

Traveling Soldier

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Iraqi uprising forces Pentagon to extend tours for 20,000 GIs

“I am back in this s--- hole”

Bryce Syverson is a tank a gunner on a Bradley fighting vehicle with the 1st Armored Division. Here, *Traveling Soldier* reprints an email from Bryce to his father on the extension of his deployment.

Hey Mom and Dad,

Well as you know now that I am back in this shit hole I will be as frank as I can be. I will not be on the airport but further south around that area that I mentioned last time. I do not think that mail would be able to get out to us there. But if I find out I will let you know what is going on.

It is going to be very dangerous for us when we go down there. I have more rounds than I can carry and I know that I will be using a whole damn lot of them. They gave me Fragmentation Grenades, AT-4 Rocket launcher, High Explosive Grenades for a Grenade Launcher and a shit load of rifle rounds. Sound like there will be some shoot outs with the bad guys. I just hope that we are the good guys.

Please do not go nuts because I am back over here. Just remember that you still have a life to live and a house to pay for so that I can stay there during my leave! What I am saying is PLEASE don't get arrested for something stupid. But tell all of the marchers that I said Hi and thanks for the support. Damn, Branden got very lucky! I was so fucking close that I could taste the German Beer on my lips again!

I am sorry that this has happened to us and the pain that I know that it is causing on you and mom. I only wish that I will be able to make it out of here with everything that I came here with. And no modifications what so ever.

Love Your Son,
Bryce

This is the email the Bryce's father, Larry, sent us. He is active in Military Families Speak Out and holds a protest every week outside his local courthouse against the war.

Dear Traveling Soldier,

Thank you for allowing me to write about my experiences in Dover and Washington. I hope it gets some of your readers to question what the administration is doing.

Both my sons were able to make it out of Iraq. Branden arrived back at Ft. Hood with his family on March 11th. Bryce arrived in Kuwait on Friday, April 2nd. We all breathed a sigh of relief that both had finally left Iraq.

Unfortunately, Bryce has been sent back into Iraq. He will be in Iraq for another 120 days.

As you can tell by his e-mail, he will be in the units responsible for taking back the cities that the Shiites have captured.

Needless to say, our family is devastated.

Just when we thought our worries were over, Bryce is being sent into a situation

even more dangerous than before. Because of this turn of events, I plan to intensify my outspokenness against the war. (If that is possible.)

Bryce's 120-day extension officially begins April 15th. I plan to protest in front of the White House that afternoon in his honor. I feel it is the least I can do.

It appears the quagmire in Iraq has turned into a whirlpool of violence that has sucked Bryce back in. I'll continue to do my best to get Bryce, and all of America's sons and daughters, out of Iraq.

You may reprint my e-mail.

More importantly, you may print all or any part of Bryce's e-mail. I think it is important that people know what is going through a soldier's head as he is being sent **BACK** into Iraq.

Especially, into a country that is much more dangerous than when he first went in. It seems as if the administration is wanting things to get completely out of control. Especially if they decide to invade Najaf! We are just asking for trouble. I don't know if your readers are getting tired of my articles.

But, if they aren't I'm sending along in a following e-mail an article of my most recent experiences while protesting at the White House with other military families.

Thank you for giving me a voice.

In peace,
Larry Syverson



The above pictures show exactly what Bush and the brass want you to do in Iraq. The reason for printing this picture is not to put down GIs, but rather to illustrate the fact that the military can really fuck over your mind if you let it.

It's up to you. You can either put in your time just trying to make it back in one piece or you can become a psycho who really digs this kind of shit. It's your choice.

Who's to blame for the torture? Start with Bush

By Lou Plummer of **Military Families Speak Out**, Army vet and former corrections officer.

One Friday in my early twenties, I took off my camouflage fatigues for the last time. The following Monday I reported to the best civilian job I could get. I was given a new uniform, a can of mace, a set of handcuffs and the keys to a cellblock at a state prison in North Carolina.

Although I was no longer in the infantry, my boss was still a sergeant and his boss was still a lieutenant. The paramilitary replaced the military but there was still an enemy and a mission. I no longer trained to kill Central-American communists. Instead, every day, I faced a prison population that was nearly eighty percent African-American in a state with a population that is nearly eighty percent white.

It was my intention to treat the inmates I was charged with supervising in much the same way I had been treated as a junior enlisted soldier in places like Ft. Benning, GA and Ft. Hood, TX. I had been belittled and dehumanized in the name of discipline. I intended to use the same tactics to control the criminal scum I was assigned to manage.

I was quickly disabused of that notion by more seasoned guards, and surprisingly, by inmates who, SHOCK! GASP!, weren't mindless crack addicted drones. I was reminded that I'd volunteered to be in the military and that none of the prisoners on C-Block had signed a contract assigning them to their current surroundings. It wasn't a matter of coddling anyone. It was a pragmatic approach to effectively managing other human beings in a high pressure situation.

I also quickly learned that the management of the prison where I worked was intensely interested in keeping their jobs. They didn't want to rehabilitate anyone. They didn't want to heal anyone's inner child. They didn't want to cure anyone's psychological disorders. They only wanted to continue to operate their little fiefdom as far from public scrutiny as possible. They weren't even especially interested in getting promoted. Self-preservation was their goal.

It appears as though that model is not the one used at Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad. The management of that institution is intensely interested in more than just self-preservation. They've been presented with a unique opportunity to take advantage of a hellish situation to

advance themselves in ways they never dreamed possible. They have an almost unlimited supply of evildoers from whom information must be extracted so that they can be BROUGHT TO JUSTICE! And, hey, if a few higher-ups can make their bones at the same time, that's just icing on the cake.

To accomplish this noble mission, the officers and administrators of Abu Ghraib have a contingent of young soldiers much like I once was. These young men and women are products of a military that gave them a one-hour class on the Geneva Convention during their first month in the military. They have been trained and trained and drilled into mind-numbing unquestioning obedience ever since that moment. Few of them have the slightest idea on how to refuse an unlawful order, much less on how to report a war crime.



Just as I didn't question my place in a prison system that was blatantly racist, these soldiers place undeserved trust in the system, in their superiors and in the righteousness of their cause. Untold millions of dollars and hours of clandestine research have gone into studies on the best ways to extract information from human sources. The Central Intelligence Agency has been repeatedly sanctioned for offenses so horrendous that

recounting them reminds us of bad spy novels: LSD experiments, assassination programs, and exploding cigars.

Is anyone really surprised that in defending themselves, the working class scapegoats of this whole horrible situation are pointing the finger at their superiors, at OGAs (Other Government Agencies) and at that new phenomena in the out-sourced military of the 21st century – civilian contractors (i.e., mercenary corporations)?

These soldiers, many of whom have been conditioned to accept racism and human degradation by working in US prisons, are as much to blame for the outrages in Iraq as I was to blame for the conditions of the prison I worked in.

All of us participated in a state-sanctioned evil. There is an attitude in our country that trains us to accept the fate of those who we are told are less deserving than ourselves. It isn't the little people on the bottom who can be condemned for designing the system. It is the self-serving masterminds at the top who should bear that burden.

President Bush says that he intends to get to the bottom of this situation. I suggest that he forgo that plan. He should instead get to the top of it instead. He can start by looking in the mirror.

A few bad apples or one rotten war?

As soon the torture scandal at Abu Ghraib broke out, politicians, the brass, and the media all sang the same song: “it’s just a few bad apples.” In other words, the only people guilty of torture are the rank-and-file MPs who were in the pictures – not their commanding officers, not military intelligence who told the MPs to “set the conditions” for interrogations, not Donald Rumsfeld who drew up the new rules for interrogating prisoners captured in the “war on terror” that clearly violated

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the Geneva Convention, and certainly not Commander-in-Chief George Bush.

This is bull.

The atrocities committed in Iraq – whether its torture, shooting civilians at checkpoints, arresting innocent people – are not the result of “a few bad apples,” a few deranged GIs, a few stupid commanders, or a few idiots in the White House. They happen because of the nature of the war itself.

Like Vietnam, you cannot tell who is the “enemy” and who is not. The men walking down the street could be the ones planting roadside bombs; the women doing laundry could be lookouts for guerillas; the children playing in the street could be scouts for the Iraqi resistance. As disabled Vietnam vet and president of Veterans for Peace Dave Cline put it: “in wars when you find yourself fighting a resistance that has the active or even the passive support of the population, you can’t distinguish who’s a combatant and who isn’t. It eventually leads you to consider **everyone** to be your enemy – and you use more and more brutality and racism. In Vietnam, the term was ‘gooks’; in Iraq, the term is ‘Haji’.”

A recent poll in the Washington Post showed that 57% of the Iraqis want all U.S. troops out of their country right now,

which means that the “enemy” and the Iraqi people are really one and the same thing. The only way to fight this kind of war is by targeting every potential resistance fighter which means raids on random homes, torturing innocent people and bombing and strafing neighborhoods and whole cities like Fallujah where the resistance is strong. And for every successful operation, for every Iraqi military age male killed or captured, for every resistance house blown up, 5, 10, or 15 more want to join the resistance to get revenge for their brother, father, mother, son, daughter, uncle, cousin, aunt, neighbor or friend and to end the bloody occupation of their country.

It’s not a few bad apples but one rotten war that led to the torture at Abu Ghraib. Whether Bush or Kerry win the battle for the White House this November, they are both going to have to use the same means to fight the same war.

The idea that the U.S. could bomb the hell out of Iraq, after starving its people and economy with years of sanctions, set up a puppet government, get control of its oil, and win the “hearts and minds” of the Iraqi people – in addition to being wrong to begin with – has turned out to be a huge and costly failure. It’s time to end it and bring all the troops home now.

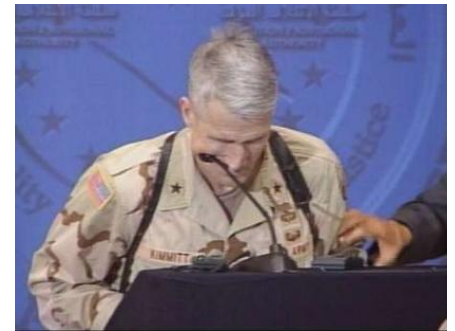
Poor Kimmit couldn’t take the heat

Just after answering a question at a press conference, Army Brigadier General Kimmit Kimmitt leaned toward U.S. government spokesman Senor and whispered, “I gotta go.” Senor nodded and said, “OK,” and then told reporters the next question would be the last.

As he listened to the question, Kimmitt’s eyes rolled upward and he began leaning forward into the podium. The podium’s small black microphone struck him on the right side of the mouth. After a few seconds leaning against the microphone, he slumped backward but remained standing. Senor stepped toward him and said, “You all right?”

“No, I’m not,” Kimmitt mumbled. Two aides approached the podium and led him out a side door. Senor continued answering questions. About 15 minutes later, Kimmitt returned again and resumed answering questions. When one reporter prefaced a question by saying, “I hope you’re feeling better,” Kimmitt smiled but offered no explanation.

Next time some commander talks like a tough guy about how you have to “suck it up and drive on,” just remember that they can’t even handle lame questions at an air-conditioned press conference in the heart of the Green Zone, which is one of the few areas where the U.S. has any kind of control.



To my fellow troops in the Iraq war

Being in today's military can be a very tough thing, a feeling that is even worse when you don't believe in what you are fighting for.

I was in that situation a year ago when I was in Iraq with the 1st Marine Division.

I knew the war I was fighting in was wrong but I didn't see myself as having much choice. I knew that as soon as I left the Middle East I would make my feelings known and that is something I have done.

The greatest surprise to me since then is that people have actually listened to me.

People really want to hear what I have to say about the war. Average people want to hear my thoughts and experiences, both good and bad.

The country isn't divided like we see in the news. Not everyone is for or against the war. Many people still don't know how they feel about what is going on in Iraq. The voice of someone who has served there carries more weight than you could ever imagine.

I've changed someone's perspective on the war any number of times simply sitting on a bar stool next to them and talking about what I know.

So now you might be asking how you can actually make your voice heard. I know for those of you in the service sounding off is much harder than for the

recent veterans like myself, but you can still speak out.

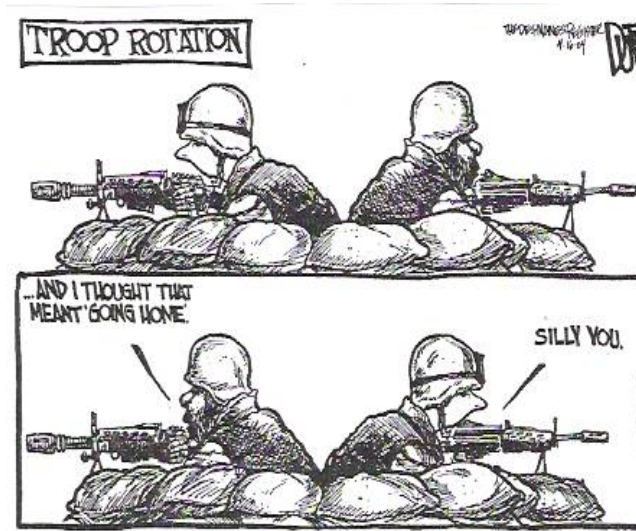
All of us, veterans, reservists, National Guard and active duty, can side with Military Families Speak Out, Veterans For Peace, and other folks standing up to stop the senseless killing of Americans and Iraqis. Those of us with direct experience in this disastrous occupation need to make our voices heard.

Active duty troops don't even need to "speak" yourselves. Just letting those of us who are now out know that you side with us lends weight to our cause and speaks volumes.

Imagine walking up to George Bush and saying that there are 100, 200, 300, 1000, 5000 or more participants from his "War on Terror" who oppose the US occupation in Iraq.

That's the kind of force that can end this war, just like it did in Vietnam. Together we can end this occupation and save the lives of our fellow American servicemen and women.

– **Michael Hoffman**
Veteran, USMC 2nd Marine division, Artillery.
Served with 1st Marine Division in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Contact Michael at iraqvet@mail.com with questions or to join the cause.



Wolfowitz forgets how many GIs he's killed



Asked how many American troops have died in Iraq, the Pentagon's No. 2 civilian estimated the total was about 500 – more than 222 soldiers short at the time. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz was asked about the toll at a hearing of a House Appropriations subcommittee. "It's approximately 500, of which – I can get the exact numbers – approximately 350 are combat deaths," he responded. Now, more than 800 have died since the start of the Iraq war, and Pentagon bureaucrats like him aren't even bothering to keep count – after all it's not their kid, so why bother? Besides, Bush's election campaign is more important.

Wolfowitz brings new meaning to what Tommy Franks, the former head of Central Command who was in charge of the Iraq war, said when asked about Iraqi casualties: "we don't do body counts." He wasn't kidding

From the mailbag

Dear Traveling Soldier,

I received the envelope with the copies of "Traveling Soldier." Thank you so much! **It's a shame that there even has to be a publication like that in the first place but I am glad there is and I was grateful to read it.** I appreciate you sending it to me. After being in the Army for six years, as I mentioned, and having my contradictory views and personal opinions stifled, it is refreshing to be able to openly voice my thoughts and to read that I am far from being the only one who feels this way. **It is very liberating to no longer be made to feel like my views are unpatriotic and wrong.**

Thank you.

Sincerely,

S, Army Base, Germany

Traveling Soldier replies:

Dear S,

Thanks for your email, and it's good to know Traveling Soldier got to you OK and is useful.

Not only are you not alone, more and more troops and recent vets are speaking out more and more strongly against the war and the general disrespect the administration gives armed forces members in general. The next GI Special (Traveling Soldier's sister publication) has a couple really strong examples. A horror not much reported here in the press is how many badly wounded are coming home, and how little money they will be supposed to live on upon discharge.

We're putting together a new Traveling Soldier in time for a conference in Chicago in middle June where Mike Hoffman, with the Marines in the capture of Baghdad (front page of your Traveling Soldier), and Lou Plummer, army vet, and a whole lot of people from Military Families Speak Out and the Bring Them Home Now formation organized by Stan Goff, Master Sgt. Special Forces (ret'd).

If it's OK, removing your name and all other identifying information that could cause any problems for you or your husband, we'd like to run your letter in Traveling Soldier. Again, all ID will be removed. One big reason is that people who see Traveling Soldier need to know just what you wrote, that you are not alone. Your letter is so powerful in getting that message out, please let us help the morale of others by running it.

As for unpatriotic, if a government uses the armed forces for private profit for the president and his corporate backers, and lies about the reason for going to war, and then screws it up completely, costing the lives of men and women who joined the armed forces to be a force for good, who is "unpatriotic"? Those outside or inside the armed services who won't put up with being abused in such a way or the government officials?

Either Bush or Kerry could buy armored vests and armor plated humvees for every troop in Iraq in a heartbeat. Bush has 300 million in his campaign fund, and Kerry has that much in his family fortune. Don't hold your breath.

Pardon my French, but this shit has to stop.

Solidarity,

Tom Barton – Traveling Soldier production staff

Dear Traveling Soldier,

As I was reading my "Traveling Soldier" issue recently, I was moved by a quote from Pat Gunn, Jason Gunn's mother (page 5 of the April-May 2004 issue) where she said, "They don't care what

condition soldiers are in, they just need a body to fill the quota, and they don't care what they send back from Iraq either."

This reminded me of something I read in the May 19th issue of "Stars and Lies" (Stars & Stripes). The sentences in bold are my emphasis. In the letter to the editor section this was (surprisingly) published:

Wednesday, May 19, 2004

I'm writing in regard to injured soldiers. I'm currently in...[Baghdad]. I first injured my knee in July. It took our medics quite a while to get things done. **I felt like I had to prove my knee was injured.**

I've had physical therapy and a steroid shot with no effects. If anything, it hurts more. I've had X-rays, but for this kind of injury I need an MRI or a scope. I settled into the pain with the mind-set that in May I'd be back in Germany and would be able to...get my knee looked at. But then I was extended. I was disappointed. Who wouldn't be? I had knee pain and the knowledge that I'd now have to stay in Iraq longer than I was supposed to with a bad knee.

I live in constant pain. This has been non-stop since July. My knee is getting worse and worse. It's buckled on me four

times. Last week I was [performing] maintenance on my Humvee. I was taking a tire off and I slipped. I bore all the weight on my bad knee. I felt terrible pain from my thigh to my foot. Ever since then it hurts badly. When I get off shift, it's swollen.

I have gone from being an asset to being a liability. What happens if my camp comes under mortar fire and I have to run to seek shelter? Say I make it without falling but my buddy gets hit. I have to run out to get him, but what can I do? If I pick him up and run for shelter, my knee is going to give out for sure. Now there are two soldiers out there instead of one providing medical care for the other.

I joined the Army of my own free will. **But had I known the Army would turn its back on me when I got hurt, I might have made a different choice.** Some of my greatest memories are from the military, but since Operation Iraqi Freedom they are some of my worst. The worst part of this whole

situation is that I'm not the only injured soldier out there. There are more like me.

We're all in the same boat in an Army in which numbers are the most important thing. I'd think they'd care about the soldiers more than the mission. Without the soldiers, you have no mission.

- Pvt. 2 Dugger Dean
Baghdad

That's the letter.

Just thought I would share that with you because it's letters like that one that make me sick and furious at this no win situation and mirrors what Pat Gunn said in the above quotation.

In the same issue of the Wednesday paper there was a brief blurb about Staff Sgt. Camilo Mejia whom I recognized from the article in "Traveling Soldier." Of course they painted him in a light that smacked of desertion and dishonorable behaviour.

Thank you for presenting his story **truthfully!** It feels good to have a publication on "our" side. Take care.

Sincerely,

S, Army Base, Germany

P.S. You are most certainly welcome to use my letter in any way you see fit to help our cause.



June 30: power handover or smoke and mirrors?

According to team Bush, on June 30th the occupation ends, a fully sovereign Iraqi government takes over, and the remaining U.S. troops become an “invited presence.”

Yeah, and Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

The Bush administration came up with its phoney power handover at the end of last year, after a surge in resistance left dozens of GIs dead and it became clear that public support for the occupation – both in the U.S. and in Iraq – was eroding fast and would impact Bush’s chances in the November elections.

In an attempt to defuse the Iraqi resistance and bolster Bush’s prospects for another 4 years, the administration decided to give the illusion of power to its handpicked puppets while in reality keeping real power for itself on June 30th. The Pentagon planned to withdraw 20,000 troops in time for the

“power handover” to make Americans think that Bush has everything under control, he was right all along, he was bringing the troops home, progress was being made in Iraq and all we have to do now is “stay the course” by electing Bush. One problem: it’s not going to work.

June 30th is a perfect example of the old proverb, “the more things change, the more they stay the same.”

Paul Bremer, the boss of the Coalition Provisional Authority, will go home but over 120,000 American GIs will stay. In Bremer’s place, John Negroponte will step in, but instead of being the boss of Iraq he will be an “ambassador.” The diplomatic mission to Iraq will be the largest in the world, with over 1,000 staffers, and each Iraqi ministry that will be set up will have American “advisors” attached to

them. The last country that the U.S. had this many “advisors” in was Vietnam, and we can see how well that one worked out.

The new prime minister, Iyad Allawi, is the head of a CIA-funded exile organization called the Iraqi National Accord. As if being known as a CIA agent wasn’t bad enough, **Allawi’s organization engaged in terrorist attacks during the 1990s inside Iraq, including blowing up a school bus and killing a bunch of Iraqi kids.** To expect Iraqis to accept this man as their new prime minister when he was involved in blowing up Iraqi children is like expecting Americans to welcome the appointment of Timothy McVeigh as the president by an occupying army.

On June 30th, the occupation of Iraq won’t end – it will have a new mask with an Iraqi face.



From mission accomplished to mission impossible

“It’s the exhaustion of power,” said a veteran of conservative think tanks.... “Ideology has confronted reality, and ideology has bent. On the foreign policy side, it has bent because of what has transpired in the last few weeks in Fallujah.” (Washington Post 5.10.04)

“Many of the guys who were shooting at the Marines have simply put on their old army uniforms and joined the Fallujah Brigade,” a U.S. official told the post. (Washington Post 5.9.04)

From Bush yapping about “Mission Accomplished” to recognition that Iraq is Mission Impossible is a huge jump in a short time, but facts on the ground are stubborn things.

The resistance won and holds Fallujah. Al-Sadr’s Madhi Army is still patrolling on the streets of Najaf, and holds the huge Shia section of Baghdad by armed force against the occupation. This is the face of the U.S. military defeat that some in command are whispering about, but the top generals and the politicians around Bush refuse to admit.

Generals always are obsessed with fighting the last war. After Vietnam, they thought danger to U.S. imperial dominance came from peasant-based insurgencies led by nationalist intellectuals. Wrong.

Today the world is dominated by huge cities, concentrating the working classes of various nations and shifting the balance of power to them.

It’s no accident that the Iraqi resistance is centered in the big cities. It’s no accident that the resistance has liberated Fallujah, Najaf, and everything in

Baghdad outside the HQ Green Zone from the occupation. As Iraq vet Mike Hoffman points out, “there’s nothing command can do now but launch suicidal patrols to try to impress the U.S. media with ‘shows of force,’ and send the bodies back to Dover.”

“The future of warfare,” the journal of the Army War College declared years ago, “lies in the streets, sewers, high-rise buildings, and sprawl of houses that form the broken cities of the world.”

To help develop a geopolitical framework for urban war-fighting, military planners turned in the 1990s to the RAND Corporation.

“Insurgents are following their followers into the cities,” RAND warns, “setting up ‘liberated zones’ in urban shantytowns. Neither U.S. doctrine, nor training, nor equipment is designed for urban counterinsurgency.” As a result, the cities have become the weakest link in the American empire. The Generals paid no attention.

“Rapid urbanization in developing countries,” wrote Captain Troy Thomas in the Aerospace Power Journal spring 2002 issue, “results in a battlespace environment that is decreasingly knowable since it is increasingly unplanned.”

There is no Mission Accomplished. Operation Iraqi Freedom is Operation Iraqi Disaster.

Every dead or maimed soldier is nothing but another casualty in the hell of an un-winnable war, sacrificed to cover the ass of politicians at home who are terrified that admitting defeat means losing their power and prestige.

That’s not a reason to keep fighting. That’s a reason to start organizing against this war in the one place that can stop it: the U.S. armed forces in Iraq.



Army punishes GI for torturing prisoners;

Army punishes soldier for not torturing prisoners

On May 19, Specialist Jeremy Sivits faced a court martial for torturing Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib. He was found guilty and got a year in prison and a bad conduct discharge.

On May 19, Florida National Guardsman Staff Sergeant Camilo Mejia faced a court martial for refusing to go back to the war in Iraq, where he had served with honor, because he had been present when prisoners were tortured and he wanted no more of that, or the war.

Tod Ensign of Citizen Soldier, the organization coordinating support for Mejia, said Mejia was at Al Asad – which is another detention center like the Abu Ghraib prison – where he witnessed the abuse and sleep deprivation of detainees in May 2003. The detention center was controlled by three interrogators, who were in civilian clothes and operated with pseudonyms. One of them called himself “Rabbit,” and one called himself “Whitey.”

“They were in charge and telling the troops which detainees ‘to soften up,’ which meant 24 to 48 hours of sleep deprivation. They would take unloaded pistols and pull the trigger with the gun on the detainee’s temples. They would pound the walls with sledge hammers, and they would constantly wake them and make them walk around.”

Staff Sergeant Mejia also got a year in prison and a bad conduct discharge.

Nancy Lessin and Charley Richardson of Military Families Speak Out summed it up this way:

“If you are near the bottom of the chain of command, if you get caught up in the racism and dehumanization of this war, if you fail to stand up to the pressure, the orders and your command, and if your illegal actions are exposed to the world, you will be made a scapegoat and you will be punished.

“If, however, you do take a stand of conscience against an illegal and immoral war, if you expose its horrors and your command’s shortcomings, you will also be punished.”

That’s why soldiers in another U.S. war for empire did their most effective organizing quietly, building networks of resistance, until the rebellion in the army

brought the Vietnam war to an end.

Lesson learned.

Meanwhile, Staff Sgt. Mejia, stuck in prison, needs all the support and help he can get.

To find out what to do for one of the bravest soldiers in the army, check out <http://www.citizen-soldier.org/CS07-Camilo.html>



Mejia (right) and his lawyer

“There is no way a great power can run tanks into a weaker country and expect anything but what we have in Iraq”

Here, *Traveling Soldier* prints a response to an article in a local paper about parents trying to hide their children from the pictures of Abu Ghraib.

Dear Editor,

I read your 5/18 article about the frantic efforts of local parents to shield their children from the gruesome images on the evening news with a great deal of sadness-and alarm. The experts, it seems, think it’s best to “protect” children by keeping them ignorant.

Ignorance protects no one.

I grew up in the shadow of World War II, and in the blue white glow of the ever-on television set. My family watched TV, and we especially watched the evening news. Every night, over dinner, Walter Cronkite. What I saw then, as a five year old, remains with me to this day.

It was the Hungarian revolt of 1956.

Guys in street clothes lurking in doorways, with pistols and rifles and Molotov-cocktails taking on Russian tanks. I wasn’t frightened, I was thrilled. Wow, who are these really brave people?

My dad told me they were Hungarians; he explained why they were fighting the Russians. We had a map pinned to the wall of the kitchen, and I learned a little geography. This is Hungary, this is Budapest...miles and oceans away from me, but also the homeland of several of the families on our street.

The images were gruesome. I remember a truck piled high with wounded insurgents flying a makeshift flag – a bedsheet with a Red Cross marked out in the blood of the wounded. I also remember the “good-guy” insurgents lynching a Communist official in a public

square. My dad said that, in war, even good people can do terrible things.

So, was I traumatized? No, I was educated. I learned some geography, some history, and I learned, deeply and forever, that there is no way that some great power can run tanks into some smaller, weaker country and expect anything but what we have now in Iraq.

Their kids will try to kill ours. Our kids will try to kill theirs. Our kids may “win,” as the Russians did in Hungary. Tanks and planes and superior firepower may win the war, but the hearts and minds will always be with the skinny kid in the doorway, waiting his chance for a shot at that tank.

That’s not trauma. That’s the truth.

Sincerely yours,
Anna Bradley

Hate the war in Iraq? Try voting against it



This man is for the war:

- Lied about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and ties to Al-Qaeda
- When asked about Iraqi attacks on American soldiers, he said "bring 'em on!"
- Responsible for the deaths of 800+ American soldiers and 10,000+ Iraqis.
- Says "we're not going to cut and run."



This man is for the war:

- Voted for Bush's war and said "I do not regret my vote"
- Wants to send *more* troops to Iraq
- Says that "my exit strategy is success" and "it's important that we not cut and run. I don't believe in a cut and run philosophy."

Soldier-Killer-in-Chief vs Soldier-Killer-in-Chief-wannabe

At a town-hall meeting in Orlando, Florida, a young Army reservist named Charity Thompson, recently returned from Iraq, told Democratic candidate John Kerry that she was having trouble getting medical care from the Veterans Administration. Her story, and her implicit anger about the war, was greeted with a vehement standing ovation. Kerry responded to the health-care point but stayed clear of the war. Later Thompson told a reporter, "**I wanted to hear what he had to say about Iraq. I despise this war, and 99.9% of the people I served with feel the same way. We should bring our troops home now. I'd really like to know what Kerry thinks about that.**"

Unfortunately for Thompson and everyone else stuck in Iraq, the awful truth is that **Kerry wants to send MORE troops to Iraq**. When the Abu-Ghraib scandal broke out, Kerry called for Rumsfeld to resign. But he said that John McCain, a Congressman from Arizona who wants to send more troops to Iraq, should be the new Pentagon boss. Kerry has also said that he would expand the active-duty Army by 40,000 troops to "help fight the war on terror." The only war Kerry can mean is the war in Iraq, and that's the only place those 40,000 troops are going to go.

But he doesn't want to come out and say, "I want to send more troops to Iraq" because so many people want to vote against the war this November. The problem is, there is no anti-war candidate, no bring the troops home now candidate to vote for. The only way we can bring the troops home now by voting is by voting with our feet into the streets. Every moment spent campaigning for Kerry is a moment wasted on what doesn't work. Every moment spent trying to build the anti-war movement to put a fire under the feet of politicians from **BOTH** parties is one spent on what works.

Building a movement to stop the war isn't going to be easy and it's not going to happen overnight, but it's the only winning strategy there is, and we can't afford to lose this fight.

An appeal to Ralph Nader: say you want to bring the troops home NOW

Traveling Soldier readers: please send this appeal to Nader's campaign by copying the text from <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/nader.php> and pasting into the message box at his website at <http://www.votenader.org/contact/index.php>

Dear Mr. Nader,

As millions of Americans agree that all U.S. troops must be withdrawn from Iraq, immediately and unconditionally, you have refused to take up a very simple demand: **bring all the troops home NOW.**

We desperately need someone in this election who stands on principle.

You can provide that lead.

What we do not need is one more candidate who wants to see more U.S. soldiers and more Iraqis die in this war for oil and empire. Every day U.S. troops stay in Iraq, that is exactly what is happening.

You have said U.S. troops must stay until UN troops take over.

Why?

Are you afraid that too many people will abandon Kerry and vote for you?

Are you afraid your immigrant-hating allies in the Reform Party will kick you off their ballot lines? People are already wondering how you can ally yourself with this pack of disgusting ultra-conservative racist scum.

Do you agree with the equally racist empire builders in Washington who run this government that Iraqis are too primitive and bloodthirsty to manage their own lives and their own country? Who on earth could be more bloodthirsty and primitive than the managers of the U.S. Empire? And why do you so love the UN that killed Iraqis by the hundreds of thousands with their sanctions for over a decade?

The notion that chaos will break out in Iraq if the U.S. troops pack up and go home right now is silly nonsense. There is chaos in Iraq now, and it is the U.S. invasion that has brought it and keeps feeding it.

No one can with certainty what kind of government the Iraqis will choose.

What can be said with certainty is that without U.S. troops in Iraq, no more U.S. soldiers will be killed by Iraqis, and no more Iraqis will be killed by U.S. troops.

Enough is enough.

Please join the millions who want no more of this war.

Not another day, not another dime, not another life.

Take up the banner for common decency and announce you are for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Iraq now!



Words from the front-lines

“I just think it’s a lost cause. This has become harder than we thought. Getting rid of Saddam Hussein, that’s one thing. Getting Iraqis to do what we want is another. It’s like we want to give them McDonald’s and they might not want McDonald’s. They have to want it or we can’t give it to them.” – **Spc. Will Bromley, Company A, Task Force 1-36, 1st Armored Division, Karbala, Iraq.**

“Some of us need to make life plans. We’re obviously short of forces in Iraq. Suppose the country just wants to split apart? Can we live with that? Or another dictator comes? Are we going to fix that? There are plenty of troublemakers and Iraqis who tolerate them. You could have units here forever.” – **Capt. Andrew Lomax, Company A, Task Force 1-36, 1st Armored Division, Karbala, Iraq.**

“Nobody wants to compare this to Vietnam. But it’s starting to feel that way on the ground. Everybody just wants to finish their year, get the hell out and forget they were ever here.” – **Anonymous officer in an email to a Congressman, who quoted the email when questioning Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld.**

“I don’t begrudge them. We’d do the same thing if some foreign dudes rolled into San Diego and set up shop.” – **Marine officer on the Fallujah resistance.**

“Man, I think some of those guys were kids. Or they were midgets.” – **Anonymous Lance Corporal after a firefight with the Iraqi resistance.**

“I questioned some of the things that I saw ... such things as leaving inmates in their cell with no clothes or in females’ underpants, handcuffing them to the door of their cell. I questioned this and the answer I got was, ‘This is how military intelligence (MI) wants it done.’ MI didn’t want any of the inmates talking to each other. ... I am feeling so bad at how the army has come down on me. They always said that shit rolls downhill and guess who is at the bottom? I have asked for help and warned of this and nobody would listen. I told the battalion commander that I didn’t like the way it was going and his reply was ‘Don’t worry about it.’” – **Ivan “Chip” Frederick, one of the GIs being court-martialed in the Abu Ghraib torture scandal.**

“Basically this guy was dying as he couldn’t take any more. An officer came down. It was ‘Get rid of him –

I haven’t seen him.’ The paperwork gets ripped. So they threw him out, still with a bag on his head. The lads said they took him back to the dock and threw him off the back of a moving vehicle. They’d have freed his hands, but he’d still be hooded. He’d done nothing, really. I felt sorry for him. I’m not emotional about it, but I knew it was wrong. ... I can’t believe it has taken the Iraqis so long to fight back. If it had been me or my family, I’d have retaliated straightaway. They’ve just got fucked around so much. You can’t go in now, and say ‘Right, let’s forget about what has happened and start again.’ We’re struggling now. There are too many people against us.” – **British soldier on their torture of their prisoners.**



“We are not helping ourselves out there. We are never going to get them on our side. We are fighting a losing war.” – **British GI reacts to the Abu Ghraib photos.**

“A lot of Marines may get killed because of these idiots.” – **1st Lt. Justin Engelhardt, commenting on the torture of Iraqi prisoners by military intelligence and MPs**

“I hate it here. I want to come home. I want to be a civilian again. We actually shot two prisoners today. One got shot in the chest for swinging a pole against our people on the feed team. One got shot in the arm. We don’t know if the one we shot in the chest is dead yet.” –

Anonymous MP stationed at Abu Ghraib prison.

“I think sometimes we’re perceived as warmongers in the armed forces, but we just take an oath to protect the country. Nobody here really wanted to go to Iraq. I think a lot of people on base agree with me, but we just can’t say it.” – **Anonymous Captain at an anti-war demonstration near Kirtland Air Force Base, Arizona.**

“Go to every radio and TV station and newspaper, and you tell them this war is wrong. They don’t want us here.” – **Army Spc. Peter G. Enos in his last phone call to his mother, before being killed in his patrol vehicle by an RPG in Bayji, Iraq**