

GI SPECIAL 6G11:



**“You Just Feel Betrayed,” He Said:
“I Went From A Very Innocent, Young Navy Officer To Becoming A Veteran In The Antiwar Movement”
“Our Troops Need To Feel That America Has Their Back If They Want To Resist”**



[Thanks to Katherine G, The Military Project, who sent this in.]

July 11 - 17, 2008 By Joy Wiltermuth, Downtown Express

At 18, Fabian Bouthillette joined the Navy. In his words, he wanted to “do something good and decent.” He served for several years, but then as the Iraq War began and raged on, he found what he was doing was for all the wrong reasons.

Bouthillette, now 27, found the antiwar group Iraq Veterans Against the War through an Internet search for “Veterans for Peace.” He connected with the mission of the group, as part of which he is now fighting to end military support for the war and to broaden outreach to local veterans.

For the past three years, Bouthillette, who lives on the Lower East Side, has studied the antiwar movement and Vietnam-era activism.

“I went from a very innocent, young Navy officer to becoming a veteran in the antiwar movement, instead of a veteran of the Navy,” he reflected recently during an interview at the Bluestockings Bookstore and Cafe on Allen St., near his home.

Now, Bouthillette is the secretary and outreach coordinator for Iraq Veterans Against the War’s New York chapter, which shares space with the War Resisters’ League in Noho, at 339 Lafayette St.

I.V.A.W. was founded in 2004, by a group of Iraq War soldiers who were united in their opposition to the conflict. They were no longer willing to remain silent about their experiences or their desire to see the war end.

The group’s second-floor office is reached by climbing a dark, cramped staircase. The narrow hall is littered with tacked-up fliers and old posters. It opens to a cluttered, sunlit space.

“You walk in there and you feel like you’re in the ‘60s protesting Vietnam,” Bouthillette said.

I.V.A.W. offers support to fellow soldiers and provides a forum to those willing to talk about their experiences.

“It’s not about being anti-military. It’s just about being anti-occupation,” he explained.

Army Captain Luis Carlos Montalván served two combat tours in Iraq. He joined I.V.A.W. because he said no other organization was as genuine in its commitment to extricating the United States from Iraq.

“Too many irresponsible acts by utterly loathsome politicians and military leaders have caused our national woes for the past eight years,” Montalván said. He said I.V.A.W. veterans have a shared understanding that foreign policy changes need to be made.

The organization sponsors Winter Soldiers, a speakers panel of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans, in which Montalván has been a participant. The group collects testimony and talks to the public about day-to-day life on the ground, for soldiers and civilians, in these war zones.

Once a month, I.V.A.W. heads out to local armories. Bouthillette said their presence lets soldiers know there is an active antiwar movement led by veterans. They hand out fliers and try to talk about the war.

“Our troops need to feel that America has their back if they want to resist,” he said. “We are the ones that really understand where they come from.”

I.V.A.W. has built up a network of local therapists offering free mental health services.

“The guys that really are emotionally struggling come really motivated,” he said, but added that they risk burnout from opening up about their feelings. “They talk about their experiences a lot. They want to get it off their chests.”

Bouthillette grew up in Arlington, Va., about a mile from the Pentagon. He graduated high school in the late 1990s and promptly enrolled in the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., to get a good education.

“I’m a guy who grew up poor. It was just that simple,” he said of his joining the military.

He graduated from the Naval Academy in 2003, with a five-year commitment. But in a strange twist of fate, the Navy commissioned too many officers, and in November 2004, it requested volunteers to waive their active-duty requirement.

“I was quick to jump on it,” Bouthillette said of his decision to leave the service. “I was not going to work hard to support the war machine anymore. Once I came to that realization, I could no longer do it.”

Still, there are elements of the military that Bouthillette misses.

“You’re just part of a huge community that works really hard together,” he said.

He remembers navigating the U.S.S. Curtis Wilbur, a guided-missile destroyer, in the Sea of Japan. “Just looking at that alone — not why we were doing it or the political reasons — was awesome,” he said. “And, I will never do that again. I’ll never be the officer on deck on a warship.

“One second I am an officer in the Navy and next second I am just an unemployed guy,” he said, recalling his retirement from active duty. He walked off the base, took off his uniform and got into a friend’s car. “That was it. I was happy, but it was weird.

“You just feel betrayed,” he said about the toll the Iraq War is taking on the military.

“I think a lot of guys feel that way, in whatever they were doing.”

The best thing that could happen is that the war just ends, Bouthillette said.

“Then we are all left without a job. I’m dying for that day to come,” he said. “But until that day comes, we are pushing forward.”



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

Local Marine Killed In Iraq Blast

6/28/2008 By TIMOTHY J. GIBBONS, The Times-Union

When Marcus Preud'homme followed his older brother into the Marines, he was chasing his dreams to "be all you could be," said a family friend.

"Marcus always had high standards and high expectations of himself," Desiree Downing said.

Those dreams came to an end Thursday. Preud'homme, a sergeant, was killed by a bomb in Iraq, said Dan McCarthy, Jacksonville's director of military affairs.

Preud'homme had been home recently, visiting a month or so ago. He spent New Year's in New Orleans with family members, said his sister Jessica Preud'homme, speaking briefly through her tears about what she said were so many happy memories.

A 2004 graduate of Fletcher High School, Preud'homme received a number of academic honors and was a member of the school's wrestling team.

"He loved the competition, the challenge," his sister said about his wrestling career. "It was something new for him to learn."

That thirst for knowledge marked his entire life, said Downing, who owns the Beach Hut Cafe where Preud'homme and members of his family had worked.

"Some kids just come and want to do one thing, he was one who wanted to learn everything," she said.

Preud'homme was "quiet and strong," said Roy Fallon, head coach of the Fletcher wrestling team and a Marine veteran himself. "When he would come visit the team, he looked like a Marine. He seemed happy with the opportunity to serve his country."

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

July 13: The Day Nine Chosen Company Soldiers Died:

“So Many RPGs Were Fired At The Soldiers That They Wondered How The Insurgents Had So Many”

[Thanks to James Starowicz, Veterans For Peace, for posting.]

July 19, 2008 By Steve Mraz, Stars and Stripes

Everything was on fire. The trucks. The bazaar. The grass.

It looked surreal. It looked like a movie.

That was what Spc. Tyler Stafford remembered thinking as he stepped onto the medical evacuation helicopter.

The 23-year-old soldier would have been loaded onto the bird, but the poncho that was hastily employed as his stretcher broke. His body speckled with grenade and RPG shrapnel, the Vicenza, Italy, infantryman walked the last few feet to the waiting Black Hawk.

That was Sunday morning in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar province. At a forward operating base — maybe as big as a football field — established just a few days prior.

Outnumbered but not outgunned, a platoon-plus element of soldiers with 2nd Platoon, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team accompanied by Afghan soldiers engaged in a fistfight of a firefight.

After maybe two hours of intense combat, some of the soldiers' guns seized up because they expelled so many rounds so quickly. Insurgent bullets and dozens of rocket-propelled grenades filled the air.

So many RPGs were fired at the soldiers that they wondered how the insurgents had so many.

That was July 13.

That was when Stafford was blown out of a fighting position by an RPG, survived a grenade blast and had the tail of an RPG strike his helmet.

That was the day nine Chosen Company soldiers died.

It was just days before the unit was scheduled to leave the base.

The first RPG and machine gun fire came at dawn, strategically striking the forward operating base's mortar pit. The insurgents next sighted their RPGs on the tow truck inside the combat outpost, taking it out. That was around 4:30 a.m.

This was not a haphazard attack. The reportedly 200 insurgents fought from several positions.

They aimed to overrun the new base. The U.S. soldiers knew it and fought like hell. They knew their lives were on the line.

"I just hope these guys' wives and their children understand how courageous their husbands and dads were," said Sgt. Jacob Walker. "They fought like warriors."

The next target was the FOB's observation post, where nine soldiers were positioned on a tiny hill about 50 to 75 meters from the base. Of those nine, five died, and at least three others — Stafford among them — were wounded.

When the attack began, Stafford grabbed his M-240 machine gun off a north-facing sandbag wall and moved it to an east-facing sandbag wall. Moments later, RPGs struck the north-facing wall, knocking Stafford out of the fighting position and wounding another soldier.

Stafford thought he was on fire so he rolled around, regaining his senses. Nearby, Cpl. Gunnar Zwilling, who later died in the fight, had a stunned look on his face.

Immediately, a grenade exploded by Stafford, blowing him down to a lower terrace at the observation post and knocking his helmet off. Stafford put his helmet back on and noticed how badly he was bleeding.

Cpl. Matthew Phillips was close by, so Stafford called to him for help. Phillips was preparing to throw a grenade and shot a look at Stafford that said, "Give me a second. I gotta go kill these guys first."

This was only about 30 to 60 seconds into the attack.

Kneeling behind a sandbag wall, Phillips pulled the grenade pin, but just after he threw it an RPG exploded at his position. The tail of the RPG smacked Stafford's helmet. The dust cleared. Phillips was slumped over, his chest on his knees and his hands by his side. Stafford called out to his buddy three or four times, but Phillips never answered or moved.

"When I saw Phillips die, I looked down and was bleeding pretty good, that's probably the most scared I was at any point," Stafford said. "Then I kinda had to calm myself down and be like, 'All right, I gotta go try to do my job.' "

The soldier from Parker, Colo., loaded his 9 mm handgun, crawled up to their fighting position, stuck the pistol over the sandbags and fired.

Stafford saw Zwilling's M-4 rifle nearby so he loaded it, put it on top of the sandbag and fired. Another couple RPGs struck the sandbag wall Stafford used as cover. Shrapnel pierced his hands.

Stafford low-crawled to another fighting position where Cpl. Jason Bogar, Sgt. Matthew Gobble and Sgt. Ryan Pitts were located. Stafford told Pitts that the insurgents were within grenade-tossing range. That got Pitts' attention.

With blood running down his face, Pitts threw a grenade and then crawled to the position from where Stafford had just come. Pitts started hucking more grenades.

The firefight intensified. Bullets cut down tree limbs that fell on the soldiers. RPGs constantly exploded.

Back at Stafford's position, so many bullets were coming in that the soldiers could not poke their heads over their sandbag wall. Bogar stuck an M-249 machine gun above the wall and squeezed off rounds to keep fire on the insurgents. In about five minutes, Bogar fired about 600 rounds, causing the M-249 to seize up from heat.

At another spot on the observation post, Cpl. Jonathan Ayers laid down continuous fire from an M-240 machine gun, despite drawing small-arms and RPG fire from the enemy. Ayers kept firing until he was shot and killed. Cpl. Pruitt Rainey radioed the FOB with a casualty report, calling for help.

Of the nine soldiers at the observation post, Ayers and Phillips were dead, Zwilling was unaccounted for, and three were wounded. Additionally, several of the soldiers' machine guns couldn't fire because of damage. And they needed more ammo.

Rainey, Bogar and another soldier jumped out of their fighting position with the third soldier of the group launching a shoulder-fired missile.

All this happened within the first 20 minutes of the fight.

Platoon leader 1st Lt. Jonathan Brostrom and Cpl. Jason Hovater arrived at the observation post to reinforce the soldiers. By that time, the insurgents had breached the perimeter of the observation post. Gunfire rang out, and Rainey shouted, "He's right behind the sandbag."

Brostrom could be heard shouting about the insurgent as well.

More gunfire and grenade explosions ensued. Back in the fighting position, Gobble fired a few quick rounds. Gobble then looked to where the soldiers were fighting and told Stafford the soldiers were dead. Of the nine soldiers who died in the battle, at least seven fell in fighting at the observation post.

The insurgents then started chucking rocks at Gobble and Stafford's fighting position, hoping that the soldiers might think the rocks were grenades, causing them to jump from the safety of their fighting hole.

One rock hit a tree behind Stafford and landed directly between his legs. He braced himself for an explosion. He then realized it was a rock.

Stafford didn't have a weapon, and Gobble was low on ammo. Gobble told Stafford they had to get back to the FOB. They didn't realize that Pitts was still alive in another

fighting position at the observation post. Gobble and Stafford crawled out of their fighting hole. Gobble looked again to where the soldiers had been fighting and reconfirmed to Stafford that Brostrom, Rainey, Bogar and others were dead.

Gobble and Stafford low-crawled and ran back to the FOB. Coming into the FOB, Stafford was asked by a sergeant what was going on at the observation post. Stafford told him all the soldiers there were dead. Stafford lay against a wall, and his fellow soldiers put a tourniquet on him.

From the OP, Pitts got on the radio and told his comrades he was alone. At least three soldiers went to the OP to rescue Pitts, but they suffered wounds after encountering RPG and small-arms fire.

At that time, air support arrived in the form of Apache helicopters, A-10s and F-15s, performing bombing and strafing runs.

When the attack began, Walker was on the FOB. He grabbed an M-249 and started shooting toward a mountain spur where he could see some muzzle flashes. Walker put down 600 to 800 rounds of ammunition.

He got down behind the wall he was shooting from to load more ammo and was told they were taking fire from the southwest. He threw the bipod legs of his machine gun on the hood of a nearby Humvee. A 7.62-millimeter caliber bullet struck Walker's left wrist, knocking him to the ground. A soldier applied a tourniquet to Walker and bandaged him.

Walker and two other wounded soldiers distributed their ammo and grenades and passed messages.

The whole FOB was covered in dust and smoke, looking like something out of an old Western movie.

"I've never seen the enemy do anything like that," said Walker, who was medically evacuated off the FOB in one of the first helicopters to arrive. "It's usually three RPGs, some sporadic fire and then they're gone ... I don't where they got all those RPGs. That was crazy."

Two hours after the first shots were fired, Stafford made his way — with help — to the medevac helicopter that arrived.

"It was some of the bravest stuff I've ever seen in my life, and I will never see it again because those guys," Stafford said, then paused. "Normal humans wouldn't do that. You're not supposed to do that — getting up and firing back when everything around you is popping and whizzing and trees, branches coming down and sandbags exploding and RPGs coming in over your head ... It was a fistfight then, and those guys held 'em off."

Stafford offered a guess as to why his fellow soldiers fought so hard.

"Just hardcoreness I guess," he said. "Just guys kicking ass, basically. Just making sure that we look scary enough that you don't want to come in and try to get us."

Bomb Kills Canadian Soldier In Panjwaii; Another Wounded

July 19 Alexander Panetta, THE CANADIAN PRESS

KANDAHAR—A Canadian soldier has been killed by roadside bomb in Afghanistan.

Cpl. James Hayward Arnal was struck by an explosion late Friday during a night foot patrol in Panjwaii district near Kandahar city.

Another Canadian soldier sustained injuries in the blast but was said to be in good condition and was expected to return to duty.

TROOP NEWS

Pat Tillman Case Stymied Cause No One Remembers Anything



[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in.]

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.



A damaged U.S. military armored vehicle at the site of a bomb attack in Baghdad's Camp Sara district May 1, 2008. (Ceerwan Aziz/Reuters)

**Reader Regrets Losing Son In
Iraq:
“This Dad Is Regretful He Died Over
Lies”
“What Farmer Would Occupy A
Neighbor’s Land Because He Could
Overpower Him?”**

My son died so that those entrepreneurs can make more money next year than last year: Haliburton, KBR, Blackwater, Lockheed-Martin, Shell, ExxonMobil, Hunt Oil, British Petroleum, many ex-generals and admirals.

July 21, 2008
By John Scripsick, Wayne, Okla.
Letters To The Editor,
High Plains Publishers, Inc.

I started farming in the late '70s from scratch.

The following year before we embargoed grain to Russia because they invaded Afghanistan.

I'm sure that most farmers would remember by the early '80s there were more auctions than you could attend. I had to work as a carpenter in town, harder than most city folks, to make land payments and pay expenses.

There was no FHA loan, so it was the only choice; but I finally got some breathing room by the late '90s.

Then, Sept. 11 happened.

My son was in high school at the time.

As all citizens we would salute the flag at every sporting event. I was shocked when he came home and wanted to join the Marines. A recruiter had a desk at school and became friends with my son. A professional football player even joined.

My son went in at 19 and was sent back in a sealed coffin at 22 from Iraq.

In Trent Loos' July 7 column, "Get a bang out of this," he does not question entering the war in Iraq and says it is best for him as a citizen.

While I agree with other parts of Trent's article, the U.N. questioned this decision and every American citizen should question it as well.

Five years later I know they chose faulty intelligence and discredited ones with good intelligence.

Trent Loos said the U.S. was built on the backs of capitalistic entrepreneurs.

My son died so that those entrepreneurs can make more money next year than last year: Haliburton, KBR, Blackwater, Lockheed-Martin, Shell, ExxonMobil, Hunt Oil, British Petroleum, many ex-generals and admirals.

The list goes on and on.

Twenty-two billion dollars spent through the Pentagon is unaccounted for.

What farmer would occupy a neighbor's land because he could overpower him?

Trent Loos has not talked to one family directly involved that is regretful.

The young men who spent the most time with my son the last three years, said he talked about becoming a coach; but they told him he was going to be a farmer.

We will never know, but this dad is regretful he died over lies.

I see fewer companies buy fat cattle and grain, and less in pork and poultry.

There are fewer retail stores on main street.

Could a few companies also control our military--like maybe 374 votes for the war and 156 against?

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

“The Response From The Public Was Very Positive To An Iraq War Veteran Who Is Against The War, Who Wants To Vote Down Funding For The War”

Iraq War Veteran Running For Congress In Vermont “Clear In His Conviction That All The Troops Come Home From Iraq Now”

From: James Marc Leas

To: GI Special

Sent: July 19, 2008

Subject: Former Spc. 4 Thomas Hermann to be on the ballot in Vermont]

Here is the note I just sent out about former Spc. 4 Thomas Hermann running for Congress in Vermont

Thanks to everyone around the Vermont who collected signatures to put Thomas James Hermann on the Progressive Party ballot for US Congress. I received many petitions by mail. Thanks very much for all your efforts.

Altogether we collected over 800 signatures, which is 300 more than needed. Thomas will be turning in the petitions to the Vermont Secretary of State office in Montpelier at 3pm Monday in time to meet the deadline.

I heard from many petitioners that the response from the public was very positive to an Iraq War veteran who is against the war, who wants to vote down funding for the war, who supports the oath to defend the constitution, and who wants to hold Peter Welch [Democrat] accountable for opposing impeaching Bush and Cheney.

Several petitioners commented that that they only had about 2 refusals out of 50 asked. A very few said they support Peter Welch and made that a reason for not signing. Many jumped to sign when they heard that Thomas was running against Peter Welch.

No Republican is in the race. Thomas will not be seen as a spoiler, and people can freely choose Peter Welch or Thomas Hermann based on who they think will better represent Vermont in Congress.

Thomas will connect with the large majority of Vermonters who are dissatisfied with the way Peter Welch and the Democratic and Republican Party leadership in Congress have voted to keep this war going.

This campaign will be exciting, not just for Vermonters. I think people all around the country will be admiring Vermont for having a candidate who participated in over 150 missions in the infantry in Iraq, received promotions and medals, and who is articulate, respectful, soft spoken, and clear in his conviction that all the troops come home from Iraq now and that we take good care of them when they get home.

If you would like to help Thomas with any aspect of the campaign, such as web site, fund raising, media, strategy, or anything else please let Dan DeWalt or me know.

The web site registered is www.votepeacevt.com and once we find a web person who would like to help set it up, hopefully in the next few days, it will start working.

**James Marc Leas
jolly39@gmail.com**

More Pentagon Pants Pissing Panic: Frantic To Hide Combat Casualties, Pentagon Rats Call Soldier Killed In Insurgent Attack A Victim Of “Vehicle Accident”



Green Beret Staff Sgt. David Textor was killed in Mosul, Iraq.

July 19, 2008 By Lou Michel – Buffalo News Staff Reporter

Staff Sgt. David W. Textor was killed when he was thrown from the turret of his Humvee during an enemy attack in Mosul, Iraq, according to his relatives.

The death of the 27-year-old Randolph native Tuesday was not the result of a simple vehicle accident as the Army first reported, his family says.

“He died in action. They were attacked. They were targeted,” said Debbie Faultner-Vondra, the sister of Textor’s wife, who both live in Olympia, Wash., where he had been assigned to Fort Lewis before his deployment in May.

The Army, at this point, still officially lists Textor’s death as a “vehicle accident.”

Three other soldiers were injured in the incident, said Lt. Gen. Robert Wagner, commanding general of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command.

“Once the investigation is complete, the Army will be able to release a statement that encompasses everything that occurred in relation to Sgt. Textor’s death,” Capt. Chris Augustine, a spokesman for Special Forces Command at Fort Bragg, N.C., said Friday.

Textor, who worked as a weapons sergeant, is believed to be the 33rd service member from Western New York to die in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Only hours before Textor died, he leaned forward and kissed a Web-cam image of his wife, Colette, whom he was chatting with over the Internet. After the kiss, he said

“goodbye” to her for the last time. She returned to caring for their five children, and her husband returned to a mission he took personally — protecting the United States for his children.

Textor’s sister-in-law described him as devoted to his family and the military. He had been serving in Iraq for about two months.

“ . . . not very long, but he loved what he was doing,” Faultner-Vondra said. “He was the kind of guy that wasn’t afraid of anything. He thought he was Superman, and my sister thought he was Superman. At that age, you never think that something like this is going to happen.” Superman, she added, had a loving side.

“My sister and her husband saw each other every day. On the morning of the day he died, they were talking and he kissed the computer screen and said goodbye to her,” Faultner-Vondra said.

The couple could not know it would be their final goodbye. Textor, who became a Green Beret in 2006, four years after enlisting, had so many plans.

When his tour ended in Iraq, he intended to come home and spend time with his children, who range in age from 2 to 14. He wanted to get back into coaching youth soccer.

Visiting parks, camping out and riding bicycles were other family activities he had enjoyed and had been looking forward to. All of his life, relatives said, Textor had been active.

At Randolph High School, where he graduated, he had participated in football, wrestling and track.

His plans also included more of the military. He intended to re-enlist in October. “He wanted to fight for his country, and his main motivation was his children, to make sure they were protected,” Faultner-Vondra said.

In Randolph, Textor’s step-grandfather, Charles Lindberg, said it amazed him how much his grandson loved his military career. “I was in the service in the Korean War, and I’ve met a lot of other soldiers, but I never saw someone who so thoroughly enjoyed what he was doing,” Lindberg said.

He, too, recalled a young man who was well suited for facing the dangers of war.

“David was almost fearless. As just a little tyke, he would jump off roofs,” Lindberg said. “He was the youngest and had five sisters, so he’d escape by jumping off the roof. He must have been about 8 at the time, and he never hurt himself.”

After high school graduation, Textor moved with mother and stepfather, Jennie and Kevin Lindberg, to Roanoke, Va., where he joined the Army.

Though Textor will be buried in Fairbanks, Alaska — where he met his future wife in October 2002 while he was stationed at Fort Wainwright — a memorial service is set for 11 a.m. next Saturday in American Legion Post 181 in Randolph.

"The military is going to be conducting it," Lindberg said.

The staff sergeant's wife hopes people here who have stories and photographs of her late husband's early years will attend and share them with local relatives, who will forward the remembrances to her.

"My sister's trying to gather these stories and pictures so that they can be passed along to their children," Faultner-Vondra said. "We're all going to miss him."

Command Lies And Soldier Die: "The Problem Was Known About Long Before Chris's Death"

"The Death Of Staff Sgt. Maseth Jan. 2, 2008 Occurred Four Years After An Army Corps Of Engineers Report Warning That These Electrical Hazards On Bases Were A 'Killer Of Soldiers'

"KBR Found The Electrical Hazard During An Inspection Of Her Son's Barracks 11 Months Before His Death"

"When the Army presented this report, they led me to believe that Chris's incident was the first such fatality. They told me outright that as the result of Chris's death, all generators across Iraq were being properly grounded so that this would not happen again."

It wasn't until April of this year that McGee said she learned that her son was the fourth person to be electrocuted in Iraq at that time and that the military was warned about these hazards in the 2004 Corps of Engineers report.

July 21, 2008 By Matthew Cox, Army Times [Excerpts]

Halliburton KBR improperly installed electrical wiring or failed to fix known electrical hazards at U.S. bases in Iraq that resulted in the deaths of 11 service members and two civilians, family members and former employees of the contracting giant testified at a Congressional hearing.

Electrical hazards in showers, swimming pools and work spaces have killed 10 soldiers, one Marine and two civilian contractors since 2003.

Sen. Robert Casey, D-Penn., expressed frustration that the latest electrocution, which caused the death of Staff Sgt. Ryan Maseth Jan. 2, 2008, occurred four years after an Army Corps of Engineers report warning that these electrical hazards on bases were a “killer of soldiers.”

“That’s October 2004 and we are sitting here in 2008 and we are still talking about this,” Casey said, describing his disgust that Maseth, a Special Forces soldier, lost his life while taking a shower in his barracks in Baghdad.

“That’s an abomination.”

Maseth’s mother, Cheryl Harris, testified at the Senate Democratic Policy Committee hearing, telling lawmakers that she has learned that KBR found the electrical hazard during an inspection of her son’s barracks 11 months before his death.

She listed deficiencies such as that “the building’s main circuit panel, the secondary feeder panel and the water tank were not grounded.” In addition, the “wiring leading into the secondary electrical panel was not sized properly for the main breakers, did not have proper thermal coating and did not meet U.S. or British electrical codes.”

Harris became upset, her voice quivering several times during her description of how her son “lay in electrified water until he was discovered by a fellow soldier who kicked the door down.

There, lying on the ground, was my son’s body, burnt and smoldering,” she said. “One of the soldiers who attempted to rescue Ryan was himself severely shocked because the electrical current was still running through the water and pipes in Ryan’s bathroom.”

KBR officials were invited to the hearing but did not attend. In an e-mailed statement, a KBR representative said the company’s investigation so far has not turned up evidence of a link between its work and the electrocutions.

Larraine McGee blames the Pentagon for not doing enough to prevent her son, Staff Sgt. Christopher Lee Everett, from being electrocuted while power-washing the underside of a Humvee at Camp Taqaddum in Iraq Sept. 7, 2005.

In a December 2005 report, the Army stated that the “generator supplying electricity to the power washer was improperly grounded, resulting in an electrical current passing to the power washer and through the water in the hose to the nozzle Chris was holding,” McGee said.

“When the Army presented this report, they led me to believe that Chris’s incident was the first such fatality. They told me outright that as the result of Chris’s death, all generators across Iraq were being properly grounded so that this would not happen again.”

It wasn’t until April of this year that McGee said she learned that her son was the fourth person to be electrocuted in Iraq at that time and that the military was warned about these hazards in the 2004 Corps of Engineers report.

“My son should never have died. Ryan Maseth should have never died,” she told the committee. “Proper grounding is a basic safety requirement. The problem was known about long before Chris’s death.”

MORE:

DoD Traitors Lie, Cover-Up How Bad The Problem Is, And Ignore Official Warnings Troops Will Be Killed:

**“Shoddy Electrical Work By Private Contractors On U.S. Military Bases In Iraq Is Widespread And Dangerous, Causing More Deaths And Injuries From Fires And Shocks Than The Pentagon Has Acknowledged”
KBR "Chose To Ignore The Known Unsafe Conditions"**

“In Late June An Electrical Fire At A Marine Base In Falluja Destroyed 10

Buildings, Forcing Marines There To Ask For Donations From Home To Replace Their Personal Belongings”

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

July 18, 2008 By James Risen, The New York Times

WASHINGTON: Shoddy electrical work by private contractors on United States military bases in Iraq is widespread and dangerous, causing more deaths and injuries from fires and shocks than the Pentagon has acknowledged, according to internal army documents.

During just one six-month period — August 2006 through January 2007 — at least 283 electrical fires destroyed or damaged American military facilities in Iraq, including the military’s largest dining hall in the country, documents obtained by The New York Times show.

Two soldiers died in an electrical fire at their base near Tikrit in 2006, the records note, while another was injured while jumping from a burning guard tower in May 2007.

And while the Pentagon has previously reported that 13 Americans have been electrocuted in Iraq, many more have been injured, some seriously, by shocks, according to the documents.

A log compiled earlier this year at one building complex in Baghdad disclosed that soldiers complained of receiving electrical shocks in their living quarters on an almost daily basis.

Electrical problems were the most urgent noncombat safety hazard for soldiers in Iraq, according to an army survey issued in February 2007. It noted "a safety threat theaterwide created by the poor-quality electrical fixtures procured and installed, sometimes incorrectly, thus resulting in a significant number of fires."

The army report said KBR, the Houston-based company that is responsible for providing basic services for American troops in Iraq, including housing, did its own study and found a "systemic problem" with electrical work.

But the Pentagon did little to address the issue until a Green Beret, Staff Sergeant Ryan Maseth, was electrocuted in January while showering. His death, caused by poor electrical grounding, drew the attention of lawmakers and Pentagon leaders after his family pushed for answers.

Congress and the Pentagon’s inspector general have begun investigations, and this month senior army officials ordered electrical inspections of all buildings in Iraq maintained by KBR.

In public statements, Pentagon officials have not addressed the scope of the hazards, instead mostly focusing on the circumstances surrounding the death of Maseth, who lived near Pittsburgh.

But the internal documents, including dozens of memos, e-mail messages and reports from the army, the Defense Contract Management Agency and other agencies, show that electrical problems were widely recognized as a major safety threat among Pentagon contracting experts.

It is impossible to determine the exact number of the resulting deaths and injuries because no single document tallies them up. (The records were compiled for congressional and Pentagon investigators and obtained independently by The Times.)

The 2007 safety survey was ordered by the top official in Iraq for the Defense Contract Management Agency, which oversees contractors, after the October 2006 electrical fire that killed two soldiers near Tikrit. Paul Dickinson, a Pentagon safety specialist who wrote the report, confirmed its findings, but did not elaborate.

Senior Pentagon officials appear not to have responded to the survey until this May, after congressional investigators had begun to ask questions. Then they argued that its findings were irrelevant to Maseth's electrocution.

In a memo dated May 26, 2008, a top official of the Defense Contract Management Agency stated that "there is no direct or causal connection" between the problems identified in the survey and those at the Baghdad compound where Maseth died.

But in a sworn statement, apparently prepared for an investigation of Maseth's death by the army's Criminal Investigative Division, a Pentagon contracting official described how both military and KBR officials were aware of the growing danger from poor electrical work.

In the statement, Ingrid Harrison, an official with the Pentagon's contracting management agency, disclosed that an electrical fire caused by poor wiring in a nearby building two weeks before Maseth's death had endangered two other soldiers.

"The soldiers were lucky because the one window that they could reach did not have bars on it, or there could have been two other fatalities," Harrison said in the statement.

She said that after Maseth died, a more senior Pentagon contracting official in Baghdad denied knowing about the fire, but she asserted that "it was thoroughly discussed" during internal meetings.

Harrison added that KBR officials also knew of widespread electrical problems at the Radwaniya Palace Complex, near Baghdad's airport, where Maseth died.

"KBR has been at RPC for over four years and was fully aware of the safety hazards, violations and concerns regarding the soldiers' housing," she said in the

statement. She added that the contractor "chose to ignore the known unsafe conditions."

In another internal document written after Maseth's death, a senior army officer in Baghdad warned that soldiers had to be moved immediately from several buildings because of electrical risks.

In a memo asking for emergency repairs at three buildings, the official warned of a "clear and present danger," adding: "Exposed wiring, ungrounded distribution panels and inappropriate lighting fixtures render these facilities uninhabitable and unsafe."

The memo added that "over the course of several months, electrical fires and shorts have compounded these unsafe conditions."

Since the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, tens of thousands of American troops have been housed in Iraqi buildings that date from the Saddam Hussein era. KBR and other contractors have been paid millions of dollars to repair and upgrade the buildings, including their electrical systems. KBR officials say they handle the maintenance for 4,000 structures and an additional 35,000 containers used as housing in the war zone.

The reports of shoddy electrical work have raised new questions about the Bush administration's heavy reliance on contractors in Iraq, particularly because they come after other high-profile disputes involving KBR. They include accusations of overbilling, providing unsafe water to soldiers and failing to protect female employees who were sexually assaulted.

Several electricians who worked for KBR have said previously in interviews that they repeatedly warned KBR managers and Pentagon and military officials about unsafe electrical work. They said that supervisors had ignored their concerns or, in some cases, lacked the training to understand the problems.

The army documents cite a number of recent safety threats.

One report showed that during a four-day period in late February, soldiers at a Baghdad compound reported being shocked while taking showers in different buildings. The circumstances appear similar to those that led to Maseth's death.

Another entry from early March stated that an entire house used by American troops was electrically charged, making it unlivable.

Since the Pentagon reports were compiled, more episodes linked to electrical problems have occurred.

In late June, for example, an electrical fire at a Marine base in Falluja destroyed 10 buildings, forcing marines there to ask for donations from home to replace their personal belongings.

On July 5, Sergeant First Class Anthony Lynn Woodham of the Arkansas National Guard died at his base in Tallil, Iraq.

Initial reports blamed electrocution, but his death is being investigated because of conflicting information, according to his wife, Crystal Woodham, and a spokesman for the Arkansas National Guard.

Free Legal Help For Troops

July 21, 2008 Army Times

WHAT'S UP: A law school, automaker and charitable foundation have teamed up to expand a program of free legal services through video conferencing for troops stationed at five bases in Iraq.

Michigan's Thomas Cooley Law School has been donating legal services to Michigan troops since April 2007 and is now expanding its services to those who are based elsewhere. Developed with the help of military leadership and military attorneys, the program has helped about 250 service members.

WHAT'S NEXT: Service members at camps Taji, Fallujah, Taqaddum and Victory and at Al Asad Air Base can consult with one of more than 100 volunteer attorneys through the video conference center at Chrysler LLC's Auburn Hills, Mich., headquarters, near one of the law school's campuses.

The connection is made through Freedom Calls Foundation, which has built a satellite network dedicated to providing communication services to deployed troops.

Service members in Iraq who want to schedule a consultation at one of the five bases can contact Kathryn Hudacek, director of development for Freedom Calls Foundation, at khudacek@freedomcalls.org or (973) 290-7886.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Resistance Action

July 17 (Reuters) & July 18 (Reuters) & (CNN) & DPA & (AFP) & June 19 (KUNA)

Two members of the U.S.-funded Iraqi Sahwa (Awakening) Council were killed on Saturday during an explosion in Al-Huwaija area, southwest of Kirkuk city, northern Iraq. A police source told KUNA that an explosive charge detonated as a Sahwa patrol was passing by in Huwajja, southeast of Kirkuk, leading to the mentioned casualties.

SAMARRA - A roadside bomb wounded seven members of a U.S. -backed neighbourhood patrol in Samarra, police said.

Guerrillas killed one policeman and wounded three others when they attacked their checkpoint on Thursday, near the city of Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

A truck bomber in northern Iraq attacked an Iraqi army patrol on Friday, killing three soldiers and wounding eight others, an Interior Ministry official said. The incident occurred in Flifla east of Mosul in Nineveh province.

In Nineveh province, three Iraqi soldiers were killed and seven injured Friday when a suicide bomber blew up his explosive vehicle near their patrol north of Mosul, an official Iraqi army source said. 'The powerful explosion destroyed other two military vehicles of the patrol and damaged 10 nearby cars,' the source told VOI.

Four people were wounded in an explosion targeting the vehicles charged with protecting oil installations near the city.

Guerrilla fighters killed three policemen in an attack on their patrol outside Tikrit, 150 km (95 miles) north of Baghdad.

A sniper shot dead a policeman at a checkpoint in central Mosul, police said.

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

**NEED SOME TRUTH?
CHECK OUT 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/)

OCCUPATION REPORT

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



Foreign occupation troops from the U.S. Army prepare to search a children's' classroom as they occupy a school during in Qubah, in Diyala province July 9, 2008. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

[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!

All The Problems Of Iraqis Will End: Green Zone Getting Five Star Hotel

[But will it have a helicopter pad on the roof for the day the collaborators have to run for their lives? T]

July 17, 2008 by Laith, "Inside Iraq"

At last, all the problems of Iraqis will end.

All the suffering of the poor families will vanish.

The tears of the hungry families will be smiles. the fear of the displaced families will be safety and tranquility. the lack of services will be not more than an old memory.

Cheer up poors and dance with joy because the big achievements are coming.

Today, we received an e-mail (press release) inviting us to attend the groundbreaking ceremony of A FIVE STAR HOTEL INSIDE THE INTERNATIONAL ZONE KNOWN AS THE GREEN ZONE

Instead of building power plants, our government approves building a five star hotel.

Instead of building water plants, our government approves building a five star hotel.

Instead of building new hospitals for the poor Iraqis who fill the old, dirty stink hospitals, our government approves building a five star hotel.

I wish I have the magical stick. I would bring all the Iraqi and American officials and force them all to live one full week in Shoula neighborhood, one of the poorest neighborhoods of Baghdad.

I wish they try for seven days managing their life with ten Amperes power for only five hours a day, without clean bottled water and of course with the ration food cards.

Do you think they would ever think about building a five star hotel?

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.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



OBAMA DERANGEMENT SYNDROME: A PUZZLING MALADY WHICH CAUSES CRAZY PEOPLE TO BECOME **EVEN CRAZIER!**

I HEARD HE'S GOING TO COMMANDER OUR **HOMES** AND GIVE THEM TO THE HORDES OF **ILLEGAL ALIENS** HE PLANS TO WELCOME ACROSS THE BORDER!

WELL IT MAKES **SENSE**, CONSIDERING THAT HE'S THE **ANTI-CHRIST** AND ALL!



UBIQUITIOUS APOSTATES: ON MESSAGE BOARDS ACROSS THE INTERNET, "FORMER DEMOCRATS" PROUDLY PROCLAIM THEIR NEWFOUND SUPPORT FOR **JOHN MCCAIN!**

I am a lifelong Democrat--but I could NEVER vote for someone as inexperienced as Obama!
--Anonymous / 9:25 a.m.

As a disgruntled Hillary supporter, I couldn't agree MORE!
--Anonymous Too / 9:26 a.m.



DISILLUSIONED ACOLYTES: AS OBAMA'S POSITIONS ON ISSUES FROM ABORTION TO WARRANTLESS WIRE-TAPPING "EVOLVE", HIS MOST ARDENT SUPPORTERS FACE A **STUNNING** REALIZATION!

OUR PARTY'S PRESUMPTIVE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE IS BEHAVING LIKE--LIKE A **POLITICIAN!**

THESE ARE **NOT** THE OPINIONS HE EXPRESSED IN OUR MANY IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS!



OBAMANOLOGISTS: TALMUDIC-LIKE SCHOLARS WHO STRIVE TO EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT OBAMA **SAYS** AND WHAT HE **MEANS!**

IT'S REALLY QUITE SIMPLE! ANYTHING HE SAYS THAT YOU **DIS-AGREE** WITH IS JUST **CAMPAIGN RHETORIC--**

--WHILE ANYTHING YOU DO AGREE WITH-- IS A **HEARTFELT PROMISE!**



THE INVISIBLE CONSTITUENCY: THE UNSEEN, BUT APPARENTLY VITAL, DEMOGRAPHIC OBAMA HOPED TO WIN OVER BY VOTING TO EVISCERATE THE FOURTH AMENDMENT, IN KEEPING WITH THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S WISHES. NO ONE HAS EVER OBSERVED THEM **DIRECTLY!** WE CAN ONLY **INFER** THEIR PRESENCE, AS A RESULT OF OBAMA'S FISA VOTE!

BECAUSE IF THEY **DON'T** EXIST, THERE'S NO RATIONAL EXPLANATION **FOR** THAT VOTE!



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CLASS WAR REPORTS

As Millions Starve Worldwide, The Heads Of The World's Most

Powerful Governments “Failed To Do Anything” But Enjoy Unlimited Quantities Of The Best Of Gourmet Foods:

**“An 18-Course ‘Theme’ Dinner Titled ‘Blessings Of The Earth And Sea’”
“Leaders Cleverly Skated Around Global Water Shortages By Choosing From Five Different Wines And Liqueurs”**



After discussing famine and hunger in Africa, the G8 leaders sat down to a sumptuous meal (Max Photos)

[During the French Revolution, these were the predators who were hung from Paris lampposts with grass stuffed in their mouths. Before that, they had fed their fat faces with the finest foods and wines, while the working class starved. Payback came. Payback will come again. Bring that on. T]

“They have told their people to tighten their belts for lean times ahead, but you feared for presidential and prime ministerial girdles after the chance to tuck into further dishes including milk-fed lamb, roasted lamb with crepes, and black truffle with emulsion sauce.

July 16, 2008 By Nicole Colson, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

SKYROCKETING FOOD prices are pushing tens of millions more people into destitution, and the signs of environmental destruction loom ever more plainly around the globe.

But at the Group of Eight (G8) summit in Hokkaido, Japan, on July 7-9, the heads of the world's most powerful governments failed to do anything more about these crises than mouth empty rhetoric.

The G8 leaders, of course, expressed their "deep concern" about the rise in global food prices. But as for a solution, the best they could come up with was a call for "countries with sufficient food stocks to make available a part of their surplus for countries in need, in times of significantly increasing prices and in a way not to distort trade."

In other words, no solution at all.

And the insult didn't stop with inaction, either.

After discussing their concern for the world's poor, the G8 leaders engaged in an orgy of conspicuous consumption that would have made Marie Antoinette blush--including an 18-course "theme" dinner titled "Blessings of the Earth and Sea."

As writers for Britain's Guardian newspaper described it:

"After discussing famine in Africa, the peckish politicians and five spouses took on four bite-sized amuse-bouche to tickle their palates.

"The price of staple foods may be soaring, but thankfully, caviar and sea urchin are within the purchasing power of leaders and their taxpayers--the amuse-bouche featured corn stuffed with caviar, smoked salmon and sea urchin, hot onion tart and winter lily bulb.

"Guests at the summit, which is costing (\$476 million), were then able to pick items from a tray modeled on a fan and decorated with bamboo grasses, including diced fatty tuna fish, avocado and jellied soy sauce, and pickled conger eel with soy sauce.

"Hairy crab Kegani bisque-style soup was another treat in a meal prepared by the Michelin-starred chef Katsuhiko Nakamura, the grand chef at Hotel Metropolitan Edmont in Tokyo, alongside salt-grilled bighead thornyhead (a small, red Pacific fish) with a vinegary water pepper sauce.

"They have told their people to tighten their belts for lean times ahead, but you feared for presidential and prime ministerial girdles after the chance to tuck into further dishes including milk-fed lamb, roasted lamb with crepes, and black truffle with emulsion sauce.

"Finally, there was a "fantasy" dessert, a special cheese selection accompanied by lavender honey and caramelized nuts, while coffee came with candied fruits and vegetables.

"Leaders cleverly skated around global water shortages by choosing from five different wines and liqueurs."

THE G8 summit also failed to take any real action to combat climate change, which is already threatening lives around the globe.

And as he was preparing to leave the G8 summit, George Bush was overheard by reporters smirking to his fellow world leaders: "Goodbye, from the world's biggest polluter."



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