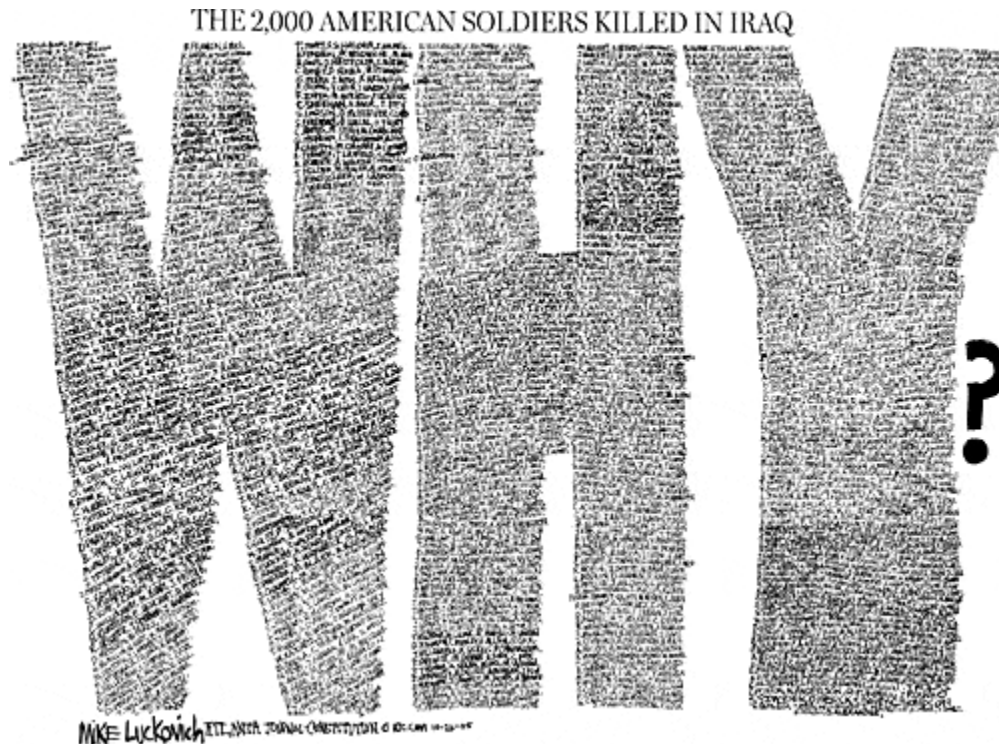


GI SPECIAL 3C99:



“The Betrayal”
**“To Remain Bound To An
Expired Commitment - Exposed
To Prolonged Peril In Support
Of An Unjustifiable Cause - Was
Beyond My Expectations”**

[Undated] By Daniel Goetz; Operation Truth.com. Daniel Goetz is currently serving in Samarra, Iraq. This is from his blog.



Seven months ago, my service in the army was to have terminated. Instead, I am in Iraq for the second time. I sit next to a DOD contractor whose job is identical to mine. Except he makes \$120,000 more, works four hours less, and visits home four times more often than I do.

I am not alone in my anger and humiliation. When we were here in 2003, there was anger, but there is a difference between anger and bitter hatred.

The atmosphere of discontent is thick and contagious. Even soldiers not stop-lossed feel The Betrayal.

They know it might be them next time.

Dissent will not change anything for us now because our voices are muted. Still, there is hope. It is that in twenty years, it will be these men and women in office. Perhaps, that alone should make me feel better.

I don't think it is enough, though, for our wounded and fallen. I can't speak for them, of course. Not yet, at least.

I joined the army soon after I finished college; the decision was an amalgamation of desire to serve, to belong, and to repay student loans. I wanted the challenge to see if I really could be all I could be. Our country was a vastly different place then; one in which policemen, firemen, and servicemembers were no different than any other American. I had almost completed my two years of training to become an Arabic linguist when September Eleventh dramatically changed the nation's climate. I knew my own role would be pivotal, and was eager to see our country avenged on the battlefield.

Until then, I had a rather dim view of the army. Their promise to repay my college loans turned out to be false, and I was left to shoulder the massive burden of debt alone.

My dismay melted away in the patriotic euphoria that enveloped the country in the run-up to our invasion of Iraq. Like the rest of the America, I clung fervently to the justifications for it. The underlying righteousness was my source of motivation when we crossed the Kuwait-Iraq border in March of 2003.

In the months that were to follow, those justifications collapsed - and with them, my confidence in a nation.

In those days, my colleagues and I would often patrol the streets of Baghdad with the infantry in a bid to quell boredom. We were also looking for hope among the Iraqi people; we could live vicariously through their optimism, and perhaps therein find meaning for our occupation.

But hope betrayed us as the insurgency swelled. It was when the fighting began again in earnest that we left Iraq. By the end of August, I was back in The United States, free to pretend Iraq never happened.

But it had. And nothing could wrench the darkest memories from repression like the knowledge that we were to return.

Worse, our year in America was wasted.

Almost every week, CSPAN would feature one committee or another complaining that our armed forces hadn't enough servicemembers in critical jobs like intelligence and military police.

I wanted them to know how poorly we were thought of in our own units, and how little job-specific training we received before we left.

At one point, we were told to study Arabic only on our own time. That was hardly possible when we were kept late every night, sometimes doing only menial tasks like weapons-cleaning until three in the morning.

The last straw was "stop loss".

My enlistment contract ended in March of this year. It is seven months hence, and I am still in Iraq. I propose that, in order for me to respect my commitment, the army ought to respect the contract we agreed upon.

It was for five years, not six.

Proponents of this form of conscription argue that I signed it nonetheless, fully aware of possible outcomes.

True, I ought to have prepared myself better. But to remain bound to an expired commitment - exposed to prolonged peril in support of an unjustifiable cause - was beyond my expectations.

Today, I find the greatest challenge of the army is to find honor in service.

I don't ever regret having joined because I've learned so much about myself and about America. I have faith in both, but yearn for hope to become reality.

I want to go home as badly as I want to be proud of my country again.

MORE:

“My Internet Access Has Become Restricted”



October 24, 2005 Matt, The Tattered Coat [Excerpt]

Months ago, in response to a post I wrote about the military blogger Colby Buzzell, Kate of Broken Windows told me to pay attention to Daniel Goetz, a soldier writing a blog called All the King's Horses.

Regrettably, I never followed her advice. And now, as Lizzy, Fred, and Navyswan tell us, it is too late.

It is too late because Daniel has been silenced, against his will. And not only has he been silenced — he has been forced to publicly declare himself "a supporter of the administration and of her policies."

A stop-lossed soldier angry that he is still serving in Iraq, seven months beyond his original enlistment agreement, Daniel is no longer free to post on his blog. Though he had taken care to adhere to the code of conduct to which he is bound, it is likely that a post of his on the Operation Truth website brought his views to the attention of military officials.

Daniel's final post is heart-breaking; the single most chilling thing about it, if you know your Orwell, is its title:

Double Plus Ungood.

"I thank all of you who have been so supportive recently. I have never before received so much positive feedback, and it was very heart-warming to know that so many people out there care. Having said that, it breaks my heart to say that this will be my last post on this blog. I wish I could just stop there, but I can not. The following also needs to be said:

"For the record, I am officially a supporter of the administration and of her policies. I am a proponent for the war against terror and I believe in the mission in Iraq. I understand my role in that mission, and I accept it. I understand that I signed the contract which makes stop loss legal, and I retract any statements I made in the past that contradict this one. Furthermore, I have the utmost confidence in the leadership of my chain of command, including (but not limited to) the president George Bush and the honorable secretary of defense Rumsfeld. If I have ever written anything on this site or on others that lead the reader to believe otherwise, please consider this a full and complete retraction.

"I apologize for any misunderstandings that might understandably arise from this. Should you continue to have questions, please feel free to contact me through e-mail. I promise to respond personally to each, but it may take some time; my internet access has become restricted.

"posted by Daniel at Saturday, October 22, 2005

"Daniel remembers now: Oceania has always been at war with Eastasia."

It's one thing when a civilian blogger like me uses Orwellian language to describe the current administration and its policies. It's something else, entirely, when someone feeling the brunt force of authoritarian rule pulls out his copy of 1984.

If you want to know what Daniel sounded like before, and observe the brilliance and care with which he suggested his views, read this post:

"S.O.S.

"We - the forlorn Atlas, who bears the burden of lofty decisions - salute you, the free. May this day be a blessing to you and yours as you celebrate your freedom from the clutches of tyranny and strife. May your beer be as cold as the hearts of your enemies and your fireworks carry the zeal of your patriotism.

"On this day, may you not be napalmed by an invading Army. May you not be tortured for a parking violation. Today, may your hometown not be bombed. When you sit down to eat tonight, may armed men not barge into your house and search your wife's underwear drawer. May you not be zip-tied, marched outside, beaten and shot in the face.

"God Save America."

"God, save America."

Daniel wrote "S.O.S." on July 04, 2005, in the rockets' red glare.

Michael Farrell, a retired soldier writing on The Defeatists, considered Daniel's final post and reflected on the limits of a soldier's duty:

"I swore to uphold the Constitution of the United States and obey the officers appointed over me; I didn't swear to uphold the officeholders appointed or elected over me. So, forbid blogging; forbid email; forbid streaming videos; forbid the whole digital world and while I think you're fucking idiots, I could salute and support it.

"But, hit those who are critical of policy and threaten them with punishment — surprising how many articles of the Uniformed Code of Military Justice list as death maximum punishment, which can get your attention — and we got a beef."

In his second-to-last post, Daniel wrote about the importance of speaking out:

"Operation Truth has published my story as their Veteran of the Week profile. I am excited and nervous for the extra attention this will attract. Excited because the army is trying very hard to muffle the cries of battered soldiers, abused by the system they are sworn to protect.

"Each time our story is heard by someone new, the country comes that much closer to understanding what is happening to us in Iraq and Afghanistan."

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.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Marine Killed At Nasser Wa Salaam

10.30.05 Reuters

FALLUJA - A U.S. Marine died of wounds after his vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb near Nasser wa Salaam on Saturday, the U.S. military said in a statement released from Falluja.

Bloomington Ill. Ist. Lt. Dies At Camp Victory

October 30, 2005 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 1116-05

1st Lt. Debra A. Banaszak, 35, of Bloomington, Ill., died at Camp Victory, Kuwait, on Oct. 28, from noncombat related injuries. Banaszak was assigned to the Army National Guard's 1035th Maintenance Company, Jefferson Barracks, Mo.

Staff Sgt. Dead At Mosul

October 30, 2005 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 1115-05

Staff Sgt. Lewis J. Gentry, 48, of Detroit, Mich., died in Mosul, Iraq, on Oct. 26, from a noncombat related cause. Gentry was assigned to the Army's 94th Engineer Battalion, Vilseck, Germany.

**LETHAL ENVIRONMENT:
NO MISSION:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



US Marines from 3rd Platoon, Company K, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment in the town of Haditha. (AFP/USMC/Cpl Kevin N. McCall)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

U.S. Soldier Wounded In Uruzgan

29 October 2005 Aljazeera

In southern Uruzgan province on Thursday, a US service member and an Afghan soldier were wounded after a joint US-Afghan patrol was attacked by militants firing assault rifles, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades.

Shortly afterwards, militants launched a second attack a few kilometres from the first, killing an Afghan soldier and wounding three others. The wounded were evacuated to a hospital at a nearby base.

Elsewhere, suspected Taliban rebels fired at a vehicle late on Friday in southern Helmand province and killed two brothers and a son of one of the men. One of the men was a candidate in legislative elections last month.

TROOP NEWS

War Blamed As 6,000 Quit British Territorial Army

October 30, 2005 Michael Smith, The Sunday Times

THE Territorial Army (TA) is suffering a manning crisis with more than 6,000 soldiers quitting in the past year because of the war in Iraq.

A £3m television advertising campaign has flopped, bringing in fewer than 600 recruits, and, at 35,000, the strength of the TA has dropped to its lowest point since it was founded in 1907. This is more than 6,000 below its required strength of 41,610.

Ministers admit the real figures are even worse — only 24,000 troops are fully trained and in practice only 12,000 TA soldiers are now available to back up the regular army on operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Balkans.

The Ministry of Defence has repeatedly denied that the TA was in trouble as a result of Iraq, but the figures released to parliament last week show the situation is far worse than previously claimed.

Don Touhig, a junior defence minister, told MPs in a series of answers to written questions that the numbers of soldiers leaving the TA had more than quadrupled in the immediate aftermath of the Iraq war in 2003.

Before the invasion the numbers leaving were steady at about 150 a month, keeping the strength of the TA relatively stable, but as soldiers started coming back from the war in October 2003 they began to leave in droves.

Over the next six months, the numbers leaving quadrupled to more than 600 a month and although the figure has dropped slightly since, it is still running at an average of 540, well over three times the pre-war figures.

The shortages come as General George Casey, the US commander in Iraq, expressed concern at the lack of troops to patrol the border between the British sector and Iran.

His comments follow the refusal of John Reid, the defence secretary, to allow military commanders to increase the number of British troops in southern Iraq by 25%.

Major-General Rob Fulton, the British commander in the south, asked for the 2,000 extra troops to mount a border surveillance operation, senior defence sources said.

But it was refused for what senior commanders believe were political reasons with Reid willing to sanction only the addition of fewer than 200 extra troops.

1000 More Connecticut Guardsmen Off To Bush's Imperial Slaughterhouse

10.31.05 Army Times

The Connecticut National Guard will send nearly 1,000 soldiers overseas, mostly to Afghanistan, by the end of January, state military officials said.

The troops represent about a quarter of Connecticut's Guard and will comprise about 5 percent of U.S. military forces in Afghanistan.

About 600 soldiers of the 102nd Infantry Battalion will leave in January for an 18-month deployment. About 300 soldiers from a unit of the 242nd Engineering Battalion and the 250th Engineering Company are also due to be deployed, the military said.

Several Connecticut units, meanwhile, are nearing their return home. On Oct. 17, the 141st Medical Company was welcomed back.

As of Oct. 19, there were 123,617 Army National Guard and Reserve soldiers on active duty in support of the partial mobilization, according to the Defense Department, bringing the number of Guard and Reserve personnel mobilized in all services to 146,581.

Army Vice Chief Of Staff Gen. Richard Cody:

Soldier-Killing Rat At Work

October 31, 2005 By Matthew Cox, Army Times staff writer. [Excerpt]

Lawmakers blasted Army leaders recently for sending up-armored Humvees to Fort Hood, Texas, and Kuwait instead of shipping them directly to soldiers fighting in Iraq.

Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, accused the Army of letting several hundred Humvees, equipped with the highest level of armor protection, sit in parking lots while roadside bombs continue to inflict casualties on Army and Marine units in combat.

“Our understanding was that the lives of our people in Iraq were the most precious thing in that we had ... taken every single vehicle that’s available and moved to the ongoing operations in Iraq,” Hunter said at an Oct. 20 hearing.

Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Richard Cody responded that commanders in Iraq, as well as leaders of units preparing to deploy, agreed that the more than 800 M1114 up-armored Humvees in question must go through Fort Hood first to be equipped with the digital battle command systems that 4th Infantry Division troops will fall in on once they arrive in theater early next year.

“We were trying to balance the obligation we have to keep the troops trained and ready and equipped at the same time,” Cody told committee members. “That was the course of action that the commanders in the field and my three stars and the Marines signed up to. And when they brought it to me, I asked these questions — I asked them, ‘Are you short any up-armored Humvees? Will this affect any operational requirements?’

“The answer was no,” Cody told the lawmakers. [Well of course the answer was “no.” These ass-kissing scum knew what Cody wanted them to say. That’s how they got to be part of the very elite, very well-paid, very very safe group of officers that traitor Cody calls up to get the answer they already know he wants. Duh.]

The alternative, Cody said, would be to separately ship the Humvees and the Force XXI Battle Command, Brigade and Below systems and install them in Kuwait — a move that would take more time and personnel and create delays in rotation schedules. [No, you murderous rat, the alternative is shipping them straight to Iraq by air cargo and handing them out to the troops being butchered by IEDs. But that, of course, would never occur to a piece of shit like you, would it?]

Hunter demanded the Army find a new way to get M1114s to theater faster. He read from a chart provided by the Army that listed 75 vehicles arriving at Hood in July, 319 in August and 430 in September, and noted that the combat units don’t start deploying to Iraq until the first of the year.

The military launched an ambitious plan to accelerate shipment of armored vehicles to Iraq and Afghanistan. Manufacturers increased production on M1114s — which provide Level I protection, the best level of armored protection available in Humvees.

The military also shipped thousands of add-on armor kits that provided Level II protection, which includes ballistic glass and armor that protect against small-arms fire, roadside bombs and mines. **[Oh please. Lie. If it “protected” against all that, there would be no need for an improved model, now would there? This is the stupidest sentence in this whole article.]**

Lawmakers, concerned about Humvees with Level II protection still being used in combat in Iraq, called for the hearing after congressional staff members saw M1114s parked at Fort Hood. **[Apparently they are unaware of the assertion you just read above that “Level II protection, which includes ballistic glass and armor that protect against small-arms fire, roadside bombs and mines.” Or maybe they are very much aware that’s just lying Pentagon propaganda.]**

The Marines are slated to have complete Level I armor on Humvees by April, and the Army will reach its Level I goal for Humvees by July 2007, Secretary of the Army Francis Harvey said.

Hunter wasn’t pleased that about half of the 824 Humvees that had been sent to Fort Hood since midsummer hadn’t been shipped to theater. He questioned why they were reserved for the 4th ID instead of sending them to the 3rd Infantry Division in theater.

“The committee is concerned about the fact that they are not going to ... soldiers in the 3rd Infantry Division, who are going out every day on operations and they don’t all have what’s considered to be the gold standard in armor,” Hunter said.

Cody and Harvey argued that it is crucial to have these Humvees fitted with FBCB2 so soldiers and leaders have the technology to know exactly where they are in relation to friendly units and the enemy positions.

He added that the 3rd ID doesn’t yet have the level of technology installed in the new Humvees and it would take too long to try to train those troops on it while they are in the middle of combat operations. [Insane bullshit. Cody would rather have dead and maimed soldiers than have the up-armored Humvees used in Iraq without all the little gadgets up and running. Send this asshole Cody under armed guard straight to Iraq and tie his carcass outside one of the worthless old Humvees, because at least that way he can serve some useful purpose “protecting against small-arms fire, roadside bombs and mines.” Hunter gets it. See below.]

“We could give those vehicles to 3rd ID, but ... it takes two weeks to train those soldiers. ... It’s like mixing a Commodore 128 computer with an Apple,” Cody said. “The 3rd ID soldiers are not trained on that and the commander doesn’t have time to pull his soldiers off the other vehicles that are they are trained on to train them on that.” [Fuck the commander and fuck Cody. Just pass out the up-armored vehicles. Oh, sorry, can’t do that. The fucking war profiteer who supplies the gadgets wouldn’t rake in

all his profits. Forgot about that. Forgot about what's really important. And it's not troops' lives.]]

Hunter then suggested that the 3rd ID soldiers would be better off with the newer Humvees, even if they don't use the high-tech force-tracking equipment. [DUH!]

Hunter acknowledged the Army's position but was not satisfied.

"My recommendation is try to come up with some type of a plan that could utilize these M1114s in theater as quickly as possible," he said. "I think you can come up with a plan that does that."

Hunter said the committee will hold a follow-up hearing on the issue. A date has not yet been set. **[And so the politician turns his back and walks away, having gotten his press coverage for the next election. The traitors playing games with the other traitors; just a game to them. The enemy isn't in Iraq. Iraqis and US Troops have a common enemy. You just had a good look at the enemy, up close and personal.]**

HOW MANY MORE FOR BUSH'S WAR? BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW



Marine Aviation Training Support Group-21 2nd Lts. Richard Turner, Alexander Taylor, Matthew Smith, Robert Monroe, Charles Hatton and Joshua Borwardt carry the body of Marine Lance Cpl. Jonathan Spears out of the airplane at the Pensacola Airport in Pensacola, Fla. Oct. 29, 2005. Spears is the first service member from the Pensacola area to die in Iraq. (AP Photo/Mari Darr~Welch)

Question:

Will The Names Of Vietnam Vets Murdered This Year By The V.A. "Review" Go On The Wall In DC?

[Thanks to Anna Bradley, who sent this in.]

Recently, Garcia was contacted by the wife of another Vietnam veteran who did get a letter from the V.A. "As a result of this letter, I have spent the last three nights watching him walk the floor, scared his benefits are going to be cut off," the wife wrote. "This morning, I went to work, and when I called my husband to inform him that I was safe at work, he told me he was going to 'fix everything.' I left work, and when I returned home, he had called his brother to pick (up) the two guns he owns."

Oct. 26, 2005 By Mark Benjamin, salon.com & October 31, 2005 By Deborah Funk. Army Times staff writer

Early this month, a vet in New Mexico took his life. At his side was the agency's plan to question benefits for mental trauma.

On Oct. 7, the remains of eight American Vietnam veterans were laid to rest in a single casket at Arlington National Cemetery, after lying in the jungle in Vietnam for over 35 years. Their unit was overrun by two enemy regiments on May 10, 1968.

John M. Garcia fought in Vietnam with the 4th Infantry Division in 1969 and 1970. He came all the way from New Mexico to Northern Virginia for the burial because he once knew a Marine whose body was now in that casket. Bringing those veterans home and giving them the respect they deserve was the right thing to do. "It is a beautiful story," Garcia said.

Garcia is the cabinet secretary of the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services, a state agency that aids veterans and helps them get federal benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington. The federal agency provides veterans medical care after their service and sends disabled veterans monthly checks if needed, up to \$2,000 a month.

When Garcia got back to his office the following Monday, his phone rang. Another Vietnam veteran needed to be buried. But this one had died by his own hand. "I was stunned," Garcia said in a telephone interview from Santa Fe. "And I was even more stunned at why."

On Oct. 8, Greg Morris, 57, was found by his wife, Ginger, in their home in Chama, N.M., an old mining town of 1,250 in the Rocky Mountains. Lying at Morris' side were a gun and his Purple Heart medal. For years, Morris had been receiving monthly V.A. benefits in compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder. Next to his gun and Purple Heart was a folder of information on how the V.A. planned to review veterans who received PTSD checks to make sure those veterans really deserved the money.

Last spring, the V.A. began to quietly draw up plans to take another look at nearly 72,000 veterans who from 1999 to 2004 had been classified as disabled and unemployable because of mental trauma from war. The V.A. plan, about which Salon was the first to report on Aug. 9, would review previous decisions to grant disability benefits to veterans incapacitated by PTSD.

Veterans advocacy groups are irate, charging the department with trying to save money at the expense of the men and women traumatized by war. They say mentally troubled veterans will be shocked, hurt and afraid of losing their monthly checks.

Many veterans said the review was bound to trigger suicides. "It is my educated opinion that (the V.A.) will kill some people with this," Ron Nesler told me on Aug. 24. "They will either kill themselves or die from stroke."

Nesler served in Vietnam in 1970 and 1971 and is coincidentally from New Mexico. His traumatic memories include a Claymore mine blasting a busload of civilians near his artillery base. He has been getting disability checks for PTSD for years.

On Aug. 11, he received a letter from the V.A. saying that his file was one of those in its review. He said the letter left him shocked, angry and afraid.

The letter warns that "confirmation" of his mental wounds "had not been established" and that his file at the V.A. "does not establish that the event described by you occurred nor does the evidence in the file establish that you were present when a stressful event occurred." (The V.A. recently determined, again, that Nesler's claims are legitimate.)

The letters themselves generated considerable controversy. "It was like Russian roulette," Garcia said. "You are dealing with lives. You don't do that. You don't just send out information to people who are suffering from some sort of mental stress saying, 'We are going to take these benefits away.'"

"Our intent was never to terminate benefits," said Jon Wooditch, acting inspector general for VA.

But Garcia said veterans feel they are under attack and that "an attack on one veteran is an attack on all of them."

"Let me make this clear," Garcia said. "This review policy is perceived as an attitude, an attack and a personal assault on the honorable service of all veterans."

Morris was a member of AMVETS, a service organization for veterans, whose issues were close to his heart. He was also one veteran who sent a clear message back to the V.A. "The evidence indicated that he committed suicide because he was frustrated and afraid that the V.A. was going to take his benefits away," Garcia said.

By all accounts, he was a troubled veteran who had attended counseling. And medical studies have shown that people with PTSD often suffer intense suicidal or homicidal rage. "People will say, 'Well, he's got problems,'" Garcia said. "Well, that was just enough to push him over the edge."

Morris did not receive a review letter from the V.A., but the prospect clearly upset him. "He was greatly shaken by the announcement of the V.A. review," Rep. Tom Udall, D-N.M., said in a statement calling for a halt to the review. Udall also said Morris "frequently inquired whether he would be losing the support he did receive" before he committed suicide. "He believed, as so many veterans do, that he was being forced to prove himself yet again. It is that belief that makes veterans so angry and so frustrated with this process."

Recently, Garcia was contacted by the wife of another Vietnam veteran who did get a letter from the V.A. "As a result of this letter, I have spent the last three nights watching him walk the floor, scared his benefits are going to be cut off," the wife wrote. "This morning, I went to work, and when I called my husband to inform him that I was safe at work, he told me he was going to 'fix everything.' I left work, and when I returned home, he had called his brother to pick (up) the two guns he owns."

Garcia said that when the wife got home, the veteran "had his rifles out and they were fully loaded. His family arrived in time to prevent him from doing it." Garcia told me the V.A. review has to be stopped. "We lost a veteran because of it," he said, adding, "I don't know how many more have tried" suicide.

Concern about fraud may be ill-founded. According to an Oct. 19 letter from seven Senate Democrats to their colleagues, arguing in favor of an amendment to halt the V.A. review, no cases of fraud have been identified. "At a time when service members are returning from war and straining an already burdened system, this review raises serious questions of costs and efficiencies," the letter stated.

Some lawmakers have launched an all-out effort to halt the V.A. review. In September, the Senate passed an amendment to block it. Drafted by Sens. Patty Murray, D-Wash.; Barack Obama, D-Ill., Dick Durbin, D-Ill., and Daniel Akaka, D-Hawaii, the amendment was attached to a Senate bill that funds the V.A.

Conferees from the House and Senate must now decide if the final bill that lands on the president's desk will contain a prohibition on the review of 72,000 PTSD claims.

On Oct. 14, a bipartisan group of 54 House members led by Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., wrote to key conferees to urge them to adopt the Senate ban on the review. **"It just sends a terrible message to those who are serving in the military today for the**

VA to attack and question whether those who served before are entitled to receive the benefits the VA itself previously approved," the letter said.

Last week, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a hearing on the review. Before Garcia left for Washington to testify, he called Morris' widow. "She said she was happy" that her husband's suicide and the V.A. review would be brought up in Congress, Garcia said, "because maybe then his death would mean something."

MORE:

“They’re Sending Me Back To Hell Again.”

And, a VA compensation specialist told me “it’s all about money” and added, “We could save a few billion a year if we deny these guys’ claims.”

October 23, 2005 By Larry Scott, VA Watchdog.org. Larry Scott (larry@vawatchdog.org) served four years in the U.S. Army with overseas tours as a Broadcast Journalist in Korea and the Azores and a stateside tour as a Broadcast Journalism Instructor at the Defense Information School (DINFOS). He was awarded DOD's First Place Thomas Jefferson Award for Excellence in Journalism. He receives VA compensation for a service-connected disability.

The suicide of Vietnam veteran Greg Morris, who suffered from PTSD, sends a loud-and-clear message to all veterans: The VA, the agency set up to help and care for veterans, isn't helping and doesn't care.

Bob started his email by saying, “They’re sending me back to hell again.” William wrote that he just put his home on the market thinking he’ll need the money to live on.

Mary told me she’ll have to go back to work instead of staying home and caring for her husband.

Greg Morris, of Chama, New Mexico, didn’t send me an email.

Morris, a Vietnam veteran, took out his gun and killed himself.

All of these veterans have a common bond.

They all suffer from PTSD.

They all receive VA compensation.

And, they all live in fear of losing the small amount of income their VA compensation offers.

All except Greg Morris, because he is not among the living.

Morris was worried about losing his benefits.

His PTSD counseling was triggering flashbacks.

He had been told not to worry about the VA review because he had been wounded and that should mean his compensation award wouldn't be reduced or canceled.

The October 8 suicide of Greg Morris has received little attention in the press.

The VA calls the review a "paper exercise" citing errors they made in granting the compensation. Spokespersons for the VA have consistently tried to downplay the significance of the review by reassuring veterans that they aren't trying to take away any benefits.

But, Rep. Udall said while it might seem like a "paperwork review" to the VA, veterans with PTSD see it as a "personal attack" that will force them to relive the trauma to continue getting benefits.

And, a VA compensation specialist told me "it's all about money" and added, "We could save a few billion a year if we deny these guys' claims."

Adding to the anger and confusion among veterans is the VA's complete lack of candor about the PTSD review process. No VA documents have surfaced indicating how the process is to be handled internally.

And, the VA keeps sending confusing signals to veterans about the review. VA centers in Arizona and South Dakota have told veterans' groups that the review is off.

This, while other VA officials have publicly stated that the review will continue "until someone tells us to stop."

This indecision on the part of the VA has turned into a game of emotional ping-pong that is devastating many veterans who suffer from PTSD.

They are asking:

Is my claim valid?

Will I have to prove everything all over again and relive the hell?

Will they take away my compensation?

And, if they do, what will I do?

If this review were truly a "paper exercise" as the VA claims, then it could be done on paper.

The VA could analyze, without notifying veterans, any errors made in granting claims.

Then they could lay out standardized guidelines for all claims processors so that these types of errors would not occur in the future.

No one need know.

Unless...unless the real goal is to cut costs by reducing and denying PTSD claims.

The VA's total incompetence in handling the review of 72,000 PTSD claims would be laughable if 72,000 lives weren't at stake.

But, this is what veterans have come to expect from the agency set up to help and protect them.

A recent edition of New Republic magazine ranked VA Secretary Jim Nicholson #4 on the list of the top 15 political hacks bungling their way through government agencies.

The VA, top-heavy with political appointees and inept cronies, is being "Mike Browned" and making enemies of those who fought our enemies.

I dearly hope that Bob does not go through hell again.

I hope William does not have to sell his home.

And Mary should be with her husband, to help him through the nightmare of PTSD, and not working.

It's time for the VA to abandon this review of PTSD claims.

It's time for them to stop harassing those who have already given so much.

Greg Morris will probably never make the list of veterans we all know, like Audie Murphy and Alvin York.

But, Greg Morris will stand as a solemn reminder to all veterans that there are still battles to be fought...that "friendly fire" is the most devastating fire of all...and that the VA, the government agency that should be "caring for those who serve and protect" is, once again, guilty of dereliction of duty.

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.

“Sergeant Guzman Will Not Be Going To Iraq Himself” “Recruitment Is Very Safe As Far As Deployment Is Concerned,” He Said



James Estrin/The New York Times

[Thanks to Peter Bronson, Veterans For Peace, NYC, who sent this in.]

Placing the list safely in the trunk next to the boxes of key chains, stickers and yellow water bottles he gives to potential recruits, he added: "Like in the dating scene. Sometimes no means yes. She just says it to make you want her more, you know?"

October 30, 2005 By JENNIFER MASCIA, The New York Times. [Excerpts]

THE lanky 15-year-old with the velvety skin flashed a deceptive grin at the man in combat fatigues standing near the curb. "You ain't no good!" she shouted at the soldier. "You stealing these young people!"

Staff Sgt. Richard Guzman looked up from the crowd of black and Hispanic students clustered near the entrance to the Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics, a high school in East Harlem. Sidling over to the girl, he held out his hand. "Hey," he said, his voice a sleepy mix of fine Long Island sand and honey.

"It's nothing against you," she replied without extending a hand. "It's people like you." Then she scurried across East 116th Street, another battle lost in the war for New York's youth. But no matter. As far as Sergeant Guzman was concerned, the neighborhood remained ripe with possibilities. "Everybody's thought about the military," he said later as his dark eyes scanned the neighborhood's pedestrian-clogged streets. "I mean, look at all the people here."

Sergeant Guzman, 26, is station commander of the Army recruiting unit in the Armed Forces Career Center, known informally as the Harlem Knights recruiting center, on 125th Street and Lenox Avenue. A product of a hardscrabble upbringing in Richmond Hill, Queens, he joined the Army after high school largely to straighten himself out. Today, he presides over a warren of rooms across the street from Bill Clinton's office that is one of the more powerful of the engines that keep an increasingly unpopular war up and running.

With a monthly average of five recruits, the Harlem Knights center, which serves both Harlem and East Harlem, is ranked in the top three in its battalion, which includes much of the New York metropolitan region. Since his arrival 10 months ago, Sergeant Guzman has signed up 12 people.

This is not an easy time to be a military recruiter. Last week, fatalities from the war reached 2,000, and last month a New York Times/CBS News poll showed that the number of Americans who thought that the United States had made the right decision in taking military action against Iraq had fallen to 44 percent.

Much has been said about the efficacy of plying poor minority neighborhoods for recruits. But several factors make Sergeant Guzman's job easier.

Unlike the Marines, Army infantry and Special Forces, which send volunteers straight from boot camp to the front lines, the Harlem Knights Army unit signs potential recruits up for more than 200 noncombat jobs, everything from laundry and textile specialist to flute player to dental specialist.

Sergeant Guzman cannot guarantee that his recruits will not go to Iraq; in fact, he acknowledges, about half of them will probably end up there, though not necessarily on the front lines. But the higher a recruit scores on the basic military aptitude test, the more noncombat specialties are available. "Pulling a trigger is not technically complicated," he said.

Sergeant Guzman also attributes the Army's relative success among the youth of Harlem and East Harlem to the problems that continue to plague those neighborhoods, notably poor schools and dismal job prospects. He has scouted out prospective recruits living in apartments with three people to a room and no bed.

"I can recruit two to three people a month," Sergeant Guzman said, "no matter if it's World War III or a recession."

Sergeant Guzman's skills of persuasion are not limited to sidewalk encounters. The other day, with the soothing, gravelly tones of a late-night disc jockey, he was on the phone, trying to lure an unsure 21-year-old girl into military service. "I'm gonna keep it real with you, and you gonna keep it real with me," he murmured into the receiver. "I'm setting you up for success. When you actually go to boot camp, you're gonna be well trained."

Then he tried another tack: "Imagine your wedding. I can see you in your uniform." He laughed a throaty laugh, his lips parted to reveal a full white smile. "An Army dress? Yeah, a camouflaged wedding dress."

Later, as the rhymes of Jay-Z poured out of a stereo perched on a bookshelf, Sergeant Guzman tapped away on his laptop, courting the 18-to-24 demographic via e-mail.

Near the entrance to the office, under a yellow banner that reads "An Army of One," a bulletin board presented photos of 50 young men and women, mostly black and Hispanic, with whom his approach had succeeded. Each photo listed the recruit's name, age, high school or college from which he or she had been recruited, and his or her enlistment bonus. Nearby was a postcard addressed to Sergeant Guzman from a recruit at boot camp. "Greetings from Henderson, Nevada!" it read. "Thank you for helping me enlist in the U.S. Army!"

Though so far only a few of Sergeant Guzman's recruits have been sent to Iraq, each time he receives a letter from the parents of a deployed soldier, he ships "his" recruit a care package that contains copies of Jet magazine and Sports Illustrated and homemade tapes of Hot 97 radio broadcasts.

Sergeant Guzman will not be going to Iraq himself. "Recruitment is very safe as far as deployment is concerned," he said.

It pays for Sergeant Guzman, too.

Of \$2,496 he receives as a monthly housing allowance, he pays \$2,000 to live in a three-bedroom apartment in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, and pockets the difference. He travels to work in a government-provided 2005 Dodge Stratus. With his \$2,600 monthly income, plus the \$425 monthly "special duty pay" that recruiters receive, he can indulge in his passion for diamond stud earrings, vintage X-Men comic books and sports jerseys that can cost up to \$400 apiece.

On the advice of a colonel friend, Sergeant Guzman has begun to invest in the stock market; his portfolio includes G.E., Home Depot and Janus Funds. "I try to stay diversified," he explained.

Just recently, he bought his first Rolex. It cost \$8,000. "Everything I've ever wanted in life, the Army's provided for me," he said, sipping a Capri Sun from its silver pouch.

On a recent afternoon, Sergeant Guzman dropped by City College on Convent Avenue and 138th Street to obtain its "stop-out" list, a register of students who have dropped out of college midcareer and might be likely recruits.

Sergeant Guzman acknowledged that some high schools and colleges were resistant to his presence, and potential recruits often report back that their teachers try to dissuade them from military service. He finds this attitude downright unpatriotic.

"You'd think that given the times and needs of the country now, schools would be more understanding," he said, seeming perplexed by guidance counselors who encourage college over the military.

"I've got a mission from the president of the United States. These schools are not going to tell me what to do."

After a quick chat with a City College receptionist, he emerged with a thick stack of papers containing the names of thousands of recent dropouts ripe for recruiting. Holding up the list as a proud father would his newborn child, he said: "All this is potential recruits. This gets me excited right here."

Heading back to his car, he elaborated on his approach.

"I don't like taking no for an answer," he said. "I've got a mission to accomplish each month. And it's not just recruiting. If I say no, I won't get anywhere in life, man."

Placing the list safely in the trunk next to the boxes of key chains, stickers and yellow water bottles he gives to potential recruits, he added: "Like in the dating scene. Sometimes no means yes. She just says it to make you want her more, you know?"



Rally, Oct. 29, 2005 in Boston. (AP Photo/Lisa Poole)

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action



Site of a roadside bomb which targeted a police patrol in Kirkuk October 30, 2005. The attack injured two Iraqi policemen. (Slahaldeen Rasheed/Reuters)

30 October 2005 RFE/RL, Inc. & AP & RTÉ & Reuters

Two men died south of Baghdad when insurgents set off a bomb next to their oil tanker truck, creating an enormous fireball.

Ghalib Abdul-Mahdi, brother of Vice President Adil Abdul-Mahdi, was shot to death along with his driver while going to work at the office of Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari.

His brother, Adel Abdul Mehdi, is a member of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), Iraq's largest Shi'ite political party and senior partner in the U.S.-backed ruling coalition.

On Sunday morning, a roadside bomb destroyed one of several oil tanker trucks driving on a main road in south Baghdad, sending a fire ball up over the area and killing the two men inside, police Capt. Ibrahim Abdul-Ridha said.

Iraq's deputy trade minister has been wounded in the shoulder in an ambush by armed fighters on his motorcade in the capital, Baghdad.

Two of Qais Dawoud Hassan's bodyguards were killed in the gun attack in the wealthy district of Mansour. Six more guards and a passerby were also wounded.

KIRKUK - An assistant manager at Iraq's North Oil Company was assassinated on Saturday by armed fighters in the northern oil city of Kirkuk, police said.

BAGHDAD - A police colonel was killed on Saturday when armed fighters attacked his house in northern Baghdad, police said. His bodyguard was also killed and his wife and nephew were wounded in the incident.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE

END THE OCCUPATION

Armed Demonstration Against Collaborator Government In Mosul



Iraqi police demonstrate in Mosul. (AFP/Mujahed Mohammed)

30 Oct 2005 By Nabil Nourredin, Reuters

Angry Sunni Arabs protesting the removal of a top police official have threatened to topple the provincial government of Nineveh.

Several hundred armed protesters, chanting slogans against what they say is Kurdish domination of Nineveh's regional administration, besieged government offices in the provincial capital of Mosul late on Saturday and were kept from overrunning the building by U.S. troops, local officials said on Sunday.

Saturday's demonstration, which saw both civilian and police protesters firing into the air in downtown Mosul followed a joint statement by leaders of dozens of local Sunni Arab tribes.

They said in a letter to Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari that allegations against Jibouri were not sufficiently investigated and his sacking was based on ethnic and political grounds.

"If you intend to approve this dismissal, you can expect to hear that the province has fallen into our hands within 24 hours," the letter said.

Anger rose during this month's referendum on a new U.S.- backed constitution for Iraq, which passed despite a large "No" vote in Sunni Arab areas, including the Sunni-dominated provinces of Salahaddin and Anbar.

Despite its large Sunni Arab population, Nineveh ended up with only 55 percent of voters against the charter -- depriving opponents of the two-thirds majority "No" in three provinces needed to block passage of the measure nationally.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

A Modest Proposal

10.30.05 By Steve, Veterans For Peace Discussion. [Excerpt]

It's very simple really.

Since the Iraq war is such a "noble cause" then there shouldn't be a problem by having soldiers who believe in it, fight it.

Therefore, soldiers in Iraq who love George Bush, who don't think he lied or misled the country into the war, who are willing to risk their lives for Iraqi's, who believe we're making "progress" and don't want to leave until the job is finished - and whose families believe that Cindy Sheehan is the enemy - can continue fighting.

But any soldier that feels otherwise can be discharged honorably and is free to come home.

Since Republicans keep telling us about all the "good news" in Iraq and that the military voted overwhelming for Bush, I'm sure more than enough troops would stay and continue fighting.

This would also put an end to the calls from liberals - all of whom supposedly hate America and hate our troops - to "bring our troops home" since any soldier that wanted to come home can come home.

So it's a win-win for hawkish Republicans. They can fight this war and shut up the "terrorist loving" liberals at the same time!

Of course Republicans would try and spin their way out of this by saying you can't have soldiers pick and choose the wars their arrogant incompetent Commander in Chief orders them to fight.

But if the military is really behind this war as much as Bush tells us they are, then Republicans and their mindless and gullible base shouldn't have anything to worry about. So why not put it to the test?

What's the matter brainwashed conservatives, afraid you'll be proven wrong and look like fools? Gee, I wonder why.

Truth hurts, doesn't it?

Friendly Fire?



Tim Origer, a Vietnam Marine, has an emotional moment with a young Marine who service in Iraq. Camp Casey, Crawford, Texas, 2005

Photo and caption from the I-R-A-Q (I Remember Another Quagmire) portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (For more of his outstanding work, contact at: (hastiemike@earthlink.net) T)

From: Mike Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: October 30, 2005
Subject: Friendly Fire?

Friendly Fire?

**The most important thing to know in war,
is to be able to point out the bad guys.
That way, you can focus your attention
on the moment.**

So many of us were shot in the back in Vietnam,

because the bullets were fired from Washington, D.C.

You got to know who the enemy is, because your life depends on it.

I don't seem to have as much fear anymore.
My PTSD is much better, because I know who the enemy is now.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71

58,000 Americans killed,
Average age 19--from the senior prom to Vietnam.

Sometimes Dreams Come True

From: Z
To: GI Special
Sent: October 30, 2005 4:21 PM

One can almost imagine the students, reinforced by soldiers, military family members, and thousands of other antimilitarists ringing the White House and other white-marble seats of corporate power whose occupiers so badly need flushing out, and perhaps serenading them some till they catch on that their time is up.

Solidarity,
Z

OCCUPATION REPORT

**U.S. OCCUPATION RECRUITING DRIVE
IN HIGH GEAR;
RECRUITING FOR THE ARMED
RESISTANCE THAT IS.**



An Iraqi man makes his way through sleeping U.S. Marines inside his house in Hit, June 28, 2005. The Marines call it a necessary evil, taking over houses and buildings for military use. For the Iraqis who become unwilling hosts, it can be anything from a mild inconvenience to a disruption that tears apart lives. (AP Photo/Jacob Silberberg)

[Fair is fair. Let's bring 150,000 Iraqis over here to the USA. They can kill people at checkpoints, or just bust into their houses with force and violence, throw them out into the street while rummaging through their most personal belongings, get into their beds with dirty boots on, overthrow their government, put a new one in office they like better and call it "sovereign," and "detain" anybody who doesn't like it in some prison without any changes being filed against them, or any trial.]

[Those Iraqis are sure a bunch of backward primitives. They resent this help, and consider it their patriotic duty to fight and kill the soldiers sent to trash their houses and occupy their country. What a bunch of silly people. How fortunate they are to live under a military dictatorship run by George Bush. Why, how could anybody not love that?]

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

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



Bush Ally Now Says He Opposed War!

[Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in. He writes: Rat abandons sinking ship.]

October 30, 2005 L.A. Times Staff Writer

ROME - For years, he has been one of President Bush's most loyal supporters in Europe, a leader who steadfastly backed the U.S.-led war in Iraq and one of the few on the continent to send troops to help out.

So it came as something of a surprise this weekend when Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi revealed his reservations about the war, on the eve of a visit to Washington no less.

"I tried repeatedly to convince the American president not to go to war," Berlusconi told an interviewer with the La7 television channel. "I was never convinced that war was the best system to achieve democracy in a country that had to emerge from a bloody dictatorship. I maintained that military action should be avoided."

Facing a tough reelection early next year, Berlusconi may be attempting to distance himself from Bush, who lately has been besieged by an onslaught of crises that have eroded public support. Berlusconi, too, has seen his support sag, in part because of the unpopular war in Iraq as well as worsening economic malaise.

Former Prime Minister Romano Prodi, the opposition leader, has said he will withdraw Italy's troops from Iraq if elected. On Saturday, he expressed puzzlement at Berlusconi's newly expressed doubts.

"What is going on?" he said. "Has (Berlusconi) finally agreed that this was a mistaken war? Now he tells us. Has he told Bush?"

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