

GI SPECIAL 6F1:

**NOT ANOTHER DAY
NOT ANOTHER DOLLAR
NOT ANOTHER LIFE**



Wendy Barranco, Iraq Veterans Against The War, speaks at a ceremony May 25, 2008 in Santa Monica, CA to honor the over 4,000 American men and women who have given their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Memorial Days:

USA:

05/22/2008 By Michael William [Iraq Veterans Against the War]

**Silence breaks upon each thought in passing
marked by the quiet bugling of despair -**

as we pause to raise our eyes to the heap
of the dead silence ever amassing

can we not be led to scream? To so rage
upon our chests as if we could exhume
thoughts lost in the welter of dust and time?
Will we continue to deploy, engage,

and destroy our innocent thoughts? and sigh
for their quiet passing? There, another
and yet another dragging toward their tomb.

Those shamelessly servile to fear will reap
nothing, for they sow nothing to the air
and mute will they remain until they die.

IRAQ:



Iraqis carry empty coffins during a symbolic funeral in Baghdad's Sadr City April 2, 2008.

Dozens of residents held a symbolic funeral procession for the Mehdi army fighters killed during clashes in Kerbala last week.

Banner reads: "We condole with a group of martyrs in the holy city of Kerbala 1. Ali Hameed Hashim al-Rubaie, 2. Oday Kadhim Kanan, 3. Yassin Khodher 4. Fadhil Omaran, 5. Majid Abdul Sada Hashim, and 6. Malik Abdul Sada Hashim."

Picture taken April 2, 2008 by/Kareem Raheem, Reuters

Australian Government Gets Troops The Fuck Out Of Iraq Combat: Troops Going Home Now; U.S. Command Announces U.S. Troops Will Be Sent To Die Holding Vacated Area

Jun. 1 2008 The Associated Press

Australia, a staunch U.S. ally and one of the first countries to commit troops to the Iraq war five years ago, ended combat operations in Iraq on Sunday.

Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was swept into office in November largely on the promise that he would bring home the country's 550 combat troops by the middle of 2008.

Rudd has said the Iraq deployment has made Australia more of a target for terrorism.

A Defence Department official said the combat troops are expected to return home over the next few weeks.

Media reports said the first of the soldiers had already landed in Australia on Sunday afternoon.

The troops on Sunday held a ceremony that included lowering the Australian flag from its position over Camp Terendak in the southern Iraq city of Talil, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity as required by the Defence Department.

They have been on standby to offer backup to Iraqi forces in the south for the past two years.

American troops will temporarily take over those responsibilities, the U.S. command said.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Baghdad IED Kills U.S. Soldier

June 1, 2008 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE
No. 20080601-04

BAGHDAD – A Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldier was killed when an explosively formed penetrator detonated in northeastern Baghdad June 1.

Waterbury Marine Dies In Iraq

05/31/2008 ASSOCIATED PRESS

WATERBURY — A 21-year-old Marine from Waterbury has died during his first tour in Iraq.

The military notified Christian Cotner's family on Friday about his death.

The Cotner family's pastor, the Rev. Kenneth Frazier Jr. of the First Congregational Church of Waterbury, says the family is too grief-stricken right now to make public statements, but he says they plan to do so in the near future.

Cotner graduated from Wilby High School. School staff say he was a well-liked, conscientious student who enjoyed volunteering and the ROTC. They say he was eager to go into the military.

Funeral services are pending.

Rocket Attack Wounds Two U.S. Soldiers At Nassiriya Base

May 31 (Reuters)

Three rockets wounded two U.S. soldiers when they landed on their base in Nassiriya, 300 km (185 miles) southeast of Baghdad, police said.

U.S. Copter Down South Of Baghdad; Two U.S. Soldiers Wounded

6.1.08 By ROBERT H. REID, Associated Press Writer

Two U.S. soldiers were injured when their helicopter crashed Sunday south of Baghdad, the military said. The military said the crash was being investigated but appeared to be due to mechanical failure.

BEEN ON THE JOB TOO LONG: COME ON HOME, NOW



US soldiers sleep in the bedroom of a mud hut in Diyala Province, northeast of Baghdad, on March 23. (AFP/David Furst)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Foreign Occupation Soldier Killed In Jalalabad; Three More Wounded

May 31, 2008 MSNBC News Services & by Sardar Ahmad (AFP)

KABUL, Afghanistan – Two NATO soldiers were killed Saturday in a Taliban car bomb attack in eastern Afghanistan.

The attack targeted a convoy.

Four more International Security Assistance Force soldiers were wounded in the blast in Jalalabad, a thriving city 50 kilometres (30 miles) from the Pakistan border, the alliance and Afghan government said.

The 40-nation ISAF would not release the nationalities of its casualties, according to policy. Most foreign troops in eastern Afghanistan are US nationals.

“I saw an American humvee at the middle of the road badly destroyed.

“It’s laying upside down in the middle of the road,” the AFP correspondent said.

Foreign Occupation Soldier Killed Near Farah; Nationality Not Announced

May 30 (AFP)

A soldier in the US-led coalition has been killed.

The soldier was killed “in action” Thursday near the western town of Farah, the coalition said in a statement. It gave no details of what happened or the nationality of the soldier.

There has been heavy fighting in recent days in Farah province, bordering Iran.

Two Foreign Occupation Soldiers Wounded In Paktia; Nationality Not Announced

May 31 Reuters

PAKTIA - Two soldiers from the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force were wounded when their vehicle hit a roadside bomb in the eastern province of Paktia, the U.S. military said.

Rashidan District Falls To Resistance; Collaborator Officials Taken Prisoner

May 30 (AFP) & By Shir Ahmad (Reuters)

In Ghazni, the Taliban captured a district called Rashidan overnight, taking prisoner the heads of its police and administration, officials and the militant group said.

“Last night Taliban attacked Rashidan district and it fell,” said provincial police chief Jan Mohammad Mujahed.

A spokesman for the Taliban, Zabihullah Mujahed, confirmed the rebels were in control of Rashidan, 120 kilometres (75 miles) southwest of Kabul, and said the district chief, acting police chief and eight officers had been captured. He said the insurgents had taken the district by force and had killed nine policemen.

“They are alive and we have captured them. The district is totally under our control,” he said.

Ghazni province where the attack took place is only a two-hour drive south from the capital, Kabul.

Resistance Claims Mercenary Copter Shot Down With U.S. Troops Aboard

May 30, 2008 Pakistan News Service

PESHAWAR: Taliban in Afghanistan on Thursday claimed to have shot down a chopper of a United States private security company, Kellogg Brown and Root (KBR), in the restive province of Khost.

“I am taking the responsibility of shooting down this copter in which all people on board have been killed,” remarked Taliban’s senior commander Sirajuddin Haqqani, who called this correspondent from an undisclosed location by telephone.

Haqqani, whose fighters operate in Afghanistan’s Khost, Paktia and even in the capital Kabul, claimed that 15 to 20 US soldiers were on board when his men targeted the chopper at Zambar area near Sabaro town in Khost.

The Taliban commander claimed dozens of Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers and US reached the spot and cordoned off the area.

Resistance Action

May 31 (AFP) & (Reuters) & 6.1 (Reuters) & by Sardar Ahmad (AFP)

An Afghan official said Saturday a district chief was killed in an attack in southeastern Zabul province the previous evening. "Unknown armed men killed the district chief of Mizan, Mohammad Yunus, and his bodyguard in Qalat city", Gulab Shah Alikhail, deputy governor of Zabul province, said.

A senior member of the government National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) was captured along with three companions by Taliban fighters in Wardak province, a local government official said. The Taliban confirmed they were holding the men.

One Afghan soldier was killed and two others wounded when they came under fire from insurgents at a military checkpoint on Friday in Sangin District in the southern province of Helmand, the defence ministry said.

A remote-controlled blast aimed at an army bus wounded three army soldiers, the defense ministry said.

In the same region, an Afghan soldier was killed in a firefight with militants, Afghan army spokesman colonel Mohammad Gul told AFP.

The defence ministry said another Afghan soldier was killed Friday when a base came under heavy fire from militants in Helmand province in the south.

TROOP NEWS

“I Wish I Had A Camera, Because Out The Windows Of The Four Or Five In The Convoy, Every One Had At Least One Peace Sign”

From: SSG N (ret'd)
To: GI Special
Sent: May 21, 2008 12:45 AM
Subject: A really nice day gets better

Spring is here, so its bike season. My roadie is 37, and still a joy to pedal.

Sunday I was returning from an attempt to make the ghost town 20 miles north, I had run out of munchie bars after 2 hours and 12 miles into a 25-30 mph head wind.

I was only a few miles from the edge of town (literally) when I heard something coming up behind me that didn't sound like a semi, pick up, or car.

I turned my head to see a humvee, unarmored, and instantly raised my arm with the V peace sign. The gesture was returned from the truck.

I wish I had a camera, because out the windows of the four or five in the convoy, every one had at least one peace sign, and some had three arms raised up in the salute.

Made my day, the last few miles were the sweetest of the whole ride.

“I Am Tired Of This War” “I Also Love The Army And What It Is Supposed To Stand For When It Isn’t Being Used As A Corporate Puppet”



May 20, 2008 By Bryan Hannah [Iraq Veterans Against the War] [Excerpt]

Branch of service: United States Army (USA)
Unit: 1st Cav
Rank: SPC
Home: Munising, Michigan
Served in: Fort Hood, Kuwait, Iraq.

I am an American Soldier who has great plans of flying and going to college, maybe living a normal life one of these days (before I’m fucking 30), but all of my plans have been put on hold due to a little thing called stop-loss.

Stop-loss is the military denying a soldier the termination of his contract at the original agreed upon date. Stop-loss was created by congress after the Viet nam war. Title 10,

United States Code, section 12305(a)* states, "the President may suspend any provision of law relating to promotion, retirement, or separation applicable to any member of the armed forces who the President determines is essential to the national security of the United States" Contractually, soldiers agree to stop loss.

In your contract it looks like so: "In the event of war, my enlistment in the Armed Forces continues until six (6) months after the war ends, unless the enlistment is ended sooner by the President of the United States." Many recruiters, mine included, will point this out, just to write it off as BS.

My recruiter, Sergeant Ryan Simms, from the recruiting station in Crawfordsville, IN as well as the people at the Military Entrance and Processing Station(MEPS) in Indianapolis, IN all told me that this never happens.

They likened it to a draft, to be used only in cases of extreme emergency. This is excluding the fact that this oversight often occurs when young, often poor, people are dazzled, by a \$20,000-\$40,000 bonus.

What would you do?

I will have to go to Iraq one more time for what is projected to be 12 months. The last time they told me that it was 15 months.

I am tired of this war.

I never agreed with it, but I need the money for college as I was never raised in a "well-off" family.

I also love the Army and what it is supposed to stand for when it isn't being used as a corporate puppet.

I am an active member of Iraq Veterans Against the War.

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

Politician Wants To Ban Penthouse, Playboy From Exchanges:

“This Religious Right-Wing View On What Is Morally Correct Is Becoming Tiresome And Wacky”

Army Times
Letters To The Editor
May 26, 2008

Rep. Paul Broun Jr., R-Ga., says he uses the four-way test — 1) moral/right, 2) constitutional, 3) necessary, 4) affordable — when voting on proposed legislation (“Bill would boot Penthouse, Playboy out of exchanges,” May 5).

By his own standards, his Military Honor and Decency Act fails on all counts.

Evidently, Broun feels it is entirely appropriate for an 18-year-old to view a dismembered body, but not female breasts.

This religious right-wing view on what is morally correct is becoming tiresome and wacky.

Back in the 1950s, the Bible thumpers demanded that our service members not drink, and were defeated. Now these groups, led by Broun, demand that service members not become overly excited by viewing naked women.

How many readers of this publication have looked at, read, viewed or purchased a Playboy or Penthouse magazine? I am advocating a return to common sense.

Our service members are not 8-year-old children who need to be protected from certain things.

They are adults doing the work of adults in the most awful manner, yet these same military service members are not allowed to drink or even think about sex.

If Broun wishes to remain celibate, more power to him, but to force his views on the rest of us is 1) not right, 2) unconstitutional, 3) unnecessary and 4) lacks common sense.

There's no use trying to convert this man, as he is set in his ways.

All we can do is let the other members of Congress know this wacky bill needs to be defeated — soundly.

Sgt. Alan Griggs (ret.)
Buckeye, Ariz.

Ban On Sex For Soldiers In Afghanistan Lifted ... Sort Of

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

May 15, 2008 Drew Brown, Stars and Stripes

JALALABAD, Afghanistan -- Single soldiers and civilians working for the U.S. military in Afghanistan can now have sex legally. Sort of.

A new order signed by Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Schloesser, commander of Combined Joint Task Force-101, has lifted a ban on sexual relations between unmarried men and women in the combat zone.

General Order No. 1 outlines a number of prohibited activities and standards of conduct for U.S. troops and civilians working for the military in Afghanistan.

Previously, under the regulation, sexual relations and "intimate behavior" between men and women not married to each other were a strict no-no. The regulation also barred members of the opposite sex from going into each other's living quarters unless they were married to each other.

But the latest version of General Order No. 1 for Afghanistan, which Schloesser signed April 19, eases those restrictions.

The new regulation warns that sex in a combat zone "can have an adverse impact on unit cohesion, morale, good order and discipline."

But sexual relations and physical intimacy between men and women not married to each other are no longer banned outright. They're only "highly discouraged," and that's as long as they're "not otherwise prohibited" by the Uniform Code of Military Justice, according to the new order.

Men and women "will not cohabit with, reside or sleep with members of the opposite gender in living spaces of any kind," unless they are married or if it's necessary for military reasons, the new policy states.

Nielson-Green said the policy change was "not significant on a practical level" since it simply aligns General Order No. 1 in Afghanistan with similar policies in the region. Neither U.S. Central Command, which oversees U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, nor Multi-National Forces-Iraq bar sexual relations between unmarried men and women in their version of the order, she said.

"The expectation is that troops should behave professionally and responsibly at all times," Nielson-Green said, adding that while the new regulation does not condone sex, it "does recognize that such behaviors happen, and if they result in any chargeable offenses, then appropriate actions will be pursued."

“The bottom line is that the troops are responsible for their own behavior,” Nielson-Green said.

She declined to “speculate” on the conditions under which soldiers could engage in legal sexual behavior.

The UCMJ contains several provisions under which sexual relations are prohibited between men and women.

For instance, married persons cannot engage legally in sex with anyone other than their spouse, or they can be prosecuted for adultery.

Sexual relations between subordinates and higher-ranking personnel are prohibited within the same chain of command. Sexual relations between officers and enlisted personnel are generally prohibited as well. Homosexual relations are completely prohibited under the code.

Nielson-Green said the new policy does allow commanders to make the provision on sex more restrictive, as long as they have approval from the CJTF-101 commander.

In eastern Afghanistan, the 173rd Airborne Brigade, which is nearing the end of its 15-month deployment, won approval to stick with the old policy that bans sexual relations between unmarried soldiers.

Maj. Will Helixon, the brigade judge advocate, said the issue was basically one of fairness.

“After we’ve treated the soldiers this way for a year, it’s not really right to change,” said Helixon said. “That’s the bottom line.”

According to Helixon’s staff, 28 soldiers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade have been punished for having sex in Afghanistan or for violating the no-entry rule in the past year. Those punishments ranged from letters of reprimand to field-grade Article 15s.

At Forward Operating Base Fenty, near Jalalabad, the reaction of soldiers to the lifting of the sex ban was mixed.

“I think there’s going to be a lot more pregnancies going around. Not that there already isn’t. But at least they won’t get in trouble for it.”

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Bush’s Dog Is A New Saddam; [GET THE MESSAGE?]



Protesters display a poster of Iraqi President Nuri al-Maliki dressed in former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's outfit during a march after Friday prayers in Baghdad's Sadr City May 30, 2008. Thousands marched through Iraq cities on Friday to protest talks between Washington and Baghdad on keeping U.S. troops in Iraq after 2008, responding to a call by nationalist anti-occupation political leader Moqtada al-Sadr. REUTERS/Kareem Raheem

Resistance Action



May 29: A damaged police vehicle following a bomber who drove into a group of police officers and detonated his explosives in the al-Ghabat district of northern Mosul. (AFP/Marwan Ibrahim)



A damaged police vehicle, next to a pool of blood in al Ghabat area central Mosul, May 29, 2008, after a bomber drove his car next to police officers detonated his explosives killing 3 policemen and wounding 4 policemen. (AP Photo/Emad Matti)

May 30, 2008 McClatchy Newspapers & June 01, 2008 The Associated Press & (Reuters)

Around 8am, insurgents killed a U.S. funded Sahwa member at Hibhib village (9 miles north of Baquba).

Guerrillas killed on Friday colonel Ali Kadhim Salman, a police officer of Babil, near his house at Al-Deir town (30 miles north of Basra).

A bomber blew himself up at a police checkpoint west of Baghdad yesterday. Fearing more attacks, authorities imposed a vehicle ban and closed all entrances to the targeted town of Hit. The attacker detonated his explosives belt after approaching the checkpoint, which was near a bridge, at about 9 p.m., said the town's administrator, Hikmat Jubeir. Jubeir said nine policemen were among those killed, including the town's police chief Col. Khalil Ibrahim. Eleven police were wounded.

In the capital, a senior police official was wounded and a traffic cop was killed when a bomb stuck to the official's car exploded in a busy intersection.

A policeman and a civilian were injured when a roadside bomb targeted a police patrol in Mosul, an official of the provincial operations center said.

A roadside bomb struck a police patrol, wounding seven policemen in central Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

Demonstrators In Baghdad's Sadr City District Chanted "No To America! No To The Occupation!"
[GET THE MESSAGE?]



Protesters burn an effigy of Iraqi [collaborator] President Nuri al-Maliki as they march after attending Friday prayers in Baghdad's Sadr City May 30, 2008. Thousands marched through Iraq cities on Friday to protest talks between Washington and Baghdad on keeping U.S. troops in Iraq after 2008, responding to a call by nationalist anti-occupation political leader Moqtada al-Sadr. Demonstrators "No to America! No to the occupation!" REUTERS/Kareem Raheem & AP

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Winter Soldier II Investigation



From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: May 19, 2008 12:55 AM
Subject: Winter Soldier II Investigation

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

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

One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
December 13, 2004

A Song Sings Across The Land

From: Dennis Serdel
To: Thomas F Barton ; Mike Hastie
Sent: Wednesday, May 28, 2008 10:53 PM
Subject: A Song Sings Across The Land by Dennis

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

A Song Sings Across The Land

**Johnny doesn't want to fight anymore
he chooses life instead of war
Just look at those boys over there
playing football in the street
just having fun with just a ball
Johnny doesn't want to fight anymore
he chooses life instead of war
See that mother standing by her door
with her baby that she holds with both arms
as the sun shines on her gentle face
like a madonna from a different faith
Johnny doesn't want to fight anymore
he chooses life instead of war
Look at that old man with a cigarette
smoke trailing off like a railroad train
his old eyes have seen it all
as a suicide bomb from a different space
Johnny doesn't want to fight anymore
he chooses life instead of war
An old lady is shopping for some food
pays and walks away with one small bag
life is poor and so is she
Johnny doesn't want to fight anymore
he chooses life instead of war
A dead body along the road
has been there for a week
bloated with one arm in the air
pointing to an Allah of just sky
Johnny doesn't want to fight anymore
he chooses life instead of war
A roadside bomb has taken a Humvee
hauled to the junk yard as
the sun bakes all the blood on each one
dark red from an American son
Johnny doesn't want to fight anymore
he chooses life instead of war
The City of Baghdad does not light up**

in the night like it did before
as mortars are aimed at everyone
Johnny doesn't want to fight anymore
he chooses life instead of war
In the morning the Soldiers wake
as they shave and drink coffee
slide into their uniforms
but one named
Johnny doesn't want to fight anymore
he chooses life instead of war
many of them feel the same way
as they listen to his song
again today.

“Workers — Both In And Out Of Uniform — Have The Collective Power To End This War, Bring The Troops Home Now, And Get The U.S. Out Of The Middle East”

April 23, 2008

Robert McEllrath, ILWU President
1188 Franklin Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
(415) 775-0533
(415) 775-1302 FAX

Dear Brother McEllrath:

**New York City Labor Against the War (NYCLAW) salutes the ILWU's Pacific Coast
May Day Shutdown to Stop the War in Iraq and Afghanistan.**

From the beginning, Bush & Co. have sought to justify this war for oil and empire with phony claims about “fighting terrorism,” finding “weapons of mass destruction,” and spreading “democracy.” Despite overwhelming rejection of its policies at the polls, the administration has steadily escalated its war in the Middle East.

This has meant not only ordering thousands more troops to Iraq and Afghanistan, but also arming and financing Israel's war on Lebanon and its increasingly brutal slow-genocide of the Palestinians, launching a proxy invasion of Somalia, bombing Pakistan, and threatening to attack Iran.

As in all such wars, ordinary working people pay the price. In Iraq and Afghanistan, this war has killed more than a million people, caused more than 50,000 G.I. casualties, promoted civil war, cost at least \$1.2 trillion and pushed the economy into crisis — with no end in sight.

At home, the administration continues to attack civil liberties, the Arab-Muslim community, undocumented immigrants, Katrina refugees, people of color and labor.

Yet this is a bipartisan war.

Congressional Democrats — including senators Clinton and Obama — have given Bush every penny he has asked for.

They have refused to filibuster war spending (which requires only 41 Senate votes) and won't even promise to get out by the end of the next presidential term in 2013. At most, they call for "redeployment" to maintain U.S. control of the region.

A generation ago, a war ended when Vietnamese resistance and the Black freedom movement ignited a grassroots working class mutiny in the military, auto plants, ghettos and barrios, against what Martin Luther King Jr. accurately called "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today . . . my own government."

It will take a similar mutiny to end this war.

The ILWU has a proud tradition of work stoppages to protest South African apartheid and U.S. death squads in Central America.

Your May Day action shows how workers — both in and out of uniform — have the collective power to end this war, bring the troops home now, and get the U.S. out of the Middle East.

Issued by NYCLAW Co-Conveners (Other affiliations listed for identification only):

Larry Adams Former President, NPMHU Local 300

Michael Letwin Former President, UAW Local 2325/Assn. of Legal Aid Attorneys

Brenda Stokely Former President, AFSCME DC 1707; N.E. Regional Coor

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

A Temporary Sort Of Peace: A Memoir of Vietnam [Book Review]

A Temporary Sort Of Peace: A Memoir of Vietnam
Jim McGarrah
Indiana Historical Society Press. 2007; 251 pages
ISBN: 987-0-87195-258-5

A Review by Gary E. May, Veterans for Peace Newsletter, March 2008

The title for this work immediately betrays what McGarrah believes about his Vietnam experiences -- it is not easily wrestled into submission and there may be additional demons lurking in the recesses of the vast memory files.

McGarrah, a Professor of Creative Writing, demonstrates his prodigious writing skills in this engaging, accessible and brutally honest work.

His tentativeness, perhaps reflecting anxiety about the unknown, seems to blunt his introspection and critical self analysis.

After the opening scene set in a VA Mental Hygiene Clinic where he is being assessed for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, while thoughts of Vietnam intrude, McGarrah begins his recollections with his life and upbringing in Princeton, Indiana.

He was an accomplished prep athlete with what is described as a forceful, driving father, a mostly unavailable mother and a younger sister. While McGarrah provides a detailed, gut wrenching description of his relationship with his father when he was challenged about being caught in a lie, most of his treatment of his family relationships provide only a tease and leaves much to the imagination to determine what family life was like and how it might help explain McGarrah's rash decision to join the Marines after flunking out of college.

The description of the early years is appropriately seasoned by teen male obsession with sex and ham-handed encounters with dating, petting and romance. McGarrah recounts the loss of the object of his sexual fantasy to a competing suitor, but shirks this experience as unimportant even while he acknowledges the preeminence of this relationship in his life. Much remains unsaid.

McGarrah's Vietnam tour, described in detail that rivals Caputo's Rumor of War, is pretty standard fare by this time. The novelty of Vietnam's particular horrors in the annals of combat has been dulled by its retelling in several popular works over the past few decades.

And yet, by the time we get to Vietnam with McGarrah we have a “connection” with him, and we care what happens, not least when he is wounded during the Tet offensive in 1968 — his is far from a detached regurgitation of facts only.

Just as we care about McGarrah in Vietnam, we care about him upon his return.

This, too, is a familiar scenario of drugs, jobs, broken relationships, soul searching, existential crises, wandering and confusion.

McGarrah’s writing style connects with the reader. The descriptions of fraternity parties, anonymous sex, youthful naiveté, idealism, geographic remedies, and blatant stupidity are engaging.

An informed reader is reminded of psychologist John Wilson’s description of Vietnam veterans as teens with a middle aged frame of reference that was launched forward at hyper speed impelled by experiences in Vietnam, although McGarrah seems oblivious to this as he tells his story.

Having achieved the credentials of legitimacy with a MFA degree, McGarrah joined the academy as a Professor of Creative Writing. He taught at the university that employs me. There he distinguished himself as a good, passionate teacher who challenged his students to do their best work.

I am personally familiar with exemplary work he did with one student, Joe Sayyah, a Vietnam veteran who died from Agent Orange poisoning. McGarrah gave this student a creative outlet for his angst, an understanding ear, and gentle incentives to do his best work in creating a legacy of his own.

In 2005, McGarrah received a Faculty Research and Creative Works Award to return to Vietnam with his adult son, John.

This was obviously a significant opportunity for McGarrah to write the epilogue for the book.

He was able to meet with a noted Vietnamese poet, Vo Que. Touring and chatting with this nationally recognized poet was obviously a highlight for McGarrah, as was the peace ceremony where he and Vo Que wrote and recited original poems intended to heal spiritual scars. Overall, the description of the return’s pathos pales when compared to the works of Scurfield and other veterans who have returned to Vietnam, many of whom adopted more deeply introspective and evaluative perspectives.

McGarrah’s understated account of the return to Vietnam (“home”) embodies a substantial dissipation of energy and enthusiasm for the trip.

For example, in a taxi ride, McGarrah and his son pass a temple that was the site of a horrific battle during McGarrah’s tour.

His immediate reaction, “Goddamn it.” When questioned by his son, he says, “I blew that temple up. I’m in the middle of my old base camp. The government must have left it as some kind of reminder, which is ironic since both governments encourage your

generation to forget”, to which John responds, “It’s better economics to forget one war. That makes it easier to start a new one.”

This exchange closes with McGarrah’s understated hope that his son’s awareness of history’s tendency to repeat itself will lead toward the wisdom to change.

There are contemporary photographs throughout the book. For someone who shares McGarrah’s experiences as a Marine, and as one who grew up in the same county and time frame as the author, I personally found the photos to be an affront to aging.

That’s not the way we look today; we’ve aged, and that’s part of the story. That said, readers of our generation will find in these photos powerful anchors to Midwest America baby boomer upbringing.

This is an important contribution to the growing volumes of “Vietnam books”.

Its strongest points are the writing style, the engagement of readers, the description of war’s aftermath and its tentative hopefulness.

The reader is likely to feel unfulfilled and “left hanging” about McGarrah’s family dynamics and his underdeveloped insights about “what it all means”.

Finally, readers will feel hopeful that McGarrah’s journey and search for meaning will continue, resulting in a permanent peace, rather than ‘a temporary sort of peace,’ for him.

Gary E. May is an Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of Southern Indiana, and a Vietnam veteran newly elected to the National Board of Veterans For Peace.

“It Would Be Wrong To Conclude, As Many Do, That The ‘Israeli Lobby’ Guides U.S. Middle East Policy”

Only a genuine democracy encompassed by one–person/one-vote, that Israel so fears, points the way for the future--in a single, secular state in which all citizens are equal, without regard to race or religion.

May 22, 2008 By Sharon Smith, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

U.S. TAXPAYER dollars have funded Israel’s war on Palestine since its inception 60 years ago.

Since 1948, Israel has remained the largest recipient of foreign aid, with more than \$108 billion from the U.S. government. Over the last 10 years, U.S. military aid reached \$17

billion--including \$2.4 billion this year alone--while Congress endorsed Israel's most recent assault on Gaza by a vote of 404-1.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude, as many do, that the "Israeli lobby" guides U.S. Middle East policy.

On the contrary, Israel's most powerful lobby resides inside the Pentagon.

The U.S. funds Israel for its own reasons in the Middle East, because it needs this well-armed and hostile combatant state, however unpredictable, that shares a similar interest in quelling Arab rebellions wherever they occur.

Indeed, Egypt is the second-largest recipient of U.S foreign aid, receiving roughly \$1.3 billion a year in military aid since 1979 and an average of \$815 million a year in economic assistance. Egypt will receive 1.3 billion in military aid and \$415 million in civilian aid this year.

This is money well spent, as witnessed in January, when Palestinians swarmed the Rafah border into Egypt to buy basic necessities--and Egyptian riot police turned water cannons on the starving Palestinians. Despite the desperation of Gazans fleeing occupation, Egypt closed its border as soon as possible.

Yet the populations of neighboring Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan identify with the Palestinian struggle, even if their despotic leaders do not.

Regional solidarity provides the eventual solution to the struggle for Palestine.

Israel's greatest fear, that Palestinians will outnumber Jews despite their careful engineering, will soon become a demographic reality.

As former Knesset member Yossi Sarid noted recently, comparing Israel to South African apartheid, "One essential difference remains between South Africa and Israel: There a small minority dominated a large majority, and here we have almost a tie. But the tiebreaker is already darkening on the horizon...[T]he Zionist project will come to an end if we don't choose to leave the slave house before being visited by a fatal demographic plague."

As in South Africa, Israeli apartheid can only survive for so long before it is overthrown from below.

Indeed, if Israel's current starvation tactic toward Palestinians, currently locked down in their future "Palestinian state," is any indication the Camp David solution is dead.

Only a genuine democracy encompassed by one-person/one-vote, that Israel so fears, points the way for the future--in a single, secular state in which all citizens are equal, without regard to race or religion.

OCCUPATION REPORT

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



A woman comforts a child as foreign occupation soldiers from the US soldiers search their house during an armed home invasion in Shulla neighbourhood in north-western Baghdad. Photograph: Sean Smith, Guardian, 5.28.08 [Thanks to JM, who sent this in.]

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?]

"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."



[images.google.com]

English soldiers search an American settler's house (1770's)

Declared Bill Ehrhart, a marine in Vietnam:

In grade school we learned about the redcoats, the nasty British soldiers that tried to stifle our freedom. Subconsciously, but not very subconsciously, I began increasingly to have the feeling that I was a redcoat. I think it was one of the most staggering realizations of my life.

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

**“I Wonder What The Benefit Of
Detaining Hundreds Of Men Was So
They Are Kept From Their Families”**

May 29, 2008 By Correspondent Hussein washingtonbureau.typepad.com/iraq/
[Baghdad]

Social calls are one of the tradition customs in Iraq. This tradition was badly affected during the last five years.

On Friday afternoon after finishing my work I made two social calls. I made my first visit to my cousin's house that I haven't seen for ages. He was so happy to see me after all that time. In fact ,the main reason was to deliver him something that his brother gave to me in Basra. That thing was some money that he is in need which forced me to make him have it as soon as possible.

After that I went to my brother's house to have the second call. I haven't seen my brother for about ten days which I spent in Basra to cover news for my agency.

On the entrance of the street that leads to my brother's house there was an American soldier with a machine gun in hand.

Soon later, I saw two American armoured vehicles few meters away with few soldiers deployed in the street. I started a conversation with the first soldier saying "Good evening Sir, may I pass." The response was short "Is your house here?" I said yes only three house from here and I am a reporter for an American agency". He let me in after searching me with my two bags which I was carrying.

I saw my brother outside his house with another cousin who came to have his car fixed by my brother. They were laughing when I arrived the house . I asked why you are laughing while the American soldiers searching the area. They said "We are laughing as you came only few minutes after having the Americans in our neighborhood . You either work with them or we are lucky to have you among us".

I realized that my brother needed me. So I waited till having my brother's house search .I spoke with the American officer in charge who was pleased to have a family member speak English. He said that they have a tip of a weapons cache in the area .

Then, the officer asked my brother by me, as I became the interpreter for the American army at that time, about a deserted house in the area which belongs to a displaced family. I told him via my brother that the house was deserted a year ago and no one lives in it ever since and the house that my brother lives in belongs to a displaced family too.

Then, the question became of the Shiite and Sunni. My brother said we are Shiite and I was displaced from my apartment in the other part of Amil neighborhood more than a year ago to let this house who belongs to a Sunni family . The American officer passed my brother two cards with phone numbers to call in case of help and tips and he ordered his soldiers to leave the house without being searched . I got relief as things were fine .

I just had in mind a flash back of having my father detained in May of 2007 who didn't have me with him at that time when the raid took place. Any way, I came back home.

I heard from my father that four of my cousins had been detained by the American troops in Amil neighborhood with at least three hundreds men detained in Amil neighborhood.

The day after, most of the detained men were released including three cousins having one remained in custody who was in a social visit to one of his cousins who was released before him hoping to be released as well as the others who were either doing shopping when the raid took place or doing prayers in a nearby mosque in the area.

I wonder what the benefit of detaining hundreds of men was so they are kept from their families.

Iraqi families suffer from the unknown that could befall their fathers, sons and husbands.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

The Israeli Airstrike We All Prayed For

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

May 23, 2008 Times Newspapers Ltd. [Excerpts]

Tony Blair came within moments of being killed when two Israeli fighter aircraft threatened to shoot down a private jet taking him to a Middle East conference in the belief that it might have been staging a terrorist attack.

The warplanes were scrambled to intercept after the jet pilot failed to contact air traffic control.

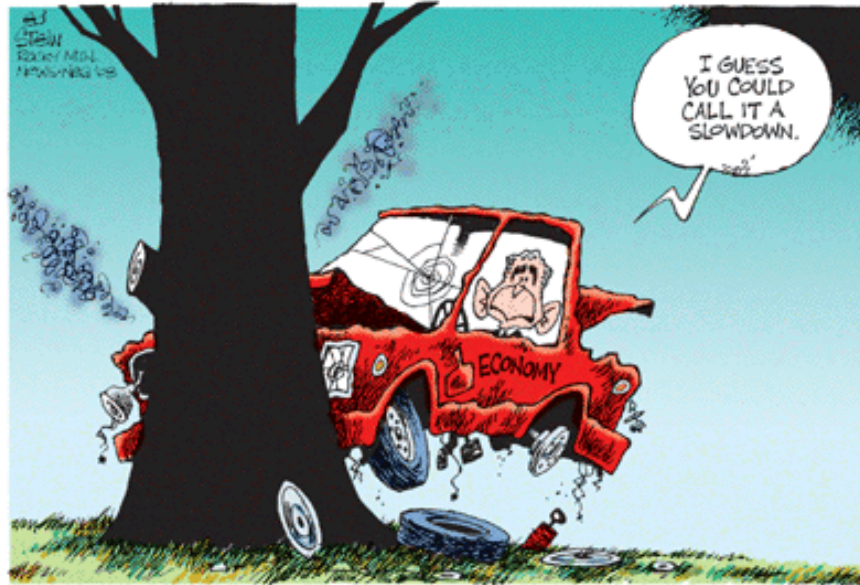
The Israeli aircraft used to intercept Mr Blair's plane would have been versions of the F16 or F15, armed with Shafirir and Python air-to-air missiles. Both missiles have proved to be devastatingly effective and versatile.

Air traffic controllers spotted a suspicious aircraft heading into Israeli airspace from the Sinai peninsula on Monday and made several attempts to establish contact. When the pilot failed to respond to their urgent requests, the Israelis scrambled two fighters to intercept what they feared could have been a terrorist attacker.

The fighters flew above Mr Blair's civilian aircraft to indicate to the pilot that he was considered a suspect target, at which point he finally made contact. The pilot told them that he was carrying Mr Blair. During the entire incident, Mr Blair was not informed of the situation by the pilot.

[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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FIGHT HIM NOW, OR HE'LL FOLLOW YOU HOME



May 29, 2008 (AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta)

LIAR TRAITOR

TROOP-KILLER DOMESTIC ENEMY UNFIT FOR COMMAND UNWORTHY OF OBEDIENCE

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