GI SPECIAL 3D53:

Half Of Marines’ Iraq Cargo Trucks Still Have Defective “Armor”

How Marines Were Killed By Commands Negligence And Stupidity:

How The DoD Covered It Up With Lies:
How The Commander Kept Himself Well Protected While Troops Got Shitty Leftovers

The first trucks retrofitted with factory armor began showing up in the field on May 31, the Marines said, and as of last week half of its cargo trucks had this armor installed. That leaves about 460 trucks in Iraq with the same protection as the truck that carried the Marine women in Falluja.

Answering questions over the next week about the attack, the Defense Department issued assurances that the women had been adequately protected. The military sent the women off that day with substandard armor, inadequate security and faulty tactics, and the predictability of their daily commute through one of the most volatile parts of Iraq made them an open target.

Their convoy was protected by just two Humvees with mounted machine guns. A third was supposed to be there but had been diverted that day by a security team that strained to juggle competing demands.

But the Falluja area was so dangerous that the local Marine commander typically had four Humvees when he ventured out. Colonel Gurganus, the former commander in Falluja, said that while he usually had an escort of four Humvees, that number rose to as many as eight when other officers or dignitaries joined him.

[Thanks to Anna Bradley, who sent this in.]

December 20, 2005 By MICHAEL MOSS, The New York Times Company

The 120-degree June heat and rising tension in Falluja had already frayed the nerves of the Marine women when the cargo truck they were riding in pulled onto the main road and turned toward camp. It was only a 15-minute trip. But the blast took mere seconds to incinerate lives.

The suicide bomber had waited for his victims alongside the road, and then rammed his car into the truck with deadly precision. The ambush ignited an inferno, scorching flesh, scattering bodies and mixing smoke, blood and dirt.

Several of the women lost the skin on their hands. One's goggles fused to her cheeks. After rolling 50 yards on fire, the truck flipped and spilled the women onto the road, where enemy snipers opened fire. With their own ammunition bursting in the heat, the women crawled and pulled one another from the burning wreckage.

They were parched and dazed, and as one marine pleaded for water, another asked over and over, "How do I look?"
"It was like somebody had ripped her face off," said Cpl. Sally J. Saalman, the leader of the group, who was waving her own hands to cool them. "I told her, 'It'll be all right, babe.'"

But it wasn't.

**Three women died:** a 20-year-old who had enlisted to support her mother, a 21-year-old former cheerleader and a 43-year-old single mother on her second tour in Iraq.

**Three male marines, including two who provided security for the cargo truck, were also killed.**

Corporal Saalman and six other women were flown to a burn center in Texas, where even morphine, she said, could not kill the pain of having their charred skin scrubbed off.

The ambush in Falluja made June 23 one of the worst days in the history of women in the American military. Yet it faded into the running narrative of Iraq, tallied up as another tragic but unavoidable consequence of war.

At the White House the next day, President Bush spoke generally of the insurgents' resolve: "It's hard to stop suicide bombers."

**Answering questions over the next week about the attack, the Defense Department issued assurances that the women had been adequately protected.**

But an examination of the attack, pieced together through interviews in Falluja and the United States, military documents and photographs taken by marines at the time, shows the opposite.

**The military sent the women off that day with substandard armor, inadequate security and faulty tactics, and the predictability of their daily commute through one of the most volatile parts of Iraq made them an open target.**

The problems mounted in a lethal chain.

**The cargo truck the women rode in was a relic, never intended for warfare with insurgents, and had mere improvised metal shielding that only rose to their shoulders. The flames from the blast simply shot over the top.**

**Their convoy was protected by just two Humvees with mounted machine guns. A third was supposed to be there but had been diverted that day by a security team that strained to juggle competing demands.**

**But the Falluja area was so dangerous that the local Marine commander typically had four Humvees when he ventured out.**

Perhaps most significantly, the security team let the suicide bomber pull to the side of the road as the convoy passed, rather than ordering him to move ahead to keep him away from the women. Marines involved in the operation called the tactic, commonly used, a serious error.
"The females should never have been transported like that," said Sgt. Carozio V. Bass, one of the marines who escorted the convoy. "We didn't have enough people or proper vehicles." [Nobody should have been transported like that. Sex is irrelevant.]

If anything, the women needed more protection because of their work in Falluja and the tension it was igniting, some marines said. They had been searching Iraqi women for weapons and other contraband and felt certain the task was infuriating insurgents.

Even so, the military had the women follow a predictable routine: traveling to and from their camp each day at roughly the same time and on the same route through the city.

Some marines questioned whether they should have been traveling at all.

Male marines also worked at the checkpoints, but did not have to face the dangers of the daily commute. They slept at a Marine outpost in downtown Falluja, but Marine Corps rules barred the women from sharing that space with the men.

[Ignorant, primitive, blind, deadly idiocy. Name the asshole responsible.]

The Cover-Up Begins

In the weeks that followed, the wounded women said, they were told not to speak with reporters. Two sergeants said they were asked to chronicle the attack in written statements, but the Marine Corps said it decided against investigating the episode.

"That convoy was as protected as many of the convoys that were run before," said Col. Charles M. Gurganus, who commanded Marine operations in Falluja at the time. "There is absolutely no way that you can prepare for every eventuality." [This is the piece of shit that made sure he had plenty of protection for himself. Remember? “But the Falluja area was so dangerous that the local Marine commander typically had four Humvees when he ventured out.” So, not only does he give himself the best there is, he comes up with this lame whining to try to avoid responsibility for the disaster. What a marvelous example of command leadership: cowardice in the face of reporters.]

The day after the attack, however, the Marines in Falluja increased to five the number of Humvees in the convoy transporting a new crew of women, added more weapons for protection and stopped letting cars wait on the side of the road for the convoy to pass. Eventually, they switched to armored Humvees instead of cargo trucks. [If the protection was adequate before, as Gurganus says, why do this? And if it wasn’t, why does Gurganus tell the reporter it was in the quote above?]

The marines killed and wounded that day were part of the heavy toll that the Marine Corps has borne since it returned to Iraq in early 2004 to replace exhausted Army units.
Marine officials point out that they have inherited some of the most violent turf in Iraq.

But some marines said that their trucks, training and personnel were more suitable for their traditional mission of establishing beachheads than for combating a sustained insurgency.

Since returning to Iraq, the Marines have had one-sixth of the military personnel in the war, but have accounted for one-third of the deaths, Pentagon records show.

And the deadly encounters, like the one in Falluja, take a toll far beyond the numbers.

"I think about it every day, 24 hours a day," said Lance Cpl. Erin Liberty, whose seatmate on the truck that day in June was so badly burned that her body was identifiable only by dog tags. "You're never happy, you're never sad, you're never mad. You're just pretty much numb to everything."

A Sense of Dread

For four months this year, about 20 women called Camp Falluja home. They made up a sort of platoon, called the Female Search Force, working out of the Marine camp, an asphalt and gravel base that lies a few miles outside Falluja.

The Marines prohibit women from participating in direct ground combat. So some of the women had performed duties in the mailroom, others in the radio shack. In February, though, the military formed the group to help search Iraqi women at the city's checkpoints.

But if screening Iraqis did not constitute a combat job, the daily commute between camp and city would amount to one.

Each day at 5 a.m., the marines rose from their canvas cots and were taken by truck to downtown Falluja. They often did not return until 11 p.m. On good days, the women joked with the Iraqis, their huge goggles bringing either squeals or tears from children. But many older Iraqi women objected to being searched.

"One lady came through and had a bunch of ID's on her," Cpl. Christina J. Humphrey, of Chico, Calif., said in a phone interview from a base in Okinawa, Japan. "I said I have to confiscate them and she grabbed my flak jacket."

By June, the checkpoints were sweltering and, the women said, a sense of dread was setting in.

Eighteen members of the military had been killed in the Falluja area and nearby Ramadi that month. Marine and Iraqi forces were encountering explosives nearly every day. In the week before the women were attacked, an Iraqi general survived a suicide car bombing in Falluja.

Cpl. Ramona M. Valdez, 20, who worked at the Statue of Liberty before joining the Marines in early 2002 to support her mother in the Bronx, regularly asked to be
relieved from the checkpoint duty. The job even spooked Petty Officer First Class Regina R. Clark, a 43-year-old Navy Seabee from Centralia, Wash., who was in Iraq for the second time. She had taken her previous tour in such stride that she had even shipped a stray dog back home.

This time was different. "She had bad feelings all around," said Kelly Pennington, a friend in Washington. "Her whole attitude went from getting the dog home to getting herself home safe."

Making sure the women's commute was safe was the responsibility of the men who provided convoy security. "That was their job," said Corporal Saalman, the group's leader, of Branchville, Ind.

Two weeks before the attack, the mood changed for the worse. The Iraqi women became withdrawn, and the marines began to suspect trouble.

"It was like a cold feeling," Corporal Saalman said. "Everything was slow moving."

**Shorthanded Forces**

The skies in Falluja on June 23 were beginning to clear from a sandstorm when Sergeant Bass, the convoy member, prepared to help take the women back to camp.

His unit provided security for the short trip, dubbed the Milk Run, but members had mixed feelings when they got the job a few weeks earlier. The marines were already escorting five or more convoys of supplies and military personnel in and around Falluja each day and Sergeant Bass and other team members said they struggled to provide each convoy with full protection.

The problem was particularly acute when it came to Humvees.

Sgt. James P. Sherlock, whose Humvee would have been in the convoy that day behind the women's truck, said he had been pulled off to patrol a nearby highway that was seen as more of a threat.

"It was a manpower issue," Sergeant Bass said.

He said his section of the security unit had roughly 10 Humvees at its disposal. But each vehicle required three to five marines, and by June their numbers had dropped to about 30, which stretched them thin.

Sergeant Bass said no one raised any objection to using just two Humvees that day because, while all of Falluja was dangerous, there had been no recent attacks on that stretch of road. Moreover, he said, the Marines were trying to lower their profile.

"We were trying to give the people some normalcy," he said. "We didn't want to appear to them as being bullies."
Colonel Gurganus, the former commander in Falluja, said that while he usually had an escort of four Humvees, that number rose to as many as eight when other officers or dignitaries joined him.

There were no hard and fast rules on how many Humvees to use, nor were there any on how to position the women in the convoy. Often, the women would mix with the men in a second cargo truck, which Sergeant Bass said he preferred because it made them a less enticing target.

The Marine compound in downtown Falluja, where the convoy was staged, is easily observable from nearby buildings, and Sergeant Bass said he was convinced that the insurgents did their homework.

"They planned this maybe for months," he said. "Scoped our convoy out and saw typically where do the females sit. Maybe they had someone watching and they called on the cellphone."

That evening, however, Corporal Saalman said she was focused on a routine but necessary chore: calling the roll. So she had all the women climb onto the bed of one truck.

Flames Everywhere'

Falluja should have been bustling on a Thursday evening in summertime. But the streets had been deserted for much of the day, which the American military had learned could be a signal that residents had been tipped off to an impending attack.

"I even told my buddy, 'Something bad is going to happen today,' " Corporal Saalman said.

At 7:20 p.m., there was only one car on the road when the women's convoy left. The marines in the lead Humvee waved the driver of a car to the side of the road and later said that his demeanor had raised no alarms.

The driver waited, they said, for the lead Humvee to pass and then hit the women's cargo truck, striking just behind the cab on the passenger's side.

The blast instantly killed the truck's assistant driver, Cpl. Chad W. Powell, an outdoorsman and third-generation marine from West Monroe, La., and Pfc. Veashna Muy, 20, of Los Angeles, who was in charge of operating a gun atop the cargo truck.

In the back, two of the women, Petty Officer Clark and Corporal Valdez, died within moments, according to casualty reports. Lance Cpl. Holly A. Charette, 21, of Cranston, R.I., the former cheerleader, died three hours later after receiving treatment at Camp Falluja, the records show.

"It was orange and black and red smoke, flames everywhere, coming at us," Corporal Liberty recalled. "I didn't see my childhood, or a big white light. I just closed my eyes and I'm like, 'Wow, I'm going to die.' " 
The marines in the rear Humvee heard the explosion, but were so far back they did not know what had been hit. Sergeant Bass took a photograph that shows a huge plume of smoke some 200 yards away.

Then came the radio call from the marines who were leading the convoy: "We've been hit! We've been hit! We've taken mass casualties. Get the doc up here."

Sergeants Bass and Timothy Lawson ran, with the medic, just as snipers across the road opened fire. When they arrived they found Corporal Liberty trying to hoist a woman away from the burning truck.

"I tried to pick her up by the back of her flak jacket," said Corporal Liberty, who is now being treated in North Carolina for an injured neck, shrapnel in one leg and combat stress. "She was a big healthy woman with lots of muscle, and she was down in the dirt and blood and I said, 'Come on girl, we've got to go.'"

Another marine grabbed Corporal Liberty and told her to let go. The woman was already dead.

The women took shelter at a storefront about 100 yards off the road and the few men who were present had to run back and forth carrying the wounded. In all, 13 women and men were injured.

Against orders, two men from the second cargo truck jumped out and raced ahead to help, including Cpl. Carlos Pineda, a 23-year-old from Los Angeles. When smoke from the flaming truck cleared for a moment, a bullet found the gap in the armor on his side and sliced through his lungs.

His widow, Ana, said she later received a letter he wrote the day before, saying he had narrowly escaped harm in another attack. "He said, 'I feel my luck here is just running out.'" [Pineda and Gurganus: what a study in contrasts. One squirming and slithering to reporters to evade responsibility, another giving his own life trying to save others.]

When another Marine unit arrived on the scene, the dead and wounded were loaded onto the second cargo truck and the convoy pressed on to camp. One of the two Humvees then broke down, and one of the injured women had to be moved to the cargo truck.

In the back, Corporal Saalman started to sing. First, "America the Beautiful," then "Amazing Grace."

"I have this thing ever since I was little, if I get scared or I'm worried or someone else is worried, I sing," said Corporal Saalman, whose nickname is Songbird.

It calmed her platoon, the marines said, and between verses she consoled the woman whose scorched head lay in her lap.
Wrong Armor For The Mission

Long before that June day, Marine commanders were wrestling with a vexing problem: their troops lacked the right protection for a war exacting its toll in roadside bombs.

To carry out its traditional mission of leading invasions, the Marines have lightly armored amphibious vehicles to get them onto dry ground and trucks to ferry them and their supplies on the back lines.

The cargo truck that carried the security checkpoint workers through Falluja each day was conceived of in the early 1990's without armor for noncombat supply lines.

"We equip for what we fight and the truck was not designed to be an armored vehicle," said Maj. Gen. William D. Catto, the leader of the unit responsible for equipping marines, in an interview at his headquarters in Quantico, Va.

In November of 2003, as the Pentagon was ordering the Marines to relieve Army troops in Iraq, General Catto's team told Oshkosh Truck, which makes the cargo truck, to help create an integrated armor system, according to records released to The New York Times.

"During the fall of 2003, we noted the alarming increase in the number of Army vehicles under attack," Col. Susan Schuler, a Marine procurement official, said in an e-mail message. "Therefore, anticipating that Marine units would return to Iraq in early 2004, we had to address vehicle hardening of all our fleets."

General Catto said the plan was ideal but was taking too long. In the meantime, they began buying ceramic panels used on military aircraft, but could not get enough from the single company that was making them.

So they obtained metal plates, which were neither as strong nor as tall as the factory armor that was being developed.

The women's truck that was hit in Falluja had been fitted with the plates and General Catto said he had been told that they repelled the blast. But the makeshift shielding, just 36½ inches tall, left the women's necks and heads exposed.

A year earlier, when four marines were killed in Ramadi after a roadside bomb hit their Humvee, their company leader told The Times that a few inches more of steel would have saved their lives.

A contract to produce the new factory armor for the cargo trucks, which is double-walled and 46 inches high, was awarded in September 2004, but the Marine Corps said it could find only one company to make it: Plasan Sasa, based in Kibbutz Sasa, Israel.

With nearly 1,000 cargo trucks in Iraq, General Catto said he would like to have multiple companies making the armor, but Plasan Sasa holds the rights to the design. However, Plasan's chief executive, Dan Ziv, said his firm had more than kept pace with the Marines' schedule. "We are not the bottleneck at the moment," he said.
The armor kits take 300 hours of work to install, and General Catto said that with the marines so pressed by the war, they could not easily give up their trucks to have the work done.

The first trucks retrofitted with factory armor began showing up in the field on May 31, the Marines said, and as of last week half of its cargo trucks had this armor installed.

That leaves about 460 trucks in Iraq with the same protection as the truck that carried the Marine women in Falluja.

Despite the June 23 ambush, Corporal Saalman said she was willing to return to Iraq.

Sergeant Bass, who has returned to a marketing job in San Diego, said he had turned the events over and over in his head. "I don't want to blame everything on the Marine Corps," he said. "Leaders make mistakes and aren't perfect."

Then he added: "We were undermanned and overtaxed, and that is not out of the norm for the Marine Corps. But in a wartime situation it really hindered our capability and sometimes our willingness to do things."

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

TASK FORCE BAGHDAD SOLDIER KILLED BY IED

December 22, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS RELEASE Number: 05-12-27C

BAGHDAD, Iraq — A Task Force Baghdad Soldier was killed by an improvised explosive device while on patrol in Baghdad Dec. 22.

Another Dead Mercenary

22/12/2005 (SA)

Pretoria - Another South African has been killed in Iraq, SABC television news reported on Thursday.

Jan Strauss, 36, was killed by a roadside bomb in Baghdad on Thursday morning while driving a car, alone.
The former policeman had been working in the country for two years as a bodyguard.

REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: 
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW

11.23.05: US Marines engaging in a rooftop fire fight in the town of Al Qaim. 
(AFP/USMC)

TROOP NEWS

Charges Dropped, War Protestors Step Up Efforts: Veterans Take The Lead

The shopping crowd was reportedly receptive to the protestors and there were no verbal confrontations.

December 18, 2005 North Country Gazette

ULSTER---The management of Kings Mall weren't happy when anti-war protestors Joan Keefe, 84, and Jay Wenk, 79, stood peacefully in front of a military recruitment center in the mall handing out anti-war leaflets.

Now, instead of just two people, there’s groups of protestors numbering about 30 handing out anti-military recruitment leaflets in front of the recruiting center which is the only one in Ulster County.
Mall management initially filed a complaint with the police against the pair and they were twice arrested in August for trespass. Those charges were dismissed last week by Ulster Town Justice Marcia Weiss on technical grounds.

**About 100 protestors appeared in support of the pair at the town hall.**

**Keefe served in the Woman's Army Corps during World War II and is a retired antique dealer.** As the protests get larger and create more public attention, it could become the nucleus for a more organized assault on the First Amendment issue.

**Wenk is a veteran of the Battle of the Bulge and said that he's encouraged by the additional protestors and says they'll be "stepping it up", particularly in light of the revelations by President Bush that he authorized secret spying on U.S. citizens.**

"Impeach Bush 4 stupidity", read one sign held by a protestor while another carried the message "Stop the war before one more mother's child is lost".

The shopping crowd was reportedly receptive to the protestors and there were no verbal confrontations.

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**Vietnam Vet Says:**

**“We Got To Get Them Out Of There”**

Dennis Cruse, a 58-year-old Vietnam veteran who worked in coal mines and steel mills, at the American Legion Hall in Johnstown, Pa., Dec. 13, 2005. 'We got to get them out of there,' Cruse said. 'Let them fight their own war over there.' (AP Photo/Keith Srakocic)
Rumsfeld Pledges To Stay And Fight Alongside U.S. Troops In Afghanistan

After attending a medal ceremony for soldiers in the 173rd Airborne at an air base in Khandahar, Afghanistan, Dec. 22, 2005, Rumsfeld was so deeply moved that he told reporters he will stay in Afghanistan to join U.S. occupation troops fighting the Afghan terrorist baby-eating monster fiends who hate his freedom.

“After reading what General MacArthur said, how could I go back to Washington DC and live like a royal prince, riding to work in a limo, enjoying the fine foods and wines at DC society dinners, being waited on hand and foot by Pentagon aides? How could I fail to heed my country’s call to duty?” he asked.

“He’d be welcome here,” said Spc. James Gerson, of Wilmette, Illinois. “We’d be honored to have him serve with us. We need some help on the cargo trucks. Right now we’re a little short on the armored ones, but hey, Rumsfeld won’t care about that. We got just the right one waiting for him.” (AP Photo/Jim Young, Pool)

Officer Who Trashed Pro-Bush Cars Kicked Out Of Military:
“So Is This All The Troops In Iraq Have To Do To Beat Stop Loss?”
DENVER - The Air Force Reserve is discharging a lieutenant colonel accused of causing thousands of dollars in damage by defacing cars bearing pro-Bush bumper stickers, his lawyer and military officials confirmed Friday.

Lt. Col. Alexis Fecteau, a pilot with 500 combat hours in the first Persian Gulf War and the Balkans, was charged earlier by Denver prosecutors with felony criminal mischief.

He is accused of using paint stripper and grease to write a profanity about President Bush in 18-inch-high letters on cars at Denver International Airport that had bumper stickers supporting Bush and conservative talk-show host Rush Limbaugh. [An earlier story reported he wrote “FUCK BUSH” on the cars.]

Jim Miller, a spokesman for the Air Force Reserve Command at Robins Air Force Base, Ga., said the command plans to begin the process of giving Fecteau an administrative discharge. He said Fecteau does not face any military punishment.

Fecteau's lawyer, Patrick Mulligan, gave a hint of what his defense might be, noting that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder could appear years after extremely stressful experiences, like flying in combat.

"There are millions of Americans who object to the war ... most of those millions of Americans didn't have, in addition, some of the combat experiences that Lt. Col. Fecteau and others had," he said.

Larry Whittemore of Pueblo, who said his Ford Expedition suffered nearly $2,500 damage, welcomed the news that Fecteau faces discharge, saying: "I don't think he is fit to be in the Air Force."

Pentagon Spying On Civilians Broke The Law: They Intend To Continue Their Criminal Acts


The National Security Agency story has pushed military spying on anti-war groups off the front pages, and the Pentagon appears to have seized upon administrative error to explain away its slide into domestic spying.
The Department of Defense now says that analysts may not have followed the law and its own guidelines that require the purging of information collected on US persons after 90 days. The law states that if no connection is made between named persons and foreign governments or transnational terrorist organizations or illegal activity, US persons have a right to their privacy and information about them must be deleted.

Thanks to RL, I now know that the database of "suspicious incidents" in the United States first revealed by NBC Nightly News last Tuesday and subject of my blog last week is the Joint Protection Enterprise Network (JPEN) database, an intelligence and law enforcement sharing system managed by the Defense Department's Counterintelligence Field Activity (CIFA).

**What is clear about JPEN is that the military is not inadvertently keeping information on US persons. It is violating the law. And what is more, it even wants to do it more.**

Follow-up reporting on the Pentagon spying story, both by this newspaper and by the New York Times, mistakenly refers to the suspicious incidents database that I obtained for the time period July 2004-May 2005 as the TALON database, for the Threat and Local Observation Notice reporting system.

**Under the provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552a), the military can maintain information on specific individuals (name of individual or other personal identifiers such as Social Security number or driver's license number) in the JPEN database system for 90 days.**

**JPEN then is supposed to purge all Privacy Act information after 90 days, unless it is part of an ongoing investigation.**

Evidently though, the JPEN maintainers didn't abide by the law, and the collectors feeding TALON and other reports into the system overreached in monitoring and retaining information on anti-war and anti-military organizations of no conceivable threat.

**The managers of JPEN are hardly being inadvertent about either the 90-day restriction or the intentional collection of information on US persons.**

So far, it appears that they have broken the law. And what is more, they are agitating internally to find ways of circumventing the legal restrictions.

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**Air Force Offers Job Without Deployment**

[Thanks to David Honish, Veterans For Peace, who sent this in. He writes: Sort of a voluntary stop loss with perks?]

December 19, 2005 Bryan Mitchell, Stars and Stripes
RAF MILDENHALL, England:

Are you married to a European national and separating from the U.S. Air Force? Are you leaving the service but still have a spouse on active duty in Europe?

If so, and you want to keep racking up years of service toward retirement, the Air Force Reserve has an opportunity for you.

The Individual Mobilization Augmentee program is for people who want to transfer military training into a part-time position at an Air Force installation in Europe.

“If people are separating from the Air Force and staying here for a certain reason, they can participate in the IMA,” said Master Sgt. Robert Flores, the Air Force Reserve recruiter at RAF Mildenhall. “It’s a very good gig and a chance to practice your trade.”

It’s a lot like serving in the regular Air Force Reserve except there’s no potential of being deployed. The program is different in that it is offered primarily to servicemembers with prior active-duty experience.

The program is fairly simple in its format. Each IMA is required to serve 36 days per year, which includes a 15-day annual tour.

Enlisting in the program also means an airman will serve on a specific base and not have to worry about being deployed downrange.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER
Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you’ll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers.
http://www.traveling-soldier.org/ And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.net)

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we’ll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and inside the armed services. Send requests to address up top.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDPUP
Assorted Resistance Action

Burned out police vehicle in Baghdad Dec. 21, 2005. A roadside bomb exploded targeting a police patrol of the Iraqi Finance Ministry killing one policeman and wounding three, Iraqi army said. (AP Photo/Haider Fatehi)

December 22, 2005 Middle East Online & Pravda.RU & Reuters & (Xinhuanet)

About 700 Iraqis demonstrated in the Euphrates town of Samawah, to protest reports that Italian troops threw a grenade at the offices of prominent Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, local police said.

Militants attacked a position held by the law and order brigade (an elite police unit) killing four policemen and wounded six others,” one source said. The firefight occurred in the capital’s restive southern Dura neighbourhood.

A car bomb detonated an Iraqi police patrol in southern Baghdad on Thursday, wounding eight policemen, an Interior Ministry source told Xinhua. "A car bomb went off in Uwairiy area when a police patrol passed by, wounding eight policemen and damaging another,” the source said on condition of anonymity.

In Al-Sadiyah, southern Baghdad, insurgents captured three women who worked inside the Green Zone, which houses Iraqi government offices and the US and British embassies.

"Gunmen in three powerful German vehicles seized the three employees, without touching their driver,” said a security source.

Insurgents often target people perceived as helping the United States.

SAMARRA - Three Iraqi police commandos were killed and four wounded on Wednesday when a makeshift bomb went off near their patrol in the city of Samarra, local security forces said.
Militants in the capital killed politician Khazaal Jasib al-Saiedi, the head of the small independent Iraq Reforming Movement, Baghdad police's Lt. Mohammed Khayoun said.

In the southern city of Basra, an Iraqi translator working in the British consulate was shot and killed, Basra police said. The translator, identified as Basaam Abdelkadim, was abducted on Wednesday night, and his body was found on Thursday morning in western Basra, said Capt. Mushtaq Kadim of Basra police. He had been handcuffed, blindfolded and shot in the head, he said.

A car bomb attack against a police patrol on a highway in Iskandariyah, 50 kilometers (30 miles) south of Baghdad, wounded seven policemen, local police said.

LATIFIYA - A former member of the governing council, Ahmed Shiyaa' al-Barak, survived an assassination attempt when gunmen attacked his motorcade in Latifiya, southwest of Baghdad. Police said two of his guards were killed and three wounded in the attack.

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Get The Message?

An Iraqi flag is raised as students gather outside a university in Mosul December 21, 2005. The students were protesting the recent huge hike in cooking oil and other prices imposed by the collaborator government in Iraq. REUTERS/Namir Noor-Eideen

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FORWARD OBSERVATIONS
American soldiers killed in Iraq for corporate greed. They died for the price of oil.

[Camp Casey, Crawford, Texas]
To G.I. Special:

As I read about the decadent lifestyle of Tom Delay in the news on December 20, 2005, and God only knows how many other lawmakers in Washington, D.C., I was catapulted back to Vietnam.

When you take a dead American soldier off of a Medevac helicopter, your life changes forever.


He never had to face the sea of names, or the sea of lies, on the "Wall" in Washington, D.C. He was never abused by the V.A. system for seeking reparations. He never planned his suicide, because of what happened in Vietnam.

Like Dick Cheney, who had many deferments that kept him out of Vietnam, Tom never served. He was never in a padded cell of a psychiatric hospital, because of all the lies. Tom never saw a Vietnam veteran receive shock therapy, because of the horrors of war.

194 American soldiers from the state of Texas have been killed in Iraq.

And, while all of this was going on, Tom Delay was involved in an orgy of pleasure.

This Christmas, 194 families in the state of Texas are going to begin to see through Tom Delay. Their patriotic shelf life is going to start running out.

These families are going to start feeling the betrayal of Tom Delay, and the U.S. Government.

They will begin to wander in their minds, and question what their children died for.

"Operation Iraqi Freedom," is a slogan that is engraved on the headstones of many American soldiers killed in Iraq.

It has nothing to do with the truth, because, Lying Is The Most Powerful Weapon In War.

Mike Hastie
What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to contact@militaryproject.org. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

“As In Absolute Governments The King Is Law, So In Free Countries The Law Ought To Be King”

21 December 2005 Via Harvey Kaye, Veteransforcommonsense.org

Thomas Paine, Common Sense (January 1776)

"But where says some is the King of America?

"I'll tell you Friend, he reigns above, and doth not make havoc of mankind like the Royal Brute of Britain.

“Yet that we may not appear to be defective even in earthly honors, let a day be solemnly set apart for proclaiming the charter; let it be brought forth placed on the divine law, the word of God; let a crown be placed thereon, by which the world may know, that so far as we approve of monarchy, that in America THE LAW IS KING.

“For as in absolute governments the King is law, so in free countries the law ought to be King; and there ought to be no other.

“But lest any ill use should afterwards arise, let the crown at the conclusion of the ceremony be demolished, and scattered among the people whose right it is."

Common Sense (January 1776)

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Brave Zionist Soldiers At Work:
Terrorist Mom And Terrorist Baby Won’t Do Their Evil Deeds Here!

A Zionist soldier aims weapon at a woman carrying a child trying to cross the Beit Furik checkpoint, near the occupied West Bank Palestinian town of Nablus, Dec. 22, 2005. (AP Photo/Nasser Ishtayeh)

[Next time some idiot speculates about what could possibly motivate people to become human bombs, show them this. If somebody occupying your country pulled this shit, assuming you have any sense of decency at all, you would certainly consider every available means to kill as many of their military forces as possible. You would be right to do so. The error would be using a tactic, becoming a human bomb, which inevitably involves your death as well as theirs, thereby reducing the forces available to the resistance to kill the enemy each time the tactic is used. As General George Patton once expressed it: “The objective isn’t to die for your country. The objective is to make some other poor son of a bitch die for his.”]

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by a foreign power, go to: www.rafahtoday.org The foreign army is Israeli; the occupied nation is Palestine.]

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK
NY City Police Used Undercover Thug To Start Violence At Anti-War Protest: NYPD Spokesman Paul J. Browne Tells Silliest Lie Of 2005, So Far

Provided with images from the tape, the Police Department’s chief spokesman, Paul J. Browne, did not dispute that they showed officers at work but said that disguised officers had always attended such gatherings, not to investigate political activities but to keep order and protect free speech.


Undercover New York City police officers have conducted covert surveillance in the last 16 months of people protesting the Iraq war, bicycle riders taking part in
mass rallies and even mourners at a street vigil for a cyclist killed in an accident, a series of videotapes show.

In glimpses and in glaring detail, the videotape images reveal the robust presence of disguised officers or others working with them at seven public gatherings since August 2004.

The officers hoist protest signs. They hold flowers with mourners. They ride in bicycle events. At the vigil for the cyclist, an officer in biking gear wore a button that said, "I am a shameless agitator." She also carried a camera and videotaped the roughly 15 people present.

Beyond collecting information, some of the undercover officers or their associates are seen on the tape having influence on events. At a demonstration last year during the Republican National Convention, the sham arrest of a man secretly working with the police led to a bruising confrontation between officers in riot gear and bystanders.

Provided with images from the tape, the Police Department's chief spokesman, Paul J. Browne, did not dispute that they showed officers at work but said that disguised officers had always attended such gatherings, not to investigate political activities but to keep order and protect free speech.

Activists, however, say that police officers masquerading as protesters and bicycle riders distort their messages and provoke trouble.

The pictures of the undercover officers were culled from an unofficial archive of civilian and police videotapes by Eileen Clancy, a forensic video analyst who is critical of the tactics. She gave the tapes to The New York Times. Based on what the individuals said, the equipment they carried and their almost immediate release after they had been arrested amid protesters or bicycle riders, The Times concluded that at least 10 officers were incognito at the events.

In New York, the administration of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg persuaded a federal judge in 2003 to enlarge the Police Department's authority to conduct investigations of political, social and religious groups. "We live in a more dangerous, constantly changing world," Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly said.

Before then, very few political organizations or activities were secretly investigated by the Police Department, the result of a 1971 class-action lawsuit that charged the city with abuses in surveillance during the 1960's.

Now the standard for opening inquiries into political activity has been relaxed, full authority to begin surveillance has been restored to the police and federal courts no longer require a special panel to oversee the tactics.

Jethro M. Eisenstein, one of the lawyers who brought the lawsuit 34 years ago, said: "This is a level-headed Police Department, led by a level-headed police commissioner. What in the world are they doing?"
To date, officials say no one has complained of personal damage from the information collected over recent months, but participants in the protests, rallies and other gatherings say the police have been a disruptive presence.

Ryan Kuonen, 32, who took part in a "ride of silence" in memory of a dead cyclist, said that two undercover officers, one with a camera, subverted the event. "They were just in your face," she said. "It made what was a really solemn event into something that seemed wrong. It made you feel like you were a criminal. It was grotesque."

Ms. Clancy said. "How is it possible for police to be accountable when they infiltrate events and dress in the garb of protesters?"

Among the events that have drawn surveillance is a monthly bicycle ride called Critical Mass. The Critical Mass rides, which have no acknowledged leadership, take place in many cities around the world on the last Friday of the month, with bicycle riders rolling through the streets to promote bicycle transportation. Relations between the riders and the police soured last year after thousands of cyclists flooded the streets on the Friday before the Republican National Convention.

Officials say the rides cause havoc because the participants refuse to obtain a permit. The riders say they can use public streets without permission from the government.

In a tape made at the April 29 Critical Mass ride, a man in a football jersey is seen riding along West 19th Street with a group of bicycle riders to a police blockade at 10th Avenue. As the police begin to handcuff the bicyclists, the man in the jersey drops to one knee. He tells a uniformed officer, "I'm on the job." The officer in uniform calls to a colleague, "Louie, he's under." A second officer arrives and leads the man in the jersey, hands clasped behind his back, one block away, where the man gets back on his bicycle and rides off.

That videotape was made by a police officer and was recently turned over by prosecutors to Gideon Oliver, a lawyer representing bicycle riders arrested that night.

Another arrest that appeared to be a sham changed the dynamics of a demonstration. On Aug. 30, 2004, during the Republican National Convention, a man with vivid blond hair was filmed as he stood on 23rd Street, holding a sign at a march of homeless and poor people. A police lieutenant suddenly moved to arrest him. Onlookers protested, shouting, "Let him go." In response, police officers in helmets and with batons pushed against the crowd, and at least two other people were arrested.

The videotape shows the blond-haired man speaking calmly with the lieutenant. When the lieutenant unzipped the man's backpack, a two-way radio could be seen. Then the man was briskly escorted away, unlike others who were put on the ground, plastic restraints around their wrists. And while the blond-haired man kept his hands clasped behind his back, the tape shows that he was not handcuffed or restrained.
The same man was videotaped a day earlier, observing the actress Rosario Dawson as she and others were arrested on 35th Street and Eighth Avenue as they filmed "This Revolution," a movie that used actual street demonstrations as a backdrop. At one point, the blond-haired man seemed to try to rile bystanders.

After Ms. Dawson and another actress were placed into a police van, the blond-haired man can be seen peering in the window. According to Charles Maol, who was working on the film, the blond-haired man is the source of a voice that is heard calling: "Hey, that's my brother in there. What do you got my brother in there for?"

After Mr. Browne was sent photographs of the people involved in the convention incidents and the bicycle arrests, he said, "I am not commenting on descriptions of purported or imagined officers."

On Sept. 12, 2002, the deputy police commissioner for intelligence, David Cohen, wrote in an affidavit that the police should not be required to have a "specific indication" of a crime before investigating.

Mr. Cohen also took strong exception to limits on police surveillance of public events.

Ms. Clancy said those guidelines offered no clear limits on intrusiveness at political or social events.

Could police officers take part in pot-luck suppers of antiwar groups, buy drinks for activists?

Could they offer political opinions for broadcast or publication while on duty but disguised as civilians?

Mr. Browne, the police spokesman, declined to answer those questions.

Nor would he say how often, if ever, covert surveillance at public events has been approved by the deputy commissioner for intelligence, as the new guidelines require.

"This president has admitted committing the crime. He just claims he's above the law," "We have finally reached the constitutional Rubicon," Jonathan Turley, a professor at the George Washington University School of Law, says. "If Congress cannot stand firm against the open violation of federal law by the president, then we have truly become an autocracy."

“This President Has Admitted Committing The Crime. He Just Claims He's Above The Law”
"We have finally reached the constitutional Rubicon," Jonathan Turley, a professor at the George Washington University School of Law, says. "If Congress cannot stand firm against the open violation of federal law by the president, then we have truly become an autocracy."

22 December 2005 By Michelle Goldberg, Salon.com [Excerpts]

"We have finally reached the constitutional Rubicon," Jonathan Turley, a professor at the George Washington University School of Law, says. "If Congress cannot stand firm against the open violation of federal law by the president, then we have truly become an autocracy."

Similar fears are voiced by Bruce Fein, a former associate deputy attorney general under President Ronald Reagan. Fein is very much a member of the right. He once published a column arguing that "President George W. Bush should pack the United States Supreme Court with philosophical clones of Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas and defeated nominee Robert H. Bork."

Suddenly, though, Fein is talking about Bush as a threat to America. "President Bush presents a clear and present danger to the rule of law," he wrote in the right-wing Washington Times on Dec. 20.

"He cannot be trusted to conduct the war against global terrorism with a decent respect for civil liberties and checks against executive abuses. Congress should swiftly enact a code that would require Mr. Bush to obtain legislative consent for every counterterrorism measure that would materially impair individual freedoms."

What alarms Fein is not only that Bush has broken laws but also that he has repeatedly shown contempt for the separation of powers. Fein wants to see congressional hearings that would explore whether Bush accepts any constitutional limitation on his own authority.

"The most important thing to me, in terms of thinking about the issue of impeachment, is to recognize that the Constitution does place a value on continuity," Fein says. "We don't want to have a situation where you make a single error, and you're exposed to an impeachment proceeding."

Fein says Congress should probe Bush on whether he plans to keep "skating the edge" of federal law by trying to concentrate power in the executive branch.

"That's the key. It's that probing that's essential to knowing whether we're dealing with somebody who's really a dangerous guy. If he maintains this disregard or contempt for the coordinate branches of government, it's that conception of an omnipotent presidency that makes the occupant a dangerous person.

“We just can't sacrifice our liberties for ourselves and our posterity by permitting someone who thinks the state is him, and nobody else, to continue in office.”

"The only question here is the political one," says Pyle of Mount Holyoke College. A former military intelligence officer, Pyle blew the whistle on the U.S. Army's domestic
spying program during the Vietnam War. He believes that Bush has committed an impeachable offense, and that right now there’s no prospect he will be impeached.

"This president has admitted committing the crime. He just claims he's above the law," Pyle says. "So the issue is: Is the president above the law?"

If so, Pyle continues, "then we need not argue over the PATRIOT Act. We do not need the PATRIOT Act, because the president can do anything he wants in time of war. He can ignore all the criminal laws of the United States, including the laws against indefinite detention and against torture. I don't think we want to go down that road."

But aren’t we already down that road? "We may be," Chris Pyle, a professor of politics at Mount Holyoke College and an expert on government surveillance of civilians, says. "Maybe it's time to call a halt."
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