

# CURRENT NEWS

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# EARLY BIRD



## January 13, 2008

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Item numbers indicate order of appearance only.

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### IRAQ

1. **Iraq Passes Bill On Baathists**  
(*Washington Post*)....Joshua Partlow and Michael Abramowitz  
The Iraqi parliament passed a bill Saturday intended to make it easier for former members of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party to return to government jobs and collect their pensions, a significant achievement for the divided legislature on an issue still regarded with raw emotion by many Iraqis.
2. **Iraq Eases Curb On Ex-Officials Of Baath Party**  
(*New York Times*)....Richard A. Opper Jr. and Steven Lee Myers  
...President Bush, traveling in Kuwait and Bahrain on Saturday, praised the vote, calling it "an important step toward reconciliation."
3. **Bush Meets With Petraeus**  
(*Washington Post*)....Michael Abramowitz  
CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait -- President Bush ventured to this sprawling U.S. base near Iraq on Saturday to begin exploring further troop reductions with his top commander and take something of a victory lap over the country's improved security conditions a year after announcing "the surge."
4. **Bush: Iraq Force Reduction Is On Track**  
(*Los Angeles Times*)....James Gerstenzang  
President Bush said Saturday that the United States was on track to bring home at least 20,000 troops from Iraq by summer, but he emphasized that he was willing to halt the drawdown "in order to make sure we succeed."
5. **Bush Lashes Iran, Lauds Iraq Progress**  
(*Miami Herald*)....Leila Fadel, McClatchy News Service  
President Bush, after meeting with the top two U.S. officials in Iraq and U.S. troops here Saturday, lauded progress in Iraq and again lashed out at Iran.
6. **Hands-On General Is Next No. 2 In Iraq**  
(*Washington Post*)....Ann Scott Tyson  
...Austin, who during the invasion of Iraq in 2003 became the first black general to maneuver an Army division in combat, will replace Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, who has earned high marks for managing the "surge" of nearly 30,000 troops in Iraq.
7. **Normalcy Returns To Baghdad, Block By Block**  
(*Washington Times*)....Richard Tomkins  
Signs of improved security in Baghdad go beyond the obvious dampening of street battles and bombings: It's in the smaller transformations taking place in neighborhoods that the seeds of possibility are starting to take root.
8. **Military Targets Enemy At The Gates**  
(*San Diego Union-Tribune*)....Hamza Hendawi, Associated Press  
Al-Qaeda refuge near capital taken in four-day battle.

## VETERANS

9. **Across America, Deadly Echoes Of Foreign Battles**  
(*New York Times*)....Deborah Sontag and Lizette Alvarez  
...The New York Times found 121 cases in which veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan committed a killing in this country, or were charged with one, after their return from war. In many of those cases, combat trauma and the stress of deployment — along with alcohol abuse, family discord and other attendant problems — appear to have set the stage for a tragedy that was part destruction, part self-destruction. Three-quarters of these veterans were still in the military at the time of the killing.

## ARMY

10. **Army Move Criticized In Abu Ghraib Case**  
(*Long Island Newsday*)....Associated Press  
The revelation that the Army threw out the conviction of the only officer court-martialed in the Abu Ghraib scandal renewed outrage from human rights advocates who complained that not enough military and civilian leaders were held accountable for the abuse of Iraqi prisoners.

## AIR FORCE

11. **F-22 Rises As An Option After F-15 Faults Found**  
(*Fort Worth Star-Telegram*)....Dave Montgomery  
Accelerating production of Lockheed Martin's F-22 Raptor is emerging as a possible option as the Air Force determines how to maintain its overall force structure with the grounding of older-model F-15 fighter jets, a top Air Force general said Friday.
12. **Sitting At Budget Controls, Official Throttles Program**  
(*Fort Worth Star-Telegram*)....Bob Cox  
Considering Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England's résumé, it's hard to imagine anyone saying that he's acting against the interests of the defense industry or the military. But that's what some lobbyists and consultants in Washington have been saying.

## MARINE CORPS

13. **Arrest Warrant Issued In Dead Marine's Case**  
(*Washington Post*)....Unattributed  
Authorities issued an arrest warrant Saturday for a Marine corporal wanted in the death of a pregnant colleague, whose burnt remains were excavated from a fire pit in his back yard.
14. **Marine's Family Says Authorities Slow To Act**  
(*San Diego Union-Tribune*)....Mike Baker, Associated Press  
For months after a pregnant 20-year-old Marine accused a colleague of rape, her family says, she continued to work alongside her alleged attacker and endured harassment at Camp Lejeune. In the weeks after she disappeared, they believe, the sheriff's department was slow to act.

## AFGHANISTAN

15. **Afghan Police Struggle To Work A Rough Beat**  
(*New York Times*)....C. J. Chivers  
...In early December, Colonel McAteer, the American commander, augmented the firebase with most of his battalion's Company B — more than two more platoons.
16. **Dutch Troops Die In Afghanistan**  
(*Washington Post*)....Unattributed  
Two Dutch soldiers were killed in a clash with militants in Afghanistan, the Netherlands' Defense Ministry said. About 1,650 Dutch are serving in Uruzgan province as part of the NATO effort there. Since their mission began last year, 14 Dutch troops have died.

## IRAN

17. **Iran Urges Agency To Settle Atomic Case**  
(*New York Times*)....Reuters  
Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, told the visiting chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency on Saturday that Iran's nuclear case should be handled by the I.A.E.A. and not the United Nations Security Council, which has imposed two rounds of sanctions on Tehran.
18. **Ahmadinejad Losing Grip On Iran's Guards**  
(*London Sunday Telegraph*)....Gethin Chamberlain and Kay Biouki  
Hardliners bent on confrontation with the West are presenting President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran with a serious challenge to his authority.
19. **Iran's Revolutionary Guard In Secret Iraq Talks With US**  
(*London Sunday Times*)....Marie Colvin  
The head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps slipped into the green zone of Baghdad last month to press Tehran's hardline position over the terms of the current talks with American officials, it was claimed last week.

## MIDEAST

20. **\$20B Saudi Arms Deal**  
(*New York Post*)....Associated Press  
The Bush administration will notify Congress Monday of its intent to sell \$20 billion in weapons, including precision-guided bombs, to Saudi Arabia, moving up the announcement to coincide with the president's arrival in Riyadh.

## PAKISTAN

21. **Scotland Yard Believes Al-Qaeda Assassinated Benazir Bhutto**  
(*London Sunday Times*)....Christina Lamb  
British officials have revealed that evidence amassed by Scotland Yard detectives points towards Al-Qaeda militants being responsible for the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

## EUROPE

22. **U.S. Aid To Weapons Scientists Off Mark**  
(*Chicago Tribune*)....Unattributed  
A U.S. economic aid program to keep Russian scientists from selling weapons information apparently funneled much of the money to scientists who never claimed to have a background in nuclear, chemical or biological programs, a congressional report said Friday.

## INTELLIGENCE

23. **Intelligence Chief Couches Reference To Waterboarding As 'Torture'**  
(*Washington Post*)....Associated Press  
The nation's intelligence chief says that waterboarding "would be torture" if used against him, or if someone under interrogation was taking water into his lungs.

## BUSINESS

24. **Repairs Could Snag Blackwater Probe**  
(*Boston Globe*)....Lara Jakes Jordan and Matt Apuzzo, Associated Press  
Blackwater Worldwide repaired and repainted its trucks immediately after a deadly September shooting in Baghdad, making it difficult to determine whether enemy gunfire provoked the attack, according to people familiar with the government's investigation of the incident.
25. **Lockheed Helicopter Contract Hits Hurdle**  
(*Wall Street Journal*)....August Cole

...According to people familiar with the situation, John Young, the Pentagon's top weapons buyer, called for an unusual Saturday meeting with senior Lockheed officials to discuss the company's attempts at building 28 highly modified helicopters for White House use.

## POW/MIA

26. **Hope Endures For Families Of Missing Troops**

*(Houston Chronicle)*....Alexis Grant

It's been more than 50 years since David Velasco's older brother was reported missing during the Korean War, but he still harbors hope that Sgt. Frank Velasco's remains will be returned home.

## POLL

27. **Economy Ties Iraq As Top Concern**

*(Miami Herald)*....Alan Fram, Associated Press

The faltering economy has caught up with the Iraq War as people's top worry, a national poll suggests, with the rapid turnabout already showing up on the presidential campaign trail and in maneuvering between President Bush and Congress.

## OPINION

28. **Why Al-Qaeda Is Losing**

*(Washington Post)*....Gary Anderson

The conventional wisdom is that al-Qaeda is making a comeback from its rout in Afghanistan. Many point to its success in killing Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan and to its support of Islamic insurgents there as evidence. Not so. Al-Qaeda is waning.

29. **A War Report Discredited**

*(Boston Globe)*....Jeff Jacoby

...Hundreds of news outlets, to say nothing of antiwar activists and lawmakers, publicized the astonishing figure, which was more than 10 times the death toll estimated by other sources. (The Iraqi health ministry, for example, put the mortality level through June 2006 at 50,000.)

Washington Post  
January 13, 2008  
Pg. 1

## 1. Iraq Passes Bill On Baathists

*Plan Would Ease Limits on Former Hussein Followers*

By Joshua Partlow and Michael Abramowitz, Washington Post Foreign Service

The agreement marks the passage of the first of the legislative benchmarks, a series of goals the U.S. government had once championed but largely ceased advocating publicly after months of delay, frustration and inaction.

President Bush, in Bahrain on an eight-day trip through the Middle East, and some Iraqi officials described the agreement as an important boost for the prospects of reconciliation between the country's marginalized Sunni Muslim minority and its Shiite Muslim majority, which now dominates Iraqi politics.

The legislation seeks to redress the first order issued by the Coalition Provisional Authority in 2003, the controversial decision that drove thousands of Baath Party members from their jobs and alienated them from Iraq's political process. That decision, along with a move to disband the Iraqi army, is widely believed to have fueled the Sunni insurgency that proved so deadly in the following years.

Bush hailed the agreement as "an important sign that the leaders in that country must work together to meet the aspirations of the Iraqi people."

At Camp Arifjan in Kuwait, Bush met for the first time in four months with Gen. David H. Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, the top American military and civilian officials in Iraq. Bush said the U.S. military was "on track" to achieve its plan of reducing troop strength in Iraq from 20 combat brigades to 15 by the middle of the summer, down to about 130,000

soldiers, or roughly the level last January before he announced the troop "surge." About 160,000 U.S. troops are currently in Iraq.

Bush and Petraeus discussed various scenarios in which even more troops might be pulled out, but both cautioned that it was too early to reach a definitive judgment. Some Pentagon officials are eager to withdraw troops faster in order to lessen the strain on the Army, but Bush and Petraeus appeared skeptical of drawing down too quickly.

A final decision will probably come in March, when Petraeus is scheduled to deliver another report to Congress on conditions in Iraq. "If he didn't want to continue the drawdown, that's fine with me," Bush told reporters afterward. "I said to the general, 'If you want to slow her down, fine; it's up to you.'"

The assessment of Iraq's progress probably also will rely heavily on political developments such as Saturday's vote in parliament. Although the agreement was widely praised, some Iraqi legislators saw the bill as motivated by the same punitive spirit that they felt guided the initial purge of Hussein's government after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003.

The approval of the "accountability and justice law," with barely more than half the legislators present, means the legislation moves to the country's three-member Presidential Council for final ratification.

"It's a good step for many reasons," said Falah Hassan Shanshal, who leads the parliamentary committee overseeing the legislation and is a member of the Shiite party loyal to influential cleric Moqtada al-Sadr. "First, it condemns all the crimes carried out by the Baath Party and its bloody regime. And this law will allow us to search for and detect every single person who committed a crime against Iraqis."

Supporters of the measure say it is intended to ease the restrictions that prevented former Baathists from holding government jobs. Shanshal acknowledged that certain people joined the Baath Party not for ideological reasons but out of necessity, and for people who have not committed crimes, "it is possible for them to return to public life."

When the U.S. military overthrew Hussein in 2003, the first order of business for the Coalition Provisional Authority was to disband the Baath Party that Hussein had fashioned into his personal empire over more than three decades in power.

CPA Order 1, or the "De-Baathification of Iraqi Society," ordered members of the Baath Party's top four echelons "removed from their positions and banned from future employment in the public sector." The number of Baathists purged is in dispute, but Ali al-Lami, spokesman for the current de-Baathification commission, said 150,000 people were removed between May and September 2003.

Since early 2004, when the de-Baathification commission began its work overseeing who could come back, about 102,000 former Baathists have returned to their jobs, Lami said. Existing rules prohibit members from the top three levels from government work but allowed people on the fourth level to return in some circumstances, he said.

It remains unclear how many former Baath Party members would be eligible to return under the new legislation. Lami estimated that 3,500 people from the third-highest Baathist rank, or Shubah members, would be allowed to apply for pension payments but would still be kept from their jobs. About 13,000 people from the fourth rank, known as Firqa members, would be eligible to return, but he expected that many would not.

"Most of them are either working outside the country

and they don't want to go back to Iraq, or they're afraid somebody will take revenge on them or they got involved with the militant groups," Lami said. "Because for two years, we have been demanding that they come to the de-Baathification commission, but there was no response."

The new measure would also prohibit Baathists who worked in Hussein's security services from returning to jobs, as well as ban their return to some of the most influential agencies, such as the Interior Ministry, Defense Ministry and Foreign Ministry, Shanshal said.

"There is potential with most laws in Iraq right now for sectarian abuse, and certainly that potential would be there as well, which is why the implementation is going to be important," a U.S. official in Baghdad said this month on condition of anonymity.

The new measure could lead to a new purge of members of the current Iraqi government, Lami said, including about 7,000 officers in the Interior Ministry. Even influential Iraqi security force officials who used to be Baathists could face removal.

"The commander of the Baghdad security plan and his assistants, according to the new law, they should retire," he said.

Many Iraqis say the concept of de-Baathification is hampered by the prevailing assumption that anyone who achieved a high rank in the party was by definition complicit in crimes during the Hussein era.

"There's no question that the original de-Baathification program basically looked at the entire senior leadership of the Baath Party and made a collective judgment. The intent of this law is to roll back part of that but not all of it," said the U.S. official, who was not authorized to speak publicly on the topic.

"So you know, is it making a collective judgment

about people who were higher up in the Baath Party? Yeah, it is. I still don't think that that means it doesn't represent political progress. Because it does represent political progress. This is certainly one of those cases where we shouldn't let the perfect be the enemy of the good," the official said.

During the sometimes bitter negotiations over the measure in recent weeks, strong objections were raised by parliament members from Sadr's party, who regarded the proposed legislation as offering too many concessions to the murderous former administration and by those sympathetic to Baathists who felt it did not offer real concessions to the Sunni minority that was marginalized after the war.

During the reading of the legislation in parliament Saturday, members of the Sunni bloc led by Saleh al-Mutlaq walked out, according to an aide to the deputy speaker of parliament. Some Sunnis wanted no restrictions on former Baath Party members.

But members of the largest Sunni coalition in parliament agreed to the new measure. Adnan al-Dulaimi, the group's leader, said the legislation was fair to low-ranking former Baathists and allowed the higher-ranking Shubah members to receive pensions, "which I consider good and acceptable."

"The current rules, on the other hand, deprived a huge number of Iraqi people who didn't commit any crimes and didn't commit any action that violated the law and the constitution," he said.

Some Iraqi officials believe the new measure institutionalizes a punishment against people who acquiesced to Hussein at a time when publicly opposing him could have resulted in a death sentence.

"The problem is that the new leaders have gone in the

direction of revenge and vengeance, rather than going into healing those wounds," said Izzat Shabender, a Shiite who is on the de-Baathification committee in parliament. "Even if this law is passed, it cannot achieve the goal -- which is opening a new chapter with the Baathists... . It's got nothing to do with reconciliation. The culture of reconciliation does not exist in the heads of the Iraqi leaders."

But with parliament nearly paralyzed by infighting, any agreement was something many Iraqis found heartening. As the prominent Shiite politician Humam Hamoudi said, "The most important thing about this new law is that it is an Iraqi law."

*Abramowitz reported from Camp Arifjan. Special correspondents Saad al-Izzi, Zaid Sabah and K.I. Ibrahim in Baghdad contributed to this report.*

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January 13, 2008  
Pg. 1

## **2. Iraq Eases Curb On Ex-Officials Of Baath Party**

By Richard A. Oppel Jr. and Steven Lee Myers

BAGHDAD — The Iraqi Parliament passed a bill on Saturday that would allow some former officials from Saddam Hussein's party to fill government positions but would impose a strict ban on others. The legislation is the first of the major so-called political benchmark measures to pass after months of American pressure for progress.

The measure, which is expected to be approved as a law by the presidential council, was described by its backers as opening the door for the reinstatement of thousands of low-level Baath Party members barred from office after the 2003 invasion. Since then, the Bush administration has urged the Iraqi government to

reintegrate many officials in order to help mend the deep rifts between Sunni Arabs who used to control the government under Mr. Hussein and the Shiites who now dominate politics here.

However, it was unclear on Saturday how far the legislation would go toward soothing Sunni Arabs, because serious disagreements emerged in the hours after the vote about how much the law would actually do.

While the measure would reinstate many former Baathists, some political leaders said it would also force thousands of other former party members out of current government jobs and into retirement — especially in the security forces, where American military officials have worked hard to increase the role of Sunnis. One member of Iraq's current de-Baathification committee said the law could even push 7,000 active Interior Ministry employees into retirement.

President Bush, traveling in Kuwait and Bahrain on Saturday, praised the vote, calling it "an important step toward reconciliation." And he said that to consolidate progress in the country in the past year, he was prepared to slow or even halt American troop reductions beyond those already planned to bring levels back to what they were before the so-called troop surge that began early in 2006. In doing so, he set the stage for renewed political debate over the war, both in Congress and on the presidential campaign trail.

In Baghdad, Salim Abdullah al-Jibouri, a senior official from the largest Sunni Arab bloc in Parliament, Tawafiq, said many lawmakers from the bloc supported the new legislation. But only slightly more than half of the 275 members of Parliament were present to vote. And Mohammed al-Diani, a member of the hard-line Sunni National Dialogue Council, said the measure would still

restrict "many scientists, professors, doctors, engineers and other competent men."

Some Shiite officials praised the legislation because they said strong curbs on former Baathists would remain in place. "They will not be allowed to get important posts or take part in the political process," said Bahaa al-Araji, a leader of the bloc of Shiite lawmakers loyal to the cleric Moktada al-Sadr, describing the more senior former party members. "There will be many restrictions."

In many cases, the legislation would allow for pensions to be paid to former Baathists who are blocked from returning to government jobs. Beyond that, it was unclear how many of the former officials would be kept out of office or allowed back in.

One Shiite politician, who spoke on condition that his name not be used, said the new law could forcibly retire up to 27,000 former Baathists, who would receive pensions.

Other officials said the legislation could allow from 13,000 to 31,000 former Baathists back into the government. "The law allows a lot of them to come back to their jobs, but those who were responsible in the old regime, the highest ranking ones, they will be locked out," said Mahmoud Othman, a prominent Kurdish lawmaker.

He said that under the new law, only 3,500 former Baath Party members would be prevented from serving in the government, allowing more than 30,000 to hold government jobs.

Former members of the Fedayeen paramilitary force and those found by a new de-Baathification committee to have committed serious crimes against the Iraqi people would be barred from government jobs and would not receive pensions, he said.

Mr. Othman also said the law would abolish the old de-Baathification committee,

created by the Iraqi Governing Council before the nation had established a parliament. Under the new law, he said, Baathists would be vetted by a different committee created by appointees selected by Parliament. Unlike the old committee, the new committee's decisions will be subject to appeal by the Ministry of Justice. Lawmakers loyal to Mr. Sadr, however, said they did not expect the committee to change all that much.

"The only thing I am concerned about is that this has come late, because now the other side may not be able to respond very positively," said Mr. Othman, referring to some Sunni Arab politicians who opposed the new law. "Many were ready to respond one or two years ago, but now it will be more difficult."

A spokesperson at the United States embassy in Baghdad declined to comment on the legislation, saying that American officials were studying the bill.

Hours before the vote, after meeting in Kuwait with President Bush and Gen. David H. Petraeus, Ryan C. Crocker, the American ambassador to Iraq, said there were increasing signs of political reconciliation.

"Reconciliation is more than national legislation," he said. "It is also what we're seeing in the provinces and around the country. There is more political activity. There is more cross-sectarian political activity."

Before traveling to Bahrain later on Saturday, Mr. Bush said he would be open to slowing or halting major troop reductions to keep progress going in Iraq, particularly noting the sharp reduction in attacks on American troops and Iraqi civilians in recent months.

"We cannot take the achievements of 2007 for granted," he said. "We must do all we can to ensure that 2008 brings even greater progress for Iraq's young democracy."

He said additional troop withdrawals beyond those planned through this summer would depend solely on conditions in Iraq, which were being reviewed by General Petraeus, the top American commander in the country. During an 80-minute meeting, the president instructed the general, who is scheduled to report to Congress in March or April on suggested troop levels, to make no recommendation that would jeopardize improvements in security.

"My attitude is, if he didn't want to continue the drawdown, that's fine with me in order to make sure we succeed, see," Mr. Bush told reporters inside a command center that oversees Army operations in a region stretching from Kenya to Kazakhstan. "I said to the general, 'If you want to slow her down, fine.' It's up to you."

On General Petraeus's recommendation, Mr. Bush in September approved the withdrawal of one Army brigade and one Marine expeditionary unit in December, or roughly 5,700 troops, and four more Army brigades and two Marine battalions by July, effectively returning the American troop level to about 130,000, where it was before the beginning of the so-called troop surge in Iraq a year ago.

General Petraeus later said that he and his commanders, including Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, had begun to consider a range of scenarios that would determine the timing and pace of any additional withdrawals, creating contingencies for both improvements and setbacks to the current security situation.

Mr. Bush arrived in Kuwait on the fourth day of an eight-day trip that began with a visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories. The first leg focused on his efforts to broker an Israeli-Palestinian peace treaty, which he said he expected to be signed before he

stepped down a year from now.

Increasingly, Mr. Bush seems to be racing against the dwindling months of his term. Speaking to more than 3,000 soldiers from the Third Army at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait, he acknowledged that the war in Iraq would remain unfinished. Success, he said, will require an active American effort "that outlasts my presidency."

But the war's critics in Congress used the first anniversary of the troop increase, announced last Jan. 10, to renew their demands for a substantial change in strategy, arguing that the military successes had not accomplished the goals the president himself had set. Those included an Iraqi takeover of security by November, provincial elections and passage of legislation intended to show reconciliation among the main ethnic and religious sects, like the one passed on Saturday.

Although some Iraqi and American officials were praising the parliamentary vote on Saturday as an important first step toward that goal, disagreements over its eventual effects continued through the day.

Ali Faisal, a senior member of the current de-Baathification committee and an aide to Ahmad Chalabi, an influential Shiite politician who had worked against previous American efforts to ease Baathists back into government, laid out one of the most extreme versions of what could happen under the new legislation. He said it could force thousands of employees in the Ministries of Defense and Interior, as well as other security institutions, into retirement, albeit with government pensions.

He said about 3,500 former Baath Party members who served in the third-highest rung of the party's hierarchy would be newly eligible for pensions, but would not be allowed to hold government jobs. Another 13,000 who

served in the fourth rung would be eligible for government pensions or jobs, though not for security-related jobs, he said.

In the early stages of the occupation, American officials had favored purging Baath Party members from government rolls. But the Shiite- and Kurdish-dominated government formed under the auspices of the American occupation administration took a very hard line on de-Baathification, forcing thousands of professionals and skilled technocrats out of government.

Moreover, the move fueled Sunni mistrust of the government and helped drive the early stages of the Sunni insurgency. American officials came to believe it was crucial to reintegrate many former Baathists into the government.

While the legislation would be the first major new law sought by the Bush administration intended to help reconcile Iraq's warring factions, other so-called benchmark laws continue to be stalled. Those include measures that would allow provincial elections, contemplate constitutional changes sought by Sunnis, and spell out rules governing the development and distribution of the country's huge oil reserves.

*Richard A. Oppel Jr. reported from Baghdad, and Steven Lee Myers from Kuwait and Bahrain. Reporting was contributed by Solomon Moore, Qais Mizher, Abeer Mohammed, Karim Hilmi, and Ahmad Fadam from Baghdad.*

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### **3. Bush Meets With Petraeus**

*In Kuwait, President Seems to Claim Vindication for 'Surge'*  
By Michael Abramowitz,  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Bush seemed anxious to avoid another moment similar

to one in 2003 soon after the fall of Saddam Hussein, when he appeared on the USS Abraham Lincoln below a giant sign reading "Mission Accomplished." In a statement to reporters here, Bush spoke of the difficult challenges ahead, such as defeating the insurgent group al-Qaeda in Iraq and reaching political reconciliation among Iraq's feuding sects.

But he also seemed to claim some vindication for his decision to send an additional 30,000 soldiers to Iraq last year to help quell spiraling violence. Bush pursued his policy in the face of questions not only from Democrats but also from many Republicans and generals at the Pentagon.

"A lot of people thought that I was going to recommend pulling out or pulling back," Bush said. "Quite the contrary; I recommended increasing the number of forces so they could get more in the fight, because I believed all along if people are given a chance to live in a free society, they'll do the hard work necessary to live in a free society."

"Iraq is now a different place from one year ago," Bush said after his first face-to-face meeting in four months with Gen. David H. Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker. Bush and Petraeus discussed the possibility of further troop reductions later this year, but no decisions were made.

Bush then appeared briefly before several thousand soldiers gathered on bleachers in the middle of this large Army base in the desert south of Kuwait City. A giant "Hoo-ah!" greeted the commander in chief as he thanked the troops for their service and vowed victory in Iraq.

"There is no doubt in my mind that we will succeed," Bush said, standing near a giant American flag hanging from a crane. "There is no doubt in my mind when history was written, the final page will say: 'Victory was achieved by

the United States of America for the good of the world.'"

Bush's visit to this Army base, between state visits with the leaders of Kuwait and Bahrain, is the only stop of his eight-day trip to the Middle East devoted solely to Iraq, the central project of his presidency. Whether Bush succeeds in creating a stable democracy remains in question, and debate has broken out among military experts over whether the decline in violence is a temporary lull or a permanent feature of life in Iraq.

Petraeus reported at the end of last year that the number of weekly attacks in Iraq had dropped 60 percent since June, to roughly 500 a week by late December. A total of 901 U.S. soldiers died in Iraq in 2007, compared with 822 in 2006, according to Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, an independent organization that tracks casualties.

As the Jan. 10 anniversary of the surge announcement approached, many Democrats ramped up criticism of what they see as a lack of progress on the political front. They argued that the troop increase has failed to achieve one of its principal objectives: Iraq's politicians, they say, have not used this period of reduced violence to make necessary political compromises, such as reaching an agreement on legislation about sharing oil revenue.

In one sample of this critique, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) said this week that political progress remains "out of reach" in Iraq while the Baghdad government "has done so little to achieve stability and it has been the most lethal year yet for American troops."

Bush seemed to catch a break Saturday when the Iraqi parliament passed a key piece of legislation intended to help restore government jobs to people who had been in

Hussein's Baath Party. U.S. officials have been pressing Iraqi lawmakers to enact such a law to help heal sectarian rifts.

Asked about the political benchmarks, Bush said Iraqis have "a lot more work to do," but he suggested the criticism was overstated, noting that the Iraqi parliament is passing laws and reconciliation is taking place at a local level.

"They passed a pension law, which, of course, got a huge yawn in our press," Bush said. "We can't reform our own pension system, like Social Security, but they did."

During his visit, Bush kept up his fierce criticism of Iran, which he has offered at almost every stop of his trip. "Iran's role in fomenting violence" in Iraq, he said, "has been exposed. Iranian agents are in our custody, and we are learning more about how Iran has supported extremist groups with training and lethal aid."

In a briefing afterward, Petraeus and Crocker said they remain uncertain about whether Iran has pulled back support for the Shiite militia groups that U.S. officials blame for much of the violence in Iraq. Crocker said that he is willing to meet with his Iranian counterpart at any point but that the Iranian envoy was not committed to a fourth meeting to discuss security in Iraq.

Petraeus said attacks involving roadside explosive devices linked to Iran appeared to have been on the upswing in the past 10 days, although he also said attacks using certain other weapons associated with Iran had declined.

"What we are seeing is what might be characterized as mixed signs or mixed indicators," he said.

Los Angeles Times  
January 13, 2008

#### **4. Bush: Iraq Force Reduction Is On Track**

*The president, speaking at a U.S. base in Kuwait, says at least 20,000 troops will be brought home by July -- unless*

*commanders want to slow the drawdown.*

By James Gerstenzang, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

MANAMA, Bahrain —President Bush said Saturday that the United States was on track to bring home at least 20,000 troops from Iraq by summer, but he emphasized that he was willing to halt the drawdown "in order to make sure we succeed."

After meeting in Kuwait with his top commander in Iraq, Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, and the U.S. ambassador to Baghdad, Ryan Crocker, the president presented a mixed picture of the conditions one year after he called for sending additional troops to Iraq.

Bush said that extremist militias had been disrupted but remained a concern. "We cannot take the achievements of 2007 for granted," he said, referring to the reduction in violence toward the end of 2007, after the deadlier months at the start of the year.

With a stop at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait, the president was as close to Iraq as he is likely to get on his eight-day trip through the Middle East and Persian Gulf, unless he makes a detour to the war zone. The supply base is about 100 miles from Iraq.

Speaking to about 3,000 U.S. troops who had gathered in the open on a chilly morning, Bush delivered a seven-minute pep talk, saying, "There is no doubt in my mind that we will succeed."

He told the cheering troops that when the history of the early 21st century is written, "the final page will say: 'Victory was achieved by the United States of America for the good of the world.'"

Administration officials have spoken for several weeks about their goal of reducing troop levels by five brigades by July, from a high of 20. That would bring the number of U.S. troops in Iraq below 140,000, from the 158,000 in the country at the end of



December. There were about 130,000 U.S. troops in Iraq a year ago when Bush announced he was sending more.

Bush told reporters that, about the reductions, he had told Petraeus, "If you want to slow her down, fine; it's up to you."

Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker provided the president with an in-person update ahead of their scheduled report to Congress in March on conditions in the country. Bush speaks frequently with the two by video over secure lines.

The general later told reporters that he was seeing "mixed signs" about conditions in Iraq.

He discussed a current operation against Al Qaeda in Iraq, an insurgent group that the administration says is led by foreigners, cautioning that to characterize the offensive as a final push "would be premature."

Petraeus also raised anew concerns about what the administration says is Iran's support of anti-U.S. forces. He said that senior leaders in Tehran had told Iraq's top officials that Iran would stop "the funding, arming, training and directing of militia extremists," but the United States was waiting to see that promise kept.

And Petraeus said that although certain methods of attacking U.S. troops had been curtailed, strikes using "explosively formed penetrators" had gone up in the last 10 days "by a factor of two or three."

The United States has repeatedly accused Iran of providing the armor-piercing bombs, among the deadliest that U.S. troops face, to the Mahdi Army, a Shiite Muslim militia.

Crocker said he could not "draw any conclusions that the Iranians have made a fundamental shift" away from allegedly supporting extremist groups in Iraq.

Drawing attention to what

the Bush administration alleges is Iran's role in Iraq is a central element of the president's travels among largely Sunni Muslim nations wary of Shiite-led Iran.

Bush later flew to Bahrain, the first visit here by a U.S. president. He is scheduled to visit United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt before returning to Washington on Wednesday.

Bahrain has played an important role in U.S. policy in the Persian Gulf, housing the headquarters of the Navy's 5th Fleet. It has long been counted in the camp of reliable moderate partners in an unstable region. Two years ago, it signed a free-trade agreement with Washington.

But last month it was roiled by a week of clashes between Shiite Muslim opposition groups and forces of the Sunni-dominated government. The street fighting, sparked by the death of an activist, was some of the worst since a Shiite uprising in the 1990s.

At a welcoming ceremony here, Bush waved a ceremonial sword, grinning sheepishly alongside King Hamed ibn Isa Khalifa, who appeared more accustomed to holding his sword at arm's length. The president, seeking to promote democracy in the region, noted that Bahrain had held two elections since 2000, and in 2006 a woman was elected for the first time to parliament.

Miami Herald  
January 13, 2008

### **5. Bush Lashes Iran, Lauds Iraq Progress**

*President Bush -- on a peace-building trip to the Middle East -- again hit out at Iran, accusing the nation of fomenting violence in Iraq.*  
By Leila Fadel, McClatchy News Service

KUWAIT CITY -- President Bush, after meeting with the top two U.S. officials in Iraq and U.S. troops here Saturday, lauded progress in

Iraq and again lashed out at Iran.

While his Mideast trip is aimed mainly at promoting peace between Palestinians and Israelis, the president also seems to be drumming up support in the region against Iran, blamed by his administration for fomenting unrest in Iraq and, at least until recently, for dabbling in nuclear weapons.

"Iran's role in fomenting violence has been exposed," Bush said at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait's biggest U.S. troop base. "Iranian agents are in our custody, and we are learning more about how Iran has supported extremist groups with training and lethal aid."

Army Gen. David Petraeus, the top U.S. general in Iraq, who briefed the president on Iraq along with U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker, also spoke out against Iranian intervention.

"Iran's senior-most leaders promised Iraq that they would stop funding, arming, training and directing of militia extremists and other elements in Iraq that were creating security challenges," Petraeus said. "We are waiting, frankly, to see that carried out."

Petraeus, who'd said recently that attacks with weapons believed to be from Iran were down, raised a renewed worry Saturday. Over the past 10 days, he said, blasts involving explosively formed projectiles, or EFPs, an armor piercing roadside bomb believed to be imported from Iran, have increased sharply.

Bush's appraisal of Iraq was far more upbeat.

"Iraq is now a different place from one year ago," he said. "Much hard work remains, but levels of violence are significantly reduced."

"Hope is returning to Baghdad, and hope is returning to towns and villages throughout the country," he said.

The president singled out for praise a U.S. program that pays mostly Sunni volunteers

\$300 a month to protect their neighborhoods and hold al Qaeda at bay. The program is known as Concerned Local Citizens or Awakening groups. They now number more than 80,000 people, mostly armed.

Awakening groups are also raising concern in the Shiite-led government, however, over their potential to turn on it. Instead, Baghdad is trying to absorb Awakening forces into civil service jobs and the security forces.

Bush said that he has no plans to reduce troops faster than the five-brigade withdrawal planned by July.

That would bring the troop level to the pre-surge level of 130,000.

Bush offered some coaxing support to Iraqi leaders Saturday shortly before Iraq's parliament passed a long-awaited, U.S.-backed law that lets former Baath Party members, who are mostly Sunnis, participate in the Shiite-dominated government.

"I'm not making excuses for a government," Bush said of the leadership in Iraq, "but to go from a tyranny to a democracy is virtually impossible."

"Have they done enough? No... Our message is very clear: It's in your interest that you pass good law."

*Special Correspondent Sahar Issa contributed to this report.*

Washington Post  
January 13, 2008

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### **6. Hands-On General Is Next No. 2 In Iraq**

*Austin Will Take Over Daily Operations*

By Ann Scott Tyson,  
Washington Post Staff Writer

A physically imposing but modest man who is little known outside Army circles, Austin's hands-on style reflects a connection with front-line troops and a breadth of combat leadership that senior officers say make him ideal for his new job: running the day-to-day

operations of the Iraq war.

Whereas the top U.S. commander, Gen. David H. Petraeus, must serve as much as a diplomat and public face of the war as a military leader, Austin must master the gritty details of Iraq's battlefield geometry -- constantly prioritizing the use of dozens of U.S. and Iraqi combat units as well as aircraft, unmanned drones and other military forces to carry out the U.S. strategy.

Austin, who during the invasion of Iraq in 2003 became the first black general to maneuver an Army division in combat, will replace Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, who has earned high marks for managing the "surge" of nearly 30,000 troops in Iraq.

These days at his Fort Bragg headquarters, Austin is poring over the same daily briefings Odierno sees, while working to make sure his staff is electronically wired to battlefield commanders and to agencies in Washington, all with the goal of building "some sustainable momentum" in Iraq, he said in a radio interview last week.

Still, Austin, who has played a central role in running the military's combat operations since 2001, predicts grueling years of conflict ahead -- in Iraq, Afghanistan or elsewhere. "We're in it for the long haul. But it's a tough, tough road ahead," he told WFNC in Fayetteville, N.C.

Austin declined to be interviewed for this story.

Austin, 54, was a pivotal figure in the invasion of Iraq. Leading the forward headquarters of the 3rd Infantry Division as it spearheaded the march to Baghdad, he gained a reputation for showing up unexpectedly in the heat of battle. He received a Silver Star for gallantry in combat.

"Lloyd's approach is, 'I am a soldier like everyone else,'" said retired Army Brig. Gen. Bill Weber, a fellow 3rd Infantry Division commander

during the invasion. "His style is flak vest, Kevlar and a ton of ammunition, and he's a big, strapping guy and can carry it," Weber said of Austin, who stands 6-foot-4 and was a star high school basketball player in Thomasville, Ga.

Austin also stood out for his strategic thinking: When the 3rd Infantry met unexpected resistance and essentially ran out of combat forces to carry on the armored thrust to Baghdad, he was central to formulating a new plan that brought in other brigades to relieve his troops and maintain the momentum critical to the campaign's success, Weber recalled.

Within months after Baghdad fell, Austin was rewarded with command of the 10th Mountain Division in Afghanistan, one of a nonstop series of demanding assignments in recent years. That was followed by a posting from September 2005 to October 2006 as the chief of staff of U.S. Central Command, which oversees all U.S. forces in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Horn of Africa.

"He's one of the best troop leaders we have," said Army Maj. Gen. Anthony Cucolo, who recalls that Austin hated sitting behind a desk when they served together in Afghanistan. "He goes everywhere he can. He will be standing on the walls at Shkin fire base [on the Pakistani border] to get a feel for what goes on there. He will fly to the deepest regions of Konar province to meet with village elders... He'd never ask his soldiers to do anything he wouldn't do."

In his current job as commander of the Army's 18th Airborne Corps -- which includes the 82nd Airborne Division and other units, with a total of 35,000 troops -- Austin recently led troops parachuting from aircraft as part of intensive preparations for the Iraq deployment.

"He was the first off the ramp," as is traditional for the

senior paratrooper on the aircraft, said Col. Ben Hodges, who jumped with the general as his chief of staff at the Corps.

Subordinates say the personable, soft-spoken Georgian has high expectations and a side he refers to as "the evil twin." "When you're really screwing up, the evil twin can come out," said one Army general who worked for Austin. "So he can be tough but never unreasonable."

They also praise Austin for his personal loyalty, saying he travels long distances to pin insignia at promotions and calls out of the blue to check in on old comrades. "He cares all the way down to the bone marrow," said retired Army Maj. Gen. Dorian Anderson, a West Point classmate who played rugby with Austin and graduated with him in 1975.

The fifth of six children, Austin does not come from a military family but is a distant relative of the first black man to attend West Point, 2nd Lt. Henry O. Flipper, who graduated in 1877, Anderson said. As a black soldier, Anderson said, "we all accept that doing 120 percent is not always a bad thing. He's kind of driven by that."

Austin has served more than three decades in the Army, but as an avid fisherman he sometimes jokes about leaving. "His inside joke is, 'I can't wait to go run a bait shop,'" Weber said.

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January 13, 2008  
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## **7. Normalcy Returns To Baghdad, Block By Block**

By Richard Tomkins, The Washington Times

BAGHDAD — Signs of improved security in Baghdad go beyond the obvious dampening of street battles and bombings: It's in the smaller transformations taking place in neighborhoods that the seeds of

possibility are starting to take root.

"When we meet and talk, we speak about how we must hold together in the future, and if we don't, the future won't be so good," said Thayia Aziz Kudam, a neighborhood leader in the East Rashid area of southern Baghdad.

"Gangs, militias, al Qaeda — all of us, we want them to go away. We don't want them."

East Rashid was best known from 2006 until last fall for sectarian violence and al Qaeda's campaign of terror. It has long been a mixed community, with Sunni Muslims in the majority but with Shi'ites and Christians as well.

Today, a trickle of returning refugee families — about 400 since the end of October, according to one district leader — is greeted by large banners reading "Welcome back" and "We are all one."

The growing sense of hope and confidence is based on the establishment of security checkpoints by the Iraqi National Police and Iraqi Security Volunteers — an armed, neighborhood-watch-type organization being established across the capital.

Also helping is the frequent presence of patrols by U.S. and Iraqi military forces.

The Americans, members of the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Cavalry, Stryker Regiment, are based in an abandoned Chaldean Catholic seminary at a combat operations post dubbed Blackfoot. The seminarians fled in 2006 after al Qaeda beheaded a priest and threatened the rest.

In September and October, the Americans fought fierce battles in East Rashid, facing snipers, mortar attacks and roadside blasts. A long line of photographs on a wall of the Stryker headquarters honors the young soldiers who died in the battle.

"When we first got here, there were memorial services

almost every day," said Sgt. Jim Tripp, who belongs to a psychological-operations unit attached to the Stryker group.

Attacks with improvised explosive devices and snipings still occur, but far less frequently than before, the soldiers say.

Although Mr. Kudam's neighborhood is starting to resemble scenes of a normal life, the streets still are deserted in other parts of East Rashid. The problems are worst near 60th Street — once a major shopping area that became the scene of intense fighting between Iraqi militias and al Qaeda.

Only an occasional pedestrian is seen hurrying across the broad avenue, even now. Neighboring streets are lined with vacant, battle-scarred houses and heaps of rubble and garbage, disturbed only by scavenging dogs.

Farther from 60th Street, however, the streets are filling with people, walking more calmly and shopping at markets that sell everything from vegetables to small electronics.

"It's quieter now; not much shooting anymore," said Omar Mohammed Salem, a 12-year-old whose family moved to East Rashid after being driven from another area of southern Baghdad a year ago.

Many of the returning residents say they would like to see even more police checkpoints, which they consider key to encouraging more of their neighbors to come home and reopen shops and businesses.

That, in turn, will require increased cooperation between the Sunni and Shi'ite factions in East Rashid. Leaders of the two groups meet regularly with local and national police and the Iraqi army to discuss security needs and to resolve conflicts.

At one recent security meeting, Sunni and Shi'ite community leaders took up

seats on opposite sides of a C-shaped table, barely looking at one another. But after two hours of talks, they were eating and chatting together.

"We are all one people," a National Police official told them. "All of us are responsible to God for the blood of the innocent people."

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San Diego Union-Tribune  
January 13, 2008

## **8. Military Targets Enemy At The Gates**

*Al-Qaeda refuge near capital  
taken in four-day battle*

By Hamza Hendawi,  
Associated Press

ZAMBARANIYAH, Iraq — Barely out of a four-day battle, the soldiers scanned palm-dotted farmland from the roof of a small house, kneeling to avoid a sniper's bullet. A pair of Apache gunships hovered above, and the occasional thud of artillery shells shook the ground.

This front line in the U.S. military's fight against al-Qaeda in Iraq lies just 10 miles from the heart of the Iraqi capital.

"This is a road we had not traveled on in nearly a year," said Lt. Col. Mark Solomon, the area's U.S. commander, standing on a dirt lane a dozen yards from the one-story house taken over by his 3rd Infantry Division soldiers. "We are going after the enemy, and we are eliminating him."

Less than a week ago, men from Solomon's unit captured Zambaraniyah, a farming community southeast of Baghdad, after the four-day battle that left one of his soldiers dead and 10 wounded.

Underlining the potency of al-Qaeda's threat in the area — a patchwork of Sunni and Shi'ite farming communities and towns known as the "triangle of death" — the military unleashed some of the Iraq war's heaviest airstrikes Thursday, dropping 40,000 pounds of explosives on al-Qaeda targets just to the east and southeast of

Zambaraniyah.

Al-Qaeda has long been entrenched in the Sunni hinterland south of Baghdad, but its strength there weakened when allied insurgent groups changed sides in recent months to join the Americans in the fight against the terror network.

But al-Qaeda's presence continued in safe havens like Zambaraniyah until a 100-strong force of U.S. infantrymen along with 60 Iraqi army soldiers pushed the terror group out. The troops were backed by Bradley fighting vehicles, helicopter gunships, artillery and rare strafing runs by low-flying F-16s.

Solomon, 40, a West Point graduate, said he believes about 30 al-Qaeda militants were killed in the battle but that at least two or three dozen more were holding out, expecting reinforcements of weapons and men to resume the fight.

"They are off balance now, like a boxer punched hard in the head," said Pedro Maldonado, a 23-year-old native of San Juan, Puerto Rico. He peered through his binoculars from the roof of the house.

"I never thought it could be this tough," Maldonado said of the recent battle. Some of the militants were so close that the Americans could see the flash of their rifles firing.

That a major battle against al-Qaeda should take place so close to the capital and nearly a year after the U.S. military began a large-scale offensive to calm Baghdad and its suburbs suggests that the insurgents are elusive or that they are deeply entrenched.

U.S. commanders say al-Qaeda militants have in recent months fled to the north and northeast of Baghdad to escape stepped-up security operations in the capital, where U.S. commanders say violence is down more than 50 percent, though devastating attacks persist.

But Solomon said al-Qaeda's continued presence south and southeast of Baghdad was largely inconsequential, arguing that taking on the militants had always been planned as the next step after Baghdad became safer.

"It's true that Zambaraniyah is only a few miles away from Baghdad, but al-Qaeda there has not been able to project its influence to Baghdad," he said.

Just how much work ahead was evident in Zambaraniyah.

Solomon sternly warned a small group of reporters that the area remained infested with roadside bombs and they must walk only on ground that already had foot or track marks.

"The enemy is a 100 yards from where we stand, and snipers have taken position in the houses you see some 200 or 300 yards away," he said.

"I believe they are looking at us now," Solomon said after going to the roof. His soldiers, wrapped in heavy jackets and ski masks, burned wood in a metal wash basin to fend off the bitter January cold.

Suddenly, several of the soldiers spotted what they said was a head popping up and down in a field near the house. Tensions rose, and the soldiers scrambled to firing positions. Three soldiers rushed out of the house and into the fields in pursuit.

They found nobody.

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January 13, 2008  
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## **War Torn: Part I 9. Across America, Deadly Echoes Of Foreign Battles**

By Deborah Sontag and Lizette Alvarez

Late one night in the summer of 2005, Matthew Sepi, a 20-year-old Iraq combat veteran, headed out to a 7-Eleven in the seedy Las Vegas neighborhood where he

had settled after leaving the Army.

This particular 7-Eleven sits in the shadow of the Stratosphere casino-hotel in a section of town called the Naked City. By day, the area, littered with malt liquor cans, looks depressed but not menacing. By night, it becomes, in the words of a local homicide detective, “like Falluja.”

Mr. Sepi did not like to venture outside too late. But, plagued by nightmares about an Iraqi civilian killed by his unit, he often needed alcohol to fall asleep. And so it was that night, when, seized by a gut feeling of lurking danger, he slid a trench coat over his slight frame — and tucked an assault rifle inside it.

“Matthew knew he shouldn’t be taking his AK-47 to the 7-Eleven,” Detective Laura Andersen said, “but he was scared to death in that neighborhood, he was military trained and, in his mind, he needed the weapon to protect himself.”

Head bowed, Mr. Sepi scurried down an alley, ignoring shouts about trespassing on gang turf. A battle-weary grenadier who was still legally under-age, he paid a stranger to buy him two tall cans of beer, his self-prescribed treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder.

As Mr. Sepi started home, two gang members, both large and both armed, stepped out of the darkness. Mr. Sepi said in an interview that he spied the butt of a gun, heard a boom, saw a flash and “just snapped.”

In the end, one gang member lay dead, bleeding onto the pavement. The other was wounded. And Mr. Sepi fled, “breaking contact” with the enemy, as he later described it. With his rifle raised, he crept home, loaded 180 rounds of ammunition into his car and drove until police lights flashed behind him.

“Who did I take fire from?” he asked urgently. Wearing his Army camouflage

pants, the diminutive young man said he had been ambushed and then instinctively “engaged the targets.” He shook. He also cried.

“I felt very bad for him,” Detective Andersen said.

Nonetheless, Mr. Sepi was booked, and a local newspaper soon reported: “Iraq veteran arrested in killing.”

Town by town across the country, headlines have been telling similar stories. Lakewood, Wash.: “Family Blames Iraq After Son Kills Wife.” Pierre, S.D.: “Soldier Charged With Murder Testifies About Postwar Stress.” Colorado Springs: “Iraq War Vets Suspected in Two Slayings, Crime Ring.”

Individually, these are stories of local crimes, gut-wrenching postscripts to the war for the military men, their victims and their communities. Taken together, they paint the patchwork picture of a quiet phenomenon, tracing a cross-country trail of death and heartbreak.

The New York Times found 121 cases in which veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan committed a killing in this country, or were charged with one, after their return from war. In many of those cases, combat trauma and the stress of deployment — along with alcohol abuse, family discord and other attendant problems — appear to have set the stage for a tragedy that was part destruction, part self-destruction.

Three-quarters of these veterans were still in the military at the time of the killing. More than half the killings involved guns, and the rest were stabbings, beatings, strangulations and bathtub drownings. Twenty-five

offenders faced murder, manslaughter or homicide charges for fatal car crashes resulting from drunken, reckless or suicidal driving.

About a third of the victims were spouses,

girlfriends, children or other relatives, among them 2-year-old Krisiauna Calaira Lewis, whose 20-year-old father slammed her against a wall when he was recuperating in Texas from a bombing near Falluja that blew off his foot and shook up his brain.

A quarter of the victims were fellow service members, including Specialist Richard Davis of the Army, who was stabbed repeatedly and then set ablaze, his body hidden in the woods by fellow soldiers a day after they all returned from Iraq.

And the rest were acquaintances or strangers, among them Noah P. Gamez, 21, who was breaking into a car at a Tucson motel when an Iraq combat veteran, also 21, caught him, shot him dead and then killed himself outside San Diego with one of several guns found in his car.

#### **Tracking the Killings**

The Pentagon does not keep track of such killings, most of which are prosecuted not by the military justice system but by civilian courts in state after state. Neither does the Justice Department.

To compile and analyze its list, The Times conducted a search of local news reports, examined police, court and military records and interviewed the defendants, their lawyers and families, the victims’ families and military and law enforcement officials.

This reporting most likely uncovered only the minimum number of such cases, given that not all killings, especially in big cities and on military bases, are reported publicly or in detail. Also, it was often not possible to determine the deployment history of other service members arrested on homicide charges.

The Times used the same methods to research homicides involving all active-duty military personnel and new veterans for the six years before and after the present wartime period began with the invasion of Afghanistan in

2001.

This showed an 89 percent increase during the present wartime period, to 349 cases from 184, about three-quarters of which involved Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans. The increase occurred even though there have been fewer troops stationed in the United States in the last six years and the American homicide rate has been, on average, lower.

The Pentagon was given The Times’s roster of homicides. It declined to comment because, a spokesman, Lt. Col. Les Melnyk, said, the Department of Defense could not duplicate the newspaper’s research. Further, Colonel Melnyk questioned the validity of comparing prewar and wartime numbers based on news media reports, saying that the current increase might be explained by “an increase in awareness of military service by reporters since 9/11.” He also questioned the value of “lumping together different crimes such as involuntary manslaughter with first-degree homicide.”

Given that many veterans rebound successfully from their war experiences and some flourish as a result of them, veterans groups have long deplored the attention paid to the minority of soldiers who fail to readjust to civilian life.

After World War I, the American Legion passed a resolution asking the press “to subordinate whatever slight news value there may be in playing up the ex-service member angle in stories of crime or offense against the peace.” An article in the Veterans of Foreign Wars magazine in 2006 referred with disdain to the pervasive “wacko-vet myth,” which, veterans say, makes it difficult for them to find jobs.

Clearly, committing homicide is an extreme manifestation of dysfunction for returning veterans, many of whom struggle in quieter ways, with crumbling marriages, mounting debt, deepening

alcohol dependence or more-minor tangles with the law.

But these killings provide a kind of echo sounding for the profound depths to which some veterans have fallen, whether at the bottom of a downward spiral or in a sudden burst of violence.

Thirteen of these veterans took their own lives after the killings, and two more were fatally shot by the police. Several more attempted suicide or expressed a death wish, like Joshua Pol, a former soldier convicted of vehicular homicide, who told a judge in Montana in 2006, "To be honest with you, I really wish I had died in Iraq."

In some of the cases involving veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, the fact that the suspect went to war bears no apparent relationship to the crime committed or to the prosecution and punishment. But in many of the cases, the deployment of the service member invariably becomes a factor of some sort as the legal system, families and communities grapple to make sense of the crimes.

This is especially stark where a previously upstanding young man — there is one woman among the 121 — appears to have committed a random act of violence. And The Times's analysis showed that the overwhelming majority of these young men, unlike most civilian homicide offenders, had no criminal history.

"When they've been in combat, you have to suspect immediately that combat has had some effect, especially with people who haven't shown these tendencies in the past," said Robert Jay Lifton, a lecturer in psychiatry at Harvard Medical School/Cambridge Health Alliance who used to run "rap groups" for Vietnam veterans and fought to earn recognition for what became known as post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

"Everything is multicausal, of course," Dr. Lifton continued. "But combat, especially in a counterinsurgency war, is such a powerful experience that to discount it would be artificial."

Few of these 121 war veterans received more than a cursory mental health screening at the end of their deployments, according to interviews with the veterans, lawyers, relatives and prosecutors. Many displayed symptoms of combat trauma after their return, those interviews show, but they were not evaluated for or received a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder until after they were arrested for homicides.

What is clear is that experiences on the streets of Baghdad and Falluja shadowed these men back to places like Longview, Tex., and Edwardsville, Ill.

"He came back different" is the shared refrain of the defendants' family members, who mention irritability, detachment, volatility, sleeplessness, excessive drinking or drug use, and keeping a gun at hand.

"You are unleashing certain things in a human being we don't allow in civic society, and getting it all back in the box can be difficult for some people," said William C. Gentry, an Army reservist and Iraq veteran who works as a prosecutor in San Diego County.

When Archie O'Neil, a gunnery sergeant in the Marines, returned from a job handling dead bodies in Iraq, he became increasingly paranoid, jumpy and fearful — moving into his garage, eating M.R.E.'s, wearing his camouflage uniform, drinking heavily and carrying a gun at all times, even to answer the doorbell.

"It was like I put one person on a ship and sent him over there, and they sent me a totally different person back," Monique O'Neil, his wife, testified.

A well-respected and decorated noncommissioned officer who did not want to endanger his chances for advancement, Sergeant O'Neil did not seek help for the PTSD that would later be diagnosed by government psychologists. "The Marine way," his lawyer said at a preliminary hearing, "was to suck it up."

On the eve of his second deployment to Iraq in 2004, Sergeant O'Neil fatally shot his mistress, Kimberly O'Neal, after she threatened to kill his family while he was gone.

During a military trial at Camp Pendleton, Calif., a Marine defense lawyer argued that "the ravages of war" provided the "trigger" for the killing. In 2005, a military jury convicted Sergeant O'Neil of murder but declined to impose the minimum sentence, life with the possibility of parole, considering it too harsh. A second jury, however, convened only for sentencing, voted the maximum penalty, life without parole. The case is on appeal.

As with Sergeant O'Neil, a connection between a veteran's combat service and his crime is sometimes declared overtly. Other times, though, the Iraq connection is a lingering question mark as offenders' relatives struggle to understand how a strait-laced teenager or family man or wounded veteran ended up behind bars — or dead.

That happened in the case of Stephen Sherwood, who enlisted in the Army at 34 to obtain medical insurance when his wife got pregnant. He may never have been screened for combat trauma.

Yet Mr. Sherwood shot his wife and then himself nine days after returning from Iraq in the summer of 2005. Several months before, the other soldiers in his tank unit had been killed by a rocket attack while he was on a two-week leave to celebrate the first birthday of his now-orphaned son.

"When he got back to Iraq,

everyone was dead," his father, Robert Sherwood, said. "He had survivor's guilt." Then his wife informed him that she wanted to end their marriage.

After the murder-suicide, Mr. Sherwood's parents could not help but wonder what role Iraq played and whether counseling might have helped keep their son away from the brink.

"Ah boy, the amount of heartbreak involved in all of this," said Dr. Jonathan Shay, a psychiatrist for the Department of Veterans Affairs in Boston and the author of two books that examine combat trauma through the lens of classical texts.

#### **An Ancient Connection**

The troubles and exploits of the returning war veteran represent a searing slice of reality. They have served as a recurring artistic theme throughout history — from Homer's "Odyssey" to the World War I novel "All Quiet on the Western Front," from the post-Vietnam-era movie "The Deer Hunter" to last fall's film "In the Valley of Elah."

At the heart of these tales lie warriors plagued by the kind of psychic wounds that have always afflicted some fraction of combat veterans. In an online course for health professionals, Capt. William P. Nash, the combat/operational stress control coordinator for the Marines, reaches back to Sophocles' account of Ajax, who slipped into a depression after the Trojan War, slaughtered a flock of sheep in a crazed state and then fell on his own sword.

The nature of the counterinsurgency war in Iraq, where there is no traditional front line, has amplified the stresses of combat, and multiple tours of duty — a third of the troops involved in Iraq and Afghanistan have deployed more than once — ratchet up those stresses.

In earlier eras, various labels attached to the psychological injuries of war: soldier's heart, shell shock,

Vietnam disorder. Today the focus is on PTSD, but military health care officials are seeing a spectrum of psychological issues, with an estimated half of the returning National Guard members, 38 percent of soldiers and 31 percent of marines reporting mental health problems, according to a Pentagon task force.

Decades of studies on the problems of Vietnam veterans have established links between combat trauma and higher rates of unemployment, homelessness, gun ownership, child abuse, domestic violence, substance abuse — and criminality. On a less scientific level, such links have long been known.

“The connection between war and crime is unfortunately very ancient,” said Dr. Shay, the V.A. psychiatrist and author. “The first thing that Odysseus did after he left Troy was to launch a pirate raid on Ismarus. Ending up in trouble with the law has always been a final common pathway for some portion of psychologically injured veterans.”

The National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study, considered the most thorough analysis of this population, found that 15 percent of the male veterans still suffered from full-blown post-traumatic stress disorder more than a decade after the war ended. Half of the veterans with active PTSD had been arrested or in jail at least once, and 34.2 percent more than once. Some 11.5 percent of them had been convicted of felonies, and veterans are more likely to have committed violent crimes than nonveterans, according to government studies. In the mid-1980s, with so many Vietnam veterans behind bars that Vietnam Veterans of America created chapters in prisons, veterans made up a fifth of the nation’s inmate population.

As Iraq and Afghanistan veterans get enmeshed in the criminal justice system, former

advocates for Vietnam veterans are disheartened by what they see as history repeating itself.

“These guys today, I recognize the hole in their souls,” said Hector Villarreal, a criminal defense lawyer in Mission, Tex., who briefly represented a three-time Iraq combat veteran charged with manslaughter.

Brockton D. Hunter, a criminal defense lawyer in Minneapolis, told colleagues in a recent lecture at the Minnesota State Bar Association that society should try harder to prevent veterans from self-destructing.

“To truly support our troops, we need to apply our lessons from history and newfound knowledge about PTSD to help the most troubled of our returning veterans,” Mr. Hunter said. “To deny the frequent connection between combat trauma and subsequent criminal behavior is to deny one of the direct societal costs of war and to discard another generation of troubled heroes.”

### ‘The Town Was Torn Up’

At the Tecumseh State Correctional Institution in Nebraska, Seth Strasburg, 29, displays an imposing, biker-style presence. He has a shaved head, bushy chin beard and tattoos scrolled around his thick arms and neck, one of which quotes, in Latin, a Crusades-era dictum: “Kill them all. God will know his own.”

Beneath this fierce exterior, however, Mr. Strasburg, an Iraq combat veteran who pleaded no contest to manslaughter and gun charges in 2006, hides a tortured compulsion to understand his actions. Growing up in rural Nebraska, he read military history. Now he devours books like Lt. Col. Dave Grossman’s “On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society” and Dr. Shay’s “Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials

of Homecoming.”

Because Mr. Strasburg is introspective, he provides a window into the reverberations of combat violence within one veteran’s psyche and from there outward. In Arnold, Neb., population 679, the unintentional killing last year by Mr. Strasburg of Thomas Tiffany Varney V, a pre-mortuary science major known as Moose, was a deeply unsettling event.

“To lose one young man permanently and another to prison, with Iraq mixed up in the middle of it — the town was torn up,” said Pamela Eggleston, a waitress at Suzy’s Pizza and Spirits.

In late 2005, Mr. Strasburg returned to Arnold for a holiday leave after two years in Iraq. Once home, he did not easily shed the extreme vigilance that had become second nature. He traveled around rural Nebraska with a gun and body armor in his Jeep, feeling irritable, out of sorts and out of place in tranquil, “American Idol”-obsessed America.

During his leave, he shrank from questions about Iraq because he hated the cavalier ones: “So, did you kill anybody? What was it like?”

He had, in fact, killed somebody in Iraq and was having trouble dealing with it. Like several veterans interviewed, Mr. Strasburg was plagued by one death before he caused another one.

In 2004, Sergeant Strasburg’s section was engaged in a mission to counter a proliferation of improvised explosive devices, or I.E.D.’s, on the road west of Mosul. One night, posted in an old junked bus, he watched the road for hours until an Iraqi man, armed and out after curfew, appeared and circled a field, kicking the dirt as if he were searching for something. Finally, the man bent down, straining to pick up a large white flour sack, which he then dragged toward the road.

“In my mind at the time,

he had this I.E.D. hidden out there during the day and he was going to set it in place,” Mr. Strasburg said. “We radioed it in. They said, ‘Whatever, use your discretion.’ So I popped him.”

With others on his reconnaissance team, Mr. Strasburg helped zip the man into a body bag, taking a few minutes to study the face that he now cannot forget. When they went to search the flour sack, they found nothing but gravel.

“I reported the kill to the battalion,” Mr. Strasburg said. “They said, you know: ‘Good shot. It’s legal. Whatever. Don’t worry about it.’ After that, it was never mentioned. But, you know, I had some issues with it later.”

Mr. Strasburg’s voice broke and he turned his head, wiping his eyes. A reporter noted that he was upset.

“I’m trying not to be,” he said, then changed his mind. “I mean, how can you not be? If you’re human. What if I had waited?”

“Maybe I was too eager,” he added. “Maybe I wanted to be the first one to get a kill, you know? Maybe, maybe, maybe. And that will never go away.”

Which bothers him, Mr. Strasburg said, telling himself: “Get over it. You shot somebody. Everybody else shot somebody, too.”

Shortly after Mr. Strasburg’s military tour of duty ended, he returned to Iraq as a private contractor because, he said, he did not know what else to do with himself after eight years in the Army. “I have no skill other than carrying a gun,” he said.

By late 2005, home on leave, he was preparing to return once more to Iraq in January.

On New Year’s Eve, Mr. Strasburg, accompanied by his brother, consumed vodka cocktails for hours at Jim’s Bar and Package in Arnold. Toward evening’s end, he engaged in an intense

conversation with a Vietnam veteran, after which, he said, he inexplicably holstered his gun and headed to a party. Outside the party, he drunkenly approached a Chevrolet Suburban crowded with young people, got upset and thrust his gun inside the car.

Mr. Strasburg said he did not remember what provoked him. According to one account, a young man — not the victim — set him off by calling him a paid killer. Mr. Strasburg, according to the prosecutor, stuck his gun under the young man's chin. There was a struggle over the gun. It went off. And Mr. Varney, a strapping 21-year-old with a passion for hunting, car racing and baseball, was struck.

Asked if he pulled the trigger, Mr. Strasburg said, "I don't know," adding that he took responsibility: "It was my gun and I was drunk. But what the hell was I thinking?"

The Suburban drove quickly away. Mr. Strasburg jumped into his Jeep, speeding along wintry roads until he crashed into a culvert. Feeling doomed, he said, he donned his bulletproof vest and plunged into the woods, where he fell asleep in the snow as police helicopters and state troopers closed in on him.

Mr. Strasburg had never been screened for post-traumatic stress disorder. Like many soldiers, he did not take seriously the Army's mental health questionnaires given out at his tour's end. "They were retarded," he said. "All of us were like, 'Let's do this quickly so we can go home.' They asked: 'Did you see any dead bodies? Did you take part in any combat operations?' Come on, we were in Iraq. They didn't even ask us the really important question, if you killed someone."

After his arrest, a psychologist hired by his family diagnosed combat trauma in Mr. Strasburg, writing in an evaluation that post-traumatic stress disorder,

exacerbated by alcohol, served as a "major factor" in the shooting.

#### **A Judge's Harsh Words**

At the sentencing hearing in Broken Bow, Neb., in September 2006, however, the judge discounted the centrality of the PTSD. He called Mr. Varney "the epitome of an innocent victim" and Mr. Strasburg "a bully" who "misconstrued comments" and "reacted in a belligerent and hostile manner." In a courtroom filled with Arnold townspeople and Iraq veterans, he sentenced Mr. Strasburg to 22 to 36 years in prison.

Mr. Strasburg's mother, Aneita, believing that the shooting was a product of his combat trauma, started an organization to create awareness about post-traumatic stress disorder.

Her activism, however, deeply offended the victim's parents, who run the Arnold Funeral Home.

"I'm sorry, but it feels like a personal affront, like she's trying to excuse our son's death with the war," Barb Varney said, adding that Mr. Strasburg has "never shown any remorse."

Thomas Tiffany Varney IV, the victim's father, expressed skepticism about Mr. Strasburg's PTSD and the disorder in general, saying, "His grandfather, my dad, a lot of people been there, done that, and it didn't affect them," Mr. Varney said. "They're trying to brush it away, 'Well, he murdered someone, it's just post-traumatic stress.'"

Mr. Strasburg himself, whose diagnosis was confirmed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, expressed discomfort with his post-traumatic stress disorder and its connection to his crime. "It's not a be-all-and-end-all excuse, and I don't mean it to be," he said.

As Mr. Strasburg prefers to see it, he had adapted his behavior to survive in Iraq and then retained that behavior — vigilant, distrustful, armed —

when he returned home. "You need time to decompress," he said. "If the exact same circumstances had happened a year later" — the circumstances of that New Year's Eve — "nothing would have happened. It never would have went down."

Mr. Strasburg also voiced reluctance to being publicly identified as a PTSD sufferer, worried that his former military colleagues would see him as a weakling. "Nobody wants to be that guy who says, 'I got counseling this afternoon, Sergeant,'" he said, mimicking a whining voice.

Mr. Strasburg's former platoon leader, Capt. Benjamin D. Tiffner, who was killed in an I.E.D. attack in Baghdad in November, wrote a letter to Nebraska state authorities. He protested the length of the sentence and requested Mr. Strasburg's transfer "to a facility that would allow him to deal with his combat trauma."

"Seth has been asked and required to do very violent things in defense of his country," Captain Tiffner wrote. "He spent the majority of 2003 to 2005 in Iraq solving very dangerous problems by using violence and the threat of violence as his main tools. He was congratulated and given awards for these actions. This builds in a person the propensity to deal with life's problems through violence and the threat of violence."

"I believe this might explain in some way why Seth reacted the way that he did that night in Nebraska," the letter continued. "I'm not trying to explain away Seth's actions, but I think he is a special case and he needs to be taken care of by our judicial system and our medical system."

#### **Many Don't Seek Treatment**

Unlike during the Vietnam War, the current military has made a concerted effort, through screenings and research, to gauge the mental health needs of returning veterans. But gauging and

addressing needs are different, and a Pentagon task force last year described the military mental health system as overburdened, "woefully" understaffed, inadequately financed and undermined by the stigma attached to PTSD.

Although early treatment might help veterans retain their relationships and avoid developing related problems like depression, alcoholism and criminal behavior, many do not seek or get such help. And this group of homicide defendants seems to be a prime example.

Like Mr. Strasburg, many of these veterans learned that they had post-traumatic stress disorder only after their arrests. And their mental health issues often went unevaluated even after the killings if they were pleading not guilty, if they did not have aggressive lawyers and relatives — or if they killed themselves first.

Of the 13 combat veterans in The Times database who committed murder-suicides, only two, as best as it can be determined, had psychological problems diagnosed by the military health care system after returning from war.

"The real tragedy in these veterans' case is that, where PTSD is a factor, it is highly treatable," said Lawrence W. Sherman, director of the Jerry Lee Center of Criminology at the University of Pennsylvania. "And when people are exposed to serious trauma and don't get it treated, it is a serious risk factor for violence."

At various times, the question of whether the military shares some blame for these killings gets posed. This occurs especially where the military knew beforehand of a combat veteran's psychological troubles, marital problems or history of substance abuse.

In some cases, the military sent service members with pre-existing problems — known histories of mental illness, drug abuse or domestic abuse — into combat only to find those problems exacerbated by the stresses of

war. In other cases, they quickly discharged returning veterans with psychological or substance abuse problems, after which they committed homicides.

Perhaps no case has posed the question of military liability more bluntly than that of Lucas T. Borges, 25, a former private in the Marines whose victims are suing the United States government, maintaining that the military "had a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent Borges from harming others." The government is trying to get the claim dismissed.

Mr. Borges immigrated from Brazil at 14 and joined the Marines four years later. After spending six months in Iraq at the beginning of the war, he "came back different, like he was out of his mind," said his mother, Dina Borges, who runs a small cleaning business in Maryland.

Assigned on his return to a maintenance battalion at Camp Lejeune, N.C., Private Borges developed a taste for the ether used to start large internal combustion engines in winter.

Mr. Borges did have a history of marijuana use, which he disclosed to the Marines when he enlisted, said Jeffrey Weber, a lawyer who represented the victims until recently.

But inhaling ether, which produces both a dreamy high and impairment, was new to him, and his sister, Gabriela, a 20-year-old George Washington University student, believes that he developed the habit to relieve the anxiety that he brought home from war.

The Marines, aware of Mr. Borges's past drug use, also knew that he had developed an ether problem, but they never removed him from the job where he had ready access to his drug of choice, according to the lawsuit. They never offered him drug treatment, either, Mr. Borges's own lawyer said in court.

Four months after he

returned from Iraq, military officials moved to discharge Private Borges when he was caught inhaling ether in his car. They impounded the car, which contained several canisters of the government's ether, and sent Mr. Borges, who threatened to kill himself, to the mental health ward of the base hospital.

"He was finally under the care of a psychiatrist, but they pulled him from that because he was a problem and they wanted to get rid of him," Mr. Weber said. "They processed him out, handed him the keys to his car, and his supervisor said, 'If you're not careful, you're going to kill somebody.'"

When Mr. Borges retrieved his 1992 Camaro, he discovered that the Marines had left their ether canisters inside — they did not have anywhere to store them, officials said at trial — and immediately got high. He then drove east down the westbound lane of a state highway, slamming headfirst into the victims' car, killing 19-year-old Jamie Marie Lumsden, the daughter of a marine who served in Iraq, and seriously injuring four others.

Convicted of second-degree murder, Mr. Borges was sentenced to 24 to 32 years in prison.

### **Lost in Las Vegas**

The Army has recently developed a course called "Battlemind Training," intended to help soldiers make the psychological transition back into civilian society. "In combat, the enemy is the target," the course material says. "Back home, there are no enemies."

This can be a difficult lesson to learn. Many soldiers and marines find themselves at war with their spouses, their children, their fellow service members, the world at large and ultimately themselves when they come home.

"Based on my experience, most of these veterans feel just terrible that they've caused this

senseless harm," Dr. Shay said. "Most veterans don't want to hurt other people."

Matthew Sepi withdrew into himself on his return from Iraq.

A Navajo Indian who saw his hometown of Winslow, Ariz., as a dead end, Mr. Sepi joined the Army at 16, with a permission slip from his mother.

For a teenager without much life experience, the war in Iraq was mind-bending, and Mr. Sepi saw intense action. When his infantry company arrived in April 2003, it was charged with tackling resistant Republican Guard strongholds north of Baghdad.

"The war was supposedly over, except it wasn't," Mr. Sepi said. "I was a ground troop, with a grenade launcher attached to my M-16. Me and my buddies were the ones that assaulted the places. We went in the buildings and cleared the buildings. We shot and got shot at."

After a year of combat, Mr. Sepi returned to Fort Carson, Colo., where life seemed dull and regimented. The soldiers did not discuss their war experiences or their postwar emotions. Instead, they partied, Mr. Sepi said, and the drinking got him and others in trouble. Arrested for under-age driving under the influence, he was ordered to complete drug and alcohol education and counseling. Shortly after that, he decided to leave the Army.

Feeling lost after his discharge "with a few little medals," he ended up moving to Las Vegas, a city that he did not know, with the friend of a friend. Broke, Mr. Sepi settled in the Naked City, which is named for the showgirls who used to sunbathe topless there. After renting a roach-infested hole in the wall with an actual hole in the wall, he found jobs doing roadwork and making plastic juice bottles in a factory. Alone and lonely, he started feeling the effects of his combat experiences.

In Las Vegas, Mr. Sepi's alcohol counselor took him under his wing, recognizing war-related PTSD in his extreme jumpiness, adrenaline rushes, nightmares and need to drink himself into unconsciousness.

The counselor directed him to seek specialized help from a Veterans Affairs hospital. Mr. Sepi said he called the V.A. and was told to report in person. But working 12-hour shifts at a bottling plant, he failed to do so.

In July 2005, when Mr. Sepi was arrested, he identified himself as an Iraq veteran. But, Detective Andersen said, "He didn't act like a combat veteran. He acted like a scared kid."

Soon afterward, Nancy Lemcke, Mr. Sepi's public defender, visited him in jail. "I asked him about PTSD," Ms. Lemcke said. "And he starts telling me about Iraq and all of a sudden, his eyes well up with tears, and he cries out: 'We had the wrong house! We had the wrong house!' And he's practically hysterical."

As part of an operation to break down the resistance in and around Balad, Mr. Sepi and his unit had been given a nightly list of targets for capture. Camouflaged, the American soldiers crept through towns after midnight, working their way down the lists, setting off C-4 plastic explosives at each address to stun the residents into submission.

"This particular night, it was December 2003, there was, I'd say, more than 100 targets," Mr. Sepi said. "Each little team had a list. And at this one house, we blow the gate and find out that there's this guy sitting in his car just inside that gate. We move in, and he, like, stumbles out of his car, and he's on fire, and he's, like, stumbling around in circles in his front yard. So we all kind of don't know what to do, and he collapses, and we go inside the house and search it and find out it's the wrong



house.”

Although Mr. Sepi said that he felt bad at the time, he also knew that he had done nothing but follow orders and that the Army had paid the man’s family a settlement. He did not imagine that the image of the flaming, stumbling Iraqi civilian would linger like a specter in his psyche.

Listening to Mr. Sepi recount the story of a death that he regretted in Iraq while grappling with a death that he regretted in Las Vegas, his lawyer grew determined to get him help. “It was just so shocking, and his emotions were so raw, and he was so messed up,” Ms. Lemcke said.

#### **An Unusual Legal Deal**

She found compassion for him among the law enforcement officials handling the case. The investigation backed up Mr. Sepi’s story of self-defense, although it was never determined who fired first. It made an impression on the police that he was considerably outweighed — his 130 pounds against a 210-pound man and a 197-pound woman. And it helped Mr. Sepi that his victims were drifters, with no family members pressing for justice.

The police said that Kevin Ratcliff, 36, who was shot and wounded by Mr. Sepi, belonged to the Crips and was a convicted felon; Sharon Jackson, 47, who was killed, belonged to NC, the Naked City gang, and an autopsy found alcohol, cocaine and methamphetamines in her blood.

Buoyed by an outpouring of support from Mr. Sepi’s fellow soldiers and veterans’ advocates, Ms. Lemcke pressed the Department of Veterans Affairs to find treatment programs for Mr. Sepi. This allowed an unusual deal with the local district attorney’s office: in exchange for the successful completion of treatment for substance abuse and PTSD, the charges against Mr. Sepi would be

dropped.

After about three months in jail, Mr. Sepi spent three months at a substance abuse program in Prescott, Ariz., in late 2005, where the graying veterans presented an object lesson: “I don’t want to be like that when I’m older,” he said to himself. In early 2006, he transferred to a PTSD treatment center run by the V.A. in Topeka, Kan., where he learned how to deal with anger, sadness and guilt, to manage the symptoms of his anxiety disorder and, it seems, to vanquish his nightmares.

“For some reason, my bad dreams went away,” he said. “It’s pretty cool.”

Free to start life over, Mr. Sepi stepped tentatively into adulthood. Settling in Phoenix, he enrolled in automotive school and got a job as a welder for a commercial bakery. Once in a while, he said, a loud noise still starts his heart racing and he breaks into a cold sweat, ready for action. But he knows now how to calm himself, he said, he no longer owns guns, and he is sober and sobered by what he has done.

“That night,” he said, of the hot summer night in Las Vegas when he was arrested for murder, “if I could erase it, I would. Killing is part of war, but back home ...”

*Research was contributed by Alain Delaquèrièrre, Amy Finnerty, Teddy Kider, Andrew Lehren, Renwick McLean, Jenny Nordberg and Margot Williams.*

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#### **10. Army Move Criticized In Abu Ghraib Case**

By Associated Press

BALTIMORE - The revelation that the Army threw out the conviction of the only officer court-martialed in the Abu Ghraib scandal renewed outrage from human rights advocates who complained that

not enough military and civilian leaders were held accountable for the abuse of Iraqi prisoners.

Those critics found an unlikely ally in the officer himself, Lt. Col. Steven L. Jordan, whose conviction on a minor charge of disobeying an order was dismissed this week, leaving him with only an administrative reprimand.

Jordan, 51, a reservist from Fredericksburg, Va., doesn’t dispute the abuse but maintains he was never aware of it. He said he believes many officers and enlisted soldiers did not face adequate scrutiny in the investigation that led to convictions of 11 soldiers, none ranked above staff sergeant.

If rough interrogation techniques were taught to the soldiers who abused prisoners at Abu Ghraib, Jordan said, “the question at that point is, who’s responsible for that? Is it Donald Rumsfeld? [Lt.] Gen. [Ricardo] Sanchez? ... I don’t know.”

Barring any startling new information, the decision by Maj. Gen. Richard Rowe, commander of the Military District of Washington, to throw out Jordan’s conviction brings an end to the four-year Abu Ghraib investigation. And it means no officers or civilian leaders will be held criminally responsible for the prisoner abuse that embarrassed the U.S. military and inflamed the Muslim world.

Jordan had been accused of not supervising the soldiers convicted in the abuse, which included photographing Iraqi prisoners in painful and sexually humiliating positions. His conviction stemmed from disobeying an order not to talk about the probe. He acknowledged e-mailing a number of soldiers about the probe, though he claims the order was not made clear to him until after the e-mailing.

Human rights advocates said the decision sent a troubling message. “Although the abuse was systemic and

widespread, the accountability for it has been anything but,” said Hira Shamsi, an attorney with the National Security Project of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Mila Rosenthal, deputy executive director for research and policy for Amnesty International USA, said: “I think we’re emboldening dictators and despots around the world. We’re saying that it’s OK to allow these kinds of abuses to flourish.”

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#### **11. F-22 Rises As An Option After F-15 Faults Found**

By Dave Montgomery,  
Star-Telegram Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON --

Accelerating production of Lockheed Martin’s F-22 Raptor is emerging as a possible option as the Air Force determines how to maintain its overall force structure with the grounding of older-model F-15 fighter jets, a top Air Force general said Friday.

In an interview with the *Star-Telegram*, Maj. Gen. Mark “Shack” Shackelford said Air Force leaders are studying the service’s combat capabilities after finding structural defects in more than 40 percent of the service’s 441 F-15s.

One possible course, he said, will be “should we or could we accelerate the rate at which we buy F-22s.” He added, however, that it is “too early to speculate” on the ultimate decision.

Shackelford, who oversees the acquisition of fighters and bombers, said the discussion on the F-15 is unrelated to a separate high-profile push to extend Raptor production beyond its scheduled termination in 2011. But he acknowledged a “potential fallout effect” resulting from problems with older F-15s,

which the F-22 is being built to replace.

An internal debate has raged for months over the Defense Department's plan to cease F-22 production in 2011 after a final purchase of 20 fighters. Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England, a former Fort Worth aerospace executive, favors that plan, but Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley, a Grand Prairie native, is leading his service's push to keep the assembly line open.

Under the current plan the Air Force's F-22 fleet would be capped at 183 aircraft, roughly half the number service officials say is needed to maintain U.S. air superiority. More than 1,800 Lockheed workers in Fort Worth build the center fuselage, the largest section, and Boeing workers in Seattle build the tail and rear section. The fighter is assembled at a Lockheed Martin plant in Marietta, Ga., which also builds the forward fuselage.

Shackelford restated the Air Force's goal of buying 381 Raptors, which he said is the minimum needed to confront a proliferation of advanced surface-to-air missiles and the emergence of new-generation fighters in Russia and China.

Maj. Gen. Jeff Riemer, program executive officer for the F-22 who also participated in the interview, said the Air Force has several cost scenarios for extending Raptor production.

The current production rate of 20 a year means that building 198 more aircraft would cost about \$40 billion and keep the production line open until 2019. But boosting production to 32 annually, he said, would be more efficient, reducing the cost to about \$35 billion, and production would last until 2016.

The two-star generals stressed that the Air Force remains committed to buying 1,763 of the F-35 Lightning II, a joint strike fighter also being made by a Lockheed-led team,

and said the two aircraft will complement each other.

Under the current cap of 183 aircraft, Riemer said, suppliers would be forced to begin shutting down production later this year and workers at the Fort Worth plant would produce the last center fuselage in December 2010.

Raptor supporters in Congress have cited the older aircraft's troubles as an argument for increasing production of the new aircraft, widely regarded as the world's most sophisticated fighter.

The Air Force grounded its F-15 fleet after an F-15C broke apart in November on a training mission southwest of St. Louis. Although more than 200 have returned to flight, Air Force officials have since found defects in at least 162 aircraft built from 1978 to 1985 by McDonnell Douglas, which later merged with Boeing.

The push to extend F-22 production is likely to be part of annual budget deliberations to shape defense spending for fiscal 2009 and beyond. Fiscal 2009 begins in October, but the congressional debate will begin in early February after President Bush and the Pentagon submit their recommendations.

"There is a fundamental disagreement between the Air Force and the senior policy people [in the Pentagon] over whether additional F-22s are required," said military analyst Loren Thompson, an executive at the Lexington Institute in Arlington, Va. Thompson, who has close contacts in the Pentagon, said the defense budget may opt to defer a decision.

Congressional supporters, many of whom represent the manufacturers or suppliers, are rallying behind the Air Force. Sixty-eight House members and 27 senators sent letters to Defense Secretary Robert Gates last month urging that F-22 production be continued.

Boosting F-22 production is a top priority in Texas,

where Lockheed Martin Aeronautics has well-placed political friends. All four Republican House members who represent Tarrant County, Kay Granger of Fort Worth, Joe Barton of Arlington, Michael Burgess of Lewisville and Kenny Marchant of Coppell, and the state's two Republican senators, Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn, all signed the letters to Gates.

Republican Gov. Rick Perry made the same appeal in a letter to President Bush on Dec. 21, saying that more than 2,700 people at more than 100 companies work on the F-22 in Texas.

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## **12. Sitting At Budget Controls, Official Throttles Program**

By Bob Cox, Star-Telegram staff writer

Considering Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England's résumé, it's hard to imagine anyone saying that he's acting against the interests of the defense industry or the military. But that's what some lobbyists and consultants in Washington have been saying.

The leaders of two defense think tanks have chastised England for not allowing the Air Force to buy an additional 200 of Lockheed Martin's F-22 Raptor fighter jets, at a cost more than \$40 billion.

A former top Lockheed and General Dynamics executive in Fort Worth, England served two stints as secretary of the Navy under President Bush. Since becoming the Pentagon's chief administrator in 2005, England has resisted Air Force pleas to buy more F-22s than the 183 now planned.

In separate recent opinion pieces, and Frank Gaffney Jr. of the Center for Security Policy and Loren Thompson of the Lexington Institute charge

that England has ignored expert analysis and that his actions could leave the Air Force vulnerable in combat with enemies possessing more modern aircraft. Thompson also works as a lobbyist for Lockheed.

Gaffney, in a *Washington Times* piece, said England was "waging war" against the F-22. Supersonic and supposedly nearly invisible to radar, the F-22 "is quite simply the best fighter aircraft in the world" and is needed to defend against enemies that may obtain new high-technology jets being developed by Russia and China, Gaffney said.

"Yet, in Gordon England's Pentagon, the Raptor is an endangered species," he wrote.

"What's going on here has less to do with military requirements than the deputy secretary being irritated at the Air Force, which he feels tried to trick him," Thompson, chief operating officer of the Lexington Institute, said in an interview.

Buying more F-22s is the top priority of Air Force generals, many of whom rose through the ranks as fighter pilots. The Air Force insists that it needs 381 of the aircraft, which cost about \$200 million each (\$350 million, counting research and development costs).

As part of the 2006 defense budget process, directed by England, the Pentagon and the Air Force agreed to cap the F-22 program at 183 planes. The last 60 are in production or under contract.

England has interpreted the 2006 budget agreement "as a commitment to terminate the line after 60 planes," Thompson said. "The Air Force interpreted it as a way to keep the F-22 going beyond [former Defense Secretary Donald] Rumsfeld's tenure" so it could argue the case with the next administration.

Thompson, who has close ties to senior Air Force leaders, charged in an article written for

defense publications that England had been advised in three separate studies that the Air Force needed more F-22s.

An aide to England said the secretary would not comment on the issue because of ongoing Pentagon deliberations on the 2009 defense budget.

Lockheed's Fort Worth plant has a stake in the argument. It builds the F-22 center fuselage, with about 1,800 people working on the program.

But finding additional money for the F-22 could mean less money for the F-35 Lightning II, the aircraft the Fort Worth plant expects to build for the next two decades or more. England has been a staunch proponent of the F-35, which some experts say will incorporate newer technology, be more versatile and cost less than half the price of an F-22.

When asked to comment on the F-22 controversy, Lockheed spokesman Tom Jurkowski said: "The issue of keeping the F-22 line open is a matter between the Defense Department and the Air Force. It's not an issue for Lockheed Martin to address.

"With respect to Mr. England, we recognize that he faces many budgetary challenges. As he meets these challenges, Lockheed Martin has the fullest faith that he will do what he considers to be in the best interests of the Defense Department and the nation."

Thompson and Gaffney probably are not speaking for the Air Force directly, said Winslow Wheeler, analyst for the Center for Defense Information and a frequent critic of defense programs.

But Wheeler said Air Force leaders like Chief of Staff Gen. Michael Moseley won't be unhappy with their allies' comments.

The last of the F-22s now on order will be delivered by 2011.

The Pentagon had planned to spend \$550 million in 2009

to pay Lockheed to begin shutting down the F-22 production line in Marietta, Ga. Air Force leaders have been lobbying instead to order parts for more F-22s.

Now England reportedly has directed that the money be used to repair the Air Force's aging F-15 fighters, which the Raptor is designed to replace.

Critics say that's not good.

"It seems obvious," Gaffney wrote, "that the momentous decision of whether to terminate the F-22 at just 180 aircraft -- one that could prove fateful in deterring a future conflict with increasingly hostile and aggressive adversaries -- should be made not by a lame-duck presidency but a newly mandated one."

Washington Post  
January 13, 2008  
Pg. 14

### **13. Arrest Warrant Issued In Dead Marine's Case**

JACKSONVILLE, N.C. -- Authorities issued an arrest warrant Saturday for a Marine corporal wanted in the death of a pregnant colleague, whose burnt remains were excavated from a fire pit in his back yard.

Onslow County Sheriff Ed Brown said investigators also recovered the remains of Lance Cpl. Maria Frances Lauterbach's unborn child.

A nationwide search is under way for Marine Cpl. Cesar Armando Laurean, who authorities said fled Jacksonville after leaving his wife a note in which he admitted burying Lauterbach's body. Laurean said in the note that Lauterbach had "come to his residence and cut her throat," an account authorities discount, and that he had nothing to do with her suicide, the sheriff said.

Lauterbach, 20, disappeared in December, just days after meeting with military prosecutors to talk about her allegation that

Laurean had raped her.

Her remains were found in a fire pit in the back yard of Laurean's house, buried under as much as a foot of ashes and dirt, said Charles Garrett, the county medical examiner.

Lauterbach, who joined the Marine Corps in 2006, and Laurean were personnel clerks in the 2nd Marine Logistics Group of the II Marine Expeditionary Force, based at Camp Lejeune. Neither had been sent to Iraq or Afghanistan.

San Diego Union-Tribune  
January 13, 2008

### **14. Marine's Family Says Authorities Slow To Act**

*Rape case took months to unfold*

By Mike Baker, Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, N.C. -- For months after a pregnant 20-year-old Marine accused a colleague of rape, her family says, she continued to work alongside her alleged attacker and endured harassment at Camp Lejeune.

In the weeks after she disappeared, they believe, the sheriff's department was slow to act.

As authorities recovered Maria Lauterbach's remains yesterday from a fire pit where they suspect Marine Cpl. Cesar Armando Laurean burned and buried her body, her family asked why authorities didn't treat her case with greater urgency.

Naval investigators said yesterday that the pair had been separated on the job, a rape case was progressing and Laurean was under a protective order to stay away from Lauterbach. Onslow County Sheriff Ed Brown insisted his department acted as best it could on the facts available.

Brown said his department was unaware of the protective order.

"As soon as it went suspicious, we contacted the

media and asked for help," Brown said. "The case did not produce enough evidence, other than she was just missing."

Yesterday, her burnt remains, and those of her fetus, were excavated from Laurean's backyard.

"As well as I could see, the body was much charred," Brown said. "The fetus was in the abdominal area of that adult. ... That is tragic, and it's disgusting."

Authorities have issued an arrest warrant on murder charges for Laurean, 21, of the Las Vegas area. They say he fled Jacksonville after leaving behind a note in which he admitted burying her body.

In his note, Laurean wrote that Lauterbach cut her own throat in a suicide, but Brown doesn't believe it and challenged Laurean to come forward and defend his claims of innocence.

Authorities have described a violent confrontation inside Laurean's home that left blood spatters on the ceiling and a massive amount of blood on the wall.

County prosecutor Dewey Hudson said Laurean had been in contact with three attorneys, including Mark Raynor, who declined to comment yesterday.

Lauterbach disappeared sometime after Dec. 14, not long after she met with military prosecutors to talk about her April allegation that Laurean raped her.

Her uncle, Pete Steiner, said Lauterbach -- stung by the harassment that eventually forced her to move off base -- decided to drop the case the week before she disappeared.

Paul Chiccarelli, the special agent in charge of Naval Criminal Investigative Service at Camp Lejeune, said yesterday that Marine commanders submitted requests in October to send the case to the military's version of a grand jury. A military protective order had been automatically issued in May

and renewed three times.

“Anytime there is a sexual assault allegation involved, that’s a standard routine,” Chiccarelli said.

Lauterbach and Laurean served in the same unit of the II Marine Expeditionary Force, and court documents indicate Lauterbach’s mother told authorities Laurean had threatened her daughter’s career.

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New York Times  
January 13, 2008  
Pg. 8

## 15. Afghan Police Struggle To Work A Rough Beat

By C. J. Chivers

NAWA, Afghanistan — Many of the problems frustrating Afghanistan’s efforts to secure its dangerous eastern and southern provinces were evident in the bizarre tour of duty of Shair Mohammad, a police officer who spent 18 months in an isolated swath of steppe.

Until December, when a colonel arrived to replace him, Mr. Mohammad, 30, had been the acting police chief in the Nawa district of Ghazni Province. The job gave him jurisdiction over hundreds of square miles near Pakistan that the Taliban had used as a sanctuary since being ousted from power in 2001.

But his ability to police his beat was severely compromised.

Mr. Mohammad had no rank, no money for food and not enough clothing or gear to operate in cold weather. Two of his six trucks were broken. The ammunition the Pentagon provided him came in cardboard boxes that immediately crumbled, exposing cartridges to the elements on his storeroom’s dirty floor.

Compounding his woes, the possibility of mutiny was on his mind. It was a natural worry, he said, because since April none of his men had been

paid.

“My commanders always just give me promises,” he said. “They never send the money.”

In its simplest distillation, the strategy driving this American-led war is straightforward. Western troops are an interim force to provide security, spur development and mentor indigenous security forces until the Afghan leadership can govern alone.

But in the past two years, the insurgency has blossomed, making control of many provinces a contest. The Afghan Army, under American tutelage, has made considerable progress, American officers say.

The police lag far behind. Lightly equipped, marginally trained, undermined by corruption and poor discipline, they remain weak, though their expected role is daunting. They are not asked merely to police a country that lacks the rule of law. They are being used to fight a war.

The American and Afghan governments say improving the police’s capabilities is a priority. American financing has sharply increased to do so.

“If you look at how the Afghan Army has changed for the better, and project that kind of change for the Afghan police, there is reason to be optimistic,” said Lt. Col. Timothy J. McAteer, who commands the Second Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry, the principal American unit working in Ghazni Province.

But Mr. Mohammad’s tour, undermined by mismanagement from above and the poor discipline that surrounded him, suggested how difficult any transformation might be. As his tour ended in mid-December, he spent his last evenings crouched by a hissing space heater in a mud-walled fort, sipping tea and waiting for his government to provide the help the police

needed.

Mr. Mohammad himself, and his sense of commitment, provided reason to be hopeful, American officers said. Tiny, bearded, wild-eyed and bedecked with long strands of unkempt black hair, he led with a style that was variously whimsical, pragmatic, resolute and cunning.

“He is a true patriot,” said First Lt. Mordechai Sorkin, a platoon leader who worked alongside him. “He has been here almost all alone, trying to make Afghanistan better.”

In the deadpan lexicon of infantry life, several soldiers nicknamed him “Charles Manson,” to whom he bears a slight resemblance. The name was meant in good humor. The soldiers said Mr. Mohammad was a character of his own: he managed a gentle and wry demeanor, but never declined to join them on patrols and was courageous under fire.

In a Taliban ambush in October, they noted, one of his officers was killed and four others wounded. Mr. Mohammad survived and tried to rally his penniless ranks.

He was also steadfast in the face of intimidation. Another day, the mutilated body of an elderly man who had spoken against the Taliban was found on the road. The man had been beheaded. Afghans, the national currency, had been stuffed in his nose.

On patrols with Americans through villages that harbor the Taliban, Mr. Mohammad gathered elders and gave speeches against the insurgents and such behavior, telling villagers that siding with the government was the surest route away from barbarism to a more secure life.

Resolve was not enough. As his tour ended, Mr. Mohammad said, his own government had failed to match his sense of duty.

His district had long been a transit corridor for insurgents between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and had had

almost no government presence. Since 2006 the area had been covered only by Mr. Mohammad’s detachment and one American platoon, roughly 40 soldiers. Many villages in the district had never been visited by either the military or the police.

In early December, Colonel McAteer, the American commander, augmented the firebase with most of his battalion’s Company B — more than two more platoons. The company commander, Capt. Christopher J. DeMure, moved to Nawa with a detachment of Afghan Army soldiers and about a dozen Afghan police officers, including a colonel to relieve Mr. Mohammad.

The officers in Nawa, the only government representatives that had ever entered much of Nawa, were surviving on donations — some might call it extortion — from a local bazaar.

When Captain DeMure arrived, Mr. Mohammad told him the government’s logistics system was such a failure that he owed \$3,400 to shopkeepers for goods he had commandeered to keep his police station fed and supplied. The sum equaled roughly three years of his salary.

Lt. Col. Amanuddin, the police supervisor who arrived with new officers, appeared to be just as disappointed as Mr. Mohammad. (Like many Afghans, Colonel Amanuddin has only one name.) “I need 20 good police officers, and could use 100,” he said. “Good people — not any hashish smokers. And I need sleeping bags and mattresses and a generator for power.”

Without more officers and better equipment, he said, it would be impossible to conduct night patrols with American soldiers.

But there were signs as well that Mr. Mohammad, for all of his courage and sense of loyalty, lacked other fundamental leadership traits. The station Colonel

Amanuddin was inheriting was a picture of disorder and filth.

Its front yard was a junkyard of scrapped vehicles and broken artillery pieces. Inside was a garbage pit. The garbage was not confined to this hole; it was everywhere. The courtyard was overrun by dogs that fed on it.

At least three unexploded rockets littered the grounds, and the police had taken to using a guard tower as a toilet. Human waste covered its floor.

Seeing the depth of the problems, Captain DeMure contacted a provincial coordination center that supervises the police. He hoped to get more gear, wages for the officers and more officers for the district.

He also organized the police into patrols, led by Americans, to search for Taliban fighters and meet villagers for introductions.

But on Dec. 6, Mr. Mohammad's fear of mass desertion came true. Destitute and dispirited, most of the officers under his command abandoned their posts at sunrise; it was not the first time, he said, that such a thing had happened.

Nine of Colonel Amanuddin's officers announced that they were leaving, too. Only one new officer remained: Amir Mohammad, a driver with only one arm.

The only other officers to agree to work were three of Mr. Mohammad's relatives — cheerful but largely untrained men. At one point, Mr. Mohammad had commanded more than 15 men.

Captain DeMure urged the new chief to ask the men to keep working. It was no use. "None of the officers have been paid," the colonel said. "If we force them, they might kill us." Mr. Mohammad nodded knowingly.

Captain DeMure was soon back in contact with Ghazni, asking for police officers again. The patrols he had organized had been

encouraging; many villagers had seemed friendly and said they wanted the government to move into the district.

"There are people here who welcome the government and the change it can bring," he said. "But we need the police down here to help make that happen."

A few days later, at the captain's urging, eight more officers arrived to work with Colonel Amanuddin. More were expected soon, he said.

Mr. Mohammad's tour was over at last. Earlier, he had said that when he was relieved he would confront the supervisors he suspected of embezzling his officers' wages.

But even this wish showed how much work was ahead. He would have to travel in an American convoy, he said, because if a police officer risked driving to the capital alone, he would almost certainly be shot.

"This looks like a fortress," he said, gesturing to the compound where he had lived for a year and a half. "Really it is an island. The Taliban is all around."

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Washington Post  
January 13, 2008  
Pg. 21

### **16. Dutch Troops Die In Afghanistan**

Two Dutch soldiers were killed in a clash with militants in Afghanistan, the Netherlands' Defense Ministry said. About 1,650 Dutch are serving in Uruzgan province as part of the NATO effort there. Since their mission began last year, 14 Dutch troops have died.

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New York Times  
January 13, 2008  
Pg. 10

### **17. Iran Urges Agency To Settle Atomic Case**

TEHRAN (Reuters) — Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, told the visiting chief of the International Atomic Energy

Agency on Saturday that Iran's nuclear case should be handled by the I.A.E.A. and not the United Nations Security Council, which has imposed two rounds of sanctions on Tehran.

"There is no justification for Iran's case to remain at the U.N. Security Council," Ayatollah Khamenei told Mohamed ElBaradei, the agency's director, official Iranian news media reported.

Dr. ElBaradei met with Ayatollah Khamenei and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad during a two-day visit to Tehran to push for more cooperation in resolving questions about Iran's atomic activity, which the United States fears may result in the production of nuclear weapons.

The I.A.E.A. has sought to verify Iran's assertion that its uranium enrichment program exists solely for civilian energy purposes. It was not immediately clear what, if any, concrete results were achieved during Dr. ElBaradei's first trip to Iran since 2006. He told reporters on Friday that he was looking forward to "accelerated cooperation" from Iran.

Iran said in August that it would answer questions about its nuclear program, but an end-of-year deadline passed with important issues still unresolved.

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London Sunday Telegraph  
January 13, 2008

### **18. Ahmadinejad Losing Grip On Iran's Guards**

By Gethin Chamberlain and Kay Biouki

Hardliners bent on confrontation with the West are presenting President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran with a serious challenge to his authority.

Government insiders say the clash in the Strait of Hormuz between American warships and Iranian gunboats last week exposed a power struggle at the heart of the regime in Teheran.

According to sources

within Iran's ministry of foreign affairs, Mr Ahmadinejad was kept in the dark about the decision to challenge the US ships until after the confrontation had ended. He is understood to have been unhappy about the action, which was ordered by hardline elements in the country's Revolutionary Guard.

"The president is not the commander-in-chief in Iran and it seems he was totally unaware of the incident being planned in advance," one senior official admitted.

Sources within the Iranian regime have told The Sunday Telegraph that the incident is the latest in a series of clashes between the president and hardliners, who are unhappy with what they see as backsliding by Mr Ahmadinejad.

Mr Ahmadinejad has been widely perceived as being set on a collision course with the West, particularly over the issue of Iran's nuclear programme. But some observers suggest that the president wants to distance himself from the country's problems in the run up to parliamentary elections in March. The Iranian economy is struggling and consumers face heating fuel shortages.

The president is understood to have been critical of a recent crackdown on unIslamic dress on the streets of Teheran, when so-called morality police picked on women wearing make up and knee-high boots. Thousands were warned and some arrested. In a more sinister development, a young woman doctor died in police custody after she was arrested for walking in a park with a man to whom she was not related.

Sources within the presidential office said Mr Ahmadinejad had complained about the crackdown. He is also reported to have clashed with army chiefs over their belligerent statements about

Iran's military capabilities.

Mr Ahmadinejad, himself a former member of the Revolutionary Guard, owes much of his political success to its paramilitary offshoot, the Basiji movement. But the Basijis remain loyal to the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Ayatollah Khamenei last week urged those campaigning during the forthcoming elections not to smear their rivals, but that did not stop Kayhan, one of Iran's main hardline newspapers, from criticising the president and drawing attention to a disagreement between him and the hardliners who have gathered around the ayatollah.

The growing ascendancy of the hardliners is also reflected in the appointment of several of their number as election monitors.

One of the casualties of the new climate of intolerance is the French actress Juliette Binoche, who has found herself the focus of demands for a clampdown on the issuing of visas to foreigners.

A petition from hardline MPs noted: "The appearance of foreign actors in joint productions would result in cultural destruction, since they would turn into role-models for Iranian youth."

Miss Binoche recently travelled to Iran to research the country before starting filming of the film *Certified Copy*, directed by the Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami.

*Additional reporting:  
Kathryn Hopkins*

London Sunday Times  
January 13, 2008

## 19. Iran's Revolutionary Guard In Secret Iraq Talks With US

By Marie Colvin

The head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps slipped into the green zone of Baghdad last month to press Tehran's hardline position over the terms of the current talks

with American officials, it was claimed last week.

Iraqi government sources say that Major-General Mohammed Ali Jafari, 50, travelled secretly from Tehran. Jafari appears to have passed through checkpoints on his way into the fortified enclave that contains the American embassy and Iraqi ministries, even though he is on Washington's "most wanted" list.

Last year Washington declared the guard a "foreign terrorist organisation" and imposed sanctions on it.

One of the accusations that led to the designation was the charge that the Quds Force, a branch of the guard, was supplying rockets, mortars and roadside bombs known as explosively formed projectiles (EFPs) to Shi'ite militias in Iraq.

In recent days there has been a sharp increase in the use of such bombs against American troops, and last weekend five Iranian speedboats were said to have harassed three American Navy ships, radioing a threat to blow them up.

On his tour of the Middle East yesterday President George W Bush put Tehran on notice over its support for the insurgency in Iraq. "Iran's role in fomenting violence has been exposed," he said in Kuwait.

Iran and the United States have held three rounds of talks over security in Iraq. They have made little progress so far but are considered a breakthrough because they are the first face-to-face encounters since 1980.

At the insistence of the Americans, the talks between Ryan Crocker, the American ambassador to Iraq, and Hassan Kazemi Qomi, his Iranian counterpart, have been kept to the issue of security in Iraq. But Tehran wants them broadened to include the release of Iranian diplomats being held in Baghdad by the Americans. It is understood Jafari was sent to Baghdad to

ensure that this happened.

New York Post  
January 12, 2008  
**20. \$20B Saudi Arms Deal**

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration will notify Congress Monday of its intent to sell \$20 billion in weapons, including precision-guided bombs, to Saudi Arabia, moving up the announcement to coincide with the president's arrival in Riyadh.

Last month, the State Department said it would delay the notification until after Congress comes back into session. But despite some lawmakers' concern about the deal, the proposed sale will be announced Monday, a day before the House returns to work and more than a week before senators return to Washington, said a senior official.

AP

London Sunday Times  
January 13, 2008

## 21. Scotland Yard Believes Al-Qaeda Assassinated Benazir Bhutto

By Christina Lamb

British officials have revealed that evidence amassed by Scotland Yard detectives points towards Al-Qaeda militants being responsible for the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

Five experts in video evidence and forensic science have been in Pakistan for 10 days since President Pervez Musharraf took up an offer from Gordon Brown for British help in the investigation of the December 27 killing. Last week they were joined by three specialists in explosives.

Bhutto's murder as she left a rally she had been addressing in Rawalpindi sparked an international outcry. Her body was flown home to be buried with no postmortem examination. Companions

insist the cause of death - a bullet wound in her neck - was obvious.

Claims by the government that she had fractured her skull on the sunroof of her car while escaping the blast from a suicide bomb prompted fury from party supporters who insisted she had been shot before the explosion.

When footage of the incident clearly revealed a man waving a pistol in the crowd, the government was accused of a cover-up.

Musharraf was quick to blame the killing on Baitullah Mehsud, a tribal leader from the Afghan border area of southern Waziristan with links to Al-Qaeda. The interior ministry released a transcript of a purported telephone conversation between Mehsud and a militant cleric in which, though Bhutto's name was not mentioned, he appeared to congratulate him on the death, saying: "Fantastic job. Very brave boys, the ones who killed her."

The transcript was met with scepticism. Critics pointed out Mehsud had previously been working with the Pakistan military, receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars and that if the country's intelligence services could tape his conversations, they should be able to capture him.

Last August Mehsud humiliated Musharraf when his men captured more than 250 Pakistani soldiers and paramilitary troops, who surrendered without firing a shot. Mehsud demanded the release of 30 jailed militants and the end of Pakistani military operations in his tribal area as the price for their freedom. To show he meant business, he ordered the beheading of three of his hostages. Musharraf gave in.

"Linking Mehsud to Bhutto's assassination was done for strategic reasons and had nothing to do with the ground realities," said Sajjan Gohel, an expert on Al-Qaeda.

"Although Mehsud has

ideological sympathies with the Taliban, his influence does not extend beyond the tribal areas and he certainly does not have the resources to plan an attack in the centre of the country like the assassination of Bhutto."

But British and American officials, who have examined the transcript, say they believe it is genuine and share Musharraf's view that Mehsud is behind most of the suicide bombings in Pakistan.

Asked why Pakistani forces do not capture Mehsud, one official said: "It's not so easy to go into tribal areas. Look what happened to the last lot of Pakistani soldiers that tried." According to diplomats, Mehsud had dispatched teams of suicide bombers round the country to follow Bhutto to rallies and seize an opportunity to kill her.

The gun fired at Bhutto has been checked for fingerprints by the Scotland Yard detectives. A government minister told The Sunday Times that these have been traced through identity cards to a man in Swat, an area where Mehsud's men have been fighting.

"There was no cover-up," he insisted. "It was just unfortunate that in all the shock and confusion at the beginning, people shot their mouths off talking about sunroofs rather than simply saying it would be investigated."

Scotland Yard has insisted that its task is not to establish who killed her but only how she died.

Even that is not straightforward. They cannot examine the body, and the crime scene and Bhutto's vehicle were both scrubbed within hours.

Every day another conspiracy theory emerges. It is now widely believed that the gun had a laser sight, suggesting military complicity, or that a sniper may have been in a nearby building.

Musharraf met the British

detectives last week for a briefing and later said he expected them to have reached a conclusion about how she died before elections scheduled for February 18.

Bhutto's widower, Asif Ali Zardari, has rejected the Scotland Yard inquiry and demanded a wider-ranging United Nations-led investigation that would also look into the bombing of Bhutto's bus in Karachi in October.

"She was a world leader," he said. "We don't just want a sergeant from Scotland Yard determining the angle of fire. She's dead - that's the proof. We have the footage, we have the doctors who were trying to rescue her."

It has never been established who was behind the mysterious plane crash that killed General Zia, Pakistan's last military dictator in 1988; who murdered Bhutto's brother Murtaza in a Karachi shootout in 1996; or who killed its first prime minister Liaquat Ali Khan, who was shot dead in 1951 yards from where Bhutto died.

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Chicago Tribune

January 12, 2008

## 22. U.S. Aid To Weapons Scientists Off Mark

A U.S. economic aid program to keep Russian scientists from selling weapons information apparently funneled much of the money to scientists who never claimed to have a background in nuclear, chemical or biological programs, a congressional report said Friday.

The Government Accountability Office auditors also found that assistance went to scientists who were too young to have participated in the Soviet-era weapons programs, but instead helped Russia and Ukraine train new scientists.

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Washington Post

January 13, 2008

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## 23. Intelligence Chief Couches Reference To Waterboarding As 'Torture'

By Associated Press

The nation's intelligence chief says that waterboarding "would be torture" if used against him, or if someone under interrogation was taking water into his lungs.

But Mike McConnell declined for legal reasons to say whether the technique categorically should be considered torture.

"If it ever is determined to be torture, there will be a huge penalty to be paid for anyone engaging in it," the director of national intelligence told the New Yorker in this week's issue, released today.

As McConnell describes it, a prisoner is strapped down with a washcloth over his face and water dripped into his nose.

"If I had water draining into my nose, oh God, I just can't imagine how painful! Whether it's torture by anybody else's definition, for me it would be torture," McConnell told the magazine.

A spokesman for McConnell said the intelligence chief does not dispute the quotes attributed to him. McConnell was interviewed by Lawrence Wright, who won a Pulitzer Prize in 2007 for "The Looming Towers," a book on al-Qaeda and the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

McConnell said the legal test for torture should be "pretty simple": "Is it excruciatingly painful to the point of forcing someone to say something because of the pain?"

White House spokesman Tony Fratto refused comment yesterday on waterboarding and McConnell's remarks.

"We don't talk about interrogation techniques. And we are not going to respond to every little thing that shows up

in the press," he said. "We think McConnell is doing an incredible job heading up the intelligence community, reforming it and making it incredibly effective in being able to provide the president the best intelligence on threats to the nation. We think it's vitally important he and the intelligence community have all the tools they need."

[A CIA spokesman yesterday noted McConnell's acknowledgement in the article that the agency's detention and interrogation program had saved lives and provided information that could not have been obtained through other means. "What he is quoted as saying is a very strong endorsement of the value of the CIA's detention and interrogation program," spokesman Mark Mansfield said in a statement. "It also is worth noting that DNI McConnell is quoted as saying the United States does not torture."]

CIA interrogators were given permission by the White House in 2002 to waterboard three prisoners deemed resistant to conventional techniques. The CIA has not used the technique since 2003; CIA Director Michael V. Hayden prohibited it in 2006.

Last summer, President Bush issued an executive order allowing the CIA to use "enhanced interrogation techniques" that go beyond what is allowed in the 2006 Army Field Manual. Waterboarding is among those techniques.

Wright disclosed in his article that the government has eavesdropped on his telephone conversations with at least two sources: a relative of Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's second-ranking leader; and a lawyer of several men interviewed for "The Looming Towers."

It is unclear under what authorities those intercepts were conducted.

"It may be troublesome; it may not be," McConnell told

Wright. "You don't know."

Boston Globe  
January 13, 2008

## 24. Repairs Could Snag Blackwater Probe

*Evidence lost from convoy vehicles in Baghdad shooting*

By Lara Jakes Jordan and Matt Apuzzo, Associated Press

WASHINGTON

Blackwater Worldwide repaired and repainted its trucks immediately after a deadly September shooting in Baghdad, making it difficult to determine whether enemy gunfire provoked the attack, according to people familiar with the government's investigation of the incident.

Damage to the vehicles in the convoy has been held up by Blackwater as proof that its security guards were defending themselves against an insurgent ambush when they fired into a busy intersection, leaving 17 Iraqi civilians dead.

US military investigators initially found "no enemy activity involved" and the Iraqi government concluded that the shootings were unprovoked.

The repairs essentially destroyed evidence that Justice Department investigators hoped to examine in a criminal case that has drawn worldwide attention. The Sept. 16 shooting has strained US relations with the Iraqi government, which wants Blackwater expelled from the country. It also has become a flash point in the debate over whether contractors are immune from legal consequences for their actions in a war zone.

Blackwater's four armored vehicles were repaired or repainted within days of the shooting and before FBI teams went to Baghdad to collect evidence, people close to the case said. The work included repairs to a damaged radiator that Blackwater says is central to its defense.

The damage and subsequent repairs were described by five people

familiar with the case who discussed it in separate interviews over the past month. All spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the case.

The repair work creates a hurdle for prosecutors as they consider building a case against any of the 19 guards in the Sept. 16 convoy. It also makes it harder for Blackwater to prove its innocence as it faces a grand jury investigation and multiple lawsuits over the shooting. The company is the target, too, of an unrelated investigation into whether its contractors smuggled weapons into Iraq.

Blackwater spokeswoman Anne Tyrrell said any repairs "would have been done at the government's direction." Blackwater's contract with the State Department requires that the company maintain its vehicles and keep them on the road.

The State Department would not comment on whether it ordered the repairs to the vehicles involved in the shooting.

Blackwater's chief executive, Erik Prince, has pointed to the damaged trucks to counter accusations that his contractors acted improperly.

In interviews last fall, he said three of Blackwater's armored vehicles were struck by gunfire and that the radiator from one was "shot out and disabled" during the shooting in Baghdad's Nisoor Square. An early two-page State Department report supports Prince's statements. The report noted the Blackwater command vehicle was "disabled during the attack" and had to be towed.

Prince has indicated that he expects the FBI investigation to clear his company. Yet people close to the case say the vehicles and radiator alone probably will not be enough to do that because repairing the trucks made it difficult for investigators to say whether the convoy was fired on - or not.

As for the radiator, investigators have verified that it was damaged. But it, too, was repaired before the FBI arrived two weeks after the shooting.

No bullets were found inside the radiator to prove that it had been shot, as opposed to being broken during routine use. That makes it hard for scientists to say for certain what caused the damage or when, according to those close to the case.

The preliminary State Department report noted "superficial damage" to the vehicles; photographs exist showing bullet damage.

People who have seen the photos said there are no time stamps or other indications of when that damage occurred.

Wall Street Journal  
January 12, 2008  
Pg. 3

## 25. Lockheed Helicopter Contract Hits Hurdle

By August Cole

A multibillion-dollar Lockheed Martin Corp. contract to build a new fleet of Marine One helicopters for use by the president is in trouble, despite the company's efforts to keep the prestigious program on track.

According to people familiar with the situation, John Young, the Pentagon's top weapons buyer, called for an unusual Saturday meeting with senior Lockheed officials to discuss the company's attempts at building 28 highly modified helicopters for White House use.

The contract, which started out at an estimated cost of \$6.1 billion, has been plagued by early delays and engineering challenges, which would result in the program's running billions of dollars over budget if the Navy continues on its present course.

According to a senior Navy acquisitions official, the Navy commissioned three studies during the past year to examine potential alternatives.

Canceling or severely cutting back the program are among the possible options being considered, say people familiar with the situation. In addition, officials have been looking at the possibility of asking United Technologies Corp.'s Sikorsky helicopter unit to step in with a version of its S-92 helicopter, which is the successor to the chopper that ferries the president on short trips. Versions of the S-92 are currently being used to carry a handful of foreign leaders, including the president of South Korea.

"There probably is no alternative that you could imagine that's not under consideration," said a senior Navy acquisitions official. Winning the plum contract in 2005 to build the Marine One fleet was a coup for Lockheed, which has been seeking in recent years to expand its defense business beyond its traditional core of building fighter jets and missiles.

Lockheed and its European partner, Finmeccanica SA's AgustaWestland, defeated incumbent Sikorsky, which had been the favorite to win.

Lockheed's three-engine US101 helicopter is larger than the twin-engine Sikorsky helicopter. The bigger Lockheed helicopter can carry more electronics aboard and gives passengers more room.

A Lockheed Martin spokesman said the company continues to "look at options with the Navy on how to proceed with the program."

In December, the Navy ordered the Bethesda, Md., defense giant to stop work on the second portion of the contract, which called for Lockheed to build 23 of the 28 helicopters, citing budget issues. Work continues on the initial batch of five helicopters, which would enter service in 2009. The second batch of helicopters is slated to be more sophisticated and capable than the first five.

"We have now recognized



based on the first three years of executing the program...that it's going to take more time and money" than originally anticipated to complete the second group of helicopters, the acquisitions official said.

Lockheed and the Navy have been haggling for months about hundreds of design changes that the Navy has required since the contract was awarded. Many of the changes have been technically challenging and have resulted in adding performance-robbing weight to the helicopter. Officials acknowledge that costs have ballooned, but they say it's impossible to put an accurate figure on them until the program is restructured.

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Houston Chronicle  
January 13, 2008  
Pg. 1

## 26. Hope Endures For Families Of Missing Troops

*Relatives get an update on efforts to find loved ones*  
By Alexis Grant

It's been more than 50 years since David Velasco's older brother was reported missing during the Korean War, but he still harbors hope that Sgt. Frank Velasco's remains will be returned home.

Velasco and the family members of about 60 other servicemen listed as missing in action attended a Department of Defense-sponsored Family Update conference in Houston on Saturday to learn what the military is doing to find their loved ones.

"I've seen so many people that have had their loved ones returned," said Velasco, who lives in east Houston. "Maybe it's my turn."

The family members, from across Texas and several surrounding states, represented missing personnel from World War II, the Korean and Vietnam wars and the Cold War. Although it has been decades since the men disappeared, new DNA

technology has given their relatives reason to believe they may still be found.

Velasco said he was 6 years old when his brother disappeared on Nov. 26, 1950, their mother's birthday. He remembers watching her track down servicemen who returned from the war to ask if they had any information about Frank.

"She'd always come away crying," said Velasco, 62.

Although his mother has since died, he has made it his goal to find out what happened to his brother, who was about 20 when he disappeared.

The others who came to the conference at the Doubletree Hotel near Bush Intercontinental Airport had similar goals. Some had attended previous conferences in the Family Update program, which has been running for 13 years.

But others, including Bill Thorne and Anita Stevens of Houston, were new. They provided DNA samples through a quick mouth swab in hopes of someday identifying the remains of their cousin, Army Pfc. Carl Hudson, who also disappeared during the Korean War.

Their mother, Iris Thorne, who previously had provided a DNA sample, said understanding the process in identifying service members gives her confidence that the Defense Department will be correct if it ever reports that her nephew's remains have been found.

"I'm hoping some day, in my lifetime, we'll find him," said Thorne, 82.

The Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office identifies up to 100 missing service members every year and returns their remains to their families, said James Canik, deputy director of the Armed Forces DNA identification laboratory. Many identifications are based on DNA given by relatives, he said after encouraging conference attendees to provide samples.

"Trying to find the correct donor for DNA is a real challenge," he said. "But it's a secret to our success."

Since mitochondrial DNA, the type used to identify old remains, is inherited only maternally, family members related to the serviceman's mother, such as his siblings, are the best sources. Samples from the missing person's children would not contain his mitochondrial DNA.

About 1,760 servicemen are still missing from the Vietnam War, 8,100 from the Korean War, 125 from the Cold War and 78,000 from WW II, the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office reported. Only one serviceman is listed as missing from the Persian Gulf War. Four are missing from current conflicts, but another agency oversees the search for them.

### More info

Do you have a family member who's missing in action? Here's how to find out the latest on the case.

**Contact the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office:**

Visit [www.dtic.mil/dpmo](http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo) or call 703-699-1140.

**Donate DNA:** Provide a mouth swab sample, which could help Defense Department specialists identify your loved one.

Source: *Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office*

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Miami Herald  
January 13, 2008

## 27. Economy Ties Iraq As Top Concern

By Alan Fram, Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- The faltering economy has caught up with the Iraq War as people's top worry, a national poll suggests, with the rapid turnaround already showing up on the presidential campaign trail and in maneuvering between President Bush and Congress.

Twenty percent named the economy as the foremost

problem in an Associated Press-Ipsos poll, virtually tying the 21 percent who cited the war. In October, the last time the survey posed the question about the country's top issue, the war came out on top by a 2-1 margin.

About equal proportions of Republicans, Democrats and independents in the new poll said the economy was their major worry, suggesting the issue looms as a potent one in both parties' presidential contests.

Candidates from each party have started talking about how they would bolster the economy. The next presidential contest is Tuesday's Republican primary in Michigan, which had a 7.4 percent unemployment rate in November that is the nation's worst.

Even as signs of economic weakness in this country have grown in recent months, U.S. and Iraqi casualties in Iraq have been dropping since the summer. Though many in the United States remain against the war, growing numbers say they think President Bush's troop increase last year has been working, and politicians say the issue is raised with decreasing frequency by constituents.

"The lines are crossing now," said Whit Ayres, a Republican pollster not working for a presidential candidate. "As Iraq becomes more stable and less violent, concern about Iraq is diminishing. It will still be an important issue, but the economy is filling the vacuum."

Economic concerns were particularly high in the Rust Belt region of Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin, states that are expected to be pivotal in the November election. About one in three there named the economy.

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Washington Post  
January 13, 2008

Pg. B7

## 28. Why Al-Qaeda Is Losing

By Gary Anderson

The conventional wisdom is that al-Qaeda is making a comeback from its rout in Afghanistan. Many point to its success in killing Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan and to its support of Islamic insurgents there as evidence. Not so. Al-Qaeda is waning. Its decline has less to do with our success than with the institutional limitations of the al-Qaeda organization. Simply stated, to know al-Qaeda closely is not to love it.

Everyplace where al-Qaeda has gained some measure of control over a civilian population, it has quickly worn out its welcome. This happened in Kabul and in Anbar province in western Iraq. It may well happen in Pakistan as a reaction to the killing of Bhutto.

No one likes to be brutalized and dominated by foreigners. The weakness of al-Qaeda is that everywhere it goes its people are strangers. This is no way to build a worldwide caliphate.

We may not be loved in Iraq and Afghanistan, but compared with the deliberately brutal methods of bin Laden's associates we become a palatable alternative. This is particularly true because, like visiting grandchildren, we will eventually go home.

Bhutto once responded to a friend who was concerned about her safety by saying, "Muslims don't kill women." She was only partly right; real Muslims don't do that, but al-Qaeda does. Its members have killed more Muslim civilians than have misdirected coalition airstrikes in Iraq and Afghanistan combined. The difference is that the Americans and their allies regret and investigate such incidents; al-Qaeda plans and celebrates them.

Why, then, are we supposedly losing the

information war in the Muslim world, and why has there not been more of an outcry among Muslims over this slaughter of innocents? A big part of the reason is that we spend too much time wanting to be liked rather than turning Muslim anger on our enemies.

We preach some values that are viewed as alien and threatening to the traditional order of things. Our popular culture is seen as decadent at best and downright threatening at worst in traditional cultures. Our message isn't selling. We can't change what we are, nor would we want to. No matter how much the government may disapprove, the government's official propaganda will be overwhelmed by the deluge, both positive and negative, from the popular media. We need to accept this fact and move on, rather than waste more millions on strategic communications "charm campaigns."

What we can do is to expose our Islamic extremist enemies for what they are. The people of Afghanistan and Anbar found this out the hard way and threw the rascals out. But when al-Qaeda kills scores of innocents, we report it as a statistic without context. We may see weeping relatives and bloodstained bodies from a distance, on video or in photographs, but they are depersonalized, and people quickly become desensitized to anonymous images. Ironically, Stalin was right: One death is a tragedy; millions are a statistic. We need to help Muslims understand how these people really treat other Muslims.

The original Islamic movement spread its doctrine by a combination of military action and compassion. Charity was a key tenet. This is largely why Hamas and Hezbollah gain a degree of popular support in the areas they control. That ingredient is missing in the al-Qaeda/Taliban approach to the world. To them, winning hearts and minds means,

"Agree with us or else." That is largely the reason that the U.S. government dropped its early "for us or against us" approach. It has taken us some time, but we seem to be recovering from that approach.

If I were directing the U.S. strategic information campaign, I would spend my dollars on collecting photos of the Muslim innocents al-Qaeda has killed and putting below them quotations from the Koran decrying such practices. These advertisements would appear in every newspaper and TV station in the Muslim world where I could buy print space or air time.

We may not be losing the war on terrorism, but we are not doing all that we can to win it.

*Gary Anderson led a study of al-Qaeda from 2003 to 2005 for a Defense Department contractor. He lectures on "The Revolution in Military Affairs" at George Washington University.*

Boston Globe  
January 13, 2008

## 29. A War Report Discredited

By Jeff Jacoby, Globe Columnist

Few medical journals have the storied reputation of The Lancet, a British publication founded in 1823. In the course of its long history, The Lancet has published work of exceptional influence, such as Joseph Lister's principles of antiseptics in 1867 and Howard Florey's Nobel Prize-winning discoveries on penicillin in 1940. Today it is one of the most frequently cited medical journals in the world.

So naturally there was great interest when the Lancet published a study in October 2006, three weeks before the midterm US elections, reporting that 655,000 people had died in Iraq as a result of the US-led war.

Hundreds of news outlets, to say nothing of antiwar activists and lawmakers,

publicized the astonishing figure, which was more than 10 times the death toll estimated by other sources. (The Iraqi health ministry, for example, put the mortality level through June 2006 at 50,000.)

If The Lancet's number was accurate, more Iraqis had died in the two years since the US invasion than during the eight-year war with Iran. President Bush, asked about the study, dismissed it out of hand: "I don't consider it a credible report." Tony Blair's spokesman also brushed it off as "not ... anywhere near accurate."

But the media played it up. "One in 40 Iraqis killed since invasion," blared a front-page headline in the Guardian, a leading British paper. CNN.com's story began: "War has wiped out about 655,000 Iraqis, or more than 500 people a day, since the US-led invasion, a new study reports." Few journalists questioned the integrity of the study or its authors, Gilbert Burnham and Les Roberts of Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Iraqi scientist Riyadh Lafta. NPR's Richard Harris reported asking Burnham, "Right before the election you're making this announcement. Is this politically motivated? And he said, no, it's not politically motivated."

But the truth, it turns out, is that the report was drenched with politics, and its jaw-dropping conclusions should have inspired anything but confidence.

In an extensively researched cover story last week, National Journal took a close look under the hood of the Lancet/Johns Hopkins study. Reporters Neil Munro and Carl M. Cannon found that it was marred by grave flaws, such as unsupervised Iraqi survey teams, and survey samples that were too small to be statistically valid.

The study's authors refused to release most of their underlying data so other

researchers could double-check it. The single disk they finally, grudgingly, supplied contained suspicious evidence of "data-heaping" - that is, fabricated numbers. Researchers failed to gather basic demographic data from those they interviewed, a key safeguard against fraud.

"They failed to do any of the [routine] things to prevent fabrication," Fritz Scheuren, vice president for statistics at the National Opinion Research Center, told the reporters.

Bad as the study's methodological defects were, its political taint was worse:

Much of the funding for the study came from the Open Society Institute of leftist billionaire George Soros, a strident critic of the Iraq war who, as Munro and Cannon point out, "spent \$30 million trying to defeat Bush in 2004."

Coauthors Burnham and Roberts were avowed opponents of the Iraq war, and submitted their report to *The Lancet* on the condition that it be published before the election.

Roberts, a self-described "advocate" committed to "ending the war," even sought the Democratic nomination for New York's 24th Congressional District.

"It was a combination of Iraq and Katrina that just put me over the top," he told *National Journal*.

*Lancet* editor Richard Horton "also makes no secret of his leftist politics," Munro and Cannon write.

At a September 2006 rally, he publicly denounced "this axis of Anglo-American imperialism" for causing "millions of people ... to die in poverty and disease." Under Horton, *The Lancet* has increasingly been accused of shoddiness and sensationalism.

In 2005, 30 leading British scientists blasted Horton's "desperate headline-seeking" and charged him with running "badly conducted and poorly refereed scare stories." The claim that the US-led invasion

of Iraq had triggered a slaughter of almost Rwandan proportions was a gross and outlandish exaggeration; it should have been greeted with extreme skepticism.

But because it served the interests of those eager to discredit the war as a moral catastrophe, common-sense standards were ignored. "In our view, the Hopkins study stands until someone knocks it down," editorialized the *Baltimore Sun*.

Now someone has, devastatingly. But will the debunking be trumpeted as loudly and clearly as the original report? Don't hold your breath.