

GI SPECIAL 416:



“This War Is Lost”

**“No One Understands Why We
Are Here And What Our Mission
Is”**

**“We Are Just Dying And Getting
Injured”**

While it is difficult to gauge their numbers with precision, there are pockets of dispirited troops who are no longer convinced that Washington has committed the resources for a winning strategy.

HIT, Iraq -- Soon after Specialist Michael Potocki was shot and killed in June, the soldiers in his platoon agreed on their goal for the months ahead: to survive and make it home alive.

Survival may be the only thing the troops here agree on. The first death of a comrade in battle is always an emotional shock, and the views from the foxhole here are probably as varied as the 34 soldiers.

Still, in this hostile stretch of western Iraq, some of the troops have begun to wonder if the presence of United States forces here is worth the cost in American lives.

[Wrong. As you will see below, *many* troops are convinced the war is pointless, stupid, useless bullshit.]

The current task force's deployment will last a year, but the mechanized unit has only some 600 troops: far fewer than some of its predecessor units.

Many of the city's residents believe that the surest way to put an end to the roadside bombings, sniper attacks and mortar rounds would be for the Americans to deprive the insurgents of their target by leaving.

Hit's police force was overrun by the insurgents last year, and [Lt. Col. Thomas Graves, who commands Task Force 1-36] has told the town elders that American forces will not leave Hit before a new police force is recruited, trained and on the streets. [One must wonder what other silly fantasies he carries around in his head. Or perhaps he simply has no grip on the real world he lives in. There is already a "new police force" in Hit, the only one he will ever see, called the resistance, and it is very much in control.]

Soon after a July police recruiting drive ended, he got into an armored Humvee and headed downtown to hear what the imams were saying at the local mosques.

An interpreter scribbled down a sermon blasting from a loudspeaker. It implored the faithful not to cooperate with their occupiers.

"Given where I was in Ramadi, I see progress," he said. "In January 2005 we could not get anybody in Ramadi to participate in the political process.

"Now you have the citizens of Hit who at least understand that process even if they don't necessarily agree with it."

A 34-year-old Marine reservist from Detroit, Maj. Brent Lilly, leads the civil affairs team. A practicing Muslim who speaks some Arabic, his goal is to improve the city's ailing infrastructure, show the Iraqis that the Americans can be trusted and pick up some useful intelligence along the way.

The military has distributed \$100,000 for sewage, water distribution and other projects, and has plans to spend much more if security improves. Major Lilly, however, is under no illusion about the difficulty of winning over the city's residents.

“Over all, they just tolerate us,” he said. “We’re here, and they have no other recourse but to tolerate us. The great majority want us to go home.”

While it is difficult to gauge their numbers with precision, there are pockets of dispirited troops who are no longer convinced that Washington has committed the resources for a winning strategy. [“Pockets” my ass. Remember the poll of troops in Iraq last Spring? 29% for immediate withdrawal, and 79% for getting out completely by 12.31.06. The biggest pockets in the world, maybe.]

Sergeant Poetsch, 31, comes from a small town in Ohio. He re-enlisted in the Army just before returning to Iraq, believes the military has made him a better person and says he would like to work as an Army recruiter. His parent battalion, 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, is currently fighting in Ramadi, but his company was sent to Hit to augment the Army task force here.

Sergeant Poetsch thought the United States was doing the right thing by toppling Saddam Hussein.

But the Army, he says, does not have nearly enough troops to patrol the city effectively, and he says Hit’s residents, unlike the people he encountered during his previous tour in Baghdad, do not want to have much to do with the Americans.

“At the beginning, I was all for it,” he said. Saddam Hussein was not a good guy, and I always felt good that he is gone. But somehow it seems it seems that we lost direction. It is just hard for guys here to understand what we are doing. What makes it so significant if we can’t have more manpower and better living conditions?”

Sergeant Poetsch was with Specialist Potocki when he was shot as they manned a combat outpost in the city. At first, it seemed that the 21-year-old specialist from Baltimore would be all right, but he later died from internal bleeding.

The loss of a comrade hit the platoon hard, as Sgt. Ryan Kahlor, 22, noted in an emotional letter to his parents in San Diego.

“The world keeps turning and so does the fighting in Iraq,” he wrote. “Yesterday, my soldier and friend was shot and killed. He is the first one in our platoon to be killed. His death has started an uproar of emotions in the platoon.”

“No one understands why we are here and what our mission is,” Sergeant Kahlor added. “This war is lost. We aren’t helping these people. We are just dying and getting injured.”

To deal with their grief, the platoon drew a memorial for Specialist Potocki and two wounded soldiers on a wooden door in one of their sandbagged rooms. They plan to bring it back to their home base in Germany.

But it is not time to leave yet, and even demoralized troops need a mission.

“We are here for each other to make it home,” said Sergeant Poetsch. “That’s what our motto is.

After Potocki went down we sat the platoon down and talked about that even if you don't believe in what is going on, at least we fight for each other. That is how we are going with it now."

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Michigan Staff Sgt. Killed



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Eugene Alex died Sept. 2, 2006, of injuries caused by enemy small-arms fire that he received while pulling security at a traffic control point in Baghdad Wednesday. Alex, 32 from Bay City, Mich., was a cavalry scout assigned to the 4th Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team based at Fort Wainwright Alaska. Alex joined the Army in May 1996 and was assigned to Fort Wainwright in September 2003. (AP Photo/U.S. Army)

THREE SERVICEMEMBERS DIE IN AL ANBAR

9/5/2006 U.S. Department of Defense News Release 06-09-05C

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq: Two Marines and one Sailor assigned to Regimental Combat Team 5 died Monday due to enemy action while operating in Al Anbar Province.

Connecticut Marine Killed Sunday



Lance Cpl. Philip Johnson from Enfield, Conn. (AP Photo/WTNH-TV)

September 5, 2006 ENFIELD, Conn. (AP)

A 19-year-old Marine from Enfield was killed in Iraq over the weekend, a family friend confirmed Monday night.

Lance Cpl. Philip Alexander Johnson died Sunday morning with one other Marine as his unit was traveling from Ramadi, family spokesman Ron Jackman said.

Ramadi, about 70 miles west of Baghdad, is considered one of Iraq's most dangerous cities and is patrolled by hundreds of Marines.

The Marines are confined to bases during the day and return to the streets at night.

His parents, Louis and Kathy Johnson, were notified by the military Sunday night, Jackman said. Jackman said Johnson apparently was killed in a roadside attack.

Johnson is the second Marine from Connecticut to die in Iraq in just over a week.

A 2005 graduate of Enfield High School, Johnson was fulfilling a lifelong dream of becoming a Marine, said those who knew him. He joined the Westover Young Marines when he was 11 and remained with the unit through high school.

"He started real early, which gave him a big heads up on everybody," Jackman said.

Once he joined the Marine after high school, Johnson moved through the ranks quickly. He received his basic training in Camp Lejeune, N.C. then trained with a scout sniper unit. He arrived in Iraq on July 14.

"To attain lance corporal, that takes some doing," Jackman said. "He made an impression. He was excited to go to Iraq."

Funeral services are pending.

There have been 33 servicemen and civilians with Connecticut ties who have died in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2002.

Johnson is the second serviceman from Enfield to die in the war.

As news of his death spread, friends gathered to remember a young man with goals and a drive to help people.

"Every since I was a kid, all he wanted to do was be in the Marine Corps," childhood friend Jordan Meyer told WTNH-TV. "I'm really proud of him. He's one person who actually did what they said they were going to do in life."

Connecticut Pfc. Killed



Army Pfc. Nicholas A. Madaras, of Wilton, Conn. was killed Sept 3, 2006, in Iraq when an explosive device detonated near his patrol. (AP Photo/Madaras Family)

Michigan Soldier Assigned To Fort Wainwright Dies

Sep. 05, 2006 Associated Press

FORT WAINWRIGHT, Alaska - A Michigan soldier assigned to Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks has died of injuries suffered in Iraq, the Army said.

Staff Sgt. Eugene Alex, 32, of Bay City, Mich., died Saturday in Germany.

Alex was wounded by small-arms fire Wednesday while on duty at a traffic control point in Baghdad. He was evacuated to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany for treatment.

Alex was a cavalry scout assigned to the 4th Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team based at Fort Wainwright. He joined the Army in May 1996 and was assigned to Fort Wainwright in September 2003.

N.C. Soldier Killed In Iraq Weeks After Returning From Leave

September 5, 2006 The Associated Press.

FREEBURG, Pa. -- A North Carolina soldier died in Iraq just weeks after returning to the Middle East from leave, his mother said Tuesday.

Pfc. Justin Dreese, 21, served with the 82nd Airborne Division, based at Fort Bragg, N.C. The Pentagon has not released details of Dreese's death.

"He will be sadly missed," Dreese's mother, Kathryn Shaffer, said by phone on Tuesday. "He was my only child."

Shaffer said she last saw her son five weeks ago, before he returned to Fort Bragg and then went overseas. Dreese, a two-year veteran, had been back in Iraq for three weeks when he was killed.

Shaffer described Dreese as an avid hunter and fisherman who made it a point to go fishing with his grandfather when he was home.

"He was a wonderful son. A patriot. Everybody loved him. A good kid," Shaffer said. "His phone never stopped ringing. Everyone wanted to talk to him."

The front porch of the home of Dreese's father and stepmother in Freeburg was adorned with a yellow ribbon, and cars packed the driveway on Monday, a day after the family learned of his death.

Shaffer was there Tuesday afternoon talking with relatives. Dreese planned to make a career out of the military, Shaffer said. "He definitely was not afraid to go into battle," she said. "He firmly believed in what he was doing."

Sgt. Gabriel DeRoo: “A Man Of Faith And Courage”



Sgt. Gabriel DeRoo

August 24, 2006 NAOMI R. PATTON, FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A florist arrived with a bouquet of flowers as U.S. Army chaplains delivered the news Monday to Hannah DeRoo that her husband, Sgt. Gabriel G. DeRoo, had been killed Sunday while fighting in Iraq.

Sgt. DeRoo, 25, of Paw Paw had sent the flowers to welcome her back to her Washington home from a California vacation she had taken with her family.

"He always sent gifts home and flowers to honor his family and wife while he was away," said the Rev. Mark Suko, Sgt. DeRoo's father-in-law. "He didn't want people to be concerned about him. He was more concerned about his family and his wife."

Sgt. DeRoo was killed in Mosul, Iraq, by small-arms fire. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, from Ft. Lewis, Wash. He was the first member of the Stryker Brigade, an armored tank unit, to die in Iraq.

And he is the 98th member of the armed services with ties to Michigan to die in Iraq or Afghanistan during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Sgt. DeRoo graduated in 1999 from Grace Christian School in Watervliet, in Berrien County, and attended community college before surprising his family by enlisting in the Army in January 2003 rather than going into law enforcement, his sister, Angel, was quoted as saying in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

"He was very proud of what he did. ... We were as well," she said.

During his three-year Army career, Sgt. DeRoo quickly rose from private to sergeant.

He earned the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Combat Infantryman Badge and the Expert Infantryman Badge.

It was Sgt. DeRoo's second deployment to Iraq. During his first tour, an eighth-grade class in Decatur, where his father, David DeRoo, teaches, adopted his Stryker unit as pen pals.

Sgt. DeRoo would have celebrated his second wedding anniversary in December. The couple had an 8-month-old son, Gabriel.

Joe Hitt, Ft. Lewis spokesman, said memorial services would be held Monday at Ft. Lewis and in Iraq with his unit.

ENOUGH. BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE



Danish soldiers carry the body of one of two British soldiers killed in a roadside bomb attack near Basra September 4, 2006. The two soldiers were killed on Monday and two more injured when their patrol came under attack near the southern Iraqi city of Basra, a British military spokesman said. (Atef Hassan/Reuters)

British Soldier Seriously Wounded In Qurna

05 Sep 2006 Reuters

A British soldier was shot and seriously wounded in Qurna north of Basra in southern Iraq, British military spokesman Major Charlie Burbridge said.

FUTILE EXERCISE: TIME TO COME HOME



A U.S. soldier at the site of a car bomb explosion, in Baghdad Aug. 27, 2006. (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)

TROOP NEWS

Iraq Veterans Need Your Support Wednesday: Court Hearing For DU Case

September 03, 2006 From Joan Walker

Dear Friends:

Really promising news!

On this Wednesday, Sept 6th at 2:30 in the Federal Courthouse on Pearl and Worth Streets in Manhattan a Federal Judge will conduct a hearing on the validity of a significant--history making-- lawsuit!

In 2005 nine members of the 442nd MP Unit and Spc. Gerard Matthew initiated the suit against the U.S. Government for compensation for their illnesses and medical expenses for Matthew's daughter born with a birth defect.

These NY Vets, ill with many so-called "Gulf War Syndrome" symptoms (identical to radiation poisoning symptoms) are unique in having been tested for depleted uranium contamination by an advanced accurate method funded by the Daily News and featured in front page essays in that paper in 2004.

The basis of their suit is negligence by the U.S. Govt for neither informing its soldiers about the presence and dangers of depleted uranium on the battlefield nor following the U.S. Army regulations to clean it up.

We had two days notice of the Hearing. We do not have a permit for a Rally. We do not know how large the Hearing room will be. But the vets deserve our support!! They will be available for the press and their supporters in tiny Thomas Paine Park, corner Worth Street and Lafayette (Foley Square) at 1:00 P.M. on Wednesday. We are "showing up!"

Directions to the Courthouse and Thomas Paine Park at Foley Square:

Driving:

Take Broadway S. to Worth Street (six blocks below Canal) Turn left going East on Worth. At #95 and #111 are two parking garages.

The entrance to the Courthouse is another two blocks or so on Worth (Although the official address is 500 Pearl Street, the only working entrance is on Worth St.) The Federal Bldg is behind the large State Court Bldg on Foley Square. The OLD, unused Federal Court Bldg is also on Foley Square. Do not be confused (if you attended trials in the 70s!)

Subway:

Trains A,C,E to Chambers Street -walk 5 blocks North to Worth and 4 'blocks' East to Courthouse
Trains 4,5,6, J,M,Z, to Brooklyn Bridge-City Hall Station--walk North to Foley Square, (Thomas Paine Park) and Worth Street ,then East one block to Federal Court House entrance on Worth Street.

Contacts:

Joan Walker-845-679-6938 or 845-399-6955

Angela Morano 845-853-3406

No Joy Here



Pte. Dave Partridge of Whitby, Ont., left, Sgt. Chad Garton, center, and Pte. Chris Brooks of Brampton, Ont., in Panjwai, Afghanistan, Sept 4, 2006, after hearing that two U.S. warplanes strafed Canadian forces in Afghanistan Monday, killing one Canadian soldier and seriously wounding five others. (AP Photo/Canadian Press, Les Perreux)

**Please Join The
Vigil To
Bring All Of The Troops Home NOW!
Wednesday, Sept. 6 (and every Wednesday)
4:30 -6:00 pm
National Guard Armory
Teaneck Road and Liberty Road, Teaneck,
NJ 07666
(Please don't park at Foster Village!)**

**Please join John Fenton at the Wednesday vigils.
John's son Matthew, was injured in Iraq on April 26. He
died at Bethesda Hospital on May 5, 2006.**

**Stand with the mother of a member of the Stryker
Brigade which was forced to return to Iraq for at least 4
months.**

Stand with family members of troops currently stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

They didn't volunteer to serve in this immoral and illegal and brutal war.

2638 U.S. troops killed in Iraq (9/2/06) - 2622 on 8/30/06 (www.icasualties.org)

Over 20,000 U.S. troops wounded

Between 100-200,000 Iraqi people - dead

Each person - someone's son or daughter

Our Demands:

Support the troops - Bring all of them home from Iraq and Afghanistan NOW!

Take care of them when they get here.

Never, never send our loved ones to war based on lies.

No permanent bases in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Wednesday vigil is co-sponsored by Military Families Speak, Out MFSO - Bergen County (www.mfsobergencounty.org.) and Teaneck and Justice Coalition (www.Teaneckpeace.org).

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward GI Special 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.

**Anti-War Protests Come To Iraq
War-Lover Congressman's Lawn;
"My Son Believed We Went There To
Bring Democracy To Iraq"**

“He Came Back Disillusioned”



September 3, 2006 By NATALYA SHULYAKOVSKAYA, The Orange County Register

HUNTINGTON BEACH – About 35 people, carrying anti-war signs, walked down the quiet street and knocked on the congressman's door. Surfing gear and a couple of children's strollers were on the porch. A window fan was working.

But no one answered.

The activists from Military Families Speak Out, three of them with sons serving in Iraq, went to a nearby park.

They returned with a giant mock check for an "endless war" and put it on the doorstep of Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, R-Huntington Beach. Then, one by one, they placed black combat boots on the grass. The boots had tags with names of soldiers killed in Iraq.

The activists, part of a national "house call" campaign to reach politicians during their recess, filled up the sliver of grass between the road and the sidewalk. They stood quietly for several minutes.

Rohrabacher has supported the Bush administration on the war in Iraq.

Then, the protesters started shouting: "Bring them home! Now!"

As the pitch rose, the congressman ran out of his grey stucco home. He was barefoot.

"You just woke my babies!" Rohrabacher said. He and his wife, Rhonda, have 2-year-old triplets. Rohrabacher said he was on his back porch when he heard crying over a baby monitor.

"I am going to get all of you arrested if you don't leave right now."

"My son is in Iraq!" responded Tim Kahlor, 48, whose son is on his second tour of duty in Iraq until January 2007. "And he does not get much sleep!"

"Did he volunteer?" Rohrabacher yelled back.

"Wait a minute, man, you are standing on my property. You are violating my rights... And you are violating my family's rights!" [Fuck him and fuck his precious property. The coward sends others to die, but he won't go to Iraq himself and fight. Oh no, no chance of that: the coward simply draws down his huge Congressional pay killing others. Then there's all that money he gets from the war profiteers for voting their way. Blood money. What a worthless piece of shit.]

Pat Alviso, a teacher whose 30-year-old Marine son will deploy in Iraq for his second tour of duty next week, said the activists tried to visit the congressman in his office last Wednesday, but were told that his calendar was full.

"Did somebody call my office ahead of time?" Rohrabacher asked.

"I met with people all last week, I talked to them about the war.... But unlike you, they were courteous, they were not arrogant."

By the time four police cruisers, called in by neighbors, rolled by Rohrabacher's home, the protesters had gone back to the park. No one was arrested.

Huntington Beach police Lt. Mike Reynolds later said that generally, people can be arrested for blocking a sidewalk in front of someone's home and refusing to leave.

The activists said they felt their 50-minute protest was a success.

"We came here out of desperation. Now, we hope, the congressman has something to take back with him to Washington," said Alviso, who organized the "house call" with her husband, Jeff Merrick, 59, an Air Force retiree who served in Vietnam.

The couple started protesting after their son, a career Marine, was sent to his first tour of duty in Iraq last September.

"My son believed we went there to bring democracy to Iraq," Alviso said. She said he came back disillusioned.

"We are protesting because our sons in the military cannot. We are doing it for them." [Wrong. They can, and they will, when the moment is right. Never doubt that for one second.]

<p>OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME <u>NOW!</u></p>



Thanks to NB, UK, who sent this in.]

“If This Does Not Impress You ... Nothing Ever Will”

From: Shirley Young
To: GI Special
Sent: September 03, 2006 10:49 PM

This is a forward from a friend:

If you don't think our military pilots earn their pay, you need to take a look at this picture, and then look again and realize what you're seeing.

This photo was taken by a soldier in Afghanistan of a helo rescue mission. The pilot is a MF Guard guy who flies EMS choppers in civilian life.

Now how many people on the planet you reckon could set the ass end of a chopper down on the roof top of a shack on a steep mountain cliff and hold it there while soldiers load wounded men in the rear??? If this does not impress you ... nothing ever will.



IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

300 Sunni Chieftains, Representing Millions Of Iraqis, Call For Armed Uprising Against U.S. Occupation Forces

03-sep-2006 Amit R. Paley and Saad Sarhan, Washington Post Staff Writers

Baghdad: A coalition of 300 Iraqi tribal leaders on Saturday demanded the release of Saddam Hussein so he could reclaim the presidency and also called for armed resistance against U.S.-led forces.

The clan chieftains, who were mostly Sunni Arabs and included the head of the 1.5 million-member al-Obeidi tribe, said they planned to hold rallies in Sunni cities throughout the country to insist that Hussein be freed and that the charges against him and his co-defendants dropped.

"If the demand is not carried out, we will lead a general, sweeping and popular uprising," said Sheik Wassfy al-Assy, brother of the chief of the Obeidi tribe, which hosted a meeting of the clan leaders on Monday in Ramal, a village 55 miles southwest of Kirkuk.

Assorted Resistance Action

9.4.06 Reuters & 05 Sep 2006 Reuters & Associated Press

A car bomb attack targeting an Iraqi police patrol in Baghdad wounded two policemen and one civilian, police said.

Insurgents killed three policemen when they fired a rocket-propelled grenade at their vehicle in the city of Baquba, north of Baghdad.

A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol in eastern Baghdad killed two policemen and a civilian and wounded three policemen.

Guerrillas killed two policemen and wounded another in Baqouba, while elsewhere in the city

Two roadside bombs struck a fuel tanker in a residential area in Samarra.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“Rebellion Within The Ranks During The Vietnam War”

6.06 Jules Brenner, Cinema Signals [Excerpts]

The release of this documentary at this time can be taken as a way to hold a mirror up to the war of the moment.

From the discomfort of the images and the inadvisability of official U.S. actions and intentions of a prior decade, one may project a time in the future when the Iraq war will be as universally agreed upon as an embarrassment for the warmongering politicians among us today, in 2006, as were the self-aggrandizing mental weaklings who sustained the fiasco of Viet Nam at such great pain and little reward some forty years ago.

These things have their cycles.

Documentarian David Zeigler focuses on rebellion within the ranks during the Vietnam war and, thereby, presents a rather unique perspective while stirring up faded memories.

In disclosing a movement within the military that paralleled the one on the popular front, he suggests it might have been more prevalent than most of us suspected.

The threat of an aroused public to the politicians who cause grave injustice and loss of life should be noted in the corridors of power today, most especially among the elites who assemble in the White House on a regular basis -- those who are responsible for so much turmoil, death and miscalculation for their crony's rather than the nation's benefit.

The stream of recurring talking heads reminisce over their front and rear line resistance at the time, intercut with news clips.

The interest level rises with the appearance of Jane Fonda, "Hanoi Jane," as she's known to her critics, heading up a song, dance and polemic show for the benefit of troops who are clearly on her side.

The picture of American troops recalling their engagement in an unpopular guerilla war in a hostile nation is not a pretty one.

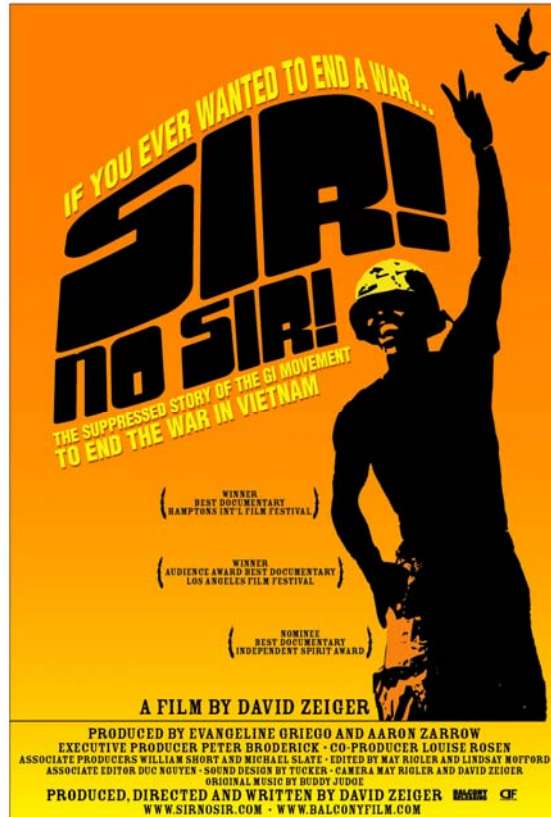
The film makes its anti-war case insistently enough to remind us, through the prism of internal rebellion, to raise the question why another war would seem like such a good idea with the Vietnam debacle still radiating its negativity.

But then, the coverups, misrepresentations and real purposes of this latest war are as obscurable as ever, so why not?

**Sir! No Sir!
At A Theatre Near You!
To find it: <http://www.sirnosir.com/>**

**The Sir! No Sir! DVD is on sale now, exclusively at
www.sirnosir.com.**

Also available will be a Soundtrack CD (which includes the entire song from the FTA Show, "Soldier We Love You"), theatrical posters, tee shirts, and the DVD of "A Night of Ferocious Joy," a film by me about the first hip-hop antiwar concert against the "War on Terror."



Reality And Fiction, Black And White, And Blood; “For The United States In Iraq, It Is Past Midnight”

George Bush, though he still has the comfort of the White House and his Texas ranch, has sent American men to the bunkers of Iraq, where they are trapped.

How much one wishes that we could bring the troops home, and send George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld to take their place in Ramadi.

We don't need any special plan for withdrawal - we just need roadmaps, helicopters, armed convoys and a final try to see if the various rebel factions would let the US leave without planting bombs along the way.

September 03, 2006 By David McReynolds. David McReynolds was for many years on the staff of the War Resisters League and has been active in the democratic socialist movement in the United States, having been the Socialist Party's candidate for President in 1980 and 2000)

Recently I went with friends to see *Army of Shadows*, a French film produced in 1969 but only recently released in the US. Directed by Jean-Pierre Melville, (and including in the cast the great Simone Signoret), it is an account of the Resistance under the Nazis. As a film, it is worthy of the raft of rave reviews critics gave it. Filmed in color, but very film noir, it is based on semi-fictional remembrance of the Resistance in France.

But at the end of the film, as the three of us sat talking about it, about the courage of those depicted, their icy nerve, one of my friends asked "yes, but what did they do?". And quite suddenly we realized that the Resistance, despite the drama of agents parachuted in from England, or picked up by British submarines, actually did very little, though they were tortured and executed for trying. (I did know one man - Claude Bourdet - a great French radical, who was among those heroes of the Resistance and survived).

Only three people were killed in the film.

One, somewhat by accident, and the other two killings were members of the Resistance executed by the Resistance. The first execution was chilling because the killers were amateurs, drawn to the Resistance not because of a criminal background but by their idealism, uneasy at the need to murder the young man who had sold them out, and very clumsy at the deed.

No bridges blown up, no trains derailed. The Germans, when they appeared, weren't encased behind barbed wire, but quite at ease in the restaurants or on the streets. Their police headquarters were not under "zones of protection". (I do, before going on, want to give the film the plug it deserves - a quote from Anthony Lane in the *New Yorker*:

"Lovers of cinema should reach for their fedoras, turn up the collars of their coats, and sneak to this picture through a mist of rain . . . For the first, and maybe the only, time this year, you are in the hands of a master").

Not long after seeing this, a friend brought over a DVD of another French film, which a group of us watched at my apartment. This was a black and white documentary, *The Eye of Vichy*, produced by Claude Chabrol, made up entirely of selections of news reels produced by the Nazis or their French collaborators.

Shown on French movie screens during the Occupation, the films begin with the "enthusiasm" shown by the French public in receiving Hitler and the Nazis, the support for Marshal Petain, the collaboration of some of the French (a "legion" was recruited to be sent to fight the "Bolsheviks" on the Eastern front).

The news reels gradually get grimmer, as food and fuel shortages take their toll and as the bad news from the front lines can't be hidden. For those who have wondered what "raw anti-Semitism" looks like, it is here, as the Nazis seek to make their case against the Jews.

However the films give little evidence of resistance. (Though there is a brief discussion of the execution of some members of the Resistance). The Germans and their French collaborators do not look uneasy. It is a film worth seeing for those who have no memory of the war, and have forgotten that half of France was fully occupied by the

Germans, and half remained (in theory) free of Occupation, but run from the small town of Vichy. It takes us back in time - I'd forgotten that Finland ended up on the German side in the war.

But we shift then from the grim drama of The Army of Shadows, which in the end achieved so little, and The Eye of Vichy which showed so little angst, from these events of a half century ago, to the front page of the New York Times of July 5 where, with photographs, there is a story headed: In Ramadi, Fetid Quarters and Unrelenting Battles.

Let me quote from it:

"The Government Center in the middle of this devastated town resembles a fortress on the wild edge of some frontier: it is sandbagged, barricaded, full of men ready to shoot, surrounded by rubble and enemies eager to get inside.

"The American Marines here live eight to a room, rarely shower for lack of running water and defecate in bags that are taken outside and burned.

"The threat of snipers is ever present, the marines start running the moment they step outside. Daytime temperatures hover around 120 degrees, most foot patrols have been canceled because of the risk of heatstroke.

"The food is tasteless, the windows boarded up. The place reeks of urine and too many bodies pressed too close together for too long"

The report (by Dexter Filkins) goes on to say that the American commanders have given up the fight for the downtown area - instead they plan to level it, to bulldoze about three blocks in the middle of the city and convert it into a "Green Zone", similar to the fortress in Baghdad where the American Embassy is housed.

As I read it I thought back to the films I'd seen. The Army of Shadows operating in the heart of German occupied France, but not striking more than an occasional glancing blow at the Nazis. The Eye of Vichy which showed so many peaceful scenes of French and German politicians, under little guard.

We have been in Iraq for more than three years. We have spent tens of billions of dollars. We have complete control of the air space. We have the most complex and sophisticated weapons our military can buy. We have radar, night vision, guided missiles.

And still, more than three years after Bush claimed victory, our troops in Ramadi are packed eight to a room, and for toilets use bags that are then tossed outside and burned.

Very few stories made it so vividly clear that the war is lost, no matter what the Generals may tell us.

I don't know how many of you have seen Downfall, the great German film made last year about Hitler and his final days in his bunker in Berlin, but George Bush,

though he still has the comfort of the White House and his Texas ranch, has sent American men to the bunkers of Iraq, where they are trapped.

How much one wishes that we could bring the troops home, and send George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld to take their place in Ramadi.

We don't need any special plan for withdrawal - we just need roadmaps, helicopters, armed convoys and a final try to see if the various rebel factions would let the US leave without planting bombs along the way.

I remember the Vietnam War, when we were told, by men very much like Bush and Rumsfeld, that we dared not leave or there would be Communists in the North Beach of San Francisco.

I remember Ho Chi Minh offering to line the roads with rose petals if our troops would only leave. In the end they left in humiliation, lifted off from the roof of the US Embassy in Saigon by helicopters.

The news from Ramadi is that the Iraqi Resistance, unlike the existentially courageous and militarily irrelevant French Resistance, long ago overwhelmed the American Occupation.

For the United States in Iraq, it is past midnight.

The crime and the tragedy is that, unlike the Nazi Occupation of France (which left deep scars of its own - which you can see painfully documented in Marcel Ophuls' *The Sorrow and the Pity*), our Occupation has thrown the Iraqis at each other, so that most of the murders committed this past week were not against the US and British troops but against Iraqi civilians, victims of the sectarian conflict which did not exist until Bush's invasion.

Happy Anniversary: Operation Raw



September 03, 2006 By Carl Bunin, Peace History Sept 4-10, peacebuttons.info

September 4, 1970

Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) began Operation RAW (Rapid American Withdrawal).

Over the following three days more than 200 veterans, assisted by the Philadelphia Guerilla Theater, staged a march from Morristown, New Jersey, to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, reenacting the invasion of small rural hamlets along the way.

58,000 Body Bags At A Football Game



From: Mike Hastie

To: GI Special
Sent: August 28, 2006
Subject: 58,000 in a football stadium

When I was processing out of Vietnam, I stayed a couple of days in a transient barracks.

We waited for our urine tests to come back to make sure we didn't have heroin in our system. When we were called out into formation, the U.S. government called out all of the dirty urines. Those people of course could not go back to the States, until they went through a two week crash course in heroin addiction recovery.

God, I love the military.

After we were dismissed from formation, we went back to the barracks and wrote dirty things about Nixon on the walls.

One guy was passed out on his bunk, and suddenly got up and pissed on the wall.

It was great graffiti. It kind of summed up the entire Vietnam War for me.

When I got home, it did not take me long to figure out I didn't fit in anymore. As I look back, it just seemed like everyone was in a trance.

Another football season was starting, because I got back from Vietnam in September. I went to one college game that had a stadium which held about 60,000 people.

Many years later, I thought about the 58,000 Americans who were killed in Vietnam. They could have all fit in that stadium that day.

58,000 body bags at a football game.

While the poor and working class die in Iraq, our entire system of government in this country is mentally ill.

George Bush, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld are filling up another stadium with another generation of dead American soldiers.

And, the madness will continue until the American people come out of their trance.

As Martin Luther King Jr. stated in a speech in 1967, "The greatest purveyor of violence in the world today is my own government."

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)

HONOR THE WARRIOR, NOT THE WAR

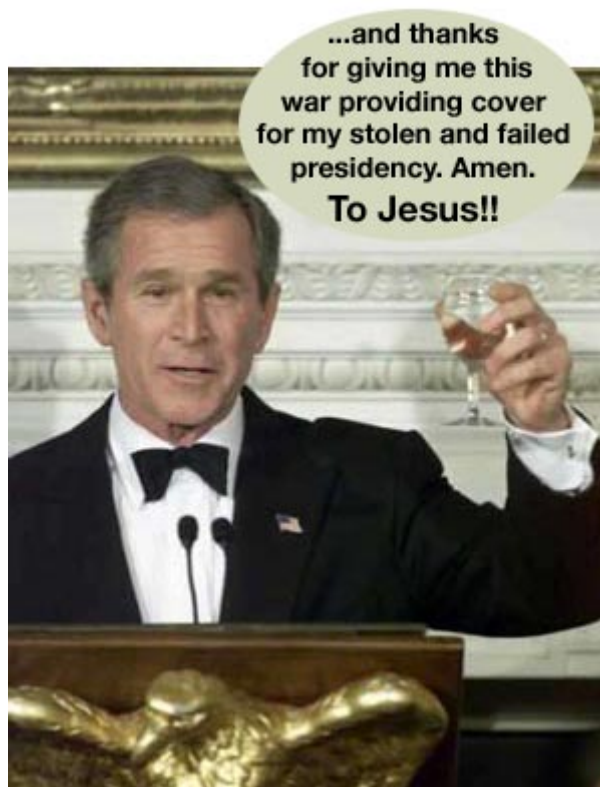
Vietnam Veterans Against the War
Fighting for Veterans, Peace and Justice since 1967
www.vvaw.org



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.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

How Bush Rapes Taxpayers To Pay For His Political Campaigning



[Thanks to PB, who sent this in and Mark Shapiro, for the graphic.]

Aug 30 By JENNIFER LOVEN, Associated Press Writer

Bankrolled almost entirely by taxpayers, President Bush is roaming far and wide on Air Force One to help Republicans retain control of Congress and capture statehouse contests in high-stakes midterm elections.

In 15 months, including back-to-back fundraisers Wednesday in Little Rock, Ark., and Nashville, Tenn., Bush has collected \$166 million for the campaign accounts of 27 Republican candidates, the national GOP and its state counterparts across the country, according to the Republican National Committee.

The president also has scooped up campaign cash in 36 cities, travels that have taken him as near as McLean, Va., in the Washington suburbs and as far as Medina, Wash., 2,800 miles to the west. On Thursday, Bush adds yet another locale to the list: Salt Lake City.

All this to-and-fro presidential politicking is only expected to increase as November draws closer.

And it is the taxpayers, not the campaigns or political parties, who foot most of the travel bill.

When Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, first lady Laura Bush or any federal official helps a candidate, Federal Election Commission guidelines say the campaign must reimburse the government only the equivalent of a first-class fare for each political traveler on each leg of the trip.

Typically, that means paying a few hundred or at most a few thousand dollars to cover the president and a couple of aides from the White House Office of Political Affairs.

The White House deems staffers from any other office "official," eliminating any need for campaigns to cover their travel.

And the White House requires reimbursement only if the president specifically advocates a candidate's election, for instance by headlining a fundraiser or a rally on their behalf.

That means that staging appearances alongside the president — from Air Force One's jetway or at a policy event — costs a candidate nothing even though they can bask in the media spotlight.

Pete Sepp, spokesman for the National Taxpayers Union, a taxpayers advocacy organization, suggested at least requiring campaigns to cover the actual cost of fueling and providing a crew to Air Force One, which runs to tens of thousands of dollars each hour for the specially retrofitted Boeing 747-200B Bush usually uses.

But Massie Ritsch, spokesman for the Center for Responsive Politics, which tracks money's impact on politics, said that seems unrealistic. "You would bankrupt the campaign," he said.

Ritsch said the system is likely to remain for the foreseeable future — mostly because both Democrats and Republicans have benefited, leaving little will on either side to change it.

"Having a member of your party in the White House is a perk for any candidate in that party," he said. "He comes with all the trappings of the president and you as a candidate really don't have to pay for any of it."

Beside the substantial Air Force One costs, other expenses not covered by the airfare reimbursement are extensive.

The Secret Service provides massive presidential protection. Advance teams fan out before trips to map every move. Overnight stays bring hotel costs for the large presidential entourage. Duplicate motorcades of well over a dozen vehicles each, including armored limousines and sometimes several helicopters, must be shipped ahead on cargo planes to every city.

Like others before it, the White House often transfers more of the bill-paying burden onto taxpayers by pairing an "official" event with the political one. Then, the percentage of time spent on official and political duties is calculated to determine what portion of the first-class fare is owed by the campaign.

Nearly two-thirds of Bush's travel days outside of Washington for political appearances this election cycle have included an "official" event. Most of the time, the two events are near enough not to require a separate flight, making it even more economical for the campaign.

At the beginning of August, for instance, Bush stopped briefly at a county emergency operations center outside Cleveland to commemorate routine disaster declarations for the area's heavy rains. It was a stop added only at the last minute, and just five minutes from a home where he was scheduled to raise \$1.5 million for Ohio's Republican candidate for governor, Kenneth Blackwell.

An increasingly common approach is to pick a local business for Bush to tour and use as a backdrop for casual remarks on the economy. A visit earlier this month to a York, Pa., Harley-Davidson plant preceded a fundraiser for Republican gubernatorial candidate Lynn Swann.

In July, Bush chatted with workers at a Wisconsin Allen-Edmonds shoe factory before helping GOP Rep. Mark Green (news, bio, voting record)'s gubernatorial campaign. And in mid-August, the president raised money for Republican congressional candidate John Gard in Oneida, Wis., following a brief stop at a nearby metal plant.

A president's unique ability to attract large donations from party faithful, and to do it on the cheap for the benefiting campaign, help explain why Bush is in demand as a fundraiser despite low approval ratings. Many candidates, however, are choosing this year to set up their Bush-headlined donor receptions in private homes, where the media is barred.

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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)

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