

GI SPECIAL 6C13:

Five Years Too Long



War dead tombstones on the assembly line at Granite Industries of Vermont, Dec. 20, 2007, that will be shipped to Arlington National Cemetery. (AP Photo/Toby Talbot)

4000 And Five Years

From: Dennis Serdel
To: GI Special
Sent: March 13, 2008
Subject: 4000 And Five Years

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

4000 And Five Years

**Corporation warlords
slicing up the pie
we will be there for a 100 years
or forever like an endless song
that only Soldiers' hear.**

Iraq is one big funeral
with a line of cars across America
leading in the red states
covering the blue states
on the highways like a spider's web
their gravesites mark the flies they caught
4000 buglers crying with their taps
84,000 spent shells 21 gun salutes
lying all around
kicking them into graves
their brass will never shine again
4000 limousines drop off
wall street investors
like if a gangster died
and they do not care
if their pictures are taken
only for a moment
and then they disappear again
a president who has said I was right
4000 times and dances
as bo-jangles across the TV screen
like the shoe shine job he has and does
going on 8 years now
meanwhile the corpses shrink up
hair grows out as the skin
the muscles dry in their coffins
many some 5 years ago
forgotten like dead dried animals
driven over and over on the highway
until the rain washes them away
and spring and Soldiers come
for another summer of hate
and 4001.

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

Arizona Soldier Killed In Tallil



Pfc. Tenzin L. Samten of Prescott, Ariz., U.S. Army, 33, died March 12, 2008, along with two other soldiers in Tallil, Iraq, of wounds suffered when their vehicle was hit by indirect fire. Samtem was assigned to the 7th Special Troops Battalion, 7th Sustainment Brigade, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) at Fort Eustis, Va. and was posthumously promoted to the rank of specialist. (AP Photo/US Army, Fort Eustis)

Starkville Soldier Killed In Iraq

11 March 2008 By BRIAN HAWKINS, Starkville Daily News

A Starkville native was one of five U.S. soldiers killed in a suicide bombing in Iraq on Monday.

Spc. Taylor McDavid, 29, a tank operator with the Army's 1-64th Armored Division, 3rd Infantry, died when a suicide bomber detonated explosives in a Sunni Mansour neighborhood in Baghdad. Three other American soldiers and an Iraqi interpreter were injured in the blast in addition to those who died, according to media reports from Baghdad.

Taylor McDavid and the other soldiers had just gotten out of a humvee to begin a foot patrol in the neighborhood when the bombing occurred, said his father, Robert McDavid, who was notified of his son's death early Monday evening.

The bomber was about 30 feet away from the soldiers when he detonated his explosives, a Baghdad police officer who witnessed the attack told reporters.

Taylor McDavid had been deployed to Iraq for 10 months and was due to return to the U.S. in July, his father said. His son was in the middle of a five-year Army enlistment, Robert McDavid said.

“He did what he wanted to do, and that’s serve his country,” said Robert McDavid Monday night. “He made me and his granddaddy so proud.”

Taylor’s wife, the former Tiffany Thornhill of Starkville, is in Fort Stewart, Ga., where her husband’s unit is headquartered. Taylor and Tiffany McDavid were to celebrate their second wedding anniversary May 19 and her 30th birthday two weeks earlier. “He was a terrific soldier, and he died doing what he loved, defending our freedom,” said Tiffany McDavid by telephone from Fort Stewart Monday night.

The son of Robert and Jean Alice McDavid of Starkville, Taylor McDavid attended both Starkville High School and Starkville Academy and had received an associate’s degree from Northeast Mississippi Community College, where he was a member of the band and a Dean’s List scholar.

He had been a student studying accounting and general business administration at Mississippi State University, where he played tuba in the Famous Maroon Band.

He was a third generation past master of the Abert Lodge No. 89, a fourth generation Master Mason, a Shriner and a member of the Corinth Scottish Rite.

In addition to his wife and parents, Taylor McDavid had a sister, Leslie, and two nieces, Elizabeth and Ellen, he “loved very much,” his father said. His grandparents were the late Judge R.L. and Annie Mae McDavid and the late Charles Lee and Billie Jean Walker.

Because of the number of deaths involved in Monday’s suicide bombings, the Army informed the McDavid family that it may take several days before Taylor McDavid’s body is returned to the U.S.

U.S. Troops Aid Resistance; Kill Collaborator Cops

3.18.08 By SAMEER N. YACOUB, Associated Press Writer

U.S. troops accidentally killed three Iraqi policemen and wounded another, the military said, the latest in a series of friendly fire incidents.

The Iraqi patrol, which was responding to an unrelated request for assistance, raised suspicion as it sped toward U.S. troops operating in a cordoned-off area, Spc. Megan Burmeister, a U.S. military spokeswoman, said in an e-mailed statement.

**THIS ENVIRONMENT IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR
HEALTH;
COME HOME, NOW**



U.S. Army soldiers, 4th Brigade, search a road for IED's during a patrol through the village of Al Hamer near Baquba December 14, 2007. REUTERS/Bob Strong

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

**Inmates Take Control Of Sections Of
Kabul Prison In Protest Against
Authorities**

March 19 (KUNA) & 18 March 2008 BBC NEWS

Gunfire has been heard from the Pul-e-Charkhi prison, a huge complex built in the 1970s on the outskirts of the capital, Kabul.

At least nine prisoners were injured as police resorted to firing to quell a riot staged by some prisoners at a high-security jail east of this Afghan capital on Wednesday.

Inmates are in control of parts of the prison and say they have taken two Afghan soldiers hostage.

Our correspondent says the stand off between prisoners and Afghan security forces, which began on Sunday, appears to be worsening.

Inmates had taken control of sections of the building as part of a continuing protest against the authorities.

A number of prisoners contacted the BBC by mobile phone and said that seven inmates had been injured.

They also said that two Afghan national army soldiers had been captured and they would be killed unless mediators were sent in to resolve the dispute.

There has been no official response from the Afghan government, but the defence minister told parliament an operation was being planned to raid the prison after parts of the building were overrun.

An Afghan member of parliament who visited the jail on Monday said the situation had become very tense.

The dispute has been going on for two weeks since an attempted jail-break and the arrest of a large number of prison visitors.

U.S. Troops Aide Resistance; Attack Collaborator Cops

Mar 20 By NOOR KHAN, Associated Press Writer

KANADAHAR, Afghanistan - NATO-led troops killed a police officer and wounded another in southern Afghanistan, a police chief said Thursday.

The policemen were patrolling in Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province, when NATO troops opened fire on them late on Wednesday, said provincial police chief Mohammad Hussein Andiwal.

Shooting left one police dead and another wounded, Andiwal said.

"The police were doing their job and I do not know why this incident happened," Andiwal said. "We are trying to talk to NATO and get details," he said.

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

TROOP NEWS

Semper Fidelis



Ken Perkins, 85 who served with the Marines during World War II, joined about 50 others in demonstrating against the war in Iraq, at the Capitol in Sacramento, Calif., March 19, 2008. The protestors gathered on the fifth anniversary of the war in Iraq calling for its end. (AP Photo/Rich Pedroncelli)

**“The Mythology Of The Bad Apple As
War Criminal, Instead Of The War
Itself As Criminal”**

“It’s The Reality Of Occupation”



19 March 2008 By Maya Schenwar, Truthout Report [Excerpt]

Winter Soldier aimed to break down that fiction of do-no-evil military nobility, according to Perry O'Brien, one of its lead organizers, who served as an Army medic in Afghanistan.

The problem, O'Brien told Truthout, is the "mythology of the bad apple as war criminal, instead of the war itself as criminal."

After incidents like those in Haditha, Fallujah and Abu Ghraib, Americans generally assumed they were caused by individual "bad soldiers."

"The average soldier on the ground understands that this is much more widespread," O'Brien said. "It's the reality of occupation."

"We're a community, a family," O'Brien said. "The camaraderie, the brotherhood and sisterhood that we felt when we were serving certainly carried over into our activism."

“My Experiences In Iraq Were What Radicalized Me”



MARCH 15, 2008 By MARC HELLER, Watertown (NY) Daily Times [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON — Philip Aliff isn't afraid to admit he was in the Army for the money. But even that — his salary, a \$7,000 signing bonus and money for college — wasn't worth what he learned in Iraq.

Mr. Aliff, who finished his tour as a corporal with the 10th Mountain Division last week, was among the current and former soldiers speaking out against the mission in Iraq at Winter Solider, a four-day conference in Silver Spring, Md., sponsored by Iraq Veterans Against the War.

"My experiences in Iraq were what radicalized me," Mr. Aliff, 21, said in an interview Friday. "I really didn't understand the dynamic of what was happening in Iraq."

Mr. Aliff, who was with the 10th Mountain Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team from Fort Drum, said the situation was far more violent than the rebuilding effort commanders advertised or were prepared to handle.

The result, he said, were contradictory messages for Iraqi civilians as U.S. forces arrested scores of fighting-age men on flimsy suspicion of wrongdoing, only to let them go a few days later.

"We'd hand kids soccer balls," said Mr. Aliff, whose duties included daily combat patrols in Abu Ghraib City and, later, the more violent area near Fallujah in 2005.

"They'd see us on the one hand giving them things, and on the other hand arresting their families."

Although some IVAW members spoke of punishment for their anti-war views, Mr. Aliff said he received only a talking-to from his squad leader when he joined IVAW as an active-duty soldier.

When he spoke out, he said, "it was reinvigorating. I felt like I finally had a voice."

800 From Minnesota National Guard Off To Bush's Imperial Slaughterhouse

March 18, 2008 Associated Press

ST. CLOUD, Minn. - Around 800 Minnesota National Guard soldiers will be leaving for Iraq this summer, the Guard announced Tuesday.

Col. David Elicerio, deputy commander of the 34th Infantry, first disclosed the deployment Tuesday during a Boy Scouts of America leadership breakfast in St. Cloud, the St. Cloud Times reported.

The Guard issued an official announcement Tuesday evening, saying the troops will leave in late May for Fort Sill, Okla., for three months of training before heading to Iraq.

The deployment will involve soldiers from the 34th Combat Aviation Brigade out of Camp Ripley and St. Paul, which flies Blackhawk and Chinook helicopters in support of the 34th Infantry Division. They will perform combat service support missions, such as transporting cargo, personnel and material, the Guard said.

Last year the 34th Infantry welcomed home 2,600 soldiers from the division's 1st Brigade Combat Team after a nearly two-year deployment, much of it in Iraq.

The New Issue Of Traveling Soldier Is Out!

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

This issue features:

1. **“Without the active support of military service members, this war cannot continue. ... [W]ithout people to drive the trucks, to man the checkpoints, and to go out on nightly raids, no war is possible”**
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/3.08.dougherty.php>

2. **“The tide is beginning to turn” writes Iraq vet J.D. Englehart of IVAW & The Military Project.**
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/3.08.mail.php>

3. **Bridging the Gap - a conference for those who want to do military organizing hosted by the Military Project.**
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/3.08.conference.php>

&

4. **Bridging the Gap - a poem by a Vietnam Vet written for the Conference.**
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/3.08.bridgingpoem.php>

5. **Active-Duty and Vets Organize Against the War at Fort Hood**
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/3.08.hood.php>

6. **“It’s soldier’s lives being tossed away on this never-ending bad wager, in the hope that somehow, someday, a big win will come out of it”**
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/3.08.gamble.php>

7. **Download the new Traveling Soldier to pass it out at your school, workplace, or at nearby base.**
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/TS17.pdf>

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/)

Pentagon Traitors Deliberately Refused To Screen Iraq Vets For Traumatic Brain Injury; Despicable Piece Of Shit Col. Kenneth Cox Comes Up With A Pack Of Stupid Lies About His Criminal Betrayal Of Combat Vets; Then He Tells The Truth: Screening Would Have Been “Much More Costly”

[Here it is again. Same old story. Used up, thrown away, and the politicians couldn't care less.

[To repeat for the 3,521st time, there is no enemy in Iraq. Iraqis and U.S. troops have a common enemy. That common enemy owns and operates the Imperial government in Washington DC for their own profit. That common enemy started this war of conquest on a platform of lies, because they couldn't tell the truth: this war was about making money for them, and nothing else. Payback is overdue. T]

March 18 2008 By Gregg Zoroya, USA TODAY & Ed Pilkington in New York, The Guardian [UK]

For more than two years, the Pentagon delayed screening troops returning from Iraq for mild brain injuries because officials feared veterans would blame vague ailments on the little-understood wound caused by exposure to bomb blasts, says the military's director of medical assessments.

Air Force Col. Kenneth Cox said in an interview that the Pentagon wanted to avoid another controversy such as the so-called Gulf War syndrome. About 10,000 veterans blamed medical conditions from cancer to eczema on their service.

The Pentagon did not acknowledge the syndrome until Congress created a committee to study it in 1998.

For troops who think they may have a condition not designated as war-related, Cox said, often “they’re reacting to rumors, things that they’ve read about or heard about on the Internet or (from) their friends.”

That uncertainty, Cox said, means “some individuals will seek a diagnosis from provider to provider to provider.

“It also makes treating veterans “much more difficult and much more costly,” he said.

“That’s baloney,” says Rep. Bill Pascrell, D-N.J., founder of the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force. “There was no need to delay this.”

In a January 2006 report, scientists at the federal Defense and Veteran Brain Injury Center urged that troops be screened for TBI “immediately.”

Yet the Pentagon is only now gearing up to implementing the screening process, which involves soldiers being asked a series of questions designed to indicate whether they are suffering symptoms.

Those symptoms include headaches, dizziness, memory loss, nausea and convulsions.

An Army mental health report last month indicated that 11% of 2,195 soldiers surveyed in Iraq and Afghanistan show signs of mild brain injury, but fewer than half were identified and evaluated in the field.

Marcus Brown, 30, was transferred to Fort Carson, Colo., where the Army has operated a pilot screening program for traumatic brain injury since 2005. There, Brown was screened for brain injury for the first time after serving two tours in Iraq and surviving three IED blasts.

Since 2003, 1.6 million troops have served in Iraq alone, many of whom return to the US without any awareness of their condition and hence no treatment.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Resistance Action

March 18 (Reuters) & March 19 (Reuters) & By ROBERT H. REID, Associated Press Writer

Militants set fire to a fuel pipeline supplying a power station in the town of Mussayab, about 60 km (40 miles) south of Baghdad, police said.

Three policeman were killed and three others wounded in a roadside bomb attack targeting their patrol in Abu Sayda village in northern Baquba, 65 km (40 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

A roadside bomb killed two traffic policemen, and wounded six others in northern Baghdad's Binoog district, police said.

A member of a U.S.-funded neighbourhood security unit was killed and another wounded when a roadside bomb exploded near a checkpoint in Iskandariya, 40 km (25 miles) south of Baghdad, police said.

Three Iraqi soldiers were wounded when a bomb in a parked car blew up near an army checkpoint in western Baghdad's Yarmouk district, police said.

Two members of a U.S.-funded neighbourhood security unit were killed in a drive-by shooting at a checkpoint in Baiji, 180 km (110 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

The bodies of two Iraqi security guards were found in Kerbala, 110 km (70 miles) south of Baghdad, police said.

A car bomber wounded 11 Iraqi soldiers and three civilians in an attack on an army checkpoint in Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

One policeman was killed and two others wounded by a roadside bomb in the town of Iskandariya, 40 km (25 miles) south of Baghdad, on Tuesday, police said.

A bomb stuck to a taxi exploded in central Baghdad's Karrada district, killing a police colonel and wounding a passenger and three pedestrians, police said.

One member of a U.S.-funded neighbourhood security unit was killed and two others wounded when guerrillas attacked a checkpoint in the city of Tikrit, 175 km (105 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

Three U.S.-funded neighbourhood security unit members and a civilian when militants threw a hand grenade at a checkpoint in Baghdad, police said.

A female bomber killed two policemen, and wounded 12 others in the town of Balad Ruz, about 70 km (45 miles) northeast of Baghdad, in Diyala province, police said.

Mahdi Army Takes Newly Issued U.S. M16s From Captured

Collaborator Troops & New Trucks From Police; The Prisoners Are Arrested By Their Own Officers After Release; Incident Shows “How Quickly M16s Can Fall Into Enemy Hands”

Mar 17 By Sam Dagher, Christian Science Monitor [Excerpts]

The gun battle in Sadr City between Shiite militiamen and the Iraqi Army lasted only 10 minutes, according to residents of the slum where Moqtada al-Sadr holds great sway.

In the end, as many as 18 soldiers were captured after the March 8 ambush, carried out by so-called “rogue elements” of Mr. Sadr’s Mahdi Army.

The next day, the men were freed, but not all of them returned with their guns, newly issued US manufactured M16s that are now believed to be in the hands of an element of Sadr’s militia that does not appear to be abiding by a freeze in operations ordered last August. About 10 rifles are missing.

For the Iraqi Army, the loss of the weapons, even though only a relatively small number, is not only embarrassing but also shows how quickly the M16s, issued recently to replace inferior AK-47s, can fall into enemy [translation: enemies of the U.S. Imperial occupation of their country] hands.

Gen. Naseer al-Abadi, deputy chief of staff of Iraq’s armed forces, says this is the first incident of its kind since the fall of last year, when the Army started receiving M16s as part of wider efforts to build up the capabilities of the US-trained force.

So far, about 22,000 M16s have been issued to the nearly 200,000-strong army, he says.

“There is a big investigation ... this is very serious,” said General Abadi. “We will not tolerate anyone losing an M16.” He says the soldiers are now in jail pending the investigation.

Clashes between militiamen and the police in the city of Kut, about 100 miles southeast of Baghdad, since Tuesday have left at least 13 people dead including two policemen.

[T]he fighting was sparked when militiamen attacked the police and seized four of their newly issued vehicles.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“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

**“No Shit, Really, Can Any Of You
In Iraqnam Or Afghannam Ever Go
Back To The Petty Bullshit Of
Stateside Duty Again?”**

**“The Brass Did Not Want Us Going
Back To Regular Duly Stations And
Infecting Soldiers With Our Anti-
Military Mindset”**

**“One Year Of Combat In Vietnam Ruined
Us From Ever Being Able To Pull
Stateside Duty Again”**

2.26.08

To: GI Special

From: Comrade Tribune [Vietnam Veteran]

I wonder if Americans can pull the lever for McCain who wants a ‘hundred year war?’”

If the Demorats win and actually start reducing troops levels in Iraq, will those troops be rotated home?

If they are rotated home, will they go back to duty stations they had before Iraq?

What about the National Guard and Reserves?

What is going to happen with them?

Tue GI revolt in Vietnam started in earnest in 1967-68.

We were not refusing orders or missions with the units I was in, but we were fragging officers and nco's who fucked with us or endangered us by their incompetence.

The organized resistance had not made it 'in country' yet. We didn't even hear about the underground papers or coffee houses back in 'the world.'

I received an early drop or discharge from Valley Forge Hospital when I had about 90 days to go on active duty.

The brass did not want us going back to regular duly stations and infecting soldiers with our anti-military mindset.

One year of combat in Vietnam ruined us from ever being able to pull stateside duty again.

What the fuck do the traitors in DC think have multiple tours done to all of you reading this?

No shit, really, can any of you in Iraqnam or Afghannam ever go back to the petty bullshit of stateside duty again?

Drilling?

Are you fucking shitting me brothers and sisters?

Inspections?

Don't goddamn fucking think so.

What are they going to do with all of you?

Do they want all disgruntled soldiers returned to regular duty so that you can affect those troops who have not been to combat yet?

The fuckheads in DC see how returning vets are joining and leading groups like the IVAW

Look how they attempted to bring charges against some of them for participating in the antiwar struggle. A recent report in a GI Special alerted us to the government revealing Article 15 information and who knows what the hell else to authorities in Canada.

Memo to Canada: comrade Tribune will not be going to goddamn fucking Canada 'a' any fucking time soon. Comrade Tribune had some brig time and Article 15 action.

Charges against returning vets for their anti-war efforts.

Ex-soldiers with Article 15 histories being barred entry to Canada (boy, can't you just see what these fuckers are going to put on our national id's?).

Isolated incidents?

Hmm, don 't think so.

That is our enemy fighting back against us.

Solidarity & respect
Shalom & salaam

Comrade Tribune

“The Parthians - Ancestors Of Present Day Iraqi Insurgents - Annihilated The Legions & Chopped Off Crassus's Head”

19 March 2008 Robert Fisk, Independent [UK]

[On] our historical radars, not even Crassus appeared, the wealthiest Roman general of all, who demanded an emperorship after conquering Macedonia - “Mission Accomplished” - and vengefully set forth to destroy Mesopotamia.

At a spot in the desert near the Euphrates river, the Parthians - ancestors of present day Iraqi insurgents - annihilated the legions, chopped off Crassus's head and sent it back to Rome filled with gold.

Today, they would have videotaped his beheading.

OCCUPATION REPORT

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



Mar 17: US soldiers in an Iraqi citizens home invaded and occupied in Diyala province.
(AFP/File/David Furst)

[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?]

"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!**

Welcome To Happy, Peaceful, Liberated Baghdad; “I Kept Calling Najam But His Phone Was Switched Off”

March 17 2008 Ghaith Abdul-Ahad in Baghdad, The Guardian [Excerpts]

Baghdad was never a beautiful city.

A sprawling sea of low rise, dusty concrete cubes with few green spaces, it is a typical Middle Eastern architectural disaster, expanding without any real urban planning from the 1950s.

But if you knew the city you could find your corners: a narrow, zigzagging alleyway, an Ottoman courtyard, the shade of a lemon tree in spring.

One of my favourites was the Mutanabi book market.

The cafes and teahouses lining the old street had become a hangout for journalists, poets and artists, and with them had come the book market. It was here that I used to buy my illegal photocopies of Marx's Communist Manifesto - in Arabic - and Orwell's 1984.

Last week, I went back to Mutanabi.

To reach it I travelled through bullet-pocked Bab al-Mu'adham, past countless checkpoints...

Mutanabi street itself looks like a scene from a second world war movie, a couple of gutted buildings, heaps of garbage in the muddy road. Before the war, booksellers spilled into the road and you had to push and shove to walk down the street; now there were only half a dozen of them.

The street was targeted by a car bomb, killing dozens, a few months ago.

A week later the prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, vowed that he would rebuild the street. When I went there, a lone small concrete mixer had been left in the middle of the road as if to indicate that his excellency's words were taken seriously.

I asked one of my old friends there for a book on a 1960s poet. "Nothing on poetry," he said. "I have lots of books on religion these days. They come from Saudi and Iran, big leather-bound books for only 1,000 dinars (about 40p). Religion sells good."

The Shahbander, one of the city's oldest cafes, where intellectuals once whispered the names of banned novelists and chewed over Sartre, was destroyed by a car bomb.

The owner, Haji Muhammad, sits outside, reading amid piles of rubbish. His five sons died in the bombing, he tells me.

On the eve of the fifth anniversary of the war, I had returned to the city where I was born and lived for 30 years to find out what five years of occupation and civil war had left of the Baghdad I knew.

In the days leading up to the start of the war on March 20 2003, I spent my time cycling through the city with a couple of borrowed cameras, trying to document what was going on. Then I would sit under the big eucalyptus tree outside my favourite cafe, the Side Street Chai-Khaneh, and scribble in a cheap notebook.

Few Baghdadis would try it these days. Most now live in walled, effectively ethnically cleansed, communities.

Travelling across the city means hopping from one frontline to another and negotiating countless militia-controlled fiefdoms.

In the market the vegetable sellers say that each time they bring in food supplies, they must bribe the Iraqi army soldiers manning checkpoints.

“We are worse than Gaza because if they don’t let me through that checkpoint I have to drive all around the area and try to get through another checkpoint, and 99% I will be dead.”

Not far from the checkpoint and behind the famous Abu Hanifa mosque was a small park. Because so many have been killed in the area, and because people can’t move outside it, it has been converted into a cemetery.

Three thousand graves have been dug in two years, according to the man who supervises it.

I drove to the place I once used to sit with friends after school. It is right on the edge of the wall: there are no ordinary people here now, just pockmarked buildings, and a few young militiamen toting guns. Another day, I changed my ID card and car and visited the other side of the wall. It is a poor area, controlled by a Shia militia, some of whose members are affiliated to the Mahdi army.

There were two funeral tents that day, one for Hussein, a young boy whose brother says he was killed mistakenly by the Americans the night before, the other for Jassim, a pick-up driver whose father and cousins say he was killed by the people of Adhamiya.

There is no such thing as a Baghdadi any more. Everyone now is identified with a particular walled neighbourhood, guarded by one of a dozen or so militias.

Compared to much of Baghdad, my beloved Side Street Cafe has changed relatively little. It’s nothing more than a metal table with a gas burner, a few huge copper kettles, and a couple of metal tables on the pavement.

Before the war it was run by two chubby brothers, Hayder and Ali - Ali always smiling, Hayder always grumpy. Immediately after the war the compulsory Saddam portrait was

replaced by an assortment of bearded clerics. Then they, too, were replaced by a single, fleshy, bearded face - Moqtada al-Sadr.

Now Moqtada has given way to posters of Hakim, the new cleric on the block. It is his militia that dominates this neighbourhood, Karrada. When I returned a week ago, there was no sign of Ali, and Hayder was a little chubbier.

Though the area has had its share of car bombs, it remained relatively immune from sectarian killings.

Karrada seemed a rare oasis of safety. Its relative calm made it a favourite backdrop for TV journalists voicing pieces to camera about how things were getting better in the Iraqi capital.

A few days ago, I was heading back to Karrada.

Suddenly I heard the thump of an explosion, the traffic stopped, cars reversed and started driving on the wrong side of the road, bullets were fired and ambulance cars raced in and out of the area.

Smoke began to rise from two explosions that had killed 68 people and injured 120.

Karrada's tranquillity had been shattered. The next day the stores were empty and there were no shoppers on the street.

I kept calling Najam but his phone was switched off.

Great Expectation: “I Discovered That I Was Deceived”

3.18. 2008 By Correspondent Jenan, [Baghdad] washingtonbureau.typepad.com/iraq/

Five years ago, just like this day, one day before starting a freedom war, yes that what I thought. I had big dreams, large hopes of salvation from what we were live with Saddam regime.

There was image stick in my mind from childish movies when the hero defeat the wizard, and every thing get better, the dry trees turn to green, rivers run again and hearing the voice of birds singing round with happiness.

Honestly, I can say I was flying with my great expectations of what would happen tomorrow.

I wasn't waiting for a war. I was waiting for new life that is full with justice, fair, happiness, hope and love.

I was waiting for the war of change.

Even I vowed to God sacrifice sheep if we get rid of Saddam occupation of Iraq that what we believe at that time we were living under Saddam's occupation.

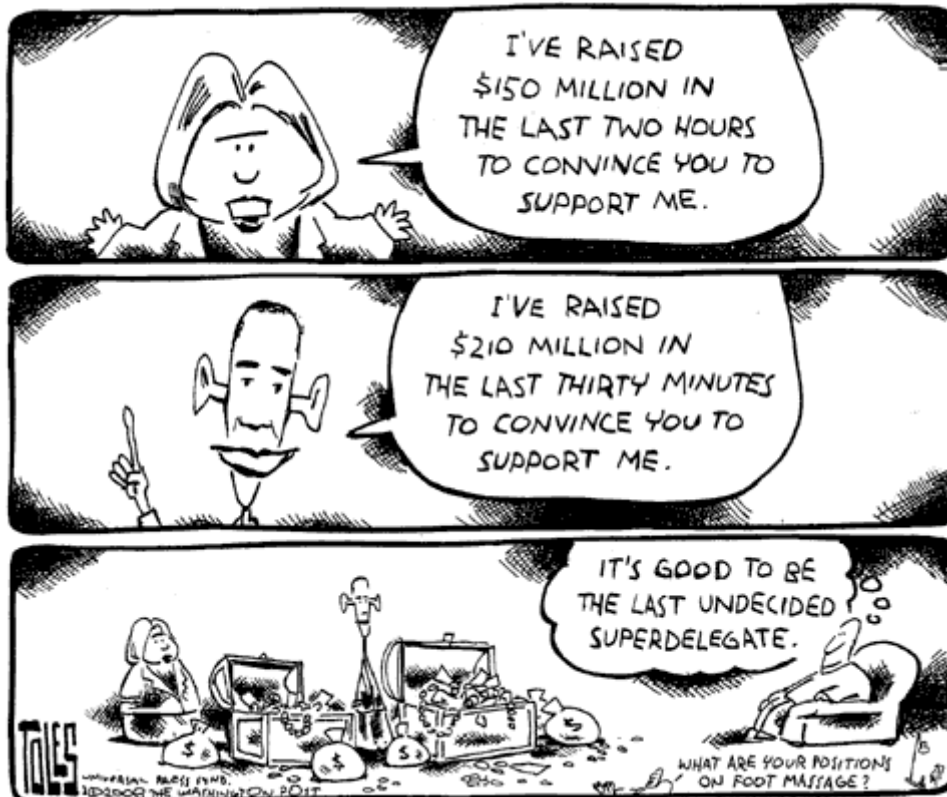
I was happy, excited, and optimistic. Yes I was optimistic at that time.

I believed all the pretexts of war because I was look like the drowned who is cling to a straw thinking that it will save him.

Unfortunately now I feel that I'm drowning more and more.

I discovered that I was deceived and now I believe the old saying "the devil that you know is better than the devil that you don't know"

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



Bush Says Resistance Will Win In Iraq

March. 19, 2008 MSNBC

“The battle in Iraq is noble, it is necessary, and it is just. And with your courage the battle in Iraq will end in victory.” George W. Bush, March 19, 2008

**LIAR
TRAITOR
TROOP-KILLER
DOMESTIC ENEMY
UNFIT FOR COMMAND
UNWORTHY OF OBEDIENCE**



(Joshua Roberts/Reuters)

McCain Concludes Fact-Hiding Mission To Iraq 'Omission Accomplished'

Presumptive G.O.P. nominee John McCain wrapped up his fact-hiding mission to Iraq today, declaring the trip an unqualified success.

"My friends, I came to Iraq to hide the facts about the way the war is going, and in that I have succeeded," Sen. McCain told reporters. "Omission accomplished."

Sen. McCain praised his campaign staff for steering clear of visual evidence of recent violence in Baghdad: "Thanks to the hard work of my advance team, the surge has the appearance of working."

The Arizona senator said that his trip to Iraq was successful in part because he was able to obscure the actual facts with new facts of his own creation.

"It's a well known fact that Iran is training al-Qaeda," Sen. McCain said. "And if it wasn't a well-known fact before, it is now."

In a speech commemorating the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, President Bush echoed Sen. McCain's fact-hiding theme.

"As far as the war is concerned, the facts speak for themselves," Mr. Bush said. "So I won't mention any of them."

CLASS WAR REPORTS



The World Pukes Up A Bankrupt Empire: Foreign Investors Quit Loaning U.S. Government Their Money; “On The Richter Scale Of Unfolding Dramas, This Matches The Death Of Bear Stearns”

17/03/2008 By Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, International Business Editor

As feared, foreign bond holders have begun to exercise a collective vote of no confidence in the devaluation policies of the US government.

Asian, Mid East and European investors stood aside at last week's auction of 10-year US Treasury notes.

“It was a disaster,” said Ray Attrill from 4castweb. “We may be close to the point where the uglier consequences of benign neglect towards the currency are revealed.”

The share of foreign buyers (“indirect bidders”) plummeted to 5.8%, from an average 25% over the last eight weeks.

On the Richter Scale of unfolding dramas, this matches the death of Bear Stearns.

Rightly or wrongly, a view has taken hold that Washington is cynically debasing the coinage, hoping to export its day of reckoning through beggar-thy-neighbour policies.

It is not my view. I believe the forces of debt deflation now engulfing America - and soon half the world - are so powerful that nobody will be worrying about inflation a year hence.

Troops Invited:

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send email contact@militaryproject.org. Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Replies confidential. Same address to unsubscribe.

DEFEND THE FREIGHTLINER 5! SOLIDARITY TOUR

**Saturday
March 29th 5pm**

**Musicians Local 802 Hall
322 West 48th Street
New York City
[Take the 1 or C/E train to 50th Street]**

March 21, 2008 Via New York City Labor Against The War

THE FREIGHTLINER 5--Robert Whiteside, Allen Bradley, Franklin Torrence, Glenna Swinford and David Crisco--are members of the negotiating committee of United Auto Workers Local 3520 in Cleveland, NC.

They were fired by Freightliner in April 2007 after leading a walkout when management broke off negotiations without extending the union contract.

Since then, the workers have been appealing for support to keep up the fight as an arbitrator prepares to hear their case.

Their speaking tour has included stops in Detroit, Chicago, San Francisco, L.A. and Portland (Freightliner's corporate headquarters). The importance of a victory in this struggle is magnified due to the historic weakness of the U.S. labor movement in the South.

Join us in the spirit of solidarity with these dedicated and heroic trade unionists as they seek justice.

Help raise money for their defense campaign and find out how you can help win their jobs back!

Learn more at <http://justice4five.com>

Robert Whiteside
Union official and strike leader, UAW Local 3520 and NAACP activist.

Allen Bradley
UAW's Voluntary Organizing Committee (VOC), strike leader, UAW local 3520 and NAACP.

Stanley Aronowitz
Professor of Sociology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.
Author, Left Turn Forging a New Political Future, Member of PSC, AFT Local 2334.

Sponsored by the Ad-Hoc Committee to Support the Freightliner 5

Endorsed by: Chris Silvera, Secretary-Treasurer, Teamsters local 808, Labor Notes, AAUP-AFT (Rutgers), UFTers to Stop the War, New York City Labor Against War.

New Orleans: “Stop The Demolition!”

March 19, 2008 By Katy Reckdahl, Times-Picayune [Excerpts]

With clouds of dust, falling bricks and rumbling bulldozers as a backdrop, three ardent public-housing activists were handcuffed Tuesday after a short protest in front of the partially demolished St. Bernard housing development.

About 30 protesters held signs scrawled on bedsheets and poster boards, using a bullhorn to shout, “Stop the demolition!” For months now, activists have shouted the same message in response to the plans of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to level and redevelop the “Big Four” developments: the St. Bernard, Lafitte, C.J. Peete and B.W. Cooper complexes.

This time they were prompted by news that a growing probe into the actions of HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson’s might extend to the Housing Authority of New Orleans.

“The demolition should be put on hold,” said Kawana Jasper, who before the storm lived in a building on Gibson Street that already has been demolished. On Tuesday about 10:30 a.m., New Orleans Police Department officers stood across Milton Street from the protesters and shouted, “This is now a crime scene.”

Anyone who remained in the demolition zone, behind the yellow-plastic caution tape, would be arrested, they said.

Three protesters who objected to being shuffled outside the cordoned-off area were handcuffed and taken away in a police van.

Kawana Jasper was arrested, along with her mother, Sharon Jasper, and longtime protester Jay Arena. Arena and the elder Jasper

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

GI Special issues are archived at website <http://www.militaryproject.org> .

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

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