

GI SPECIAL 6F9:



**“Bring The Soldiers
Home — Now. Today”**

**“I Don’t Care How Many
Generals, Colonels, Captains —
Whatever — Think They Can
Win The War”**

**“You Know Why? Because I
Thought I Could Win The War,
Too”**

[Book Review]

Warrior King: The Triumph and Betrayal of an American Commander in Iraq, by retired Lt. Col. Nathan Sassaman with Joe Layden, 307 pages, St. Martin's Press, \$25.95

June 16, 2008 Review By J. Ford Huffman, Special to the [Army] Times

His Army times and life were the subject of a 2005 cover story in The New York Times Magazine tellingly headlined “The Fall of the Warrior King,” an article that became required reading at a West Point course on the challenge of making ethical decisions in a time of war.

Earlier, long before the incident detailed in the Times story, he had made the news as an exemplary officer, war fighting one day, rebuilding the next.

What is left to say about Nathan Sassaman? Plenty, he believes.

More than two years after the Sunday Times magazine article, Nathan Sassaman replaces the title's “fall” with “betrayal.”

He candidly gives his take on his infamous, career-ending guidance — perceived by some as a cover-up — to two soldiers who had forced two Iraqi detainees to jump into the Tigris River on a January night in 2004.

He straightforwardly offers his appraisal of the war in Iraq. And he openly mourns two soldiers who died under his leadership.

So, what's the news?

First, the war

Withdrawal: “Bring the soldiers home — now. Today ...

“I don't care how many generals, colonels, captains — whatever — think they can win the war. You know why? Because I thought I could win the war, too.

“But there is no war right now. It's law enforcement.”

His Pentagon boss: “Donald Rumsfeld must accept a significant share of the responsibility for what went wrong in Iraq.

“He totally ignored the cultural and human endeavors of combat by suggesting that we could win the war with cell phones and F-16 rockets and a handful of Special Forces troops.”

His White House boss: The commander in chief's 2003 announcement that “major combat operations in Iraq have ended” was “a rather spectacularly ill-informed display of hubris.”

Their idea of invasion: "If we had been serious about winning this war and taking care of Iraq, we would have put the resources in place to rapidly develop and rebuild this war-torn nation.

"It's just not acceptable in the 21st century to invade other nations on the premise of eliminating a dictator without first demonstrating commitment to putting that nation back on its feet."

The 2004 Incident

His fateful decision: Believing that neither Iraqi was injured in the forced fall into the Tigris, Sassaman told his captain to "Tell (the higher ups) about everything except the water."

Why did he say that? "There are gradations of bad behavior in war, and while I do not excuse the actions of my men, I did not then, and never will, believe they rose to the level of criminal activity." (Sassaman remains unconvinced that either Iraqi drowned in the river.)

The case against him: "It never occurred to me that a criminal investigation would be launched, and maybe part of that stemmed from the fact that when I tried to initiate an investigation into the deaths of ... five elderly (Iraqi) men who had been killed in November 2003, nothing had happened."

The Uncommanding Officer

"I had the misfortune to serve under Fred Rudesheim," a colonel who was "arrogant, uncaring, aloof, uncoachable, and unable to relate to or have empathy for his soldiers." (You thought your boss was bad.)

After Rudesheim praised Sassaman and his men in 2003 for being "the most aggressive and effective" force "under my command," Rudesheim told warrior Sassaman, "You don't have to be that aggressive. We can just finish out our days here and go back home and resume our lives."

"I can't do that, sir," Sassaman told his commanding officer. "My entire life has been based on winning ... I'm actually trying to win the damn war, and that's how I am wired." Strong convictions, but not terms of endearment to your supervisor.

The son of churchgoing Oregon parents, Sassaman "was a soldier made, not born." At Ranger School, he "enjoyed the physical demands."

At the U.S. Military Academy, he played football (he and a Boston College player named Doug Flutie shared an award from Football Roundup magazine). Also at West Point, he learned that "if most cadets shared a common trait, it was an almost pathological fear of failure." Later, in Iraq, he learned that "fear can be a powerful motivational force."

Sorrow can inspire, too. The loss of two of his soldiers in separate incidents, Staff Sgt. Dale Panchot in Albu Hishma and Capt. Eric Paliwoda in Balad, remains painful to him, and Paliwoda's death is ominous in retrospect. Why?

After Sassaman spoke at the memorial service for "my guy" Paliwoda, he was heading to an appointment in Samarra when he found out two other soldiers "have to tell you something" about an occurrence that happened at the side of a river.

The rest is unfortunate history.

But Sassman requests no sympathy.

He says he used to tell civilians and senior officers "that you really need to get some American blood on your hands before you start questioning commanders on the ground.

"Fight your way out of a couple of ambushes, hold the hand of a friend as he dies, and then come talk to me."

Point proven, many pages after a hopeful — or naive — early line that says this is a "book the American people can read."

Is this a presumptuous belief that the book-reading U.S. population clamors to know Sassaman's side, or a straightforward acknowledgement that "Warrior King" wants to set the record straight?

Either way, the book works.

Even when the water is admittedly murky, Sassaman and Layden make the lieutenant colonel's perspective clear.

And what happened to the career of the once and future Army king?

Sassaman received a written reprimand. According to the Times magazine, the officer's conduct was "wrongful, criminal and will not be tolerated."

Ouch. He opted for retirement with surprisingly little bitterness.

"I can say from firsthand experience that revenge is not the answer; you can, in fact, become a very old and bitter person, despite exacting whatever amount of retribution you think is appropriate for the hurt."

This is an apparently genuine admonition from a winner, an athlete, a soldier, an officer and a man who has learned the lessons of 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

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Sgt. Dies Of Baghdad IED Wounds

June 13, 2008 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 502-08

Sgt. Steve A. McCoy, 23, of Moultrie, Ga., died June 10 at Brooke Army Medical Center, San Antonio, Texas, of wounds suffered on March 23 in Baghdad, Iraq, when his vehicle encountered an improvised explosive device.

He was assigned to the 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Ga.

***You Want The Truth, Lt. Edinger?
You Can't Handle The Truth:
"They Ask Whether The Teachers
And Students Have Anything To
Share. Unfortunately, Four Of The
Girls Do"***
***"As One Soldier Said, 'So Much For
Building Up Trust Around Here'"***

The Iraqi man had been shot at an infantry outpost after failing to heed a warning shot.

The driver reportedly got lost trying to find a funeral, made a wrong turn and did not stop in time. Mahan said the driver and his passengers admitted being unfamiliar with life near the military in a war zone.

Before he could change his blood-stained uniform Mahan said, "I hate to say it but it kind of happens often."

June 16, 2006 By Andrew Scutro, Army Times [Excerpts]

BAGHDAD, Iraq — If you do not speak Arabic, you will have a tough time pronouncing the old Iraqi's name. Fortunately, he speaks English very well and has translated his name.

"Call me Jerry. Jacob," he said, greeting U.S. soldiers canvassing the area for census data.

"It's safe for the time being, but you don't know tomorrow what will happen," he said.

When the soldiers ask to photograph him for their files, he readily agrees.

Before sitting still for the shot, he jokes, "Shall I smile or cry?"

Earlier that day, the patrol that left to interview Jacob had been hit by a roadside bomb while driving right beside their outpost on a route from the Tigris known as Slaughterhouse Road.

A large artillery shell exploded seconds after the patrol passed a handful of waving girls walking home from school. Except for some headaches and ringing ears, no one was injured and the truck was barely scratched.

Col. Ted Martin, the commander of 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, just happened to be visiting the squadron on the other side of a T-wall when the improvised explosive device went off. He came out to investigate for himself, plowing into a thick green palm grove and a vineyard that camouflaged an escape route.

He said the IED blast was an "atypical event" for the area and a news story on it alone would "disappoint" him because there is so much other progress being made.

It was, in fact, the first IED shot against Red Team since it began operating here a month ago.

"We're digging in on this," said the "Raider Brigade" boss.

If there has to be violence, those who are in Iraq for their second and third tours prefer it to be a rare occurrence.

Sgt. Daniel Saffeels, from B Troop, a scout and designated sharpshooter on his third tour, has had his fill of war.

“I don’t want to fire one round this time,” he said during one patrol. “I want it to be boring.”

Despite the best efforts of the troopers of 7-10 Cav, the past still haunts.

Even the near past.

One afternoon, a section from A Troop’s 2nd Platoon Spartans canvassed a neighborhood trying to track down the source of al-Qaida flyers threatening to burn down houses.

As they left, an old man stood in the road, frantically waving his arms beside a silver Kia minivan.

Cpl. Chris Bennett, a medic, and Sgt. 1st Class Jim Mahan get out to investigate and find a man on the floor of the van shot in the head.

Mahan calls in a report from the other passengers that the man may have been shot by a U.S. unit to the south. Mahan and the troops quickly load him into an MRAP vehicle and drive for the military hospital in the Green Zone.

But within maybe two minutes of setting out, Mahan gets back on the radio, “The casualty is DOA at this time. Over.”

The radio operator doesn’t understand and Mahan has to repeat himself, then clarify.

“He’s dead. He’s dead.”

Somewhat unbelievably, he has to spell it out a third and fourth time for the command post.

“The casualty has expired,” he says firmly into the radio. “He is no longer living!”

An officer from the American unit to the south later confirmed to Mahan the account from one of the van passengers.

The Iraqi man had been shot at an infantry outpost after failing to heed a warning shot.

The driver reportedly got lost trying to find a funeral, made a wrong turn and did not stop in time.

Mahan said the driver and his passengers admitted being unfamiliar with life near the military in a war zone.

Before he could change his blood-stained uniform Mahan said, “I hate to say it but it kind of happens often.”

The patrol paused to scrub out the MRAP, then went back out to set up a night observation post near a highway.

Even if it wasn't 7-10 Cavalry that killed the man, the incident became their problem that day.

As one soldier said, "So much for building up trust around here."

As part of a nearly 10-hour mission two days later, Spartan platoon members stopped at a girls' high school to introduce themselves and the newly arrived Iraqi army unit.

They ask whether the teachers and students have anything to share.

Unfortunately, four of the girls do.

After being addressed in a courtyard by the Iraqi army leader, the four teen girls request a meeting in the headmaster's office.

Through the platoon's masked interpreter, the girls explain to 1st Lt. Jason Edinger that their families have been hurt by the war.

The first said her sister was shot in the head and the leg by U.S. troops while waiting for a taxi a year ago.

The second girl said her brother was shot and killed by U.S. troops at his vegetable stand. Her father is crippled. "He was the only man in the house," she tells Edinger.

Her uncle had been shot by a British special forces unit in a raid the week prior. It happened in his operating area and Edinger knew the incident firsthand. "I saw that," he said. "It was pretty bad."

The third girl, her head wrapped in a red scarf, said her house was raided during the last Ramadan holy period. Her brother was detained. "They broke all the doors and the furniture," she said.

She cries telling the story and is interrupted by a gunshot close enough to prompt radio reports from troops waiting outside.

The fourth girl also tears up, talking about her detained uncle.

Edinger makes sure they understand that the incidents, while unfortunate, occurred when a different unit lived here, or in the case of the British raid, because of a different unit.

He says he will take the matters to his chain of command.

But at this one school, there were at least four girls who had endured recent, painful experiences with coalition forces.

THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO COMPREHENSIBLE REASON TO BE IN THIS EXTREMELY HIGH RISK LOCATION AT THIS TIME, EXCEPT THAT A PACK OF TRAITORS IN D.C. WANT YOU THERE
That is not a good enough reason.



US soldiers from 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment patrol through a desert village located northeast of Baghdad on March 24, 2008. (AFP/File/David Furst)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Four Twentynine Palms Marines Killed In Farah Blast; Another Wounded

June. 14, 2008 MSNBC News Services & June 15, 2008 (AP)

Four Marines from a unit based at Twentynine Palms were killed in a roadside bomb attack in Afghanistan, the military reported Saturday. A fifth Marine was seriously wounded.

Lt. Col. David Johnson said the blast targeted a vehicle being used by U.S. personnel to help train the Afghan police in the attack in western Farah province.

Marines from the 2nd Battalion, 7th Regiment based in Twentynine Palms, California, arrived in Afghanistan earlier this year and were sent to southern and western Afghanistan.

However, Johnson said he could not immediately confirm that the four personnel killed were Marines.

The U.S. death toll in Afghanistan now stands at least at 44 so far this year.

Kandahar Resistance Attack In Force Liberates 1000 Prisoners: “There Is No One Left”

June 13, 2008 Doug Schmidt, Canwest News Service & THE ASSOCIATED PRESS & June 14, 2008 (AP)

KANDAHAR CITY, Afghanistan - Canadian soldiers joined allied and Afghan national security forces in a sweeping door-to-door hunt for a thousand escaped prisoners after the Taliban staged a daring mass breakout at Kandahar City's Sarposa Prison late Friday.

The prison houses almost 1,200 inmates.

Wali Karzai, the brother of President Hamid Karzai who is president of Kandahar's provincial council, said “all” the prisoners escaped.

“There is no one left,” he said.

A shopkeeper who sells vegetables near the prison, Mohammad Hiqmatullah, said he saw prisoners run out and disappear into nearby pomegranate and grape groves.

The complex attack included a truck bombing at the main gate, a bomber who struck a back wall and rockets fired from outside, setting off a series of explosions that rattled Kandahar, the country's second biggest city.

A bomber drove up to the prison's main entrance and detonated his vehicle around 9:30 p.m. local time.

After the massive explosion, which was heard across the city and destroyed the gate and a police checkpoint, reports say as many as 30 motorcycles raced

forward, carrying armed men firing rocket-propelled grenades, machine-guns and AK-47s.

A man who claimed to be one of the militants who escaped, Abdul Nafai, called an Associated Press reporter and said the insurgents had minibuses waiting outside the prison during the attack and that dozens of militants fled in the vehicles.

A Taliban spokesman, Qari Yousef Ahmadi, said 30 insurgents on motorbikes and two bombers attacked Sarposa Prison and freed about 400 Taliban members.

The prisoners were able to flee during the ensuing 20-minute battle in the city's west side.

The report also said 10 police officers were killed.

A Taliban spokesman said the group was claiming responsibility.

Ahmadi, the Taliban spokesman, said militants had been planning the assault for two months. "Today we succeeded," he said, adding that the escaped prisoners were "going to their homes."

The daring attack came just days after Kandahar province's police chief told reporters here the security situation in the city was good.

"We believe that the situation is under control," Joint Task Force Afghanistan spokesman Maj. Jay Janzen told reporters at Kandahar Airfield about three hours after the start of the attack.

The blast caused an unknown number of casualties among the guards, prison director Abdul Qadir told Reuters.

"They (Taliban) used a truck to blow the gate open and all of the guards (at the gate) have been killed and are under rubble," he said by telephone. As he spoke, bursts of gunfire could be heard in the background.

The two officials who declined to be named said the Taliban fired several rockets at various parts of the mud-built prison.

Hours after the attack, several rockets hit a base used by foreign troops in another part of the city, an official and several residents said.

Sirens were heard from inside the base, they added, but no further details were immediately available.

Last month, scores of Taliban prisoners in Kandahar's jail resorted to several days of hunger striking, complaining mostly of being badly treated.

The number of resistance attacks has increased since 2006 and the prison raid ranks among one of the biggest.

Liberal Senator Colin Kenny, chair of the Senate's defence committee, said the prison break raises disturbing questions about the conduct of coalition troops in Afghanistan.

He questioned how Canadian or other troops with the International Security Assistance Force failed to detect, with night-vision equipment, the after-dark movements of the attackers.

Kenny, whose committee recently returned from Kandahar, said the attack clearly shows there are not enough soldiers in southern Afghanistan.

Lawmaker Habibullah Jan said 47 of the prisoners had stitched their mouths shut during the hunger strike in May.

He said some of the hunger strikers had been held without trial for more than two years and others were given lengthy prison sentences after short trials.



Destroyed vehicles and damaged buildings after a prison break at the Kandahar prison in southern Afghanistan June 14, 2008. (Photo: Reuters)

TROOP NEWS

Army Suicides:
[Cutting Through The Bullshit]
A) Fewer Than For Comparable Civilians;

B) Up Sharply As Wars Drag On And On And On

[Facts are stubborn things. Sorry about that. T]

June 09, 2008 By Kelly Kennedy, Army Times [Excerpts]

With 117 active-duty suicides in 2007 — the highest on record and an increase of 13 over 2006 — Army officials say combat has filled soldiers' cups to the brim, and the stressors of deployment are making them overflow.

As of May 26, the Army has had 38 suicides in 2008, with 12 more cases pending confirmation.

Of those who committed suicide in 2007, 26 percent had never deployed.

An additional 43 percent killed themselves after returning home.

Of those who killed themselves in theater, 24 percent had deployed once, and 7 percent had deployed more than once.

Twenty-six of the soldiers who committed suicide had seen direct combat. Of those, 17 had seen casualties, two had been injured, 16 had witnessed killing, 17 saw dead bodies in combat, and seven did the killing themselves. Those figures are comparable to those from 2006.

Suicide attempts also went up last year, from 887 in 2006 to 935, with deployed soldiers accounting for 166 attempts. **[The article fails to report whether self-injury to avoid deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan is considered a "suicide attempt. T]**

Health care providers said 21 percent of the 935 attempts were related in some way to a deployment.

In 2006, 254 soldiers who attempted suicide had served in Iraq or Afghanistan; that number rose to 290 in 2007.

The numbers were up in other categories as well. In 2006, 80 of the soldiers who attempted suicide had seen others killed in combat; the 2007 figure was 93. Also, in 2006, 39 of those who attempted suicide had killed others in combat; the figure for 2007 was 54.

In 2006, 27 soldiers killed themselves in Afghanistan or Iraq.

In 2007, that number rose to 32.

The 2007 suicide numbers include 33 mobilized National Guard soldiers and 20 mobilized Army Reserve troops.

Strain started to show in 2006, when the Army had 102 suicides — the highest number since 1990-91, when the force was much larger.

But Ritchie [Col. Elspeth Ritchie, psychiatric consultant to the Army Surgeon General] said there is more to war than “exposure to really horrifying and terrifying things”: being away from home, lack of privacy when soldiers bunk four to a room, and easy access to loaded weapons.

The Army active-duty suicide rate is 18.8 per 100,000 soldiers, including mobilized reservists. That compares with a civilian rate, adjusted for sex and age, that is roughly comparable, at 19.5 per 100,000.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

GET THE MESSAGE?



Iraqi nationalists rally in Kufa June 13, 2008 against George Bush's demand for a U.S.-Iraqi security pact that would permit continued U.S. occupation of Iraq.
(AP Photo/Alaa al-Marjani)

Resistance Action

June 14 (Reuters) & June 15 (Reuters)

A roadside bomb exploded near an Iraqi Army patrol in the town of Dhuluiya 70 km (45 miles) north of Baghdad, on Friday, killing three Iraqi soldiers and wounding one, a source in the Iraqi Army said.

A roadside bomb killed a traffic policeman and wounded six others when it blew up near their patrol in central Samarra, 100 km (60 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

Insurgents shot dead an off-duty policeman and his brother near their house in central Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

A roadside bomb exploded near a police patrol near Dhuluiya, 70 km (45 miles) north of Baghdad, wounding six policemen, the police said.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

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

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

**"The mighty are only mighty because we are on our knees. Let us rise!"
-- Camille Desmoulins**

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

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

**“This War Is An Injustice For
Which There Is Only One Remedy:
Bring Our Troops Home Now
Before Their Lives Are Cut Short
For The Wrong Reasons In A
Country Not Their Own”
[Prisoners Against the War
Essay Contest Winners]**

March 2008 STATESVILLE SPEAKS QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

“No More War” has won the Best Essay Award in the Prisoners Against the War Essay Contest. **[Contest open to inmates of Illinois prisons. T]**

Congratulations Mr. Askew!

The second place winner in the Prisoners Against the War Essay Contest is John Velez. Congratulations, Mr. Velez!

Each of the writers who submitted to the contest were provided a copy of Homefront, published by Mainstay Press and written by Tony Christini

No More War!

By Christopher Askew

9/11 has been the basis for this present administration to launch wars in two sovereign nations. Presently American troops are engaged in armed battles in Afghanistan and Iraq, with the latter being the most severe.

Undoubtedly, 9/11 had a profound effect upon the psyche of this nation.

However, misguided and prolonged military operations are unjustified.

Personal vendettas and conjured falsifications, i.e., weapons of mass destruction, have clouded the judgments of the decision makers and placed hundreds of thousands of young Blacks, Whites, Latinos, etc., in harm's way.

Propagandized ads and campaigns to increase recruitment continue. Now, everyone is baffled on what course of action to take.

Both Republicans and Democrats alike seem to agree that immediate withdrawal is not an option.

While both parties remain uncertain on just what to do, the death toll continues to rise on both sides. Since President Bush's two daughters are not in Afghanistan or Iraq and very few if any members of the U.S. Senate or Congress have any of their children fighting in these wars, expediency is nonexistent.

Since the political figures have been and continue to be negligent in their duties, it is going to take the citizens of this nation to rise up against the war and voice their dissatisfactions.

If this is not done, the death toll will continue to rise and the financial strain that this war is causing to this country will continue as well.

So, let us give the rally cry of NO MORE WAR.

I'm Against The War (Why I Support Bringing The Troops Home)

By John Velez

After 9/11, our Secretary of State and former head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Cohn L. Powell, appeared before a Senate Committee to present the Administration's case for war, citing among other things a mobile chemical weapons program otherwise known as WMD's" (weapons of mass destruction) and an alleged connection between the Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein, and Al-Queda leader Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi in Iraq.

Shortly after, Congress authorized the use of force against the country of Iraq, stating the possibility that WMD's could fall into the hands of terrorists, which was the most compelling reason for authorizing this use of force.

We now know that the Administration's 'case for war' was based on faulty intelligence, or worse, a flat out lie.

Not only were there no weapons of mass destruction, but the so-called link to the terrorist group, Al-Queda, was also a fabrication, most likely used to inflame the passions of the Congress and influence a vote that would send our troops to the wrong war in the wrong place.

There are several reasons to be against this war but none more “compelling” (this being the word Congress used) than the 3,500 plus U.S. fatalities and countless casualties suffered as a result of a war based on lies.

In conclusion, this war is an injustice for which there is only one remedy: bring our troops home now before their lives are cut short for the wrong reasons in a country not their own.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Good News For The Iraqi Resistance!!

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



June 13, 2008: Foreign occupation soldiers from the U.S. 101st Airborne Division search an Iraqi citizen's house during a home invasion in Baghdad. Photograph: Sean Smith, Guardian.co.uk. [Thanks to JM, who sent this in.]

[Fair is fair. Let's bring 150,000 Iraqi troops over here to the USA. They can kill people at checkpoints, bust into their houses with force and violence, butcher their families, overthrow the government, put a new one in office they like better and call it "sovereign," and "detain" anybody who doesn't like it in some prison without any charges being filed against them, or any trial.]

[Those Iraqis are sure a bunch of backward primitives. They actually resent this help, have the absurd notion that it's bad their country is occupied by a foreign military dictatorship, and consider it their patriotic duty to fight and kill the soldiers sent to grab their country. What a bunch of silly people. How fortunate they are to live under a military dictatorship run by George Bush. Why, how could anybody not love that? You'd want that in your home town, right?]

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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

CLASS WAR REPORTS

Strikes Against Soaring Fuel Costs Spread Around The World

12 June 2008 by: The London Evening Standard

Worldwide protests over the rising price of fuel escalated today, with the Philippines presidential palace besieged by lorries, fishermen burning their boats in Thailand, and Spanish petrol stations running dry as hauliers blockade major roads.

Violence has already claimed lives of lorry drivers on either side of the dispute, while one haulier was nearly burned to death in his cab by strikers.

Hundreds of lorries and minibuses blocked roads in Manila leading to Malacanang Palace today to demand the lifting of a 12 per cent sales tax on fuel. Petrol prices there have risen about 24 per cent this year.

Traffic ground to a halt as anti-riot police halted the convoy, including about 500 tuk-tuks, Manila's three-wheeled taxis.

In Thai capital Bangkok, tens of thousands of heavy lorries are threatening to cause havoc while farmers are demonstrating and fishermen have begun burning their boats in nationwide protests against soaring prices of fuel and other essentials.

Lorry drivers' leaders warned the government that it has until next Tuesday to subsidise their fuel or face at least 100,000 vehicles rumbling into Bangkok.

A half-day strike yesterday by lorry drivers who parked their vehicles on roads across the country was only a prelude to next week's possible push into Bangkok, they said.

One fishermen's group said more than half of the 50,000 fishing boats under its wing are being kept ashore because of the high cost of diesel.

Meanwhile opposition groups in Malaysia today vowed to push on with mass protests against a 41 per cent hike in petrol prices - despite a pledge from the Prime Minister to keep prices fixed for the rest of the year.

Malaysia is Asia's largest net oil exporter, earning £38 million a year in revenue for every 50 pence rise in crude prices. Protesters demanded to know why rising profits from oil exports were not being used as subsidies to the poor.

A march is planned tomorrow in Kuala Lumpur to the Petronas Twin Towers, headquarters of oil giant Petronas.

A million people are expected for another demonstration in the capital next month.

Police have warned they will take action against protesters, with a permit required for any gatherings of more than four people.

Malaysia followed India, Indonesia, Taiwan and Sri Lanka by raising pump prices last week.

Also in Asia, South Korean lorry drivers voted to strike on Monday, ignoring a £5 billion government aid package designed to cushion the impact of fuel price rises.

In Spain, hauliers' unions vowed to press on with protests, rejecting measures to end the three-day nationwide protests over rising fuel prices.

In San Isidro, near Alicante, a lorry driver is being treated for serious burns after narrowly escaping an attempt by strikers to burn him alive in his cab. Fire destroyed four trucks and damaged a fifth at the industrial park.

The incident, being investigated by police, followed the death near Granada on Tuesday of a picketing haulier hit by a lorry.

Some petrol stations in Madrid and Catalonia have run dry, supermarkets are reporting panic buying and highways around the country have been clogged by slow-moving or parked trucks.

Car manufacturers warned that if the stoppage continues the entire industry will grind to a halt because parts are not reaching factories.

Lorries driving at low speed jammed access roads around Madrid, Valencia and Murcia, while sea links between the Balearic Islands and the Spanish mainland were cancelled due to lack of fuel.

The action has caused disruption for tens of thousands of British holidaymakers in Spain.

But police yesterday re-established traffic into France at the border post of La Jonquera, where more than 3,000 lorries had been barred entry by pickets.

In all, 51 people have been arrested since the strike started, and police vehicles have escorted nearly 3,000 lorries.

The hauliers say fuel prices consume up to 60 per cent of their income.

The strikers - self-employed drivers who represent an estimated 20 per cent of Spain's haulage industry - say big companies can cope better with fuel price increases by lowering their rates to land more jobs.

Infrastructure Minister Magdalena Alvarez has rejected the hauliers' demand for a minimum price for their services, describing it as illegal in a market economy.

The strike is the most serious labour unrest that Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero has faced since he came to power in March 2004.

Spanish fishermen have also been on strike since May 30 to protest against rising fuel costs, and 85 per cent of the fleet is now moored.

At least 50 people, nearly half of them police officers, were slightly injured in clashes during a fishermen's demonstration in Seville and one involving farmers in Almeria.

Spain is also struggling with an economic slowdown after a decade-long boom in the property market came to a halt.

Shortages are also beginning to bite in neighbouring Portugal, where retailers have said food stocks at supermarkets are beginning to run out, and several petrol stations in Lisbon ran dry yesterday.

Portuguese farmers said they would have to throw away 660,000 gallons of fresh milk by the end of the day unless the protest ended because they had run out of storage capacity.

A striker died as he tried to stop a truck on a road north of the capital.

Its main Portela airport diverted airlines to other airfields to refuel, saying it could supply only emergency, military and state flights. Some flights were delayed but none were cancelled.

In the Netherlands, lorry drivers said they would limit speed to 30mph on a number of Dutch roads today in protest at calls for a diesel excise duty.

They also want a system to stabilise diesel prices by lowering duties when oil prices rise and raising them when they fall.

The Revolt Over Rising Food Prices; “The Upward Spiral In Global Food Prices Has Meant A Struggle For The

Most Basic Of Human Rights — The Right To Eat”

By SHARON SMITH, International Socialist Review Issue 59, May–June 2008 [Excerpts]

WALL STREET millionaires have spent months mourning their losses from once ridiculously overvalued investments. Yet these same free-market cheerleaders remain blissfully unaware of the magnitude of the crisis facing the real victims of the unfolding global meltdown they so enthusiastically enabled.

For the 3 billion people who survive on less than \$2 a day, the upward spiral in global food prices has meant a struggle for the most basic of human rights—the right to eat.

Rice, bread, and tortillas are the staple food for this half of the world’s population. In 2007, the price of grain rose by 42 percent, and dairy products by 80 percent, according to United Nations figures, and food inflation has accelerated further in recent months.

In the last twelve months alone, wheat prices have increased by 130 percent, and rice by 74 percent.

As the Observer noted on April 6, “A global rice shortage that has seen prices of one of the world’s most important staple foods increase by 50 percent in the past two weeks alone is triggering an international crisis.”

In March and April, mass hunger spawned violent rioting in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Mozambique, Senegal, and Haiti.

Five years after the invasion of Iraq, U.S. occupiers have made no effort to spare the conquered population from the rise in hunger sweeping the world. On the contrary, in December the U.S.-backed Iraqi government announced that monthly food rations would be cut in half due to “insufficient funds and spiraling inflation,” affecting 10 million Iraqis dependent on these rations for survival.

The trade ministry has halved the list of subsidized foods to include only flour, sugar, rice, oil, and infant milk, while abandoning the formerly subsidized necessities of lentils, chickpeas, soap, tea, and detergent.

Even before the current crisis, the percentage of Iraqis receiving food rations had already declined from 96 percent in 2004 to 60 percent in 2007, according to a 2007 Oxfam International report. The report estimated that “43 percent of Iraqis suffer from absolute poverty” and over half the population is unemployed, adding, “Child malnutrition rates have risen from 19 percent before the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 to 28 percent now.”

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 to
contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld on request.
Replies confidential.

Class War In Egypt:
**“Ghazl El-Mahalla Is At The Heart
Of The Ongoing Strike Wave, The
Biggest To Engulf Egypt Since The
End Of The Second World War”**
“Down With The Government”
**As Food Prices Rise, Class Struggle Is
Heating Up**

By HOSSAM EL-HAMALAWY, International Socialist Review Issue 59, May–June 2008
[Excerpts]

Hossam el-Hamalawy is an Egyptian journalist and socialist. For updates on Mahalla and the industrial struggle in Egypt, go to his site at <http://arabist.net/arabawy/>.

EGYPTIAN POLICE cracked down in early April on the Nile Delta town of Mahalla—home to the biggest textile mill in the Middle East with its labor force of 27,000—aborting a strike, as the town erupted in two bloody days of street uprisings that left at least two young men killed by President Hosni Mubarak’s U.S.-backed regime.

Solidarity protests in Cairo and the other provinces were also squashed by the security services, which rounded up hundreds of ordinary citizens and dissidents, including bloggers and organizers.

A strike had been called by the left-leaning Textile Workers’ League in the Ghazl el-Mahalla textile mill for April 6, to pressure the government into raising the national minimum wage that has not moved from a pathetic \$6.40 per month since 1984. The workers were demanding an increase to \$222 per month, as well as other demands related to food allowances, industrial safety, and work conditions.

Ghazl el-Mahalla is at the heart of the ongoing strike wave, the biggest to engulf Egypt since the end of the Second World War.

The textile mill went on strike in December 2006, over promised government bonuses. Three thousand women garment workers struck and marched into the company compound demanding their male colleagues join their strike. The factory was brought to a complete halt, and for three days the area was the scene of marches and demonstrations.

The victory achieved soon spilled over, not only to the rest of the troubled textile sector, but also to other sectors in the economy and to civil servants.

Over the following ten months, virtually all sectors witnessed strikes or sit-ins.

From December 7, 2006 to September 23, 2007, according to a report by the Giza-based Center for Socialist Studies, more than 650 workers' protests took place across the country, a large proportion of which were strikes.

This period saw 198,400 workers take strike action, and an even higher number staged sit-ins and street protests, from civil servants, drivers and cashiers of metros and subways, cement factory workers, garbage collectors, fishermen, and even real estate tax collectors.

The tax collectors who struck for three months, bringing tax collection down by 90 percent and winning a victory after they set up a camp in front of the ministerial cabinet headquarters in downtown Cairo.

Though the strikes started over economic demands and working conditions, the strike leaders in the major industrial urban centers started pushing forward political demands, related to impeachment of government-backed union officials and corrupt state managers as well as freedom of association. As Ghazl el-Mahalla went on strike again in September 2007, demanding a greater share of the company's annual profits and impeachment of company management, workers raised banners that read "Down with the government."

Videos of the strikers chanting against the "IMF and colonialism" circulated on the Web by bloggers on the scene.

The strike ended in victory once more, with the government succumbing to the workers' demands after six days.

The head of the local union resigned after he was hospitalized by the strikers while trying to persuade them to disband the strike, and the CEO was impeached a month later.

In February 2008, leftist organizers in Ghazl el-Mahalla mobilized the biggest anti-Mubarak labor protest since he ascended to power in 1981, with ten thousand factory workers taking to the streets, joined by a similar number of the local citizens, demanding a raise in the national minimum wage, and chanting against Mubarak and his son Gamal, whom he's been grooming for succession.

Mahalla's militancy increased the appetite of the Egyptian working class for more industrial action, and also increased the militancy of middle-class professionals. Doctors

voted to go on a national strike for the first time since 1951. The strike was scheduled for March 15, but was aborted by the pro-government Doctors' Syndicate board. University professors followed suit, launching a national strike on March 23, demanding that the campuses and classrooms be freed from the interference of state security along with salary raises.

As leftist organizers on the factory floor in Ghazl el-Mahalla announced their intention to go on their third strike in less than two years, opposition groups and bloggers launched a call for a general strike, asking the public to stay home.

On the April 6, thousands of police troops occupied the town of Mahalla, and security took control of the factory, thus preempting the strike.

Spontaneous demonstrations broke out in the town, however, including thousands of the urban poor, the young employed, and workers chanting against the president, corruption, and price increases. The demonstrators were met with police tear gas, rubber bullets, and live ammunition, which left at least two young men, ages 15 and 20, dead.

For two days the city turned into a scene similar to the Palestinian Occupied Territories, where demonstrators hurled stones at Mubarak's police force and armored vehicles, while shouting "the revolution has arrived!" according to eyewitnesses. Posters of the dictator Mubarak were defaced and destroyed by the rioters in Mahalla's public squares.

Hundreds were arrested and dozens were critically injured in the ensuing crackdown. The police also cut power to the city, which sank into darkness for two successive nights, interrupted by sporadic rioting.

Activists' homes were also raided in Cairo and the Nile Delta following the dispersal of Mahalla solidarity protests. Egyptian rights lawyers are still struggling to locate the detainees and get accurate arrest figures. Released detainees spoke of abuse. Children as young as eight were among those detained in Mahalla's First Police Station, together with local and foreign journalists and media personnel who tried to interview the families of the detainees.

The Egyptian activists have issued an international call for solidarity, requesting support from labor unions, community associations, and student unions.

The Mubarak regime is a close ally of U.S. imperialism, and the second largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid after Israel (roughly \$2 billion, of which \$1.3 billion is military aid). Egypt is the most populous Arab country, with more than 76 million people, and it also has the largest working class, with a long tradition of militancy.

An overthrow of this U.S.-backed dictatorship could produce a domino effect throughout the region, emboldening the struggles of other Arab workers against similar dictators.

“The single largest failure of the anti-war movement at this point is the lack of outreach to the troops.” Tim Goodrich, Iraq Veterans Against The War

“The military are the final, essential weak point of Bush and Cheney.” David McReynolds 9.29.07

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