

GI SPECIAL GUARD ISSUE 7B3:

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**"I'VE TOLD HIM THAT DADDY'S NOT AT WORK ANY LONGER,
BUT HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND IT YET"**



1.16.09: Alison Hernandez is supported by her mother, Billie Meadows (left), and father, Robert Gordon (right), Thursday as she cries at the casket of her husband, Cpl. Joseph M. Hernandez, Indiana National Guard, killed in Afghanistan. (Stephanie Dowell/Post-Tribune)

**Slaughterhouse Afghanistan:
Obama "Will Put More Emphasis
On Waging War Than On
Development, Senior
Administration Officials Said"**

U.S. Troops To “Focus On The Fight Against Insurgents”

Missile Attacks On Pakistan To Continue

January 27, 2009 By HELENE COOPER and THOM SHANKER, The New York Times Company & By Anne Gearan, Associated Press [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON — President Obama intends to adopt a tougher line toward Hamid Karzai, the Afghan president, as part of a new American approach to Afghanistan that will put more emphasis on waging war than on development, senior administration officials said Tuesday.

They said that the Obama administration would work with provincial leaders as an alternative to the central government, and that it would leave economic development and nation-building increasingly to European allies, so that American forces could focus on the fight against insurgents.

NATO has not met its pledges for combat troops, transport helicopters, military trainers and other support personnel in Afghanistan, and Mr. Gates has openly criticized the United States' NATO allies for not fulfilling their promises.

Mr. Obama is preparing to increase the number of American troops in Afghanistan over the next two years, perhaps to more than 60,000 from about 34,000 now.

He outlined plans for an increase of about 12,000 troops by midsummer but cautioned that any decision on more troops beyond that might have to wait until late 2009, given the need for barracks and other infrastructure.

With the forces of the Taliban and Al Qaeda mounting more aggressive operations in eastern and southern Afghanistan, administration officials said they saw little option but to focus on the military campaign.

“There is little doubt that our greatest military challenge right now is Afghanistan,” Gates said, marking the formal shift in priorities away from Iraq in his first congressional testimony as Pentagon chief under President Obama.

Gates joined US fortunes in Afghanistan to the related struggle against extremism in Pakistan, but signaled no reduction in US missile strikes or other raids that infuriate both populations and besmirch the US-backed governments in Kabul and Islamabad.

Who Could Possibly Have Believed It?

JCS Chief Casey Tells Military Audience That “Iraq And Afghanistan Are Not Going To Go Away”

“Also In Question Is Whether Obama Will Stick To His Campaign Promise Of Withdrawing Troops From Iraq Within 16 Months Of His Oath Of Office”

1.26.09 By Gina Cavallaro & By Michelle Tan, Army Times [Excerpts]

The Army chief of staff projects a “slight increase” in the number of soldiers deployed between now and mid-2010, as a planned shift of combat troops to Afghanistan takes shape at the same time most soldiers are still deployed in Iraq.

Gen. George Casey, who made his remarks at a Jan. 14 meeting of the Association of the U.S. Army in Arlington, Va., gave few details about what sort of increase he foresees, indicating a holding pattern of sorts with the change of command at the White House.

As of Jan. 13, there were 23,500 soldiers in Afghanistan and 103,700 in Iraq, with another 10,400 soldiers in Kuwait and Qatar in support of operations in the war zones, according to the Army G-3 plans and operations center.

Casey told his audience that “Iraq and Afghanistan are not going to go away” and said he does not yet know how decisions made by the incoming Obama administration will impact the Army.

“We don’t know where this is going to come out, but I don’t see much reduction until the middle of 2010,” Casey said.

“We’re probably not going to have everything out of Iraq on the timelines we need to have it in Afghanistan. So I think maybe a slight increase,” Casey said, in reference to a previously announced increase in forces in Afghanistan by 30,000 by this summer.

Also in question is whether Obama will stick to his campaign promise of withdrawing troops from Iraq within 16 months of his oath of office.

At the end of the day, the senior planner said, everyone acknowledges that the Army is operating at capacity.

Casey, who had said he is eager to get troops up to a minimum of 18 months’ dwell time, said he didn’t expect the deployment of additional soldiers through 2010 to disrupt the progress the Army is making in providing more dwell time for soldiers.

Still, he said, the plan to get soldiers back to more than 18 months dwell time is not yet in place and won't be for at least two years.

“A Coalition Of Anti-War Groups Say National Guard Troops Are In Iraq Illegally”



01/21/09 NewsChannel 8

A coalition of anti-war groups say national guard troops are in Iraq illegally. They are introducing legislation in more than a dozen state legislatures to force governors to demand their recall.

More than a quarter of American troops in Iraq are National Guardsmen and many have served multiple tours.

Congress authorized their mobilization in 2002, but anti-war advocates say that law has expired. “We contend this law is moot, that its terms have been met, and therefore there is now legal basis for sending the National Guard to Iraq,” said Jean Athey, Peace Action Montgomery.

Seven years ago, National Guardsmen were called up to help find weapons of mass destruction Iraq.

Since none were found and until Congress re-authorizes their mobilization, campaigners argue, they are there illegally. “The National Guard should be commanded by their governors, lacking the authorization from Congress,” said Karen Dolan, Institute for Policy Studies.

The coalition is trying to introduce legislation in every state to demand governors take back control of National Guard units and block future call-ups of guardsmen, unless there is a valid reason.

“Until there is some lawful basis for the guard to be deployed to Iraq, we are instructing our state executive, our governor, to stay no,” said Ben Manski, Liberty Tree.

So far, legislators in 18 states, including Maryland, have agreed to introduce the bill.

Maryland supporters say the legislation will be introduced to the general assembly soon.

3,000 From Texas Army Guard Off To The Imperial Slaughterhouse “War Taking Toll On Guardsmen”

Dec. 6, 2008 By SIG CHRISTENSON, San Antonio Express-News

A 3,000-member Texas Army National Guard infantry unit has taken over the job of running convoy missions in Iraq.

But the unit's 12-month mission, one of the Army's most dangerous jobs, began amid signs of increasing strain in its ranks.

Some mid-grade officers and enlisted men in the 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team are leaving at the end of their enlistments, the unit's adjutant general said, while others wrestling with troubled marriages and jobs have been allowed to stay home rather than deploy to Iraq.

And as the war drags on, the Guard has been told to prepare a Houston brigade for deployment within the next year.

Their presence in Iraq is the largest yet by the Texas Guard since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, underscoring the Pentagon's reliance on part-time soldiers.

Eight Guard soldiers have been killed in Iraq, in a CH-47 Chinook southwest of Baghdad, and one has been slain in Afghanistan. Sixty-seven troops have been wounded.

As the sixth anniversary of the invasion nears, there are signs of wear and tear in the Texas force. While it has kept more than 60 percent of its veteran troops and met and exceeded its recruiting goals, Rodriguez said mid-grade officers and non-coms are leaving.

Defense Department figures released in February show that nearly half of the Army National Guard's force of 356,211 soldiers have served in Iraq or Afghanistan. The figure is similar for Texas.

More Bosses Refusing To Hire Back Guard & Reserve Members; Too Many Deployments

January 19, 2008 By Karen Jowers, Army Times [Excerpts]

There are signs that employers are having increasing difficulty complying with the law related to rehiring National Guard and Reserve members returning from military duty.

“The op tempo of the Guard and Reserve is having a dramatic effect on employers’ willingness to comply” with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, said Mathew Tully, an attorney who specializes in military law and writes a legal column for Army Times.

Some employers say it’s worth it for them to reach a monetary settlement rather than rehire the service member, Tully said.

‘We’ve seen a dramatic increase in complaints compared to 2006,” he said.

“Irrespective of what the law says, employers tend to get aggravated with multiple call-ups.” Guard and reserve members are not just being deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, but are being pulled away for training and other duty.

The number of cases of USERRA complaints handled by volunteer ombudsmen for the Defense Department’s National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) increased by about 12 percent in 2008, compared to 2007, following a steady decline over the previous four years.

Service members who want free help can go to the ESGR, which tries to broker an informal solution between service members and employers before informing service members that they can file a case with the Department of Labor or hire a private attorney.

But regardless of how many cases come to the ESGR or other federal agencies, that’s the “tip of the tip of the tip of the iceberg,” said Sam Wright, a retired Navy captain and attorney who is an expert on USERRA who works for Tully’s law firm.

Complete information on the total number of USERRA cases ‘just does not exist,” he said.

An unknown number of service members decide to hire their own attorneys for help in resolving the issue with the employer, or to sue the employer, he said.

“We’re seeing more employers who are fighting back,” he said. ‘They’re getting legal help to try to find ways around this.

Another hidden factor is people who never complain. They may think they have rights, but don't know what to do.'

SUPPORT G.I. RESISTANCE



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”

[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."



“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

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.