

GI SPECIAL 6K2:



“This Is The Freedom We’re Fighting In Iraq For, Huh?”

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

And if you think that either McCain or Obama, or any of their power friends, give the slightest shit about what happens to the citizens in this news story, you are out of your fucking mind. McCain and Obama are bought and paid for by the people who make this Denver courtroom happen, and to them, we’re merely an annoyance. Until we come calling on them in our millions, with our troops by our side.

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October 21, 2008 By Bill Johnson, Rocky Mountain News

As trials go, and I've sat through many, this wasn't much of one. It went pretty much like this:

Officer No. 1: I didn't actually see him break the law, but he was in a group of people the commander told me to arrest, so I did.

Officer No. 2: I didn't actually see her break the law, but she was in a group of people the commander told me to arrest, so I did.

City Attorney No. 1: Your honor, the prosecution rests.

If there is any justice still around, the four women and two men who make up the jury in Courtroom 282 of Denver County Court will this morning do what they often do on TV, tell Judge Kathleen Bowers that there is no need for deliberations, that they made up their minds, oh, three days ago: Not guilty.

I get what Denver is trying to do: If you have your police department corral, hose down with pepper spray and arrest more than 100 people in the middle of downtown during, of all things, the Democratic National Convention, you better darn well prosecute those who demand their day in court.

The problem it seems, as the first of the DNC trials got under way Monday, is that everyone who did the actual law-breaking likely has pleaded out already.

The scorecard thus far on the first five cases to reach Courtroom 282: three outright dismissals and two of the three charges against the remaining two defendants thrown out.

At the very least, if the jury was paying attention at all to the case I heard the prosecution put on Tuesday, the "not guilty" verdicts should be returned long before lunch today.

Eli Hardy and Tiffany Bray remain charged with obstructing a street or public passageway.

They were among the more than 100 people swept up by more than 100 police officers pursuing demonstrators in the early evening of Aug. 25 at 15th Street and Court Place.

They both maintain they were merely in the area at the time the protest march formed, wanted none of it, yet were prevented from leaving the area by the cordon thrown up by police.

Nothing the prosecution presented by the close of its case Tuesday proved otherwise.

Lonn Heymann and Qusair Mohamedbhai, attorneys for the two, looked at each other quite quizzically and for long moments when city attorneys told the judge they were resting their case.

“OK, who goes first?” I heard one of them say.

Lonn Heymann argued passionately that the charges should be dismissed immediately, even if the judge were to give the prosecution the best of things.

No one had seen Hardy or Bray do anything, much less testify to it.

He even said, “Are you kidding me?”

Assistant City Attorney Nate Fehrmann countered that the judge should at least let the jury decide. That officers had testified that members of the group with which Hardy and Bray were arrested had been seen, well, in the streets on that day.

You could tell the judge was torn. She took her time. She heard everyone out.

And in the end, Kathleen Bowers took the easiest and, perhaps, fairest route.

“Let’s let the jury decide,” she finally ruled.

Whatever the outcome, what I walked away with from Courtroom 282 could fill this newspaper.

The first thing is that being within spitting distance of any large crowd that is even remotely protesting anything means - and this truly is “anti-American” - arrest can happen virtually anytime.

Your day is ruined.

I will later tell the story of Tiffany Bray, of the fear and humiliation she endured on that summer day, an ordeal that even an acquittal today will never wash away.

Tiffany Bray was new in town and coming back from shopping when she was swept up and told by officers multiple times to just sit where she was standing, that if she did that, the officers would let her go home.

In her case, that was on the curb, her feet in the street.

Prosecutors on Tuesday tried to use that as proof she was blocking the street.

No matter what happens today to Eli Hardy and Tiffany Bray, the reality, too, is that more than 50 others like them are also due very shortly inside Courtroom 282.

It has taken three days now to adjudicate the two of them, a process that at minimum has involved a judge, her clerk, seven jurors, three to four city attorneys, three defense attorneys and a small forest of trees.

Numbers are not my friend, and I still cannot balance my checkbook, but even I know that is costing us - meaning you and me - a boatload of taxpayer cash.

Now multiply that number by at least 50.

And to what end?

It cannot be, not as I sit here, jailing and criminalizing Tiffany Bray and Eli Hardy.

Yet after hours spent in Courtroom 282, along with my personal road weariness, I must tell you that the system will say and do as it will.

And, in the end, quite sadly, it will do so on the flimsiest of proof.

Everything has lost its ability to surprise.

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

Friends, Family Mourn Loss Of Soldier From Eugene



Oct 27, 2008 By Molly Blancett, KVAL News

EUGENE, Ore. - Family members are mourning the loss of Private First Class Cody Eggleston.

Eggleston died Friday morning after being injured while fighting in Iraq almost two weeks ago.

The army said he was hit by indirect fire during a mortar attack in Baqubah on Oct. 16.

Eggleston's friends and family said the news hasn't been easy to handle.

"I'm barely hanging in there," said Eggleston's friend Kaitlyn Kite. "It's hard. I'm just trying to keep myself together."

"It's been pretty hard," said Eggleston's sister Kaytrina Jackson. "The family has been taking it pretty hard. I'm just trying to stay strong for my little sister."

Eggleston, known as C.J. by everyone, joined the military after high school.

"He said he would try to make it but things don't always work out," said Jackson.

Eggleston moved to Eugene from Redmond, Ore., in 2007 to finish school at North Eugene Alternative High School. Even though he lived in Eugene for less than a year, he made an impression.

"He definitely warmed up to us," said Tony Satej, the school's head teacher. "He came in being kind of being a conservative Eastern Oregon student and thought of us as a little wacky when he first came here."

Though he was only 21 when he died, his friends and family agree: he lived a full life.

"He did everything in his life that he wanted to do," said Kite. "He did. He accomplished it all. So him dying, he died as a happy person."

KVAL News talked to Eggleston's mom off-camera. She said she's numb.

When we asked her what she will miss the most about her son, she answered, "hearing him call me mommy".

Eggleston got married four months ago. His wife and six-year-old stepdaughter live in North Carolina. Eggleston's funeral is tentatively set for Saturday in Redmond, Ore.

Resistance Surging In Mosul:

“Any Day I Come Out On The Streets And Nobody Is Shooting At Me, Is A Good Day,’ Said An American Colonel”

02 Nov 2008 By Damien McElroy in Mosul. Telegraph (UK) [Excerpts]

Iraq has deployed extra troops, including two brigades of the paramilitary National Police, into the battle for the northern Sunni Arab city [Mosul], but the effort has been handicapped by widespread infiltration of the security forces by terrorist sympathizers [translation: anti-Occupation nationalists].

The debilitating influence of the insurgent factions has sapped confidence within the security forces operating in the city, according to Captain Nabeel Mutlak, a policeman in Mosul since 1996.

Terrorist [translation: anti-Occupation nationalist] penetration of all ranks is so pervasive that his off-duty colleagues are regularly killed, mostly in the street or at markets.

“They just shoot and run. Sometimes they use silencers even though they are in a crowded place,” he said.

“They know how to identify their victims because every neighbourhood has cells that find out who is working for the police, pass the information on and identify the victims. It’s impossible to stop.”

Raid Ranem has been jobless since a car bomb destroyed his shop at Burning Intersection in 2005. He used a visit by Governor Kashmula to the area to press his claims for compensation.

“I have nothing since I lost my business,” he said.

Hours after the governor’s visit a car bomb targeting a police patrol killed two officers.

“Any day I come out on the streets and nobody is shooting at me, is a good day,” said an American colonel accompanying the city’s commander, Lieutenant General Riyadh Jalal Tawfiq Riyadh, on a city centre walkabout.

U.S. OCCUPATION RECRUITING DRIVE IN HIGH GEAR;

RECRUITING FOR THE ARMED RESISTANCE THAT IS



Iraqi citizens are forced at gunpoint to get out of their house by foreign occupation soldiers from U.S. soldiers who also search their personal belongings during a home invasion in village near Baquba in Diyala province, some 65 km (40 miles) northeast of Baghdad October 23, 2008. REUTERS/Goran Tomasevic

[There's nothing quite like invading somebody else's country and busting into their houses by force to arouse an intense desire to kill you in the patriotic, self-respecting civilians who live there. But your commanders know that, don't they? Don't they?]

Iraqi citizens have no right to resist home invasions by occupation soldiers from the USA. If they do, they may be arrested, wounded, or killed.

"You go up the stairs. You grab the man of the house. You rip him out of bed in front of his wife. You put him up against the wall.

"You have junior-level troops, PFCs, specialists will run into the other rooms and grab the family, and you'll group them all together. Then you go into a room and you tear the room to shreds and you make sure there's no weapons or anything that they can use to attack us.

"You get the interpreter and you get the man of the home, and you have him at gunpoint, and you'll ask the interpreter to ask him: 'Do you have any weapons? Do you have any anti-US propaganda, anything at all--anything--anything in here that would lead us to believe that you are somehow involved in insurgent activity or anti-coalition forces activity?'

"Normally they'll say no, because that's normally the truth," Sergeant Bruhns said.

“So what you’ll do is you’ll take his sofa cushions and you’ll dump them. If he has a couch, you’ll turn the couch upside down.

“You’ll go into the fridge, if he has a fridge, and you’ll throw everything on the floor, and you’ll take his drawers and you’ll dump them.... You’ll open up his closet and you’ll throw all the clothes on the floor and basically leave his house looking like a hurricane just hit it.

“And if you find something, then you’ll detain him. If not, you’ll say, ‘Sorry to disturb you. Have a nice evening.’

“So you’ve just humiliated this man in front of his entire family and terrorized his entire family and you’ve destroyed his home. And then you go right next door and you do the same thing in a hundred homes.”

Sgt. John Bruhns

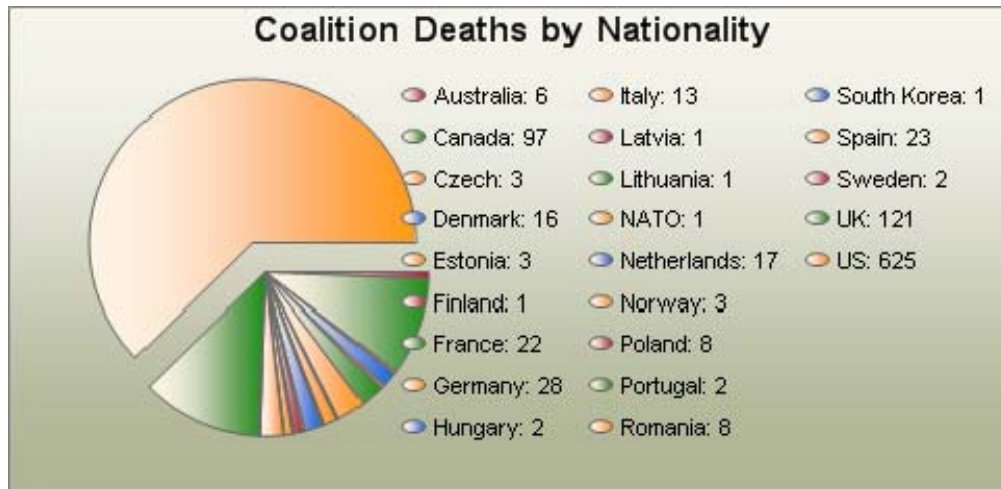
“In the States, if police burst into your house, kicking down doors and swearing at you, you would call your lawyer and file a lawsuit,” said Wood, 42, from Iowa, who did not accompany Halladay’s Charlie Company, from his battalion, on Thursday’s raid. “Here, there are no lawyers. Their resources are limited, so they plant IEDs (improvised explosive devices) instead.”

NEW GENERAL ORDER NO. 1: PACK UP, GO HOME



U.S. Army soldiers from 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment use a tank to pull a humvee from a flooded intersection in Mosul, Oct. 28, 2008. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS



icasualties.org/oef/

Family Remembers Marine Killed In Afghanistan; San Sim, 23, Was Weeks Away From Completing His Third Tour

October 24, 2008 By MICHAEL MELLO, Orange County Register

Lance Cpl. San Sim came from a family of pacifists.

His birthplace, the Phillipines, was ever a reminder of their journey from the terror of the Khmer Rouge. But after Sept. 11, 2001, Sim decided to fight.

Sim was shot to death while on routine patrol in Afghanistan this week, near the end of his third tour of duty. He was 23.

Seng Sim said his brother was shot Tuesday. He died Wednesday, the Department of Defense reported. A military attaché arrived at the family's home in Santa Ana that same day to notify them, Seng Sim said.

San Sim was part of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, based in Camp Pendleton and Twentynine Palms. They were due to return to the U.S. next month, First Lt. Curtis Williamson said.

Sim, a rifleman, and his unit headed to southwestern Afghanistan in April.

Their mission was security training for the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police, Williamson said, but “the situation on the ground dictated that they have more of a combat role. He was out there fighting.”

Afghanistan was Sim’s third tour abroad; he served twice in Iraq. He won commendations during his career, including two purple hearts. “He thought family was important, but that it was also important to help those who are suffering,” said Sim’s wife, Karla Sim.

It was that desire, she said, that pushed him to re-enlist after his initial four-year commitment.

“We’re really proud of him,” Seng Sim said.

Sim’s family settled in Santa Ana in 1985, after escaping Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge, and living in a refugee camp in Thailand. San Sim was the youngest of 11 children, born in the Philippines as his family worked to reach the U.S.

Several family members gathered at the Sim’s Santa Ana home, wearing white. Buddhists believe wearing white and keeping candles lit at the house helps to guide Sim’s spirit home. They will observe 100 days of remembrance.

Sim’s participation in the military clashed some with his family’s pacifist beliefs, but he felt strongly about his calling.

“He was proud of what he did,” said sister Serene Sim. “He felt like he was really doing something. After what happen on 9-11, he wanted to go out there and put in his own effort.” “He felt the need,” sister Yasmine Sim said, “to serve the country that gave us the opportunity to escape from war.”

Sim was in the process of gaining his citizenship; the rest of his family has already been naturalized. Family members said they will petition the government to award him citizenship posthumously.

Sim was a student at Santa Ana Valley High School, where he was a wrestler.

That’s where he also met military recruiters and kept in frequent contact with them.

“When he got out of high school, he wanted to do something for his country,” Seng Sim said. “Everything else could wait.”

Family was a big part of Sim’s life, evidenced by a pile of dozens of family photos at the Sim home.

He always seemed to surround himself with children, his sisters said. With 21 nephews and nieces, that wasn’t too difficult. In his spare time, he enjoyed fishing.

Sim’s body is expected to return stateside sometime next week. The Sim family mourns, but will wait for him to return to California before planning a memorial.

"We came to this country to escape war. And now he's died in war," Yasmine Sim said. "Our thoughts, prayers and wishes go out to the troops still out there."

Funeral Planned For Fallen Shelby County Soldier

Oct 17, 2008 By Donna McCollum, SHELBY COUNTY, TX, (KTRE)

A Shelby County teenager is one of three Fort Hood soldiers who has died in an explosion while serving in Afghanistan. The fallen soldier is Specialist Cory Bertrand, 18, of Center.

He was driving a Hum-Vee when the vehicle was bombed in Qazi bandeh, Afghanistan. The other fallen soldiers are Spc. Stephen Fortunato, 25, of Danvers, Mass., and Sgt. Preston Medley, 23, of Baker, Fla. They were assigned to the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division at Fort Hood.

Specialist Bertrand's family learned of his death on Wednesday.

Cory Bertrand's teenage years were spent playing in the front yard of a white frame house. His step grandparents live there in the Neuville area of Shelby County. His grandfather, Johnny Allen recalls the quality time they spent together. "We shot guns together and we walked the place here together. I do some mechanic work and he enjoyed being with me while I was doing that."

The country boy decided to join the Army at age 17. His young age, required his mother, Charlotte Allen to sign the enlistment papers. She agreed so her son could have the future he wanted. She's too sad to talk, but her pastor, Charles Boster, delivers her message.

"She would want people to understand that now is a great difficult time. She does not blame the country. She does not blame the government for sending him, but she would, she just hates the fact that he's dead and would like to have him back. "

Now there are only memories and pictures. Images that clearly show how a young boy quickly turned into a young man.

"Looking (at the photographs) you saw the difference in him. He had more determination in his eyes. His face seemed to have that look of being, 'I'm serious about what I'm doing and I really know he had come to realize that his purpose in life was fulfilled in being in the military,'" observed Boster. The family also spoke of how Cory's recognition of others broadened. "I think the military in this sense he seemed to understand that there are greater things than himself and you sensed that," shared Boster.

Cory was scheduled to come home next month for his 19th birthday and Thanksgiving.

His grandmother, Lillian Allen, was looking forward to the homecoming. Now she's preparing for a funeral. "He felt like he was doing his job to protect not only his family, but his country and he saw a purpose for his life," said Allen

Specialist Cory Bertrand will be honored with full military service at Mangum Funeral Home in Center. Services are pending until his body arrives to East Texas, sometime next week.

Specialist Bertrand is the third soldier with Shelby County ties to be killed in action.

Foreign Occupation Troops Give The Resistance Some Help

Nov. 2 (Xinhua)

Five Afghan National Army soldiers were wounded by friendly fire from the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in eastern Afghan province of Kunar on Sunday, an ISAF statement released here said.

"The ANA troops were on a patrol in the Pech district of Kunar in the vicinity of an ISAF combat outpost and ISAF troops fired on what they suspected were Anti-Afghan Forces [translation: Afghan nationalists fighting Imperial occupation] within the area," the statement said.

Two Captured Development Workers Freed By Resistance

Nov 2 (AFP)

Two Bangladesh development workers captured in central Afghanistan about 10 days ago by the Taliban have been freed without condition, their employer and the insurgent militia told AFP Sunday.

The men, both in their 40s, were snatched in the central province of Ghazni on October 24 from the offices of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), one of the largest foreign development organisations here.

They were freed because their abductors had found "they were not involved in any anti-Taliban activity," the head of BRAC in Afghanistan, Fazlul Hoque, told AFP.

The men were "fine" and undergoing medical check-ups in Kabul, Hoque said, adding they were due to return home shortly.

Hoque said the organisation would decide later whether to send foreign staff back to Ghazni, which is about 120 kilometres (75 miles) from Kabul and sees regular Taliban attacks.

A BRAC spokesman in Dhaka, Anwarul Haq, said the men were released unconditionally late Saturday.

A spokesman for the Taliban, Zabihullah Mujahid, confirmed the group had freed the pair.

“As they were Muslim and Bangladesh does not have military forces in Afghanistan and they were found innocent by the mujahedeen (fighters), we have freed them,” he told AFP.

TROOP NEWS

“Pain Is The Most Common Complaint Of Nearly 350,000 Iraq- And Afghanistan-Era Veterans” “Most Suffer Orthopedic Injuries From The Strain Of Long Deployments”

10.21.08 By Gregg Zoroya. USA Today [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON — Narcotic pain-relief prescriptions for injured U.S. troops have jumped from 30,000 a month to 50,000 since the Iraq war began, raising concerns about the drugs’ potential abuse and ad-diction, says a leading Army pain expert.

The sharp rise in outpatient prescriptions paid for by the government suggests doctors rely too heavily on narcotics, says Army Col. Chester “Trip” Buckenmaier III, of Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington.

Pain is the most common complaint of nearly 350,000 Iraq- and Afghanistan-era veterans treated by the Department of Veterans Affairs, says Robert Kerns, national program director for pain management.

A study of VA health records estimates that nearly half of those patients suffer chronic pain, severe enough in about 30 percent of those cases to limit daily living.

Most suffer orthopedic injuries from the strain of long deployments, according to a VA study.

Army Defies Congress: Redeploys Fucked Up Strykers; Hasn't Fixed "Performance And Survivability Issues"

11.3.08 By Matthew Cox, Army Times [Excerpts]

The Pentagon will keep sending the Army's Stryker Mobile Gun Systems into combat despite lawmakers' concerns over performance shortcomings in the wheeled bunker buster.

The Army has promised to correct problems that emerged during its first combat deployment, but, for now, crew members will have to live with quick fixes, such as special cooling vests in lieu of proper air-conditioning.

Lawmakers expressed concern in the National Defense Authorization Act Fiscal Year 2009 bill.

"We remain concerned by the Army's deployment of ... Stryker MGS vehicles to Iraq given the performance and survivability issues noted during testing and urge the Army to take the actions necessary to ensure Stryker MGS vehicles meet all requirements before deploying any additional Stryker MGS vehicles to theater," the bill states.

That didn't stop the Army from deploying the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division (Stryker Brigade Combat Team), to Iraq in September equipped with its 27 MGS.

The vehicle's lack of air conditioning had crew members patrolling while hooked up to intravenous fluids to counter the triple-digit temperatures of summer.

As a stopgap, crew members will continue to wear special micro-coolant vests that air crews wear to cope with the extreme heat in helicopter cockpits. They feature coiled tubing that runs throughout the interior of each vest. Two small compressors mounted on the outside of each MGS circulate chilled water through the tubes.

Fans also have been added to circulate air in the vehicles to keep systems from overheating, Schurr said. Program officials will replace the commander's display terminal with the type used in the M1 tank; it offers better resolution and can stand up to the heat, he said.

The Army is looking at several options for a long-term active protection system, but for now the interim solution will continue to be slat armor, a system that has worked well against rocket-propelled grenades, Schurr said.

There are also about a dozen other soldier “observations” to improve the MGS, such as ensuring the commander has the same color display as the gunner to minimize confusion when identifying targets, Schurr said.

Stryker commanders began submitting “urgent operational need statements” for the MGS as early as 2005.

The Antitank Guided Missile Strykers they had been relying on to compensate for the lack of MGS proved ineffective in street fighting in northern Iraq.

The ATGM's TOW missiles often failed because the guiding wires attached to the missiles became entangled in the low-hanging electrical wires.

The original plan was to have MGS ready for full fielding in September 2006, but jamming problems prompted officials to redesign the sophisticated loading system.

The redesign delayed fielding by eight months.

And Now, For The Grand Prize, Which Genius Of Counter-Insurgency Warfare Said This In What War?

“They definitely tested us, but they lost all those firefights because they broke contact and we stayed there.....”

- A) Major Winthrop L. Farnworthy, His Majesty's British Army, South Carolina, 1781
- B) Colonel George A. Wilson, U.S. Army, Ia Drang, Vietnam, 1965
- C) Oberstleutnant Hans Dieter Vom Thurn, Germany Army, Yugoslavia, 1943
- D) Lt. Col. Anthony DeMartino, Commander, 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, Afghanistan

Answer: All of them.

[DeMartino quoted in 11.3.08 Army Times]

“We Had (An Active Duty) Gunnery Sergeant Stop By”

“He Said, ‘I Can’t Do Anything Like This, But I’m Glad You Guys Are Out Here’“

They note Democratic congressional candidates in 2006 all talked about ending the war. But once they were elected, they did nothing to end the war. “I think the war is why Obama became the nominee: He was against the war, or seemed like it,” Weddington said.

November 2, 2008 Gerald Ensley, Tallahassee.com [Excerpts]

We’re going to elect a new president in two days. The hay is in the barn.

Despite the last-minute flurry of signs and rallies, there’s nothing left to be said that hasn’t been said.

Except maybe this: It’s still about the war in Iraq to some of us.

More than 4,100 Americans have given their lives in Iraq — a small number historically but devastating to everyone who lost a son, daughter, father, mother, brother, sister, friend or neighbor.

The nation spends \$120 billion a year on the war — which is enough to have fixed New Orleans, health care, our schools or even bail out the economy.

Nobody understands that better than the anti-war protesters who are in front of the Old Capitol every week. Local activists Michael Weddington, Ed Deaton and Tom Baxter started the vigil shortly after Sept. 11, 2001. They waved signs advocating “Justice not vengeance” for the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington D.C.

By the following spring, with the build-up to Iraq, they were protesting the war and calling themselves the Tallahassee Network for Justice and Peace. They are in front of the Old Capitol every Thursday and Sunday, with timeouts only for Thanksgiving, Christmas and the annual School of the Americas protest at Fort Benning, Ga.

They intend to be there until the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are ended.

Some of the visitors have been military personnel or veterans — just like Baxter, a former Army sergeant who served in Vietnam.

“We had (an active duty) gunnery sergeant stop by,” said Baxter, a law librarian for the state attorney general. “He said, ‘I can’t do anything like this, but I’m glad you guys are out here.’ “

So are many passersby.

When the protesters started their vigil, Baxter calculated, they received 15 honks of support for every one negative “upraised finger, fist shake or yell.” Now, the ratio has

risen to 25 honks per finger. Many drivers flash peace signs and shout words of encouragement.

“Everybody realizes war is nuts, except for that small percentage that doesn’t know anything and listens to Fox News,” Baxter said.

“The only way we’re going to stop (war) is if people of good will get together and stop it.”

The Old Capitol protesters aren’t certain Obama’s election would change things.

They note Democratic congressional candidates in 2006 all talked about ending the war.

But once they were elected, they did nothing to end the war.

“I think the war is why Obama became the nominee: He was against the war, or seemed like it,” Weddington said.

“But it seems like nobody has the courage of their convictions.”

This time, somebody must.

The war has got to end.

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

**Pentagon Cheated Nearly 2,000
Severely Disabled Veterans Out Of
Payments:**

**“Up To 8,763 Disabled Vets Died Before
Their VA Retro Claims Could Be
Reviewed”**

[Hey, if they’re dead, think of the money saved for really important shit, like bailouts for Wall St. billionaires.]

[Thanks to Elaine Brower, The Military Project, who sent this in.]

October 22, 2008 Associated Press & 11.3.08 By William H. McMichael, Army Times
[Excerpts]

WASHINGTON - The Pentagon, in a rush to shrink a backlog of unprocessed claims, wrongfully denied money to nearly 2,000 severely disabled veterans, a House lawmaker said Wednesday.

The new study updates a July 15 subcommittee report that found the complex calculations of thousands of retroactive payments made after March 1 — part of an effort by DFAS and contractor Lockheed Martin to clear out a large backlog of claims — were completed without quality assurance reviews.

That failure, the subcommittee has calculated, led to erroneous denials of payment on 1,782 to 1,985 claims and inaccurate payments in excess of \$2,500 on as many as 2,514 other claims.

Pentagon rules require that all benefits payments in excess of \$2,500 be checked a second time, but those rules were ignored when DFAS suspended quality assurance checks in its effort to clear up the claims backlog.

The controversy involves two programs created by Congress from 2002 to 2004 for retirees with combat-related and service-related injuries: the Combat Related Special Compensation program, which provides tax-free monthly payments for eligible retirees with combat-related injuries, and the Concurrent Retirement and Disability Program, which pays taxable benefits to retirees with service-connected disabilities rated at 50 percent or more by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Congress also created the “VA Retro” program for retirees whose disability status subsequently changed, meriting a single retroactive payment.

In July 2006, DFAS awarded a no-bid contract to Lockheed Martin to calculate retroactive pay awards; the contractor determined three months later that 133,057 retirees were due payments.

Lockheed missed a November 2007 deadline to process those payments, according to the subcommittee, and as of March — some 21 months after starting work — more than 60,000 cases remained to be processed.

In an effort to clear the backlog, DFAS in March suspended its quality assurance controls and left that task to Lockheed, which relied exclusively on random statistical sampling, even though all payments above \$2,500 were supposed to be manually checked under government standards.

Up to 8,763 disabled vets died before their VA Retro claims could be reviewed during the 5½ years following enactment of the legislation, according to the subcommittee’s July report.

“That’s a very, very long time,” said a subcommittee staff member who spoke on condition of anonymity. “Normally, there’s not a 5½-year lag time between when Congress passes a law and ... the benefits start rolling out the door.”

“Why Does The Government Allow So Many British Troops To Die Because Of Poor Equipment?” Army Machine Gun Fires Without Trigger Pull: “So Bad Troops Fearful Of Using It”

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

02 Nov 2008 By Graham Tibbetts, Telegraph.co.uk

A machine gun on the Army’s Warrior armoured vehicles has fired without the trigger being pulled on at least 18 occasions, leaving one soldier with crippling leg injuries.

A Ministry of Defence investigation into the 7.62mm weapon, fitted to 800 vehicles, found that its perceived reliability was so bad that troops were fearful of using it.

The problems with the Warrior chain gun came to light after Sgt Albert Thompson of the 1st Battalion of the Black Watch was hit in the leg in Iraq in 2003.

He was forced to have his leg amputated below the knee and was awarded more than £1million in compensation.

Initially the MoD blamed Cpt Tam Henderson, the gunner, and convicted him of negligence. He was later cleared on appeal.

But an internal report - a Board of Inquiry - found that the “undemanded firing” of the gun had occurred at least six times between 1999 and 2004. It concluded that the gun “is unpopular with many service users primarily due to a perception of reliability issues”.

The MoD has admitted in an email to Mr Henderson that the weapon has also fired at random 12 times this year alone.

Another report by the MoD’s Defence Logistics Organisation disclosed that it killed one Iraqi civilian and severely wounded another when it discharged without warning in 2004.

Mr Henderson said: "I can't believe the MoD has finally admitted the gun is dangerous. It has tried to cover up this lethal fault for years. Why does the Government allow so many British troops to die because of poor equipment and funding?"

"I resigned my commission last year because I felt I could not lead my troops into a war knowing we were not supported."

Liam Fox, shadow defence secretary, said: "If this is a correctable fault and nothing has been done because of the cost, then it is a scandal."

Corrupt Scum At Texas VA Try To Destroy Doctor Who Reported "Fraud, Waste, And Research Mismanagement Totaling \$1.2 Million In Misused Funds" Hired To Help Vets With Brain Injury, He Reported Rats Stealing From The Program; Now He Faces Firing



Thieving lying co-conspirators at the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System, meet to plan more stupid lies and slanders attacking Dr. Van Boven. [Wolfstad.com]

“I had a chance to help 40,000 veterans with brain injury,” Van Boven said. “I felt this was a gift and a blessing to help those who have served and suffered, and I am well trained to do it. ... I don’t want these soldiers to become the next generation of homeless veterans.”

OCTOBER 31, 2008 BY LAUREL CHESKY, The Austin Chronicle [Excerpts]

It all began with such promise.

The Brain Imaging and Recovery Laboratory, launched in January, would hunt for treatments for what has become the Iraq war’s signature ailment: traumatic brain injury.

A program of the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System, part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, BIRL was housed at the University of Texas’ J.J. Pickle Research Campus, where VA researchers had access to UT’s \$2.7 million brain scanner to help diagnose invisible head injuries.

But now, BIRL’s research has ceased, and the program’s director, neurologist Dr. Robert Van Boven, has been suspended from duty with pay since September, while the VA decides what to do with him.

On Oct. 15, the VA held a closed hearing to determine whether or not to terminate Van Boven’s employment. A board presiding over the hearing is expected to make a recommendation to Thomas Smith, the director of the Central Texas system, within a few weeks.

Van Boven is a compact, tightly wound man. Fast-talking and brimming with energy, he could serve as poster boy for the type A personality.

His educational and professional feats match his tireless demeanor. Van Boven earned a doctorate in dental surgery from the University of Illinois and an M.D. from the University of Missouri. He completed two neurology residencies, at Harvard’s Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and at Northwestern University. He has worked as a clinician at the National Institutes of Health and as an associate professor at Chicago Medical School and Louisiana State University.

The Central Texas VA system, based in Temple, hired Van Boven in July 2007 to start up the BIRL program.

At the time, VA officials may have considered themselves lucky to find Van Boven and woo him into running their modest \$4.2 million brain research program. Van Boven, in turn, was excited to work on potentially groundbreaking research that could help thousands of soldiers returning from active duty with head injuries.

“I had a chance to help 40,000 veterans with brain injury,” Van Boven said. “I felt this was a gift and a blessing to help those who have served and suffered, and I am well

trained to do it. ... I don't want these soldiers to become the next generation of homeless veterans."

But within a few months, the relationship between Van Boven and his bosses was turning sour. Maybe they weren't expecting a take-charge go-getter like Van Boven.

And perhaps the doctor wasn't ready for the stodgy, insular environment of one of the country's most notoriously inexpedient bureaucracies.

The VA in general and the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System in particular are not models of efficiency. The Central Texas system – which runs two hospitals in Temple and Waco, five outpatient clinics, two nursing homes, and two rehabilitation centers – ranks 118th in patient satisfaction out of 139 veteran health-care systems in the country.

The local system made national news when the press was leaked an e-mail from Norma Perez, a post-traumatic stress disorder coordinator in Temple, advising mental-health professionals not to diagnose patients with PTSD "straight out," because "we really ... don't have time to do the extensive testing that should be done to determine PTSD" – a serious mental illness that can, among other things, lead to suicide and homicide.

Almost immediately, Van Boven observed what he calls fraud, waste, and research mismanagement totaling \$1.2 million in misused funds.

He was concerned about research being conducted at BIRL by a VA physician – an inexperienced researcher, Van Boven says, whose work was flawed and of "highly questionable scientific merit."

To be certain, he sought the opinion of five experts, including researchers at the Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins University, and Harvard, to review documents related to the research. "All five uniformly panned the research," Van Boven says.

Moreover, the research was costly. Experiments took more time on the MRI brain scanner (240 hours at \$487 per hour over nine months) than they should have, Van Boven thought.

And the research didn't have anything to do with traumatic brain injury incurred in combat. The research was related to diabetic retinopathy, or blindness triggered by diabetes.

According to Van Boven, he also discovered that a consultant helping with the research was billing the VA for hours that he had not worked and that a grant proposal the consultant had written was plagiarized, lifted almost word for word from an Oxford University document posted on the Web.

The consultant was paid \$107,000 in fiscal year 2007, with, according to Van Boven, little to show for it. "There is no grant proposal, no publication, nothing has come out of this research that the VA spent over \$1 million of taxpayer money on," he says.

In September of last year, Van Boven voiced his concerns to Dr. Paul Hicks, associate chief of staff for research with the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System.

According to Van Boven, Hicks took no action.

In the following months, Van Boven repeatedly asked VA leadership for an investigation into the research he alleged was fraudulent.

Those requests were not only ignored, but Hicks stripped Van Boven of his oversight duties concerning the diabetic retinopathy research and threatened him with reassignment.

In February, Van Boven went over his bosses' heads and reported his concerns to the VA Office of Inspector General.

In a July 29 report, the office partially substantiated his allegations.

The report agreed that "BIRL funds had been misspent since approximately September 2006 because eight hours of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner time (a week) ... was paid to the University of Texas Austin without BIRL research to support expenditures of this magnitude."

The report "neither substantiated or refuted" Van Boven's allegation of waste in the payment of the consultant due to a technicality: The consultant didn't have a contract with the VA.

In the absence of a contract spelling out expectations, the Office of Inspector General could not determine whether or not the consultant was overpaid. However, the report did conclude that payments to the consultant were against VA policy.

"VA Handbooks ... do not permit hourly payments under a free basis contract," the report states. "Rather, consultants must be paid on the basis of services rendered and not on the basis of time taken to complete tasks."

The report recommended that the Central Texas VA cease paying for the eight hours a week of MRI scanner time in the absence of a contract and execute a contract with the consultant for further work. The report also recommended that the Central Texas VA's Office of Research & Development and Institutional Review Board review the research in question and address issues identified in the report.

You'd think Van Boven's VA bosses would have been happy that he had rooted out misuse of taxpayer money. If they were, they didn't show it.

Instead, they called for an investigation into allegations of misconduct against Van Boven – allegations which, curiously, began to accumulate soon after Van Boven started needling his VA bosses about his concerns over waste and mismanagement.

Now a bona fide whistle-blower, Van Boven won't be so easy to kick out of the VA system.

Federal law protects people who allege misconduct within an organization from retaliation, including harassment, demotion, or termination of employment.

Nevertheless, they're trying.

VA officials in Temple have assembled a laundry list of allegations against Van Boven and are using it as grounds for possible termination. Among them:

- **Insubordination for defying orders to refrain from organizing a fun run to benefit traumatic brain injury research – even though a letter from the VA regional counsel opined that Van Boven was free to organize the event as a private citizen.**
- **Hanging a personalized door tag outside of his office.**
- **The use of profanity and engaging in “threatening gestures” at work. The employee who made the allegations occasionally socialized with Van Boven’s family outside of work and has since moved out of state. Van Boven admits he occasionally used profanity at work but says it was never directed toward a person. He says he never made threatening gestures to the employee.**
- **“Disrespecting” Sen. John Cornyn at a BIRL event attended by the senator. The VA alleges Van Boven inconvenienced the senator by allowing the event to run long in order to allow two veterans not on the agenda to speak. Cornyn’s office wrote a letter denying that Cornyn felt disrespected.**
- **Sexual harassment. A subordinate claims that he overheard Van Boven asking a female UT researcher about her sex life. The researcher, who does not work for Van Boven, wrote a letter vehemently refuting the accusation.**

In mid-September, Van Boven was suspended with pay and now awaits the review board’s decision and his professional fate. (The review board, incidentally, declined to hear testimony from Van Boven’s former supervisor, who wrote a letter in support of him.)

All of which raises another question: Why would an obviously smart and qualified neurologist put up with such nonsense? Van Boven says he’s looked for other work – but something called “Google” has thus far worked against him.

When you search his name, the whistle-blowing stuff lands at the top of the heap. He had accepted a job at a small private practice in Illinois, but when the doctors there read about the brouhaha in Austin, they decided not to hire him.

“They said they were worried about loyalty and integrity,” Van Boven says. “My reputation has been damaged. Some people might admire a whistle-blower, but nobody wants to hire one.”

So for now, Van Boven is standing his ground and fighting like a soldier against the VA. The doctor has now reached beyond the VA and has contacted a host of federal agencies with allegations of waste, mismanagement, and misconduct of VA officials in

Temple. He has sent letters to Cornyn, the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, and even the FBI. And he's just beginning.

“My reputation is at stake, so there is no slipping away into the night,” Van Boven says.

“If they succeed and I am truly a dead man, then they will have to deal with the stench of my corpse.”

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IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

GET THE MESSAGE?



Iraqis burn American flags as they demonstrate against the proposed security pact between Iraq and the U.S. that would continue the U.S. Occupation in Baghdad's Sadr City, Iraq, Oct. 31, 2008. (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)



Iraqis demonstrate against a draft U.S.-Iraqi security agreement in Baghdad Nov. 1, 2008. The deal would allow U.S. troops to remain here until at least the end of 2011. (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)



Iraqis demonstrate against the proposed security pact between Iraq and the U.S. that would continue the U.S. Occupation in Baghdad's Sadr City, Iraq, Oct. 31, 2008. REUTERS/Kareem Raheem

Resistance Action

Nov 2 (Reuters)

A roadside bomb killed one policeman and wounded three others when it hit their patrol in Kamaliya district, eastern Baghdad, police said.

A car bomb targeting a police patrol wounded one policeman on Saturday in western Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

A roadside bomb wounded two Iraqi soldiers on patrol in eastern Mosul on Saturday, police said.

Insurgents wounded one Iraqi soldier and one woman in an attack on military checkpoint in eastern Mosul on Saturday, police said.

Unknown assailants gunned down a police officer on foot patrol in Shiite eastern Baghdad, police said.

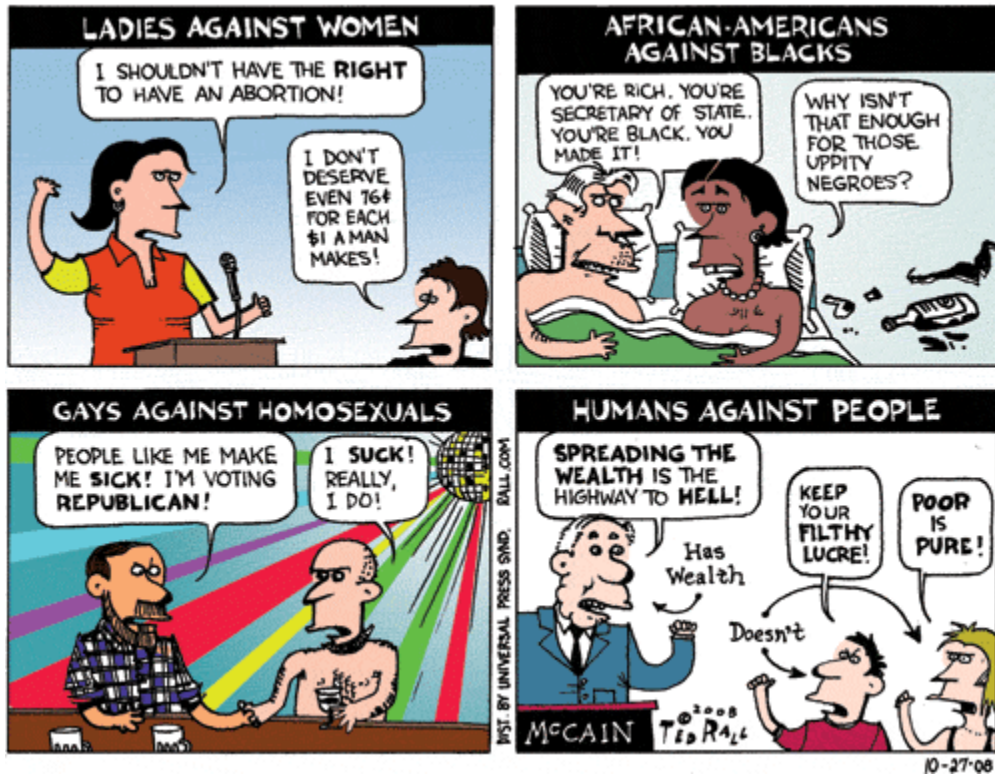
OCCUPATION NORTHERN IRELAND

“Britain’s Murder Machine Out Of Ireland”



Irish protest at The British Army's Royal Irish Regiment as they parade through Belfast City, Belfast, British occupied northern Ireland, Nov. 2, 2008. (AP Photo/Peter Morrison)

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



“The ‘Candidate Of Change’ Has Voted Repeatedly To Fund Bush’s Rapacious Wars, And Now Demands More War In Afghanistan”

October 28, 2008 John Pilger, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

Obama claims that his vast campaign wealth comes from small individual donors, yet he has also received funds from some of the most notorious looters on Wall Street.

Moreover, the “dove” and “candidate of change” has voted repeatedly to fund George W. Bush’s rapacious wars, and now demands more war in Afghanistan while he threatens to bomb Pakistan.

Dismissing the popular democracies in Latin America as a “vacuum” to be filled by the United States, he has endorsed Colombia’s “right to strike terrorists who seek safe havens across its borders.” Translated, this means the “right” of the criminal regime in that country to invade its neighbors, notably uppity Venezuela, on Washington’s behalf.

The lesson learned is that no presidential candidate, least of all a Democrat awash with money from America’s “banksters,” as Franklin Roosevelt called them, can or will challenge a militarized system that controls and rewards him.

Obama’s job is to present a benign, even progressive, face that will revive America’s democratic pretensions, internationally and domestically, while ensuring nothing of substance changes.

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

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

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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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