

GI SPECIAL 4H8:

**REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



U.S. forces take cover as they are fired upon while inspecting the site of a car bomb, July 30, 2006, in Mosul. (AP Photo/Mohammed Ibrahim)

The Crime Against The 172nd

**#1: The News Report
#2: Those Who Love The
Soldiers Organize To Fight Back**

#1:

“The Soldiers Got Angry” Extension Wreaks Havoc Upon Stryker Soldiers’ Lives; “‘We Could List A Million Ways That People Are Getting Screwed,’ Forney Said”

Some officers also expressed confusion about why, if it was so important to keep the brigade in country and send it to Baghdad, no one in the chain of command could tell them what the mission there would be.

August 03, 2006 By Sean D. Naylor, Army Times Staff writer [Excerpts]

BAGHDAD

The extension to the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team’s Iraq deployment has sown chaos in the personal lives of many soldiers in the brigade’s cavalry squadron and imposed tremendous logistical burdens on the unit, problems that could have been avoided, soldiers say, if only the Defense Department had given them a little more warning.

The 172nd deployed to Iraq in August 2005 and the bulk of the unit was due to return to Fort Wainwright, Alaska, early this month.

But the Pentagon announced July 27 that it was extending the 172nd’s deployment for up to 120 days and moving the unit to Baghdad to counter the worsening violence in the Iraqi capital.

Soldiers in 4th Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment received word of the extension July 27 as they were preparing to depart Combat Outpost Rawah, in central Anbar province, where they had spent most of the previous 12 months. The news hit many hard.

Many of those still in Iraq were within a day or two of leaving. Stryker crews had celebrated their last missions “outside the wire.” There was an end-of-semester atmosphere at COP Rawah, with soldiers playing practical jokes on each other as they prepared to head home.

Then came the news that rather than flying home into the arms of their loved ones, they would be heading into the heart of the violence in Baghdad, where

more than 1,600 people died in July as sectarian violence between Sunni and Shi'ites spun out of control.

Some soldiers greeted the news with disbelief and tears, others with shrugs.

Capt. James Foster, 4-14's chaplain, said he believes the soldiers will be physically and emotionally ready for their missions in Baghdad, but he acknowledged that some are still coming to grips with the reality that they'll be in combat for up to another four months.

"It's kind of like a grieving process," he said. "A lot of shock and denial, then you kind of get angry. The wives got angry back home. The soldiers got angry. Everybody's going through these phases. Some go through them faster than others."

[And some of them see through this lame, dismissive bullshit about "phases" and a "grieving process," and know you have as much to do with genuine religion as a \$3 crack whore has to do with true love. Oh, sorry, you're just doing your job, babbling about how the soldiers will be "emotionally" ready for their missions.

[That's your real job, you piece of shit, coming out with meaningless happy talk. No, you're a friend of Satan. Your Satan's' boon companion. If you had one spark of real religious feeling, you'd be defending the troops and giving out some loud and righteous wrath to the reporter about how your soldiers are getting fucked over. But no, you won't say anything like that, will you? Because your nothing but one more brasskissing lump of worthless vomit. May you burn in hell for all eternity, you shit-eating sanctimonious supercilious fraud.]

The extension might well doom the marriages of several soldiers in the squadron, according to Foster and other NCOs. [Of course Devil Captain Chaplin wouldn't mention that, would he? Maybe that's just a "phase" too.]

"Some (marriages) have already been strained to the max, so when you throw another straw on the camel's back, it's hard for the family members to accept," Foster said. "Some were holding on to come home and maybe work things out, and may not take that opportunity now."

Stoehr agreed. "I had a few guys (with troubled marriages) that sucked it up all the way to the end," he said, but the last-minute extension appears to have been the breaking point for their wives.

The extension "is creating more problems with the families," he said. "Sometimes the wives just don't understand, and it's hard."

Almost every 4-14 soldier had made plans for the next several months that the extension has disrupted.

In some cases, the extra months spent in Iraq will cost soldiers opportunities they will never be able to get back.

Sgt. Ryan Forney, who works in the 4-14 tactical operations center, was excited at the prospect of attending the birth of his first child. "My wife's due Oct. 29," he said. "I was hoping to be able to go back and help her with the last couple of months of her pregnancy, seeing as I'd missed the first six months."

When his wife heard about the extension, "she was pretty angry and upset," said Forney, who like all the squadron's soldiers was able to take two weeks rest and recuperation leave at home during the deployment.

"She's trying to be supportive of me," he said, but was finding it hard because the 4-14 has not been told either what its mission will be in Baghdad, or given a firm return date inside the 120-day extension window.

There are also numerous financial costs involved.

Many soldiers and their families had bought plane tickets in anticipation of the block leave the brigade had scheduled for September.

Because the 172nd is the first brigade to go through the Army's three-year unit manning cycle, most of the unit's soldiers were due to change duty stations or leave the Army upon their return.

Now many are unsure of whether jobs they had lined up in either the Army or the civilian world will be waiting for them when they get home. In some cases, these soldiers had already put down-payments or security deposits on new homes in areas where they had planned to move.

Even soldiers whose next jobs the Army has promised to hold open until they return can get caught in this trap.

Hart is due to assume a new position in Human Resources Command in Alexandria, Va., and had put a \$2,000 security deposit on an apartment near the command, with a view to moving in at the beginning of September.

Although Human Resources Command says the job will still be waiting for him when he redeploys, it makes no financial sense for him to pay rent for the next four months for an apartment he's not living in. But his would-be landlord has refused to refund his security deposit. Army legal officials in Alaska are working on his behalf to try to get the money back.

In other cases, Forney said, soldiers' families have already moved into new homes and now are stranded thousands of miles from Fort Wainwright with no support network in place.

There are smaller complications that will end up costing soldiers money.

"We could list a million ways that people are getting screwed," Forney said.

By the time the Pentagon ordered them to extend in Iraq, 4-14 soldiers had mailed most of their personal gear home, and given away comfort items like televisions

and pillows to soldiers newly arrived in Iraq, retaining only the uniform items and toiletries they would need for their last week in Iraq. Now they have to buy replacement items out of pocket.

Forney spent \$250 on books for online courses he had registered to take via Troy State University in Alabama. "I'm going to eat that," he said.

Another frustration, he said, was the knowledge that the soldiers likely would not be returning to Wainwright until Alaska's bitter winter has set in.

"Getting back in the middle of winter is going to be a pain for everybody. There are unique challenges to an Alaskan unit going back in the middle of winter as opposed to the summertime," Forney said, explaining that moving house and retrieving belongings from storage would be hard when the temperature is 20 degrees below zero. Forney said.

But the Pentagon's late decision to extend the 172nd's deployment has done more than extract an emotional and financial toll on individual soldiers. It has also made the job of getting ready for whatever missions the brigade will be ordered to conduct in Baghdad much harder, said 4-14 officers.

Three days prior to the order to extend, the squadron had turned its theater permanent equipment; that gear that a unit receives upon arriving in theater; over to 1-14, the Stryker unit originally tapped to relieve 4-14 in Rawah. That included trucks that carry the squadron's heavy loads, engineering equipment used to construct defenses, and individual soldier items like all the M14 rifles for the unit's squad designated marksmen.

"The line elements were left short of war-fighting equipment," said Capt. Sean Skrmetta, executive officer for 4-14's Headquarters and Headquarters Troop.

The process of getting new equipment has been complicated by the fact that the squadron had already closed out the codes it used to order gear through the logistics system, Skrmetta said.

New codes are being issued to the unit, but the process can take up to 15 days, costing the squadron precious time.

"Where the squadron really got hurt was the supply side of the house," Skrmetta said. "All that stuff we'd given out and we can't get it back."

He cited a long list of items that 4-14 had handed over to 1-14, including protective eyeglasses, Nomex gloves, chemical lights and stationery.

Even the gear the squadron retained had been stripped and prepared for transport back to Alaska. Troops had removed the sights from all 4-14's M240B and .50 cal machine guns. Now the soldiers have to remount the sights and re-zero the weapons.

"That's a painful process that generally takes a long time," Skrmetta said.

Much of the frustration within the unit is due to the fact that even though the situation in Baghdad had been deteriorating over a period of several months, senior leaders waited until the last possible moment to change their orders.

The soldiers “didn’t like the fact of getting almost one foot onto the plane and being told, ‘You have to go back,’ ” Stoehr said. “Had we known at least a month out, it would have been much better.”

“Even if we could have known a week earlier, it would have made a huge difference to us,” said Capt. James Vogelpoehl, a 4-14 battle captain.

Some officers also expressed confusion about why, if it was so important to keep the brigade in country and send it to Baghdad, no one in the chain of command could tell them what the mission there would be.

#2:

BRING HOME THE 172ND STRYKER COMBAT BRIGADE!



[<http://www.bringhome172nd.org/stryker/>]

[Thanks to D for sending in, and to Katherin GY for organizing the content.]

[Excerpts from: <http://www.bringhome172nd.org/stryker/>]

On July 26th, the men and women of the 172nd Stryker Combat Brigade prepared to end their unit's deployment to Iraq. This unit of 3,800 Americans had endured the fight for a year, distinguishing itself as an essential and effective factor in bringing stability to the North of Iraq. A small number of the brigade had taken the first steps back on U.S. soil, arriving to their base near Fairbanks, Alaska, while many others were already in Kuwait waiting to board homebound planes.

With these successes behind them, their flak vests packed, personal items sent stateside, and their Stryker Armored Vehicles turned over to other newly-arrived units, this battle brigade was able to breathe a sigh of relief and prepare to Go Home.

The following day, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld gave his approval to extend the 172nd Brigade's deployment in Iraq. Instead of greeting their loved ones, the Strykers will help to fight the insurgency in Baghdad.

Below are the voices of some of the people affected by this re-deployment...

“They Do Not Deserve To Be Back In Iraq Thrown Further Into The Muck”

Submitted Sat 29 July , 10:05 PM CST

This site is a blessing and I hope it gets used well. Your words are so true. We try too hard to go with the flow, not make waves, and do what we are asked to do. While it is true our loved ones involved in this situation signed up for the military and don't have much of a say on their own, that should not be true of the family members behind trying to support their efforts.

My son is part of the 172nd Stryker Brigade. We are very proud of him for all that he has done. And all of the members of this brigade deserve better than they are receiving.

These individuals are people, not pawns on a gameboard and they are being treated poorly by the military (in my opinion).

After all their efforts and accomplishments, loss and gains to date, they deserve a heros welcome and to be at home safe in their own beds. They do not deserve to be back in Iraq thrown further into the muck.

This treatment is very disrespectful to our soldiers and their families.....and I haven't heard any apologies or sympathy from the White House with respect to this extension.

While I know I must be strong for my son and try to put my best face forward, I am just so angry with the fact that this was allowed to happen. I personally have contacted my sons Commander as well as Donald Rumsfeld and CNN regarding this issue.

I feel that we are owed some answers as to how this can be allowed to happen.

I also want to know how anyone can convince themselves that these soldiers can possibly on their best game after 365 days plus of this war already. Lack of sleep, long shifts, and daily stress take a toll on one's body and mind.

How can they be expected to continue to do this for 120 more days effectively? Who in their right mind thought this is a smart move? Especially in light of the fact that they were on their way home, packed and emotions released when all of a sudden they were thrown back in to war.

My son was to be on the plane the same day they were cancelled and told they were staying. Our family has taken a huge loss due to this and I am sure this is minor compared to what our son is feeling.

He had pre-paid for a vacation to the tune of \$2000. for his 30 day leave and was ready to go meet the love of his life. That has all been put on hold now.

God willing it will happen for him 5 months from now, but he should not be having to put his plans on hold.

Thank you for helping to keep the pressure going. My family very much appreciates it and we will continue to be a thorn in the side of those who have extended this tour until our son is home safely.

Please do not post our name on your site for the protection of our son.
Thank you again.

Submitted Sat 29 July , 10:25 PM CST

Response to the 10:05 posting:

I totally agree with this woman and I feel for her in a way that means to comfort. And I also feel the pain that her son has of waiting to meet the love of a lifetime.

My friend was on his way home to me, I know he is the one I want to give my whole heart to; my fear is that I may never get the opportunity now. I second this woman's opinion in everything she said.

I thank her for putting it the way she did...

“My Fiancee Is Stronger Than I Am, He's Putting Up A Good Face, But I Know A Little Part Of Him Has Broken Too, Even If He'd Never Admit It...”

Submitted Sat 29 July , 11:25 PM CST

My fiancee is in the 172nd Stryker, he loves his job, he loves what he does...

He was only hours away from his flight home when they told him he wasn't coming anytime soon. I got the call at 3am my time, through the awful connection he told me the news. We have been waiting a year to get married, it was supposed to happen right after he came home, in August, we had everything planned, our families were going to be there from all over the country, I'd even had relatives in Maine and NY coming, they'd already bought tickets.

Now it's not happening. I know we are going to get there eventually, but we were so close. I know to expect changes with the Army, they extend our soldiers all the time. But to do it so close to when they were supposed to be home, when some were already home!

I had gone to bed, that night I found out, so happy, knowing that he was coming home, and I woke up in a different place.

I know I sound over-dramatic, but it's just...words can't really explain the way I feel. A friend of mine said I need to have strength for my man, but I have been strong for a year now, and it's run out...

I don't have it as bad as others, we don't have any kids, I don't have to tell my children that daddy's not coming home when I promised.

And I had even heard of a woman whose husband and her were moving away when he got home, so she had sold the house recently and now that they are not coming back, she has no home.

My fiancée is stronger than I am, he's putting up a good face, but I know a little part of him has broken too, even if he'd never admit it...

“Our Soldiers Have Done Their Time, Do Right By Them And BRING THEM HOME NOW!”

“They Feel Like They Have Been Royally Screwed, And So Do Their Families”

Submitted Sun 30 July , 12:20 AM CST

Our 172nd stryker brigade are being treated like garbage.

is this the thanks that our sons and daughters get after a long hard year of watching best of friends die and dragging their bodies off of the back of vehicles, is this what they get after watching friends being blown up by suicide bombers and ied's, and losing their limbs and other devastating injuries?

they are tired, they have fought hard, gone without meals, lived in the desert in the sweltering heat. they are mentally and physically tired. and then they wait until most of them have one foot on the plane out of that place, and come and tell them that they can't come home

why, a dog shouldn't be treated this way.

why does our government want tired and worn out soldiers to go in and "clean up" baghdad?

that's just plain foolish. it's dangerous now, to put them in the most unstable part of iraq after what they have been through.

wouldn't it make more sense to have a fresh stryker brigade in there?

i stay in contact with a lot of soldiers, as well as my own soldiers, and their morale is at rock bottom.

they feel like they have been royally screwed, and so do their families.

yes, we are mad!!! and have every right to be. our soldiers and their families are greiving over this.

hearts are broken and minds are tormented.and then, the audacity of the pentagon to so call, leak this news to CNN first. how dirty is that?

when i called washington d.c. , i was told that these soldiers wanted to stay and help in baghdad, and i was wondering, hmmm, now i wonder which soldiers they are talking about. because it certainly isn't the 172nd.

how much longer are the american people going to stand by and take all of this B.S. off of george bush and donald rumsfeld?

our soldiers have done their time, do right by them and BRING THEM HOME NOW!

**“What Happened To This Brigade Is Immoral”
“(Don't Forget That's Why We Have The 'Right To Bear Arms.' It's In Case Our Government No Longer Represents Us.)”**

Submitted Sun 30 July , 9:20 PM CST

My daughter's husband (they were married on his leave in Feb. and still waiting to live together for first time) is in the 172nd Stryker Brigade in question.

I just flew her up there at the end of June with her to help her prepare their first home. She and I spent lots of time and money getting their place ready, and I left her alone there to wait for her husband's return. She's from Arizona, and now she faces the brutal winter alone, not knowing how to prepare it having planned on his being there to help.

She will probably come back to Phoenix to stay with us, and that will cost her airfare, and she'll be paying rent and utilities while she's gone on a place she apparently doesn't yet need. She'll have to spend money for airfare again when he finally comes home or at least to pack up her stuff.

We were all waiting with such excitement in the last few days only to have our world shattered.

I have spent hours over the last few days trying to console my daughter who is unable to eat much, sleep much, and has severe abdominal cramping from the gutwrenching emotions she is feeling.

I've had a lump in my throat that occasionally makes me feel nauseated.

This is almost as bad as hearing that they died.

It's not much less severe than that.

We are grieving and just learned the men that replaced them will stay in Mosul, while these emotionally and physically exhausted young men were told "be ready to hit the streets of Baghdad" in a few days. The fact that they are going to a very draining and dangerous situation when they have so little left to give has us so very worried. That is my connection.

First, thank you so much for this opportunity to speak out! We are still Americans even if we are starting to be treated like we live under a non-representative government.

We are fighting for democracy and are losing it ourselves if we aren't careful.

We are a moral nation, and what happened to this brigade is immoral. (Don't forget that's why we have the "right to bear arms." It's in case our government no longer represents us.)

The poster writes: This is a letter I have been sharing with news organizations and officials as much as I can.

There is a huge story going on in this country about how our soldiers are being misused and mistreated. You hear lies daily from generals who say morale is "still high." Either they are being lied to by those under them in the few visits they make to bases, or they just lie. Either way, nothing could be further from the truth.

Not only are we turning fighting men into police, but they don't know who the enemy is until they are shot at.

They have to fear death and be accused of murder even though no one they are fighting wears a uniform. It's tough to do that for even 6 mos. which some branches of the military serve there, but for the army, apparently a grueling year doesn't warrant rest.

The 172nd Stryker Brigade out of Fairbanks, AK is a story that needs telling, and people need to see this never happens again this way unless we are attacked in 9/11 style--only that would be understandable.

The men were not treated well the entire year they served, and they did everything they were asked to do.

Holidays were not celebrated for many of them.

The wife of a soldier in this brigade died, and the soldier was not allowed to go home.

Another's wife was in a severe accident and he also was not allowed to go home.

I find this appalling.

These are just examples of the miserable treatment they received during their deployment, and all they had to look forward to was coming home. It's the only thing that kept them sane.

The time finally came, and the soldiers and their families could finally breathe easier. They were getting excited. The men turned in all their equipment and turned over their Strykers to another brigade. The paperwork had been processed, and the flights home had begun for the 3700 troops.

Some are already back, and some were ready to get on a flight, the last group was just four days from their turn to get on that flight home.

It has been said in the press that these men were scheduled to come home next month--that is such a deceptive "play on words" because it was very end of July when they decided to extend them, and the last soldiers would be heading home on Aug. 1.

It would have been easier to take if it were a month's notice, but they were nearly home, and mentally they were already home.

A captain in the brigade said there was actually a group of soldiers in a plane leaving Kuwait for home only to be flown back to Iraq without being told that's where they were taking them. Can you imagine the horror!?

This has literally been a nightmare for these men and their close and extended families. Thousands of men are completely empty inside and are now expected to fight the fiercest of battles in this state of mind.

The many thousands of family members so happy to finally breathe a sigh of relief are now tormented by worry and sorrow almost as severe as if the men had died.

Thousands of plans have been cancelled--like weddings and much needed vacations, leaves are cancelled. Tickets purchased by family to welcome their sons, brothers, husbands and friends are lost.

Wives have severe abdominal cramping, can't eat or sleep, and young children are asking why daddy can't be home like mommy told them.

New babies have yet to see their fathers, and may never see them now after being so close--so close!

I'm sure if you asked these men if they would rather be extended at this last second like this or be beaten, they would choose the beating as long as they could survive it. After all, they feel like they've been gut punched.

One young man had planned to get out of the military as scheduled back in April but was "stoploss'd" to keep him on this deployment. It was finally over--and then it wasn't.

These men were so relieved to survive, and now they have to fear even more than ever when they are in this abandoned, betrayed, emotional state and with critically low morale.

Please look into this. If we treat our own Americans this way, what is the point of fighting for America? What is America?

If Baghdad needs beefing up, find a way to do it that doesn't involve completely horrendous actions such as this, and treat the soldiers better while they are on deployment!! Serial murderers and terrorist prisoners that want to murder innocent people get treated so much better than our soldiers.

If Americans knew how our men and women in uniform are being treated in many cases, there would be outrage! Please help us make them aware and stop this. It may be legal, but it isn't moral. If we lose our morality, who are we?

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

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Clovis Man Dies

08/07/2006 KOB-TV

The family of a Clovis man was notified over the weekend that he had been killed in Iraq.

Family members say that they were notified Saturday evening of Segura's death.

Segura was born in Fort Sumner and had lived in nearby Clovis before joining the army.

Firefight Claims The War's First Navy SEAL

8.7.06 Los Angeles Times, August 7, 2006)

Navy SEAL Marc Alan Lee, 28, has been killed in a prolonged firefight with insurgents in Ramadi, making him the first member of the Navy commando group killed in Iraq.

Lee's death, announced Friday by the Pentagon, is virtually the first recognition that the SEALs are involved in the battle to wrest Ramadi from insurgent control.

TROOP NEWS

**In Case We All Forgot, Americans
Are Still Dying In Vain:
“‘President Bush Took Away My
Son, My Only Son,’ The Mother
Had Said”**

Just this once, there was no poor, helpless family member saying that they were proud that their son had died in this war. Don't ever say that the young man had died in vain, because that is the icy truth of Iraq that people often cannot handle.

06 August 2006 By Jimmy Breslin, Newsday [Excerpt]

"We didn't know," Erin Tinsley, 37, was saying late Friday. "We didn't know what they were here for. Two military women."

Erin was in the hot 10th-floor hallway of the Alfred E. Smith houses on the downtown East Side. Two doors down from her lived the parents of Haiming Hsia, an Army specialist who died Tuesday in an explosion in Iraq.

"The father let the military women in and then when they came out, he stood there and seemed fine. I thought that they had brought an award for his son."

Erin said she didn't know how long afterward, an hour, maybe two, before the words of the Army officers exploded inside him. He collapsed, and on Friday, somebody from the family said that his wife, the soldier's mother, was unable to cope.

"President Bush took away my son, my only son," the mother had said.

Just this once, there was no poor, helpless family member saying that they were proud that their son had died in this war.

Don't ever say that the young man had died in vain, because that is the icy truth of Iraq that people often cannot handle.

"I grew up with him," Erin Tinsley was saying on Friday. "We went to PS 126 and IS 131. We used to run up and down the hall. Playing soldier. The last time I saw him was in April. He was home, but he said that he had to go back."

Spc. Hsia joined the Army because he couldn't make enough as a security guard to support a wife and baby. He spent three years in the Middle East and wanted to come home for good, but part of the secret of Iraq is that we don't have enough soldiers. He was ordered back.

This time Hsia was in Iraq for a month. Now he returns to the Alfred E. Smith houses in a box.

The Other Shoe Drops: U.S. Troop Cuts In Afghanistan Cancelled Too [A Sure Sign The Occupation Is Winning, Right?]

[Thanks to David Honish, Veterans For Peace, who sent this in.]

August 03, 2006 Associated Press

The Pentagon announced Wednesday that 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, from Fort Bragg, N.C., will deploy to Afghanistan late this year as part of the next rotation of forces.

Late last year the Pentagon said U.S. troop levels would be reduced by 3,000 this year, but that has not happened, mainly because the Taliban armed resistance has stepped up its attacks, particular in the volatile southern areas.

Broke Down National Guard; Broke Down Army: Nothing Left In The Cupboard

[Thanks to David Honish, Veterans For Peace, who sent this in.]

August 01, 2006 Associated Press

WASHINGTON: More than two-thirds of the Army National Guard's 34 brigades are not combat ready due largely to vast equipment shortfalls that will take as much as \$21 billion to correct, the top National Guard general said Tuesday.

The comments by Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum came in the wake of disclosures by Army officials, analysts and members of Congress that two-thirds of the active Army's brigades are not rated ready for war.

The problem, they say, is driven by budget constraints that will not allow the military to complete the personnel training and equipment repairs and replacement that must be done when units return home after deploying to Iraq or Afghanistan.

One Army official acknowledged Tuesday that while all of the active Army units serving in the war zone are "100 percent" ready, the situation is not the same for those at home.

Driving the current problem is the fact that Army units returning from the war have either left tanks, trucks or other equipment behind or are bringing them home damaged or broken. And once they arrive, many of their comrades either leave the Army or move to other posts, forcing leaders to train other soldiers to replace them. As a result, the unit's ratings drop, said Ey, an Army spokesman.

There They Go Again: VA Data On 38,000 Veterans MIA

Aug. 7, 2006 NewsMax.com

As many as 38,000 veterans may be at risk of identity theft because a Veterans Affairs Department subcontractor lost a desktop computer containing their sensitive personal data.

VA Secretary Jim Nicholson said that Unisys Corp., a subcontractor hired to assist in insurance collections for VA medical centers in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, reported the missing computer last Thursday. The computer was being used in Unisys' offices in Reston, Va.

The computer is believed to contain names, addresses, Social Security numbers, dates of birth, insurance carriers and claims data including medical information for veterans who received care at the hospitals in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh during the past four years.

According to initial estimates, the data covered about 5,000 patients treated at Philadelphia, and 11,000 treated at Pittsburgh and another 2,000 deceased patients. The VA is also investigating whether the information also may have covered another 20,000 who received care through the Pittsburgh medical center.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action



The severely damaged building of a provincial headquarters of a police force destroyed in the truck blast, in Samarra Aug. 7, 2006. (AP Photo/Hamid Rashid)

August 7, 2006 RAWYA RAGEH, Associated Press Writer & Reuters & By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA, Associated Press Writer & Aug. 8, By PAUL von ZIELBAUER, NY Times

In Mosul, guerrillas opened fire on a taxi Monday, killing two policemen inside, said police Brig. Saeed al-Jubouri. He said two other policemen in the taxi were injured.

Two bombs exploded on Palestine Street, a major shopping area of Baghdad, injuring 10 people, including a senior police officer.

A truck bomber struck the provincial headquarters of an Iraqi police commando force north of Baghdad on Monday, killing at least 10 paramilitary commandos.

The attack in Samarra targeted the regional headquarters of Interior Ministry's elite commando force,

The truck carrying vegetables drove through razor-wire barricades around the two-story building of the Interior Ministry's police commandos, which is located near an intersection in central Samarra, police Capt. Laith Mohammed said.

The building was virtually leveled, said policeman Mohammed Ali, who witnessed the aftermath of the attack. He said three houses nearby were severely damaged and three cars were destroyed.

U.S. forces sealed off the area and rescue workers dug through the rubble.

Militants killed four Iraqi soldiers at a checkpoint in the market area of Muqdadiya, 90 km (50 miles) northeast of Baghdad, police said.

At least six soldiers were killed and 15 wounded when guerrillas opened fire at dawn on an Iraqi army checkpoint near the small town of Balad Ruz, 50 km (30 miles) southeast of Baquba, Police Lieutenant Colonel Amer Naseer said. One gunman was killed, he said.

A bomb targeting a police foot patrol exploded in a vegetable market in Khan Bani Saad near Baquba, 65 km (40 miles) north of Baghdad, killing a civilian and a policeman and wounding seven people, police said.

A roadside bomb exploded near a police check point in Baghdad shortly before 1 p.m., killing four civilians and injuring three policemen, an Interior Ministry official said.

In Ramadi, gunmen took control of a military recruitment center, launching a battle that left 15 injured, an official at a Ramadi hospital said.

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

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

RED WHITE & NO MORE BLUES



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

From: Dennis Serdel
To: GI Special
Sent: August 05, 2006
Subject: RED WHITE & NO MORE BLUES by Dennis

Written by Dennis Serdel, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th Brigade, purple heart, Veterans For Peace, Vietnam Veterans Against The War, United Auto Workers GM Retiree, in Perry, Michigan

RED WHITE & NO MORE BLUES (Dedicated to Medic Mike Hastie)

With the handsome beginning of grey hair
the old veteran finally breaks
and cries raw memories, opaque tears
squeeze from heavy eyes
dripping from his unshaven chin
into a puddle of truth.
The Iraq War and Vietnam flashbacks
finally invade his peace,
so he takes his red pills
which are supposed to make him feel better.

His Doctor with his glasses
and frantic blue eyes,
bloody white frock, white light,
soldier's red blood all over,
someone tells him to count back
from a 100 fresh flowers
on an Iraq veteran's grave.
But sometimes even the white pills
don't work either and he is left
with his screaming naked shame.
America, it's all your fault,
I'm not like you
and I will be free he fights back.
Just after he awakens from surgery,
a chubby nurse in white
runs up and down
the olive drab tent
screaming lights out,
get under your bed,
we are taking a rocket attack
pull your mattress on top of you,
some soldiers like him though
do nothing but lay there
exposed to the war lies again.
Lebanon wrecked TV reruns
over his once boy skinned body
that has been fragged by America
with it's red white and blue
flag fucked forever scars.
It's not my fault Doc.
it's not my fault.
I know the Medic tells him
try these new anti-blues
and he disappears
no longer
a political prisoner.

Endless Peace,
Dennis

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)

Civil War In Iraq?



From: Richard Hastie
To: GI Special
Sent: August 03, 2006

Civil War In Iraq?

"Shiite and Sunni are going to have to love their children more than they hate each other."
General Peter Pace

Now, here is a man with a political IQ of about 7.

He is one of America's military leaders, and he just doesn't get it.

Iraq Prime Minister And President Condemn U.S. Military Attack On The Mahdi Army: “He Apologized To The Iraqi People For The Operation And Said ‘This Won't Happen Again’”

August 7, 2006 RAWYA RAGEH, Associated Press Writer & by Ammar Karim, AFP & By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA, Associated Press Writer

Iraq's prime minister sharply criticized a U.S. attack Monday on a Shiite militia stronghold in Baghdad, breaking with his American partners on security tactics as the United States launches a major operation to secure the capital.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's criticism followed a pre-dawn air and ground attack on an area of Sadr City, stronghold of radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army militia.

Col. Hassan Chaloub, police chief of Sadr City, said three people including a woman and a 3-year-old girl were killed and 12 injured in the fighting, which the U.S. command said was aimed at "individuals involved in punishment and torture cell activities." He said three cars and three houses also were destroyed.

One U.S. soldier was wounded, the U.S. said.

Al-Maliki, a Shiite, said he was "very angered and pained" by the operation, warning that it could undermine his efforts toward national reconciliation.

"Reconciliation cannot go hand in hand with operations that violate the rights of citizens this way," al-Maliki said in a statement on government television.

"This operation used weapons that are unreasonable to detain someone, like using planes."

He apologized to the Iraqi people for the operation and said "this won't happen again."

Gen. George Casey, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, meanwhile, said he discussed with Iraq's President Jalal Talabani a security plan to bring "fundamental change to the security situation in Baghdad."

Addressing concerns about the rising power of Shiite militias, Talabani said he has written to al-Sadr "to control those elements of the Mahdi Army" who take "illegal actions."

He also said he told Casey that "it is in nobody's interest to have confrontations with the Sadrists."

[T]he public position taken by al-Maliki and Talabani signaled serious differences between Iraqi politicians and both U.S. and Iraqi military officials on how to restore order and deal with armed groups, many of which have links to political parties.

"We condemn this cowardly, terrorist attack conducted by the U.S. forces in Sadr City," said Falah Shanshal, a lawmaker aligned to al-Sadr. "We demand the government take necessary measures to stop such unjustified aggression and we demand an investigation."

Shanshal also said the raid was a reaction to an anti-American and anti-Israeli street rally carried out Mehdi Army supporters on Friday.

"The raid was also an act of disrespect to the prime minister's decision to not carrying out such operations during nighttime. We demand an investigation to reveal which dirty squad took part in the raid," he told reporters.

MORE:

U.S. Command Lighting Matches In A Powder Magazine

Key al-Sadr lieutenants say privately that they have their "red lines" and that at some point, American pressure will become too great for restraint.

8.7.06 By ROBERT H. REID, Associated Press Writer

The Americans know they must rein in al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army militia if they are to disband armed groups believed responsible for the sharp rise in sectarian violence that has brought the country to the brink of civil war.

But the Americans cannot afford an all-out move against al-Sadr. That would trigger a backlash among the Shiite majority a nightmare scenario for the troubled U.S. mission in Iraq.

A major push against al-Sadr would also undercut [Prime Minister] al-Maliki, who relies heavily on al-Sadr for political support.

Al-Sadr's movement holds 30 of the 275 seats in parliament and five Cabinet posts. Al-Sadr's backing helped al-Maliki win the top job during painstaking negotiations within the Shiite alliance that led to the ouster of Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari.

As a result, the Americans have been careful to avoid mentioning the Mahdi Army as the target of their attacks, including the raid early Monday in Sadr City or the July 22 attack on al-Sadr's office in Musayyib where 15 militiamen died.

Key al-Sadr lieutenants say privately that they have their “red lines” and that at some point, American pressure will become too great for restraint.

For the time being, al-Sadr prefers to look for ways to remind the Americans and the Iraqi government that he is a powerful figure who cannot be easily dismissed. That more than admiration for Hezbollah was behind Friday's mass rally in Sadr City in support of the Lebanese Shiite guerrillas fighting the Israelis.

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

OCCUPATION PALESTINE/LEBANON

One More Stupid Zionist Lie About The Qana Massacre Exposed; Hizbullah Rockets Cannot Be Fired From Buildings

The timing of the attack, taking place as it did during a period of relative calm and not in the immediate aftermath of a Hizbullah missile launch, speaks of a punitive strike designed simply to kill members of the Shia community from which Hizbullah is drawn and receives its moral support.

31/07/2006 Tom Clonan, The Irish Times

IDF spokespeople are maintaining that Hizbullah had been mounting missile attacks on Israeli territory from Qana in recent days. The IDF has claimed it targeted the three-storey house in Qana at 1.30am local time in the belief it contained a Hizbullah "asset".

Any investigation into the targeting of this house will have to consider precisely what kind of Hizbullah "asset" could possibly have been hidden in a modest, low-rise building among the narrow streets of a village such as Qana.

The type of missiles being fired by Hizbullah at Israeli cities cannot be fired from within houses, mosques, hospitals or even UN facilities as has been suggested by the IDF.

Due to the massive "back-blast" caused by the rocket launchers of these missiles, they can only be fired from open ground. To fire them from within a building would result in the instant death of the missile crew and probable destruction of the missile before

launch. Most of the missiles are truck-mounted and are fired - on open ground - from the backs of flat-bedded trucks or larger four-wheel-drive vehicles.

When fired, these missiles generate an enormous flare of light, heat and sound energy - a heat and light signature which is readily detected by IDF target-acquisition systems. Accurate retaliatory fire can be directed at Hizbullah launch sites by IDF aircraft and ground artillery in seconds. Such a reaction would be considered by international military norms to be proportionate and within the general "rules of engagement".

In these circumstances, having fired their missiles, Hizbullah tends to disperse as rapidly as possible.

It is unlikely that a flat-bedded truck with a multilaunch rocket-system mounted on it could be easily and rapidly hidden in a village as small as Qana. Nor is it likely that such a truck-mounted weapon or four-wheel-drive vehicle could easily be hidden in a house such as the one targeted by the IDF yesterday.

The pattern and circumstances of the attack are sinister. With no telltale scorch marks from a Hizbullah missile launch visible near the destroyed house, and with no Hizbullah fighters among the dead and injured, the question remains as to what kind of "asset" the IDF could credibly allege to have been contained within the building.

The timing of the attack, taking place as it did during a period of relative calm and not in the immediate aftermath of a Hizbullah missile launch, speaks of a punitive strike designed simply to kill members of the Shia community from which Hizbullah is drawn and receives its moral support.

The targeting of unarmed Shia women and children would represent a deliberate targeting of innocent civilians for retaliatory or punitive purposes, and may well constitute a war crime.

**“His Unit Never Saw The Enemy,
He Said. ‘We Mostly Heard Them’”
“The Whole Calculus Of This Sort Of
Warfare Has Changed, As Even The
Israelis Gave Grudging High Marks To
Their Opponents”**

[Thanks to PB, who sent this in.]

Hizbullah's high-tech communications heighten its classic advantage as a guerrilla force fighting on home turf. "The plan was to go deep, but we didn't

finish it," said 19-year-old Nahum Fowler, a corporal in Israel's Nahal Brigade who fought in South Lebanon last week.

"They know what they're doing. They know their villages really well." His unit never saw the enemy, he said. "We mostly heard them."

Aug. 14, 2006 By Kevin Peraino, Babak Dehghanpisheh and Christopher Dickey, Newsweek [Excerpts]

Hizbullah's fighters were as elusive last week as they were deadly. Thousands of them were dug in around southern Lebanon, and yet encounters with the hundreds of journalists also in the area were rare, and furtive.

Like Hussein, as he chose to call himself, who popped out of the rubble in the blasted town of Bint Jbeil, site of what Hizbullah is calling its Great Victory, to crow a little. He was in civvies, the only way the Hizbullah fighters appear in public, but the walkie-talkie under his loose shirt was a giveaway.

The hillside nearby glittered with metal in the bright sun. Here and there lay shell casings, mortar tubes, mangled shrapnel from artillery and bombs. Thousands of cartridges, the gold ones from Israeli M-16s, the duller brown from Hizbullah's AK-47s, all mixed together. This was asymmetrical warfare with a fearful symmetry. Hussein picked up a handful of empty brass. "Very close-range fighting," he said, jingling them in his palm. "You can imagine what weapons we have and what weapons they have."

In Khiam, a teenager on a motor scooter rolled through town, apparently minding his own business, except that the ear bud of the walkie-talkie hidden under his shirt identified him as one of Hizbullah's many scouts. They were hard to find, until they wanted to be found.

Hizbullah is proving to be something altogether new, an Arab guerrilla army with sophisticated weaponry and remarkable discipline. Its soldiers have the jihadist rhetoric of fighting to the death, but wear body armor and use satcoms to coordinate their attacks.

They've reportedly destroyed three of Israel's advanced Merkava tanks with wire-guided missiles and powerful mines, crippled an Israeli warship with a surface-to-sea missile, sent up drones on reconnaissance missions, implanted listening devices along the border and set up their ambushes using night-vision goggles.

NEWSWEEK has learned from a source briefed in recent weeks by Israel's top leaders and military brass that Hizbullah even managed to eavesdrop successfully on Israel's military communications as its Lebanese incursion began.

When Lt. Eli Kahn, commander of an elite Israeli parachutists outfit, turned a corner in the southern Lebanese village of Maroun al-Ras early in the month-old war, he came face to face with this new enemy. "He had sophisticated equipment like mine and looked more like a commando," he recalled.

"They didn't retreat," says Danny Yatom, a former director of the Mossad. "They continued to fight until the death."

As Israel continued to push its ground offensive, progress was painfully slow, one small Lebanese village at a time.

By Saturday the Israeli Defense Forces, with six brigades, close to 7,000 soldiers, could claim only to have subdued half a dozen villages, a long way from their goal of establishing a secure buffer zone, possibly as far north as the Litani River.

The whole calculus of this sort of warfare has changed, as even the Israelis gave grudging high marks to their opponents.

The sort of weaponry Hizbullah is deploying is normally associated with a state, and states can be easily deterred by a superior military force like Israel's. They have cities to protect, vital infrastructure.

But the organization is believed to have laid in supplies for at least another month, and when it suits, the Hizbullah fighters can disappear into the population. "We live on onions and tomatoes," said Hussein in Bint Jbeil, as he pulled one off a vine in an abandoned garden.

"Their strategy is a strategy of disappearance," says one Israeli military official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was talking about operations.

"The strategy is to make them lose as many as possible," said Hussein, on the cartridge-strewn hillside at Bint Jbeil. "Israel doesn't care about the tank. They care about the people."

"The command and control centers were state of the art. They built a whole network of underground tunnels that enabled them to trap Israeli soldiers ... They were eavesdropping on Israeli military communications with the equipment they received."

Hizbullah's high-tech communications heighten its classic advantage as a guerrilla force fighting on home turf. "The plan was to go deep, but we didn't finish it," said 19-year-old Nahum Fowler, a corporal in Israel's Nahal Brigade who fought in South Lebanon last week.

"They know what they're doing. They know their villages really well." His unit never saw the enemy, he said. "We mostly heard them."

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by foreign terrorists, go to: www.rafahtoday.org The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves "Israeli."]

Received:

The Well

From: Mike Hastie [Vietnam Vetran]
To: GI Special
Sent: August 07, 2006
Subject: The Well

To G.I. Special:

I read Dennis Serdel's poem, "The Well."

This is the kind of stuff that has to be read in high school classes. Some times you have to scare the hell out of these kids.

"The Well," just might keep a kid out of a funeral home.

This is the power that veterans have.

Mike Hastie

Received:

Nir Rosen

From: FL
To: GI Special
Sent: August 04
Subject: 4H2

Dear GI Special,

Thanks, once again, for the 4H2 issue and for "I'd be an insurgent too".

I haven't read anything that close to the ground in awhile. I didn't see it at truthdig so I'm very glad you put it up here. Having read the article, I googled Nir Rosen, who wrote it. I couldn't google the soldier he interviewed.

Interesting link : <http://www.counterpunch.org/rosen0424.html> [This is an early article by Nir Rosen on his visit to Israel, and how he came to see the wrongs done to the Palestinians. Well written. T]

Especially germane as Lebanon is utterly dismantled and Gaza is ground into dust.

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