

GI SPECIAL GUARD ISSUE:

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

There It Is: No Drawdown For Middle East Troops Levels For "Four Or Five Years Into The Future"

2.9.09 By Michelle Tan, Army Times [Excerpts]

There are now 15 BCTs in the Central Command area of operations, 12 in Iraq and three in Afghanistan, the senior Army planner said, adding that he and his staff continue to plan for that level of demand four or five years into the future.

Also, the Army National Guard has five brigades conducting security force missions in the Central Command area of operations.

“We’re only supposed to get them once every four years,” the senior Army planner said about Guard brigades.

“We’re turning them faster than that right now.”

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

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

**You Are Cordially Invited To:
“2,191 Days And Counting”
Iraq Veterans Against The War
Brooklyn Benefit Party**



Saturday, March 7th at 6PM
Powerhouse Arena - 37 Main Street, DUMBO, Brooklyn.
(It is easy to get to by subway on the 2, 3, 4, 5, A, C, and F trains.)

For \$10 at the door enjoy gourmet food, beverages and performances, including IVAW members speaking about the Winter Soldier project.

For more information read the description below.

Join photojournalists and artists Jim Nachtwey, Joyce Kozloff, Joan Snyder, David Opdyke, Martha Rosler, Steve McCurry and Joy Garnett, Iraqi and veteran artists and new talent at a benefit exhibit/ performance at Powerhouse Arena on March 7th from 6-10 PM, Benefiting Iraq Veterans Against the War's Winter Soldier Project*

One kilogram of ashes from burnt books collected from the library at the College of Fine Arts in Baghdad lies in three glass cylinders, on which Qais Al-Sindy, a 42-year-old Iraqi artist, etched calligraphy verses from a poem about death and renewal.

Al-Sindy, who now lives in San Diego, also created a video of the burning of the precious historic collection which he witnessed in 2003.

Drew Cameron, a 26-year-old Army artillery soldier now living in Burlington, Vt., cut up his uniform, turning it into pulp paper, on which he depicted a degraded image of his memories of Chinooks and Apaches landing in the desert at sunrise (he launched "Combat Paper Project," a series of workshops which have helped 65 other vets from different wars "deconstruct" their uniforms and synthesize their war experiences in art).

"The story of the fiber, the blood, sweat and tears, the months of hardship and brutal violence are held within those old uniforms," he says.

Wafaa Bilal's provocative video game/art exhibit, Domestic Tension (80 million hits), grew out of the killing of his younger brother by American air-ground missile.

Two stills from the project -- one of them with him ducking to avoid being shot -- reflect the impersonal nature and the trauma of war. Bilal, who now teaches at NYU, will also read from his book, -- Shoot an Iraqi: Art Life and Resistance Under the Gun -- at the reception on March 7th.

The universality of tea -- and the sheer generosity of Iraqi nationals brewing tea for exhausted American Army truck drivers -- inspired Aaron Hughes, a 26-year-old veteran (now living in Evanston, Ill.) who served in the 1244th Transportation Company to create "Tea," his three-part project (installation/performance/dialogue) using styrofoam cups.

He tells the story of Chris Arent who "was not familiar with Muslim culture" but he learned that they don't draw the human form, maybe not any creatures, but they draw a lot of flowers. They would cover the cups with flowers."

The reception and evening of performance will be on Saturday March 7, from 6-10 PM.

There is a \$10 cover charge at the door, which includes the performance, food and beverages.

All proceeds will be donated to IVAW's Winter Soldier Project to collect soldiers' firsthand accounts of both wars.

All veterans can take part, regardless of their politics, regardless of whether the soldiers are pro or anti war, and the project will provide them with much needed legal and mental health support.

As the nation nears the six-year anniversary of the wars, the Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) is working diligently to raise accountability and expose the true facts.

In 1971, courageous Vietnam veterans came forward to testify at Winter Soldier, fueling the anti-war movement.

Last March, the Iraq Veterans Against the War (www.ivaw.org), launched a similar event, called Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan.

In organizing the high profile benefit exhibit and performance, -- 2,191 Days and Counting -- IVAW hopes to expose true narratives while encouraging debate aimed at ending these wars.

See you ALL on March 7th...

New York City Chapter
Iraq Veterans Against the War
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SUPPORT G.I. RESISTANCE



www.ivaw.org

National Guard Soldiers From At Least Three States Exposed To Deadly Toxin In Iraq:

“They Knew Back In 2003 That This Stuff Was Dangerous And They Told Us It Wasn’t”

“KBR Officials On Site Told Him It Was Only Slightly More Dangerous Than Baby Powder”

“I knew that there was an issue when they sought to protect themselves and didn’t bother to tell us on the way out there, ‘You might want to have chemical masks and suits,’” said Kimberling, who intends to join a group of soldiers who are suing KBR.

February 28, 2009 By Farah Stockman, Boston Globe Staff

WASHINGTON - The West Virginia National Guard is trying to track down 130 reservists who were probably exposed to a cancer-causing chemical in 2003 while guarding a water facility in southern Iraq.

The move follows similar efforts by the Indiana and Oregon National Guards, whose soldiers were also believed to have been exposed to sodium dichromate. The soldiers were guarding civilians who were repairing the Qarmat Ali plant under the supervision of Houston-based defense contractor KBR.

Hundreds of soldiers and civilians are believed to have worked near the chemical, which is used to prevent pipes from rusting but which also greatly increases the risk of cancer and other health problems.

The Pentagon and KBR were aware in 2003 that the chemical was piled around the looted facility, and took blood samples from some soldiers and civilians in Iraq to try to determine their level of exposure.

But six years later, little effort has been made to systematically alert all those who worked at the plant.

“They knew back in 2003 that this stuff was dangerous and they told us it wasn’t,” said one former West Virginia reservist who asked that his name not be used because he feared it would be detrimental to his military career.

He said battalion medics questioned a group of West Virginia soldiers in August 2003 to ask whether they had come into contact with the orange dust, but they never told him what it was and never tested him.

“They asked us if we had seen this stuff, breathed it, gotten it on our clothes or our bodies,” he said, adding that KBR officials on site told him it was only slightly more dangerous than baby powder.

Russell Kimberling who now works for a pharmaceutical company in Louisville, Ky., had been guarding the plant for more than two months when his superiors asked him to escort senior KBR officials there because there were rumors of an orange chemical on the ground that they wanted to see.

He said he got out of his vehicle at the site, kicked the dirt, stirring an orange cloud, and said, “This is what you are talking about.”

But when Kimberling, dressed in battle fatigues, turned around, he was stunned to see that the KBR officials who were getting out of their vehicles were all dressed in full chemical suits.

“I knew that there was an issue when they sought to protect themselves and didn’t bother to tell us on the way out there, ‘You might want to have chemical masks and suits,’” said Kimberling, who intends to join a group of soldiers who are suing KBR.

Sodium dichromate is the same substance that poisoned residents in Hinkley, Calif., an incident made famous by the movie “Erin Brockovich.” Specialists say that even short-term exposure can increase the risk of cancer, depress the immune system, and cause other problems.

Kimberling said he was airlifted out of Iraq to repair a hole in the cartilage of his nose - a common symptom of sodium dichromate exposure - and that he now suffers from frequent sinus headaches and unexplained spots on his skin.

The West Virginia soldier who asked not to be identified said he has frequent bloody noses and tumor-like knots in his thyroid glands.

He said he saw a doctor, but a battery of tests did not turn up any cause. He realized only in recent weeks, after receiving a letter from the West Virginia National Guard, that he had been exposed to a substance that could have triggered the problems, he said.

In February, the West Virginia National Guard began tracking down the soldiers who spent time at Qarmat Ali to tell them to get a health assessment.

“We feel, since the issue has been raised, that it is important enough to contact the soldiers and advise them of what they need to do to get checked out,” said Michael Cadle, a spokesman for the West Virginia Guard.

There is no effective way to undo the health risks caused by exposure, specialists say, but records can be kept in soldiers’ medical files so that if health problems arise, they might be covered as service-related.

If The Oregon “Guard Home” Campaign Has Its Way, Deployment To Iraq And Afghanistan Will Be Stopped: “Oregon’s National Guard Protects Us Year Round. We Must Now Act To Protect Them”



February 19, 2009 By Peter Bergel, Statesman Journal.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are about to come home to Oregonians more than they ever have before.

If the Pentagon has its way, 2,800 to 3,500 National Guard troops from Oregon will be deployed to the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan before summer. This would be the largest deployment of Oregon National Guard troops abroad since World War II.

If the Guard Home Campaign has its way, that deployment will be canceled.

The Guard Home Campaign is a coalition of 54 Oregon organizations working together to pass state legislation aimed at preventing the deployment. It is part of a national campaign now active in 19 states and growing.

Why target state legislatures? Isn't this a federal issue?

Legally, the National Guard can only be deployed abroad if a valid Authorization for the Use of Military Force exists.

Since World War II, AUMFs have taken the place of the formal congressional declarations of war required by the Constitution to commit the nation to war. GHC claims

that the 2002 AUMF for Iraq has expired, since it refers to the capture of Saddam Hussein and his alleged weapons of mass destruction and enforcing U.N. resolutions against Iraq.

The 2001 AUMF for Afghanistan is so broad that its terms can never be fulfilled. Thus, it too fails the test of validity.

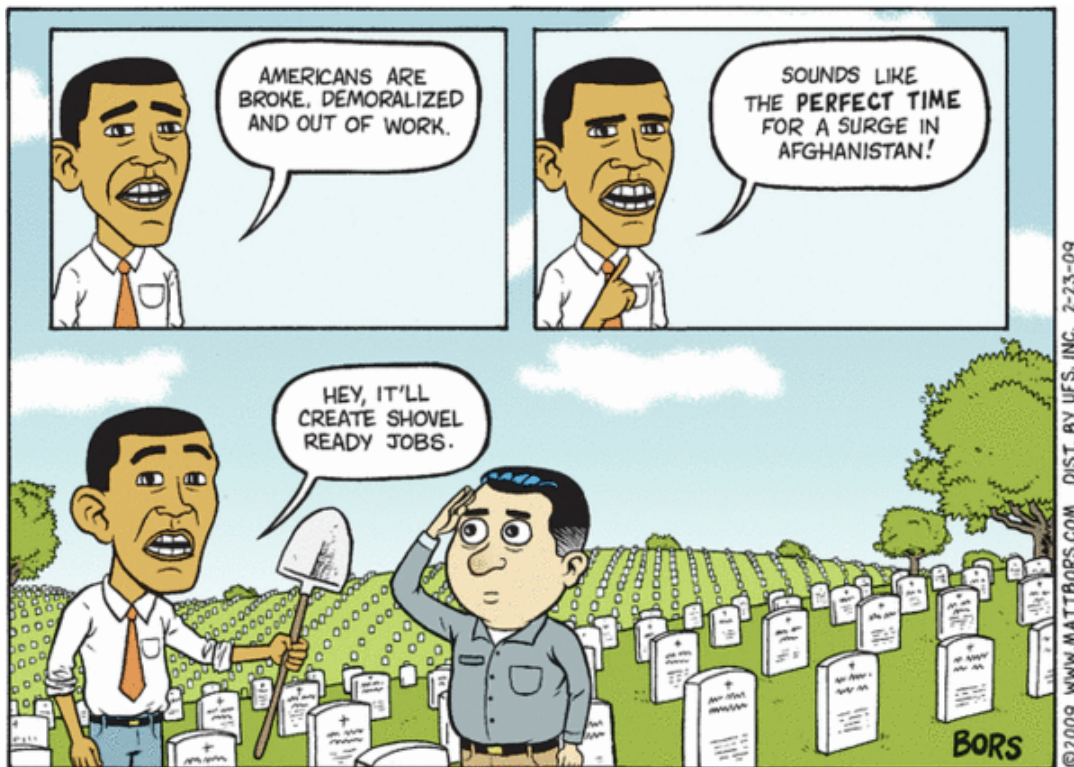
There is a bill in the Legislature that affirms that the state militia (National Guard) “is limited to service on behalf of the State of Oregon unless the organized militia is called to federal active duty under a constitutionally authorized federal order pursuant to a Congressional declaration of war or a valid Congressional resolution.”

This bill is accompanied by state Senate and House resolutions urging the governor to use the power confirmed by this legislation to keep the Guard in Oregon.

If you believe Oregon’s National Guard will be needed to fight fires, deal with floods and help with search-and-rescue missions, now is the time to contact your state representative and state senator urging a speedy yes vote on the bills to keep the Guard in Oregon. If you do not know who your legislators are, go to leg.state.or.us/findlegsltr/ to find out.

Oregon’s National Guard protects us year round.

We must now act to protect them.



Stupidity In Command: Iraq Veteran Thrown Out Of National Guard For Being Gay: “It Didn’t Make A Difference When I Went To Iraq”

February 9, 2009 Pink News

A woman who served for nine years in the Kansas Army National Guard has been discharged after a co-worker told authorities she is a lesbian.

Amy Brian is an Iraq veteran.

She is the first service member to be dismissed from the Kansas Army National Guard, made up of reservists, under a 1993 law that bans openly gay people from serving in the US Armed Forces.

After a co-worker told Guard officials via email she had seen Ms Brian kissing another woman in a checkout line at Wal-Mart, an investigation began.

Despite her service since 1994, including a tour of duty in Iraq, she was dismissed last month.

“Everyone ... knew I was gay, and no one had a problem with it,” Ms Brian said.

“It didn’t make a difference when I went to Iraq.

“It didn’t make a difference when I drove that truck.”

“It didn’t make a difference in my ability to serve my country.”

“I was not separated because of any type of misconduct but plain and simply because someone else had a problem with my sexuality.”

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.

No More Court-Martials In Argentina: “Important New Rights For The Rank- And-File” Troops Will Be Tried In Civilian Courts With Lawyers Of Their Choice

[Thanks to Mike Woloshin, Veterans For Peace.

[He writes: “Here is an example of ‘Military Justice’ which should be followed by the United States which will eliminate the abuses of ‘Command Influence’ and provide for the accused to choose his own legal counsel. Note that: ‘The new system places Argentina on a par with international standards for military legal proceedings,’ and also that: ‘The new rules guarantee important new rights for the rank and file.’]

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) -- Members of Argentina’s armed forces will be tried by civil courts rather than military tribunals under a new rule that took effect Friday, part of a government effort to increase control over the military.

“We are still in a period of transition after the return to democracy, trying to advance in terms of our democratic institutions,” said Gaston Chillier, director of the Buenos Aires-based Center for Legal and Social Studies.

The new system places Argentina on par with international standards for military legal proceedings, said Defense Ministry spokesman Jorge Bernetti.

Signed into law last August, the measure brings the army, navy and air force under the same legal system as civilians -- making soldiers accountable to civilian courts and hamstringing the military’s ability to delay trials to protect its own, Chillier said.

[C]hillier said the new rules also guarantee important new rights for the rank-and-file.

For example, service members can now choose their own lawyer rather than being appointed one by the military.

The measure also means troops are no longer subject to the death penalty and cannot be imprisoned for engaging in homosexual acts.

March 7, 1965: Most Honorable Anniversary The First March From Selma: A Day That That Shook The World



Alabama police attack Selma-to-Montgomery marchers

Carl Bunin Peace History; Americaslibrary.gov [Excerpts]

March 7, 1965

When 525 people started a planned march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, on Sunday March 7, 1965, it was called a demonstration.

When state troopers met the demonstrators at the edge of the city by the Edmund Pettus Bridge, that day became known as "Bloody Sunday."

In Selma, African Americans made up almost half the population, but only two percent were registered voters. Discrimination and intimidation tactics aimed at blacks kept them from registering and voting.

The demonstrators marched to demand fairness in voter registration.

The sheriff warned the people that they had two minutes to break up the march, but the deputies attacked sooner.

The demonstrators were tear-gassed, clubbed, spat on, whipped, trampled by horses, and jeered by others for demanding the right to register to vote.

Television and newspapers carried pictures of the event that became known as "Bloody Sunday."

The images sickened, outraged, and electrified people throughout the country.

Within 48 hours, demonstrations in support of the marchers were held in 80 cities.

Many of the nation's religious and lay leaders, including Martin Luther King, flew to Selma. After one more failed attempt, King led a peaceful march from Selma to Montgomery. Congress responded to these events by enacting the Voting Rights Act of 1965.



March 8, 1965; Unhappy Murderous Imperial Stupidity Anniversary



Carl Bunin Peace History

About 3,500 U. S. Marines became the first American combat troops in Vietnam, landing near the coastal city of Da Nang.

The USS Henrico, Union, and Vancouver, carrying the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade under Brig. Gen. Frederick J. Karch, took up stations 4,000 yards off Red Beach Two, north of Da Nang.

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.



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

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

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

Frederick Douglas, 1852

Troops Invited:

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