

Traveling Soldier

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“Iraqis are not a threat or the enemy. We are the threat and the enemy to them.”



This appeared in the Letters to the Editor section of the April 24, 2006 issue of *Army Times*:

I am a soldier about to embark on my second tour in Iraq.

My first tour started in November 2003. When we arrived, Saddam Hussein was on the loose. In December, he was caught.

When I came into the military, I signed a contract that said I would defend this country against all threats, foreign and domestic.

After spending a year in Iraq, I have found that the Iraqis are not a threat or the enemy. I did find that we are the threat and the enemy to them.

They acted as we would if someone came into America and said we are going to change your ways.

I feel this war is no longer about taking out a threat. But I believe it is about securing oil commerce for the future.

Securing this country and stabilizing it would mean oil contracts and people lining their pockets with money from the oil that my friends have been wounded for and have died for.

I hear the president speak with the press and tell them things to appease them and to divert them to a different subject.

What I don't see is the president having a conference with the soldiers who have fought on the ground in Iraq.

We do not know what we are fighting for anymore; we do not know what our mission is.

I am not alone in this thought. My boys need to know what they may possibly die for.

Is it for a few extra bucks for Halliburton subsidiary KBR?

Is it about the oil?

Is it for America?

How will this war help my family in the future?

– Staff Sgt. Christopher Galka
Rainier, Wash.

Laughin', Cryin', Livin', Dyin' Hee Haw! Who's the jackass now?

[This article appeared in the June, 1970 issue of *Vietnam GI*, the most widely read anti-war GI paper during the Vietnam era. We are reprinting it because the Haditha massacre has raised exactly the same issues and the brass and the politicians are trying to pass the buck to the rank-and-file soldiers just as they did 36 years ago.]

Charlie Co. is the jackass. From Nixon and Abrams on down to all sorts of deluded fat ass lifers and self-righteous civi-pigs there is a feeling that Charlie Co. really blew it. They didn't give candy bars to the kids of My Lai. They didn't pass out soap to the women. Instead they blew off the village.

So the men of Charlie Co. fucked up. They didn't act like your friendly neighborhood Peace Corpsman. They acted instead like the ordinary sons of ordinary people.

They acted like an outfit of short-timers and Purple Heart winners who'd been in the shit, who'd lived it and breathed it for a long time. They acted like men who were taught to believe in and respect officers like Lt. Calley, who awarded himself an extra 7 days leave while his platoon was being chopped to shit in a minefield. They acted like men who were given the bullshit line about getting their GED's and going to an Army school and then were dumped into the infantry.

The men of Charlie Co. conducted themselves like men whose personal knowledge of the Vietnamese people came from encounters with whores, pimps, begging kids, black market operators, thieves, and of course the VC. They acted like men, a tight group of men, who for two months had seen



their brothers getting mangled in mine fields and ripped off by snipers and who'd rarely seen anybody to shoot back at.

Sound familiar so far?

Then pay attention.

Charlie Co. is ordered by Lt. Col. Barker to hit My Lai 4. He tells Medina there's a crack VC battalion in the village. They are supposed to destroy it, then burn out the village.

Next day they move in. No VC. But a few of the villagers panic and run. The men, fucked over, psyched up, looking for revenge, open fire.

A lot of people fall.

The rest of them are too scared to move.

Next we see Snot Calley ordering his men to herd the people into ditches and to start cutting them down. Some do and dig it. Some get pissed off and sickened by the whole thing.

Calley and Medina make a bullshit body count, find a few imaginary

weapons, and pull out. A few days later Westmoreland commends Medina for doing a good job. The real story gets hushed up for the obvious reasons that nobody in the Army wanted the publicity.

But after 20 months word does get out. And as the story gets pieced together by the CID, the press takes it up. The Establishment is surprised, shocked and outraged... both because there was a massacre ("How could our boys have done such a thing?"), and because the Army covered it up.

After showing that their hearts were in the right place, they gave up the stage to the Brass with parting remarks to the effect of "well, if you are just men, you will not sweep this under the rug... you will see to it that the guilty are punished."

Enter the Brass, anxious to prove that they are indeed, just men.

How do they do it?

They tell the ex-GIs of Charlie Co. that they want them to come to Washington, all expenses paid, to tell their version of the massacre so they can get the goods on Calley.

Half of the company gets sucked in. Now that the Brass has the whole story of My Lai, what do they do?

The two-faced bastards turn around and announce their intention to prosecute the whole company. But you say most of the guys are civilians now, so they are out of the reach of military "justice"? Well, not exactly... the latest is that the JAG is trying to find a way to extradite them to SVN for trial.

The Brass is really pissed at Charlie Co. But it's not because they give a fuck about the killing of innocent people.

If that were true they'd be a little more careful where they ordered air

and artillery strikes. They'd also find it a little harder to just shrug when they hit our own men and say, "Well, accidents happen you know."

What they are pissed about is that news of the massacre has made them and their war look worse than they ever have before. So they know what they have to do. Put the screws to Charlie Co., to make it look to people back home and around the world that they believe in – fighting a good clean war.

At the same time they are making the GI's of Charlie look like bloodthirsty freaks. While everyone is talking about what a terrible thing it is they completely forget who is really responsible.

Because when you come right down to it, the wrong people are on trial for atrocities.

Nixon, Westmoreland, Abrams and

Mendal Rivers, the very bullshitters who are most eager to see Charlie Co. brought to justice, are finally the men most responsible for My Lai. They were the ones telling us that Ky and Thieu's corrupt government is worth dying for. They are the ones who taught us to kill, who put us over here in this mind-fucking shit hole and told us to go to it. In short, they started the war and they know you never have a war without atrocities.

If you put men in the shit long enough, you're going to have My Lai's.

It's as simple as that.

If they were really concerned about putting a stop to massacres like My Lai they'd stop the war.

But right now their concerns are very clear; easy promotions, soft civilian jobs for retired Brass, and money for the owners of the arms industry. If by making the men of Charlie Co. into the scapegoat they can keep the ball rolling a bit longer you can bet your ass they'll do it.

Comment:

If you're looking for people to blame for the endless evil shit that happens in Iraq in this dishonorable Imperial war, blame the politicians that put the troops downrange, in an impossible situation.

Everything flows from the act of invasion and conquest ordered up by the greedy Imperial liars and traitors in Washington DC. They are the enemy.

– T.B., Traveling Soldier
production staff

Are Haditha Killings a Modern Day My Lai?



"Soldiers Have Become More Vocal In Expressing Their Opinions Against The War"

[This is a report from the Military Project, an organization dedicated to reaching out to the troops as the only people who can stop the war.]

On May 20th members of the Military Project and Veterans For Peace launched another day of outreach action with soldiers of an Army National Guard unit in New York

City. This unit has many soldiers who have returned very recently from duty in Iraq.

We were successful in distributing the largest amount to date: more than 115 of the *Traveling Soldier* newsletter and a *GI Special* excerpt, and many GI Hotline cards and GI rights brochures. Soldiers who stopped to speak with us told us the materials we've been distributing are being widely read, and we are also being asked to provide new materials as well.

We spoke to eight soldiers who just returned from Iraq. One of the things we discussed was the recent poll of troops in Iraq in which 72% stated that the US should get out this year.

One of the soldiers just back from Iraq told us "72 percent? It's more like 99 percent!!!"

At one point a sergeant nearby as we gave out materials to a small group of soldiers told us to "stop giving those things to my soldiers."

The sergeant then turned to the group of soldiers and told them "I don't want you to bring that stuff inside."

As the other soldiers present nodded in agreement, one soldier, especially angry about Bush and the war, responded loudly in front of everybody. "He's just saying that because he hasn't been over there (Iraq)"

They paid no further attention to his demands, proceeding to openly "bring that stuff inside" the Armory.

It's clear that we've made a significant breakthrough with our outreach work. The soldiers have become very receptive towards us and are recognizing our presence there. We are able to interact with them in an increasingly friendly and welcoming environment.

The soldiers have become more vocal in expressing their opinions against the war and are less hesitant now in making anti-war statements to us.

It's important to continue building on the progress we are making.

Today was a significant turning point in our outreach work as it has become very clear and visible how strong and vast anti-war sentiment is among the troops and for the first time we witnessed soldiers openly dissenting.

"Bush has shredded the Constitution and killed over 2,200 good soldiers"

On March 1, nearly 200 people gathered in New York City for a panel discussion on the counter-recruitment movement whose goal is to persuade people not to join the military in an attempt to deny the Pentagon the troops it needs to continue the Iraq war. This is the text of a speech given by Michael Harmon, a combat medic and member of Iraq Veterans Against the War, at the meeting.

My name is Mike Harmon, and I enlisted in the army in May 2002, partly because of 9/11 and partly because at the time, I had no real direction in life. I was lied to by recruiters right off the bat when I was told that I was going to be a health care specialist. That later turned out to be a combat medic.

Shortly after I joined, there were rumors about war, and sure

enough, on Martin Luther King Day 2003, we had a special formation where the colonel told us that we were going to war.

I didn't feel like this war was warranted since the Iraqis had nothing to do with 9/11. But we got to Kuwait in April 2003 as part of the initial invasion, and it was an eye-opening experience.

Two weeks into the war, we were told to put our protective gear and chemical mask away. Now I'm not a military intelligence officer or a CIA agent, but I know we were supposed to be there to rid this country of weapons of mass destruction.

So being a New Yorker with a smart mouth, I asked the major who told us to put our gear away, "Sir, with all due respect, I thought we were here for weapons of mass destruction."

He replied, "Do what you're told, son, and shut your mouth." From that point on, I knew this war was just a fabrication by Bush's regime, and that it was definitely unjust.

The event that really turned

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me was when one of my good friends died because of an insurgent deciding to pose as a hospital worker and drop a grenade on him and two other soldiers in my company.

At that point, I wanted this war to end immediately, but I had to cope, because I was the first line of medical defense for 350 soldiers. That was hard on me mentally, and you could tell the other soldiers were feeling the same way, especially since we were being strung along about how long the deployment was going to be.

What the media, of course, doesn't show you is the dead and injured kids, and that will be burned in my memory forever. When soldiers in their mid 20s and early 30s are crying for their wives and mothers because they don't want to die, that's something that takes a tremendous toll.

When I came home, I had a lot of trouble adjusting back to civilian life, and I didn't know what was wrong with me. I went to the troop clinic, and they diagnosed me with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, which also affected about 60 percent of soldiers I deployed with.

The clinic decided to throw pills like Paxil at me, which made me feel even worse, and suicidal at times. I started to cope my own way with alcohol, and I hit the bottle real hard. It got to the point where I couldn't take it any more, and I got out.

When I came home to New York, I fell deeper in the dark hole. I tried to go to the local VA. They told me they were backed up in claims, and what I was feeling was normal.

That's when I joined Iraq Veterans Against the War, because I felt I needed to surround myself with fellow vets

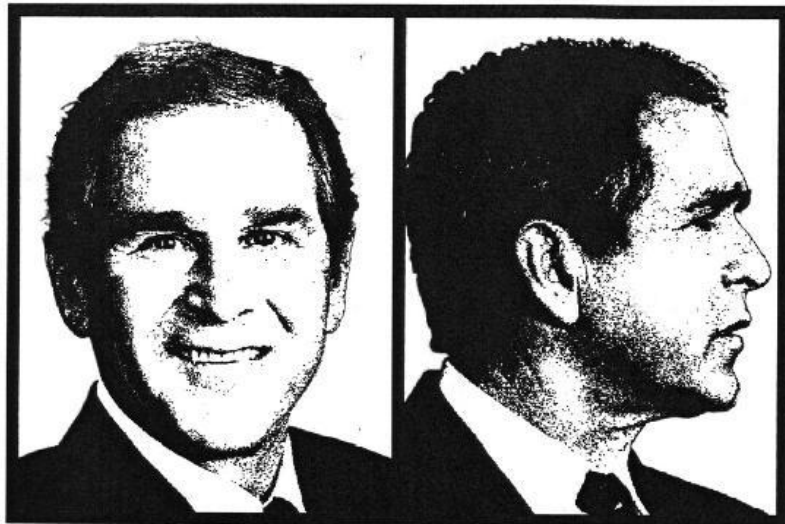
who had similar problems, and who also felt that Bush lied just to start this immoral war.

I felt that I was supposed to be fighting for freedom, but when I came home, all the American people's freedoms were taken away, due to the Patriot Act and illegal NSA spying.

There was one time when I came home from Iraq from mid-term leave, and airport security made me step aside so they could wave the wand around me, and I was in full uniform. I couldn't believe it. Here I am fighting and risking my life in Iraq so that we could keep freedom from supposed terrorist threats, and I felt like the enemy.

Bush has shredded the Constitution and killed over 2,200 good soldiers along the way, and that's not even counting how many were injured. Now if we all stick together for this cause, we will prevail.

One terrorist down, one to go



“It would have been a mistake for us to get bogged down in the quagmire inside Iraq” – Dick Cheney

Quotes from Laurence M. Vance,
<http://www.lewrockwell.com/vance/vance70.html>

[The point of re-printing excerpts of these old speeches is to debunk the notion that the Bush administration’s invasion of Iraq and its disastrous aftermath was caused primarily by arrogance, stupidity, and incompetence. What changed Cheney’s mind about invading Iraq was 9/11. They thought the American people would give them a blank check to wage wars around the world as long as the stated aim was to prevent any more 9/11s in the future.]

Dick Cheney, Washington Institute for Near East Policy in April of 1991:

I think that the proposition of going to Baghdad is also fallacious.

I think if we were going to remove Saddam Hussein we would have had to go all the way to Baghdad, we would have to commit a lot of force because I do not believe he would wait in the Presidential Palace for us to arrive. I think we’d have had to hunt him down.

And once we’d done that and we’d gotten rid of Saddam Hussein and his government, then we’d have had to put another government in its place.

What kind of government? Should it be a Sunni government or Shi’ia government or a Kurdish government or Ba’athist regime? Or maybe we want to bring in some of the Islamic fundamentalists?

How long would we have had to stay in Baghdad to keep that government in place?

What would happen to the government once U.S. forces withdrew? How many casualties should the United States accept in that effort to try to create clarity and stability in a situation that is inherently unstable?

I think it is vitally important for a President to know when to use military force. I think it is also very important for him to know when not to commit U.S. military force.

And it’s my view that the President got it right both times, that it would have been a mistake for us to get bogged down in the quagmire inside Iraq.



From 1992 a speech he gave in Seattle at the Discovery Institute on the same question:

And the question in my mind is how many additional American casualties is Saddam worth?

And the answer is not very damned many.

So I think we got it right, both when we decided to expel him from Kuwait, but also when the president made the decision that we’d achieved our objectives and we were not going to go get bogged down in the problems of trying to take over and govern Iraq.

All of a sudden you’ve got a battle you’re fighting in a major built-up city, a lot of civilians are around, significant limitations on our ability to use our most effective technologies and techniques.

Once we had rounded him up and gotten rid of his government, then the question is what do you put in its place? You know, you then have accepted the responsibility for governing Iraq.

Now what kind of government are you going to establish? Is it going to be a Kurdish government, or a Shi’ia government, or a Sunni government, or maybe a government based on the old Baathist Party, or some mixture thereof?

You will have, I think by that time, lost the support of the Arab coalition that was so crucial to our operations over there.

I would guess if we had gone in there, I would still have forces in Baghdad today, we’d be running the country. We would not have been able to get everybody out and bring everybody home.

Words from the front-lines

“They hate us over here. I’m in the worst possible place you can be in this country. I want to come home.” – **Michael J. Stanley Jr., 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, Ramadi, Iraq.**

“No one told me why I’m putting my life on the line in Samarra, and you know why they didn’t? Because there is no fucking reason.” – **Specialist Michael Pena, 2nd platoon, Bravo Company, Rakkasan Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, Samarra, Iraq.**

“I don’t know. I suppose insurgents. Trying to get rid of us, I guess. I guess they hate us because we done blown up half their country.” – **Pvt. Patrice Gittens, Camp Striker, Baghdad, Iraq, when asked who is responsible for mortaring her unit’s base.**

“How can we know who is our enemy when we don’t even know why we’re here?” – **Specialist William Clark, Camp Striker, Baghdad, Iraq.**

“See these oil fires? This is why we’re here, guys. We’re not defending freedom.” – **Tomas Young, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, Baghdad, Iraq.**

“I don’t know what the mission is; I haven’t known for a long time. ... I’m tired of putting kids in body bags.” – **Sergeant Sherwood Baker, 82nd Airborne Division, who died protecting the Iraq Survey Group that was sent to find Iraq’s non-existent WMD.**



“We can’t fight this enemy. ... They could be right in front of you and you wouldn’t know it. They have an enemy. We don’t.” – **Staff Sergeant Emmitt Adkins, 2nd Platoon, A Company, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, Kandahar, Afghanistan.**

“I don’t know who my enemy is. It’s a worthless, senseless war, a war of religion. We’ll never win it.” – **Seth Niederer, Iskanderiya, Iraq. These were his last words to his mother before he returned to Iraq and was killed by an I.E.D.**