

Traveling Soldier

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contact@traveling-soldier.org

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“We definitely needed something more, more armor than just plywood and sandbags because that wasn’t really going to stop much”

Joseph Woods participated in the invasion of Iraq and he spoke to Traveling Soldier’s Tom Barton. This is the first of a three-part interview.

Barton: Let’s start with your branch of service, unit, M.O.S.

Woods: I was in the U.S. Army, 82nd Airborne Division, and I was Infantry 11 Bravo.

B: What was your period of active-duty service?

W: I was on active duty from August of 2000 to June of 2004.

B: And how much of that period was spent overseas?

W: Approximately fourteen months, seven months Afghanistan and seven months Iraq.

B: You were in Afghanistan in which year?

W: I was in Afghanistan from August of 2003 to March of 2004.

B: And then you came back to the U.S.?

W: I was back in the U.S., still active-duty, for a couple months. Then I got out and moved on with my life.

B: What part of Afghanistan were you stationed in?

W: In Afghanistan, I spent the first couple weeks there in Kandahar, then moved onto



Bagram. I was there for about a month, month and a half. Then I went to Khost for about two months. After that I went back to Kandahar for the remaining, I think it was about two months.

B: And where did you go after that?

W: Back to the U.S.

B: When did you come back here?

W: I got back from Afghanistan to the U.S. in January of 2003.

B: And when were you deployed to Iraq?

W: So then I went to Iraq seven months later, August of 2003.

B: Was your force expecting to be sent to Iraq?

W: We were not. They were telling us at the time – one brigade of the 82nd was sent to Kuwait prior to the initial wave of the invasion –

and they had told us there were no plans on going to Iraq. There were a lot of rumors, but there was nothing official, so we’d be back in the States for a while. But the six months in between Afghanistan and Iraq we had no word of going anywhere until we found out we were going to Iraq and we left two weeks later, so it was kind of a spur-of-the-moment thing.

B: There have been a lot of reports on how well prepared the equipment was for different units that were sent over there. How was yours?

W: It was pretty unprepared. In Afghanistan we were conducting operations [with the] use of helicopters. In Iraq, once we got where we were going, they told us we were going to be a mobile unit [with] trucks. So we got a bunch of

trucks from God knows what other units. They're stripped down, they were Humvees but they were like pickup trucks basically. With no armor at all.

B: None!

W: None.

B: None?

W: No armor at all, not until we went to. ... We got to Iraq, I remember the first couple days we were there, that was the objective, to get to Baghdad International Airport. The first day, the first two days, everybody was, we were armoring our trucks. But – it was with plywood and sandbags.

B: So you're way of entering Iraq itself was by air to Baghdad?

W: Yeah, to Baghdad International Airport.

B: How long were you in Baghdad and what came next?

W: We were in Baghdad for two weeks, approximately two weeks. I think there were two missions that were conducted out of there by air. I didn't personally go on the missions because I was on a support channel and there was no need for me to go. But the unit my company did go on missions with did go on Chinooks. We were there for two weeks, and

then we did a convoy up to Fallujah.

B: Roughly when did you arrive near Fallujah?

W: We got into Fallujah, I'd say beginning of September, first week of September.

B: September of '03.

W: '03, Right.

B: Were people at all at that point in time concerned about the lack of armor, or was that not yet a big concern?

W: It was a concern because he had already heard on the news ... I mean, going into Iraq we knew the biggest, the leading cause of casualties was the roadside bombs. I mean I remember going on the convoy up to Baghdad being scared. I was like on the back of an LTV with a bunch of duffel bags with little, like no protection whatsoever. It was probably a thirty Humvee convoy, thirty vehicle convoy. And so it was clear that we definitely needed something more, more armor than just plywood and sandbags because that wasn't really going to stop much.

B: Were you given any explanations by command or promises about that, or was it talked about at all from the top down?

W: It wasn't even talked about. I never heard anything about it. It wasn't until we got to Fallujah and shortly thereafter, our guys were getting hit with IEDs, guys were getting injured, and it wasn't until – I can't remember the exact dates – but it probably wasn't until October, the next month when we started receiving sheets of armor, which is called "armor x" or something. We had welders, engineers or whatever they were cutting it up and drilling it to the sides of the Humvees, and putting doors on the sides. Before that people were getting – several people got injured, one of our guys died before the armor got there.

B: Was this a subject of discussion among the rank and file?

W: Well I remember, from my experience, I remember talking to guys, we were like: "what the fuck? Where's our armor?" It was an open bed Humvee. On [the] one hand we were like, yeah we kind of understand why it has to be open, so we can have guys pointing weapons and whatnot, but once people started getting blown up, it just wasn't really cool anymore. We were just like, how is our administration, how are our leaders going to handle this, and make sure our guys don't keep getting shrapnel ones and whatnot.

B: In some units it was reported that the senior officers got the armor first.

W: I don't really remember that being a topic of any of the discussions I had with the guys, but yeah definitely I would say that the sergeant major and colonels' trucks were probably the first ones to get armored, yeah definitely. Not to say that they weren't going out into Fallujah, but yeah I would say they were one of the first vehicles to get armored.

B: Coming into 2003, there was still a view that the mission was a good one, that this evil dictator had been gotten rid of. Then as 2004 moved along, there were more and more reports of resistance by the



Iraqis. How did that look to you first-hand?

W: Well, as soon as we got to Fallujah, we encountered resistance right off the bat. We were told going into Fallujah that they called it the “wild, wild west,” and that we were going into this area that was very pro-Saddam, there were a lot of Fedayeen soldiers there. We knew what to expect. And within the first week, I think the first week, we had our first major fire-fight. One of the platoons of my company was involved with that, a platoon that I had once served in, a lot of friends in were in that, where seven policemen, seven Iraqi policemen, which wasn’t sure whether or not whether they were legit or not, but these seven policemen end up dying, getting shot by our guys, and it was this huge fire-fight right outside their compound in Fallujah. But to answer your question, we knew that that area was very high in anti-U.S. sentiment, anti-U.S. sentiment was very high.

B: Fallujah had around 400,000 people living there at the time. How

many forces did you have to hold it down?

W: The battalion I served in had about 900 guys or so, plus some attachments from 10th Mountain Division, and some engineers from some other units, I’m not sure. But basically our battalion was in control, basically we were assigned Fallujah, we did all the operations in Fallujah. Another battalion in our brigade had conducted operations on the outskirts of Fallujah. It was divided up to different battalions, so it was pretty much about under 1,000 guys doing missions in Fallujah.

B: So you had about 1,000 up against 400,000, assuming of course that not all the 400,000 are combatants. That sounds like rather thin odds.

W: Yeah. Yeah, you can say that.

B: You mentioned before the interview that your command had a somewhat more laid back attitude than the marines that came after?

W: When we first got there, we were the first.... Prior to us being

there, I think there was a group of military police from some National Guard unit that were there, but they weren’t really pulling full-on operations going into Fallujah, so I’m pretty sure that we were the first units since the initial wave of the invasion that had gone up through there. The command figured out what would were right to do, what were not, as far as avoiding casualties, while still conducting a lot of missions but doing things in a smart, tactful way to avoid harm on the guys. So as time went on, we realized certain things like what areas to avoid that weren’t necessary to conducting operations, what areas were prime spots for IEDs, that sort of thing. In the seven months that we were there, we only lost, we only had one guy killed. There were a lot of injuries, from various IEDs and shoot-outs that happened, but only one KIA. The marines came in and lost like three guys within the first week.

(Part two of the interview will appear in the next issue.)

“I have not heard a worthwhile nor just reason for staying the course”

I’m Justin Gordon and I was a Captain with 2nd Battalion 4th Field Artillery during the invasion of Iraq.

My active duty commitment to the military ended in May 2004. In January of 2003 I requested a transfer to this battalion to fill an officer vacancy because it was the first battalion from Fort Sill to mobilize during the pre-invasion build up.

I, like the rest of us, still felt the deep emotions that followed 9-11. I was told of stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and links to Al-Qaeda. I wanted to do my part to protect American security.

From March 20 2003 until May 12, 2-4 Field Artillery moved from Kuwait, through the Karbala gap, into Baghdad before the city capitulated, to



8-25-05 THE PHOENIX INQUIRER. INTERNAL PAGE 20/2005.

Tikrit, and finally back to Kuwait. Along the way I saw first hand what death and destruction look like. I learned what it feels like to realize that your life may end in a few minutes, but my personal experiences back then pale in comparison to the violence that is currently happening in Iraq every single day.

This is not why I oppose the war. I would do it again if my actions were protecting American citizens, but this is not what we are doing in Iraq.

The justification for Iraq frequently changes, and since the weapons of mass destruction theory has been debunked, I have not heard a worthwhile nor just reason for staying the course.

Prior to the invasion of Iraq, the administration currently in power told us that war was an absolute last resort, and then it did everything it could to fix intelligence and convince America and the rest of the world that our only course of action was to invade.

After it was proven that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, our just cause magically changed.

In his inaugural address on January 21st 2005, President Bush stated that “the best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world.”

Expanding freedom at gunpoint has great costs and may not yield the results one would want.

Spreading freedom has cost the lives of 1,900 Americans and untold thousands of Iraqi civilians. It has cost us our credibility as a leader of the free world. It has also cost us 250 billion dollars so far. At the current rate of 6 billion a month, to stay the course for another 5 years would cost 11 thousand dollars to each American household.

Even if we ignore the costs of spreading freedom, the outcome is still problematic. With reference to the recent draft of the Iraqi Constitution, there’s a strong chance that we’re going to spread Sharia Law and create an Islamic State that any Ayatollah would be proud of. A state where women and non-muslims have less freedom than they did under Saddam Hussein.

When spreading freedom didn’t seem to be working out too well, President Bush on June 28, 2005 stated that “there is only one course of action against them (terrorists): to defeat them abroad before they attack us at home.”

The fighting them over there so that we don’t have to fight them over here rationalization is illogical and immoral for several reasons.

It makes an assumption that there are a finite number of terrorists and that at some point we will have killed them all. This is not so. Our presence in Iraq creates terrorists and jihadists faster that we could hope to kill them. Many terrorists and foreign fighters have arrived in Iraq to gain real life experience using American soldiers as targets.

Two months ago, when terrorists detonated bombs in their transit system, the people of London realized that fighting them over there doesn’t stop them from attacking your home. Are we any safer than the people of London? Are we any safer than we were four years ago?

Recently Hurricane Katrina wreaked havoc comparable to a worst case scenario for a terrorist attack. The only difference is that Katrina warned us days ahead of time whereas a terrorist will not. The lack of leadership in evacuating, delivering

Traveling Soldier contact info

Send email to:
contact@traveling-soldier.org

Or write to:
Traveling Soldier
954 Lexington Ave
N.Y. N.Y. 10021

On the internet:
www.traveling-soldier.org

Veterans Advisory Board:
Cpl. Mike Hoffman, U.S.M.C., O.I.F.
Sgt. Martin Smith, U.S.M.C.
E-3 Roberto Resto, U.S.M.C.

Production Staff
Pham Binh
Thomas Barton

aid, and stabilizing the region following this catastrophe underlines how we have made no progress in protecting American lives since September 11th.

Fighting them over there is immoral for two reasons. First it means that we’re fighting our war in someone else’s home and they get to suffer for it. Second it means that we’re using our soldiers as bait.

This is not what I call supporting our troops.

The military is not a sports team, and war is not a football game.

It’s very real.

As a nation we have to ask ourselves if what we’re doing is right.

Are we having a positive impact in the Iraq? Is our presence there protecting American citizens?

The answers are overwhelmingly no, and this is why I cannot support the war in Iraq.

**(Republished with permission
from GI Special.)**

Bush comes up \$hort

Last month, an extraordinary thing happened. The Bush Administration made an appeal to the general public to donate money for Iraq’s “reconstruction.”

After a month, only \$600 has come in! The fact that Bush can’t voluntarily get the cost of two iPods from the public say a lot about what the American people think about the war.

The recruitment numbers are falling, because poor people don’t want to kill poor people in Iraq for rich people. The rich – who have never been the rank and file of the military and whose “support” for the troops doesn’t extend beyond the bumper stickers on their luxury SUVs – don’t even want to put their money where their mouths are.

“The government had a plan, but it did not include the poor black people of the south”

For too long I’ve remained silent on a number of issues, mostly for fear that I would jeopardize my chances for discharge as a conscientious objector from the US Army Reserve.

I am a staff sergeant with over 12 years of service to this nation in both active and reserve components.

However, I have refused to go to Iraq and serve in this illegal, unjust, and undemocratic war. My case is still pending, but my conscience can no longer bear the weight of not speaking out.

I chose GI Special as the first place to announce my disgust with my commander-in-chief because it is here that I find what I consider the truth regarding the troops.

What follows are a few sketches that I hope to flesh out over the coming weeks and am confident your readers will find some insights that resonate with their experiences.

1) Hurricane Katrina – What finally drove me over the edge this morning was watching news coverage and hearing reports on DemocracyNow! about the debacle in New Orleans. In a sense the levees of my conscience finally gave way, allowing the rage that has been building up inside me to overflow.

I hope my words have as devastating an effect on this so-called administration, as the hurricane and subsequent flood had on the poor people of Louisiana.

My initial impression was surprise that so many of my black brothers and sisters were left for dead while others headed for the hills.

But then I realized that this is America, and we have a long history of discrimination against people of color (of which I am one) so it should come as no surprise that the refugees would be predominantly dark-skinned people.

My second impression was that these are nearly all poor people who did not have the means to escape the devastation and they unfortunately relied on the government to have a plan.

The government indeed had a plan, but it did not include the poor black people of the south.

So while this may be linked to a natural disaster, the real force lies behind the race and class discrimination inherent in the structure of American society.

Am I blaming the system for what the invisible hand has created? Perhaps.

Or maybe I’m simply drawing attention to the underlying current that connects people struggling in the Gulf Coasts (both Mexican and Persian gulfs).

Indeed, there exists a widening gulf between the rich, mostly white, elites and the poor, mostly brown and black, masses around the world. Through the events unfolding in the deep south I begin to understand what MLK meant when he said “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

2) Shoot to kill – The governor of Louisiana and the commanding officer of a Military Police battalion



recently back from Iraq, were both quoted as saying that lethal force would be used against the refugees in New Orleans to restore order.

Reports mentioned that the troops had M-16’s and they knew how to use them.

Presumably this meant these are battle-tested trained killers who have no qualms about shooting civilians.

What is truly remarkable about this story is that these troops, poor bastards that they are, have just returned from year long deployments in the most dangerous place in the world and are now faced with not only the destruction of their hometown but the prospect of having to shoot their refugee neighbors.

No amount of VA funding will be able to deal with the post traumatic stress these men and women are up against.

As a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War, I fully support these soldiers in any dissent they wish to express toward this ridiculous mission.

My admonition to them is remember, you are CITIZEN and a

SOLDIER. These are NOT mutually exclusive.

No one has more right to speak than the troops who have served this nation. You are asked to sacrifice much, but you are not asked to stop thinking for yourself. At least not by the American people.

Remember that one of the Army values is personal courage. Cultivate that courage and stand up to unlawful orders. The regulations and the law of the land are behind you in that regard.

Finally, remember that **ANTI-WAR DOES NOT MEAN ANTI-SOLDIER.**

On the contrary, we realize that no one appreciates the value of peace more than combat veterans. I for one support and respect you as human beings and public servants. You've done what my conscience prevented me from doing. And for that, you have earned my admiration and a personal promise to do everything I can to ensure that you are taken care of as a veteran.

Tom, thank you for the opportunity to vent my frustration. There's more where that came from, as they say.

I have been inspired by other troops that I read about in your paper. People like Camillo Mejia,

Pablo Paredes, Kevin Benderman, Soldier X, etc. In your own way, you are providing a service to the grassroots of this wonderful nation we live in. You are standing on the shoulders of giants by continuing the tradition of a popular press. Jeff would be proud of you. For that I commend you and look forward to struggling with you to change things in some small way for the better.

This is my first dispatch to GI Special. It will not be my last...

Respect,
SOLDIERMEDIC
(Reprinted from GI Special with permission)



Which one of these looters would *you* shoot?

Media Chatter Ignored Soldiers for Cindy

Millions of words were written and spoken by the major media about Cindy Sheehan's camp outside Bush's ranch in Texas.

As usual, they were blind to the most important news event of all from Crawford, Texas.

Fraternization.

The word that terrifies Imperial politicians.

Soldiers from Ft. Hood began to come to the action.

They came to talk, to listen; some came to help out and bring supplies.

The soldiers reached out to the movement against the war in Iraq. And so did some sailors too.

When the history of the movement that stopped this war is written, the few small sentences below will weigh more than all the words babbled by all the politicians in Washington.

Soldiers can stop a war, when they decide enough is enough, and that the whole thing is dishonorable, deadly bullshit.

They did it in Vietnam, when they rebelled against that war.

They can do it again.

The soldiers who reached out to the movement against the war took a risk.

Now it's time for civilians against the war to reach out to them.

Check out what happened:

2005-08-09 Report from Cindy Day 3 Via David Swanson News from Crawford

By Cindy Sheehan [Excerpt]

We had a young man who is in the US Army at Ft. Hood come this morning and spend hours with us. He has been there and his unit is scheduled to go back in October. How much courage did that take for him to come within earshot of his commander in chief's home and spend time with some old hippy protestors???

Aug 12th, 2005 Cindy Sheehan, Daily Kos [Excerpt]

Three active duty soldiers from Ft. Hood came to visit me and tell me that they really appreciated what I was doing and that if they were killed in the war, their moms would be doing the same thing.

That made me feel so good after all of the negativity I had been hearing from the righties.

Aug 16th, 2005 by Cindy Sheehan [Excerpt]

We are moving to a place that doesn't have much shade and I put out an appeal for tarps and a soldier from Ft. Hood brought some to us. I have had a lot of soldiers from Ft. Hood come out and tell me to keep it up and that I am doing a good thing.

08/28/05 By Cindy Sheehan, Daily Kos [Excerpts]

A photographer friend of mine went down to Crawford to the Pro-War, Anti-Peace rally today. There were about 1500 people there he said.

I was visited by a 2nd Lt. from Casey's 2-5 Cavalry that told me to keep up the good work and Casey's old roommate came out from Ft. Hood to meet me.

He may have to go back to Iraq soon. He hopes he doesn't have to since he will be out in 6 months, but he is pretty sure he will be stop-lossed.

August 18, 2005, Sailors For Cindy

By STEVE STONE, The Virginian-Pilot



VIRGINIA BEACH — There were no angry speeches. No shouting. Just the soft flicker of hand held candles illuminating faces, young and old.

Except for some anti-war sentiments scrawled on a few signs, it was hard to tell why about 200 people had gathered in vigil Wednesday night at Town Center. That is until the first soft voice in song cut

through the din of conversation and laughter like a bullet.

The gathering was one of hundreds nationwide in support of Cindy Sheehan whose son, an Army soldier, was killed in Iraq in April 2004.

While the crowd at Town Center was made up largely of civilians, there were numerous retired and even active-duty military members present.

Bryan Brooks, 23, a nuclear electrician aboard the carrier Enterprise, said he is disillusioned with the war because the basis for invading Iraq was its possession of weapons of mass destruction. But that proved to be "definitely, definitely wrong," he said.

"You can oppose the war and still love your country," Brooks said.

And if called to fight, he said he'll obey. "I will do as I am told," Brooks pledged, "even if I don't agree."

“After 9/11, all I wanted was a way to Afghanistan and an axe,” said Bill Everett, a lieutenant in the Naval Reserve. Back then, he thought the war was just and said he believed Bush. No more, however.

“It’s all about the oil and money,” Everett, 29, said. “It’s not about protecting the American people, and that’s what I signed up for.”

As he spoke, a few men passed by, one muttered a denunciation of the demonstration, saying it did not

support the troops. Everett’s response was swift. “I am in the service,” he shot back, waving his military ID card.

He said its time to leave Iraq to the Iraqis. “Let them settle it among themselves and if they want a religious government, then let them have it,” Everett said. “Bush wants religion in government here.”

How the Soldiers Stopped the Vietnam War

Book review by Ron Jacobs.

Published by Haymarket Books, ISBN 1-931859-27-2 and available at www.haymarketbooks.org

Of all the antiwar buttons I could wear, the only one I choose to pin on my coat or backpack is one that reads: I Support the Iraq Veterans Against the War.

Not only does this statement make clear my opposition to the war, it also serves to stifle most supporters of Washington’s latest imperial exercise who like to pretend that those who oppose the war want to see the occupation troops dead.

Actually, we just want them out of the combat zones—at least for starters.

It’s not that war veterans have more legitimate reasons to oppose a war than civilians, although their understanding of war is obviously much more personal.

However, because they are veterans, they tend to get a hearing from individuals and groups that might otherwise dismiss antiwar sentiment out of hand.

Two such audiences that come immediately to mind are other veterans and those men and women currently in the military.

One other is the young people around the country currently preyed on by those traders in human flesh we call recruiters.

If one remembers the various campaigns of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) during the war in Vietnam and the effect those campaigns had on the conscience of America, the importance of vets in the antiwar campaign becomes quite obvious.

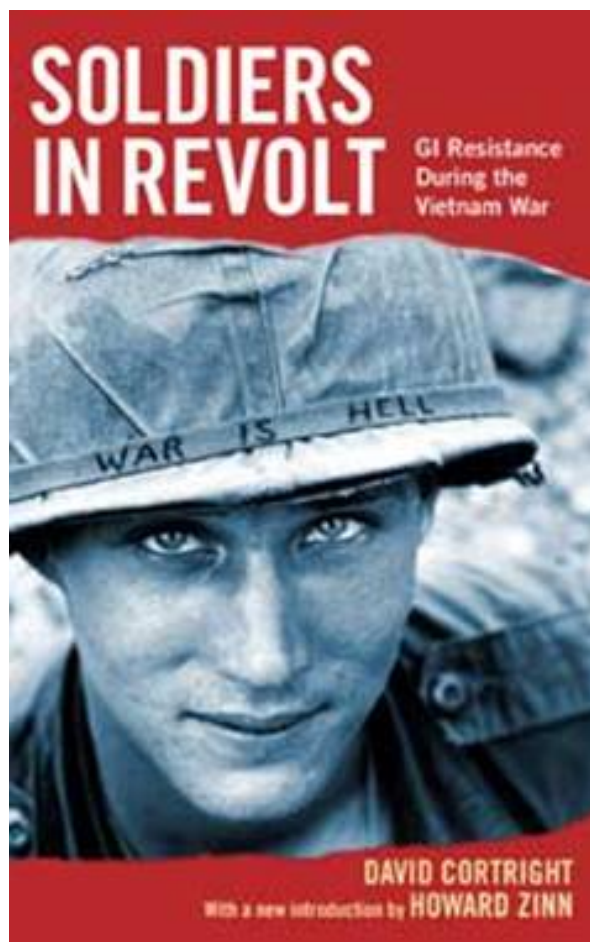
As for the importance of active duty soldiers, it can’t be overstated. After all, if the soldiers refuse to fight, there can be no war. The recent republication of David Cortright’s 1975 classic, *Soldiers in Revolt*, makes this fact abundantly clear.

A history of US military resistance, a compilation of statistics from various studies done by and for the Department of Defense and its subsidiaries, and a stirring rendition of anecdotes detailing multiple actions by GIs and marines around the world during the US war on Vietnam, *Soldiers in Revolt* is required reading for antiwarriors no matter where they live or where they organize.

Current campaigns like those of Cindy Sheehan and Military Families Speak Out are reaching out to those who have seen their sons and daughters go to war,

and veterans’ groups like the aforementioned Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), VVAW and Vets for Peace are beginning to mobilize numbers of Iraq war vets, but the movement against the war among those serving is still in its infant stages.

As Cortright’s book makes clear, this segment of the movement needs to grow exponentially if it is to make a difference. Furthermore, once it does grow, it is likely



to make a difference—along with the counter recruitment organizing—a greater difference than all of the rest of the movement.

***Soldiers in Revolt* reads like a combination organizing manual, history text, and underground newspaper.** Cortright lists the details of mutinies, revolts, congressional actions, and armed attacks on commanding officers.

The telling is never dry, despite its occasional dry content, and the history is about more than just the Vietnam period—although it is primarily concerned with that time. This latter fact limits its relevance to today's time a little—after all, today's youth culture is different from the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s—but the overriding and oppressive reality of military culture transcends this minor aspect.

As a teenager who opposed the war in Vietnam while living on military bases in Germany, this book was like a blast from the past. I remember when it first came out in 1975. A Vietnam vet friend of mine named Steve who was attending the University of Maryland and worked out of the VVAW office near Ft. Meade lent me his copy and I read it in a weekend.

The chapters titled “Armed Farces” and “Over There” listed at least two incidents in Germany that I had helped organize support for the GIs charged in their wake. Cortright's descriptions of GIs daily acts of resistance—things like not saluting, wearing peace buttons, refusing haircuts—all of this was part of the life I knew from hanging out with GIs in Europe; and all of it added to the breakdown in military discipline that was so important to the eventual failure of US imperial designs in Southeast Asia. Not all of it was necessarily political, but it all added up.

If we are serious about getting the troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan, two things must happen: the military must fail in its recruitment efforts and the men and women currently serving must challenge the mission they have been assigned.

If this doesn't occur, then the antiwar movement is likely to be just a never ending series of marches and other actions that become just another sideshow.

It's not that the civilian antiwar movement is irrelevant or unnecessary. Indeed, it is essential. All soldiers were civilians at one time, and most of them will be civilians again. It is the antiwar movement's job to insure that they all do.

No, it's not that the civilian part of the antiwar movement is irrelevant, nor is it that the GI movement is able to stop the war on its own. As Cortright's book makes clear, one is the complement of the other.

Currently, military recruitment is falling short of its needs. This has caused the military to continually lower its qualifications. Even that has failed to bring the numbers of recruits up to where the military feels secure in its objectives. Part of the cause for this happening is the growing success of the counter-recruitment efforts of groups like the Campus Antiwar Network (<http://www.campusantiwar.net/>) and the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (<http://www.objector.org/>).

As far as dissension in the ranks of those already enlisted, it seems to be growing, although it remains unorganized. Efforts like GI Special (<http://www.militaryproject.org/>) and Traveling Soldier (<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/>) provide soldier and civilian alike with an idea of individual GI's frustration and anger at their current lot, but the apparent lack of local or national organizations that could channel this frustration into protest and resistance have yet to appear.

If history has anything to tell us, such organizations will appear. *Soldiers in Revolt* makes this quite clear.

Check it out.

Now.

Buy a copy and send it to a GI or Marine that you know.

This could save your life!

(Via Ewa J.)

Iraq is a dangerous environment for U. S. troops, especially new arrivals who know nothing of the local language.

If you find yourself at risk of harm from pissed off Iraqis, and there are several million of them, yelling these simple phrases may save your life:

Yekhrob beit Bush! (May Bush's house fall down and be destroyed.)

Khurr'ub Bush! (Shit on Bush.)

Try them out on some kids to get the pronunciation right, and just watch the big smiles come. Somebody might actually throw a flower. And, provided you do not display hostile intent, you might not get fired on.

Also useful for other occasions. Use your imagination.

Words from the front-lines

“I don’t agree with Iraq. America is never going to leave Iraq. We’re building permanent bases out there now. In Iraq, it is all about money. ... The Iraqis don’t want us there. They see us killing their brothers, sons and children, and that makes them resent us. ... I don’t like Bush. He has three things on his mind – oil, money and daddy’s war. ... Kerry is a bad man. He was all for Iraq before it went sour. I voted for him, but only because he wasn’t George Bush. He was the best of a bad lot.” – **Patrick Lackatt, United States Army Reserve.**

“I’ve always been against war. I don’t think being in the military means that I am a lover of war. It just means that I believe that this country needs to be defended. When I took that oath of office, I didn’t take the oath to kill people. I took it to defend the country from enemies foreign and domestic.” – **Army Reserve Spc. David Lewis, recently returned from serving in Tikrit.**

“I don’t want anything to do with him [President Bush]. My belief is that his ego is getting people killed and mutilated for no reason – just his ego and his reputation. If we really wanted to, we could pull out of Iraq. Maybe not completely but enough that we wouldn’t be losing people – at least not at this rate. So I think he himself is responsible for quite a few American deaths. ... It’s gonna go on as long as we’re there. There’s always gonna be insurgents trying to blow us up. There’s just too many of ‘em that are willing to do it. You’re never gonna catch all of ‘em. And it seems like they have unlimited amounts of ammunition. So I don’t think it’s ever gonna end.” – **Terry Rodgers, 2nd Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment**

“Many of the people who were attacking me were the poor people of Iraq. They were definitely not members of Al Qaeda, left over Baath Party members, and they were not former members of Saddam’s regime. They were just your average Iraqi civilian who wanted us out of their country. ... I remember the day I left there were hundreds of Iraqis in the streets outside the compound that I lived in. They watched as we moved out to the Baghdad Airport to finally go home. The Iraqis cheered, clapped, and shouted with joy as we were leaving. As

a soldier, that hurt me inside because I thought I was supposed to be fighting for their freedom.” – **Sgt. John Bruhns**

“You know, this war is so fucking illegal.” – **Pat Tillman, in a conversation to his friend while in southern Iraq, before he was killed in Afghanistan by friendly fire and his death covered up by the Pentagon.**

“I didn’t ever think we’d get engaged. I just had the basic view of the American public – it can’t be that bad out there. ... Personally, I don’t think the sweeps help too much. You find some stuff and most of the bad guys get away. ... For as much

energy as we put in them, I don’t think the output is worth it.... I think the most frustrating thing is there’s no sense of accomplishment. You’re bidding your time and waiting. But then you lose your friends, and it’s not even for their own country’s freedom.” – **Travis Williams, Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 25th Regiment, 4th Division, Haditha Dam, Iraq. After the Iraqi resistance set off a roadside bomb in August, 2005, he was the only surviving Marine from his 12 man squad.**

