

GI SPECIAL 3A7:



"WHAT...WHAT STOP-LOSS POLICY, GRAMPA?..."

"I Am Ashamed To Be Associated With This Mess"

"The people that we are fighting now, are for the most part people like you and me, people that are defending themselves against a superior military force and fighting to keep that which is rightfully theirs" he said. Benderman also stated that the Iraqi people have the right to choose their own form of government, "just like we did in America after the revolution." Sergeant Kevin Benderman, U.S. Army

01/05/05 By Robert S. Finnegan, Managing Editor, Southeast Asia News

Ft. Stewart Georgia, "Rock of the Marne"

This morning Sergeant Kevin Benderman, U.S. Army awoke to face what will probably be one of the most important decisions of his life: whether or not to accept or refuse re-deployment to Iraq to participate in a war that has been increasingly questioned by the American public, and the world.

While conscious of the fact that this single action could be the opening salvo of a war pitting an increasingly disgruntled military against the Bush administration over issues such as “stop-loss,” questionable operations, equipment failures and casualties in Iraq and the possibility of facing severe penalties under the Uniform Code of Military Justice for his actions, Benderman remains firm in his resolve to do something about it, and to do it now.

“I have both a professional and a moral obligation to call into question why we are still in Iraq after accomplishing the mission – in President Bush’s words – of deposing Saddam, and why U.S. military personnel are increasingly killing non-combatants. **On my last deployment in Iraq elements of my unit were instructed by a Captain to fire on children throwing rocks at us.” This is not what he signed up for, Benderman said.**

Both Benderman, 40, and his wife Monica realize the possible ramifications of his stand.

“We have no other choice,” Benderman’s wife said. “This is what we have to do, I have always told my children that the right thing is the most important thing, and doing it is the only thing that allows you to keep your integrity, regardless of the consequences.” Their actions are only reflecting their core beliefs she said.

Benderman’s feelings on the war run deep, and were primarily influenced by his experiences during a previous deployment to Iraq from March through September 2003.

“The people that we are fighting now, are for the most part people like you and me, people that are defending themselves against a superior military force and fighting to keep that which is rightfully theirs” he said. Benderman also stated that the Iraqi people have the right to choose their own form of government, “just like we did in America after the revolution.”

He says that he is proud of his service to his country, but takes no pride in what is happening in Iraq now.

In addition, Benderman states that while he signed a contract with the military to ‘defend the Constitution of the United States from all enemies, foreign and domestic,’ he says now that “I am ashamed to be associated with this mess, and I certainly did not join the Army to kill women, children and old men.

“I just don’t see how these innocent people could be a threat to the constitution of the United States: an American soldier should not be ashamed of what they do.”

Benderman has a flawless military record and a list of meritorious awards.

As for his combat experience in Iraq, Benderman says that he believes that those who have not experienced war are those who beat the war drums the loudest. "Has the video game mentality so pervaded our country that this is how we base our decisions on war? **Some of the younger guys were totally out of touch with reality in that respect, and I had to repeatedly tell them to keep their heads down because there are no restart buttons on reality,"** he said.

Benderman sincerely believes that the U.S. has lost its way in Iraq and that the best way to avoid creating more terrorists in the world at this time is to bring our soldiers home from Iraq and to let Iraqis sort out without interference the type of government they prefer.

"We did it for ourselves during the American Revolution and now it is time to let the people of Iraq do it for themselves," he said.

Sergeant Benderman is scheduled to undergo a psychiatric evaluation at Ft. Stewart Georgia this afternoon after submitting a request for Conscientious Objector Status from the Army.

U.S. Army Public Affairs Officer Lt. Colonel Kent declined comment for this article citing privacy, and adding that "typically, these are administrative actions we cannot comment on."

Soldier On Leave Joins Demonstration Against War

January 7, 2004 Socialist Worker, Jane Hamlin and Justin Nicholes contributed to this report.

In Wichita, Kan., on New Year's Eve, Wichita's Peace and Social Justice Center, along with members of the ISO **and one soldier on leave from Iraq, stood outside the McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita in protest of the war in Iraq.**

Signs carried slogans such as "Bring them home" and "War is big bu\$ine\$\$."

<p>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.</p>

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

7 American Troops Killed; Bradley Blown Up In Baghdad

Jan 06, 2005 By NICK WADHAMS, Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq - A roadside bomb killed seven U.S. soldiers in northwest Baghdad.

The soldiers with Task Force Baghdad were on patrol Thursday evening when their Bradley fighting vehicle hit the explosive, the military said in a statement. Everyone inside the Bradley was killed.

TWO MEF MARINES KILLED IN AL ANBAR PROVINCE

Jan 06, 2005 By NICK WADHAMS, Associated Press Writer

Two U.S. Marines killed in action Thursday were both members of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force and lost their lives in Anbar province, which is home to Fallujah.

Incoming Resistance Rockets Punctuate Iraqi Puppet Army Farce

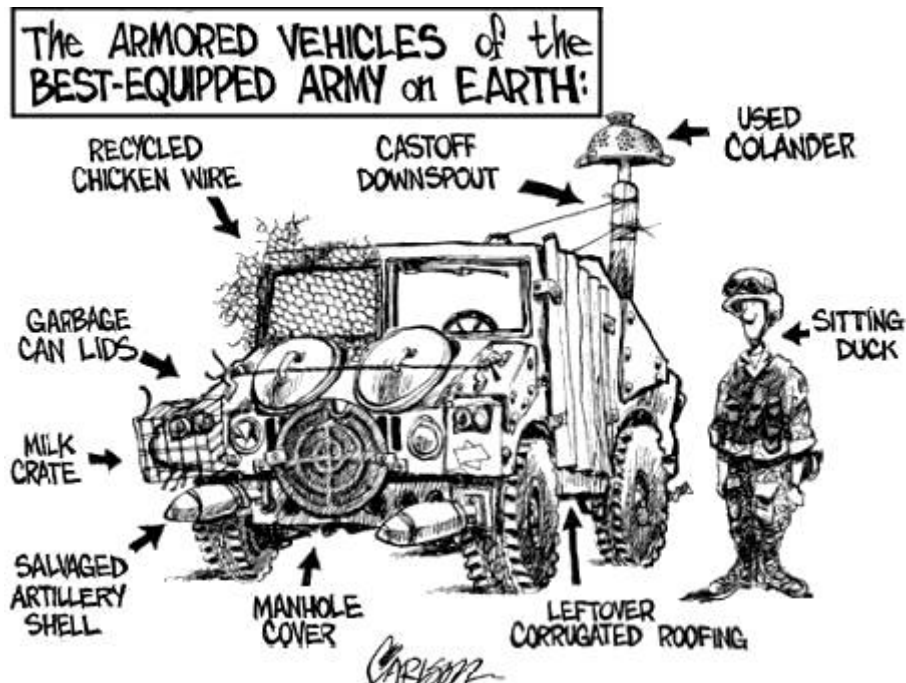
January 06, 2005 By Gordon Trowbridge, Army Times staff writer

TAJI, Iraq — **The whoosh of incoming artillery rockets was not exactly the fireworks that planners had in mind for Iraq's first Army Day celebration of the post-Saddam era on Jan. 6.**

But not long after the too-close-for-comfort impacts scattered Iraqi soldiers from the parade ground, there was interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi watching as marching troops, new trucks and the ancient T-55 tanks of the country's first mechanized brigade filed past the sprawling U.S.-Iraqi base here.

It's likely to be some time, however, before the Iraqi army's parade grounds are beyond the insurgency's reach. [Try never. You might consider selling tickets for Allawi's hanging, however. Unless he makes it to the helicopter leaving from the Embassy roof as the resistance finally takes the Green Zone.]

TROOP NEWS



NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation, the cuts to veterans' benefits, or the dangers of depleted uranium - is the first reason Traveling Soldier is necessary. 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)

STOP-LOSS "INVOLUNTARY SERVITUDE"

Soldier Extended Until 2031

But the military has gone further in Santiago's case. He originally signed for an eight-year tour with the Guard in 1996, but as a result of the "stop-loss" back-door draft, his service has been extended to December 2031, when he would be 54.

January 3, 2005 Corvallis Gazette-Times

While most pollsters would agree that there is almost no discernable support for reinstating the military draft, why should the public support the military's policy of forcing exhausted those who already have fulfilled their contractual obligation to serve into an open-ended term of indentured — potentially fatal — military servitude?

Yet that is exactly what is happening to people such as Oregon Army National Guardsman Sgt. Emiliano Santiago, 27, of Pasco, Wash.

Last Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Owen M. Panner denied Santiago's motion for a preliminary injunction against having to report again for active duty, less than a week before Santiago is scheduled to ship to Fort Sill, Okla. A soldier with D Company of the Oregon Guard's 113th Aviation Battalion in Pendleton, he is and his unit are expected to be deployed to Afghanistan in February.

Santiago argued that he already had completed his contracted term in 2002, but Panner's ruling means that he will have to go. And he is only one of thousands who are finding themselves back in uniform despite having honorably completed the service they signed on for.

This is possible because of an executive order President Bush enacted after 9-11 that authorized the Pentagon to involuntarily extend military personnel on active duty "for not more than 24 consecutive months."

But the military has gone further in Santiago's case. He originally signed for an eight-year tour with the Guard in 1996, but as a result of the "stop-loss" back-door draft, his service has been extended to December 2031, when he would be 54.

Judge Panner said he was ruling that Santiago had to go back because the military would be more harmed than Santiago if he allowed Santiago to leave. He correctly assumed that the thousands of others also forced to stay would file similar court challenges, complicating the United States' military actions in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

President Bush said repeatedly during his re-election campaign that there would be no military draft in his second term. But if a soldier who has completed his term of service and returned to civilian life is forced back onto the battlefield, how is that anything other than a draft, forcing involuntary servitude?

We haven't had a draft in this country since Richard Nixon abolished it in 1973.

And we haven't had involuntary servitude since Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation made it illegal as of Jan. 1, 1863, freeing "all persons held as slaves within

any state or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free."

The Emancipation Proclamation clearly stated that "the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom."

Who knew that President Bush would overturn the acts of two past Republican presidents in deciding that, under his term, the military means not being able to declare with confidence, "I'm a civilian again."

Fuck The Troops In Iraq, It's Party Time In D.C.



Margaret Carlson (Los Angeles Times, January 6, 2005)

"Jeanne Phillips, chairwoman of the 55th Presidential Inaugural Committee, was asked in a recent interview if the \$40 million being spent on the festivities might be better spent on the troops in Iraq.

No, not really. She and the president instead decided to dedicate the festivities to "honoring service" and throwing, for the first time, a Commander in Chief Ball to which 2,000 servicemen have been invited.

That, of course, leaves out the 140,000 troops stationed in Iraq, and countless others around the world." [Wouldn't it be lovely if 10 or 20 thousand pissed off troops decided to come anyhow, arms in hand? Just a social call, you understand. And if they happen to come across the real enemy combatants, cleverly disguised as U.S. politicians, well, there it is, isn't it. Game over. Maybe not this January, but payback gets a little closer every day.]

Mother Of Soldier Killed In Iraq Helps Raise Money For Falluja: Wants Troops Out Of Iraq; “We're Not Doing Much To Protect Our Soldiers.”

January 6, 2005 By VICTOR CALDERON, The Salinas Californian

PAJARO -- The mother of the first combatant from Monterey County to be killed in Iraq returned Tuesday night from a trip to donate supplies to Iraqi refugees in the bordering country of Jordan.

She said she journeyed in her son's honor and gained a deepened perspective on the war in which her son died Oct 13.

On Dec. 26, Amalia Avila González, mother of late Marine Lance Cpl. Victor González of Pajaro, flew more than 19 hours from San Francisco to Amman, Jordan, to help deliver \$600,000 worth of supplies to refugees from the Iraqi city of Fallujah.

Victor González, 19, was killed in combat in Al Anbar province, barely a month after he'd arrived in the war-torn country.

Amalia González said Wednesday that during eight days in Jordan she met Iraqi refugees, including mothers like her who have lost a son or a relative in the war. The delegates from Global Exchange and Code Pink, the two groups that organized the trip traveled with translators, but González said she understood what they felt because of their common bond as mothers.

González said she developed a deeper understanding of the war and people in the Middle East by walking around and talking to victims of the fighting.

"Every day, this war gets worse and worse," she said. "It's become more than a war; it's become a massacre.

"For the families over there it's become a time of survival. And it's the same for the American soldiers. My son would always ask for little things, food and supplies. It makes me sad that we're not doing much to protect our soldiers. They deserve everything they need. Here we are blessed, but over there they are in harm's way. The news doesn't show 5 percent of what's really going on there."

González, who has placed an altar in her living room with photos and cards of condolence for her son, said she hopes to continue her mission of peace. **She said she wants U.S. troops home.**

The group also has discussed holding candlelight vigils in Washington, D.C., to call attention to the need to bring troops home.

"People should contact their government officials and ask them to stop this massacre," González said.

"Parents should refuse to send their kids because the soldiers have no idea of what they're getting into."

Army Running Out Of Bullets Seeks To Buy Ammunition From Taiwan

6 January 2005 (AFP)

TAIPEI - The United States is planning to buy hundreds of millions of bullets from Taiwan in the first such deal as its supplies are running low after wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, a report said Thursday. [Maybe they got some uparmored trucks too.]

Citing Taiwanese military sources, the United Evening News said Washington had made the request to acquire some 300 million 5.56-millimeter bullets for rifles for an estimated two billion Taiwan dollars (62.5 million US).

An unnamed general quoted by the paper said it would be the first time for Washington, Taiwan's leading arms supplier, to acquire arms from the island.

The Army Way

From: Allan Zirlin
To: GI Special
Sent: January 06, 2005

When I first arrived at my assignment to White Sands Missile Range in March of 1958, I was having some trouble with my right arm and shoulder which prevented me from lifting or carrying anything heavy.

I went to the dispensary at White Sands and was sent to Wm. Beaumont Army Hospital at nearby Fort Bliss, Texas, for further evaluation. It was decided that I should be assigned to what they designated as the Neuro-Psychiatric ward. This was a part of the hospital that treated any neurological disorder as well as soldiers with psychological and psychiatric problems.

When anyone was first admitted, for whatever reason, he was immediately assigned to the maximum security section and relieved of all personal belongings that, in their judgment, could be used to cause physical harm to himself or others.

They gave you a toothbrush and toothpaste, soap, and you could have a comb. They gave you a razor but you had to give it back when you were through shaving. After "they" reviewed your particular case, mine being a weakness in the shoulder, they moved you down a notch to a less secure ward.

This took about 2 days. After another 2 days of that, "they" decided that I was not a nut case and moved me to an open ward, gave me back my belongings and told me I could move about freely (to the mess hall, the library, etc.). "They" conducted various tests like an EEG to try and find the cause of my problem.

So everything was going well at that point.

Then one unlucky day I managed to eat something there that caused nausea and vomiting. Seeing as there was no doctor attending this ward, I was moved back once again to maximum security so I could be treated. Once again I had to surrender all my personal stuff and be locked up as though I was a danger to society. I had to go through the same routine of going from maximum to minimum to open ward. This was the only way "they" knew how to do things. After three weeks I was finally discharged with a diagnosis of pressure on a nerve that was causing my shoulder weakness.

It was the total lack of any reasonable flexibility in operating procedure that was so astounding.

The humiliation of being locked up with mental patients and, I assume, being judged as one by the hospital staff merely by my presence there.

Why would I be in maximum security if I wasn't off my rocker?

Ah, the Army! Army Intelligence, what an absolutely perfect oxymoron.

More Canonical Murphy's Laws of Combat

31. If the enemy is within range, so are you.
32. The only thing more accurate than incoming enemy fire is incoming friendly fire.
33. Things which must be shipped together as a set, aren't.

34. Things that must work together can't be carried to the field that way.
 35. Radios will fail as soon as you need fire support.
 36. Radar tends to fail at night and in bad weather, and especially during both.
 37. Anything you do can get you killed, including nothing.
 38. Make it too tough for the enemy to get in, and you won't be able to get out.
 39. Tracers work both ways.
 40. If you take more than your fair share of objectives, you will get more than your fair share of objectives to take.
 41. When both sides are convinced they're about to lose, they're both right.
 42. Professional soldiers are predictable; the world is full of dangerous amateurs.
 43. Military Intelligence is a contradiction.
 44. If you fortify your front; you'll get your rear shot up.
 45. Weather ain't neutral.
 46. If you can't remember, the Claymore is pointed towards you.
 47. Air defense motto: shoot 'em down; sort 'em out on the ground.
 48. The Cavalry doesn't always come to the rescue.
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Families Of Dead Mercenaries Sue Blackwater; Denied Use Of Armored Vehicles

January 06, 2005 By Estes Thompson, Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Families of four security contractors whose bodies were burned and dragged through the streets of Fallujah, Iraq, last year sued the workers' former company Wednesday.

The families contend that the company, Blackwater Security Consulting, cut corners that led to the men's deaths. The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages.

The workers were sent into Fallujah without proper equipment and personnel to defend the supply convoy they were guarding, according to the civil lawsuit. [They can sue. The loved ones of troops killed for the same reasons are out of luck. Try suing Bush or Rumsfeld. Lots of luck.]

"The fact that these four Americans found themselves located in the high-risk, war-torn city of Fallujah without armored vehicles, automatic weapons and fewer than the minimum number of team members was no accident," the lawsuit said.

The lawsuit alleges that one week before the deaths, Blackwater fired a project manager who had insisted that the contractors use armored vehicles.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Truck Drivers Killed For Cooperating With Occupation

January 6, 2005 Associated Press

The bodies of three Jordanian truck drivers were discovered on the outskirts of Ramadi, 113 kilometres west of Baghdad.

They were shot in the head. "This is the fate of anyone who cooperates with the Americans," said a handwritten note placed on one of the bodies.

Occupation Cops Burned In Basra

Jan 06, 2005 By NICK WADHAMS, Associated Press Writer

The charred bodies of the two beheaded Iraqi policemen were found in a house in Basra used by officials organizing the election, police said.

<p>IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</p>

OOPS: E-Mail Threats Sent To Foreign Workers In Iraq

(Washington Times, January 6, 2005, Pg. 13)

The Iraqi resistance movement is sending death threats to expatriate workers and their families by e-mail, leading at least one electricity project worker to quit his high-paying job in Iraq and return home. U.S. intelligence officials are investigating the incidents but have been unable to trace the origins of the messages. [Try command headquarters. What makes you think the resistance hasn't infiltrated that as well as everything else in the country?]

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Lose The Roads, Lose The War

1.6.05 By Greg Jaffe, Wall St. Journal

In recent weeks, the U.S. military in Iraq has increased the amount of cargo it is flying into that country by about 30% as the threat of attack from roadside bombs has grown.

Today, dozens of C-17 and C430 cargo planes, along with commercial aircraft, are carrying more than 450 tons a day of equipment and supplies into Iraq. All told, the air operations have kept about 400 trucks off the roads each day, Lt. Col. Mike Caidwell recently told reporters.

The Insurgency "Irremediable" And "Ineradicable" By US: "We Have Lost The Primary Control"

5 January, 2005 By Paul Reynolds, World Affairs Correspondent, BBC News website

The situation in Iraq has deteriorated so much that the insurgency has developed into near-open warfare.

The head of Iraq's intelligence service Gen Muhammad Shahwani now puts the number of insurgents at 200,000, of which 40,000 are said to be the hard core and the rest active supporters.

These figures do not represent an insurgency. They represent a war.

The power of the insurgents was demonstrated again on Tuesday with the assassination of the governor of Baghdad Ali al-Haidri - the latest in a blistering series of attacks.

An example of this also came on Tuesday. A tanker loaded with explosives and driven by a suicide bomber - of whom there appears to be an unlimited supply - blew up at an Iraqi interior ministry commando headquarters in Baghdad, killing eight commandos and two civilians.

These commandos were formed as a special unit to target insurgents and to help make up for the ineffective regular police and national guard. Instead they are the target.

<p>The level of attacks is now so intense and sophisticated that it is not surprising that the former British representative to the former Coalition Authority, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, said recently that the insurgency was "irremediable" and "ineradicable" by US and other foreign troops alone.</p>

"It depends on the Iraqis. We have lost the primary control," he said.

Recent events indicate that Iraqis have lost the primary control as well.

The War Hits Home: FTA (F the Army)***

Since most of the warmakers agree that the upcoming elections in Iraq will mean little in terms of ending the insurgency, the need for a movement against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan amongst the soldiers fighting them grows more essential with each passing day. Sure, they need good armor, but more importantly they need to get their butts home. Now! The casualties will only continue to get closer to home.

January 3, 2005 By RON JACOBS, CounterPunch

*And I couldn't help but think, through the thunder rolling and stink,
That I was just a puppet in a play.
And through the roar and smoke, this string is finally broke,
And a cannon ball blew my eyes away.
"John Brown", by Bob Dylan*

The war just keeps getting closer.

I found out from my dad over the weekend that the son of a kid I used to play Boys & Girls Club sports with was killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq early in December.

I never knew the dead young man, but his uncles and aunts attended the same schools and churches that I did when I was young. Unless the US troops get out sooner rather than later, this familiarity with death in war will become as familiar to US residents as it did in Vietnam and Korea (not to mention this country's previous wars), and as familiar as it has become to Iraqis and Afghans.

Like my dad rhetorically asked after giving me this news: "What did he die for?"

For those of us who have been opposed to these wars since their inception, this is not that much of a question.

For my dad, it is. A career officer during Vietnam, he sees the world from a perspective quite dissimilar to me. He knew Vietnam was pointless when he was there, but believed there might be a purpose to his mission.

He has never seen such a possibility in Iraq and, once he got past his desire for revenge in the wake of 911, he began to question the conflict in Afghanistan, as well. My anti-imperialist self always suggests that he take a look at who profits from these wars to find

out their true purpose, but his worldview won't let his thought process go there. Instead, like many people, he blames individuals for these murderous escapades.

I mention my dad only because I just re-read a book published thirty years ago by Ramparts Press-the publishing house of the great leftist journal.

The book, titled *The Flower of the Dragon* by Richard Boyle, was recently highlighted at a website titled "GI Special" which is maintained by Thomas Barton and is essentially a collection of news and opinion pieces about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The intended audience for the newsletter is GIs and other soldiers and the intention is to provoke this audience to question its role and, ultimately, refuse to participate. Like GI underground newspapers from the Vietnam era, GI Special reminds its readers that they have a right to read and carry the paper (if they print it out) and that their commanding officer or any other authority can't take it from them. Barton intersperses news pieces about GI deaths and officer fuckups with commentary from antiwar writers in an attempt to provide military men and women with not only a different perspective from that which they hear all around them but one that also can provide antiwar soldiers with a sense that they are not alone.

Anyhow, back to Boyle's book.

At the time of its writing (1966-1971), Boyle freelanced as a reporter and photographer throughout southern Vietnam and Cambodia. He began his war correspondent career as a supporter of the war and the Special Forces men who were then the only US soldiers in combat. By 1971, he had changed his tune completely.

Much of his work by that time was about the growing movement among GIs who opposed the war and tried their best not to fight.

In addition, he exposed the dichotomy between what the military spokesmen and generals were telling the press in Saigon and what the GIs actually fighting the war were experiencing in the jungle.

In short, it was the sentiment of Boyle and his GI contacts that the US was losing the war and should just get the hell out. Meanwhile, the press in Saigon was being told that US forces were making great progress not only in combat but in winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people. According to Boyle, his reporting made him very unpopular with the military brass, but helped his work amongst the enlisted men and younger officers who were doing much of the actual fighting.

In a section that seemed to me to be instructive for today's wars, Boyle writes about a battle at a fire base in the jungle that took place in 1971. The chapter, which is named after the fire base, is titled *Firebase Pace*, and describes a pointless battle by a few hundred US soldiers, some southern Vietnamese troops (ARVN), and various mercenary forces against thousands of North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars.

Now, this battle took place after Nixon had supposedly removed all US forces in Vietnam from any type of combat role. Indeed, it was occurring a week after the generals in Saigon had told the media and the Pentagon that the battle was over and the ARVN had

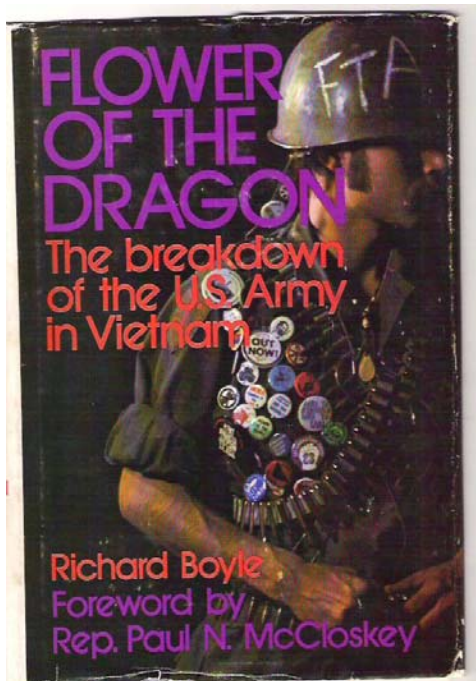
soundly defeated the NVA. Yet the GIs were taking casualties every day while the ARVN troops sat on the sidelines, unwilling to risk their lives in a war that they could care less about. Like many of today's Iraqi forces, these Vietnamese were in the ARVN for the paycheck and saw no reason to risk their lives for either the Washington or the US puppet government "elected" in Saigon.

As I read the conversations and details reported by Boyle in this chapter, I kept thinking about the recent "victories" in Fallujah and Samarra in Iraq and wondered how real those victories actually were. This wonder increased after hearing of more US air and ground combat in both cities as recently as December 29th, 2004- at least three weeks after US generals declared victory and told the world media that the Iraqi insurgency's back was broken.

Boyle's book is a good, conversational read and has more than a bit of relevance to today's wars.

Since most of the warmakers agree that the upcoming elections in Iraq will mean little in terms of ending the insurgency, the need for a movement against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan amongst the soldiers fighting them grows more essential with each passing day. Sure, they need good armor, but more importantly they need to get their butts home. Now! The casualties will only continue to get closer to home.

*Ron Jacobs is author of *The Way the Wind Blew: a history of the Weather Underground*, which is just republished by Verso. Jacobs' essay on Big Bill Broonzy is featured in CounterPunch's new collection on music, art and sex, *Serpents in the Garden*. He can be reached at: rjacobs@zoo.uvm.edu*



The Empire Unravels

January 6, 2005 John Pilger, The New Statesman

"The most spectacular display of public morality the world has ever seen", was how the writer Arundhati Roy described the anti-war anger that swept across the world almost two years ago. A French study now estimates that 35 million people demonstrated on that February day and says there has never been anything like it; and it was just a beginning.

This is not rhetorical; human renewal is not a phenomenon, rather the continuation of a struggle that may appear at times to have frozen but is a seed beneath the snow.

Take Latin America, long declared invisible and expendable in the west.

"Latin Americans have been trained in impotence," wrote Eduardo Galeano the other day. "A pedagogy passed down from colonial times, taught by violent soldiers, timorous teachers and frail fatalists, has rooted in our souls the belief that reality is untouchable and that all we can do is swallow in silence the woes each day brings." Galeano was celebrating the rebirth of real democracy in his homeland, Uruguay, where people have voted "against fear", against privatisation and its attendant indecencies.

In Venezuela, municipal and state elections in October notched up the ninth democratic victory for the only government in the world sharing its oil wealth with its poorest people. In Chile, the last of the military fascists supported by western governments, notably Thatcher, are being pursued by revitalised democratic forces.

These forces are part of a movement against inequality and poverty and war that has arisen in the past six years and is more diverse, more enterprising, more internationalist and more tolerant of difference than anything in my lifetime.

It is a movement unburdened by a western liberalism that believes it represents a superior form of life; the wisest know this is colonialism by another name.

The wisest also know that just as the conquest of Iraq is unravelling, so a whole system of domination and impoverishment can unravel, too.

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

Occupation Cops Flee Iraq

06 Jan 2005 BAGHDAD, 6 January (IRIN)

Iraqi police continue to leave their jobs, and some are even leaving the country, in response to violence and threats against them.

Insurgents have said policemen countrywide are targets due to their work with US troops and consider them to be traitors.

According to Maj Salah al-Zeidan, police chief in the Karada district of the capital, many officers resigned after receiving threats from unknown sources and some decided to leave the country. "I know that it may surprise people, as policemen want to feel totally secure and are leaving the country. This is the reality in Iraq," he explained.

"The elections will be the worse days in this country, even with all the security preparations. We will be the first targets and I will leave the country next week for Syria. Unfortunately I had to quit my job for my family's safety," Kamal al-Rabia'a, a policeman working in the Hay Jamia'a district of Baghdad, told IRIN. "I don't want my children to live without a father and that is what could happen if I stay and do my job," he maintained.

"If people leave the country before the elections and policemen do the same, who is going to vote in the coming polls?" Sabah Kadham, deputy minister of interior, asked.

Despite "Gifts," Fallujans Won't Go Home; Marine Major One Lying Stack Of Shit

January 06, 2005 By Steven Komarow, USA Today

FALLUJAH, Iraq — Food rations, blankets, water and other necessities are stacked high and offered free with a smile to local residents. It's part of the U.S. military's effort to lure residents of Fallujah back to their homes.

"We try to make it as easy and friendly for them as we possibly can," says Marine Maj. Jim Hensien, the logistics officer in charge of one of several relief sites set up in the last three weeks. [Maj. Hensien is a lying stack of shit. They can't have cars, can't have even one weapon to protect themselves, and can be thrown in prison for not having their approved ID cards, writing things on walls or having any kind of public meeting. Once the resistance gets rid of Maj. Hensien and the rest of the treacherous Bush occupation command who turned Falluja into a high-tech concentration camp, see how fast they go home then. The tragedy, and the horror, is how many U.S. and Iraqi lives that will cost.]

But so far Fallujans are not lining up to return to what's left of their devastated city. The U.S. troops and Iraqi guardsmen waiting to hand out supplies one day this week outnumbered the locals. [That's called fuck you, in your face.]

About 40,000 Iraqis have visited Fallujah since it was partly re-opened last month, but only a few thousand of the 250,000 who once lived here have moved back in.



[Thanks to Joan M. who sent this in. She writes:]

Falluja Today.

Let's destroy this ancient city and rebuild it -like --- what? Did Bush fail at history? Are all ancient cities going to end up looking just like New York? Is this a way of making Halliburton richer?

Who gets the prize for the correct answer? --- J.

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

Allawi, Other Collaborators Starving; Army Commander Sends E-Mail From Baghdad Seeking Food

(Las Vegas Review-Journal, January 5, 2005)

Our security dogs are surviving on table scraps and garbage, according to an e-mail from Capt. Gabriella Cook, commander of a Las Vegas-based Army Reserve

detachment in Iraq. "The dogs are starving and urgently need dry dog food," she wrote. "Some of them have already died."

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

33 U.S. Troops Killed In 2004; Up 275% From 2003

January 5, 2005 Agence France-Presse

The US military says 33 of its soldiers died from hostile fire in 2004 - up from just 12 the previous year - and a total of 60 have been killed in combat since the American-led invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001.

"The People There Are Dead Because We Wanted Them Dead."

January 6, 2005 John Pilger, The New Statesman

Consider the plight of Afghanistan, where clean water is unknown and death in childbirth common.

At the Labor Party conference in 2001, Tony Blair announced his famous crusade to "reorder the world" with the pledge: "To the Afghan people, we make this commitment . . . We will not walk away . . . we will work with you to make sure [a way is found] out of the miserable poverty that is your present existence." The Blair government was on the verge of taking part in the conquest of Afghanistan, in which as many as 25,000 civilians died.

In all the great humanitarian crises in living memory, no country suffered more and none has been helped less. Just 3 per cent of all international aid spent in Afghanistan has been for reconstruction, 84 per cent is for the US-led military "coalition" and the rest is crumbs for emergency aid.

What is often presented as reconstruction revenue is private investment, such as the \$35m that will finance a proposed five-star hotel, mostly for foreigners. **An adviser to the minister of rural affairs in Kabul told me his government had received less than 20 per cent of the aid promised to Afghanistan. "We don't even have enough money to pay wages, let alone plan reconstruction," he said.**

The reason, unspoken of course, is that Afghans are the unworthiest of victims. When US helicopter gunships repeatedly machine-gunned a remote farming village, killing as many as 93 civilians, a Pentagon official was moved to say, "The people there are dead because we wanted them dead."

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

12 Israeli Soldiers Injured In Resistance Rocket Attack

5 January, 2005 BBC News

Twelve Israeli soldiers have been injured after Palestinian militants fired two rockets into Israel from the Gaza Strip.

The rockets landed inside an army base near the border with northern Gaza.

Overnight a Palestinian gunman was killed as he attacked troops at the main checkpoint from Israel to Gaza.

The violence comes a day after a tank shell aimed at suspected militants killed seven Palestinians youths in a strawberry field in northern Gaza.

The soldiers injured when Qassam rockets were fired into Israel by Hamas militants early on Wednesday were taken to hospital in the desert town of Beersheva, the Israeli military said.

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by a foreign power, to: www.rafahtoday.org The foreign army is Israeli; the occupied nation is Palestine.]

CLASS WAR NEWS

The Decline Of The Dollar

January 7, 2005 By Alan Maass, Socialist Worker

"THE GROWING external deficits of the world's 'sole superpower' have put the global economy on a path that is not merely unsustainable but also dangerously

so.” That alarming statement could be found last month not in a left-wing newspaper like Socialist Worker, but in the bosses’ own Financial Times.

Huge increases in the U.S. government’s budget deficit and the U.S. economy’s trade deficit with other countries are sending tremors through the U.S. establishment. One related development has been a sharp decline in the value of the dollar compared to other major currencies.

How serious is the problem? And what will the impact be on working people? ALAN MAASS looks at the unfolding dollar crisis.

OVER THE last few years, the value of the U.S. dollar has fallen by more than 15 percent--and by more than 50 percent against Europe’s currency, the euro. Financial commentators expect the decline of the dollar to continue--with the nightmare scenario being a further big drop causing an international financial crisis.

The value of a country’s currency rises and falls because of a combination of factors, including international investment flows and government policies. One of the most important is a country’s balance of trade--the difference between exports and imports.

The annual U.S. trade deficit has increased more than eightfold from a two-decade low of \$77 billion in 1991 to almost \$650 billion by the end of 2004. That’s about 6 percent of U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP)--the measure of the overall size of the U.S. economy. In a poor country, when the trade deficit climbs above 5 percent of GDP, the International Monetary Fund usually steps in to insist on a “structural adjustment” program.

Meanwhile, the U.S. government has gone from a budget surplus at the end of the 1990s to a record-setting deficit of \$412 billion in 2004, all in less than a decade. The most important causes have been the Bush administration’s trillion-dollar tax cut giveaways to the super-rich and massively increased military spending thanks to the “war on terror.” And there’s more red ink to come with the Bush team’s plans to privatize Social Security and push through even more tax cuts.

“If this country were named Argentina or Indonesia, it would be a clear candidate for financial crisis any day now,” economist and New York Times columnist Paul Krugman said in a recent radio commentary.

The size of the U.S. trade deficit really took off in the late 1990s, when the U.S. government pumped large amounts of money into the economy to stop America from suffering the financial crisis that struck countries throughout East Asia beginning in 1997. The strategy did stop the U.S. from coming down with the “Asian flu.” But one major consequence was a huge increase in imports of goods and services into the U.S., as the American market soaked up other countries’ exports.

The trade gap is so big now that U.S. exports of goods and services would have to grow by 50 percent to reach the level of U.S. imports.

A deficit this big can't be paid for domestically. So the U.S. has been funding its balance of payments deficits by borrowing from the rest of the world--to the tune of \$1.8 billion a day.

Add in the skyrocketing government deficit--which is competing with the trade deficit in trying to attract foreign capital to finance it--and it's obvious that the U.S. has become far and away the world's biggest debtor.

Who are the lenders? This year, China, Japan and other East Asian countries are expected to finance half the annual U.S. trade deficit. As Financial Times columnist John Plender wrote, the world's "lone superpower now depends on China as the swing financier for its gigantic current account deficit."

That's why the dollar crisis finally attracted mainstream media attention last month when rumors spread that central banks in China, India and Russia were starting to divert their holdings of foreign currencies out of dollars because of the decline in their value.

The Bush White House claims that it is committed to keeping the dollar strong, but this is hot air. Actually, the administration has actively encouraged a controlled decline in the value of the dollar.

One goal is to lower the U.S. trade deficit. A weaker dollar benefits U.S. manufacturers because U.S. exports are cheaper to buy in other countries, and other countries' exports become more expensive in the U.S. Yet the trade deficit has continued climbing despite the dollar's decline over the past year.

U.S. policymakers also understand that the accumulated debt from the twin deficits becomes cheaper to pay off. "In essence, what is happening is that the American government is defaulting on a part of its debt," Joel Geier, associate editor of the International Socialist Review, said in a recent interview. "They will pay back the debt at its face value, but in a devalued currency. It's not declaring bankruptcy, but the world's biggest debtor is telling its creditors: 'We'll pay you 80 cents on the dollar, or 60 cents on the dollar.' Try that with your credit card company."

This is playing with fire--because the more the dollar drops in value, the less incentive other countries will have to continue financing the U.S. balance of payments deficit. "The break can come either from the Reserve Bank of China deciding it has enough dollars, thank you, or from private investors saying 'I'm going to take a speculative bet on a dollar plunge,' which then ends up being a self-fulfilling prophecy," Krugman said.

Even if the White House avoids this nightmare scenario, working people will pay a price in declining living standards. The administration's unstated policy of letting the dollar slide means not only that imported products are more expensive to buy, but that prices will rise across the board.

This hasn't shown up in the government's official inflation statistics yet. But these figures are increasingly misleading because they exclude so many essential products--like, for example, gas, which has jumped in price over the last several years--because they are supposedly "too volatile" to measure properly.

Also, the high level of consumer spending in the U.S. was kept going through the recession by a boom in mortgage refinancing because of low interest rates. This provided homeowners with extra cash to spend even as real wages declined. But the decline in the dollar's value is already pushing up interest rates, slowing the refinancing frenzy and threatening a more severe crisis if the bubble in real estate values caused by the mortgage boom is punctured.

As Geier puts it, "The press may present [the Bush administration's dollar policy] as a brilliant stroke by the political representatives of the U.S. capitalist class, but it is not a sign of strength...The U.S. remains the dominant power, and it is on this basis that it assumes that the rest of the world will bail it out. The U.S. ruling class may get this if the dollar collapses, because Europe, Japan and Asia can't afford for that to happen. But that won't enhance U.S. credibility."

Since the election, the mainstream media--as well as many progressives--have acted as if the Bush administration is all-powerful. But the dollar crisis with all its looming consequences shows the fault lines and weaknesses right below the surface.

Read Joel Geier's interview "Dimensions of the U.S. Dollar Crisis" in the International Socialist Review.



Received:

Ft. Hood: A Chance To Speak Out:

From: "JoAnn Wypijewski" jwyp@earthlink.net

To: GI Special
Sent: January 06, 2005
Subject: Ft. Hood?

I am at Fort Hood at the moment to cover Charles Graner's court martial for Harper's Magazine.

I'll be coming back in a month or two to attend Lynndie England's. I was wondering if you had any soldier contacts here or in the area whom you think I should speak to. I'm writing about the larger issues of justice and responsibility that these cases raise--not simply military.

But I want to talk to military people here obviously.

Any suggestions would be most gratefully received.

Thanks so much.

JoAnn

Web Copies

For back issues see: GI Special web site at <http://www.militaryproject.org/>

The following that we know of have also posted issues:

<http://www.notinourname.net/qi-special/> ; www.qifightback.org ;

<http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/qi-special.htm>, www.williambowles.info/gispecial

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