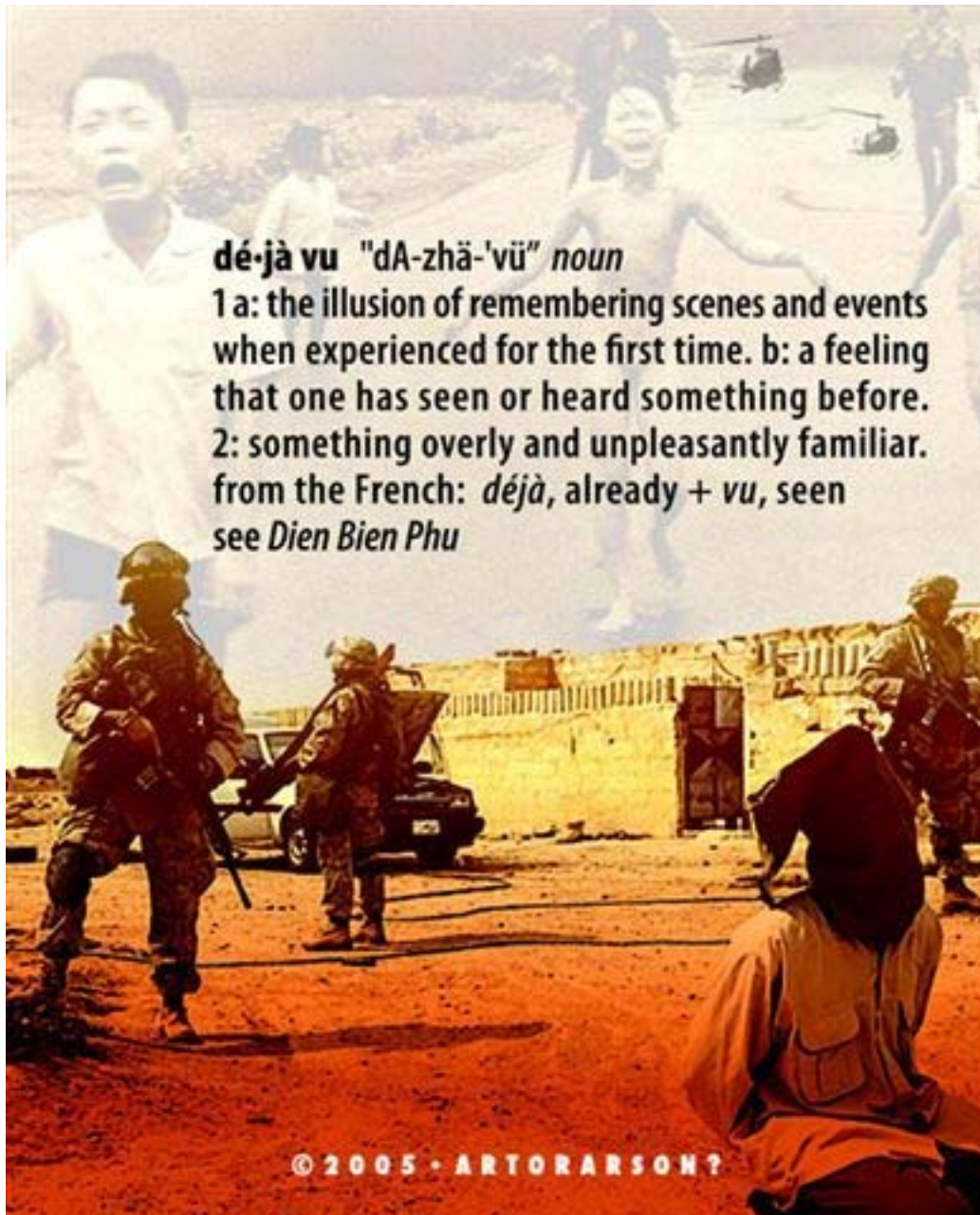


GI SPECIAL 4H13A:



Richard Lockett

NOTICE:

This issue is to bring forward an article on an important issue: **Military Training And Atrocities**, By Sgt. Martin Smith, USMC Ret'd.

Military Training And Atrocities: A New Generation Of Activists In Solidarity With Active-Duty Personnel And Military Families “Need Not Be Helpless Before The Power Of Illegitimate Authority . ”

The elemental truth is that generals and war planners call the shots from air-conditioned buildings and bunkers far from combat, but wars must be fought on the ground by working-class troops who, when organized, can act on their own political principles rather than on those of their commanding officers.

As David Cortright argues, a new generation of activists in solidarity with active-duty personnel and military families "need not be helpless before the power of illegitimate authority . . . by getting together and acting upon their convictions people can change society and, in effect, make their own history"--a history that is free of torture, far removed from war crimes, and rid of the likes of Steven Green, Lt. Calley, and John Burge.

August 5 / 6, 2006 By Sgt. MARTIN SMITH, USMC (Ret.), CounterPunch

The mounting revelations of war crimes in Iraq have ripped the mask of democracy and nation-building off of a fatigued and wearied Uncle Sam, revealing the true face of U.S. imperialism.

At least thirty U.S. servicemen are being prosecuted or are under investigation for the murder of Iraqi civilians. Twenty-one year old Steven Green, who served in the 502nd Infantry Regiment, was charged with the gang rape and murder of a fourteen-year old Iraqi girl in Al-Mahmudiyah, south of Baghdad.

The accused, with the assistance of five other soldiers, allegedly premeditated the attack and carried it out in broad daylight. After a drinking bout, the soldiers changed out of their uniforms and Green covered his face with a brown skivvy undershirt to avoid detection as they entered the woman's house to commit the crime. After the sexual assault, they murdered her and poured a flammable liquid over her body to destroy the evidence. Afterwards, Green shot the victim's parents and sister in the head, execution-style. The soldiers made a pact to never discuss the incident.

Yet this is just the tip of the iceberg of the U.S. occupation's horror show in Iraq.

Out of revenge for the death of a fellow Marine, who had died from a roadside bomb last November, members of Kilo Co, 3rd BN, 1st Marine Regiment are accused of killing twenty-four unarmed civilians in Haditha. Iraqis claim that Marines gunned down unarmed teenagers in the streets and then stormed through homes, killing residents, including babies and the elderly, in what can only be described as a blood bath.

Likewise, in March in the town of Ishaqi, witnesses claim that eleven civilians, including children under the age of five and a seventy-five year old woman, were forced into a corner of a room with hands bound and then brutally shot by U.S. troops.

Explaining how U.S. soldiers could be capable of such ghastly deeds has led to blatant distortions and false claims by the media punditocracy.

The Fox News and Limbaughesque loudmouths were quick to blame the anti-war movement's criticisms of the conduct of the war as a scheme to demoralize America's "will to win" and a ploy aimed to bolster the propaganda efforts of "al Qaeda operatives."

Some in the blogosphere even absolved U.S. war crimes as a just response to an insurgency which has utilized beheadings, kidnappings, and roadside bombs, even though the targeting of civilians is in contravention of international humanitarian law or let alone the fact that the Iraqi resistance is born out of the very presence of U.S. troops as an occupying force.

Liberal analyses rely on two versions of the "bad apple" hypothesis that are equally inept.

On the one hand, it is claimed that the war crimes are the result of a renegade president who flaunts international law.

According to such a view, the impeachment of Bush would be a step forward in remapping what is merely a stray path on which the neo-con Republicans have circuitously navigated U.S. democracy.

On the other, many argue that such incidents are the result of a few deranged individuals and that Steven Green's discharge with a "personality disorder" is proof that his actions represent an isolated incident by an unstable individual.

The former argument buys into the liberal myth that the U.S. military is somehow capable of humanitarian interventions, if only Al Gore or John Kerry were president, or so they say.

Such an assessment fails to acknowledge that U.S. imperialism has never been humanitarian nor has it been free of blatant war crimes, as the history of military intervention under Clinton in Kosovo or Somalia will attest.

The latter is merely another version of the "support our troops" sloganeering which holds that the U.S. military, as a whole, represents the lofty ideals of honor, courage and commitment.

While many have loved ones or relatives in service; or may have served in the military themselves, there can be no denial that the military is a tool of big business, and comes at a cost to human life that is, as they say, "priceless."

In describing the interventions that he participated in during the early decades of the 20th century--and the corporate interests he served--U.S. Marine Gen. Smedley Butler said: "I spent most of my time being a high class muscle-man for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the Bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism."

Some of the Bushies and the Pentagon war planners attempt to camouflage the mounting war crimes and the staggering count of Iraqi dead by painting a rosy picture of how troops are giving candy to Iraqi children or rebuilding schools and hospitals in Afghanistan, even though the infrastructures of these countries were destroyed by U.S. bombs and firepower in the first place.

Yet despite the deceptions and manipulations, the realities of the war are coming home.

With almost 2,600 U.S. troops now dead and thousands more maimed and crippled, one thing is for certain. In this "dirty war," troops cannot tell friend from foe, leading to war crimes against a civilian population.

It is also certain that, with our government promoting a campaign of lies and deception to justify its illegal actions (with the complicity of both parties in Washington), and with U.S. troops fighting to support a regime that lacks popular support and legitimacy, the war in Iraq will increasingly resemble another immoral and unjust war from a not so distant past.

The atrocities of Al-Mahmudiyah, Haditha, and Ishaqi resemble the war crimes committed by U.S. troops in the American War, the Vietnamese name for the conflict known in this country as the war in Vietnam.

On March 16, 1968, members of Charlie Company murdered 347 unarmed men, women, and children in the Vietnamese hamlet of My Lai. Lt. William "Rusty" Calley became infamous as details emerged of how he herded some 100 Vietnamese into a ditch and machine-gunned them to death. When he saw a baby crawling away from the dead, he grabbed the child by the leg and threw it back in the pit and opened fire.

Vietnam is now infamous in the public memory as the "bad war," largely because a vocal anti-war movement opened a public space that allowed the exposure of war crimes, such as My Lai. The Winter Soldier Investigation, held in Detroit in 1971 by the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, included the testimony of over one hundred veterans who testified about war crimes they had either witnessed or committed, including rape and torture.

Yet the comparisons to Vietnam extend beyond the massacre at My Lai.

In fact, the dehumanization of the enemy and the callous disregard for human life exhibited in both Vietnam and Iraq travels in multiple directions.

Atrocities were not only committed "in country" to Vietnam but were also exported to the U.S. from overseas. Recently, the finally released report by a special prosecutor on

systematic police torture exposed what African American victims long knew, that Chicago police detectives during the seventies and eighties tortured nearly two hundred African Americans to gain coerced confessions. John Burge, the Joseph Goebbels of Chicago, practiced torture techniques on African Americans in the west side of Chicago for more than ten years and is now retired in Florida where he receives his full pension.

He was also a Vietnam Veteran who served in the Ninth Military Police Company.

Burge's instruments of torture included mock executions with pistols, a cow prod targeting the victim's genitals, and a black box that generated an electric shock when a crank was turned. In fact, this black box technique was the same device utilized by U.S. soldiers in Vietnam, a field telephone that was jimmed into a torture method known by soldiers as "the Bell telephone hour." It is likely that Burge first honed his skills as master-torturer in the fields of Vietnam.

The barbaric acts committed by Chicago's "finest" are reminiscent of the same incidents that took place at Abu Ghraib, the U.S. torture chamber in Iraq, where at least twenty-seven military intelligence officers and numerous military contractors humiliated detainees.

According to the military's own investigation of the abuse, there were at least forty-four accounts of abuse which included sodomizing of detainees, stripping them naked and leading them around on leashes, and attaching electrical probes to their genitals. In one case, military personnel attempted to force two teenage detainees to defecate by terrorizing them with aggressive and snarling dogs.

Thus, given the massive scale of abuse committed by the U.S. from Vietnam to the Middle East and even within the criminal injustice system; and realizing the similarities between the inhumane conduct of the Steven Greens, the Lt. Calleys, and the Jon Burges; all military veterans, it is far time that we look far beyond the "bad apple" thesis.

Because rather than a few bad apples, it is clear that the contents of the entire wretched barrel are, in fact, rotten.

If the military is capable of producing "personalities" that kill babies, rape women, and torture the innocent, then what is responsible for the degradation and dissolution of these military personnel?

How and why do U.S. soldiers lose their humanity?

A closer examination of military recruit training may shed some light on these questions.

With the recent allegations of U.S. war crimes, many are criticizing the standards for recruitment and training. Some are pointing to the fact that in 2005 the Pentagon increased the number of admitted Category 4 enlistees, recruits with low test scores, and is currently giving more waivers to those with criminal backgrounds and drug abuse histories. Such adjustments are a necessary response by the U.S. Army, which consistently failed to meet recruiting goals due, in part, to the counter-recruitment efforts by segments of the anti-war movement.

Others fault basic training for the increase in war crimes, claiming the military is in need of improved ethics training. If only the military instilled proper values and respect for the Geneva Convention, it is argued, then troops would behave with more compassion, a sort of "occupation with a human face," so to speak.

Meanwhile, the Department of Defense boasts that it has modified recruit training to teach the essentials of fighting in Iraq and the principals of urban warfare.

Yet returning troops report that none of their training prepared them for what they experienced in Iraq. "You can train up all you want, but you're not going to be prepared until you get here and mingle with the culture," explained Spc. Travis Gillette, an Army infantryman who served in Iraq.

Gillette's advice reveals the contradiction of U.S. occupation. Indeed, learning about Iraqi culture and its people might, on the one hand, improve relations between U.S. soldiers and the civilian population. Yet on the other, the danger is that, as a result, soldiers may sympathize with the Iraqi people and turn against U.S. war aims and its justifications.

In fact, keeping a greater distance between troops and the civilian population is one of the lessons the military learned from the Vietnam War, a war in which large numbers of troops turned against the war and discovered that the real enemy was the military itself, particularly from 1968 to 1973.

But rather than blaming the Pentagon for the loosening of recruitment standards and instead of boot camp needing an overhaul that would require more lessons in core values, the overall design and purpose of recruit training should be truthfully acknowledged.

In fact, boot camp continues and has long served the needs of U.S. imperialism all too well. Despite some minor reforms during the seventies, the goals of recruit training have changed very little since the Vietnam War. In order for the military to avoid feelings of solidarity between their soldiers and the "enemy," it has developed a tried and true method of conditioning enlistees to kill efficiently and also, and most importantly for success, to dehumanize an adversary. As the war whoop jingo printed on t-shirts and flags, and attributed to the Green Berets in Vietnam, disgustingly puts it: "Kill 'em all. Let God sort them out."

The Department of Defense structures basic training with the goal of molding a singular and uniform killing machine. The notion of manufacturing conformity was expressed openly in a 1968 U.S. Army publication for new recruits about basic training, utilizing cartoon illustrations.

On the cover of the brochure is a motley crew of all-white individuals who represent a range of stereotypes, including a cigarette smoking cowboy, a guitar strapped and barefoot hippie, a beefy jock in a "letter sweater," and, of course, the geek with glasses carrying a bulky briefcase. However, by the end of the pamphlet, the image of the drill sergeant is presented as the figure to which all recruits should aspire. Gone are the civilian markers of individuality, replaced instead by the trim, piercing dark eyed, chiseled facial boned, short-haired, and, again, white figure which the military trains one to become.

The brochure explains ten learning objectives of basic training with humor and cartoons.

Lessons include "learning how to shoot and care for your rifle or other weapons," "performing guard duty," and "getting in good physical condition."

However, one lesson, in particular, reveals a not so subtle message about the projection of military conformity. Lesson nine is "learning how to conceal yourself and your equipment." The picture is of a recruit hiding behind a tree as he spies on three scantily dressed white women as they frolic and splash in a pond.

How three sprightly and smiling civilian women managed to find a pond in the middle of basic training for their merriment is a question the military must assume the average recruit would not ask. Yet, the real purpose of the cartoon was to assert that one's newfound military identity is to be based upon the affirmation of heterosexuality. The cartoon was a not so subtle warning that real military recruits long for and desire white women.

Lesson nine also reveals a more disturbing current within the military. Not only is the smirking recruit hiding behind a tree, but he is also, as the brochure explains, "concealing his equipment." One wonders what the sly grin on the face of the recruit might also represent. Thus, not only was the cartoon about affirming heterosexuality but it was also about confirming a soldier's right to violate the privacy and space of women. Underneath the surface of the cartoon is an implied predatory violence.

While the military projected the experience of basic training with light-mannered humor in the brochure, the actual experience of basic for many recruits is far from amusing.

away one's individuality during training is based on a planned and structured form of cruelty. As Terry Mullen, who served in the Americal Division infantry in Vietnam, explains, "I remember going into basic and the first thing that hits you is that they take away from you any individuality you had and put you in a mass. . . .they tell you in this situation that you are the legs and they are the head. You don't think. You don't do anything but act. From there on it goes. You are in it."

Through basic training, the military molds troops into fighting members of the Armed Forces. Key to the recruit training is the inculcation of discipline. As the 1967 Guidebook for Marines, the bible of rules and regulations for enlisted personnel, made clear, "when a Marine learns to be a disciplined Marine, he has learned a sense of obligation to himself and to his comrades, to his commander and to the Marine Corps. He has learned that he is a member of a team which is organized, trained and equipped for the purpose of engaging and defeating enemies of his country."

The achievement of military discipline is based on the ability to shut down any emotional feelings so that one is prepared for the possible exigencies of battle and the ability to overcome fear. "The individual must be able to recognize and face fear because fear is the enemy of discipline. Fear unchecked will lead to panic and a unit that panics is no longer a disciplined unit but a mob," according to the Guidebook.

Training recruits to be "disciplined" and not a "mob" is based on removing civilian emotions of compassion so that troops accept their role of killing during combat.

John R. Fabian, who served in the 1st Air Cavalry in Vietnam from 1969-1970, explains how drill instructors taught recruits to quash their feelings of compassion:

The day I went into the Army-I'll never forget that; I got to basic training in Fort Knox, Kentucky, and the senior drill instructor said, "You are not human being. You are animals." That stays with me. Everything they taught you was not to be a human being, to have compassion, to have feelings. If you had feelings and compassion, you are a shit soldier. As soon as you got rid of those things, the better off you were, those emotions.

The process of basic training is part of a structured environment so that troops replaced their civilian identity, which allowed a limited degree of emotional feelings, with an idealized military masculinity based on the denial of attachment and compassion.

Through ritual-like commands, recruits learn the acceptance of any and all orders within the military rank structure. As soon as recruits arrive off the bus, they receive their new buzz haircut, a ritual of dehumanization. Throughout the training weeks, recruits live an ultra-regimented life, akin to prison, participating in daily calisthenics, close-order drill, and classes in first aid and military history and traditions.

According to Daniel Barnes, who served in an Army infantry unit from 1969-1970, "the main word was, 'Kill. Kill. Kill,' all the time, they then pushed it into your head twenty-four hours a day. Everything you said-even before you sat down to eat your meals, you had to stand up and scream, 'Kill' before you could sit down and eat." If for some reason, a recruit does not perform a task efficiently, drill instructors punish the entire training unit or team. In so doing, individual recruits learn to see their larger purpose as tied to the other recruits and to the training unit as a whole. Thus, one's emerging military identity is based on a doctrine of conformity constructed around teamwork.

However, the military has larger plans for promoting teamwork beyond troop morale and welfare. The process of breaking-down recruits and molding them into future troops is based on building a team which was in opposition to those who were outside of it. Drill instructors indoctrinate recruits to dehumanize the enemy in order to train them how to overcome any fear or prejudice against killing.

The process of dehumanization is central to military training. Before Vietnam, the Japanese and Germans were derogatively referred to as "Japs" and "Krauts." The enemy in Vietnam was simply a "gook," "dink," or a "slope." Today, "rag head" and "sand nigger" are the current racist epithets of derision lodged against Arabs and Muslims.

Steve Padris, who served in the Army infantry from 1969-1970, revealed that he learned in basic that "the only good dink is a dead dink, and once you do get over there you can't trust any of the people." Similarly, Guadalupe G. Villarreal, who also served in the Army infantry during Vietnam, explains how the racism learned in basic was tied to national identity as well:

"They are indoctrinated and that is sort of a racist type thing that of course the gooks are gook and they are inferior to us; therefore, you just hear this statement. Well, if you kill ten gooks for one American that's all right because that's how much they are worth.

They would say that anybody would go along with that because that's what an American was worth, was worth so much more. . . . That their lives have really no meaning and this, of course, is the attitude that is shown to you and the ones indoctrinated with it, this is indoctrinated into you from the first time you get into the Army until the time you leave. When you get there, this is the attitude that you find."

Simply put by Daniel Barnes, all of the Vietnamese "were something less than human." Military identity is based upon both learning solidarity with the unit as a means to draw a demarcation between those who were inside the boundaries of the unit and those who are outside of it. Drill instructors enforce a dehumanization of the enemy that infects the entire training process.

Yet the racialized "other" is not the only group targeted as the outsider. A carefully crafted campaign of teaching recruits to despise and mistrust women is also part of the training regiment. Future soldiers run in formation through cadences based on the repetition of call and response lyrics with their drill instructors. Cadence calls are in the lineage of work songs utilized centuries previous by slaves and often chanted by sailors on whaling vessels in the nineteenth century. However, a large portion of military cadences degrade women.

Recruits sing "Jody Calls" or "Jodies" to encourage male bonding through the homosocial space of the military. Jody is a mythical figure who stays at home, avoids the military, and then steals one's girlfriend. Thus, the Jody figure plays several roles. He represents the draft-evader or civilian "outsider" who shirks his call to duty. Military culture teaches recruits to hate and despise Jodies. Therefore, the "insider" status of recruits is forged in opposition to all of the potential Jody "outsiders," civilians who are not in the military. However, the assumption at the core of the call and response verses is that if one were not in the military, one would also be the womanizer that Jody embodies. He is, therefore, both despised and valorized. The real purpose of the Jody figure is thus to reinforce the idea amongst recruits that women are disloyal and two-timing. As the Jody figure perpetuates, women will always leave a soldier at the drop of a hat. Only military men and particularly those within one's unit can be trusted.

The following cadence is typical of the "Jodies" prevalent in today's military and is representative of the general theme of those utilized in the past:

When I was home on leave last time,
Found out the meaning of Jody rhymes.
My girl was running with another guy,
Had planned to write and tell me bye.
But I surprised her with this man,
You should have seen the way they ran.
The guy was a wimp, looked real weak,
My girl was alone, he took a peek.
While I was fighting to keep them free,
They got it on and forgot about me.

In fact, the above "Jody" is bland and mild-mannered in comparison to the more vulgar and degrading verses of many cadence calls. The implication and logical conclusion of such cadences are that women are to be used for one purpose only—as repositories for sexual aggression.

In Tim O'Brien's classic Vietnam memoir, *If I Die in a Combat Zone*, he recalls several "Jodies" that expressed a profound hatred towards women sung during the Vietnam era. Therefore, troops learn to forge an identity based on achieving a group "insider" status in opposition to the feminine "outsider." The "other" is not only the nation's so-called adversary but also the entire civilian world, particularly women.

Producing conformity based on hatred of the "outsider" is just one purpose of breaking-down recruits and molding them into troops. The training also encourages one to lose their ability to think independently and to become psychologically dependent on the officers and upper enlisted for all decisions, including the very personal aspects of one's hygiene and identity.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the military is never completely successful in this endeavor. Not all troops accept the indoctrination of basic training whole-heartedly. Some bring a questioning attitude into the military that no amount of "training" can erase. Still others become bitter at the military as a result of the harsh treatment, enforced regulations, and military discipline imposed by drill instructors.

The molding of a uniform killing machine, the convergence of the hippie, geek, and jock into the perfect warrior, is far from uniform and less than perfect.

For example, in 1971, Garry Battle, who served in the Americal Division in Vietnam, reflected, "I made it through basic training with difficulty. I didn't like stabbing a dummy with a bayonet. I just couldn't see it. I don't like killing." Likewise, Vietnam veteran Tim O'Brien reminisces about the close friendship he developed at basic training at Fort Lewis, refusing to reign in his feelings of compassion. O'Brien explains how his camaraderie with Eric was built upon defiance:

"It was a war of resistance; the objective was to save our souls. Sometimes it meant hiding the remnants of conscience and consciousness behind battle cries, pretended servility, bare, clenched obedience. Our private conversations were the cornerstone of the resistance, perhaps because talking about basic training in careful, honest words was by itself an insult to army education. Simply to think and talk and try to understand was evidence that we were not cattle or machines."

O'Brien and Eric subverted the military training "to save our souls," relying on each other as a means to express their hidden protest.

Yet relying on a secret friendship should not be the only means through which the men and women in uniform can hold on to their humanity.

The deterrence of more Greens, Calleys, and Burges depends on the strength and tactics of today's anti-war movement.

It should be our task to not only "bring the troops home now" but to also give our soldiers the determination and fortitude to refuse to participate in war crimes and atrocities.

It is no coincidence that the strength of the anti-war movement during the Vietnam War and the dissension in the ranks, what David Cortright has called the "soldiers in revolt," were mutually reinforcing.

During the Sixties, many soldiers encountered their first anti-war or civil rights protest at home and some revolutionary socialists purposefully entered the military to organize, carrying the ideas of social justice with them into the military structure.

Therefore, the "GI Movement," the widespread dissent and rebellion by active duty troops and veterans during the Vietnam War, emerged out of an organic connection between the organizing at home and the resistance abroad.

It is just such a connection that we should take heart in from the past and aim to rebuild and strengthen in our anti-war tactics in the present.

But our ideas are just as important as our actions.

We can neither rely on claims that impeaching Bush will end future war crimes nor that the actions of a few individuals are merely to blame.

Rather, the entire military institution and its training are complicit in the project of U.S. imperialism, including the war crimes of the past, and, if not stopped, in the continuance and promotion of further atrocities.

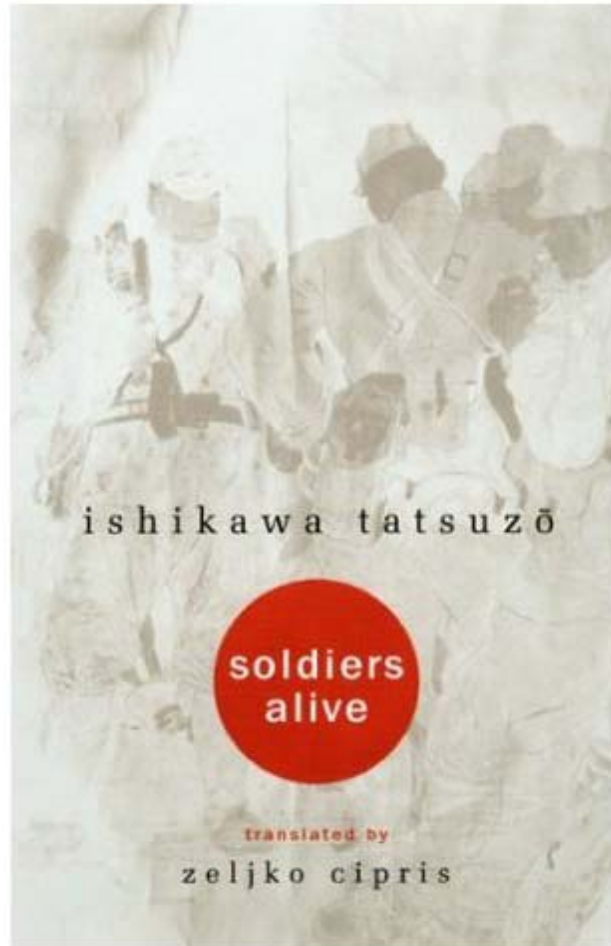
Moreover, individual soldiers should never be viewed as cogs in a wheel or as mere simpletons and powerless victims.

The elemental truth is that generals and war planners call the shots from air-conditioned buildings and bunkers far from combat, but wars must be fought on the ground by working-class troops who, when organized, can act on their own political principles rather than on those of their commanding officers.

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Martin Smith, a former sergeant in the US Marine Corps, is a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War. He can be reached at: send2smith@yahoo.com

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.



Ishikawa and Kuroshima would understand: insert troops into a hell on earth and there's no way to prevent atrocities. Yet the real fiends in their capital suites are never spattered with a single drop of blood. Solidarity, Z

One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions.

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



[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, who sent this in.]



The Association of United Arab Nations and Panamanians protest against the war in Lebanon in front of the Israeli embassy in Panama City August 3, 2006. REUTERS/Alberto Lowe (PANAMA)

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

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<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)

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.

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