got home from work, they already knew. They told me about it, and that was the worst news that I could have ever gotten, that hurt so much."

Hearing the news brought back a painful memory Miguel Baez helped her get through.

"Last time I seen Michael was in June, when my step son got killed, and he came over here. He cried and I cried, because we were one big happy family, this right here is like bringing back memories losing a loved one that was real dear to me."

Baez's aunt Elise Marquez said he always knew what he wanted to do.

"As a kid, he would collect G.I. Joes. He would put soldiers in combat, he would always talk about the military, that's what he wanted to do."

"I just can't believe he's gone," said Marquez. "It's just hard for all of us, because my family has been through alot lately, but I'll be okay."

Baez is survived by his parents, wife, and their four children.

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## **Gordonville Soldier Killed In Iraq Volunteered Second Tour To Give Others A Break**



Sgt. Bradley Skelton of Gordonville was killed Wednesday in Baghdad by a roadside bomb. (Submitted photo)

February 8, 2008 By SAM BLACKWELL ~ Southeast Missourian

Bradley Skelton had already served one dangerous tour in Iraq in 2004 and part of 2005, then retired from the Missouri Army National Guard after a 23-year career. But last year he volunteered to go again because he thought someone with more to lose might be better off staying home.

“He told me he wanted to give someone else a break who was married and had a family,” said his uncle, Charles Skelton.

Sgt. Bradley Skelton, 40, of Gordonville was killed in Iraq on Wednesday when his vehicle struck an improvised explosive device, the Missouri National Guard said. He was killed in Baghdad, where he was serving with the Missouri National Guard's 1138th Engineer Battalion.

**The 1138th is assigned to clear roads of IEDs and to maintain traffic flow.**

**“He was running the roads,” his uncle said. “You know what that means.”**

Skelton was one of 100 members of the battalion deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom last July. The 1138th is based in Farmington. Another member of the battalion, Matthew Straughter, 27, of Belleville, Ill., died in Baghdad on Jan. 31.

Skelton grew up in Gordonville and graduated from Jackson High School. His parents, Harold and Dorothy Skelton, are deceased. His sister, Carmen Robinson, and her family live near Sikeston. Charles and his wife Carrie Skelton also live in Gordonville. Brad Skelton's aunt, Evelyn Dake, resides in Jackson.

He was a hunter and fisherman who collected arrowheads and loved the military. "Rambrad" was one of his nicknames. "God bless him," said longtime friend Brian McCallister. "He died doing exactly what he wanted to do."

McCallister has known Skelton for 38 years. As young boys they lived down the street from each other in Gordonville. "He was rambunctious," McCallister said. "He was always available to do something with."

Telling his three daughters about his friend's death was difficult, he said. "It's been pretty rough no matter who I told, the way he touched people. You just can't find anyone to speak an ill word about him."

Skelton joined the Missouri Army National Guard while a senior in high school in 1984. He came out of retirement because he wanted to serve with close friends returning for a second tour, the Guard said.

In a news release, Maj. Gen. King Sidwell, adjutant general of the Missouri National Guard, said he knew Skelton personally. "I am saddened beyond words about the loss of Sgt. Skelton," he said. In a statement, U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson said the nation owes a great debt to the sergeant and his family. "My thoughts and prayers are with Sgt. Skelton's family during this troubled time," she said.

Charles Skelton said his nephew was planning a trip to Australia on his next leave and expected his tour to end later this year. He had worked for a water softener company and more recently at the Elfrink Transportation terminal.

Skelton was not married and had no children. He was a member of Zion Lutheran Church in Gordonville and the Gordonville Fire Department. "He was a good guy, outspoken, always there to help anybody, as much with the fire department as he was in the service," fire chief Mark Koerber said. "He would do anything anyone would ask him to do."

In 1999 he ran unsuccessfully for a seat on the Gordonville Board of Trustees.

When in town, Skelton was a regular at the Gordonville Grill. "He was a part of this community, and we are a small community," co-owner Amy Hancock said. "It impacted everyone a lot."

Skelton was a happy man who was always joking, Hancock said. Wednesday night, a photo album containing photos of his last tour was passed around the restaurant. "We must have had 20 to 30 people in here drinking Stag," Hancock said. "He loved Stag."

Kent Koch, another friend since boyhood, said he, McCallister and other friends were just finishing a remodeling job on Skelton's house in anticipation of his return from Iraq. "I'm really going to miss him," Koch said. "He was like a brother to me."

He said Skelton loved handing out candy to the children in the Iraqi neighborhoods and seeing their eyes light up because they had so little. "A person couldn't have talked him into not going this last time," Koch said. "He really believed in what he was doing."

Funeral arrangements are pending. Charles Skelton expects services will take place in a week to 10 days.

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## **Soldier, Newlywed Dies In Iraq Just Short Of 21st Birthday**

February 04, 2008 The Orange County Register

ORANGE, Calif. —

When Pfc. Brandon Meyer was deployed to Iraq five months after his wedding, he told his bride that if he died he wanted to be buried by the ocean and he wanted guests to wear his favorite color, baby blue.

Meyer, 20, was killed Jan. 28 when his convoy hit a roadside bomb in Mosul, Iraq. Four other soldiers - all from the 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment Team, 4th Infantry Division from Fort Carson, Colo. - died in the attack, according to the military.

Meyer's wife, Caitlin, will bury him by the ocean this weekend after a funeral in the church where they were married. She said her husband never doubted his decision to enlist in the military.

"You go into it knowing it could happen, but at the same time you think, 'Did this just happen to me?'" she said. "I'm a 20-year-old widow. That's not normal. That's not the way it should be. At all."

The couple met on a blind date and Caitlin Meyer fell in love with the young man who had moved to Orange County from Texas to be closer to the beach. He also loved music, baseball and football.

"He's everything I'm not, and I'm everything he's not," said his wife, who grew up in Orange. "It was a spark."

Meyer called his wife two or three times a week between patrols in Mosul. He told her he had dodged bullets, including one that flew by his head when he looked out a window in a house that was raided by soldiers.

About a week after she heard that story, Meyer was killed in the roadside blast.

Meyer, who was promoted to specialist after his death, is also survived by his parents and a younger sister.

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## Fallen Soldier Proud To Serve

February 07, 2008 Centre Daily Times

Across fields, down streets, Timothy Van Orman would march in his uniform -- years before going to war.

He played trombone, a dedicated Bald Eagle Area High School band member from Port Matilda sounding the music for a Friday night football game or a parade.

'Tim was the kind of student who really poured his whole heart and soul into everything he did,' said Scott Sheehan, his former music director who now runs the Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School music program.

'It was a fun thing for him. He worked hard at it. He was the kind of kid you want in your program.'

A year after his 2002 graduation, Van Orman enlisted in the Army. On Wednesday during a combat operation in Iraq, the 10th Mountain Division sergeant died from an improvised explosive device. The blast in Al Muqdadiyah also killed two 82nd Airborne Division soldiers.

Van Orman, who was 24, left behind a wife, Cadie, and an infant daughter, Halie, at Fort Drum, N.Y. 'He was very dedicated and believed in what he was doing,' his mother, Kelly Van Orman, told the Watertown (N.Y.) Daily Times on Thursday. 'He thought he was making a difference.'

Also surviving her son is his father, Randy Van Orman, two sisters and a brother.

After basic and advanced training at Fort Benning, Ga., Sgt. Van Orman served in Afghanistan from August 2003 to May 2005. He then deployed to Iraq for a year. By the time of his death during his second tour, he had become a decorated fire team leader with the 2nd Battalion of the 22nd Infantry Regiment.

But Karen Morse knew a different Van Orman, a slender, bespectacled 'solid student' with sandy brown hair.

'He was sort of the backbone of America type of kid, hard working, smiles, very polite,' said Morse, a school counselor at Bald Eagle Area High School.

Sheehan recalled Van Orman's zest for playing in the jazz, concert and marching bands.

'He really had a certain intensity about performing well,' he said.

Early in his senior year, Van Orman rechanneled that fire.



After the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, his marching band took part in a patriotic rally at Penn State. Talking with Sheehan about the world, Van Orman declared his wish to join the military and defend his country.

'He was very proud to be going into the service, and it definitely meant a lot to him,' Sheehan said.

Six and a half years later, he fondly remembers the trombone player with the upbeat attitude.

'He was like the epitome of a good citizen,' Sheehan said. 'He was really the kind of young adult who you'd want to have contribute in society to make a difference. I'm sure, while he was in the service, he made one.'

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## **UNREMITTING HELL ON EARTH; ALL HOME NOW**



[Thanks to Kevin Ramirez, CCCO, who sent this in.]

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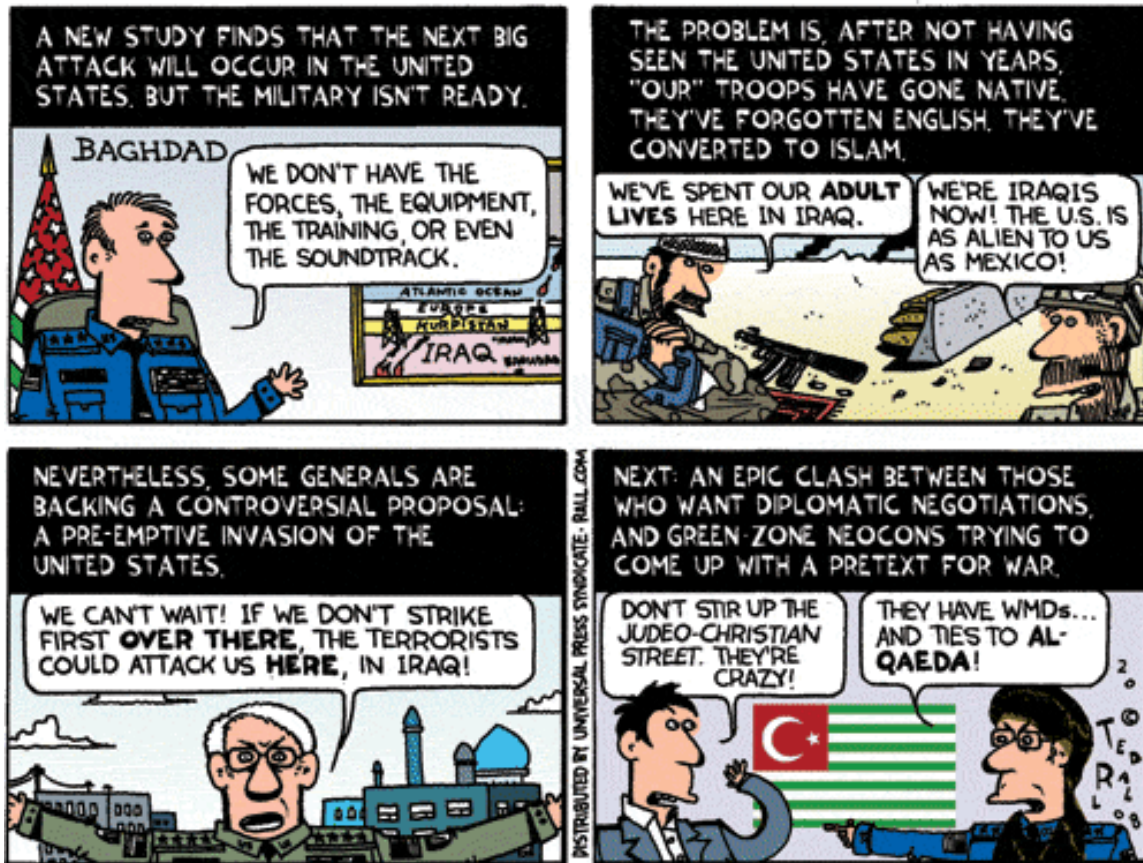
## **UH-60 Down In At Ta'Mim**

16 February 2008 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory  
RELEASE No. 20080217-02

TIKRIT, Iraq – A UH-60 Blackhawk experienced an in-flight emergency which required a precautionary landing in At Ta'Mim Province, Feb. 15.

The Blackhawk made a safe landing in an unsecured area while its wingman provided security and called for Coalition air and ground security forces.

## TROOP NEWS



## **Soldier In Hospital With “Some Paranoia And Possible Homicidal Tendencies” Kicked Out And Shipped Back To Kuwait**

[Thanks to James Starowicz, Veterans For Peace; Phil G & Frank M, who sent this in.]

**“First, we had the planeload of wounded, injured and ill being forced back to the war zone. And now we have soldiers forcibly removed from mental hospitals. The level of outrage is off the Richter scale.”**

February 11, 2008 By Erin Emery - The Associated Press

FORT CARSON A Fort Carson soldier who says he was in treatment at Cedar Springs Hospital for bipolar disorder and alcohol abuse was released early and ordered to deploy to the Middle East with the 3rd Brigade Combat Team.

The 28-year-old specialist spent 31 days in Kuwait and was returned to Fort Carson on Dec. 31 after health care professionals in Kuwait concurred that his symptoms met criteria for bipolar disorder and “some paranoia and possible homicidal tendencies,” according to e-mails obtained by a Denver newspaper.

The soldier, who asked not to be identified because of the stigma surrounding mental illness and because he will seek employment when he leaves the Army, said he checked himself into Cedar Springs on Nov. 9 or Nov. 10 after he attempted suicide while under the influence of alcohol. He said his treatment was supposed to end Dec. 10, but his commanding officers showed up at the hospital Nov. 29 and ordered him to leave.

“I was pulled out to deploy,” said the soldier, who has three years in the Army and has served a tour in Iraq.

An e-mail sent Jan. 3 by Capt. Scot Tebo, the brigade surgeon, says the 3rd Brigade Combat Team had “been having issues reaching deployable strength” and that some “borderline” soldiers were sent overseas.

Paul Sullivan, executive director of Veterans for Common Sense, was outraged.

“If he’s an inpatient in a hospital, they should have never taken him out. The chain of command needs to be held accountable for this. Washington needs to get involved at the Pentagon to make sure this doesn’t happen again.

**“First, we had the planeload of wounded, injured and ill being forced back to the war zone. And now we have soldiers forcibly removed from mental hospitals. The level of outrage is off the Richter scale.”**

**The soldier said that on Nov. 29, he was called to the office at Cedar Springs. His squad leader, his platoon leader, his Army Substance Abuse Program counselor and two counselors from Cedar Springs “came and ambushed me.”**

**He said an Army alcohol counselor told him alcoholism and anxiety could not stop him from being deployed.**

**“They said, ‘You know what? Tough it out. All of us like to drink.’”**

In the December e-mail, Tebo tells brigade leaders: “Evidently, while at Cedar Springs, he was started on psychiatric medications that should have made him non-deployable,

but somehow no one was notified. He may have been pending a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, but that information was not passed on at discharge. He deployed with his unit and has not been doing well here.”

In Kuwait, the soldier isolated himself. He said he had “racing thoughts” and couldn’t keep still. “I was ... burning my fingertips with cigarettes, just anything to keep my mind off of things,” the soldier said. “I had homicidal thoughts. I don’t know at the time if I intended on doing anything. But at the time, it was there, I had homicidal and suicidal thoughts.”

Since his return, he has been in treatment.

He said his medical record contains a permanent profile for bipolar disorder, an illness that makes him unfit for military service. He is undergoing the process to be medically discharged from the Army.

**MORE:**

## **The Killer**

From: Dennis Serdel  
To: GI Special  
Sent: February 10, 2008

By Dennis Serdel, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th Brigade, purple heart, Veterans For Peace 50 Michigan, Vietnam Veterans Against The War, United Auto Workers GM Retiree, in Perry, Michigan

\*\*\*\*\*

### **The Killer**

**Jimmy was released from a Military psychiatric hospital in Maryland in June of 1969 after almost a full tour in Vietnam in infantry.**

**He never went home though, instead he spent his money on a used car and a .38.**

**But the back pay and separation pay didn't last long and he found himself in a bar in Pennsylvania drinking his last beer at closing time and broke.**

**At the edge of town was an all night gas station, Jimmy slid his car in and filled it with gas. Inside, he grabbed two 12 packs of beer and slid them on the counter.**

**The 30 year old midnight shift man just shook his head**

and said, "Sorry, it's too late and I can't sell them to you."  
Jimmy just gazed at him with a blank stare and said,  
"I need two cartons of Marlboros."

The man gave a nervous grin and stuttered,  
"Those, those I can sell you," then he turned  
around and bent down to get the cigarettes.

Jimmy pulled out the .38 and when the man turned  
around with the cigarettes, it was pointed at his face.  
"Give me the money," Jimmy demanded.  
He carefully placed the cigarettes on the counter.

"All, all I have is about \$70, when, when  
I get over a \$100, I slide it in the safe on the floor.  
He opened the cash register  
and held out the \$70 at arms length,  
his head turned away.  
Jimmy grabbed the \$70,  
and shot the man in the side of his head, killing him.

He picked up the beer and cigarettes  
and walked out to his car and was gone.

Jimmy still liked killing too much.

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# THE NEW ISSUE OF TRAVELING SOLDIER IS OUT!

**NEED SOME TRUTH?  
CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER**

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces.

Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces.

If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/>

And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! ([www.ivaw.org/](http://www.ivaw.org/))

## THIS ISSUE FEATURES:

1. “I, personally, don’t believe in fighting for the profit of a handful of people. I also don’t believe in fighting for a government that is willing, if not eager, to f--- its own people over” says a soldier stationed in Kirkuk, Iraq.

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/2.08.halliburton.php>

2. “Not us. We’re not going.” – A Unit Revolts

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/2.08.revolts.php>

3. Moving Forward Together - IVAW member Liam Madden explains why building a grassroots GI movement, not voting for a pro-occupation presidential candidate, will bring the troops home.

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/2.08.liam.php>

4. “The first time I put on that uniform I hoped I would wear it with honor. On Sept. 15, I finally did,” says Iraq veteran Michael Prysner at an anti-war protest.

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/2.08.prysner.php>

5. While Bush’s Buddies Cash In On the War, Pentagon Scum Won’t Supply Wounded Female Troops With Clothes Forcing Them to Beg Civilians for Help

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/2.08.female.php>

6. Download, print, and distribute this issue at your school, anti-war group, base, or armory:

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/TS16.pdf>

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## British Government Admits Problems Supplying Troops In Afghanistan:

**“We Are Operating In Very Difficult, Very Complicated Circumstances. Getting Supplies To The Frontline In**

# **A Difficult Theatre Will Always Be Difficult”**

## **“Before His Death, Soldiers Complained Repeatedly About A Lack Of Proper Equipment”**

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

15 February 2008 BBC

Two coroners have criticised the government over the deaths of three soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Separate inquests heard how troops were denied “mission essential” equipment.

Oxford assistant coroner Andrew Walker accused the Ministry of Defence (MoD) of “a breach of trust” over the death of Capt James Philippon.

Meanwhile, Wiltshire coroner David Masters called for a review of armed forces funding after the deaths of two soldiers in Iraq.

Capt Philippon, 29, of 7 Parachute Regiment Royal Horse Artillery, died in a fire fight with Taleban troops in Helmand Province on June 11, 2006 in which British forces were “totally out-gunned”.

The Oxford inquest heard that before his death, soldiers complained repeatedly about a lack of proper equipment - chiefly standard night vision kits and weaponry.

The MoD admitted an “administrative error” led to a 25-day delay in getting equipment to the front line.

Mr Walker said: “They (the soldiers) were defeated not by the terrorists but by the lack of basic equipment.

**“To send soldiers into a combat zone without basic equipment is unforgivable, inexcusable and a breach of trust between the soldiers and those who govern them.”**

The soldier's father, Anthony Philippon, of St Albans, Herts, said after the inquest: “He (the coroner) laid into them (the MoD) particularly badly for the lack of equipment.

“I do hold the MoD responsible for James's death but it is not just the MoD, it goes much deeper than that.

**“The Treasury and the then Chancellor, Gordon Brown, will be really to blame for what happened. The MoD was starved of cash by the Chancellor.”**

The second inquest in Trowbridge, Wiltshire, heard that a platoon commander had asked for Mastiffs - more heavily protected vehicles - to be used on the day two men died - but the vehicles were all in use on another mission.

Lance Sergeant Chris Casey, 27, and Lance Corporal Kirk Redpath, 22, of 1st Battalion, Irish Guards, were escorting a supply convoy between Kuwait and Basra when they were hit by a home-made explosive.

After the inquest Mr Redpath's partner, Sharon Hawkes, 50, said: “It was under-funding by the government that killed him.”

Defence minister Bob Ainsworth said that provision of kit to troops in Afghanistan had been dramatically improved since Capt Philippon's death.

But he acknowledged that he could not promise no British soldier would ever again die as a result of equipment shortages.

Mr Ainsworth said: “This is not the first time delays in the supply chain have caused casualties in theatre. can't promise you that it will be the last.

“We are operating in very difficult, very complicated circumstances. Getting supplies to the frontline in a difficult theatre will always be difficult.

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## **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.**

**“The mighty are only mighty because we are on our knees. Let us rise!”  
-- Camille Desmoulins**

**“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

## Classical Music



From: Mike Hastie  
To: GI Special  
Sent: February 16, 2008  
Subject: Classical Music

### Classical Music

**Mankind is walking into a gas chamber,  
convinced it's a think tank.**

**Mike Hastie  
Vietnam Veteran  
February 15, 2008**

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](mailto:hastiemike@earthlink.net)) T)

***[In Case You Missed It The First  
Time]***

# **“We Need To Eliminate PTSD As A ‘Mental’ Disorder”**

## **Images Of Traumatized Veterans “Constituted Portraits Of Victimization”**

### **“Bill Needed A Social Movement, Not Treatment, And The Same Can Be Said For Hundreds Of Troops And Veterans Today Who Are Similarly Disgusted”**

From: GI SPECIAL 5H21: 8.25.07

**The needs of the current wars’ many victims will be best served not by public lamentations on the costs of war and pledges to support the troops but by an anti-war movement inclusive of the men and women sent to fight the war.**

**We need to eliminate PTSD as a “mental” disorder and address it for what it is: A psycho-social anomie arising from our service on behalf of a power-mongering government out for political, personal, and capital gain.**

Spring 2007, By Dianne Ford Wood (interviewer), *The Veteran*, Vietnam Veterans Against the War [Excerpts]

This article originated as a review of *Camouflage & Lace (Camo)*, an audio book about Diane Ford Wood’s experiences with Willie Hager, VVAW and PTSD in the early 1970s.

Vietnam vet Jerry Lembcke (*The Spitting Image*) also wrote about Hager related to the 1978 film *Coming Home*. This historical overlap revealed powerful ways that Vietnam veterans can support the post-traumatic struggles and understanding of today’s returning veterans.

The interview evolved from there.

Jerry Lembcke is a professor at Holy Cross College in Worcester, MA. *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam* (2000) is available nationwide.

Willie Hager and Diane Ford Wood are principal organizers of PTSD-centered VetSpeak.org.

*Still at War* will soon be available at Wisbooks.com. *Camouflage & Lace* (2005) is available at [www.cdbaby.com/camo](http://www.cdbaby.com/camo).

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*Diane: What is your connection to the movie Coming Home?*

Willie: As the VVAW regional coordinator in LA at the time, I was interviewed extensively for the movie.

Screenwriter Waldo Salt asked me what was the hardest part of Vietnam. "Coming home," I told him. For me, that was far more painful than Vietnam itself. I was given a role as a technical advisor which wasn't a completely new experience. In 1976, I helped make *Still at War*, one of the earliest documentaries on PTSD and mistreatment of paraplegic veterans on film.

After Salt got informally sidelined, the new writers revised Bruce Dern's character (loosely based on my life) in the same way society revised us. In an insightful and compelling way — and with the benefit of having reviewed the original UCLA interview transcripts — Lembcke got this.

**Coming Home began as a story about how a career Marine turns into an anti-war veteran organizer.**

**Dern's character and the script took a completely different turn from Salt's original story premise; it became a foil for the administration's reframing program. Go figure!**

**It wasn't the movie I had signed on to make. I probably wouldn't have become involved had I known how it was all to come out.**

Jerry: When I was writing *The Spitting Image*, I came across interviews that screenwriter Waldo Salt did with Willie and other veterans for the script of *Coming Home*.

**Speaking of what was then called "post-Vietnam syndrome" (PVS), Willie told Salt that their Vietnam experience had taught veterans that American society was a lie and that that same society did not want to deal with them.**

**I wrote that, in effect, the raised consciousness that men like Willie came home with was pathologized, beginning with the way Salt used Willie's story to construct the prototypical whacked-out veteran played by Bruce Dern in the film and later canonized by psychiatrists as the mental health problem, PTSD.**

**Images of spat-upon veterans and traumatized veterans constituted portraits of victimization.**

**These portraits displaced from public memory the fact that their time in Vietnam was one of empowerment and politicization for many GIs.**

**Reading books like Alan Young's *The Illusion of Harmony: Inventing Post-traumatic Stress Disorder*, I became aware of how the diagnostic category PTSD also functioned as a political and cultural concept.**

With the Vietnam-era "anti-war warrior" screened out by the "victim-veteran," it was no surprise that the current wars began with both the pro-war Right and anti-war Left pledging to support the troops.

**It was no surprise either when the film *Sir! No Sir!* (about the GI anti-war movement during Vietnam) pulled that piece of history back into view.**

It inaugurated a new anti-war coffee house near Fort Drum; a petition campaign against the war by military personnel; and new stories of spat-on veterans. This redirected public attention to the televised images of battered veterans images heretofore banned from public consumption.

Diane: *The Spitting Image* talks about how Willie's experiences were misunderstood by the VA, the military, Hollywood, society and even those closest to him. Camo describes living this nightmare from a woman's perspective. Were we all too caught up in the moment to have any kind of overview? How could so many caring people miss the point?

Willie: We were living history. We were blinded by the light.

**Jerry: Hollywood was a major player in displacing the story of the war itself with the story of GIs coming home to the country that had betrayed them and their mission.**

*Coming Home*, for which Willie's interviews were used, had powerful feminist and anti-war messages and was heralded as a contribution to the disability-rights movement.

For those who needed a different story, it also helped construct a mythical betrayal narrative for why we lost the war.

In *Sir! No Sir!* Bill Short recalls that one of his duties in Vietnam was to count the dead Viet Cong after a fight.

The task revolted him and when he refused to do it any longer he was sent to the unit shrink for psychiatric evaluation.

His resistance about to be pathologized as a mental health problem (he thinks), the psychiatrist turns instead and pulls from the shelf a copy of *The New York Times* with a full-page petition against the war signed by GIs.

**Bill needed a social movement, not treatment, and the same can be said for hundreds of troops and veterans today who are similarly disgusted with the war they've been sent to fight and depressed with the realization that there is no glory in inglorious war.**

Willie: The devil is in the details: The more you know about PTSD, the more pissed you become. Sure I have those feelings, especially when it is all coming around again as a result of our combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

**We need to eliminate PTSD as a “mental” disorder and address it for what it is: A psycho-social anomie arising from our service on behalf of a power-mongering government out for political, personal, and capital gain.**

Diane: Jerry, you are a Vietnam veteran, presumably with some level of disillusionment. Yet you found your way in society to become a college professor. How have you managed to survive in a society with which you have such issues?

Jerry: Janice Joplin sang “freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose.” That was the mindset I returned with from Vietnam. One of the veterans in Gerald Gioglio’s book, *Days of Decision* (about in-service conscientious objectors) says he never had more clarity about life than during his days of resistance. This is the kind of clarity that comes when you’re stripped-down to the essentials of life. That’s the way I felt. I vowed never again to be entrapped by this society’s materialism or to be bonded to what Willie described to Salt as “little bullshit jobs that don’t really count.” At about that time, I read Neil Postman’s book *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*. I used it as a kind of playbook for a dialectical engagement with society—surviving within it while simultaneously working for its transformation into something beyond itself.

Diane: Willie, you and veterans like Calixto Cabrera (“Alfredo” in *Camo*) joined the military as patriots and believers. You turned down a presidential appointment to Annapolis to become a Marine. Yet ultimately, you chose the outlaw life after Vietnam. How do you feel about that choice now?

Willie: I am still a patriot and always will be. I joined the Marine Corps in 1959 as a result of patriotism. Ten years later, I left and joined VVAW in 1971 – also as a result of patriotism.

It was a patriotic act to rally with the grassroots to maintain our Constitutional perspectives. We won.

Nixon and his band of thugs were ousted from power and for a while, the government did the People’s Business. Remember the Erich Fromm quote: “The successful revolutionary is a statesman, the unsuccessful one a criminal”? Given the context, and using this history as a criterion, I consider “outlaw” an honorable definition of character synonymous with “patriot.” Oh, yes; and I still believe.

Diane: In the ‘60s and ‘70s, VVAW trail-blazed post-traumatic stress research using their own lives as collateral. Can this make a difference to today’s returning vets?

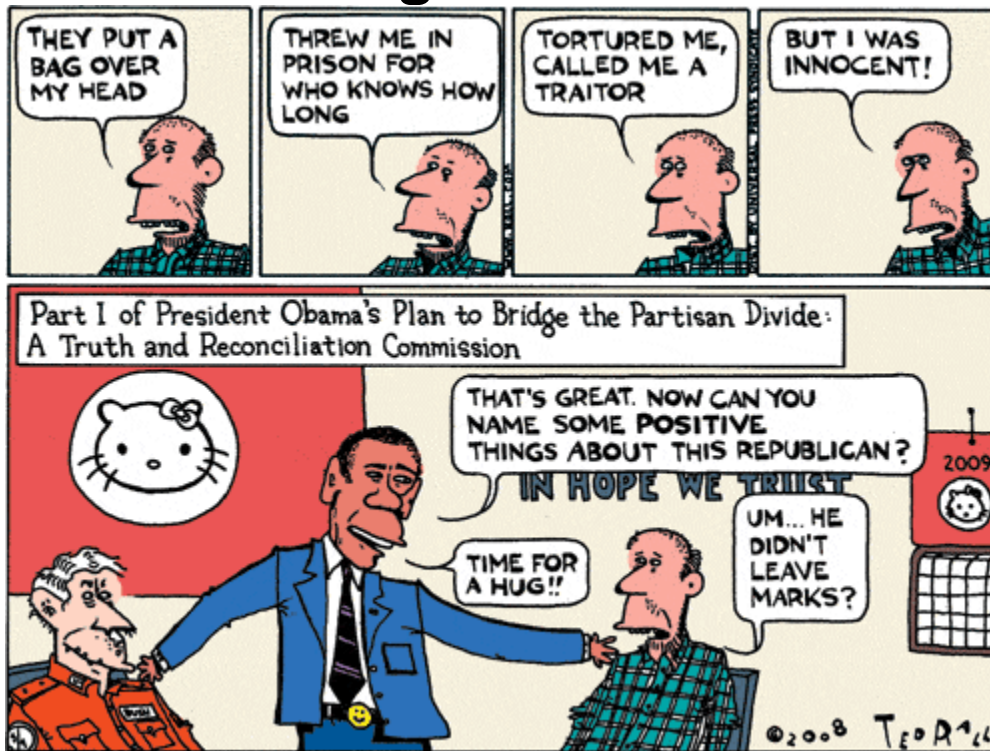
Jerry: The movement of in-service resisters and Vietnam veterans against the war called attention to the human costs of that war and mustered the political support for increased services for the mentally and physically wounded.

**The needs of the current wars’ many victims will be best served not by public lamentations on the costs of war and pledges to support the troops but by an anti-war movement inclusive of the men and women sent to fight the war.**

**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.

**“Clinton And Obama Are Much Closer To Each Other Politically--And Even To The Republicans They Promise To Oppose--Than They Are To The Mass Of People Who Are Voting For Them”**



If he does get the nomination, Obama will be the representative of a political party that has always put the interests of the business and political elite first, before the

**demands of the majority in society--and his own record shows no sign that he would defy this history, whatever his rhetoric on the campaign trail.**

February 15, 2008 Editorial, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

BARACK OBAMA is edging ahead of the one-time "inevitable" Democratic presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton--on the strength of a campaign that has tapped into mass discontent with the status quo and the desire for a genuine and fundamental alternative.

More striking than details like the delegate count, however, is the intense excitement generated by Obama's campaign--most obviously among African Americans and young voters who are turning out for the primaries in record numbers, but now reaching across the different categories of the electorate.

If you look more closely at his actual positions and proposals, Obama is firmly within the moderate mainstream of the Democratic Party and largely indistinguishable from Clinton. But the resonance he has found for his calls for "change" has set him apart. Increasingly, Obama's campaign has sought to portray itself as a movement, building from the grassroots.

As Los Angeles Times columnist Rosa Brooks pointed out, "Obama aired a 30-second Super Bowl ad that drew unabashedly on the iconography of the American left...(offering) images of rallies and protest marches, of poverty and environmental destruction, of the devastation of war and of beaming, hopeful, multiracial crowds..."

"Whatever the causes, Americans seem eager to reclaim a spirit of idealism that many thought ended with the 1960s, to embrace a heritage that acknowledges conflict and struggle, but also hope and progress.

"Obama's Super Bowl ad represented a gamble: a bet that the symbolism of past social movements is now more likely to give Americans a thrill than a chill. And the matter-of-factness with which his ad was greeted--and Obama's electoral success so far--suggest that his campaign correctly read the national mood."

Brooks is right, and there's more to the point she makes.

**By pressing on the idea that ordinary people, rather than political leaders, have made the difference in history, the Obama campaign is legitimizing ideas of struggle and grassroots mobilization--something missing from U.S. politics for many decades.**

Coming after the cynicism and demoralization bred by years of stagnating living standards for working-class people and the political dominance of the Republican right, this is a breath of fresh air.

Plus, there is the historic significance of Obama's campaign--that an African American could quite possibly become president of a country that was founded on slavery, and where an apartheid system reigned across the U.S. South a few generations ago.

**At the same time, it is important to remember that Obama is not a radical.**

He is dressing his campaign with the trappings of social movements of the past, but his goal is not actually to build a new movement, but rather to win an election.

If he does get the nomination, Obama will be the representative of a political party that has always put the interests of the business and political elite first, before the demands of the majority in society--and his own record shows no sign that he would defy this history, whatever his rhetoric on the campaign trail.

Anyone committed to fighting for change today should see how Obama's campaign has raised hopes and expectations.

People are becoming convinced of that most basic sentiment at the heart of all the great struggles of the past: that what we do matters--and that could mean more in the future than the candidate trying to employ this sentiment to gain votes.

But there is another lesson to be drawn from all the social struggles invoked by Obama's campaign--the civil rights movement, the fight for women's suffrage, the struggle for unions.

Their strength rested on the willingness to remain independent and mobilize for justice, no matter what president was sitting in the White House.

**DESPITE THEIR differing styles and rhetoric, Clinton and Obama are much closer to each other politically--and even to the Republicans they promise to oppose--than they are to the mass of people who are voting for them in the hopes that they will bring fundamental changes to Washington when they take over the White House.**

But Election 2008 is important in a wider sense--it has provided further evidence of the mass popular rejection of George Bush and his Republican agenda, and it has raised the hopes of millions of people for something new.

Those hopes will be important in the struggles of the future--after the election and before it, too--to fight for a real alternative to a world of war, poverty and injustice.

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## **BLINDING FLASH OF THE OBVIOUS: “If An Elected Official Doesn’t Call For An Immediate Withdrawal Of The Troops, Then That Official Is Pro-War”**

[And any candidate who does not call for an immediate withdrawal of the troops is Pro War and any political figure who supports the election of any candidate who does not call for an immediate withdrawal of the troops is Pro War, and that is not rocket science. Duh. T]



09 February 2006 By Cindy Sheehan, Truthout Statement [Excerpts]

The last Senate vote for increased funding for the killing was 99-0.

How about cutting off the Presidents means for killing? It is not that difficult.

It is not enough to say that one is critical of the war in Iraq.

If an elected official voted for the war, votes for the funding of the war, and doesn't call for an immediate withdrawal of the troops, then that official is pro-war, no matter what he or she says.

We in America are fed up with rhetoric, and if the actions don't match the rhetoric, then we are not buying what they are selling anymore.

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## **They Knew In 1870 What The Imperial Fools In Washington Are Too Stupid To Understand Today:**

**#1:**

**“Wherever A People Allowed Itself To Be  
Subdued Merely Because Its Armies Had  
Become Incapable Of Resistance It Has  
Been Held Up To Universal Contempt As  
A Nation Of Cowards”**

**#2:**

**Occupation Armies “Were Very Soon  
Compelled To Treat Popular Resistance  
As Perfectly Legitimate, From Fear Of  
Reprisals On Their Own Prisoners”**

From: Karl Marx, by Boris Nicolaievsky & Otto Maenchen-Helfen; Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott Company, 1936

Engels energetically pleaded France's cause in articles in the Pall Mall Gazette.

He denounced the brutal retaliatory measures the Prussians took against the francs-tireurs [guerrilla fighters against the 1870 Prussian occupation of France].

There was an answer to these methods, he said.

'Wherever a people allowed itself to be subdued merely because its armies had become incapable of resistance it has been held up to universal contempt as a nation of cowards,' he wrote, 'and wherever a people did energetically carry out this irregular resistance, the invaders very soon found it impossible to carry out the old-fashioned code of blood and fire.'

The English in America, the French under Napoleon in Spain, the Austrians in 1848 in Italy and Hungary, were very soon compelled to treat popular resistance as perfectly legitimate, from fear of reprisals on their own prisoners.'

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## OCCUPATION REPORT

# U.S. OCCUPATION RECRUITING DRIVE IN HIGH GEAR; RECRUITING FOR THE ARMED RESISTANCE THAT IS



An Iraqi woman cries after a night home invasion attack by foreign occupation troops from the US in northeastern Baghdad Feb. 11, 2008. US troops raided a mosque and nearby houses and arrested 26 people, police said. (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)

**[There's nothing quite like invading somebody else's country and busting into their houses by force to arouse an intense desire to kill you in the patriotic, self-respecting civilians who live there.**

**[But your commanders know that, don't they? Don't they?]**

**"You have junior-level troops, PFCs, specialists will run into the other rooms and grab the family, and you'll group them all together. Then you go into a room and you tear the room to shreds and you make sure there's no weapons or anything that they can use to attack us.**

**"You'll go into the fridge, if he has a fridge, and you'll throw everything on the floor, and you'll take his drawers and you'll dump them.... You'll open up his closet and you'll throw all the clothes on the floor and basically leave his house looking like a hurricane just hit it.**

**"And if you find something, then you'll detain him. If not, you'll say, 'Sorry to disturb you. Have a nice evening.'**

**"So you've just humiliated this man in front of his entire family and terrorized his entire family and you've destroyed his home. And then you go right next door and you do the same thing in a hundred homes."**

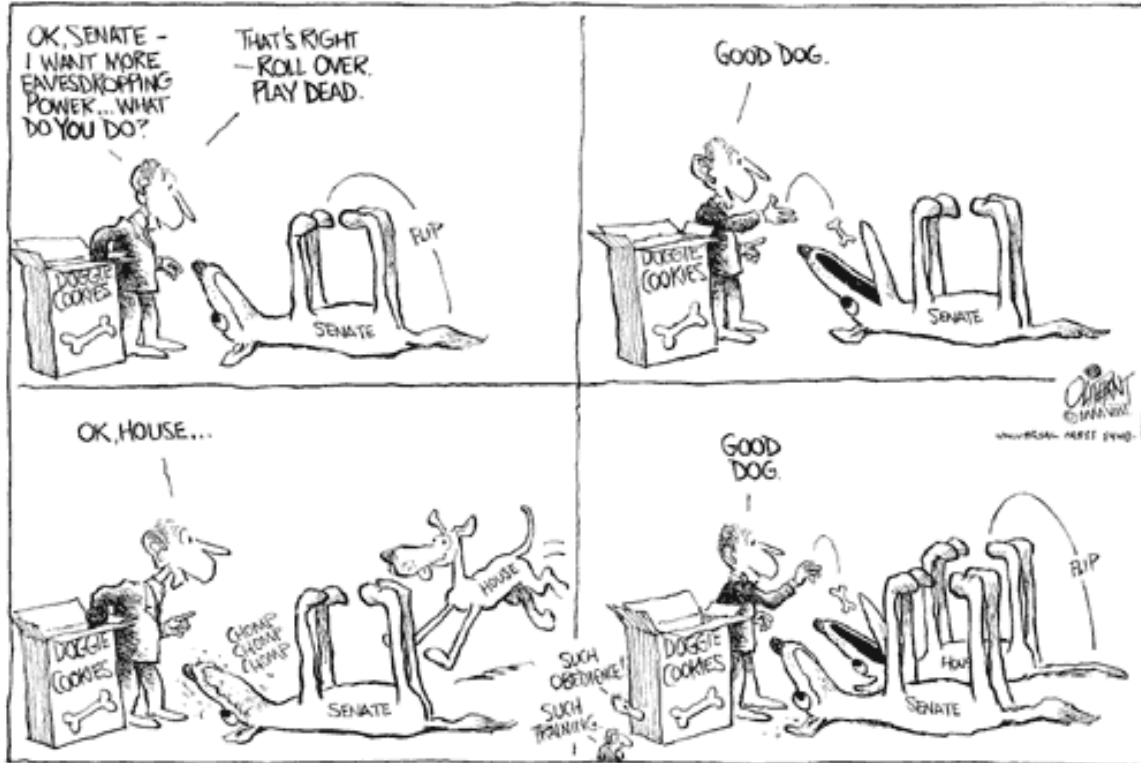
**Sgt. John Bruhns**

**"In the States, if police burst into your house, kicking down doors and swearing at you, you would call your lawyer and file a lawsuit," said Wood, 42, from Iowa, who did not accompany Halladay's Charlie Company, from his battalion, on Thursday's raid. "Here, there are no lawyers. Their resources are limited, so they plant IEDs (improvised explosive devices) instead."**

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

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

**DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK**



## GEORGE BUSH: POLITICAL GENIUS The Commander-In-Chief Speaks

Mar 25th, 2004 Bush quotations compiled by Richard Thompson, The Washington Post

I think we all agree, the past is over.  
This is still a dangerous world.  
It's a world of madmen and uncertainty  
And potential mental losses.

Rarely is the question asked  
Is our children learning?  
Will the highways of the Internet  
Become more few?

How many hands have I shaken?  
They underestimate me.  
I am a pitbull on the pantleg of opportunity.

I know that the human being  
And the fish can coexist.  
Families is where our nation finds hope,  
Where our wings take dream.

Put food on your family!  
Knock down the tollbooth!  
Vulcanize society!  
Make the pie higher!  
I am the Decider!



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