

GI SPECIAL 6J3:



There It Is:

[Thanks to Frank M, who sent this in,]

September 28 2008 by John Gray, The Observer [Excerpt]

The fate of empires is very often sealed by the interaction of war and debt.

That was true of the British Empire, whose finances deteriorated from the First World War onwards, and of the Soviet Union.

Defeat in Afghanistan and the economic burden of trying to respond to Reagan's technically flawed but politically extremely effective Star Wars programme were vital factors in triggering the Soviet collapse.

Despite its insistent exceptionalism, America is no different.

MORE:

There It Is #2: U.S. To Keep The Number Of Troops In Iraq “Largely Steady Through Much Of Next Year”

[Save this for some occasion some fool tells you to vote for Obama because he’s going to bring the troops home from Iraq. Oh yeah, that’s right, almost forgot, he may bring some out of Iraq on their way to die for the Empire in Afghanistan. He promised that already. You’ll get “change” allright. BOHICA. T]

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

Sep 30 By KIM GAMEL & LOLITA C. BALDOR, Associated Press Writers [Excerpt]

Six U.S. Army brigades, a National Guard unit, and three military headquarters have been ordered to deploy to Iraq next summer, the Pentagon announced Tuesday, in a move that would allow the U.S. to keep the number of troops largely steady there through much of next year.

There are now about 150,000 U.S. troops in Iraq.

At least 4,176 members of the U.S. military have died in the Iraq war since it began in March 2003.

Six of the 10 units slated to head to Iraq next year are from Washington or North Carolina, with others from Texas, Kansas and Wyoming. It would mark the first time the Army’s 1st Corps headquarters out of Fort Lewis has deployed to either Iraq or Afghanistan.

The headquarters unit is commanded by Lt. Gen. Charles Jacoby, who came to prominence several years ago as the author of a report examining the treatment of detainees in Afghanistan.

He found no widespread mistreatment, but concluded there was a lack of knowledge and clear standards regarding the detention and interrogation of detainees that required changes in procedures.

The other units ordered to deploy are:

-1st Cavalry Division headquarters, Ft. Hood, Texas.

-2nd Marine Expeditionary Force headquarters, Camp Lejeune, N.C.

- 4th Brigade, 1st Armored Division, Fort Bliss, Texas
 - 4th Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C.
 - 5th Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, Fort Lewis, Wash.
 - 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C.
 - 3rd Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, Fort Lewis, Wash.
 - 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, Kan.
 - 115th Fires Brigade, a National Guard artillery unit from Cheyenne, Wyo.
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IRAQ WAR REPORTS

MND-C Soldier Killed By IED (Amarah)

10/03/08 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE No. 20081003-10

CAMP VICTORY, Iraq – A Multi-National Division – Center Soldier was killed when an improvised explosive device exploded near his vehicle south of Amarah Oct. 2.

U.S. Military Convoy Car-Bombed, Casualties Not Announced; Green Zone Mortared,

October 2, 2008 By Sahar Issa, McClatchy Newspapers

A car bomb targeted a U.S. military convoy in Ameriyah, west Baghdad at noon. A U.S. army vehicle was destroyed and two Iraqi civilians were injured according to Iraqi police. The U.S. military confirmed the incident, adding that the investigation was ongoing.

One mortar round slammed into the Green Zone near the Ministry of Defence, said Iraqi Police.

Polish Government Withdraws All Troops From Iraq

October 4, 2008 (AP)

DIWANIYAH, Iraq. Poland has marked the end of its military mission to Iraq with a ceremony at its main base south of Baghdad.

Poland is one of several countries in the U.S.-led coalition to withdraw from Iraq.

Poland initially had 2,500 soldiers in Iraq, but the numbers have since fallen to 900.

REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: ALL HOME NOW



U.S. soldiers of 2nd-327th Infantry Battalion in Samarra, 100 km (62 miles) north of Baghdad September 23, 2008. REUTERS/Erik de Castro

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Family, Friends Grieve For CNY Marine

September 23, 2008 by John Stith, The Post-Standard

THROOP, NY -- When Jerry Bell Jr. was growing up in Throop, he knew what he wanted to be.

"He's wanted to be a Marine since he was 4 or 5," Bell's mom, Tammy, said, admitting she can't explain where her son got his love of the Marines. She only knows "he was always going to be a Marine."

Sgt. Jerome "Jerry" C. Bell Jr. died Sept. 19 in Bawka, Farah Province, Afghanistan. He was riding in the front seat of a Humvee that hit an improvised explosive device.

Bell's parents were in the sixth day of a seven-day Alaska cruise on Friday when they were notified by the Department of Defense of their son's death.

Bell married his high school sweetheart, the former Melissa Nowak, whom he met in 10th grade. They have three children, daughters Katrazyna, 9, and Taylor, 8, and a son, Jerry III, 3. They live in California.

On Monday afternoon, the American and Marine flags flew at half staff outside the Basswood Road home of Bell's parents, Jerry Sr. and Tammy Bell. The family looked through old photographs and greeted friends who arrived in a steady stream after hearing the news of Jerry Jr.'s death. Red, white and blue bunting was draped from the railing of the deck and small American flags fluttered from flower boxes hanging on the railing.

Bell was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, based at Twentynine Palms, Calif. He had been deployed to Iraq twice -- in 2003 and 2007 -- before being sent in March on a security mission to the Farah province in southeastern Afghanistan with his battalion, a reinforced light infantry task force. The unit's mission was to support combat troops and help train police officers, according to 1st Lt. Curtis Williamson, a public affairs officer with 1st Marine Division. Williamson said Bell's unit was regularly involved in fights with al-Qaida and Taliban groups.

The Bells last talked with Jerry on Sept. 7, Grandparents Day. He told them he would return home by Dec. 1.

"He loved the Marines, but he loved his family, too," said his aunt, Jodi Morgenthaler, of Throop. "The Marines were No. 2."

Bell left the Marines when his daughters were old enough for school, Tammy Bell said. He re-enlisted.

"He missed it so much," she said. "He asked me if I minded if he went back in. He had enough respect to ask me if I minded. I knew he never wanted to get out. How do you tell a 27-year-old Marine, a married man, he didn't need his mother's permission?"

The Bells last saw their son in February, just before his unit shipped out.

Bell was the only Marine in a family full of U.S. Army soldiers. His sister, Stacey Bell Zimmerman, spent eight years in the Army, and cousins Joseph and Jesse Alcock and Joe Whiffen IV all are in the Army. Another cousin, Richard Gilbert, is in the Air Force.

Good-natured, intra-service rivalry spilled over at family gatherings.

“(Jerry) was the worst,” said his uncle, Bill Whiffen, an Army veteran. “He trashed us.”

Jerry Bell played football in high school and loved to hunt. He got his first deer while hunting in Ledyard.

“I can still see the grin on his face,” Morgenthaler said.

Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES Superintendent William Speck said he remembered Bell as a good student who was in the construction trades program, particularly heavy equipment repair and operations.

“He was a really good kid, he did very well academically,” Speck said. “He was a very good citizen for us. This is very sad.”

Jerry Bell’s body was flown to Dover, Del., and the family is awaiting word from the Department of Defense about its return home. His cousins, Richard Gilbert, Joe Whiffen IV and Jesse Alcock, will escort the body to Central New York.

Funeral arrangements, which will be handled by Cheche Funeral Home in Auburn, were incomplete.

A Cheery Little Report About Rocket Attacks On Occupation Air Base

October 02, 2008 Tom Blackwell, Canwest News Service [Excerpts]

KANDAHAR AIR FIELD, Afghanistan - For six days in a row, sometimes twice a day, the sirens blared and the Cockney-accented voice echoed through Kandahar Air Field: “Rocket attack, rocket attack, rocket attack.”

The main NATO base in southern Afghanistan has been subjected to an unusual spate of the Taliban’s haphazard barrages recently, resulting in a handful of casualties.

But the British officer in charge of guarding the base says the attacks remain little more than a minor irritant.

Though two of the recent sirens were false alarms, the base recorded six attacks in September - most with two rockets each - almost all in the last week. Each time, soldiers and civilian workers, including about 1,800 Canadians, crowded into bunkers, where the mood tends to be more festive than frightened.

Tuesday saw no attacks, but then Wednesday night there was a warning of another possible attack.

About a dozen parachute flares lit up the desert sky west of the airfield.

Soldiers from [Air Commodore Andy] Fryer's RAF Regiment - a sort of air force infantry unit that specializes in guarding airfields - had received a tip about rocket activity and went in search.

"Sometimes that means the safest thing to do is keep the camp in shelter," he said.

He would not say where the rockets are made, but the supply seems ample, despite attempts to cut it off. U.S. soldiers found and destroyed a cache of 1,800 near the base in 2003.

Notes From A Lost War:

**"I Do Know How Many Brigades
There Are In The Army, And I Do
Know Where They Are All Going, And
Nobody's Told Me To Send Any To
Afghanistan Next Year"**

**"We Do Not Have The Forces To Send
Three Additional Brigade Combat Teams
To Afghanistan"**

October 06, 2008 By Gina Cavallaro and William H. McMichael, Army Times [Excerpts]

Up to three additional brigade combat teams slated for deployment to Iraq next spring and summer could be diverted to Afghanistan.

The 10th Mountain Division's 3rd BCT already has been redirected to Afghanistan from a scheduled deployment to Iraq, and, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said, three more could have their deployment orders switched.

Only by diverting brigades from Iraq deployments, he told a Senate panel, could the number of troops in Afghanistan be increased, as pledged by President Bush and NATO leaders.

Gates made his assertion in a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on Sept. 23 during a discussion of force levels in Afghanistan.

“Without changing deployment patterns, without changing length of tours, we do not have the forces to send three additional brigade combat teams to Afghanistan at this point,” he said.

There are about 33,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan now, and that number is expected to increase by 5,300 with the deployment of a Marine Corps battalion in November and the Army’s 3rd BCT by January.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey said taking a brigade “out of the force, which is already stretched” would be a challenge.

“My preference would be that they be redirected from an Iraq rotation,” Casey told Army Times in a Sept. 25 interview in his Pentagon office. He said taking brigades out of Iraq rotations also would depend on what Multi-National Force-Iraq commander Gen. Ray Odierno needs on the ground there.

So far, the Army hasn’t sent any heavy brigades to Afghanistan, largely because of the terrain in that country.

But Casey didn’t rule out the possibility “because most of the heavy brigades now are operating out of Humvees.” [That, mind you , is the good news.]

“We don’t control demand, but I think we are at a point now, especially for the next couple of years, where we have to take a hard look at whether the tactical benefit of an additional brigade or two or three (in Afghanistan) is worth the stress that it’s going to put on the force.

That’s where we are; those are the kinds of discussions that the chiefs need to have and that we will have,” Casey said.

As of Sept. 26, the Army had not identified which brigades could be on the radar screen.

“The 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain, is the only brigade I’ve been told to divert,” a senior Army planner said, noting that “we can sustain the level of effort (in Iraq) but we can’t increase the level of effort.

“It’s a matter of mathematics. I do know how many brigades there are in the Army, and I do know where they are all going, and nobody’s told me to send any to Afghanistan next year.”

The majority of troops who have deployed to the war zones over the past seven years of operations have gone to Iraq on repeat rotations.

U.S. Command Forced To Stop Ground Attacks Inside Pakistan

After “Pakistanis Started Talking About Closing Down Our Supply Routes, And Actually Demonstrated They Could Do It” “We Can’t Sustain Ourselves In Afghanistan Without The Pakistani Supply Routes” “Raids ‘A Strategic Miscalculation,’ The U.S. Government Source Said”

October 06, 2008 By Sean D. Naylor, Army Times [Excerpts]

U.S. special operations forces have paused ground operations in Pakistan’s tribal areas, but military and civilian government officials differ over why the cross-border raids have been halted.

The issue of U.S. raids into the tribal areas was thrust into the international spotlight by a Sept. 3 raid in Angor Adda, in the South Waziristan tribal agency, by Navy SEALs working for a Joint Special Operations Command task force.

“We have shown a willingness starting this year to pursue those kinds of missions,” a Pentagon official said. However, he said, after temporarily granting JSOC more latitude to do cross-border missions, U.S. leaders had decided to restrain the command, at least as far as cross-border missions with ground troops are concerned, to allow Pakistani forces to press attacks on militants in the tribal areas.

But a U.S. government official closely involved with policy in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region said the military had underestimated the Pakistani response and was reconsidering its options.

The official's comments were echoed by a field grade special operations officer with Afghanistan experience.

The Sept. 3 raid “was an opportunity to see how the new Pakistani government reacted,” the officer said. “If they didn’t do anything, they were just kind of fairly passive, like Musharraf was, ... then we felt like, OK, we can slowly up the ante, we can do maybe some more of these ops.

“But the backlash that happened, and especially the backlash in the diplomatic channels, was pretty severe.”

The raid represented “a strategic miscalculation,” the U.S. government source said.

“We did not fully appreciate the vehemence of the Pakistani response,” which included the Pakistan government’s implication that it was willing to cut the coalition’s supply lines through Pakistan.

The military’s comments about the Sept. 3 raid sending a message represented a smokescreen, said the government official, who added that the mission “was meant to be the beginning of a campaign.”

“Once the Pakistanis started talking about closing down our supply routes, and actually demonstrated they could do it, once they started talking about shooting American helicopters, we obviously had to take seriously that maybe this was not going to be good enough,” the government official said.

“We can’t sustain ourselves in Afghanistan without the Pakistani supply routes.

“At the end of the day, we had to not let our tactics get in the way of our strategy.”

Under questioning on Capitol Hill Sept. 23, Defense Secretary Robert Gates did not deny that U.S. forces had made cross-border strikes. “We will do what is necessary to protect our troops,” he said, acknowledging the Pentagon had been granted “authorities” for such action.

The Sept. 3 raid was not the first time JSOC forces, the Army’s 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta and the Navy’s Naval Special Warfare Development Group, or DevGru, also known as SEAL Team 6, have launched into the tribal areas.

In the past, small JSOC elements have operated with the Pakistani Special Services Group in the tribal areas, and the special operations officer with Afghanistan experience said he was aware of “two or three” cross-border operations similar to the Angor Adda raid. “They have happened, but it was by no means a common occurrence,” he said.

However, the government official closely involved with Afghanistan-Pakistan policy said, JSOC “has been pushing hard for several years” to step up their raids into the tribal areas.

“None of the JSOC activity has been going on in the areas around the sanctuary for Mullah Omar’s Taliban,” which is located in and around the Pakistani city of Quetta, the civilian expert on Afghanistan said.

“It’s all happening in the tribal areas.”

“They Can Make You Feel Welcome, So Long As You Aren’t Shooting At Them”



Aerial photos of compounds in Helmand Province, between Camp Bastion and Lashkar Gah.

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

01 October 2008 Michaelyon-online.com [Excerpt]

They can make you feel welcome, so long as you aren't shooting at them.

Iraq size 168,754 sq mi

Afghanistan size 249,984 sq mi

Iraq population 27,499,638

Afghanistan population 31,889,923

Iraq: U.S. Troops 146,000

Afghanistan: U.S. Troops 33,000

Game over.

MRAPs Won't Work In Afghanistan [Sorry About That, But There's More Room At Arlington]

October 2 By Donna Borak, AP [Excerpts]

With plans to redeploy more Marines to Afghanistan later this fall, companies like General Dynamics Corp. and Force Protection Inc. are being asked to re-engineer mine-resistant vehicles that can traverse the war-ravaged country's mountainous terrain while offering even greater protection.

High altitudes, dispersed battalions and restricted travel zones are among the serious challenges facing the service as it weighs the resources needed to perform its missions in Afghanistan where violence has escalated, senior Marine Corps officials told defense industry executives at the service's annual expo Thursday.

However, senior Marine Corps officials are concerned the current MRAPs are ill-equipped to handle the rocky terrain in Afghanistan, and are too heavy to easily transport to areas where they are needed.

"It's OK in Iraq, but it's not OK in Afghanistan," said Dillon. "It's got to have off-road capability and all the survivability."

The service this summer asked companies to submit information for a so-called "MRAP Light" to see how the current vehicle could be changed to meet the latest needs of the Marine Corps.

Still, there will be trade-offs if the service reconfigures its existing MRAP inventory, said Winslow Wheeler, an analyst for the Center for Defense Information. The vehicles are built high to compensate for the impact of blasts, but become too top heavy to maneuver well in cities or rough terrain.

"Technology always has compromises when you are trying to solve a warfighting problem," said Wheeler.

8,000 British Troops Are Stationed In Helmand Province;

“Yet This Year They Have Not Managed To Extend Their Hold On Territory” [Afghanistan Has 34 Provinces]



The New York Times

October 3, 2008 By CARLOTTA GALL, The New York Times Company [Excerpts]

KABUL, Afghanistan — As the new planting season for opium poppy draws near, the governor of Helmand, Afghanistan’s largest poppy-producing province, says that this year he is determined to beat the illicit crop that is a major source of money for drug lords and insurgents alike.

Five districts of 13 are outside government hands and controlled by the insurgents, and three more districts have only a token government presence and foreign troops in the district centers.

Some 8,000 British troops are stationed in Helmand as part of the NATO force, along with hundreds of Afghan Army soldiers, police officers and border forces. Yet this year they have not managed to extend their hold on territory.

The trouble began in mid-August when the market town of Marja, in Nadali District, fell to the Taliban. Marja was equally valuable to the drug smugglers and the Taliban, both of whom had been looking for a new base of operation since American marines uprooted them in May from a base farther south, in Garmser.

It remains unclear exactly why Marja fell. The governor blamed British troops for maneuvers that panicked the police, who abandoned their posts.

“If We Never Leave, Will The Job Ever Get Done?”

Canadian Prime Minister Says Some Other Western Leaders Wrongly Believe Occupation Forces “Could Stay There Forever”

Oct 2 (Reuters)

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who has committed to pulling out Canadian troops from Afghanistan in 2011, said on Thursday some other Western leaders wrongly believed NATO forces could stay there forever.

“2011 is three more years off. By then Canada will have been in Afghanistan for nearly 10 years ... we will have been in Kandahar for six years,” he said.

“If we never leave, will the job ever get done?”

“We Reject An Offer For Negotiation By The Puppet And Slave President Hamid Karzai”

“He Only Says And Does What He Is Told By America”

Oct 3 SPIN BOLDAK, Afghanistan (Reuters)

A senior Taliban commander on Friday rejected reconciliation with what he called the “puppet” Afghan government, the latest in a series of pronouncements from both sides on potential peace talks.

“We reject an offer for negotiation by the puppet and slave President Hamid Karzai,” Mullah Brother told Reuters by satellite telephone from an undisclosed location.

He said Karzai had no right to negotiate. “He only says and does what he is told by America.”

He repeated the Taliban's war aim of fighting till the more than 70,000 U.S. and NATO troops were driven from the country and said the insurgents would not negotiate while there were still foreign troops on Afghan soil.

TROOP NEWS

Army Secretary Fears End Of Wars Will Hit Army's Funding

September 30, 2008 The Hill

Army Secretary Pete Geren cautioned that Wall Street's financial crisis and Congress's proposed \$700 billion rescue plan could take a toll on the Army's budget in the coming years.

The financial crisis could exacerbate the fact that defense budgets traditionally are cut drastically at the end of wars, Geren, a former four-term congressman, said.

Geren did not give a specific timeline for the budget cuts, but said that the next eight to nine years will "involve incredible risk."

V.A. Shits On National Guard And Reserve War Veterans, As Usual: "More Likely Than Active-Duty Iraq And Afghanistan War Veterans To Have Disability Claims Denied And More Likely To Receive The Lowest Possible Disability Ratings"

Duffy said reservists returning from deployments do not have the same access as active-duty members to qualified doctors who can evaluate combat-related medical problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.

October 06, 2008 By Rick Maze, Army Times [Excerpts]

National Guard and reserve members are more likely than active-duty Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans to have disability claims denied and more likely to receive the lowest possible disability ratings — even though they are only half as likely to file claims in the first place.

An analysis of benefits claims prepared by Veterans for Common Sense, based on data obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request, shows Guard and reserve members who served in Iraq or Afghanistan are twice as likely to have a veterans' disability claim denied as other veterans of the same operations.

The higher rate of denials and low ratings among reservists do not appear to be the result of filing frivolous claims.

Forty-five percent of active-duty veterans of the two ongoing operations filed disability claims, compared with 23 percent of Guard and reserve members who deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, said Paul Sullivan, executive director of the nonprofit veterans' group.

Sullivan said he is unsure what has caused "such an enormous discrepancy" but thinks Congress and veterans deserve an answer.

"With 300,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans filing a claim [with the Veterans Affairs Department] so far, we owe it to our veterans to make sure their claims are adjudicated completely, accurately, quickly and fairly," Sullivan said.

Peter Duffy, a retired Army colonel with the National Guard Association of the United States, said gaps in personnel and medical records might make it harder for Guard and reserve members to prove they have service-connected disabilities.

Duffy said reservists returning from deployments do not have the same access as active-duty members to qualified doctors who can evaluate combat-related medical problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“I Don’t Think It Is Correct To Blame The Movement For The Lack Of A GI Resistance”

From: Marti Hiken
To: GI Special
Sent: October 03, 2008
Subject: GI Special Headline

Re: The current headline in GI SPECIAL 6J1:

“It’s Hard To Build A GI Resistance Movement Or A GI Revolt Within The Military If You Don’t Have A Civilian Movement Behind It”

I don’t know who said this, but I take issue with it.

I think it’s possible to:

- build a meaningful and successful civilian anti-war movement against imperialistic wars without a GI resistance movement or a GI revolt within the military; and,

- for GIs to build a GI revolt or movement within the military without any “support” from the outside whether there is a movement or not. It has been done before -- and, in distant foreign countries.

Unfortunately, I think there is scant GI resistance in the military today. If there were, there would be a large and active movement ready to support them.

I don’t think it is correct to blame the movement for the lack of a GI resistance. It is a complicated issue.

Thank you for your continued excellent publication and hard work, Tom.

(Note: Oct. 14th, Tuesday: 1971 Presidio 27 Mutiny Get-Together Day, 1:30 p.m. at the location of the old Stockade, Ft. Winfield Scott, where the mutiny took place !)

In the struggle,
Marti Hiken

REPLY: T

Thank you for writing in -- and for your work assisting GIs resisting Imperial war. The more discussion the better.

As for GI Special, the thanks go to the dozens of people who help make GI Special possible.

The headline referenced appears above a story consisting of an interview with several members of Iraq Veterans Against The War. The quotes in the story are preceded by the name of the member of Iraq Veterans Against The War who is speaking. Their full names are in the introduction to the interviews:

Here is the quote cited, from Phil Aliff, IVAW:

“Phil: One thing that I took away from Denver is the relationship between the civilian movement and the veteran movement.

“It’s hard to build a GI resistance movement or a GI revolt within the military if you don’t have a civilian movement behind it to give it confidence.

“IVAW has its own area where it concentrates, but sometimes you can lose perspective that we actually are part of a bigger machine, and we have to play our part, but we are all related in some way.

“We have to translate this experience into a six-year anniversary march. There’s a lot of discussion and debate about why there wasn’t an anniversary march last year. This year, we’ve learned a lot of lessons, and we should make a statement next March 20 that the movement is not going away because of Obama’s election.”

It is the case that at the height of the resistance inside the armed forces to the American war on Vietnam, the civilian movement was a pathetic remnant of what it once had been. The silly notion that an election or another march around the Mall in DC would stop the war had been completely discredited.

The civilians reaching out to and forming ties with armed forces resistance were not many, but their work was key to supporting resistance inside. People like Marti Hiken.

When the army in Vietnam disintegrated and refused to fight, and GI resistance spread to troops in Europe, and inside the United States, military and political ruling class leadership saw that they had to choose between losing Vietnam and losing their ability to project military power anywhere, abroad or at home.

And the war ended.

The opposition to the war today inside the armed forces is huge, and universal.

Unlike Vietnam, where there was none, today’s unit cohesion means that we do not see many of the moralistic acts of individual defiance that characterized so much of the resistance within the army in Vietnam.

And it is completely understandable that many people in the armed forces, like so many civilians, cling to the desperate fantasy that electing a batch of Imperial Democrat mass-murderers in place of Imperial Republicans mass-murderers will end the stupid, hopeless wars of occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Once those illusions have been cleared up and laid to rest, and the new Obama regime rats in DC keep the Imperial wars going, then our troops will take matters in hand to save us and save themselves.

There will be no other option left.

There will be unit cohesion about that too.

Never doubt it.

Solidarity & Respect,

T

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

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

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

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

Troops Cordially 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 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 wars, 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

Cops Vs Protesters At The RNC



From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: September 18, 2008
Subject: Cops vs Protesters at the RNC

Cops vs Protesters at the RNC

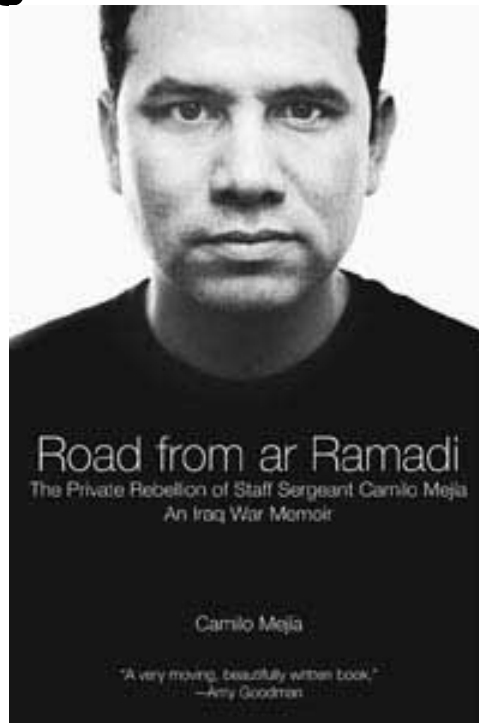
**The Police...
The Military...
The Iron Gate
Around America.**

**Mike Hastie
Vietnam Veteran**

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)

Road From Ar Ramadi: The Private Rebellion of Staff Sergeant Camilo Mejia:

**An Iraq War Memoir;
“The Many Struggles Waged By
Servicemen And Servicewomen Against
Their Mission And Leadership Are Part
Of A Painful Process Of Realization That
Something Has Gone Awfully Wrong”**



Paperback, March 2008, 300 pages, isbn 978-1931859-53-0. Haymarket books.

Book excerpt from 9.26.08 Socialist Worker

This fall, Mejía will join other authors on the Resisting Empire speaking tour, organized by Haymarket Books.

THE IDEA behind writing Road from ar Ramadi first occurred to me while I was living underground in New York City.

At the time, I was contemplating the various consequences that could befall me for being critical of the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

I knew that if I spoke publicly about why I had refused to return to my unit in Iraq, the U.S. Army would want to silence me.

Although I had always wanted to be an author, writing this memoir was separate from that aspiration. Writing Road from ar Ramadi was a way to ensure I would not be silenced even if I ended up behind bars.

The reasons I wrote the manuscript have turned out to be more complex than simply wanting to get out my version of the story.

The Argentinean writer Ernesto Sábato once wrote in one of his novels that he could not be held responsible for the actions of his characters. I think the same is true for memoirs and for other nonfiction writing. There are driving forces behind everything we do that can be found outside of our intentions.

In the case of this memoir, the original purpose was to tell my version of the story because I did not know if I was going to be in jail for a long time. But I did not start working on the manuscript until after I was released from military prison. The need to make my voice heard from behind bars was no longer a consideration when I began the actual work. I now realize that writing the memoir had a different purpose in my life: it was something I had to do in order to begin my healing process.

Shortly after my return from Iraq, my stepsister asked me if I had been in any combat missions and if I had fired my weapon. I began to tell her about the time my squad was ambushed. For the first time, my voice broke as I described the event.

I had spoken about the incident after it happened with members of my platoon in Iraq, but back then, we were too concerned about what would happen next to truly discuss our feelings.

Keeping our guard high always meant that the horrible things we experienced in the war were thrown in a trunk of suppressed memories. These emotions and memories only resurfaced after I started working on the manuscript, over a year after my public surrender to the military and almost four months after getting out of jail. Most of the year it took me to write the memoir was actually spent staring at a blank computer screen, remembering, reliving, and coming face to face with painful experiences for the very first time since I left Iraq.

Dealing with the memory blanks I had and still have made writing difficult, but perhaps even harder was understanding why my memory failed me when I tried to revisit very difficult moments.

It was never the whole incident but bits of information that were missing from my recollection of events: the age, face, and emotional expression of a child who had just witnessed the brutal killing of his father or the face of a young man who was gunned down for throwing a grenade at our building.

It is mostly the faces of people who carry the pain we inflicted in their lives that are hard to remember. Those faces may be missing, but the pain they carried we now carry with us.

Negotiating those memory gaps meant that I had to initiate a sincere dialogue between the part of me that had gone through the experience of war and the part of me that wanted to write about it. That dialogue became problematic when I tried to provide answers to the many haunting questions that, time after time, remained unanswered.

It is clear to me now that there are limits to what we can share, not only with other people, but also with ourselves.

Those missing memories are part of an experience far too overwhelming to be fully contained, understood, or explained. Their missing is not a form of absence, but rather a statement of how war can profoundly change the human soul, removing memories and banishing them into dark and inaccessible corners of the subconscious, while pain, guilt, and despair occupy center stage in our daily lives.

After I reached an agreement with myself to leave out the missing details, I was able to write, and I found the process less painful and more therapeutic. But the joy of finishing the manuscript was short-lived, to say the least.

The product of a year's struggle to reclaim memories buried beneath layers of fear in order to bring them to light was now to be cut down during another agonizing process-- editing, which would last six months. By the time my editor and I finished working on the original manuscript, close to a third of the manuscript was gone. Although I understood the logic behind keeping the book concise, I could not help feeling like a parent at a maternity ward who is told by the doctor that for the baby to survive all its extremities had to be amputated.

The book was officially published six months after we were done with the editing, a year after I finished writing the manuscript. At that time, the writer's vanity took a hold of me. I started to obsessively look for reviews and sales rankings on the Internet. What had begun as the need to express myself in the face of imposed silence, punishment for my rebellion, and which had later become a process of self-exploration and healing, was now reduced to a selfish need for literary recognition.

Things began to change when I went on a pre-release book tour in Southern California, sponsored by the San Francisco chapter of Veterans For Peace (VFP). In two weeks of speeches and readings, we did not visit a single bookstore.

We concentrated on community centers, churches, and alternative high schools where troubled and disadvantaged youth went after traditional schools gave up on them. These students, who lived their lives in the margins of society and who were the prime target of military recruiters, could not afford to buy the memoir, but my conscience could not afford to leave them empty-handed.

We started donating the book to the school libraries and letting students buy it at cost, or for whatever money they had, which many times meant giving it away for free.

I slowly began to realize that the success of Road from ar Ramadi was not to be found in literary magazines or sales rankings, but at the community level, where grassroots activists battle against a system that refuses to place human interest above profit and that feeds on poverty and disadvantage to fill the ranks of its military.

Not too long ago, I received a phone call from a group of students from a Catholic high school in California. They had read about me in one of their classes and wanted to interview me for an assignment.

They had been really touched by my actions and thought I was a prophet.

By any stretch of the imagination I remain sure that I am no prophet, I told them, but knowing how my actions and words are having a positive impact on young people is a reward that cannot be matched materially.

The memoir before you has been transformed yet again--this time into a tool of activism, a sort of chisel I hope will contribute to the carving of a new world, beginning by working on ending the occupation of Iraq through organizing around military resistance.

A few words about that resistance would be appropriate.

WHEN I first refused to return to Iraq in October of 2003, no combat veterans had taken a public stance against the war.

Air Force Capt. Steven Potts and Marine reservist Stephen Funk had been the only two public resisters, but their resistance occurred prior to the invasion, and their cases received little to no attention from the media. At that time, when the nation was rallying behind the president and the antiwar movement was just beginning to gain strength, resisting the war from within the military was a lonely path to walk.

The political climate has significantly changed since October of 2003, when the news was that morale among the troops in Iraq was high, and when only 22 service members had failed to report back for duty after their mid-deployment furloughs. Only five months later, the number of GIs who didn't report back to their units had grown to 500. When I got out of military jail in February of 2005, after serving nine months on a desertion charge, the same number was 5,500.

Today's military, developing from blind and unwavering obedience to entire units refusing to go out on combat missions, has come a long way in resisting the war.

But those of us organizing in the military cannot take full credit for that change, nor can civilian organizers.

It will take a deeper analysis of what is happening inside the military, and outside the antiwar movement, to understand why service members are saying "no" to their superiors.

The military's attempt to repress dissent within the ranks has mostly concentrated on suppressing public criticism of the war, and it has remained strong since I spoke out.

A month after my court martial, Army Sgt. Abdullah Webster, a U.S. Muslim, was sentenced to 14 months of incarceration for refusing to deploy to Iraq.

Webster was followed by Navy Petty Officer Third Class Pablo Paredes, who refused to board his amphibious assault ship, Bonhomme Richard, as it sailed off to transport marines to the Middle East. Paredes was sentenced to three months of restriction and two months of hard labor.

Other high-profile cases include that of Sgt. Kevin Benderman (fifteen months), Specialist Agustín Aguayo (eight months) and Lt. Ehren Watada, the first commissioned officer to publicly refuse orders. Lt. Watada called the war illegitimate and cited the Geneva Convention and UN Charter as the legal basis of his defense. Though his court martial was dismissed, the military is still pursuing a retrial.

While most of the prominent cases of GI resistance have revolved around political opposition to the occupation of Iraq, it would be a mistake to generalize the current military resistance as purely political, or even as purely antiwar.

As early as July of 2003, a platoon from my infantry unit engaged in negotiations with our company commander to modify an ongoing mission after unsound practices cost that platoon four casualties and a vehicle, and led to the killing of an innocent Iraqi civilian.

In October of the following year, an army reserve platoon of truck drivers made the news after 17 of its members refused to go on a supply mission that they called “suicidal.”

And in 2007, as reported by Democracy Now! in December, after losing five of its members to an improvised explosive device (IED) attack, a U.S. Army infantry platoon refused to go back out after the incident, citing fear of committing a massacre in retaliation for the loss of their fellow soldiers.

We also have the resistance of Specialist Katherine Jashinski who, in November of 2005, refused deployment orders to Afghanistan, declaring herself a conscientious objector, but avoiding being politically critical of any war. In 2006, Army Specialist Suzanne Swift refused a second deployment to Iraq with the same supervisors who had forced her into a sexual relationship in exchange for not sending her on senseless, suicidal missions, a practice known as “command rape.”

Army Reserve Col. Janis Karpinski, during a public tribunal on war crimes committed by the Bush administration, said that female soldiers were dying of dehydration in Iraq. The reason was that, in those extreme heat conditions, they would purposely stop drinking water after noon so they wouldn't have to urinate at night, thus avoiding the risk of being raped by fellow soldiers on their way to the latrine. In the case of units refusing to go out on missions, as well--as in the cases of Jashinski and Swift--military resistance originated not from a profound political analysis of the invasion and occupation of Iraq but from a more primal, human refusal to participate in one's own detriment, be it physical or spiritual.

The supply and infantry units that refused their missions are not necessarily antiwar. Just as in the case of the two female resisters, these are people who are simply saying, “I refuse to kill or be killed.” And, “I refuse to be raped.”

An effective antiwar movement should recognize the diverse nature of military resistance in order to work with these individuals and involve them.

When people join the U.S. military, in the overwhelming majority of the cases to escape poverty, the understanding is that the possibility of war will only come after all other venues to peaceful resolution have been exhausted.

There is trust in the government to act within the parameters of national and international law and in the people of the United States to hold its government responsible for any misuse of the armed forces.

War, we are told before signing the enlistment document, will only be our last recourse, and will only occur to protect our country--or perhaps to advance freedom and democracy.

It is no wonder then that servicemen and servicewomen have a hard time seeing the bigger picture, understanding that the senseless missions, that the risk of being raped by their peers, that the fear of taking human life without a noble reason, are all directly tied to the policies behind military action. The propagation of an inhuman, cruel, misogynist, and racist subculture in the military (to a significant degree, a reflection of the larger culture) is necessary to create the conditions in which a land and its people can be denied their sovereignty through military force. Military resisters don't necessarily know that--not right away, sometimes never. They may not be ready to tell themselves they were misused by their government to fight for profit or for reasons other than freedom and justice. They just know they don't want to go out there when they know they will commit a massacre, or when they know their lives will be surely wasted, or when they know they will be subject to command rape.

By and large, people resisting in the military, the 10,000 deserters reported last year, the units refusing to commit massacres, the truck drivers refusing suicide missions, the female soldiers who died of dehydration (they too resisted), are not necessarily progressive political thinkers. They just got punched in the face, and fell flat on their backs.

The antiwar movement needs to become that hand that helps them get up. They have to be on their feet before they can move forward.

Before there can be a united front to end the occupation of Iraq, the antiwar movement should understand that the many struggles waged by servicemen and servicewomen against their mission and leadership are part of a painful process of realization that something has gone awfully wrong.

IN THIS book, I write about my first real act of resistance, which took place in Jordan right before the invasion.

It was a matter simple enough to go unnoticed in the United States, but which I conducted with the secrecy of one who is engaged in treason. I asked a soldier in my squad to take a picture of me holding a sign that said: GIVE PEACE A CHANCE.

When that picture was taken, I was not a politically aware person. I was informed enough to be against the war on political grounds, but had I gotten out of Iraq shortly

after that picture was taken, I would have never considered becoming an activist, nor would I have ever believed that I could be one.

That first act of resistance was followed by a slightly bolder one when I stood up for a soldier who was being abused by our leadership. At the time, I did not know that the same cruelty applied to that soldier would be applied to the people of Iraq once we got there, only with more force and on a much greater scale.

Small acts of resistance that respond to very specific situations in the battlefield or elsewhere in the military are directly tied to the larger injustice of war and occupation, but GI resisters may need help seeing that connection. In order to help them see the broader picture, we must meet them exactly where they are and not where we want them to be.

That is why I think the work of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) is so crucial in ending the occupation of Iraq.

IVAW was founded by seven Iraq war veterans at the VFP convention in Boston, Massachusetts, in July of 2004. Our membership consists of active duty and reserve service members as well as of veterans who have served in the U.S. military since September 11, 2001.

The three stated goals of IVAW are the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all occupying forces from Iraq, U.S. government reparations to the people of Iraq so they can rebuild their country on their own terms, and full benefits to all servicemen and servicewomen, and to all veterans. In order to reach our goals, we are dedicating ourselves to removing military support for the war.

We are organizing active duty bases and guard and reserve armories, reaching out to veterans, and going into schools to teach the youth about war and military life so they can make informed decisions about joining the service.

The most ambitious project we have at this time is the organizing of the Winter Soldier Investigation: Iraq and Afghanistan. From March 13 to 16, 2008, we are bringing to Washington, D.C., more than one hundred U.S. veterans and civilians from Iraq and Afghanistan to testify about atrocities committed by our military in those countries. We hope not only to provide an honest picture of the awful reality of those two wars, so that people in the United States can finally see what their government is doing in their name, but also to organize the servicemen and servicewomen who may feel alone in their opposition to the occupation of Iraq.

With the larger peace movement and with the mentorship of our predecessors in Vietnam Veterans Against the War and VFP, we can help young servicemen and servicewomen channel their energy into a path of resistance that leads to justice. Their journey, and ours as we walk with them, is a long and winding one, but one we cannot afford to abandon.

As with the writing of this memoir, the reasons why GIs embark on their different journeys of resistance may vary over time, and may have little to do with what we initially tell ourselves.

But when we find our voices as a way to reclaim our love for humanity and our dedication to justice, there can be no punishment severe enough to keep us quiet.

Speaking out becomes the moral fabric that keeps our existence together.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

NO SHIT? WHAT A BIG SURPRISE!

“Obama’s Choice Of The Word ‘Reduce’ Rather Than ‘Withdraw’ May Be A Tip Of The Hand”

[Right. And a 80 foot wall of water headed straight for you “may be” a tsunami. T]

September 29, 2008 By Lance Selfa, Socialist Worker [Excerpt]

Regarding the future, Obama noted that “in 16 months, we should be able to reduce our combat troops.”

Perhaps lost on most listeners, Obama’s choice of the word “reduce” rather than “withdraw” may be a tip of the hand.

Formerly, Obama had pledged to withdrawal “combat troops” from Iraq, which would have still left thousands of support troops and mercenaries deployed in Iraq.

CLASS WAR REPORTS

CEO Beaten To Death By Laid-Off Workers; “Other Executives Said That They Were Lucky To Escape With Their Lives”

[Thanks to Al Jaccoma, The Military Project, who sent this in.]

September 23, 2008 The Times [Excerpts]

Corporate India is in shock after workers bludgeoned to death the chief executive who sacked them from a factory in a suburb of Delhi.

Lalit Kishore Choudhary, 47, the head of the Indian operations of Graziano Transmission, a manufacturer of car parts that has its headquarters in Italy, died of severe head wounds on Monday after being attacked by scores of laid-off employees, police said.

The incident, in Greater Noida, followed a long-running dispute between the factory's management and workers demanding better pay and permanent contracts.

It is understood that Mr Choudhary, had called a meeting with more than a hundred former employees who had been dismissed after an earlier outbreak of violence at the plant.

A police spokesman said: "Only a few people were called inside. About 150 people were waiting outside when they heard someone from inside shout for help. They rushed in and the two sides clashed. The company staff were heavily outnumbered."

Other executives said that they were lucky to escape with their lives. "I locked my door from inside and prayed they would not break in. See, my hands are trembling even three hours later," one Italian consultant told reporters.

Thousands of violent protesters recently forced Tata, the Indian conglomerate that owns Land Rover and Jaguar, to halt work on a plant being built to produce the world's cheapest car, the £1,250 Nano. The move could result in £200 million in investment costs being written off.

Other companies, including Vedanta, the London-listed mining company, have encountered similar problems in India.

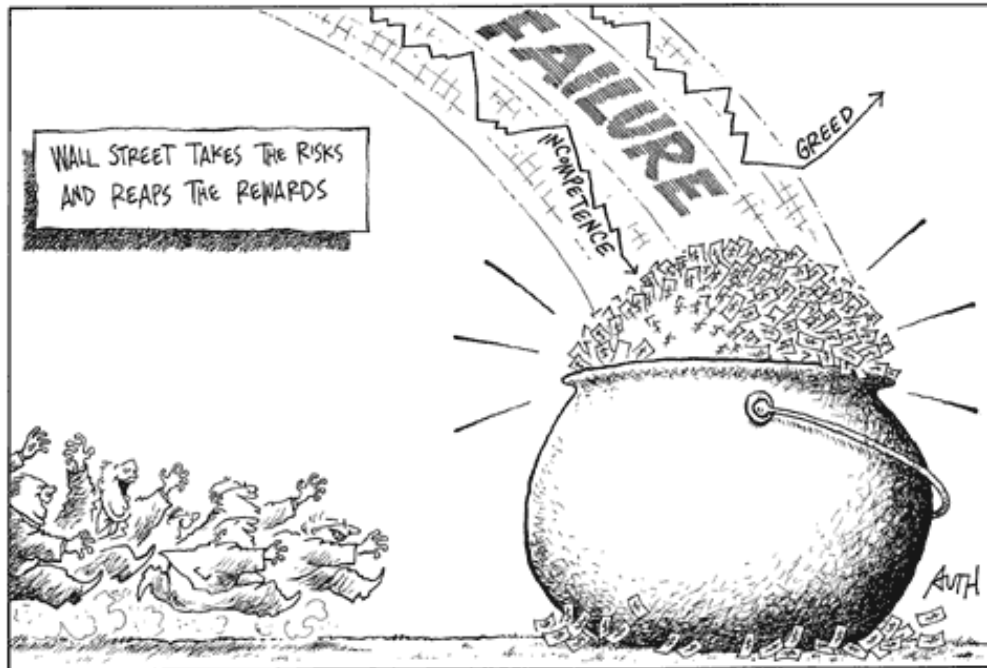
NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupations 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 to Imperial wars 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/)



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