

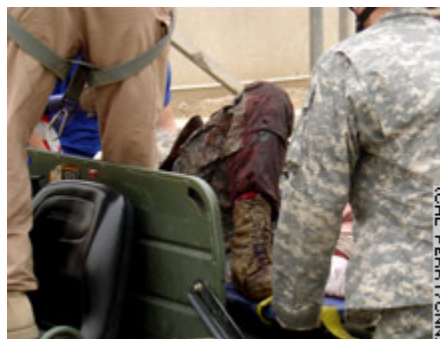
GI SPECIAL 4E11:

THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE



Maria Gomez, center, mother of Sgt. Jose Gomez, with her husband Felix Jimenez, as she and Gomez's fiancée Marie Canario mourn during her son's funeral service, May 10, 2006 in New York. Gomez died in Baghdad on April 28, 2006 when a roadside bomb detonated near his Humvee. The soldier was assigned to the 10th Cavalry, 4th Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood, Texas. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

Have A Front Row Seat For The George Bush Production: “Hell On Earth”



Medics work to save the life of a wounded soldier.

“It’s Life And Death, Every Day”

May 10, 2006 By Cal Perry, BAGHDAD, Iraq (CNN)

"Don't let me die! Please, don't let me die," the U.S. soldier said repeatedly as medics carried him to the trauma room.

His glazed eyes focused on an Army chaplain kneeling over him. There was blood everywhere.

A roadside bomb that exploded next to his patrol vehicle sent shards of metal into his body and catapulted him from the vehicle.

He, like so many of the gravely wounded soldiers in Iraq, was rushed to the 10th Combat Support Hospital, where minutes or seconds can mean life or death.

"Am I going to live?" he asked, in a pleading, rhythmic voice.

"Hell, yes, you are," replied Capt. David Steinbruner, one of the doctors.

Moments earlier, the soldier asked the medics to keep his leg from falling off the gurney as they hurried him into the emergency room. The blast tore the flesh from the bone. His left hand was just as bad -- a "near amputation," according to one of the doctors.

Less than 5 feet away, a friend and fellow soldier lay dead, his body placed in a black body bag and zipped up.

“It’s life and death, every day” said Lt. Col. Bob Mazur, another doctor.

These men and women -- doctors, medics and nurses, many of them just 20 or 21 years old -- have saved the lives of numerous servicemen and women who in any previous war may have come home in flag-draped coffins.

CNN has withheld the names of the wounded soldiers for privacy concerns.

In Iraq, roughly 17,500 U.S. troops have been wounded, and nearly 2,500 have been killed. The survival rate is significantly higher than in previous wars, and much credit goes to those working to save lives in places such as the 10th Combat Support Hospital.

"If you look at the overall death rate ... the case fatality rate is cut in half from Vietnam to now. And again I think that's due to better training, tactical combat casualty training," said Col. John Holcomb, the senior surgeon at the hospital.

At least eight doctors and nurses worked on the soldier with the shredded leg -- their arms and clothes drenched in his blood. His femur protruded from his upper thigh.

A nurse clutched one of his hands.

Outside in the hall sat the clothes of these wounded men -- or their "battle rattle," as it's called. Flak jackets lay blown in half, boots drenched in blood.

Down the hall, a private first class who was driving the vehicle was put gingerly on a bed. He was in better shape than his comrades despite bad burns on his hands and metal in his neck. Still filled with adrenaline, he breathlessly relived the attack for the nurse.

"It just exploded. On the left side or under the vehicle -- I'm not sure. Everything was on fire," he said. "I got out through the gunner's position and got one more out."

As the doctors and nurses work, the captain of the wounded soldiers' unit sat, head in hands, torn up. At times, he spoke to his commanding officer, a major, in an inaudible tone. Single tears ran down his cheeks.

The private called his wife and explained what happened, followed by a short smile. "I'm fine, I'm going to be OK. That's fine, fine; you just go ahead and pray. Pray."

Steinbruner took the phone and spoke soothingly: "He's going to be fine -- you hang in there now." He turned, shaking his head: "She's totally in shock."

Back in the main trauma room, the soldier with the torn leg hung on, fighting with every breath. He remained conscious. Steinbruner suggested putting him under anesthesia completely.

"He's a sick boy. We need to put him down. He's totally with it. He said, 'Please, don't let me die.'"

"Just breathe deep -- there we go, nice and deep. ... You're a healthy guy," Steinbruner told the soldier.

"I'm not going to die -- am I?"

"Look, I promise -- I wouldn't lie to you," Steinbruner said.

Serving as both doctor and impromptu commanding officer, Steinbruner added, "Don't you dare try to die on me. I didn't give you permission."

Through a condensed face mask, the soldier wheezed and coughed, "Am I gonna lose the fucking leg?"

"I don't know," Steinbruner replied. "We'll try to save it if we can, OK? I just don't know. I can't give you an answer on that."

The near dozen doctors, medics and nurses stopped the blood from pouring out of him and prepared to send him to surgery in an attempt to save his leg and hand.

"Thank you, sir," Steinbruner said to the senior surgeon, Holcomb, while taking off his blood-drenched gloves and tossing them in the trash.

The surgery was a success. The soldier survived and kept his leg for the time being. Once close to death, he is now being treated at a U.S. military facility in Germany.

"He asked me if he's going to lose his leg, and I said, 'I don't know,' " Steinbruner said minutes after working to save the soldier's life. "I never lie to them. I'll say to them, 'I just don't know.' It was tough. It's tough."

He paused in thought. "That's the kind of thing we face out there. ... I mean ... I think there were several killed out there as well."

He paused again and said, "I'm now going to go take care of his buddy." And then he walked away and went back to work.

SATAN



"The marines that I have had wounded over the past five months have been attacked by a faceless enemy. But the enemy has got a face. He's called Satan."
US Marine Colonel Gareth Brandl. (AP Photo/Gerald

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

21-Year-Old Kingsport Soldier Killed

May 4, 2006 By Associated Press

KINGSPORT, Tenn. - An Army tank driver whose wife is expecting their first child back home in Tennessee was killed Monday in Iraq, his family said.

Spc. Robbie Glen Light, 21, was the only member of his crew killed when their tank hit an improvised explosive device south of Baghdad, according to Elizabeth Baker Light, his widow.

Light was a member of the Army's 4th Infantry, C Company, 167th Armored Division based at Fort Hood, Texas, and deployed to Iraq in December.

A military chaplain and officer informed Elizabeth Light of her husband's death on Tuesday. Confirmation from the Department of Defense and Fort Hood was pending Wednesday.

"I think we're through the initial shock but just don't know what to think right now," she told The Kingsport Times-News. "But ... he did it for a good cause."

Light, a 2002 graduate of Sullivan South High School, enlisted in 2003 and was scheduled to leave the service in May 2007. He served a six-month tour in Iraq in 2003-2004 and left for a second tour in December less than two months after getting married. He was scheduled to come home for a visit next week.

"We're just trying to keep memories (of him)," said Elizabeth Light, who expects to deliver a girl later this month. "(We're) trying to make sure to write them down so we don't forget to tell her over time and she'll know him."

She said her husband, whom she met in high school, joined the Army "to prove himself."

Funeral arrangements were pending.

Light is the 51st service member from Tennessee to die in the Iraqi conflict, according to a count by The Associated Press.

Roadside Bomb Kills Missouri Marine



Lance Corporal Leon Deraps [KMOV]

May 8, 2006 Jamestown, MO (AP)

A central Missouri Marine has been killed in a roadside bombing in Iraq.

Family members say Lance Corporal Leon Deraps, 19, of Jamestown died in the attack Friday. The Pentagon had not revealed information about Deraps by mid-day today, but relatives confirmed his death.

Deraps joined the Marines soon after he graduated from Jamestown C1 High School in 2005.

Jamestown schools Superintendent Jim Deeken said the district summoned four ministers to school today to help students with their grief.

Funeral plans are incomplete.

Bush Does Tal Afar Version Of “Bring ‘Em On”: Another U.S. Soldier Dead

May 9, 2006 By Joseph Giordano, Stars and Stripes & 5.10.06 AFP & AP

A 1st Armored Division soldier was killed Sunday near Tal Afar, U.S. military officials said Monday.

Attacks have increased in the ethnically mixed city over the past few weeks, particularly in the north.

Some soldiers speculate that insurgent fighters stepped up their attacks after President Bush held Tal Afar up as a model city during speeches earlier this year.

Tuesday night's deadly suicide truck bombing in the northern town of Tal Afar left 24 people dead.

The US military said 134 others were wounded in the attack when the bomber exploded a truck carrying flour in the marketplace in Tal Afar, a town hailed by the Bush administration a few months as an example of successful attempts to pacify the restive north.

U.S. and Iraqi forces launched an operation in September to clear the city of insurgents; the second such attempt in a year.

However, by the end of that month a woman bomber slipped into a crowd of recruits, killing at least six people and wounding 30. Since then, the city has been hit by repeated attacks.

Tennessee Soldier Seriously Injured

May 10, 2006 WATE, MONROE CO, Tenn.

A Monroe County soldier is recovering after being seriously injured in a roadside bombing in Iraq.

The Monroe County Daily News is reporting that 28 year old U.S. Army Sergeant Heath Newlan Berry was injured on Friday.

He is now recovering in a military hospital outside the U.S. Apparently he had to have his left hand and right thumb amputated.

Sergeant Berry is a member of the Army Reserve's 489th Civil Affairs Battalion out of Knoxville.

Three other Army soldiers were killed in the attack.

FUTILE EXERCISE: BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!



U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Julian Hernandez, of Dumas, Texas, patrols in Karmah, Iraq, April 26, 2006. (AP Photo/Jacob Silberberg)

Local Soldier Injured In Iraq

May 05, 2006 WEEK-TV

A local soldier was seriously injured in Baghdad today when the vehicle he was riding in struck a roadside bomb.

Army Private 1st Class Caleb Lufkin suffered shrapnel wounds and broke several bones according to family members in Knoxville.

Lufkin is a 2000 graduate of Knoxville High School in Knox County. He has been serving in Iraq since October.

The soldier's grandparents say the Army expects to fly him to Germany for treatment once his condition stabilizes.

Lufkin and another soldier were injured in the attack and two others were reportedly killed.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Militants Attack

May 10, 2006 Miami Herald

Police patrolling in southern Afghanistan were ambushed by Taliban militants. Two government employees were killed by guerrillas on motorbikes.

TROOP NEWS

PROTEST GEORGE BUSH AT WEST POINT

**SAVE THE DATE
Saturday, May 27, 2006**

[Thanks to PB, for sending in.]

May 10, 2006 Veterans For Peace:

To New York, New Jersey, and Hudson Valley Activists:

Join with us to protest the appearance of George W. Bush at the commencement of the graduating class at the US Military Academy (USMA) at West Point on May 27, 2006.

Send Bush and the media the message that the DECEIT and LIES that led us to the War on IRAQ are known and rejected by the public.

Tentative agenda:

Assemble in Highland Falls: 8:00 AM
March to USMA Main Gates: 8:30 AM
Veterans Park Rally: 10:00 AM

Some of the many groups who have expressed an interest in supporting this event are:

- Iraq Veterans Against the War
- Military Families Speak Out/Gold Star Families
- Veterans for Peace
- No War Westchester
- American Iranian Friendship Committee
- Rockland County Peace Coalition
- Northeast Citizens for Responsible Media
- Democratic Alliance of Orange County
- Fellowship of Reconciliation (Nyack)
- Hudson Valley Activist Network

Army Guard, Reserve Miss April Recruiting Goals

5.10.06 By Michelle Tan, Army Times staff writer.

The Army National Guard and the Army Reserve missed their recruiting goals for April, while the active Army continued its string of successful recruiting, according to the Defense Department.

The Guard recruited 5,875 people in April, 90 percent of its goal of 6,530. It is the first time the Guard has missed its monthly goal since the beginning of the fiscal year in October.

April is the second straight month the Reserve has failed to meet its recruiting goal. Recruiters brought in 1,300 people, 75 percent toward its goal of 1,742, according to numbers released by Army Recruiting Command. In March, the Reserve brought in 1,518 people, 8 percent shy of its goal.

The active Army continued its recruiting success in April, bringing in 5,684 people. That's 105 percent of its goal of 5,400. This is the 11th consecutive month the active Army has exceeded its monthly goals.

FEARS OVER MISSING SECRET PENTAGON ARMS SHIPMENT: DID 200,000 AK47S FALL INTO THE HANDS OF IRAQ RESISTANCE?

[Thanks to Don Bacon, The Smedley Butler Society, who sent this in.]

10 May 2006 Mirror Co (UK)

SOME 200,000 guns the US sent to Iraqi security forces may have been smuggled to terrorists, it was feared yesterday.

The 99-tonne cache of AK47s was to have been secretly flown out from a US base in Bosnia. But the four planeloads of arms have vanished.

Orders for the deal to go ahead were given by the US Department of Defense. But the work was contracted out via a complex web of private arms traders.

And the Moldovan airline used to transport the shipment was blasted by the UN in 2003 for smuggling arms to Liberia, human rights group Amnesty has discovered.

Amnesty chief spokesman Mike Blakemore said: "It's unbelievable that no one can account for 200,000 assault rifles. If these weapons have gone missing it's a terrifying prospect."

American defence chiefs hired a US firm to take the guns, from the 90s Bosnian war, to Iraq.

But air traffic controllers in Baghdad have no record of the flights, which supposedly took off between July 2004 and July 2005. A coalition forces spokesman confirmed they had not received "any weapons from Bosnia" and added they were "not aware of any purchases for Iraq from Bosnia".

Nato and US officials have already voiced fears that Bosnian arms, sold by US, British and Swiss firms, are being passed to insurgents. A Nato spokesman said: "There's no tracking mechanism to ensure they don't fall into the wrong hands. There are concerns that some may have been siphoned off."

And a US official said £270million of equipment could not be traced.

Meanwhile, Aerocom, the Moldovan air firm at the centre of the 200,000 missing AK47s, was stripped of its licence by its national authorities a day before the first shipment.

Two other companies in the complicated sale claim to have papers proving the guns were delivered in Iraq but refuse to show them.

Typical Pentagon “Security” **Hackers Steal Personal Data On People** **Who Went To Fraud Conference**

5.10.06 Washington Post

The Pentagon has sent warning letters to thousands of persons who may have had their personal data stolen, advising them that they may be at risk of identify theft and other fraudulent activities.

Most of those affected registered online for an August 2001 Defense Department conference on health-care fraud.

Last month, hackers broke into the data base that contained names, Social Security numbers, credit card numbers, employer identification and other personal information about the conference attendees.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

5 Escape From U.S. Prison

5.10.06 AP News

Five people escaped from a U.S. detention center in northern Iraq, the U.S. command said Wednesday.

The detainees escaped early Tuesday from the Fort Suse Theater internment facility near Sulaimaniyah, 160 miles northeast of Baghdad, said Spc. Stacy Sanning, a spokesman for the U.S. command in Baghdad. U.S. soldiers and Iraqi forces were searching for them, he said.

Sanning did not identify the escapees, saying the incident was being investigated, but Col. David Gray, commander of the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division, said

three were Arabs and a fourth was an Iraqi Kurd. The nationality of the fifth was not immediately known.

Assorted Resistance Action



Dead policeman following an attack May 10, 2006. Insurgents opened fire on two officers, killing both in the Mansur area in western Baghdad. (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

5.10.06 AP & IOL & (Reuters)

In Baghdad, guerrilla fighters fatally shot Mohammed Musaab Talal al-Amari, who directs the Defense Ministry's public relations office, said police Capt. Jamil Hussein. Al-Amari was on his way to work when his car was stopped by another vehicle in the residential neighborhood of Bayaa, Hussein said. Three men then got out of another car and opened fire, killing him and wounding an Iraqi pedestrian, he said.

Guerrillas also killed four off-duty policemen in an ambush Tuesday in Ramadi, apparently as they were leaving work.

An Iraqi soldier was killed and two others were wounded when their patrol was attacked by resistance fighters near the northern city of Kirkuk, police said.

Guerrillas killed Lieutenant Colonel Kanan Hasan, an aide to the head of Baquba's Criminal Intelligence Directorate, along with two body guards, while he was heading to his work in the city, police said.

A policeman and a civilian were wounded when a roadside bomb went off near a police patrol in Baquba, police said.

An army major and two soldiers were seriously wounded when a roadside bomb went off near their patrol in Hawija, 70 km southwest of Kirkuk, police said.

**IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE
END THE OCCUPATION**

Sunni & Shia Organize Neighborhood Militias Together

May 10, 2006 By SABRINA TAVERNISE, New York Times [Excerpt]

It was almost 3 a.m. in Zubaida Square in central Baghdad last week when headlights signaled one flash, then two, then one again.

From the darkness, someone signaled back. The watchers were there.

As evidence mounts that Shiite police commandos are carrying out secret killings, Sunni Arab neighborhoods across Baghdad have begun forming citizen groups to keep the paramilitary forces out of their areas entirely. In large swaths of western Baghdad, and in at least six majority Sunni areas in its center, young men take turns standing in streets after the 11 p.m. curfew, to send out signals by flashlights and cellphones if strangers approach.

Watch groups have been assembled in other mixed areas, including Baquba to the north and Mahmudiya to the south, residents and officials said.

"The killing, you can't imagine the killing," said Yusra Abdul Aziz, 47, a teacher, whose block, in Adhamiya, organized its watch group in March, after four neighbors were shot dead over several days. "Without any reason. Cars come and shoot us. We run to the hospital and get our wounded. We live in a nightmare, actually."

On her block, seven men, Sunnis and Shiites, stand on rooftops and street corners from midnight to 6 a.m., stopping suspicious cars. Palm tree trunks and pieces of trash are used to block roads.

Still, she is so afraid of nighttime raids by both the special police and marauding criminals dressed like police officers that she sleeps in her clothes.

As a counterweight to sectarian extremism, neighborhood watch groups often cross sectarian lines, with Sunni and Shiite neighbors standing guard together.

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

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

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

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“My Picture Is On Your Website”

From: Tonantzin Castro
To: GI Special
Sent: May 10, 2006 5:39 PM
Subject: My picture is on your website...

I was browsing the net and found my pic from the Immigrant Rights May Day protest on your site.

Thank you for including me, or my image, in the good work you are doing.

Keep Up The Good Fight,
Tonantzin Castro

REPLY: Thank you for your letter, not least because it offers a reason to run a magnificent photo (below) again. Someday, when honest history books are written for school kids, which tell the truth instead of ruling class lies, this photo will have a place of honor.

As the saying goes, better than a thousand words does it condemn to the realm of fraud all the stupid slanders going around about the people who come here to live, from wherever. People who are looking for a symbol of courage, intelligence, and refusal to stand still and take abuse from racist politicians and bigots will find it in this photo. Respect to you, and all those who have been and are standing up.

This movement is a movement for the human rights and liberation of all who are exploited and oppressed by the dictatorship of corporate greed that characterizes the USA today. “An injury to one is an injury to all.”

GET THE MESSAGE?



Tonantzin Castro, holds a placard during a rally in downtown Los Angeles May 1, 2006. In 'A Day Without Immigrants,' rallies across the country closed hundreds of restaurants, shops and factories. Waves of humanity poured through city streets. REUTERS/Lucy Nicholson

Ignorant “Minutemen” Bigots Best Quit Fucking With Immigrants: They Have Combat Experience

“After serving our country, to see our relatives now criminalized through this legislation is provoking a lot of people.”

5.8.06 Army Times

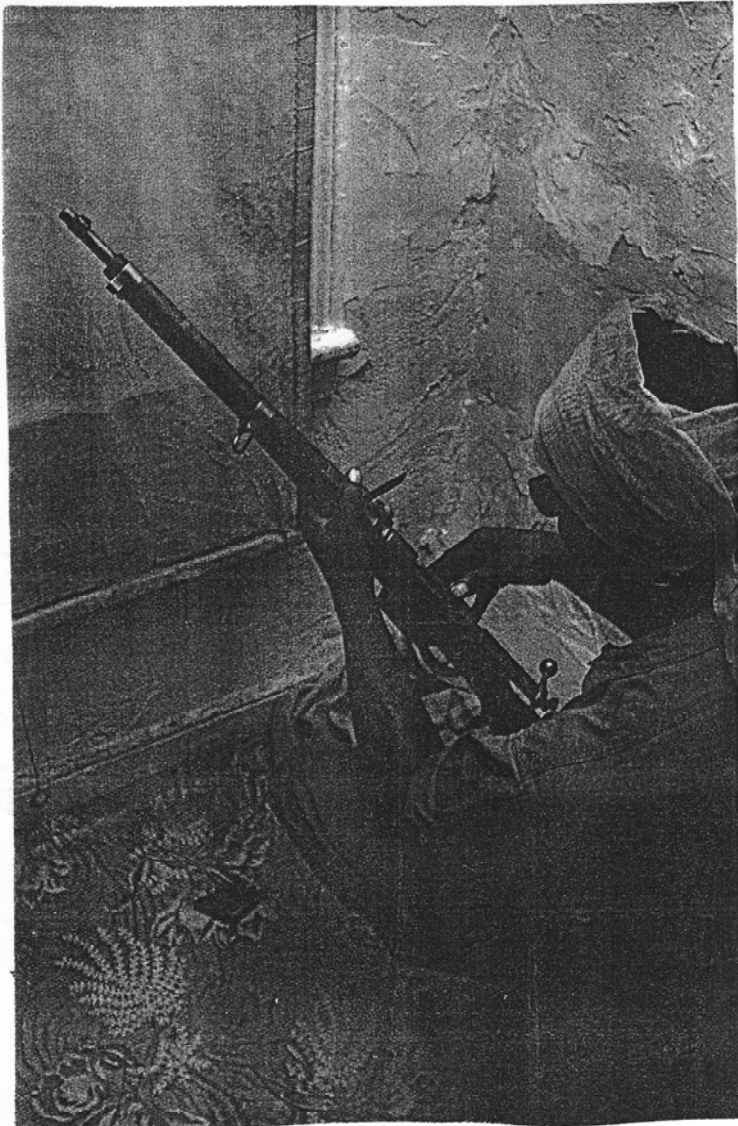
At a time when the Pentagon has stepped up recruiting of Hispanics to fill recruiting quotas, experts say a crackdown on illegal immigration would undoubtedly cause resentment in the ranks.

Hispanics are increasingly joining the military as their numbers have grown, according to a 2004 study on Marine recruitment by CNA Corp., a research firm in Arlington, Va. The study found Hispanics have done exceptionally well in the Marine Corps, with boot-camp attrition rates well below average.

Hispanics accounted for 16.5 percent of Marine recruits last year, up from 13.4 percent in 2002 and 11.7 percent in 1997, the firm said.

“After serving our country, to see our relatives now criminalized through this legislation is provoking a lot of people,” said Jorge Mariscal, a Vietnam veteran and director of Chicano studies at the University of California, San Diego.

Ignorant “Minutemen” Bigots Have Fatally Short Memories



Vietnam Veterans defend Newark, New Jersey from ignorant bigots of the Newark police force during Newark Insurrection, July 1967.

Reflections On A “Noble Cause”

Vets Look Back On The Vietnam War

“And that’s what the war seems like it was all about: dollars. Helping a few people get some money, expand their sphere of influence in another area, to dominate some trade somewhere else. It’s not about people here.”

“I think Vietnam veterans learned early on in the war that we were there to fight for the interests of the multinationals,” concludes Stahl. That we were losing, just wasting life to protect their investments, in a country that we should never have been in. And that pissed us off to be used like pawns.”

Although some people in the movement blamed them for the war, especially in the early years, vets became an important and distinct force against Vietnam, particularly through Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). Foley believes that this involvement was the single most important thing a vet could do for his own mental health because rather than wallow in guilt over Vietnam, antiwar vets tried to end it.

[Thanks to Michael Letwin, New York City Labor Against The War, for making this available.]

Spring 1982 by Michael Letwin, Wavelength (UMass/Boston)

“Well, it’s time we recognized that ours was, in truth, a noble cause . . . We will never again ask young men to fight and possibly die in a war our government is afraid to let them win.” —Ronald Reagan on Vietnam, August 18, 1980

“We didn’t win, thank God.”—Vietnam Veteran David Connolly, April 1981

This article, drawn from interviews with six Boston-area men active in veterans’ rights and antiwar organizing, reflects the views of a growing number of Vietnam vets who have begun to speak out against Reagan’s version of the war they fought.

To them, Vietnam was anything but “Noble.”

It was a war against the people of Vietnam and against American GIs themselves, since it was working class and minority kids who died on the front lines. They

saw the Vietnamese and their own brother GIS sacrificed in the name of “Democracy,” when what was really at stake was the quest for a world where American capitalism could be guaranteed safe profits.

For them, massive Vietnamese insistence made Vietnam a war the US couldn’t and shouldn’t have won.

And they resisted the U.S. military in the field and joined the Antiwar Movement at home in that belief.

Today, Vietnam remains an unending nightmare which has profoundly affected their lives and the lives of their fellow vets.

It was the U.S. government, they point out, not the Antiwar Movement, which poisoned them with Agent Orange.

And they say that rather than solving the problems which the war created for them, the administration is exploiting Vietnam vets to whip up support for new wars which will result in the destruction of another generation of young people in the coming Vietnam.

These vets have resolved to tell their story, especially to the young people who didn’t experience Vietnam first hand so that we will never allow the government and those it represents to create it again.

Only in this way, they believe, will their war not have been in vain.

Part 2 Of 2:

“Vets became aware of a lot of things as a consequence of Vietnam,” says Armstead, reflecting on his own feelings and on those of many of the vets he counsels. “How racism works, how exploitation works. How being profit-oriented reduces the individual to a second or third consideration. How the loss of life means nothing as long as it produces dollars.

“And that’s what the war seems like it was all about: dollars. Helping a few people get some money, expand their sphere of influence in another area, to dominate some trade somewhere else. It’s not about people here.”

“I think Vietnam veterans learned early on in the war that we were there to fight for the interests of the multinationals,” concludes Stahl. That we were losing, just wasting life to protect their investments, in a country that we should never have been in. And that pissed us off to be used like pawns.”

The result, he says, is that he doesn’t feel any pride for his role in Vietnam.

"I'm not proud, in a sense, to say that I'm a Vietnam veteran. Because I committed that rape and pilferage. To be proud that I served comrades there who are still suffering today, that's where I can get up and boast a bit. But as far as being there for the Government, I'm ashamed."

"I think we should put the message across that there can be no pride in what we did," agrees Connolly, whose opposition to Vietnam was heightened by the feeling that he was betraying his Irish heritage by helping to suppress a movement for national self-determination.

"If we allow the American public to look at us like heroes, then it'll just happen again—they'll get another crop of 19 and 20 year olds."

If their experiences led these vets to views so starkly opposite to Reagan's, why do some vets still defend Vietnam?

Because they can't face the idea that the suffering they inflicted, experienced, and witnessed in the war was in vain, believes Mark Foley, who was in the Army's Thirty-Second Medical Depot in Vietnam in 1970-71 and who attends the University of Massachusetts today.

"Mentally, they need to have something to hold onto, he explains, "even if they don't really buy it anymore. They have to believe that they went over there to get a job done, no matter how it ended up. I think a lot of guys are hanging onto that because if they let go, there's a void they can't fill."

"How can you pump bullets at somebody 'till his face or his knees are completely blown to pieces?" asks Shep Gurwitz, a paratrooper in an advanced reconnaissance unit of the Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade in 1967-68, who lives in East Boston and attends the University of Massachusetts today.

"How can you watch little kids crying on the side of the road, dirty and grimy and no parents? You say, 'Oh boy, was all this worthless?' Some people just can't deal with it that way. They displace it, put it somewhere else. And if they take a look into that picture and feel the pain, they're gone. That's how they deal with it. Then they can make Vietnam seem like the right thing. You can make anything seem like the right thing."

Stahl encounters another group of vets who are able to admit that the war was wrong, but whose reaction is to blame themselves. He has no difficulty understanding this reaction, since there are times when he has felt the same way.

"My father had this hate for the people they waged war against in World War II," he says. "But we can't hate the Vietnamese, so the hate is turned inward, and we begin hating ourselves for the ignorance and the stage of development we were at when we went to war at 17 years old. And today, at 34 years old, that hatred is starting to come out.

"There's two million of us, and one hundred thousand have committed suicide," he adds. "Well, it's denial. They're not able to accept what they did."

Other vets, however, reject self-hatred. From the start, they point out, working class and minority young men had little knowledge of, or choice about Vietnam, even before the draft boards reached them. In their communities in the mid-1960s, they say, there was a tradition of military service which made joining up seem like the natural thing to do.

“When I was in high school,” remembers Miller, “the big joke was that when you got out you were going to ‘Saigon U.’ It was just expected. You lived with it for about three years, and I knew they were going to draft me. So I just figured, ‘Well, I’m going to go down and get it over with. To hell with it.’ And that was it. I joined the Army to get out of town.”

In South Boston, Connolly’s situation was similar: “Friends of my parents, older people, would say to me, ‘What are you going to do when you get out of high school?’ I’d tell them, ‘I’m going to Vietnam. Where the hell do you think everyone else is?’ There was nobody on the streets that was older than you.”

Connolly believes that he was a victim of the government’s effort to recruit and draft the youngest possible working class youth, because it found them the easiest to mold to its requirements. “Do you know how old the average veteran of World War II was? 26. I didn’t know anybody who was 21! The average age in Vietnam was 19.

“That’s one of the first things I try to tell people who ask me about the war,” he continues. “We were little kids, see? And they gave us a gun and told us we were going to be John Wayne and that those fucking dinks ain’t worth shit.’ And a few old men directed the whole thing.”

Partly because he was a little older, Foley was already against the war by the time he enlisted, but he too found no way to avoid the military. “I joined because they would have drafted me anyway, and the Army promised to send me to Germany. They didn’t tell me they would send me to ‘Nam afterwards.

“When I got my orders for ‘Nam, I came home and found absolutely no support from my friends and family. They said, ‘Well, you got orders, you got to go.’ They were going to work tomorrow, and didn’t want to hear it. My folks were worried about whether I changed my life insurance benefits from them to somebody else. Not the fact that I was going to Vietnam, but that if I died, they wouldn’t get the money!

“The options were horrible, fucking lousy, you know? To think of the MPs pulling up to your house someday and dragging you off to Leavenworth! I finally decided, ‘Well, I don’t even have the bucks, so what am I going to do? No way I’m going to Canada with no support from anyone.”

Until massive GI resistance blossomed in the late ‘60s, the options were even fewer once in Vietnam, explains Stahl. “They wouldn’t shoot you for deserting, but you had to choose whether you were going into a stockade where they beat you about the head and shoulders with a baseball bat every hour, or you went into combat. Which would you choose? I chose to try and survive, and in surviving, you had to wage war.”

“What makes a difference is class,” concludes Miller. “If you go to a group of people who are pretty wealthy, you don’t hardly meet a Vietnam vet at all. You go

down among people who work for a living and you meet all kinds of them. A lot of guys from South Boston, Medford and Somerville, which had the most killed in the country for its size.”

“I grew up in South Boston, from which twenty-eight guys were killed in Vietnam,” says Connolly.

Vets who came to blame the war on the government and economic system, rather than on themselves, often joined the antiwar movement when they got home, says Miller.

Although some people in the movement blamed them for the war, especially in the early years, vets became an important and distinct force against Vietnam, particularly through Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). Foley believes that this involvement was the single most important thing a vet could do for his own mental health because rather than wallow in guilt over Vietnam, antiwar vets tried to end it.

“I think that the antiwar movement saved a lot of guys who were in the war,” he says.

They didn’t, like a lot of veterans, have problems because they’ve taken their guilt personally. It was an amazing feeling to be in a demonstration with five hundred guys in jungle fatigues walking through the streets of some city in this country to end the war. Everyone felt that ‘Hey, I got all my brothers right here with me. They all feel the same way, they’ve all been through a lot. We know we’re right, we just know it.’

“So all these guys in VVAW had an outward direction for their rage. They were no longer blaming themselves. They knew they were victims, just like the Vietnamese. And I think it was very effective in turning public opinion.”

“I tell you,” says Miller, “the one thing I take pride in is the fact that I came to be in VVAW, to make a stink and say this shouldn’t be going on. Other than that, the war is just something I did. I would have rather done it fighting for truth and justice than what we were fighting for. Then I could be proud.”

Even for those vets who have been able to “direct their rage,” the war continues today. In part, they explain, Vietnam continues to take an enormous emotional and physical toll on those who returned.

“Vietnam makes me crazy every day,” explains Connolly, as he recounts story after story of friends who have been driven to drugs, alcohol or suicide because they can’t shake the war. “You see a lot of dudes who come back from the military and hate everybody,” says Gurwitz. They hate themselves and their families.

“You’re old and you haven’t even had the chance to be young. I’ve never been young. I came out of high school right into the service, and then bang—when I came back I wasn’t twenty-one anymore. I was fifty-five.

“Every day in the ‘Nam was like a year out of your life. I’m thirty-four years old and I don’t know how to talk about simple things. There’s this thing: ‘Don’t get too close, man.’ People tell you they see you scoping out everything in sight in a non-combat zone and sitting with your back to the wall all the time. I don’t have nightmares—I have daymares. It’s with me all the time.”

Connolly and Gurwitz are not alone. Recent studies report that hundreds of thousands of vets suffer from Post Vietnam Stress Syndrome,” whose effects include a high alcoholism, drug, suicide, divorce and prison rate.

Because they are also workers and minorities, vets are among those bearing the brunt of the economic crisis. No one knows how many GIs were contaminated by Agent Orange, a chemical used by the military to devastate the Vietnamese countryside, and which causes cancer, birth defects, and a long list of equally deadly diseases.

The government not only created these problems by sending them to Vietnam, say. these vets, but it has refused to take the necessary steps to remedy them.

They charge that Veteran Administration benefits and hospitals have always been hopelessly inadequate and unsympathetic to their needs, to the point that vets are given drugs instead of counseling and are denied treatment or compensation for Agent Orange poisoning.

Despite Reagan’s proclamation that Vietnam vets are heroes, these vets point out that their position has grown worse under the new administration, one of whose first acts was to try to cut the budget for Vietnam vet services.

“Ronald Reagan pinned the Congressional Medal of Honor on a Vietnam vet and then signed an order that cut off the funding for the outreach centers,” says Connolly.

“Ronald Reagan can’t look at Vietnam veterans as heroes when he’s trying to cut back all the programs that are vital to us,” adds Stahl. “We have seventy million dollars worth of programs that are crucial to Vietnam vets. All seventy million are on Stockman’s hit-list. It suggests that white man speak with forked tongue. He’s saying one thing and doing the direct opposite. We just look at him as another farce, another obstacle, because we know that Reagan will never give us what we want. He’ll just throw crumbs our way to try and keep us pacified.”

Stahl is particularly angered by the contrast between Reagan’s cuts in programs for Vietnam vets, and the unprecedented funds allotted to the military. “I think about the amount being spent on building up the war machine again. They are more interested in building Trident submarines and Cruise missiles than in ever answering the question of what effects Agent Orange has on human beings.”

Outrage is the only way to describe these vets’ reactions to US intervention in another Vietnam-type war which, they are convinced, will send their younger brothers or sons to the fate of those who went to Vietnam.

"I've been yelling at people over El Salvador," says Connolly, "to the old guys that I work with, a couple of whom were in the infantry during World War II. I'm trying to tell them: 'You know, I did the same thing you did."

"You got to listen to me now. You haven't listened to us for ten years. They're doing wrong again. They're starting 'Nam all over again in this hemisphere, and you people aren't doing anything about it."

"Yup," agrees Miller, "they're gonna pack off their kids again."

"The beginnings of El Salvador are just the same as Vietnam," argues Stahl. "And we're calling it a 'Little Vietnam' because it's just a matter of time."

"They're flooding the country with millions of dollars worth of weaponry and technology to wage a war down there. As soon as the first American ship is hit, they'll have another Gulf of Tonkin incident," he says, referring to the attack against allegedly innocent US ships off the Vietnamese coast in 1964. Though the Johnson administration later admitted that the ships were involved in military operations against North Vietnam, the incident served at the time to win unanimous Congressional support for massive US military intervention in Vietnam.

"And I'm sure that if you look at what's happening in the military training centers and boot camps, they're probably telling the new soldiers to hate 'spics,' to kill El Salvadorans, just like we were told to hate 'gooks.' El Salvador is the same as Vietnam—another corrupt dictatorship to support, another people to keep down for the sake of corporate profit."

These vets are actively working to prevent another Vietnam, this time before it starts. Ron Armstead speaks frequently at antiwar demonstrations in Boston, Stahl, Connolly, Foley, Gurwitz and Miller are active in antiwar activity in Boston and at the University of Massachusetts where they have helped to launch the William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Recovery, which conducts courses on Vietnam.

"It's our obligation as vets," says Stahl, "to let people know what the situation is with the government today, and not to let Vietnam recur. Because we're the most recent ones with knowledge of what war can do and the amount of suffering it inflicts not only on our own veterans, but on other peoples as well."

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.

Military Rules Of Combat

May 10, 2006 By Joe Balshone, Firebase-Humor [Excerpt]

(Always worthy of reading every once in a while comes this favorite list:)

A "sucking chest wound" is nature's way of telling you to slow down.

A Purple Heart just proves that you were smart enough to think of a plan, stupid enough to try it, and lucky enough to survive.

Anything you do can get you shot. Including doing nothing.

Close only counts in horseshoes, hand grenades, nukes and proximity-fused missiles.

Don't look conspicuous: it draws fire.

Don't draw fire; it irritates the people around you.

Don't ever be the first, don't ever be the last and don't ever volunteer to do anything.

Five second fuses only last three seconds.

Helicopter Pilots should remember, If hit, landing near the people that just shot you down is not a good idea.

If it's stupid but works, it isn't stupid.

If the enemy is in range, so are you.

If you aren't sure, the SAM's are pointed at you.

If you can't remember, the claymore is pointed at you.

If your attack is going well, you have walked into an ambush.

If you're short of everything but the enemy, you're in a combat zone.

Incoming fire has the right of way.

Make it too tough for the enemy to get in and you can't get out.

Mines are equal opportunity weapons.

Never forget that your M-16 was made by the lowest bidder.

Never share a foxhole with anyone braver than you.

Smart bombs have bad days too.

The best defense is to stay out of range.

The easy way is always mined.

The enemy diversion you have been ignoring will be the main attack.

The enemy invariably attacks on one of two occasions: When you're ready for them and when you're not ready for them.

The only thing more accurate than incoming enemy fire is incoming friendly fire.

Try to look unimportant; they may be low on ammo.

When in doubt empty the magazine.

When the pin is pulled, Mr. Grenade is not our friend.

When you have secured an area, don't forget to tell the enemy.

You are not Tom Cruise.

OCCUPATION REPORT

“The Shiites No Longer Have Any Use For The Americans”

[Thanks to Phil G, for sending this in.]

May 9th, 2006 Democracy Now

Interview of LA Times Baghdad Bureau Chief Borzou Daragahi [Excerpt]

You know, the Shiite south, as listeners may remember, originally welcomed the U.S. Shiites were oppressed under Saddam Hussein and successive Sunni Arab regimes, and at the point where the U.S. came in, the Shiites kind of tolerated them and even welcomed them in many instances.

Over the last three years, that's changed dramatically, and right now what we see and what we've heard is that the Shiites no longer have any use for the Americans.

They have built up the security forces enough, and they've gotten control of local government, and they feel that at this point, the Americans, as well as the British down in the south, as we saw this weekend, are causing more trouble than their worth, and they would like the Americans to get out.

CLASS WAR REPORTS

Workers' Wages Aren't Keeping Up With Inflation

[Thanks to PG, who sent this in.]

May. 10, 2006 San Jose Mercury News

Experts agree that U.S. economic growth is above historic norms. In late April, the Commerce Department reported a sizzling first-quarter annual growth rate of 4.8 percent in the nation's gross domestic product, the broadest measure of the economy. And at 4.7 percent, unemployment hovers near all-time lows.

But when pollster Gallup recently surveyed Americans, 64 percent said the economy was getting worse. Only 33 percent described it as good, 40 percent as fair and 23 percent as poor. And that survey was taken March 13 to 16, before gasoline prices climbed more than 30 cents a gallon to a national average of \$2.92.

So why aren't Americans celebrating?

"It's not showing up in their paychecks the way you'd expect," said Jared Bernstein, chief economist for the liberal Economy Policy Institute in Washington. "The gap between the economy from 40,000 feet and on the ground level just seems to get wider with every new report."

The same week that the robust GDP numbers came out, the government also reported that worker compensation -- pay and benefits -- rose in the year's first quarter at an annual rate of only 2.4 percent, the slowest rate in seven years.

That figure, Bernstein said, suggests that workers' wages aren't keeping pace with wage gains during past economic expansions, or even with inflation, which rose by 3.4 percent over the year ending in March as measured by the consumer price index.

"The problem is you have faster-growing prices colliding with nominal wage growth that has been pretty unimpressive," he said.

The Labor Department said in 2004 that 51.6 percent of all workers are concentrated in five job categories with average hourly wages of \$15.50 a hour or less.

In fact, two government measures of workers' pay -- median weekly earnings and a broader index that adds benefits such as health insurance to compensation -- grew more slowly than inflation over the past 12 months, and two other wage indexes surpassed inflation only slightly.

That suggests that many workers' income is either losing ground or barely holding even.

“Bush: Biggest Terrorist Of World”



Demonstration against United States asking its troops to withdraw from Iraq immediately in Bombay, India, May 10, 2006. (AP Photo/Aijaz Rahi)

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to thomasfbarton@earthlink.net. Name, I.D., address withheld unless publication requested. Replies confidential.

Received:

“Recruiter Scum Do It Again” Not An Isolated Case!

[This letter refers to an article in GI Special reporting army recruiters had almost managed to sign up Jarred, a kid with autism, before they got stopped cold and publicly exposed by the family and a reporter. Looks like it's not just a couple recruiter scum; looks like it's a general tactic. T]

From: PG
To: GI Special
Cc: "AG!!!!!!!!!!!!" <actiongreens@yahoogroups.com>
Sent: May 10, 2006

Subject: Re: GI Special 4E10: Recruiter Scum Do It Again

My son is in a special school, and the military looked into recruiting him and other kids.

These guys are real bastards.

I hope Jarred doesn't have to go.

P&L,
Paul

South African Mercenaries

From: Joshua Karpoff
To: GI Special
Sent: May 10, 2006
Subject: South African Mercenaries

Apparently those who fought to defend the racist apartheid regime in South Africa are more than happy to provide security for Halliburton and Bechtel in Iraq:

(S Africa Gets Tough On 'Mercenaries' BBC 5 April 2006)

South African mercenaries were involved in a failed coup attempt against the president of Equatorial Guinea. Currently S. African politicians are trying to pass a law forbidding S. African citizens from working as guns of hire, much to the disappointment of private security firms around the world who say feel that S. African mercenaries' experience defending the apartheid regime gives them wonderful experience in fighting against the resistance in Iraq.

Mercenaries, especially ones like these, lay bare the true nature of this conflict, when private corporations hire mercenaries, who are accountable to no one, and who's resumes list some of the most brutal and repressive campaigns against resistance movements in the past 4 decades.

Josh Karpoff
Rochester Institute of Technology Anti War, Organizer
Campus Antiwar Network, Website Manager
Phone: (585)-224-5330
Email: trotskysghost@hotmail.com

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

The following have posted issues; there may be others:

<http://www.williambowles.info/gispecial/2006/index.html>;
http://robinlea.com/GI_Special/; <http://imagineaworldof.blogspot.com/>; <http://gi-special.iraq-news.de>; http://www.traprockpeace.org/gi_special/;

<http://www.uruknet.info/?p=-6&l=e>; <http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/qi-special.htm>

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