

GI SPECIAL 7H19:

Left Behind



Nikja Gadson and her daughter Alanna Gadson Photo: Nelson Kepley

August 23, 2009 By Tricia L. Nadolny, News-Record

A couple stung by grief, six years after learning their son was among the first casualties of the war in Iraq.

A soldier who lost three buddies and four years of his life.

A young mother recently widowed, still in shock.

All stories of loss here at home from a war that continues abroad.

Then, she slept soundly.

Now, she wakes up every two hours, feels like she hasn't been to bed in six years and doesn't remember her dreams. Just the few that he's in.

Then, she surrounded herself with friends.

Now, she can't stand groups. After an hour at her daughter's birthday party, she called it quits. Told them to take her home.

Then, she thought there may be a god.

Now, she knows there's no such thing.

Brenda Lam measures time by the death of her son. Before and after. Then and now.

Six years ago — April 22, 2003 — Alan Lam died in Iraq. The Marine from Snow Camp became the first from the Piedmont to die in that war and still, at just 19 years old, is the youngest casualty from these parts.

Then, he was one of 131. Now, he's one of more than 5,100.

"You feel like you're stuck in some kind of time warp where everything is moving faster than you are," Brenda says, dragging on a cigarette.

Now, she smokes too much.

Alan's room is tucked in the corner of her small home. Clothes that will never be worn. A bed no one is allowed to use. His drawings held in picture frames now coated in a light layer of dust. And the boots he wore in Iraq by his bedside, as if waiting for someone to slip them on.

Pictures and furniture have been added and moved, but for the most part, the room looks like it did when it happened, when a grenade malfunctioned and killed the young Marine during a training exercise.

In the past six years, so much in this house has remained steady, untouched.

His room.

Her pain.

"It's still the same," she says, blinking back tears. "It's not any better."

The grenade was meant for him, but it missed its target.

The main drag of Sadr City, a suburb of Baghdad, had been quiet that morning as John Oliver's convoy patrolled the streets. As they came to a stop, the grenade passed in front of his vehicle and hit a scooter passing in the next lane.

Now, the image spills out in vivid detail.

A man lies in the street next to the bike. His son cries as the pool of blood around his father grows larger. A medic tries to help, but the father is gone.

At home in Greensboro, it's one of the memories John tries to avoid.

"I always see that little boy," he says.

By the time he left Iraq — after two tours and 31 months in the country — John had gained that memory and lost three buddies.

On his right wrist, he wears a black cuff with their names and the dates they died printed in silver type. John, 26, knows their families live in Texas and Louisiana, but he's not sure when he'll be ready to reach out to them.

"I still go through points where it doesn't seem real..." he says. "Nothing's really hit me hard yet. Hopefully it won't."

Just three weeks after his official discharge from the Army, John focuses on restarting his life, fusing together the two worlds he has been living in.

Iraq, at times, feels like a dream. The first time he was shot at, still surreal.

And Greensboro — with nephews that grew old while he was gone and a wife he barely saw during the first year of their marriage — feels new.

"I'm ready to be settled and start life over again ..." he says. "It's kind of like the last 41/2 years have been a time warp."

He had picked out his tux, all white. And she had picked out her shoes: rhinestone sandals with a bow in the back.

The colors would be coral and canary yellow.

And the dress — she hadn't bought it yet, but she knew which one she wanted. The white A-line gown covered in lace.

"It was so, so pretty," Nikja Gadson, 27, says.

The church ceremony would have been just a formality. She had officially married Laron Lawrence Gadson through paperwork filed while he was in Iraq.

The first time they were together as husband and wife, she was receiving his body at the airport.

Today, in the living room of her Greensboro home, Nikja remembers getting the news — the call from her mother-in-law, her own screams in the moments after, and then the soldiers arriving.

She met them in the front yard.

"I said to them that they had just taken a piece of my heart I will never get back," she says.

Her husband, at age 24, died in a car accident in Germany. His body arrived in Greensboro on June 9, the day he was scheduled to come home from his first tour in Iraq.

Their daughter, Alanna, turned 3 last week. Laron joined the military the day after she was born.

They used to video chat every day, Nikja turning the camera on Alanna so her father could watch her play and grow.

Now, when Nikja opens her computer, her daughter goes to the screen. She wants to talk to Daddy.

“You know, sweetie, we can’t talk to Daddy,” Nikja says.

“Daddy’s in heaven?” she asks.

Nikja knows that it will get harder as her daughter gets older.

“I hope that she accepts it and she won’t go through what we had to go through,” she says.

It hits Nikja sometimes — when she sees Alanna’s profile or catches “the prettiness” in her eyes. Just how much she looks like her father.

It’s only been three months.

She’s still in shock.

But in those moments with her daughter, it becomes painfully clear that they will have to grow without him.

Laron was the one who used to drive that process, the planner in the family who forced his wife to look beyond tomorrow.

“When he was around, it was always such a clear picture to see. There was more to life than what you have in front of you...” she says. “I have to do that for myself. But he made it a lot more clear.”

As Brenda lets her head fall into her hands, her husband, Adam Lam, sits down on the edge of the couch.

Before, as his wife talked about Alan — the youngest of five and their only son — Adam moved through the house, standing in doorways and then disappearing into the bedroom, sitting for a minute and sharing a few words before quietly slipping away again.

“I don’t take my fishing pole and go to the lake anymore ...,” he says in a hush. “It’s something the father and son used to do together. Fishing together, hunting together. Now you walk into the woods, you look. What do you sit down here for? ... Now, you turn around and walk right back out.”

Two cars sit in the driveway of their home. One, a blue Acura that Alan bought for himself before he left. The other, a black CRX they bought for him but he never got to see.

Brenda is fixing up the second car, replacing the tires, putting in yellow and black seats — Alan's favorite colors — and giving it a new coat of paint.

She won't sell it. It's his.

The family visits him at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington when they can.

After years of fighting with her husband, Brenda agreed to give up his ashes.

They both knew he deserved a headstone there. She just had a harder time letting go.

"When I go to Arlington," she says, "it takes all of me to not dig up his urn — because it's not that deep."

The ashes used to sit in their dining room, at the base of a Buddhist shrine that honors Adam's religion.

Two massive pictures of Alan — his military photo and a high school portrait — fill the back wall. Wax candles from birthday celebrations held in his absence lie near Buddhist statues and incense burners. His dog tags and hat hang in the center.

There's no god, no Buddha, no nothing, Brenda says. But the shrine helps her feel close to a son who in some ways — in her pain and in his room — has never left the house.

Every night as the sun sets, they switch on the electric candles above the mantle.

"It's comforting, you know, because when you light the incense, you can say what you want to say," she says.

"The belief is that the spirit wanders all over during the day, but at night the lights show them how to get back home to where they're supposed to be."

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

U.S. Soldier Killed In Baghdad

August 23, 2009 Multi National Corps Iraq Public Affairs Office, Camp Victory RELEASE
No. 20090823-06

BAGHDAD – A Multi-National Division-Baghdad Soldier died Aug. 23, from combat-related injuries while conducting a patrol in Baghdad. The Soldier's name is being withheld pending notification of next of kin.

Soldier's Body Returns Home



Staff Sgt. Johnny Roosevelt Polk's wife stands by her husband's flag draped coffin at the Gulfport Air National Guard Base. Family and friends were on hand to witness Polk's return to Mississippi. TIM ISBELL/SUN HERALD

Aug. 13, 2009 By LEIGH COLEMAN - SUN HERALD

GULFPORT — The reality of war hit home Thursday as hundreds stood in silent tribute while the body of fallen soldier, Army Staff Sgt. Johnny R. Polk, was returned to his hometown of Gulfport.

The mournful cries of a grieving family carried through the sounds of the jet engines as Angel Flight touched down on the Air National Guard airfield.

Fellow Battalion members, flown in from Fort Hood, Texas, stood at attention as the flag-draped casket appeared from the plane.

Soldiers escorted Sgt. Polk's wife, Wanonia Janise Polk, as she laid her hands on her late husband's casket.

Gulfport Mayor George Schloegel, Gulfport city council member Libby Milner Roland, the Patriot Guard Riders, and members of the VFW Post in Gulfport and Ocean Springs also attended to honor Polk.

Polk, 39, died July 25 from wounds he received in Iraq. He was transported to the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Landstuhl, Germany, after being wounded when an anti-tank grenade in Kirkuk, Iraq, struck his vehicle. The incident happened July 23. He was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division based in Fort Hood, Texas.

“It’s just a struggle,” said Xavier Jones, Polk’s 18-year-old son. “He has just been there for so long and then to just know that we won’t see him again until we arrive in Heaven. We take it one day at a time. We cry, but we’re going to really miss him. We just try to stay strong for one another.”

Polk attended Harrison Central High School where he played football. He also worked as a volunteer firefighter in Gulfport and then joined the Army in 1992.

Resistance Action

Aug 21 (Reuters) & August 22, 2009 By SINAN SALAHEDDIN, The Associated Press & AFP & (Reuters) & Aug 23 (KUNA) & (Reuters)

MOSUL - A car bomb targeting an army patrol in a village 100 km (62 miles) northwest of Mosul killed four soldiers, including two officers, and wounded one, police said.

Insurgents attacked an Iraqi military checkpoint in the Iraqi capital Saturday using silenced pistols. The attack on the checkpoint in northern Baghdad killed two Iraqi soldiers and wounded another. The soldiers were killed at about 6 a.m. when attackers opened fire during a drive-by on the checkpoint in Azamiyah, the official said.

In Baquba, 60 kilometres (35 miles) north-east of the capital in Diyala province, a soldier was killed and two others wounded when a bomb exploded as their convoy passed through the centre of the city.

A roadside bomb wounded an off-duty Iraqi army officer in central Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

Four Iraqi soldiers were killed and another serviceman wounded in a car bomb explosion in northwestern Mosul on Sunday, a police source said. The bomb car exploded while an Iraqi army patrol was passing by in northwest Mosul, the source told KUNA. Four patrolmen, including two officers, were killed and another soldier injured in the bombing, it added.

MOSUL - Guerrillas in a car attacked a police checkpoint and shot dead a policeman in southwest Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

TAJI - A roadside bomb wounded 11 policemen when it targeted their patrol in the town of Taji, 20 km (9 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Two Foreign Occupation Troops Killed In Afghanistan; Nationality Not Announced

Aug 23 (Reuters)

Two ISAF servicemen were killed in a bomb blast in southern Afghanistan, a spokesman for the alliance said. Their nationality or details of the incident were not disclosed.

Farmingdale Marine James Argentine Killed In Afghanistan



James D. Argentine. Undated photo from a memorial website.

14 August 2009 Written by Jaime L. Tomeo, Anton Community Newspapers

When you hear of military casualties in the War in Afghanistan, most often the victims hail from far away from Farmingdale. Unfortunately, recent news of a fallen Marine brings the loss to Dalers' front doors.

According to the U.S. Department of Defense, Lance Cpl. James D. Argentine, 22, of Farmingdale was killed Aug. 6 by a roadside bomb.

Argentine was among three other Marines fatally wounded supporting involved in combat operations in the Farah province of Afghanistan. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, based out of the Marine Corps Base in Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay.

Argentine was a 2005 graduate of St. Anthony's High School in Huntington. A message on the school's website states, "Please pray for the repose of the soul of Lance Cpl. James Argentine, 2005." A special mass was held at St. Anthony's Chapel in Argentine's honor.

Brother Gary Cregan, the principal at St. Anthony's said that Argentine "was a notable and noteworthy student, especially in his involvement in stage crew."

"That was the one area where he spent the bulk of his free time serving," he added. "Anything that involved staging, we relied heavily on James. This was fairly indicative of

the kind of quiet service he was capable of. Which brings me to the type of service he provided for his country.”

Argentine enlisted in the Marines in October 2006. He is survived by his parents.

A tribute to Argentine was held along Main Street on Aug. 12 as his body was returned to Farmingdale. The Farmingdale Fire Department created an arch with ladders to display the American Flag.

“Main Street will be closed for approximately one-half hour while James receives a hero’s welcome back to his hometown,” Mayor George “Butch” Starkie said in a village press release.

He was waked Aug. 12 and 14 at McCourt & Trudden Funeral Home. A funeral Mass is scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 15 at St. Kilian’s RC Church, with interment following at Long Island National Cemetery in East Farmingdale.

Farmingdale residents have been distributing emails suggesting Dalers and other local residents gather at 10:30 a.m. on Aug. 15 along the south side of Hempstead Turnpike from Howitt Middle School to Route 110 to pay tribute to James for his sacrifice and to support the Argentine family. “Our neighbor, Lance Cpl. James D. Argentine, gave his all to protect our freedoms and our way of life,” Mayor Starkie said in the release.

San Antonio Marine Killed In Afghanistan

08/08/2009 By Scott Huddleston - Express-News

San Antonians are mourning the death of a Marine, but remembering his tireless devotion to faith and military service.

Lance Cpl. Travis T. Babine, 20, was one of four Marines killed Thursday in support of operations in Farah province, Afghanistan.

Babine, whose parents both served in the Army, was drawn to the Marine Corps, said his father, Bill Badger.

“I told him how hard it was going to be, and I never sugar-coated anything,” his father said. “He never flinched, and never turned away. He so wanted to prove himself as a man.”

Alice Babine's voice quavered as she read her son's favorite Bible passage.

“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then said I, ‘Here am I; send me,’” she said, reciting Isaiah 6:8.

Those words formed her son's essence, she said.

“He was a kind soul, a generous spirit. He had a pure heart and was incredibly smart. He truly believed in what he was doing,” his mother said.

Annie Jackson, who taught him in eighth and ninth grades at Village Parkway Baptist Church, recalled a freckle-faced boy with sweet innocence and sandy blond hair.

“He always had smile on his face,” Jackson said.

Having studied Latin at Village Parkway, Babine seemed to live by the Marine Corps motto, “Semper Fidelis” — “Always Faithful,” said Terri Kruse, who was the school principal.

He later graduated from Castle Hills Christian School, then joined the Marines in 2007.

While in Afghanistan, he shared his faith with his battle buddies as a lay reader in his unit, and even hoped to serve communion.

The rough terrain made it hard for chaplains to reach his battalion, Kruse said.

Babine was a rifleman based at Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe Bay.

Also killed in the attack were Lance Cpl. James D. Argentine, 22, of Farmingdale, N.Y.; Cpl. Christian A. Guzman Rivera, 21, of Homestead, Fla.; and Sgt. Jay M. Hoskins, 24, of Paris.

Babine and his family moved to San Antonio in 1996, and have been involved in the Episcopal Church. He also is survived by a younger sister, Marshall Badger, two half-sisters, Desiree Badger and Demetria Badger and his stepmother Dorothy Badger.

On July 18, as his sister Marshall was completing a weeklong stay at Camp Capers, an Episcopal camp in Waring, the priest asked everyone at the closing service to keep Babine in their prayers.

He'd narrowly survived a bomb blast the day before, because he was in an MRAP — Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle.

“He had called and said, ‘Mom, when you go to Camp Capers, you've got to tell those people what an awesome God we have,’” his mother said.

Virtually the same thing happened Thursday, with tragic results, she said. He and the other Marines were in a Humvee that day.

The family is planning a service at Christ Episcopal Church and burial at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery next week.

“U.S. Troop Deaths In Afghanistan Have Steadily Risen”

“The Number Of Wounded U.S. Troops Also Continues To Rise”

8.24.09 By William H. McMichael, Army Times [Excerpt]

According to the independent Web site iCasualties.org, which tracks U.S. and coalition deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq, U.S. troop deaths in Afghanistan have steadily risen since 2005's 99 through last year 's 155 to the current total of 151, with four months left in 2009.

The number of wounded U.S. troops also continues to rise.

Through April and May, the weekly average was in the low double digits, never more than 15.

The weekly totals began jumping in early June, and for the five-week period through the first week of August, the numbers were 62, 76, 66, 68 and 70.

<p>OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION ALL TROOPS HOME NOW!</p>
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Notes From A Lost War:

“Governor Massoud Said He Personally Admired The Marines But He Said Many People ‘Just Don't Want Them Here’”

“He Estimated That Two Of Every Three Local Residents Supported The Taliban”

“The Military Lacks The Troop Strength Even To Try To Secure Some Significant Population Centers”



American Marines meet for a briefing in Khan Neshin. Robert Nickelsberg/Getty Images, for The New York Times



Khan Neshin -- The New York Times

[Thanks to Alan Stolzer, The Military Project & Clancy Sigal, who sent this in.]

The Marine battalion, which deployed with less than 40 percent of its troops, can regularly patrol only a small portion of its 6,000-square-mile area.

To do even that they have stretched: three-fifths of the Marines are stationed at checkpoints and a handful of austere outposts ringing Khan Neshin

August 23, 2009 By RICHARD A. OPPEL Jr., New York Times [Excerpts]

KHAN NESHIN, Afghanistan — American Marines secured this desolate village in southern Afghanistan nearly two months ago, and last week they were fortifying bases, on duty at checkpoints and patrolling in full body armor in 120-degree heat.

Despite those efforts, only a few hundred Afghans were persuaded to come out here and vote for president on Thursday.

Something is missing that has left even the recently appointed district governor feeling dismayed. “I don’t get any support from the government,” said the governor, Massoud Ahmad Rassouli Balouch.

Governor Massoud has no body of advisers to help run the area, no doctors to provide health care, no teachers, no professionals to do much of anything.

About all he says he does have are police officers who steal and a small group of Afghan soldiers who say they are here for “vacation.”

It all raises serious questions about what the American mission is in southern Afghanistan — to secure the area, or to administer it — and about how long Afghans will tolerate foreign troops if they do not begin to see real benefits from their own government soon.

American commanders say there is a narrow window to win over local people from the guerrillas.

Securing the region is overwhelming enough.

The Marines have just enough forces to clear out small pockets like Khan Neshin.

Even with the new operation in Helmand Province, which involves the Marines here and more than 3,000 others as part of President Obama’s troop deployments, the military lacks the troop strength even to try to secure some significant population centers and guerrilla strongholds in central and southern Helmand.

And they do not have nearly enough forces to provide the kinds of services throughout the region that would make a meaningful difference in Afghans’ lives, which, in any case, is a job American commanders would rather leave for the Afghan government.

Meanwhile, Afghans in Khan Neshin, the Marines’ southernmost outpost in Helmand Province, are coming to the Americans with requests for medical care, repairs of clogged irrigation canals and the reopening of schools.

“Without the Afghan government, we will not be successful,” said Capt. Korvin Kraics, the battalion’s lawyer, who is in Khan Neshin. “You need local-level bureaucracy to defeat the insurgency. Without the stability that brings, the Taliban can continue to maintain control.”

Local administration is a problem throughout Afghanistan, and many rural areas suffer from corrupt local officials — if they have officials at all.

But southern Helmand has long been one of the most ungovernable regions, a vast, inhospitable desert dominated by opium traffickers and the Taliban.

It not clear what promises of support from the Afghan government the Americans had, or whether they undertook the mission knowing that the backing necessary to complete it, at least in southern Helmand, might not arrive soon — if at all.

The Americans in Khan Neshin doubt that the Afghan government promised much of anything.

Governor Massoud said he personally admired the Marines here, from the Second Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, but he said many people “just don’t want them here.”

He estimated that two of every three local residents supported the Taliban, mostly because they make a living growing poppy for the drug trade, which the Taliban control.

Others support them for religious reasons or because they object to foreign forces.

Not least, people understand that the Taliban have not disappeared, but simply fallen back to Garmsir, 40 miles north, and will almost surely try to return.

As for follow-up assistance, Colonel Grattan [Lt. Col. Tim Grattan, the battalion commander] said the Afghan national government “has been ineffective to date.”

The shortfall in Afghan government support is important not only in terms of defining the Marines’ mission here, but also because it crimps their operations. The Marines, unlike units in some other regions, answer to a NATO-led command and are under orders to defer to Afghan military and civilian officials, even if there are none nearby.

For instance, Marines must release detainees after 96 hours or turn them over to Afghan forces for prosecution, even if the nearest prosecutors or judges are 80 miles away. Some detainees who the Marines say are plainly implicated in attacks using improvised explosive devices or mortars have been released.

The problems are compounded by a shortage of American troops, despite the recent reinforcements.

The Marine battalion, which deployed with less than 40 percent of its troops, can regularly patrol only a small portion of its 6,000-square-mile area.

To do even that they have stretched: three-fifths of the Marines are stationed at checkpoints and a handful of austere outposts ringing Khan Neshin, living without air-conditioning or refrigerated water.

That leaves no regular troop presence across the vast southernmost reaches of Helmand.

On the Pakistani border the town of Baramcha — a major smuggling hub and Taliban stronghold — remains untouched by regular military units. American and Afghan officials say Baramcha’s influence radiates through southern Helmand, undermining Marine and

British military units elsewhere. "It's the worst place in Afghanistan," Governor Massoud said.

If the Afghan national government can provide more resources and security forces — and the Marines add more men — then the United States may be able to leave in two to three years, Colonel Grattan said. Without that, he said, it could take much longer.

["Two or three years" in his dreams. The troops will have something to say about that, just as they did in Vietnam, when the day came when they rebelled and that equally stupid, deadly Imperial war ended.]

For now, little help is materializing.

Frustrated, Governor Massoud said his "government is weak and cannot provide agricultural officials, school officials, prosecutors and judges."

He said he was promised 120 police officers, but only 50 showed up.

He said many were untrustworthy and poorly trained men who stole from the people, a description many of the Americans agree with. No more than 10 percent appear to have attended a police academy, they say.

"Many are just men from the streets," the governor said.

The Afghan National Army contingent appears sharper — even if only one-sixth the size that Governor Massoud said he was promised — but the soldiers have resisted some missions because they say they were sent not to fight, but to recuperate.

"We came here to rest, then we are going somewhere else," said Lt. Javed Jabar Khail, commander of the 31-man unit. The Marines say they hope the next batch of Afghan soldiers will not be expecting a holiday.

In the meantime, at the local bazaar, just outside the Marines' base, the foreign troop presence remains a hard sell.

When one man, Abdul Hanan, complained that "more people are dying," First Lt. Jake Weldon told him that the Taliban "take away your schools, they take away your hospitals; we bring those things."

Mr. Hanan remained doubtful. Some people have fled the area, fearful of violence since the Marines have arrived.

He asked, "So you want to build us a hospital or school, but if nobody is here, what do we do?"

Resistance Attack “In Usually Peaceful Northern Afghanistan” Kills Baghlan Police Commander

August 23, 2009 AFP

A bomb in usually peaceful northern Afghanistan killed six police.

The roadside bomb killed the commander of the Baghlan provincial rapid reaction police force and five other police in the area of Kook Chinar near Baghlan town on Saturday, the interior ministry said.

On Thursday, suspected Taliban militants stormed Baghlan town. "We had to tell our people to save your (ballot) boxes and save yourselves," the head of the election commission, Azizullah Lodin, said at the time.

Baghlan province straddles the main road linking the Afghan capital Kabul with the north. Kunduz province, further north, has become increasingly dangerous and the main road running to the south from Kabul is another flashpoint.

Blood Money

August 9, 2009 By Walter Pincus, Washington Post Staff Writer [Excerpt]

Since the invasion of Afghanistan eight years ago, the United States has spent \$223 billion on war-related funding for that country, according to the Congressional Research Service. Aid expenditures, excluding the cost of combat operations, have grown exponentially, from \$982 million in 2003 to \$9.3 billion last year.

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

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

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

OBAMA'S WAR: REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: ALL HOME NOW



A U.S. Marine checks a road for explosives in Golestan district of Farah province, May 4, 2009. REUTERS/Goran Tomasevic



U.S. Marines from the 2nd MEB enter a hole in the wall of a mud compound that they detonated to enter near Now Zad in Afghanistan's Helmand province June 20, 2009. (AP Photo/David Guttenfelder)



U.S. soldier from 10th Mountain Division from Fort Drum, NY inspects the site of an IED attack on an MRAP vehicle in Wardak province Aug. 3, 2009, in Afghanistan. (AP Photo/Dima Gavrysh)



U.S. soldiers of 4th ID Task Force Mountain Warrior near Honaker Miracle camp at the Pesh valley of Kunar Province August 12, 2009. REUTERS/Carlos Barria

**AFGHAN ELECTIONS:
BOMBS ON ONE HAND, EMPTY BALLOT BOXES ON THE OTHER**



[Steve Bell, Guardian, UK]

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**

One In The Same



From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: August 22, 2009

Subject: One In The Same

One In The Same

Two weeks ago I was in Washington, D.C., and like always, I took some pictures at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, otherwise known as, The Wall."

I happened to take a picture of this young girl looking at the names on the memorial. When I printed the image, I decided to place a picture of a Vietnamese girl I took in Vietnam in 1970. I simply printed the smaller picture, and placed it in the original picture that I took two weeks ago.

I stared at this manipulated image for a long time. It dawned on me how much our government demonized the Vietnamese people during the war, to manipulate the belief that they were the evil enemy.

The word "Gook" was implanted in our minds during basic training, and that lie followed us to a small poor country called, Vietnam.

We were told the Vietnamese people were sub-human.

They did not have the moral values that we Americans had.

Can you imagine, the most powerful military force the world has ever seen, dropped more bombs on that little country than any other country in the world.

We were the Super Power, and they were the Communists.

So, with all of that said, what do you think these two small children have in common?

Would they have played together on the same playground?

Or, would the American girl have called this little Vietnamese girl a Gook?

They are a mirror image of each other,

something these two children would have figured out on the playground.

Something the U.S. government never figured out.

Because, America is in search of enemies.

Why?

Because, hate and demonization are good for business.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
August 22, 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

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 to contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe. Phone: 917.677.8057

**“Whilst Large-Scale Industry
Preached Freedom And Peace
Between Nations It Also Turned The**

World Into An Armed Camp As Never Before In History”

From: KARL MARX; The Story of His Life
By Franz Mehring, 1918
Translated from the German by Edward Fitzgerald

The capitalist mode of production, an embodied contradiction, both produces and destroys modern states.

It intensifies all national antagonisms to the utmost and at the same time it creates all nations in its own image.

So long as the capitalist mode of production exists these contradictions are insoluble, and therefore the brotherhood of man about which all bourgeois revolutions have sung so sweetly has suffered defeat again and again.

Whilst large-scale industry preached freedom and peace between nations it also turned the world into an armed camp as never before in history.

However, with the disappearance of the capitalist mode of production its contradictions will vanish also. It is true that the proletarian struggle for emancipation must develop on a national basis because the capitalist process of production develops within national limits, and in the beginning therefore the proletariat in each country finds itself face to face with its own bourgeoisie.

Despite this, however, the proletariat need not submit to the merciless competition which has always destroyed all bourgeois dreams of international peace and freedom.

As soon as the workers realize that they must get rid of competition in their own ranks if they are to offer effective resistance to the superior power of capital — and this realization coincides with the first awakening of their class-consciousness — then it is only a step to the deeper realization that competition between the working classes of the various countries must cease too, and still further that the working classes must cooperate internationally if they are to overthrow the international dominance of the bourgeoisie.

Very early in the history of the modern working-class movement therefore, a tendency towards internationalism made itself felt.

What the bourgeoisie, thanks to the narrowing of its horizon by its profit interests, regards as unpatriotic, as ignorance and lack of understanding, is in reality a vital condition for the very existence of the proletarian struggle for emancipation.

Although this struggle can solve the antagonism between nationalism and internationalism, whilst the bourgeoisie is condemned to writhe under it as long as it lives, the workers possess no magic wand in this respect any more than in any other, and they are not able to turn the hard and difficult climb into a level and easy path.

The modern working class has to fight its battles under conditions created by historical development.

HOW MANY MORE FOR OBAMA'S WARS



The casket for U.S. Marine Cpl. Nicholas Xiarhos at the Massachusetts National Cemetery in Bourne, Mass., July 31, 2009. Xiarhos died after being injured in a roadside bomb blast in southern Afghanistan. (AP Photo/Lisa Poole)

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

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/)

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

THE HEALTH CARE DEBATE: A VIEW FROM THE UK



[Steve Bell, The Guardian, UK]

Obama's Super Secret Prison Rolls On: "No Access To Lawyers Or Courts" "Many Prisoners At Bagram Do Not Know Why They Are Being Detained"

Aug 14 By Danielle Kurtzleben, IPS [Excerpts]

The U.S. government continues to withhold even the most basic information about prisoners in the Bagram detention facility in Afghanistan, according to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), a New York-based legal rights organisation.

An April 2009 ACLU Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for documents and information about the detainment of prisoners at Bagram has yielded dead ends with both the Department of Defence (DOD) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

The ACLU wants the Obama Administration to make these records public, including information about "the number of people currently detained at Bagram, their names, citizenship, place of capture and length of detention, as well as records pertaining to the process afforded those prisoners to challenge their detention and designation as 'enemy combatants.'"

The Bagram detention facility, located on an air base north of Kabul, reportedly houses around 600 detainees. These detainees comprise a mixture of suspected terrorists from outside Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as Afghans captured while fighting American soldiers.

In a letter responding to the ACLU's FOIA request, the CIA said it could "neither confirm nor deny the existence or nonexistence" of records containing the information requested by the ACLU.

The DOD's response said that the department has a list containing basic detainee information, including names, capture dates and circumstances, and length of detainment. However, the DOD said that this list is classified, and cannot be released for national security and personal privacy reasons.

Bagram is a major topic of interest for several human rights groups, including Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the International Justice Network, which have criticised the Obama Administration's record on promoting justice in its overseas prisons, comparing conditions at Bagram to those at the much-criticised U.S. facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

"There are serious concerns that Bagram is another Guantanamo - except with many more prisoners, less due process, no access to lawyers or courts and reportedly worse conditions," said Melissa Goodman, staff attorney with the ACLU National Security Project, in a statement issued on Thursday.

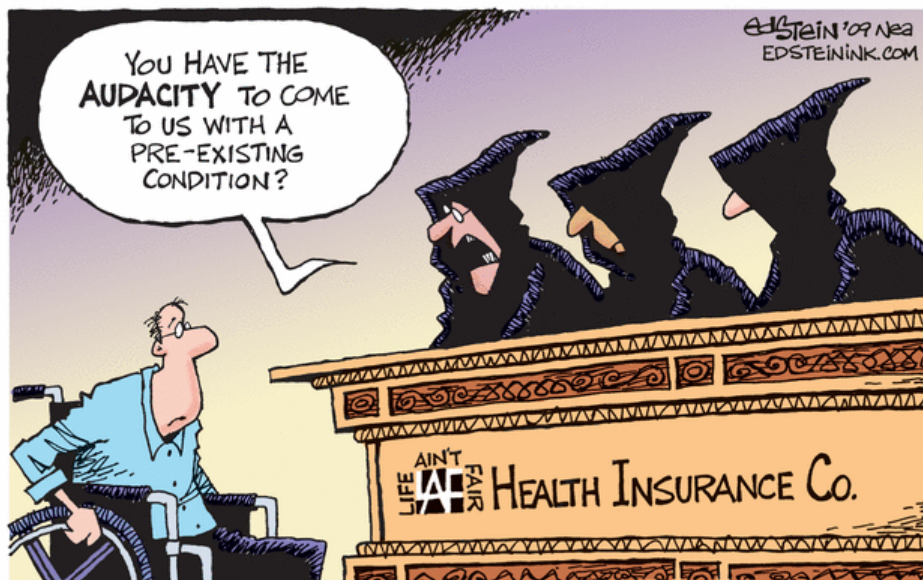
"The chief complaint is lack of meaningful process to challenge their detention," said Sahr Muhammedally, Senior Associate with the Law and Security Program at Human Rights First, a human rights advocacy organisation headquartered in New York.

She said that many prisoners at Bagram do not know why they are being detained.

Muhammedally has travelled to Afghanistan to interview 30 Bagram detainees, most recently in April. She told IPS that the capacity does not currently exist to process all of the prisoners and bring them all to fair trials.

The question of fair trials for Bagram detainees was raised in April, when the Obama Administration appealed a federal judge's decision to allow three Bagram detainees to challenge their detention in U.S. courts - a move that drew heavy criticism.

CLASS WAR REPORTS



DEATH PANEL

Class War In Kanaky:

“10 Days Of Demonstrations, Roadblocks And Violent Confrontations With Police, Motivated As Much By A Desire For Independence And Decolonisation, As By The Issue Of Industrial Justice”

August 12, 2009 By Collectif Solidarité Kanaky, translation and introduction for Links International Journal of Socialist Renewal by Annolies Truman

August 12, 2009 -- On August 6, a general strike in Kanaky (or the French overseas territory of New Caledonia) was called off after an accord between the trade union confederation USTKE (Federation of Unions of Kanak Workers and the Exploited) and Air Caledonia was finally signed by the airline.

The signing of the accord, which had been negotiated on June 11, put an end to 10 days of demonstrations, roadblocks and violent confrontations with police, motivated as much by a desire for independence and decolonisation, as by the issue of industrial justice.

The conflict originated with the unfair dismissal of an Air Caledonia employee in March for “betraying commercial confidentiality” for telling her mother that her father had taken a flight with his mistress.

It accelerated on May 28 with the arrest of twenty-eight unionists at a press conference at Noumea Airport during a day of action called by USTKE to support the striking airline workers.

The mobile police and the National Police Intervention Group intervened, pushing the demonstrators onto the tarmac. Twenty-eight of them took refuge in an empty plane to protect themselves against a stream of tear gas.

Despite the fact that there were no planes in circulation at the time and it was the police action which disrupted the demonstration, the twenty-eight were charged with “hindering the flight of an aircraft”.

Tensions reached a new high on June 29 when the USTKE unionists were given prison sentences. According to USTKE, the judgement targeted the leadership of the union, particularly the president, Gérard Jodar, and the general secretary of the construction union, Michel Safoka, both now serving one year prison sentences.

With the airline dragging its feet on signing the accord, USTKE launched a call for a general strike on July 27.

Workers and residents responded with numerous actions, growing in intensity.

On August 5 in the working class suburb of Montravel, 1500 youths threw stones at a truck convoy coming from Noumea's port with a police escort, forcing it to turn back.

In the Saint Louis tribal area, a policeman was shot in the thigh during a confrontation between youth and the police.

The conflict has drawn on deep discontent at the social inequalities between indigenous Kanaks and neighbouring Islanders on the one hand, and French settlers and residents on the other.

According to the August 7 France 2 Telejournal, a quarter of the population in Kanaky is living below the poverty threshold, 4 times more than on the French mainland. Many young people are unemployed.

A young Kanak interviewed complained that those who come from Europe get a job within two to three months, whereas many locals, especially youth, are unemployed.

Since USTKE formed the political party Parti Travailleiste (PT, Kanaky Labour Party), it has been criticising the co-option of the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS), the pro-independence liberation of the 1980s. The PT's radical pro-independence stance resonates with the dispossessed and explains the intensity of recent events.

Fearing a return to the insurrectional climate of the 1980s, the conservative president of the government of the French overseas territory, Philippe Gomes, intervened to persuade Air Caledonia to sign the accord.

The recent events in Kanaky mirror the general strikes held earlier in the year in other French overseas territories, such as Guadeloupe and Martinique, where unionists highlighted the inequalities suffered by the islands with regard to France and their barely disguised colonial status, and won significant concessions.

Marie-Pierre Goyetche, USTKE's general secretary, told the French newspaper Liberation on August 7 that the union had suspended the general strike, but would continue to mobilise until its leaders were released. The newspaper Humanite quotes the union as promising "a second phase of mobilisation", with a day of action called for August 22, three days before the appeal hearing of the six imprisoned union leaders.

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