

GI SPECIAL 6L16:



Members of the 101st Airborne Combat Aviation Brigade returned from Afghanistan to Campbell Army Airfield at Fort Campbell Ky., on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, 2008. (AP Photo/The Leaf-Chronicle, Robert Smith)

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Silly Iraqis! They Don't Get It!! They Are "Arguing That All American Soldiers Should Leave Cities And Towns By June, As Is Stated In The Agreement"

December 23, 2008 By Adam Ashton and Laith Hammoudi, McClatchy Newspapers
[Excerpts]

As of Jan. 1, U.S. military operations are to be governed by a new security agreement that gives significantly more authority to Iraq. It replaces an expiring United Nations mandate that had given the U.S. wide latitude to act independently in Iraq.

With that deadline approaching, U.S. and Iraqi leaders are negotiating details of the agreement that could affect the withdrawal date.

The meaning of "combat troops" is still being debated, for example.

It's important because the security agreement calls for all U.S. combat forces to leave Iraqi urban areas by June 2009.

The U.S. has nearly 400 military stations in Iraq, some of which are located in Iraqi neighborhoods where soldiers work closely with Iraqi forces.

[U.S. General] Odierno had said that some soldiers might stay on at past that date as "enablers and advisers" at the request of the Iraqi military.

Some Iraqi leaders took exception to those comments in recent weeks, arguing that all American soldiers should leave cities and towns by June, as is stated in the agreement.

<p>POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT THE BLOODSHED</p>

THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE WARS

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. Same address to unsubscribe. Phone: 917.677.8057

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



U.S. soldiers of 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry at a U.S. military camp in Baghdad's Sadr City December 24, 2008. REUTERS/Erik de Castro

***“We Must Continue To Treat All
Iraqi Citizens With The Utmost
Dignity And Honor”***

**Gen. Ray Odierno, U.S. Commanding
General, Multi-National Force—Iraq**

[Quoted By Robert H. Reid, The Associated Press, Dec 5, 2008]



December 15, 2008: Foreign occupation soldiers from the USA refuse to allow Iraqi citizens to return to their homes in Sab al-Boor near Baghdad unless they submit to retina scans. REUTERS/Erik de Castro

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

**Foreign Occupation Soldier Killed
Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan;
Nationality Not Announced**

December 24, 2008 (AFP)

A soldier with the NATO-led force in Afghanistan was killed Wednesday in an insurgent attack in the east of the country, the force said.

The multinational International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) did not provide the nationality of the soldier killed or any details about the attack.

Occupation Troops Parking Area Attacked In Khost: “Firing Is Still Continuing”

23 December 2008 Quqnoos

Two strong explosions hit the parking area of the foreign forces' supply trucks in Khost city, the provincial capital of the eastern province of Khost on Tuesday evening.

Quqnoos.com reporter said firing is still continuing in the parking area after the explosion.

There are no reports about the cause of the explosion and the number of civilian casualties so far.

**“When The Taliban Attack They
Are So Close That We Talk To
Each Other On The Radios”
“They Tell Us That We Are Infidels
Because We Are Helping The
Foreigners Occupy Our Country”
““What Do You Tell Them?” I Ask”
“Nothing. They Are Right”**

[Nothing like this written before. A remarkable look at part of the war from the inside, especially the dynamics of the opium trade. T]

22 December 2008 Ghaith Abdul-Ahad in Lashkar Gah, Guardian News and Media Limited [Excerpts]

The frontline defence of Lashkar Gah is a two-room mud hut beside a bridge over the river that snakes around the town. Here the Afghan police commander squats on a barrier and describes the latest Taliban onslaught.

“They attacked at night,” he says. “We fought back and then helicopters came and fired at them.”

He moves his hand in a sweeping semi-circle and explains that the land all around is held by the Taliban.

But for the commander and his men standing around him in shalwar kameez and glittering caps, their main concern was not the threat from the Taliban, but the low price of opium. Like most of the people in this the capital of Helmand province, they were all poppy farmers.

“The people are not planting teryaq (opium) because they don't have water; they use the little water they can get to plant something they can eat,” says one policeman. “I have eight jeribs (approximately four acres) but this year I didn't plant any opium.”

The commander chimes in: “The government is not helping us. Only the rich people get the money. If you want the help of government, you need money, good car and influential friends.” He says he had planted opium on half his land. “Inshallah (God willing) the rain will be better this year.”

The Road To Lashkar Gah

In the middle of the road from Kandahar to Helmand stood a lone gunman in a white turban and a long coat, his gun flickering with the early morning sun.

The driver of our decrepit Toyota taxi slowed almost to a halt, stretched his hand out and put 10 afghani (about £1.50) into the hand of the gunman.

“Police,” explains the cabbie, matter of factly. On the side of the road another policeman sits on a blanket drinking tea.

As we left Kandahar, we started counting the holes caused by “improvised explosive devices”, 15 miles and 18 holes later, we stopped counting. Sometimes the craters were barely 100 metres from each other. Trucks and taxis drove fanatically, trying to cover the perilous road as fast as possible. They zigzagged wildly between the road and the dirt to avoid the holes.

We passed two more police checkpoints, each exacting their own tax.

Lashkar Gah - literally “the camp of the soldiers” - declared itself with a herd of camels and two British army Land Rovers marking a checkpoint.

About 15 miles south-east of Camp Bastion, the British army's desert compound, Lashkar Gah has the feel of a besieged frontier town.

Twice in recent months the Taliban has tried to take the city. On each occasion it was repelled.

Last week, military sources admitted that deaths and serious injuries among British troops in Helmand were running at a higher rate than at any time since the start of the conflict in 2001. Eleven British soldiers have been killed in southern Afghanistan since the beginning of last month.

Heroin, Schools And The Heart Of The Insurgency: The Smuggler

Hameedullah's family live in one big house on a dusty unpaved lane - Hameedullah, his five sons and their wives, children, grandchildren and two cousins. Hameedullah, a tall, thickset man, is a government employee. And like many people in Helmand, he is also a poppy farmer.

Like any other farmer, he was concerned by water, and crop prices. "People plant poppy because it's good money, it needs little water and it makes a good harvest," he said. "Prices were very low last year because everyone planted poppy. Wheat is very good this year because prices are high, so most of the people are planting wheat this year. I divided my land half wheat and half poppy, but next year we will plant poppy again."

He went on to explain how the economy of the poppy trade took in the Taliban and the government.

"The Taliban benefit from the poppy because the farmers pay them taxes. And when the government destroys the fields, the people support the Taliban," he said. "The government also benefits from the poppy - we pay officials so they won't destroy our land. Two years ago we paid them so they only destroyed two jeribs (1 acre) of my land."

We sat sipping tea made with salty water that left a powerful aftertaste. When an old man entered the room everyone stood and the children grabbed his long-fingered hand and kissed it. "He is our uncle," one of Hameedullah's sons said in a hushed voice. "He is a big smuggler." The older man wore a white turban that matched his white beard.

Hameedullah's son Hekmat said the old man crossed Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan smuggling opium and heroin. He had been in the business since he stopped fighting the jihad against the Soviets and turned to a more lucrative occupation 20 years ago. "I remember him since I was a small kid," Hekmat whispered. "He used to come on his motorbike and buy opium from us."

Crossing his long fingers, and speaking quietly, the uncle explained his trade. "If we smuggle 40kg, we give the Taliban 4kg. We pay the 10% as a zikat (Islamic tax) to the Taliban. And we pay another 10% to the government officials and the police.

"Each Taliban commander collects his own tax - from the smugglers - and also from the farmers. We pay a commander and he makes calls to other commanders to make sure

that we have safe passage. The problem is when we have to pay several times to several commanders.”

He said he travelled to Musa Qala, Sangin and other districts in Helmand all of which, he said, were effectively under Taliban control - the British and the Afghan government controlled the towns but the countryside is a free for all.

A motorbike is his preferred mode of transport. He could load it with as much as 80kg of poppies, though sometimes he used Land Cruisers or taxis.

“The Taliban say we are doing the jihad and you are making money so you should support us. Smugglers give a lot: three Land Cruisers in Sangin a few weeks ago.”

The relationship between the Taliban, police and poppy trade is quite simple, he added: “If we don't plant opium then smugglers don't make money. If we (the smugglers) don't make money the Taliban and police don't make money. The Taliban and the officials have a very strong relationship - if they don't then how can we do so much trade and travel to so many districts?”

The real money, the uncle said, lay in international smuggling. The opium was taken to laboratories in the east on the border with Pakistan, refined, and made into heroin. That's where the real business began, he says. Convoys of mainly Baluch smugglers took the heroin back through Afghanistan, then into Iran. From there it travelled through Iraq and Turkey to reach Europe.

He reels off the figures like an accountant: “A kilo of opium is around \$5,000 in Pakistan. It is \$20,000 when it reaches Europe, through Greece and Turkey. Four kilos of opium make a kilo of heroin which sells for \$10,000 in Iran - \$30,000 in Greece.”

Just as in rural Afghanistan, there is a symbiotic relationship between smugglers and officials in Pakistan and Iran. “We travel in convoys, each three cars has five gunmen between them. We leave a big trail, so they can see us. Afghan officials make contact across the borders and we pay the Iranian sepah (army). If (the Iranians) open fire then we don't pay them.”

Like merchants who plied the ancient trade routes, opium smugglers have diversified. “We smuggle gold and silver, but now we also smuggle a lot of antiquities from Afghanistan to Europe,” he said.

A youngster in the family entered the room with a silver pot and a washbasin. He poured hot water and the men washed their hands, throwing two cloths around the room to dry them. A dinner of chicken stew, bread and more salty tea was served. The men ate silently and watched the news on Afghan television.

The Policeman

Worn out with battle fatigue, Afghan police officers huddled around a tin teapot. Their commander drew long breaths from a hashish joint. “Its very good hashish,” he said. “And very cheap.”

His outpost lies in a district a few miles outside Lashkar Gah, but at noon he and his men make for the safety of the city: “The Taliban attack us at night. There is no security in the districts.”

He said he joined the police seven years ago when his boss, a former warlord, became the district police chief. “When we are at the post during the day it’s safe, but going and coming is very dangerous.” He pointed at a well behind us: “We take water from here with us, we don’t even have water there.”

He passed the joint to a young policeman, took a flat disc of hashish the size of his palm from a pocket, and started rolling another joint. His eyes blood red, he began outlining a theory I had heard several times in Afghanistan, once even from an Afghan diplomat.

“The problem is the British. They support the Taliban.” Why? “Because they want to control Afghanistan. They want us to stay fighting forever. The British only kill the innocent, they don’t kill the Taliban.”

He took another deep drag on the joint, poured some tea, and said: “Most of the Taliban we fight are Pakistanis here. They are Punjabis. When I arrested one of them two months ago I told him I am a better Muslim than you are, I fight for my country. And I shot him.”

“Afghanistan is destroyed by the foreigner,” said the young policeman, now more articulate after his joint. “Al-Qaida, the Pakistanis, the British and the Americans are all destroying Afghanistan.”

A young Afghan soldier sitting next to the police commander said:

“When the Taliban attack they are so close that we talk to each other on the radios. They shout 'allahu akbar, allahu akbar'. We ask them why are they fighting us - we are Afghans like them.

“They tell us that we are infidels because we are helping the foreigners occupy our country.”

“What do you tell them?” I ask.

“Nothing. They are right.”

Canadian General In Kandahar “Welcomes” Report Condemning Occupation For “Abusive Behavior,” Night Home Invasions Based On

“Faulty Intelligence,” & Disrespect For Afghan Women: “There Have Been Other Incidents Where The Men Were Simply Shot On Sight”

The report said that the lack of recognition of the victims, apology or compensation has also caused anger and resentment in the local community.

December 23, 2008 CBC News & Sayed Salahuddin, Reuters & December 24, 2008 By Steve Rennie, The Canadian Press [Excerpts]

Brig.-Gen. Denis Thompson, who is in charge of Canadian and NATO forces in the province of Kandahar, said he welcomed the findings in a 55-page report released Tuesday by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.

The commission, which is funded by the countries involved in the NATO mission in Afghanistan, made a deal with Canada last year to monitor the condition of all detainees seized by the Canadian military and handed over to Afghan officials.

The report characterizes NATO incursions into homes as violent break-ins that reportedly include “abusive behaviour” and cultural insensitivity, particularly toward women.

“Afghan families experienced their family members killed or injured, their houses or other property destroyed, or homes invaded at night without any perceived justification or legal authorization,” the report says.

“Afghans in these regions generally know stories of friends or family members who have been awakened in the middle of the night to be tied up, and often abused by a group of armed men,” it says.

A common pattern observed during the raids was for armed men to “separate the men from the women in the household, tie up the men, and often take one or more of the men with them when they left.”

The commission says there have been other incidents where the men were simply shot on sight.

“They often did not know who perpetrated the acts against the family or why. To their knowledge and perception, those who perpetrated the acts were never punished nor prevented from repeating them,” the report says.

The report suggests international forces often rely on unreliable sources or faulty intelligence when launching the incursions into homes, and there is little public accountability for the raids, which also appears to increase local anger.

There is a lack of co-ordination between coalition forces, foreign soldiers and local authorities, the report says.

“Ordinary people believe that there is no accountability or justice in respect of these violations, regardless of who committed (them).

The overall picture is that ... continuing support for Afghan government and international military has been eroded as ... consequences of the not carefully planned night raids,” the report says.

Monthly tracking information from the United Nations' human rights unit shows air strikes have been responsible for 25 per cent of all civilian deaths in Afghanistan this year. Coalition forces caused the majority of those civilian casualties.

The report said that the lack of recognition of the victims, apology or compensation has also caused anger and resentment in the local community.

“Ignoring the damage to civilians and lack of transparent and public investigations have contributed to the picture that the international forces are not interested and concerned about their activities causing damage to ordinary people,” the document states.

To compile the report, investigators from the commission spent three weeks gathering 74 testimonies from witnesses, military personnel, local authorities and government officials.

The commission also analyzed information from its regular reporting and incident monitoring, and scoured media reports and investigations by other human rights organizations.

Hundreds of Afghans have been killed in U.S. air strikes this year, undermining public support for the continued presence of NATO-led and U.S. coalition troops in Afghanistan and leading to a rift between President Hamid Karzai and his Western backers.

“While night-time house searches resulted in fewer deaths, night raids frequently involved abusive behaviour and violent breaking and entry at night, which stoke almost as much anger toward PGF as the more lethal air strikes.”

Quoting a UN estimate, Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission said in a report that 695 civilians were killed this year until October in raids by foreign and Afghan troops while hunting the Taliban.

Occupation Slaughters More Civilians:

“One Young Man In The Crowd Yelled Out To Karzai, ‘Death To Those Who Are Killing Afghans’”

23 December 2008 AP

President Hamid Karzai attended a memorial ceremony today for three Afghans killed in an overnight raid by US forces, an incident Karzai has asked America's top military officer to investigate.

Afghan officials say the three killed were innocent Afghans, and Karzai yesterday asked Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to investigate the deaths.

The three killed were Amir Hassan, 40, his wife and a 14-year-old nephew, said Haji Balal Hassan, the brother of Amir Hassan.

Balal Hassan said that Karzai shared his condolences during the ceremony in eastern Khost province and asked for details of the incident.

Some 800 people attended the memorial ceremony. Karzai told the crowd he is working on the problems, but said for now the country needs foreign troops despite pleas from some in the audience for international forces to leave.

One young man in the crowd yelled out to Karzai, “Death to those who are killing Afghans.”

“We Are Living In The Districts, In The Villages — We Are Not Living In The Mountains,” The Taliban Chief Said: “The People Are With Us.”

December 23, 2008 By DEXTER FILKINS, The New York Times Company [Excerpts]

American commanders and Afghan leaders are preparing to arm local militias to help in the fight against a resurgent Taliban. But along with hope, the move is raising fears here that the new armed groups could push the country into a deeper bloodletting.

The militias will be deployed to help American and Afghan security forces, which are stretched far and wide across this mountainous country. The first of the local defense

forces are scheduled to begin operating early next year in Wardak Province, an area just outside the capital where the Taliban have overrun most government authority.

Still, Mr. Haqmal said he was skeptical that the government-backed militias could succeed because the Afghan and American officials were bypassing the traditional leaders of the province. So far, he said, they had selected leaders in the community who lacked credibility with the local people. Moreover, Mr. Haqmal said he was worried that the militias would fail to receive proper support and guidance from the government, and end up starting tribal feuds with members of the Taliban.

Taliban commander based in Wardak Province, who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear that he would become a target, predicted that the government militias would find it hard to put down roots in the area, if only because the Taliban had already done so.

“We are living in the districts, in the villages — we are not living in the mountains,” the Taliban chief said. “The people are with us.”

Resistance Action: Military Supply Staff Captured

12/24/08 The Printers (Mysore) Private Ltd.

A 38-year-old man from Tamil Nadu working with a food store attached to Italian soldiers deployed in Afghanistan, has been captured by Afghan militants in Herath province, police said.

Simon, who hails from Kalakurichi Village of Villupuram district, was captured by a group calling itself Mujahideen on October 13 this year, police said.

Simon was working with an Italian food store supplying food to its soldiers in Afghanistan.

He was captured with two other company employees while they were delivering food at the International Security Assistance Force camp in Bagram air base, the sources said.

The kidnapers allowed Simon to talk to his brother Subbu who was also working in Kabul. Subbu said that the Indian Embassy in Kabul informed him about the kidnap on October 14.

TROOP NEWS

**“People All Along The Seven Mile
Route Got Out Of Their Chairs Of
Their Own Free Will And
Applauded At The First Sight Of
The IVAW Banner”
“Something Special Was
Happening That Day”
[Marching On The 4th Of July]**



Central Illinois IVAW on the Fourth of July in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois

Fall 2008 By Meg Miner; The Veteran; Vietnam Veterans Against The War [Excerpts]

Fourth of July is notoriously hot and humid here in the corn fields of central Illinois. Seven years ago I wouldn't have dreamed of spending that date at a parade much less in one.

But sometime after 9/11/01, I joined up with AWARE (Anti-War, Anti-Racism Effort: www.anti-war.net) a group of activists in Champaign-Urbana. In 2003, AWARE started entering the annual C-U pageantry for patriotism called Champaign County Freedom Celebration.

Each year, AWARE's entry in the parade lampoons the chosen theme in some way.

So yeah, every year it's hot and humid and I'd really rather be doing anything with a precious day off other than walking on asphalt.

Sometime people get it, though. They make the connection between the subversive message and the ever-inane annual theme and from there, we hope, they connect to the even more insane policies of our elected officials. Those moments of clarity are truly special but they were never more so than at this year's parade.

The AWARE float organizers took this year's official theme "Honoring Our Military Heroes" and once again turned it slightly askew from the intended tone. AWARE's float was called "Honoring Our Military Heroes Who Speak Against War."

They had six-foot tall posters made with war dissenters' pictures and they added quotes with these heroes' own comments about the war.

The AWARE planners invited IVAW and VVAW to join their parade entry, asking that IVAW take the lead.



Central Illinois IVAW on the Fourth of July in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois

Sometimes in past parades I've signaled my veteran status and sometimes not, but without official sponsorship I never felt I should wear my VVAW colors before.

This year I was thrilled to be walking beside my VVAW compatriots at the back of the IVAW contingent. I wore my VVAW shirt and carried a sign that said I was a Gulf War vet opposed to endless Gulf Wars.

Frankly, I thought we'd get some flak along the route. It usually happens, although in recent years there seem to be more people who are vocally supportive of our message than who object to it.

But like I said, this year was special.

I barely got one smart-mouthed rallying cry out before I realized the people were with us. I mean really with us.

And not just the people on the liberal side of town – people all along the seven mile route got out of their chairs of their own free will and applauded at the first sight of the IVAW banner.

I only heard three negative comments the whole way, and even they weren't agitated enough to shout down the people around them.

The worst comment of the day for me was when a kid read my sign and turned to his mom and said, "What's a Gulf war?" That threw me for a loop. One of the Vietnam vets beside me said, "Now you know how we feel." Time is truly a relative thing.

But my feeling of insignificance soon faded.

Something special was happening that day.

To be a witness to the acceptance IVAW got in C-U from people who are sometimes not so tolerant of messages that make them uncomfortable, and to see some people mouth the words "Thank You" ... wow, what a day!

IVAW brought something out of the people that day, and I think it spilled over to the VVAW line and on back to the civilians of AWARE and the posters with hard messages from the vets who couldn't be there with us.

It felt like C-U was honoring the warrior and the war-resister. It felt good.

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 RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Resistance Action:



(Graphic: London Financial Times)

Dec 23 By Laith Hammoudi, McClatchy Newspapers & By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA, Associated Press Writer & December 24, 2008 The Age Company Ltd. & MCT

The chief police of al Abayachi police station Lieutenant Colonel Ismail Faisal, his wife, his deputy Major Arkan and two others policemen were killed by a roadside bomb that targeted their vehicle in north Baghdad around 10 a.m.

Four policemen were killed and three others injured in bomb explosion in Tarmiyah, 30 miles north of Baghdad, an officer said on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to speak to the media.

Five Iraqi policemen were killed in a blast that ripped through their patrol vehicle in northern Baghdad, according to a security source. "An improvised explosive device planted by unknown gunmen on the main road in Baghdad's northern area of al-Mushahada detonated while the motorcade of a local police chief was passing by, killing him along with four of his security guards," the source was quoted by the Voices of Iraq news agency as saying.

A roadside bomb detonated in Jisr Diyala (southeast Baghdad) targeting a police patrol around 1 p.m. Six policemen were injured with their vehicle was damaged.

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

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

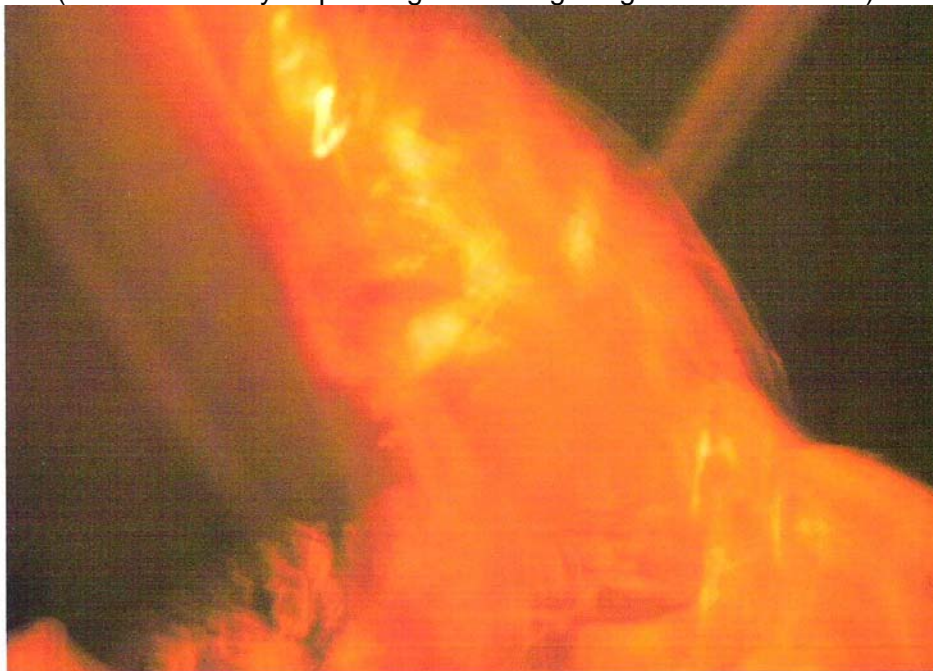
**THE U.S. EMPIRE
SENDS HOLIDAY
GREETING AND GIFTS
TO THE PEOPLES OF
IRAQ AND
AFGHANISTAN:**

FOR THE KIDS:



FOR THOSE SPECIAL GROWNUPS

(Some assembly required: gasoline + gel ingredients included.)



(Mike Hastie photo)

AND HERE'S SANTA!



You Can't Even Win On Christmas Day

From: Dennis Serdel
To: GI Special
Sent: December 22, 2008
Subject: You Can't Even Win On Christmas Day

By Dennis Serdel, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th Brigade, purple heart, Veterans For Peace 50 Michigan, Vietnam Veterans Against The War, United Auto Workers GM Retiree, in Perry, Michigan

You Can't Even Win On Christmas Day

Doug wonders how in the hell he ended up here
feeling like a sponge wet all the time, no let up,
no enemy, evidently they are not idiots, slipping
and falling down the paths for 30 + days straight in 1967
So then they go to these filthy bunkers with empty crushed
drab ration cans cigarette butts wrappers spent cartridges
dirt all over watching through a window of time
Orders to just go one at a time not all at once
“one mortar round could get you all killed trained “cliche”
Now go to the Mess Hall so you get killed one at a time
instead, with rust on the outside of your M-16
get some turkey mashed potatoes gravy
cranberries green beans and a roll on a steel tray
that separates all the hot and steaming food
with nothing to cover it and told to be on his way
So by the time Doug makes it back to the bunker
the monsoon rain has killed it as it all swims together
like puke from a Santa Claus drunk so he
eats the turkey and throws the rest away
for the rats to eat while others try to cover
their own with ponchos etc. but then all they could
see is their food slop on their pants, boots, mud
But the Brass should have known by now
that the monsoon rain rains 24 hours a day
like Rudolph and the Raindeer pissing altogether
on the Lz so Dougie like the others
slops in the mud and gives back their steel trays
He still wonders how can he get out of this mess
while America is sucking on his blood
like the leaches do on the jungle green wet leaves
while the princes and kings Officers

eat at the Mess Hall where it is dry warm and
clean, makes him want to kill them.
But he is supposed to protect them
while they drink 7-7's Jim Beam on the rocks
playing cards as he returns the eternal betray
between the Officer's fascist Orders
to grunts like a class war using poor drafted
boys, ok, some joined, mistakes were made,
Silent Night, but Dougie thinks at least, he can see
one half of the enemy maybe more
“don't salute me's” drunk and drunk with power
and of course we will win, just stay steady men.

**“It Was Just A Handful Of
Frustrated Vets Tired Of Signing
Petitions, Protesting, Marching
And Voting With Very Little
Result”**

**“Sometimes, We Have To Cross The
Line Of A Polite Society To Fight Fire
With Fire”**

**“The Strike Force Went Over The Chain
Link, Barbed Wire Barrier And Low
Crawled To The Flag. It Was Run Down
With Great Efficiency And Returned To
Its Post Upside Down”**

Fall 2008 By “A Veteran,” Vietnam Veterans Against The War

VVAW members know those in power make laws to protect their own interests.

When those interests turn to illegal and immoral war, they need to be stopped. As witnesses to war, we've realized we have a responsibility to expose the greed, horrors and lies that keep this history repeating.

Sometimes, we have to cross the line of a polite society to fight fire with fire.

We have avoided preaching in favor of dramatic events that have educated while entertaining.

The big actions often become legendary, but the valuable creative little capers from chapters across the country can be lost in the shuffle.

We need to fill in the blanks to complete our history and perhaps inspire future generations faced with this same madness.

There are veterans of war and its atrocities that don't tell their stories. There are those of us that can't.

Maybe it's less painful to tell anti-war stories.

Maybe the antics of the past can serve as inspiration or at the very least a curiosity for the present and future peace movements. I won't mention any names, but it is alleged that Vietnam Veterans Against the War has been involved in anti-war activities since its inception way back when.

This is a place to share our often humorous, sometimes less than legal and perhaps almost heroic attempts to derail the war machine.

Allegedly So...

It is alleged that in those heady days the Milwaukee chapter of VVAW, with a nod to the beeps and boops of censorship, had a volunteer unit they referred to simply as bee-boop.

It was just a handful of frustrated vets tired of signing petitions, protesting, marching and voting with very little result.

They had all been patriotic young men with high ideals willing to go to war for their country to protect its claims of freedom and to do right for the world. They lived in the shadow of an America that came to the rescue in World War II.

The new mission was to save the world from Godless Communism.

But then they found out, it was all more about money, war profiteers and lies than any political ideology.

They had been lied to, used and cast aside.

The nation was torn between blind patriotism and an end to the Vietnam War.

The Veterans Administration denied there were problems from Agent Orange and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The new class of veterans had served and wasn't even being cared for properly upon their return, but that's another story.

The team members were all ready and willing to cross the line and go to jail if necessary, but they were also practical and committed to nonviolence. Before each excursion, they met with a volunteer lawyer to discuss the legal consequences of their action and often shaped it accordingly.

They realized with each arrest they would be draining money from the very movement they hoped to support. They were all sworn to secrecy in that grand old tradition of "loose lips sink ships."

It was probably late June. We were still at war in a far off land when the call came over our tapped telephones.

A coded message said the Bee-Boop team would be activated for a special Independence Day statement.

It was a simple, yet eloquent thought. We would turn the American flag upside down – an internationally recognized signal of distress – at one of Milwaukee's grandest Fourth of July celebrations. It would be tricky.

There was still plenty of animosity between pro and anti-war forces. Aging VFW vets would be performing a 21-gun salute and the Milwaukee Police Department would be passing out ice cream to the kiddies. We needed precise military style, yet non-violent, tactics.

Lake Park is a beautiful site. It sits on the top of a steep wooded bluff overlooking Lake Michigan between a quiet city street in an exclusive neighborhood and the very busy Lake Drive below. A scenic – country like - winding road connects the two. So here was the plan:

There would be a get-away van with driver parked on Lake Drive. A small number of allies would be stationed in the audience armed with literature about the war. Another couple of supporters on ten speed bicycles would create a diversion with fire works behind the main park lodge.

And finally, teams of combat infantry vets in full camouflage would lay motionless in the woods, rush the flag, pop smoke grenades and in the confusion bring her down and put her back topsy-turvy amidst all the confusion. Then, a hasty retreat down the steep slope – hopefully a little too steep for the VFW vets and the Milwaukee Police to keep up or actually follow – and finally scrambling into the idling van and a safe escape to Hooligan's Bar to regroup and boast about the action.

The best laid plans...

Okay, so there was a walk through the day before to make sure the logistics would work. The camo clad vets arrived well before dawn and lay so still that even park workers picking up litter did not discover them. It is alleged that one stuck his pointy tipped paper

picker upper within a foot of me. My breathing was so shallow as to be almost nonexistent – and he gave me no notice.

The fire works exploded. We rushed the flag screaming for affect and absolute confusion. The smoke grenades were popped and the flag came down. Alas, it took some time to reverse it and try to get it back up.

The VFW recovered and was after us with their old M-1's at the ready – not locked and loaded – but ready to swat us like flies. We had seen this as a possibility and with our commitment to nonviolence sounded a hasty retreat. We ran for the slope. Everyone made it. No casualties.

But at Hooligans, the adrenalin was still raging and we were disappointed that we didn't get the flag back up. This called for a plan B.

Growing up in Milwaukee, I had often admired the patriotic and always well-manicured floral display that nestled below a proudly waving American Flag at the top of North Avenue in Reservoir Park. It was at the highest point in Milwaukee just a few miles straight up from the Lake. Traffic flowed up the very busy artery and steep incline for a great view looking directly into the park and its flag. Vehicles even had to slow for the sharp curve to the left and then right around it.

A new plan relying more on stealth than shock and awe was developed.

The Bee-boop unit took to the hill and quietly scouted the fence that separated them from their prize. Signals were established and lookouts posted around the park.

The strike force went over the chain link, barbed wire barrier and low crawled to the flag. It was run down with great efficiency and returned to its post upside down.

The team made it back over the barrier without incident and another successful get-away followed. Peace activists and the anti-war community were rewarded with a full color photo of Old Glory in distress on page one of the city's major daily newspaper.

**HONOR THE WARRIOR,
NOT THE WAR**

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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/)**



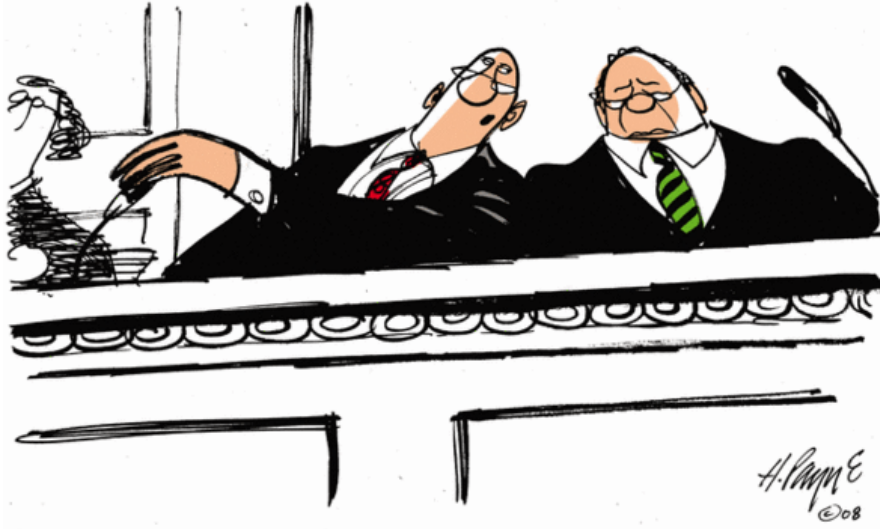
“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“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 Douglass, 1852

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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"REMINDE ME: ARE WE BAILING OUT BIG OIL AND CONDEMNING BIG AUTO GREED...OR THE OTHER WAY AROUND?"

CLASS WAR REPORTS



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

THIS IS CHANGE YOU CAN BELIEVE IN



12.22.08: Anti-government demonstrators burn the model of a pigs head with a police cap during a demonstration in central Athens. Shots were fired at an anti-riot van in Athens on Tuesday and a police car damaged as some thousands marched in new protests that have rocked the capital since police killed a teenager. (AFP/Aris Messinis)

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