

GI SPECIAL 6E2:



**Combat Report:
Behind The Lines With The
Mahdi Army:
Weapons Range “From Mainly
American-Made Guns, Including M16
And M18 Rifles, To Homemade
Roadside Bombs”
“Our Bombs Are Not Iranian-Made –
They Are Produced Locally,” Said One**

Commander. “Any Mahdi Fighter Can Put One Together”

“One of the officers with the Iraqi army is a Mahdi sympathiser and he arranged for me to be released within two hours,” he said with a smile. “We have quite a number of Mahdi people in the army and they tip us off about certain movements.”

May 4, 2008 By Hala Jaber, The Sunday Times [Excerpts]

The fight between Sadr and Maliki, between the dirt-poor who look to the firebrand cleric for inspiration and the relatively secure who support the prime minister, is one that neither side can afford to lose.

“We can bring Baghdad to a standstill,” boasted one Mahdi commander. “Be assured that when all-out war is eventually declared, we will be able to take over the city.”

No sooner had I arrived in Sadr City than my escorts received word that an attack was about to be launched on Al-Quds Road, the dividing line between the Mahdi forces to the north and the Iraqi army to the south.

Sand was swirling through the air as a fresh storm stirred and the men knew this presented them with an opportunity.

“Allah is on our side,” said one. “They bombard us with artillery, war planes and helicopters at will.

“Maliki has the entire US air force behind his army and all we need is a bit of sand to bring it to a standstill.”

As we reached the narrow streets that ran down to Al-Quds Road, nothing appeared to be out of the ordinary at first.

But one by one, young men in western jeans and T-shirts appeared from the alleyways with machineguns or rifles slung across their shoulders. They grinned, patted each other’s backs and uttered the greeting “Peace be with you”, before getting down to the business of war.

Two snipers had already entered shattered buildings overlooking the highway beyond which the Iraqi army was hunkered down.

The dozen or so fighters who had congregated in front of me ran forwards 50 yards to take up their positions. Then one of them briefly broke cover to open fire with his AK47 assault rifle. Another stepped round a corner and unleashed a volley of bullets from a heavy-calibre machinegun, followed by another and another.

As the Mahdi positions came under equally heavy machinegun fire in turn, the noise reached a crescendo with an exchange of mortar rounds that smashed shops on either side of Al-Quds Road, showering the whole area with shards of debris. The cacophony

faded, only to be replaced by the whizz of snipers' bullets shooting up the street. It was time to take cover.

My escort hammered on the gates of the nearest house and a woman ushered me into her courtyard, introducing herself as Salma Jamila, an unmarried teacher aged 40 who lived with her elderly parents. When she heard that I had come to report on the fighting, she fetched a small plastic chair and propped it against the yard wall so that I could peep over it to see what was happening.

Evidently a cool hostess in a crisis, she disappeared into her kitchen and returned beaming with bottles of orange juice on a tray as mortar rounds crashed on to the road less than 100 yards away.

Stranger still, another guest arrived, a cousin and Mahdi Army commander named Abu Ali who was enjoying a day off. He hugged Jamila, explained that he had come to visit her father and chatted away about how he had been arrested a few days earlier.

“One of the officers with the Iraqi army is a Mahdi sympathiser and he arranged for me to be released within two hours,” he said with a smile. “We have quite a number of Mahdi people in the army and they tip us off about certain movements.”

The violence died down as suddenly as it had flared up and some of the fighters shouted that it was all over. A man with a relaxed manner and a Russian rifle on his back sauntered past. I asked him how old he was.

“Twenty-three,” he answered. “Young for a sniper,” I said. He shrugged.

“I killed two Iraqi soldiers,” he replied, and strolled away.

Another passing fighter, a well-built man with fair skin, said he had set fire to an Iraqi tank with a rocket. There was no way to verify either account.

The men exchanged information for a few moments before walking off in different directions. Some were collected by cars as they approached neighbouring streets incongruously thronged with shoppers inured to shooting and buying food for the evening meal.

It was around 6pm, as we were driving towards the centre of Sadr City, that another call came through and we headed back to the front line.

This time Mahdi fighters were trying to push back Iraqi army and American forces.

Several people were said to be buried under collapsed buildings and the Mahdi Army – which, like Hezbollah in Lebanon, has made itself popular by providing welfare services to local people – had decided to take responsibility for rescuing them, even if that meant fighting its way to the scene.

Driving along roads lined with open sewers, past children playing football in winding alleys and old women peering out from their doorways, we reached a point where men on street corners were handing cold water to fighters taking a break from the front line.

We parked and moved forwards through ranks of Mahdi Army fighters who had lined an alleyway with rocket-launchers, rifles and machineguns. The sound of sniper fire intensified but the hardened militiamen who were accompanying me paid no attention.

The regular thud of mortars and the relentless clatter of machineguns indicated that the fighting here was far more intense than it had been earlier on Al-Quds Road.

As we rounded a corner, I noticed a school 100 yards ahead on the right-hand side. I was wondering how long it would be before the pupils could return when an explosion almost knocked us off our feet. An artillery shell had landed in the playground and the classrooms were shattered by shrapnel.

I froze with fear. For the second time that day, a fighter rapped on the nearest house gate and I was beckoned into a secluded courtyard. So shaken was I that my legs barely carried me into the house. I squatted on the floor to catch my breath.

Three spinsters produced a large bottle of fizzy drink from a shop they ran from their house. As before, the fighting subsided after about half an hour and we returned to our vehicle. The inconclusive nature of both confrontations witnessed suggested that neither side could be confident of gaining the upper hand.

The Iraqi army may have the superior fire-power but Mahdi commanders were eager to show off their own arsenal.

Seven of them gathered in a single-storey concrete house to display weapons ranging from mainly American-made guns, including M16 and M18 rifles, to homemade roadside bombs known as raaed, or thunder.

“Our bombs are not Iranian-made – they are produced locally,” said one commander. “Any Mahdi fighter can put one together.”

The plastic cylinders packed with gunpowder, TNT and C4 explosives came in four sizes, he explained: 5kg and 15kg for use against small military vehicles, and 25kg and 50kg against armoured personnel carriers.

Another commander, who gave his name as Abu Ahmad, was limping from an injury sustained one week into the battle when his unit set an American tank on fire, only to be wiped out by a helicopter gunship.

He spoke softly as he described seeing his best friend, Uday al-Dulemi, killed in front of him.

Dulemi’s father refused to accept condolences and insisted that his “martyred” son’s burial be treated as his wedding day. He said that if his three other sons in the Mahdi Army were killed too, he would volunteer himself.

The Mahdi Army also claims to have a secret weapon at its disposal. Its elite special forces, called “The Nerves of the Righteous – the Islamic Resistance in Iraq”, are said to be lying in wait in sleeper cells across the country, ready to carry out unspecified “spectacular” attacks against coalition forces.

According to a senior aide to Moqtada al-Sadr, they are capable of raining down missiles on the heavily protected Green Zone where the Iraqi government and US military are based, causing disarray among Iraq's security forces and halting the work of ministries.

They have also created a potential "ring of fire" around Sadr City that could be ignited in the event of a full-scale offensive by Maliki.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Four Marines Killed By Anbar IED

May 4, 2008 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20080504-03 & AP

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – Four Multi-National Force – West Marines were killed in action May 2 when their vehicle was attacked by an enemy force with an improvised explosive device in al Anbar Province.

Friday's attack was the most lethal in the province since Sept. 6, when four Marines were killed in combat.

Two Georgian Military Servicemen Killed In Diyala

03 May 2008

Two Georgian soldiers in Iraq died. Lieutenant Giorgi Margiev and Corporal Zurab Gvenetadze were assigned to the 13 Battalion of 1st Infantry Brigade. Junior Sergeant Tengiz Mirtskulava of above mentioned battalion was wounded.

The unpleasant incident took place in province Diyala, 35 km away from Baghdad in May 2. Georgian soldiers were moving from Base CLEAR for performing mission, when their vehicle encountered an improvised explosive device.

The wounded soldier was ambulated in Baghdad for rendering medical assistance. Killed servicemen will convey to Georgia as soon as possible. Funeral charges will be covered by the Ministry of Defence of Georgia. Indemnity in amount of 15 thousands GEL will be paid to the families of killed soldiers as well.

U.S. Soldier Killed In Baghdad

May 3 (Reuters)

A U.S. soldier died from wounds sustained when a roadside bomb struck his vehicle during a combat patrol in eastern Baghdad on Friday, the U.S. military said.

Green Beret From Magnolia Dies During Firefight In Iraq



April 21, 2008 By DALE LEZON, Houston Chronicle

A Houston-area soldier killed last week in Iraq was a decorated Green Beret on his second tour in the war-torn country.

Army Staff Sgt. Jason L. Brown, 29, of Magnolia, died Thursday during a firefight in Sama village, Department of Defense officials announced.

He is the third local military service member to be killed in Iraq during the last two weeks.

A woman who answered the phone at his parents' home in Cartwright, Okla., declined to comment. She said that Brown's parents were too overcome with grief to speak. He had lived in Magnolia, she said.

An Army spokesman said Brown's parents did not want information about their son released.

However, Army officials said that he died from wounds suffered when enemy forces attacked his unit with small arms and grenades early in the morning.

He was hit by small arms fire, Army officials said, while he was trying to enter a building during an operation to capture an al-Qaida leader in the village. He died instantly.

Brown, a Texas native, enlisted in the Army on March 25, 2003, and became a member of the Special Forces the following year. He was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group, Fort Campbell, Ky.

He was awarded the Bronze Star and a Purple Heart as well as medals for meritorious service.

In addition to his parents, James and Rosemary Brown, Brown is survived by his daughter, Alyssa Gomez, of Cypress, Army officials said.

Funeral arrangements had not been made by late Monday.

There have been 101 military service members with strong connections to Houston killed so far in Iraq. Eight service members with strong ties to Houston have been killed in Afghanistan.

San Diego Sergeant Killed In Iraq

April 9, 2008 SIGN ON SAN DIEGO NEWS SERVICES

SAN DIEGO – A 22-year-old Army sergeant from San Diego has been killed by enemy fire in Iraq, authorities said.

Sgt. Richard A. Vaughn died Monday in Baghdad when enemy forces attacked using a rocket-propelled grenade, improvised explosive device and small arms fire, the Defense Department reported.

Vaughn was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, based in Fort Hood, Texas.

In honor of Sgt. Vaughn, Capitol flags are being flown at half-staff.

Great Moments In The History Of U.S. Armed Forces Criminals In Command: The Air Strike At Baghdad's Al-Sadr Hospital;

“The Attack Was Aimed At Preventing Doctors And Medicines Reaching The Hospital”



The al-Sadr hospital compound after U.S. air attack in Baghdad's Sadr City May 3, 2008 wounded 20 people including women and children, and incinerating or damaging 11 ambulances, police and hospital sources said. (Kareem Raheem/Reuters)

[Thanks to JM, who sent this in.]

May 3 by Jacques Charmelot (AFP) & AP & 5.4 AP

A US air strike damaged a hospital in the Iraqi capital's Sadr City on Saturday, injuring 20 people.

"I can confirm that we conducted a strike in Sadr City this morning," a US military spokesman told AFP. "The targets were known criminal elements. Battle damage assessment is currently ongoing."

However, witnesses and an AFP reporter at the scene said the main Al-Sadr hospital had been badly damaged and a fleet of ambulances were destroyed.

Dr. Ali Bustan al-Fartusee, director general of Baghdad's health directorate, told the AP that 23 civilians were injured in the strike.

Just outside the hospital, a shack which appeared to be the target was reduced to a pile of rubble.



Iraq citizens gather to condemn the U.S. occupation and allied local government at al-Sadr hospital compound in Baghdad's Sadr City May 3, 2008, after a U.S. air attack.
REUTERS/Kareem Raheem

Hospital staff said at least 20 people wounded in the air raid were taken to the same hospital which had its glass windows shattered, and medical and electrical equipment damaged.

Doctors and hospital staff were livid they had been hit.

"They (the Americans) will say it was a weapons cache (they hit)," said the head of Baghdad's health department, Dr Ali Bistan. "But, in fact they want to destroy the infrastructure of the country."

He charged that the attack was aimed at preventing doctors and medicines reaching the hospital which is located inside an area of increased clashes between American troops and militiamen.

The corridors of the hospital were littered with glass splinters, twisted metal and hanging electrical wiring. Partitions in wards had collapsed.

The huge concrete blocks forming a protective wall against explosions had collapsed on parked vehicles, including up to 17 ambulances, disabling the emergency response teams.

Nurse Zahra was recovering from the shock of the attack.

"I was very afraid. I thought I would die. Everyone was scared. They ran in all directions," she told AFP. "Now I am more sad than frightened because hospital facilities have been destroyed."

Hospital guard Alaa Mohamed, 26, was at a side entrance when the bombs exploded. "There were five missiles that exploded outside the parking lot," he said.

An AFP reporter saw three huge craters, each with a diameter of six metres (yards), created by the impact of the explosions. Youngsters climbed on top of the rubble and looked for anyone trapped underneath.

Iraqi health officials said at least 10 people — including two children — were killed in the past 24 hours in the Baghdad neighborhood of Sadr City,

MORE:

**The Geneva Convention;
Grounds For Immediate Arrest, Court-
Martial And Condign Punishment Of The
Dishonorable Coward In Command Who
Ordered This Attack, And For Each And
Every Superior Officers Who Refuses To
Enforce The Law Of Land Warfare
Against That Officer**



Ambulances destroyed by U.S. air attack on Al-Sadr hospital in Sadr City, May 3, 2008.
(AP Photo/ Karim Kadim)

Civilian hospitals organized to give care to the wounded and sick, the infirm and maternity cases, may in no circumstances be the object of attack, but shall at all times be respected and protected by the Parties to the conflict.

Persons regularly and solely engaged in the operation and administration of civilian hospitals, including the personnel engaged in the search for, removal and transporting of and caring for wounded and sick civilians, the infirm and maternity cases, shall be respected and protected.

(Geneva Convention, Art. 19)

MORE:

Good News For The Iraqi Resistance!!

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

May 4, 2008 By Hala Jaber, The Sunday Times [Excerpts]

On a bare patch of ground outside the entrance to Sadr general hospital, 15 women clad from head to foot in black squatted in a sandstorm, wailing and waiting for their dead.

Lightning flashed, thunder rolled and the women's robes were spattered with mud falling from a sky filled with rain and sand, but they did not notice.

"Ya'mma, Ya'ba" ("Oh mother, oh father"), cried Amira Zaydan, a 45-year-old spinster, slapping her face and chest as she grieved for her parents Jaleel, 65, and Hanounah, 60, whose house had exploded after being hit by an American rocket.

"Where are you, my brothers?" she sobbed, lamenting Samir, 32, and Amir, 29, who had also perished along with their wives, one of whom was nine months pregnant.

"What wrong have you done, my children?" she howled to the spirits of four nephews and nieces who completed a toll of 10 family members in the disaster that struck last Tuesday. "Mothers, children, babies; all obliterated for nothing."

The keening of Zaydan and her distraught circle of friends was drowned out briefly by sirens shrieking as ambulances sped through the hospital gateway with the latest

consignment of casualties from a brutal battle that has been raging for the past month in Sadr City, a slum of more than 2m souls on the eastern side of Baghdad.

Doctors and nurses with pinched faces darted out of the dilapidated hospital to greet the wounded and dying, while administrators stared at the weeping women and saw that they were beyond comforting.

Zaydan had hardly moved from the hospital for 24 hours since her family's home was demolished as she and her sister Samira, 43, prepared lunch. Neighbours were trying to dig bodies out of the debris when another rocket landed, killing at least six rescuers.

Apart from the two sisters, the family's only survivor was their brother Ahmad, 25, who arrived at the hospital with leg injuries and shock. "I lost everybody," was all he could say.

On Wednesday afternoon, Zaydan was still waiting for seven family members to be disinterred from the rubble and delivered to Sadr general. The other three were in the morgue, among them a nephew, aged three, lying on a trolley in a puddle of blood from a head wound.

"I blame Maliki and his government and all those who are sitting in power and letting this happen," she said. Then she burst into tears and walked away.

ENOUGH OF THIS SHIT; ALL HOME NOW



A U.S. army soldier from 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment during foot patrol on the outskirts of Baqouba, northeast of Baghdad Jan. 2, 2008. (AP Photo/Marko Drobnjakovic)

Tikrit Insurgent Identified

[From Iraq Coalition Casualties report:]

“05/03/08 Reuters: Roadside bob kills 2 Iraqi soldiers near Tikrit”

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

British Soldier Killed In Nowzad; Three Wounded

May 3 By MATTHEW PENNINGTON, Associated Press Writer

Britain's Defense Ministry said in a statement that a soldier was killed on patrol in Afghanistan and three others injured when their vehicle struck a land mine.

The ministry said the incident happened Friday afternoon during a routine patrol in the Nowzad area in southern Afghanistan's Helmand province.

The soldier was pronounced dead on arrival at the British military base in Helmand known as Camp Bastion. The three others are being treated for their injuries.

Facts Are Stubborn Things

May 3, 2008 DOUG SAUNDERS, Globe and Mail

In Nangarhar, insurgent attacks have increased sharply despite a doubling in the number of U.S. soldiers.

TROOP NEWS

**Stop-Loss Extended Into 2009:
“12,230 Soldiers Are Under Stop-Loss
Orders, Compared To 8,540 In May 2007,
During The Surge”**



May 3, 2008 By Michelle Tan, Army Times [Excerpts]

Last year's surge of five combat brigades into Iraq helped drive a 43-percent increase in soldiers being barred from leaving the service under stop-loss orders, and Army leaders predict the policy will remain in place at least through next year.

More than 12,230 soldiers are under stop-loss orders, compared to 8,540 in May 2007, during the surge.

But the 30,000 combat troops that were part of the surge are in the process of coming home, and the Army is returning to 12-month deployments Aug. 1. Because soldiers are placed under stop-loss as members of deploying units, reducing the numbers sent to war reduces the numbers involuntarily held.

Under stop-loss policies, active-duty soldiers within 90 days of retirement or obligated service are barred from leaving the Army if they are in units alerted for deployment. Reservists and National Guard members are barred from leaving if their units have been alerted for mobilization.

In March 2005, 15,758 soldiers fell under stop-loss orders, the most for any month between November 2004 and March 2008, according to Army data. The numbers stayed between 10,000 and 13,000 for about two years after that and fell to an all-time low of 8,540 in May 2007.

But the trend reversed the next month as the last of the five surge brigades flowed into Iraq and soldiers settled into 15-month tours.

At the end of March, the most recent month for which data are available, 6,868 active Army soldiers, 3,879 Army National Guard and 1,488 Army Reserve soldiers were affected by stop-loss.

Until then, the number of active Army troops forced to stay beyond their initial enlistments had remained relatively consistent since September, ranging from 6,322 to 7,690.

Much of the increase in March can be attributed to a spike among Guard soldiers — the 3,879 soldiers stop-lossed during that month make up the largest group of Guardsmen affected by the policy since November 2004.

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. Phone: 917.677.8057

**Army Officers And KBR War
Profiteers In Iraq & Afghanistan
Were Warned Their Shitty Work
Was Electrocuting U.S. Troops;
They Said Complaints About Deadly
Wiring Was “Not Giving The Soldiers
What They Deserved”
Honest, Honorable Workers Who
Complained Ignored Or Fired**

**This Is SSG Maseth:
Murdered By Corporate Greed And By**

Army Officer Scum Who Lied To Protect War Profiteers:



Staff Sgt. Ryan D. Maseth with his mother, Cheryl Harris. Sergeant Harris, a Green Beret, was electrocuted while taking a shower in an Army compound in Baghdad three months ago. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, via Associated Press

[Here's a plan: give these Army officers & KBR bosses responsible "what they deserve": trial for premeditated murder and the appropriate punishment for that offense. Thanks to Alan Stolzer, The Military Project & Phil G, who sent this in. T]

And Mr. Bliss, who saw a soldier standing next to him in Qalat, Afghanistan, receive a severe shock from an electrical box that was not supposed to be charged, said his KBR bosses mocked him for raising safety issues. They were "not giving the Army what it needed," he said, "and not giving the soldiers what they deserved."

May 4, 2008 By JAMES RISEN, The New York Times [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON — In October 2004, the United States Army issued an urgent bulletin to commanders across Iraq, warning them of a deadly new threat to American soldiers. Because of flawed electrical work by contractors, the bulletin stated, soldiers at American bases in Iraq had received severe electrical shocks, and some had even been electrocuted.

The bulletin, with the headline "The Unexpected Killer," was issued after the horrific deaths of two soldiers who were caught in water — one in a shower, the other in a swimming pool — that was suddenly electrified after poorly grounded wiring short-circuited.

"We've had several shocks in showers and near misses here in Baghdad, as well as in other parts of the country," Frank Trent, an expert with the Army Corps of Engineers, wrote in the bulletin. "As we install temporary and permanent power on our projects, we must ensure that we require contractors to properly ground electrical systems."

Since that warning, at least two more American soldiers have been electrocuted in similar circumstances. In all, at least a dozen American military personnel have been electrocuted in Iraq, according to the Pentagon and Congressional investigators.

Many more soldiers have been injured by shocks, Pentagon officials and soldiers say.

American electricians who worked for KBR, the Houston-based defense contractor that is responsible for maintaining American bases in Iraq and Afghanistan, said they repeatedly warned company managers and military officials about unsafe electrical work, which was often performed by poorly trained Iraqis and Afghans paid just a few dollars a day.

One electrician warned his KBR bosses in his 2005 letter of resignation that unsafe electrical work was “a disaster waiting to happen.” Another said he witnessed an American soldier in Afghanistan receiving a potentially lethal shock.

A third provided e-mail messages and other documents showing that he had complained to KBR and the government that logs were created to make it appear that nonexistent electrical safety systems were properly functioning.

[KBR electricians] have a ready response to anyone who suggests that poor electrical work might be considered an unavoidable cost of war.

“The excuse KBR always used was, ‘This is a war zone — what do you expect?’ ” recalled Jeffrey Bliss, an Ohio electrician who worked for the company in Afghanistan in 2005 and 2006. “But if you are going to do the work, you have got to do it safe.”

Since the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, tens of thousands of American troops have been housed in pre-existing Iraqi government buildings, some of them dangerously dilapidated.

As part of its \$30 billion contract with the Pentagon in Iraq, KBR was required to repair and upgrade many of the buildings, including their electrical systems.

The company handles maintenance for 4,000 structures and 35,000 containerized housing units in the war zone, according to the Pentagon.

Lawmakers and government investigators say it is now clear that the Bush administration outsourced so much work to KBR and other contractors in Iraq that the agencies charged with oversight have been overwhelmed. The Defense Contracting Management Agency has more than 9,000 employees, but it has only 60 contract officers in Iraq and 30 in Afghanistan to supervise nearly 18,000 KBR employees in Iraq and 4,400 in Afghanistan handling base maintenance.

“All the contract officers can do is check the paperwork,” said one agency official, who asked not to be identified.

According to the Army warning bulletin, two deaths occurred 10 days apart in May 2004 at different bases in northern Iraq.

A later victim, Staff Sgt. Christopher L. Everett, 23, of the Texas National Guard, was electrocuted in September 2005 while power-washing a Humvee at Camp Taqaddum, in central Iraq near Falluja.

His mother, Lorraine McGee of Huntsville, Tex., said Army officials told her that the equipment he was using was connected to a generator that was not properly grounded, and that other soldiers using the equipment had previously complained of shocks.

“We were told that as a result of his death all the generators were being repaired and that it wouldn’t happen again,” Ms. McGee said. “But if it is still going on, something’s not right.”

The most recent fatality occurred on Jan. 2 in Baghdad, when Staff Sgt. Ryan D. Maseth, a Green Beret, died in a shower after an improperly grounded water pump short-circuited.

Nearly a year earlier, KBR issued a technical report to the contracting agency citing safety concerns related to the grounding and wiring in the building in the Radwaniyah Palace Complex, where Sergeant Maseth’s unit, the Army Fifth Special Forces Group, was housed.

Another soldier said in an interview that he was repeatedly shocked in the shower in December 2007 and submitted requests for repairs.

But nothing was done until the day after Sergeant Maseth’s death, when the defense agency ordered KBR to correct the problem, according to Pentagon documents.

Cheryl Harris, Sergeant Maseth’s mother, said in an interview that the Army initially told her that her son had taken an electrical appliance into the shower with him.

Later, she said, officials told her that investigators had found electrical wires hanging down around the shower.

She said she had been skeptical of both accounts and learned the truth only after repeatedly questioning Army officials.

Her family has filed a wrongful death lawsuit against KBR, the only such claim brought in any of the electrical deaths.

“I knew Ryan would not get into a shower with an electrical appliance, and having wires hanging overhead didn’t make sense,” said Ms. Harris, of Cranberry Township, Pa.

“My biggest question is really, why would KBR do a safety inspection, know about the electrical problems and not alert the troops?”

Long before Sergeant Maseth’s death, KBR electricians were raising alarms about the dangers of unsafe electrical work at various bases.

In 2006, John McLain was working as a KBR electrician at the United States regional embassy compound in Hilla, south of Baghdad, when he made a disturbing discovery.



At a 173rd Airborne base in Shin Kay, Afghanistan, in 2005, an outdoor, 200-ampere breaker panel, above, was uncovered and wired from the top. Its exposure to water made it unsafe, said Jeffrey Bliss, an electrician who worked for KBR, the military contractor.

A KBR quality control inspector had recently cited employees there for failing to file quarterly ground resistance testing logs — reports on whether the electrical wiring in the newly upgraded embassy building was properly grounded and safe for use.

Mr. McLain soon realized that the testing was not being conducted, because the building had never been grounded, though KBR and at least one Iraqi subcontractor were supposed to install proper safeguards during a renovation the previous year. Mr. McLain said he had sent a series of increasingly blunt memos and e-mail warnings about the safety hazards to KBR officials.

“It’s like driving a car without a seat belt,” he explained. “You can get away with it for a while, but eventually it could kill you.”

Mr. McLain said other KBR electricians later created logs that incorrectly made it appear that the grounding system existed.

KBR fired him in 2007 after he told a visiting defense contracting agency official about his concerns.

His candor proved useless, however. Mr. McLain said that the contracting agency official showed no interest. “He said, ‘I’m not an electrician; I don’t know what you are talking about,’ ” Mr. McLain recalled.

Noris Rogers, who worked for KBR in Afghanistan in 2005, said he repeatedly complained to his supervisors that electrical work at Camp Eggers, the American

military's command base in Kabul, Afghanistan, did not meet the requirements of the company's Pentagon contract.

And Mr. Bliss, who saw a soldier standing next to him in Qalat, Afghanistan, receive a severe shock from an electrical box that was not supposed to be charged, said his KBR bosses mocked him for raising safety issues. They were "not giving the Army what it needed," he said, "and not giving the soldiers what they deserved."

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. Phone: 917.677.8057

The International Longshore And Warehouse Union Strike Against The War: May 1, 2008:



Dressed in black jackets decked with medals and buttons, the ILWU Drill Team kicked off their West Coast work stoppage by clanging down Market Street, twirling cargo hooks

in their precision routine -- literally abandoning ship in honor of International Workers Day May 1.



Grand Lake Theater, Oakland, CA

05/01/2008 By Francine Brevetti, Staff Writer, Insidebayarea.com [Excerpts] & May 2nd, 2008: U.S. Labor Against The War [Photos]

In a statement Thursday, the International Longshore & Warehouse Union defended its members' right to take off work to protest the U.S. war in Iraq.

"Big foreign corporations that control global shipping aren't loyal or accountable to any country," said Bob McEllrath, the ILWU's international president.

"But longshore workers are different. We're loyal to America, and we won't stand by while our country, our troops, and our economy are destroyed by a war."

"The employers' associations we deal with will get the message today," said Richard Cavalli, president of the ILWU Local No. 34. "It's ironic. I turned on the TV today and this is the fifth anniversary of the day George Bush stood on that carrier and said, 'Mission Accomplished.'"

"We have to speak out against the war for working people who are non-union, who don't have a voice and don't have the luxury of taking the day off," said Thibeaux Lawrence, 66.

Welcome To The Occupied USA
Police State ID Law Denies War
Vet The Right To Vote;
“When Asked Why This New Voter ID
Law Was Passed, Dickinson Had A
Simple Answer: ‘To Suppress The
Poor And The Minorities’”
“I Did All This For My Country And This
Is What I Get For It”

His military discharge papers feature a paragraph’s worth of honors and awards, like the national defense service medal, the Vietnam service medal with two bronze service stars, the combat/infantry badge and a purple heart for being wounded during combat.

Apr 30, 2008 by Andrew Prinsen, Nuvo.net [Indiana]

Russell Baughman, 61, has fought in three conflicts as a part of the United States Army. He was on the front lines in Vietnam in March of 1967 during a battle that has since become known as “the bloodiest week.”

He was sent to Panama shortly after the 1989 U.S. invasion as part of a security maintenance force.

And he spent six months in the deserts of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait during the Gulf War in the early '90s.

His military discharge papers feature a paragraph’s worth of honors and awards, like the national defense service medal, the Vietnam service medal with two bronze service stars, the combat/infantry badge and a purple heart for being wounded during combat.

So when Baughman arrived at his polling place at precinct 52 in Lawrence March 11 for the special election, he wasn’t expecting to have a problem voting in the country he had defended.

But since Indiana passed its new Voter ID law, which requires every voter to have a valid, government-issued photo ID, Baughman’s identification was no longer good enough.

He had with him his expired driver's license (he rides a bicycle), his Department of Veterans Affairs card (featuring his purple heart endorsement) and, of all things, his voter's registration card.

But Baughman was told that neither of his photo IDs were valid. His driver's license didn't count because it was expired and his Veterans Affairs card didn't count because it didn't feature any expiration date at all.

"I've been on the voting rolls since 1968," Baughman said, "and all of a sudden they expect my identity to change. There was no change."

Baughman was offered a provisional ballot. The print was so small that the polling officials had to fetch a magnifying glass. After filling out a provisional ballot, the voter has 10 days to prove his or her identity at their county clerk's office. During this time the voter must come up with the appropriate identification.

But herein lay Baughman's problem.

He had been to the license branch several times, trying to attain a new photo ID card, and had been denied. In order to get a new photo ID, one must have one form of primary identification: an original birth certificate or naturalization card, a U.S. Veterans Universal Access Identification card, a current military ID card or a valid U.S. passport.

Like many citizens in Indianapolis, Baughman had no idea where his birth certificate was.

His veteran's ID card wasn't being accepted because it was issued by the VA hospital and not by Fort Harrison (even though it took a proof of identity when he was issued the VA card). And though Baughman has spent more time overseas than your average American citizen, the kind of traveling he did never required a passport.

Dee Anne Moore was at the same polling place that day. She is the 52 Lawrence precinct committeewoman and it is her job to make sure the people in her (Democratic) party are registered and out to vote. It's no surprise, then, that she felt undercut by one of her own precinct's voters being turned away.

"I remember him saying, 'I did all this for my country and this is what I get for it,'" Moore said. "It's just sad that they're putting all these roadblocks up in front of people who are just trying to practice their constitutional right."

Moore said that if it is voter fraud the lawmakers are afraid of, their concern is misplaced.

"I've been working the polls for 20 years and we have never had anyone attempt voter fraud," Moore said. "It's hard enough to get people to come out and impersonate themselves on Election Day!"

Moore decided that she was going to do what she could to help Baughman. She got in touch with an old friend of hers, former state Rep. Mae Dickinson. Dickinson

championed American civil liberties during her 15 years representing the 95th District in the Indiana House.

The trio decided to meet at the Lawrence license branch April 23 and, though they knew it would likely amount to nothing, Dickinson would offer her support of Baughman getting a new ID.

By the time they had arrived, however, Baughman was sitting in the waiting room with a smile on his face and a new ID in his hand.

“I guess that I just got the right person at the counter this time,” he said. “That young lady is my hero!”

Since the little posse was already gathered, they took the opportunity to pull some chairs together and talk politics. Dickinson related stories from the fighting she had done while in the Legislature that defended the rights of elderly black citizens who had been born in the South before their births were documented.

When asked why this new voter ID law was passed, Dickinson had a simple answer: “To suppress the poor and the minorities,” she said. “That’s why.”

The license branch manager nervously made his way over to the group, inquired as to what was being discussed and encouraged them to leave. And eventually they did leave because their goal had been met. Russell Baughman was once again an identifiable citizen and is ready to vote in the primary election May 6.

However, the fact remains that, for many in Indianapolis, obtaining the right identification will be even more difficult than Baughman’s saga. Those who have never had a driver’s license and don’t have their original birth certificate still won’t be able to get an ID to vote.

And the catch-22 is that to get a birth certificate or a driver’s license or a passport, you have to have valid ID — the very thing you’re trying to obtain.

Asked why he has gone through so much trouble to get this new ID, Baughman simply pushed a laminated newspaper article, dated Feb. 8, 1969, across the table.

The article is from The Indianapolis Star and it reports the death of Ronald Gene Baughman, his brother, who was killed by enemy rifle fire in the Quang Nam Province of Vietnam.

“My brother fought and died for freedom,” Baughman said, “so the least I can ask of my country is to give me some of it.”

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Resistance Action

May 1 (Reuters) & May 3 (Reuters) & (KUNA) & 5.4.08 By BRADLEY BROOKS,
Associated Press Writer & Reuters

A booby-trapped bicycle targeting a U.S.-backed Sunni neighbourhood patrol in Hawi Jah, about 200 km north of Baghdad, wounding two members of the patrol and a child, police said.

A roadside bomb wounded three policemen when it struck their patrol in central Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

A roadside bomb struck an Iraqi army patrol, killing two Iraqi soldiers and wounding four others on the outskirts of Tikrit, 175 km (110 miles) north of Baghdad, police and army sources said.

A roadside bomb killed a civilian and wounded six traffic policemen, when it exploded near a traffic patrol in Jamiaa district, western Baghdad, police said.

A roadside bomb exploded near a police patrol, wounding three policemen in eastern Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

A source of Kirkuk police indicated that an IED blast caused the injury of three policemen.

Two policemen were killed when gunmen opened fire on them in the center of Mosul,

A bomb hit a motorcade carrying Iraq's first lady through Baghdad on Sunday. The motorcade bombing in Baghdad's Karrada district injured four of Hiro Ibrahim Ahmed's bodyguards but left her unharmed, according to the office of her husband, President Jalal Talabani. She was headed to the city's central National Theater to attend a cultural festival when the attack occurred just before noon, said the presidential office.

Two roadside bombs exploded in quick succession in al-Maamoun neighbourhood in western Baghdad, killing a traffic policeman and a civilian and wounding four traffic police, police said.

A roadside bomb struck the office of the U.S.-funded citizen patrol unit in Baquba on Sunday, killing one of its members and wounding another.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Winter Soldier II Investigation



From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: April 26, 2008
Subject: Winter Soldier II Investigation

Winter Soldier II Investigation
Silver Spring, Maryland
March 13-16, 2008

The only thing worse than death is betrayal.
Malcolm X

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

OCCUPATION REPORT

While U.S. Troops Die:

**War Profiteers At Work:
“Millions Of Dollars Of Lucrative Iraq
Reconstruction Contracts Were**

Never Finished Because Of Excessive Delays”

“The Audit Said Many Reconstruction Projects Were Being Described As Complete Or Otherwise Successful When They Were Not”

April 27, 2008 By HOPE YEN, The Associated Press [Excerpts]

Millions of dollars of lucrative Iraq reconstruction contracts were never finished because of excessive delays, poor performance or other factors, including failed projects that are being falsely described by the U.S. government as complete, federal investigators say.

The special IG's review of 47,321 reconstruction projects worth billions of dollars found that at least 855 contracts were terminated by U.S. officials before their completion, primarily because of unforeseen factors such as violence and excessive costs.

About 112 of those agreements were ended specifically because of the contractors' actual or anticipated poor performance.

In addition, the audit said many reconstruction projects were being described as complete or otherwise successful when they were not.

In one case, the U.S. Agency for International Development contracted with Bechtel Corp. in 2004 to construct a \$50 million children's hospital in Basra, only to "essentially terminate" the project in 2006 because of monthslong delays.

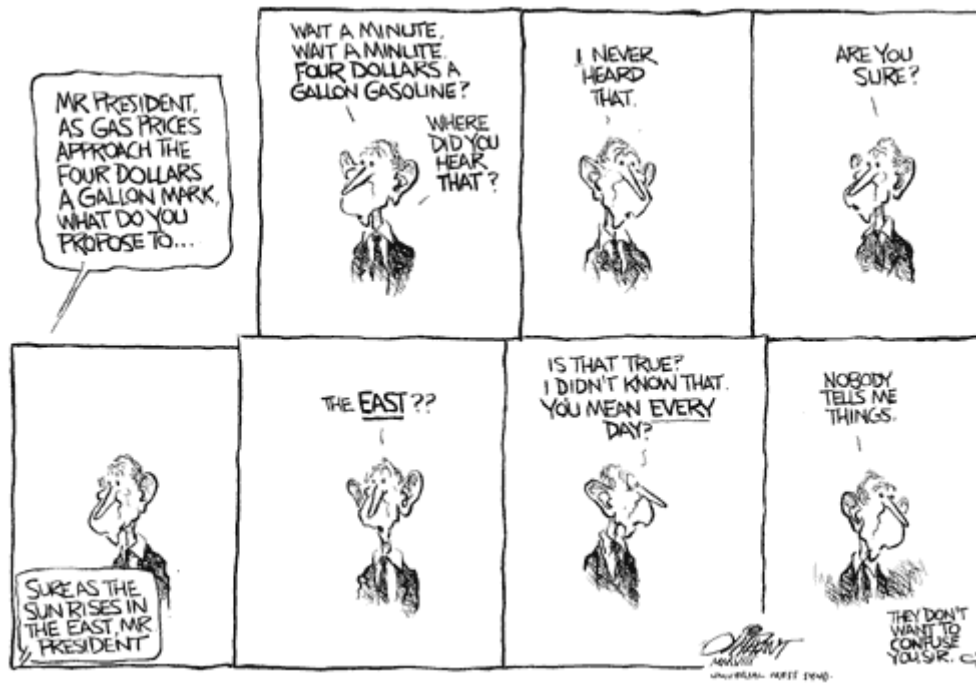
But rather than terminate the project, U.S. officials modified the contract to change the scope of the work. As a result, a U.S. database of Iraq reconstruction contracts shows the project as complete "when in fact the hospital was only 35 percent complete when work was stopped," said investigators in describing the practice of "descoping" as frequent.

The audit comes amid renewed focus in recent months on potential abuse in contracting government-wide, such as Iraq reconstruction. Last year, congressional investigators said as much as \$10 billion -- or one in six dollars -- charged by U.S. contractors for Iraq reconstruction were questionable or unsupported, and warned that significantly more taxpayer money was at risk.

Danielle Brian, executive director of the watchdog group Project on Government Oversight, said the latest audit report points to significant U.S. taxpayer waste in current reconstruction efforts.

"The report paints a depressing picture of money being poured into failed Iraq reconstruction projects -- contractors are killed, projects are blown up just before being completed, or the contractor just stops doing the work," she said.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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/)

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

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:

<http://williambowles.info/gispecial/2007/index.html>; <http://www.uruknet.info/?p=6&l=e>; http://www.traprockpeace.org/gi_special/;
<http://www.albasrah.net/pages/mod.php?header=res1&mod=gis&rep=gis>

GI Special distributes and posts to our website copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in an effort to advance understanding of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. We believe this constitutes a "fair use" of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law since it is being distributed **without charge or profit** for educational purposes to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for educational purposes, in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. **GI Special has no affiliation whatsoever with the originator of these articles nor is GI Special endorsed or sponsored by the originators. This attributed work is provided a non-profit basis to facilitate understanding, research, education, and the advancement of human rights and social justice.** Go to: www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml for more information. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

If printed out, this newsletter is your personal property and cannot legally be confiscated from you. "Possession of unauthorized material may not be prohibited." DoD Directive 1325.6 Section 3.5.1.2.