

GI SPECIAL 6E5:



ACTION REPORTS

OUTSTANDING!

May 1, 2008 Veterans For Peace

Troop Engagement Actions:

**"I Estimate That At Least 60-65%
Gave Us Some Kind Of Positive
Response: A Wave, A Thumbs Up,**

Even Some Peace Signs And Salutes”

[Reports From: Veterans For Peace Newsroom:]

#1: Fort Dix: New Jersey

Near the main gate of Fort Dix, NJ, six members of VFP31 displayed a large VFP banner that said: “Know Your Options” and passed out a packet of material from IVAW and elsewhere that included information on GI Rights, the Appeal For Redress, IVAW membership and similar material.

We set up at 11 AM at the last intersection before the gate, on the sidewalk next to a Wendy's that seemed a favorite lunch spot for soldiers. We passed out 50 to 60 of the information packets to active duty Army and Air Force soldiers from E-3s to a handful of AF majors at Dix to train to eventually train AF officers in Iraq.

Some soldiers declined the material, but not one of them was in any way hostile or seemed threatened by us or the material.

We had great conversations with a couple of them, especially the man in the car, above, speaking with member Thompson Bradley. [photo referenced not posted]

He had been a 20-year Marine, then had shifted to the Air Force and was very open to ending the occupation of Iraq and changing leadership in America.

The only negative reaction all day was a woman who claimed what we were doing endangered her husband serving in Iraq. We explained we disagreed on that point, but that we supported her husband completely in his role as a soldier in the occupation but that we needed to begin to talk about ending the occupation, which meant we wanted to bring her husband home as soon as possible.

We approached soldiers politely and identified ourselves as veterans with Veterans For Peace and told them we had material that explained their rights as soldiers and that, while we did not support the continuing occupation policy, we supported them as soldiers who might be assigned to occupation duty. We said we understood it was controversial information and that even us being there passing it out was controversial, but we thought they were intelligent enough to read it and do with it what they felt was best for them.

We encouraged them to save the material and share it.

The point we took from the day was that soldiers were fine about receiving such material, and some were very open to it -- while it was non-service people and officialdom who had a problem.

After about two hours, the State Police rolled up and told us we were in violation of township rules and needed to go to the township office to apply for a permit. (Note the State Police first sergeant in the photo above seems to be flipping the photographer a bird with his right hand.) [photo referenced not posted]

We suspected the New Jersey municipality would be more hostile and bureaucratic than was Hinesville, GA, where no one attempted to stop this type activity. So, we wrapped things up and went to the township office, where we got a copy of the ordinance and an application. We will study it and submit an application for a future date. A couple of us will attend the township meeting in where the application will be discussed.

[Others passing out material against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan previously this year at Dix gate, including members of the Military Project from New York City, have not been interfered with in any way by police, nor has this lying bullshit about a permit been pulled on them either. Contrast this with Scott Air Force Base report, below. T]

Everyone felt it went well, given we were trying something new. The goal seems to be to establish relationships, which takes time. We're also pondering some kind of outreach effort at the National Guard stryker brigade armory in Philadelphia. We hope to work with IVAW on that.

- John Grant

#2: Fort Hood: Texas



On May Day, four members of Veterans For Peace Chapter 66 of Austin, Texas went to the gates of Fort Hood to put the Engagement Project into action.

We were two ex-Marines (Dave Offield and Doug Zachary), one active-duty Marine grunt with two tours in Iraq behind him and another coming up soon (our Vice President

Michael Nordstrom), and our newest member, retired Air Force veteran (21 years active-duty) Bill Johns. Three of us were on our first pro Peace action at a military installation.

While Bryan Hannah of IVAW Fort Hood Chapter 38 and Military Families Speak Out member Cindy Thomas, whose husband is on his third tour in Iraq and has already earned a Purple Heart in this illegal Occupation, hung a sign that said, "Mission Accomplished!! Sorry We Could Not Find An Aircraft Carrier", we (VFP) deployed to the gate to approach the soldiers.

In the advise of an active-duty soldier stationed at Fort Hood, we arrived at 4:45 AM, early enough to approach soldiers showing up for PT.

We carried packages containing copies of "Ground Truth", membership applications for the IVAW, GI Rights Hotline cards, Right to Redress Petitions, and contact information for IVAW Chapter 38. We also distributed invitations to attend a Memorial Day cookout sponsored by IVAW Chapter 38 intended to honor the Iraq veterans and welcome them home.

We were met with a variety of responses. One soldier looked at the VFP logo on my sweatshirt and laughed. Some soldiers refused to look at us, keeping their gaze on the car immediately ahead of them. Many soldiers, although friendly in some cases and polite in almost all cases, said "No Thank You ... I'm OK."

Many soldiers took the packages and said "Thank you."

One soldier asked, "Is that 'Ground Truth'? Can I have two copies? We like that video!"

Another group of soldiers in a cafe that morning responded very favorably when we approached them saying that we had packages of information regarding their rights as soldiers.

We said that their Officers were not likely to share that information with them, so we, as former Enlisted soldiers, believed that we needed to do it. There were nods around the table at that statement and they took two packages.

All in all, we distributed 55 of the 200 packages we had with us that morning.

We plan to revisit Fort Hood a number of times between now and Memorial Day, in an effort to draw attention to the existence of IVAW Chapter 38, to help turn out soldiers for the Memorial Day event, and to bring the Occupation of Iraq to a halt.

#3: Scott Air Force Base: Illinois

Four members of the St. Louis Chapter of Veterans For Peace arrived at the main gate of Scott Air Force Base at approximately 7:45 a.m. on May 1st. In tow we had four signs: two read "Veterans For Peace Salutes YOU" and two read "Veterans For Peace Salutes Our Troops and Veterans." In addition, we had two VFP flags on flagpoles. We assumed positions on the shoulder of the incoming side of the road, where we staggered

the signs and flags in order to give passersby a chance to read our message and identify our organization as we greeted them.

Around 8:15 the MPs started riding back and forth in front of us and eventually stopped.

They were very friendly and even took some of the “Bring Them Home Now” bracelets; they told us that Homeland Security had been mobilized, and that though we were within our right (i.e. on public property exercising our First Amendment rights), next time we should call ahead to both the office of St. Clair County and the Public Affairs unit on base so that our presence would not scare anyone (more on this later).

By this time our team was complete as our last two VFP members had arrived.

Around 8:30, the traffic really picked up with military personnel and civilians headed onto base for work; during this time we were all stationed on the incoming side of the road, approximately 20-30 feet apart from one another. At a little after 9, we left, and let the MPs know we would return for lunchtime. We headed to a coffee shop and de-briefed.

After about an hour, we headed back to the base and this time stationed three people on each side of the road: two signs and a flag on each.

I would be lying if I said the response was 100% positive. In the three hours we were out there, I did see one thumbs down.

What did everyone else do?

I estimate that at least 60-65% gave us some kind of positive response: a wave, a thumbs up, even some peace signs and salutes.

I firmly believe that no matter what their reaction was at that moment, many proceeded to work on base and talked about what they had seen.

In fact, I am sure of that because we had 17 hits on the website yesterday; 17 may not sound like a lot, but given that there are virtually no members located in this vicinity, we can be sure the action and the jump in hits are directly correlated.

Towards the end, one car pulled around, making a couple of u-turns and then pulled over close to where I was. A man jumped out and started yelling about us causing a ruckus.

Before I had time to even begin to reply, I realized I knew this man.

He was Chief Jeff Slocum, a decorated and retired airman.

Chief Slocum had intended to spend 30 years in the Air Force, but because of his opposition to our occupation of Iraq, he retired last October.

He signed the Appeal For Redress, making him one of the highest ranking signers and while still in uniform, he became a very outspoken critic of our occupation of Iraq. He is now a member of VFP and was thrilled to see us at the gates.

He congratulated us on our action and when I told him how our response had been, he was not surprised, saying, “Cherie, they are tired.”

At around 1, we called it a day. Following the action two MPs approached us with a camera and said they wanted to take our picture for the next crew and explain to the next shift how nice we were.

Who knows what that picture was for and it does not really matter. What I do know is that they seemed sincere and what they said was right; we are nice and we were there in peace and support.

After this, the group briefly discussed the day and several offered comments about what could be done different or better.

Several wanted to carry signs next time which are a little less innocuous, perhaps “Bring Them Home” or “How Many More?” [It’s doubtful that the troops would be shocked shocked shocked. Chief Slocum is right. T]

Several others thought that next time, which by the way, they want to be next week, we should stick to yesterday's message, but hit the strip mall parking lot a little harder with literature for the troops; though we had this in hand, ready to distribute it if called upon to do so, we distributed very little.

Aside from the one thumbs down and one person sarcastically yelling, “nice turnout,” (little did he know that we had the number we wanted), the response was overwhelmingly positive.

I would guess that we saw at least 1,000 vehicles in those hours and a majority of people reacted positively, presenting us with a reasonable picture of the make-up of this base.

#4: Fort Wainwright: Alaska

On May 1, 2008, members of North Star Chapter 146 of Veterans for Peace took up position at Fort Wainwright, Alaska. The location of our VFP / Military Member outreach outpost - which was on Airport Way east of the Richardson highway, before the Main Gate, and on Post Property - was chosen for its visibility to military members going to and leaving work.

This was a good choice for visibility but proved inadequate for personal interaction and / or literature distribution due to construction activity on the roadway.

I took first watch (07:15 to 09:00) carrying a sign stating on one side “SOLDIERS - VETERANS FOR PEACE (VFP logo) SUPPORT YOU” and “END STOP LOSS (VFP logo) 457-5578 (my phone number)” on the other.

The observed reactions of the troops entering and leaving post appeared overwhelmingly positive with the “END STOP LOSS” sign being clearly the most popular. Clenched fist salutes, thumbs up gestures, peace signs, friendly waves,

and tooted horns vastly outnumbered any show of disapproval by a ratio of at least 20 to 1.

Only one giving of the bird was observed. I was just about to count it as a negative reaction when the young soldier with arm extended far outside the window bearing the infamous salute vociferously proclaimed “F*# Stop Loss”.

I registered that as a sign of approval.

A few minutes later a soldier shouting “You are awesome” reinforced my belief that we are on the right track with this outreach.

Second watch (10:00 to 1:00) was taken by James Kerrigan (U.S. Army Veteran) and me.

The reaction of troops leaving for lunch was pretty much the same as the morning shift. James was carrying a sign proclaiming “WE SUPPORT YOU (VFP logo)” on one side and “FULL BENEFITS FOR RETURNING VETERANS” on the other.

At one point during the second shift a soldier after passing our post put his vehicle in a hard reverse, rolled up along side of me and shouted “just how in the fuck do you support me”.

After about 15 minutes of conversing with the soldier I was able to surmise that he was tired of all the “We Support the Troops” signs that are prevalent on Fairbanks business establishments etc. [The pissed-off soldier is right. This propaganda slogan pushed for years by the Bush regime, along with the yellow ribbon bit, has been used by the government since the invasions to support their wars. It’s also a fraud: nobody in their right mind “supports the troops” who are Neo-Nazis and/or members of the Aryan Brotherhood; who rape other troops and/or civilians; etc. etc. T]

I learned that the man was having a difficult time getting an airline ticket out to see his little girl. I thanked him for serving, told him that he had every right to be angry, gave him my contact information and asked him to call.

His last words to me as he was leaving were “peace bro”.

The last watch (15:45 to 18:00) was taken by Jeanne Olson (U.S. Air Force Veteran) and me (I left early @ 17:00). The shift was pretty much a continuation of the earlier effort but it appeared that troops were more interested in getting home or to somewhere to relax than to paying any attention to what we were doing.

Jeanne and her team of activists took up position across the Richardson highway from where we had been stationed. They hung huge banners proclaiming “Mission Accomplished” and “major combat operations in Iraq have ended - President G. W. Bush 05/01/03”. They also carried U.S. flags and had a grill going to offer passers-by a hot dog.

All in all the day went well. I have gotten some phone calls that I am following up on. I hope that we can be of service by helping to facilitate for those who are moved to resist.

MORE:

Honesty Wins Respect

[The “Why We Are Here” below is handed out by Military Project members, along with Traveling Soldier, copies of Sir No Sir, and IVAW materials, to explain to troops the purpose of face-to-face outreach.

[Agree or disagree, troops appreciate direct, honest, no bullshit communication, respecting people who have the courage of their convictions and are up front and center about their total, uncompromising opposition to Bush’s wars.

[“Why We Are Here” has yet to provoke a hostile response. The problem in outreach work isn’t hostility on the part of the troops receiving information, most of whom hate the war for far more personal and immediate reasons than civilians.

[The problem is that those who demand others water down or hide their opposition to the war and the government in approaching troops are taking counsel of their fears. T]

Why We Are Here

The Military Project is an organizing committee of activists focused on encouraging participants in the anti-war movement to reach out to active duty, reserve and National Guard troops.

Our mission is to support and provide aid to soldiers opposed to continuing the war in Iraq.

All troops—including members of the National Guard and Reserves—have every right to question and oppose the war and occupation.

No one has more of a right.

Every time you speak out, it gives a voice to the soldiers in Iraq who don’t want to be there. It gives others the courage to resist and openly dissent inside the military.

A soldier’s voice, when it’s raised, carries authority. People will listen.

During Viet Nam, the anti-war movement within the armed forces was the decisive factor in ending the war.

Now we're at a decisive moment in history. The majority of the American people want the troops to come home now. But it is clear that the Bush administration has no intention of ending the war.

GI resistance will stop this war.

No one has a bigger stake.

If you would like to organize with other dissenting soldiers, receive support in distributing and replacing materials, attend one of our meetings or speak to us with any questions you may have:

Contact us:
contact@militaryproject.org

The Military Project
Box 126,
2576 Broadway,
New York, N.Y. 10025-5657

MORE ACTION REPORTS WANTED: FROM YOU!

An effective way to encourage others to support members of the armed forces organizing to resist the Imperial war is to report what you do.

If you've carried out organized contact with troops on active duty, at base gates, airports, or anywhere else, send a report in to GI Special for the Action Reports section.

Same for contact with National Guard and/or Reserve components.

They don't have to be long. Just clear, and direct action reports about what work was done and how.

If there were favorable responses, say so. If there were unfavorable responses or problems, don't leave them out.

If you are not planning or engaging in outreach to the troops, you have nothing to report.

NOTE WELL:

Do not make public any information that could compromise the work.

Whether you are serving in the armed forces or not, do not in any way identify members of the armed forces organizing to stop the war.

If accidentally included, that information will not be published.

The sole exception: occasions when a member of the armed services explicitly directs his or her name be listed as reporting on the action.

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

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

U.S. Soldier Killed In Ninewah; Another Wounded

May 6, 2008 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20080506-09

NINEWAH, Iraq – A Multi-National Division – North soldier was killed from wounds sustained in an insurgent attack against the soldier's patrol in Ninewah Province May 6.

One soldier was also wounded in the attack and was taken to a Coalition force hospital for treatment.

Hundreds Of People Remember Fallen Ozarks Soldier

May 2, 2008 By Michelle Sherwood, KSPR

Though hundreds of people showed up, it still felt like a private affair. The family requested that we not videotape them, but they still wanted the media there. Staff Sergeant Ronald C. Blystone's father, Lonnie, said he believed it was our duty-- that's something the family has come to know a lot about.

R.C. received several medals of valor during his service. He was deployed four times--once at Guantanamo Bay and three times in Iraq.

34-year-old Blystone was killed Wednesday, April 23, during his third deployment to Iraq. He had lived his entire life in Springfield and was a Glendale High School graduate, though he was stationed in Fort Hood, Texas.

Blystone and his wife, Kelly, have three children. Maggie age 13, Molly age 10, and Zackery age 9.

While R.C. was in the military, he received several awards, including two Bronze Stars, The Purple Heart, Valor Unit Award, four Good Conduct Medals, two Army Service Ribbons, the Army Commendation Medal, the Expert Infantry Badge, two National Defense Service Awards, two Iraq Campaign Medals, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and the Army Achievement Medal.

The family has set up an educational fund for the Blystone children at BanCorp South. You can donate at any bank location or mail them to: The Blystone Educational Fund, BanCorp South, P.O. Box 4023, Springfield, MO 65808.

Tuscaloosa Native Injured In Iraq Blast

May 6, 2008 By Jason Morton, Staff Writer, Tuscaloosa News

Though barely into his teens at the time, Byron Clay Henson watched his country suffer through the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., and told his mother he would do something about it.

Five years later, he joined the U.S. Army. 'Actually, ever since 9/11, he felt that he needed to serve his country,' said his mother, Marilyn Henson. 'And he wanted to do it to the best of his ability.'

On Wednesday, Spec. Clay Henson, now 21, of Tuscaloosa was injured in a sneak attack on his convoy that also killed one soldier and injured another.

Henson is at least the 514th Alabama native injured in Iraq since the war began, according to the U.S. Department of Defense. Sixty-seven Alabamians have died in the war so far.

Speaking from his hospital room at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., on Monday, Henson said he remembers everything about the blast that occurred minutes after his convoy departed on a mission from a base in northern Iraq.

'We just pulled out of our base and we got hit,' said Henson, who attended Paul W. Bryant High School. 'We were just driving along and all of a sudden, boom — the front of the truck was on fire.'

Dazed from the blast and aware of a high-pitched squeal in his ear, Henson did not know that a quarter-inch piece of shrapnel had embedded itself into his brain. His only indication, he said, was that he was bleeding from his head, 'so I knew something was wrong, but I didn't actually know it was shrapnel in me.'

Despite being hit, Henson pulled another injured soldier from the vehicle and began applying a tourniquet before help arrived.

He also kept asking about the third soldier who was in the vehicle.

'It was hard to hear it,' Henson said of learning about his comrade's death. 'But I kind of had the feeling that he'd already passed.'

'It made it a little easier because I'd been asking where he was for 20 minutes or so and nobody would give me a straight answer. Finally, somebody did.'

Out of respect to the other soldiers' families, Henson declined to give their names.

After the attack, Henson was taken from his base, which he did not name, to Balad Airbase north of Baghdad. From there, he was flown to a military hospital in Germany, where he underwent surgery to remove the shrapnel that had penetrated his skull. Once he was stable, he was flown to Bethesda.

Jerry and Marilyn Henson learned of their son's injury on Thursday while they were vacationing in Williamsburg, Va. They left immediately for Bethesda, where Marilyn said she will remain 'as long as he needs me.'

It was unclear Monday when Henson will be released from Bethesda, but his mother credits God and the prayers of friends and family for allowing him to escape the attack alive. 'He's passing all their neurological exams with flying colors,' she said. 'We are just double-blessed by God that he saved him and that he's in such wonderful condition so far. 'He's had a lot of prayers from the Tuscaloosa area, even before he was injured, and I believe that played a huge part in being spared.'

When Henson told his mother in 2006 that he intended to join the Army, she said she was worried, but she also understood.

'I was concerned, because of the war, naturally,' she said. 'But he'd talked about it for a long time and I knew that was really what he wanted to do.'

Henson said his decision to join was partially influenced by family members who had served in the military. His father served during the Vietnam War and his grandfather in World War II.

Primarily, though, his reason for enlisting was his own desire.

'I just wanted to help out, you know?' he said. 'I always wanted to join the Army and I kind of got bored with school, so I signed up.'

His injury prevents him from returning to combat, so Henson said he plans to go back to school once he comes home to Tuscaloosa.

But the soldier said he has no regrets

'I wouldn't change it,' he said.

**GUESS WHO'S WORRIED
GUESS WHO ISN'T
GUESS WHY
ALL HOME NOW**



U.S. soldier in eastern Baghdad April 30, 2008. REUTERS/Thaier al-Sudani

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Canadian Soldier Killed In Kandahar; Another Wounded

06 May 2008 Reuters

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan, May 6 (Reuters) - Taliban insurgents killed a Canadian soldier in a clash in the southern Afghan province of Kandahar on Tuesday, the Canadian military said.

It said another Canadian soldier was wounded in the incident in the Zhari district to the west of the city of Kandahar, the scene of frequent gunfights between NATO-led forces and Taliban militants.

COMMENT UNNECESSARY



U.S. Marines, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, patrols through an opium poppy field near Garmser, Helmand Province, Afghanistan May 1, 2008. (AP Photo/David Guttenfelder)

[Thanks to Pham Binh, Traveling Soldier & The Military Project, who sent this in.]

May 6 By JASON STRAZIUSO, Associated Press Writer [Excerpts]

Last week, the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit moved into southern Helmand province, the world's largest opium poppy-growing region, and now find themselves surrounded by green fields of the illegal plants that produce the main ingredient of heroin.

Yet the Marines are not destroying the plants. In fact, they are reassuring villagers the poppies won't be touched. American commanders say the Marines would only alienate people and drive them to take up arms if they eliminated the impoverished Afghans' only source of income.

Staff Sgt. Jeremy Stover, whose platoon is sleeping beside a poppy crop planted in the interior courtyard of a mud-walled compound, said the Marines' mission is to get rid of the "bad guys," and "the locals aren't the bad guys."

"Poppy fields in Afghanistan are the cornfields of Ohio," said Stover, 28, of Marion, Ohio. "When we got here they were asking us if it's OK to harvest poppy and we said, 'Yeah, just don't use an AK-47.'"

[So Much For The Silly Happy Talk] Soldier's Folks Accidentally Hear Firefight On Voice Mail

May 6, 2008 The Associated Press

OTIS, Ore. — An Oregon couple checking their voice mail found a frightening three-minute recording of their son caught in a battle in Afghanistan.

Stephen Phillips and other soldiers in his Army MP company were battling insurgents when his phone was pressed against his Humvee. It redialed and called his parents in the small Oregon town of Otis.

Most the sounds were gunfire, but shouts can be heard, including, "More ammo! More ammo!"

"At the end, you could hear a guy saying 'Incoming! RPG!' And then it cut off," said John Petee, Phillips' brother.

Phillips' mother, Sandie Petee, and her husband, Jeff Petee, were not at home at the time of the call. When they checked their voice mail, they heard the shooting.

"His friend died a year ago in Iraq and I'm thinking, 'Oh my God, this may be the last time I hear my son's voice on the phone,'" Sandie Petee said.

Her husband added: "It's something a parent really doesn't want to hear. It's a heck of a message to get from your son in Afghanistan."

As soon as the voice mail stopped playing, the Petees began trying to reach their son in Afghanistan.

"I finally got a hold of him," Sandie Petee said. "He was embarrassed, he said, 'Don't let Grandma hear it.'"

Stephen Phillips is scheduled to return home next month, when his tour is complete, his mother said.

TROOP NEWS

“Do I Know Of Any Other Barracks In Horrible Condition? Name The Post”

“When Congressmen Do Make Their Infrequent Trips To Visit Posts, They Are Shown What The Army Wants Them To See”

May 12, 2008 By Matthew Cox, Army Times [Excerpts]

Many soldiers have seen it — the mold, the peeling paint, the backed-up plumbing — but this darker side of barracks life never truly came to light until it showed up on YouTube.

The video, shot by the father of an 82nd Airborne Division soldier, shows disturbing living conditions, including a bathroom drain plugged with what appears to be sewage in the Fort Bragg, N.C., barracks where paratroopers were housed after returning from a 15-month combat deployment.

Soldiers have to complain to their leaders, but Sgt. Jeff Frawley's father, Ed, went straight to the Internet video forum known as YouTube. His April 23 post sent shockwaves through top offices of the Army, Pentagon and Congress.

So far, Fort Bragg has received all the public attention on this issue, but an April 24 Government Accountability Office report found that the Army — and the rest of the military — has been unable to maintain its facilities properly.

The report cites porch surfaces crumbling, paint peeling and broken windows at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, where “several barracks buildings, which were still in use, had deteriorated because of inadequate funding.”

In addition, the GAO report is critical of the Army for its unreliable inventory records for about 90,000 facilities, about 39 percent of its infrastructure. Inventory records are meant to detail the condition of facilities, including maintenance, repair and replacement needs.

“At some installations, a significant percentage of inventory records was not verified,” the report states, saying Fort Bragg had not verified 83 percent of its inventory records within the past five years. At Fort Irwin, Calif., the records were worse — 93 percent unverified in the past five years, GAO said.

But when asked about the report — specifically the \$2 billion in unfunded facility sustainment requirements — Rogers told Army Times, “(W)e believe based on the information we are getting from (commanders) that they have the appropriate amount of money to maintain their facilities.”

A number of soldiers, and parents of soldiers, however, say that the conditions depicted in the Bragg video are not new and can be found at facilities throughout the Army.

“Do I know of any other barracks in horrible condition? Name the post,” wrote one sergeant first class, who asked that his name not be used for fear of retribution.

“When congressmen do make their infrequent trips to visit posts, they are shown what the Army wants them to see.”

The sergeant first class told Army Times in a May 1 interview that during his 15 years of service, he had seen similar conditions at Fort Drum, N.Y., Fort Benning, Ga., Fort Lewis, Wash., and at bases in South Korea.

“If this was a story where there was no truth in it, it would have been quashed right away,” he said.

Soldier Killed By PTSD Drugs The Pentagon Knows Are Useless

[See the report on these useless, dangerous drugs that follows this article. T]

[Thanks to Ward Reilly, Veterans For Peace, who sent this in.]

May 1, 2008 by Joseph Shapiro, NPR [Excerpts]

The last time Susan Nichols brought her husband home from Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, she knew something was very wrong.

He couldn't even play with their 6-year-old son and 5-year-old daughter. Instead, he just watched them play basketball with the neighborhood kids.

“He was constantly dizzy, or he just couldn't handle being out because of the pain, or the medication just knocked him out completely and he couldn't even walk,” Nichols recalled while sitting on the patio at her home in San Antonio.

“And the last day that we all saw him, he could barely stand up straight without leaning against a wall to prop him up.”

Two days later, on Jan. 22, Sgt. Robert Nichols was found dead in his room at Brooke Army Medical Center.

The autopsy report said he died of an accidental drug intoxication from the pills he had been prescribed by his Army doctors. Some of them, mixed together, made a deadly combination.

Since June, there has been a rash of overdoses at Army hospitals, including some, like Nichols', that have resulted in deaths.

Eleven medications were found in Nichols' body, including painkillers to treat his physical wounds from an explosion in Iraq and drugs to ease the nightmares, insomnia and memory loss caused by his post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.

Susan Nichols said that several times before he died, Robert Nichols asked his doctors to reduce the medications "because he felt like he was a zombie and he could only function for a small portion of the day."

Robert Nichols' widow said multiple doctors gave her husband multiple prescriptions.

MORE:

**“Research Has Not Shown Serotonin Re-Uptake Inhibitors, Such As Prozac, Zoloft Or Celexa, To Be Effective In Treating PTSD”
“Exposure Therapy -- Reliving A Traumatic Experience By Writing Or Talking About It -- Is The Only Therapy Proved Effective By Independent Research”**

April 14, 2008 By Kelly Kennedy, Army Times [Excerpts]

“Problems related to getting troops adequate mental health treatment cannot be resolved unless two issues — stigma and access — are addressed,” Todd Bowers, director of government affairs for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, told the House Veterans’ Affairs subcommittee on health on April 1.

Almost 59,000 veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been diagnosed with PTSD by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Army post-deployment health assessments have found that 20 percent of active-duty and 40 percent of reserve-

component troops had symptoms of PTSD, and some experts say the real numbers could be much higher.

But because PTSD hasn't been addressed until fairly recently — the first scientific paper about the disorder in veterans of the 1991 Persian Gulf War didn't come out until five years after that war ended — VA and Pentagon officials say much needs to be done to determine good screening techniques and therapies.

"This is the first war where DoD and VA recognized the psychological impact going in," said Army Col. Charles Hoge, chief of psychiatry and neuroscience at the Walter Reed Institute of Research.

Combat vets are not sleeping, experience startle reactions and are hyper-alert.

"All of these things that we label as symptoms are things they need in combat," Hoge said. "No sooner are they transitioned back home than they're right back in rotation."

At the House hearing, Hoge said an Army assessment last summer showed that the numbers of soldiers with PTSD is going up with each deployment.

"There's a direct connection between mental health and multiple deployments," he said, adding that troops also need more time between deployments.

David Matcher, of the Institute of Medicine's Committee on Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, said a recent study found that research has not shown serotonin re-uptake inhibitors, such as Prozac, Zoloft or Celexa, to be effective in treating PTSD.

Exposure therapy — reliving a traumatic experience by writing or talking about it — is the only therapy proved effective by independent research, he said.

Other treatments exist, but they have been tested mainly by the same people who developed them.

That's an important point because the Defense Department and VA use several such methods, including group and drug therapy, to treat combat veterans.

MORE:

Walter Reed Practicing Medical Fraud On Iraq & Afghan War Vets

[Remember what you just read? "Exposure therapy — reliving a traumatic experience by writing or talking about it — is the only therapy proved effective by independent research, he said."

[Now check out what the incompetent fools at Walter Reed are malpracticing: useless worthless bullshit dreamed up by some idiot, and approved by even bigger idiots. T]

May 6, 2008 Washington Post

Some 20 percent of approximately 1.6 million U.S. military personnel who served in Iraq or Afghanistan suffer from symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Yoga instructors at Walter Reed are trying to train them how to relieve their stress by using guided meditation.

MORE:

Drugging At Drum; Malpracticing Army Quacks Dishing Out Worthless, Useless Pills

5.5.08 By Claudia Parsons, (Reuters) [Excerpts]

Fort Drum, a bleak U.S. Army base in upstate New York, is a test case for how the military is handling a looming mental health crisis.

The military and its critics agree on one thing -- there are not enough therapists to treat all the soldiers who return from Iraq and Afghanistan traumatized by the experience.

The 10th Mountain Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team (2BCT) is the most-deployed brigade in the U.S. army since 2001. It served two tours in Afghanistan, totalling 11 months, and was sent to Iraq twice for tours of 12 and 15 months.

Christopher Smith, 23, a tank mechanic who served in Ramadi, returned from Iraq in January 2006 and left the army. In the following six months, he grew increasingly withdrawn and isolated and was unable to hold down a job.

Despite what his wife Cara says were clear signs of PTSD, he managed to re-enlist in December 2006 without the recruiter noticing a problem. Sent to Fort Drum, he was diagnosed with PTSD and judged undeployable. He has been on a string of different medications, none of which he says have worked.

"It's so frustrating," Cara Smith said, describing the base as unfriendly and depressing.

"The doctors up there, they say 'Come to group therapy, we'll help you.' But because of his duty and his orders and stuff he has to do, he missed two group therapy sessions and got kicked out of group therapy," she said.

Now, she said, he has a 30-minute individual therapy session around every six weeks. "It's not really therapy, it's more of a medication appointment," she said.

Stalin, Hitler Would Be Proud: Big Surprise: 7 Years And Counting No Charges, No Trials For Prisoners At Guantanamo Concentration Camp This Year Either

5.6.08 Washington Post

None of the approximately 775 terrorism suspects held at Guantanamo has faced a jury at the Expeditionary Legal Complex Courtroom, and U.S. officials believe it is highly unlikely that any of the Sept. 11 suspects will before the Bush administration ends.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

***Interview With A Mahdi Army
Commanding Officer:***

**“The First And Foremost
Agenda Is To Kick Out The
American Occupation”**

**“We Know The Green Zone Inch
By Inch”**

**“We Are Even Close To The
Operations Command, And They
Give Us Information In Real Time”**

“Abu Baqr Says He Had Actually Welcomed The Americans Five Years Ago When They Toppled Hussein”

Elements of the Mahdi Army are engaged in an intense conflict with rival Shiite Muslim parties in the Iraqi government that benefit from their own close ties to Iran and, more advantageously, the assistance of America's superior firepower.

May 6, 2008 Ned Parker, Los Angeles Times [Excerpts]

BAGHDAD

It was sunset, and a pair of Iraqi soldiers were sitting in a roofless house by the Iranian border, awaiting orders. Suddenly, Abu Baqr recalls, his friend let out a gasp and fell silent, a sniper's bullet in his forehead.

Abu Baqr couldn't help him, couldn't move for fear of being shot. He lay beside his friend's corpse until morning.

“How would you feel after that?” Abu Baqr asked. “You come out of that, you only come out bad.”

Abu Baqr, now a commander in the Mahdi Army militia of cleric Muqtada Sadr, blames Iran for what happened to his friend more than 20 years ago during Iraq's war with Iran, just as he blames Saddam Hussein for that conflict.

He still hates Iran.

But now, he said, he accepts its weapons to fight the U.S. military, figuring he can deal with his distaste for the Iranians later.

So he takes bombs that can rip a hole in a U.S. tank and rockets that can pound Baghdad's Green Zone without apology or regret.

“I think that the Iranians are more dangerous than the Americans. I hate them and I don't trust them,” he said in an interview over soft drinks.

But the militia has limited resources, he said, and “therefore, when somebody gives you or offers help, it's hard to say no.”

He laughed: “If it came from Israel, we would use it.”

Abu Baqr's attitudes illustrate the pragmatism of a movement under siege.

Elements of the Mahdi Army are engaged in an intense conflict with rival Shiite Muslim parties in the Iraqi government that benefit from their own close ties to Iran and, more advantageously, the assistance of America's superior firepower.

The attitudes of commanders such as Abu Baqr would seem to confirm U.S. accusations of Iranian meddling in Iraq. Although the extent of their relationship remains unclear, the commanders have embraced a hardened stance that may bode ill for the U.S. military.

These leaders confound U.S. attempts to categorize and differentiate between moderate fighters and what U.S. officers call the Iranian-funded and trained "special groups" that are believed to continue armed struggle against American forces despite a truce called by Sadr.

"It blurs out there," acknowledged a senior U.S. military commander who is not authorized to talk publicly about the various factions within the Mahdi Army, which is thought to number as many as 60,000 fighters.

Abu Baqr is a senior commander in a few neighborhoods of Baghdad's Sadr City district, responsible for at least 100 fighters. He is trusted enough by the movement that he has served as a mediator between factions in trouble spots in southern Iraq.

The price of survival

A year ago, in one of a series of interviews with The Times, his voice rose in anger when he talked of Iran's efforts to co-opt the Mahdi Army movement.

He seethed about Tehran's drive to recruit fighters to bomb U.S. convoys at a time when Sadr was trying to halt such activities. He railed against militia members whom Iran had bought off.

At this time of immense pressure, however, he embraces the breakaway factions.

His positions shift tactically from moment to moment. He believes the militia should fight the Americans to the end, but even now he hints he is ready to strike a truce on honorable terms with the U.S. military if it agrees to halt its operations against the militia in Baghdad.

Until March, Sadr loyalists such as Abu Baqr had worked to enforce a freeze the cleric ordered last year on the militia's activities. But that month, everything fell apart when the government launched controversial military operations against Shiite militias in the port city of Basra and in Sadr City, the Shiite slum.

The Sadr movement saw the operation as specifically targeting its fighters.

Abu Baqr stopped reining in fighters and once more switched to a war footing.

"The balloon has burst," he said soberly.

With gray hair, a slight paunch and the nimble gait of a former athlete, Abu Baqr has played various roles in his five years with Sadr's sprawling grass-roots nationalist movement. In the fall of 2006, he helped inaugurate so-called punishment committees to

get rid of militia members who defied Sadr's decrees and were perceived to be committing criminal activities.

He does not talk of what happens when men, insubordinate to Sadr, are brought to religious courts, where underlings speak of beatings and death.

Abu Baqr's stature in the Mahdi Army stems from his actions in the final years of Hussein's regime, which favored Sunni Arabs. He heeded the call of Sadr's father, Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Sadeq Sadr.

The foundering war veteran was inspired by the grand ayatollah's sermons and defiance of Hussein, finding a fresh purpose in his life.

"We started thinking more about and worshipping God, trying to get rid of the injustice on our people," he said.

When Sadr's father and two brothers were killed by unknown gunmen in 1999, Abu Baqr dedicated himself to battling Hussein and joined a secret cell that he says killed some Baath Party officials, with the approval of some clerics.

"All of the things we do, we seek to please God, to approach God," he said, describing the violence at that time.

Abu Baqr says he had actually welcomed the Americans five years ago when they toppled Hussein.

He handed out flowers to U.S. soldiers early in 2003 and played soccer with them in the street.

But he said their behavior convinced him early on that they were not leaving and were intent on antagonizing Sadr. By April 2004, Abu Baqr had joined in the first of the revolts against the Americans.

It has been a long road since then. One of his sons was gunned down firing a rocket-propelled grenade toward a tank in May 2004.

On some nights, he helps oversee battles, operating from buildings, coordinating with fighters by cellphone, radio and courier.

[T]he Mahdi Army has men everywhere inside the heart of the Iraqi police and army.

"It is our right to place elements within the Iraqi army and police," he said. "We are even close to the operations command, and they give us information in real time."

He brags about the ambushes they have set for the U.S. and Iraqi troops -- lining alleys with bombs for armored vehicles.

He boasts about the militia's knowledge of the Green Zone and the layout of the U.S. Embassy and houses and offices of prominent Iraqis.

“We know the Green Zone inch by inch,” he said. “We are working 24/7 gathering information.”

Like his late son, he claims, he is ready to die fighting the Americans and has no doubts about sacrificing himself for the Sadr movement.

“We believe in God. God is with us,” he said.

“The first and foremost agenda is to kick out the American occupation. The Iranians are right next door. The Americans come from far away.”

Resistance Action

May 6 (Reuters) & KUNA

A roadside bomb hit an Iraqi army patrol, killing one soldier and wounding two in western Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

A roadside bomb killed one policeman and wounded seven on Monday in Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, the U.S. military said.

Two mortar bombs wounded four officers from the Facility Protection Services, which guards government buildings and infrastructure, near Baghdad's municipal headquarters, police said.

Guerrillas ambushed a police patrol, killing two policemen and a civilian and wounding two other policemen in western Mosul, police said.

Two mortars wounded five policemen near Utaifiya neighbourhood in central Baghdad, police said.

11 civil servants, were injured when two mortar shells hit a government building in Baghdad Tuesday. The attack targeted Baghdad Municipality Secretariat in Al-Jomhuriya Street, downtown Baghdad, a police officer said in a phone call to KUNA from the site of the attack.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

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

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

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

Why Vietnam Is Still A Devastated Country



From: Mike Hastie

To: GI Special
Sent: May 05, 2008
Subject: Why Vietnam is still a devastated country

Why Vietnam is still a devastated country

The Vietnamese people survived a genocidal war. Everyone should know one simple statistic: The Washington, D.C. memorial to the American war dead is 150 yards long; if a similar monument were built with the same density of the names of the Vietnamese who died on it, it would be nine miles long.

Philip Jones Griffiths
International award winning
photojournalist who covered
the Vietnam War. Author of:
Vietnam Inc.

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)

Battle For Haditha: [Film Review]

May 4 David Edelstein, New York Magazine [Excerpts]

At last year's Virginia Film Festival, I met the director Nick Broomfield, there to show his freshly minted atrocity-of-war drama *Battle for Haditha*, and we talked a bit about the controversy over Brian De Palma's uncompromisingly brutal *Redacted*—which also builds to the murder of Iraqi civilians by U.S. military personnel.

The conversation was off the record, and Broomfield was extremely circumspect. But it's fair to say he saw a distinction between his own approach and that of De Palma, who rubbed our noses in the sadism of the killers.

Now that I've seen the film, it's clear that Broomfield's take is closer to HBO's *The Wire*, in that events are depicted from several different angles and no perspective is complete:

The point is not to focus on individuals but on the ways in which their actions feed the larger (diseased) organism.

Battle for Haditha dramatizes the (true) story of a roadside bomb that killed a U.S. soldier and the retaliation that took the lives of 24 Iraqi men, women, and children.

Here are the salient points: The two men who plant the bomb hate Al Qaeda (which would kill them just for drinking alcohol) but hate Americans more — they disbanded the army in which the older man served and left him with nothing.

The family who live across the street from where the bomb is planted and know that it's there have the choice of telling the Americans, in which case the insurgents will kill them, or saying nothing, in which case the Americans might kill them — or arrest them as collaborators and do who-knows-what.

They can't run because the outside world isn't safe, but staying put could be just as deadly.

The American soldiers, meanwhile, have a scary amount of unfocused energy: They're always playing rough, hostile practical jokes on one another, and the corporal (Elliot Ruiz) who ends up doing most of the killing is beginning to buckle under all his bad dreams.

He asks for counseling and is coldly refused. The message is “Do your job.” His murderousness is shocking — he's a man possessed — but this is his tragedy, too.

Broomfield is known for documentaries, and his filmmaking here has a live-wire feel. The camera is handheld but never ostentatiously quivery: Its restlessness conveys its characters' chaotic emotions.

You get edgy alongside the Americans as they scan buildings for snipers. You wince for the Iraqis roughly pulled from their cars and searched, rifles pointing in their faces. (To think we get indignant about taking off our shoes at airports.)

You exhale in anticipation with the bombers on the balcony of an apartment complex, looking up and down the road below for signs of an American convoy.

Battle for Haditha has some of the raw energy of Sam Fuller's war pictures, which weren't subtle but left you energized by their ambivalence (there was no good or evil). It's a hell of a picture.

MORE:

3 Iraqis at Camp Pendleton To Testify About Hadithah Killings

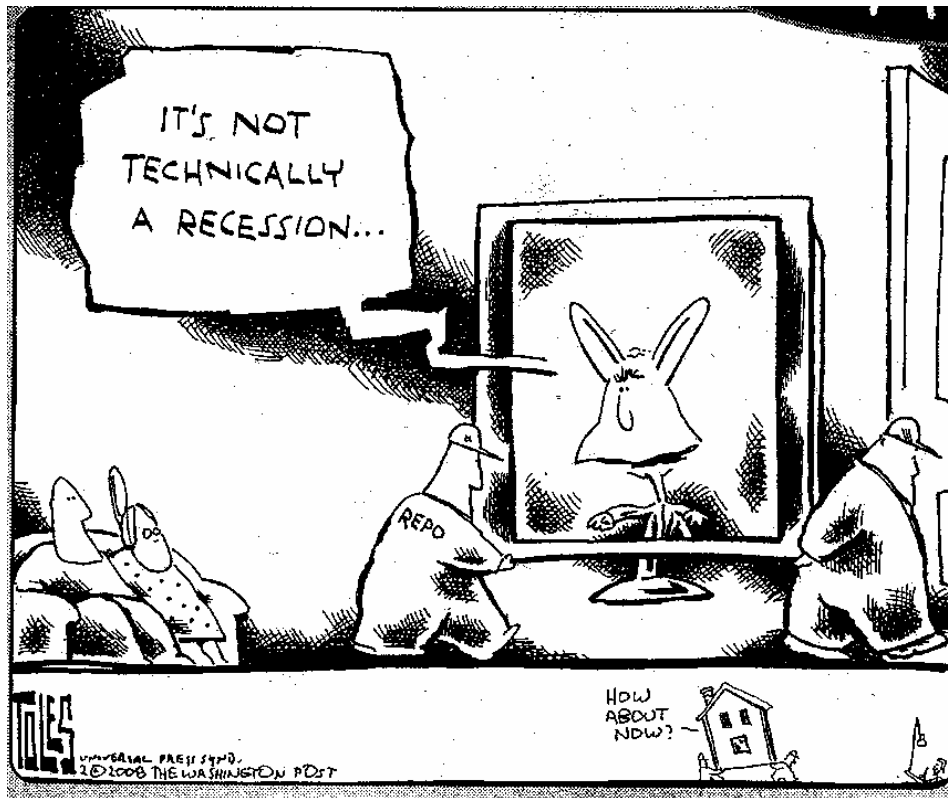
5.6.08 San Diego Union-Tribune

Three Iraqis are at Camp Pendleton this week to testify about the killing of 24 people in Hadithah by Marines in 2005.

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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