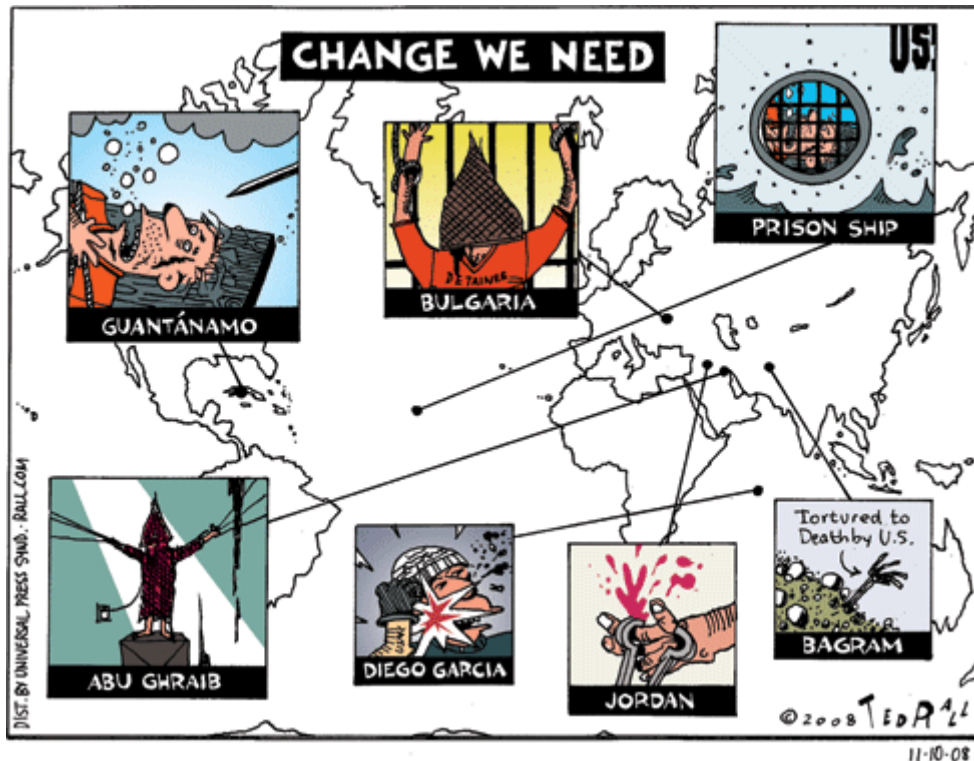


GI SPECIAL 6K12:



Poisoned:

**“It’s A Shame That The Military
Says It’s Not Harmful”**

**“A Review Of My Medical Records
Shows No Mention Of My Sickness
While In Balad — All Records Of
My Time There Were Purged”**

**“The Fact That DoD Says It’s Safe
Just Makes No Sense At All”
“It’s A Disgrace That The Air Force Will
Not Fully Acknowledge The Burn Pits’
Effects Towards All The People Who
Have Served At Balad”**



READER-SUBMITTED PHOTO: ARMY TIMES: 11.17.08

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

[See boldface in brackets below for SSGs' comments!]

11.17.08 Army Times [Excerpts]

Disabled American Veterans has issued a call to all service members and veterans who think they may have illnesses related to burn pits in Afghanistan and Iraq: Contact DAV so it can collect data and look for trends.

One Air Force bioenvironmental engineer, Lt. Col. Darrin Curtis, was so worried by the chemicals he believed were being released into troops' living and work spaces at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, that he warned: "In my professional opinion, the known carcinogens and respiratory sensitizers released into the atmosphere by the burn pit present both an acute and chronic health hazard to our troops and the local population."

Air Force officials say they had cleaned up the Balad burn pit as of June by using two incinerators and recycling plastic bottles. A report shows that tests in 2007 reflected an “acceptable risk” for cancer-causing and other poisonous toxins from the pit.

“It’s a fantastic before-and-after story,” said Army Capt. Lynn Thompson, waste management officer for Balad from March to October. “The contractor who runs the place is planning to build a tennis court about 100 meters west of the trenches.” **[And what is the 'after story?' Can the contractor be held responsible for tennis players who get sick?]**

Thompson said that he personally inspects the trenches every day, that the 147 tons of waste now burned are lumber and contractor-produced garbage, **[Theirs is different from military garbage? Tell me it doesn't stink!]** and that the pit no longer takes in paints, plastics, solvents, rubber or unexploded ordnance. Petroleum products are stored as hazardous material, rather than burned as they were in the past. The 90,000 plastic water bottles that used to go into the pit daily now are recycled.

The blackness of the pit’s plume is from dining facility vegetable oil and will be eliminated within two months, Thompson said. **[“That would be enough vegetable oil to deep fry a C 130,” says SSG N. (ret)].**

Service members told Military Times that they have asthma that was diagnosed after they left Balad; that they have allergy-like symptoms for the first time in their lives; that an unusual number of people in their units have developed cancer; that they are failing the runs on their physical fitness tests because of breathing problems; and that their headaches still haven’t gone away months after returning home.

One Army officer reported a brain tumor.

“The fact that DoD says it’s safe just makes no sense at all,” Baker said. “Dioxin was used in herbicides in Vietnam. Now it’s a byproduct of the burn pits.

“But you don’t just have dioxin — you have a list of other chemicals. We need to look at the combined effect of all these chemicals.” John Bradley, a legislative consultant for DAV, said the group can look for a positive association between a deployment and disease, and that can lead VA to presume the diseases were caused by this war. The proof shouldn’t rest on the veteran, he said.

Army Staff Sgt. Danielle Nienajadlo said her time in Balad led to a nightmare that will haunt her forever.

Immediately upon arrival, she said she started coughing and blowing out black stuff. Soon, she lost her appetite. She felt nauseated, constantly tired and had trouble breathing.

She went to sick call several times, only to be told she might be stressed out.

As a vehicle mechanic, she spent much time at the motor pool near the burn pit. When she ran for fitness training, she inhaled the noxious fumes. She said the smoke constantly hung over her living quarters.

“We were always covered in ash and dirt,” she said. “People got bloody noses and headaches.”

Once, she stayed up all night with hot sweats and a fever, so she went to the emergency room and begged doctors to draw her blood.

They did. Her white blood cell count was over the top: She had leukemia.

She believes the burn pit served as a catalyst for her cancer.

“I know I got it out there,” she said.

After a full course of chemotherapy at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, where she remains, she said she’s doing better. But she will be checked every three weeks for the next five years.

“I’m in remission,” she said. “I know I’m blessed. If I’d waited another day, I would’ve died.”

MORE:

**Unlike Assorted Lying DoD Scum,
The Troops Describe Reality:
“It Amazes Me That Officials Say It’s
Not Hazardous, Yet Somehow You
Mysteriously Develop These
Problems After You Get There”
“There’s No Way That Stuff Was Not
Harmful”**



Smoke rises from a burn pit at Joint Base Balad, Iraq: Reader-submitted photo

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
11.17.08

I was stationed at Joint Base Balad in Iraq last year for about a month on my last deployment with the 202nd Red Horse Squadron.

I remember seeing the ashes fall from the burn pit on the job.

I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma this past February and finished treatments a few weeks ago. I received a discharge because of the cancer this past July with 10 years of service. My family has no history of this type of cancer.

I really believe that this came from my last deployment overseas in Balad.

From what I know, I am one of four people in my unit to be diagnosed with cancer in the past two years, with less than 200 people in the squadron.

Former Air Force Staff Sgt. Edward Lee Buquo
Camp Blanding, Fla.

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
11.17.08

I was stationed at Balad from December 2005 through May 2006.

I am a firefighter and was tasked countless times to extinguish the blaze at the pit when smoke impaired the towers' view of the airfield.

We inhaled that disgusting stuff while performing our duty. It was bad enough just living on the base breathing the poor-quality air, but driving around in the pit was horrendous.

While I understand that air sanitation was not at the forefront of anyone's mind going into Iraq, let us not pretend that the smoke is not a health hazard.

Air Force Tech. Sgt. Rusty Thomason
Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
11.17.08

My duties in air transportation placed me downwind from a burn pit.

The smoke would often choke out our cargo grid yard for days at a time.

I spent 12-plus hours a day, four to six days a week, for six months breathing black smoke that often made myself and others gag.

We could see in the burn pit not only plastics on the flames, but also old scrap metal such as tin and razor wire. Sometimes you could taste the metal in the smoke.

I'm experiencing problems with my lungs since about halfway through my deployment.

The clinic told me I had a respiratory infection. However, my breathing problems are ongoing and the inhalers I have been prescribed provide only minimal relief.

My run time for the 1½ -mile run went from about 10 ½ minutes to 13:59 in six months.

Judging by the lack of improvement in my lungs, I am looking at a debilitating condition.

My concern is my responsibility to maintain the Air Force standard for physical fitness and mission readiness.

I cannot fill the requirements in my current condition and the doctors, while concerned, don't have the background knowledge on what I was exposed to.

Name withheld

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
11.17.08

It's a disgrace that the Air Force will not fully acknowledge the burn pits' effects towards all the people who have served at Balad.

Where is the inspector general or investigation services?

Is the Air Force planning on force shaping our own Bio/Health services so there will be less complaints brought up the chain?

Name withheld

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
11.17.08

I was based at Balad from March 2004 to February 2005. Even though I was located on the opposite side of the base from the burn pit, at times, the smoke from the burn pit would bank down so low that it was like driving through a forest fire.

Army Reserve Sgt. 1st Class John Wingfield
Fort Knox, Ky.

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
11.17.08

My story is about Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, a Marine Corps air station similar to Balad.

The company I was with in Iraq experienced many headaches, migraines and shortness of breath.

While some of us were fortunate to sleep in the center of the base, away from the smoke pits, there were also Marines sleeping next to the smoke pits.

The Marines who happened to be exposed were constantly going to medical with headaches and migraines.

Medical told them to suck it up and shut up.

One Marine did some research and concluded that the smoke from the garbage pit was causing the problems.

He showed the information to medical, who finally contacted our commanding officer, and he had them moved immedi-ately. All this took place five or six months into the deployment.

Name withheld

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
11.17.08

I was deployed (to Balad) with the 332nd Joint Expeditionary Operations Support Squadron from January to May 2005.

The burn pit was a huge source of anger for just about everyone I knew there.

The smoke would routinely hover over parts of the airfield during the late-night and early-morning hours because of temperature inversions keeping the plume on the surface or just above. This delayed many flights and was a hazard for medevac missions.

Upon outprocessing, we were told that testing concluded that the smoke was nontoxic and not harmful to anyone in the vicinity.

We were even told to sign a form — I think it was one of those waiver-of-liability type of things.

Every one of us looked at each other like, “You’ve gotta be kidding me.”

There’s no way that stuff was not harmful.

Name withheld

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
11.17.08

I served at Balad from November 2003 until February 2004.

The stench of that burn pit with the heavy particulates hung over our tent city every day, and it was particularly bad at night — like a dark fog.

I got my first upper respiratory infection after being there a month and nearly had bronchitis.

I had never been so sick in my life. I went to sick call, and the doctor said lots of people were reporting the same symptoms.

I recently retired from the Air Force Reserve.

A review of my medical records shows no mention of my sickness while in Balad — all records of my time there were purged.

Twice a year since my re-turn, I have developed the same sickness, almost like clockwork. A trip to the doctor and a week of antibiotics, and I am fine.

Former Air Force Reserve Sgt. Eric Gibeaut
Columbia, S.C.

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
11.17.08

I was deployed to Balad from September 2007 through mid-Jan-uary 2008.

All day, every day, all you saw was that plume of smoke rising out of the burn pit. It was worse at night, the smoke would settle on the ground like a thick fog.

It would get so bad that it literally choked you.

There was no relief from it; it would seep into our living quarters, making it difficult to sleep or even relax. You would blow your nose and get nothing but

black nasty mucus, plus the wheezing, sinus problems, headaches and eye irritation.

It amazes me that officials say it's not hazardous, yet somehow you mysteriously develop these problems after you get there.

The officials need to do what they tell us: Suck it up — and take care of the troops who have been exposed.

Name withheld

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
11.17.08

I was stationed at Balad from January to June 2006.

The burn pit was constantly burning — day and night.

When we drove by it, everything imaginable was in there. Destroyed vehicles from IEDs to old Iraqi vehicles abandoned during the takeover.

I worked 100 yards from the burn pit, and on any given night, if the wind blew the right way, we would step outside and walk into a fog of smoke and stench.

I never had migraines before deploying to Iraq, but I was in such pain there that one night I had to go to the hospital and get IVs for morphine and another medication so I would stop throwing up.

Since then, I've had a few of the same type of headache, but not as bad.

I received a copy of the memo for my medical records stating that the burn pit could cause adverse effects.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Scott A. Chamberlain
Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
11.17.08

This is a problem not only at Balad but also at Camp Al Taqaddum.

During my tour there last year, I was a maintenance chief, and my Marines worked outside 24 hours a day.

Most nights there would be soot or ash falling, and we would breathe this stuff in all night.

I also recall many nights waking up in my little 6-by-8 ply-wood hooch thinking it was filled with smoke because the taste and the smell was so thick.

During the day, you could see usually two separate burns going at the same time with plumes of smoke so black we thought that an oil line was set ablaze.

Many of us had the “crud” (hacking coughs, a lot of mucus) for most of the deployment, and like most, we had to suck it up and chalk it up to the environment we were in.

Marine Corps staff sergeant, name withheld

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
11.17.08

I was at Balad in 2007 and 2008, and the burn pit is the nastiest thing you can imagine. Constant black smoke billows out, and if there is no wind, it settles on the base like a thick fog in which you can't breathe.

I noticed headaches and sinus issues during my deployments there. Also, you can forget doing any sort of PT with the nasty air. Your lungs would burn if you tried to work out in that.

The constant smell and toxins it produces into the air must have some serious long-term effects on personnel.

It's a shame that the military says it's not harmful.

Air Force Tech. Sgt. Arthur A. DuReitz
Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
11.17.08

While I was deployed to Camp Bucca, Iraq, in 2006 and 2007, I recall sitting in a tower or doing simple roving patrols around my compound and having to wear a mask to help with breathing.

There would be a nasty haze floating over the camp; sometimes there were even reduced visibility warnings.

Senior Airman Veronica Nieto
Minot Air Force Base

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
11.17.08

When I was deployed to Iraq last year, we had a burn pit about a mile from our forward operating base.

That burn pit was no joke.

The locals would throw in anything and everything imaginable. They also used dangerous chemicals, such as diesel fuel, to (burn) it.

We had to don gas masks several times because the fumes were absolutely noxious and painful to your lungs. It constantly smelled like nail polish remover and ammonia.

Name withheld

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
11.17.08

I was deployed to Camp Lemonier, Djibouti, for six months. During that time, our living units were about 50 yards from a burn pit.

On the days after the nights when it was really bad, I couldn't even taste the food I was eating, and I could still smell it — it was on my clothes and eventually saturated the walls and bed in my living quarters.

The report I was given when I left says there are no ill effects of exposure. It does outline what was burned, which was anything with the exception of ammunition and batteries.

A lot of us were waving the red flag while we were there, and nobody really seemed to care, nor do they now when I bring it up.

I simply get the question, "Do you feel sick now?" Last I checked, long-term effects don't appear a month after you get back.

Senior Airman Thomas McCaulla
Randolph Air Force Base, Texas

Letters To The Editor
Army Times

11.17.08

While deployed in Djibouti from September 2006 to March 2007, I was also exposed to smoke from an incinerator on a daily basis.

The black, acrid smoke cloud would engulf the base almost every night. In March 2007, I suffered a collapsed lung just as my tour ended.

Coincidence? I don't know, but I made sure to include a reference to the smoke issue in my service record.

Name withheld

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

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

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

**Has He Lost His Mind? Can He See
Or Is He Blind?
"Shitty TC Flips The Fuck Out"**

November 10, 2008 By Joe; Fobbits Need Ice Cream Too; Kbrsecurity.blogspot.com/

Age: 23

Gender: Male

Industry: Military

Occupation: Ice Cream Man

Location: An Nasiriyah, Scania, BIAP, TQ, Taji, Balad, Mosul, Baqubah: Iraq

So we're on the FOB up north, cruising over to billets to draw a tent, grab our rucks and rack out for the night. It rains heavy up north now, almost everyday.

The FOB we usually take trucks to is a dusty, man-made KBR dump. When it rains it turns into a mud pit, and the entrance into the parking lot for gun trucks has mostly washed away.

There are 4 foot deep trenches flanking either side of the entrance, and now the turn in is so narrow that a humvee can't fit through without taking one trench or the other. I did not see that it was deep on both sides; just my side on the left side of the truck because the driver in an 1151 cannot see the right side of the truck because of the radio brackets.

I hit it on the right side, and Shitty TC flips the fuck out.

He screams over the radio (everyone in the truck has a headset with microphone capable of talking on truck internal, escort internal or theater net local), and when I park, immediately jumps out and comes over and yells at me about 2 inches from my head.

All the crews in the lot are getting ready to push back south, and I have 30 fellow Joes staring in our direction as I get cut down.

I had my fists clenched, and was getting ready to open up on him when the little bit of sanity left in my head advised me to walk away.

After I left, he smoked Misfit in the mud because Misfit refused to take a side when Shitty TC asked him if he thought I could have avoided the ditch or not.

I went to the bravo team leader and asked for his advice and was basically told that everyone's hands are tied with Shitty TC because he is getting out of the Army as soon as we get back (he is on stop-loss).

I've never met a more bipolar person or a bigger failure of a human being.

One of his character quirks is that he's in constant competition with everyone, even if they are unaware that they are in a competition.

One of the ways he "wins" is when our truck is the first one ready, even if it means we don't eat chow or get enough sleep.

When everyone else rolls up to the lot to move out, he yells at the other TCs for being late.

He forgot his iPod the other day and we had to wait while he walked back to get it at his ancient 41 year old pace, and were about 20 minutes late to the lot.

One of the other TCs, also a corporal, took the opportunity to let Shitty TC know that he was late.

Shitty TC flipped out and the other TC, CPL Canada, just let loose on Shitty TC. Told him he was a failure of a person; a 41 year old man who lives at home with his parents, is a 3-time felon and a terrible NCO.

I had to get back into the truck to avoid laughing.

The Command Sergeant Major has been riding in our convoys the past week; his first time outside the wire in about 6 months. He walks around our convoys when we are at the lot, yelling at us to put headgear on and wear our DAPS.

DAPS are the Deltoid Auxillary Protection System; these stupid kevlar flaps that hang from our shoulders. They are worthless and cumbersome and up until the relieving unit arrived, we weren't required to wear them.

They look like this.



The CSM gathered us up let us know that we look fucked up when we don't wear all our protection gear.

Two more weeks until these shitheads cut out early, leaving us with the new guys to answer any last minute questions or concerns.

We are ordered to await the arrival from the rest of our battalion from up north before we can begin the outprocess, uh, process and head back stateside for de-mobe.

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/)

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



A U.S. soldier of 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division secures the area in Fadhiliah, eastern Baghdad, Iraq, Oct. 22, 2008. (AP Photo/Petros Giannakouris)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Soldier From 2nd Battalion The Royal Ghurkha Rifles Killed In Helmand

16 Nov 08 Ministry of Defence

It is with great regret that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that a soldier from 2nd Battalion the Royal Ghurkha Rifles was killed as a result of an explosion in the Musa Qala District of Helmand Province on Saturday 15 November 2008.

The soldier was taking part in a routine road move when the vehicle he was traveling in struck an explosive device.

Two U.S. Soldiers Wounded In Herat

11.16.08 (CNN)

Two U.S. soldiers were wounded Sunday after their convoy was attacked by a car bomber in western Afghanistan, the military said.

The attack on two U.S. soldiers occurred in the city of Herat.

Blinding Flash Of The Obvious

“I’m an American and America’s been bombing them and they can’t get back, so if they get hold of an American they’d like to get back at him,” the engineer said.

“We’ve taken a lot of Afghan blood,” the engineer said, “so they wanted mine.”

Anonymous U.S. businessman taken prisoner in Afghanistan and rescued by U.S. troops. Quoted By Sean D. Naylor, Army Times 11.17.08

TROOP NEWS

“What Would I Feel Like If Somebody Did This To Me?”

November 16, 2008 By Tony Perry, Los Angeles Times [Excerpts]

“Lioness,” showing this week on PBS’ “Independent Lens” series, is an up-close look at the evolving role of women in the U.S. military — not just in traditional roles as nurses and support personnel but as weapon-toting frontline troops.

Staff Sgt. Ranie Ruthig, a mechanic who never expected to fire a weapon, remembers a late-night mission in which troops forced their way into Iraqi homes to search for weapons and insurgents.

“I felt like the Gestapo,” she said. “All I could think of was ‘What would I feel like if somebody did this to me?’ “

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 contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Replies confidential. Same address to unsubscribe. Phone: 917.677.8057

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

“Iraq Cannot Handle Any More Of This Occupation” “We Want -- Today And Not Tomorrow -- To See Them Go”

16 November 2008 AFP [Excerpt]

Asadi said he was certain the Americans will not stick to the timetable of the agreement, which requires them to leave Iraqi cities by the end of June 2009 and the country as a whole by the end of 2011.

“I don't think the day will ever come when the American forces leave Iraq, especially after they have built all these bases here,” he said, referring to the more than 400 US bases in the country.

“For them the occupation of Iraq has been a dream come true. How are they going to give up this joy?” he said, chuckling.

“I am obliged to wait at this checkpoint for the next seven months, and we are going to see American forces driving through the streets of Baghdad without any hesitation.”

Ali Hossam, a 29-year-old civil servant passing through the checkpoint, was more optimistic about the agreement.

“I support the decision on the agreement because it serves the Iraqi people, and in its form and content it will end the occupation,” he said.

“It was the occupation that encouraged the sectarianism in this country.

“It's the occupation that caused the destruction of the country.”

Abu Mustafa, a shopowner down the street, also backs the pact.

“Iraq cannot handle any more of this occupation, and we want -- today and not tomorrow -- to see them go and leave the decisions to us.”

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

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

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

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

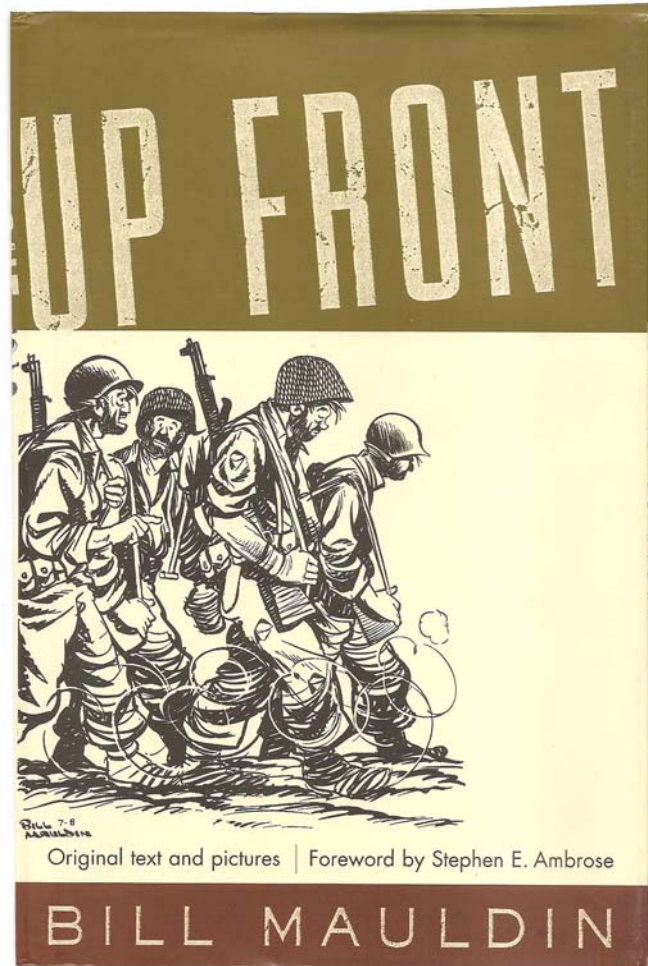
One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
December 13, 2004

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

**"It Is A Tremendous Relief To Get A
Little Breath Of Democracy And
Freedom Of Speech Into This**

Atmosphere Of Corporals And Generals” [Bill Mauldin’s War]



[Thanks to Comrade Tribune, Vietnam Veterans, who sent in the book.]

By Bill Mauldin, Up Front, Henry Holt and Company, Inc., New York, 1945 [Excerpts]

I don't make the infantryman look noble, because he couldn't look noble even if he tried. Still there is a certain nobility and dignity in combat soldiers and medical aid men with dirt in their ears.

They are rough and their language gets coarse because they live a life stripped of convention and niceties.

Their nobility and dignity come from the way they live unselfishly and risk their lives to help each other. They are normal people who have been put where they are, and whose actions and feelings have been molded by their circumstances.

If the campaign in Holland is taking up all the space, it burns the guys in Italy to read how “minor patrol action and comparative quiet continue on the Italian front, with no progress reported.”

To a soldier in a hole, nothing is bigger or more vital to him than the war which is going on in the immediate vicinity of his hole.

If nothing is happening to him, and he is able to relax that day, then it is a good war, no matter what is going on elsewhere.

But if things are rough, and he is sweating out a mortar barrage, and his best friend is killed on a patrol, then it is a rough war for him, and he does not consider it “comparatively quiet.”

It’s very hard to compose a letter that will pass the censors when you are tired and scared and disgusted with everything that’s happening.

It’s an accepted fact that you must be totalitarian in an army. The guys know that, but sometimes it chafes a little.

That’s why we do more bitching and groaning than any other army.

And that’s why it is a tremendous relief to get a little breath of democracy and freedom of speech into this atmosphere of corporals and generals and discipline and officers’ latrines.

It’s a big relief even when it has to come from a little four-page newspaper.

Look at an infantryman’s eyes and you can tell how much war he has seen.

Look at his actions in a bar and listen to his talk and you can also tell how much he has seen.

If he is cocky and troublesome, and talks about how many battles he’s fought and how much blood he has spilled, and if he goes around looking for a fight and depending upon his uniform to get him extra-special privileges, then he has not had it.

If he is looking very weary and resigned to the fact that he is probably going to die before it is over, and if he has a deep, almost hopeless desire to go home and forget it all; if he looks with dull, uncomprehending eyes at the fresh-faced kid who is talking about the joys of battle and killing Germans, then he comes from the same infantry as Joe and Willie.

Every other army gets a liquor ration.

Drinking, like sex, is not a question of should or shouldn't in the army.

It's here to stay, and it seems to us here that the best way to handle it is to understand and recognize it, and to arrange things so those who have appetites can satisfy them with a minimum of trouble for everybody.

We have a pretty strong hunch that the army doesn't keep drinkin' likker out of our reach because the War Department is stupid.

It's only because the home folks would scream their heads off at any hint of the clean-cut lads overseas besotting themselves.

So stuff is bought at very high prices from street vendors over here. The dogfaces love to tell the story of the curious soldier who sent a bottle of cognac to a chemist friend for an analysis. In due time the report came back. It informed the soldier that his horse had kidney trouble. . .

A liquor ration would seem to be a desirable thing.

The British soldier gets a spot of whisky regularly, the size of the spot depending upon his rank. He gets a little beer also.

And the Frenchman gets his wine. It's not much, but his palate is soothed with honest liquor which makes him unable to bear the smell, let alone the taste, of the home-distilled stuff the Americans are forced to drink because they can get nothing else.

The Arabs used to gather discarded British whisky bottles, fill them with unmentionable substances, and sell the hooch to the Americans for ten dollars a bottle.

The ideal officer in any army knows his business.

He is firm and just. He is saluted and given the respect due a man who knows enough about war to boss soldiers around in it. He is given many privileges, which all officers are happy to accept and he is required, in return, to give certain things which a few officers choose to ignore.

I try to make life as miserable as possible for those few.

An officer is not supposed to sleep until his men are bedded down. He is not supposed to eat until he has arranged for his men to eat.

Since I am an enlisted man, and have served under many officers, I have a great deal of respect for the good ones and a great deal of contempt for the bad ones.

A man accepts a commission with his eyes open and, if he does not intend to take responsibilities as well as privileges, he is far lower than the buck private who realizes his own limitations and keeps that rank.

I never worry about hurting the feelings of the good officers when I draw officer cartoons.

I build a shoe, and if somebody wants to put it on and loudly announce that it fits, that's his own affair.

A few of them have done it, to the subsequent enjoyment of the guys who read the letters to the editor in the Mail Call section of *Stars and Stripes*.

One poor lieutenant — let's call him Smith to be on the safe side — wrote that instead of picking on officers, I should stop and consider the stupid antics of enlisted men whom he had observed in his three years' service.

Several letters came back — not defending me, but putting the blast on the lieutenant for being foolish enough to call soldiers stupid.

I remember one of the letters very well. It began:

“ . . . I pick up the October 23rd issue of *Stars and Stripes* and what do I see but a letter from my old pal, Lt. Smith. The last I heard from 'Stinky' Smith, he was studying for his third attempt to make a score of 110 in his General Classification test in order to qualify for OCS. . . . Now, 'Stinky,' when you worked in my poultry house in 1940, picking turkeys for \$14 a week, neither myself nor the other boys regarded you as a mental giant. Quite the contrary . .

This undoubtedly provided the boys in Lieutenant Smith's outfit with considerable glee.

A very different and very interesting letter was written by a colonel of artillery.

He said: “ . . . being Regular Army, my father before me, and his father before him, one of the first things I learned at West Point was to respect the enlisted soldier of the United States Army. . . “

The colonel, for my money, is the perfect officer. He is a professional soldier, he likes the army, he likes his job, he likes the men under him, and he knows his business.

He carries his rank easily because he is capable of earning respect without ramming his eagles down somebody's throat.

I will throw the gentleman a salute any time I meet him, and I will look him in the eye while I'm doing it.

The army is his home, and while I am in it he is the host whose rules I must respect. In civilian life, if he comes into my home, I am the host, and it is obvious that he is going to be enough of a gentleman to abide by my rules.

I've thrown a drawing or two at the regular army, because too many mess sergeants with thirty years in the army have been made temporary majors and lieutenant colonels, and they are making the most of their moments of glory.

Even after four long years in the army I still disagree with some of the officer-enlisted man traditions. But I'm not rabid about it.

If the men who wrote the rules prefer their own exclusive bathrooms and latrines, that's okay with me. But if the officer is going to have a tent over his latrine in the field, how about one for me?

I might not be as important as he is, but I can get just as wet.

And keep him out of my latrine when the weather is bad, and his latrine is farther away than mine.

If he wishes to eat at his own table, and wants me to wash his dishes because he has weighty problems on his mind and no time for dishwashing, then I understand.

But let him keep his hands off my own kitchen's canned orange juice.

Many old line officers are no doubt shocked at a spirit of passive rebellion which occasionally shows itself in this citizen army.

That's the whole answer.

It is a citizen army, and it has in its enlisted ranks many men who in civil life were not accustomed to being directed to the back door and the servant quarters.

To taking orders, yes; but to taking indignities, no.

It doesn't hurt us. Nearly everybody needs a little humbling from time to time. If the army maintains these customs to prevent undue fraternization between the ruling class and the working class, on the theory that familiarity breeds contempt, then perhaps the army is right.

But most combat outfits scrap tradition, as they scrap many other things, when they go into battle.

An unpleasant noncommissioned officer can often make life a lot more miserable for the men under him than an officer can, simply because there are certain restrictions on the behavior of officers.

An officer can be court-martialed for calling an enlisted man a son of a bitch, but that, coming from some sergeants who have complete mastery of the army language, can be taken as a small compliment.

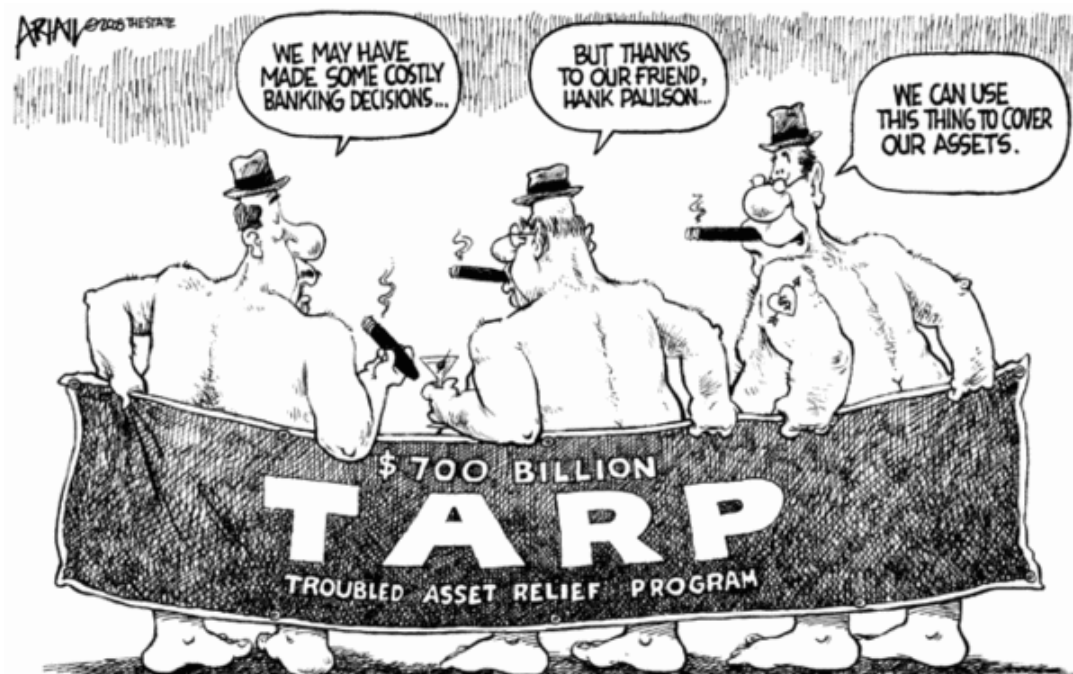
Also, an officer usually lives a little apart from the boys, so if he says there's to be no gambling, it's easy enough to get a flashlight and hold an exclusive little game under a blanket. But a corporal, bucking for a third stripe, can crawl right in there with you and turn you in if he loses.

The infantry in combat doesn't worry much about rank.

One company I know of had two sets of noncoms for a while. One set led squads and patrols when the outfit was committed.

After the company was pulled back to a rest area, this first set lined up to be busted, and an entirely different set — those who had more of an eye for regulations and discipline — took over while the others went out and got tight.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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

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CLASS WAR REPORTS



Taxi Drivers In A Third Chinese City Have Gone On Strike, Testing The Central Government's Tolerance For Worker Demonstrations;

The Chongqing Strike, Which Began Nov. 3, “Made An Impact” “People Noticed That It Worked”



Chinese police right an overturned taxi last week after angry taxi drivers attacked colleagues who refused to join their strike in Chongqing. Agence France-Presse/Getty Images

NOVEMBER 13, 2008 By SKY CANAVES, Wall St. Journal [Excerpts]

Taxi drivers in a third Chinese city have gone on strike, testing the central government's tolerance for worker demonstrations in a time of growing labor-market concerns.

On Wednesday, hundreds of taxi drivers in the resort city of Sanya on the southern island province of Hainan entered the third day of a strike over fees paid to taxi companies and competition from unlicensed taxis.

About 1,500 miles away, roughly 150 drivers in Yongdeng County in northwest China's Gansu province returned to work after a strike that began Monday, following promises by local authorities to eradicate competing illegal taxis within 10 days.

The two strikes follow last week's walkout of about 9,000 drivers in Chongqing, an event that generated an unusual degree of attention from public officials.

It is unclear whether the latest strikes were related to the Chongqing strike, but labor experts said the example set by the first strike as well as the government's positive response were likely a factor.

The Chongqing strike, which began Nov. 3, “made an impact,” said Zhou Litai, a Chongqing-based labor-rights lawyer. “People noticed that it worked.”

That attention underscores official concerns about maintaining social stability as China's economic growth, red-hot in recent years, slows to a pace that may not provide enough jobs and wealth for a hungry population.

Authorities are especially sensitive to urban protests because they are potentially more disruptive than rural unrest or strikes by factory workers in city suburbs. Observers are bracing for more labor unrest as businesses close or lay off workers.

“There's a lot more coming, though the government will probably take a very flexible approach to the strikes as long as it's in their interests to do so,” said Andreas Lauffs, a partner at the law firm of Baker & McKenzie who specializes in Chinese labor issues.

In Chongqing, where the strike stranded commuters around the city, officials vowed to provide more fuel supplies, eliminate extra fees that drivers are required to pay to taxi companies and crack down on unlicensed cabs that city cabbies said were stealing business. Last week, driver representatives received a rare audience with a high-ranking official. By that time, most of the taxi drivers already had returned to work.

Experts say that strikes by China's taxi drivers have occurred fairly regularly in recent years.

Mary Gallagher, an associate professor of political science at the University of Michigan, said drivers are generally well organized, can coordinate over their radio systems and “know they have a lot of power, being essential to transportation.” However, those strikes didn't receive the amount of government and media attention bestowed on the Chongqing strike.

In Sanya, the strike showed few signs of progress Wednesday.

No taxis were in service and dozens of drivers protested outside the city government offices, according to official news agency Xinhua.

Striking drivers added another demand to their list: the release of 28 people detained in connection with strike-related violence, the news service said.

Striking drivers were reported to have attacked others who continued working and to have smashed 15 vehicles during the previous days of the strike, it said.

Hu Wenzhong, the director of the Traffic Administration Department at the Sanya Communications Bureau, said that about a third of the city's roughly 1,000 licensed taxis had resumed work by 5:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Acting Mayor Wang Yong on Tuesday offered an apology to drivers and pledged to improve the taxi industry, according to state media. “Lots of issues exist in our transport management, and I apologize for that to the city's taxi drivers,” Xinhua quoted him as saying.

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