

GI SPECIAL GUARD ISSUE:

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**“Iraq Veterans Against The War
Calls For The Immediate And
Unconditional Withdrawal Of All
Occupying Forces In
Afghanistan”**

**“The Afghanistan War Dehumanizes
The Afghan People And Denies Them
Their Right To Self-Determination”**

**“There Is No Battlefield Solution To
Terrorism”**



Feb 5 2009 IVAW Website: IVAW.org

Whereas, Iraq Veterans Against the War is an organization that has opened its membership to veterans of the war in Afghanistan;

Whereas, the war in Afghanistan is continuing into its seventh year with rising casualties among the Afghan people, and with U.S. and Coalition forces facing their deadliest year since the invasion;

Whereas a primary motivation for the prolonged occupation of Afghanistan is competition between the U.S., Russia and China for control of oil and natural gas resources in Central Asia and the Caspian Sea;

Whereas, the military occupation is creating tension and resentment among the Afghan people, to include Afghan women, many of whom are calling for the removal of all foreign occupying troops;

Whereas, the Afghanistan war dehumanizes the Afghan people and denies them their right to self-determination;

Whereas, our military is being exhausted by involuntary extensions, and activations of the Reserve, National Guard and Individual Ready Reserve, and by repeated deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan;

Whereas, service members are facing serious health consequences due to our government's negligence in Iraq and Afghanistan and mismanagement of the Department of Veterans Affairs;

Whereas, there is no battlefield solution to terrorism, and any escalation of the war in Afghanistan will only serve to exacerbate the plight of the Afghan people, destabilize the region, and further the breakdown of our military;

Therefore, be it resolved that Iraq Veterans Against the War calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all occupying forces in Afghanistan and reparations for the Afghan people, and supports all troops and veterans working towards those ends.

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

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

National Guard Bonuses Slashed;

Re-Enlistment Payouts Cut One-Third

3.16.09 By Michelle Tan, Army Times [Excerpts]

The Army National board has slashed bonuses, including key re-enlistment payouts by a third, and restructured the way many incentives are paid and targeted.

The changes, effective March 1:

Here are some of the major changes to the Guard incentive program, according to Lt. Col. Ron Walls, chief of recruiting and retention:

■ **The \$15,000 bonus for any six-year extension has been cut to \$10,000. The \$7,500 bonus for three-year re-enlistments now falls to \$5,000.**

In addition, the bigger bonuses of the past were paid in lump sums.

Now soldiers receive 50 percent initially, 20 percent midway through their term, and the final 30 percent upon completion of the re-enlistment.

The only exception is for soldiers who re-enlist while deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan or Kuwait. They still will receive their bonuses in a lump sum.

- Retention bonuses for Active Guard and Reserve soldiers, military technicians and those in the 09 Lima interpreter/translator program are suspended indefinitely.
- Incentives worth up to \$20,000 for soldiers who enlist for at least six years in a critical unit or skill have been cut to \$10,000. Critical skills include medical, military intelligence and transportation.
- Units used to be able to recruit and offer bonuses to new soldiers until the units were at 125 percent of their authorized strength. That cap has been reduced to no more than 105 per-cent of a unit's authorized strength.
- Prior-service soldiers who join the Guard can still earn \$15,000 for a six-year hitch with a unit that has been identified for deployment or one that requires special skills, such as military intelligence, Special Forces and aviation. Three-year commitments are worth \$7,500.

What's changing is the way these soldiers will receive their bonuses. Before March 1, these soldiers received 50 percent of their bonus at the beginning and 50 percent midway through their terms. Now they receive 50 percent to start, 20 percent midway and 30 percent at the end of their enlistments.

■ The Guard has eliminated its affiliation bonus, which can be worth up to \$20,000. In the past, those with prior service in any military service could earn a lump sum of \$20,000 for six years in a critical unit in the Guard and \$10,000 for three years. Those who enlisted into a non-critical unit received the same amount of money, but the payments were split in two. That bonus no longer exists.

- Guard soldiers who are students can benefit from a more generous loan repayment program, up to \$50,000, if they meet certain requirements. Previously, soldiers who were full-time students received up to \$20,000 to repay their loans.

They can now receive up to \$50,000 if they enlist or re-enlist into certain critical-needs units.

Non-prior service soldiers must score in categories I through IIIA on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery to qualify. Prior-service soldiers must never have received money from a reserve component student loan repayment program. Soldiers also must already have at least one loan to enter the program.

- In an effort to fill training seats during off-peak months for new soldiers, the Guard is offering a \$5,000 bonus for recruits who agree to ship to basic training within 45 days of enlisting. Those who don't ship within 45 days of enlistment, but who do so between Oct. 1 and May 31, earn an off-peak ship bonus, also worth \$5,000. Recruits who fulfill both criteria can earn \$10,000.

- Bonuses can be combined to add up to the maximum of \$20,000. For example, new soldiers can earn \$5,000 if they ship within 45 days of enlisting, another \$5,000 if they ship between Oct. 1 and May 31, and \$10,000 paid over their term of enlistment if they join a designated critical unit.

- Other programs, such as the Guard Recruiting Assistance Program, which pays qualified soldiers up to \$2,000 for every new recruit they bring into the Guard, will remain in place.

**War Profiteers KBR Knew
Oregon National Guard Soldiers
Were Being Poisoned During
Operation “Restore Iraqi Oil”
Now They’re Fighting For Their
Lives:
Rats In Command Covered It Up For
KBR; Said No Problem:**

Oregon Guard Medical Bureaucrats Fail To Notify Poisoned Soldiers: They're Too Busy Sending More Troops To Die For Oil And Empire



Larry Roberta, who served in the National Guard in the Middle East, takes so many daily medications to manage shortness of breath and other problems, he needs a plastic tote box to keep them organized. "That's not the man I sent," says his wife, Michelle. Photo: Rob Finch, The Oregonian

[Here it is again. Same old story. Used up, thrown away, and the politicians couldn't care less. To repeat for the 3,535th time, there is no enemy in Iraq or Afghanistan. Their citizens and U.S. troops have a common enemy. That common enemy owns and operates the Imperial government in Washington DC for their own profit. That common enemy started these wars of conquest on a platform of lies, because they couldn't tell the truth: U.S. Imperial wars are about making money for them, and nothing else. Payback is overdue. T]

The Army also concluded that the low levels of exposure that were found meant soldiers were not expected to suffer long-term health consequences. Finally, the Army concluded, KBR had fulfilled its contract. The oil was flowing.

March 07, 2009 by Julie Sullivan, The Oregonian

The soldiers worried about Saddam Hussein loyalists, not the dust.

Dust coated the Oregon Army National Guardsmen's combat boots and caked their skin as they protected Halliburton KBR contractors restoring oil flow in Iraq in 2003.

Dust poofed from the soldiers' uniforms as they crowded into vans at the end of the day and shared tents at night.

When the dust blew onto Spc. Larry Roberta's ready-to-eat meal, he rinsed the chicken patty with his canteen water and ate it.

Six months later, doctors discovered the flap into Roberta's stomach had disintegrated. Six years later, the Marine and former police officer can no longer walk to the mailbox or work.

Another Oregon soldier, Sgt. Nicholas Thomas, died of complications of leukemia at age 21. Three others have reported lung problems to headquarters. Five more told The Oregonian they suffer chronic coughs, rashes and immune system disorders.

The same Oregon Guard soldiers who went into Iraq without adequate body armor or up-armored Humvees face another dubious first: exposure to hexavalent chromium, which greatly increases their risk of cancer and other diseases.

It was in the orange and yellow dust spread over half the Qarmat Ali water treatment plant by fleeing Saddam supporters.

Scientists call the carcinogen a Trojan horse because the damage may not be immediately obvious. Over time, people can develop different cancers, breathing problems, stomach ulcers or damage to the digestive tract.

"This is our Agent Orange," says Scott Ashby, who served in the Oregon Guard.

Ninety-three Oregon soldiers may still not know that they have been exposed to hexavalent chromium. The Oregon Guard sent registered letters notifying them Friday, six years after their deployment.

Officials say they didn't learn of the problem themselves until November, when the Army, spurred by lawsuits in Indiana and Texas and a subsequent Senate investigation, alerted the Oregon Guard.

The suits claim KBR ignored both a United Nations report and its own employees' warnings about the danger.

Larry and Michelle Roberta of Aumsville received the Guard's letter Feb. 26 notifying them of his possible exposure. They set the letter aside. Roberta has known since July 2003 when an Army medic recorded exposure to hexavalent chromium at the water plant.

"We knew he was exposed since the very beginning," says Michelle Roberta, 38. "I sent a very healthy man over there. He did not come back."

The 1-162 arrived at its base of operations in Kuwait on April 18, 2003, and within weeks, the soldiers from Gresham and McMinnville were assigned to escort and protect KBR contractors on a mission called "Restore Iraqi Oil." Soldiers also came from combined units from Hillsboro and St. Helens.

Houston-based Kellogg, Brown & Root Services, then a subsidiary of Halliburton, won the contract to get the oil flowing in Iraq. Repairing the water treatment plant, which maintained pressure in nearby oil wells, was a top priority.

Soldiers, officers and the undersecretary of the Army's manager for the project say that Oregon platoons rotated from Kuwait into Iraq in three to four day intervals from April 2003 until June 2003.

Oregon soldiers met KBR workers at a rest stop on the main highway into Iraq, then accompanied them in the contractors' SUVs to pipelines, oil fields or the water treatment plant.

Just weeks after the Indiana Guard replaced the Oregonians, a new KBR safety officer arrived at the water treatment plant at Qarmat Ali.

Ed Blacke was shocked by the widespread orange and yellow dust piled feet deep in places. The powder, he learned, was a corrosion fighter that contained hexavalent chromium.

Soon he had sinus, throat and breathing problems, and found that 60 percent of the soldiers and staff at Qarmat Ali had identical symptoms.

KBR managers told him it was "a nonissue."

Blacke described the sequence of events to a Senate committee in June 2008.

According to a subsequent Senate query, KBR did not test the site until August 2003 or notify the Army until September 2003.

The Indiana Guard learned of the contamination when KBR managers showed up in protective suits. KBR closed the plant shortly after.

In October 2003, the Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine evaluated 137 soldiers and others at the site. They reported abnormalities including eye, nose and lung irritation that "could also be due to dehydration, diet supplements, previous conditions or heavy workouts."

The Army also concluded that the low levels of exposure that were found meant soldiers were not expected to suffer long-term health consequences.

Finally, the Army concluded, KBR had fulfilled its contract. It paved over the contamination, then completed the water-treatment center repairs in 2006.

The oil was flowing.

In March 2008, nine KBR employees, including whistle-blower Blacke, sued KBR for damages.

In December, 16 Indiana Guardsmen filed their own lawsuit, contending KBR “disregarded and downplayed the extreme danger.” The Indiana commander is dying of a rare lung cancer that the VA has ruled is related to being at the water treatment plant.

Sens. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., and Evan Bayh, D-Ind., have challenged the Army's handling of the issue, even after an independent panel backed the Army.

The senators also want to know why some Guard members -- including some from Oregon -- still haven't been notified.

But the Oregon Guard is busy.

The medical command is readying half the state's soldiers -- about 3,000 -- to return to Iraq this summer.

And they are still determining who served at the water treatment plant.

Because in the chaos of the early days of the war in 2003, no one kept an archive of names of who served where, or day-by-day events.

Brig. Gen. Mike Caldwell says the first Oregon Guardsmen sent into combat in 50 years paid a price.

“This was the low point of the Army's care of reservists, no doubt about it,” says Caldwell, commander of the Oregon State Defense Forces.

“The strategy was driven by former Secretary of Defense (Donald) Rumsfeld and (Deputy Defense Secretary) Paul Wolfowitz, and the responsibility goes right back to them.

“They thought we were going into Panama and we'd all be home in a week.”

When Larry Roberta finally did come home, Michelle barely recognized him.

For Larry Roberta, the military had always been a way out. As a foster child, he joined the National Guard for rent money. He rejoined the Guard in 2001 so he could afford college. And he kept working as a technician at Xerox in Wilsonville.

At 38, he scored at the top of every physical category in the Guard's exam. His only medications: ibuprofen and Tums. He left for Iraq tan, fit and in his prime.

Within weeks of arriving and patrolling the water treatment plant, Roberta had severe chest pains, sore throats, coughing attacks and wheezing, according to his medical records.

Although KBR and the Army did not move to close the plant or alert the soldiers and civilians until weeks later, as early as July 18, 2003, an Army medic wrote in Larry Roberta's chart: “Possible irritation of lung from reflux/inhalation air toxicity (sodium dichromate at Qarmat Ali WTP.)”

Roberta's commanders also were concerned, hounding him to get medical care. When the Army began investigating exposure two months later, his first sergeant thrust him at doctors: "This is the soldier you have to see."

In December 2003, Roberta was evacuated to Madigan Army Hospital to repair the disintegrated stomach opening. They also diagnosed reactive airway disorder, upper chest pain and nasal polyps, noting his exposure to hexavalent chromium.

Then he came home.

Michelle Roberta noticed other changes.

He erupted at local boys on bicycles. The former policeman who despised domestic violence, grabbed her by the throat. She hit him with a Dirt Devil and went to the phone book for a therapist. After he climbed over the cubicle at work angry at a colleague, he called his wife: "I need help."

With the help of an Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs counselor, he was rated 100 percent disabled by lung disorders, tinnitus and post-traumatic stress disorder.

He needs two inhalers to breathe and swallows eight kinds of pills a day for upper chest pain, migraines, high blood pressure, mood swings and a mystifying low level of testosterone.

"The worst part was, I couldn't figure out what was going on," he says. At one point, he plotted to kill himself -- "right down to the noose."

Michelle Roberta intervened. "I have ESP about these things."

With their son Larry, 20, living at home, Michelle, a dialysis technician, has held the family together, working full time and meeting with the landlord and creditors to cover bills. She uses their pugs Jimi and Frank, who respond when a mood is coming.

And she introduced her husband to Donna Burleigh of S&D Exotic Bird Rescue in Keizer. Larry Roberta began working with abandoned birds and the couple have since moved 23 cockatoos, macaws and others into their home in a dizzying array of squawks and color.

Larry Roberta has begun visiting schools with his birds. He is trying, he says, to find purpose in his new life. Many of the birds are so traumatized they have plucked their own feathers and are unadoptable. They perch, beneath gorgeous heads, like whole chickens ready for the pot.

"They're misfits," he says, "like I am."

Hexavalent Chromium

- Exposure to 40 micrograms of hexavalent chromium per cubic meter -- about the size of a grain of salt in about a cubic yard -- has shown a high increase in not only lung cancer, but also leukemia and stomach, brain, renal, bladder and bone cancers.
 - The chemical is the toxic component of the corrosion fighter sodium dichromate.
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Does This Lame-Ass Bullshit Sound Familiar?
March 29, 1973:
“The Last American Combat Troops Left South Vietnam”
[And The War Went On Until Saigon Fell On April 30, 1975]

Carl Bunin Peace History March 23-29

The last American combat troops left South Vietnam, ending direct U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam War.

U.S. military advisors to the South Vietnamese Army remained, as did Marines protecting U.S. installations, and thousands of Defense Dept. civilians.

SUPPORT G.I. RESISTANCE



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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 Douglass, 1852

OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION ALL TROOPS HOME NOW!

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.

