

# *Traveling Soldier*

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## Hold on to your humanity: an open letter to GIs in Iraq

Dear American serviceperson in Iraq,

I am a retired veteran of the army, and my own son is among you, a paratrooper like I was. The changes that are happening to everyone one of you – some more extreme than others – are changes I know very well. So I’m going to say some things to your straight up in the language to which you are accustomed.

In 1970, I was assigned to the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade, then based in northern Binh Dinh province in what was then the Republic of Vietnam. When I went there, I had my head full of shit: shit from the news media, shit from movies, shit about what it supposedly meant to be a man, and shit from a lot of my know-nothing neighbors who would tell you plenty about Vietnam even though they’d never been there, or to war at all.

The essence of all this shit was that we had to “stay the course in Vietnam,” and that we were on some mission to save good Vietnamese from bad Vietnamese, and to keep the bad Vietnamese from hitting the beachheads outside of Oakland. We stayed the course until 58,000 Americans were dead and lots more maimed for life, and 3,000,000 Southeast Asians dead. Ex-military people and even many on active duty played a big part in finally bringing that crime to a halt.

When I started hearing about weapons of mass destruction that threatened the United States from Iraq, a shattered country that had endured almost a decade of trench war followed by an invasion and twelve years of sanctions, my first question was how in the hell can anyone believe that this suffering country presents a threat to the United States? But then I remembered how many people had believed Vietnamese threatened the United States. Including me.

When that bullshit story about weapons came apart like a two-dollar shirt, the politicians who cooked up this war told everyone, including you, that you would be greeted like liberators. They told us that we were in Vietnam to make sure everyone there could vote.

What they didn’t tell me was that before I got there in 1970, the American armed forces had been burning villages, killing livestock, poisoning farmlands and forests, killing civilians for sport, bombing whole villages, and committing rapes and massacres, and the people who were grieving and raging over there weren’t in a position to figure out the difference between me – just in country – and the people who had done those things to them.

What they didn’t tell you is that over a million and a half Iraqis died between 1991 and 2003 from malnutrition,

medical neglect, and bad sanitation. Over half a million of those who died were the weakest: the children, especially very young children.

My son who is over there now has a baby. We visit with our grandson every chance we get. He is eleven months old now. Lots of you have children, so you know how easy it is to really love them, and love them so hard you just know your entire world would collapse if anything happened to them. The Iraqis feel that way about their babies, too. And they are not going to forget that the United States government was largely responsible for the deaths of half a million kids.

So the lie that you would be welcomed as liberators was just that. A lie. A lie for people in the United States to get them to open their purse for this obscenity, and a lie for you to pump you up for a fight.

And when you put this into perspective, you know that if you were an Iraqi, you probably wouldn’t be crazy about American soldiers taking over your towns and cities either. This is the tough reality I faced in Vietnam. I knew while I was there that if I were Vietnamese, I would have been one of the Vietcong.

But there we were, ordered into someone else’s country, playing the role of occupier when we didn’t know the

people, their language, or their culture, with our heads full of bullshit our so-called leaders had told us during training and in preparation for deployment, and even when we got there. There we were, facing people we were ordered to dominate, but anyone of who might be pumping mortars at us or firing AKs at us later that night. The question we started to ask is who put us in this position?

In our process of fighting to stay alive, and in their process of trying to expel an invader that violated their dignity, destroyed their property, and killed their innocents, we were faced off against each other by people who made these decisions in \$5,000 suits, who laughed and slapped each other on the back in Washington D.C. with their fat fucking asses stuffed full of cordon bleu and caviar.

They chumped us. Anyone can be chumped.

That's you now. Just fewer trees and less water.

We haven't figured out how to stop the pasty-faced, oil-hungry backslappers in DC yet, and it looks like you all might be stuck there for a little while longer. So I want to tell you the rest of the story.

I changed over there in Vietnam and they were not nice changes either. I started getting pulled into something – something that craved other people's pain. Just to make sure I wasn't regarded as a "fucking missionary" or a possible rat, I learned how to fit myself into that group that was untouchable, people too crazy to fuck with, people who desired the rush of omnipotence that comes with setting someone's house on fire just for the pure hell of it, or who could kill anyone, man, woman, or child, with hardly a second thought. People who had the power of life and death – because they could.

The anger helps. It's easy to hate everyone you can't trust because of your circumstances, and to rage about what you've seen, what has happened to you, and what you have done and can't take back.

It was all an act for me, a cover-up for deeper fears I couldn't name, and the reason I know that is that we had to dehumanize our victims before we did

the things we did. We knew deep down that what we were doing was wrong. So they became dinks or gooks, just like the Iraqis are now being transformed into ragheads or hajjis. People had to be reduced to "niggers" here before they could be lynched. No difference. We convinced ourselves we had to kill them to survive, even when that wasn't true, but something inside us told us that so long as they were human beings, with the same intrinsic value we had as human beings, we were not allowed to burn their homes and barns, kill their animals, and sometimes kill them. So we used these words, these new names, to reduce them to strip them of their essential humanity, and then we could do things like adjust artillery fire onto the cries of a baby.

Until that baby was silenced, though, here's the important thing to understand, that baby never surrendered her humanity. I did. We did. That's the thing you might not get until it's too late. When you take away the humanity of another you kill your own humanity. You attack your soul because it is standing in the way.

So we finish our tour, and go back to our families, who can see that even though we function, we are empty and incapable of truly connecting to people anymore, and maybe we can go for months or years before we fill that void where we surrendered our humanity, with chemical anesthetics – drugs, alcohol, until we realize that the void can never be filled and we shoot ourselves, or head off into the street where we can disappear with the flotsam of society, or we hurt others, especially those who try to love us, and end up as another incarceration statistic or a mental patient.

You can never escape that you became a racist because you made the excuse that you needed to survive, that you took things away from people that you can never give back, or that you killed a piece of yourself that you may never get back.

Some of us do. We get lucky and someone gives a damn enough to emotionally resuscitate and bring us back to life. Many do not.

I live with the rage every day of my life, even when no one else sees it. You might hear it in my words. I hate being chumped.

## ***Traveling Soldier – what's it for?***

Our goal is for *Traveling Soldier* to become the thread that can help people in the armed forces get organized. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces - and that can't happen without **you**.

If you have a problem, if you or your family are getting screwed, if you agree or disagree with what this newsletter says - we want to know. If you want people to know what's really going on in Iraq, or if you're stateside and you want people stuck in Iraq to know what's going on at home, write to us.

If you're a civilian that's ok too. You can help *Traveling Soldier* and the movement to bring the troops home now by distributing this newsletter where service people hang out. Or pass it along to your friends, family, or co-workers if they are in the armed forces.

We publish this newsletter every other month, but we will publish more often if there's enough demand for it. If you liked reading this newsletter we hope that you'll become a regular reader. You can subscribe by writing us (it's free to people in the services since the pay is so damn low). If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of *active duty organizers*.

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So here is my message to you. You will do what you have to do to survive, however you define survival, while we do what we have to stop this thing. But don't surrender your humanity. Not to fit in. Not to prove yourself. Not for an adrenaline rush. Not to lash out when

you are angry and frustrated. Not for some ticket-punching fucking military careerist to make his bones on. Especially not for the Bush-Cheney Gas & Oil Consortium.



The big bosses are trying to gain control of the world's energy supplies to twist the arms of future economic competitors. That's what's going on, and you need to understand it, then do what you need to do to hold onto your humanity. The system does that; tells you you are some kind of hero action figures, but uses you as gunmen. They chump you.

Your so-called civilian leadership sees you as an expendable commodity.

They don't care about your nightmares, about the DU that you are breathing, about the loneliness, the doubts, the pain, or about how your humanity is stripped away a piece at a time. They will cut your benefits, deny your illnesses, and hide your wounded and dead from the public. They already are.

They don't care. So you have to. And to preserve your own humanity, you must recognize the humanity of the people whose nation you occupy and know that both you and they are victims of the filthy rich bastards who are calling the shots.

They are your enemies – The Suits – and they are the enemies of peace, and the enemies of your families, especially if they are black families, or immigrant families, or poor families. They are thieves and bullies who take and never give, and they say they will “never run” in Iraq, but you and I know that they will never have to run, because they aren't fucking there. You are.

They'll skin and grin while they are getting what they want from you, and throw you away like a used condom when they are done. Ask the vets who are having their benefits slashed out from under them now. Bushfeld and their cronies are parasites, and they are the sole beneficiaries of the chaos you are learning to live in. They get the money. You get the prosthetic devices, the nightmares, and the mysterious illnesses.

So if your rage needs a target, there they are, responsible for you being there, and responsible for keeping you there. I can't tell you to disobey. That would probably run me afoul of the law. That will be a decision you will have to take when and if the circumstances and your own consciences dictate. But it's perfectly legal for you to refuse illegal orders, and orders to abuse or attack civilians are illegal. Ordering you to keep silent about these crimes is also illegal.

I can tell you, without fear of legal consequence, that you are never under any obligation to hate Iraqis, that you are never under any obligation to give yourself over to racism and nihilism and the thirst to kill for the sake of killing, and you are never under any obligation to let them drive out the last vestiges of your capacity to see and tell the truth to yourself and to the world. You do not owe them your souls.

Come home safe, and come home sane. The people who love you and who have loved you all your lives are waiting here, and we want you to come back and be able to look us in the face. Don't leave your souls in the dust like another corpse.

Hold on to your humanity.

**- by Stan Goff, retired Special Forces Master Sergeant, founder of the Bring Them Home Now! campaign. Check it out at: [www.bringthemhomenow.org](http://www.bringthemhomenow.org)**



**Charle Moore, left, and daughter Spc. Talise Moore at Rochester International Airport.**

## Protest and survive

A Rochester, N.Y. Army Reserve officer faced charges for sticking up for his rights and the rights of his soldiers. Capt. Steve McAlpin, of the 401st Civil Affairs Battalion, faced a court-martial and demotion because he questioned a legal waiver that his unit was ordered to sign. The waiver allowed his unit to be deployed in a war zone for the third time since January 2002. The 401<sup>st</sup> went Afghanistan in early December.

McAlpin pointed out in a teleconference with a higher-up that the Army was probably violating federal law by not allowing members of the 401<sup>st</sup> a 12-month “stabilization

period.” For sticking up for his men and trying to abide by federal law, he was charged with having a “negative attitude” toward the 401<sup>st</sup> and being “insubordinate towards the leadership of the unit”!

Capt. Brian Earey, a spokesman for the 401<sup>st</sup>, defended the brass’ decision to punish McAlpin saying, “There are only soldiers who meet the standards who can deploy. Some soldiers don’t make the grade. It’s like any team. You need to make cuts.”

So instead of cutting the incompetent or the law-breaking commanders, they cut those who stand up for their soldiers!

The brass decided to punish McAlpin – who has served in the military for 25 years and 12 of them on active-duty –

because the military is becoming over-stretched and under manned. Instead of backing down, he got himself a lawyer and refused to back down. Shortly after, all charges against McAlpin were dropped and he was not punished.

Thanks to McAlpin’s actions, 17 officers and enlisted soldiers from his unit decided not to sign the waiver and won’t be shipping out. **The McAlpin case shows that protest works and that exercising your legal rights can pay off. It may save you from getting killed in combat. As McAlpin put it, “If an officer said to sign something, you signed it – that’s what I did as a kid. Now I’m a little older, a little wiser, and my mouth is a lot bigger.”**

## “Marshall came to Iraq to die for a general's carpet”

Spec-4 Marshall L. Edgerton was 27 years old. He was from Rocky Face, Georgia. He was assigned to [deleted], 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. We are based in Fort Bragg, N.C. Marshall was killed December 11th when he was escorting a delivery truck into the 82nd Headquarters in Ramadi, Iraq. The news told you that a furniture truck blew up outside the compound, and that our excellent defenses prevented a lot more people from being killed. That's a load of shit. The truck blew up inside the compound, and the reason only 15 people were hurt and one American killed is plain luck. They make us get on every vehicle that enters the compound, and plenty of vehicles come. It's like playing Russian roulette.

We understand water trucks and gasoline trucks. We need that stuff, even though there are still plenty of ways they could detonate one of those too. Let me tell you what was being delivered though, and what Marshall Edgerton died for. A general is decorating his office here. It's a nice office, a luxury office you might say. And it needed a carpet to go with all the new furniture. Now while the grunts and we [deleted] can get along with field tables and folding chairs, of course the general has to trick out his office like he's a Roman Caesar or something. So these furniture trucks come onto our



compound when we already know that a lot of people out there want to kill us. This truck was loaded with carpet.

Marshall came to Iraq to die for a general's carpet. Marshall's family will grieve so a general could have carpet. What we really need here are big trucks that can haul away all the bullshit. And a few to get our asses back to an airport.

Don't give my name or email address. The truth can get you in a lot of trouble here.

- **Anonymous**  
**posted December 15**  
**Bring Them Home Now sound off board**

## F.T.A. in Baghdad

By Khury Petersen-Smith, Campus Antiwar Network delegation to Iraq

I spoke with one group of Military Police, resting between dispatches. They were from the Missouri National Guard Reserve, and never expected to be deployed. Most of them were fathers with jobs and lives back home, and are just

waiting to get out of Iraq. A couple had already done tours of duty in Germany and now were doing another in Iraq.

I also spoke with some troops at the Green Zone, and they seemed tired and bored, and wanted to go home. I saw something interesting though. There were big barricades all around the entrance of the Green Zone, where many soldiers hang out and stand guard. Written on one of the barricades in permanent marker were the letters “FTA.” During the Vietnam War, “FTA,” which stands for “Fuck The Army,” was a slogan of resistance to the war inside the Army.



# Guardsmen killed by Pentagon penny-pinching

On November 2nd, 16 soldiers from the Illinois-Iowa National Guard were killed when their helicopter was shot down in Iraq. The chopper was not equipped with new defensive equipment to protect it from the shoulder-fired missiles that brought it down. The Illinois-Iowa unit was so under-equipped that soldiers said it qualified for "automatic mission-abort criteria"; but instead of being kept home until they got their gear, they were sent anyway.

The scandal is this: **the National Guard brass decided to order only 50% of the ALQ-158 flare-launching systems actually needed for the Guard's Chinook fleet!** "A conscious decision was made not to buy as many as we need," said Lt. Gen. Roger Schultz, director of the Army National Guard. He added, "It's a decision that has some level of risk with it." No kidding. "Somebody, someday, someplace said: 'We're going to accept some risk. We'll authorize the planes but not the equipment,'" commented Maj. Gen. Walter Pudlowski.

Tom Donnelly, a conservative military expert for the American Enterprise Institute and former policy director of the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, explained the obvious: **"It's a budget driven deal. These guys [guardsmen and**

**reservists] are farther down the food-chain."**

Not only is this deal budget driven, the fact that about 40% of the troops in Iraq are reservists is budget-driven. The Pentagon is using part-time soldiers for the same reasons companies like Wal-Mart, Blockbuster, and Barnes and Noble prefer part-time workers: it's a lot cheaper. Part-timers get a less benefits (if any at all), get paid less, and are easier to fire and replace with new workers.

Reservists don't get the same equipment as those on active-duty, even though the Iraqi resistance doesn't discriminate between them when they attack U.S. troops. Almost 25% of GIs in Iraq, most of them reservists, **STILL** don't have ceramic plates for their vests – and that scandal broke in the news months ago!

While high-level officers wrack their brains over whether to under-equip their troops by 50%, 25% or 75%, soldiers are getting killed on a daily basis in Iraq with no end in sight. The important thing to realize is that not only is the troop rotation and the equipment shortages "budget-driven", the whole war itself is "budget driven." It's not about making Americans safer: Iraq had

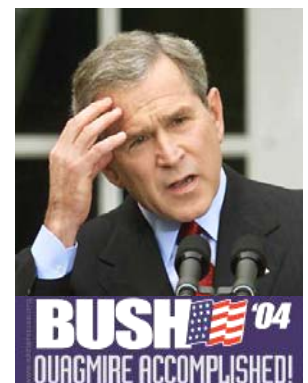


no WMD to speak of, and the only link between Iraq and Al-Qaida is between Bush's ears. It's not about bringing democracy to Iraq; the U.S. plan for a "power handover" in July will mean that hand-picked stooges (the Governing Council) get to pick other stooges (regional caucuses), who then get to pick more stooges (disguised as a "national assembly"), and the last set of appointed stooges will "invite" U.S. troops to stay in Iraq! It's not about reconstruction either: Halliburton and Bechtel are pocketing billions of taxpayer dollars and have almost no work done anywhere in Iraq to show for it.

Bottom line, this war is about the bottom line; it's about making the rich in America richer and the power-brokers in Washington, D.C. more powerful by controlling the world's second largest oil reserve and establishing permanent military bases in the Middle East. That's why we say **bring all the troops home NOW.**

## Bush explains how to "win hearts and minds" in Iraq

At a White House photo-op on October 27, President and Commander-in-Chief Bush outlined his plan to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people: **"The vast majority of Iraqis want to live in a peaceful, free world. And we will find these people and we will bring them to justice."** Just like in Vietnam, Washington politicians and the brass talk a lot about "winning hearts and minds." As if they were having a peaceful, reasoned dialogue with the Iraqis and not occupying their country, stealing their oil, and installing a puppet government! With geniuses like Bush at the helm, it's no wonder the U.S. isn't winning anything in Iraq – least of all the hearts and minds of Iraqis.



# Mailbag

Hi guys!

Just found your web site through Information Clearing House.

I am an Army Vietnam vet from down under and am very impressed with what you are doing. Now I am an instructor with the Navy cadets. Just can't stay out of uniform!

I have great compassion not just for the American troops, but also for the ordinary people. Your great nation has been hijacked by corrupt people who don't give a stuff about how many people die to keep big business (usually theirs) profits rolling in.

There are 2 wars being prosecuted. The Middle East mess that would probably go away if Israel got the hell out of Gaza and the West bank, and the drug war that is spawning the massive crime wave we are all suffering and the authorities are wasting their time fighting. That war would go away if drugs were decriminalized. They argue that we would all turn into junkies, but that argument falls down in the fact that the US population did not become alcoholics after prohibition.

But wars are profitable things. Arms industry, security industry, media, all controlled by people who make war or make political donations to those who do. Then there are the bribes from drug barons and criminal mobs that distribute the stuff.

The only way to win a war is to eliminate the cause, not engage in combat.

Vietnam is not the greatest place on earth but at least the people are not getting shot and bombed any more, and after 40 years of war that was a blessing. Australia quickly developed a close relationship after the war and it is still close and very strong.

Lots of people here visit Vietnam and vice versa. We are good friends now, and as you said the domino theory was all BS and came to nothing anyway, but the BS kept the war going.

You are so right. Let the Iraqis sort out Iraq. I can just imagine how indignant Washington would have been if someone

had tried to mediate the [American] civil war???

Keep up the great work guys. I will pass your site on to the local vets, they may want to touch base if they have not already done so.

Take care and keep well.

- B.G.

I am Larry Syverson of Richmond, VA.

I have three sons in the military. Two are serving in Iraq. Branden is a master gunner for Abrams tanks in Tikrit with the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Bryce is a gunner on a Bradley in Baghdad with the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored.

I spoke at the August 13th Military Families Speak Out press conference. A picture of me holding my protest sign was included in your September 2003 issue. I was pleased to have my sons' pictures in your article.

I have news about my sons, Branden and Bryce, that you may find interesting. Both are safe; however, they are still in Iraq. Both joined the Army with the intention of making it a career. In October both Branden and Bryce have said they will not re-enlist.

They have said they don't want to be sent back to Iraq.

Branden should leave Iraq in April and will get out of the Army in October 2004. Bryce should leave Iraq in May and will get out of the Army in November 2005. Unfortunately, there is the possibility he will have to be in Iraq one more time.

As I stated in the press conference, I protest every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at noon in front of the Richmond Federal Courthouse. I began protesting prior to the war starting. On Friday, December 12<sup>th</sup>, I will have my 100th protest in front of the Courthouse.

In peace,

Larry Syverson

lwsyverson@deq.state.va.us

## One Hundred Times at the Courthouse

by Larry Syverson of Military Families Speak Out

On December 12, 2003, at noon, I performed my 100th protest in front of the Richmond, VA Federal Courthouse. For me, these protests are personal. I have three sons in the military. Two are currently stationed in Iraq. Branden is a master gunner for Abrams tanks with the 4th Infantry and in April was deployed to Tikrit. Bryce is a gunner on a Bradley fighting vehicle with the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored and in May was deployed to Baghdad.

I began these protests in mid-March prior to the war's beginning.

They continued through the war and now the occupation. On the first day of the war, over 100 people protested at the Courthouse. As the war quickly wound-down, and the long slog of an occupation set in, the crowds disappeared. By May 1st, when Bush technically declared the war over, six people protesting at the Courthouse was considered a **GOOD** day.

Those first few months were very difficult. The Courthouse sits only one block from the Capitol of the Confederacy. To many Richmonders,



the Civil War is still a hot topic. I cannot count how many times I have been shot the "bird". Many shouted I was not patriotic and several even called me a communist.

Before they yelled insults at me, many drivers would honk to get my attention. So, I took control of the situation. I confiscated their honks! I made a sign "Honk for Peace". Now when people honk, they honk in support. I reply to each honk: "Honk for peace! Bring the troops home!"

The small numbers of supporters continued with one exception, June 24, 2003, Bryce's 25th birthday. Ten friends joined me on that special day to wish Bryce a Happy Birthday somewhere in Baghdad.

In early December, I announced my upcoming 100th protest at the

Courthouse. The event was posted at the Military Families Speak Out and Richmond Indy-Media websites. I didn't know what to expect. I hoped for a turnout of between 10 and 15 people.

The results were amazing! At one time there were 40 people standing along the curb. The "Honk for Peace" sign was prominently held, and I have never heard so many horns. With each honk, the crowd yelled the appropriate response. We protesters generated so much commotion that a car rear-ended another car in front of us. Fortunately, no one was injured, and the police did not hassle us when they responded.

I knew only a quarter of the people who came down to stand with me. I traveled up and down the line to personally thank each protester for his

support. The hour ended with me performing a mild form of civil disobedience: I stood on the "off-limits" Courthouse steps while thanking everyone for their support.

In reflection, I am just a dad trying to get his sons out of Iraq. But on December 12th, I really did feel that I might be making a difference. There is a large group of people who are against the occupation in Iraq. They just need a reason to come out to voice their opinion. I'm glad I was able to offer that reason.

Eventually, the administration will have to acknowledge the ground-swell of people who are against our military actions in Iraq. My 100th protest gave me hope that perhaps that acknowledgment isn't far in the future.

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## You'll get paid – when the “war on terrorism” is over!

Back in December 2003, Congress approved a special deployment allowance worth up to \$600 a month but service men and women may never see a dime of it. The new allowance would pay \$200 per month to anyone deployed more than 191 days in a row, \$600 to anyone deployed 211 days in a row and more than 450 cumulative days out of the previous two years.

Deployment clocks were halted in the weeks after September 11<sup>th</sup> because President Bush declared a national emergency and have not been restarted. Pentagon officials anticipate that even if the freeze on deployment clocks is lifted, they'd be reset to zero and past deployment days would not count! With over a hundred thousand troops deployed for year-long tours of duty in Iraq, in addition to the thousands in Afghanistan, the brass would rather not spend money on soldiers but on fat contracts for defense industry corporations.

One aide to the House of Representatives Armed Services

Committee said that the Pentagon's deployment clock scam came as “no surprise.”

**“I would not be shocked, quite frankly, if nobody ever received this pay. I don't see deployed days being counted until the war on terrorism is declared over – if that were to ever actually happen.” Vice-President Dick Cheney has even said that the war on terrorism “may never end, at least not in our life times.”**

So don't hold your breath for those checks.

The Pentagon actually has the legal right to do this rip-off. Congress approved the 2004 Defense Authorization Act, leaving intact the loophole that allows the Dept. of Defense to stop counting deployed days in the interests of "national security," and even added a

provision to the bill that would allow the DoD to declare that deployed days won't count for people with certain skills in certain units. The loopholes were requested by the Bush administration, Congress passed the bill overwhelmingly and Bush signed it into law on last year.



Stealing service people's pay isn't just a Bush or Rumsfeld thing, or a Republican thing - almost all the Democrats in Congress voted for the bill too. This is just one more example of why the real enemy is at home, not in Iraq.



# Who is the enemy?

Then he [the resistance leader] made an extraordinary confession: "Last week I was driving in my car with my smallest child when a soldier came up and started playing with him. I saw a tear in his eye. I thought: 'He does not have a choice about being here. And I wished him no evil. I swear to God,' he tells me, 'it hurts me to see an American bleed. I admire them, but in their own country.'" – Peter Beaumont Sunday January 11, 2004, *The Observer*

"I think the timing is perfect for the anti-coalition forces and the former regime elements to make a decision that it's time to embrace the future. It is time for them to lay down their arms." – Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez at a press conference, Jan. 16, 2004.

Assuming that the 14 "Saddam Hussein loyalists" left do lay down their arms, that only leaves several million Iraqis who hate Hussein and the occupation both to keep on fighting. That's not counting the Shiias, who make up 60% of the population.

So far, their leaders have held most of them back from joining the armed resistance. Now, their leaders are demanding free elections. They are also threatening that if they don't get free elections, they will start moving against the occupation.

What does Bush say about that?

Among other lies, having told the public and the armed forces he ordered the invasion of Iraq for "democracy," the Bush regime is saying no to free



elections. **That would mean every soldier in Iraq is there to kill and get killed so there are NO free elections in Iraq.** That's such in-your-face hypocrisy it simply can't be sustained for long, especially if the Shiia leaders go into open resistance to the occupation.

The Shiia leaders aren't saints. They have their own reasons for demanding one Iraqi-one vote. Since Shiias are the majority, these leaders are really campaigning to become the new rulers of Iraq themselves, trying to use their followers as the lever to put them on top of a new Iraqi government, in control of all that lovely oil money. Far from being insane religious fanatics, as Bush would like you to believe, they're really like most preachers everywhere, more interested in how much they've got in their pocketbooks than in anything holy.

Bush says the Iraqis can't organize an election by June. "Too complicated."

This is bull! Every single Iraqi has an ID card from the U.N. oil-for-food Program, which is what they still use to get their food rations today! You could make a big list of everybody who had a card, then vote, and check them off one by one.

**Bush is afraid of a fair election. He was in Florida, and he is in Iraq.**

So, the bottom line is, what exactly are U.S. soldiers dying for? Not WMD's, not overthrowing Saddam Hussein, not capturing Hussein, and

now, plain as day, not for democracy. Bush & Co. react to the idea of democracy in Iraq the way a vampire reacts to garlic and sunlight.

Every day this war goes on has one overriding purpose now: make Bush look good for the fall election. **Bringing all the troops home now**

**wouldn't be a defeat for the soldiers, or ordinary Americans who are paying for this war, or for the military families, or for anybody who really matters.**

**It would be a political disaster for Bush.**

Even the armed resistance leader quoted above is feeling sorry for U.S. soldiers. But he's wrong when he says, "He does not have a choice about being here." You didn't have a choice about being sent to Iraq, true enough. But you do have a choice now: keep on keeping-on dying for votes for Bush and the corrupt thugs that run this government, or start organizing your own resistance to the whole senseless war.

Soldiers who did that stopped the Vietnam war.

Burying the politicians in an ocean of letters and petitions might be one place to start. Sometimes, that's how organizing a resistance begins, very carefully.

Any member of the armed forces may lawfully write members of Congress without any interference whatsoever from command. The right to circulate a petition to Congress is heavily limited, particularly if the petition concerns conditions of military service or a war, or if the service member is stationed overseas. For details on your rights, contact *Traveling Soldier*.



# ***Words from the front-lines***

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“Wow, 130,000 troops on the ground, nearly 500 deaths and over a billion dollars a day, but they caught a guy living in a hole. Am I supposed to be dazzled?” – **Anonymous Army Specialist**

“It's nothing like what the people back home have been hearing. They're saying the war's over. The war's not over. Now, it's more of a guerrilla war. The waste and frustration, everything that goes on over there, it's just a nightmare.” – **Army Sgt. Michael Badgley Jr.**

“Everyone hears that morale is high and it is a bold-faced lie. The only people they ever talk to are these commanders. The reserve soldiers never get to speak their mind. We are the pawns of this war. We watch the active duty retire, and move to new assignments. We watch their tours end as we are still trapped because of poor post-war planning.” – **Reservist from Indiana**

“At the beginning, it was very clear: get that maniac out of power, get him and his regime gone, and everything else would take care of itself. We reached that goal, and continued past that goal, and we've lost track of what we're doing. You can't leave, but you can't win. ... All they're doing now is getting people killed. ... There's not going to be any end in sight. It only takes a handful of people to hit a place, move on, and hit another place. It was effective in Vietnam, and it's effective here.” – **Sgt 1st Class John Bogle, 101st Airborne**

“The equipment they tried to hand us was items that were bound for the trash pile. Vietnam-era flack vests held together by dental floss and a prayer won't keep us safe ... It was like pulling teeth trying to get the things we needed. As 'dirty reservists,' we didn't

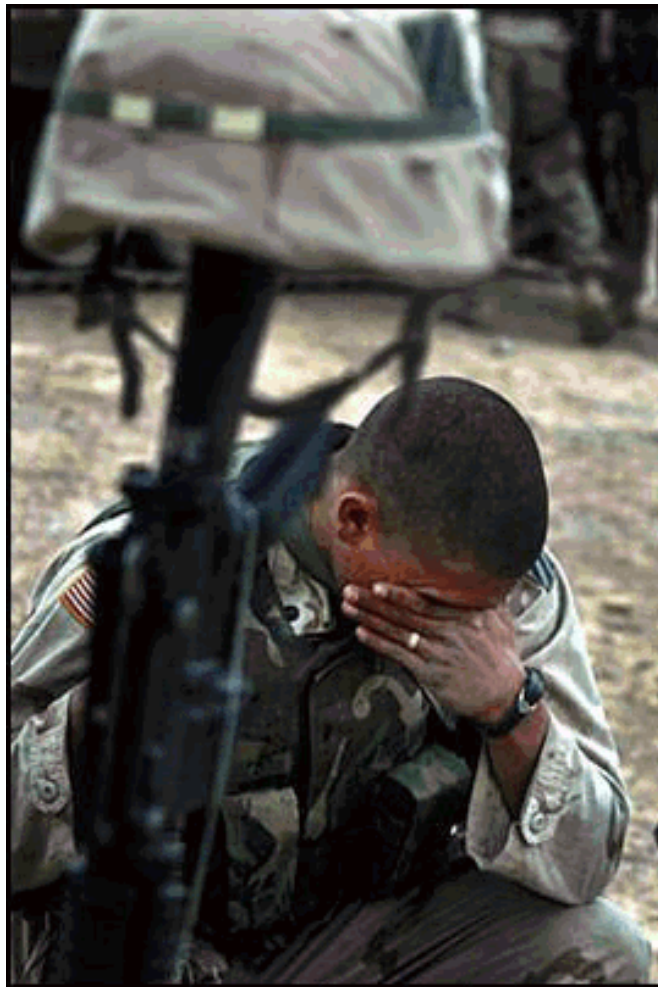
deserve the same respect, even though we're supposed to watch the active-duty's backs.” – **Nicholas Ramsey, reservist from Indiana, public affairs unit, Iraq**

“You'd be surprised at how many of the guys I talked to in my company and others believed that the President's scare about Saddam's WMD was a bunch of bullshit and that the real motivation for this war was only about money. There was also a lot of crap that many companies, not just Marine companies, had to go through with not getting enough

equipment to fulfill their missions when they crossed the border. ... It amazes me with all the money our government spends on the military, all the foul-ups and screwed up things we've had to put up with during this campaign. We were promised to go home on June 8th, and found out that it was a lie and we got stuck doing missions for an extra three months. Even some of the most radical conservatives in our company including our company gunnery sergeant got a real bad taste in their mouth about the Marine Corps, and maybe even President Bush.” –

**Lance Corporal George Batton, Marine Corps Reserves**

“Man, they can't pay me enough to stay here. There's not enough money in the world to make me stay a month longer.” – **Anonymous Specialist, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division commenting on the \$10,000 three year re-up bonus announced by the Pentagon.**



**Not one more for Bush's war.**

“If someone invaded Texas, we'd do the same thing.” – **Lieutenant Colonel Kim Keslung, 21<sup>st</sup> Combat Support hospital, Balad, Iraq.**

# Should we vote for anyone but Bush in 2004?

Millions of people all over America are disgusted by Bush and his policies – everything from his invitation to the Iraqi resistance to “bring ‘em on” to his huge tax cuts for the rich, from his claim to “support the troops” while cutting veterans' benefits to filing a brief with the Supreme Court attacking affirmative action on Martin Luther King day. Many people on active-duty and in the Reserves are paying the ultimate price for Bush's policies in the sands of Iraq.

**A lot of people are so fed up with Bush that “anybody but Bush” would be better – that anybody would, of course, be a Democrat.** But do the Democrats deserve our vote? Let's look at their record and what the candidates are saying about bringing the troops home.

The majority of the Democratic Party back in October 2002 voted to give Bush the authority to attack Iraq. None of them questioned Bush's WMD lie, or the Al-Qaida-Iraq connection lie, or the Iraqis welcoming the U.S. lie, or any of his lies. Half of the Democratic Party in Congress voted against Bush's \$87 billion occupation budget – the other half voted for it.

All of the candidates are saying that U.S. troops are not coming home any time soon. Howard Dean said: “**Now that we're there, we can't leave. First thing I would do is**



**bring in 40,000 to 50,000 other troops. . . . We're gonna be there for a long time in Iraq.”** Of

course he later said the “40,000 to 50,000 other troops” would be troops from other countries – but let's be realistic. What other country wants to rescue the U.S. from the Iraqi quagmire and send thousands of their soldiers to fight the Iraqi resistance? If 40,000 or 50,000 more troops get sent to Iraq by Dean, most of them will be American.

Not far behind Dean in the race is Wesley Clark, a Vietnam vet, retired general, and former NATO commander. Clark let the cat out of the bag when he told *Newsweek*: “**I would have been a Republican if Karl Rove had returned my phone calls.**” Karl Rove is Bush's chief

political strategist and election advisor – the one who dreamed up Bush's landing on the



aircraft carrier with the “mission accomplished” banner behind his head that was supposed to coast him to easy victory in 2004. If the only thing Clark's principles, opinions and allegiances hinge on

are a phone call – from one of Bush's cronies – how can we trust him to stop Bush's policies, to bring the troops home, or do anything to make our lives better? The other Vietnam vet in the race, John Kerry, isn't much better. **He likes to brag about how he earned a Silver Star, three Purple Hearts, and the Bronze Star with Combat V awards during his tour as a boat captain in the Mekong Delta. For someone who knows combat first hand, he hasn't said a single word about reservists not getting ceramic plates for their body armor.**

But that's because Kerry is a child of privilege: his wife owns the Heinz food empire and his mom comes from the Forbes family. Kerry and his wife are worth about \$840 million, so they spend their time worrying about their money, not soldiers, their spouses, or their families.

**All of the Democrats support the continued occupation of Iraq – their only difference with Bush is about bringing in the United Nations, NATO, or other Arab countries to help out.** Even if any of these other countries send troops, it won't mean that you get to go home any sooner, out of harm's way and back into the arms of your loved ones. It will mean that more soldiers – who speak French, German, Russian or even Chinese – will be in the line of fire and will be made to suffer the same fate as you. It will mean that a French Halliburton or a German Bechtel get a small piece of the contact pie.

**The reason all the Democrats back the occupation and most of Bush's policies is because, just like the Republicans, they are a party for Corporate America, for**



**big business.** Most of the money that the Democratic Party gets is money from big corporations, and as the old saying goes: “Tell me whose hand you eat out of and I'll tell you whose song you sing.” The Democrats are against Bush the man, but not his main goals: helping the rich at taxpayers' expense, starting wars for oil and empire, and incarcerating minorities.

So far for 2004, big business has contributed \$393,495,895 – 61% of their money has gone to Republicans, and 39% to the Democrats. For Corporate America, it doesn't matter whether the Democrats or the Republicans are in office – either way, they win.

All of the quality of life issues that service people have to deal with today – lack of health care, cuts in veterans benefits – were issues under the Democrats too. As Vietnam veteran and President of Veterans for Peace Dave Cline explained, “Say you got your leg blown off, and they put you in the hospital for a month before they send you home. You go home without \$240 or your leg. It's outrageous when you think about it. A lot of this stuff comes back to shortchanging soldiers, privatization - and this was going on before Bush. Rumsfeld is a major architect, but it was also happening during the Clinton administration.” Clinton approves of the way Rumsfeld is abusing the armed forces, saying: “I hope that when the smoke clears from the Iraq thing, some more attention would be given to Rumsfeld's ideas.”

Voting for the Democrats didn't stop Bush in 2000 – while Bush was throwing out black votes in Florida, Gore kept his mouth shut about it and instead whined about “chads.” Millions of people who voted against Bush in 2000 looked on helplessly as Bush slithered into the White House despite the popular vote.

The only way we can win is by organizing ourselves and fighting against the Democrats **AND** the Republicans, who agree more than they disagree.

## Protest on the One Year Anniversary of the War on Iraq

Millions of people protested before the war on Iraq, but anti-war movement was not strong enough to stop Bush from going to war. Many people feel like the protests didn't do anything. But it's important to remember that Congress gave Bush authorization to attack Iraq back in October 2002; it took almost another 6 months before they could go to war because of the enormous upsurge of anti-war activity that made its presence felt on the streets and in the halls of government from Washington to Istanbul.

Almost a year after U.S. forces crossed the Iraqi border, every reason for the war has turned out to be a big fat **LIE**. American soldiers and Iraqi civilians are getting killed for it every day, while Halliburton is making billions off of sham reconstruction while schools at home are crumbling and the cost of living is rising.

We weren't able to stop the attack on Iraq, but we have to continue to mobilize, this time to **bring the troops home now!**

Protests are being planned all over the U.S. in: Santa Maria, California; Tallahassee, Florida; Rockford, Illinois; Augusta, Maine; Reno, Nevada; New York City; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Nashville, Tennessee; Norfolk, Virginia; and in Fayetteville, right outside Ft. Bragg.

For more information, visit the United for Peace and Justice website:  
<http://www.unitedforpeace.org/calendar.php?calttype=17>

# You're Invited To Help Make History At Ft. Bragg

*The largest anti-war demonstration at a military base since the war started is coming to Fayetteville, North Carolina. Below is a report about on the organizing done by the North Carolina Peace Coalition by veteran and anti-war activist Lou Plummer.*

We have a chance to make a little history here. Would you be willing to help us in Fayetteville with this?

Peace groups from across North Carolina met on Saturday to plan for an action on March 20. There was near unanimous consent for holding the demo in Fayetteville, near Ft. Bragg, because of the importance of reaching out to members of the armed services.

Groups represented included local grassroots peace coalitions, campus antiwar groups, Veterans for Peace, Military Families Speak Out, Quaker House and the International Socialist Organization.

I'll be visiting New Bern and Chapel Hill to encourage members of those groups to come to Fayetteville on the 20th.

The message for the event, arrived at by committee, is **Support the Troops for Real; Money for Jobs, HealthCare and Education, Not for Wars and Occupations.**

The "s" at the end of occupation is because there were several groups there who advocated for more attention for the occupation of Palestine.

Most present agreed that security and discipline are of paramount importance among our folks at the demo in order to have a safe and successful event.

There was wide support for the speakers from the platform being primarily vets and members of military families, although there will be some time for others as well. We will have folks who wear two hats (like vets who are also trade unionists) to present a dual message.

Activists from across the state are working on this in a spirit of unity wherever possible.

We need your help and participation.

**Lou Plummer**  
**Fayetteville Peace With Justice**  
**Military Families Speak Out**  
**Bring Them Home Now!**  
Feel free to give me an email with questions at: [lou.plummer@mac.com](mailto:lou.plummer@mac.com)

