



VETERANS FOR
PEACE
HUMBOLDT BAY
CHAPTER 56

THE FOGHORN

“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

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FOURTH OF JULY

by: *Jim Sorter*

Veterans For Peace Humboldt Bay Chapter 56 was well represented in Arcata on the Plaza Fourth of July celebrations. We had two booths manned by several of our chapter members.

Our Information booth, ran by Nate Lomba, Carl Stencil, Bill Thompson, Marc Knipper, Fred Hummel, John Mulloy, Stephen Sottong, Rob Hepburn, Johnny Calkins, and others, seemed to be filled all day with people wanting to know the answers to questions concerning theirs, or relatives, decisions to join or not join the military service. The Anti-Recruiters Guide was a popular item as it laid out, in plain language the potential problems young would-be enlistees should be aware of, as well as pointing out some possible alternatives to enlistment. It was very important to have our VFP members there to answer questions and give a different perspective to a career in the military service.

Since this event, one young Iraqi vet has contacted me personally wanting information on our monthly meetings and our weekly vigils. He has vowed to come and see what our organization is all about. He thanked the vets who took their time to give him much information on the Fourth for sparking his interest in our organization.



The food booth served vegan chili along with a hot roll for \$4.00 per serving. Running this booth were Gordy Anderson, Peter Aronson, Judi Rose, Don Swall, Linda Sorter Charlotte Hagen, John Calkins, Jim Sorter, Doug Smith, John McAlinn, and Bill Wyman.

The day started out fairly slow with sales, but by the afternoon sales had started to pick up. Because of the slow start, however, by the end of the selling day VFP 56 had not met its goal of sales, barely breaking even to cover costs. The members present agreed that possibly the preparation and selling of food is not the best way to generate funds for our organization. The Coordinating Committee will discuss this point and take their recommendations back to the plenary for final discussions and decisions on the selling of food items.

VFP 56 still has a supply of chili for sale. If anyone is interested in purchasing it, it will be sold for \$10.00 per gallon. All who purchased it on the Fourth said it was very delicious. If anyone is interested in buying some contact Gordy Anderson at (707) 443-9663.

Thanks to all members who got up early to help set up both booths and those who stayed after 7:00 PM to help take the structures down and clean up.

In my opinion, I believe it was a very successful day. Anytime VFP-56 can have a public forum to spread the message of peace, and have so many positive comments from the citizens about our organization and what we do, I believe we have met our goal. Despite the disappointment of food vending, we did manage to educate some young minds on alternatives to joining the military. We can be proud of our collective efforts and our presence in a community that so desperately needs to hear the message of hope and peace from the men and women who have experienced the antithesis of this belief.



BUSH'S SELECTIVE MOURNING

by: Joel Bleifuss

The Fourth of July is the time for patriotic hooah by national boobahs. So, Commander-in-Chief George W. Bush will invoke, as he did on Memorial Day at Arlington Cemetery, the "sacrifice" of that "awesome bunch of people."

"It only remains for us," said Bush that day, "the heirs of their legacy, to have the courage and the character to follow their lead—and to preserve America as the greatest nation on earth and the last best hope for mankind."

Bush then dressed up his war with tales of the fallen.

Nate Hardy of Durham, N.H., and Mike Koch of State College, Pa., according to Bush, would "head into battle with American flags clutched to their chests underneath their uniform." Nate and Mike "both laid down their lives in Iraq after being ambushed by terrorists," and today "lay at rest next to each other."

Ron Tucker of Fountain, Colo., as a young man, was "known for having an infectious smile and a prankster's sense of humor," but the military "transformed" him "into a devoted soldier and dutiful son who called his mother every day."

"He worked with other members of his unit to build a soccer field for Iraqi children," said Bush. "As he drove back to his base, an enemy bomb robbed him of his life."

But other victims of his war didn't merit the president's notice.

Jeffrey Lucey returned from Iraq in 2003 but could not get treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) from the Veterans Health Administration. On June 22, 2004, his father Kevin found him hanging from the basement rafters, a garden hose around his neck.

"Neither our veterans nor their families should have to beg for the care they deserve," his mother Joyce testified at the Winter Soldier hearings in March. "Our marine physically returned to us, but his soul did not. He lost it in Iraq."

Timothy Bowman returned from Iraq in 2005. As his family was busy preparing the 2005 Thanksgiving meal, Timothy shot himself and slowly bled to death.

Tommie Edward Jones committed suicide in front of his mother Dorothy, on March 25, at Fort Carson, Colo. She told reporters, "He said, 'I wake up every morning angry.' He said, 'My body is here but my mind is in Iraq.'"

Veterans like Jeffrey, Timothy and Tommie kill themselves at an astonishing rate.

Dr. Ira Katz, the head of mental health at Veterans Affairs, wrote in a Feb. 13 email to a colleague: "Shh! Our suicide prevention coordinators are identifying about 1,000 suicide

attempts per month among veterans we see in our medical facilities. Is this something we should address ourselves in some sort of release before someone stumbles on it?"

Too late. That e-mail saw the light of day in April as part of a class-action lawsuit filed against the VA in San Francisco.

For men and women in uniform, the rate is even higher than that of veterans. The Army reports that about 2,100 enlisted soldiers attempted suicide in 2007—only 350 did so in 2002 before the war began. How many succeeded in killing themselves was not revealed.

Young Americans are sent off to war and are killed by roadside bombs. Young Americans return home from war and kill themselves. Whatever.

They "have made the ultimate sacrifice that allows a free civilization to endure and flourish," said a "humbled" Bush.

On July 4th, as fireworks exploded, triggers were pulled and Bush blathered, let us remember the lines from writer Bertolt Brecht: "Everyone sees you hiding the hem of your mantle, which is bloody with the blood of your best sons."

The Costs of War: The Parents' Agony

by: Ann Wright

Every day for a parent of a person in the United States military is a long day, filled with concern for their daughter or son. Parents of nine US Army soldiers were notified of the deaths of their family members in Afghanistan this week.

July 16 and 17, 2008 have been extraordinarily long days for another group of parents.

In Washington, DC, on July 17, 2008, John and Linda Johnson, the parents of US Army Private First Class (PFC) Lavena Johnson, met US Army criminal investigators concerning the classification of the death of their daughter, who died three years ago on July 19, 2005 in Balad, Iraq. The Army labeled her death a suicide, despite evidence from materials the Army reluctantly provided to the parents that she was beaten, bitten, sexually assaulted, burned and shot. Despite numerous questions from Dr. John Johnson about the Army's investigation and determination of suicide, the Army stuck to its guns, saying that Lavena Johnson committed suicide. After the briefing, the Johnsons asked Congressman William Lacy Clay and Congresswoman Diane Watson to request that House Oversight and Governmental Reform Committee Chairman Henry Waxman hold hearings, requiring the production of witnesses to testify under oath to their knowledge of how Lavena died - an attempt to get information that the Army has so far failed to provide.

On July 16, 2008, at Fort Knox, KY, Helen and Eric Burmeister, the parents of PFC James Burmeister, attended the court-martial of their son. After being in three IED explosions in Iraq, upon his

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The Cost of War: Continued from page 2

unit's return to Germany, James left his unit and flew to Canada. He stayed in Canada for ten months, and while there, in hopes of ending the practice, spoke publicly about "bait and kill" zones used by some military units to entice Iraqis into a zone with interesting objects and then shoot them. James voluntarily returned himself to military control at Fort Knox four months ago. In those four months, despite shrapnel still in his body and raging post-traumatic stress disorder, James was provided with minimal medical and emotional assistance. He was court-martialed on July 16, 2008 for being absent without leave (AWOL) and was convicted. The prosecution brought up the public statements and interviews Burmeister gave on "bait and kill." He was sentenced to six months in jail, a loss of pay, reduction in rank to private and a bad-conduct discharge that will deny him medical assistance for physical and emotional wounds suffered on active duty. He was taken from the court directly to jail.

On July 16, 2008, in Boise, Idaho, the parents of US Army war resister PFC Robin Long waited for the news that their son had been deported from Canada and placed in the hands of the US military. Ironically, war resister Long was handed over to US officials at the Peace Arch on the US-Canadian border, just north of Seattle, Washington. Three years ago, in 2005, Long went to Canada after refusing to serve in Iraq, a war he called an "illegal war of aggression." A Canadian federal judge on July 15 ordered that Long be deported after she ruled that he failed to provide clear and convincing evidence that he would suffer irreparable harm if he were returned to the United States. Long was taken by Washington State police to a civilian jail to await the arrival of Army military police who will transport him to the military prison at Fort Lewis, Washington. Eventually, he will be returned to his unit in Colorado for probable court-martial. At least 200 other US military personnel are in Canada. Several have requested refugee status but have been denied and risk deportation.

The costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continue to mount. The lives of hundreds of thousands of Americans and millions of Iraqis and Afghans have been permanently damaged by these wars. Support the families, but end the war.

Chapter 56 Report for the VFP Newsletter Approved in Committee, 10May2008

by: Nate Lomba

The Veterans Education and Outreach Program (VEOP) Committee of Chapter 56 worked long and hard to create and publish *ADVICE FROM VETERANS on Military Service and Recruiting Practices: A RESOURCE GUIDE for Young People Considering Enlistment*. The 32-page, tabloid format Resource Guide was favorably received by the public and members of other VFP chapters and has become a valuable resource in many schools in our Chapter's region. We also had a request for copies by members of Code Pink who wanted to distribute the Resource Guide during their efforts to blockade the Marine Recruiting Station in Berkeley, California. The first printing of 3,000

copies went quickly and the Committee recently completed work on a revised edition. The Second Edition of the Resource Guide is now available as a free download on the Chapter's web site at www.vfp56.org/VEOP.html. The Guide can be copied and printed and disseminated without modification by anyone with Adobe Reader™ (a free download at www.adobe.com). To better serve youth in other areas, we encourage others to localize the resources listed in the back of the Guide. These localized resource changes need not be cleared with the VEOP Committee. On a final note: The Resource Guide is made available in PDF format; therefore, the file can be downloaded and taken to almost any commercial printer for reproduction. We encourage other VFP chapters to avail themselves of this option and introduce the Resource Guide to their community.

Becky & Brian



With sadness, on July 27th, we said our goodbyes to Becky and Brian Willson. They have sold their home in Arcata and are making plans to move to Portland, Oregon in August. The tremendous influence both of them have had on our collective lives will be felt for many years to come.

We can only give them our best wishes and positive thoughts as they prepare for their future lives in their new community. If they are half as influential in Portland as they have been in Arcata we can be assured that our loss will be a tremendous boost for the peace movement in their new home.

**You will be greatly missed Brian and
Becky!**



Electrical Risks at Bases in Iraq Worse Than Previously Said

by: James Risen

The New York Times July 18, 2008

Shoddy electrical work by private contractors on United States military bases in Iraq is widespread and dangerous, causing more deaths and injuries from fires and shocks than the Pentagon has acknowledged, according to internal Army documents.

During just one six-month period — August 2006 through January 2007 — at least 283 electrical fires destroyed or damaged American military facilities in Iraq, including the military's largest dining hall in the country, documents obtained by The New York Times show. Two soldiers died in an electrical fire at their base near Tikrit in 2006, the records note, while another was injured while jumping from a burning guard tower in May 2007.

And while the Pentagon has previously reported that 13 Americans have been electrocuted in Iraq, many more have been injured, some seriously, by shocks, according to the documents. A log compiled earlier this year at one building complex in Baghdad disclosed that soldiers complained of receiving electrical shocks in their living quarters on an almost daily basis.

Electrical problems were the most urgent noncombat safety hazard for soldiers in Iraq, according to an Army survey issued in February 2007. It noted "a safety threat theaterwide created by the poor-quality electrical fixtures procured and installed, sometimes incorrectly, thus resulting in a significant number of fires."

The Army report said KBR, the Houston-based company that is responsible for providing basic services for American troops in Iraq, including housing, did its own study and found a "systemic problem" with electrical work.

But the Pentagon did little to address the issue until a Green Beret, Staff Sgt. Ryan D. Maseth, was electrocuted in January while showering. His death, caused by poor electrical grounding, drew the attention of lawmakers and Pentagon leaders after his family pushed for answers. Congress and the Pentagon's inspector general have begun investigations, and this month senior Army officials ordered electrical inspections of all buildings in Iraq maintained by KBR.

"We consider this to be a very serious issue," Chris Isleib, a Pentagon spokesman, said Thursday in an e-mail message, while declining to comment on the findings in the Army documents.

Heather Browne, a KBR spokeswoman, would not comment about a company safety study or the reports of electrical fires or shocks, but she said KBR had found no evidence of a link between its work and the electrocutions. She added, "KBR's commitment to the safety of all employees and those the company serves remains unwavering."

In public statements, Pentagon officials have not addressed the scope of the hazards, instead mostly focusing on the circumstances surrounding the death of Sergeant Maseth, who lived near Pittsburgh.

But the internal documents, including dozens of memos, e-mail messages and reports from the Army, the Defense Contract Management Agency and other agencies, show that electrical problems were widely recognized as a major safety threat among Pentagon contracting experts. It is impossible to determine the exact number of the resulting deaths and injuries because no single document tallies them up. (The records were compiled for Congressional and Pentagon investigators and obtained independently by The Times.)

The 2007 safety survey was ordered by the top official in Iraq for the Defense Contract Management Agency, which oversees contractors, after the October 2006 electrical fire that killed two soldiers near Tikrit. Paul Dickinson, a Pentagon safety specialist who wrote the report, confirmed its findings, but did not elaborate.

Senior Pentagon officials appear not to have responded to the survey until this May, after Congressional investigators had begun to ask questions. Then they argued that its findings were irrelevant to Sergeant Maseth's electrocution.

In a memo dated May 26, 2008, a top official of the Defense Contract Management Agency stated that "there is no direct or causal connection" between the problems identified in the survey and those at the Baghdad compound where Sergeant Maseth died.

But in a sworn statement, apparently prepared for an investigation of Sergeant Maseth's death by the Army's Criminal Investigative Division, a Pentagon contracting official described how both military and KBR officials were aware of the growing danger from poor electrical work.

In the statement, Ingrid Harrison, an official with the Pentagon's contracting management agency, disclosed that an electrical fire caused by poor wiring in a nearby building two weeks before Sergeant Maseth's death had endangered two other soldiers.

"The soldiers were lucky because the one window that they could reach did not have bars on it, or there could have been two other fatalities," Ms. Harrison said in the statement. She said that after Sergeant Maseth died, a more senior Pentagon contracting official in Baghdad denied knowing about the fire, but she asserted that "it was thoroughly discussed" during internal meetings.

Ms. Harrison added that KBR officials also knew of widespread electrical problems at the Radwaniya Palace Complex, near Baghdad's airport, where Sergeant Maseth died. "KBR has been at R.P.C. for over four years and was fully aware of the safety hazards, violations and concerns regarding the soldiers' housing," she said in the statement. She added that the contractor "chose to ignore the known unsafe conditions."

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Electrical Fires: continued from page 4

Ms. Harrison did not respond to a request for comment.

In another internal document written after Sergeant Maseth's death, a senior Army officer in Baghdad warned that soldiers had to be moved immediately from several buildings because of electrical risks. In a memo asking for emergency repairs at three buildings, the official warned of a "clear and present danger," adding, "Exposed wiring, ungrounded distribution panels and inappropriate lighting fixtures render these facilities uninhabitable and unsafe."

The memo added that "over the course of several months, electrical fires and shorts have compounded these unsafe conditions."

Since the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, tens of thousands of American troops have been housed in Iraqi buildings that date from the Saddam Hussein era. KBR and other contractors have been paid millions of dollars to repair and upgrade the buildings, including their electrical systems. KBR officials say they handle the maintenance for 4,000 structures and an additional 35,000 containers used as housing in the war zone.

The reports of shoddy electrical work have raised new questions about the Bush administration's heavy reliance on contractors in Iraq, particularly because they come after other high-profile disputes involving KBR. They include accusations of overbilling, providing unsafe water to soldiers and failing to protect female employees who were sexually assaulted.

Officials say the administration contracted out so much work in Iraq that companies like KBR were simply overwhelmed by the scale of the operations. Some of the electrical work, for example, was turned over to subcontractors, some of which hired unskilled Iraqis who were paid only a few dollars a day.

Government officials responsible for contract oversight, meanwhile, were also unable to keep up, so that unsafe electrical work was not challenged by government auditors.

Several electricians who worked for KBR have said previously in interviews that they repeatedly warned KBR managers and Pentagon and military officials about unsafe electrical work. They said that supervisors had ignored their concerns or, in some cases, lacked the training to understand the problems.

The Army documents cite a number of recent safety threats. One report showed that during a four-day period in late February, soldiers at a Baghdad compound reported being shocked while taking showers in different buildings. The circumstances appear similar to those that led to Sergeant Maseth's death.

Another entry from early March stated that an entire house used by American troops was electrically charged, making it unlivable.

Since the Pentagon reports were compiled, more episodes linked to electrical problems have occurred. In late June, for example, an electrical fire at a Marine base in Falluja destroyed 10 buildings,

forcing marines there to ask for donations from home to replace their personal belongings.

On July 5, Sgt. First Class Anthony Lynn Woodham of the Arkansas National Guard died at his base in Tallil, Iraq. Initial reports blamed electrocution, but his death is being investigated because of conflicting information, according to his wife, Crystal Woodham, and a spokesman for the Arkansas National Guard.

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VFP 56 YARD SALE

VFP 56 will be holding its annual yard sale on the weekend of September 20th and 21st. Please set aside items to donate. If anyone has space to store items until the event, or needs information, please call Gordy Anderson at (707) 498-5889.



THREE CUPS OF TEA

by: Greg Mortenson & David Oliver Relin

A True Story Still Being Told - A review by Woody Powell

I don't believe in coincidences. Just as I was launching the Chapters Newsletter request for ideas for a signature program or project to define VFP, I finished a remarkable book about peacemaking through education in the Pakistan and Afghanistan Northern Territories (the supposed hiding place of Osama Bin Laden).

It got me to thinking about what us veterans are truly qualified to do best. Yes, protest is one thing, a necessary thing. But our experiences invest us with a special qualification; that of knowing first hand the devastation of war and its lasting effects upon whole populations. One of those effects is a lingering resentment that could and has flared into the next war – and the next.

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Three Cups of Tea: continued from page 5

How is that best countered? Well, many of us have gone back to the scene, with shovels and picks, instead of rifles, to build hospitals, schools, water treatment plants. We became brothers with our former enemies, healing our own wounds along with the wounds we had inflicted. We became peace-makers. Veterans For Peace.

Three Cups of Tea chronicles the efforts of one man, Greg Mortenson, a veteran, a mountain climber, an itinerant nurse, to build schools, mainly for girls, in some of the most remote, rugged and culturally hostile regions of the world, since the mid nineties.

He faced not only geographical obstacles, but obstacles thrown up by a war threatening to turn the entire Muslim world against all things American. Using nothing but his love for the people, his insistence on keeping his word, his humility and the ability to be drawn into the lives of others not like him, he accomplished what no government had ever been able to accomplish; creating literally hundreds of schools and maintaining them despite wars and fatwahs from small-minded fundamentalist clerics.

I have never encountered a better example of “winning the hearts and minds” than that of Greg Mortenson’s. His approach stands in the starkest of contrasts to the way the U. S. has conducted foreign policy in the last century. Here are the comments of Pakistani Brigadier General Bashir Baz:

He and Greg were watching Afghan women carrying the bodies of their babies from a bombed out building on TV in Rawalpini. “People like me are America’s best friends in the region.” the General said shaking his head ruefully. “I’m a moderate Muslim, an educated man. But watching this, even I could become a jihadi. How can Americans say they are making themselves safer?”

“Osama had something to do with it, too.” Mortenson said.

“Osama, baah!” Bashir roared, “He is a creation of America. Thanks to America, Osama is in every home. As a military man, I know you can never fight and win against someone who can shoot you once and then run off and hide while you have to remain eternally on guard. You have to attack the source of your enemy’s strength. In American’s case, that’s no Osama or Saddam or anyone else. The enemy is ignorance. The only way to defeat it is to build relationships with these people, to draw them into the modern world with education and business. Otherwise the fight will go on forever.”

That is so self evident to us, but not to everyone. Greg Mortenson speaks all over the world when he is not in Pakistan or Afghanistan building schools or bringing water to refugee villages before building schools in them. By his example, he has held back the tide of hate in the parts of the

world he has touched. He has shown the human face of America and preserved some of our good will in some places.

I recommend reading the book written about him, *Three Cups of Tea*, to witness the power of love first hand. Then I would suggest considering how we, as veterans, might best assist this vital effort to regain sanity in the world.

We know how. Our own Iraq Water Project is a good example of the same sort of selfless effort to bring health into the lives of people dying for lack of good water.

Water, the stuff of life. Education, the stuff of peace.

For more information, contact the Central Asia Institute, PO Box 7209, Bozeman, MT 59771 426-585-7841 www.ikat.org

US Military Recruits Children

by: Michael B. Reagan, *t r u t h o u t* | Perspective

“America’s Army” is a video game developed in part by the US Army to lure potential recruits.

In May of 2002, the United States Army invaded E3, the annual video game convention held in Los Angeles. At the city’s Convention Center, young game enthusiasts mixed with camouflaged soldiers, Humvees and a small tank parked near the entrance. Thundering helicopter sound effects drew the curious to the Army’s interactive display, where a giant video screen flashed the words “Empower yourself. Defend America ... You will be a soldier.”

The Army was unveiling its latest recruitment tool, the “America’s Army” video game, free to download online or pick up at a recruiting station, and now available for purchase on the Xbox, PlayStation, cell phones and Gameboy game consoles. Since its release, the “game” has gone on to attain enormous popularity with over 30,000 players everyday, more than nine million registered users, and version 3.0 set for launch in September. “America’s Army” simulates the Army experience, immersing players in basic training before they can go on to play specialized combat roles. Most of the gameplay takes place in cyberspace where virtual Mideast cities, hospitals and oil rigs serve as backdrops for players to obliterate each other. As a “first person shooter,” the game allows players to “see what a soldier sees” in real combat situations - peek around corners, take fine aim, chose weapons that replicate those actually used by the US Army.

For the game’s commercial developers, realism is one of its strongest selling points. Console version programmers were shipped to military training facilities in Wyoming, where they ran boot camp obstacle courses, fired weapons at the shooting range and got whisked around on helicopters. Back at hip, safe San Francisco Bay Area game companies, Army weapons spe-

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cialists worked

with developers to ensure aim, fire, sound and reload functions for all of the game's weapons were as close to the real thing as possible. The Army also ensured that players learn real weapons skills such as breath control and the reload time for a M4 carbine. And in order to edge closer to the Army's goal of "realism" and "authenticity," several of the game's missions are based on actual combat experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even the training simulators and firing ranges are modeled on the real life versions at Ft. Benning, Ft. Lewis and Ft. Polk. In a 2005 press release, Ubisoft, the multimillion-dollar publisher of the console version of the game, wrote that "America's Army" is the "deepest and most realistic military game ever to hit consoles," hoping that it gave players a "realistic, action-packed, military experience."

But behind the fun and games is an attempt, in the words of a military booklet on "America's Army," "to build a game for Army strategic communication in support of recruiting." The Army spent \$6 million to develop the game at the Modeling, Virtual Environments and Simulation Institute (MOVES) before handing it over to private companies for adaptation to the console formats in 2004. As the name implies, the MOVES Institute is the military center for creating virtual training environments and simulators. A MOVES Institute booklet proclaims a later version of the game, "America's Army: Special Forces," was developed specifically to increase the number of Army Special Forces recruits. "The Department of Defense want[ed] to double the number of Special Forces Soldiers, so essential did they prove in Afghanistan and northern Iraq; consequently, orders ... trickled down the chain of command and found application in the current release of 'America's Army.'"

Like so many aspects of contemporary military operations, the development of later versions of the game has been handed over to corporations for private profit. Some of the biggest game companies have worked on the console, arcade and cell phone versions of "America's Army." Ubisoft, the world's seventh largest video game company, is the game's exclusive producer and has recently publicized record profits for the first quarter of 2008. Ubisoft worked closely with San Francisco based Secret Level to develop the 2005 Xbox version. Global VR, in San Jose, California, is preparing the release of the arcade version, and Gameloft programmed a version available for download to cell phones. Getting in on the action are other more traditional military contractors, such as Digital Consulting Services (DSC), a multimillion-dollar military tech company based in Newbury Park, California. Among DCS's other projects are the Encore II Information Technology Solution for the innocuous sounding Global Information Grid, "an all encompassing communications project for the Department of Defense," worth \$13 billion over five years. Or the Navy's Seaport-Enhanced - a \$100 billion multicontract program to integrate Navy warfare operations. The Army worked closely with these and other companies to produce "America's Army," the first and only officially licensed Army game. It is this partnership and the close attention to technical detail that the Army and game companies claim gives "America's Army" its realistic quality. As Col. Casey Wardynski, director of the US Army's Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis (OEMA) and director of the game project proclaims, "America's Army" is "the

most authentic console game about soldiering in the US Army."

Yet, far from providing realism, "America's Army" offers a sanitized version of war to propagandize youth on the benefits of an Army career and prepare them for the battlefield. In the game, soldiers are not massacred in bloody fire typical of most video games, or for that matter, real combat. When hit, bullet wounds resemble puffs of red smoke, and players can take up to four hits before being killed. To further protect youth, concerned parents can turn on optional controls that sanitize the violence even more - shots produce no blood whatsoever and dead soldiers just sit down. This presentation of war contrasts to the much more grisly reality unfolding every day in Iraq and Afghanistan, like a June suicide attack on the Fallujah City Council in which three Marines, two interpreters and 20 Iraqis, including young children, were killed. Photos by American photojournalist Zoriah depict a horror scene in a small courtyard, dismembered body parts - ears, hands and pieces of skull - spot the ground; one Marine's head looks smeared into the pavement. Zoriah writes of the scene, "There are dying people strewn around like limp dolls along with lifeless bodies of all ages. People are screaming and crying and running as if they have something important to do, only they can't figure out what that important thing could possibly be ... people are literally frantic removing the dead, as if their pace may bring some of them back." It is this violent, realistic quality of combat that has been excised from the game.

Another ploy in the Army's "realism" playbook is what the Army calls "America's Army's Real Heroes." On the "America's Army" web site, visitors can explore the stories of eight combat veterans who received silver or bronze stars, purple hearts, or other awards. Among them is Sgt. Tommy Rieman, an Iraq veteran who used his body to shield his gunner from incoming fire, miraculously surviving bullet wounds to the chest and shoulder. He was selected to be a "Real Hero" and media celebrity for Army recruitment not solely for his courage, but also because he survived his experience. Those who have made the "ultimate sacrifice" are unlikely to be chosen at all, like 22-year-old Specialist William L. McMillan, who was killed on July 8 when his vehicle was destroyed by a roadside bomb. Or 35-year-old Sgt. Steven Chevalier, of Flint, Michigan, father of two, who joined the Army after high school in 1991 because he couldn't find work in Flint. On July 9, in the midst of his third tour in Iraq, Sergeant Chevalier was destroyed by a grenade attack in Samarra. Other Army nonheroes include those who have taken the courageous step of refusing orders in an illegal and immoral war, like Lt. Erin Watada or members of 2nd Platoon, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment who refused patrol orders in Adhamiya, Iraq.

Next meeting of VFP Chapter 56 will take place August 7th at 7:00 PM at the Labor Temple, 830 E Street in Eureka, CA





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LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

If you would like to submit an article, opinion, comment or response to anything you have read which might interest the members of VFP-56, please e-mail it to turtldncer@aol.com, in word format, or mail to Jim Sorter at 1762 Buttermilk Lane, Arcata, CA 95521. Submissions will be included on a first come basis until the newsletter is full. Late arriving submissions will be archived for future issues.

Casualties in Iraq

The Human Cost of Occupation

**Edited by Margaret Griffis : Contact
American Military Casualties in Iraq**

American Deaths	Date	Total	In Combat
Since war began	(3/19/03)	4124	3360
Since "Mission Accomplished"	(5/1/03)	3985	3252
Since Capture of Saddam	(12/13/03)	3663	3054
Since Handover	(6/29/04)	3265	2727
Since Election	(1/31/05)	2687	2454
American Wounded		Official	Estimated
Total Wounded:		30438	23000 - 100000
Latest Fatalities as of July 17, 2008			
Iraqi Deaths Due to U.S. Invasion		1,245,538	
Afghanistan Casualties		560	

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