

## **DoD mis-spends \$4.7 billion recruiting vulnerable youth in America**

### **"Truth in Recruiting"**

**counter-recruitment update/digest from the Tulsa Peace Fellowship, March 2009**

lead story:

#### **Oklahoma among country's worst for military recruitment of youth, poor**

--statistics from the **National Priorities Project** reveal skewed priorities in Oklahoma

factoid:

'Worst 100' counties includes six counties in Oklahoma

measured by army recruits per 1000 youth, 2006

#### **Lies the Pentagon Tells Gullible Americans**

--Rumsfeld was behind the DoD's foray into **propaganda for domestic consumption**

--Obama administration to reconsider bloated DoD funding, e.g. **\$4.7 billion for military advertising/recruiting**

factoid:

In 2009, **the propaganda arm of the Pentagon, a wire service called *Hometown News***, plans to put out 5,400 press releases, 3,000 television releases and 1,600 radio interviews, all of them placed surreptitiously in the mainstream media. That is 50 percent more than in 2007.

related story:

**Associated Press chief executive Tom Curley accuses U.S. Military of being **Propaganda Machine****

page one:

#### **Veteran describes U.S. military recruiter's "**faulty recruiting tactics**"**

--letter of support to active-duty war resisters and conscientious objectors

--argument in favor of raising the minimum age of military recruitment to 21

quote:

"As a high school senior I was unaware of the potency of the moral dilemmas to which my community was attempting to alert me. Neurobiology tells us that the capacity for reasoning is not fully developed in the human brain until the mid-twenties or later. It was illogical for my elders to expect me -- as an 18-year-old -- to be capable of comprehending the moral complexities of the war I was eager to join; just as today it is unreasonable to expect any teenager to be capable of understanding death, violence, the codes of military justice, or military obligations."

~Evan Knappenberger, Iraq War veteran

related story:

#### **War Resister Blames Military Recruiters for the **Lies They Told Him****

--deported from Canada in failed bid to receive political asylum

--now he faces court martial for his principled stance against killing innocents, or serving in Iraq occupation

counter-point:

## **"Lies Our Students Tell Themselves"**

by Cynthia Gibson

excerpt from:

*Teaching Tolerance magazine*

Number 35, Spring 2009

follow up: **spate of suicides** in Army, Marines, and National Guard

### **Army official: Suicides in January 'terrifying'**

--more soldiers die in January '09 from suicide than from combat

quote:

"When people are apart you have **infidelity, financial problems, substance abuse and child behavioral problems**. The more deployments, the more it is exacerbated."

~Col. Kathy Platoni, chief clinical psychologist for the Army Reserve and National Guard

related story:

### **Suicide blamed in 10 Utah National Guard deaths**

---rising numbers despite increased attention from social workers, counselors, etc.

more coverage:

### **Sergeant tells his soldier: "Kill yourself. Save us the paperwork"**

--Pfc. Ryan Alderman, now deceased, sought medical help from the Army. He got a fistful of powerful drugs instead.

follow up on PTSD, and domestic violence among the military

### **Murder-suicide linked to **post-traumatic stress disorder** after a tour in Iraq**

--was the tragedy due to war-zone-related shell shock? was the murderer delusional?

It's a fact: Troops with post-traumatic stress can have flashbacks of their time at war, nightmares, sleeplessness and other debilitating symptoms.

follow up on suicides among Texas recruiters

### **Battalion's leadership blamed for recruiter-suicides: "outside acceptable practices"**

--Army recruiters subject to **threats and humiliations in psychotic sub-culture** within the Houston battalion

page two: Court Cases, etc.

### **Active-duty Resister in U.S. Army Asks for Court Hearing in St Louis, Missouri**

--letter from Matt Chiroux seeks your moral and financial support in his **conscientious objector** case

### **Active-duty Resister in U.S. Army Seeks Asylum in Germany**

--he cites **profound moral opposition** to the US-led invasion of Iraq

op/ed

### **Republican Representative Ron Paul on the **Military Draft**: Just Say No**

--former candidate for U.S. President say it's time to wind down Selective Service

quote:

"Too often a flawed foreign policy prompts the need for a draft. Abolishing Selective Service is one thing we could do to counter those efforts."

follow up:

### **Court Martial for Soldiers Accused of Murder**

international news: **war crimes** committed by U.S. troops abroad

#### **UN: 2,100 civilians killed in Afghanistan in 2008**

--increase over 1,500 civilians killed there in previous year in 2007

--more than 8,000 civilian deaths in the eight years since the fall of the Taliban

--**828 civilians killed by the American-led coalition forces, mostly in cowardly U.S. air raids**

related story: civilian elected official in Mid-East *versus* Western military machine

#### **Karzai Admits Rift With US, NATO Over Civilian Killings**

--Afghan President Says NATO Trying to Silence Him

related story:

#### **Anger Over Afghan Civilian Deaths Shows Limits of U.S. Air Power - NYTimes.com**

quote:

"To win the insurgency, we're not going to bomb our way out of this."

~Col. Harry A. Foster, the chief of the strategy division of the Combined Air and Space Operations Center in Southwest Asia, the command headquarters for the air wars over Iraq and Afghanistan.

editorial:

### **Sounds Familiar: Afghanistan Occupation is Iraq redux**

related story: whistleblower

#### **British officer held over Afghan casualties leak**

--Lt-Col Owen McNally arrested in Kabul: Is he a conscientious objector?

related story: **hysteric general** spouts contentious order, oversteps 'rules of engagement'

#### **Time May Be Short for NATO High Commander in Afghanistan**

--U.S. General Craddock ordered troops to attack drug traffickers -- without checking to see if they were also insurgents.

quote:

"I have never issued an **illegal order**."

~Gen. Craddock, in Kabul

file under: mercenary companies in court

#### **Family of contractor killed in Iraq by US troops sues Halliburton, KBR over death**

--negligence and fraud by Halliburton and KBR killed truck driver recruited in Houston, killed in Iraq

backpage:

file under S.N.A.F.U

#### **U.S. Patrol Kills 8-year-old Iraqi Girl, in a Crowd**

quote:

“We didn’t notice the Americans before the gun shooting started. **My sister fell immediately, swimming in her own blood.**”

~brother of the victim, Hussein, also 8 years old

file under: the ongoing crisis

### **Air Force fails new nuclear reviews**

--3 nuclear-missile and 2 strategic-bomber units failed inspections in 2008

file under: glimmers of hope

### **Obama to approach Russians about reducing nuclear warhead stockpile down to 1,000 each**

--Russia says it is ready for more arms cuts

file under: glimmers of hope

### **Obama to reconsider Afghan 'surge': President skeptical of his Defense Secretary's lack of a plan**

quote:

“What’s the endgame?”

~President Obama, speaking to his Sec'y Defense, about U.S. occupation of Afghanistan

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lead story:

## **Oklahoma among country's worst for military recruitment of youth, poor**

--statistics from the National Priorities Project reveal skewed priorities in Oklahoma

### **Army recruits, total and per 1000 youth by state, 2005-2006, put **Oklahoma at 2nd Worst in Nation****

The table below shows the total number of active-duty Army recruits, and the number of recruits per 1000 youth population, for fiscal year 2005 and 2006 for each state. States are ranked according to recruits per 1000 youth. Youth population numbers are for 2005 and are not yet available for 2006.

<http://nationalpriorities.org/charts/Army-recruits-total-and-per-1000-youth-by-state-2005.html>

Rank in 2006	Location	15-24 Youth Population 2005	Number of Army Recruits FY 2006	Total Army Recruits per 1000 youth FY 2006	Total Army Recruits per 1000 youth FY 2005	Change
-	U.S. States	42,076,849	68,556	1.63	1.57	3.78%
1	Arkansas	397,584	981	2.47	2.22	11.14%
<b>2</b>	<b>Oklahoma</b>	<b>530,591</b>	<b>1,296</b>	<b>2.44</b>	<b>2.41</b>	<b>1.35%</b>
3	Montana	140,307	335	2.39	2.52	-5.25%

4	Texas	3,445,669	8,214	2.38	2.27	5.02%
5	Maine	182,012	432	2.37	2.09	13.56%
6	Alabama	645,504	1,518	2.35	2.17	8.37%
7	South Carolina	609,057	1,298	2.13	1.92	11.00%
8	North Carolina	1,189,267	2,533	2.13	1.92	10.93%
9	Alaska	111,905	238	2.13	2.1	1.28%
10	Kansas	416,292	863	2.07	1.84	12.67%
11	Missouri	838,180	1,676	2.00	1.89	5.80%

TPF comment: **Oklahoma is the second easiest place to recruit for the military**, according to this league table. Hopefully TPF counter-recruitment efforts over the past two years will have some effect, when the revised tables are published, at least to prevent Oklahoma from becoming the #1 stomping ground of military recruiters. Updated figures will be provided, as they come available, from the NPP citizen sector organization.

**Six of worst counties nationwide are in Oklahoma**  
as measured by army recruitment rate of youth

TPF comment: In Oklahoma, we are in desperate need of **counter-recruitment efforts** in the following 6 counties, where the **military recruiters are preying more effectively** than in most other places in the country:

The table below shows the top 100 counties in the U.S. according to active-duty Army recruits per 1000 youth. The data and statistics are for counties with five or more recruits in fiscal year 2006. Recruits according to ZIP code were obtained from the Army through a FOIA request submitted by NPP, and were placed into counties using [Claritas](#) data purchased by NPP. Population numbers are from the 2005 [U.S. Census Bureau population estimates](#). Perceived ties are due to rounding.

Excerpt from the NationalPriorities.org table:

Rate Rank	Location	Total Army Recruits per 1000 youth	Total Recruits in 2006
-	<b>U.S. States</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>68,556</b>
8	Craig County, Oklahoma	8.1	16
21	Kiowa County, Oklahoma	6.6	9
30	Tillman County, Oklahoma	5.9	7
35	Pushmataha County, Oklahoma	5.7	9
60	Comanche County, Oklahoma	4.9	94
81	Ottawa County, Oklahoma	4.5	22

<http://nationalpriorities.org/charts/Top-100-counties-by-army-recruits-per-1000-youth-2006.html>

## In Oklahoma, military recruiters are dramatically more successful recruiting youth who fail to finish high school

### Lack of Educational Attainment in Oklahoma Means Greater Likelihood of Putting Life on the Line in the Military

#### Up to 30% of Oklahoma recruits are high school dropouts

The table below shows the percentage of each state's active-duty Army recruits in fiscal year 2005 and 2006 that held a regular high school diploma or above, otherwise known as 'tier 1' by the Department of Defense. The Department of Defense has a goal of 90% of new recruits holding a regular high school diploma and 2005 is the first time in at least 20 years that the Army has not met the goal. In 2006, the proportion of new recruits with a regular high school diploma dropped for every state and nationally, with the exception of North Dakota.

These statistics are from an analysis of the recruiting data that was obtained by NPP through a FOIA. Excerpt only:

Location	2006 Army Recruits	2006 % Tier 1	2005 % Tier 1
U.S.	68,556	73.1	83.5
U.S. w/territories	69,383	73.3	83.7
Oklahoma	1,296	69.7	80.6

full table available online:

<http://nationalpriorities.org/charts/Educational-Attainment-by-State-2005-2006.html>

related story: DoD spends billions recruiting vulnerable youth in America

### DoD Walks Fine Line Between News, Propaganda Machine

By Chris Tomlinson - The Associated Press

Posted Feb 8, 2009

WASHINGTON-- An Associated Press investigation found that over the past five years, the money the

military spends on 'winning hearts and minds' at home and abroad has grown by 63 percent, to at least \$4.7 billion this year, according to Defense Department budgets and other documents. That almost is as much as it spent on body armor for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan between 2004 and 2006.

This year, **the Pentagon will employ 27,000 people just for recruitment, advertising and public relations**, almost as many as the total 30,000-person work force in the State Department.

“We have such a massive apparatus selling the military to us, it has become hard to ask questions about whether this is too much money or if it’s bloated,” says Sheldon Rampton, research director for the Committee on Media and Democracy, which tracks the military’s media operations. “As the war has become less popular, they have felt they need to respond to that more.”

Yet the money spent on media and outreach still comes to only 1 percent of the Pentagon budget.

On an abandoned Air Force base in San Antonio, editors for the *Joint Hometown News Service* point proudly to a dozen clippings on a table as examples of success in getting stories into newspapers.

What readers are not told: Each of these glowing stories was written by Pentagon staff. Under the free service, stories go out with authors’ names but not their titles, and do not mention *Hometown News* anywhere. **In 2009, Hometown News plans to put out 5,400 press releases, 3,000 television releases and 1,600 radio interviews, among other work. That is 50 percent more than in 2007.**

The service is just a tiny piece of the Pentagon’s rapidly expanding media empire, which is now bigger in size, money and power than many media companies.

In a yearlong investigation, The Associated Press interviewed more than 100 people and scoured more than 100,000 pages of documents in several budgets to tally the money spent to inform, educate and influence the public in the U.S. and abroad. The AP included contracts found through the private FedSources database and requests made under the Freedom of Information Act. Actual spending figures are higher because of money in secret budgets.

The biggest chunk of funds — about \$1.6 billion — goes into recruitment and advertising. Another \$547 million goes into public affairs, which reaches American audiences. And about \$489 million more goes into what is known as psychological operations, which targets foreign audiences.

Staffing across all these areas costs about \$2.1 billion, as calculated by the number of full-time employees and the military’s average cost per service member. That is double the staffing costs for 2003.

Recruitment and advertising are the only two areas where Congress has authorized the military to influence the American public. Far more controversial is public affairs because of the **prohibition on propaganda** to the American public.

“It’s not up to the Pentagon to sell policy to the American people,” said Democratic Rep. Paul Hodes, who sponsored legislation in Congress last year to reinforce the ban.

“The role of public affairs is to provide you the information so that you can make an informed decision yourself,” says Robert Hastings, acting director of Pentagon public affairs. “There is no place for spin at the Department of Defense.”

But on Dec. 12, the Pentagon's inspector general released an audit finding that the public affairs office may have crossed the line into propaganda. The audit found that the Defense Department "may appear to merge inappropriately" its public affairs with operations that try to influence audiences abroad.

Another audit, also in December, concluded that a public affairs program called "America Supports You" was conducted "in a questionable and unregulated manner" with funds meant for the military's Stars and Stripes newspaper.

The audit also found that the offer to place corporate logos on the Pentagon Web site in return for donations was against regulations. A military spokesman said the program has been overhauled to meet Pentagon regulations.

The fastest-growing part of the military media is "psychological operations," where spending has doubled since 2003. In 2003, for example, initial accounts from the military about the rescue of Pvt. Jessica Lynch from Iraqi forces were faked to rally public support.

Psychological operations aim at foreign audiences, and spin is welcome. The only caveats are that messages must be truthful and must never try to influence an American audience.

Rear Adm. Gregory Smith, director of strategic communications for U.S. Central Command, says that in the 21st century, it probably is not possible to win the information battle with insurgents without **exposing American citizens to secret U.S. propaganda.**

With a new administration in power, it is not clear what changes may be made. Obama administration officials have said they intend to go through the Defense Department budget closely to trim bloated spending.

The emphasis on influence operations started with **former Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld.** In 2002, Rumsfeld established an Office of Strategic Influence that brought together public affairs and psychological operations. Critics accused him of setting up a **propaganda arm**, and Congress demanded that the office be shut down.

In January 2008, a new report by the Defense Science Board recommended resurrecting the Office of Strategic Influence as the Office of Strategic Communications. But Congress refused to pay for the program.

[http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2009/02/marine\\_public\\_relations\\_020709w/](http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2009/02/marine_public_relations_020709w/)

related story:

## **AP CEO: Bush Turned Military Into Propaganda Machine**

by John Hanna  
February 6, 2009

LAWRENCE, Kan. — The Bush administration turned the U.S. military into a global propaganda



machine while imposing tough restrictions on journalists seeking to give the public truthful reports about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Associated Press chief executive Tom Curley said Friday.

Much like in Vietnam, "civilian policymakers and soldiers alike have cracked down on independent reporting from the battlefield" when the news has been unflattering, Curley said. "Top commanders have told me that if I stood and the AP stood by its journalistic principles, the AP and I would be ruined."

Curley said in a brief interview that he didn't take the commanders' words as a threat.

Late in 2007, Curley wrote an editorial about the detention of AP photographer Bilal Hussein, held by the military for more than two years. Eleven of AP's journalists have been detained in Iraq for more than 24 hours since 2003. Last year, according to cases AP is tracking, news organizations had eight employees detained for more than 48 hours.

AP, the world's largest newsgathering operation, is a not-for-profit cooperative that began in 1846.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/02/06/ap-ceo-bush-turned-milita\\_n\\_164812.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/02/06/ap-ceo-bush-turned-milita_n_164812.html)

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## Guest Columnist: Acknowledge soldier's right to object

by Evan Knappenberger, Iraq war veteran

When I joined the Army shortly after the invasion of Iraq in 2003, my friends and family raised many serious questions that, after almost four years on active duty and two years of college, I have only now started addressing.

As an 18-year old, I deferred answering morally charged questions like "are you ready to kill human beings?" and "what if you change your mind?" partly because the Army recruiters claimed that I would not kill in my chosen occupation. As easy, however, as it is to blame **faulty recruiting practices** for the dysfunctional ethics of my past, honesty dictates a more thorough self-disclosure now.

As a high school senior I was unaware of the potency of the moral dilemmas to which my community was attempting to alert me. Neurobiology tells us that the capacity for reasoning is not fully developed in the human brain until the mid-twenties or later. It was illogical for my elders to expect me -- as an 18-year-old -- to be capable of comprehending the moral complexities of the war I was eager to join; just as today it is unreasonable to expect any teenager to be capable of understanding death, violence, the codes of military justice, or military obligations. It is an irresponsible society that binds its sons and daughters to a lifestyle of military discipline and the rigors of combat without acknowledging the

imminence of their natural cognitive and moral development.

Considering this, as well as our nation's foundational principle of individual self-determination, it is profoundly hypocritical that we refuse to recognize the natural rights of the war resister. In an "all-volunteer" military, refusal to serve for any reason should be honored and recognized as the milestone of a mature mind, just as refusal of any voluntarily violent civilian occupation would be honored.

It should be noted that refusal to serve can take forms other than conscientious objection. The praxis of personal experience is a powerful teacher, especially to soldiers who believe that the occupation of Iraq or Afghanistan is unjustifiable in itself. Though they volunteered, they retain the right to change their minds, just as they retain the right to change political and religious affiliations.

Soldiers objecting to specific wars should be given the same conscientious objector status as those who stand against all war, and honorably discharged without prejudice. Were this doctrine fairly practiced, perhaps political-military expeditionism would become as militarily impractical as it is financially unrewarding. And, if the soldiery was able to exercise an independent and informed judgment, maybe military operations would be more successful than they have been at times.

In the years since I was first asked those challenging questions, I have come to a hard-won conclusion that conventional values do not follow the rules of conventional wisdom. I believe now that the mistaken equation of war-resistance to cowardice is an outdated and primitive notion, as barbaric and uncivilized as racism and patriarchy. In fact, true cowardice often hides behind a weapon, a flag, a uniform, or a particular shade of skin, and rarely behind matters of conscience.

I know now that there is no ethics that can balance the right of individual self-determination with the subjective pragmatics of military law. It is illogical to believe that an Army that does not recognize the right of its soldiers to object can defend the right of dissent at all. I did not earn the prerogative of social protest, as some tell me, through my service. It was there all along.

Until our country accepts and affirms the rights of war resisters, teenagers will continually be forced (as I was) into choosing between the unjust consequences of breaking the silence, or committing injustices themselves. Our young soldiers deserve better than this catch-22.

Evan Knappenberger is an Iraq War veteran and a Davis-Putter Scholar at Whatcom Community College in Bellingham.

[http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/opinion/399345\\_evanonline10.html](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/opinion/399345_evanonline10.html)

related story:

## **War Resister Blames Military Recruiters for the Lies They Told Him**

Cliff Cornell, a 28 year-old from Mountain Home, Arkansas, refused to go to war because "it just didn't feel right," he told supporters at a 2005 rally in Canada soon after arriving. "I don't want to be killing innocent people." Cliff explains that he joined the Army only after **repeated promises from the military recruiter** that he could serve his country without being deployed to Iraq. Of course, that turned out to be a lie.

Cliff traveled to Canada four years ago after his Army artillery unit was ordered to Iraq.

Despite a popular outcry in Canada to provide sanctuary to U.S. soldiers who refuse to fight in illegal wars, Canada's Conservative government is pressing ahead with deportations. Cliff had come to call British Columbia home. But he now faces an expected court martial at Fort Stewart, and possibly two years in an Army stockade.

"Cliff Cornell should not be going to jail," said Gerry Condon, director of Project Safe Haven, a war resister advocacy group. "He had the guts to follow his conscience and obey international law. President Obama should grant amnesty to Cliff Cornell and all war resisters."

Cliff is the third Iraq War resister to be forced out of Canada.

<http://www.couragetoresist.org/x/content/view/662/1/>

## Lies Our Students Tell Themselves

by Cynthia Gibson

excerpt from:

*Teaching Tolerance* magazine

Number 35, Spring 2009

Part of the 'Why I Teach' series

I teach in a rural, all-black school just outside of town. My students are hopeful yet disillusioned, free yet held down, youthful yet already grown. Many live at or below the national poverty line, have faced racial struggles, and can relate to at least one of Langston Hughes' deferred dreams. On the way to work I pass a golf course, one that even in the year 2008 is closed to blacks, and therefore to all of my students.

Yet it's not so much the racist minority in the community that disturbs me. What disturbs me is the mindset I see in many of my students who — subtly — seem to believe that they are inferior, that their life options are limited, that they are unworthy of their own hopes and dreams. Statements like "too poor and too black" hint at a belief in the lie.

Here, the enemy comes in the form of that mindset. In your neighborhood, students may suffer from other toxic lies, ones no less damaging — lies of sexism, economic power, religious bigotry or intolerance toward anyone or anything different. No matter what their form, there's only one way to counter these lies: by changing lives, one mindset at a time.

Take "Alfred," a student with a sweet smile who tries to put on a rough exterior. On the ride home, I looked at him and stated, "You are *not* the thug you pretend to be." We talked candidly, and he said he realized that he is a better person than the tough-guy act he had created. I saw that spark in him and a big, soft heart. Since the trip, Alfred has been one of the best-behaved and most motivated students in class.

A little education can change a mindset, and when the mindsets change, futures change. That student who, a year ago, was "too poor and too black" to go to college has just been admitted to Samford

University — his dream school.

By learning the truth about himself, he has overcome a childhood of abuse, poverty, and lack of parenting. This young man stands as an example of how dramatically a life can change when we are willing to stand together to fight against injustice.

If you aren't teaching social justice and tolerance, you aren't really teaching at all.

full article: <http://www.tolerance.org/teach/magazine/features.jsp?p=0&is=44&ar=1004>

Teachers: sign up for free [Teaching Tolerance e-newsletters](#)



further recommended reading:

***The Teen Guide to Global Action*** (\$12.95), by Barbara Lewis, tells the story of teen activists like Zach Hunter, who started Loose Change to end modern-day slavery; Janine Licare, who is helping to stop the destruction of rain forests; and Zhura Bahman, who started a foundation in her native Afghanistan to help girls with education. (Grades 7-12)

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***Bully Busters: A Teacher's Manual for Helping Bullies, Victims, and Bystanders*** (\$31.95), by Arthur Horne, is a comprehensive curriculum guide to help students live together peacefully. (Grades K-5)

ISBN# 0-8782-2443-2; (Grades 6-8) ISBN# 0-8782-2452-1

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## Army official: Suicides in January 'terrifying'

If reports of suicides are confirmed, more soldiers will have taken their lives in January than died in combat.

>From Barbara Starr and Mike Mount  
CNN

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- One week after the U.S. Army announced record suicide rates among its soldiers last year, the service is worried about a spike in possible suicides in the new year.

The Army said 24 soldiers are believed to have committed suicide in January alone -- six times as many as killed themselves in January 2008, according to statistics released Thursday.

The Army said it already has confirmed seven suicides, with 17 additional cases pending that it

believes investigators will confirm as suicides for January.

If those prove true, more soldiers will have killed themselves than died in combat last month. According to Pentagon statistics, there were 16 U.S. combat deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq in January.

"This is terrifying," an Army official said. "We do not know what is going on."

Col. Kathy Platoni, chief clinical psychologist for the Army Reserve and National Guard, said she sees the multiple deployments, stigma associated with seeking treatment and the excessive use of antidepressants as ongoing concerns for mental-health professionals who work with soldiers.

Those who are seeking mental-health care often have their treatment disrupted by deployments. Deployed soldiers also have to deal with the stress of separations from families.

"When people are apart you have infidelity, financial problems, substance abuse and child behavioral problems," Platoni said. "The more deployments, the more it is exacerbated."

Platoni also said that while the military has made a lot of headway in training leaders on how to deal with soldiers who may be suffering from depression or post-traumatic stress disorder, "there is still a huge problem with leadership who shame them when they seek treatment."

The antidepressants prescribed to soldiers can have side effects that include suicidal thoughts. Those side effects reportedly are more common in people 18 to 24.

<http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/02/05/army.suicides/>

## Suicide blamed in 10 Utah Guard deaths

Rising numbers » Military responding with increased social workers, counselors.

by Matthew D. LaPlante

*The Salt Lake Tribune*

Updated: 02/04/2009

Since 2005, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost the lives of two soldiers from the Utah National Guard.

Suicide has claimed 10.

In response to an alarming increase of suicide in its ranks, the military has hired a virtual army of social workers, mental health professionals and suicide-prevention counselors to work with its members. But for the fourth consecutive year, the Army has reported an increase in the number of soldiers it has lost to suicide. At least 128 soldiers took their own lives in 2008 - - --- and that number could rise, as 15 other deaths remain under investigation.

"Why do the numbers keep going up? We cannot tell you," said Army Secretary Pete Geren.

The Utah guard lost three soldiers to suicide in 2005, four in 2006, one in 2007 and two in 2008. Officials said statistics from prior years were unavailable because the Guard's personnel officers didn't track suicides separately from other deaths until 2005, but at least one soldier killed himself in 2004

while on duty in Afghanistan with the 211th Aviation Battalion.

Since the overall count of Utah Guardsmen is small compared to the Army as a whole, the drop is not considered statistically significant.

Veterans advocacy groups say the military's data undercounts the problem. That's because it doesn't include people like Jason Ermer -- an Iraq War veteran who killed himself after leaving the service.

[http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci\\_11620245](http://www.sltrib.com/news/ci_11620245)

more coverage:

## **"Kill yourself. Save us the paperwork"**

--Pfc. Ryan Alderman, now deceased, sought medical help from the Army. He got a fistful of powerful drugs instead.

for the story, go to: [http://www.salon.com/news/special/coming\\_home/2009/02/10/coming\\_home\\_two/](http://www.salon.com/news/special/coming_home/2009/02/10/coming_home_two/)

follow up on PTSD, and domestic violence among the military

## **Murder-suicide linked to post-traumatic stress disorder after a tour in Iraq**

LAS VEGAS — A Nellis Air Force Base airman involved in what police think is a murder-suicide was being treated for post-traumatic stress disorder after a tour in Iraq, base officials confirmed.

Jason Klinkenberg, 25, was receiving treatment in response to unspecified events that took place during a five-month tour in Iraq that ended in 2006, Capt. Amanda Ferrell said.

Klinkenberg was a vehicle operator with the 99th Logistics Readiness Squadron.

He had started receiving treatment for PTSD on base but was eventually referred to an off-base specialist, Ferrell said.

Troops with post-traumatic stress can have flashbacks of their time at war, nightmares, sleeplessness and other debilitating symptoms.

Nearly 20 percent of military service members who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan — 300,000 in all — are estimated to have symptoms of PTSD or major depression, according to a study last year by the RAND Corp. research organization.

[http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2009/02/ap\\_nellis\\_suspected\\_022209/](http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2009/02/ap_nellis_suspected_022209/)

follow up: Texas Army recruiters get new command after deaths by suicide among military recruiters

# **Army: Recruiting battalion in Houston under new leadership after 4 recruiters commit suicide**

by Rich Matthews, AP News  
Feb 20, 2009 20:09 EST

An Army recruiting battalion in which four soldiers committed suicide has been placed under new leadership, a brigadier general assigned to investigate the deaths said Friday.

Brig. Gen. Frank Turner said the deaths of four members of the Houston Recruiting Battalion were the result of a number of factors, but that some of the command's practices were outside Army regulation.

"Some of the leadership practices occurring here in Houston by a couple of individuals — not all but a couple — were clearly outside the acceptable practices of leadership inside the Army," Turner said.

Some soldiers and their family members had complained that recruiters, already subject to long hours and pressure to meet quotas, were threatened and humiliated when they failed in trying to fill an all-volunteer Army at war while isolated from other soldiers and support systems.

The four soldiers, all combat veterans, committed suicide between 2005 and 2008. There have been 16 suicides among recruiters since 2003.

The deaths came amid an increase in the Army's suicide rates during each of the last four years.

Source: AP News

<http://wire.antiwar.com/2009/02/20/texas-army-recruiters-get-new-command-after-deaths/>

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page 2

## **Matthis Chiroux War Resister at Stony Brook Univ**

February 2, 2009 at 3:45pm

"I have a date with the Army"  
by Matthis Chiroux

March 12, I'll attend a board hearing in St. Louis, Missouri, to determine what the nature of my discharge from the Individual Ready Reserve will be. The Army has alleged "misconduct" and they're shooting for a "general discharge," but I'm pushing for "honorable," as my refusal to deploy was not an act of misconduct.

I will attend this hearing in uniform as ordered, but only for the purpose of these administrative

proceedings. I'm not contesting the fact that I did not report as ordered to deploy to Iraq. However, I intend to paint a clear picture of my convictions to the military, and I seek to corroborate them with first hand accounts of occupation.

No person is bound to act against the dictates of conscience, let alone their understanding of the law. I know the occupation of Iraq and further the Global War on Terror to be an illegitimate and ultimately murderous campaign waged for economic gain, fueled by misinformation and greed. I know it to be in violation of not only international law, but the U.S. Constitution. Far more importantly, it is against the dictates of my own conscience, and never again will I compromise my humanity to support or ignore the crimes of my government.

I will be working closely with Iraq Veterans Against the War to plan what we hope will reflect a Winter Soldier event in the form of our members testifying under oath to the military about their experiences in the Global War on Terror.

I seek only truth to be heard and considered by the military. If reconciliation is possible, I seek that, as well.

If we are a democracy, than ultimately we the people are responsible for the actions of our government. When those actions bring about crimes against humanity in the forms of occupation, torture and war profiteering, it is our duty as people to resist.

I stand for humanity, the rule of law and the rights of people, be they Arab or American, to cast off their oppressors, be they foreign or domestic...and even challenge them in court, which is what, in essence, I am doing.

The Army in no way has forced this hearing upon me. I demanded this hearing from them to oppose the General Discharge, and I thank them for providing me due process.

We are continuing to gather funds needed to cover travel expenses and accommodation for those who will be testifying. I hope anywhere from fifteen to thirty veterans, military family members, Iraqi civilians and constitutional experts will appear before my board. Please consider making a donation to my defense campaign either through my website, [matthisresists.us](http://matthisresists.us), or through [ivaw.org](http://ivaw.org).

This information, when presented to the military, will provide a clear contrast to the official narrative of the Global War on Terror and establish a firm base for my actions in reality as recalled by those who lived it.

As well, I have recently returned to New York from Washington D.C. where in addition to watching our new president be inaugurated and demanding our old one be prosecuted, I visited the offices of the Congressional Signatories to my support letter from last summer.

As I write this, they are penning another letter of support which will be more widely circulated in Congress than the first to be sent to President Obama before my hearing. As well, several Members have expressed interest in appearing in person to voice support for me and troops like me in March.

I will mobilize as much media as possible to put the critical issue of war resistance to the American people for judgment, but I need your help to get the word out. Please forward this information far and wide, especially in St. Louis, and contact me if you'd be interested in helping organize or participating



in a national day of action to support war resisters on March 12. I'd like to make it a day to send a clear demand to President Obama that he halt the military from prosecuting troops refusing to participate in the Global War on Terror.

In these most critical times for our service members and the people of Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and others, I ask the American people to consider that change will not manifest itself in this country until society halts the unjust practices of the past, among them prosecuting Soldiers of conscience.

We tried to bring this message to President Obama at the final presidential debate. Tragically, Joe the plumber took precedence that evening, and Nick Morgan the Iraq Vet was nearly crushed by a police horse during a violent crackdown on our peaceful demonstration.

Hopefully, President Obama will hear our voices this time and understand that enough blood has been shed in Baghdad, Kabul, Waziristan and Hempstead alike. It is time for a just peace, at home and abroad.

But for peace to exist, first must occur reconciliation, and for reconciliation to occur, first must exist truth.

Truth is what led me to resist, and it is that truth now that leads me to St. Louis. Win or loose, my life WILL reflect truth and is dedicated to preserving human rights. The truth is, there is no other path I can walk. The Army proved that to me and now I'll prove it to them.

More to follow on various fundraisers, events and our national day of action. As always, I am grateful to all for your interest, support and dedication to peace and justice. I look forward to the whirlwind of activism that will be the next 39 days.

Peace and Solidarity,

Matthis Chiroux  
matthisresists.us

## **Active-duty Resister in U.S. Army Seeks Asylum in Germany**

February 03, 2009

Agence France-Presse

A deserter from the US army seeking asylum in Germany pleads his case Wednesday in a hearing that could have major political and legal ramifications.

Citing profound moral opposition to the US-led invasion of Iraq, Andre Shepherd, 31, went AWOL from his base in southern Germany in spring 2007 and spent 19 months on the run before applying for asylum in November last year.

Shepherd, originally from Cleveland, Ohio, completed a five-month stint in Iraq between September 2004 and February 2005 where he serviced Apache helicopters as part of the 412th Aviation Support Battalion.

When ordered to redeploy to Iraq, he felt he could not continue to serve in what he said is a "completely illegal war" and will be the first US soldier to claim asylum in Germany in a landmark case.

"Wednesday is my chance to tell my side of the story," Shepherd told AFP on Monday.

He said his case rests on the illegality of the war and the fact that he would be "unfairly prosecuted if handed over to the US authorities."

Tim Huber from the Military Counseling Network, which has been working with Shepherd, told AFP that the potential legal precedent of a positive ruling would have a "huge impact."

"There would not be a whole lot stopping US soldiers walking off their bases" to claim asylum, he told AFP.

"The gist of this whole thing is that he went AWOL because he didn't believe in the war in Iraq. He agreed with Germany," Huber said, where people were overwhelmingly opposed to the 2003 invasion.

Huber also pointed out that part of Germany's own law -- set up by the US military at the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal after World War II -- says that soldiers must take responsibility for their own actions.

"Just following orders is not an excuse. What we have here is a case of a soldier following his sense of personal responsibility," he said.

However, Shepherd's lawyer, Reinhard Marx, said that although he was confident his legal case was strong, the ruling could put Germany in a tight spot politically, which could affect the outcome of the hearing.

"Legally, it's an open-and-shut case. Politically, we don't know," Marx told AFP. He added: "It's of course a very politicised case. There's a very fine line between politics and the law."

The hearing takes place in the western German city of Karlsruhe at the Federal Immigration Office -- part of Germany's interior ministry.

Marx said: "The government will take the last decision. They won't leave it to the administrative departments."

The hearing is expected to last three or four hours and is closed to the public. A decision on Shepherd's application for asylum could be expected in the next four months, Marx said.

Shepherd himself said the procedure could "potentially last years."

Nevertheless, he vowed to appeal in the courts if his application is rejected.

"I will definitely fight on, as I don't believe I or anyone else should be prosecuted for doing what they think is right," he said.

<http://www.military.com/news/article/February-2009/army-deserter-seeks-asylum-in-germany.html?col=1186032310810>

op/ed

February 17, 2009

## **The Draft: Just Say No**

by Rep. Ron Paul

Much has been made by the new administration of the idea of national service and volunteerism. While service to one's community is certainly admirable, it is not the federal government's place to "encourage" or promote volunteerism. Moreover, there are troubling signs that national service could transition from voluntary to mandatory, or de facto mandatory, such as the requirement of service in order to be granted a diploma, or something along those lines.

Involuntary servitude was supposed to be abolished by the 13th Amendment, but things like Selective Service and the income tax make me wonder how serious we really are in defending just basic freedom. The income tax enslaves workers for nearly four months out of a year by garnishing what amounts to all their wages in that period of time. A military draft could demand your very life, without your consent. This should be unthinkable in a free society.

Proponents of reinstating the draft claim it is needed to protect liberty from enemies abroad. But what about the enemies of liberty right here at home? I am convinced that there are more threats to American liberty within the 10-mile radius of my office on Capitol Hill than there are on the rest of the globe. If we get our troops off of foreign soil, those perceived enemies of our liberty abroad are much more likely to stand down and let us be. We have more than enough troops to mind our own business and defend ourselves. It is only for world domination that we have a troop shortage.

Nevertheless, some think recruiting for our military is too low and that the younger generation will not answer the call of duty willingly, and must be drafted by force. I take extreme exception to this characterization of young people today. First of all, I believe they correctly see that foreign policy, as unpopular as it has been under Bush, is not significantly changing under Obama, and has little, if anything, to do with defending the United States, and certainly not the Constitution. Second, many see friends and acquaintances who have voluntarily enlisted, and have taken note of how soldiers and veterans are treated. Perhaps rather than blaming younger generations for being selfish, older generations should remember their promises to those who volunteer for military service and be mindful of how they are treated. Every homeless vet by the side of the road, every suicide, every report of substandard conditions in veteran hospitals is a sign of how we let our military down. Perhaps we should look to those issues if we have problems with military recruitment, rather than trampling freedom in the name of protecting it.

If that is not enough reason, consider that most in the military are against a draft. There is a vast difference between serving alongside another volunteer and serving alongside a reluctant conscript. Americans need to be on the lookout for any propaganda trying to ease us back into the draft. Too often

a flawed foreign policy prompts the need for a draft. Abolishing Selective Service is one thing we could do to counter those efforts.

<http://www.antiwar.com/paul/?articleid=14259>

follow up on a previously posted story:

## **Baghdad shootings: court martial of US soldiers begins**

Middle East News

Deutsche Presse-Agentur

Feb 17, 2009, 16:52 GMT

Vilseck, Germany - A US soldier, 26, accused of shooting four blindfolded Iraqi prisoners in the head and dumping their bodies in a canal near Baghdad went on trial Tuesday before a court martial in Germany.

He and two other soldiers, 27 and 40, had been ordered to release the prisoners, but are alleged to have instead murdered them in early 2007 out of a desire to avenge the killings of US soldiers.

All are being tried at the Grafenwoehr US Army base in Vilseck, Germany where they lived before deployment to Iraq. The other two are to face trial later. Accounts of the killings have caused revulsion in the United States and in the Arab world.

Two men who helped plot the murders but did not personally kill any prisoners were earlier jailed for seven and eight months respectively. Military lawyers said the sentences so far had been lenient because those convicted first had agreed to testify against the main defendants.

[http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/middleeast/news/article\\_1460058.php/Baghdad\\_shootings\\_court\\_martial\\_of\\_US\\_soldier\\_begins](http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/middleeast/news/article_1460058.php/Baghdad_shootings_court_martial_of_US_soldier_begins)

## **UN: 2,100 civilians killed in Afghanistan in 2008**

REUTERS

Feb 03, 2009 08:06 EST

GENEVA, Feb 3 (Reuters) - More than 2,100 civilians in Afghanistan were killed last year, a 40 percent rise from the previous year, because of escalating fighting that spread to new areas, the United Nations top aid official said on Tuesday.

John Holmes, U.N. emergency relief coordinator, gave the toll to representatives of donor countries while launching a U.N. funding appeal of \$604 million for Afghanistan for 2009.

"According to U.N. figures, over 2,100 civilians were killed as a result of armed conflict in 2008, which represents an increase of about 40 percent from 2007," Holmes said in a speech, the text of which was issued to reporters in Geneva.

"The armed conflict is increasingly characterised by the use of suicide bombings, improvised explosive devices, kidnappings and air strikes, all of which tend to increase civilian casualties," said the U.N. funding appeal document.

Source: Reuters North American News Service

(Reporting by Stephanie Nebehay; Editing by Jonathan Lynn and Katie Nguyen)

<http://wire.antiwar.com/2009/02/03/un-2100-civilians-killed-in-afghanistan-in-2008/>

more detail:

February 17, 2009

Today, the United Nations released a report detailing the civilian death toll in Afghanistan in 2008.

According to the report, [2,118 civilians were killed in 2008](#) - **828 by the American-led coalition forces**.

Most of those were, unsurprisingly, killed in the various air strikes and raids against Afghan villages.

related story:

## **Karzai Admits Rift With US, NATO Over Civilian Killings**

Afghan President Says NATO Trying to Silence Him

Posted February 4, 2009

President Karzai has conceded that the dispute is causing a growing rift between the two sides.

"For a long time now we and the Americans have discord in our opinions regarding the civilian casualties... and therefore there are tensions in our relations," Karzai insists, adding that "it is natural that they in return put pressure on us so that we keep quiet."

As the soaring violence has led to a soaring civilian toll, Karzai's complaints have become louder and more frequent.

<http://news.antiwar.com/2009/02/04/karzai-admits-rift-with-us-nato-over-civilian-killings/>

related story:

## **Anger Over Afghan Civilian Deaths Shows Limits of U.S. Air Power - NYTimes.com**

ABOARD U.S.S. THEODORE ROOSEVELT, on the Arabian Sea — From 15,000 feet up, the pilots protect supply lines under increasing attack, fly reconnaissance missions to find what they call "bad

guys” over the next hill, and go “kinetic” with bombs that kill three, four or five Taliban fighters at a time. They can always tell when troops who call in airstrikes are under direct fire.

The United States military is experiencing the limitations of air power in a seven-year war, in which an increasing American reliance on airstrikes against insurgents has kindled growing fury over the civilian casualties that have come with them.

As Vice Adm. William E. Gortney, the commander of United States naval forces in the region, put it: “We don’t drop when we’re unsure.”

“Just because it’s positively identified as hostile, you’ve still got to mitigate the other things around,” said Commander Luchtman.

To support ground troops in Afghanistan, the United States flew more than 19,000 combat missions in the country in 2008 — more than ever before, surpassing even the number in Iraq over the same period. But over all, American pilots dropped slightly fewer bombs and other munitions, perhaps as a result of more restrictive rules imposed in September after an uproar about civilian casualties.

“To win the insurgency, we’re not going to bomb our way out of this,” said Col. Harry A. Foster, the chief of the strategy division of the Combined Air and Space Operations Center in Southwest Asia, the command headquarters for the air wars over Iraq and Afghanistan. To that end, pilots on the Roosevelt often engage in a “show of force” — flying as low as 1,000 feet and making a lot of noise to scare the Taliban — and say they drop bombs as a last resort.

On Wednesday in Washington, Gen. David D. McKiernan, the top American commander in Afghanistan, said the war was “at best stalemated” in the very region in which the pilots operate.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/24/world/asia/24carrier.html?  
\\_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/24/world/asia/24carrier.html?_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss&pagewanted=all)

## **editorial from Antiwar.com**

A foolhardy invasion, a fruitless struggle, increasing hatred of the American occupiers, even our own puppets protesting our brutal methods: does any of this sound familiar?

Of course it does. The war in Iraq, which was supposed to be a "cakewalk," includes all of the above – and so does the ongoing war in Afghanistan, albeit with far graver dangers.

For some reason, the Afghan war is considered the "good war," even in ostensibly antiwar circles. All the well-known arguments against the Iraq adventure – the high costs, the futility of nation-building, the risk of igniting a wider conflagration – somehow do not apply to Afghanistan. Yet they are all too applicable, and increasingly so, as the U.S. puts 30,000 more troops into that war-torn country and extends the conflict into Pakistan.

The original rationale for attacking Afghanistan was the alleged presence of Osama bin Laden, but now that he is long gone we're escalating the fight – and provoking a backlash from the Afghan people. The technocrats and warlords we support have little to no credibility, and our reckless killing of civilians has been vigorously protested by Afghan

President Hamid Karzai, to little effect.

We are told that bin Laden is being harbored in the tribal areas of Pakistan, just as we were once told he was allied with Iraq. How many lies will the American people swallow before they turn against this war, too?

America can ill afford to sink further into this quagmire – and yet it is poised to do just that, almost without opposition.

appeared 10 Feb 2009 on antiwar.com homepage

related story:

## **British officer held over Afghan casualties leak**

5 Feb 2009

A senior British Army officer has been arrested in Kabul and faces charges under the Official Secrets Act for allegedly leaking figures about civilian casualty figures in Afghanistan to a human rights group.

Lt-Col Owen McNally was detained after details about people killed and wounded during Western military operations were leaked from Nato headquarters in the Afghan capital. According to defence sources, Col McNally had become friendly with a female employee of a human rights group which had been carrying out an inquiry into the extent of "collateral damage".

The issue is highly sensitive in Afghanistan, with more than 8,000 deaths in the eight years since the fall of the Taliban.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/british-officer-held-over-afghan-casualties-leak-1546407.html>

related story:

## **General Craddock's Contentious Order**

Time May Be Short for NATO High Commander

By Susanne Koelbl, Hans-Jürgen Schlamp and Alexander Szandar

At the end January, *SPIEGEL* reported that NATO High Commander General Craddock had ordered troops to attack drug traffickers -- without checking to see if they were also insurgents. He lost the internal dispute that ensued and his time may now be short in the Western alliance.

On Jan. 30, General Bantz John Craddock gave up. On that day, the NATO High Commander retracted an order calling on troops fighting in Afghanistan with NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to attack drug traffickers and facilities. Many of Craddock's comrades found the order unpalatable -- it explicitly directed NATO troops to kill those involved in the drug trade even if there was no proof that they supported insurgents fighting against NATO or Afghan security forces.

General Egon Ramms, from Germany, who heads up the NATO command center responsible for

Afghanistan in Brunssum, the Netherlands, expressed his displeasure with the order as did US General David McKiernan, who heads up the NATO command in Afghanistan. Both felt that the order violated ISAF rules of engagement as well as international law.

The contentious contents of Craddock's paper unleashed dismay throughout the alliance and across the political spectrum. "Afghan people are not chickens whom one could hunt whenever one wanted to," commented Afghan Foreign Minister Rangeen Dadfar Spanta.

In his defense, Craddock said that the NATO Council has confirmed the connection between the drug trade and the insurgents. "I have never issued an illegal order," he said.

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,605780,00.html>

file under: mercenary companies in court

## **Family of contractor killed in Iraq by US troops sues Halliburton, KBR over death**

AP News  
Feb 07, 2009

A lawsuit against two military contractors claims the companies' mistakes led U.S. soldiers to believe an American truck driver working for the contractors might be an insurgent steering a bomb-laden truck onto a U.S. military base.

In a lawsuit filed in Houston this week, Kristen Martin accused Halliburton Co. and KBR Inc. of the wrongful death of her father, truck driver Donald Tolfree, who was killed at a Camp Anaconda checkpoint, about 50 miles north of Baghdad, in February 2007.

Tolfree, of St. Charles, Mich., was told he would be protected by U.S. soldiers at all times. Instead, because of negligence and fraud by Halliburton and KBR, Tolfree was killed by U.S. troops, said Guy Watts, Martin's attorney.

"He was recruited in Houston, oriented in Houston and assured of his safety in Houston," Watts said in explaining why the lawsuit was filed here.

<http://wire.antiwar.com/2009/02/07/family-of-slain-contractor-sues-halliburton-kbr-2/>

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backpage

file under S.N.A.F.U

## **Iraqis Say U.S. Patrol Killed Girl, 8, in Crowd**



BAGHDAD — An 8-year-old Iraqi girl was killed Saturday and several other civilians were wounded when gunfire from an American military convoy struck a crowd of Shiite pilgrims traveling to the holy city of Karbala, witnesses and Iraqi officials said.

It was unclear how the shooting on Saturday began. Col. Asaad Malek, the commander of a joint American and Iraqi military outpost in Diwaniya, said the Americans had been protecting a convoy of fuel trucks when they stopped to attend to a disabled vehicle.

The road was crowded with pilgrims heading to Karbala, witnesses said. Salah Mon'em, 26, who was wounded, said the patrol had sounded horns to keep the crowds at bay. Before he realized what was happening, he said, "I fell down because of a bullet that hit me."

Jassim Hassan, a 25-year-old college student, described a scene of chaos and confusion. "I don't know how all of this happened and I can't remember a thing, because everything was so fast and sudden," he said.

After the short burst of gunfire, the 8-year-old girl, Sa'adiya Saddam, collapsed on the ground by her wailing mother, witnesses said.

Her brother, Hussein, also 8, said: "We didn't notice the Americans before the gun shooting started. My sister fell immediately, swimming in her own blood."

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/09/world/middleeast/09iraq.html?\\_r=2&ref=world](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/09/world/middleeast/09iraq.html?_r=2&ref=world)

## **U.S. Air Force fails new nuclear reviews**

Air Force nuclear units have failed two inspections in the past three months, providing fresh evidence that the military service that jarred the world in 2007 by mistakenly transporting live nuclear weapons across the United States continues to suffer lapses in its management of intercontinental ballistic missiles.

In all, three Air Force nuclear-missile units and two strategic-bomber units failed such inspections in 2008.

James Schlesinger, the former defense secretary who headed a recent task force on nuclear-weapons management, said Tuesday the continuing problems affect U.S. credibility worldwide - both in deterring attacks and assuring allies of protection...

"Whatever the size of the nuclear force is, it has to be run with zero defects," Mr. Schlesinger said in an interview. "We've got to get back to that if we want to have any credibility in the international scene."

The most recent surety-inspection failure took place at the 90th Missile Wing at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming from Dec. 2 to Dec. 17. The base is in charge of 150 Minuteman III missiles that are on alert 24 hours a day.

Air Force officials said the 90th was given failing grades by inspectors from the Space Command and the Defense Technology Security Administration for not properly documenting tests on missiles...

The two other nuclear-surety-inspection failures took place last year at the 341st Missile Wing at Malstrom Air Force Base, Montana, from Oct. 26 to Nov. 10, and at the 91st Missile Wing at Minot Air Force Base, N.D., from Jan. 22 to Jan. 30, 2008. Both wings also handle 150 nuclear-tipped Minuteman IIIs deployed in underground silos.

A security breakdown allowed live nuclear weapons to be flown improperly from Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota to Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana in August 2007.

The Defense Department task force report issued in October warned that the Air Force was not doing its job of securing and maintaining nuclear-missile forces. The report identified a "serious erosion of senior-level attention, focus, expertise, mission readiness, resources, and discipline in the nuclear weapons mission."

The task force believes a significant shortfall exists in the DoD nuclear surety inspection process," the report said.

Mr. Schlesinger, who headed the task force, stated in the October report that the Air Force in recent years focused too much on conflicts in the Middle East and Afghanistan. "Both inattention and conscious budget decisions have led to the atrophy of the Air Force's nuclear mission," he stated.

The January task force report stated that one of the problems for the Air Force's nuclear weapons mission is that troops do not clearly understand the deterrence mission of the expensive and extremely powerful strategic weapons.

<http://washingtontimes.com/news/2009/feb/04/air-force-fails-new-nuclear-reviews/>

related story: glimmers of hope for 'Peace Dividend' - 20 years overdue since end of Cold War

## President Obama seeks Russia deal to slash nuclear weapons

The radical new treaty would reduce the number of nuclear warheads to 1,000 each

>From *The London Times* (UK)

February 4, 2009

by Tim Reid in Washington

President Obama will convene the most ambitious arms reduction talks with Russia for a generation, aiming to slash each country's stockpile of nuclear weapons by 80 per cent.

The radical treaty would cut the number of nuclear warheads to 1,000 each, The Times has learnt. Key to the initiative is a review of the Bush Administration's plan for a US missile defence shield in Eastern Europe, a project fiercely opposed by Moscow.

Mr Obama is to establish a non-proliferation office at the White House to oversee the talks, expected to be headed by Gary Samore, a non-proliferation negotiator in the Clinton Administration. The talks will be driven by Hillary Clinton's State Department.

No final decision on the defence shield has been taken by Mr Obama. Yet merely delaying the placement of US missiles in Poland and a radar station in the Czech Republic — which if deployed would cost the US \$4 billion annually — removes what has been a major impediment to Russian co-operation on arms reduction.

Any agreement would put pressure on Britain, which has 160 nuclear warheads, and other nuclear powers [such as Israel, suspected to have up to 300 nuclear warheads] to reduce their stockpiles.

Mr Obama has pledged to put nuclear weapons reduction at the heart of his presidency and his first move will be to reopen talks with Moscow to replace the 1991 US-Soviet Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (Start), which expires in December. Under that pact, the two countries have cut their respective stockpiles from roughly 10,000 to 5,000.

[http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us\\_and\\_americas/article5654836.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/article5654836.ece)

plus this comment from one reader:

"The Bush shield was aggressive posturing, fine when Russia was on it's knees but now . America is too broke to do the John Wayne thing. Perhaps Obama will also use his influence to rid the middle east of nuclear weapons, phosphorus bombs and other chemical weapons, and cluster bombs?"

~Kais Uddin, Manchester, England