

GI SPECIAL 6H17:

A Hot Welcome For The Republican National Convention



Chino Latino Restaurant, 2916 Hennepin Ave, Minneapolis, Minnesota
(Photo: Parasole Restaurant Holdings)

**NO END IN SIGHT:
DC Politicians And Iraq
Collaborators Agree:
Not Enough Dead U.S. Troops And
Dead Iraqis, So Far;
Not To Worry, More To Come, For Years**

Aug 22 By David Alexander and Wisam Mohammed, Reuters

BAGHDAD (Reuters) - A draft agreement between the United States and Iraq contains no fixed dates for U.S. forces to withdraw, but Iraq would like combat troops out by the end of 2011, government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said on Thursday.

“The draft does not contain definite dates,” Dabbagh said.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Marine’s Death Last Fall Finally Reported

Aug 23, 2008 Jay Price, Staff Writer, The News & Observer

A Cherry Point-based Marine was wounded in Iraq in 2005 and died of those injuries nearly a year ago, but the Pentagon forgot to formally announce his death until Friday.

Sgt. Nickolas Lee Hopper, 27, of Montrose, Ill., was wounded west of the town of Hit in western Iraq on June 20, 2005, said Maj. Aisha Bakkar, a spokeswoman at Cherry Point for the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing. An improvised bomb struck his truck in Anbar Province, then the deadliest place for U.S. troops in Iraq.

He died in Havelock more than two years later, on Sept. 8, 2007. An autopsy report issued the next month made it clear his death was caused by the combat wounds, Bakkar said.

After families are notified, the Defense Department normally issues a brief news release on each death in Iraq and Afghanistan, whether combat-related or not. In Hopper’s case, the family was properly notified of the cause of death immediately after the autopsy, and his death was properly listed as combat-related in military records, but the formal public notification was somehow overlooked, said Maj. Dave Nevers, a Marine spokesman at the Pentagon.

Hopper was assigned to the 2nd Low Altitude Air Defense Battalion, Marine Air Control Group-28, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, II Marine Expeditionary Force, according to the Pentagon news release. That unit uses shoulder-launched Stinger missiles to protect U.S. troops from airborne threats, Bakkar said. Hopper had almost certainly been assigned to other duties in Iraq, though, as insurgents there have no aircraft.

According to a statement on behalf of Hopper’s family that was released by the Illinois lieutenant governor’s office last fall, Hopper graduated from Dietrich High School in Dietrich, Ill., and attended Lake Land College in Mattoon, Ill. He enlisted in January 2001.

Hopper is survived by his wife, Natividad; his son, Andrew; his mother, Judy Hopper of Montrose, Ill.; his father, Van Hopper of Texas; and his brother, Christopher Hopper, of Montrose.

**BAD IDEA:
NO MISSION;
POINTLESS WAR:
ALL HOME NOW**



5.08: A US soldier from the 187th Infantry Regiment during a foot patrol in Yusufiyah, about 16 kms (10 miles) south of Baghdad. AFP/Mauricio Lima)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

**Foreign Occupation Soldier Killed
Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan;
Nationality Not Announced**

Aug 22 KABUL (AFP) - A soldier with the US-led coalition died in a bomb blast in Afghanistan Friday. The coalition announced the killing of its soldier in eastern Afghanistan.

Great Moments In U.S. Military History:

The Nawabad Massacre; “50 Children Aged Between 12 And 18 Were Among Those Killed In The Bombardment”

August 23 2008 Sharafuddin Sharafyar, Reuters in Heart, The Guardian & Kyodo News & AP & AFP

At least 78 Afghan civilians, including 50 children, were killed Friday and scores of others were wounded in U.S.-led Coalition airstrikes in western Afghanistan, the country's Interior Ministry said Saturday.

“Civilians, most of them women and children, were martyred today in a coalition forces operation in Herat province,” the Interior Ministry said in a statement.

Afghan villagers protested against troops on Saturday.

Villagers gathered in an angry demonstration Saturday, hurling stones at Afghan troops, the police chief for western Afghanistan, General Akram Yawar, told AFP.

Shots were fired into the air to disperse the crowd and two people were wounded, he said.

The troops were forced back into their compound, he said by telephone with the crowd's chants against the government and the international troops heard in the background.

Ikramuddin Yawar, police commander of the western zone, confirmed that around 50 children aged between 12 and 18 were among those killed in the bombardment, which took place in the Nawabad area of the Shindand district Friday afternoon.

Twenty of the victims were women, seven of them men and the rest children under the age of 15.

Police said Friday that 15 houses were destroyed in air strikes.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai expressed his condolences to the families. He condemned the violence and said most of the dead were civilians.

In a statement condemning the event, Karzai accused of the troops of acting without coordinating with local authorities and “innocently martyring at least 70 people, most of them women and children.”

Resistance Offensive Cutting Occupation Overland Supply Line:

“90% Of U.S. Goods Destined For Bagram, The Main U.S. Base,” Including Diesel & Jet Fuel, Come By Trucks Being Destroyed In Ambushes:

“There’s Been A Pretty Clear Trend In The Past Couple Of Weeks To Interdict Our Supply Routes”
“Targeting Of Supply Chains Marks A New And Troubling Development”

August 12, 2008 By ALAN CULLISON in Kabul, Afghanistan, and PETER WONACOTT in Peshawar, Pakistan, Wall St. Journal [Excerpts]

Taliban insurgents have stepped up efforts to seize and destroy supplies destined for North Atlantic Treaty Organization troops in Afghanistan, driving up the cost of the war and signaling a new setback in the nearly seven-year-old campaign.

The attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan are part of the militants’ campaign to isolate the fragile U.S.-backed government in Kabul, led by President Hamid Karzai.

In addition to targeting supply convoys, insurgents in Afghanistan have blown up roads and bridges that were the centerpiece of U.S. efforts to rebuild the nation after NATO troops helped drive the Taliban from power in 2001.

“There’s been a pretty clear trend in the past couple of weeks to interdict our supply routes,” says Brig. Gen. Mark Milley, deputy commander for U.S. forces at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan.

The war in Afghanistan has taken a rough turn for the U.S. over the last year as attacks surge and Mr. Karzai’s control over the countryside ebbs.

The latest attacks on NATO convoys came Monday.

A bomber rammed his car into a convoy in Kabul, killing three civilians and wounding at least a dozen people, while a bomb attack on a convoy in the country’s northwest killed one soldier, the Associated Press reported.

About 90% of U.S. goods destined for Bagram, the main U.S. military base in Afghanistan, make an eight-day journey from Pakistan’s Karachi port through the Torkham border crossing into Afghanistan, according to U.S. officials.

Weapons and ammunition are flown into Afghanistan.

Still, the targeting of supply chains marks a new and troubling development.

The militants’ tactics appear designed to bog down foreign forces and wait them out, the same strategy adopted successfully by Afghan insurgents against the Soviet Union in the 1980s.

In response, NATO forces are adopting some of the Soviets’ tactics. [Right. The tactics that won the war for Russia. That’s why Russian troops occupy Afghanistan.]

They are paying more money to local warlords to guarantee safe passage over roads and importing more fuel from central Asia, across Afghanistan’s northern borders with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, where roads are still safe.

That presents logistical challenges and drives up the cost of the war.

“We saw this situation developing a while ago, so the northern route looked a lot safer,” says an official close to the situation. “And it’s clear security is not improving.”

Standard security precautions, such as armed gunmen accompanying large convoys, are no longer sufficient.

In June, Taliban fighters in Afghanistan ambushed a convoy of more than 50 trucks carrying supplies to troops in the south, setting fire to them about 40 miles south of Kabul.

“We had plenty of guards, but we never expected an attack so strong,” says Haji Ajmal Rahmani, whose company, Afghan International Transportation & Logistics, lost 40 trucks in the June attack.

Mr. Rahmani says 40 of his employees, mostly drivers, were killed and 20 went missing, probably burned beyond recognition or blown up when the trucks exploded.

One of the hardest-hit stretches in Afghanistan has been the U.S.-built Highway 1, a 500-kilometer road connecting the capital with Afghanistan's second-largest city, Kandahar, in the south.

Insurgents blew holes in a major bridge on the road in late April and have been blowing up bridges and culverts with increasing frequency since.

On Saturday, in the southern province of Ghazni, officials say insurgents blew up a 25-meter bridge, halting traffic for hours.

Gen. Milley surveyed Highway 1 from a helicopter last week.

He says the road was broken and buckled in parts, and several bridges were impassable because large holes had been blown in them. Insurgents haven't yet demolished a bridge entirely, he says, but they placed explosive charges near structural beams, making the bridges impossible to use.

Other parts of the road are scarred by attacks from bombs set off along the road and the carcasses of burned-out trucks.

Gen. Milley says there were a half-dozen attacks on convoys along the road in the past few days.

Western embassies and private aid groups in Afghanistan advise their staffers to avoid the Kabul-Kandahar road because it is too dangerous.

NATO says the road remains open because engineers have bulldozed routes around the blown bridges.

But the bypasses often run through dry creek beds that will fill with the autumn rains. More permanent repairs will be a challenge since insurgents have been kidnapping and killing road workers.

Gen. Milley says the insurgents had evidently recognized that attacking the highway would undermine confidence in the government.

"One of our main goals is to connect the people to the government," he says. "The enemy is trying its best to stop us."

Insurgents also are taking aim at "soft targets," such as government offices, employees and aid organizations, U.S. officials say.

But Nawab Sher Afridi, general secretary of the All Pakistan Oil Tankers Owners Association, says ambushes are rising against trucks carrying ordinary fuel and highly flammable jet fuel to NATO forces.

Over the past 18 months, as many as 250 tankers have been damaged and 40 drivers have been killed, according to Mr. Afridi.

“There is no security in Pakistan. No security in Afghanistan,” he says. “We are losing our business.”

SOMALIA WAR REPORTS

Resistance Forces Control Kismayo

Aug 22 AFP

Islamist fighters took control of Somalia's southern port of Kismayo on Friday following three days of bloody battles with a local U.S. backed militia that left at least 34 people dead, witnesses said.

TROOP NEWS

Only 130,000 More To Go: All Home Now



Lcpl. Chris Glosmek, 28, of Chesaning, Mich., embraces his 17-month-old daughter Emilee Grace Glosmek after he and about 20 Marines arrived by bus Aug. 21, 2008 at

the Saginaw Training Center, in Saginaw, Mich.. He hadn't seen Emilee since she was nine months old. The Marines are part of the 1st Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment, Fourth Marine Division based out of Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Mount Clemens, Mich., and are returning home after nearly a year in Anbar province of Iraq. (AP Photo/The Saginaw News, Jeff Schrier) Photo Tools

THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE



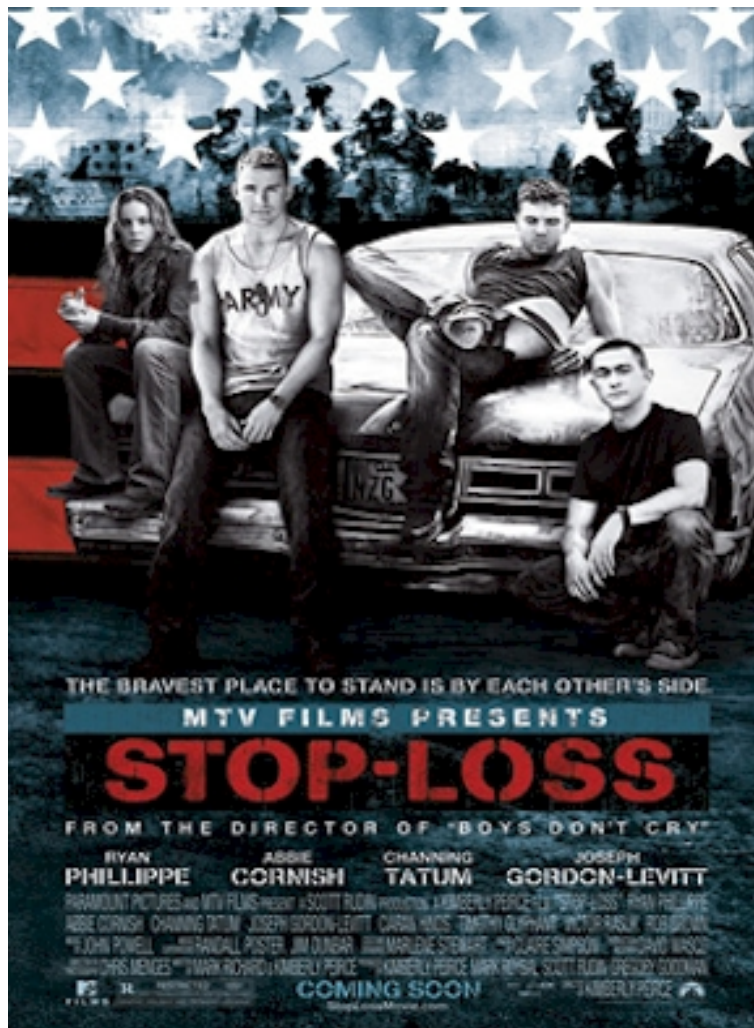
The coffin containing the body of U.S. Army 1st Class Sgt., Dominican Jose Enrique Ulloa, killed in Baghdad, is carried by relatives and friends during his burial in Jima Arriba, north of Santo Domingo, Aug. 21, 2008. (AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa)

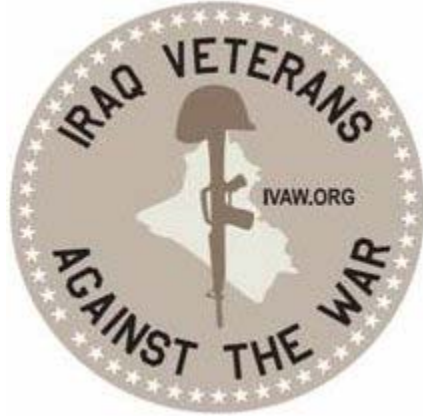
**“A Movie About The Choices
That I And Many Of My Friends
Make On A Daily Basis”**

“It Is The Circumstances That Are Wrong, Not The Soldiers”

“We Have All Felt Like SSG King Sometimes”

“Continually Calling The Same People Back Again, To Fight A War No One Believes In, Is Wearing Out And Using Up Our Army”





Film Review: By Selena Coppa: IVAW Sit-Rep Issue #6; Summer 2008

Sit-Rep is a publication of
Iraq Veterans Against the War,
P.O. Box 8296,
Philadelphia, PA 19101

Director: Kimberly Peirce
Starring: Ryan Phillippe, Channing Tatum, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Abbie Cornish
Runtime: 113 minutes
Rated R for graphic violence and pervasive language.
Website: stoplossmovie.com

Rating: 4.5 out of 5 stars. This film is PTSD-triggering, and sufferers should take care not to see it alone.

Warning: This review contains what are commonly referred to as “spoilers.”

I may tell you some facts about how this movie turns out, but if you're a service member or veteran seeing Stop-Loss, you can probably see most of the twists and turns coming.

This movie is not about suspense or shock, what happens or doesn't happen – it's about showing the journey along the way.

I wanted to see Stop-Loss for quite some time, but knew I had to watch it with the right people.

I refused to see it with a civilian. I'm glad I made that decision because once again, this movie hit hard.

It hit hard in the theater, as I clutched my companion's arm hard enough to leave marks, and it hit hard for hours afterwards as we talked it over and over, trying to get the experience out of our brains and into our words.

Despite some civilian critics' accusations, I found it to be a very realistic movie.

This movie is not the stereotypical easy-plot Hollywood blockbuster, with clearly defined good and evil and paper-thin characters – one hero and one villain who wear their hats until the feel-good ending.

This movie is about a conflict and situation that knows no black and white – a movie that everyone who is still currently serving knows the story of.

A movie about the choices that I and many of my friends make on a daily basis.

It is not an anti-war film. It is not a pro-war film. It is a film about soldiers who happen to be living a war.

We meet SSG King, our protagonist, after an ambush in Iraq.

Maybe he should have seen it coming, as many argue. Maybe he didn't know. Maybe he was poorly trained.

Maybe in the heat of the moment, he made a stupid decision.

Maybe he made the only decision he knew how to make.

He is not a bad soldier or a stupid soldier, he is just a soldier living with the consequences of his actions, whether they lead to death or glory. He can't accept either without the other because nothing is that simple.

These are just people trying to do the best they can. Sometimes good people get killed or injured. Sometimes good people are forced by circumstances to do things that will haunt their sleeping and waking hours.

It is the circumstances that are wrong, not the soldiers.

I applaud these filmmakers for doing their best to tackle PTSD from many different angles. After living for several years in an Army at war, and this last year as a member of IVAW, I have encountered a lot of service members with PTSD. From what I've seen, the portrayals in this movie are spot-on.

I've been the person who gets called by the wife saying her husband is bugging out. I've been next to someone who has shuddered awake with nightmares, and had to be soothed back into restless dreams.

I've seen where a fight isn't just a fight, but becomes a survival game.

I've been the NCO that has had to call their soldiers back to reality, time and again.

I've seen the men who are afraid to talk about what they've done, for fear that loved ones will reject them.

I've had people open their souls to me, and then close them up the next day for the rest of the world, insisting that nothing is wrong.

I've also been the soldier standing tall, hearing the last roll call, hearing the shots ring out.

And I'm the soldier who prays that no one ever has to hand my loved ones a flag, with the thanks of a grateful nation, anytime soon.

We have all felt like SSG King sometimes.

Continually calling the same people back again, to fight a war no one believes in, is wearing out and using up our Army.

There have probably been nights where all of us have dreamed of running – of going to someone who could make sense of this whole crazy mess and actually has the power to change things.

Not all of us have done what he did – not all of us have gone AWOL, or hit other soldiers and run – but sometimes soldiers do stupid things, and sometimes, especially in an Army increasingly desperate for bodies on the “front lines,” those soldiers go unpunished.

To any veterans, especially older ones, who were shocked by this, I can understand your reaction.

I, too, am continually shocked at how far the Army is falling apart.

But I've seen a lot more people come back from being AWOL with less consequences these days.

Sometimes commanders are unable to punish them, and sometimes they fear creating their own morale problem.

An NCO comes back, like manna from heaven, ready to do his job? Command may not have enough NCOs left to bust him down, or they might feel it would only encourage more soldiers to stay gone.

Why would they come back if they're only going to get reduced anyway?

Sergeant Shriver, viewed by many as the antagonist, is not the enemy.

That's the point: there are no enemies but the ones we ourselves create by our action or inaction. The war may be an enemy, but it too is an enemy we created by our failure to ask the right questions or to stand strong enough to bring it to a close.

Sergeant Shriver doesn't want to go back either, but has simply taken his own path. Every NCO has different strengths.

SSG King was good at empathy, relating to his soldiers and calming them down. SGT Shriver was good at enduring, despite the situation he was presented with.

He hit his fiancee, yes, but he was not a bad man because of it. SSG King broke a man's arm, but he was not a bad man because of it either.

Like every other soldier currently serving, they were just men in a bad position, forced to decide between increasingly bad choices.

Unlike many other reviewers, I was not surprised by the ending of the film.

Many soldiers make the decision to stay in the Army, and they have a variety of complex reasons for it.

Very few of them make the decision to stay because they “love war.”

Even the ones who still blindly support the current conflict rarely do – only truly disturbed individuals “love war.”

Many stay because they cannot imagine abandoning their brothers.

They wonder who would lead their squad if they left.

They wonder if there'd be yet another gap in an Army already suffering from military breakdown.

They do what they have to do according to their code.

Sometimes, they count down the days until they can be home again.

But many of them, like myself, like the other active duty members of IVAW – some of whom are currently serving in Iraq – are still standing tall in formation whenever morning comes.

We are standing tall for all of these complex reasons, but this should never be misinterpreted as us supporting the war.

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

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

The New Issue Of Traveling Soldier Is Out!



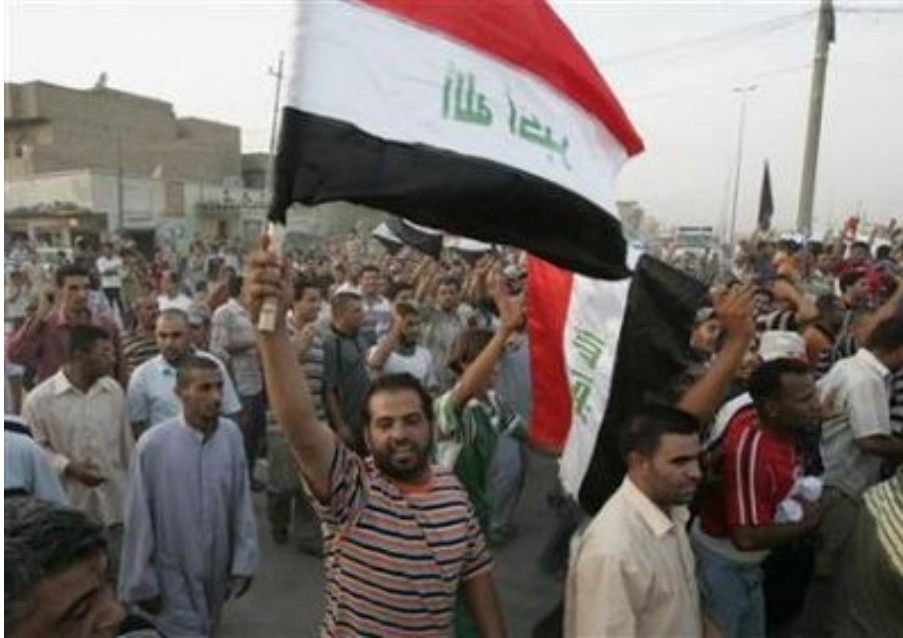
U.S. Army soldier, Arab Jabour, south of Baghdad, Feb. 4, 2008. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

This issue features:

1. **“My squad and I are all behind IVAW 100%. ... This war is bullshit”**
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/8.08.bull.php>
 2. **“I choose to commemorate July Fourth by recommitting myself to living by the ideals which were blazed that day” says Iraq vet Sergeant Selena Coppa**
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/8.08.4th.php>
 3. **“We Must, As A Nation, Once Again, Embrace Defiance, Rebellion, And Resistance!” says Iraq vet Adam Kokesh.**
<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/8.08.kokesh.php>
 4. **Download the new Traveling Soldier to pass it out at your school, workplace, or at nearby base.** <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/TS19.pdf>
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IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

“Iraq Is Not A U.S. Colony” “No To America” [GET THE MESSAGE?]



Iraqis take to the streets in Baghdad to condemn the visit of U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the Occupation, August 21, 2008. (Photo: Kareem Raheem/Reuters)

August 22, 2008 The Associated Press & By David Alexander and Wisam Mohammed, Reuters

In Kufa, about 2,000 Sadrists [translation: anti-occupation nationalists] marched after Friday noon prayers, chanting “No to America” and raising pictures of al-Sadr.

They held up banners reading “The dubious agreement means a permanent colonization of Iraq” and “Iraq is not a U.S. colony.”

An aide to al-Sadr, Sheik Dia al-Shawki, told the worshippers that the emerging deal goes against the will of the Iraqi people.

In Sadr City, a sprawling Shiite slum and al-Sadr’s stronghold in Baghdad, preacher Sayyid al-Battat criticized what he said was an ambiguous agreement “that the Iraqi people know nothing about.”

Anti-American cleric Moqtada al-Sadr [translation: anti-occupation nationalist politician Muqtada al-Sadr] denounced both Rice's visit and the prospective pact.

“Today, Condoleezza Rice, the occupation foreign secretary, arrived in Iraq to try to put pressure on the government of Iraq to accept terms dictated by the occupation to sign this ominous treaty,” said a statement read out by Sadr political adviser Liwa Smeism at the cleric's office in Najaf.

Resistance Action

Aug 21 (Reuters) & 22 Aug 2008 Reuters & 8.23 (AFP) & (Reuters)

One mortar bomb landed in the heavily fortified Green Zone in central Baghdad, police said.

A bomber blew himself up at a car dealership in the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk on Saturday. The attack targeted a leader of a group fighting insurgents in the town of Khalis in the central province of Diyala. The leader of the group, Abdel Karim Ahmed Mindil, was inside the showroom and was killed in the blast along with four others, he said.

The attack took place at around 7:00 pm (1600 GMT) in the compound of the showroom in southern Kirkuk, Rahman said.

Militants killed a policeman in a gun battle in western Mosul, police said.

A policeman was wounded in clashes with gunmen in northern Mosul, police said.

Insurgent fighters wounded an interior ministry official in the Karrada district of central Baghdad, police said.

A member of a U.S.-backed neighbourhood patrol in central Samarra, 100 km (60 miles) north of Baghdad, wounded fellow guards when he opened fire on them, police said.

Guerrillas shot dead an Iraqi army officer and a soldier in an attack in eastern Mosul, police said.

A rocket attack on an Iraqi military base wounded three soldiers in northern Baghdad's Adhamiya district, police said.

Insurgents killed four members of a U.S.-backed neighbourhood patrol in a drive-by shooting at their checkpoint just south of Baiji, 180 km (110 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

<p>IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</p>

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Non-Stop Killing Of Civilians By The U.S. Government



Vietnam 1970

From: Richard Hastie
To: Thomas F Barton
Sent: Saturday, August 23, 2008 12:06 PM
Subject: Non-stop Killing of Civilians by the U.S. Government

Non-Stop Killing Of Civilians By The U.S. Government

**How many more civilians have to be killed
by the U.S. Government before Americans
get it.**

**It was recently reported that over 60 civilians were
killed by U.S. air strikes in one operation in Afghanistan.**

Most of them were women and children.

It never stops--never.

**During the Vietnam War, Secretary of State,
Robert McNamara, estimated that the
United States was killing 1,000 innocent**

civilians every week.
That's 4,000 innocent civilians a month.
That's 48,000 innocent civilians a year.
Let's conservatively say the Vietnam War
lasted 8 years.
That makes 384,000 innocent civilians killed
by U.S. taxpayers.
All of those numbers are very conservative.
The United States Government is a non-stop
killing machine.
That is a very tough statement to face.
Most Americans would absolutely deny
that as a truth.
Absolutely.
We the people,
live in a fantasy world.
In the end,
my Statue of Liberty,
you will get away with nothing.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
August 23, 2008

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

**“What Began As The Latest U.S.
Attempt To Use A Small Nation As An
Outpost Of The American Empire Has
Ended With A Brutal Invasion By A
Rival Empire”**

**“And Exposed The Hypocrisy Of U.S.
Politicians And The Media Who Decry
The Imperialism Emanating From
Moscow, But Embrace It When It's Made
In The USA”**

August 21, 2008 By Lee Sustar, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

THE RUSSIA-Georgia war has revealed a new balance of power in the world--and exposed the hypocrisy of U.S. politicians and the media who decry the imperialism emanating from Moscow, but embrace it when it's made in the USA.

John McCain, of course, wins the prize for setting the most outrageous double standard. "In the 21st century," he informed us, "nations don't invade other nations."

McCain demanded and immediate pullout of all Russian forces from Georgia and insisted upon its "territorial integrity"--even as he claims the right for the U.S. to occupy Iraq for the next 100 years.

The supposedly progressive Barack Obama sounded little different. "I have condemned Russian aggression, and today I reiterate my demand that Russia abide by the cease-fire," he said. "Russia must know that its actions will have consequences."

One can imagine how a President Obama would respond if Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin or President Dimitri Medvedev declared that he wouldn't withdraw all troops from Georgia right away, but would leave behind a large occupation force in order to be "as careful in getting out of Georgia as we were careless in getting in."

That, of course, is Obama's excuse for keeping up to 50,000 U.S. troops in Iraq for "force protection," the defense of U.S. military personnel and "anti-terrorist" missions--the same kind of pretext that Russia used to move beyond Georgia's disputed South Ossetia region to a full-fledged invasion.

The media has been even more two-faced than the politicians.

For the U.S. media, when Washington military action causes civilian deaths--between 600,000 and more than 1 million in Iraq, according to some estimates--it's "collateral damage," a regrettable but unavoidable part of modern warfare.

Yet when a Russian plane drops a bomb that kills innocent bystanders, it's a barbaric disregard for human life.

TO POINT out this U.S. hypocrisy isn't to downplay the imperial nature of Russia's latest occupation of Georgia.

Georgia may have initiated the conflict by trying to smash the Russian-backed separatists among the Ossetian minority--and likely did so with a green light from the U.S. But Russia seized the opportunity to make an example of Georgia through military might--and not for the first time.

The Tsarist rulers of old Russia conquered Georgia more than two centuries ago. After a brief interlude following the Russian Revolution of 1917, Georgia was again imprisoned in Stalin's USSR.

The Georgian nationalist movement revived in the 1980s despite murderous repression by the supposedly liberal Mikhail Gorbachev, the last president of the USSR.

The 1991 collapse of the USSR saw the non-Russian “federal republics,” including Georgia, gain independence.

With Russian imperialism in crisis, U.S. imperialism was determined to fill the vacuum, not only in Moscow’s former puppet states in Eastern Europe, but in countries formerly part of the USSR.

In late 2003, the U.S., then still in the confident “Mission Accomplished” phase of the Iraq war, decided to up the ante.

It backed the U.S.-educated lawyer Mikheil Saakashvili, the leader of the mass protests of the “Rose Revolution” that ousted [President Eduard] Shevardnadze after his party tried to rig parliamentary election results.

The U.S. saw the Saakashvili government as a means to accelerate its energy and defense plans for Georgia.

According to one study, Georgia is the second highest recipient of U.S. aid per capita in the world.

SOON, THE White House was ready to plant the U.S. flag in the heart of the South Caucasus.

George W. Bush visited Tbilisi in May 2005 to “underscore his support for democracy, historic reform and peaceful conflict resolution,” as the U.S. Embassy in Georgia put it in a press release. These “reforms,” according to Kakha Bendukidze, the Russia-based industrial oligarch turned Georgian economy minister, meant that the Georgian state would privatize “everything that can be sold, except its conscience.”

With Saakashvili in power, Washington moved aggressively to create in Georgia a crucial gateway for oil and gas pipelines that could bypass Russia on the north and Iran on the south.

It was under Saakashvili that the long-sought Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline was finally completed in 2005, providing a means to get oil from Azerbaijan on the Caspian Sea across Georgia to a Turkish port on the Mediterranean.

The U.S. had to strong-arm Western oil companies into building BTC--ultimately, BP agreed to take the lead. The U.S. also had to pressure the International Finance Corporation, the private development arm of the World Bank, to loan \$250 million for construction of the pipeline.

“In the South Caucasus, U.S. and European state interests are bound up with the commercial interests of major oil companies that form the principal Caspian energy consortia,” wrote Damien Helly and Giorgi Gogia, two experts on Georgian politics.

“To secure their investments in the Caspian Sea Basin, these companies have found allies among U.S. geostrategists who support a strong U.S. presence among Russia’s

neighbors. High-level former officials such as Zbigniew Brzezinski, Brent Scowcroft, John Sununu, James Baker and Richard Cheney (when he was head of Halliburton) have all visited Baku (Azerbaijan) and the Caspian region and lobbied in favor of the oil companies.”

These U.S. economic and political projects had to be secured militarily. Thus, in the wake of 9/11, the U.S. began to send military advisers to Georgia.

That move rankled Moscow, which also accused Georgia of doing too little to stop the flow of arms and insurgents across its border into neighboring Chechnya, where separatists were fighting the Russian armed forces.

After Saakashvili took over in Tbilisi, U.S.-Russian tensions over Georgia increased dramatically.

In the years since, the U.S. and Israel have sent military trainers to upgrade Georgia's military to NATO standards, and Saakashvili has showed his loyalty to the U.S. by sending 2,500 Georgian troops to participate in the occupation of Iraq.

By 2007, the Georgian armed forces, previously a ragtag outfit unable to defeat irregular militias in South Ossetia or Abkhazia, was well-drilled, lavishly equipped and NATO-ready.

All that state-of-the-art weaponry, of course, is now smashed or captured by the Russian army, and the armed forces shattered by the Russian occupation.

What began as the latest U.S. attempt to use a small nation as an outpost of the American Empire has ended with a brutal invasion by a rival empire, one just as determined to police its own “backyard” as the U.S. has been in Latin America.

And in the wake of the Russia-Georgia war, oil-rich Azerbaijan--which has its own separatist region populated by ethnic Armenians allied with Russia--will think twice about crossing Moscow to sign up with the U.S. and NATO.

So much for the neoconservative dream of a “new world order” under U.S. domination, guaranteed by pre-emptive warfare and regime change.

The U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were intended to allow Washington to consolidate its grip on the Middle East and project its power into the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Instead, the U.S. finds itself militarily overstretched, incapable of protecting its new client states and unable even to get a strong resolution out of NATO condemning Russia's invasion of Georgia--to say nothing of NATO countries' reluctance to commit troops to the losing war in Afghanistan.

There are other examples of waning U.S. imperial clout--the ouster of Pervez Musharraf as dictator of Pakistan being the latest serious example.

The cracks in the empire, in turn, are widened by the ongoing U.S. financial crisis which is increasingly dragging down the entire world economy.

The entire U.S. economic model--the pro-business, free-trade neoliberal program--is being discredited. The recent collapse of the latest World Trade Organization negotiations is a case in point.

U.S. imperialism is far from a spent force, of course.

The country still has enormous military might and economic resources, and a President Obama would likely bring in a foreign policy and military team that's more competent than the Bush administration hacks.

But no matter who's in charge in the White House, the shift in the world balance of power--economically, militarily and politically--is bound to lead to further instability and crises.



Thanks to Linda Olson, who sent this in. [Military Humor: Tom-phillips.info]

OCCUPATION REPORT

Good News For The Iraqi Resistance!!

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



A foreign occupation soldier from the U.S. Army soldier checks the identification papers of Iraqi men.

The men of Nahr-al-Iman village were forced out of their homes at gunpoint, and must sit in the dirt behind barbed wire while the foreigners decide whether or not to let them go or throw them in U.S. prison camps, where they may remain for years without any charges against them. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

[Fair is fair. Let's bring 150,000 Iraqi troops over here to the USA.

[They can kill Americans at checkpoints, bust into their houses with force and violence, slaughter 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 and treat them like shit.

[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!**

Maliki Regime Wants To Put Awakening Councils To Sleep: U.S. Commanders Say That Paying The Guerrillas Has Saved The Lives Of Hundreds Of American Soldiers; Regime Dog Says "These People Are Like Cancer, And We Must Remove Them"

General Nassir also says he has orders to arrest Abu Azzam and Abu Zachariyah, brothers who were leaders of the Islamic Army of Iraq but who were publicly hailed by Colonel Pinkerton and other American commanders last year for bringing relative peace to an insurgent stronghold west of Baghdad.

August 21, 2008 By RICHARD A. OPPEL Jr., The New York Times [Excerpts]

In restive Diyala Province, United States and Iraqi military officials say there were orders to arrest hundreds of members of what is known as the Awakening movement as part of large security operations by the Iraqi military.

At least five senior members have been arrested there in recent weeks, leaders of the groups say.

West of Baghdad, former insurgent leaders contend that the Iraqi military is going after 650 Awakening members, many of whom have fled the once-violent area they had kept safe.

While the crackdown appears to be focused on a relatively small number of leaders whom the Iraqi government considers the most dangerous, there are influential voices to dismantle the American backed movement entirely.

“The state cannot accept the Awakening,” said Sheik Jalaladeen al-Sagheer, a leading member of Parliament. “Their days are numbered.”

The government’s rising hostility toward the Awakening Councils amounts to a bet that its military, feeling increasingly strong, can provide security in former guerrilla strongholds without the support of these former fighters who once waged devastating attacks on United States and Iraqi targets.

But it is causing a rift with the American military, which contends that any significant diminution of the Awakening could result in renewed violence, jeopardizing the substantial security gains in the past year.

United States commanders say that the practice, however unconventional, of paying the guerrillas has saved the lives of hundreds of American soldiers.

Awakening members complain, with rising bitterness, that the government has been slow to make good on its promises to recruit tens of thousands of its members into those security forces. General Perkins said only 5,200 members had been recruited in a force of about 100,000.

“Some people from the government encouraged us to fight against Al Qaeda, but it seems that now that Al Qaeda is finished they don’t want us anymore,” said Abu Marouf, who, according to American officials, was a powerful guerrilla leader in the 1920s Revolutionary Brigade west of Baghdad.

“So how can you say I am not betrayed?”

After he said he discovered his name on lists of 650 names that an Iraqi Army brigade was using to arrest Awakening members west of Baghdad, Abu Marouf fled south of Falluja. His men, he said, “sacrificed and fought against Al Qaeda, and now the government wants to catch them and arrest them.”

“These people are like cancer, and we must remove them,” said Brig. Gen. Nassir al-Hiti, commander of the Iraqi Army’s 5,000-strong Muthanna Brigade, which patrols west of Baghdad, said of the Awakening leaders on his list for arrest.

General Nassir says he has orders to arrest Abu Marouf, whose older brother, Col. Faisal Ismail Hussein, was also a guerrilla leader before he became the Falluja police chief.

General Nassir also says he has orders to arrest Abu Azzam and Abu Zachariyah, brothers who were leaders of the Islamic Army of Iraq but who were publicly hailed by Colonel Pinkerton and other American commanders last year for bringing relative peace to an insurgent stronghold west of Baghdad.

The general says his orders come from the military’s Baghdad Operations Center, which he said is taking orders from Iraqi judicial authorities.

He acknowledged some disenchanting fighters may take up arms again “like a drug addict who quits only to take drugs again.”

But he says that reconciliation is impossible and that he would quit before he ever worked with former insurgents with blood on their hands.

“They committed crimes and attacked the Iraqi Army and the American Army, and there is no way to rehabilitate them,” he said.

Who Could Believe It?
**Saddam Hussein Is Still Dead,
There Is No War On Iran & No
Iraqi-U.S. “Security” Agreement
“Yet”**

**“Iraq Still Demanding Withdrawal
Date, Right To Try U.S. Troops”
“There Needs To Be A Strict
Timetable, Otherwise These Forces
Will Stay Forever. Not Having A
Timetable Means They Will Never
Leave”**

August 22, 2008 by Leila Fadel & Jonathan S. Landay, McClatchy Newspapers
[Excerpts]

BAGHDAD — Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made a surprise visit to Iraq Thursday in an effort to convince Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki to consent to an agreement governing the conduct of U.S. forces in Iraq that will be needed when the U.N. mandate for U.S. military operations in Iraq expires at the end of this year.

A one-on-one meeting between Rice and Maliki was “deep and direct,” said Sadiq al Rikabi, a top advisor to Maliki, but only time will tell if a compromise can be reached, he said.

“They tried to reach a compromise solution, but it is too early to say they reached an agreement about all issues,” he said.

Iraqi and American officials have been claiming for weeks that they were on the brink of a security agreement.

Maliki, however, has demanded a strict timetable for the withdrawal of American forces and insisted that U.S. troops must be subject to Iraqi law when they're outside their bases.

Maliki had demanded that U.S. combat forces leave his country by 2010, but the agreement includes only a vague goal of having combat troops out by 2011 if conditions permit, officials said.

“The Iraqi government wants as a sovereign country to be the master of the law in Iraq,” said Ali al Adeb, a Shiite legislator from Maliki’s Dawa party. “There needs to be a strict timetable, otherwise these forces will stay forever. Not having a timetable means they will never leave.”

The Iraqi government spokesman, Ali al Dabbagh, confirmed that while Thursday’s talks made progress, an agreement remains days away.

Maliki will accept nothing less than American forces coming under Iraqi law outside their bases, he said.

While Shiite lawmakers and advisors to Maliki indicated that a plethora of issues remain to be ironed out, Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari told reporters that a draft was complete and would be referred to the executive council on Friday.

If the council agrees to the draft, it will move to the Political Council for National Security before going to the Iraqi parliament, which must approve the agreement before the U.N. mandate expires.

Talking to reporters, Rice stressed that there was no agreement and put the burden of responsibility for completing the agreement on Maliki.

“It will be an excellent agreement when we finally have agreement.”

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT
THE BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE
WAR**



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