

## GI SPECIAL 6L12:



[Thanks to Ward Reilly, Veterans For Peace, who sent this in.]

# Czechs Bringing Home All Troops From Everywhere:

“Parliament Failed To Extend  
Deployment Of Troops In  
Afghanistan, Iraq And Other  
Foreign Missions”

December 19, 2008 (AP)

The lower chamber of Czech parliament has failed to extend a mandate for the deployment of the country's troops in Afghanistan, Iraq and other foreign missions for next year, meaning the soldiers will leave soon.

The mandate for as many as 415 Czech servicemen serving in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, and for another unit of 100 elite troops with the U.S.-led operation against al-Qaida and Taliban fighters, expires by the year's end.

"I am ashamed of the vote," Prime Minister Mirek TopolaneK said. **[Whine, whine, whine.]**

TopolaneK said later Friday the government used its constitutional rights and delayed the troops' return home by 60 days, starting Jan 1.

"It is a serious situation," Czech military chief of general staff Lt. Gen. Vlastimil Picek said. "It is a very bad signal for our partners," he said. **[And a very good signal for troops everywhere who want no part of foreign occupations.]**

The chamber's decision Friday means the end of all current foreign missions. The 550 troops deployed in the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Kosovo — the mission known as KFOR — will have to be withdrawn, as well five officers who were slated to train officers on Iraq for one more year.

**MORE:**

## **Macedonian Government Brings All Troops Home From Iraq Now**

December 19, 2008 The Associated Press

SKOPJE, Macedonia: Macedonia says it has pulled the last of its troops out of Iraq and will not renew their mission.

A welcoming ceremony in the capital, Skopje, Friday for the country's last 40 soldiers serving in Iraq was attended by President Branko Crvenkovski and Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski.

Since June 2003, Macedonia has deployed about 480 troops in Taji, a town about 70 kilometers north from the Iraqi capital Baghdad.

<p><b>DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?</b></p>
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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

## **AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS**

### **Resistance Sharpening Attacks On Afghan Occupation Supply Line:**

**“There Are Huge Gunbattles Between  
Private Security Forces And The  
Taliban”**

**“It’s Better For Me To Beg On The Street  
Than To Be A Driver Of A Fuel Tanker On  
These Roads”**

Dec. 16, 2008 AP

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan - Traveling in a convoy of 30 supply trucks escorted by security guards, the young Afghan driver hauled bottled water through Afghanistan's dangerous south to a U.S. outpost in Helmand province.

Stanekzai then headed back to the main American base at Bagram — without an armed escort. Halfway home on the country's main highway Monday, he heard gunfire tear into his rig. He stepped on the gas and prayed.

“I was afraid. I was bracing for a rocket-propelled grenade, because they usually fire those, too, but fortunately they didn't,” the 22-year-old said Tuesday, standing beside his pockmarked truck.

Afghan and Pakistani truck drivers say their work is becoming increasingly risky, and some are becoming wary of crossing Taliban-held areas despite their relatively high pay.

Because 75 percent of U.S. military supplies in Afghanistan come by road from Pakistan's ports, a functioning supply line through the Khyber Pass is critical.

Although a Pakistani truckers association said Monday that its drivers were refusing to haul supplies to Afghanistan because of the risks, some trucks continued to travel through Khyber.

Safiullah, a 24-year-old from Ghazni who had just driven to Bagram from the large NATO base outside Kandahar, said Tuesday that drivers now travel in convoys of 80 to 100 trucks accompanied by 30 or 40 private security vehicles.

He said Zabul province and Wardak province, south of Kabul, pose the greatest risks.

"Every time we drive through we are fired upon or there's an ambush," said Safiullah, who like Stanekzai and many other Afghans uses one name.

**"There are huge gunbattles between private security forces and the Taliban. We face these threats every day, and every day the threat increases."**

Stratfor, an Austin, Texas-based intelligence company, said in a report Tuesday that the U.S. search for alternate supply routes has accelerated, but that Pakistan remains "by far the quickest and most efficient overland route to the open ocean."

**The U.S. and NATO fly in ammunition, weapons and other sensitive supplies, but it would be too costly to ship everything that way.**

Another dangerous stretch for drivers is the Khyber Pass. Bakhtiar Khan, a local official in the Khyber tribal region, said Tuesday that truck convoys are passing through with increased security measures, including escorts by the paramilitary troops of Pakistan's Frontier Corps.

Mohammad Aslam, a Pakistani who drives a fuel tanker, said he fears for his life.

"Only one bullet and my whole truck catches fire," he said. "I'm a father of two children and I don't want my children to be orphans. I want to quit this job.

"It's better for me to beg on the street than to be a driver of a fuel tanker on these roads."

The earnings are hard for drivers to give up, though.

Stanekzai, whose truck was sprayed with bullets Monday, said he earns about \$900 a month, a considerable sum in a country where junior police officers and army soldiers are paid only \$100 monthly.

"But this money we are making is not worth it," he said after pointing out the bullet holes in his truck. "Not considering the threat we face."

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

**END THE OCCUPATIONS**

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

## **Fiendish Attack On British Troop Morale: Shipment Of Christmas Turkeys Blown Up By Taleban**

19 December 2008 BBC

A lorry carrying Christmas turkeys for British troops in Afghanistan has been blown up by the Taleban, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) confirmed.

The consignment of frozen turkey roll breasts weighing 325kg was completely destroyed en route from Pakistan to Camp Bastion in Helmand Province.

The traditional Christmas dinner for 3,000 soldiers was under threat as a result of the explosion.

However, the MOD flew out replacement birds to secure the special meal.

The WO has been preparing for Christmas since the summer, ordering everything needed to feed the 2,500 to 3,000 troops that will be at Bastion as well as the 2,000 others stationed around Helmand.

But there will be no brandy for the Christmas sauce, with Camp Bastion a dry area.

"It wouldn't have made it in there anyway," WO Townley joked.

Special meals are also being sent out to the 10 Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) where there are another 35 chefs.

WO Townley said: "The only blokes who won't get it are the ones in the PBs (patrol bases) but the idea is to rotate them through the FOBs.

Soldiers out in the PBs often face the worst of the insurgency and the harshest living conditions.

They live off ration packs, have little in the way of washing or toilet facilities and often come under Taleban attack.

Some have labelled Camp Bastion “Camp Easy” or “Slipper City”

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## **World’s Stupidest Imperial Collaborator Offers Canadian Citizen Job As New Governor Of Kandahar**

December 18, 2008 GRAEME SMITH AND ROBERT MATAS, Globe and Mail  
[Excerpts]

An agricultural expert from British Columbia is now the leading candidate in the urgent search for a new governor of Kandahar, The Globe and Mail has learned. The post is a key political seat in southern Afghanistan but a dangerous task with little chance of glory.

Tooryalai Wesa, 58, of Coquitlam, B.C., was called from Canada to Afghanistan this week to discuss the unusual job offer.

The current governor left the post after less than four months in the job, and prominent figures in the country had rejected the position, so President Hamid Karzai appears to have reached into the expatriate community and chosen a friend of his family with experience in rural development.

Yesterday Wesa sent a brief e-mail to his wife in Coquitlam, saying he is scheduled to meet the Afghan President today.

They gained citizenship in Canada three years after arriving on Aug. 24, 1995.

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### **TROOP NEWS**

**Fort Lee:  
Living Hell For Injured Soldiers:  
“They Want You To Give Up So  
They Can Just Process You Out Or  
Wait For You To Screw Up So**

# **They Can Get You Gone Immediately”**

## **“Fort Lee’s Probably One Of The Worst Of The Bunch, But It’s Happening All Over The Place”**

### **“When They Ask For Help They Are Admonished For Violating The Chain Of Command”**

He and other veterans’ advocates say they see errors in medical retirement paperwork, incorrect information about what benefits soldiers are eligible for, and soldiers being forced out for pre-existing mental health conditions and disciplinary problems that directly relate to their military service.

They can’t get appointments; they are forced to perform 24-hour duty while on sleeping medications; they say they are treated as whiners trying to get over on the system; they say training injuries are treated as less important than combat injuries, even though by law, both require the same medical care.

12.22.08 By Kelly Kennedy, Army Times [Excerpts]

At a recent gathering in a small auditorium at Fort Lee, Va., wounded soldiers listened as everyone in their chain of command up to a full colonel reassured them that life in the post’s Warrior Transition Unit remained good.

Capt. David Payne, their company commander, reminded them that Fort Lee had ranked in the top five of 35 WTUs for 15 straight months, according to monthly online polls. The barracks are “rated the top in the Army.” Three members of the cadre are former wounded soldiers themselves.

Lt. Col. Robert Lather told them the hospital is being revamped, with more space dedicated to active-duty soldiers so they don’t have to wait in long lines with troops going through Advanced Individual Training.

**“Your mission is to heal,” said Col. Donna Diamond, head of Fort Lee’s Kenner Army Health Clinic. “We’re here to make sure your needs are addressed.”**

**In the back of the room, Sgt. Loyd Sawyer shook his head.**

**“We’re having another dog-and-pony show,” he said.**

Before the meeting, troops were told their attendance was mandatory, and they needed a doctor's note to get out of going.

**After the meeting, soldiers seen talking to reporters — or even surreptitiously passing notes with phone numbers — said they were called in by their chain of command and asked about what they had said.**

"The town hall meetings are never like that," said 1st Lt. Rebecca Ludwick, one of about 70 injured soldiers assigned to the WTU.

"I've never seen all those officers there."

The disparities didn't end there.

**As officers from the unit explained that they were fully staffed, that the cadre is well-trained and cares, and that the troops consider their chain of command friends, the soldiers offered a different story:**

**They can't get appointments; they are forced to perform 24-hour duty while on sleeping medications; they say they are treated as whiners trying to get over on the system; they say training injuries are treated as less important than combat injuries, even though by law, both require the same medical care.**

Two said they sought off-post counseling to help them deal with the stress of being in the WTU.

One with severe post-traumatic stress disorder went back to the hospital as an inpatient after a cadre member yelled at him for playing with his unit patch.

One said she was named the executive officer of the unit, even though she injured herself during initial training and had no command experience.

**Another faced an Article 15 for oversleeping — even as he was going through a sleep study that eventually diagnosed him with narcolepsy.**

**They say that when they ask for help — through an ombudsman, the Wounded Warrior hotline or through the Inspector General office — they are admonished for violating the chain of command.**

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The Army created Warrior Transition Units after the scandal at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in early 2007 after investigations showed that soldiers working their way through the military medical retirement system had to fight through a thick bureaucracy of lost paperwork, incorrect documents, untrained lawyers and counselors, and unfair ratings that left them with a lifetime of injuries and little or no compensation.

It was revealed that sick and injured soldiers served as platoon sergeants and squad leaders even as they took medications or dealt with mental health issues.



Some spent months — even years — in medical hold units. Ultimately, many signed whatever they were handed so they could go home.

The 35 Warrior Transition Units, formed about a year and a half ago, include professional cadre pulled in to provide stability; nurse case managers assigned to monitor soldiers' progress and appointments; a doctor just for the soldiers in the unit; and family resources.

They have ombudsmen and case managers. Everyone, officials say, has been trained in the special needs for soldiers with PTSD or traumatic brain injury.

But in recent months, the Army realized it does not have the manpower to staff the units, the rules changed about who would be allowed in and the focus shifted to those with combat injuries rather than those who injure themselves preparing to deploy. Those who don't go to a Warrior Transition Unit remain in their home units, where unfit soldiers fill deployable slots — leaving line units understaffed as they prepare for deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan.

**The offshoot, Fort Lee soldiers say, is that those without combat injuries are treated as if they are a waste of resources.**

Retired Army Lt. Col. Mike Parker, who has worked as an advocate for wounded soldiers by helping them through the medical retirement process, said he sees the same recurring issues in the Army's WTUs.

**“Fort Lee’s probably one of the worst of the bunch, but it’s happening all over the place,” he said.**

He and other veterans' advocates say they see errors in medical retirement paperwork, incorrect information about what benefits soldiers are eligible for, and soldiers being forced out for pre-existing mental health conditions and disciplinary problems that directly relate to their military service.

Some of Parker 's concerns surfaced at the Fort Lee town hall meeting.

Ludwick asked why all of her medical conditions were not properly documented on her medical form. Lather explained that he had called for guidance and been told that only medically unacceptable conditions should be on the form, and that the Physical Evaluation Board at Walter Reed was kicking back packets that listed all conditions.

That's wrong, Parker said, after talking with board officials. All conditions should be listed.

**Sgt. Stanley Craig stood up at the meeting to ask why he was given 24-hour staff duty when he was on sleeping medication.**

“Many people ... function on the same medications you take,” Lather replied.  
**[Remember that name: Lt. Col. Robert Lather. Payback will find him, sooner or later, somewhere, sometime. Piece of shit.]**

Diamond said her staff is doing a good job. "I've not heard any complaints on the cadre at all," she said. "I think people understand they genuinely care."

Payne is a former patient who broke his leg after stepping in a gopher hole at Fort Riley, Kan.

"When I got here, I was still dealing with my own issues," he said.

Because the WTU is not a typical unit — no arms room, no motor pool — he feels his role is more akin to that of a parent.

And the soldiers say they often do, in fact, feel like children.

**One soldier who asked not to be named said he had a meltdown one day because of his PTSD and asked his nurse case manager to make him a mental health appointment.**

**But she didn't.**

**Rather, she had him committed to the Veterans Affairs mental health clinic at Portsmouth, Va., where he was immediately released, he said, because the doctors said there was no need for him to be committed.**

**He began seeing a counselor, but was told he couldn't go to his second appointment because he had made the appointment himself, rather than having his case manager do it.**

**When he arrived at Fort Lee from another unit, he said it took 6½ weeks to restart his physical therapy, and then a month to get an appointment for an MRI.**

**Then, he said, his nurse case manager told him she was too busy and that he needed to make his own appointments for anything not related to his medical retirement case.**

**"They're blaming me for prolonging my medical care," he said.**

**"I'm ready to go home. I'm sick of being hassled. I can't stop shaking."**

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Craig arrived at the WTU after serving two tours at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., as a mortuary affairs specialist. He blew out his knee on an obstacle course 2 ½ years ago.

Then, in October 2007, while training to deploy, he fell off a truck and suffered multiple herniated discs. Doctors realized immediately he was not deployable.

**At Fort Lee, he said he hasn't seen his nurse case manager for more than a month, but was told he can't make his own appointments.**

When he stepped in a hole Labor Day weekend and broke a bone in his ankle, he received a referral for a doctor's appointment from the unit's primary care physician.

He gave it to his nurse case manager, who told him to make the appointment himself, he said. He finally got the appointment in mid-November.

The paperwork related to his Medical Evaluation Board was a disaster, he said, and when he tried to explain it to the cadre, they didn't understand what he was talking about.

His original separation date was August. He's been extended until Dec. 30 because of his medical retirement case. He just received his final paperwork for his medical evaluation board.

**He was rated at 10 percent for his knee and 10 percent for his back, which his paperwork states he hurt picking up a footlocker several years ago — a noncombat-related injury. His training injury that caused the herniated discs had been left off.**

"I specifically remember falling out of a truck," Craig said sarcastically.

"I'm so fed up with this place."

He said he just signed the paperwork to get it over with.

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Sawyer 's wife, Andrea, begged for her husband to be admitted to the hospital when he didn't get the help he needed for his severe PTSD. He had been at Joint Base Balad in Iraq on the day a Turkish airliner crashed and killed 45 people about 1,000 yards from the mortuary where he worked. The staff spent hours cataloging belongings and lining up bodies in the parking lot.

"Some of them were still hot and burned through the bags," he said. "I saw a lot of that. That was a rough three days."

When he returned home, he couldn't sleep, dealt with anger issues, jumped at noises and spent hours on the living room floor crying with his dogs. He spent three weeks as an inpatient in a psychiatric ward, and then was transferred to the Fort Lee WTU.

**On his third day there, Sawyer was playing with his new unit patch when his platoon sergeant began yelling.**

**"I ended up with a sergeant first class in my face yelling at me for disrespecting the people who died for that patch," Sawyer said. "He didn't know me from Adam. He's lucky that morning I was very heavily medicated."**

**Andrea Sawyer said the platoon sergeant made her husband "write a five-page paper on the importance of the patch."**

**"Lloyd went back to the psychiatric ward because he couldn't deal with the people at the WTU," she said. "That was his third day at the WTU."**

He was supposed to see his nurse case manager weekly, but didn't.

**“They billed me for appointments when I wasn't even there, just to pad the books,” he said.**

**“They had me down one day for an 8 a.m. appointment at Portsmouth, a 9:30 a.m. appointment at Fort Lee and a 10 a.m. back at Portsmouth.”**

**He said it took three months after he received a referral to get an orthopedics appointment.**

**“The only thing you get is what you fight tooth and nail for.**

**“They want you to give up so they can just process you out or wait for you to screw up so they can get you gone immediately.”**

**When an inspector general visit was scheduled, soldiers spent five hours cleaning their rooms, Sawyer said.**

“God knows they're not allowed to say anything,” he said of soldiers in the WTU.

**He said the soldiers were told to speak only if asked questions.**

**If they spoke up on their own, the “retribution is s--- duty,” he said.**

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Spc. Elizabeth Sartain had PTSD after serving as a mortuary affairs specialist in Kuwait. “Anyone who dies in Iraq, those bodies come through Kuwait,” she said.

When she got home, she tried to commit suicide. She poured pots of boiling oil over her arms and legs to try to match what she felt inside with what she felt outside.

“I was devastated,” she said. “I wasn't getting the help I needed.” After spending time as an inpatient at a psychiatric ward, she transferred to the WTU. She immediately began working eight hours a day as Payne's orderly room clerk.

“It was overwhelming,” she said. “It was too hard to recover and be his secretary.”

She said she wasn't allowed to make her own appointments, but did anyway because she needed help.

“The case manager says she'll call you back, but never does,” she said. “Weeks would go by. I'd check in, and it hadn't been done. They've told us they're overwhelmed.”

**She said she also was berated for jumping the chain of command — for talking to the WTU ombudsman.**

Ultimately, she received a disability rating of 50 percent for PTSD and was discharged.

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Pvt. Aaron Howard began his tour at the WTU as a sergeant. In Iraq, he had his big toe shot off by another soldier who reacted poorly when an Iraqi family didn't stop at a checkpoint. He also suffers from PTSD.

Before his injury, he had hoped to start law school and become an officer. But at the WTU, he said he was demoted for missing too many formations.

**He said he received one Article 15 while he was waiting for results of a study that showed he has sleep apnea, narcolepsy and hypersomnolence (excessive daytime sleepiness).**

"I had eight alarm clocks, but I could not wake up," he said.

He received another Article 15 when he missed an appointment because he got the time wrong. He said his chain of command told him he "made up" his ailments.

"I'm getting counseling statements every 15 minutes," he said.

**"I made E-5 in six years, no troubles. I come to Fort Lee and I'm the biggest turd in the Army."**

**Recently, he said he was told he could get out administratively on a psychiatric discharge.**

**That would end his time in the WTU — but he would leave with no medical benefits or retirement pay.**

He said his chain of command also tried to get him out for "continued misconduct."

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Ludwick said her biggest surprise came when she arrived at the WTU as a patient and was assigned duty as the unit's executive officer.

She was injured in February 2007 during a land navigation course when she fell down a hill in full battle rattle. She said she was told to "suck it up — you're an officer." She did — and received her commission — but "there were days when I could barely walk," she said.

Still, she continued her training, going to Fort Sill, Okla., for her officer leadership course.

In her first week, she reinjured herself in combatives training.

"The other person yanked my leg up over her shoulder," Ludwick explained. "She dropped me because she could hear it rip." Ludwick ended up in a leg immobilizer, and the second part of her training was waived. She went to Fort Lee for her officer basic course, but no one cut her formal orders for that.

When she arrived in December 2007, she received orders attaching her as the WTU's executive officer.

“They said, ‘We’re going to make you the XO,’ “ she said. “I can’t even walk. The cadre were like, ‘You need to be a patient.’”

So instead of performing XO duties, she worked at the post museum, leaving the XO slot empty. She remained in the museum position until October.

The first time she saw an orthopedic specialist since her injuries was at Fort Lee. “The surgeon at Portsmouth wouldn’t help me because it had been too long since the injury,” she said.

**She discovered she had three herniated discs, a torn muscle in her back, stress fractures and nerve damage on one side of her body, and a broken ankle.**

**When it came time to do her paperwork for her medical retirement, only the herniated disc was put on it, even though she was using a wheelchair.**

**Her disability rating came back at 20 percent.**

**“It was a total joke,” she said. “They said, ‘Here’s \$8,000 in severance pay — good luck.’”**

**She filed an IG complaint, which declared that everything had been done properly, she said. Then she sent a letter to her congressman, after which she said she was told she could no longer talk with her Physical Evaluation Board liaison officer.**

**“They told me I was causing trouble,” she said.**

Ludwick said she sank into depression and stayed away from the unit. She sought outside mental health help to deal with the panic attacks she said were caused by the people at the WTU.

**She also talked to the Military Officer Association of America, who recommended that Parker look at her case. With his help, she appealed her case and ended up with a disability rating of 50 percent.**

“My case is horrible, but when people come into the WTU, they’re all horrible,” she said.

“I’m sure people are busy, but that’s the whole reason this unit was put in place. I’ve never been so much as asked if I need anything.”

**Ludwick said she often sees people sign their paperwork without appealing it — or without understanding that they need to because their cases were handled improperly.**

“People just get so frustrated,” Ludwick said. “They just sign and get out. I don’t have the luxury to just go out and get a job — I can barely walk.”

**Diamond seemed unclear on some of the WTU’s policies.**

**“We have not used patients to oversee other patients,” she said, adding that privacy laws would prevent that.**

**“They’ve got their own medical care to see to — that’s kind of a conflict.” But Payne said some patients are given “leadership roles.” “I expect them to lead,” he said.**

Army WTU regulations state that patients will not be placed in roles overseeing other soldiers, but Payne said he ensures the wounded soldiers who fill squad leader positions do not write counseling statements or conduct UCMJ actions, and they are not rated for those duties.

But he said only three noncommissioned officers were willing to perform those duties without being rated — two as team leaders and one as a squad leader.

“We’re not going to push them to do that,” Payne said.

**When Craig was asked to fill such a role, he declined.**

**“As an NCO, you’re supposed to know where your soldiers are at,” he said. “When the cadre’s gone, the team leader becomes a squad leader. There is nothing I can do for a wounded soldier for support. What are we actually going to do as patients for other patients?”**

During the day, the soldiers are expected to attend 6:30 a.m. formations, work four hours minimum, and then attend a 1 p.m. formation. They may miss work for appointments, and Payne said supervisors know what medications they’re on.

**But Craig said the rules can and do change, and they’re not always clear.**

**As of mid-October, he said he was told his four-hour day has been switched to an eight-hour day, to be used for warrior tasks and drills.**

**“If I wanted to go do battle drills and reinjure myself, I’d go back to my old unit,” he said.**

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## **While Soldiers Died:**

# **Thieving FBI Agents In Iraq Got \$63 Million In Overtime For Watching Movies And Partying**

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

Dec 18 By Ben Conery, Washington Times & LARA JAKES JORDAN, Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON – A new Justice Department report shows that FBI agents each billed an average of \$45,000 in overtime during three-month tours in Iraq and were sometimes paid for watching movies, exercising and going to parties.

**The investigation released Thursday by the department’s inspector general found that agents claimed at least eight hours of overtime a day, every day, for the 90 days they were stationed in Iraq.**

A report from Justice Department Inspector General Glenn A. Fine said the FBI allowed, and even encouraged, agents to list all waking hours on their time sheets, a move that violated federal pay statutes, regulations and FBI policies. The 1,150 agents who worked in Iraq from 2003-2007 uniformly listed 16-hour workdays for each day of their three-month tours.

The IG also said the FBI shifted the work week of the agents from Monday through Friday to Sunday through Thursday, meaning they improperly received additional “Sunday pay.”

That amounted to \$63 million in overtime between 2003 and 2007, the report found. This year, overtime costs in Iraq came to about \$6.4 million.

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## **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**

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History's shoe

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

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**“If He Had Thrown His Shoes At A Tramp  
In The Street, If He'd Have Thrown His  
Shoes At Somebody From Al-Qaeda, He  
Would Still Be Walking Around The  
Streets”**

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

19 December 2008 By Martina Booth, Press Gazette, UK [Excerpts]

British journalists and peace activists today sent a letter to the US Embassy in London calling for the release of Iraqi journalist Muntadar Al-Zaidi who on Sunday threw both his shoes at US president George Bush during a press conference.

The letter has been signed by former MP and lifelong NUJ member Tony Benn, Guardian journalist Nick Davies and Jeremy Corbyn MP among others. It calls on the US to guarantee Al-Zaidi's safety and secure his release immediately.

"If he had thrown his shoes at a tramp in the street, if he'd have thrown his shoes at somebody from Al-Qaeda, he would still be walking around the streets.

"But it is because he threw his shoes at somebody who is a political ally of the government that he is being treated this way."

## **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 Veterans Against the War to end the occupations and bring all troops home now! ([www.ivaw.org/](http://www.ivaw.org/))**

**“He Was Deeply, Deeply  
Committed To Finding A Way To  
Give Voice To The Vietnam GIs  
Who Opposed The War”  
“The Movement Owed A  
Considerable Debt To Jeff Sharlet As  
The Creator Of Vietnam GI”**

# “They Were Considered Subversive To Good Order In The Military”



Jeff Sharlet, linguist, U.S. Army Security Agency, 1963 – 1964

Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation Newsletter: Extra. Fall 2008. All images courtesy of Robert Sharlet.

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“Dedicated to Jeff Sharlet, founder of Vietnam GI, the first GI underground paper,” reads a screen at the end of Sir! No Sir!, an award-winning documentary film on the antiwar movement among active-duty soldiers during the Vietnam War.

The movement owed a considerable debt to Jeff Sharlet WF '67 as the creator of Vietnam GI (VGI). The film documents the importance of the more than 300 such newspapers for which VGI paved the way, produced and distributed on both domestic and overseas bases by military personnel and veterans.

Jeff Sharlet did not live to see the end of the Vietnam conflict, dying of cancer in 1969 at the age of 27.

His older brother, Robert Sharlet, professor of political science at Union College, is now preparing a book about Jeff. Bob's son, Jeff's namesake and a journalist himself, is co-author.



March 1968

### AN ALTERNATE ROUTE

When a family financial crisis interrupted Jeff's undergraduate studies, he enlisted in an Army intelligence unit. Expecting to study Russian and be posted in Europe, he was instead bumped to the Vietnamese course.

The year was 1962.

"Unbeknownst to anybody but the Pentagon, they were building up reserves of Vietnamese linguists," says Bob. "Most of us didn't know where Vietnam was in 1962. (Jeff) said to one of the regular Army sergeants, 'Sarge, what would happen if you flunked out of Vietnamese?'"

And the sarge said, 'Son, no one flunks out of Vietnamese.'"

### SOLDIER, STUDENT, ACTIVIST

In late August 1963 Jeff was assigned to a radio intelligence unit in Vietnam, where he served for most of the rest of his tour. After returning stateside in 1964, he re-enrolled at Indiana University where he became increasingly political and co-founded a chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). “(We) grew up in a fairly apolitical family,” says Bob.

“(It’s) clear, from talking to GIs who served with him and knew him well, that the experience in Vietnam politicized him. He could see even at that point that things were not going well. There was a good deal of corruption (and he) became quite disenchanted. I also could see from his letters that he was becoming more politically conscious.”

The only Vietnam veteran in the IU SDS chapter, Jeff was sensitive to New Left criticism of GIs.

He began to envision a way to give GIs a voice.



September 1968

Intending to pursue a Ph.D. in political science, he applied for a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship. One of Jeff’s advisers would later tell Bob, “I knew Jeff was of two minds. On the one hand, he was an outstanding student and very intent on following through and getting a Ph.D.

“On the other hand, he was deeply, deeply committed to finding a way to give voice to the Vietnam GIs who opposed the war.” Jeff won the Fellowship, which he took to the University of Chicago in 1967.

There, he began developing Vietnam GI.

## **VIETNAM GI**

The first issue appeared in January 1968. In addition to news of the GI antiwar movement, VGI regularly included interviews of newly returned GIs, letters from GIs still overseas, and editorials from Jeff and other ex-GIs.

Jeff also reached well beyond the paper to elicit perspectives from GIs.

“Jeff would tour the country and the GI coffeehouses looking for stories from returning GIs, and also carrying around the paper,” Bob notes.

Among the coffeehouses he visited was the noted Oleo Strut near Fort Hood, which would become known as a center of the GI antiwar movement.

“Two other papers came out immediately after Jeff’s,” Bob says.

“This I think is Jeff’s legacy. VGI and its immense success inspired GIs in stateside camps, and some in Japan and Germany, to develop their own underground papers, using the base mimeograph machine illegally. Early on the Army was court-martialing these individuals and giving them very stiff sentences.

They couldn’t touch Jeff because he was out—he was a civilian.

Later they realized they couldn’t court-martial everybody and developed a policy that entitled (GIs) to have one copy of the paper. But if you were distributing the paper, that was against base rules and you could be censured for that.”

From its modest beginnings, VGI soon reached a circulation of 30,000 copies, and Jeff began printing two editions.

## **THE JUGGERNAUT: VGI AND THE GI ANTIWAR MOVEMENT**

VGI also became a force to be reckoned with by the government, as Bob’s study of Jeff’s life has revealed. “Occasionally (Jeff) would call me out of the blue and I’d say, ‘Jeff, where are you?’ ‘I’m on a pay phone. I’m on the road.’ I said, ‘Oh, where is that?’ Jeff said, ‘Best not to say,’ and I thought he’s a little paranoid.

“Well, I’ve learned that J. Edgar Hoover directed the Chicago office to put Jeff, his staff and the whole Vietnam GI operation, under surveillance as of May 1, 1968. Then one of his friends, who worked on the paper with him and who lived with him in Chicago, told me that the F.B.I. occasionally came to the door and asked to interview them.

“Subsequently I found out that most of the underground papers were subject to postal surveillance, especially the papers that were directed to the GIs.

“They were considered subversive to good order in the military, and hence the U.S. postal authorities collaborated with the F.B.I., the Department of Army Intelligence, and eventually the C.I.A., which got involved illegally on the domestic front through their CHAOS program.

“Also, in Chicago, there was the Red Squad of the Chicago Police Department. There were a lot of groups involved in trying to slow down this juggernaut, this growing GI antiwar movement.”

### **JEFF'S LEGACY**

Jeff's efforts in late 1967 and 1968, though intensive and far-reaching, would prove all too brief.

Just over a year after the first issue of Vietnam GI, Jeff was diagnosed with kidney cancer, and his health declined quickly. Two more issues appeared after his death in June 1969, and then Vietnam GI ceased publication.

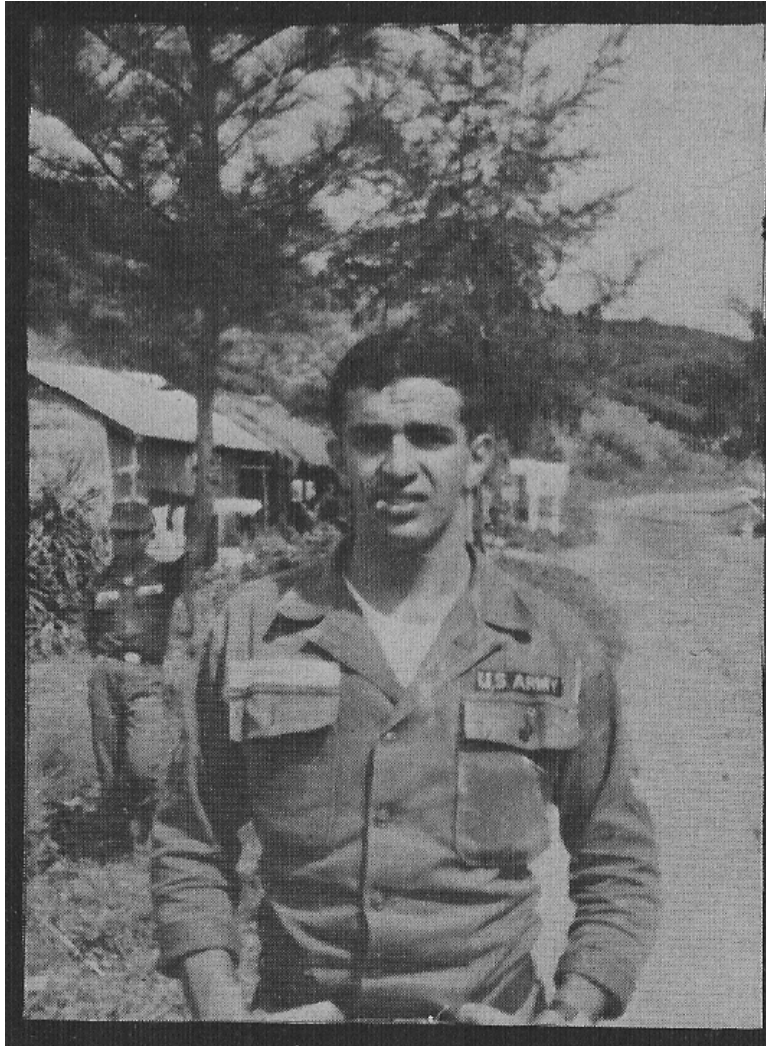
Today, Jeff is increasingly acknowledged as a pioneer not only in the GI antiwar movement, but also in some contemporary efforts: In interviews with Bob Sharlet, Tom Barton, a longtime activist and VGI's east coast distributor, who publishes a daily online anti-Iraq War GI newsletter called GI Special, has said, “I see myself as following in Jeff's footsteps. If Jeff were here, he'd be doing this. And I see my online newsletter as the successor to Vietnam GI.”

“My brother (was) a child of the middle class who became involved in this enormous thing,” says Bob Sharlet. “For him, the military was an option—but the average Vietnam GI was not a person who had a lot of choices in life.

(Civilian namecalling) intensified Jeff's desire to give these choiceless guys who ended up in combat units an opportunity to express themselves on the war.”

**MORE:**

**Vietnam GI**  
***Jeff Sharlet Dies***



**VIETNAM GI:  
August 1969**

Many good men never came back from Nam. Some came back disabled in mind. Jeff Sharlet came back a pretty together cat--and he came back angry. Jeff started VGI, and for almost two years poured his life into it, in an endless succession of 18-hour days trying to organize men to fight for their own rights.

On Monday, June 16th, at 2:45 pm, Jeff died in the Miami VA Hospital. He died of a sudden heart failure, brought on by the uncontrollable growth of the cancer that had earlier destroyed his kidney. There was no way to save him. He was only 27 years old.

Rather than wait for the draft, like so many others Jeff went RA. With dreams of seeing Europe, he applied for "translator-interpreter", and found himself at the US Army Language School at Monterey, California. But instead of French, Czech or German, he was assigned a strange language called "Vietnamese"--. spoken in a country he couldn't even find on the map. For eleven months in 1962 he was drilled in Vietnamese.



In 1963 he was assigned to Army Security Agency, and left for his first tour in Nam. Stationed in Saigon awhile, Jeff witnessed the ARVN coup that overthrew Saigon dictator Ngo Diem. On his second tour his ASA unit was stationed near Phu Bai. Engaged in top-secret work monitoring, decoding and translating North Vietnamese radio messages, they wore AF uniforms and worked at a small air base. But every time they went into the bars, every bargirl could reel off all the facts about their mission.

Speaking the language well, Jeff could talk to many Vietnamese about what was happening to their country. He spent long hours questioning ex-Foreign Legion men, who'd settled in Vietnam after the French left, peasants, ARVN officers, students, and even suspected VC agents. By the time he ETSed in July, 1964 he'd put a lot of pieces together.

**Jeff went back to school, and got his college degree (with honors) from Indiana University in 1967. During his "GI Bill years" he joined the peace movement, and became chairman of his local chapter of Students for a Democratic Society. But he had become increasingly disillusioned about the student movement, and felt that its shallowness and snotty attitude towards other people made it ineffective.**

**That summer he went to New York City to work with Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and it was there that he decided to try to organize other GIs to fight the brass. Jeff had won a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship for graduate study at the University of Chicago. He enrolled and" picked up his check. From then on all his time and money were sunk into starting a newspaper for servicemen.**

After two years of endless traveling, fund-raising and writing, Jeff's drive started to fade. That restless energy that had brought him countless miles to base after base wasn't there. After his last trip to Ft. Hood in the Fall of 1968, Jeff complained that he was really beat, burnt out. We all agreed that he should go "on leave" and take a rest.

It was while visiting friends in Boston that the first really severe pains started. Jeff flew home to Florida, and entered the hospital. From there it was steadily downhill all the way. The removal of his left kidney, massive radiation treatments, drugs--nothing stopped the growth of his cancer. At the end he was weak and emaciated, without enough breath in his lungs to speak for more than a few sentences. He said that he had many new ideas for our fight, but was just too exhausted to talk about them.

Jeff was a truly rare man. He was our friend and comrade, and those of us who came together in this fight will never forget him. VGI, the paper that so many readers called "the truth paper," will go on fighting.

#### **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](mailto:contact@militaryproject.org): Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe. Phone: 917.677.8057**

# Vietnam GI: Reprints Available



## Vietnam: They Stopped An Imperial War

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

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## **DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK**



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**With Economy Collapsing And  
Millions Thrown Out Of Work,  
Congress Gives Itself A \$2.5 Million  
Pay Raise;  
“The Average Lawmaker Makes \$169,300  
A Year”**

[Thanks to Clancy Sigal, who sent this in.]

12/17/08 By Jordy Yager, The Hill [Excerpts]

A crumbling economy, more than 2 million constituents who have lost their jobs this year, and congressional demands of CEOs to work for free did not convince lawmakers to freeze their own pay.

Instead, they will get a \$4,700 pay increase, amounting to an additional \$2.5 million that taxpayers will spend on congressional salaries, and watchdog groups are not happy about it.

“As lawmakers make a big show of forcing auto executives to accept just \$1 a year in salary, they are quietly raiding the vault for their own personal gain,” said Daniel O’Connell, chairman of The Senior Citizens League (TSCL), a non-partisan group.

“This money would be much better spent helping the millions of seniors who are living below the poverty line and struggling to keep their heat on this winter.”

Steve Ellis, vice president of the budget watchdog Taxpayers for Common Sense, said Congress should have taken the rare step of freezing its pay, as lawmakers did in 2000.

“Look at the way the economy is and how most people aren’t counting on a holiday bonus or a pay raise — they’re just happy to have gainful employment,” said Ellis. “But you have the lawmakers who are set up and ready to get their next installment of a pay raise and go happily along their way.”

Member raises are often characterized as examples of wasteful spending, especially when many constituents and businesses in members’ districts are in financial despair.

**In the beginning days of 1789, Congress was paid only \$6 a day, which would be about \$75 daily by modern standards.**

**But by 1965 members were receiving \$30,000 a year, which is the modern equivalent of about \$195,000.**

**Currently the average lawmaker makes \$169,300 a year, with leadership making slightly more. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) makes \$217,400, while the minority and majority leaders in the House and Senate make \$188,100.**

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

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

**Got an opinion? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send to [contact@militaryproject.org](mailto:contact@militaryproject.org): Name, I.D., withheld unless you request identification published.**

## CLASS WAR REPORTS



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

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