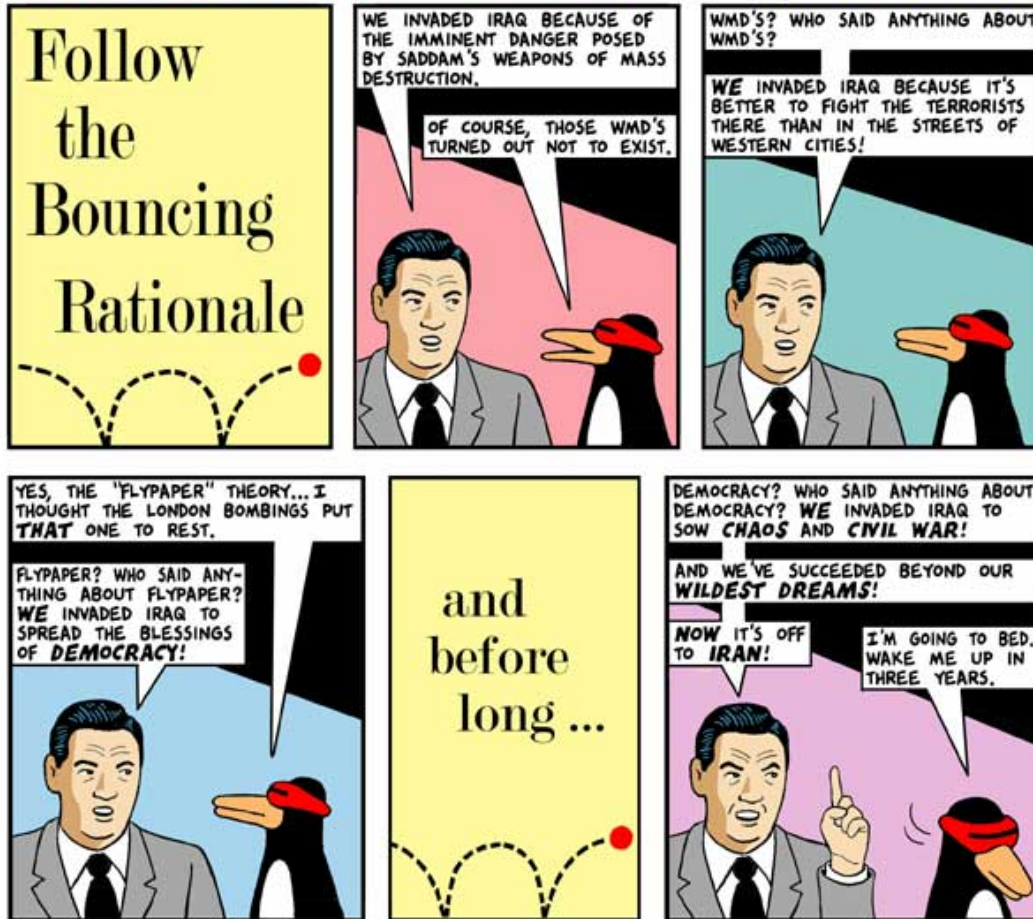


GI SPECIAL 4F19:

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



Blood For No Oil, Part 2

The War To Keep Iraq's Oil In The Ground

In sum, Big Oil, whether in European or Arab-OPEC dress, has done its damned best to keep Iraq's oil buried deep in the ground to keep prices high in the air. Iraq has 74 known fields and only 15 in production; 526 known "structures" (oil-speak for "pools of oil"), only 125 drilled.

June 14, 2006 By Greg Palast, AlterNet [Excerpts]

Did the U.S. invade Iraq to tap its oil reserves or to make sure they stayed under the sand?

World oil production today stands at more than twice the 15-billion a-year maximum projected by Shell Oil in 1956 -- and reserves are climbing at a faster clip yet. That leaves the question, Why this war?

Did Dick Cheney send us in to seize the last dwindling supplies? Unlikely. Our world's petroleum reserves have doubled in just twenty-five years -- and it is in Shell's and the rest of the industry's interest that this doubling doesn't happen again.

The neo-cons were hell-bent on raising Iraq's oil production.

Big Oil's interest was in suppressing production, that is, keeping Iraq to its OPEC quota or less.

This raises the question, did the petroleum industry, which had a direct, if hidden, hand, in promoting invasion, cheerlead for a takeover of Iraq to prevent overproduction?

It wouldn't be the first time.

If oil is what we're looking for, there are, indeed, extra helpings in Iraq. On paper, Iraq, at 112 billion proven barrels, has the second largest reserves in OPEC after Saudi Arabia. That does not make Saudi Arabia happy.

Even more important is that Iraq has fewer than three thousand operating wells... compared to one million in Texas.

That makes the Saudis even unhappier.

It would take a decade or more, but start drilling in Iraq and its reserves will about double, bringing it within gallons of Saudi Arabia's own gargantuan pool. Should Iraq drill on that scale, the total, when combined with the Saudis', will drown the oil market.

That wouldn't make the Texans too happy either.

So Fadhil Chalabi's plan for Iraq to pump 12 million barrels a day, a million more than Saudi Arabia, is not, to use Bob Ebel's (Center for Strategic and International Studies) terminology, "ridiculous" from a raw resource view, it is ridiculous politically.

It would never be permitted.

An international industry policy of suppressing Iraqi oil production has been in place since 1927. We need again to visit that imp called "history."

It began with a character known as "Mr. 5%"-- Calouste Gulbenkian -- who, in 1925, slicked King Faisal, neophyte ruler of the country recently created by Churchill, into giving Gulbenkian's "Iraq Petroleum Company" (IPC) exclusive rights to all of Iraq's oil. Gulbenkian flipped 95% of his concession to a combine of western oil giants: Anglo-Persian, Royal Dutch Shell, CFP of France, and the Standard Oil trust companies (now ExxonMobil and its "sisters.") The remaining slice Calouste kept for himself -- hence, "Mr. 5%."

The oil majors had a better use for Iraq's oil than drilling it -- not drilling it.

The oil bigs had bought Iraq's concession to seal it up and keep it off the market.

To please his buyers' wishes, Mr. 5% spread out a big map of the Middle East on the floor of a hotel room in Belgium and drew a thick red line around the gulf oil fields, centered on Iraq. All the oil company executives, gathered in the hotel room, signed their name on the red line -- vowing not to drill, except as a group, within the red-lined zone. No one, therefore, had an incentive to cheat and take red-lined oil.

All of Iraq's oil, sequestered by all, was locked in, and all signers would enjoy a lift in worldwide prices. Anglo-Persian Company, now British Petroleum (BP), would pump almost all its oil, reasonably, from Persia (Iran). Later, the Standard Oil combine, renamed the Arabian-American Oil Company (Aramco), would limit almost all its drilling to Saudi Arabia. Anglo-Persian (BP) had begun pulling oil from Kirkuk, Iraq, in 1927 and, in accordance with the Red-Line Agreement, shared its Kirkuk and Basra fields with its IPC group -- and drilled no more.

The following was written three decades ago:

Although its original concession of March 14, 1925, covered all of Iraq, the Iraq Petroleum Co., under the ownership of BP (23.75%), Shell (23.75%), CFP (of France) (23.75%), Exxon (11.85%), Mobil (11.85%), and Gulbenkian (5.0%), limited its production to fields constituting only one-half of 1 percent of the country's total area. During the Great Depression, the world was awash with oil and greater output from Iraq would simply have driven the price down to even lower levels.

Plus ça change...

When the British Foreign Office fretted that locking up oil would stoke local nationalist anger, BP-IPC agreed privately to pretend to drill lots of wells, but make them absurdly shallow and place them where, wrote a company manager, "there was no danger of striking oil."

This systematic suppression of Iraq's production, begun in 1927, has never ceased.

In the early 1960s, Iraq's frustration with the British-led oil consortium's failure to pump pushed the nation to cancel the BP-Shell-Exxon concession and seize the oil fields. Britain was ready to strangle Baghdad, but a cooler, wiser man in the White House, John F. Kennedy, told the Brits to back off. President Kennedy refused to call Iraq's seizure an "expropriation" akin to Castro's seizure of U.S.-owned banana plantations. Kennedy's view was that Anglo-American companies had it coming to them because they had refused to honor their legal commitment to drill.

But the freedom Kennedy offered the Iraqis to drill their own oil to the maximum was swiftly taken away from them by their Arab brethren.

The OPEC cartel, controlled by Saudi Arabia, capped Iraq's production at a sum equal to Iran's, though the Iranian reserves are far smaller than Iraq's. The excuse for this quota equality between Iraq and Iran was to prevent war between them. It didn't. To keep Iraq's Ba'athists from complaining about the limits, Saudi Arabia simply bought off the leaders by funding Saddam's war against Iran and giving the dictator \$7 billion for his "Islamic bomb" program.

In 1974, a U.S. politician broke the omerta over the suppression of Iraq's oil production. It was during the Arab oil embargo that Senator Edmund Muskie revealed a secret intelligence report of "fantastic" reserves of oil in Iraq undeveloped because U.S. oil companies refused to add pipeline capacity.

Muskie, who'd just lost a bid for the Presidency, was dubbed a "loser" and ignored. The Iranian bombing of the Basra fields (1980-88) put a new kink in Iraq's oil production. Iraq's frustration under production limits explodes periodically.

In August 1990, Kuwait's craven siphoning of borderland oil fields jointly owned with Iraq gave Saddam the excuse to take Kuwait's share. Here was Saddam's opportunity to increase Iraq's OPEC quota by taking Kuwait's (most assuredly not approved by the U.S.).

Saddam's plan backfired. The Basra oil fields not crippled by Iran were demolished in 1991 by American B-52s. Saddam's petro-military overreach into Kuwait gave the West the authority for a more direct oil suppression method called the "Sanctions" program, later changed to "Oil for Food." Now we get to the real reason for the U.N. embargo on Iraqi oil exports. According to the official U.S. position:

Sanctions were critical to preventing Iraq from acquiring equipment that could be used to reconstitute banned weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs.

How odd. If cutting Saddam's allowance was the purpose, then sanctions, limiting oil exports, was a very suspect method indeed. The nature of the oil market (a cartel) is such that the elimination of two million barrels a day increased Saddam's revenue. One might conclude that sanctions were less about WMD and more about EPS (earnings per share) of oil sellers.

In other words, there is nothing new under the desert sun.

Today's fight over how much of Iraq's oil to produce (or suppress) simply extends into this century the last century's pump-or-control battles.

In sum, Big Oil, whether in European or Arab-OPEC dress, has done its damned best to keep Iraq's oil buried deep in the ground to keep prices high in the air. Iraq has 74 known fields and only 15 in production; 526 known "structures" (oil-speak for "pools of oil"), only 125 drilled.

And they won't be drilled, not unless Iraq says, "Mother, may I?" to Saudi Arabia, or, as the James Baker/Council on Foreign Relations paper says, "Saudi Arabia may punish Iraq."

And believe me, Iraq wouldn't want that.

The decision to expand production has, for now, been kept out of Iraqi's hands by the latest method of suppressing Iraq's oil flow -- the 2003 invasion and resistance to invasion.

And it has been darn effective.

Iraq's output in 2003, 2004 and 2005 was less than produced under the restrictive Oil-for-Food Program.

Whether by design or happenstance, this decline in output has resulted in tripling the profits of the five U.S. oil majors to \$89 billion for a single year, 2005, compared to pre-invasion 2002.

That suggests an interesting arithmetic equation. Big Oil's profits are up \$89 billion a year in the same period the oil industry boosted contributions to Mr. Bush's reelection campaign to roughly \$40 million.

That would make our president "Mr. 0.05%."

A History Of Oil In Iraq Suppressing It, Not Pumping It

1925-28 "Mr. 5%" sells his monopoly on Iraq's oil to British Petroleum and Exxon, who sign a "Red-Line Agreement" vowing not to compete by drilling independently in Iraq.

1948 Red-Line Agreement ended, replaced by oil combines' "dog in the manger" strategy -- taking control of fields, then capping production--drilling shallow holes where "there was no danger of striking oil."

1961 OPEC, founded the year before, places quotas on Iraq's exports equal to Iran's, locking in suppression policy.

1980-88 Iran-Iraq War. Iran destroys Basra fields. Iraq cannot meet OPEC quota. 1991 Desert Storm. Anglo-American bombings cut production.

1991-2003 United Nations Oil embargo (zero legal exports) followed by Oil-for-Food Program limiting Iraqi sales to 2 million barrels a day.

2003-? "Insurgents" sabotage Iraq's pipelines and infrastructure.

2004 Options for Iraqi Oil: The secret plan adopted by U.S. State Department overturns Pentagon proposal to massively increase oil production. State Department plan, adopted by government of occupied Iraq, limits state oil company to OPEC quotas.

This article is excerpted from Greg Palast's new book, "Armed Madhouse" (Dutton Adult, 2006).

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Travis Bradach-Nall, Who Died The Day Bush Screamed "Bring 'Em On!"



[Dailykos.com]

Bodies Of Two Captured U.S. Soldiers Found

6.20.06 The Associated Press

The U.S. military recovered the bodies Tuesday of two missing soldiers from an area it said was rigged with explosives.

Coalition forces spotted the American soldiers' bodies late Monday, three days after the men disappeared following an attack on their checkpoint south of the capital, the military said. But troops delayed retrieving the remains until an explosives team cleared the area after an Iraqi civilian warned them to be alert for explosive devices.

Maj. Gen. William Caldwell said the bodies were found together in the vicinity of an electrical plant, which would be just a few miles from where the initial attack took place near the town of Youssifiyah in the volatile Sunni Triangle south of Baghdad.

Caldwell said the remains were believed to be those of Pfc. Kristian Menchaca, 23, of Houston, and Pfc. Thomas L. Tucker, 25, of Madras, Ore. The bodies will be flown from Kuwait to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware for positive identification through autopsies and DNA testing.

Nebraska Soldier Killed

June 13, 2006 By Mike Goodwin, Daily Sun staff writer

Friends and family members continued to mourn Monday as the U.S. Department of Defense confirmed the death of Army Reserve Pfc. Benjamin Slaven.

Slaven, 22, who went to Iraq in March as a member of the Lincoln-based 308th Transportation Co., died Friday when a roadside bomb exploded near his convoy in Ad Diwaniyah, a city in south central Iraq.

Slaven was the son of Bruce and Julie Slaven and Nick and Judy Huenink of Plymouth.

Bruce Slaven said his son was manning the gun mounted on top of his Humvee when the bomb exploded, killing him instantly. He was somewhere in the middle of the convoy, he said.

“At least, for our own consolation, we know he didn't suffer and he was doing his job until the end.”

Slaven was the first Nebraska member of the Army Reserves and the 30th U.S. service member with Nebraska ties to be killed in Iraq or Afghanistan since the beginning of military operations following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

He was the fourth Nebraska serviceman killed in the last month.

U.S. Soldier Scam Victim Dies

6/13/2006 James Faulk, Eureka Times Standard

Sgt. Clarence McSwain, the U.S. soldier whose identity was stolen by an e-mail scammer looking to bilk people out of money by luring them with the promise of Iraqi gold, was killed in Iraq last Thursday by a roadside bomb.

McSwain, of Meridian, Miss., died while leading a platoon near the area where Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was killed. He leaves behind a wife and five children.

Several months ago, an unsolicited e-mail came to a desk at the Times-Standard, offering the recipient an exclusive opportunity to cash in on the riches of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. It was supposedly from McSwain, 31.

"I am serving in the U.S. Army of the 2nd Battalion 502nd Infantry Regiment, Iraq," the e-mail reads. "As you know we are being attacked by insurgents everyday and car bombs. We managed to move funds belonging to Saddam Hussein's family. The total amount is U.S. \$25 million dollars in cash, mostly \$100 bills. We want to move this money to you, so that you may invest it for us and keep our share for banking."

U.S. CENTCOM in Iraq was notified, and it later issued a statement that exonerated the real McSwain.

"An investigation has been conducted regarding Staff Sgt. McSwain's involvement, and the results of that investigation reveal that Staff Sgt. McSwain is a victim of identity theft," said an e-mail from Maj. Tim Keefe of the U.S. Marines. "He was not in a position or had the resources to have sent the e-mails."

He was one of three servicemen to die on June 8.

Litchfield Soldiers Recovering From Blast That Killed Minnesotan

June 20, 2006 LITCHFIELD, Minn. (AP)

Two National Guard soldiers from this Minnesota town are recovering from injuries they suffered in a bomb blast in Iraq that killed a fellow soldier from Minnesota.

Specialist Gregory Brown and Staff Sgt. Willy Puckett were injured Friday by the roadside bomb that killed Specialist Brent W. Koch, 22, of Morton.

The three were deployed to Iraq in March along with about 2,600 Guard members from the state — the largest overseas deployment of the Minnesota Army National Guard since World War II.

Tarja Brown didn't know her son was lying in a hospital bed in Germany until she got a call early Saturday. "Mom, I got hit with a bomb," her son told her. After he described driving a vehicle and the explosion in Ad Diwaniyah, Iraq, he told her another member of the unit had been killed.

Mary Puckett learned of her son's injury when she was paged while working an extra shift at the 3M plant in Hutchinson. "Mom! Willy's OK," her daughter told her over the phone. "I had thought the worst, but then I was relieved."

The men were assigned to Company E, 2nd Battalion, 136th Infantry Combined Arms Battalion, which consists of soldiers from Hutchinson, Litchfield and Redwood Falls.

Puckett, a member of the Guard since 1996, suffered a deep cut near his left kneecap and punctures on his left arm and face, his mother said Monday. He also had a piece of glass removed from an eye.

Brown, who joined the Guard after graduating from Litchfield High School in 2004, had surgery Monday after suffering extensive shrapnel damage to his arms. His right cornea was injured as well.

Both men were expected to recover and could be back in the United States later this week. "We're just thankful they're alive," Mary Puckett said.

Swedish Mercenary Killed In Baghdad Bomb Attack

20/06/2006 Breaking News

A Swedish national employed by the British security company Genric in Iraq was killed in a bomb attack over the weekend in the Iraqi capital, the foreign ministry in Stockholm said today.

The man, whose name was not released, was in his 30s and was killed on Saturday, said foreign ministry spokesman Christian Carlsson.

“U.S. Troops, Bunkered Down On Large, Fortified Bases, Treat Iraqi Forces More Like A Problem Than A Partner”

[Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in. He writes: Amazing stuff. This is what colonialism looks like.]

[Col. Pasquarette and Col. Payne are each 100% right, and each 100% wrong. In an impossible situation, which has no hope of a successful outcome, each sees what the other is doing is ineffective and pointless. But then, this whole war of occupation is ineffective and pointless, lost before it began. T]

"They treat the Iraqis with utter scorn and contempt," Col. Payne says. "The Iraqis may not be sophisticated, but they aren't stupid. They see it."

June 16, 2006 By GREG JAFFE, Wall Street Journal [Excerpts]

Camp Taji, Iraq

This sprawling military base is divided down the middle by massive concrete barriers, a snaking fence and rifle-toting guards. On one side, about 10,000 U.S. Army soldiers live in air-conditioned trailers. There's a movie theater, a swimming pool, a Taco Bell, and a post exchange the size of a Wal-Mart, stocked with everything from deodorant to DVD players.

On the other side are a similar number of Iraqi soldiers whose success will determine when U.S. troops can go home. The Iraqi troops live in fetid barracks built by the British in the 1920s, ration the fuel they use to run their lights and sometimes eat spoiled food that makes them sick.

The only soldiers who pass regularly between the two worlds are about 130 U.S. Army advisers, who live, train and work with the Iraqis.

For many of these advisers, the past six months have been a disorienting experience, putting them at odds with their fellow U.S. soldiers and eroding their confidence in the U.S. government's ability to build an Iraqi force that can stabilize this increasingly violent country.

Army commanders back in the U.S. "told us this was going to be the most thankless and frustrating job we have ever held, and boy, were they right," says Lt. Col. Charles Payne, who until last month oversaw about 50 Army advisers.

He and fellow advisers say U.S. troops on the American side of the base saddle Iraqis with the least-desirable missions and often fail to provide them with the basics they need to protect themselves against insurgent attacks.

"They treat the Iraqis with utter scorn and contempt," Col. Payne says. "The Iraqis may not be sophisticated, but they aren't stupid. They see it."

Col. James Pasquarette, who commands most of the soldiers on the U.S. side of Camp Taji, calls those claims "totally ridiculous."

Though the divide here at Camp Taji is extreme, it reflects a growing friction throughout this war-torn country.

Part of the reason, U.S. officials say, is that widespread Iraqi corruption has made it hard for the fledgling Iraqi government to supply their troops with basics like good food, batteries and fuel.

But Iraqi soldiers and their U.S. advisers say the problem extends beyond basic supply issues. They complain that U.S. troops, bunkered down on large, fortified bases, treat Iraqi forces more like a problem than a partner.

U.S. forces "don't talk to us," says Col. Saad, a senior Iraqi commander on Camp Taji. The Iraqi colonel, whose family has been threatened by insurgents, asked that his full name not be used.

U.S. commanders counter that there are huge risks to giving the Iraqi army too big a role right now.

They worry some Iraqis will leak word of impending operations to the enemy or use military force to settle sectarian scores.

Earlier this spring, the tension between the two sides at Camp Taji reached the breaking point when the Iraqi army brigade that Col. Payne was advising leveled two dozen roadside kiosks. The Iraqi soldiers said insurgent snipers, who had killed and wounded Iraqi troops, used the kiosks for cover.

Col. Pasqualette thought destroying the kiosks would only enrage locals and drive them to support the insurgents. "This was a great day for the terrorists," he recalls telling Col. Payne on the day that the Iraqi army flattened the fruit and vegetable stands.

Col. Payne says the Iraqi army bulldozed the kiosks -- consisting mostly of palm fronds suspended by bamboo poles -- to protect Iraqi soldiers. "When I first heard what they had done, my initial response was, 'I am all for it,' " Col. Payne says. "This is not a law and order situation. This is a war."

Late last month, Col. Pasqualette asked that Col. Payne be dismissed from his position, just four months after the two men started working together. Col. Payne was then assigned to a desk job in Baghdad.

The 2,500-soldier Iraqi brigade that Col. Payne was advising had formed 11 months earlier and had been fighting nonstop. The Iraqis had scrounged all of their tanks and armored personnel carriers -- most of which were at least 30 years old -- from a massive junkyard on the Iraqi side of Camp Taji. When something broke, Iraqi soldiers retreated to the scrapyard where they would pillage rusting hulks for spare parts. Of the \$260 billion spent on the Iraq war since 2003, about \$10 billion has gone to build Iraqi army and police forces.

The U.S. officers bonded quickly with their Iraqi counterparts. In January, Maj. Michael Jason, who leads one of the advisory teams, was on patrol with a 42-year-old Iraqi colonel when a terrified farmer told them he had found bodies in a field. He then led them to the corpses of 11 Iraqi army soldiers who had been headed home on leave. Each had been beaten, blindfolded and shot in the head. Their Iraqi army identification cards had been taken from their wallets and pinned to their shirts by insurgents who regularly target Iraqi forces.

Maj. Jason, a Roman Catholic, and his Iraqi counterpart, Col. Khalid, a Muslim, kneeled next to the bodies and prayed. The U.S. Army asked that Col. Khalid's full name be withheld for his safety. That night, Maj. Jason, a 33-year-old West Point grad, wrote an email home describing his Iraqi colleague's bravery and sacrifice.

"Col. Khalid's children have to move constantly for fear of their lives. When he goes home on leave, he cannot tell anyone for security reasons. He just disappears. He

drives 90 mph with a pistol tucked in the small of his back and his ID hidden. I love these guys, no s-t," he wrote.

A month later, Col. Khalid's brother, also an army officer, was kidnapped. Insurgents killed him and dumped his body on his parents' doorstep. Col. Khalid couldn't go to the funeral for fear that he would be assassinated. So Maj. Jason and soldiers in the unit mourned with him at Camp Taji.

In March, Col. Khalid left the battalion for a safer assignment, which doesn't require him to leave the base.

As the U.S. advisers grew closer to the Iraqis, they also grew more frustrated with U.S. soldiers on the other side of the base.

Shortly after Col. Pasqualette arrived at Camp Taji, he beefed up the number of guards and armored vehicles at the gates separating the U.S. and Iraqi sides of the base. "Securing my (base) is my No. 1 mission. I am risk averse here," he says. The U.S. advisers to the Iraqis thought the additional guards and guns were unnecessary and only served to make U.S. soldiers more suspicious of the Iraqis.

When the advisers asked if they could bring an Iraqi colleague to eat with them on the American side of the base, they say they were shocked at the response. They were told that the presence of an Iraqi officer in the dining hall might upset the U.S. soldiers.

"These kids go outside the gate and deal with a very hostile environment. They need a place where they can relax and let their guard down," says Lt. Col. Kevin Dixon, Col. Pasqualette's deputy commander. He says the policy was driven by the bombing of a dining facility in Mosul in 2004 by an Iraqi who had sneaked in.

The advisers felt differently. "We really believe there is a systemic contempt for Iraqi soldiers," says Master Sgt. John McFarlane, a senior enlisted adviser to the Iraqis at Camp Taji. The policy has since been amended to allow advisers to eat with Iraqi officers on the U.S. side if they file a letter in advance with the base's security office.

One of the Iraqi army's primary jobs in the Taji area is to guard water-purification substations that provide most of Baghdad's drinking water. Last summer, insurgents blew up one of the substations, cutting off water for two weeks. To ensure that didn't happen again, Iraqi army units were dispatched by the U.S. to guard the sites. Iraqi soldiers began to take regular sniper fire there.

In January, the U.S. advisers asked Col. Pasqualette for help installing barriers around one of the substations, to shield the Iraqis from snipers. Col. Pasqualette asked one of his units to help. Weeks passed, but help never came. American engineering units were too busy fortifying the U.S. side of Camp Taji and bases around it, says Maj. Martin Herem, who handled the request.

On Feb. 28, a sniper shot in the back one of the Iraqi soldiers at the water station. The soldier bled to death. Three weeks later, a sniper killed a second Iraqi soldier who was on patrol near the water station. Iraqi troops said that both times snipers used the small

fruit and vegetable stands lining a nearby road for cover. The Iraqi army couldn't return fire without killing shopkeepers and customers.

When the Iraqi soldiers ran over to ask people who had been shooting at them, locals said they hadn't seen anything. It's dangerous for locals to be seen helping the U.S. Army or the Iraqi army.

The day after the second killing, Col. Saad, an Iraqi colonel in the unit Col. Payne was advising, ordered his men to tell the shopkeepers to empty the vegetable stands. The Iraqi soldiers then bulldozed the stands. Col. Saad says he destroyed the kiosks to protect his soldiers.

When Col. Pasqualette learned about the incident, he was furious. The Iraqis' actions ran completely counter to his strategy. He had told his soldiers to focus less on killing insurgents and more on reconstruction programs designed to win support of the people.

"When you go lethal or destroy property there may be a short-term gain, but there is a long-term loss," he says. He saw the move as a throwback to the Saddam Hussein era when the army was used to quell unrest and inflict mass punishment.

Because the Iraqi troops operate in his sector, Col. Pasqualette oversees them. He called Col. Payne into his office and demanded that he tell Col. Saad to have his soldiers apologize and pay reparations to the shop owners.

Col. Payne passed along the orders. But Col. Saad says he refused to follow them. "Here in Iraq if someone makes a mistake, you punish them," he says, referring to the shop owners' failure to give Iraqis information about the snipers. "If you give him money, he will repeat the mistake. And he will consider the person who gave him the gift an idiot."

The next day, Col. Pasqualette met with Col. Saad's Iraqi superior and told him about the dispute. The Iraqi general fired Col. Saad. Later that day, three low-ranking Iraqi soldiers, accompanied by about a dozen Americans, passed out the reimbursement forms.

The Iraqi officers in Col. Saad's brigade felt betrayed. On March 21, just before midnight, four senior officers stopped by Col. Payne's office and threatened to resign. "They were furious," says Col. Payne. Two days later, Col. Saad was quietly re-hired.

Col. Payne says he is still angry that neither Col. Pasqualette nor his subordinate commanders talked to Col. Saad to hear his side of the story. "This is a respect issue. These guys don't respect the Iraqis," Col. Payne says.

"Personally I don't think there was anything to discuss," Col. Pasqualette says.

In the days that followed, the relationship between Col. Payne and Col. Pasqualette grew more tense.

In mid-March -- about the time the Iraqis flattened the vegetable stands -- insurgents attacked an Iraqi army patrol base in Tarmiyah, a city of about 50,000, a short drive from Camp Taji. One Iraqi soldier from Col. Saad's brigade was killed by a rocket-propelled

grenade and another was shot in the head by a sniper. The next day, four of Col. Saad's soldiers died when their armored personnel carrier hit a roadside bomb. The blast threw the turret of the vehicle about 30 yards and lopped off the head of one of the Iraqi soldiers inside, U.S. and Iraqi officers say.

Senior Iraqi officials in the Ministry of Defense were convinced Tarmiyah was a hotbed of insurgent activity. Col. Pasqualette says he was told by his commander in Baghdad to clear the city of insurgents.

Col. Pasqualette and his team spent several days building a plan before he invited Col. Payne, Col. Saad and Col. Saad's commander to the U.S. side to explain it.

The two Iraqi officers were led through a 208-slide PowerPoint briefing, in which all the slides were written in English. The six areas the Iraqi troops were supposed to occupy were named for New England cities, such as Cranston, Bangor and Concord. The Iraqi officers, who spoke only Arabic, were dumbfounded. "I could see from their body language that both of them were not following what was going on," says Maj. Bill Taylor, Col. Payne's deputy.

Once the plan was explained to them through an interpreter, the Iraqis strongly disagreed with it. Col. Pasqualette planned to surround the city with razor wire and set up checkpoints to search all cars moving in and out of the city. U.S. and Iraqi soldiers would then begin regular foot patrols through the city to gain intelligence on insurgents. The centerpiece of the plan was \$5 million in reconstruction projects.

Col. Pasqualette argued that the projects would help the U.S. win support of the city's powerful mayor, Sheik Sayid Jassem, who had been detained by U.S. forces in the early days of the occupation for supporting the insurgency. He also thought the projects would turn the people to the side of the new Iraqi government.

The Iraqis favored a harder-nosed approach. They wanted to conduct house-to-house searches and find a way to put pressure on the mayor, who they insisted was still supporting insurgents. They suggested shutting Tarmiyah's business district down for a week. Once the mayor had been cowed with the stick, they favored dangling the \$5 million in reconstruction funds.

Col. Pasqualette says the Iraqi approach would have alienated the people in Tarmiyah. He rejected it and stuck to his plan. Although the operation hasn't netted any insurgents, he says people are out shopping and businesses that had been closed are bustling as a result of the checkpoints and foot patrols. The U.S. military is bankrolling a pipeline that will bring potable water into the city, building medical clinics and repairing the main road.

Attacks in the city are down substantially since March, though they have begun to climb of late, Col. Pasqualette says. Still, he says the operation was a success because residents feel safer. He doubts the city was ever really a major insurgent hotbed. "We were all wrong about Tarmiyah," he says.

Col. Saad and Col. Payne say the insurgents have simply moved outside the city's gates.

In their four months together, Col. Payne and Col. Saad became close. Col. Payne teased him about a poster on his office wall of two fluffy white kittens, nuzzling next to a dozen roses. "What in the world is the deal with the cat and the flowers?" Col. Payne asked.

"It reminds me of softness and women," Col. Saad replied. He often referred to Col. Payne as "my brother."

Col. Saad confided his worries about his country and his army to Col. Payne. His unit was constantly short of supplies. His soldiers often didn't have enough fuel for their armored vehicles and generators. They also lacked AA batteries to run the night-vision goggles the Americans had given them. He blamed corruption in the Iraqi system for supply shortages. "If you don't have the basics to survive, you cannot be great. You cannot win," he said one evening.

Col. Payne threw his arm around the Iraqi colonel's shoulder. "No, but you can survive," he said.

The U.S. says it is helping the Iraqis fix problems that have led to shortages of equipment. The Iraqi government recently replaced the contractor responsible for serving troops spoiled food. Supplying the army is the responsibility of the Iraqi government and "there have been a few cases of poor performance" among Iraqi contractors, says Lt. Col. Michael Negard, a senior spokesman in Iraq. "While the problems aren't huge, the issue's certainly of the highest priority," he says.

Col. Saad has also grown frustrated with the Americans on the other side of Camp Taji. Last month, Col. Pasquarrette asked the Iraqis to provide a couple of dozen soldiers to man some checkpoints with U.S. soldiers. The U.S. soldiers showed up at the checkpoints for about a week. Then, without warning, they left the Iraqis to run them on their own, Col. Saad says. The Iraqis, who questioned the value of the checkpoints in the first place, were angry they had suddenly been abandoned.

"Why did they leave? Aren't they supposed to be helping us?" Col. Saad asked Col. Payne.

"I don't know what the hell they are doing," Col. Payne replied.

Col. Pasquarrette says the Iraqis should have been informed that the U.S. soldiers were pulling out of those checkpoints.

In late May, Col. Payne began to push the Iraqi soldiers to get out on the offensive. "I am sick of sitting around and waiting to get attacked," Col. Payne told Col. Saad. He asked Col. Saad to cut loose 10 or 15 soldiers that he could pair up with three or four U.S. soldiers to venture out at night in search of the enemy. Col. Saad agreed.

On May 19, soldiers from Col. Payne's and Col. Saad's units set out on their second night patrol. After they stopped a car that was out in violation of curfew, the enemy opened fire on them from a surrounding palm grove. The soldiers fired back, killing three insurgents and dispersing the rest. When the shooting ended, a man stumbled out of a small shack deep in the palm grove. His hands were tied and a blindfold hung around his neck. "Come mister. I am problem," he sobbed in broken English.

The man said he worked as a legal adviser for Iraq's Ministry of Defense and had been kidnapped by men who told him they would slaughter him "like a sheep." The kidnappers were setting up a camera to film his execution, he said, when they heard the soldiers and left him. "God sent you to save me," the man said, as tears streamed down his face.

Col. Payne was elated. "The Iraqi army saved a life. It also demonstrated that it will go into the field to find and destroy the enemy," he said.

His victory, however, quickly gave way to crushing defeat. The next day, he was summoned to meet with his immediate supervisor. Col. Payne was relieved of his command and told to move to a headquarters position in Baghdad.

He says he was told that he removed because he was "ineffective" and "lacked the skills necessary to lead (his) team in this challenging environment." An Army spokesman in Baghdad said Col. Payne wasn't relieved for any single incident. He declined to comment further.

A few days before Col. Payne was fired, Col. Pasquarette said in an interview that he thought Col. Payne and his men had grown too close to the Iraqis they were advising and his decisions were too often guided by emotion. "From my perspective, the move was warranted," Col. Pasquarette wrote in an email after Col. Payne was dismissed.

The morning after he was fired, Col. Payne spent the day saying goodbye to Col. Saad and the U.S. soldiers on his team. That evening, he boarded a helicopter for Camp Victory, a massive U.S. base on the outskirts of Baghdad.

"I'm now here in Victory -- an alien environment to me and one I never wanted to be a part of," he wrote in an email. He was able to hold his emotions in check until his helicopter lifted off from Camp Taji. Then, he says, he began to sob. "I simply cannot tell you how much I will miss my team."

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.

Great Moments In U.S. Military History: The Massacre Of The Poultry Farm Workers

20 June 2006 Aljazeera & Reuters

Thirteen Iraqis, including a child, have been killed in an alleged US air strike on a village north-east of Baquba, while a bomb attack in Baghdad has killed seven people. Four others who were injured in the strike on two farm houses in the Shaikh Qaddur al-Shahin village early on Tuesday were detained by US forces, Haidar al-Tamimi, an Iraqi journalist, told Aljazeera.

Residents also say the injured were arrested.

They added that the casualties of the strike were poultry farm workers.

Al-Tamimi said US troops were dropped to the ground after the strike. The troops then opened fire at the two farm houses, he added.

AFP reports that an Iraqi police officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the workers had been sleeping in the fields of the village when the attack occurred.

The report was backed by Hadi al-Azzawi from a human rights organisation in Baquba, while the main hospital in the city said it had received 13 bodies.

Hussam Shamil, a farmer in the area, told AFP that two of his brothers were killed, while his father and another brother were arrested by US forces

A man identifying himself as Mohammed Jabar al-Qaduri said two of the dead men were his sons Jassem and Mazen and that all the victims had worked at an adjacent poultry farm.

“They did not attack any Americans or Humvees. We don’t have any problems with the Americans. We don’t have any foreigners here,” he said, wearing a traditional Arab headdress and sitting slumped on the dirt ground in the shade of a truck.

Reuters footage showed 13 bodies covered with blankets lying in the back of open trucks. All were male. A police source said one of the dead was a 12-year-old boy.

An aircraft flying in support of the troops hit power lines and had to make a controlled landing, the military said.

Reuters footage showed a bloodied mattress on the floor of one of the houses. Two spent bullet casings lay nearby.

Residents said the 12-year-old boy had been sleeping on the mattress when he was shot.

As the bodies were loaded onto the trucks, one man lifted up the blanket covering one victim and cried out: “Why God, why?”

Another man reached into the pocket of one corpse and took out a handful of sweets, to show that it was the body of the boy.

**REALLY BAD IDEA:
NO MISSION;
HOPELESS WAR:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



U.S. forces guard the entrances to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad June 13, 2006 in Baghdad. (AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

**Romanian Soldier Killed, Four Wounded;
Tank Destroyed**

06/20/06 AP

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan: An explosion that tore apart a coalition tank in southern Afghanistan has killed a Romanian soldier and wounded four others.

The Romanian Defense Ministry says today's blast targeted a four-vehicle Romanian convoy just outside the southern city of Kandahar as the troops were returning to their base.

TROOP NEWS

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



The American flag is lifted from the casket of Sgt. Jose M. Velez during his funeral service Monday, June 19, 2006 in New York. Sgt. Velez, originally from Bronx, New York, was killed during combat operations near Kirkuk in Iraq. (AP Photo/Seth Wenig)

Japanese Withdrawing All Troops From Iraq

Jun 20 By CARL FREIRE, Associated Press Writer

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Tuesday announced the withdrawal of Japanese ground troops from southern Iraq, moving to end the country's largest overseas military operation since World War II.

In a nationally televised news conference, Koizumi said the troops had accomplished their non-combat mission, and he pledged to continue aiding Iraqi reconstruction.

He offered no timetable for the withdrawal, but Defense Chief Fukushima Nukaga told reporters earlier in the day that the pullout would take "several dozen days."

Although the mission was strictly humanitarian, polls show most Japanese were opposed to it, worried the troops would be drawn into the fighting or become targets of terrorists.

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

Honoring Beth Pratt: One Of The First Military Wives To Resist The War In Iraq

**“My Husband And I Are Both
Opposed To This War”**

“Can You Help Him Get Out Of The Army?”

[This news story is from 2004. When Beth Pratt spoke out against the war in Fayetteville, N.C., home of Ft. Bragg in March 2004, it was almost unheard of for the wife of an active duty soldier in Iraq to do such a thing. T]

Below it, the marchers spread across the grass in the sun. A newsprint program listed speakers and performers -- veterans, union members, Hip-Hop Against Racist War, a September 11 family member, and the fourth speaker on the list, "Beth Pratt -- military spouse from Fayetteville whose husband is in Iraq."

She'd been invited to speak at the peace rally. Here, at last, was something she could do. A small thing, but something.

October 10, 2004 By Kristin Henderson, The Washington Post Company [Excerpts]

Beth Pratt hunched on a chair in the anonymous, fluorescent-lit exam room of a health clinic on Fort Bragg, N.C. It was a wintry day in early March, she remembers, and her dancer's body drooped with sadness. She picked at the skin around her fingernails.

The nurse practitioner rustled through the door. "So, what brings you in to us today?"

"Oh," said Beth and stopped. Her voice was thin and scratchy. She started again. "I'm having a really hard time with my husband gone." Her husband was deployed to Iraq five months before. "I think I'm really depressed." She started to cry. "I cry like this all the time. And I just want it to stop."

Beth remembers that the nurse practitioner nodded. She was older, with the calm, comforting air of a woman who has raised a whole brood of children and seen it all. She nudged Beth with the usual questions: Are you feeling any sense of hopelessness or helplessness? Have your sleeping habits changed?

Have your eating habits changed? Have you lost weight? How about a change in sexual desire? Yes, Beth said to each question, struggling to get the word out, yes, yes, yes, and yes, adding to the last, "Actually I don't know, since my husband's not here." And her face crumpled again.

"Honey, have you had any suicidal thoughts?"

Beth didn't say anything. She just nodded.

"Do you have a plan? What are you thinking about?"

"I've been thinking," Beth said softly, "that if I had a gun, I'd shoot myself."

AROUND THE SAME TIME, on a back road on Fort Bragg, just a few miles from the health clinic, a gold hand-me-down sedan was doing 70 in a 55-mph zone when the blue and red lights came on behind it, forcing the driver, Marissa Bootes, to stop. It was midnight. The military policeman asked, "Do you know what speed you were going?"

"I have to get to the hospital," Marissa recalls saying. "My daughter woke up screaming that her head hurt. She has a temperature of almost 104; she's burning up. I'm afraid she might have that viral infection that's been going around, that kids have been dying of."

The MP flicked his flashlight over 5-year-old Lexie slumped in her seat. Her hair was wet with sweat, her cheeks flaming, the rest of her skin clammy and pale. The MP frowned, unconvinced. "I hope you're not lying to me."

"Look at me!" said Marissa. "I'm wearing sweats and I've got a sick kid in the back seat. Where else would I be going at 70 miles an hour in the middle of the night?"

He let her go -- he just asked her to do him a favor and slow down. Her husband was riding convoys in Iraq. Now their kid was sick. She wasn't slowing down for anybody. She hit the accelerator and sped the rest of the way to the Army hospital.

Five hours later, Lexie's temperature was headed back down, and they were dragging home. Before Marissa fell into bed, she says, she faxed the doctor's excuse to her supervisor at the law firm where she worked as a paralegal. She'd landed this job just before her husband was deployed four months earlier, and it was her dream job. But if she tried to drive to those 8 a.m. foreclosure hearings, she might just wrap the company car around a tree. The firm could get someone else to cover the hearings.

At 9, her supervisor was on the phone with one clear message: If those hearings happened without her, she was fired.

BOTH MARISSA BOOTES AND BETH PRATT ARE MARRIED to lower-level enlisted men in the 82nd Airborne Division. Beth's husband, Pvt. E-2 Luigi Pratt, drove Army trucks on convoys through Iraq's Sunni Triangle. On other convoys along those same roads, Marissa's husband, Spec. Charlie Bootes, manned a Mark-19 fully automatic grenade launcher.

Marissa and Beth have never met. Marissa, 24, grew up in foster homes, has a two-year college degree and is married to her high school sweetheart. On the subject of the war, she had no patience for Americans protesting in the streets; it killed morale, she said, made life harder for soldiers and their families. Beth, 34, had a happy childhood, holds multiple post-graduate degrees and is newly married for the second time, no children. As for the war, she believed it was wrong from the start. The U.N. weapons inspectors, it seemed to her, had been doing just fine. Beth and Marissa didn't have much in common except for this: In the fall of 2003, they both faced the frightening challenge of their husbands' first deployments.

BETH PRATT REMEMBERS WATCHING LUIGI GET HIS GEAR TOGETHER -- rain poncho, canteens, gas mask. It was September and it was cold, just before dawn

outside his unit's big, brick headquarters. She was seeping tears. He was sweating. Another soldier, passing by, asked Beth, "He's not sick, is he?"

She shook her head. "He's okay. He just sweats when he's nervous."

Beth says Luigi walked her out to her white compact car in the parking lot. "I hate this war," she said. Whenever she said that, her voice took on the tone of a child who's been wronged. "I don't know why we had to go in there in the first place."

Luigi nodded. Then he said: "Uh-oh, they called formation. I got to go." A quick hug and a kiss, as if he were just going down the street, and then he was gone.

While Luigi and the other soldiers in his unit waited for the buses that would take them to the airfield at Pope, Beth says, she drove home to their tiny, rented duplex, where his surfboard leaned in a corner of the living room and her pink pointe shoes hung by their ribbons on the wall next to her drum kit, which she hadn't touched since moving here.

A few hours later, her cell phone rang. It was Camilla Maki, whose husband was a noncommissioned officer in Luigi's platoon. Maki was an FRG volunteer and Beth's contact on the families' phone tree. "Beth, you need to come out here to Green Ramp to see him before he leaves," she said.

Green Ramp was what passed for a waiting terminal at the airfield. Beth wiped her nose with a tissue. "I'm not up to it, really. Anyway, I thought we're not allowed to go to Green Ramp."

"Screw 'em," Camilla remembers saying, "come on."

By the time they got to Green Ramp, it was nearly noon and the other wives had been shooed away. Beth peered in the door of the hulking concrete-block building. Men in beige desert camouflage stood and sat on rows and rows of bleachers like drifts of sand, talking, reading, sleeping, killing time.

Someone yelled, "Pratt! Your wife's here!" and several rows over, Luigi jumped up. Beth recalls a surf magazine flapping open in his hand, his grin getting bigger and bigger the closer he came. "Oh my God!" He wrapped her in a bear hug. "You came back!"

She'd given him the magazine while he was packing. She'd written something on every page: I'm so lucky you showed up on my doorstep . . . You make my life complete . . . He'd already read them all. They stood there grinning at each other, his hands resting on her hips, her red-rimmed eyes almost level with his.

Eventually someone yelled: "Pratt! Get over here!" Beth hugged him, but he was wearing his Kevlar vest, and to her he felt awkwardly hard and inhuman. She turned away before he walked out the door to the plane.

BETH PRATT'S JOURNEY TOWARD FORT BRAGG BEGAN IN MINNESOTA. As soon as she got off the farm where she grew up, she went to college on a scholarship and didn't stop until she had earned degrees in biology, Spanish, nursing and forensic science. About the same time that Marissa was moving to Fayetteville, Beth was at a friend's house in South Florida, falling in love with an easygoing surfer just as he was

leaving for basic training. Luigi Pratt, at 30, had joined the Army hoping to get money for college and to help out his immigrant mother with some steady income.

Beth worked as a nurse at a jail clinic. She says she was warned by one of the deputies who had served in the military, "You know he's going to get sent off, right?"

"Yeah," she said, "I know."

"It's not an easy life," she remembers him saying. "I don't know that you're going to like it that much."

She wasn't sure she would, either. But she'd been married before. Her first husband had never made her feel the way Luigi did, like she was a treasure he'd discovered, and she wasn't willing to give that up. So she sold the house she loved in Florida, married the man she loved more, and followed him to Fayetteville, leaving behind her job, her friends, her life.

In Fayetteville, she started knocking on doors, looking for a job in forensics. Nothing opened. She wound up settling for a nursing job in labor and delivery at the Army hospital on Fort Bragg, and she and Luigi began trying to start a family themselves. Within five months, they learned they needed treatment for infertility. Just as they were trying to overcome that blow, Luigi was sent to Iraq.

IN THE LABOR AND DELIVERY ROOMS AT THE ARMY HOSPITAL, a lot of the pregnant women were there with their mothers, sisters or girlfriends. The husbands were overseas -- gone to Iraq, Afghanistan, South Korea, Colombia.

Beth worked the overnight shift. Sometimes she'd walk into a delivery room to check on a patient and the TV would be turned to the news. She remembers always doing her best to get out of there before the newscast got around to the latest on the war in Iraq. While some military spouses are addicted to the news, some don't watch at all -- it just reinforces the fear.

Sometimes, in the nurse's station, Beth would listen while other nurses talked about the war, about how it was a good thing. She says she felt like asking them, Where are all those weapons of mass destruction that were supposed to be there? But she didn't have the nerve to disagree with them out loud, not in an Army hospital. She felt like enough of an outsider as it was.

When she got back home in the morning, she would push a videotape into the VCR and sit on the couch to watch. It was 10 minutes of Luigi surfing, goofing around on the beach, playing with their dog in the living room, taking a shower. "Show me your butt," her voice called, laughing, from behind the camera. Now she couldn't watch without reaching for a tissue.

Beth was in a motel in Myrtle Beach, S.C., hanging out for the weekend with their friend Debbie McKay, who was up from Florida for business. In the minutes after the connection died, Beth told Debbie she was tired of it, she was tired of everything. She didn't know why she got married; it was like they weren't even married anymore. A few minutes later when the phone rang again, and she heard Luigi's relentlessly sunny voice from the other side of the world, she demanded, "Why don't you call me?"

"What do you mean?" he asked.

She was pacing. "Everybody else's husband calls them. Every day, practically. It just makes me wonder if you don't love me anymore."

"Don't -- what?" He admits his voice went supernova, and Beth was so startled she stopped pacing. "I work all the time!" he yelled. "I don't know what you think I'm doing over here, baby, but I work all the time! I barely get to sleep! When can I talk to you? When?"

He couldn't believe she'd think he didn't love her, yelled that even when he did find a minute to call her, he couldn't just pick up the phone -- he had to stand in a long line, and then after a few minutes the phone would go dead. "You know I love you!" he yelled. "You're the person who keeps me sane!"

Beth was looking at the floor. She'd never heard him raise his voice like that before. She said softly, "I'm sorry." And then, quickly, before the line could go to hell again, she told him she loved him, too.

Afterward, she said to Debbie: "I'm glad he yelled at me. I needed to hear that. All I've been thinking about is the danger he's in when he's out on convoys. I didn't think about how hard he's working."

Debbie said, "I'm just glad you didn't mention you're lying around at the beach." Beth laughed then. But after that fight with Luigi, she decided not to get together with other soldiers' wives anymore. The things they said just made her paranoid.

She had few people she could talk to in Fayetteville. Now she had even fewer.

A SHORT WALK UP THE HILL FROM DOWNTOWN, in a quiet neighborhood on a dead-end street, there's a scruffy blue bungalow with a small white, wooden sign in the front yard. "Quaker House," it says above a dove's silhouette.

Since the Vietnam war, Quaker House's small, mostly volunteer staff has counseled military personnel who believe they've become conscientious objectors, helping them apply to either get out of the military or shift to noncombatant service.

With her husband in a war zone, Beth had been forced to think about war more than she ever had before.

Talking about it with Luigi on the phone, she was starting to think that all wars were pointless, not just this one; so many innocent civilians died. The way she saw it, Saddam Hussein was bad, but there were a lot of bad dictators in the world, and America couldn't go fight all of them.

The more she analyzed it, the angrier she got. So, earlier in the deployment, when another wife told Beth about Quaker House, she decided to meet with its director, Chuck Fager.

She remembers feeling hopeful that afterward she'd be able to tell Luigi she'd found a way for both of them to act on what they believed.

"My husband and I are both opposed to this war," she said to Fager. "Can you help him get out of the Army?"

Fager, gray-bearded and wearing khaki shorts and a T-shirt, slouched in his chair like a melancholy, off-duty Santa. He says he told her, "It's not easy." It's not. Successful applicants have to be able to prove they've changed and now believe the use of violence is always wrong. The process involves a lengthy application and interviews with a psychiatrist, a chaplain and an investigating officer. It's designed to weed out those who want out for political reasons, or are afraid of combat, or have a new spouse who wants them out.

"Chances of success are not good," Fager tells would-be applicants. "People who take this route need to be prepared to take a stand and suffer."

Listening to Fager, Beth knew Luigi wasn't the type to rock the boat. Besides, it was only this war he was opposed to. He said all along that he would be proud to serve in Afghanistan. By the time Beth left two hours later with an armload of application materials, she felt like she was sinking beneath their weight. She had always made her own decisions, controlled her own life, she says. Now she felt like she controlled nothing. She couldn't even help her own husband.

It began to pile up. Five months into the deployment, Beth found herself weeping in an Army health clinic, admitting to a nurse practitioner that if she had a gun she'd shoot herself.

WHEN BETH WENT TO THE HEALTH CLINIC, she was just hoping to get something to make the pain go away. Within an hour, she had received a prescription for an antidepressant, as well as counseling from a social worker and an appointment to begin regular counseling sessions in town, paid for by the Pentagon. She hadn't known any of those services were available.

The social worker Beth saw was one of five behavioral health care managers on Fort Bragg, one at each of the post's health care facilities. The care managers are part of the Deployment Cycle Support program that was getting underway as Beth and Marissa's husbands took off for Iraq. The Army started developing it in the early 1990s, after one out of every seven service members returning from Desert Storm, according to Department of Defense data, either requested or required evaluation for Gulf War Syndrome (which involves an array of symptoms from chronic fatigue to abdominal pain). And then came the summer of 2002.

EARLY LAST SPRING, THE CROWD OF MARCHERS CAME AROUND THE CORNER from Fayetteville's downtown and on down the hill to the park. They wore bluejeans and T-shirts, desert camouflage jackets and gothic black. They pushed strollers, carried water bottles and signs and banners -- "Bring Them Home Now" -- and an American flag. It was Fayetteville's largest peace rally since the Vietnam War.

The park's band shell was a vast shaded space littered with speakers and microphone stands and drums.

Below it, the marchers spread across the grass in the sun. A newsprint program listed speakers and performers -- veterans, union members, Hip-Hop Against Racist War, a September 11 family member, and the fourth speaker on the list, "Beth Pratt -- military spouse from Fayetteville whose husband is in Iraq."

She'd been invited to speak at the peace rally. Here, at last, was something she could do. A small thing, but something.

In the last few weeks, Beth had been feeling steadily better -- she'd started attending a church, she'd signed up for a yoga class. When Luigi called, she told him she'd finally picked up her drumsticks again.

She says that after she got the invitation to speak at the rally, she asked Luigi if he thought she should do it. "Would it bother you?" she asked.

Over the phone, she had heard him laugh. "Far as I'm concerned, that's what I'm over here for, isn't it? Your freedom of speech?"

Now she walked across the stage and stopped in front of one of the microphones, silhouetted against the crowd. She gripped the pages of her speech and leaned forward.

"My name is Beth Pratt. I'm a nurse, and I grew up in Minnesota."

Her voice boomed over the crowd. She told them it had taken all the courage she had to stand up there and speak for those few minutes. "As far as supporting the troops," she read, "I support my husband one hundred percent, along with all of the other soldiers that are making sacrifices for us. Ending this war and bringing them all home safely would be the best form of support that I can see."

She spoke for just three minutes. When she turned away from the mike, her heartbeat faded out of her ears, and the crowd's roar faded in.

Afterward, as the speeches went on behind her, Beth spoke to reporters from local newspapers and the New York Times and to a pudgy man with a cell phone on his hip. He shook Beth's hand. "I'm a producer with NBC," he said. His crew had had some technical difficulties while she was speaking. He wanted her to come over to the camera and tell the rest of the country what she'd just said up there.

Beth frowned and hunched her shoulders. "You mean national TV?" She suddenly looked smaller. She glanced around for a familiar face. "Television. I don't know. I don't know if I should do that."

"What you had to say was very powerful," the producer said, cupping his hands in front of him as if offering a gift. "It's a great opportunity to get your message out there."

She hesitated. "I'm sorry," she said, "I'm just worried about my job. And my husband." As the producer pressed on, she mumbled, "I have to think about it; I

don't know." The other reporters exchanged glances. The producer said, "It's right over there; it won't take long."

And then Lou Plummer, one of the rally's organizers, shouldered his way into the middle.

"Back off," he barked. A veteran of the National Guard, Plummer looked more like a bouncer than a peace activist. "You don't have to live in this town, but she does. I live here. I know what it's like." As the producer argued with him, another newspaper reporter moved in to ask Beth a few questions.

She didn't do the TV interview, but when she saw her words in print the next day, she liked how it felt; she began wondering what she should do next.

She thought about doing something more significant, like joining Doctors Without Borders, an international medical charity, and going overseas.

But, in the end, she went no farther than downtown to join the occasional peace vigil.

What she wanted was a family with Luigi.

She knew it was going to be hard enough to make that happen, she says, without her being gone, too.

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.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Rising Levels Of Violence In Basra; Gloomy Assessment Echoed By Minister

June 21, 2006 Richard Norton-Taylor, The Guardian

British troops are facing an increasingly dangerous security situation in Basra, with rising levels of violence, a senior British officer warned yesterday.

Painting a gloomy picture of British-controlled southern Iraq, Lieutenant General Nick Houghton, Britain's chief of joint operations, also told the Commons defence committee that it would be "some time" before Britain could hand over responsibility to Iraq for defending the country's crucial oil producing region in the northern Gulf. Describing the situation as "worrying" he said provincial elections in the region, originally planned for the summer, would probably have to be delayed until the autumn.

The general's assessment was in contrast with recent upbeat comments about the security situation in Iraq by Tony Blair.

But the general's words were echoed by the armed forces minister, Adam Ingram, who told the committee: "I am conscious of the fact that the first time I visited Iraq I was on the streets with our soldiers who were in soft hats, no body armour. I don't think that could happen now."

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

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

GI Special issues are archived at website <http://www.militaryproject.org> .

The following have posted issues; there may be others:

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http://robinlea.com/GI_Special/; <http://imagineaworldof.blogspot.com/>; <http://gi-special.iraq-news.de>; http://www.traprockpeace.org/gi_special/;

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