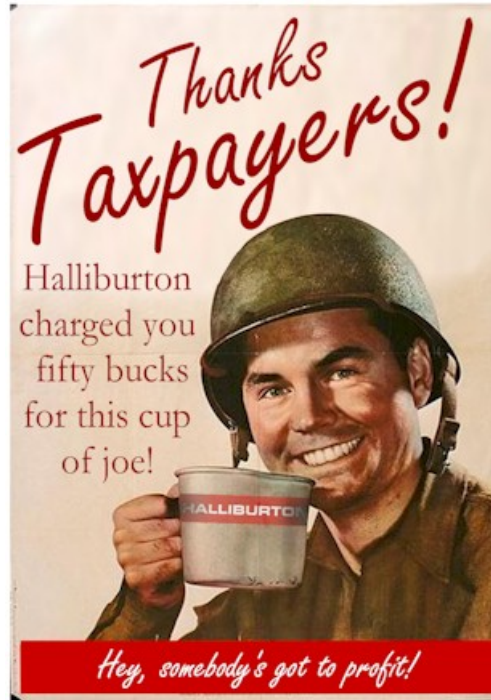


GI SPECIAL 3C15B:



oldamericancentury.org

“Was It The Oil?”
And For That, “I Lost My Son, My
Baby”
“I Want People To Know Why I'm
Angry”
“Tell Them Why”

August 7, 2005 The Greenville News [This reporter deserves a By line. None given.]

Carolyn Hutchings' son didn't turn 23 last week.

Two years, four months and 15 days have passed since Marine Pvt. Nolen Ryan Hutchings, of Boiling Springs, was killed in Iraq on March 23, 2003.

He was one of 18 who died and 17 wounded under heavy fire on the outskirts of Nasiriyah the fourth day of the war. He was 20.

His birthday, Aug. 2, is hard in ways his mother doesn't have words for.

Not only because of all the things Nolen will now never do.

And not only because of the way he died and the questions that surround his death and the deaths of others who died with him.

But also because of how long it took the military to tell her the truth, that something had gone wrong, and how long they took to investigate it.

And how even after a year of investigating, the military said they couldn't call it what she feels without a particle of doubt it was. Friendly fire.

Carolyn Hutchings believes there's been a deliberate pattern of dishonesty throughout, not just regarding her son's death or, for that matter, Pfc. Jessica Lynch's capture, which happened the same day at the same town, but from the beginning.

She means the war in Iraq itself.

And "I know a lot of families (of casualties) feel the same way I do," she says.

Make no mistake. Carolyn wants it clear she supports the troops "100 percent." They are America's sons and daughters, many of them from small towns like Boiling Springs where patriotism runs high.

Many are the children of working people like herself.

Carolyn, 50, is a secretary at a trucking company. Her ex-husband, Larry, 54, is a site manager for a construction company.

Whatever is asked of young Americans in uniform they will do, and bravely. Carolyn couldn't believe this more strongly.

In return, their country must cherish their lives and ask war of them only when it has to. This is also something she believes strongly.

With Iraq, she is convinced, the government didn't do that. Or tell the truth.

"They should be ashamed of themselves," she says.

As a Gold Star mother, Carolyn is regularly invited to patriotic events. She goes. "I'm proud to talk about my son," she says. "He died an honorable death."

But she doesn't hide her feelings about the war. Sometimes the people who invite her are surprised. Carolyn is beyond worrying about that. "I feel like I've got the right," she says flatly.

She doesn't know exactly what drew Nolen to the Marines. Partly, "He wanted to go to college and knew that would pay for it." Larry also thinks college tuition was mainly why.

Before Nolen graduated from Boiling Springs High School in 2000, he started working out and running to get in shape.

He didn't turn 18 until August. "I did not want to sign those papers" to allow him to join the Marines before his birthday, she remembers. Larry signed.

Kerise Broome, Nolen's 10th-grade English teacher, recalls that before the young Marine left for Iraq, he returned to the high school.

"Not every kid will come back and let you know you made a difference," Broome says. But Nolen did. He asked to speak to her classes and told the students to apply themselves. "In his uniform, he got their attention," she says.

It seemed to Broome that in the time since he'd graduated, Nolen "just really grew up."

Now, Broome says, "When I hear the evening news and they talk about the people that have died (in Iraq)," she thinks about Nolen.

"But also about how proud he was to be doing what he was doing."

Only in the last days before Nolen was sent overseas did the new Marine reveal apprehension. War had not yet begun, but seemed certain.

"We were sitting at the table one night, just me and him," Larry recalls.

Nolen was his adopted son, but Larry helped raise him from the time he was 18 months old.

"He said, 'Dad, I'm scared,'" Larry remembers, his voice growing scratchy.

"I said, 'Son, all you can do is do what they trained you, and you'll be all right.'" At the memory, the father wiped his eyes with his fingers.

Nolen called home from a ship off the coast of Kuwait. That was the last time his parents heard his voice.

On March 26, 2003, a major and a sergeant came to the Hutchingses' door, Carolyn says. They told her her son and seven others were missing in action.

The official term: Duty Status Whereabouts Unknown.

The next 20 days were nearly unbearable. "Twenty days," she says. "You know how that was?"

"Everybody was calling," Larry says. Friends, family, strangers, reporters. "I was on the phone constantly." Carolyn wouldn't take the receiver.

But the couple made calls of their own every day, trying to find out about their son.

In the second week after the military informed them Nolen was missing, a reporter from a national newspaper asked if the Marines had mentioned friendly fire.

There was a news story about Marines mistakenly killed March 23 by Air Force A-10 aircraft.

This call Carolyn took. The reporter told her where to find the story on the Internet.

Days later, on a Saturday night, after three hours on the telephone and getting transferred from person to person a number of times, Larry Hutchings finally reached someone at the military base in Dover, Del., where the bodies of casualties are returned to the U.S.

He learned Nolen had been identified by DNA.

Early the next morning, the sergeant and major came to the Hutchings' door again. They confirmed Nolen's death.

"I yelled at them," Carolyn recalls. "I was pretty frustrated. I let it rip. I slammed my fist on the table and I asked them, 'Was it friendly fire?'"

The military took a year to officially answer her question.

The report, when it came, in 2004, was more than 800 pages.

Eighteen members of the 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, including Nolen Hutchings, had been killed in the intense and chaotic fighting at Nasiriyah.

The report was delivered to their relatives around the country at the same hour on the same day.

Larry read every word. It took him three days. When he finished, he still had questions.

Of the 18 dead, the investigation found eight were clearly killed by enemy fire.

As for the rest, as many as 10, possibly friendly fire. But given "the intensity of the enemy fire," investigators couldn't say for sure.

Maverick missiles from the planes struck two amphibious assault vehicles, one of them Nolen's, destroying both.

But as Larry interprets the report, the military says maybe Nolen and/or others had already been killed by an RPG (rocket-propelled grenade).

To the Hutchingses, friendly fire is friendly fire.

They are skeptical of the military investigation itself. According to the investigation report, the pilots knew before they landed that it had maybe been friendly fire. Yet the videotapes from both planes were lost -- one taped over, one misplaced, the report said.

Carolyn believes the military was afraid of the damage such a terrible incident so early in the war would do to morale, both on the battleground and at home.

To her mind, that fear helps explain why they were quick to embrace and circulate stories of Jessica Lynch fighting her captors to her last bullet that same day at that same town, stories Lynch later denied.

The news back home was filled with the mythic Lynch, not with Air Force planes strafing Marines.

Carolyn sees a pattern. "(President Bush) doesn't want caskets shown on TV. Why not? It's respect." She is adamant. Her son's sacrifice and the sacrifice of others deserve the respect they earned.

Among the last things she wants: "I don't want my son forgotten." And this: "I don't want his death to be for no reason."

"What do I think about the president hiding all that stuff from us? Not a lot."

She and Larry visit Nolen's grave at least once every week, and often more than that. They go separately. Since their son's death, they've divorced.

Both of them questioned the war in Iraq from the beginning, they say.

"We didn't have any business going there," Larry sums up. "I've talked to other people who feel the same way. Osama bin Laden is the one that had to do with 9-11."

"Was it the oil?" Carolyn asks. And for that, "I lost my son, my baby."

Yes, she says, she is angry. **"I want people to know why I'm angry."** Carolyn turns to the reporter taking notes, her face severe. **"Tell them why."**

MORE:

Yes, There Really Is An Empire

8.3.05 By Alan Murray, The Wall St. Journal

With Republicans in the White House and running both houses of Congress, business groups have a rare opportunity to turn events to their favor. The energy bill might have been loaded with environmental regulations and taxes in a less friendly environment.

Instead, it became a grab bag of business subsidies.

Some of this also reflects the realities that the people who run big businesses now face.

Global trade is one of them.

Mr. Immelt has said he expects 60% of his company's growth to come from developing countries in the future, compared with 20% in the past.

For that to happen, he needs the help of Washington to keep those countries safe, open to trade and secure for investment.

Doing big business with the developing world, by necessity, involves close cooperation between business and government, since business and government are indistinct in so many of those developing countries.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

GIs Fry In Iraq Extreme Heat



U.S. soldiers of the army infantry from the Stryker brigade in the town of Hammam Al Alil, near Mosul, in northern Iraq, July 28, 2005. REUTERS/Andrea Comas

8.8.05 Army Times

With blazing temperatures dominating the headlines throughout the United States, troops in Baghdad, where temperatures typically hit 120 to 130 degrees, say they're getting a new perspective on what "hot" really means.

“Hot” is when bottled water becomes almost undrinkable within a half hour. It’s when Bradley fighting vehicles and Abrams tanks leave imprints in the asphalt and boots start sticking to the roadways.

It’s “pretty brutal” for troops, said Sgt. William Howard from the 3rd Infantry Division’s 2nd Brigade Combat Team in eastern Baghdad.

Gunners, perched atop Humvees, have it the worst. That’s because they’re constantly exposed, not only to enemy threats, but also to the blazing sun, out of reach of the little air conditioning the Humvees pump out.

“We rotate them a lot to get them out of the heat,” Howard said.

Sgt. David Winkle said noncommissioned officers play a big role in protecting soldiers from the heat. They constantly remind the troops to drink lots of water, to eat even when the heat has zapped their appetites, and also to get plenty of rest.

Patrols all carry coolers of water, chilled with ice from the dining facility, and many troops have personal backpacks filled with drinking water. Some soldiers soak headbands and neckbands in the water and wrap them around their foreheads and necks to help cool down.

Sgt. 1st Class David Brissett, NCO in charge of medical operations for the brigade, said the brigade has had only “a couple of cases” of heat exhaustion and no full-blown incidents of heat stroke.

For many of the soldiers, who like Winkle are serving their second summer deployment in Iraq, the second go-around, with better food, better living conditions and more air conditioning, is a little easier than the first.

“It’s not such a shock when you’ve already experienced it once,” he said. “Your body already knows what it’s like, and it makes it a little easier when you get that first blast of heat when you walk outside.”

When they return to their forward operating base after a mission, the troops strip off their sweat-soaked and salt-crusting shirts and savor the air conditioning that cools most offices and barracks, as well as their dining facility.

For most members of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, the big day they’re looking forward to will come in January, when they’re due to go home to Fort Stewart, Ga.

But in the meantime, many troops have their short-term sights on September. That’s when daytime temperatures are expected to begin dipping below 90 degrees.

TROOP NEWS

Dishonorable Discharge: **Soldiers Who Believe Iraq Is An** **Honorable War Are Hard To Find**



Soldiers who believe Iraq is part of an honorable and just war for U.S. security are hard to find. Most understand the closest we come is in defending Halliburton and members of the puppet government, or patrolling oil fields and pipelines that may someday provide militarily subsidized oil to the United States and her loyal creditors.

August 3, 2005 Karen Kwiatkowski, LewRockwell.com. [Excerpt] Karen Kwiatkowski, Ph.D., is a retired USAF lieutenant colonel, who spent her final four and a half years in uniform working at the Pentagon.

In 2004, Sgt Kevin Benderman filed for conscientious objector status while he and his unit were preparing to redeploy for a second tour in Iraq.

What is it we are doing in Iraq, actually? Well, this is indeed the trillion dollar question. Don't worry your pretty little heads about that, Americans! Just keep sending the boys and the girls and the credit, and Washington will do the rest.

We have (or had, as the case may be) soldiers serving not their second, but their third tour in Iraq. A law of diminishing returns for U.S. efforts in Iraq may be in effect – where soldiers are added fruitlessly to ground already saturated with violence and blood and resentment on both sides.

We continue to send soldiers to die and kill, destroy and be destroyed in Iraq. We continue to inflict death and mayhem on Iraqis, in order to "create" stability and "build" a unified and submissive, oil-rich Arab economy.

In the current era, it is politically correct to send hundreds of thousands of soldiers instead of one reliable, somewhat needy and ever so obliging dictator.

One understands the neoconservative longing for the old Cold War, and recognizes the source of their flashes of sophomoric insight on world affairs and the global role of our morally bankrupt government.

As Benderman processed his CO status paperwork, the Army charged him with a combination of crimes.

Last week, the Army prosecution succeeded in its case against Sgt Benderman. He was found guilty of "missing a movement" and sentenced to 15 months in prison, reduction in rank, and a dishonorable discharge.

Benderman's company commander Army Captain Gary Rowley rhetorically asks, "If (the rest of the Army) saw this and found out it works using smoke and mirrors to get by, we'll have other soldiers saying, 'Well, I'm a conscientious objector.' ...They need to know there are consequences for not doing their duty."

The irony drips.

Duty? How about honor? Or country?

These words have little meaning to soldiers and Marines in Iraq, trying to keep themselves and their buddies alive so they might someday do something really necessary for this country's security.

Defending its borders, setting an upright example in their communities, and working to preserve the Constitution come to mind. Heck, firefighting is a better use of their time.

Soldiers who believe Iraq is part of an honorable and just war for U.S. security are hard to find. Most understand the closest we come is in defending Halliburton and members of the puppet government, or patrolling oil fields and pipelines that may someday provide militarily subsidized oil to the United States and her loyal creditors.

The Army captain mentioned smoke and mirrors. It is a well-worn phrase in military circles today. They've heard about the smoke and mirrors used by the Bush administration to get their little war in Iraq. They've executed orders in Iraq that betray the corresponding Pentagon and White House public statements.

Our soldiers and Marines have seen the lowest grade Army Reservists punished handily for torture of uncharged detainees and prisoners, while ranking officers responsible for implementing and designing the administration's torture policy wink and nod.

Sgt Benderman is happy to explain why he is a conscientious objector. The reaction of the Army and the administration has been typical of their reaction to other examples of moral consistency. As in Caesar's time, they have been despised and persecuted.

Conscientious objectors sit atop an iceberg in American society. The unseen behemoth comprises millions of parents who are warning their kids away from military service, and turning recruiters away.

At least not while we are in Iraq, a stupid murderous little engagement pursued for reasons the President has never bothered to share with the average American.

The Army judge and jury did what they had to do. Justice demands a different verdict, but politics would tolerate nothing but the harshest punishment for the ethics and the example of Sgt Benderman.

Ironically, in a military prison cell, Benderman will be freer and doing more good for America than those doing hard time in Iraq, or pushing government propaganda through the Pentagon Channel here at home.

There has indeed been a dishonorable discharge from the United States military. But it didn't start last week, and it most assuredly wasn't Sgt Kevin Benderman.

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and inside the armed services. Send requests to address up top.

**Patton, Napoleon, Lee, Grant,
Sherman, Jackson, Hannibal,
Zhukov, Rommell, Tsun Tsu, Quintus
Viriathus:
In The Tradition Of Great Field
Commanders,
We Now Bring You:
(Gasp)
The Pentagons Official Report
On Iraq:**

Warning: No one with an IQ below 34 should attempt to read this report. Puking NOT permitted.

[Thanks to JG, who sent this in.]

Below is GEN (Ret) McCaffrey's 'Trip Report' to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

His comments about keeping the Casey/Vines/Petreus "Command Team" in place are now OBE. LTG Petreus is heading to FT Leavenworth.

All in all, an interesting read. Use discretion in further dissemination.

18 Jul 05

MEMORANDUM FOR: SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Subject: Trip Report - Kuwait and Iraq Saturday, 4 June through Saturday, 11 June 2005

1. PURPOSE:

This memo provides feedback reference visit 4-11 June 2005 by General Barry R. McCaffrey, USA (Ret.) to Kuwait and Iraq.

2. SOURCES:

- 1.. General George Casey, Commander, MNF-I - one-on-one discussions and Staff Briefings.
- 2.. LTG JR Vines, Commander MNC-I - one-on-one discussions and Staff Briefings.
- 3.. LTG Dave Petraeus, Commander, Multinational Security Transition Command - one-on-one discussions/briefings.
- 4.. LTG Robin Brims, (UK Army), Deputy Commanding General of MNF-I - one-on-one discussions.
- 5.. Charge d'Affairs James Jeffrey - office call one-on-one with U.S. Embassy Iraq.
- 6.. MG Tim Donovan (USMC), Chief of Staff, MNF-I - one-on-one discussions.
- 7.. MG Steve Johnson (USMC), Acting Commanding General, II MEF - one-on-one discussion and staff briefing.
- 8.. BG Peter Palmer and BG John Defreitas - MNF-I Operations and Intel Briefings.
- 9.. MG Rusty Findley (USAF) and Colonel Bill Hix - MNF-I Campaign Action Plan Brief.
- 10.. BG Tom Bostick - Army Corps Engineers. Gulf Region Division Brief.
- 11.. MG William Webster, Commanding General, Multi-National Division Baghdad - General Officer Briefing and 3rd ID Battle Staff briefing.

- 12.. 2nd Brigade 3rd ID Commander and Staff Briefing. Baghdad security operations.
- 13.. Ambassador Ahrif Oazi and UN Iraq Delegation - Lunch Meeting with Special Representative to the Secretary General of the UN in Iraq.
- 14.. MG Robert Heine, Acting Director IRMO (US Embassy Reconstruction Program officer) - one-on-one discussion/briefings.
- 15.. MG Hank Stratman - Political-Military-Economic Brief, US Embassy.
- 16.. MG Eldon Bargewell, Joint Contracting - one-on-one discussions.
- 17.. Field Visit. US Marine Infantry Battalion. Fallujah.
- 18.. Field Visit. US Army Mechanized Infantry Battalion. Vicinity Tikrit.
- 19.. Briefing Iraqi Army Brigade Commander. Fallujah.
- 20.. Briefing by U.S. Army Embedded Training Team. Fallujah ISF Army brigade.
- 21.. Briefing USMC Embedded Trainer. Fallujah Police.
- 22.. Briefing U.S. Army Captain. Embedded Training Team. ISF Army Infantry Battalion- Vicinity Tikrit.
- 23.. Briefing Iraqi Army Colonel. ISF Training Center. Vicinity Tikrit.
- 24.. Lunch discussions. Iraqi Army Battalion XO, S3, SGM. Vicinity Tikrit.
- 25.. Live Fire Demo/Briefing. Iraqi Army Commando Battalion.
- 26.. Demo/Briefing Iraqi Police ERU (Emergency Response Unit). Baghdad.
- 27.. Field Sensing Session. US Army combat division. Fifteen U.S. Army Company Grade Officers.
- 28.. Field Sensing Session. US Army combat Battalion. Junior Enlisted Soldiers.
- 29.. Field Sensing Sessions. U.S. Army/Navy/Air Force/Marine Senior NCO's.
- 30.. Discussion Sessions. Two U.S. Contractor Teams (Logistics and Security) -- Senior Leadership

3. THE BOTTOM LINE---Observations from Operation Iraql Freedom: June 2005:

1st - US Military Forces in Iraq are superb. Our Army-Marine ground combat units with supporting Air and Naval Power are characterized by quality military leadership, solid discipline, high morale, and enormous individual and unit courage.

Unit effectiveness is as good as we can get. This is the most competent and battle wise force in our nation's history. They are also beautifully cared for by the chain-of-command --and they know it. (Food, A/C sleeping areas, medical care, mental health care, home leave, phone/e-mail contact with families, personal equipment, individual and unit training, targeted economic incentives in the battle area, visibility of tactical leadership, home station care for their families, access to news information, etc).

2nd - The point of the US war effort is to create legitimate and competent Iraqi national, provincial, and municipal governance. We are at a turning point in the coming six months. The momentum is now clearly with the Iraqi Government and the Coalition Security Forces. The Sunnis are coming into the political process. They will vote in December. Unlike the Balkans--the Iraqis want this to succeed. Foreign fighters are an enormously lethal threat to the Iraqi civilian population, the ISF, and Coalition Forces in that order.

However, they will be an increasing political disaster for the insurgency. Over time they are actually adding to the credibility of the emerging Iraqi government. We should expect to see a dwindling number of competent, suicide capable Jihadist. Those who come to Iraq--will be rapidly killed in Iraq. The picture by next summer will be unfavorable to recruiting foreigners to die in Iraq while attacking fellow Arabs.

7 The initial US/UK OIF intervention took down a criminal regime and left a nation without an operational State.

7 The transitional Bremer-appointed Iraqi government created a weak state of warring factions.

7 The January 2005 Iraqi elections created the beginnings of legitimacy and have fostered a supportive political base to create the new Iraqi Security Forces.

7 The August Iraqi Constitutional Referendum and the December-January election and formation of a new government will build the prototype for the evolution of an effective, law-based Iraqi State with a reliable Security Force.

7 January thru September 2006 will be the peak period of the insurgency --and the bottom rung of the new Iraq. The positive trend lines following the January 2006 elections (if they continue) will likely permit the withdrawal of substantial US combat forces by late summer of 2006. With 250,000 Iraqi Security Forces successfully operating in support of a government which includes substantial Sunni participation--the energy will start rapidly draining out of the insurgency.

3rd - The Iraqi Security Forces are now a real and hugely significant factor. LTG Dave Petraeus has done a brilliant job with his supporting trainers. **[Kiss kiss kiss]**

7 169,000 Army and Police exist in various stages of readiness. They have uniforms, automatic weapons, body armor, some radios, some armor, light trucks, and battalion-level organization. At least 60,000 are courageous Patriots who are actively fighting. By next summer--250,000 Iraqi troops and 10 division HQS will be the dominant security factor in Iraq.

7 However, much remains to be done. There is no maintenance or logistics system. There is no national command and control. Corruption is a threat factor of greater long-range danger than the armed insurgency. The Insurgents have widely infiltrated the ISF. The ISF desperately needs more effective, long-term NCO and Officer training.

7 Finally, the ISF absolutely must have enough helicopter air mobility (120+ Black Hawk UH 60's) --and a substantial number of armored vehicles to lower casualties and give them a competitive edge over the insurgents they will fight. (2000 up-armor Humvee's, 500 ASV's, and 2000 M113A3's with add-on armor package)

4. Top CENTCOM Vulnerabilities:

1st - Premature drawdown of U.S. ground forces driven by dwindling U.S. domestic political support and the progressive deterioration of Army and Marine manpower. (In particular, the expected melt-down of the Army National Guard and Army Reserve in the coming 36 months)

2nd - Alienation of the U.S. Congress or the American people caused by Iraqi public ingratitude and corruption.

3rd - Political ineptitude of Shia civil leadership that freezes out the Sunnis and creates a civil war during our drawdown.

4th - "The other shoe" - a war with North Korea, Venezuela, Syria, Iran, or Cuba that draws away U.S. military forces and political energy.

5th - The loss or constraint of our logistics support bases in Kuwait. Clearly we need constant diplomatic attention and care to this vital Ally. If Kuwait became unstable or severely alienated to US Military objectives in the region-then our posture in Iraq would be placed in immediate fatal peril.

6th - Open intervention by Iranian intelligence or military forces to support rogue Shia Iraqi insurgency. (Assassination of Sustani-armed rebellion by Sadr)

7th - Continued under-manning and too rapid turnover in State Department inter-agency representation in Iraq.

8th - Lack of continuity in CENTCOM strategic and operational senior leadership. The CENTCOM military leadership we now have is a collective national treasure. **[KISS KISS KISS!!]**

7 General Abizaid's value to the War effort based on his credibility to US Military Forces --and ability to communicate and relate to the Iraqi emergent leadership-- cannot be overstated. **[Come on guys, rent a room.]**

7 The combination of a three-star tactical Headquarters (LTG John Vines is the most experienced and effective operational battle leader we have produced in a generation) - [OK, rent a suite] and an in-country four-star strategic commander (Gen

George Casey) has improved the situation from the overwhelmed, under-resourced Bremer-Sanchez ad hoc arrangement.

7 LTG Dave Petraeus has done a superb job building the ISF. **Relationships are everything in this campaign. [Hey, what happened to Don't Ask, Don't Tell?] We need to lock in our senior team for the coming 24 months.**

7 Suggest that the three key US/Coalition military HQS of Casey-Petraeus-Vines need to stop unit rotation and go to individual replacement rotation.

7 The very senior U.S. military leadership needs their families based in a Kuwait compound with periodic visits authorized. (We did this with General Abrams and his senior leaders during the final phase of Vietnam.) [Yeah, and we all know how that one turned out.]

5. The Enemy Threat:

1st - The Iraqi Insurgency threat is enormously more complex than Vietnam.

7 There we faced a single opposing ideology; known enemy leaders; a template enemy organizational structure; an external sanctuary which was vital to the insurgency to bring in fighters, ammunition, resources; and relative security in urban areas under Allied/Vietnamese Government control.

7 Iraq is much tougher. The enemy forces in this struggle are principally Sunni irredentists-- but there is also a substantial criminal class determined to murder, rob, kidnap and create chaos.

7 We also face a small but violent foreign Jihadist terrorist element. These terrorists do not depend on foreign sanctuary. They can arm themselves with the incredible mass of munitions and weapons scattered from one end of Iraq to the other.

7 Finally, Iraq is encircled by six bordering nations -- all of whom harbor ill-will for the struggling democratic Iraqi state.

2nd - On the positive side of the ledger:

7 High Sunni voting turnout and political participation in December will likely set the conditions for the down hill slide of the insurgency.

7 The insurgency can no longer mass against Coalition forces with units greater than squad level -- they all get killed in short order by very aggressive US/UK combat Forces. The insurgents have been forced to principally target the weak links-- the Iraqi Police and innocent civilians. This will be a counter-productive strategy in the mid-term. It has been forced on them by the effective counter-insurgency operations and information operations of Coalition forces.

7 Insurgents now have a reduced capability to attack Coalition forces by direct fire: 80% (+) of the attacks are carried out with standoff weapons or suicide bombings (mortars, rockets, IEDs). [Oops, total ignorance of insurgency strategy and tactics confirmed.]

7 Suicide IED attack is enormously effective. However, it will soon likely become a fragile tool. The Jihadists will begin to run short of human bombs. Most are killed or die while carrying out missions which are marginally effective. This must be a prime enemy vulnerability for Coalition information warfare operations.

7 We must continue to level with the American people. We still have a five year fight facing us in Iraq.

3rd - The Fallujah Situation:

7 The city has huge symbolic importance throughout Mideast.

7 Unrealistic expectations were raised on how rapidly the Coalition could rebuild.

7 The City appears to be an angry disaster.

Money doesn't rebuild infrastructure - bulldozers and workers and cement do. The Coalition needs an Iraqi/Coalition effort principally executed by military engineers --and thousands of Iraqi workers--to re-build the City. We need a "Pierre L'Enfant" of Fallujah.

7 Police stations are planned but barely started. The train station is mined and the trains do not function. Roads must be paved. We need to eliminate major signs of US caused war damage, etc.

6. Coalition Public Diplomacy Policy is a disaster:

1st - The US media is putting the second team in Iraq with some exceptions. Unfortunately, the situation is extremely dangerous for journalists. The working conditions for a reporter are terrible. They cannot travel independently of US military forces without risking abduction or death. In some cases, the press has degraded to reporting based on secondary sources, press briefings which they do not believe, and alarmist video of the aftermath of suicide bombings obtained from Iraqi employees of unknown reliability.

2nd - Our unbelievably competent, articulate, objective, and courageous Battalion, Brigade, and Division Commanders are not on TV. These commanders represent an Army-Marine Corps which is rated as the most trusted institution in America by every poll.

3rd - We are not aggressively providing support (transportation, security, food, return of film to an upload site, etc) to reporters to allow them to follow the course of the war.

4th - Military leaders on the ground are talking to people they trust instead of talking to all reporters who command the attention of the American people. (We need to educate and support AP, Reuters, Gannet, Hearst, the Washington Post, the New York Times, etc.)

7. SUMMARY: **[Here comes the happy talk from the lice at the end of the tunnel.]**

a.. This is the darkness before dawn in the efforts to construct a viable Iraqi state. The enterprise was badly launched --but we are now well organized and beginning to develop successful momentum. The future outcomes are largely a function of the degree to which Iraqi men and women will overcome fear and step forward to seize the leadership opportunity to create a new future.

b.. We face some very difficult days in the coming 2-5 years. In my judgment, if we retain the support of the American people --we can achieve our objectives of creating a law-based Iraqi state which will be an influencing example on the entire region.

c.. A successful outcome would potentially usher in a very dramatically changed environment throughout the Middle East and signal in this region the end of an era of incompetent and corrupt government which fosters frustration and violence on the part of much of the population.

d.. It was an honor and a very encouraging experience to visit CENTCOM forces in Iraq and Kuwait and see the progress achieved by the bravery and dedication of our military forces.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers.

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/> And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.net)

Front-Line Fighter Has Deadly Flaw: Navy Brass Stonewalled & Refuse To Act

Failure to fix the problem "could lead to loss of use of the antiskid system, loss of normal brakes and potential loss of aircraft and life," Geron warned.

[Thanks to PB, who sent this in.]

Aug 4 By TED BRIDIS, Associated Press Writer

The front-line fighter jet of the Navy and Marines has suffered a series of recent accidents blamed on brake failure, exposing a problem that has spurred urgent warnings from commanders, military documents obtained by The Associated Press show.

Brake problems affecting the F/A-18 Hornet pose "a severe hazard to Naval aviation" that could kill pilots and ruin valuable aircraft, a Navy air wing commander wrote last year after one of his jets roared off a runway and splashed into San Diego Bay, destroying the \$30 million plane.

Many of the brake failures have been traced to a \$535 electrical cable — about as thin as a drinking straw — that controls the jet's antiskid brakes, the equivalent of antilock brakes on a passenger car. Investigators say the cable can chafe or break, since it runs close to where heavy tie-down chains secure the jets to a carrier deck.

One Navy pilot aborted a landing last fall when his brakes failed after a combat mission over Iraq. He took off again, circled the runway in Kuwait for a second landing attempt, then lowered his tailhook and caught the emergency arresting cable on the ground. He was not hurt and there was no damage to the jet.

A month earlier, a Marine commander was seriously injured when he ejected after he lost his brakes landing on a short runway at Marine Corps headquarters in Quantico, Va. Other failures have occurred as recently as February.

Lt. Jason Walker, low on fuel, was landing in San Diego at night after two unsuccessful landing attempts aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln. The jet's brakes failed one second after touchdown, and, among other problems, Walker couldn't find the cockpit controls to engage emergency backup brakes. He ejected as the jet sped off the runway and into the bay at 60 mph. The Navy determined Walker shouldn't be disciplined.

"He stood on the brakes as much as possible but the aircraft was still not slowing," investigators wrote, concluding his brake cable severed.

The Navy last fall ordered fleetwide inspections of brake components, instructed mechanics to immediately replace any cables they previously had repaired and reminded pilots about procedures to help land safely even when antiskid brakes fail.

But fresh problems have surfaced.

At AP's request, the Naval Safety Center in Norfolk, Va., located about two-dozen formal reports describing failures of the Hornet's antiskid brakes since 1990.

The incidents caused the loss of one jet, damage of at least \$1 million to another, damage of up to \$200,000 on three additional jets, one serious injury and one other overnight hospital stay.

Officials acknowledge that their tally of formal reports probably understates the number of brake failures. One report filed in January referred to 14 Hornet brake failures and tire blowouts in a single squadron during 2004 alone.

"This trend of brake failures and blown tires cannot be ignored," Marine Col. Earl S. Wederbrook wrote to senior Navy and Marine officials after one of his jets spun backward on a runway from a blown tire in California. "Short of an aircraft system fix ... the pilot is the only control measure that can mitigate this hazard."

The Navy also told the AP that based on its investigation so far, redesigning the brake system is unwarranted and would require lengthy and costly new safety reviews.

Some commanders urged the Navy to do more.

"Ultimately, the wiring harness needs to be protected or redesigned," Cmdr. John R. "J.D." Dixon wrote to senior Navy officials after brakes failed in February on a Hornet speeding 115 mph down a runway at Lemoore Naval Air Station in California's San Joaquin Valley.

The jet blew two tires when the pilot activated emergency backup brakes. The incident happened months after the Navy's new mandatory inspections and training, and mechanics traced the problem to the same brake cable. The same problem was discovered later on another jet in the same squadron.

After last year's accident in San Diego, Naval air-wing commander M.C. Geron also wrote to the chief of naval operations to urge the service to improve the brake system.

Failure to fix the problem "could lead to loss of use of the antiskid system, loss of normal brakes and potential loss of aircraft and life," Geron warned.

Investigators and documents also said the Navy's instructions and computerized simulators do not train pilots adequately for brake hazards.

"The brake problem and loss-of-directional-control-on-ground emergency procedures are confusing," wrote investigators in the San Diego accident.

Days after the crash in San Diego harbor, the Navy used a heavy crane to hoist the destroyed jet out of the sea. The call sign "Lucky" was stenciled outside Walker's waterlogged cockpit.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“Fuck Fighting For Fatcats”

From: Z

To: GI Special
Sent: August 03, 2005 7:01 PM
Subject: fuck fighting for fatcats

An excerpt from 'Battle Cry of Freedom' by James McPherson, pages 612-613:

Many of the men who deserted from Confederate armies during the winter of 1862-63 agreed with a Mississippi farmer who went AWOL because he "did not propose to fight for the rich men while they were at home having a good time."

Many of these deserters joined with draft-evaders in backcountry regions to form guerrilla bands that resisted Confederate authority and virtually ruled whole counties.

Clearly, people are quite capable of recognizing a rotten cause when they see it, and taking appropriate action.

Solidarity,
Z

Bush And His Cronies Are The Real Enemies Of Freedom.

August 06, 2005 Roger Duncan, The Roanoke Times

Despite his presumed madness and regardless of the number of WMD he did or didn't have, Saddam didn't have the power to remove a single iota of freedom from any American. No action he could take could conceivably result in a loss of freedom. There was never even the slightest of chances that we would see an Iraqi invasion force land on our shores.

Now, one may be able to argue that his remaining in power hypothetically threatened Americans.

But taking someone's life and taking someone's freedom are two different things. Saddam could only kill me; he couldn't take my freedom.

So logically, it isn't freedom that our troops are fighting for, but security. But I suppose that makes a somewhat less poetic rallying cry.

Now, the president is a different story. He can actually take away a great deal of my freedom. And boy, has he been busy!

Ironic that we're actually called to sacrifice portions of our freedom for the Patriot Act, and the justification is that it preserves freedom. Talk about Orwellian.

Bush and his cronies are therefore, logically, the real enemies of freedom.

Lest you think me a member of the John Kerry fan club, I think it's fair to say that there are no greater enemies of freedom than the liberals. I just think that, in this case, ol' W is giving them a run for their money.

So, let's be honest with ourselves in this debate. Let's not lie and proclaim "Give me liberty or give me death!" when what we really mean is "I'm a coward; I surrender the freedoms my forefathers died for in order to save my miserable hide!"

Is that not, after all, exactly what we mean?

"In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act." -- George Orwell, "1984."

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to contact@militaryproject.org. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Iraq's Defense Ministry Stinks Of Corruption & Incompetence: U.S. Military Defeat Assured As Occupation Planners Move To Organize Iraqi "Equivalent Of Pentagon"

There are also indications of widespread corruption involving the ministry's purchases of equipment using its own money.

Iraqi authorities said last month that they were investigating possible kickbacks in connection with more than \$300 million in purchases of defective and outdated helicopters, machine guns and armored personnel carriers by the department's former procurement chief.

03 August 2005 By David S. Cloud, The New York Times

Baghdad - The reformed Iraqi Ministry of Defense, a crucial element of any American plan to withdraw troops, is riddled with crippling problems that have raised concerns

about its ability to keep Iraqi units paid, fed and equipped once it assumes full responsibility for the army, American and Iraqi commanders say.

The shortcomings of the ministry, which was overhauled under the American occupation authorities last year, are a growing concern to the American commanders. Hoping to withdraw large numbers of the 135,000 American combat troops in the next year, these commanders say their plans hinge on a functioning ministry. If American troops leave without one in place, they say, the Iraqi Army could quickly collapse.

"What are lacking are the systems that pay people, that supply people, that recruit people, that replace the wounded and AWOL, and systems that promote people and provide spare parts," said a top American commander in Iraq, who asked not to be identified because his assessment of Iraqi abilities went beyond the military's public descriptions.

"If they don't have that capability, we won't be able to take the training wheels off and let them operate independently," the commander said.

Iraqi soldiers complain that they lack some crucial equipment for fighting the insurgents, especially armored vehicles.

While much of the equipment for the new army is provided by the United States and other foreign governments, the ministry is nominally in charge of distributing it to troops from supply depots being created all around the country.

Even routine equipment and supply requests are supposed to be cleared by ministry officials, but there are not enough people to handle the job or procedures in place to ensure that it is done smoothly.

Instead, American trainers embedded with each Iraqi unit often have to step in to ensure that necessary equipment is delivered, several American officers said.

The ministry has responsibility for feeding troops and for operating the growing number of bases where soldiers are stationed around the country, but those jobs are handled largely by Iraqi contractors, many of whom came close to shutting down their operations last month after not being paid for weeks, American officials said.

There are also indications of widespread corruption involving the ministry's purchases of equipment using its own money.

Iraqi authorities said last month that they were investigating possible kickbacks in connection with more than \$300 million in purchases of defective and outdated helicopters, machine guns and armored personnel carriers by the department's former procurement chief.

The ministry has not yet put in place a system for commanding units in the field, American and Iraqi officials said.

Although the army's ground forces headquarters officially opened in May, in July its operations center, which is supposed to keep track of units and transmit

orders from the country's civilian authorities and top generals, still was not operational.

American officials accept some of the responsibility for the ministry's shortcomings, saying they focused initially on building combat units to fight insurgents.

Only now, they admit, are they putting comparable effort into developing Iraq's equivalent of the Pentagon.

The top-ranked Iraqi military leader, Gen. Abdul Qader Mohammed Jassim, placed blame for many of the army's woes on the decision by the American occupation authorities last year to hire civilians, who lacked extensive military experience.

Equipment purchases and the awarding of contracts have been hampered by cronyism and corruption, he said, and some army commands have been handed out because of family and tribal connections.

At one point the buyers at the Defense Ministry chose civilian radios that he said were suitable for taxis, not for the secure communications required for the military.

"The problem is that the Americans made mistakes when they hired the wrong people at the Ministry of Defense," General Jassim said in an interview. "These people are corrupt."

Among the ministry officials hired by the Coalition Provisional Authority, which administered Iraq until last year, was Ziad Tariq Cattan, an Iraqi who had spent years abroad before the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and, in 2004, became the ministry's top weapons buyer.

An American military official, who would not speak for attribution because the Iraqi investigation was continuing, said Mr. Cattan was being investigated for possible misuse of Iraqi funds and receiving kickbacks in connection with several major contracts.

Mr. Sirhan, the spokesman for the Defense Ministry, confirmed that Mr. Cattan "was fired from the ministry a month ago by a decision issued from the prime minister council due to the accusations" of procurement fraud.

The ministry has overcome its lack of internal support troops by employing private Iraqi companies to deliver food and other daily necessities. But that approach has brought its own problems.

In early July, several companies that supply food, sanitation, electricity and other services to Iraqi troops threatened to halt operations because they had not been paid in months. American commanders, worried that thousands of soldiers without food would leave their bases, pressed ministry officials to negotiate stopgap payments, according to American officials.

Gen. George W. Casey Jr., the top American commander in Iraq, warned Iraqi officials last month that if soldiers were not fed, there was a danger of units

collapsing as soldiers went AWOL, according to two American officers. "It was resolved, but it was a little bit of a drama," said one of the officers.

The soldiers in the field know firsthand about the ministry's problems.

When Sgt. Ameer Jabar Talb, a stocky 26-year-old, joined the new Iraqi Army, he received a uniform, an AK-47 assault rifle and a poorly made flak vest that wore out within three months.

But his requests for replacement body armor, sent to the Ministry of Defense, went unheeded for months, Sergeant Talb said. Exasperated, he finally spent \$100 of his own money on a new flak jacket.

"The Ministry of Defense is useless," he said, pointing to the discarded vest by his barracks desk.

Winning More Friends: For The Armed Resistance That Is



An Iraqi woman speaks to a U.S. soldier from the seventh infantry division and an interpreter working for the U.S. army searching inside her house during a patrol in Baghdad August 2, 2005. REUTERS/Andrea Comas

There's nothing quite like invading somebody else's country and busting into their houses by force to arouse an intense desire to kill you in the patriotic, self-respecting civilians who live there.

But your commanders know that, don't they? Don't they?

**OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION
BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!**

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

***Traitors, Idiots Or Idiotic Traitors?* Bush Regime Opens Door To Torture Of American War Prisoners**

"We've lowered the bar ourselves - if X-Y-Z is OK for us to do, it's OK for the same treatment to be meted out to our people if they're captured," he said. "It's not rocket science; it's the Golden Rule."

08/04/2005 By Matthew D. LaPlante, The Salt Lake Tribune. Salt Lake Tribune reporter Robert Gehrke contributed to this report.

For much of his Army career David Irvine preached a kinder, gentler interrogation style: Legal under international military law, effective against the most stubborn enemy, and - above all - moral.

Satisfied that his instruction to would-be interrogators was consistent with Army-wide tactics, the retired brigadier general was crushed, last year, when he learned his nation's flag had flown over prisons where U.S. troops abused suspected enemy fighters.

And the horror of it all, the Salt Lake City resident says, is that none of it ever needed to happen.

"What has gone on over the past few years is completely off the book," he said.

That book, the Army Field Manual for Intelligence Interrogations, directs soldiers to use its principles and techniques within the constraints of the Hague and Geneva Conventions and the Uniform Code of Military Justice - noting repeatedly that "the use of force, mental torture, threats, insults, or exposure to unpleasant and inhumane treatment of any kind is prohibited by law and is neither authorized nor condoned by the U.S. Government."

Those instructions, Irvine fears, have been all but forgotten in a new world of warfare.

On Monday, Arizona Republican John McCain stepped onto the U.S. Senate Floor and read a letter signed by Irvine and 10 other former high-ranking military officers, encouraging approval of amendments to a defense bill that would define the term "enemy combatants" and tighten existing law prohibiting cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment of prisoners.

In essence, the letter stated, future interrogations of detainees in Defense Department custody should simply conform to the Army's manual.

"Had the manual been followed across the board, we would have been spared the pain of the prisoner abuse scandal," the officers wrote.

McCain agreed.

"The Army Field Manual and its various editions have served America well, through wars against both regular and irregular foes," he told Senate colleagues. "The manual embodies the values Americans have embraced for generations while preserving the ability of our interrogators to extract critical intelligence from ruthless foes. Never has this been more important than today in the midst of the war on terror."

The White House has threatened to veto the legislation if it is passed. On Tuesday, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist attempted to prevent a vote on the McCain amendment and several others by limiting debate on the bill. Utah Sens. Orrin Hatch and Bob Bennett voted in favor of limiting debate, but when the vote failed, Frist pulled the bill off the Senate schedule.

Hatch's staff declined comment on the vote, but Bennett spokeswoman Emily Christensen said her boss' vote was not intended to prevent the passage of any specific amendment.

"Senator Bennett does not condone the mistreatment of enemy prisoners and has expressed outrage at the reports of prisoner abuse," Christensen said. "He believes, however, that these incidents are an anomaly and supports the administration position that the Department of Defense has the necessary policies in place to deal with these issues."

She said Bennett's vote to end debate was intended only to speed along passage of the entire \$491 billion bill. But after Frist decided to pull the bill, and with the Senate headed into a month-long recess, future action isn't expected until after Labor Day.

Irvine doesn't buy Bennett's "anomaly" argument - or the contention the Defense Department is prepared to deal with abuses.

"The Army explanation that these acts are being ginned up by a half dozen low-ranking reserve soldiers just doesn't ring true," he said, noting that the photographs of abuses in Abu Ghraib have been followed by descriptions of abuses in other prisons - implicating many dozens of other soldiers and making the purported ignorance of senior officers implausible.

"It is obvious that there has been a complete breakdown of command discipline and a complete departure for the Army's policy on treating prisoners of war," he said.

Irvine disregards claims of those who say tougher techniques are necessary to extract information from religious zealots, noting that Israel, which "got very good at torture" in its struggle against its Arabic enemies, has banned the practice. The former chief interrogator for Israel's General Security Services, Michael Koubi, has said the most important skill for an interrogator is to know the prisoner's language - something the U.S. military has struggled with.

Since his retirement, Koubi has questioned whether torture, as a means of extracting valuable intelligence, is worth its moral price.

Others have no doubt whatsoever.

"Torture," said McCain, whose five years in a North Vietnam prison gave him some experience with the matter, "doesn't work."

Nonetheless, in the classes Irvine taught, there was always someone who felt the Field Guide's provisions didn't go far enough. "There are always going to be those who feel that the ends justifies the means," he said. "Those who feel the training they got was too Mickey Mouse for the circumstances they find themselves in."

Acting on such seductive thinking, he said, results in the forfeiture of "any moral objection to similar kinds of treatment."

And that scares him most of all.

"We've lowered the bar ourselves - if X-Y-Z is OK for us to do, it's OK for the same treatment to be meted out to our people if they're captured," he said. "It's not rocket science; it's the Golden Rule."

Received:

Texas Law: Fighting Words And More

From: David Honish, Veterans For Peace
To: GI Special
Sent: August 07, 2005

In Texas there is a legal term "fighting words" that is all the legal justification one needs to become physically violent with another as long as no weapons are used.

Essentially, if you curse, or vilify someone, or make rude comments about their mother, they have a legal right to punch your lights out, so long as they only use their fists.

That does not mean that doing so will not get you a night in jail until you can post bail or see a judge about your being verbally provoked, but it is an affirmative defense against conviction for assault.

Yep, things are different down here.

You don't see the 'easy rider gunracks' in the back window of pickup trucks so much like you used to see in the '70s. It is still legal to carry a loaded & uncased rifle or shotgun in your vehicle, or walk down the street with it for that matter. You could do it most anywhere except a church, school, courthouse, or any place that serves or sells alcoholic beverages.

The reason you don't see them in every other truck anymore is that the bad guys figured out they'd be pretty easy to steal by just breaking a car or truck window.

Another reason is that while it might be legal for me to walk out my door and carry a rifle down the street, if I did so I could expect to spend some time face down on the pavement & handcuffed until the local cops had satisfied themselves that I had no outstanding warrants or was up to nothing evil.

Once that was figured out, they would have no choice but to return my rifle and send me on my way with nothing more than a lecture about how discretion might avoid confrontation with law enforcement.

Handguns are another matter. The TX Department of Public Safety conservatively estimates that 2/3 of TX motorists have a loaded handgun in the car. We do have concealed carry permits, that cost the individual a couple hundred dollars and require periodic renewal. Seems we have to pay the state for the right to defend ourselves ALMOST always. Again that church, school, courthouse, AND amusement parks thing comes up as prohibited sites to carry concealed. Alcohol joints get a little tricky with a concealed carry permit. Carry in bars is prohibited.

The dividing line between a restaurant that serves alcoholic beverages and a bar is if the restaurant derives more than 51% of their total revenue from alcoholic beverage sales, they are treated the same as bars under the law. It IS however legal for concealed carry in stores that sell alcoholic beverages.

Even more arcane is the still on the books "traveler's exemption" which is a left over from the 19th century. Essentially it states that while a citizen may not unless otherwise authorized, (concealed carry or peace officer), habitually carry a handgun on their person, if they are engaged in travel outside their home county for purposes of staying overnight they may carry a concealed handgun only as long as they are engaged in traveling. Essentially, if I wanted to go spend a weekend in Austin, I can pack iron w/o a permit until I get there. Once I arrive at my destination the exemption is no longer valid.

I figure if I have no conflict with the law, it won't be an issue.

Also if I have a valid reason to use a firearm, it also will not be a legal problem. I'm only working part time and am not flush with disposable income at the moment.

I also see the concealed permit law as almost racist, and certainly class warfare in that a high price, essentially half to 2/3 the cost of a decent handgun, is required to be paid in fees to the state and mandatory training for a concealed carry permit.

While a holster under a shirt or jacket would be a clear violation without a permit, the popular stealth fanny paks with quick release pull cords that open up to reveal your handgun ARE A COMPLETELY ENCLOSED GUN CASE.

It is legal in most states to transport an unloaded and completely enclosed in a case firearm. I'm presently carrying a .40 S&W auto in one, but unloaded with a few loaded magazines in the bag.

Got a stopwatch? Want me to show you how it can be drawn, loaded, and the slide racked & ready for business in less than 2 seconds? Better to have it and not need it than the other way around.

What would really be nice is if there was national legislation modeled on the Vermont State Law. In Vermont, ANY CITIZEN who is not a convicted felon or has been court committed for mental health treatment can carry a concealed handgun. No permit required. No taxes or fees to the state. It seems that some folks understand that when all the good guys are free to shoot back, it tends to moderate criminal behavior.

"A kind word and a gun go further than a kind word alone." Wild Bill Hickok

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