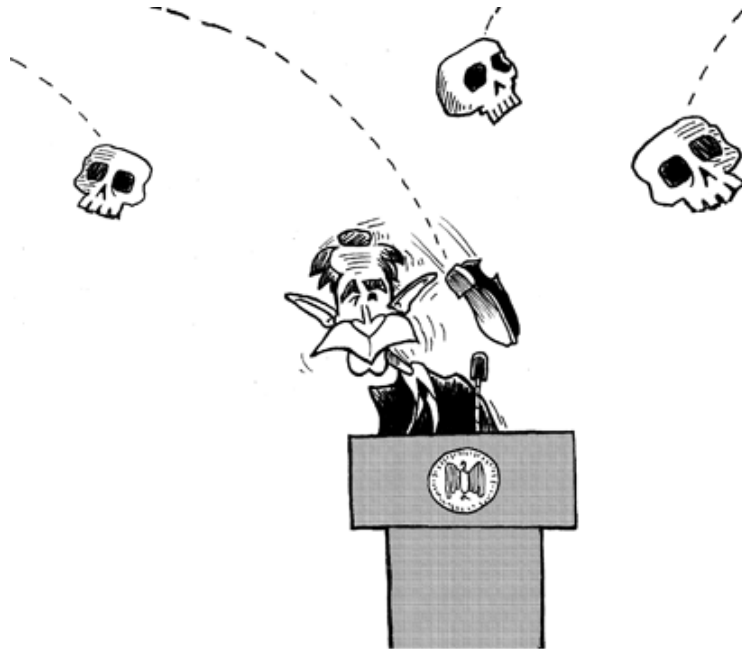


GI SPECIAL 6L17:



Mosul Christmas Edition!

**“To The TCNs: You Men And
Women Do Good Work For Very
Little Pay And Diminished
Human Rights. I Thank You For
What You Do For Us Each And
Every Day”**

**“To U.S. Contractors, KBR
Employees, And DoD Civilians”
“I And Many Soldiers Look At You
With Contempt, You Have Easy
Positions Here In Iraq, Taking Care Of
The Men And Women Out In The
Fight Is Not What You Do”
“You Have Failed Us More Often Than
Provided Us With Support”**



As a U.S. soldier, what is my interest in the TCN's? In three deployments to Iraq, the first of which was in the invasion in 2003, and I write this from the city of Mosul in northern Iraq, I have worked sometimes very closely with TCNs.

Close enough to know that they have names, families, dreams, and goals.

Close enough to see some of the abuses and poor treatment of the people that work so hard to support us in combat.

From: Garrett Reppenhagen [Iraq Veterans Against The War]
To: GI Special
Sent: December 24, 2008
Subject: Mosul Christmas Edition!

This is from [XXXX] who is deployed, he gave us permission to spread it around -- gives a great perspective on how we treat foreign employees.

Garrett Reppenhagen

Program Director
Homelake Colorado
Veterans Green-Jobs
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www.veteransgreenjobs.org

Mosul, One Year!

Before I get going on this
IMPORTANT

Any mail sent to me after 1 January 2009 may not make it to me
Please DO NOT send any mail to me after 1 January!

This is welcome news, if mail sent to me after the 1st may not make it to me; it means I might NOT BE HERE!!!! Welcome news indeed!

Here we go!

I have now been deployed for one year and 2 weeks as of today, December 17th. I have been in Mosul since the 2nd of January 2008.

And oh what a year it has been!

I have been thinking about how to talk about the year, there is too much to cover in one update I have decided. But what is important? How do I separate the details and opinions, what will make for a good read, what will be fun to write?

Well I don't know so I will just start somewhere and see where it goes and how many times I end up deleting entire paragraphs and starting over. I will try to keep track.
Smile!

This month I have managed thus far to avoid going into the city at all!

Thank goodness! I weaseled my way onto the gate guard force, not a glamorous position at all, actually one of the most looked down upon positions here in Mosul. And I have a smile on my face each day!

Because I am not running around Mosul doing ridiculous things each night.

Working the gate has been interesting, I work the contractor vehicle inspection lane, I get to see fun trucks like, garbage trucks, septic waste tankers, porto potty cleaning trucks, dump trucks, and all other manner of contractor vehicles.

With me at the gate is the Ugandan security detachment, no not the Ugandan army, Ugandans working for a private security company. They are good people and I have a good time chatting with them. To bad they are mercenaries and I sort of look down upon them on principle.

They are in an awful hurt right now, I guess in Uganda the temperature never goes below 18c, and the past few nights here in Mosul it has been dropping to freezing each night. Poor equatorial zone fellows. At least they are dressed appropriately, in long underwear, heavy uniforms, ski suits, gloves, full-face winter hats, and scarves.

I asked them what they are going to do when it gets cold, they looked at me in horror and disbelief. It cannot possibly get colder! Oh yes, it can, it will!

We have begun processing to redeploy, I got labeled "high risk" by the chain of command somewhere along the line.

So I had to go see the chaplain the other night to get evaluated to see if I needed counseling when we get home.

I checked out fine, I just have the same problems every other three-tour vet to Iraq has. So I just need to suck it up and soldier on.

Up until I got assigned to guard duty, [XXXX] was coming to see me every hour of the duty day for a little team leader loving time. For 10 minutes of every hour from 9am until 5pm he got to do push ups, sit ups, sprints, and all sorts of other exercises that were helpful and a few that were demeaning. Maybe if I embarrass him enough he will decide to get with it and pass his PT test. Next week we will find out if my efforts have helped at all.

There are many issues in Iraq that need to be recognized, addressed, or investigated.

I am going to focus though on the group of people that very few seem to remember.

Here in Iraq we call them TCN's (Third Country Nationals) who fits into this category?

The camp, FOB, and base support mechanism relies on TCN's to operate.

TCN's are from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Philippines, and across the Pacific, Asia, and Africa.

The only articles I have read about TCN's in the past few years are about contractors getting caught abusing or mistreating their employees, most recently in Baghdad when a contractor was housing over 1000 in a warehouse in Baghdad, essentially imprisoning them.

This only scratches on the surface of all of the TCN and contractor issues and problems in Iraq.

The average TCN has an income of between 400 and 600 US Dollars per month. Some make over \$800 a month and I have heard of some companies paying their Indian labor as little as \$200 per month. This in itself is not an issue so much, being that they are paid accordingly to their respective local economies.

What I believe is an issue is the difference in how a TCN and KBR or other US contractors get freedoms, liberties, and privileges.

As a U.S. soldier, what is my interest in the TCN's? In three deployments to Iraq, the first of which was in the invasion in 2003, and I write this from the city of Mosul in northern Iraq, I have worked sometimes very closely with TCNs.

Close enough to know that they have names, families, dreams, and goals.

Close enough to see some of the abuses and poor treatment of the people that work so hard to support us in combat.

Often the TCNs are blatantly ignored, talked trash about in front of their faces by soldiers, their US civilian managers and treated poorly by their parent companies, and have very few privileges and opportunities here in Iraq.

I have seen it time and again, individuals being rude and making fun of the TCNs, who just take the verbal abuse with a smile and move on. The TCNs speak English, yes they do. Actually many of them have more formal education than most soldiers and their US managers. I do my part to discourage this behavior by soldiers around me, but the problem started long ago, and is not easily squashed at all.

I was going to include a list of jobs the TCNs perform but it would have been too long for this column. In brief, they do every job on the camps that is support related, construction, cleaning, cooking, and so on.

The TCNs have and get very, very few privileges as compared to KBR (Kellogg Brown and Root) and other U.S. contractor employees doing much of the same work, or much less work as often is the case.

A U.S. contractor employee gets to eat in the DFAC, use army Morale, Welfare and Recreation facilities (gym, computer center, library, movie nights, USO shows etc.) A TCN does not get to use any of these.

The U.S. contractor employees also are allowed to use the PX (Post Exchange or troop store) where as TCNs are not allowed to go in or even allowed to have a soldier or U.S. contractor employee buy them anything.

Who am I referring to when I saw U.S. contractor?

I am referring to KBR (Kellogg Brown and Root) the largest American defense contractor in Iraq, along with other companies such as DynCorp, L3 Communications, General Dynamics, MPRI, Blackwater and the list goes on. KBR Company though is most visible, and most of my comparisons come from looking at KBR employees.

Another firm example of the privilege gaps and problems was brought to my attention last night (22 December, 2008).

The EODT Company, a civilian paramilitary company provides security for camps and FOB's thru out Iraq. Here in Mosul the EODT security detachment is made up of Ugandans (classified as TCN's). I have no problem personally with any of the Ugandans, though as a soldier I object to mercenaries on principle.

The issue is this, these men and women are supplied weapons, placed in security positions, often out in front of U.S. soldiers at checkpoints, camp entry points and inspection areas, yet are not allowed for "security" reasons to have a computer, MP3 player, camera, or cell phone.

KBR employees, regardless of the positions that they hold, are authorized all of the above.

Should TCNs be allowed to get all the privileges provided to the army?

Personally I don't think so, at the same time I wonder why KBR and other US contractors are so special to get to use everything we soldiers are given or rewarded.

There are few things more frustrating in Iraq than being in line at the DFAC behind a KBR employee as they complain about how they need to make more money.

Most KBR employees in Iraq make a minimum of \$60,000 a year. Most U.S. soldiers in Iraq make a maximum of \$40,000 a year, and the soldiers most likely to be killed here are the lower enlisted, who make often less than \$30,000 a year.

It is very hard to be objective about contractors in Iraq. As I sat down to write this I started off trying to be objective then the anger and frustration set in. Writing about a topic that I am in the middle of has proved challenging.

It is very hard not to attack the people that do work for companies such as KBR because if the corporate policies and standards those companies seem to represent. Many KBR employees do good work for us soldiers and do provide good support.

But many do not care about supporting the soldiers or our missions.

While I attempted to do a marginal amount of research for this column, most this has come from my perception of the way things are on the ground; both from my personal experience, and from the stories of those I work with.

While KBR is probably the most scorned and investigated contractor, there are over 150 firms operating in Iraq.

The average TCN has little to no voice in his or her quality of life while employed in Iraq and works for little pay.

Let us call to task these companies that continue to neglect their foreign workers, and the U.S. Department of Defense for allowing it to happen.

These workers not only support us out in the field and on the camp, but also live on a U.S. compound.

America claims to be 'land of the free' but that is just a slogan, for these men and women see that there is no equality, no fairness, they are third rate people from the third world.

Let us bring fairness to all.

To the TCNs: You men and women do good work for very little pay and diminished human rights.

I thank you for what you do for us each and every day.

To U.S. Contractors, KBR employees, and DoD civilians:

I and many soldiers look at you with contempt, you have easy positions here in Iraq, taking care of the men and women out in the fight is not what you do.

You have failed us more often than provided us with support and often I have to go out of my way to accommodate your wants and needs.

A special note to you KBR employees at the Class 1 yard (food supply area) I despise you people!

You give Me attitude when I ask for produce that is Not brown and food that is Not expired!

I caused you problems because you were supposed to be having a BBQ and you had to take care of me?

I was bitching too much about wanting all the food the soldiers of COP Knight need and deserve?

Shame on you people, shame.

I just realized that this update will be the Christmas edition.

Christmas day this year I will be on duty, all day, 7AM until 8PM, working the gate.

Christmas dinner will come to me in a to-go plate.

I am positive I will get crap food.

They will probably bring me a hamburger and fries just because it will be easier than getting us at the gate an actual dinner.

[XXXX]
Mosul Iraq
23 December 2008

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

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

U.S. Soldier Killed By Indirect Fire (Mosul)

25 December 2008 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory
RELEASE No. 20081225-F

TIKRIT, Iraq – A U.S. Soldier died of wounds as a result of an indirect fire attack near
Mosul, Iraq Dec. 25.

**THIS ENVIRONMENT IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR
HEALTH;
ALL HOME, NOW**



U.S. soldiers at a roadside bomb attack on an Iraqi police vehicle, in Firdous Square, central Baghdad, Nov. 26, 2008. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

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

Dec 25 (Reuters)

A soldier for the NATO-led force was killed in the south of the country, the alliance said.

Royal Marine From 42 Commando Killed In Nad-E-Ali

Dec 25 Ministry of Defence

It is with deep sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that a Royal Marine from 42 Commando was killed in Afghanistan, yesterday, 24 December 2008.

The Royal Marine died from enemy fire in the Nad-e-Ali district near Lashkar Gah in Helmand province. He was taking part in an operation to remove enemy forces from the north of the district.

Occupation Troops Help Resistance, Again

Dec 25 (Reuters)

Foreign troops mistakenly shot dead at least two employees of a construction firm in eastern Kunar province on Wednesday, residents said.

Afghanistan Occupation Supply Line Choked:

**“Attacks Have Become A Daily
Affair”**
“The Road Is A Death Trap”
**“Militants Now Rule The Critical Region
East Of The Khyber Pass”**



A truck carries supplies for American and NATO troops on a highway east of Kabul, Afghanistan. A portion of this road has been called a deathtrap. Musadeq Sadeq/Associated Press

“Increased missile attacks by remotely piloted American aircraft have enraged residents in Khyber and other tribal areas near the border, increasing sympathy for attacks on convoys”

The largest truckers’ association here has gone on strike to protest the lack of security, saying that the job action has sidelined 60 percent of the trucks that normally haul military goods.

December 24, 2008 By RICHARD A. OPPEL Jr. and PIR ZUBAIR SHAH, New York Times [Excerpts]

PESHAWAR, Pakistan — This frontier city boasts a major air base and Pakistani Army and paramilitary garrisons. But the 200 Taliban guerrillas were in no rush as they methodically ransacked depots with NATO supplies here two weeks ago.

The militants began by blocking off a long stretch of the main road, giving them plenty of time to burn everything inside, said one guard, Haroon Khan, who was standing next to a row of charred trucks.

After assuring the overmatched guards they would not be killed — if they agreed never to work there again — the militants shouted “God is great” through bullhorns. They then grabbed jerrycans and made several trips to a nearby gas station for fuel, which they dumped on the cargo trucks and Humvees before setting them ablaze.

The attack provided the latest evidence of how extensively militants now rule the critical region east of the Khyber Pass, the narrow cut through the mountains on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border that has been a strategic trade and military gateway since the time of Alexander the Great.

The area encompasses what is officially known as the Khyber Agency, which is adjacent to Peshawar and is one of a handful of tribal districts on the border.

But security in Khyber has deteriorated further in recent months with the emergence of a brash young Taliban commander who calls news conferences to thumb his nose at NATO forces, as well as with public fury over deadly missile attacks by American remotely piloted aircraft.

Khyber’s downward spiral is jeopardizing NATO’s most important supply line, sending American military officials scrambling to find alternative routes into Afghanistan through Russia and Central Asia.

Three-quarters of troop supplies enter from Pakistan, most of the goods ferried from Karachi to Peshawar and then 40 miles west through the Khyber Pass into Afghanistan.

A half-dozen raids on depots with NATO supplies here have already destroyed 300 cargo trucks and Humvees this month.

American officials insist that troop provisions have not suffered, but with predictions that the American deployment in Afghanistan could double next year, to 60,000 soldiers, the pressure to secure safer transportation is even more intense.

For NATO the most serious problem is not even the depots in Peshawar but the safety of the road that winds west to the 3,500-foot Khyber Pass.

The route used to be relatively secure: Afridi tribesman were paid by the government to safeguard it, and they were subject to severe penalties and collective tribal punishment for crimes against travelers.

But now the road is a death trap, truckers and some security officials say, with routine attacks like one on Sunday that burned a fuel tanker and another last Friday that killed three drivers returning from Afghanistan.

“The road is so unsafe that even the locals are reluctant to go back to their villages from Peshawar,” said Gul Naseem, who lives in Landi Kotal, near the border.

The largest truckers' association here has gone on strike to protest the lack of security, saying that the job action has sidelined 60 percent of the trucks that normally haul military goods. An American official denied that the drop-off had been that severe.

"Not a single day passes when something doesn't happen," said Shakir Afridi, leader of the truckers' group, the Khyber Transport Association. He said at least 25 trucks and six oil tankers were destroyed this month.

"Attacks have become a daily affair," he said.



An important NATO supply line goes over Khyber Pass. The New York Times

There are new efforts to deter Taliban raids, including convoy escorts by a Pakistani paramilitary group, the Frontier Corps.

But now militants are attacking empty — and unguarded — trucks returning to Pakistan. The road from Peshawar to the border has become far more perilous than the route on the other side in Afghanistan, truckers say.

"Our lives are in danger and nobody cares," said Shah Mahmood Afridi, a driver who was in the returning convoy attacked on Friday. "They fired at the trucks and killed three men inside. There is no security provided when we are empty."

Escalating violence on the Khyber road has paralleled the rise of Hakimullah Mehsud, a young Taliban commander and lieutenant of Baitullah Mehsud, leader of the main Pakistani Taliban faction.

Earlier this year, Hakimullah Mehsud's forces took control of Orakzai Agency and instituted the strict Islamic laws known as Shariah. At a news conference there one month ago, Hakimullah Mehsud declared his intention to intensify attacks on NATO supply convoys.

Increased missile attacks by remotely piloted American aircraft — like one that killed seven people in the South Waziristan Agency on Monday — have enraged residents in Khyber and other tribal areas near the border, increasing sympathy for attacks on convoys. Mr. Afridi, of the truckers' association, condemns the strikes and blames them for increased assaults on his drivers. "We are a tribal people, and if the Americans hit innocent people in Waziristan, we also feel the pain," he said.

Raising the prospect of an even wider threat to the convoys, an influential Islamic party, Jamaat-e-Islami, staged a rally last week in Peshawar, turning out thousands to condemn the missile strikes. The marchers demanded that Pakistan end the NATO convoys, and they vowed to cut the supply lines themselves.

Taliban militants have also moved into Khyber after Pakistani military campaigns in nearby areas like Bajaur Agency.

Their migration is reminiscent of a tactic that bedeviled the American military in Iraq for years — dubbed "whack a mole" by combat officers — in which guerrillas eluded large American combat operations and moved to take up positions in areas with understaffed troop contingents.

**A Moment Of Truth For
Canadian Occupation Soldiers
As Their General Brings The
Good News:
"Enjoy Your Christmas Because It
Doesn't Get Any Better Than This"
He Promises To Push Them Into
Fresh Combat Soon:
"I'd Rather Be Opening Presents," Said
Bombardier Spanos, 23**

December 25, 2008 Darah Hansen , Canwest News Service [Excerpts]

PANJWAI DISTRICT, Afghanistan - Christmas on Afghanistan's front lines was as festive as a company of tired soldiers could make it.

Despite the festivities, it was hard for the soldiers to forget why they're there.

Just days before, the members of Mike company - who man this forward-operating base deep in Taliban territory - were trading fire with insurgents across the grape fields and mud walls of a nearby village. A foot patrol turned up a cache of homemade explosives, the kind used to such deadly effect against the Canadians over the past two years.

Christmas Eve brought a special visit from Brig.-Gen. Denis Thompson, the commander of coalition forces in Kandahar, who joined in the dinner celebration.

"Enjoy your Christmas because it doesn't get any better than this," Thompson said, promising to push further into what he called a "critical" territory in the coming year.

At one of the tables, Bombardier Alexander Spanos, Bombardier Evan Shields and Gunner Ossama Aziz took a welcome break from their artillery duties. For all three men, it was their first Christmas in Afghanistan.

"I'd rather be opening presents," said Spanos, 23, a Toronto resident.

TROOP NEWS

Another U.S. Deserter Ordered To Get Out Of Canada

December 17, 2008 The Canadian Press

TORONTO - The War Resisters Support Campaign says Citizenship and Immigration Canada has told a U.S. deserter living in Nanaimo, B.C., that he must leave Canada by Dec. 24 or face removal by force.

Cliff Cornell, originally from Arkansas, arrived in Canada in January, 2005.

Mr. Cornell's deportation order comes after similar orders for war resisters Corey Glass, Jeremy Hinzman and his family, Patrick Hart and his family, Matt Lowell and Dean Walcott.

More Than A Dozen Members Of National Guard Accuse Their Top General Of Race And Gender Discrimination: “The Letter Complaining To The NAACP Is An Acceptable Way For Soldiers To Complain About Equal Opportunity” [“The Enemy Isn’t In Iraq”]

[Thanks to SSG N (ret’d) who sent this in. She writes: “The enemy isn’t in Iraq.”]

12/21/2008 By Tony Messenger, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH [Excerpts]

JEFFERSON CITY — More than a dozen members of the Missouri National Guard have accused their top general of discrimination on the basis of race and gender.

In the past two months, two high-ranking personnel officers have filed federal discrimination complaints alleging that the top general in Missouri’s Guard, Adjutant Gen. King Sidwell, discriminates against women and blacks.

And 13 black members of the Missouri Guard have complained to the NAACP that Sidwell has “fostered a climate of institutional discrimination.”

The allegations come seven years after a study of the Guard’s racial climate criticized the organization for deficiencies in the promotion of minorities and women.

“Under Gen. Sidwell, it’s my perception that unless your skin is the same color as his, you’re not qualified to be part of the key staff,” said Lt. Col. James Tate, one of the soldiers to sign a letter of complaint to the NAACP.

The federal complaints, one filed by Tate, the other by a white female, allege that Sidwell and his chief of staff, Col. Glenn Hagler, passed over qualified black and female officers for promotion in favor of less qualified white males.

Sidwell and Hagler acknowledge that some complaints in the NAACP letter involve situations that were “handled poorly” by management.

One of the federal complaints was filed by Lt. Col. Nancy Jones, the Guard’s top advisor on discrimination allegations.

Jones, who is white, said she was passed over for a job as the head of human resources for the Guard in favor of a white man who didn't apply for the job and had no experience in human resources.

A 30-year veteran of the military, Jones was one of four applicants for the position. She was the only woman and the only applicant to have human resources experience. Jones has worked in the field for 13 years and said she had received high marks for her work.

She said that when she was passed over for a white male with less experience, she sought an explanation from Sidwell.

"The adjutant general said to me: 'Nancy, this is not about you being a woman. It's that John Oberkirsch is the next person I want to promote.' That was his answer," Jones said. "He genuinely doesn't see it. In my opinion, he doesn't see women in the same leadership capacity as he sees men."

Jones, who is 51, said she agonized over whether to file her complaint. She's a self-described "military brat," the daughter of a retired Air Force officer. Her husband is a lieutenant colonel in the Missouri Air National Guard, based in St. Louis.

"I've been in the military over 30 years," she said. "To lodge a complaint is a very, very difficult thing for me to do. This is my life. I love the military."

Gov. Matt Blunt appointed Sidwell to his post in 2005. Sidwell is a lawyer and engineer who lives in Sikeston. He has applied with Gov.-elect Jay Nixon to keep his position as adjutant general under the next administration.

The 13 black soldiers who complained to the NAACP allege that Sidwell and Hagler also discriminate against minorities seeking promotion.

In a letter to Nimrod Chapel, the president of the Jefferson City branch of the NAACP, the soldiers point to several instances where black officers were passed over for promotion in favor of white counterparts who, the letter says, were less qualified.

"When we've attempted to address these issues with the leadership," the letter says, "we're consistently met with barriers, roadblocks and excuses."

On Dec. 1, Tate filed a complaint with the inspector general of the Department of Defense outlining what he calls a pattern of discrimination against both blacks and women under Sidwell and Hagler.

Tate, the deputy director of personnel for the Guard, lists six examples of alleged discrimination against blacks or women in his complaint, including the Guard's decision to bypass him for promotion to colonel despite a unanimous recommendation from the Career Management Board.

Sidwell and Hagler told the Post-Dispatch they believed Tate's complaint was filed as retaliation against them for promoting another African-American, Larry Spruill, to become the first black colonel in the Missouri Army Guard's history.

“The complaint wasn’t filed until after (Spruill) was hired,” Sidwell said in an interview in his office Tuesday. “This was a reaction to the Spruill hire.”

But Sidwell had the time line wrong. The letter to the NAACP was written in October, and Tate filed his complaint about a week before the Career Management Board met to consider Spruill’s promotion.

Spruill didn’t qualify for the promotion under typical standards, Sidwell said. He has not yet been deemed colonel-worthy by a national promotion board. Spruill had not commanded a battalion or attended War College. And he wasn’t on the state’s order of merit list, which is used in determining promotions.

So why was Spruill promoted?

“Affirmative action,” Sidwell said.

In a letter sent through his public information officer after his interview, Sidwell says Tate was 29th on an order of merit list and junior in grade, while Spruill is an advisor to the assistant secretary of the Army for manpower and reserve affairs at the Pentagon and is senior in grade.

There is nothing in the Guard’s affirmative action policy that either allows or directs soldiers to be promoted on the basis of their race. The policy instead is a series of directives aimed at making sure Guard leadership takes equal opportunity seriously. In fact, the policy makes it clear that race should not be a factor in promotions.

This is not the first time Tate has complained of racism in the Missouri National Guard.

In 2000, he filed an equal opportunity complaint with the Guard over his alleged mistreatment while stationed in Fulton. The National Guard Bureau in Washington sustained his complaint. At the time, four Missouri Guard officers were punished over their mishandling of his complaint.

The NAACP also intervened in that case, and as a result the National Guard Bureau ordered a private firm to perform a study of the Guard’s racial climate in Missouri. The study found that minorities were poorly represented in the Missouri Guard’s officer ranks and that women and minorities were poorly represented in management or officer ranks.

MISLABELED FILE

Lt. Col. Greg Mason, one of the 13 soldiers who signed the recent letter to the NAACP, has been in the National Guard either full-time or part-time for 30 years.

Mason, 51, spent most of his civilian life in the Missouri Highway Patrol. He’s served tours of duty in Bosnia and Iraq. In March, Mason was passed over for a promotion in favor of Lt. Col. North Charles, who is white, even though Mason had much more experience.

Mason is a graduate of the Army War College. Charles is not. Mason has led a battalion and been deployed. Charles hasn't.

Mason's first inkling of a problem was when Tate, the deputy director of personnel in the Guard, told him his personnel file seemed to be mislabeled.

To be promoted to colonel, Guard soldiers must have received positive evaluations from their supervisors, who decide whether they are a "must promote" candidate.

In his evaluation in Sept. 2004, Mason was rated as "above center of mass," which qualified him for promotion to colonel. On the evaluation, Gen. Michael Pace wrote, "LTC Mason should be promoted at the earliest opportunity and be placed in a position of even greater responsibility."

But that evaluation, both Tate and Mason say, at some point was mislabeled in Mason's file to indicate that he was not qualified for promotion to colonel.

Tate, who was transferred to the Jefferson City headquarters after a 3-year-tour as the commander at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis, said he noticed the error while Mason was deployed to Iraq.

By then, Sidwell already had promoted Charles.

The Guard declined to provide Charles' evaluations, so it is impossible to know how they compare with Mason's.

Asked if he believed race played a role in Sidwell's promotion decisions, Mason said he couldn't know for sure.

"The only one who would know that is Gen. Sidwell," Mason said. "My issue is not being given the same opportunity as Charles. I don't begrudge him."

Sidwell said he was aware of the mislabeling problem with Mason's file. He said the mistake occurred at the National Guard Bureau in Washington.

Mason and Tate say they don't see the same problems with race and promotion in other parts of the country that they see in the Show-Me State.

"Being at the War College, you get to meet a lot of people from all over the country," Mason said. "When they hear that Missouri has never had a black colonel, they're very surprised."

"In terms of race," Tate said, "Missouri is so far behind the curve it's shameful."

LETTER DISPUTE

In the military, promotions are supposed to be based on a specific system of merit, with checks and balances in place to guard against discrimination.

Tate, 41, argues to the Department of Defense's inspector general that the evidence shows he has jumped through all the proper hoops to be a colonel, but that Sidwell, for some reason, simply won't promote him.

It's "very much like the 'good ole boy' system being revived," Tate's complaint alleges.

His most recent officer evaluation report, signed by Sidwell, said Tate should be promoted to colonel "immediately."

"Outstanding officer with excellent potential matched by performance," the report stated. Tate was ranked "above center of mass." He should be "promoted ahead of his peers," the evaluation stated.

On March 18, the three-person Career Management Board — which must approve all senior officer promotions — discussed several lieutenant colonel promotions, including Tate's. The board unanimously approved promoting Tate to his new position at headquarters.

As part of the move he would be promoted to colonel in October, according to his complaint, and the recommendation was provided to Sidwell for final approval.

Sidwell, Tate's complaint says, approved all of the board's decisions except for the one related to Tate.

Sidwell said the Career Management Board was wrong to promise a "future" promotion. That's why he didn't approve Tate's move to colonel, he said.

The general didn't hide his disdain for Tate.

"Why have I got a lieutenant colonel who is responsible for personnel soliciting a signature to make a complaint that he should be communicating and he should be solving?" said Sidwell, referring to Tate's involvement in the NAACP letter.

Sidwell said Tate should have brought the complaints to him directly. "That was not done."

Tate said he followed the chain of command and took his issues to Hagler, the chief of staff and Sidwell's top aide. Hagler confirmed that he had had many conversations with Tate about equal opportunity issues, including Tate's own promotion. Hagler also said he took some of those issues to Sidwell.

Hagler and Sidwell say the letter complaining to the NAACP is an acceptable way for soldiers to complain about equal opportunity. After the Guard's issues with discrimination seven years ago, the Guard instituted a policy of quarterly meetings with the local NAACP president and the adjutant general.

Black soldiers are told that if they have concerns about racial issues that it is within their rights to discuss them with Chapel, and he will, in turn, bring those issues to Sidwell.

That's precisely what the black soldiers intended with the letter delivered to Chapel in October, said several soldiers who signed the letter.

But Sidwell said Chapel never gave him the letter. The general said he would have addressed some of the issues earlier had he received it.

On Friday, the Guard released a letter Chapel wrote to Sidwell a day earlier commending the general for his good communication and “positive relationship” with the NAACP.

But when a reporter asked Chapel whether he had received the letter alleging discrimination, he was unclear. He said he hadn’t seen “a letter signed by 13 soldiers in the Missouri National Guard.” Asked if he received any letter substantially like the one the Post-Dispatch obtained, he refused to answer.

Tate said he felt as if he had spent the past several months trying to advance his military career while being stymied by Sidwell and Hagler every step of the way.

“They have simply stonewalled the process,” Tate said. “You kind of see the goalposts get moved back with each passing month.”

1,000 Serbian Army Veterans Fight With Police: “Former Yugoslav Army Reserve Soldiers Demanding Unpaid Wages For Fighting In Kosovo In 1999” [“Cheating Soldiers Out Of Their Pay Is Played All Over The Place”]

[Thanks to SSG N (ret’d) who sent this in. She writes: More bonus marchers. The rich get richer the poor stay poor. Cheating soldiers out of their pay is played all over the place.]

BELGRADE, Dec 21, 2008 (Xinhua via COMTEX)

Some 1,000 protesting Serbian army veterans clashed with the police in southern Serbia on Sunday, leaving nine people injured.

Three veterans were lightly injured, while four others were arrested. Six policemen, two of them Gendarmes, were also hurt, the Serbian news network B92 reported.

The incident took place on a bridge over the River Toplica as the veterans of the Kosovo war attempted to break through a police cordon at the Merdare border crossing with Kosovo, but were stopped by some 300 Gendarmes and riot police in full riot gear.

The veterans from some 20 towns staged the protest on the Nis-Pristina road near Kursumlija, demanding unpaid wages for fighting in Kosovo in 1999.

The former Yugoslav Army reserve soldiers, who were called up during the 1999 Kosovo War, planned to continue months of protests and draw the Serbian government's attention to their demands.

Dejan Milosevic, who heads one of the veterans' associations, said that they expect the government to adopt an urgent decree that will allow all veterans to receive the same amount of money. "Everyone should get what some individuals have got through courts, and that is from 500,000 to 1 million dinars (8,290 to 16, 580 U.S. dollars)," he said.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Iraqi Oil Pipeline Blown Up

25/12/2008 KIRKUK, Iraq, (Reuters) & By Hussein Kadhim, McClatchy Newspapers

The oil pipe line that passes through al-Misharfa village of Dibs (south Kirkuk) was sabotaged by a bomb, causing a fire and great damage to the pipe line. The crude oil pipeline carries oil from northern Iraq to the city of Kirkuk, Iraqi and U.S. military officials said on Thursday.

The explosion at around midnight set fire to one pipeline and damaged a second, said the joint U.S.-Iraqi military coordination centre in Kirkuk.

The fire occurred in the town of By Hassan, near the disputed city of Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, police said. "This explosion did not affect the Iraqi-Turkish pipeline, it is for domestic use.

"In the next few hours we should be able to extinguish the fire," said a source at the state-run North Oil Company, who asked not to be identified.

Resistance Action:

December 25, 2008 (AP) & By Hussein Kadhim, McClatchy Newspapers

A fatal car bombing in Baghdad on Christmas morning was a gruesome reminder that serious problems remain. The bombing outside a restaurant frequented by police killed

four and wounded 25 in the neighborhood of Shula, said a police officer on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to give information to news media.

A car bomb detonated near the fifth brigade headquarters of the Iraqi army in Kokajli district (east of Mosul) around 5 p.m. Two people were injured.

A roadside bomb targeted an army patrol in Intisar neighborhood in Mosul on Thursday. Four soldiers were wounded and one civilian.

A car bomber targeted a coalition patrol in front of Muqdadiyah town (21 miles northeast Baquba). Three people were killed and 14 others were wounded including four policemen.

Insurgents opened fire on a policeman in the 17th of July neighborhood in Mosul city on Thursday. The policeman was injured.

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

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

Frederick Douglas, 1852

“What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms.”

Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, 1787.

“The mighty are only mighty because we are on our knees. Let us rise!”

-- Camille Desmoulins

“When someone says my son died fighting for his country, I say, “No, the suicide bomber who killed my son died fighting for his country.”

-- Father of American Soldier Chase Beattie, KIA in Iraq

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

Mike Hastie

U.S. Army Medic

Vietnam 1970-71

December 13, 2004

UFPJ Forced To Agree To Immediate Withdrawal From Afghanistan

From: John O

To: GI Special

Sent: December 23, 2008

Subject: Re: UFPJ Now Demands Immediate Withdrawal From Afghanistan

[T]he proposal to incorporate opposition to the war in Afghanistan was approved.

From article on United For Peace And Justice national convention December 12-14;
Socialist Worker 12.19.08:

“UFPJ demands immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all occupying forces from Afghanistan,” reads the amendment.

“We will make this demand along with immediate withdrawal from Iraq the central focus of our organizing and actions.”

UFPJ’s leadership clearly didn’t want to come out for immediate withdrawal, which puts the coalition explicitly at odds with the Obama administration’s plans.

But sensing that this was broadly popular among the delegates, the program committee decided to accept the caucus’ language as a friendly amendment, and thus avoid a vote on the issue directly.”

I think the pressure from the caucus is commendable. We’ll see if the demand actually becomes a “central focus”. Whether IVAW adopts a similar position is probably just a matter of time, but the sooner the better!

Reply:

All honor to the insurgent caucus that forced this change.

As for being at odds with Obama, UFPJ has had a paper position for years calling for immediate withdrawal from Iraq, and that hasn’t given the national office any problems in their unceasing alignment with the Democratic Party.

Too harsh?

Don’t hold your breath waiting for the day UFPJ points out that Obama’s position on Afghanistan means he’s up to his neck in the blood of U.S. troops and Afghans, and that he is as much of an Imperial enemy as Bush ever was. Never happen, GI.

The faction who run UFPJ are Imperial apologists black-flagging, and not to be trusted for one second, whatever resolutions they grudgingly are pressured into agreeing to.

Their refusal to call for national action this year to bring the troops home on the anniversary of the invasion of Iraq and their refusal to lift a finger to call for or organize person to person outreach to troops resisting the Imperial wars speaks for itself.

T

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

POLITICIANS CAN’T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT THE BLOODSHED

THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE WARS

December 26, 1971: Honorable Anniversary



Carl Bunin Peace History December 24-30

Two dozen members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War “liberated” the Statue of Liberty with a sit-in to protest resumed U.S. aerial bombings in Vietnam.

They flew an inverted U.S. flag from the crown as a signal of distress.

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/)

GI SPECIALS BY MAIL FREE FOR ACTIVE DUTY TROOPS

IF YOU WISH TO HAVE A SELECTION OF GI SPECIALS MAILED TO YOU, EMAIL YOUR ADDRESS TO: CONTACT@MILITARYPROJECT.ORG OR DROP A LINE TO: BOX 126, 2576 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10025-5657 USA. 917.677.8057

Please say how many you wish sent.

NOTE WELL: They will all be different issues of GI Special to satisfy DOD regs that you may possess copies, *provided you don't have more than one of the same issue.*

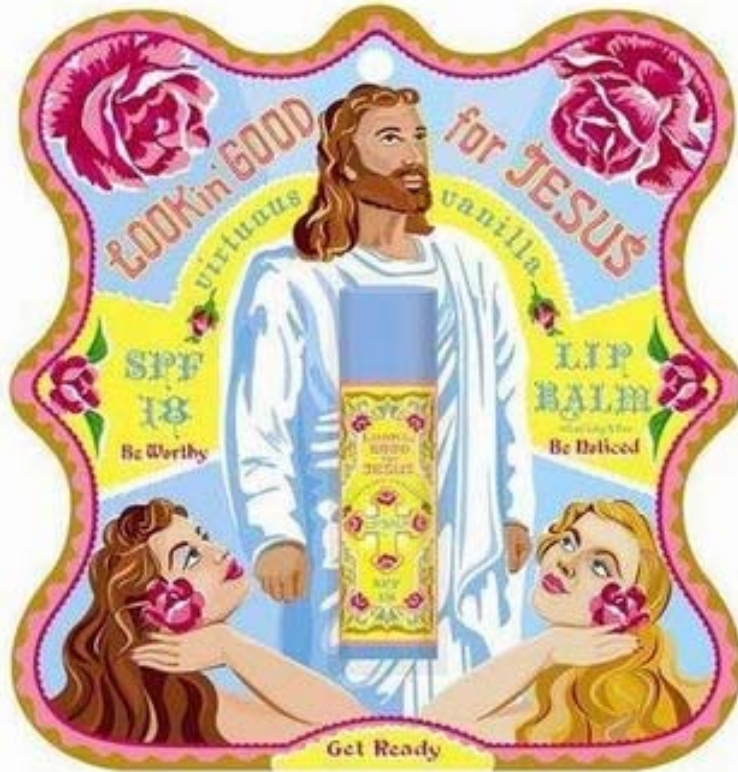
Got an opinion? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send to contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request identification published.

CLASS WAR REPORTS



[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in. She writes: The UAW has to take cuts for their bail out.]

Capitalism At Work: “We’ll Sell Anything”



DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

GI Special issues are archived at website <http://www.militaryproject.org> .

The following have chosen to post issues; there may be others:

<http://williambowles.info/gispecial/2008/index.html>;

http://www.traprockpeace.org/qi_special/;

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