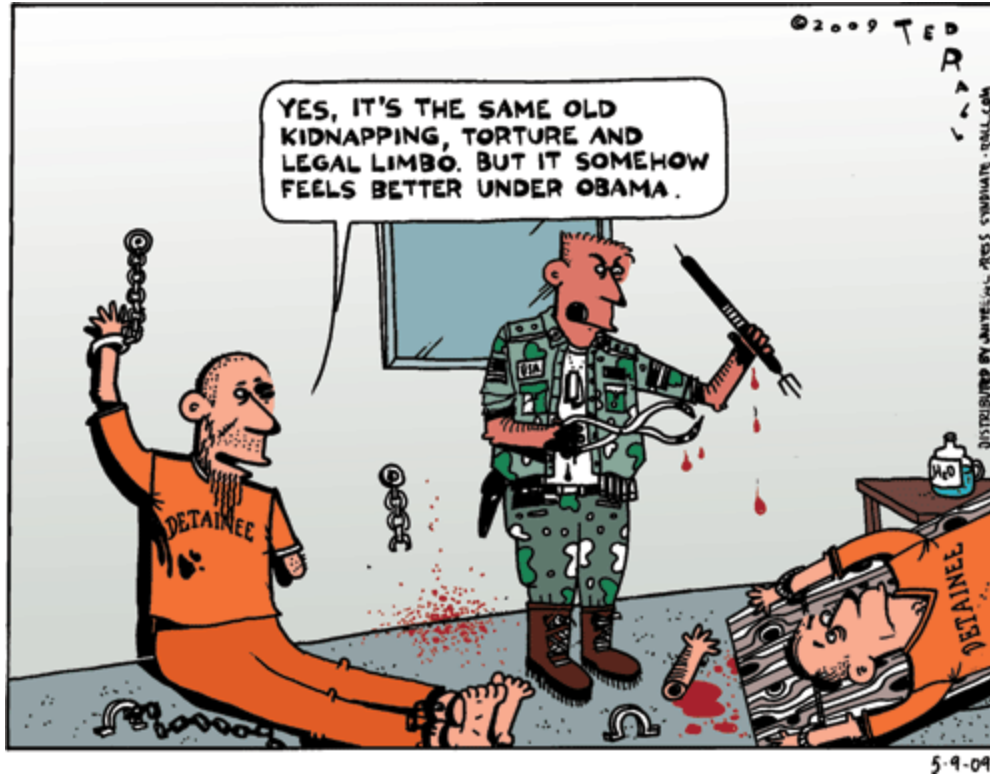


GI SPECIAL 7F1:



Confusion, Poverty, Then Revolt

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

From: Dennis Serdel
To: GI Special
Sent: May 30, 2009
Subject: Confusion, Poverty, Then Revolt

Confusion, Poverty, Then Revolt

Son, this is your Mother I know
your Dad sent a letter to you in Iraq
that letter was a hard one
to send, you see
your Father is a proud man
always kept food on the table
a roof over our heads
he played by the rules
now he doesn't have a job anymore
he doesn't know what he did wrong
My Boy, he didn't ask you
so I'm asking you for him
Son can we borrow \$1,200
cause that is what it costs
to go through bankruptcy court
your Father needs his heart pills
more than ever and I need my medicine
it costs us \$600 dollars a month
if we go bankrupt we would get help
paying for the medicine
Son I'm worried about
his heart and his nerves are shot
we're all filled with anxiety
and fear everyday
but probably it is not the same
fear like you have being a Soldier in Iraq
your Dad had to sell
his fishing boat his big truck
sold all the antique furniture
that Gramma left him
he sold everything now there is
nothing to sell and we can't
get credit anymore
we only need \$1,200
the government is bailing out
the banks but when we say
we are going bankrupt
they are not going to bail us out too
I get worried when your Dad
gets so angry and says he would
like to kill them all
Son could you help us out?
Love Mom

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

U.S. Soldier Killed By Baghdad IED

June 2, 2009 RELEASE No. 20090602-04 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory

BAGHDAD – A U.S. Soldier died June 2 of combat-related injuries after an improvised explosive device detonated near a patrol in eastern Baghdad.

Resistance Action

May 30, 2009 DPA & AFP & May 31 (Reuters) & Jun 1 (AFP) & Reuters

Four policemen were killed late Friday when insurgents opened fire on them in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, local police sources told the German Press Agency dpa on Saturday. The source said that the attack took place in the al-Karamah neighbourhood east of Mosul.

An Iraqi soldier was killed and three others wounded on Saturday when a bomb exploded as they were on patrol in Diyala province, one of Iraq's most dangerous areas, a military official said. The improvised device blew up to the south of the provincial capital of Baquba, the local official told AFP.

A roadside bomb targeting an Iraqi army patrol wounded a soldier and a civilian in eastern Mosul, police said. An off-duty traffic policeman was killed when soldiers started firing randomly at perceived threats after the explosion.

A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol killed two policemen and wounded four on Saturday in the city of Samarra, 100 km (60 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

A mortar round landed on police station, wounding two policemen in eastern Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

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

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

This Sets A New World Record For Pure Stupid Transparent Lame- Ass Command Bullshit:

U.S. Troops Will Sort Of Withdraw From Some Iraq Cities By Deadline To Withdraw From All Iraq Cities

6.2.09 By CHELSEA J. CARTER [Excerpts]

CAMP CARVER, Iraq (AP) — The U.S. military is expanding some rural bases and building others to house thousands of troops displaced by a June deadline to withdraw from Iraq's major cities.

Army Maj. Gen. David Perkins said there are no plans to close Camp Victory, which houses more than 20,000 troops, and two other smaller bases within Baghdad.

Large Marine bases in western Anbar province on the outskirts of Ramadi and Taqqadum, outside of Fallujah, will also remain.

In northern Iraq, the main U.S. air base at Balad and the logistics base on the outskirts at Taji also will stay.

In Mosul, U.S. troops operate primarily from the Army's Marez base on the outskirts of the city.

Some American troops will remain in the cities in training and advising roles.

Military officials have been considering marking those vehicles and uniforms with a patch or emblem that show they are not combat troops, U.S. officials said.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

4 U.S. Troops Killed By IEDs In Nirkh

June 1, 2009 The Associated Press

KABUL - Two roadside bombs that struck back-to-back only miles apart hit two U.S. military vehicles Monday, killing four American troops, U.S. and Afghan officials said.

The deaths bring to 64 the number of U.S. forces killed in Afghanistan this year, according to an Associated Press count based on military figures.

That far surpasses the 36 troops killed through the first five months of 2008, the deadliest year for American forces since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion to oust the Taliban.

Col. Greg Julian, the top U.S. spokesman in Afghanistan, said the two IED strikes occurred "not too far away from each other." He declined to give further details because family members hadn't yet been notified.

Though the U.S. military declined to say where the strikes occurred, an Afghan official said the two attacks happened in Wardak, one province west of Kabul that saw an influx of 10th Mountain Division troops earlier this year.

Mohammad Hanif Hanifi, the top government official in Nirkh district, said a U.S. vehicle hit an IED around 6 p.m. in a village that troops routinely patrol through around 6 p.m.

He said a second vehicle hit a mine only 15 or 20 minutes later and that a helicopter flew in to evacuate casualties.

Two U.K. Soldiers Killed In Helmand

30 May 09 Ministry of Defence

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must announce that two soldiers, one from the Light Dragoons, one from the Parachute Regiment, were killed in Helmand Province today, Saturday 30 May 2009.

Both soldiers were killed as a result of an explosion that happened whilst on a deliberate operation near Musa Qal'eh, They were serving with the Brigade Reconnaissance Force.

Paktya IED Kills U.S. Soldier; Two More Wounded

Jun 2 by Bronwen Roberts, (AFP)

A US soldier was killed and two wounded in an insurgent attack in the eastern province of Paktya, which border Pakistan, the US military said.

Paktya province spokesman, Rohullah Samoon, said an Afghan interpreter was killed in the same incident. A roadside bomb had hit a military vehicle, he said.

Resistance Attacks Kill 28 Collaborator Guards; Destroy 10 Occupation Military Supply Trucks

Jun 2 By Bronwen Roberts, (AFP) & Reuters

A roadside bomb struck a vehicle carrying private Afghan guards in the Paktya province and killed eight of the men, Rohullah Samoon said. The guards were contracted to the international military forces, Samoon said.

Taliban fighters attacked a convoy in the province of Farah, killing 18 Afghan private security guards, deputy provincial governor Mohammad Younus Rasouli said. In western Farah, provincial police spokesman Abdul Rahoof Ahmadi said the Afghan guards were ambushed by Taliban fighters in Bala Boluk district. The guards were providing security for supply trucks for foreign troops, he said. Police said earlier more than 10 vehicles destroyed.

In the adjoining province of Nimroz, Taliban attacked a police post on Tuesday and killed two policemen, provincial police chief Abdul Jabar Pordeli said.

“Americans Forbid Driving At Night”

“Americans Talk To Shop Owners Without Buying Anything”

“Americans Block Traffic, Forcing Pregnant Women To Wait”

May 31, 2009 By SABRINA TAVERNISE, The New York Times [Excerpts]

JALREZ BAZAAR, Afghanistan — A year ago, the Taliban were tormenting this lush valley just miles from the Afghan capital, kidnapping people and blocking the road.

All that changed when American troops arrived in February. They dropped from helicopters and set up three camps where there had been none, expecting a fight.

Instead, the Taliban put up almost no resistance and left for other areas. Now trucks travel freely and merchants no longer fear for their lives.

Afghanistan's complex ethnic ties proved to be the next problem. Part of Jalrez District is made up of Pashtun, the ethnic group most closely associated with the Taliban, and a number of those villages refused to offer guards, a blow to American plans.

In the Pashtun village of Ziwalat on a recent Sunday, a crowd of residents ticked off a list of complaints: Americans forbid driving at night; Americans talk to shop owners without buying anything; Americans block traffic, forcing pregnant women to wait. But questions about recent violence — an asphalt machine belonging to a Chinese construction company was burned, and a bomb set on the road wounded eight Afghan soldiers — drew blank looks.

Who is laying mines? "We don't know," said a man in a brown scarf.

Resistance Action

May 30 (AFP) & Jun 1 (AFP) & Reuters & 6.2.09 Quqnoos

Taliban attacked a police post in northern Kunduz province Monday, killing four policemen, Ministry confirmed. Four policemen were killed in the attack, close to the Kunduz city in the northeastern Afghanistan, interior ministry spokesman Zemarai Bashary told Quqnoos.

The attack in the stable Afghan northern city is an alert to the supplies of the NATO and US forces that will soon start coming through this city.

Kunduz governor Mohammad Omar was returning from neighbouring Takhar province when a remote-controlled bomb struck his vehicle, said local intelligence chief Abdul Majeed Azimi. "Along the road a remote-control mine struck his vehicle, injuring him and his driver slightly," Azimi said, adding the two men were hospitalised with "slight injuries".

Afghan soldiers and militants were killed in fierce fighting in the southwestern province of Badghis, the defence ministry said. "During this operation nine brave soldiers of the Afghan National Army were martyred and four others are missing," the defence ministry said in a statement, raising the earlier toll given by local officials of six soldiers.

Taliban attacked a police post in northern Afghanistan early Monday killing four policemen. The police were attacked near the northern town of Kunduz where German troops are based.

A roadside bomb killed an Afghan soldier in the eastern province of Paktya on Sunday, the defence ministry said in a statement. Two other soldiers were wounded.

ALL HOME, NOW



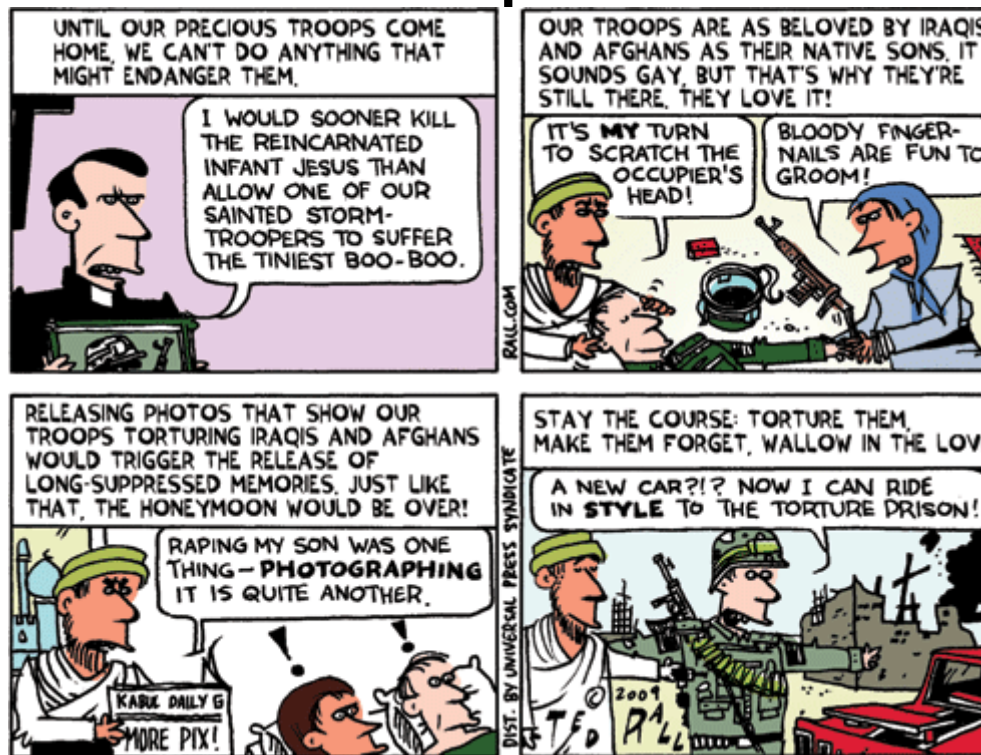
A U.S. soldier of 10th Mountain Division in Logar province April 13, 2009.
REUTERS/Ahmad Masood

THIS ENVIRONMENT IS HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH;



Taliban militants are seen in an undisclosed location in Afghanistan May 9, 2009.
REUTERS/Stringer

Kill Crazy Special Ops Unit Blamed For Repeated Afghan Massacres: “An Article In The Marine Corps Times Described The MarSOC Troops As ‘Cowboys’ Who Brought Shame On The Corps”



[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in. She writes: "Prosecute ALL the way up the chain of command."]

16 May 2009 By Jerome Starkey in Kabul, Independent.co.uk

A single American Special Forces group was behind at least three of Afghanistan's worst civilian casualty incidents, The Independent has learnt, raising fundamental questions about their ongoing role in the conflict.

Troops from the US Marines Corps' Special Operations Command, or MarSOC, were responsible for calling in air strikes in Bala Boluk, in Farah, last week – believed to have killed more than 140 men, women and children – as well as two other incidents in 2007 and 2008.

News of MarSOC's involvement in the three incidents comes just days after a Special Forces expert, Lieutenant-General Stanley McChrystal, was named to take over as the top commander of US and Nato troops in Afghanistan.

His surprise appointment has prompted speculation that commando counterinsurgency missions will increase in the battle to beat the Taliban.

MarSOC was created three years ago on the express orders of Donald Rumsfeld, US defence secretary at the time, despite opposition from within the Marine Corps and the wider Special Forces community.

An article in the Marine Corps Times described the MarSOC troops as "cowboys" who brought shame on the corps.

The first controversial incident involving the unit happened just three weeks into its first deployment to Afghanistan on 4 March 2007.

Speeding away from a suicide bomb attack close to the Pakistan border, around 120 men from Fox Company opened fire on civilians near Jalalabad, in Nangahar province. The Marines said they were shot at after the explosion; eyewitnesses said the Americans fired indiscriminately at pedestrians and civilian cars, killing at least 19 people.

The US Army commander in Nangahar at the time, Colonel John Nicholson, said he was "deeply ashamed" and described the incident as "a stain on our honour".

The Marines' tour was cut short after a second incident on 9 March in which they allegedly rolled a car and fired on traffic again, and they were flown out of Afghanistan a few weeks later.

The top Special Operations officer at US Central Command, Army Major General Frank Kearney, refuted MarSOC's claims that they had been shot at.

"We found no brass that we can confirm that small-arms fire came at them," he said, referring to ammunition casings. "We have testimony from Marines that is in conflict with unanimous testimony from civilians."

At the military hearings on the incident, which were held back in the US, soldiers said the MarSOC troops, who called themselves Taskforce Violence, were gung-ho and hungry to prove themselves in battle.

The inquiry also heard testimony suggesting there were tensions between the Marine unit and its US Army counterparts in Nangahar province.

Col Nicholson told the court the unit would routinely stray into areas under his control without telling him, ignoring usual military courtesies.

"There had been potentially 25 operations in my area of operations that I, as a commander, was not aware of," he said. Asked about the moment he was told of the March shootout, he added: "My initial reaction was, 'What are they doing out there?'" "The three-week military inquiry ultimately spared the Marine unit from criminal charges.

There are around 2,500 troops in MarSOC. Around half are frontline troops, the rest are support and maintenance. Originally the unit was used to plug gaps in the Special Forces world and it has operated in more than 16 countries since being set up by Mr Rumsfeld in 2006.

However, in a recent interview, its commanding officer, Major General Mastin Robeson, revealed he has been ordered to focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Today MarSOC answers to the Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command, based in Kabul. That in turn answers to US Forces Afghanistan, which is led by the top US commander, David McKiernan, who is soon to be replaced by General McChrystal.

In August last year, a 20-man MarSOC unit, fighting alongside Afghan commandos, directed fire from unmanned drones, attack helicopters and a cannon-armed Spectre gunship into compounds in Azizabad, in Herat province, leaving more than 90 people dead – many of them children.

And just last week, MarSOC troops called in the Bala Baluk air strikes to rescue an Afghan police patrol that had been ambushed in countryside in Farah province. US officials said two F18 fighter jets and a B1 bomber had swooped because men on the ground were overwhelmed.

But villagers said the most devastating bombs were dropped on compounds some distance from the fighting, long after the battle was over, and when Taliban forces were retreating. Afghan officials said up to 147 people were killed, including more than 90 women and children.

The spokesman for US forces in Afghanistan, Colonel Greg Julian, denied reports that commanders have lost confidence in the Marine unit.

"MarSOC was involved in these incidents, but it's not all the same guys. They get the lessons passed on from all of the rotations and experiences. Yet, they are human," he said. "They have the same rules of engagement that everyone has."

The so-called "tactical directive" was introduced last September in the wake of the international uproar that followed the Azizabad deaths. It requires troops to exercise "proportionality, restraint, and utmost discrimination" when calling in air strikes.

Claims that bombs were dropped in last week's incident in Farah long after the fighting finished suggest those directives may not have been followed by MarSOC.

TROOP NEWS

**THIS IS HOW OBAMA BRINGS THE TROOPS
HOME:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE**



The casket of Air Force Staff Sgt. Phillip Myers, of Hopewell, Va., who was killed Afghanistan on April 4 is lowered to the tarmac on Sunday, April 5, 2009 in Dover Air Force Base, Del. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

**Travis' Story:
“If I Had Deployed To Afghanistan, I
Don't Think I Would Have Been Able To
Look Into Another Mirror Again”**

[Thanks to Sandy Kelson, Veterans For Peace & Military Project and Jeff Paterson, Courage To Resist, who sent this in.]

May 21, 2009 By Sgt. Travis Bishop, Ft. Hood Soldier Voices

Why am I doing what I'm doing?

Why am I resisting?

Refusing?

It wasn't so long ago that I deployed to Iraq in support of the war on terror. I didn't refuse then.

Like a good Soldier, I did what I was told, and I spent 14 months stationed in Baghdad.

It was a quiet enough deployment, I suppose. Mortars and rockets flew over the walls with unnerving frequency, but otherwise, it felt more like a move to a different duty station than a deployment to a warzone.

I didn't see real combat. I didn't come back with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. I didn't lose friends.

Mine was, in my opinion, an average deployment. Go overseas, play X-Box and read for a year, come back with money that's gone before you remember how you spent it. We talked and laughed about it once we came back, and talked about what we would do with the money we made from our next deployment, whenever that may be.

Back home, I received a hero's welcome.

That was the first time I felt unsettled over what I had done overseas. My hand was shook, my back was patted, and every night my belly was burning, full of free alcohol. I was a veteran of a foreign war, hailed as a hero, and yet I felt...unnerved; anxious. I felt as if I had a big secret inside me that threatened to burst out of me at any moment, exposing what I really was to the rest of the world...but I couldn't figure out what the secret was.

Not for a long, long time.

I was never plagued with nightmares from the war.

I was plagued with guilt.

I literally felt guilty for receiving the accolades that come from redeploying as a 'hero,' knowing that I had not paid the price for the Army's true definition of a hero. Here it goes: Army Hero; noun. Soldier who has deployed overseas to a combat zone. Has participated in active combat. Has redeployed with PTSD, a bullet in their leg, and a time bomb in their head. Unable to rejoin the civilian world in a normal psychological state.

In my heart of hearts, I know I don't fit this definition, or anything resembling it.

For a long time, my unit was set to redeploy to Iraq in August 2009.

However, in February 2009, we were told there was a change of plans. Instead of Iraq, it would be Afghanistan.

Instead of August, it would be the end of March, less than sixty days away.

Rumor had it that, although we were told the rush was because of a Brigade Commander's wishes, it was our Battalion Commander who requested our unit be put on the Afghanistan Troop Surge.

Once again, in good Soldier mode, I prepared to deploy.

This time I was a Sergeant, and I had Soldiers to take care of, one of which my best friend. These things drove me to be well prepared. We had things to do, and not much time to do them in.

I rarely gave myself time to think about what it was we were actually deploying for.

When I did, I started to question everything.

Why are we going?

What purpose does it serve?

Nothing sat right. I began to read the Bible again. More and more I saw things like 'turn the other cheek' and 'love thy enemy.' These were things that went directly against the war we were in, and they were spoken by Jesus himself. Could I really deploy again, and compromise my beliefs, just because I was told to? Would I be able to live with that? What if I had to take a life, and knew that if I hadn't deployed, I would never have been put in that situation?

I became afraid to voice my opinion, knowing that if I spoke to the wrong person, I would face persecution and ridicule.

I told my best friend, who voiced the same opinions to me, but it seemed he was content to deploy, do his time, make some money, and then get out of the Army upon his return. I respected his opinion, didn't try to talk him out of it, and let it be.

The rest of the pre-deployment phase went uneventfully. We loaded our gear, got our trucks ready, and inspected our equipment.

We went to the field several times, and although my team and other teams never fully accomplished the missions we were given, Command congratulated us on a successful field mission, and said we were more than ready to deploy. I started to worry again after that.

I worried when they said I was leaving early with the cargo. I worried again when our cargo flights were suddenly 'cancelled,' and the main body of our unit deployed to Afghanistan before us, the 'advanced' party.

Once again, I got the feeling that we were rushing into something before we were even close to being ready. Weeks went by, and groups of us went out on separate days, sometimes only two Soldiers at a time.

A few days before I was set to deploy, I was approached by members of an organization who told me that I had a choice. They told me that they were here to support me, and that if I really was against the war our country was currently in, I could choose not to go.

All those old feelings and worries came back with a vengeance, and I began to question the war again.

After a full day of thinking, the only reason I had come up with for me to go was the fact that my best friend was going too. And, in the end, I decided that, although he might

hate me for it, he was better off with me not going in the long run. I had to put my needs before his, though it killed me inside, because a three year friendship is hard to come by in the Army. I hope that he can forgive me one day.

So the afternoon I was set to deploy, while everyone else was loading their gear in the van headed toward the airfield, I loaded my gear in my car, and left. It was the hardest decision I have ever made.

I plan on coming back; soon. I am not a deserter, and I wouldn't go AWOL for months and risk ruining my chances at getting a good job later in life. I am a Patriot.

I love my country, but I believe that this particular war is unjust, unconstitutional and a total abuse of our nation's power and influence. And so, in the next few days, I will be speaking with my lawyer, and taking actions that will more than likely result in my discharge from the military, and possible jail time...and I am prepared to live with that.

My father said, 'Do only what you can live with, because every morning you have to look at your face in the mirror when you shave. Ten years from now, you'll still be shaving the same face.'

If I had deployed to Afghanistan, I don't think I would have been able to look into another mirror again.

Pray for me.

Two Tour Iraq Soldier From Fairfield Suicides In Santa Cruz; He Asked That Someone Clean Up The Area Quickly "Before Kids See"

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

05/22/2009 By Jennifer Squires, MediaNews staff

SANTA CRUZ — An AWOL soldier committed suicide in a car parked at an ocean overlook on Friday afternoon, three days after he was reported missing from Fort Carson in Colorado.

U.S. Army officials had issued alerts asking for the public's help in finding Pfc. Roy Brooks Mason Jr., a decorated Iraq War veteran whose hometown is Fairfield, but had no luck finding the 28-year-old.

"We knew that he was missing and we were looking for him," said Fort Carson spokeswoman Brandy Gill. "We were concerned for him."

Around 1:20 p.m. Friday, Mason used a roadside call box to call 911. He told a dispatcher there would be a dead body in a red Chevy Cobalt parked on West Cliff Drive, authorities reported. He also asked that someone clean up the area quickly "before kids see," an emergency dispatcher said.

Police, fire and medics rushed to the scene, found the car described and saw a man sitting inside with what appeared to be a Beretta handgun on his lap, authorities reported.

Officers surrounded the area but waited to approach the car until they had obtained a ballistic shield. They were unsure if he had fired the gun or would turn it on others, police spokesman Zach Friend said. Police also had sent a crisis response team to the scene in hopes he was still alive and could be talked down.

However, Mason had shot himself before emergency responders arrived.

West Cliff Drive, which overlooks the Pacific Ocean, was packed with walkers, joggers, bicyclists and cars when the shooting occurred. Police said no passersby were injured.

Tuesday, officials at Fort Carson, which is in Colorado Springs, had reported that Mason did not show up to accountability formation that morning and was listed as absent without leave. The Army also reported he may be carrying a gun, but was not a threat to the public.

Mason was part of Carson's Warrior Transition Unit, to which physically and psychologically wounded soldiers are assigned as they recover or wait for reassignment. Details about his injuries were not released by the Army.

He had served two tours in Iraq since joining the Army in 2004, according to Army records.

Mason had been awarded the Army Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Combat Infantry Badge, the Army Service Ribbon and the Overseas Service Ribbon.

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/)

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“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

“Hope for change doesn't cut it when you're still losing buddies.”
-- J.D. Englehart, Iraq Veterans Against The War

I say that when troops cannot be counted on to follow orders because they see the utility and immorality of them THAT is the real key to ending a war.
-- Al Jaccoma, Veterans For Peace

Betrayal—The I.E.D. (Improvised Explosive Devise)



From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: May 25, 2009
Subject: Betrayal--The IED (Improvised Explosive Device)

Betrayal--The I.E.D. (Improvised Explosive Devise)

I believe the self-inflicted destructive force behind PTSD, is a silent enemy called Betrayal. It is so insidious and pervasive, that it has the character of a bounty hunter. Betrayal, by one's own government, based on lies to justify going to war, is a form of incest. It totally dismantles the victim's belief system. The word trust, from now on, sinks to the bottom of the mind. The only way to survive, is to face the lie. And, the only way veterans can do this is through a buddy system that deals with this deadly pathology. Untreated betrayal builds up until it becomes a lethal dose that makes veterans commit suicide. I had a close Vietnam veteran friend hang himself in a motel room two years ago. Betrayal,

is an off limits subject that is rarely talked about in the American landscape of denial.

Mike Hastie
Vietnam Veteran
May 24, 2009

Photo and caption from the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (For more of his outstanding work, contact at: hastiemike@earthlink.net) T)

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

A Soldier's Tale: Check Point Iraq: “I Can Damn Sure Bet You That He Won’t Be Hauling Watermelons”

[Thanks to Don Bacon, Veteran, The Smedley Butler Society, who sent this in.]

May 19, 2009 By KRISTOFFER REHDER, CounterPunch

Kristoffer Rehder was first deployed to Kirkuk, Iraq in 2003 where he served in the 4th Infantry Division, 1-12 Infantry Battalion for 13 months. In 2005 he was redeployed to Iraq for an additional 400 days despite being classified as 50% disabled by the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Minnesota for severe PTSD, hearing loss and bad knees. He now lives in Montana.

I don't remember how old I was when my father asked me this peculiar question, maybe sometime during my high school years. And I don't know why he asked me or how it came up in conversation, but when it did, it hit me like a brick.

“How many dying boys have you held in your arms, crying for their mother?”

To this day I have never held anyone dying in my arms, and no one crying for their mother. I don't remember how I answered his question. I was dumb founded.

My father fought in the Vietnam War.

He was an Infantry Scout Dog handler where he walked the point man with his German Sheppard, Beau. They led the way and looked for Charlie, ambushes, booby traps, tunnels, and weapon caches. My father and Beau were a team. They walked out in front of the patrol and Beau would alert my father if he smelled trouble ahead. The lives of the men they were leading through the jungles of South Vietnam were in their's to protect.

Years later after my father asked me this disturbing question, he explained what had happened to him years ago in Vietnam.

One day my father and Beau were leading a patrol through the jungle, when Beau threw up a signal to my father that he smelled danger, so he signaled for the patrol to halt.

The Lieutenant ran up front and asked why "his" patrol had stopped.

My father explained to the LT that his dog had alerted him that there was something ahead to be cautious of.

The LT became angry, "That's bullshit, this area has been cleared. Charlie hasn't been in the AO for days," the LT then ordered them continue on with the mission.

Against my father's better judgment he continued to lead the patrol deeper into the jungle.

Within a few minutes they walked right into a heavy ambush. Beau had been right. The patrol was pinned down and had to fight their way out of it. They were able to break contact with the enemy and pull back to safety.

However, during the firefight, a soldier in the squad took a bullet to the lower stomach and was bleeding fast.

This young soldier happened to be a good friend of my father.

Seeing his wounded buddy, he ran over to him yelling for a medic to come and assist. The soldier was lying on the ground, holding his guts in his hands, crying out for his mother. All my father could do was hold his friend and provided what comfort he could as he died in his arms.

After my father told me this experience, he confessed that he still felt guilty for this young man's life. He said he wished he could have tried to convince the LT not to continue the patrol any further. Maybe there was more my father could have done.

In my father's face I could see the heavy guilt and anger as a tear rolled down his cheek.

Right then I knew that my father had just shared something with me that he probably hasn't shared with too many others. I didn't know what to say. But I did gain a better answer as to why he asked me that question years ago.

As I mentioned, I have never held anyone dying in my arms crying for their mother. So the answer to my Dad is no I have never experienced that.

But let me ask you this Dad, how many nine year old boys have you held in your arms, crying for their father?

How about a boy clinging to his lifeless father that you just killed?

In the summer of 2003, I was working a check point outside the small city of Al-Hawija in Northern Iraq.

I was in the Army, in the Infantry, just like my father was, but instead of patrolling the humid jungles of Vietnam, I was fighting an urban guerilla war in the extreme heat and sand of Iraq.

Our check point was set up outside of town and we were stopping every vehicle trying to enter. We were searching the vehicles for weapons, explosives, suspected bad guys, stuff to build IED's, and other contraband.

Our check point looked like this: 300 meters out we had a warning sign written in Arabic that said, "Slow Down. Prepare to Stop!" 150 meters out we had another sign that said, "Deadly Force will be used if you do not stop!"

We then had a maze of concertina wire set up for the vehicles to weave in and out of before coming to a stop in an area that we nicknamed the "pit". In the pit we searched the vehicles, and when nothing was found and they were clean, we waved them on, and allowed them to enter the city.

On that summer day back in 2003, my squad was manning the check point into Hawija. It was a slow day with not much traffic. I think it had something to do with the mid afternoon heat. When the temperatures reached over 130 degrees, most of the Iraqis wisely stayed inside and off the roads. Most traveled at night when it was cooler.

But a one vehicle approached our check point. So I peered through a pair of binoculars and spotted a small white Toyota pick-up truck heading towards our position. I put the binos down and raised my weapon to the ready position.

The white truck approached the first warning sign, but did not attempt to slow down.

My squad leader ordered a warning shot to be fired as a sign of force, so the man next to me fired off a three round burst with his M-16 over the top of the truck.

The truck was not slowing down. It soon approached the 150 meter second warning sign.

Fearing that the truck could be loaded down with explosives on a suicide run, our squad leader ordered everyone to open fire on the truck. I raised my weapon and put 30

rounds into the driver's side windshield. The man next to me with the M-240B machine gun opened fire and sprayed about 150 rounds into the vehicle's engine. With each bullet weighing 180 grains, he put about a pound of lead into its engine block.

Black smoke started to billow out from under the hood, as the little truck started to swerve back and forth. It ran into our concertina wire and eventually came to a stop inside the pit.

Immediately I slammed in a fresh magazine and fired off a few more rounds into the driver side door.

Our squad leader then yelled for a cease fire.

The firing stopped but my adrenaline was still pumping.

The driver of the truck was hanging out the driver side door, hunched over. Blood was running out of his head, chest, and arms, turning the side of the truck a dark liquid maroon.

A squad member opened the driver side door, and his body fell to the ground. I can still hear the thud it made as he rolled out of the truck.

Wildly, the passenger side door flew open, and I saw a young boy, eight or nine years old, jump out and run around the front of the truck.

He dove on top of the bullet riddled body, screaming and crying, all in Arabic so I am not certain what was being said. All I could do was watch in horror.

As it turned out, the driver was the boy's father.

Fortunately the boy was not injured as we all fired our shots into the driver's side of the truck.

The boy was wailing hysterically holding onto his dead father. He was now covered in his father's blood and it took 3 of us to pry him away.

We managed to drag the boy from his father's body and over to one of our Humvees.

We held the boy so he couldn't see his father lying on the ground in a pool of blood. Our medic walked over to the body to check it out. There was nothing the medic could do. The damage had been done.

The medic just stood over the body and kicked it a few times and then flung his arms up into the air, telling us, "fuck this!"

We all knew he was dead.

I don't think you could count all the bullet holes in his body.

They loaded the young boy into the Humvee and drove him off.

To where, I don't know. I never saw the boy again.

We spent the rest of the afternoon trying to clean up the carnage. We packed the father's body into a body bag and tossed it into the back of another Humvee like it was a old bag of trash. Where they took him, I also don't know.

I never asked where they took the bodies after we killed them. I really didn't care either. My job was just to kill. The rest was up to someone else. I don't know whose job was worse.

Next, we had to figure out what to do with the truck. It was completely disabled and the inside of it was covered with blood and chunks of flesh.

No one wanted to climb into the truck, so we called in the mechanics and they towed it out of our check point.

Later on the mechanics told us after checking over the truck that the breaks were broken. The truck wasn't trying to run our check point, it just couldn't stop.

It turned out just to be a father and son coming back into town after what had to be a grueling day working out in their watermelon fields.

The back of their truck was full of watermelons and shovels. Maybe they were on their way into town to sell their melons at the market and perhaps make enough money to get the breaks on their truck fixed.

Could this shootout have been avoided?

I don't know.

Myself, and the others in my squad were just following orders.

We were ordered to open fire on the truck, and we were just doing our job.

A job that was illegally ordered by a Congress and White House without any recognition of international law, let alone humanity.

How were we to know if the white Toyota truck wasn't loaded with explosives, ready to blow us all up.

And how were we to know that the truck was just a father and son coming back from their fields and that the breaks on their truck were faulty?

And how to you explain this to the young boy who watched his innocent father be killed by American Forces occupying his country?

That was over five years ago, making him a teenager by now.

Maybe he will be driving a white Toyota pickup truck tomorrow, approaching a collation check point somewhere in Iraq.

And I can damn sure bet you that he won't be hauling watermelons.

**DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE
MILITARY?**

Forward GI Special along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the wars, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 917.677.8057

***June 2, 1863: Glorious Anniversary:*
“Col. Montgomery And His Gallant Band
Of 300 Black Soldiers, Under The
Guidance Of A Black Woman, Dashed
Into The Enemy’s Country, Struck A Bold
And Effective Blow, Striking Terror Into
The Heart Of Rebeldom”**



Harriet Tubman

It is significant as the only military engagement in American history wherein a woman black or white, “led the raid and under whose inspiration it was originated and conducted”.

June 2, 1863

Abolitionist and former slave James Montgomery led 300 African-American troops of the Union's 2nd South Carolina Volunteers on a raid of plantations along the Combahee River. Meanwhile, backed by three gunboats, Harriet Tubman's forces set fire to the plantations and freed 750 slaves.

The following dispatch, quoted in part, appeared on the front page of The Commonwealth, a Boston newspaper, on Friday, July 10, 1863:

HARRIET TUBMAN

July 10, 1863:

Col. Montgomery and his gallant band of 300 black soldiers, under the guidance of a black woman, dashed into the enemy's country, struck a bold and effective blow, destroying millions of dollars worth of commissary stores, cotton and lordly dwellings, and striking terror into the heart of rebeldom, brought off near 800 slaves and thousands of dollars worth of property, without losing a man or receiving a scratch.

It was a glorious consummation.

After they were all fairly well disposed of in the Beaufort charge, they were addressed in strains of thrilling eloquence by their gallant deliverer, to which they responded in a song. "There is a white robe for thee," a song so appropriate and so heartfelt and cordial as to bring unbidden tears.

The Colonel was followed by a speech from the black woman, who led the raid and under whose inspiration it was originated and conducted.

For sound sense and real native eloquence, her address would do honor to any man, and it created a great sensation...

Since the rebellion she had devoted herself to her great work of delivering the bondman, with an energy and sagacity that cannot be exceeded. Many and many times she has penetrated the enemy's lines and discovered their situation and condition, and escaped without injury, but not without extreme hazard.

The Combahee River, in South Carolina, was the first one visited by the Spaniards in the year 1520. Vasque de Ayllon, having discovered it, gave it the name "River Jordan."

Although subsequently renamed the Combahee, the stream now became a River Jordan literally for more than seven hundred and fifty Negroes who, under the leadership of Harriet Tubman and the auxiliary command of Colonel James Montgomery, delivered this number of blacks into the free lines.

The River Jordan has been in biblical history a reality, and in modern Negro allusion a symbol of the barrier between bondage and freedom, and it is an interesting

coincidence, therefore, that the Combahee campaign should so parallel the ancient situation.

It is significant as the only military engagement in American history wherein a woman black or white, “led the raid and under whose inspiration it was originated and conducted”.

The N.Y. Tribune “ says that the Negro troops at Hilton Head, S.C. will soon start an expedition, under the command of Colonel Montgomery, differing in many respects from any heretofore projected.

The Combahee strategy was formulated by Harriet Tubman as an outcome of her penetrations of the enemy lines and her belief that the Combahee River countryside was ripe for a successful invasion.

She was asked by General Hunter “if she would go with several gunboats up the Combahee River, the object of the expedition being to take up the torpedoes placed by the rebels in the river, to destroy railroads and bridges, and to cut off supplies from the rebel troops.

She said she would go if Col. Montgomery was to be appointed commander of the expedition...

Accordingly, Col. Montgomery was appointed to the command, and Harriet, with several men under her, the principal of whom was J. Plowden...accompanied the expedition”.

Actually in this raid it was Montgomery who was the auxiliary leader. The whole venture owed its success to the complete preliminary survey made by Harriet Tubman’s espionage troops.

Captain John F. Lay, the Confederate investigating officer, discussing the movement afterwards, said, “The enemy seems to have been well posted as to the character and capacity of our troops and their small chance of encountering opposition, and to have been well guided by persons thoroughly acquainted with the river and country.

It was a commentary, however indirect, on Harriet’s work and the labor of her subordinates.

About ten miles north of Port Royal Island, Harriet’s station, was St. Helena Island, and between this island and the mainland of South Carolina was the water known as St. Helena Sound. The Combahee River, a narrow, jagged stream that ran about fifty miles into the interior of the State, began at the Sound: and on its banks were rice fields and marshes.

During the night of June 2, 1863, Harriet and Colonel Montgomery, with a party of about 150 Negro troops in three gunboats, started up the Combahee River. Pickets located at stations near the mouth of the stream spotted the oncoming boats and dispatched word to the Confederate commander, Major Emanuel, located deeper inland at Green Pond...

Every plantation on both sides of the river was aroused; the Union soldiers, in small detachments, raced from one to another, creating a general devastation of the zone.

In the Combahee Ferry region the Blake, Lowndes, Middleton and Heyward plantations were in ruins. The Negroes fled to the gunboats and the slavemasters skedaddled inland. The bridge at Combahee Ferry was burning too “but not badly.

As the gunboats passed up the river, the Negroes left their work and took to the woods, for at first they were frightened.

Then they came out to peer, “like startled deer.” But scudding away like the wind at the sound of the steam-whistle.

The word was passed along that these were “Lincoln’s gunboats come to set them free.”

From that moment on, the overseers used their whips in vain, for they failed to drive the slaves back to the quarters.

They turned and ran for the gun-boats; they came down every road, across every field, dressed just as they were when they left their work and their cabins.

There were women with children clinging around their necks, hanging onto their dresses, or running behind, but all rushed at full speed for “Lincoln’s gun-boats.”

Hundreds crowded the banks, with their hands extended toward their deliverers, and most of them were taken aboard the gun-boats to be carried to Beaufort.

This is about what happened all through the night and morning of June 2 when Harriet, Montgomery and the colored soldiers overran the Combahee.

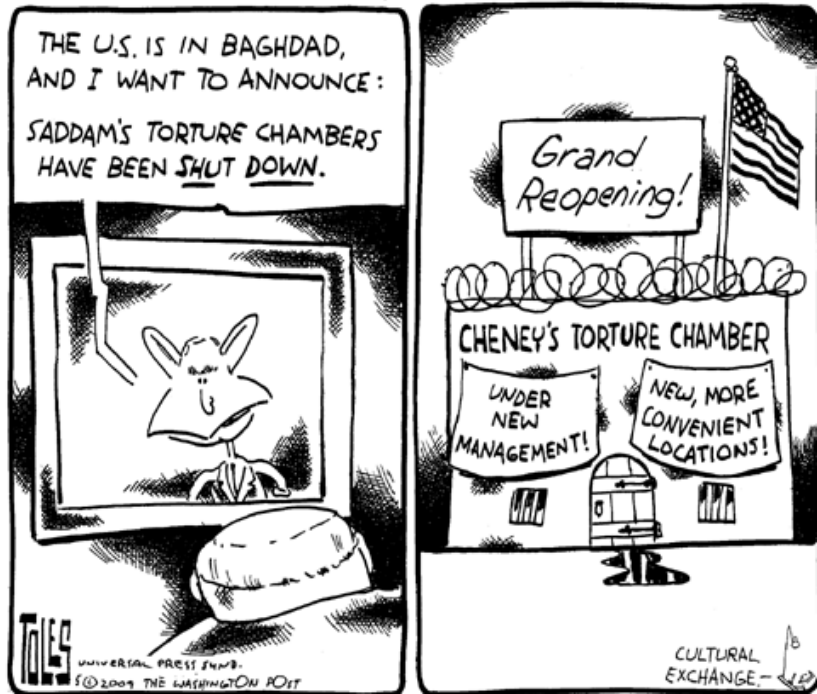
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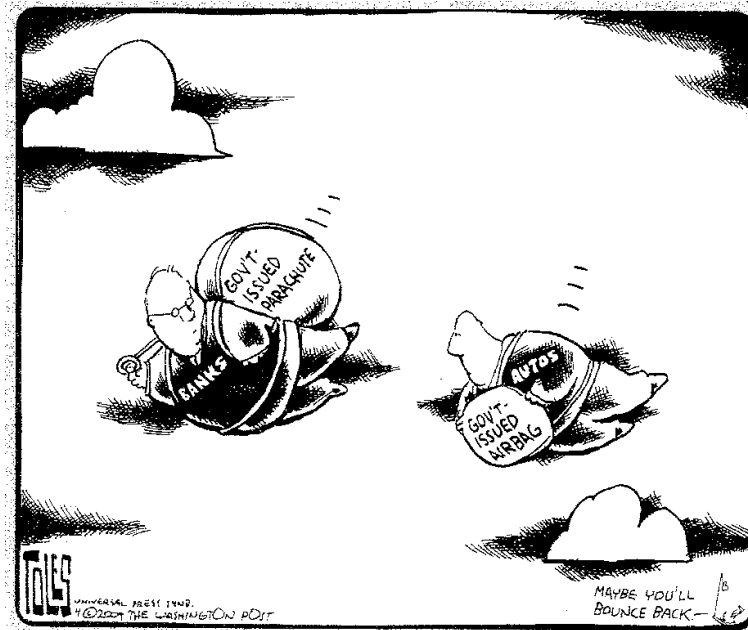
**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT
THE BLOODSHED**

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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