

Soldiers Desperate to Leave Iraq

Casualties of war (3/19/03 - 10/10/03), and still counting ...

- **U.S. soldiers** : 326 (died), **over 1785** (wounded)
- **Iraqis** : **over 8,000** (died), **over 20,000** (wounded)
- **U.S. Cost** : **62 Billion** (~\$620 per household) up to now
- **43.6 Million** Americans (15.2% of the population) lack health benefits
- **38 Million** Americans (12.4% of the population) live below poverty level

AWOL State of Mind: Calls from Soldiers Desperate to Leave Iraq Flood Hotline

by Leonard Greene, *The New York Post*, October 6, 2003

Morale among some war-weary GIs in Iraq is so low that a growing number of soldiers - including some now home on R&R - are researching the consequences of going AWOL, according to a leading support group.

The [GI Rights Hotline](#), a national soldiers' support service, has logged a 75 percent increase in calls in the last 12 weeks, with more than 100 of those calls from soldiers, or people on their behalf, asking about the penalties associated with going AWOL - "**absent without leave**" - according to volunteers and staffers who man the service.

Many of the calls have come from soldiers who are among those now on the first wave of 15-day authorized leaves that began almost two weeks ago. Some hotline callers have indicated they may not return, staffers said. Some soldiers are so desperate that they have **called directly from the war zone**, contacting the hotline when they can get satellite-phone access or after waiting in line for hours in the desert for a military phone.

Lt. Gen. James Helmly, chief of the 205,000-member Army Reserve, warned recently that there could be an **exodus of active and reserve forces** if the United States failed to get other countries to join the Iraq campaign.

New Jersey Reservist Leads Protest to Bring Troops Home!

by David Cline, *Veterans for Peace*, October 5, 2003

On Friday October 3, a demonstration took place at the Newark offices of NJ Senators Corzine and Lautenberg led by Army reservist Frank Mendez, along with 25 family members, friends and members of Veterans For Peace, to **demand the troops be brought home**.

It was Mendez's 23rd birthday and he is home on a thirteen day leave from the 310 Battalion which is deployed in Iraq. Mendez stated "I had no problem going into this. I knew the mission going in: We were going to find weapons of mass destruction. Only there weren't any, then the mission became bringing democracy to Iraq. But now we're just in the country sitting on our butts wasting taxpayers money and wasting our time" **Frank Mendez returns to Iraq next Tuesday**. He has shown real courage by speaking out while home on leave.

4,000 U.S. Non-Combat Evacuations in Iraq

by Mark Benjamin, *United Press International*, October 4, 2003

Nearly 4,000 U.S. troops have been medically evacuated from Operation Iraqi Freedom for non-combat reasons -- with more than one in five of those for psychiatric or neurological problems, according to Pentagon data.

A total of **3,915 evacuations** from the region have been for **non-combat medical problems**. A combination of what the Pentagon is calling evacuations for "psychiatric" and "neurological" problems make up 22 percent of the total, with 478 and 387 evacuations, respectively. Another 544 evacuations have been for "general surgery," 290 for gynecological reasons and 118 for orthopedic problems. Army Surgeon General spokeswoman Virginia Stephanakis, who supplied the data, said on Friday that she had few details.

Sick tired of the U.S. occupation in Iraq? Sick tired of billions for war, pennies for education?
Join the bus ride (from FOR, Nyack) to a mass March in Washington, D.C. on Sat. Oct. 25 !
Seats are limited. To secure a seat, please send your check (\$35, payable to FOR) soon to
PeaceBus, P. O. Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960. For detail info: peacebus@rocklandaction.org

Reaction to Springsteen Reinforces Value of Dissent

by Judy Ettenhofer, *The Madison Capital Times*, October 2, 2003

"Ladies and gentlemen," **Bruce Springsteen** said to 40,000 fans at Miller Park Saturday night, "**It's time to impeach the president.**" With a grin, the Boss continued his introduction of saxophonist Clarence Clemons, suggesting "the Big Man" could replace President Bush and be "somebody who knows what he's doing."

Answers Please, Mr. Bush

by Michael Moore, *The Guardian/UK*, October 6, 2003

In this extract from his new book "**Dude, Where's My Country**" he (Michael Moore) asks:

I have seven questions for you, Mr. Bush. I ask them on behalf of the 3,000 who died that September day, and I ask them on behalf of the American people. We seek no revenge against you. We want only to know what happened, and what can be done to bring the murderers to justice, so we can prevent any future attacks on our citizens.

1. Is it true that the Bin Ladens have had business relations with you and your family off and on for the past 25 years?
2. What is the 'special relationship' between the Bushes and the Saudi royal family?
3. Who attacked the US on September 11 - a guy on dialysis from a cave in Afghanistan, or your friend, Saudi Arabia?
4. Why did you allow a private Saudi jet to fly around the US in the days after September 11 and pick up members of the Bin Laden family and fly them out of the country without a proper investigation by the FBI?
5. Why are you protecting the Second Amendment rights of potential terrorists?
6. Were you aware that, while you were governor of Texas, the Taliban traveled to Texas to meet with your oil and gas company friends?
7. What exactly was that look on your face in the Florida classroom on the morning of September 11 when your chief of staff told you, 'America is under attack'?

Declare Victory in Iraq and Leave

by James O. Goldsborough, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, October 6, 2003

We can declare victory and come home, exactly as we should have done in Vietnam before it was too late. The longer we stay in Iraq the worse things will get – for us and for Iraqis... Bush wants to stay in Iraq for the same reason the British wanted to stay 80 years ago: **profit.**

Stories appear daily of companies and individuals **with ties to Bush** who are moving in on Iraq. Halliburton, Bechtel, Richard Perle, Joe Allbaugh, Edward M. Rogers, Lanny Griffith, the firm of Kellogg, Brown and Root. **They'll all do well. A lot better than either America or Iraq.**

Questions are Raised on Awarding of Contracts in Iraq

by Patrick E. Tyler and Raymond Bonner, *The New York Times*, October 4, 2003

Last month the Iraqi Governing Council questioned why the American occupation authority had issued a \$20 million contract to buy new revolvers and Kalashnikov rifles for the Iraqi police when the United States military was confiscating tens of thousands of weapons every month from Saddam Hussein's abandoned arsenals.

On Wednesday the Iraqi council,...challenged an American decision to spend \$1.2 billion to train 35,000 Iraqi police officers in Jordan when such training could be done in Iraq for a fraction of the cost. **Germany and France have offered to provide such training free.**

Iraqi officials and businessmen charge that millions of dollars in contracts are being awarded without competitive bidding, some of them to former cronies of Mr. Hussein's government. "**There is no transparency,**" said Mahmoud Othman, a Kurdish member of the Governing Council, "There is mismanagement right and left... **A lot of American money is being wasted,** I think. We are victims and the American taxpayers are victims."

Join **Rockland Coalition for Peace and Justice** for weekly peace vigils
at Middletown Rd. & Rt. 59 in Nanuet, **every Saturday** 1-3 pm. For info:
www.rocklandaction.org, or call The Fellowship of Reconciliation at 358-4601

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