

GI SPECIAL 6F14:

King Tells His Lieutenant Commander, “With All Due Respect, Fuck The President”

**“It Is A Moment That Brought
Standing Ovals And Cheers
From Active-Duty Service People
At A Theater Outside Fort Carson”**



06/12/2008 by Martin Smith, Iraq Veterans Against The War [www.ivaw.org/]

Branch of service: United States Marine Corps (USMC)

Unit: 1st Radio Bn, B Co

Rank: Sgt.

Home: Champaign, Illinois

Served in: Presidio of Monterey Defense Institute; Goodfellow Air Force Base, San Angelo, TX; Kaneohe Bay, MCBH

Review: Stop-Loss, directed by Kimberly Peirce, written by Peirce and Mark Richard, starring Ryan Phillippe, Channing Tatum and Abbie Cornish.

IF YOU are looking for an antiwar movie, then skip Stop-Loss.

No overt political stance on the war is taken by director and co-writer Kimberly Peirce in the film.

From the vantage of the soldiers, Stop-Loss shows the emotional impact that their service afflicts on their community and loved ones at home. Yet without a critique of the war, this film concludes with a supportive tone for the war effort in the guise of duty to one's fellow brothers in arms.

It is a reactionary conclusion that affirms the necessity of building an antiwar movement and the stark consequences of inaction. (Warning: This review divulges several plot turns)

The movie centers on Staff Sergeant Brandon King, who in the movie's dramatic opening leads his squad into an ambush in Tikrit, a firefight that leaves four U.S. soldiers killed and Private Rico Rodriguez severely wounded.

His injuries haunt King throughout the film with guilt-inspired post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) flashbacks. The opening bloodbath shows the chaos of battle and the confusion caused by the fog of war.

In the midst of the urban search for insurgents, King finds the huddled bodies of two women and a child on a blood-soaked mattress. The image is one of the film's few indictments of the war, exposing how combat indiscriminately targets the innocent and destroys the human spirit.

The relationship between soldiers and insurgents in the film parallels all counter-insurgency warfare, highlighting the difficulty in distinguishing between friend and foe.

In the scenes in Iraq, all Arabs are portrayed as the potential enemy. While this may be the reality experienced by some troops, it is a disservice to the viewer not to explore the motives of the insurgency.

A subtle Islamophobia is implied by the unfolding of the scene of the ambush.

As a sinister foreshadowing of the attack, the muezzin's call to prayer reverberates from loudspeakers moments before the ambush, implying that the Islamic faith is the cause of the insurgency, rather than the insurgency being a justified response to a foreign occupation.

The film then features King's unit's return home to Texas, complete with a hometown parade where his best friend, Sgt. Steve Shriver, tells the cheering crowd, "We're over there killing 'em in Iraq, so we don't have to kill them in Texas."

It is a pro-war rhetoric laced throughout the film that is never challenged, one of many zingers by Shriver and the other soldiers like, "Take out a Hajji every time they hit us, and send 'em back to Bible times" and "We just need to drop a 10,000 pound bomb for every time they hit us."

YET THE film moves beyond portraying the men in his unit as mere simpletons and redneck yahoos.

They all struggle with some form of PTSD: Shriver beats his girlfriend when he can't get an erection, King has disruptive recurring flashbacks, and Tommy lapses into alcoholism and separates from his wife.

After a severe bout of depression, Tommy commits suicide in the moments building up to the film's climax.

But the main storyline revolves around the status of King's discharge.

While out-processing from the military, King is shocked to learn that he has orders back to Iraq; he has been stop-lossed, a "back-door draft" that allows the president to extend one's military obligation beyond their contract enlistment.

In a dramatic confrontation, King tells his lieutenant commander, "With all due respect, fuck the president."

It is a moment that brought standing ovations and cheers from active-duty service people at a theater outside Fort Carson, according to Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) members who had passed out copies of Sit-Rep, the IVAW newsletter, at the film's premiere.

The scene, one of the few worth remembering, obviously struck a chord.

Rather than focusing on the commander-in-chief, however, the film shifts to blame the lack of forced conscription as the true culprit for the war's malfeasance and the undue burden pressed on the "good guys"--the football jocks turned battle heroes who are fighting "America's war."

King then goes AWOL, becoming a fugitive. In a tense moment when he is considering his options with his family, he explains that his stop-loss was due to the absence of a draft. Implicit throughout the rest of the film is an "us" against "them" attitude within the military that labels civilians as lazy, self-consumed and unwilling to sacrifice.

The posturing of military superiority becomes meshed with reactionary views about race. Three people of color, including two Blacks, rob King's belongings, an incident that triggers a combat flashback for King. He struggles with the robbers and overtakes their gun.

Forcing them to the ground, he screams obscenities at them, including "Hajji" and "You better start praying to Allah," enacting one of his memories of detaining suspects in Iraq. Yet rather than drawing a larger point about racism and the dehumanization of the

enemy, the film instead links the hatred of the foreign Arab abroad to the fear of the domestic dark-skinned enemy at home.

Perhaps the most unrealistic scene is King's visit to Rodriguez at a military medical facility. Forget the atrocious and dilapidated facilities of Walter Reed, Rodriguez is in a state-of-the-art care unit where he tells King that he receives "first-class treatment." He even jokes about flirting with a nurse who has "soft hands" in contrast to the coarseness of his own prosthetic forearm.

When King confides to Rodriguez his guilt at leading the men into an ambush, Rodriguez responds with gratitude and says he might consider reenlisting so that his family can get a green card.

King gains peace of mind and has no further flashbacks, symbolically suggesting that his fears were all for naught and that the military takes care of its own.

The climax of the film occurs after Tommy's funeral when Shriver punches King while screaming, "That's for running out on us, for coming home too late (to save Tommy), and for general principle." They fall to the ground and wrestle over the graves, a blatant metaphor for King wrestling with his own demons and the potential of another tour in Iraq that may bring his own death or self-destruction.

The ultimate tragedy of the movie is Brandon's decision to return to his unit from going AWOL, as he falls into formation and rides the bus to his deployment in Iraq, sitting next to his gung-ho buddy Shriver.

It is a shame, because one is left to wonder what could have been and what other choices--beyond joining the movement of underground fugitives escaping to Canada--King might have had.

What if Brandon King's best friend had been war resister Camilo Mejía rather than Shriver, for example, or if he had heard about Winter Soldier?

What if Brandon had met IVAW or read Soldiers in Revolt?

Unfortunately, with no antiwar voice in the movie and with no movement to open the space for GI resistance, the possible is silenced as impossibility.

Even more tragic, this disappointing finale may be the likely reality for many, given the overall weakness of the antiwar movement.

This is the tragic loss that must be stopped.

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

BIG SURPRISE: DemoRats Vote Money So Obama Regime Can Keep On Killing U.S. Troops And Iraqis In 2009; They Cut Help For The Poor & Unemployment Benefits, But Hey, That's What It Takes To Come Up With Imperial Murder Money

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

Jun 18 By ANDREW TAYLOR, Associated Press Writer & T. Lassiter Jones Via New Orleans LA Discussion & 20 June 2008 By Maya Schenwar, Truthout [Excerpts]

In a step that sealed the fate of Iraq war funding until next June, the House of Representatives voted on Thursday to approve \$162 billion for the occupation, with no strings attached.

The agreement drops restrictions on Bush's ability to conduct the war and gives him almost all of the funding he sought well over a year ago for Iraq and Afghanistan.

For the 3rd time, Bush was prepared to veto funding for the war, which, under the provisions of the War Powers Act would have required a full withdrawal of US forces within 60 days.

But for the 3rd time, the pro-war Dems have voted to keep the war going despite Bush's threat to end it.

"Democratic and Republican leaders in the House hailed an agreement they said would avoid a veto that President George W. Bush had threatened over some provisions Democrats had been trying to add beyond the war funds."

The vote follows a series of compromises and revisions over the past two months, ultimately resulting in major concessions from Democrats.

The agreement would require that the Senate would agree to drop most of the more than \$10 billion it added last month for programs such as heating subsidies for the poor, wildfire fighting, road and bridge repair and help for the Gulf Coast.

Democrats dropped a provision to extend unemployment benefits for an additional 13 weeks in states with particularly high unemployment rates.

The current version of the supplemental is much closer to the plans of House Republicans - and the Bush administration - than to the initial proposal presented by Democrats, who make up the majority of the House.

White House Budget Director Jim Nussle was equally enthusiastic about the bill, telling Congressional Quarterly that the administration “obviously” approved of it.

The legislation satisfies Bush’s demands not only for fiscal year 2008 funding, but also for about half of the funding needed to support status quo operations in Iraq for 2009.

MORE:

GI SPECIAL 5I18 [9.18.07]

Democrats Have Enough Votes To End The War Now [If They Choose To Do So]

To insist, as many media outlets have, that the Constitution makes it impossible for Congress to stop the war obscures the actual choices facing the nation--by confusing “can’t” with “won’t.”

[Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in.]

Sep 13, 2007 FAIR [Excerpts]

Following a pattern set when Congress passed supplemental funding for the Iraq War last May (FAIR Media Advisory, 6/1/07), major media outlets continued to “explain” the politics of the war in incomplete and misleading ways.

The point made by these media outlets again and again is that the Democrats have little power to affect policy in Iraq because it would be difficult to pass legislation over a potential Republican filibuster, and even harder to pass a bill over a presidential veto.

This sentiment is also voiced by many Democratic politicians, many of whom consider themselves opponents of the war.

As the Washington Post’s Shailagh Murray and Dan Balz (9/10/07) put it:

“Because of a Senate rule requiring 60 votes to shut off debate and 67 votes to overturn a veto, (Senate Majority Leader Harry) Reid faced an almost impossible challenge. Even if all his troops stood together, he started with just 49 votes.”

Newsweek's Howard Fineman declared that the Democrats' powerlessness was built into the constitutional system on NBC's Chris Matthews Show (9/2/07):

“Politically, what the president has been trying to do is to keep discipline among the Republicans because as long as he can keep most of the Republicans in the Senate, in the House with him, there's no way to overturn the policy because of the way the Constitution reads.... I hate to keep coming back to the Constitution. Sixty votes to stop a filibuster, 67 to overturn a presidential veto in the Senate.”

This sort of analysis was used to explain the Democrats' need to compromise with Republicans, watering down a firm withdrawal date in the hopes of winning bipartisan support.

This approach was endorsed in an Associated Press report (9/11/07) by Matthew Lee:

“If Republican support for the war holds, as it might for now, Democrats would have to soften their approach if they want to pass an anti-war proposal. But they remain under substantial pressure by voters and politically influential anti-war groups to settle for nothing less than ordering troop withdrawals or cutting off money for the war--legislation that has little chances of passing.”

But passing a filibuster- or veto-proof bill is not their only option.

The problem with all these accounts is that Congress does not have to pass legislation to bring an end to the war in Iraq--it simply has to block passage of any bill that would continue to fund the war.

This requires not 67 or 60 Senate votes, or even 51, but just 41--the number of senators needed to maintain a filibuster and prevent a bill from coming up for a vote.

In other words, the Democrats have more than enough votes to end the Iraq War--if they choose to do so.

The Democratic leadership may believe--rightly or wrongly--that such a strategy would entail unacceptable political costs. But that's very different from being unable to affect policy.

To insist, as many media outlets have, that the Constitution makes it impossible for Congress to stop the war obscures the actual choices facing the nation--by confusing “can't” with “won't.”

**LIAR
TROOP-KILLER**

**DOMESTIC ENEMY
DESPICABLE PIECE OF SHIT**



**WANTED FOR THE MURDER OF U.S.
TROOPS AND CITIZENS OF IRAQ:
THE TRAITOR PELOSI**

**LIAR
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DESPICABLE PIECE OF SHIT**



varifrank.com/images/Preacher_Reid.jpg

WANTED FOR THE MURDER OF U.S. TROOPS AND CITIZENS OF IRAQ: THE TRAITOR REID

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Third Terrell Soldier Killed In Iraq

June 6, 2008 By Marcus Funk, The Terrell Tribune's

For the third time, Terrell has lost one of its own in the war in Iraq. Spc. Jonathan Emard, a 20-year-old Airborne Ranger with the 1-87 Infantry Battalion 10th Mountain Division, fell in the line of duty in the early morning hours of June 4 near Kirkuk.

Jonathan, who went by "JD" with his friends, was known for his active personality and friendly attitude. He was a football player at Boles High School before joining the military at age 17.

According to his father, David, he made friends wherever he went – from Terrell all the way to Iraq.

"He was very outgoing. He would show up somewhere and suddenly, a whole group of people would be there," Emard said with a laugh. "Sometimes he thought it was a curse, especially when it was 10 girls that showed up all at once."

Emard said his son loved Mexican food, and was also an "absolute ace" at paintball.

His father said he devised a battle plan with a fellow paintballer that used diversions and stealth to defeat the competition every time they played. Emard said that after watching his son play paintball, it was obvious he would do well in the armed forces.

Emard was involved in an expansive, multi-battalion operation into enemy territory, according to U.S. military reports. The area had not seen combat in some time, according to Ltc. Christopher Vanek, battalion commander.

"We possessed a "black list" of almost 100 suspected terrorists," Vanek said.

"Our soldiers fought valiantly and during the violent engagement which lasted approximately 20 minutes, killed five Al Qaeda terrorists and wounded two."

According to the statement from Vanek, Emard led his company courageously into enemy fire before falling in battle during the ensuing firefight.

Two other soldiers, Sgt. Shane Duffy and Sgt. Cody Legg, also lost their lives in the battle.

“You can remain exceptionally proud of the Soldiers and leaders of this Task Force,” Vanek wrote in a letter to family members. “We will always remember the sacrifices these men have made, yet we afflicted a tremendous cost on our enemies that they will not recover from.”

Prior to this week’s loss, Terrell has mourned the deaths of two other soldiers in the current war. Goreno Moreno died in June of 2004 and Brady Berry died in October of 2005.

Funeral services are pending with Anderson Clayton. Local residents and businesses are asked to lower their flags to half staff in the late soldier’s honor.

THIS ENVIRONMENT IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH; ALL HOME, NOW



A U.S. Army soldier from Third Armored Cavalry Regiment, exits a warehouse after searching for bomb-making materials in Mosul, Iraq March 25, 2008. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Ross Toles Remembered As Dedicated Sailor, Father



Ross L. Toles

June 20, 2008 by Shannon Murphy and Shena Abercrombie, The Flint Journal

NORTH BRANCH, Michigan -- Just a few months shy of celebrating 20 years in the military, a Middle East deployment was the last thing Petty Officer First Class Ross L. Toles III of North Branch expected.

And, he never expected to go into a war zone. But, for Toles shirking his duty to country was never an option, friends said.

Lt. Commander George Degener, Toles' executive officer for 10 years, said Toles was tapped for an assignment in Afghanistan for one reason -- he was the best.

Toles was one of two sailors killed in Afghanistan this week. He died from wounds suffered in a rocket attack on the northern Paktika province.

Raised in Davison, the husband and father of three boys ages 14, 6 and 9 months, had recently relocated his family to a new home in North Branch.

He was the consummate family man -- the kind of guy who stepped in to head the cub scout troupe and served on the neighborhood association.

Toles enlisted in the Navy right out of high school, and now at 37, he was settling into a managerial role in his career.

He'd followed in his dad's footsteps, Ross Toles II, and switched over to the Naval Reserves. His father retired from the same unit earlier this year as a senior petty officer.

There was no reason to believe he'd have to go into the war zone, because he was in a unit that supported the Naval Air Station Sigonella base in Sicily. Annually they'd trek to the country for three weeks of training.

"Being in the military we are all subject to individual augmentation, where you're chosen because of the rate or specialty you have," Degener said. "That was the case in Petty

Officer Toles going to Afghanistan. His specialty was public works and construction battalions.”

Hospitalman Marc A. Retmier, 19, of Hemet, Calif., was the other soldier to die in the attack. Both were in a Provincial Reconstruction team Sharana in Afghanistan.

“He’s been one of my top sailors,” Degener said. “He’s one of the people I looked towards and always asked to go with me on any training event anywhere we were asked to go. He was always a hard charger -- a performer. “Everywhere we went, he was asked to come back.”

Toles left a lasting impression on civilian turf as well.

Jeff Coolidge worked for two years with Toles at GM’s Pontiac Assembly Center, where they served as fleet managers for Premier Manufacturing Support Services. Coolidge described his co-worker as a “free spirit” who was willing to lend a helping hand.

“He was just a vibrant person,” said Coolidge, who learned of his friend’s death on Thursday, when a memo was sent around the plant. “He always had a smile and he was always outgoing.”

Local and national military support groups have been highly critical of the government’s practice of redeploying soldiers for tours in the Middle East or who are at the tail end of their military careers.

Kathy Gilberd is interim co-chair for the Military Law Task Force, a national committee of the National Lawyers Guild who are challenging continued deployments and extended tours of duty.

“Soldiers are being run ragged in order to keep this war going,” Gilberd said.

“We’re getting calls from both reservists and active duty who are being called at a critical rate, and had never expected that at this point in their career they’d be doing this kind of work.

“They expected to play a continual role in protecting their country, but not a role abroad.”

But for the Toles family there is only one role -- loyalty, to family and country.

“He didn’t have to do it,” Degener said. “He did it because he loved this country and thought the country was worth it.”

TROOP NEWS

V.A. Promises To Keep On Testing Killer Drug On Veterans: Leading Medical Ethicists Stunned By The VA's Decision To Continue The Chantix Experiment: “Why Take The Group Most A Risk And Keep Them Going? That Doesn't Make Any Sense, Once You Know The Risk Is There,” He Said

The FAA has prohibited commercial airline pilots from using Chantix because of its possible side effects.

On Wednesday, the head of the Veteran's Affairs Committee called for government clinical trials using Chantix to be suspended, calling them “appalling.”

June 17, 2008 By BRIAN ROSS and VIC WALTER, ABC News & June 18, 2008 By JANET ST. JAMES, WFAA-TV

“Lab rat, guinea pig, disposable hero,” said former US Army sniper James Elliott in describing how he felt he was betrayed by the Veterans Administration.

Elliott, 38, of suburban Washington, D.C., was recruited, at \$30 a month, for the Chantix anti-smoking study three years after being diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He served a 15-month tour of duty in Iraq from 2003-2004.

Months after he began taking the drug, Elliott suffered a mental breakdown, experiencing a relapse of Iraq combat nightmares he blames on Chantix.

“They never told me that I was going to be suicidal, that I would cease sleeping. They never told me anything except this will help me quit smoking,” Elliott told ABC News and The Washington Times.

On the night of February 5th, after consuming a few beers, Elliott says he “snapped” and left his home with a loaded gun.

His fiancée, Tammy, called police and warned, “He's extremely unstable. He has PTSD.”

“Do you think that he is going to shoot or attack the police?” the 911 dispatcher asked.

"I can't be certain. I don't know," she said.

"He was operating as if he was back in theater, in combat theater," she told ABC News. "And of course, a soldier goes nowhere without a gun."

When police arrived, they found Elliott in the street, with the gun in the front pocket of his hooded sweatshirt.

"Are you going to shoot me? Shoot me," Elliott said, according to the police report.

Police used a Taser gun to stun Elliott and placed him under arrest.

It wasn't until three weeks later that the Veterans Administration advised the veterans in the Chantix study that the drug may cause serious side effects, including "anxiety, nervousness, tension, depression, thoughts of suicide, and attempted and completed suicide."

The VA's letter to the veterans, on February 29, 2008, followed three warnings from the FDA and Chantix' maker Pfizer, that were issued on November 20, 2007, January 18, 2008 and February 1, 2008. (click here to read the FDA warning and click here to read Pfizer's statement on Chantix)

"How this study continued in the face of these difficulties is almost impossible to understand," said Arthur Caplan, director of the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. [Miles McFall, co-administrator of the VA study] said there is no proof that Elliott's breakdown was caused by Chantix and he sees no reason to discontinue the study. Some 140 veterans diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder continue to receive Chantix as part of a smoking cessation study.

Dr. McFall says the VA decided to continue the Chantix study because "it would be depriving our veterans of an effective method of treatment to help them stop smoking."

"We're not enrolling new people in this study," [Veterans Affairs Secretary James Peake] said, but there are no plans to stop the current project.

Caplan, one of the country's leading medical ethicists, said he was stunned by the VA's decision to continue the Chantix experiment.

"Why take the group most at risk and keep them going? That doesn't make any sense, once you know the risk is there," he said.

The FAA has prohibited commercial airline pilots from using Chantix because of its possible side effects.

On Wednesday, the head of the Veteran's Affairs Committee called for government clinical trials using Chantix to be suspended, calling them "appalling."

MORE:

The Background: **VA Knew Of Chantix Suicide/Violence Risk, But Didn't Tell Vets Taking It: Veteran Says The VA Treated Him Like A "Disposable Hero" "You're A Lab Rat For \$30 A Month"**

While the alerts from Pfizer and the FDA clearly mentioned suicide and suicidal thoughts as possible side effects, the VA's letter to its veterans used no such language.

June 17, 2008 Washington Times & June 19, 2008 & By BRIAN ROSS and VIC WALTER, ABC News [Excerpts] [Thanks to Mark Shapiro, The Military Project, who sent this in.]

The government is testing drugs with severe side effects like psychosis and suicidal behavior on hundreds of military veterans, using small cash payments to attract patients into medical experiments that often target distressed soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, a Washington Times/ABC News investigation has found.

In one such experiment involving the controversial anti-smoking drug Chantix, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) took three months to alert its patients about severe mental side effects. The warning did not arrive until after one of the veterans taking the drug had suffered a psychotic episode that ended in a near lethal confrontation with police.

James Elliott, a decorated Army sharpshooter who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after serving 15 months in Iraq, was confused and psychotic when he was Tasered by police in February as he reached for a concealed handgun when officers responded to a 911 call at his Maryland home.

Mr. Elliott, a chain smoker, began taking Chantix last fall as part of a VA experiment that specifically targeted veterans with PTSD, opting to collect \$30 a month for enrolling in the clinical trial because he needed cash as he returned to school. He soon began suffering hallucinations and suicidal thoughts, unaware that the new drug he was taking could have caused them.

Just two weeks after Mr. Elliott began taking Chantix in November, the VA learned from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that the drug was linked to a large number of hallucinations, suicide attempts and psychotic behavior. But the VA did not alert Mr. Elliott before his own episode in February.

In failing to do so, Mr. Elliott said, the VA treated him like a “disposable hero.”

“You’re a lab rat for \$30 a month,” Mr. Elliott said. “It hurts me to have anyone think we would treat our veterans as lab rats,” Peake said.

One of the nation’s premier medical ethicists said the VA’s behavior in the anti-smoking study violated basic protections for humans in medical experiments.

“When you’re taking advantage of a very vulnerable population, people who have served the country, and the agency that’s responsible for their welfare isn’t putting their welfare first, that’s a pretty serious breach of ethics,” said Arthur Caplan, director of the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania.

In all, nearly 1,000 veterans with PTSD were enrolled in the study to test different methods of ending smoking, with 143 using Chantix.

Mr. Caplan, who reviewed the consent and notification forms for the study at the request of The Times and ABC News, said the VA deserved an “F” and that it has an obligation to end the study, given the vulnerability of veterans with PTSD and the known side effects of Chantix. “Continuing it doesn’t make any ethical sense,” he said.

The VA continues to test Chantix on veterans, even as reported problems with the drug increase and have prompted at least one other federal agency to take action. On May 21, the Federal Aviation Administration banned airline pilots and air traffic control personnel from taking Chantix, citing the adverse side effects.

“We have a phrase to describe this phenomenon - the disposable soldier syndrome,” said Richard Weidman, former VVA director of government relations.

Currently, the VA and other federal agencies are conducting nearly 300 clinical studies involving veterans with PTSD.

Most studies are behavioral, including one that tests the effects of yoga on PTSD sufferers.

Twenty-five, however, are testing drugs on 4,796 veterans, more than half (2,488) of whom are just returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to clinical trials filed with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and reviewed by The Times. Other studies are testing drugs on veterans with PTSD, including the antidepressants paroxetine, mirtazapine and citalopram - all carry warnings of suicidal side effects.

“Over 150,000 soldiers are currently deployed in Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and 12 percent of returning OIF veterans have PTSD,” said one study that is using the drug paroxetine on 160 veterans “who have returned from the Iraq theater within the past six months.”

Warnings about taking paroxetine include “suicidal thinking about harming or killing oneself or planning to trying to do so” among young adults up to 24 years of age, according to NIH.

Another study on the use of mirtazapine for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan is testing the efficacy and tolerability of the drug on 100 veterans. Citalopram is being tested on 300 veterans “exposed to high levels of combat stress.”

The NIH warning for paroxetine also applies to mirtazapine and citalopram.

The VA has not revealed how many veterans are registered in an experiment to study the effects of divalproex in the treatment of PTSD, but the FDA warned health care professionals on Jan. 31 it had received reports of suicide and suicidal thoughts linked to the anticonvulsant drug.

The FDA says that nearly 40 suicides and more than 400 incidents of suicidal behavior have been linked to Chantix.

Mr. Elliott began taking Chantix on Nov. 6. Two weeks later, on Nov. 20, the FDA issued its first alert that it had “received reports of suicidal thoughts and aggressive and erratic behavior in patients who have taken Chantix,” also known as varenicline. “A preliminary assessment reveals that many of the cases reflect new-onset of depressed mood, suicidal ideation, and changes in emotion and behavior within days to weeks of initiating Chantix treatment,” the November FDA alert said.

On Jan. 18, the drug manufacturer Pfizer revised its warning label to state “patients who are attempting to quit smoking with Chantix should be observed for serious neuropsychiatric symptoms, including changes in behavior, agitation, depressed mood, suicidal ideation and suicidal behavior.”

On Feb. 1, the FDA held a news conference to announce that new health risks have been associated with the drug.

On Feb. 4, VA officials were told to “formulate and approve an action plan,” and on Feb. 13, a second consent form and letter was submitted for approval by VA officials.

The letter received by Mr. Elliott and other veterans was dated Feb. 29, more than three weeks after he already had suffered his mental breakdown and confrontation with police.

While the alerts from Pfizer and the FDA clearly mentioned suicide and suicidal thoughts as possible side effects, the VA’s letter to its veterans used no such language.

“Scientists have recently learned that varenicline can sometimes have serious side effects in some people,” the VA letter said. “These side effects may include an increase in psychiatric symptoms such as anxiety, nervousness, tension and depression as well as untoward changes in behavior.”

School for Sadists: Russian Officers Sell Soldiers For Sex; The Government Protects Them; Goes After The Soldiers And Soldiers' Mothers

[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, The Military Project, who sent this in.]

19 June 2008 by Galina Stolyarova, St. Petersburg Times.

ST. PETERSBURG: The letters come in by the dozens, desperate pleas from young men say they have been raped, tortured, or enslaved.

Some by now have taken their own lives.

It was the contents of one letter in particular, sent to the St. Petersburg pressure group Soldiers' Mothers, that ignited a scandal last year over forced prostitution in the military. The matter is now officially closed, having been settled at great cost to the whistleblowing group.

But the letters keep coming.

"Those who did not have money and failed to give it to the senior recruits on demand were sent to sell themselves on the street at the Catherine Garden," wrote one recently demobilized recruit from the signal force of the Russian Interior Ministry corps, headquartered opposite the world-famous Hermitage Museum in the heart of St. Petersburg.

"They could either use one of the lists of clients that were always available from the older recruits, or try and pick someone up using their own devices."

The garden surrounding the monument of Catherine the Great overlooking Nevsky Prospekt is a notorious cruising area for those who seek the services of male prostitutes.

For publicizing this soldier's letter, which arrived in their mailbox in February 2007 and which alleged that he and dozens of his fellow recruits were being forced into prostitution by older recruits, Soldiers' Mothers was this month ordered to pay 22,000 rubles (\$930) in "professional reputation damages" to his unit.

When the story made a splash in the media, the Leningrad Military District Prosecutor's Office conducted an investigation into the letter's claims but found no evidence to support them, which means that a criminal case was never launched.

Corroborating testimony from other soldiers never saw the light of a trial.

Several months later, one recruit, Dmitry Petrochenko, who deserted the same unit and was one of the sources of the Soldiers' Mothers in the alleged prostitution racket scandal, was sentenced to 18 months in prison for desertion.

The army has accused the pressure group of persuading the deserter to lie about being forced to prostitute himself – an accusation that sent a shock through human rights advocates across the country.

Earlier, Petrochenko had testified that he was regularly forced by senior recruits to prostitute himself. He had taken the human rights advocates on a walking tour of some of the addresses in central St. Petersburg he said he had been sent to.

“At least five to 10 recruits a night were sent out to sell themselves,” he said in his videotaped testimony. “When they returned at dawn, senior recruits demanded at least 1,000 rubles (\$42) from each person.”

Ella Polyakova, director of Soldiers' Mothers, said, “The victims told us that as night fell, young recruits are ordered up by phone and then delivered to their top-ranking clients, including city officials and retired intelligence agents.”

The lists of potential clients contained between 40 and 100 names, Petrochenko said.

The internal investigations mentioned ... are infamously inefficient and the system is notorious among human rights lawyers for lacking transparency.

“No matter how often we send them files and documents about hazing, physical abuse, or rape in the army, the military prosecutors typically refuse to launch an investigation into the facts we've collected,” Viktor Andreyev, a human rights lawyer who represents Soldiers' Mothers told me. “They simply claim the evidence is not enough and never open a case.”

The testimonies I have seen at the Soldiers' Mothers office tell of victims being tortured and physically threatened on a daily basis in the barracks.

“The torturers would wrap exposed telephone wire around our toes and then run electricity through the wire,” reads a testimony. “It was extremely difficult to stand up, I would be all shaking and it felt like a never-ending convulsion — but those who did it found it very funny and would laugh their heads off.”

Only two recruits agreed to officially provide evidence.

Some of the people whose evidence would have been important are afraid to step forward and talk only off the record, the activists told me.

Those who get involved in court battles with the Russian army often achieve little. In many cases, alleged victims who had originally complained about being abused, enslaved, or raped have withdrawn evidence.

“These situations are incredibly stressful; the victims are obviously intimidated,” Polyakova said.

In 2005, Leningrad Military District conscript Maxim Gugayev spent months in forced labor at a farm owned by a retired army officer in Krasnoye Selo.

When he escaped and ended up in a military hospital he was afraid to tell the true story: after all, his enslavement had been arranged by Colonel Alexander Pogudin whose word, Gugayev thought, would be enough to destroy him.

Over the course of the trial, however, Gugayev, encouraged by human rights groups, gave a true picture of his confinement. But the judge treated his conflicting evidence as unreliable and let the colonel go with a fine of 50,000 rubles (\$2,100).

“Unfortunately, in Russia, victims’ testimonies are not treated seriously enough,” Polyakova said. “Even if we submit a whole pile of testimonies, the prosecutors can easily refuse to open a criminal case, claiming that the evidence does not suffice.”

Soldiers’ Mothers said more testimonies would have been available for the trials if the victims and witnesses were not afraid of retaliation.

Petrochenko’s plight and his incarceration are sure to discourage many other recruits from filing cases against their assailants. Polyakova said the young man has attempted suicide several times while in prison.

A witness protection program might be a logical solution, but in Russia such a program exists only on paper. Peppered with gaping holes, it is criticized by judges, prosecutors, and human rights advocates alike.

The absence of such a program might be costing Russia hundreds of lives, many of them linked to the army.

Although no comprehensive accounts of the physical and moral damage endured by army recruits are kept, it can be measured by the staggering rate of suicide in the country’s armed forces.

Figures released this month showed that in 2007, the number of suicides in the Russian army was 341, up from 200, officially, the year before. Suicides account for more than half of deaths due to non-combat causes.

“We’ve lost a whole battalion of recruits; the proportion of suicides in the total numbers of human losses has been on the rise in recent years,” said Sergei Fridinsky, Russia’s chief military prosecutor.

Investigations of those suicides as well as claims about the alleged hazing, rape, and now the prostitution racket typically go nowhere.

In the meantime, Soldiers’ Mothers says the recruits are driven to suicide by hazing, violence, and physical abuse.

Some of the horrifying letters they keep in their headquarters were written by recruits who would soon commit suicide.

These letters are sometimes brought to the pressure group by desperate parents wanting to sue the military authorities.

“Every month deserters and their relatives flock to us telling absolutely chilling stories of torture, forced prostitution, and slavery,” Polyakova said.

Collecting evidence in a closed structure such as the Russian army, which has its own military prosecution system, is difficult indeed.

It is a shame that the Russian armed forces are more concerned about their image — which they want to preserve at all costs — than about establishing the truth and protecting the victims of abuse.

The suicide toll, which is more difficult to hide, remains an available indicator of just how grave the problem is.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Winter Soldier II Investigation



From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: June 22, 2008
Subject: Winter Soldier II Investigation

Winter Soldier II Investigation
Silver Spring, Maryland

March 13-16, 2008

**Few things are more painful than an invisible wound.
Nelson Mandela**

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)

“With Foreign Affairs In Shambles, The Rulers Reach For A Pretty, Brown Face To Front For The Empire”

[In his own writings, Abu-Jamal describes his adolescent experience of being “kicked ... into the Black Panther Party” after suffering a beating from white racists and a policeman for his efforts to disrupt a George Wallace for President rally in 1968. The following year, at the age of 15, he helped form the Philadelphia branch of the Black Panther Party, He is currently a prisoner at State Correctional Institution Greene near Waynesburg, Pennsylvania: Wikipedia [Excerpt]

Jun 10th, 2008 By Mumia Abu-Jamal, Indybay.org

With the attainment of the required delegates to claim the Democratic Party's nomination for U.S. president, Sen. Barack H. Obama (D. ILL.) has written a new page in American history.

For by so doing he succeeds where Channing Phillips, Shirley Chisholm, Jesse Jackson, Sr., and Al Sharpton could not - by gaining the necessary delegates to demand nomination.

Of course, there have been numerous Black candidates for president, but these have been third party efforts designed more to raise issues, to organize or protest than to actually win elections. Some of the best known have been Eldridge Cleaver (former Black Panther Minister of Information), Dick Gregory, Dr. Lenora Fulani, and the former congresswoman, Cynthia McKinney.

But this is a different kettle of fish, for Obama's candidacy is the closest to make it to the winner's circle.

What also distinguishes Obama from his predecessors is he doesn't come from civil rights, Black liberation, socialist or anti war movements. (He often remarks at speeches, "I'm not against all wars, I'm just against dumb wars")

Indeed, although his detractors may try to paint him as a leftist liberal this is hardly true. On issues both foreign and domestic he would've been more at home in the Republican Party of his senatorial forebear, Edward Brooke of Massachusetts. For though he is Black by dint of his African father, he has studiously avoided Black political groups in his long, harrowing climb to the rim of the White House.

He has studiously avoided the very real and long standing grievances of Black America. In fact, he tried to run a 'post-racial' campaign until Sen. Hillary R. Clinton (D.N.Y.) (and her rambunctious husband, former Pres. Bill), brought race front and center during the Super Tuesday February primaries, by trying to pigeonhole him as 'the Black candidate'.

This primary wounded Obama, and as he won in the delegate count, he also lost a number of primary states, such as Ohio and Pennsylvania, which are necessary for a win in November.

Politics is the art of making people believe that they are in power when in fact, they have none.

It is a measure of how dire is the hour that they've passed the keys to the kingdom to a Black man.

As in many American cities, Black Mayors were let in when the treasuries were almost barren, and tax bases were almost at rock-bottom.

With the nation's manufacturing base also a thing of history, amidst the socioeconomic wreckage of globalization, with foreign affairs in shambles, the rulers reach for a pretty, brown face to front for the Empire.

'Real change that you could believe in' would be an end to Empire, and an end to wars for corporate greed, not just a change of the shade of the political managers.

That change, I'm afraid, is still to come.

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

Good News For The Iraqi Resistance!!

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



Foreign occupation soldiers from the U.S. interrogate Iraqi citizens at gunpoint who have been forced out of their home in Mosul June 13, 2008. REUTERS/Eduardo Munoz

[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?]

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.

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

Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Gets A Taste Of The Occupation Of Iraq: “Strike Force” Invades Citizens’ Homes; ‘How Would You Like It If Someone Busted Your Door Open?’ Tague Said. [Just Being Helpful, Ha Ha Ha]



Cedar Rapids firefighter Cheme Fairlie, right, uses a crowbar to force entry into a Northwest Cedar Rapids home as Cedar Rapids police officer Josh Bell and Urban Search and Rescue technician Jason Lopez watch on Sunday. Liz Martin/The Gazette)

[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in. She writes: Remember all those home invasion stories you've sent?]

CEDAR RAPIDS - Strike teams searched flood fringe areas on both sides of the Cedar River on Sunday, finding flooded basements, collapsed walls and piles of debris.

The teams operated in 10 sectors on both sides of the river and relayed information back to command centers at Roosevelt and McKinley Middle Schools. About 390 residences are in each sector.

If it was safe, the home was considered “cleared” and a green sticker was placed on the door.

The teams operated in 10 sectors on both sides of the river and relayed information back to command centers at Roosevelt and McKinley Middle Schools. About 390 residences are in each sector.

Angela Tague, a member of the STAR 1 search and rescue team from Ames, ran into any angry homeowner on E Avenue NW.

“He was saying ‘Where do you live?’ and ‘How would you like it if someone busted your door open?’” Tague said.

Police Officer Josh Bell later had a heated exchange with the man, and told him that if he didn’t go back inside his house and stop harassing the strike team, he would be escorted out of the area.

The man was visibly agitated about his broken door and pointed at Bell.

“It’s wrong,” the man said, over and over.

[COMMENT FROM AN IOWA VETERAN PUBLISHED IN RESPONSE]

“The Thugs Practicing Door-Busting Techniques In Iraq Will Return And Be Good Little SWAT Teams Here In America”

Posted By: Doug Herman
Post Date: 06/18/08 03:29:00 PM
Title: Thuggery, from Baghdad to Katrina

Busting down doors is as American as, as well, as American as our occupation army in Iraq.

Get used to it, God-fearing, government-trusting Americans.

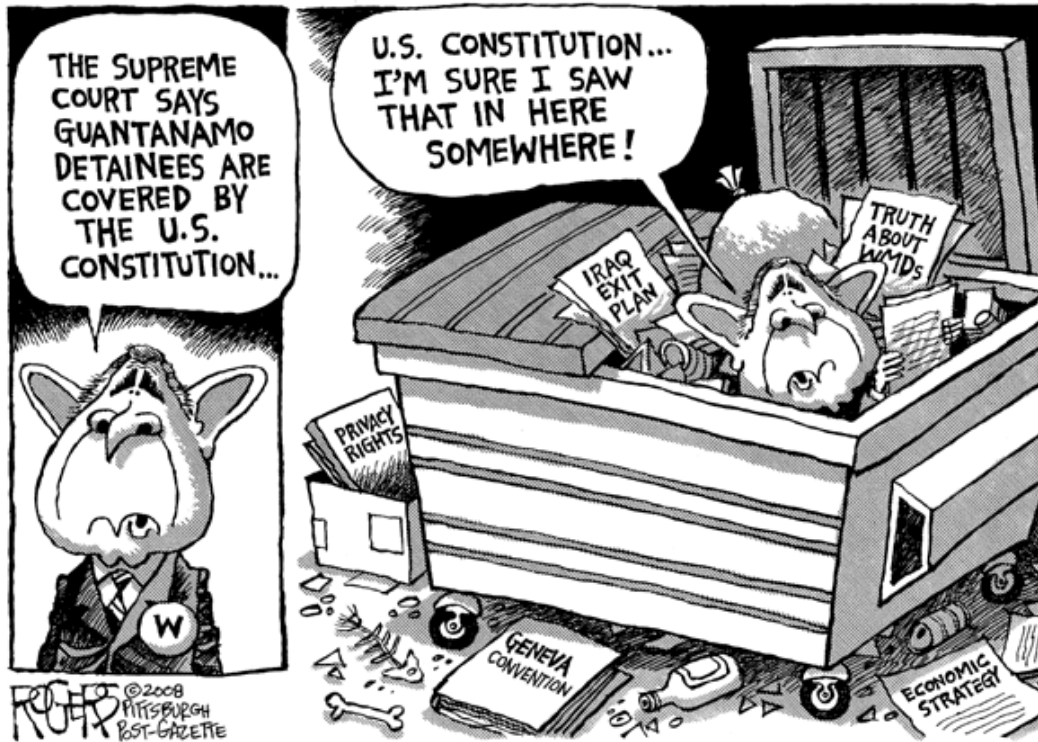
The thugs practicing door-busting techniques in Iraq will return and be good little SWAT teams here in America.

“Strike Teams” as the local paper calls them.

And God knows, we Americans probably deserve a good dose of our own bad medicine before we say Enough.

Tom Paine
USAF veteran

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



**Another Rat Joins The Pack:
Nader Hangs With McCain And
Obama, Announcing His Very Own
Witless Plan To Kill More U.S.
Troops And Iraqis:
He's Against Bringing The Troops
Home For Another Year;
Why Keep On Killing U.S. Troops And Iraqis?
"That's The Way You Knock The Bottom Out
Of The Insurgency"**

[So, if he were elected, no bringing the troops home for six months after his inauguration: July 2009. Campaigning for Nader is nothing but campaigning for more dead U.S. troops and more dead Iraqis. Nothing new about that. In 2004, he was yammering the same empty bullshit about wiping out the Iraqi insurgency. Of course, neither he nor his campaign organizers are willing to go to Iraq and take on that odious Imperial job themselves. T]

June 18, 2008 Interview with Democracy Now [Excerpts]

RALPH NADER: Six-month corporate and military withdrawal from Iraq, during which we negotiate with the Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis for modest autonomy, which they worked out in the 1950s before the dictators took over.

That's the way you knock the bottom out of the insurgency.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE NEW TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces.

Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces.

If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/>

And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.org/)

CLASS WAR REPORTS

**“Local Officials Had Assured
Townspeople In 1999 That The Levee
Was Sturdy Enough To Withstand A**

Historic Flood, And FEMA Had Agreed”

[Oops: Sorry About That]

[Thanks to Pham Binh, Traveling Soldier & The Military Project, who sent this in. He writes: HECK OF A JOB, FEMA (UNDER BILL CLINTON, NO LESS)]

Jun 19 By TAMMY WEBBER and MARIA SUDEKUM FISHER, Associated Press Writers [Excerpts]

GULFPORT, Ill. - Juli Parks didn't worry when water began creeping up the levee that shields this town of about 750 from the Mississippi River — not even when volunteers began piling on sandbags.

After all, local officials had assured townspeople in 1999 that the levee was sturdy enough to withstand a historic flood, and FEMA had agreed.

In fact, some relieved homeowners dropped their flood insurance, and others applied for permits to build new houses and businesses.

Then on Tuesday, the worst happened: The levee burst and Gulfport was submerged in 10 feet of water. Only 28 property owners were insured against the damage.

“They all told us, ‘The levees are good. You can go ahead and build,’” said Parks, who did not buy flood coverage because her bank no longer required it.

Around the country, thousands of residents who relied on risk maps from the Federal Emergency Management Agency may unknowingly face similar dangers.

[S]ome FEMA floodplain maps are 20 years old and seriously outdated, based on old evaluations of levees and river conditions.

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

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*This is how Bush brings the troops home,
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE.*



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