

**GI SPECIAL 6J11:**

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## **Soldiers Who Stopped A War:**

**“Even More Than The West  
Coast, We Were Leading The  
Country In GI Work, Direct  
Organizing”**

# “We Worked A Lot With The Guard And Reserve”



The reserve and Guard units wouldn't meet every weekend, there'd be different ones, but we had enough info; we knew which ones were meeting at what time, and we'd be there leafleting four o'clock in the morning.

October 10, 2008 Book excerpt: Richard Stacewicz, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

Winter Soldiers: An Oral History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War recovers this moving chapter in the history of the Vietnam War era. Oral historian Richard Stacewicz brings together the voices of more than 30 VVAW members who spoke their conscience and helped end the war in Vietnam.

[This is from his interview with Bill Davis:]

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*Bill Davis grew up in Columbus, Ohio, in a working-class family. He joined the Air Force in August 1966 and remained in active duty until August 1970. For a year--from February 1968 to February 1969--he was in the Tactical Airlift Squadron, stationed at Vung Tau Army Airfield in Vietnam, where among his other duties he was assigned to play football.*

*The following year (February 1969 to February 1970), he was stationed in Thailand. He joined VVAW in June 1970. He was interviewed in his home in Oak Park, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago.*

Bill Davis (BD): I fell in with the GI paper and stuff in Ohio with Mark Rovic from Columbus, who was an antiwar activist and by and large liberal by his analysis, which wasn't a bad thing.

I was just filled with this pent-up rage and anger and frustration. I was more of a "Let's attack and burn everything and snatch everything" sort of guy.

In Columbus, Ohio, we were more homogeneous. We worked together much better than any other place. We were under a state of siege there. We were fighting for our lives every minute there.

RS: *Why?*

BD: Columbus was a very unique place in that it had state police training barracks; regional Army reserve center; the state National Guard facility; a military side to the airport; and then the Air Force base of course, the Strategic Air Command, and all the security and stiff that went with that; and a defense supply construction center--just an endless array of military suppliers, just an incredibly huge concentration of military and police forces there.

So what you had there, basically, was this huge concentration of police and military force and very conservative town. They lynched union organizers right up to the 1950s. They'd been in the grip for years and years of a single mayor who was a fatherlike authoritarian figure, not nearly as progressive as Daley.

In 1972, I wasn't in any real leadership position. That summer, with the Republican convention and stuff, we had to step forward when (Bill) Crandle and some other guys declared the (Columbus) organization dead.

Crandle had been in the national office when it was like this large group of people who worked with each other off and on in the New York area. He was also the regional coordinator of Ohio.

He went to the Columbus papers and said the VVAW was no longer a functioning organization. He started to work organizing Vets for McGovern.

To this day he claims that they did that just to motivate us.

We objected. We didn't agree.

We had to kick the organization in the ass. We attended the meeting in Cincinnati in the late spring of 1972. That was the first time I met Zastrow. I got to know some of the people from around the state who I'd never met before.

So we pulled together shards of the old organization and moved forward to a more militant organization, recruiting more vets and new people and stuff.

We are becoming more and more left in 1972, 1973. At this point you're looking at a core of 35 to 40 people, with a real active membership of 150 to 175 people for big events.

We moved out of the campus area, because at that point we were less and less a campus organization and more and more a community organization. It was a mile or so from the university area and still close enough for us to be connected to the university.

We were still an organization on campus, pulling thousands and thousands of dollars out of the university. We were very solvent. All of it was accountable; nothing illegal was done with it. People didn't go on extravagant trips. Trips to the national meetings were always paid out of pocket.

Expenses that were incurred were documented. We were sending a lot of money to the national organization at that point. We were paying for the printing of the papers.

We were talking to everyone. We couldn't make enough churches, high schools, suburban gatherings.

We moved out and established chapters in Athens, Lima, and made connections all over the state. We were responding to people who came forward to us. There were people in those areas who began to organize.

We had always done guerrilla theater. The guerrilla theater actually started under the more liberal groupings of VVAW. It played well on the campuses, but occasionally we'd do it down by the state capital.

Some poor person would be standing at a bus stop and suddenly a bunch of vets would jump him and beat him to the ground and drag him off, as a suspected communist.

We were denied entrance in the Fourth of July parade in Arlington, Ohio, which was one of the whoop-de-do suburbs. We'd always tried to get in and got a lot of publicity, because we were always denied access to the parade.

There were a lot of people saying, "They were vets. They deserve to be here"; on the other hand, they were saying, "These guys are radicals. They're going to disrupt the parade."

We said, "No, just let us in; we won't disrupt it." They wouldn't let us in, so we really disrupted it. We kept disrupting every year until they finally said, "Jesus, let these guys in the parade." So we were finally allowed in the parade.

**Even more than the west coast, we were leading the country in GI work, direct organizing and counseling.**

**We did Lockhorn. We had commercials on all the rock stations, "If you're AWOL, or you're going through town, stop and see us; maybe we can help you." We had hundreds of walk-ins on a monthly basis: "Hey, I'm AWOL. What can you guys do for me?"**

*And what did you do?*

BD: Made it clear that they had to go back and then start the paperwork on various kinds of discharges. After we did like an induction sort of interview, we'd try to see what they were more suited for.

More left people in the organizations were opposed to the CO stuff but it was the best one. I'd tell guys straight out: I don't care if you are or not--just lie, if that's what it takes to get out.

There were obvious people who were hardship.

There were people who for mental or physical reasons never should have got into the military.

We were looking at McNamara's "One Hundred Thousand." (This program increased the pool of draftees by lowering the requirements for enlistment.)

It was active duty initially; and then, as the war was winding down, then it became National Guardsmen, ROTC people, reservists--it was just a flood.

**We worked a lot with the Guard and reserve.**

**The reserve and Guard units wouldn't meet every weekend, there'd be different ones, but we had enough info; we knew which ones were meeting at what time, and we'd be there leafleting four o'clock in the morning.**

We had a new counselor at the counseling center, and we'd have press releases out--you know, "VVAW Expands Counseling."

All it took was two ROTC recruits, and it was, "VVAW Undermining the ROTC Program at OSU," which brought us a flood of ROTC people.

We started branching out into more class-oriented strike support. That had to do with the members who came into the chapter. A lot of us had been students, but we had to get jobs.

The bulk of the guys were working-class. We supported striking workers at Borden's. The Borden strike was a natural; there were a lot of vets there.

We had a whole committee on turning out publicity and press releases. We made a lot of contacts in the local media, primarily with the rock stations. The newspapers were pretty conservative, and the TV; they didn't like us worth a damn, but they couldn't ignore us.

Some of the stuff we did was just too good, whether they liked it or not.

We worked in the VA hospitals. We did the papers and leaflets whenever necessary--demos, confrontations, visiting, whatever we could to get inside.

*Were you successful in any respects?*

BD: We broadened the organization. We brought a lot more guys who were vets into the organization. We gained a rep as a militant organization with realistic goals.

We had all the guards disarmed (in the VA hospitals). Even though they were federal protective service, they were little better than rental cops.

They were dangerous. These guys went berserk, Maced whole waiting rooms when they were trying to get us out. Fights and brawls were breaking out right inside on the wards of the VA.

Columbus chapter was very successful in the various things that it did.



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## Vietnam GI: Reprints Available



**Vietnam: They Stopped An Imperial War**

Not available from anybody else, anywhere

Edited by Vietnam Veteran Jeff Sharlet from 1968 until his death, this newspaper rocked the world, attracting attention even from Time Magazine, and extremely hostile attention from the chain of command. The pages and pages of letters in the paper from troops in Vietnam condemning the war are lost to history, but you can find them here.

The Military Project has copied complete sets of Vietnam GI. The originals were a bit rough, but every page is there. Over 100 pages, full 11x17 size.

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## IRAQ WAR REPORTS

### Fallen Soldier's Life Applauded



Sgt. Daniel M. Eshbaugh: Friends and family described Eshbaugh as a humble man who loved his family and his football teams.

10/6/2008 By MICK HINTON, World Capitol Bureau



NORMAN — Amid huge sprays of red carnations and white gladioli tied with blue ribbons, a small paper wreath with the words “We Love You Daddy” was displayed Saturday above the casket of Sgt. Daniel M. Eshbaugh.

At the center of the wreath was a snapshot of Eshbaugh flanked by his son and daughter as they stood in front of an Army helicopter. Nearby were a pair of Eshbaugh’s tan-colored combat boots.

Several hundred mourners, almost half of them dressed in military attire, gathered Saturday at CrossPointe Church to pay tribute to the soldier, who was killed in Iraq on Sept. 18.

Eshbaugh, 43, and two other soldiers died when their Chinook helicopter crashed 60 miles west of Basra, Iraq. Also killed in the crash were Chief Warrant Officer Brady J. Rudolph, 37, of Oklahoma City, and Cpl. Michael E. Thompson, 23, of Harrah.

They were members of a Lexington-based battalion of the Oklahoma National Guard. They were with Detachment 1, 2nd Battalion, 149th Aviation unit. Outside the church, dozens of Patriot Guard Riders parked their motorcycles and took up American flags to line the street when family members arrived for the service. They are members of the international patriotic group that often attends service members’ funerals, said member Kim Drye of Oklahoma City.

Also standing at attention as their flags waved in the morning breeze were members of the University of Oklahoma ROTC.

Inside the church, family friend Jerica Southwell of Chickasha recited eulogies prepared by Eshbaugh’s wife, Rachel, and Eshbaugh’s mother, Bernadine, of Chicago. She talked about Eshbaugh’s love of the Oklahoma Sooners, the Chicago Bears and his dog, Cheyenne.

Rachel’s words brought a few chuckles as she noted that it appeared Eshbaugh “loved Cheyenne more than me sometimes.”

Deacon Jeff Willard described Eshbaugh “as unremarkable as you and I. He was a common man who did common things. “He never stood in front of a crowd and got to hear them roar for him,” Willard said, inviting those attending to rise in applause — which they did.

It was announced during the services that Eshbaugh was being awarded the Bronze Star posthumously. Several other medals and awards he had won for service in Iraq and elsewhere were displayed.

Attending the service were Oklahoma’s adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Harry M. “Bud” Wyatt III, and Lt. Gov. Jari Askins.

Following the Norman service, Eshbaugh’s body was taken to Fort Sill for burial with full military honors.

Eshbaugh is survived by his wife, Rachel, son, Bryan, and daughter Jordan. He also has two other daughters, Ashley and Jessica of Kansas.



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# **“The House Isn’t Full Of IEDs -- The Whole House Is An IED!”**

## **[Oops; Embedded Reporter Confirms Whole Population Hates And Is Fighting The Occupation]**



Diyala house bomb after the explosion: U.S. Army

OCTOBER 8, 2008 By YOCHI J. DREAZEN, Wall St. Journal [Excerpts]

TAHWILLA, Iraq -- It was just after 10 p.m. when a sergeant started yelling in the darkness. “There’s a bomb in the building!”

The dozens of soldiers bivouacked in an abandoned house here grumbled as they threw on their dusty flak vests. They’d been awake for more than 30 hours. Several called the warning a prank.

Ten minutes later, the soldiers learned the house had been wired with explosives from top to bottom. If the bombs had gone off, the explosions would likely have killed everyone inside.

“It’s better to be lucky than good,” Capt. Russell Wagner muttered under his breath.

Unlike much of Iraq, this area remains hostile territory.

[A]bout 40 miles north of Baghdad, Diyala Province is one of the deadliest areas for U.S. forces ....

One reason is a tactic that has become the province’s calling card: a house bomb, or, in the antiseptic jargon of the U.S. military, a “house-borne improvised explosive device.”

Created to kill U.S. troops when they are most vulnerable, house bombs undermine a central tenet of the American counterinsurgency strategy -- the reliance on hundreds of vacant houses as small combat outposts.

In Diyala, insurgents turn those houses into bombs, which have killed more than a dozen American troops since the summer of 2007.

Late last week, Iraqi soldiers acting on a tip defused a house rigged with explosives in Abu Ghraib, just west of Baghdad.

An American soldier was killed in a roadside bombing in the same province last month, and numerous U.S. and Iraqi personnel have been wounded since the offensive in Diyala began over the summer.

Insurgents continue to find new ways of killing and maiming U.S. personnel. In addition to roadside bombs and booby-trapped houses, militants regularly hide explosives beneath dead animals and string them from trees.

For soldiers at the front, war is made up of a series of close calls. For Bravo Company of the 1st Armored Division's 1-6 Infantry Battalion, the close call happened in late July.

Bravo was part of an operation called Iron Pursuit, which called for U.S. and Iraqi troops to push deep into Diyala Province.

Capt. Wagner's soldiers were meant to move into Tahwillia and two nearby towns and search every house for insurgents, bombs and weapons. The troops would then build small combat outposts where they could live and work for several weeks. That was a switch from the three prior operations since 2007. In those cases, U.S. troops left after the initial sweep, allowing militants to return.

Shortly after midnight on Thursday, July 24, a swarm of Chinook helicopters landed in barren farmland outside Tahwillia. Capt. Wagner and about 30 soldiers rushed out and lay in firing position, guns pointed into darkness. Through night-vision goggles, the canals and irrigation ditches took on a pale green glow.

The soldiers sweated profusely; despite the dark, it was close to 100 degrees. The departing helicopters kicked up dust that engulfed the prone soldiers and blotted out the stars.

**When the troops moved into Tahwillia, it was quickly apparent that the insurgents had deserted the town. Soldiers found only women and young children.**

**[Oops; embedded reporter confirms whole population hates and is fighting the occupation. He just wrote that the whole population men and boys are "insurgents".]**

Shortly after 3 a.m., Specialist Charles Ruckdeshell, severely dehydrated, stumbled into a nearby empty house and passed out. Sgt. Brian Smith, one of the platoon's team leaders, rooted around in his backpack and pulled out a long needle and a bag of

intravenous solution. "Come on, Ruck, stay with me," he said. "I know you're still in there." He recovered after a few hours on the IV.

The house was devoid of furniture, and many windows were cracked or missing. But it was large, laid out in a C-shape, with three wings surrounding a courtyard strewn with bricks and chunks of concrete. It had a broad roof -- a cool place for soldiers to sleep on steamy nights -- and a walled backyard perfect for housing vehicles and equipment. Situated off the main road, it had clear views over the surrounding farmland.

"This is an excellent spot," said 2nd Lt. Brian McDonald, his voice carrying across the empty roof. "We got pretty lucky on this one." He and his men carefully searched every room in the house and found nothing untoward.

By the next morning, soldiers had installed a satellite array on the roof, running wires down to a communications vehicle in front of the house. The soldiers also began mapping out locations for latrines and showers.

Lt. Col. Rich Morales, the overall commander of the operation, took a large side room as his headquarters. Col. Morales found another unexpected bonus. Every room had pre-cut holes in the walls, perfect spots to shoot from.

"It's like the bad guys left us a fort," he marveled.

That afternoon, Maj. Gen. Mark Hertling, the top American commander in the region, flew in to see the nascent base. With him were several senior Iraqi officers. Standing in the courtyard, he opened a pocket and pulled out photos of soldiers who had died in a Jan. 9 house bomb.

"This has been a dangerous place, but we're not going to let up until we've chased (insurgents) from every hiding place they have," Gen. Hertling said.

Around 9 that night, Sgt. First Class Kris Dohl was on his way to pick up water from a helicopter landing area when he recalls seeing two shiny copper wires glimmering in the freshly-tilled farmland.

He felt a flash of panic: Insurgents often use copper wiring in roadside bombs. Heading back to alert his commanders, Sgt. Dohl spotted more wiring, this time leading straight into the house.

At first, military explosives-disposal experts thought insurgents had planned to detonate a bomb from the building.

After an hour, they realized the opposite was true. The house itself was wired with explosives that could be triggered from outside. A sergeant raced upstairs to wake the sleeping soldiers.

"The house isn't full of IEDs -- the whole house is an IED!" yelled First Sgt. Ramiro Hernandez.

Sergeants directed the soldiers to an empty dirt field. The field reeked of cow dung, but the tired troops collapsed onto it anyway and fell asleep in their armor.

The disposal experts later found artillery shells and barrels of homemade explosives carefully buried under the tiled floors of every room in the house. One makeshift bomb was in the room set aside as the medical center, and one was in a room planned for a brigade headquarters. The bombs were connected to copper wiring carefully concealed inside fake plaster moldings.

The experts found another bomb buried outside the house, in the courtyard a few feet from where Gen. Hertling had been standing.

Some believe insurgents designed the house, down to the holes in the walls, as bait. "They set a trap and we walked right into it," Col. Morales said later.

The soldiers don't know why the bombs never went off. The field containing the detonator had been turned into a helicopter landing zone, so perhaps insurgents were unable to make their way there. Others believe that it was simply luck.

Lt. McDonald, whose platoon had searched the house, took the discovery especially hard. "It feels like a kick in the jaw," he said to one of his men the next day.

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## **FUTILE EXERCISE: ALL HOME NOW!**



A U.S. soldier stands guard on a road in Dujail, 50 km (30 miles) north of Baghdad, October 7, 2008. REUTERS/Mahmoud Raouf Mahmoud

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## TROOP NEWS

**“The Number Of Vocally Anti-War Soldiers Appears To Be Growing”**

**“The Anti-War Sentiments Are Much More Pervasive Now In Iraq”**

**“You Take An Average Group Of Soldiers And Ask Them, ‘Is The War Worth It?’ And You Get Close To A Majority Saying It Is Not Really Necessary Or Viable”**



September 29, 2008 By Justine Sharrock, Mother Jones [Excerpts]

On the fourth anniversary of the start of the Iraq War, in March 2007, Marines Adam Kokesh and Cloy Richards joined a group of other Iraq Veterans Against the War in a mock combat patrol in Washington, DC. Wearing fatigues, a uniquely powerful symbol at a war protest, they pretended to arrest fellow protesters, throwing them to the ground, zip tying them, and leading them away.

Other IVAW members passed out fliers explaining the guerrilla theater and noting that it wasn't sanctioned by the military.

Not long after, the two Marines, both of whom had served tours in Iraq, were notified that they were under investigation for potential violations of the Uniform Code of Military

Justice. The code mandates that soldiers who wear uniforms at political events may be penalized with an “other than honorable” discharge, one step above a dishonorable discharge; they can lose health benefits and be forced to repay grants, including GI bill assistance.

The probe came even though technically, Kokesh and Richards weren’t bound by the UCMJ at the time of the protest: They were part of the Individual Ready Reserves, a group of soldiers who’ve left active duty but still have time remaining on their eight-year military contracts. IRR status is mostly unpaid, and legally civilian.

Kokesh promptly fired off an email to his deputy commander, refusing to cooperate with an investigation he viewed as “political harassment.”

He wrote, “I am deeply offended by the attempt to keep me under the thumb of the organization to which I pledged my life and served so devotedly.” The commander responded that Kokesh was being recommended for discharge; Kokesh, in turn, demanded a public hearing. At the hearing, in June 2007, with throngs of supporters and media standing outside the Marine Corps Mobilization Command in Kansas City, a panel of officers imposed a general discharge—the military equivalent of a C-minus report card, but with benefits intact.

**The number of vocally anti-war soldiers appears to be growing.**

**The IVAW alone signs up 12 to 15 new members each week; one-third of their 1,300 members have joined since February.**

Appeal for Redress, an online petition to end the war, has gathered more than 2,200 soldiers’ signatures since late 2006.

“You take an average group of soldiers and ask them, ‘Is the war worth it?’ and you get close to a majority saying it is not really necessary or viable,” says David Cortright, author of *Soldiers in Revolt: GI Resistance During the Vietnam War*, who has been touring and speaking at bases.

“The anti-war sentiments are much more pervasive now in Iraq.”

As a result, soldiers say, the military is increasingly trying to silence them with formal threats as well as less official intimidation techniques: At their own discretion, commanders can enact “non-judicial punishments,” such as imposing a diet of bread and water, enforcing longer work hours, and requiring intensive physical activity like hauling sandbags back and forth or running for hours in full gear.

“There has definitely been an uptick in complaints,” according to Mike Lebowitz, Kokesh’s lawyer and a National Guard officer, who receives up to five emails per week from soldiers or their families seeking legal advice related to anti-war activities.

He specializes in military free speech. “The military is infamous for punishing people for expressing political beliefs,” he says. “The intimidation or threat of ramifications to soldiers is very pronounced.”

"It's hard to explain how much the military has control over your entire life," says Sergeant Selena Coppa, a career Army soldier and single mom. She faced retaliation starting in 2007 after criticizing the war to fellow soldiers and at an IVAW protest.

The Army launched an inquiry, but she was never formally charged. "The investigation was seamless and easy," says Coppa.

"It was the informal retaliation that was severe."

According to Coppa, one superior officer threatened to have her committed to Walter Reed's psych ward. He also claimed he'd provide her ex-husband, against whom she had a restraining order, with her address.

Fearing reprisal, Coppa didn't report the threats, which means there is no paper trail of the incident. But, she says gravely, "It is not unreasonable for a soldier to not want to speak out against the war."

Aside from appearing before a discharge review board, there are few avenues for recourse in disciplinary matters.

Filing a report with the Pentagon's inspector general's office leads to an investigation involving unit command, which many believe will instigate more harassment. According to Lebowitz, "The public won't hear about 95 percent of these cases because soldiers just want to quietly resolve them and move on, with as few repercussions as possible."

Under the Military Whistleblower Protection Act soldiers may take their grievances to Congress, but that involves risks as well. The Appeal for Redress site explains in great detail that soldiers who sign are protected by the Whistleblower statute. Even so, founder Jonathan Hutto says many are still too scared to sign. Seemingly with good reason:

After signing the appeal last year, and shortly thereafter vocalizing her thoughts on the war to the New York Times, Air Force Sergeant Tassi McKee was suspended from her work assignment, stripped of her security clearance, and interrogated by superiors. Her complaint to the IG earned her back her military assignment, but her reputation among superiors remained tarnished.

## **DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?**

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# **Family Condemns Command For Soldier's Suicide; Troops Forced To Use Toxic Anti- Malaria Drug: “Not Only Was This Unit Misprescribed Lariam, This Was Being Done With The Tacit Approval Of The Command,” The Doctor Said**

[Thanks to Michael Letwin, NY City Labor Against The War & Military Project, who sent this in.]

October 12, 2008 By Kari Lydersen, Washington Post Staff Writer [Excerpts]

CHICAGO -- Juan Torres didn't believe that his son, Army Reservist Juan "John" M. Torres, had killed himself in Afghanistan just weeks before he was to return home in July 2004. He figured that John, 25, was murdered because of his opposition to the reportedly rampant heroin trade around the base.

So Torres, an Argentine immigrant who works in food service in the Chicago suburbs, launched his own investigation. Now, he is convinced that his son did indeed kill himself. But he blames Lariam, a drug taken by tourists, Peace Corps volunteers and troops to prevent malaria.

An Army psychiatrist's report also suggests the medication was a factor in Torres's suicide.

Controversy swirled around Lariam in 2004 after a UPI-CNN investigation linked it to the suicides of six Special Forces soldiers, including three murder-suicides at North Carolina's Fort Bragg in the summer of 2002.

Lariam is known to have serious neurological and physical side effects, especially in users who have certain mental health problems.

The group Lariam Action USA has catalogued numerous complaints from veterans and others who say they suffered lasting psychological and physical side effects, which sometimes didn't surface until years later.

The Food and Drug Administration's Web site warns of anxiety, hallucinations and other side effects, and says: "Some patients taking Lariam think about killing themselves, and there have been rare reports of suicides. We do not know if Lariam was responsible for these suicides."

**The Pentagon launched an investigation into the drug in 2004, but it is still regularly prescribed for troops in Afghanistan, Iraq and other regions.**

Now, Torres, 53, is asking for congressional hearings and is demanding a moratorium on Lariam pending more investigation and stricter oversight of the drug's use by troops.

"I think my son's story could save many lives," said Torres, who went to Bagram in 2006 with a documentary filmmaker to ask questions about his son's last days.

"I think the military is covering up the effect of Lariam. After a soldier dies, that's it, they don't want to get at the truth."

A study published in the Feb. 11 issue of the peer-reviewed Malaria Journal indicated that almost 10 percent of soldiers sent to Afghanistan have health problems such as depression and bipolar disorder that put them at risk for adverse reactions to the drug.

**An Army doctor who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he doesn't have permission to speak publicly said he was "floored" to discover while deployed in Afghanistan this year that many troops who were on antidepressant drugs were also prescribed Lariam.**

**"Not only was this unit misprescribed Lariam, this was being done with the tacit approval of the command," the doctor said.**

**"If a doctor is concerned enough to prescribe an antidepressant, that would indicate they have a problem which would indicate they should not use Lariam.**

"Anecdotally, almost everyone reports some side effects -- strange dreams, et cetera -- it's highly likely our folks are experiencing on a daily basis problems related to this drug."

John Torres was engaged and planning a honeymoon. He was buying a house in Houston. He was known for his upbeat attitude, and he loved serving in the military, having also done a tour in Bosnia.

His time in Afghanistan had been relatively uneventful, marked more by boredom than by fear or stress.

**But in the weeks before his death, Torres had complained of intense stomach pain, for which Army doctors found no physical basis.**

**His family says his rambling, strange suicide note was out of character.**

**His father thinks these were manifestations of the known side effects of Lariam, including psychosomatic pain and paranoia.**

**A report by Army psychiatrist Robert Ensley suggested that the influence of Lariam (Roche Pharmaceuticals' brand name for mefloquine) was a likely factor in the suicide.**

“If toxicology reveals the presence of mefloquine, SPC Torres’ case should be viewed in light of other suicides suspected to be associated with the drug,” said Ensley’s report, which noted Torres’ symptoms began shortly after deployment, when his unit began taking Lariam, and appeared to abate on a visit home, when he may have stopped the medication.

There are two FDA-approved alternate malaria prophylactic drugs, but Lariam is usually preferred by the military because it is taken only once a week. The others are taken daily.

McCanna and Ferro say Army officials have not answered their questions about how Lariam may have affected Torres.

McCanna thinks that Ensley’s report was mistakenly sent to them unredacted, as two earlier responses to FOIA requests did not include it.

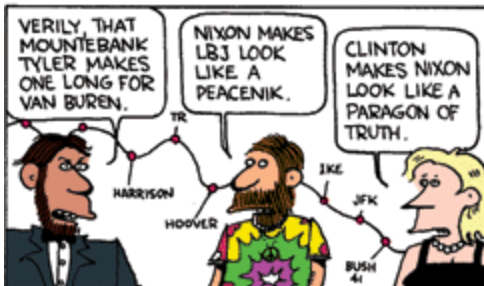
“They clearly knew it was Lariam early on,” said McCanna, whose documentary “Drugs and Death at Bagram” will be released this fall. “But they weren’t honest about what they found.”

## DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

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

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE  
WARS**

## **McCain Holds Auditions For Angry Mob**

October 12, 2008 The Borowitz Report

With just three weeks to go until Election Day, the McCain campaign has launched a nationwide talent search to find angry audience members for their increasingly hate-filled rallies, McCain aides confirmed today.

"People assume that when we hold a rally, angry white people just magically appear, but that's not the case," said McCain aide Hardin Carley. "The fact is, a lot of planning goes into this."

In order to stock their rallies with the requisite number of irate white voters, the McCain camp has reached out to Hollywood, retaining the services of casting agent Tracy Klugian, who found the angry crowds for the 2000 film "Gladiator."

"They were really clear about my assignment," said Mr. Klugian. "They were like, we want the same kind of crowds you had for 'Gladiator,' only more bloodthirsty."

Toby DeBreaux, a self-described angry white man from Dayton, Ohio, was one of a thousand hopefuls who showed up at Mr. Klugian's open casting call in New York City over the weekend.

With full-throated outbursts like "Liar!", "Terrorist!", and "Kill him!", Mr. DeBreaux seemed to impress the Hollywood talent scout.

"He really seemed crazy-angry," said Mr. Klugian. "It was like watching Cindy McCain off her meds."

**Elsewhere, in a sign that the world financial crisis may be deepening, leaders of the G7 nations asked President Bush for cab fare back to the airport.**

### **Troops Invited:**

**Comments, arguments, articles, and letters 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**

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## CLASS WAR REPORTS

### “Another Blow Struck For The Rest Of Us”



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

“The United States Is Bankrupt, In The Sense That It’s Assets Are Now Worth Much Less Than Its Liabilities”

# **“Losses Will Overwhelm The Capacity Of Banks And Lenders To Absorb Them”**

## **“As The Scale Of The Fed’s And Treasury’s Own Lending Becomes More Evident, Their Own Credibility Is Starting To Fray”**

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

Oct 13 2008 By John Kemp, economist; Financial Times [Excerpts]

First take a deep breath, and recall President Franklin Roosevelt’s wise advice that there is nothing to fear but fear itself.

Then let’s admit something painful:

The United States is bankrupt, in the sense that it’s assets (housing stock, corporations and cash flow, plant and machinery) are now worth much less than its liabilities (in the form of mortgage-backed securities, other debt and loan instruments).

In particular, large parts of the housing stock are now worth much less than the owners paid for them, and less than the outstanding value of the mortgages, or the collateralised bonds that have been issued against them.

US house prices have already fallen around 20% from their peak according to the Case-Shiller index of repeat home sales in 20 metropolitan areas, and there is little doubt they will now fall further, perhaps another 10% or more, as the credit crisis works its way through the real economy, raising unemployment, depressing incomes, and making refinancing increasingly difficult.

\*\*\*\*\*

Even after current and prospective price falls, US households still have considerable NET equity in their homes.

By the end of H1 2008, homeowners still held about \$8.7 trillion worth of net equity after adjusting for mortgages, according to the Federal Reserve’s Flow of Funds Accounts (Table B100 line 50).

Households real estate assets were valued at \$19.429 trillion while they had borrowed \$10.639 trillion against them.

But net equity had already fallen -\$1.135 trillion (-11.4%) from its peak in Q1 2007, when it stood at \$9.924 trillion, and the equity cushion will continue to shrink as home prices fall while the debts secured against them remain unchanged.

**The situation is far worse than this net equity figure implies.**

**A significant proportion of households will have paid off their mortgage entirely and are living in homes with substantial 100% equity.**

**If we look at just that subset of homes which are still subject to a mortgage, the net equity in THESE properties is far lower, shrinking fast, and might even be negative, especially if home prices continue to fall another 10-20%.**

There are no separate figures on net equity in the subset of homes against which the mortgage debt and ultimately the bonds are secured. But let's assume 25% of US households live in properties with no mortgage (typically retired families) and that the value of their homes is typical of the housing stock as a whole.

That leaves the mortgaged stock worth 75% of the total, so about \$14.571 trillion, against which at the end of H1 2008 there was \$10.639 trillion worth of mortgages, leaving net equity of just \$3.932 trillion in these homes at end H1.

Home prices have fallen further since then, so net equity is already lower than this, probably by around \$300-400 billion, if the recent decline in net equity values per quarter is typical.

**Assuming another 10-20% decline in home prices from current levels as the economy worsens, most of the net equity cushion behind the mortgage market will have evaporated.**

The debt secured on half or more US homes will be worth more than the home itself, with little or no prospect of a quick rebound in housing values to rebuild positive equity.

In the circumstances, many households may conclude that it is rational to walk away rather than pay over-the-odds for an asset the price of which has no realistic chance of regaining its former value in the short to medium term. The resulting wave of repossessions would only depress prices further.

So while households might still technically have some equity left in their home, from a collateral perspective, after applying an appropriate haircut, the mortgages are probably worth more than the houses against which they are secured. In that sense, the US housing market and mortgage industry is now bankrupt.

**The collective liabilities (in the form of mortgage bonds) are worth far more than the proportion of the housing stock against which they are secured, and the situation looks set to persist or worsen.**

The situation is less extreme in commercial property, consumer loans, and other forms of bank lending, but equity coverage there is shrinking rapidly too, as corporate profits weaken, the economy falters and collateral values fall.



**The US government via the Treasury and the Federal Reserve System have tried to prop up the banking system.**

**But with \$10 trillion worth of home mortgages, \$2.5 trillion worth of commercial mortgages, \$2.5 trillion worth of consumer credit, \$3.7 trillion worth of trade credit, and \$1.5 trillion worth of security credit, much of it held through the banks or mortgage-pools, the government cannot assume or even most of these debts.**

Federal revenues amount to only \$2.567 trillion per year, or just \$1.932 trillion per year if taxes earmarked for Social Security and Medicare are excluded.

The government also has \$9.6 trillion of its own debts to fund, with another \$600 billion or so already added to that to cover the costs of the bailout and lending operations so far.

The United States as a whole has \$17.639 trillion worth of overseas assets. But it owes \$20.081 trillion to foreigners.

**In this context, the country's now-derated assets are probably worth less than its collected liabilities (both internally and internationally).**

**The United States is now, in some very general sense, bankrupt.**

Millions of Americans and foreigners now own debt and other securities which are not worth their face value, and which are not likely to be worth their face value under many plausible states of the world in future.

**Much of the discussion so far has framed the US financial crisis in terms of "liquidity" rather than "solvency". The assumption is that the problem is just that banks are not willing to trade with one another and that pouring liquidity into the system will solve the problem.**

**But hundreds of billions have been poured into the system with no discernable effect.**

**I would argue that the problem is now one of solvency rather than liquidity.**

**The problem is not that markets are not liquid, but that the majority of banks and many other institutions are probably now insolvent or close to it, in the technical sense that if they were forced to write down all their assets (mortgages, bonds, loans and other advances) to probable recovery levels, their capital might be insufficient to absorb the losses.**

There is little wonder that insolvent institutions are reluctant to lend to one another.

Inflation has been the solution to widespread over-indebtedness in the past for many countries.

But even if the Fed COULD generate inflation amid a contracting economy, that would simply expropriate creditors in a different fashion.

Losses will overwhelm the capacity of banks and lenders to absorb them.

The current debate has obscured this by pretending that everyone can emerge whole.

In particular, that the government can buy \$700 billion worth of troubled assets, and lend huge sums to the banking system, and expect to get all or almost all of it back. That households can somehow repay all or most of what they still owe. And that the mortgages and bonds and other loans will somehow be mostly repaid. In other words that no one will have to bite the bullet.

That seems completely implausible.

The Fed and Treasury have tried “muddling through” with no success so far. Systemic stress has risen rather than fallen.

**As the scale of the Fed’s and Treasury’s own lending becomes more evident, their own credibility is starting to fray.**

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