

Traveling Soldier

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F.T.A.

“They paint the walls to cover my pen, but the Shit House Bandit has struck again!”
– *Shit House Bandit*

The US Army loves a good robot.

A soldier who takes orders obediently without thought or question is considered a good soldier.

Each automaton is expected to take to gospel any ideas or beliefs held by the authority over him. Any thinking that would contradict the absolute omnipotence of the army as a whole is considered heresy.

The intense mind control starts very early in a soldier’s career. Once a person enters into the ranks of the war machine, that person will be subjected to inane mind games and deprived of human spirit and character.

An installation of fear will break down his free will, clear it of all pride and self-respect, and replace it with fiber-optic bloodlust. The average soldier soon discovers to always be the yes-man, always stay motivated, and always know that the army is steadfast in its supremacy. Never again would that soldier think for himself or question authority.

Those few of the enlisted who would dare display any traits of individuality or independent thought are immediately singled out and dealt with.

These such “black sheep” are subjected to ridicule, ostracism, and idle threats in order to conform that soldier back to the

standardized way of thinking. Trepidation plays a huge role in keeping the lower ranking in line, thus smiting any desires for an individual to speak out for himself.

Valid complaints of ill treatment are expected to pass upwards through a long, bureaucratic chain of command, usually brushed off repeatedly and almost never reaching the authority needed to deal with the problem at hand.

Robots are expected to receive orders and process them without thought or feeling. Killing is the robot’s task. Emotion is not tolerated. Fear is processed into hatred and hatred is turned into motivation. The drone is expected to eat, sleep, and to mindlessly serve the High Command.

The army loves a good robot, but the army consistently neglects the fact that its soldiers are human, displaying every feeling and emotion that a person normally would.

Deployments are a long and hard trial of negativity, doubts, and horror.

Soldiers in Iraq are incessantly faced with the extreme conditions of a searing desert, a constant paranoia of their volatile environment, undue stress caused by the despot authority over them, and imminent death around every corner.

The soldier will make every attempt to keep these problems to himself, to deal with them on his own terms. Talking to friends about these problems can only help so much, and an attempt to express these

issues to his superiors prove to be futile...one can be accused of cowardice only so much.

Angst and frustration fill the bottle more and more everyday, until the time comes to ignite the greasy rag. With no one around, and the all seeing eye of Big Brother out of range, the soldier makes his stand within the confines of a restroom stall. Marker in hand, freshly painted white walls his canvas, he explodes and sums it all up with one rebellious thought...

“FUCK THE ARMY!”

It goes without saying, an American soldier is not privileged to the same constitutional rights he defends with his life.

The soldier cannot come and go as he sees fit; there is no such thing as a “two-week notice” in his line of work. Limitations are placed on what he says, and free speech is certainly not free. Incorrect thoughts are to be kept silent, and dire consequences await for those who act on their convictions. Due to the absolute privacy found in bathrooms, what was once suppressed frustrations suddenly become an open forum of ideas and acquisitions. The latrine walls become what The Combine dreads the most, a podium of free speech for soldiers.

You will not find too many of these such restrooms or portable toilets on smaller camps. The fear of authority in such places cuts too deep. However, on larger forward operating bases, usually



consisting of many different units, the shit will hit the fan. You can join in on the open-ended debates, if you remembered your marker. I for one have made a black permanent marker an everyday part of my uniform.

Most of the time, you will see unit rivalries going back and forth, sort of like a dog marking his territory:

“1/8 Cavalry was here...too damned long!”

“HHC 854th ENG all the way”

“B 1-7 FA don’t know their asses from a hole in the ground!”

Or you may see valid complaints from the front, such as National Guard units who were extended past a year, or soldiers who were stop-lossed from leaving the army:

“One weekend a month?!
BULLSHIT!!”

“Thank God I got out of the
army...SEVEN MONTHS AGO!!”

“FUCK THE WORLD!”

“FUCK IRAQ!”

The most interesting toilets I have found in the past have been the ones containing politically heated debates, going back and forth from one scribbled statement to the next:

“FUCK G.W. BUSH AND HIS
FUCKING OIL WAR!”

“FUCK YOU, BASTARD! BUSH IS
FIGHTING TERRORISM WHERE IT
STARTS!”

“HE MUST BE AN OFFICER.
FUCKING TOOL!”

“THAT’S OUR COMMANDER IN
CHIEF! YOU CALL YOURSELF A
SOLDIER?!”

“YOU CALL YOURSELF
INTELLIGENT?”

...and then there’s always something from the incorrigibles:

“FUCK THE ARMY!”

“FUCK BIG BROTHER!”

“FUCK THE \$YSTEM!”

...or one of my personal favorites:
“FIGHT FASCISM! (insert [1] well
drawn anti-swastika circle)
THE U.S.ARMY IS RAN BY NAZI
SWINE!!”

Bathroom graffiti is never a pretty sight. The language is always horrible, certainly not spoken through the mouths that kiss mothers. One thing should be made very clear right now: soldiers talk like a bunch of sailors, bottom line.

One thing very interesting is that of the FTA.

This is an almost underground cult within the ranks. The members of this secret organization refer to each other as Joe’s. Soldiers will know who is FTA just by looking at him.

He will immediately understand that “Joe” hates being oppressed by his superiors, disagrees with the army’s stupid rules, and resents the army for taking him to crazy 3rd world countries, only to try to kill him.

The actual graffiti “FTA” can be found in almost every portable toilet or restroom where others have left their opinions. It’s almost never written fancy or artistic, just three bold, simple letters...**F.T.A.**

One can surely assume what it means. It’s a safe guess that “lifer’s” or high ranking officers see this kind of subversive swill and become rather angry about it.

The whole façade of “one big happy army” disappears right in front of their eyes, and their petty little fantasy world of structure and order come crashing down around their ankles.

The only way to counter the bathroom graffiti is, of course, painting over the walls. Or take a can of spray paint and omit the slander quicker than G.W.Bush can black-out his sham military record.



F.T.A. button, 1968

The fallacy of treating soldiers like tools is that the soldier will eventually speak out in one way or another. No matter how many times a bathroom wall gets painted over, Joe and his pen will strike again...

“I will never run out of ink as long as there’s bathroom walls to write on!” – anonymous

I strongly believe in and support bathroom graffiti.

Whether it helps to vent frustrations or simply express opinions and ideas, the free speech of the shithouse will always live on. Quick little shout-outs against the system are always good, and sometimes you feel entertained by what someone said.

Other times the graffiti isn’t too intelligent, but it helps to gauge the soldier’s overall feelings for the army and the war.

Obviously, the dissension is rampant as the message is literally on the wall. A good tag will remind you that you are not the only one that feels the war is wrong or your “president” is a complete joke.

However, it is the graffiti that speaks The Truth that always leaves the lasting impression:

“The loss of diversity is the degradation of effectiveness. Submission to conformity is the deprivation of creative expression. The inability to form a personal opinion leads to the lack of self worth. THINK FOR YOURSELF!” – The Heretic

– **hEkLe**
Baquba, Iraq

A note from hEkLe:

I want you to know one thing about the piece, those quotes I wrote in there are all 100% guaranteed genuine quotes I pulled off the walls of porta-johns and other restroom facilities. I write down the good ones when I see it.

And a very interesting point of view from our resisters. One thing everyone should remember is that the people we are fighting are just like any other freedom loving Americans back home, and there is no “army” of resisters as the Pentagon ignorantly assumes, it’s more like a movement. I’ve got respect for them.

Iraq soldiers petition against stop-loss: sign it and pass it on

To whom it may concern:

The Statistics are now 15 days away from our original release date from the US ARMY. Unfortunately, we are under the jurisdiction of the Army's Stop-Loss, a "back door draft" designed to keep soldiers in the army for deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan for the duration of 3 months before the 12 month deployment until 3 months after it. Many soldiers' lives have been put on hold, dismantled, ruined or expired due to this de facto draft. Time is running out for thousands of soldiers who were supposed to be out, and thousands more will be effected by the Stop-Loss in the not so distant future.

Help to end this madness by sending your name and concerns to: nostoploss@yahoo.com

On behalf of The Statistics and a myriad of soldiers chained to this war, we thank you all!

– hEkLe
Statistic

"We had no business being there in the first place. We killed people, we had our people killed, and it hasn't made any kind of difference."

Corporal Alex Rybov participated in the invasion stage of the Iraq war. Traveling Soldier's Pham Binh spoke to him.

B: First question – what's your name, what unit were you with in Iraq?

R: My name is Alex Rybov, I'm 21 years old. I served with Romeo Battery, Fifth Battalion, Tenth Marines, and we were in Iraq. We crossed the border March 20th and went back into Kuwait on May 9th.

B: When did you start to question the stated reasons for the war – weapons of mass destruction, liberating the Iraqi people, and Iraq's links with Al-Qaeda?

R: I questioned it somewhat before we went, but it was more of a ... I just kinda thought about it and thought past. Our First Sergeant who was in the Marine Corps for about 20 plus years gathered us around before we went and told us, "you're not going over there to be heroes or topple Saddam, or to get weapons of mass destruction." He said, "you're going over there for oil." And some of the guys that have been in the unit for a while like myself, just kind of shrugged and figured that the way the military was and the way the government was it was just kind of the next step. Some of the younger guys were taken aback by it – this isn't what we're told on the news, and stuff like that.

But when I really started to seriously question the reasons for the war and the war itself was after I had returned from Iraq, and everyday just watching the body count rise on the news, on CNN, both on the U.S. side and on the Iraqi side. And after a while I just quit



watching the news because it was the same thing every day. I could not watch the news and still know that at least a few Marines or soldiers were going to die over there. And it made me realize that we had no business even going into Iraq. From the beginning it's been such a waste of life on both sides. We never found weapons of mass destruction. And Iraq obviously was not an imminent threat because we took the capital in about three weeks. Really it was when I came back that those realizations really hit me.

B: What happened to the sergeant who told you that it was about oil?

R: He did his job, he took care of us when we were in Kuwait and Iraq. When we returned with us to the States he was with our unit for awhile and afterwards he was transferred over to a different unit. I guess he had done his time with us. And as far as I know he's still in the Marine Corps somewhere.

We had a sergeant major that was in charge of our battalion. First of all, our unit was the only one out of our battalion from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina to go to Iraq. We were attached to Fifth Battalion, Eleventh Marines

from California. About a month ago when I went down to Camp Lejeune to visit the last unit I was in, because they were about to go to Iraq, I found out that that sergeant major who had also been in the Marine Corps twenty plus years and commanded 500 marines in Iraq and did a pretty good job of it – I found out that he hung himself sometime after when we returned from Iraq. This really threw me off because he did not seem like the type of man that would do that. He seemed calm, collected. He would get angry at times but it was for appropriate reasons, like somebody had a CD player out for some reason. That's obviously not for a combat environment, even though we weren't shooting at that time.

The reason I was given for why he hung himself was because his second wife left him. But even without knowing the facts, I think I can say that I believe there were underlying reasons behind it, most likely the things he saw in Iraq and something along those lines so it's just really disturbing.

B: How do active-duty troops and Iraq vets that you've talked to feel about the war now? Have you seen a big change since last year?

R: Yeah, definitely. Even the troops that decide not to speak out or not to become active – there's definitely a lot of anger that exists towards the Bush administration and the war itself. 'Cuz the troops realize that they were sent over there for nothing, that we killed people, we had our own people killed, and it hasn't made any kind of difference. We still don't have any kind of control in Iraq, and really we have no right to even be there from the beginning. So the general sentiment amongst troops, even though they don't speak

out – whether it’s because it’s just not their thing to become active in the peace movement or because they still have time left in the service and they don’t want to risk losing their GI Bill and things like that – they definitely disagree with the Bush administration and what’s going on in Iraq today.

B: So what do we do now in Iraq?

R: Really this – taking aside from the fact that we shouldn’t have been there to begin with – what we need to do know is to bring our troops home because Iraq is a lose-lose situation as it stands. It’s either we lose what we’ve lost so far, or we lose even more. We don’t even have control of most Iraqi cities like Ramadi, Fallujah. The U.S. troops are being pushed out of city after city everyday, and pretty much the reason that’s given on the news for why we can’t pullback is because the Iraqis will have a civil war and things like that. That’s really more of a reason to maintain support for the war. Because the Iraqi people – I’ve seen statements from clerics and religious leaders in Iraq that the people listen to, that the people trust, and they’re saying that this is exactly what the U.S. and coalition forces want them to do is fall into civil war if the troops leave. And if the Sunnis and Shiites can come together for demonstrations and things like that, I think the Iraqis can form their own government with coalition forces out of there.

And also as far as rebuilding their country, we’ve pretty much contracted out every phase of rebuilding their country. Like let’s say this company will do oil wells, this company will do water, stuff like that – why not just give the Iraqi people the means and the resources to rebuild their own country? First of all, they’re not these savages that they’re made out to be sometimes on the news – there’s engineers, there’s doctors – they’re a developed society, although we’ve destroyed a good portion of it.

Also, with all these hostages both U.S. and foreign that are being taken by the resistance – none of that will happen if it is Iraqis who are rebuilding the country. It would really serve them absolutely no purpose to capture their own people and demand some type of ransom.

B: Who do you think is really behind the resistance?

R: While I believe that some of the resistance is made up of Saddam loyalists, some terrorists, things like that, I believe the majority are made up of just regular Iraqi people, just everyday citizens that have watched their friends and families die in either intended or non-intended incidents where U.S. troops have fired on them or bombing raids have gone of course or something like that. Some of these people, really I believe, have nothing to live for because what would the average American do if their entire family was destroyed. I know that if something like that happened to me, I would pick up arms and go after the enemy or whoever perpetrated the killings. So that’s part of the problem in Iraq

that we don’t – or at least our government and the military – doesn’t fully understand the Iraqi people and what they’re doing to them. For every Iraqi civilian that people see killed, most likely two or more Iraqis decide, “to hell with this, I’m gonna pick up a weapon and try put an end to the occupation of my country,” ‘cuz that’s really what we’re doing. I believe the same thing applies – but people don’t want to admit it – if a foreign force were to invade our country, every person who has a shotgun in their house or a hunting rifle or something like that would be out in the street fighting this foreign force. That is what is happening in Iraq.



IVAW
Iraq Veterans Against the War

B: As a founding member of Iraq Veterans Against the War, can you tell me what the organization is all about? How can people join, donate, etc?

R: O.K. Our primary mission is to get our troops that are in Iraq brought home now. Because day after day, more and more are getting killed, it’s senseless, we’re not getting anywhere. Also, we’re here as support for U.S. troops that are returning from Iraq who have all these things running through their mind, need somebody to talk to, need somebody to find out questions about VA benefits, other benefits. And also we’re trying to make sure that when the troops come home, the benefits that the government has promised them are bestowed upon them, that they’re given proper health care, that they’re given their GI bill, things like that. We have a website, it’s www.ivaw.net. On the website there’s our mission statement, there’s brief biographies about the founding members, there’s a place to donate to our organization, and there’s some articles and links to other organizations we work with like Veterans for Peace, Military Families Speak Out.

B: The media is constantly talking about how the military is stretched too thin, and 40% of the troops in Iraq are National Guard and Reservists. What do you think of a possibility of a draft in the next 4 years? Would it make much of a difference between Bush and Kerry in terms of the military being stretched thin?

R: As far as a draft, I feel that if Bush is elected would be likely a lot sooner than four years, just because of the fact that the military is stretched so thin. The military was not meant to be used this way. Not just invading a country for economic gain, but so many troops are being sent over there that – not just reservists and National Guardsmen – but the fact that a lot of these units that have been in Iraq at least once come back for a few months and are sent back over again because of sheer numbers, because they’re needed in Iraq. The draft would be the only way for them to really replenish the ranks and to have enough troops in Iraq, and to replenish the National Guard and things like that. People talk about, “what if a terrorist attack happened,” something along the lines of September 11th, honestly if that happened and the National Guard was needed, I believe that there aren’t enough of them left in most areas to carry out the tasks they’re supposed to be doing, which is pretty much homeland security, which is protecting the U.S., in things like a terrorist attack, or some kind of natural disaster or emergency. Most of these guys in Iraq, they’re obviously not able to do that. We’ve really weakened the nation as far as our security and safety instead of strengthening by sending troops to Iraq.

Also, I want to add something on that, as far as whether a draft would be instituted if Bush or Kerry is elected, I believe that if Kerry is elected he will see that we elected him for a reason, and that’s to get the troops out of Iraq, to fix the situation over there. And I believe that he’ll think twice before making similar decisions to what Bush has done because he’ll realize that the people will not stand for it. So that’s my opinion on that one.

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Production Staff
Pham Binh
Thomas Barton

A debate: how should service people resist the war?

Refuse illegal, immoral, insane orders

Dear Friends at Traveling Soldier,

I have put together a list of public military refusers to the war in Iraq. You can see it here:

<http://www.tomjoad.org/WarHeroes.htm>

I would be interested in hearing of those I have not yet listed. Please spread the word.

I cannot say enough about the importance of refusal, and any way one chooses to do it, publicly or privately, it is to be respected and honored. It is crucial if humanity is to survive to keep one's ability to say "NO," to refuse illegal, immoral, insane orders. Those in the military owe their greatest allegiance not to the "President" but to all people and our highest values.

Thanks for your newsletter. I hope lots of GI's are reading it.

– **Jim**



Troops in Vietnam in 1968 hold up a banner that reads: "Welcome to G.I.'s opposing the imperialist aggressive war on South Vietnam and demanding the withdrawal of us troops home!"

Organizing within the ranks more effective

Dear Jim:

The growing list of military resisters that have refused to serve in the current unjust and immoral war in Iraq are true heroes. All Airmen, Marines, Soldiers, Reservists, Guardsmen and Seamen must decide to follow their own conscience in how they might choose to oppose the war.

The military hierarchy, however, easily isolates and cracks down on individual resistance, either by locking such a person in the brig or stockade or by charging that person under the UCMJ. Yet when troops begin to act in concert and think of means to oppose the war collectively, their power and threat to the war machine increases significantly.

During the Vietnam War, members of the Armed Forces turned against the war in large numbers, leading to creative means of collective resistance. Troops formed "rap groups" within their platoons that discussed the immorality of the war; they used graffiti and sabotage to deadline military vehicles; soldiers led mutinies that included whole companies; and many engaged in "fraggings," the use of smoke or fragmentation grenades to warn NCO's and officers that were either too strict in their enforcement of Mickey Mouse regulations or too gung-ho in their prosecution of the war.

Acts of resistance became so widespread that the military often failed to punish the offenders out of fear that retribution might incense the troops and lead to even greater discontent. Overall, the collective action by troops opposing the war was a significant factor in bringing an end to the ground war in Vietnam.

Therefore today, we must allow the troops stationed in Iraq to decide for themselves what the best means of opposing the war are, in accordance with their own unique circumstances.

However, rather than allowing yourself to be locked up by the military for refusing to serve, consider the more powerful position you might occupy by organizing against the big green machine from within.

FTA / FTMC / FTN / FTAF,

– **Sgt. Martin Smith, Traveling Soldier veterans advisory board, U.S.M.C. (retired)**

“Every letter that is written to me by the Army telling me a load of crap only makes me fight harder”

Sept. 8, 2004

To: Mr. President, Mr. Vice President, Senators, Congressmen, Colonel Short, America

It has now been just over 1 month since my husband was forced back into Iraq and I am still going strong. Especially sense I have been challenged by an officer, by lies that the Army has told me and the nerve of a Commander telling me that my husband seems to be getting better. The support that I get from so many, and the look in my children's eyes that wonder where the daddy is, also keeps me going strong. Here is a complete update of my husband as of Sept. 8, 2004.

I wrote a letter to my husband's Commander, Colonel Short, and told him that I did not think that what was said in the Congressional sent to Senator Hutchison was right, and that I was not going to stop fighting for my husband's return. In the letter that he sent me dated on Aug. 16, mailed Aug. 21, and after taking 7 days for delivery, it was delivered Aug. 28th. Anyway, in the letter it says:

Dear Mrs. Lampin,

Thank you so much for your letter. Your husband is doing an outstanding job for us. He is the best mechanic that we have. According to CSM Perez, he is extremely motivated and seems to enjoy our mission and his part in it's success. Even his physical problems seem to be improving. We are taking good care of him like I promised. He is a fine soldier. We are proud to have him as I am sure you are and the nation is lucky to have him as a soldier.

Thanks again for your support and concern.

Sincerely,
Col. Short

I am guessing that the Colonel never read my letter, and just had his secretary type something up, that sounded good. Does Short think that I would believe him and not my husband on how his physical problems are? I got news for him, how does he expect me to believe him if he has lied to my husband himself. If he seems to be getting better, then why is he still going to sick call for pain?

After a phone call from Tony on Aug. 28th, before the arrival of the letter, Tony informed me that the command is well aware of my actions, and was confronted by his Lieutenant, Lt. Stovall, asking him if he knew what I was doing. My husband told him yes, that he is aware of my actions. Lt. Stovall then told my husband that I could do anything that I could, and that it wouldn't matter because he would not have Tony sent back. This made me very angry, and I took it as a challenge and in my opinion, the Lt. challenged the government into making him have Tony sent back. All I can say is “Lt. Stovall, BRING IT ON.”

I just recently got back from a trip to my family back in Texas on Sept. 6th. In the mail, was a letter from the Adjutant General (AG), Mr. Dane Goodwin, telling me the biggest load of crap that the Army could ever tell me. The Army is responding to my correspondence to the local media in La., about my husband's medical issues and his recent deployment to Iraq. It says that Fort Polk officials are pleased to

provide information regarding my husband's deployment and to address my concerns about his safety and present medical condition.

In the letter, it is written:

The Battalion Commander, at that time, Colonel Richards, spoke directly with the orthopedic surgeon who was treating Sgt. Lampin. The orthopedic surgeon concluded that, medically, Sgt. Lampin was capable of performing his duties and any additional procedures and/or medical boards could be postponed until the unit returns to Fort Polk. In addition, Colonel Short, Commander, 115th Field Hospital, who took command one week prior to deployment, was in frequent communication with Colonel Richards regarding Sgt. Lampin's medical condition and deployability. Colonel Short did not speak with the orthopedic surgeon prior to deploying; rather he chose to support Colonel Richard's decision unless there was a significant change in Sgt. Lampin's condition in the week prior to deploying.

It goes on saying that my husbands condition has not prevented him from performing his duties, about the combat gear he is wearing is within his profile restrictions, not to lift or carry 30 lbs, and that he is not having to wear it but for approximately one and a half hours. What I didn't want to hear is this:

The combat uniform and force protection policy is designed to increase the survivability of the soldiers in the event of a mortar attack and is considered protective equipment. All soldiers leaving in the immediate Life and Support Area (LSA) who move around the Forward Operating Base are required to wear their combat gear and carry their weapon. However, Sgt. Lampin lives and works inside the LSA and is not required to wear his combat gear during the time he is at work or off duty. On a normal duty, he is required to wear the combat gear approximately one and a half hours. The time is obviously increased when Sgt. Lampin is required to conduct convoy operations, which is very infrequent.

This is what scared me. Are they saying that inside the LSA is safe? If so how can they say that, because there is no such place in Iraq. What if an attack was to occur, and my husband doesn't have his gear on? What then? Is this how the Commander is saying that he is taking care of my husband? Again, I am being lied to so the command can cover their ASS. What about the part about the doctor saying that my husband can perform

his duties. I don't believe this because I talked to my husband's doctor in person, and according to him, and I have it on recording, he told Colonel Richards that he DID NOT advise my husband to be deployed to Iraq, and that he never did speak with Colonel Short to advise him the same thing. If he said what is in the letter, then why did he write NON-DEPLOYABLE on my husband's medical profile? What about Short telling my husband that if he was told by his doctor that he would only get worse he would not take him? Again, LIES. What about the part that my husband has been able to perform his duties? Then why did my husband inform me on the 28th of Aug. that he hasn't been able to do anything but sit around and staying off his knee? I think you can guess that on your own. The part about his protective gear weighing within the limits of his profile, that too is a LIE. According to the company that makes the vest, a large vest



weights 10 lbs, and the inserts, that the Army uses weighs 9.5 lbs each. That is a total of 29 lbs. Now if you add the weight of the extra gear needed including his weapon the total weight that he is carrying weights well over 30 lbs.

Another part of the letter reads this:

An orthopedic surgeon evaluated Sgt. Lampin on Aug. 19th, for pain he was experiencing in his left knee. The surgeon reported that after evaluating the knee and the existing medical records, he concurred with the treatment plan and medical work-up Sgt. Lampin has received to date, and he does not recommend redeployment. The surgeon offered Sgt. Lampin pain control by steroid injections; however, at this time he rejected this method of treatment.

According to my husband, the surgeon there didn't want to go into his case, and that it was more administrative than medical. About the injections, my husband hates needles, and was told that the steroid injections would only control the pain a certain amount of time, and that there is a series of 5 to 6 shots, and I was warned, by a private doctor, that the steroid itself would only cause more damage in the long run by deteriorating the knee. I ask this, what would you do? It is obvious that my husband is in pain, if he is going in to see a doctor. It is obvious that his knee is getting worse.

Another written passage:

Colonel Short, as the commander, has the authority to deploy a soldier depending on the needs of the unit and the US Army. By Army policy, a doctor provides recommendations to the soldier's commander based on his physical restrictions. In the case of Sgt. Lampin, as with all soldiers, the doctor's recommendations are strongly considered. Colonel Richards' decision to deploy Sgt. Lampin was made in conjunction with the doctor's assurance that Sgt. Lampin's medical condition would not limit his deployability.

Again, Tony's doctor said that he advised Richards that Tony should not be deployed, not what the AG said in the letter. I ask this: why does a soldier bother going to a doctor for his/her medical needs when a commander has the right to override their needs and send them into war? This needs to be changed. A doctor's recommendation should be taken seriously and accepted so that no future injury will occur causing more pain to the soldier who has to live with it for the rest of their life. They are the ones with the pain, not their commander. On any other given military day before this war, a soldier that is to be medically boarded out of service, would be told thank you for your service, and good luck in the civilian world. Instead, my husband is told, "oh well, we don't care, you're going to war." Also, Colonel Richards at the time he was in command had changed, 1 week before turning over his command, his mind to not have Tony sent to Iraq.

The constant excuse that Colonel Short and Lt. Stovall keeps saying "BECAUSE WE NEED HIM," is not an excuse. They say my husband is their best mechanic. So are they saying that they can't rely on the other mechanics who are there? Also, if he is needed so badly, then why back in Feb. of this year, before my husband's 2ND surgery, was

he being assigned to a quartermaster unit? It's because the company did not rate more than one NCO, and that the company already has a Motor Sgt. and Tony being a Sgt./NCO, did not have a specific duty in the company. Knowing this, and the fact that they knew he was eventually going to be medical boarded out they thought that they would just hand him to another company. My husband, having a profile for well over 2 years, also participated in only two of the training exercises that pertained to this deployment. In the last one on the last weekend of June, they practiced convoy attack maneuvers to be better prepared which included practicing 3 - 5 second rushes, this was a live fire exercise. Was my husband able to do this? NO, he wasn't. All he could do is put the vehicle he was driving in a combat position. When confronted by his Sgt.Maj., he was told to just lay down on the ground. I'm not saying that my husband did not know how to do rushes, but this was a refresher course, and laying on the ground is not training. Being told to lay on the ground is saying, "hey you have a profile that says you can't do this, so, and this is my opinion, pretend you are dead." If during training they can accept his profile, then why can't they accept it now and let him have his medical board? I have also found out that my husband was not supposed to be extended an extra 28 days on his EAS by the Stop-Loss program. According to the rules, paragraph 6 section B it states that Soldiers eligible for disability retirement, separation for physical disability, or other physical conditions. This includes Soldiers who have a permanent 3 or 4 profile (which is what my husband has), the Stop-Loss does not take effect.

With every letter that is written to me by Colonel Short, or the Army itself telling me a load of crap, only makes me fight harder. I know that what I am doing is drawing concern with them, because they are trying to assure me that Tony is safe and not in any pain, and I guess they think that the letters will stop me from my mission. Well, they can think again. They know that what they did was wrong, and they are trying to cover it up by telling me lies that I can see a mile away. They think they are talking to just another spouse, but guess what, I am not just another spouse, I am a former Marine, and people know, that you don't mess with a Marine, especially this one. I was not called Cpl. Chucky for nothing back in my service. I am a fighter for rights, and my husband deserves his right to be medical boarded out of service NOW. Send my husband and the other medically unfit Soldiers home, they deserve their rights that they fight for, that they have earned. Don't crap on them like you did in the past with our Vietnam Vets. Bring them home, bring them all home.

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Iraq war by the numbers

WMDs found: 0

Iraqis liberated: 0

Iraqis killed: 37,000+

Americans killed: 1,052+

Americans wounded: 7,000+

Cost so far: \$130,000,000,000+



The truth about John Kerry

“Marines nowadays want to know stuff. They want to be informed, because we’ll be voting out here soon. ‘Fahrenheit 9/11’ opened our eyes to things we hadn’t seen before. We still have full faith and confidence in our Commander-in-Chief. And if John Kerry is elected, he will be our Commander-in-Chief.” – Marine Sgt. Christopher Wallace, Ramadi Iraq.

“Kerry protested the war in Vietnam. He is the one to end this stuff, to lead to our exit of Iraq.” – Army Specialist Nathan Swink, Najaf, Iraq. (Christian Science Monitor, 9.21.04)

John Kerry made headlines when he declared that the Iraq war was the “wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time” and tore Bush a new asshole in the first presidential debate. This, combined with his history as a Vietnam veteran who spoke out against that war after he came home, has given hope to millions of people who are sick and tired of Bush and the war.

But people who are looking to Kerry for a change – however small – ought to look more closely at what Kerry is actually saying about the war.

While he nailed Bush for “misleading” (i.e. lying) to America about the reasons for the Iraq war, **he said that the U.S. should continue to fight and attempt to win “the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time.”** Sound confusing?

As Kerry explained in the debate with Bush: **“I believe there’s a better way to do this. ... I have a plan for Iraq. I believe we can be successful. I’m not talking about leaving. I’m talking about winning.”**

According to his website johnkerry.com, he has a four point plan for “victory” in Iraq: 1) bring allies in like France, Germany, and Russia to help bear the financial and military burden 2) train Iraqi security forces to take the place of U.S. troops 3) step up reconstruction of the country and 4) establish a stable Iraqi government.

So Kerry doesn’t want to withdraw from Iraq, he’s going to try to finish the job Bush started – establishing a puppet government in Iraq and securing control over Iraq’s huge oil reserves. And Kerry’s four-point plan for “victory” isn’t going to work, for a few reasons.

For one, if France and Germany didn’t want to join the invasion, why would they want to join the war now, when

there are beheadings, carbombs, and serious attacks on foreign troops almost every day of the week? What would they get out of jumping into the quagmire, except sinking into it?

Secondly, the problem with Iraqi security isn’t their lack of training, it’s where their political loyalties lie. The Iraqi National Guard units used in the April attack on Fallujah disintegrated – some went over to the Iraqi resistance, some ran away, and many just plain refused to fight. Think of it this way: if the United States was invaded, its government overthrown, and the occupiers set up a police force and an army, would you want to join it? Would you join it knowing you would be used against your fellow Americans resisting the foreign occupation? Would more “training” change the

fact that you hated being occupied by a foreign country?

Contrary to what Kerry claims, help is **NOT** on the way in Iraq. The U.S. is not fighting a bunch of foreign terrorists or Saddam loyalists – it is fighting a patriotic, nationalist movement that wants to kick the U.S. out of its country, just like in Vietnam. The majority of the population is against the U.S. being there, and that’s why the war is unwinnable.

So why won’t Kerry withdraw troops from Iraq? For the same reasons as Bush. Handing over the world’s second largest oil reserves to Al-Sadr or the

Iraqi resistance would mean a tremendous loss in economic power for Corporate America, and the victory of

the Iraqis over the world’s number one superpower would inspire people around the world – in Chechnya, Palestine, and Afghanistan to name a few places – to fight for their independence, which would severely disrupt the world order. This is why Kerry is echoing Bush, saying “it’s important to not just cut and run” and “I don’t believe in a cut-and-run philosophy.” Kerry wants to win Bush’s war for oil and Empire.

No matter who wins on November 2nd, tens of thousands of American soldiers are going to still be in Iraq, fighting an unjust and unwinnable war. Like Vietnam, we can’t rely on the bought and paid for politicians from the Democratic and Republican parties. An anti-war movement within the ranks of the armed forces – involving thousands of soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, reservists, and guardsmen – is going to be crucial in forcing Bush or Kerry to bring all the troops home now.



Kerry’s one point plan for Iraq.

Why we cannot win

By Al Lorentz, a reservist currently serving in Iraq and former chairman of the Constitution Party of Texas. (Traveling Soldier does not in any way endorse or support the views of the Constitution Party of Texas.)

Before I begin, let me state that I am a soldier currently deployed in Iraq, I am not an armchair quarterback. Nor am I some politically idealistic and naïve young soldier, I am an old and seasoned Non-Commissioned Officer with nearly 20 years under my belt. Additionally, I am not just a soldier with a muds-eye view of the war, I am in Civil Affairs and as such, it is my job to be aware of all the events occurring in this country and specifically in my region.

I have come to the conclusion that we cannot win here for a number of reasons. Ideology and idealism will never trump history and reality.

When we were preparing to deploy, I told my young soldiers to beware of the "political solution." Just when you think you have the situation on the ground in hand, someone will come along with a political directive that throws you off the tracks.

I believe that we could have won this un-Constitutional invasion of Iraq and possibly pulled off the even more un-Constitutional occupation and subjugation of this sovereign nation. It might have even been possible to foist democracy on these people who seem to have no desire, understanding or respect for such an institution. True the possibility of pulling all this off was a long shot and would have required several hundred billion dollars and even more casualties than we've seen to date but again it would have been possible, not realistic or necessary but possible.

Here are the specific reasons why we cannot win in Iraq.

First, we refuse to deal in reality. We are in a guerilla war, but because of politics, we are not allowed to declare it a guerilla war and must label the increasingly effective guerilla forces arrayed against us as "terrorists, criminals and dead-enders."

This implies that there is a zero sum game at work, i.e. we can simply kill X number of the enemy and then the fight is over, mission accomplished, everybody wins.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. We have few tools at our disposal and those are proving to be wholly ineffective at fighting the guerillas.

The idea behind fighting a guerilla army is not to destroy its every man (an impossibility since he hides himself by day amongst the populace). Rather the idea in guerilla warfare is to erode or destroy his base of support.

So long as there is support for the guerilla, for every one you kill two more rise up to take his place. More importantly, when your tools for killing him are precision guided munitions, raids and other acts that create casualties among the innocent populace, you raise the support for the guerillas and undermine the support for yourself. (A 500-pound precision bomb has a casualty-producing radius of 400 meters minimum; do the math.)

Second, our assessment of what motivates the average Iraqi was skewed, again by politically motivated "experts." We came here with some fantasy idea that the natives were all ignorant, mud-hut dwelling camel riders who would line the streets and pelt us with rose petals, lay palm fronds in the street and be eternally grateful. While at one time there may have actually been support and respect from the locals, months of occupation by our regular military forces have turned the formerly friendly into the recently hostile.

Attempts to correct the thinking in this regard are in vain; it is not politically correct to point out the fact that the locals are not only disliking us more and more, they are growing increasingly upset and often overtly hostile. Instead of addressing the reasons why the locals are becoming angry and discontented, we allow politicians in Washington DC to give us pat and convenient reasons that are devoid of any semblance of reality.

We are told that the locals are not upset because we have a hostile, aggressive and angry Army occupying their nation. We are told that they are not upset at the police state we have created, or at the manner of picking their representatives for them. Rather we are told, they are upset because of a handful of terrorists, criminals and dead enders in their midst have made them upset, that and of course the ever convenient straw man of "left wing media bias."

Third, the guerillas are filling their losses faster than we can create them. This is almost always the case in guerilla warfare, especially when your tactics for battling the guerillas are aimed at killing guerillas instead of eroding their support. For every

guerilla we kill with a "smart bomb" we kill many more innocent civilians and create rage and anger in the Iraqi community. This rage and anger translates into more recruits for the terrorists and less support for us.

We have fallen victim to the body count mentality all over again. We have shown a willingness to inflict civilian casualties as a necessity of war without realizing that these same casualties create waves of hatred against us. These angry Iraqi citizens translate not only into more recruits for the guerilla army but also into more support of the guerilla army.

Fourth, their lines of supply and communication are much shorter than ours and much less vulnerable. We must import everything we need into this place; this costs money and is dangerous. Whether we fly the supplies in or bring them by truck, they are vulnerable to attack, most especially those brought by truck. This not only increases the likelihood of the supplies being interrupted. Every bean, every bullet and every bandage becomes infinitely more expensive.

Conversely, the guerillas live on top of their supplies and are showing every indication of developing a very sophisticated network for obtaining them. Further, they have the advantage of the close support of family and friends and traditional religious networks.

Fifth, we consistently underestimate the enemy and his capabilities. Many military commanders have prepared to fight exactly the wrong war here.

Our tactics have not adjusted to the battlefield and we are falling behind.

Meanwhile the enemy updates his tactics and has shown a remarkable resiliency and adaptability.

Because the current administration is more concerned with its image than it is with reality, it prefers symbolism to substance: soldiers are dying here and being maimed and crippled for life. It is tragic, indeed criminal that our elected public servants would so willingly sacrifice our nation's prestige and honor as well as the blood and treasure to pursue an agenda that is ahistoric and un-Constitutional.

It is all the more ironic that this un-Constitutional mission is being performed by citizen soldiers such as myself who swore an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States, the same oath that the commander in chief himself has sworn.

Words from the front-lines

“Hey, I’m from Texas, and let me tell you that, right now, I hate Bush. Not for getting us into Iraq in the first place – I’m not even going to go there – but now he can’t figure out a way to get us home except in a body bag.” – **Anonymous GI from the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Najaf, Iraq**

“We’re losing people everyday, and for not a good reason. Among my group of friends, we don’t want Bush to get elected. We feel if Bush gets re-elected we will go back to Iraq, which we don’t want to do. I honestly think we’re fighting this war for oil. Why else would we be there? We have Saddam Hussein. I personally think Osama bin Laden’s dead.” – **Marine Lance Corporal Ward Stone, after being wounded and returning home from fighting in Fallujah, Iraq.**

“There’s no clear definition of why we came here. First they said they have WMD and nuclear weapons, then it was to get Saddam Hussein out of office, and then to rebuild Iraq. I want to fight for my nation and for my family, to protect the United States against enemies foreign and domestic, not to protect Iraqi civilians or deal with Sadr’s militia.” – **Army Spc. Nathan Swink**



“9 out of 10 of the people I talk to, it wouldn’t matter who ran against Bush – they’d vote for them. People are so fed up with Iraq, and fed up with Bush.” – **Anonymous GI, Najaf, Iraq.**

“Everyone’s watching it. It’s shaping a lot of people’s image of Bush.” – **Anonymous Marine Corporal, commenting on the impact of “Fahrenheit 9/11” on troops, Ramadi, Iraq.**

“You have to give them credit. They do an amazing amount with what little they have.” – **Sgt. 1st Class Mike Dewilde, 3rd Platoon, 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, commenting on Al-Sadr’s militiamen in the battle at the Imam Ali shrine in Najaf, Iraq.**

“There’s nothing good that can come of it. We win, we lose. We lose, we lose.” – **Anonymous Army operations officer, on the possible outcomes of the battle for the Imam Ali shrine in Najaf, Iraq.**

“Wives, daughters, husbands. You just know you’re destroying that tomb. It doesn’t feel right sometimes.” – **Sgt. Hector Guzman, 5th Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, during the battle for the Imam Ali shrine in Najaf, Iraq.**

“It’s all a game over there. It’s all about politics, oil – who the heck knows? I’m livid. We never really knew what was going on. We were told, ‘We’re here to do good, to help Iraqis, they want us here.’ And we know that’s just pep talk from politicians – a bunch of professional liars. Everything in Iraq pissed me off. ... You never knew if the guy in there was innocent or not, and half the time he was.” – **Army infantrymen home on leave from Iraq after doing raids on Iraqi homes.**

“More and more [Iraqi] people want us to go home. Believe me, we want to go home.” – **Army Private 1st Class Rachel Bosveld, in a letter home.**

“I’m scared even to take a shower in case they mortar us. I want to go home and be with my wife and start a family.” – **Army Specialist Luis Cruz, Baquba, Iraq.**

“People are tired of us being here. It’s the same as if someone came to the U.S. and started taking over. You’d do what you’d have to do.” – **Marine Lance Corporal Anthony Robert.**

“We shouldn’t be here. There was no reason for invading this country in the first place. We just came here and [angered people] and killed a lot of innocent people. I don’t enjoy killing women and children, it’s not my thing.” – **Anonymous Marine infantryman, Ramadi, Iraq.**