

GI SPECIAL 6E7:



Bush Allies In Lebanon “Reeling”

Lebanese Army Overturns
Measures Against Hezbollah That
Had Triggered The Group To Take
Control Of “Much Of” Beirut

May 10, 2008 Reuters & May 09, 2008 By Hussein Abdallah, Daily Star staff [Lebanon]

The Lebanese army overturned on Saturday two government measures against Hezbollah that had triggered the group to take control of Beirut, and the military urged Hezbollah to withdraw from the streets.

The army said in a statement it was keeping the head of the security at Beirut airport in his post and that it would handle Hezbollah's communications network in a way "that would not harm public interest and the security of the resistance".

Hezbollah's takeover of Beirut in three days of fighting left Siniora's U.S.-backed government reeling and strengthened Hezbollah's position as the most powerful group in Lebanon after a 17-month power struggle with the governing coalition.

Fighting, which has so far killed 27 people, erupted after the government said on Tuesday it was taking action against Hezbollah's military communications network and sacked the head security at Beirut airport, who is close to the Shi'ite group.

Hezbollah, a powerful anti-Israeli guerrilla group, said the pro-U.S. government had declared war.

Five gunmen and two soldiers died in clashes on Saturday east of Beirut and in north Lebanon. Protesters burned tires and lit fires along the airport road, which remained blocked by large mounds of earth dumped by opposition supporters.

Opposition supporters overran at least three offices of the pro-government Future Movement in different areas of Beirut.

On the streets of Beirut, fighters from Hezbollah continued to man checkpoints on main thoroughfares, although in smaller numbers than on Friday.

Traffic was thin as many residents stayed at home. Roads to Beirut's international airport remained closed by barricades erected by Hezbollah. A few shops reopened after the army deployed in several areas but did not interfere with Hezbollah fighters

Hezbollah took control of much of Beirut on Friday.

MORE:

**“Hezbollah Reportedly Has
Excellent Relations With The
Lebanese Army”**

**“This Was Not A Coup! Think Of It
As A Protest And Message To Bush”**

“Prime Minister Fouad Siniora Is Increasingly Seen As A Bush Administration Puppet”

May 10 / 11, 2008 By FRANKLIN LAMB, Counterpunch [Excerpts]

Many Hezbollah fighters left the streets of Hamra and turned them over to the Lebanese Army which had been largely absent on Friday.

Some of Hezbollah’s withdrawing ‘regulars’ were replaced by ‘reserves’.

“Its good for their training”, one fellow who was obviously in charge outside of Starbucks on Hamra Street, explained through an interpreter.

Some pro-opposition commentators wandered around Hamra trying to assure returning residents.

“This was not a coup! Think of it as a protest and message to Bush and Olmert. If we wanted a coup we could surround the Serail. Mr. Siniora would perhaps hand us the keys. We don’t want them.

“Let’s all prepare for elections and let the people decide who sits in Parliament and makes up Cabinet.”

Hezbollah reportedly has excellent relations with the Lebanese Army and wants to maintain them.

Evidence of this is apparent today as Hezbollah’s forces made a point of politely and almost paternally yielding some of their street corner locations to the Army with handshakes and sometimes kisses.

Outside Costa Coffee down from the Bristol Hotel, one seasoned Hezbollah fighter spoke to some obviously younger and ‘greener’ Party members and instructed them on their duties as they relieved him and he headed south for rest.

He explained that things went fairly smoothly yesterday and that they would likely see residents start returning to Hamra.

“Be helpful to those who need help. Assure them their neighborhood is secure and safe.

“We will start no violence and if someone else wants to we can assure those in who live in Hamra that we will quickly deal with troublemakers”.

“This situation was forced on us and we defended ourselves. Now we should seek a just and quick solution and heal any wounds”, one young woman, obviously a Hezbollah supporter explained as she chatted with some fighters and journalists.

She added, "We want dialogue and a fair peaceful solution. We are a Resistance movement and will not participate in a civil war".

Prime Minister Fouad Siniora loses more of his waning influence and status. One of his main problems is that he is increasingly seen as a Bush administration puppet.

"The money the Bush administration has spent has been to create a Sunni 'Internal Security Force' not for the Lebanese but for the 'ruling team' (the name the oppositions and its allies call the current government of Lebanon) which is no more than a militia run by pro-American officers.

"Hezbollah could defeat and disband this Bush militia in three hours of less", according to one long time UNIFIL program administrator.

[Hezbollah Secretary General] Hassan Nasrallah's position is probably the strongest it has ever been, not just in Lebanon but throughout the region. If he wanted to be a dictator of all of Lebanon, which he eschews, he could have the position today.

MORE:

Beirut Unions "Enforce An Anti-Government Labour Strike"

[Thanks to New York City Labor Against The War for posting.]

MAY 07, 2008 Al Jazeera

Protesters allied to Lebanon's Hezbollah-led political opposition have blocked streets in the capital Beirut to enforce an anti-government labour strike.

Security forces said Hezbollah and pro-government supporters, opposing the strike, exchanged gun fire in three Beirut neighbourhoods on Wednesday.

The strike was called by labour unions to demand pay increases after they rejected a last-minute government offer.

The demonstrators blocked roads to Beirut's international airport with dirt and burning tyres.

James Bays, Al Jazeera's correspondent in Beirut, said he had heard a lot of gunfire.

He said the strike action comes as many Lebanese struggle to meet the rising cost of food.

"Lebanon has had a very bad harvest, which means that food prices are rising, making it very hard for the very poorest in society," he said.

“That is why the labour unions called for this protest to take place today.”

Labour unions at Beirut airport were taking part in the one-day strike, announcing a six-hour work stoppage starting mid-morning.

MORE:

“The Eruption Of Violence Is Immediately Rooted In A Cabinet Decision To Take Action Against A Hizbullah Communications Network”

“We Have The Right To Confront He Who Starts A War With Us By Defending Our Rights And Our Weapons”

“Nasrallah Said The Conflict In Lebanon Was Between Factions Supporting An ‘American-Israeli Regional Agenda’ And Parties Opposed To Any Such Scheme”

“The decision is tantamount to a declaration of war. This (signals) the start of a war ... on behalf of the United States and Israel,” Nasrallah said during the conference, which was held via video link.

[Thanks to JM, who sent this in.]

May 09, 2008 By Hussein Abdallah & By Anthony Elghossain, Daily Star staff [Lebanon]
[Excerpts]

Hizbullah secretary general Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said during a press conference Thursday that Lebanon has entered a new phase of its political crisis and warned that a government crackdown on his party was tantamount to a “declaration of war.”

The eruption of violence is immediately rooted in a Cabinet decision to take action against a Hizbullah communications network

Nasrallah described the fixed-line network that connects the group's officials, commanders and positions as a vital part of the military structure of the group, which fought Israel during that latter's 34-day war against Lebanon in 2006.

"The communications network is a significant part of the weapons of the resistance," Nasrallah declared.

"I had said that we will cut the hand that targets the weapons of the resistance ... Today is the day to fulfill this decision."

The cleric also stressed that Hizbullah is ready to use its weapons to defend itself should the government "cartel" seek to impinge upon the rights of the resistance.

"We have the right to confront he who starts a war with us by defending our rights and our weapons. We have yet to use our weapons inside the country but will do so to protect our arsenal," he added.

"The decision is tantamount to a declaration of war. This (signals) the start of a war ... on behalf of the United States and Israel," Nasrallah said during the conference, which was held via video link.

The Hizbullah leader said "the current government boss - Mr. Walid Jumblatt - is a thief, a liar and a murderer. He sits there drawing red lines calling for members of the resistance to be taken to court."

"The airport is being transformed into a base for the CIA, FBI, and Mossad, which we cannot tolerate," added the Hizbullah leader. "Our honor and fate are more valuable than any other consideration."

"We will no longer accept being fired upon and killed in the streets ...

"We will not accept encroachment against our presence as a resistance," Nasrallah said. "We will shoot once shot at, strike back when struck at."

Downplaying the prospects of a Sunni-Shiite rift even as fighting was limited to factions supported mostly by those two communities, Nasrallah said the conflict in Lebanon was between factions supporting an "American-Israeli regional agenda" and parties opposed to any such scheme, irrespective of "religious or communal differences."

In response to accusations that the violence signaled an attempted opposition coup d'etat, Nasrallah said that "had we desired to orchestrate a coup, (members of the government) would have awoken in cells or been thrown into the sea."

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Texas Soldier Killed In Mosul



Alex D. Gonzalez, 21 of Mission, Texas, died May 6, 2008 in Mosul, Iraq, of wounds suffered when his vehicle encountered small arms fire and a rocket-propelled grenade attack. He was assigned to the 43rd Combat Engineer company, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment at Fort Hood, Texas. (AP Photo/Gonzalez family via The Monitor)

Pasco Soldier Killed In Iraq

April 30, 2008 By Helen Anne Travis, Times Staff Writer

ZEPHYRHILLS — The inspiration came from a country music song, though his father doesn't remember which one. But three years ago, Marcus Mathes made an announcement.

"He said, 'I was listening to the radio the other day, to Toby Keith, and I decided to join the Army,'" his father, Ralph Mathes said Tuesday.

"I said, 'Couldn't you change the damn station?'"

Marcus Mathes, a Zephyrhills High School graduate, died Monday near Baghdad, his family said Tuesday.

Mathes, 26, was at his base working on a truck when he and two buddies were killed by rocket fire, his father said.

Mathes left for boot camp on his 23rd birthday, March 15, 2005. He served in Afghanistan from October 2006 until March 2007. In November 2007, he left for Iraq.

He loved the excitement.

"He'd call and say, 'We took gunfire off the side of the helicopter. It was so cool,'" his father said.

He had "US Army" tattooed into his skin. He also had a tattoo of an American eagle, and also one of his wife's name.

Julia Mathes and her husband planned to celebrate their sixth anniversary in June. Now, Julia, 24, is arranging to have the pastor who married them oversee his funeral.

"I literally have no tears right now," she said Tuesday. "They will not come out.

"He was my life. Where do you go...what do you do when your life just fades away?"

Two years ago, when she and Mathes lived on base in Fort Polk, La., her older sister Heather came to visit. Mathes introduced her to a soldier named Bryan Harvey. Two months later, Heather and Bryan were married.

Harvey, also deployed to Iraq, was only a few trucks away from Mathes when the rocket hit.

"He went over to where it happened and started picking up the pieces of Marcus' Bible," said Heather Harvey, 26.

The family hopes that Harvey will be allowed to leave Iraq to escort Mathes' body home.

Mathes will be buried at the National Cemetery in Bushnell. The funeral date has not been set.

“U.S. Troop Deaths Have Climbed To Their Highest Level In Seven Months, Mainly Because Of The Clashes In And Around Sadr City” -- Two-Thirds Of Baghdad Area A No-Go For Occupation Forces

May 11, 2008 By Tina Susman, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer [Excerpts]

BAGHDAD -- In the glow of a full moon, a U.S. military convoy inched toward a strategic road in Sadr City. The goal: to add to a wall being built to carve out a haven in the Shiite Muslim militia stronghold.

But the mission ended before it began.

Machine gun fire blasted out from the third floor of a building along the route. A Bradley fighting vehicle fired back, sending a thunderous roar through the neighborhood of middle-class homes and businesses. Then, the lead tank hit a roadside bomb.

As gunshots and grenade blasts raged in the night, the two Iraqi construction workers accompanying the troops quit.

Army Capt. Alan Boyes wasn't worried. None of his men were injured, and at \$500 a day, he knew that the contractors hired to operate a crane to install 6,000-pound slabs of the wall would be back or that others could be found to replace them.

But the violence that night and several attacks since highlight the hurdles American troops face as they try to take on fighters loyal to [nationalist] Muqtada Sadr without plunging into the heart of his stronghold and sparking an all-out uprising of his heavily armed followers.

"Everyone knows we won't go past Route Gold," Boyes said, referring to the street along which the wall is being built, separating more than two-thirds of Sadr City from a rectangle where U.S. forces occupy a smattering of small bases. "It's a political thing."

An Iraqi military offensive launched against militias in late March has drawn in U.S. troops and has led to near-constant fighting in Sadr City.

Sadr has threatened "open war" if the offensive does not end.

U.S. troop deaths have climbed to their highest level in seven months, mainly because of the clashes in and around Sadr City, and the additional American troops will be gone by July.

For Boyes' team, each attempt to add to the wall, which is designed to run the 3-mile length of Route Gold, is a combat mission.

"When he says stop shooting, they do as he says," Boyes said, citing Sadr's March 30 call to halt violence. It brought an immediate end to the shower of rockets and mortar shells that had been pummeling the Green Zone.

Rocket fire resumed two weeks later and has remained relatively consistent since Sadr rejected Prime Minister Nouri Maliki's demands that he disarm the Mahdi Army militia.

The streets surrounding Boyes' base, a former butcher shop, were prime rocket-launching terrain before the troops moved in.

Sandbags and concrete walls surround the structure. Cots cover virtually every inch of the floor inside except for makeshift footpaths. More cots are outside beneath the trees.

Day and night, most are occupied by troops sleeping, reading or watching movies on their laptops.

There is no running water, and the troops use outhouses.

But it's luxurious compared with Patrol Base Texas, a four-story structure overlooking a field in the Jamila neighborhood that militiamen once used for mortar and rocket attacks.

Here, troops sleep sprawled on marble floors or, to escape the stifling heat, on the concrete rooftop beneath camouflage netting. Occasionally, sniper bullets zing past.

These bases did not exist until the third week in March, when the military decided it needed a foothold here. Most offer high floors for long-range viewing to help keep potential attackers at bay.

There is a limit to what soldiers can do without crossing Route Gold, but they say to be more aggressive would risk bloodshed worse than that during Mahdi Army uprisings in 2004.

Now, the main roads of Sadr City are peppered with roadside bombs that can pierce armored vehicles.

The military says militiamen are positioned in residential areas, increasing the risk of civilian bloodshed if U.S. forces fire at them. Sadr officials say U.S. helicopters already have killed scores of civilians in errant assaults.

Sadr insists that his cease-fire remains intact, and has urged his followers not to attack Iraqi troops, but he says they have the right to defend themselves against U.S. forces.

In a statement April 25, Sadr emphasized that his warning of "open war" applied only to American forces.

[Sgt. Erik] Olson said that establishing a Sons of Iraq group, security volunteers who receive \$10 a day from the U.S. military and who are credited with decreasing violence in cities and villages outside Baghdad, had been discussed in Jamila.

The military even gave neighborhood leaders money to go hire some.

"But they came back," Olson said. "They didn't think Sadr City was ready for it yet."

MORE:

**“We’re Bullet Magnets”
“We Are Lit Up Like The Sun At
Night”**

“Most Of The Time The Soldiers Find The Bombs Before They Explode, But Sometimes The Bombs Find Them”

May 11, 2008 By MICHAEL R. GORDON, The New York Times Company [Excerpts]

BAGHDAD — The bland job description is “route clearance,” but it is one of the most unglamorous and dangerous missions in Iraq. Creeping along the scarred streets of Sadr City, the soldiers search for roadside bombs around the clock, using bright spotlights at night that make them a big, bright target.

“We are lit up like the sun at night,” said Specialist Chance Guzman, a forklift driver in a St. Louis scrap yard before his National Guard unit, the 1138th Engineer Company, deployed to Iraq from Missouri.

He spoke after a night mission during which his platoon found two bombs, or improvised explosive devices, as they are known by the military, avoided the blast from a third bomb, took gunfire from an alley and eluded two mortar rounds.

Most of the time the soldiers find the bombs before they explode, but sometimes the bombs find them, producing powerful blasts that rock their armored vehicles and reverberate through the streets.

Several members of the platoon have already earned Purple Hearts, and one gunner was lost to a rocket-propelled grenade.

“We’re bullet magnets,” said Specialist Michael Jason McMillan, a Missouri college student whose studies have been interrupted by two deployments to Iraq. He was hit by shrapnel in the arm and above the lip while manning the turret during a mission in October but was soon back on duty.

But bombs are not the only worry. Armed with rocket-propelled grenades, small arms and mortars, militia fighters are often primed to attack when an American or Iraqi vehicle is stopped by a bomb blast.

The militias are well practiced at employing the bombs. One tactic is to place a bomb, or a decoy, in a visible portion of the road to distract the soldiers and divert them into the path of a powerful hidden explosive.

“The ones that are hard to find are in the areas we have not been in yet,” said Lieutenant Roberts, alluding to streets like Al Quds.

As the vehicles proceeded, Specialist Williamson spied an overturned wheelbarrow, which he flipped over with the Husky’s mechanical arm, the soldiers recalled. Behind it was a block draped with a T-shirt. Wires appeared to be attached to the block, a telltale sign of an explosively formed penetrator set to be fired by a hidden triggerman.

The Husky pulled back, and members of an explosive ordnance team climbed out of their vehicle and placed a small robot on the ground to take a closer look. The robot was equipped with a camera, and the team members maneuvered it forward to confirm the find.

Gunfire erupted from an alley and the robot began zigging and zagging as a soldier responded with a .50-caliber gun. The robot survived the cross-fire, Specialist Guzman explained, and it was sent forward again, this time with a chunk of C-4 explosive, which it placed to destroy the bomb. The blast sent a shudder through Specialist Guzman's vehicle and splattered it with a cloud of dust.

But the night was far from over. A bomb exploded near the road-clearance vehicles to the rear, but it missed them. Then a large bomb was discovered to the front, hidden this time inside a green can that was covered with an empty sandbag. The explosive ordnance team again deployed the robot to destroy it.

As the soldiers were turning around to return to base, two mortar rounds landed with resounding booms, one of which was close enough to puncture a tire of one of the vehicles. It was a slow leak and the route clearance team managed to drive back without further incident.

The next morning, the platoon set out again to check the main streets south of Al Quds Street. Specialist Manuel Pavon, a construction worker in civilian life, was in front as the Husky driver.

His fellow soldiers consider him to be one of the luckiest men in the company.

It was Specialist Pavon who was driving a RG-31 armored vehicle on the earlier mission in which the gunner was killed by the rocket-propelled grenade.

The round flew through the turret and exited through a window on the driver's side of the vehicle. Specialist Pavon was hunched over the steering wheel when the attack occurred and was unscathed.

MORE:

**“Sitting Ducks”
Fort Carson Soldiers Vulnerable While
Building Wall:
“The Brigade Has Been In Combat 38
Straight Days”**

[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in.. She writes: “Sitting ducks.”]

May 6, 2008 By TOM ROEDER, THE GAZETTE [Excerpts]

Fort Carson soldiers working on the wall in eastern Baghdad know they'll be attacked every day.

That has drawn Shiite fighters like moths to a lamplight, the brigade's operations officer, Lt. Col. John Digiambattista, said in a telephone interview Tuesday from Iraq.

"The enemy knows where to find us, and any small group that wants to engage Americans can make their way there."

The brigade has been in combat 38 straight days, including a four-hour battle last week that left 28 insurgents dead and six Americans wounded.

Truce Declared In Sadr City Fighting

May 11, 2008 By Alissa J. Rubin, The International Herald Tribune

BAGHDAD: Shiite leaders in Parliament and leaders of the movement of the Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr agreed to a truce over the weekend that would end more than a month of bloody fighting in the vast, crowded Baghdad ghetto of Sadr City.

REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: ALL HOME NOW



U.S. soldiers from 1st Platoon, Bravo Company (Bulldogs), 1-502 Infantry Battalion, patrol Chercook neighbourhood in Baghdad's Khadamiya district May 10, 2008. REUTERS/Oleg Popov

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Afghan Civilian Killed At Demonstration Protesting Occupation Slaughter Of Afghan Civilians: “Death To America, Death To Bush, Death To Karzai”

[Thanks to JM, who sent this in.]

May 10 by Samoon Miakhial (AFP) & (KUNA) & By AMIR SHAH, Associated Press
Writer & Gulf News

At least one person was killed and several wounded in Afghanistan Saturday when police opened fire to disperse a protest accusing US-commanded soldiers of killing civilians, killing at least two and injuring six more civilians, said residents.

“We will start jihad (holy war) if they (foreign troops) continue to carry on like this,” said a protestor named Khairullah.

The protest demonstration of 1,000 people was staged in the province of Nangarhar where the angry protestors blocked the 75-kilometre Torkham-Jalalabad Highway for all kinds of traffic to register their protest against the killing of three men in a military operation overnight, witnesses said.

Villagers from the area carried three bodies to a major highway during the protest.

An AFP reporter was shown the body of a man killed in the police action.

A doctor in the nearby city of Jalalabad said six people were admitted to hospitals. “They were all wounded by gunshots but their wounds were not deep. They were treated and released,” doctor Baz Mohammad Sherzad said.

Provincial police chief Sayed Abdul Ghafar said that -- contrary to US-led coalition claims -- the men killed in an operation overnight in the Shinwar district were not militants or from the extremist Taliban movement.

“The coalition conducted independent operations in Shinwar and martyred three people. They were civilians,” he told AFP.

Before the demonstration was dispersed, protestors chanted slogans against foreign troops, US President George W. Bush and Afghan leader Hamid Karzai.

“The Americans killed three civilians,” said demonstrator Pizwan Khan. “They were my neighbours and I knew they were not Taliban,” he told AFP above shouts of “Death to America, death to Bush, death to Karzai.”

Others said the dead were an elderly man shot in a mosque and two other men, employed as drivers, shot in their homes.

TROOP NEWS



**“The Current Body Armor Is Bulky
And Cumbersome”**
**“Senior-Ranking Individuals Have Worn
A Competitor’s Body Armor In Iraq”**

Letters To The Editor
Army Times

May 12, 2008

How many times has it been said to “give the troops what they need to get the job done” or “the troops deserve the best”? Probably too many to count.

These statements brief well. But then there is the real world, the lowest-bidder world, the cost-effective world, the hidden-agenda, politically driven world in which the service member lives.

The jam-prone M4 is still being purchased and issued when more reliable alternatives are available.

The current body armor is bulky and cumbersome, and requires additional attachments to offer the standard protection provided by some of its competitors.

Adding insult to injury, senior-ranking individuals have worn a competitor’s body armor in Iraq.

If this armor offers better protection, then why not issue it to those on the ground taking the fight to the enemy?

The Army should stop talking about providing the best, and start giving the troops what they need.

Master Sgt. David Bolden (ret.)
Puyallup, Wash.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

**“The Soldiers Turned More
Decisively To The Left, As More
Proof Piled Up That The New
Regime Was No Different From
The Old”**

**“When The Armed Masses
Themselves Bring Weapons Of**

Reason Into Action Against A War, That Means The War Is About Over”

[Russia: 1917]

[USA 2009]

Excerpted quotes from History of the Russian Revolution, by Leon Trotsky. Reviewer comments by Amy Muldoon: International Socialist Review March–April 2008

“A century of taunts and violence had burst to the surface like a volcano. The soldiers felt themselves again deceived.

“The offensive had not lead to peace but war.

“The soldiers did not want war. And they were right....

“They were guided by a true national instinct, refracted through the consciousness of men oppressed, deceived, tortured, raised up by revolutionary hope and again thrown back in to the bloody mash. The soldiers were right.

“A prolongation of the war could give the Russian people nothing but new victims, humiliations, disasters—nothing but an increase of domestic and foreign slavery.”

The soldiers turned more decisively to the left, as more proof piled up that the new regime was no different from the old.

As the politicization of the armed forces progressed, the possibility of victory shrank:

“When enlightened pacifists try to abolish war by rationalistic arguments they are merely ridiculous, but when the armed masses themselves bring weapons of reason into action against a war, that means the war is about over.”

“The more the soldiers in their mass are convinced that the rebels really are rebelling—that this is not a demonstration after which they will have to go back to the barracks and report, that this is a struggle to the death, that the people might win if they join them, and that this winning will not only guarantee impunity, but will alleviate the lot of all — the more they realize this, the more willing they are to turn aside their bayonets, or go over with them to the people.

“In other words, the revolutionists can create a break in the soldiers’ mood only if they themselves are actually ready to seize the victory at any price whatever, even the price of blood.”

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

OCCUPATION REPORT

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



An elderly Iraqi citizen huddles on the floor as foreign occupation soldiers from the U.S. search her home house during a home invasion in Baghdad May 7, 2008.
REUTERS/Oleg Popov

Iraqi citizens have no right to resist home invasions by occupation soldiers from the USA. If they do, they may be arrested, wounded, or killed.

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

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

The women and children were moved into a room, where they huddled together in silence. The men had been forced down onto their knees wherever they were apprehended, their hands secured behind their backs with plastic handcuffs and their eyes covered by makeshift blindfolds. YOCHI J. DREAZEN, Wall St. Journal, 3.12.07

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

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

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

OCCUPATION HAITI

**"Haiti's Occupation Has Been A
Complete Failure"
"In Haiti, The Brazilians Always Shoot
First, And Detain Without Cause Or
Warrant"**

May 5, 2008 Kevin Pina interviewed by Emmanuel Santos, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

Kevin Pina is an independent journalist and filmmaker and the founding editor of the Haiti Information Project, an alternative news service providing coverage and analysis of developments in Haiti.

YOU HAVE written extensively on the brutal repression and destructive violence inflicted on poor neighborhoods by the occupying forces. The Brazilian military has played a leading role in this respect. What are some of the military tactics the Brazilians use to enforce the occupation?

THE BRAZILIAN military is by its own nature and history a repressive force. One need not look further than its own history to confirm this. The Brazilians serve much the same role they play in their own country to repress the favelas.

The only difference is that they use Haiti to whitewash their own brutal historical image internationally.

In Haiti, the Brazilians always shoot first, and detain without cause or warrant. Yet they wash their hands of responsibility for arresting thousands of Haitians, most of them incarcerated for political reasons without ever seeing a judge.

The conditions in Haiti's main penitentiary demand we work to free them by any means necessary. I'm serious--even if it means confronting the UN directly on the ground in Haiti. Prisoners in Haiti cannot be allowed to suffer under these conditions without a directed and durable response.

Most of the prisoners are there without seeing a judge for more than a year and remain imprisoned for their political beliefs.

Otherwise, the burden of proof lies with Haiti's occupation force--namely the United States and their surrogates such as Brazil.

RECENTLY, THE Economist and the head of the UN hailed the occupation of Haiti as a success story. But just like the U.S. occupation in Iraq, the opposite is the case. What do the world ruling elites mean when they say that the occupation has been a success?

I HAVE to use a benchmark to qualify your question. For me, the benchmark was the recent protests on February 29, 2008 that marked the fourth anniversary of Aristide's ouster. More than 10,000 people took to the streets throughout Haiti to demand his return from exile.

Given your earlier questions, you might now begin to understand why.

Haiti's occupation after his ouster has been a complete failure. There has been no discernable improvement in the lot of the average Haitian--quite the contrary, their lot has descended into more poverty and misery.

Again, this is because the priority has shifted away from programs for the poor and a safety net for the most vulnerable to creating more business opportunities for the wealthy elite and their foreign partners.

WHAT CAN people in the U.S. and elsewhere do to support the resistance movement against the occupation?

I KNOW of projects on the ground that folks can support. The best alternative at this moment is the Haiti Emergency Relief Fund or HERF.

The most important act of solidarity is choosing whom you work with. They most closely reflect my own experiences and values for working in solidarity with grassroots organizations that are working to rebuild their lives following the ouster of Aristide and the brutal years of repression that followed.

It is about creating an alternative to the NGO model of social engineering that allows for Haitians to lead in their own communities for sovereignty and economic and social justice.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

The Anniversary Of A Lie: “The Modern Jewish Myth Has It That Almost All The Jews Are Descendents Of The Jewish Community That Lived In Palestine 2000 Years Ago And Was Driven Out By The Romans” “That Is, Of Course, Baseless”

19/04/08 By Uri Avnery, Gush-shalom.org [Excerpt]

TONIGHT THE JEWS all over the world will celebrate the Seder, the unique ceremony that unites Jews everywhere in the defining Jewish myth: the Exodus from Egypt.

Every year I marvel again at the genius of this ceremony. It unites the whole family, and everyone - from the venerable grandfather to the smallest child - has a role in it. It engages all the senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching.

The simplistic text of the Haggadah, the book which is read aloud, the symbolic food, the four glasses of wine, the singing together, the exact repetition of every part every year - all these imprint on the consciousness of a child from the earliest age an ineradicable memory that they will carry with them to the grave, be they religious or not. They will

never forget the security and warmth of the large family around the Seder table, and even in old age they will recall it with nostalgia.

A cynic might see it as a perfect example of brain-washing.

Compared to the power of this myth, does it really matter that the Exodus from Egypt never took place?

Thousands of Egyptian documents deciphered in recent years leave no room for doubt: the exodus of masses of people, as described in the Bible, or anything remotely like it, just never happened.

These documents, which cover in the finest detail every period and every part of Canaan during this epoch prove beyond any doubt that there was no “Conquest of Canaan” and no kingdom of David and Solomon.

For a hundred years, Zionist archeologists have devoted tireless efforts to finding even a single piece of evidence to support the Biblical narrative, all to no avail.

But this is quite unimportant. In the competition between “objective” history and myth, the myth that suits our needs will always win, and win big.

It is not important what was, the important thing is what fires our imagination. That is what guides our steps to this day.

THE BIBLICAL narrative connects up with documented history only around the year 853 BC, when ten thousand soldiers and 2000 battle chariots of Ahab, King of Israel, took part in a grand coalition of the kingdoms of Syria and Palestine against Assyria.

The battle, which was documented by the Assyrians, was fought at Qarqar in Syria. The Assyrian army was delayed, if not defeated.

(A personal note: I am not a historian, but for many years I have reflected on our history and tried to draw some logical conclusions, which are outlined here. Most of them are supported by the emerging consensus of independent scholars around the world.) The kingdoms of Israel and Judea, which occupied a part of the land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan, were no different from the other kingdoms of the region. Even according to the Bible itself, the people sacrificed to various pagan deities “on every high hill and under every green tree”. (1 Kings 14:23).

Jerusalem was a tiny market town, much too small and much too poor for any of the things described in the Bible to have taken place there at the time.

In the books of the Bible that deal with that period, the appellation “Jew” (Yehudi in Hebrew) hardly appears at all, and where it does, it clearly refers simply to an inhabitant of Judea, the area around Jerusalem.

When an Assyrian general was asked “talk not with us in the Jewish language” (2 Kings 18:26), what was meant was the local Judean dialect of Hebrew.

The “Jewish” revolution took place in the Babylonian exile (587-539 BC). After the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem, members of the Judean elite were exiled to Babylon, where they came into contact with the important cultural streams of the time. The result was one of the great creations of mankind: the Jewish religion.

After some fifty years, some of the exiles returned to Palestine. They brought with them the name “Jews”, the appellation of a religious-ideological-political movement, much like the “Zionists” of our time. Therefore, one can speak of “Judaism” and “Jews” - in the sense accepted now - only from then on. During the following 500 years, the Jewish monotheistic religion gradually crystallized. Also at this time, the most outstanding literary creation of all times, the Hebrew Bible, was composed. The writers of the Bible did not intend to write “history”, in the sense understood today, but rather a religious, edifying and instructive text.

TO UNDERSTAND the birth and development of Judaism, one must consider two important facts: (a) Right from the beginning, when the “Jews” came back from Babylon, the Jewish community in this country was a minority among the Jews as a whole.

Throughout the period of the “Second Temple”, the majority of Jews lived abroad, in the areas known today as Iraq, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Cyprus, Italy, Spain and so on.

The Jews of that period were not a “nation” - the very idea did not yet exist.

The Jews of Palestine did not participate in the rebellions of the Jews in Libya and Cyprus against the Romans, and the Jews abroad took no part in the Great Revolt of the Jews in this country.

The Maccabees were not national but religious fighters, rather like the Taliban in our days, and killed many more “Hellenized” Jews than enemy soldiers.

(b) This Jewish Diaspora was not a unique phenomenon. On the contrary, at that time it was the norm.

Notions like “nation” belong to the modern world.

During the period of the “Second Temple” and later on, the dominant social-political pattern was a religious-political community enjoying self-government and not attached to any specific territory. A Jew in Alexandria could marry a Jewess in Damascus, but not the Christian woman across the street. She, on her part, could marry a Christian man in Rome, but not her Hellenist neighbor.

The Jewish Diaspora was only one of many such communities. This social pattern was preserved in the Byzantine Empire, was later taken over by the Ottoman Empire and can still be detected in Israeli law. Today, a Muslim Israeli cannot marry a Jewish Israeli, a Druze cannot marry a Christian (at least not in Israel itself). The Druze, by the way, are a surviving example of such a Diaspora.

The Jews were unique only in one respect: after the European peoples gradually moved on to new forms of organization, and in the end turned themselves into nations, the Jews remained what they were - a communal-religious Diaspora.

THE PUZZLE that is occupying the historians is: how did a tiny community of Babylonian exiles turn into a worldwide Diaspora of millions? There is only one convincing answer to that: conversion.

The modern Jewish myth has it that almost all the Jews are descendents of the Jewish community that lived in Palestine 2000 years ago and was driven out by the Romans in the year 70 AD.

That is, of course, baseless.

The “Expulsion from the Country” is a religious myth: God was angry with the Jews because of their sins and exiled them from His country.

But the Romans were not in the habit of moving populations, and there is clear evidence that a great part of the Jewish population in the country remained here after the Zealots’ Revolt and after the Bar-Kochba uprising, and that most Jews lived outside the country long before that.

At the time of the Second Temple and later, Judaism was a proselytizing religion par excellence. During the first centuries AD it fiercely competed with Christianity.

While the slaves and other downtrodden people in the Roman Empire were more attracted to the Christian religion, with its moving human story, the upper classes tended towards Judaism. Throughout the Empire, large numbers adopted the Jewish religion.

Especially puzzling is the origin of “Ashkenazi” Jewry. At the end of the first millennium there appeared in Europe - apparently out of nowhere - a very large Jewish population, the existence of which was not documented before.

Where did they come from?

There are several theories about that. The conventional one holds that the Jews wandered from the Mediterranean area to the North, settled in the Rhein valley and fled from the pogroms there to Poland, at the time the most liberal country in Europe. From there they dispersed into Russia and Ukraine, taking with them a German dialect that became Yiddish.

The Tel Aviv University scholar Paul Wexler asserts, on the other hand, that Yiddish was originally not a German but a Slavic language. A large part of Ashkenazi Jewry, according to this theory, are descendents of the Sorbs, a Slavic people that lived in Eastern Germany and was forced to abandon its ancient pagan creed. Many of them preferred to become Jews, rather than Christians.

In a recent book with the provocative title “When and How the Jewish People was Invented”, the Israeli historian Shlomo Sand argues - like Arthur Koestler and others before him - that most of the Ashkenazi Jews are really descended from the Khazars, a Turkic people that created a large kingdom in what is now South Russia more than a thousand years ago.

The Khazar king converted to Judaism, and according to this theory the Jews of Eastern Europe are mostly the descendants of Khazar converts. Sand also believes that most Sephardi Jews are descendents of Arab and Berber tribes in North Africa that had converted to Judaism instead of becoming Muslims, and had joined in the Muslim conquest of Spain.

When Jewry stopped proselytizing, the Jews became a closed, ethnic-religious community (as the Talmud says: "Converts are hard for Israel like a skin disease").

But the historical truth, whatever it is, is not so important.

Myth is stronger than truth, and it says that the Jews were expelled from this land. This is an essential layer in modern Jewish consciousness, and no academic research can shake it.

IN THE LAST 300 years, Europe turned "national".

The modern nation replaced earlier social patterns, such as the city state, feudal society and the dynastic empire. The national idea carried all before it, including history.

Each of these new nations shaped an "imagined history" for itself. In other words, every nation rearranged ancient myths and historical facts in order to shape a "national history" which proclaims its importance and serves as a unifying glue.

The Jewish Diaspora, which - as mentioned before - was "normal" 2000 years ago, became "abnormal" and exceptional. This intensified the Jew-hatred that was anyhow rampant in Christian Europe. Since all the national movements in Europe were - more or less - anti-Semitic, many Jews felt that they were left "outside", that they had no place in the new Europe.

Some of them decided that the Jews must conform to the new Zeitgeist and turn the Jewish community into a Jewish "nation".

For that purpose, it was necessary to reshape and reinvent Jewish history and turn it from the annals of a religious-ethnic Diaspora into the epic story of a "nation".

The job was undertaken by a man who can be considered the godfather of the Zionist idea: Heinrich Graetz, a German Jew who was influenced by German nationalism and created a "national" Jewish history. His ideas have shaped Jewish consciousness to this day.

Graetz accepted the Bible as if it were a history book, collected all the myths and created a complete and continuous historical narrative: the period of the Fathers, the Exodus from Egypt, the Conquest of Canaan, the "First Temple", the Babylonian Exile, the "Second Temple", the Destruction of the Temple and the Exile.

That is the history that all of us learned in school, the foundation upon which Zionism was built.

ZIONISM REPRESENTED a revolution in many fields, but its mental revolution was incomplete. Its ideology turned the Jewish community into a Jewish people, and the Jewish people into a Jewish nation - but never clearly defined the differences.

In order to win over the religiously inclined Jewish masses in Eastern Europe, it made a compromise with religion and mixed all terms into a one big cocktail - the religion is also a nation, the nation is also a religion, and later asserted that Israel is a "Jewish state" that belongs to its (Jewish?) citizens but also to the "Jewish people" throughout the world.

Official Israeli doctrine has it that Israel is the "Jewish nation state", but Israeli law narrowly defines a "Jew" as only a person who belongs to the Jewish religion.

Herzl and his successors were not courageous enough to do what Mustafa Kemal Ataturk did when he founded modern Turkey: he fixed a clear and sharp border between the Turkish nation and Islamic religion and imposed a complete separation between the two.

With us, everything remained one big salad. This has many implications in real life.

For example: if Israel is the state of the "Jewish people", as one of our laws says - what is there to stop an Israeli Jew from joining the Jewish community in California or Australia?

Small wonder that there is almost no leader in Israel whose children have not emigrated.

MORE: From GI Special 4H14:

“A Jew to Zionist Fighters, 1988” Do You Really Want To Be The New Gestapo? The New Wehrmacht? The New SA And SS?

[Thanks to JM, who sent this in. She writes:]

Something very different: a poem.

Have you heard of Erich Fried who is often referred to as the greatest modern, Jewish, poet?

He was born in Vienna in 1921 and escaped to England, with his mother, after his father was tortured to death by the Gestapo, in 1938.

Because of his experiences with racism and Fascism he became involved in the Palestinian cause.

He was a leader in the fight against both Fascism and Zionism.

I'm sending a copy of his best poem, in my opinion. It was first published in 1988 just before he died.

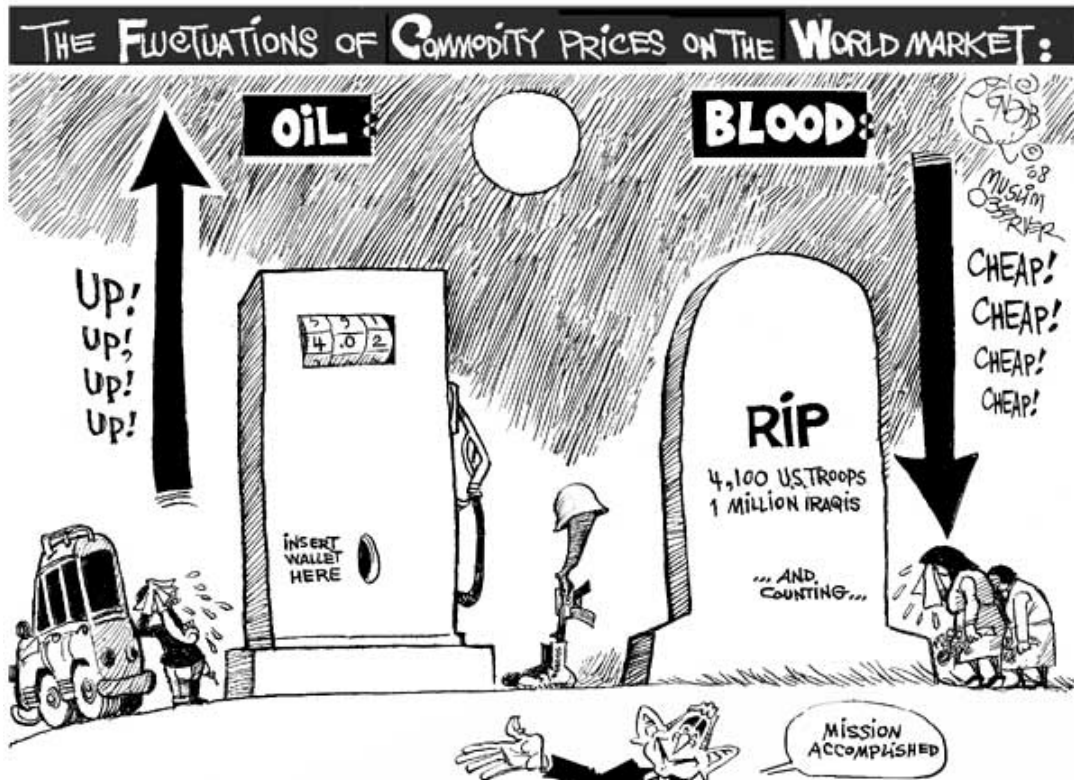
Please take the time to read it. I think it's wonderful.

A Jew to Zionist Fighters, 1988

What do you actually want?
Do you really want to outdo
those who trod you down
a generation ago
into your own blood
and into your own excrement
Do you want to pass on the old torture
to others now
in all its bloody and dirty detail
with all the brutal delight of torturers
as suffered by your fathers?
Do you really want to be the new Gestapo
the new Wehrmacht
the new SA and SS
and turn the Palestinians
into the new Jews?
Well then I too want,
having fifty years ago
myself been tormented for being a Jewboy
by your tormentors,
to be a new Jew with these new Jews
you are making of the Palestinians
And I want to help lead them as a free people
into their own land of Palestine
from whence you have driven them or in which you plague them
you apprentices of the Swastika
you fools and changelings of history
whose Star of David on your flags
turns ever quicker
into that damned symbol with its four feet
that you just do not want to see
but whose path you are following today

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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