

GI SPECIAL 3A61:

GET THE MESSAGE?



2.28.05 Anonymous, Infoshop News

BE ADVISED: Grieving Families Of KIA Targeted By Con Artists

March 07, 2005 Army Times

Con artists are plying two Iraq-related e-mail scams, including one targeting relatives of fallen service members, the Department of Homeland Security says.

Specifics of how the scams are supposed to work are under investigation. However, they have hallmarks of "phishing" expeditions, through which criminals seek to gain personal and financial data via e-mail that can be used to defraud victims.

In one scam, someone claiming to be a volunteer working with U.S. forces contacts a relative of a service member killed in Iraq. The scammer then claims to

have known another service member killed in Iraq who was a friend of the target's deceased military relative. The scammer then hints at needing help in obtaining funds held for him by the deceased friend, and promises to provide more details when the target responds.

In another scam, someone claims to be an Immigration and Customs Enforcement official in Iraq who is tracking down funds looted from the Iraqi Central Bank by Saddam Hussein's son. The scammer lists ICE's official Web site, asks the recipient to confirm his e-mail address, and mentions a need to discuss "a very important and confidential matter."

These solicitations are not associated with any ICE activities and no one should respond with any personal or financial information, officials said. **Recipients should notify the ICE tip line at (866) 347-2423.**

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE NEW 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)

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

SOLDIER DIES FROM INJURIES SUSTAINED IN BAYJI VEHICLE WRECK

March 1, 2005 HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND NEWS
RELEASE Number: 05-03-01C

LOGISTICS SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, BALAD, Iraq – **A second 1st Corps Support Command Soldier is dead March 1 from injuries sustained during a vehicle accident that occurred about 20 miles northwest of Tikrit near the town of Bayji Feb 28.**

The Soldier was evacuated to a combat support hospital in Tikrit Feb. 28 to be treated for head injuries, later dying as a result of those injuries.

Oelwein Reservist Seriously Injured

March 1, 2005 By DAN HAUGEN, Courier Staff Writer

OELWEIN --- A Northeast Iowa guardsman serving in Iraq is in stable but serious condition following a roadside bomb explosion that killed another area soldier.

Spc. Seth Garceau, 22, of Oelwein, was riding in the gunner's position of an up-armored Humvee when it was hit by an explosive device. The attack occurred between Karbala and Ar Ramadi, Iraq.

Garceau's father, Rick, said he received a telephone call about noon Sunday about the incident. "When you get that call, it's tough," Rick Garceau said. "It's something you think you can prepare yourself for, but you just can't."

Seth Garceau sustained several injuries, including head wounds, facial lacerations, a crushed trachea and a compound fracture to his leg. He also lost his right eye, according to his father.

Doctors spent 20 hours in surgery to stabilize Garceau so that he could be transported from Baghdad to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, Rick Garceau said. Seth Garceau graduated from Oelwein High School in 2001. He started National Guard basic training the summer before his senior year.

"He was always interested in heavy equipment," Rick Garceau said. "He thought that would be a good place to get his training. He wanted to join, and that's what he did." Seth Garceau also worked for several years at Steve's Auto Body in Oelwein.

He left for his first tour of duty with the 224th Engineer Battalion based in Burlington last year after training in Texas and Oklahoma.

Three other soldiers from the company were also injured in the attack: Sgt. Timothy Shay, 22, of Muscatine; Spc. Justin Edgington, 23, of Burlington; and Spc. Dennis Smutzer, 32, of Moline, Ill.

Australian Troops Evacuate Base; Retreat To Green Zone

March 01, 2005 Max Blenkin, AAP

THE nation's 120-member security detachment in Baghdad – SECDET – are evacuating their former base next to the unoccupied Australian embassy and moving into the more secure Green Zone.

Army Chief Lieutenant General Peter Leahy confirmed today the move was underway.

"The SECDEF have already commenced movement and they will be closer to the diplomats and I think that movement is pretty well happening now," he said today.

It follows the evacuation of Australia's three diplomats who in late January relocated to the Australian headquarters on the American Camp Victory base.

TROOP NEWS

Ukraine To Pull Out Troops From Iraq Starting March 15

Mar. 01, 2005 Associated Press, KIEV, Ukraine

Ukraine's top defense and security body has decided to order the withdrawal of the nation's soldiers from Iraq, and the pullout will begin this month, officials said Tuesday.

The phased withdrawal will begin March 15, and 150 soldiers will leave Iraq in the first batch, Defense Minister Anatoly Gritsenko said.

Gritsenko had said Ukraine's 1,650-member contingent could be completely withdrawn by October, and would be reduced to some 700 troops by April.

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.

General Admits Troops Still Forced To Use Deadly Vehicles In Iraq

March 01, 2005 By Robert Burns, Associated Press

Marine Corps Gen. Peter Pace, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Senate Budget Committee on Tuesday that **all U.S. military vehicles in Iraq will be outfitted with the best armor by summer.** [Last winter these Pentagon assholes said that would happen by Spring. Make the fuckers like Pace ride in the deadly pieces of shit. Maybe that will get some results. Even better, tie his scrawny ass on the hood.]

Until then some will rely on the less effective add-on armor, which some soldiers have dubbed “hillbilly armor” because it is an improvised solution. [“Rely on?” What the fuck does that mean? We know what “less effective” means. Dead or maimed for life.]

Abizaid Slams Pentagon For Failure To Focus On IEDs

March 01, 2005 By Robert Burns, Associated Press

The Pentagon is not trying hard enough to defeat the makeshift roadside bombs that are the leading killer of U.S. troops in Iraq, the commander of American forces in the Middle East said Tuesday.

Pentagon statistics show that over the past two months, the homemade, easy-to-hide weapons have accounted for a significantly higher share of U.S. battle deaths. In the final 10 days of February, for example, at least 13 of the 22 battle deaths were caused by roadside bombs.

Army Gen. John Abizaid, the commander of U.S. Central Command, told the Senate Armed Services Committee “But I’m not satisfied that we have come up with the solutions that we could if we really rolled up our sleeves and looked at it the way it needs to be looked at.”

That statement was the most direct public challenge to the Pentagon’s approach to this deadly problem.

Troops Have Enough Iraq; Half Won’t Re-Up; Recruiting Tanks Too

28 Feb 2005 Action Center

Out of 10 Army Divisions, part or all of 9 of them are either deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Twenty-one out of 33 regular combat brigades are on active duty in Iraq, Afghanistan, South Korea, or the Balkans.

That's 63% of the Army's combat strength. This means the Army is extremely overextended.

All four services missed their enlistment quotas last year, and enlistments in the Reserves, National Guard, and regular military are at a 30-year low.

Many current members of the armed forces plan to get out as soon as their current enlistment ends.

According to a poll conducted by the military newspaper Stars & Stripes, 49% of soldiers stationed in Iraq do not plan to re-enlist.

Straws In The Wind: Pentagon Doubles Money To Chase “Malcontents”

March 07, 2005 Army Times

Under current spending plans, the Pentagon will almost double its budget for apprehending military deserters in just two years, from \$2.3 million in fiscal 2004 to a projected \$4 million in the fiscal 2006 budget request.

By service, the proposed budget for nabbing deserters in 2006 would give the Marine Corps \$1.6 million; the Army, \$1.4 million; the Navy, \$825,000; and the Air Force, \$100,000.

In other words, the Marine Corps, the smallest of the four, spends the most to track down malcontents. Meanwhile, the Army's proposed \$1.4 million deserter-pursuit budget for 2006 would more than double its total this year, \$615,000.

Bush's Whore At Pentagon Says Compensating Reservists For Lost Pay A Bad Idea

March 07, 2005 By Vince Crawley, Army Times staff writer

The Pentagon's chief of reserve affairs opposes plans to compensate some reservists who lose income when mobilized, saying this would create inequities among deployed troops.

Thomas Hall, assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs, said such a move would go against his philosophy that reserve pay and benefits should be as closely aligned as possible with those of active-duty members.

Meeting with defense writers in mid-February, Hall said the National Guard and reserve have shifted from being strategic Cold War backup forces to operational reserves involved in regular deployments. This shift in emphasis makes eliminating differences between reserve and active-duty benefits — and not creating new ones — more important than ever, Hall said. **[This is babbling bullshit, that has no meaning, just a smokescreen so Bush and the Empire can get more victims for their Imperial Iraq Adventure as cheap as possible. This is the same kind of double-talk Wall-Mart hands out when their workers want a raise. Here's the translation: "Cause I say so." Oh, by the way, what do you suppose this assholes' official U.S. Government paycheck looks like?]**

Several lawmakers have proposed bills that would direct the government to make up any differences in pay for mobilized reservists whose military wages are less than what they make in their civilian jobs.

***But Hall, a retired Navy rear admiral,* says the Pentagon has found no widespread problems with reserve pay that merits such a move. [Of course not. Pieces of shit like Hall only find what they want to find. So of course he hasn't "found" a problem. Maybe 50,000 reserve members need to pay him a visit, arms in hand. That might help him "find" a problem.]**

"Our view has been that we need to compensate equally guardsmen, reservists and active duty with the same salary out of the federal taxpayers' dollars when they're doing the same job," Hall said. **[Check the way he sneaks in the line about "taxpayers' dollars, as if paying men and women called up from the reserves, losing their incomes, and going off to Iraq to die or come home without arms, legs, and eyes is some kind of insult to these "taxpayers" he's whining about. Everybody knows scum like Hall and his traitor boss Bush keep cutting taxes on the rich every time they inhale and exhale, and then they poormouth about not having the money to keep deployed reservists out of bankruptcy. Payback for scum like this is so overdue.]**

Such supplemental pay, he said, could result in a situation in which two E-5s — one on active duty, one a reservist — are in a foxhole, talking about their pay.

The active-duty member might note that he's trying to make ends meet on about \$45,000 per year. But the reservist might say, "Well, I get \$100,000 because you as the taxpayer are paying the difference of what I got when I was a civilian," Hall said. "That creates a little bit of a problem with that active-duty person." **[Only in the deluded mind of Hall. The problem has a very simple solution. Instead of twisting this into something the active duty E-5 has to pay for, confiscate the fucking profits of Halliburton and all the other war profiteers to pay the reservists. And let Mr. Retired Rear Admiral Hall take a hit to his riches as well. Guaranteed, the active**

duty E5 will stand up and cheer for that one. What despicable trash these low life Pentagon ass-kissers truly are. They have no honor, no truth, and no respect for anybody who doesn't eat with them in the Pentagon dining room.]

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.

Hawai'i Reserve Commander Arrested In Iraq For “Nearly Choking” Operations Officer

March 1, 2005 Associated Press

An Army Reserve commander from Hawai'i has been arrested by military police in Iraq after allegedly attacking a subordinate staff officer, officials said.

Lt. Col. Alan Ostermiller was suspended last week by Brig. Gen. Joe Chaves, commander of the 29th Infantry, pending the outcome of an investigation, Brig. Gen. John Ma, commander of the Army Reserve's 9th Regional Support Command, said yesterday.

Ostermiller is commander of a unit attached to the Hawai'i Army National Guard — the 29th Infantry Brigade's 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry.

Ostermiller allegedly assaulted his operations officer at the battalion's headquarters during an early morning briefing at Logistical Support Area Anaconda, nearly choking the officer, the Honolulu Star-Bulletin reported, quoting unidentified family members.

Ostermiller was pulled off the officer and thrown to the ground before being placed under arrest by military police, the newspaper said.

Ostermiller, who took command of the 100th Battalion, 442nd Infantry, in July, is a 1982 Kamehameha Schools graduate. **He went through the ROTC program at the University of Hawai'i.**

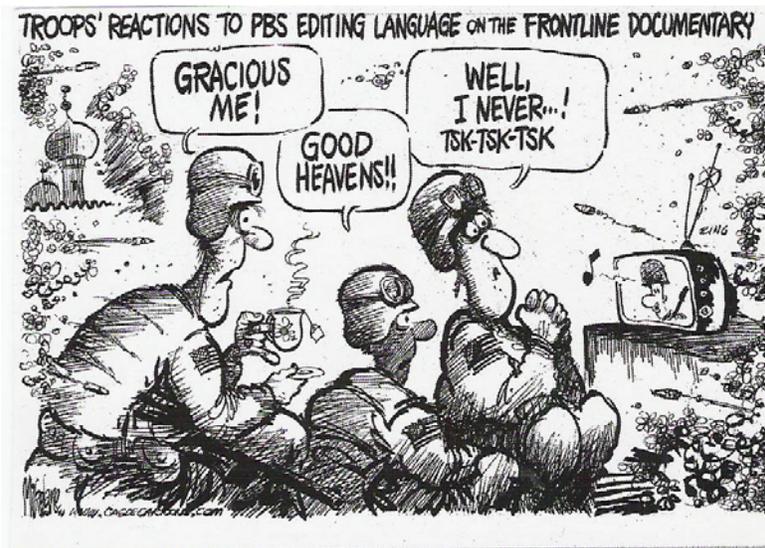
The Universal Code Of Military Injustice Strikes Again

(San Antonio Express-News, March 1, 2005)

An Air Force sergeant convicted of having sex with a student at Sheppard Air Force Base, Tex., wonders why the Air Force's top lawyer escaped a court-martial despite pursuing affairs with more than a dozen women over a decade, some of them his subordinates.

The disparity raises the old issue of whether officers get special breaks from the military's 54-year-old justice system - what some cynics call "different spansks for different ranks."

PATHETIC PUSILLANIMOUS PBS PRUDES:



Army Times 3.7.05

“Don't Ask” Policy Flops

(Miami Herald, March 1, 2005)

The Pentagon policy on gays in the military, known as "don't ask, don't tell," isn't working. It hurts recruitment, impedes retention and costs too much, according to last week's GAO report that underlined the need to rethink the 12-year-old policy.

Perhaps "don't ask, don't tell" made sense at one time, relaxing the rule that banned homosexuality in the U.S. military altogether. It makes no sense today. The policy should be repealed, and men and women who want to serve their country in the armed forces should be allowed to do so without regard to sexual orientation.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Resistance Forcing Occupation Recruiting Stations To Close

3.1.05 By Farnaz Fazzihi, Wall St. Journal

The constant attacks on recruiting centers have hindered U.S. efforts to build a diverse force.

For example, the U.S. initially planned to open six army recruiting stations around Iraq, but continued violence forced several to shut down.

The two recruiting stations in Mosul and Ramadi, which account for the bulk of Sunni recruits, were closed most of last month.

The Baghdad station, which most recently was attacked on Feb. 8, killing 13, hasn't produced strong numbers, U.S. military officials said, and the only reason the Iraqi army has been able to hit recruiting goals is the large numbers joining in the Shiite south.

Big Victory In Ramadi: Dentist Killed



A protest took place 2.28.05 in Ramadi, where medical staff and students were angered by the killing of a dentist, Ahmed Abdul Rahman al-Qubaisi, by American soldiers last week. (Anonymous, Infoshop News)

Collaborator Judge Shot

March 1, 2005 By Jim Miklaszewski, Correspondent, NBC News

BAGHDAD, Iraq - A judge working on the special tribunal established to try Saddam Hussein and other senior officials in his toppled regime was assassinated Tuesday in Baghdad.

Resistance Action:

March 1 (Xinhuanet) & 2.28.05, Middle East Online

Two bodies of Iraqi soldiers were found close to the main road near Tikrit, north of Baghdad, police said on Tuesday.

"The two bodies were identified as bodyguards of a high-ranking official in the Iraqi Defense Ministry," Colonel Hassan Ahmad from the provincial headquarters of Salahudin police told Xinhua.

The two bodies were found Monday night on the main road linking Tikrit to Baiji, north of Baghdad, Ahmad added.

Two Iraqi soldiers were killed in a gunbattle south of Samarra, while an Iraqi soldier and translator died in a mortar attack near Dhuluiya, north of Baghdad, Iraqi security officials said.

<p>IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE END THE OCCUPATION</p>

OCCUPATION REPORT

U.S. State Department Says Iraqi Puppet Government A Pack of Thieves, Thugs, Torturers And Killers

March 1, 2005 WASHINGTON (AP)

Serious human rights abuses occurred under the interim Iraqi government installed by the United States after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, including torture, illegal detention by police and forced confessions, according to a State Department report.

The report said that ``corruption at all levels of government remained a problem" during the period and Iraqis continued to be victimized by police, courts and others in authority.

Under the interim Iraq government, there were reports of local police and other government agents killing members of Saddam's Ba'ath Party, a mother and daughter accused of prostitution and kidnappers of police officers, the State Department noted. It cited a report by Human Rights Watch that said ``torture and ill treatment of detainees by police was commonplace."

The report, released Monday, did not address incidents in Iraq in which Americans were involved, such as the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib.

In the Iraqi judicial system, the reported noted, defendants were generally given short shrift. There were no jury trials; a defendant's guilt or innocence was decided by a three-judge panel and those convicted were sentenced immediately after the verdict.

War Crime Ordered By U.S. Command In Hiyt City

01 March 2005 Aljazeera

The [U.S.] forces surrounded Hiyt city, imposing curfew for the seventh consecutive night. **Aljazeera learned that the US forces had arrested many people *including the medical staff of the Hit general hospital.* [Criminal violation of Geneva Conventions.]**

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Tel Aviv Blast Killed Elite Soldiers

01 March 2005 By Khalid Amayreh in the West Bank, Aljazeera.Net

The Israeli press has reported that three of the five people killed in the bomb attack in Tel Aviv on Friday were members of an elite Israeli army unit serving in the West Bank.

The Jerusalem Post reported the elite unit was invited to celebrate a party for one of its soldiers, and stood at the entrance to the stage club when the bomber detonated the explosive device he was carrying.

Earlier, the platoon commander, Eran Cohen, told Army Radio (Gali Tzahal) that virtually all the casualties of the bombing were members of his unit.

"There were 13 of us there. All the fatalities are from our unit. Many more were wounded." Eran called the unit's soldiers "the best of the best, Israel's elite".

Earlier, the Israeli media had reported that all those killed and injured in the blast were civilians

"In the past five years of this war, we have carried out virtually every single mission in the [Palestinian] territories and underwent nearly every kind of attempted attack.

"In five years, none of our troops were wounded. It's ironic that we were hit so hard in one explosion on a Friday night in Tel Aviv. Just before a party," Eran said.

Israeli undercover units have assassinated hundreds of Palestinian political and resistance activists during the Palestinian al-Aqsa intifada against Israeli occupation, which started in September 2000.

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

Received:

“Poor, White And Pissed”

From: JG
To: GI Special
Sent: Tuesday, March 01, 2005 12:39 AM
Subject: “Poor, White And Pissed”

Man, I really liked that one!

It hit a lot of nails on the head. (most everything you print does)

I live in rural Georgia and these are my neighbors.

I did not grow up here and even though I have lived here over 20 years I will always be an "outsider" but I want to print this letter up and pass it around.

If the author will give me permission, and the editor of the local paper will print it, I would love to send it in.

Thanks for all the good works brother,
sincerely
JG

REPLY: You get the thanks for all the terrific material you send in. T

SPECIAL REPORT:

Seven Days In Falluja: "I Don't Want My Boy To Know His Daddy's A Killer"

The house, yet another in a line of dozens if not hundreds, was blown apart by Bradley and Abrams tank fire. "It's intense, that's about all there is to say," said Spc. John Bandy, 23, of Little Rock, Ark. "The determination these guys have against our forces, these little bands of guys shooting at tanks, it's almost admirable."

2004-11-28 Tom Lasseter, Knight Ridder Newspapers

11.8.04, Monday

FALLUJAH, Iraq - Capt. Sean Sims watched artillery shells fall and explode in a blast of sand and rubble, close enough to hear but too far to see what they hit. It was Sims' first daylight look at the rebel-held city of Fallujah on Monday afternoon, just hours before he would lead his men deep into its heart.

A Marine Harrier jet screamed overhead. A Mark-19 automatic grenade launcher nearby let loose - bomb-boom-boom - sending grenades to burst in the distance.

As commander of Alpha Company, of the 1st Infantry Division's Task Force 2-2, Sims drew a mission the U.S. military had sought to avoid since the start of the Iraq war: house-to-house fighting in an urban landscape that gave rebels many places to hide, significantly offsetting the superior firepower of U.S. troops while risking civilian casualties and vast property destruction. It would be the most intense urban combat for U.S. troops since the 1968 battle for Hue, in Vietnam.

Sims' men would win the battle, yet no one would feel like celebrating. Killing the enemy, they learned, was sobering. More so was the loss of friends.

Sims would not come back.

Before his men left the Forward Operating Base near Fallujah that morning, battalion commander, Lt. Col. Pete Newell, gathered them in a circle. "This is as pure a fight of good versus evil as we will probably face in our lifetime," he said.

Alpha Company was heading to the city's eastern corridor, the Askari neighborhood, from where they would turn south into industrial districts and finally hook back to the west, running for six bleary days with almost no sleep.

Although most of the city's 300,000 residents had fled, intelligence briefings suggested the Askari neighborhood - home to many former officers in Saddam Hussein's army - had been turned into one big bunker, with car bombs, booby traps and snipers' nests.

None of the young American men had ever set foot in the town, shared a cup of tea with a resident or seen the ornate blue domes that topped the mosques.

After Sims took in the view, soldiers of Alpha Company scrambled to a road overlooking Fallujah. Then sniper fire began and the battle was joined. Some soldiers emptied their M-16 clips, some yelling, others laughing as return sniper fire pinged off the Bradleys and pavement around them.

"Lord, I have to say a special prayer now," the 32-year-old Sims said in the soft-spoken accent of his hometown of Eddy, Texas.

He hustled up a berm to the road to link up with the Task Force 2-2 reconnaissance team.

Crouched down on his right knee, Sims watched the insurgents' mortar rounds land, and a minute or two later he heard the retort of U.S. artillery. A few hundred yards away, the outskirts of Fallujah rose out of the desert in a warren of sand-colored houses.

Satellite images after recent airstrikes showed dozens of ensuing explosions that probably resulted from roadside bombs.

"Everybody realizes that it's something that will affect the rest of our lives, in terms of seeing that type of combat," Sims said a few days earlier. "When the first bullet impacts, you know the eyes of the world are going to be on you."

Near Sims, a sniper lay on his belly with a rifle scope pressed against his eyes. A five-man insurgent team was scampering in and out of the buildings of Askari. One rebel appeared to be carrying mortars.

More bullets flew by, and the mortar rounds grew closer. Capt. Kirk Mayfield, of the recon team, yelled, "Everyone behind the truck."

Standing next to his Humvee, Mayfield screamed for U.S. mortar strikes on the five-man team. After the ensuing rumble, a voice called over the radio: "Can I get a battle damage assessment?"

"An assessment?" the reply came. "There is no more building."

Sims laughed to himself.

Sniper shots zipped by, pinging off the Humvee.

"Where is that sniper? Here it is," Mayfield barked, turning to a gunner behind an automatic grenade launcher. "Blow him away."

The red-hot streak of another bullet whizzed past. The gunner shot round after round, with explosions echoing across the town, then pulled a pair of binoculars to his face and announced, "He is not there anymore."

Sims called over to his men, "Let's go," and they went scrambling back down the dirt berm.

At about 7 p.m., he lined up his vehicle behind his First and Third platoons as they braced for the fight.

Sitting in the back of Sims' Bradley Fighting Vehicle, Corp. Travis Barreto, from Brooklyn, leaned over and tried to get a glimpse through one of the small rectangle windows at the back of the truck.

A truck pulled up carrying a rocket with about 350 feet of cord attached to it and 5-pound blocks of C4 plastic explosives spaced out every foot down the line. With a small whoosh, the rocket flew forward and a wall of flame shot up. Roadside bombs planted by rebels exploded, one after the other.

Barreto cheered.

"You know we're going to destroy this town," said Barreto, 22.

"I hope so," replied the soldier sitting next to him.

Phosphorous shells came next, releasing bouncing white orbs of smoke. The gunner on top of the Bradley began firing 25 mm high explosive rounds, filling the cabin of the Bradley with an ammonia-like smell. Barreto looked outside the window again and could see only smoke and flashes of light.

The U.S. artillery shells were coming in "Danger Close" - the thin line between uncomfortably near and death.

Insurgent AK-47 fire rang off the sides of the Bradley. Explosions sounded to the rear, but it was impossible to tell which belonged to roadside bombs and which were rocket-propelled grenades.

As the hours passed, soldiers tried to grab a few minutes of sleep, slumping their heads on the next shoulder. Each time they began to drift off another explosion would jolt them awake.

Large concrete barriers and parked cars blocked in the road in some places. The big M1A1 Abrams tanks lined up and pounded the obstacles with 120 mm shells, shaking the air.

Sims followed his platoons, which moved a few blocks at a time, one in front of the other, before stopping. The rear hatch of the Bradley lowered amid yells of "Dismount! Dismount!" The soldiers, having ridden in a tight, sweaty box through the battle - their knees cramped and aching - ran out, then slammed to their knees and took cover beside a wall. Then came "Go! Go! Go!" and the men busted through the front door of a house and, waving their rifles, cleared rooms before storming upstairs.

Sims parked his vehicle with two others in a blocking position on the road outside before following to the rooftop, where his soldiers set up a lookout.

With bullets whizzing, Sims and his men crouched down with the third platoon and assessed the battle. Barreto, acting as a guard, crouched next to Sims with a dazed look on his face.

"It's weird how we can be looking at the rooftops and there's no one," he said, "and all of a sudden they're shooting at us." An AC-130 airplane flew overhead, shooting its cannons in a low roar.

The third platoon reported that the house next door had a jumble of wires leading to a propane tank. Fearing a booby trap, Sims got on the radio and called for a tank to level the building. The call came back: the road was too narrow. Well, Sims said, blow a hole through a wall and drive through it.

"It's difficult terrain," Sims yelled over the noise around him. "We're having to move deliberately through the rubble."

He took another look around the rooftop, then scurried back downstairs and into his Bradley.

Mortar rounds began to fall, at first far away, then closer and closer as unseen insurgents walked their mortar fire forward a few feet at a time. Sims' Bradley was stuck between two other vehicles, but to veer off the road would risk hitting a mine or bomb. Another mortar fell, and its shrapnel tattooed the side of the Bradley and rattled those sitting inside. "Kill those b-----, kill those motherf-----," someone screamed in the darkness.

No one said another word.

11.9.04, Tuesday

Thirteen hours after the push began, Sims and his men looked gray and worn. Dirt was beginning to cover their faces and uniforms. Their ears ached. After two hours of sleep on a concrete floor of an abandoned house, their eyes were dulled.

"At first, last night, when we came in and heard all the AK-47 fire we freaked out," said Sgt. Brandon Bailey, 21, of Big Bear, Calif. "But now as long as it's not coming right at us, we're fine."

Later, Bailey said it felt like the enemy was coming from every direction.

"So we just went ape shit with the cannon, shooting everything," he said.

How many people did they kill? Bailey shrugged his shoulders.

Sims' temporary headquarters was a mostly empty house. It stood on the north side of Fallujah's main road which, like all east-west roads there, was given a woman's name by military planners: Fran. On the other side stood the beginnings of the city's industrial district, where more insurgents lay in wait.

Tanks were parked up and down Fran, and ordnance disposal teams were already identifying the homemade bombs - Improvised Explosive Devices, in military lingo - that lined the road. They were densely packed, but with no one to detonate them, the bombs sat idle as Army trucks rolled by.

Inside the house, the family that fled left handwritten verses of the Quran on the doorways, a tradition intended to keep homes safe. Baby formula was scattered around and a kerosene heater was stored in a utility closet. A painting of Mecca, Islam's holiest city, hung on the wall in the front room.

Bullet holes pocked the walls of the house. Its windows were shattered. Pieces of plaster and concrete were strewn about. A soldier defecated in a stairwell, and the stench grew with the morning sun.

Staff Sgt. Jason Ward was sitting outside the house in his M-113 armored truck - a square box on tank tracks used to cart casualties off the battlefield.

Ward, from Midland, Texas, had a deeper accent than Sims, a square jaw and a blank expression. He was chewing on a Slim Jim. Ward said he'd ferried at least 10 injured soldiers the night before.

"It's been very intense," he said. "For a lot of our younger soldiers, it's overwhelming."

He wore a bracelet with the name "Marvin Sprayberry III" etched on it, just above "KIA" and "True Friend."

Sprayberry was Ward's best friend. He was a good man. He was killed on May 3 when the vehicle he was in rolled over during a firefight. That was all Ward had to say on the matter.

Resting in a Humvee nearby, 1st Lt. Edward Iwan was scrolling down a flat blue computer screen, mounted to the dashboard, that showed the location of every Army and Marine unit in Fallujah. Iwan, Alpha company's executive officer, noted that his men were deeper in the city than any other unit.

"It's a fairly complex environment, like we thought it would be," said Iwan, 28, of Albion, Neb. **"Cities are where people die. That's where you take most of your casualties."**

Iwan looked out through the Humvee's window at a thicket of buildings in every direction.

"There are 8,000 places to hide," he said, shaking his head.

Across the street, a long row of shops, once home to mechanics and carpenters, lay in ruins. Tin cigarette stands leaned on their sides, pocked with bullet holes.

Sims was on the roof of the house, sitting against a wall, his legs crossed at the ankle with a map on his lap. A little past dawn, after an hour or two lull, the shooting started again.

A reporter offered Sims a satellite phone to call his family. No thanks, he said. He wanted to talk with them when he got somewhere quieter. He had an infant son, Colin, whose brown hair and small ears, which poked out on the sides, looked just like his father's.

Sims wondered aloud if the bullets flying by were aimed at him. During the next couple minutes, several ricocheted off the roof near him.

"OK, that's a sniper right there," he said with a small grin as his men grabbed their guns and crouched so only the top of their heads showed above the roofline.

Sims picked up the radio and called in an artillery strike to "soften" the sniper positions. His call sign was Terminator Six.

Barreto moved his rifle slowly, scanning the cluster of houses nearby. "He's somewhere from my 11 o'clock to my 3 o'clock," he muttered.

Spc. Luis Lopez, 21, was too short to rest his M14 sniper rifle on the roof, so he created a step from a metal box containing a child's Snoopy sneaker.

The company radio squawked with sightings of snipers and everyone adjusted their aim: a circle window to the southwest, a rooftop to the southeast, a crevice in the wall to the southwest. With every new location, the men clenched their triggers and shell casings flew up in the air. The sniper rounds stopped. And then, they began again.

"He shot right at me," yelled Barreto, ducking. "He shot right AT me."

Those soldiers who weren't on sniper rotation sat on the roof with their brown Meal Ready to Eat packets, finding the main meal - bean burrito, country captain chicken, beef teriyaki - and dunking it with water in the cooking pouch, which smelled of cardboard and chemicals.

They talked about Steve Faulkenburg, the battalion sergeant major, shot in the head the night before. What the hell was he doing out there, they asked. Directing traffic, trying to get a truckload of Iraqi National Guardsmen out of the line of fire. The tough 45-year-old was from Huntingburg, a small town in

southern Indiana where there are cornfields and a population of about 5,500. There's a Victorian-style downtown district there with brick-lined sidewalks and streets named Chestnut and Washington. Thousands of miles from home, he'd fallen dead, in the dark, on a street with no name.

"Friendlies coming up, friendlies coming up," other soldiers yelled as they climbed the stairs to the roof.

A building a few blocks away quaked with fresh explosions that sent ashes falling like snowflakes. Flames shot into the sky.

The radio squawked: "OK, I've got an injury to sergeant ... and I'm unaware if it is a gunshot wound to the groin or a shrapnel wound to the groin."

Another report came in: A second sergeant had been shot. The soldiers on the rooftop with Sims paused, shook their heads, then turned back to the fight.

When they got bored or scared of being on the rooftop, some of the men - young and with an awkward day's stubble on their upper lips - went outside and around the corner to see the Fat Man. "Hey dude, we're going to see the Fat Man, wanna come?" they said.

Their boots crunched hurriedly across the rubble outside the house and then slid down a muddy hill of trash and feces.

The Fat Man lay in his own blood. He was an Iraqi insurgent who'd hidden in an alley next to a garbage dump waiting for the Army to come by. A couple 25 mm high explosive rounds, shot from a Bradley, blew off his left leg, leaving a stump of bone, and, from the looks of it, punched a hole through his midsection. Two or three others died with him. A group of insurgents managed to drag the others away, but the Fat Man was too big. His arms were still splayed back from where his comrades tried to pull him through the narrow alley.

Some of his guts - perhaps an intestinal tract - were splattered on the wall. His eyes were open, peering out from his dirty face and scraggly beard, staring at the heavens. A traditional red-and-white checked Arab keffiyah headdress was wrapped around his waist, and a bag with slots for RPG rounds - all empty - lay on the ground next to him.

The Fat Man was the first dead person that many soldiers had seen. They grew solemn as they leaned over his body and peered into his eyes, but never too close, never close enough to touch his skin or take in too deep a whiff of death.

11.10.04, Wednesday

Joshua Franqui, a big kid with a tooth missing from the bottom of his smile, grew up in Augusta, Ga., and had never been farther than Louisiana before he signed up with the Army.

His uniform was stiff with sweat and dirt, and he'd become quiet over the past few days. No one asked why. Maybe it was all the noise from the gun he manned from his

Bradley's gunner seat: the M242 25 mm "Bushmaster," a weapon capable of shooting 200 high explosive rounds a minute.

Maybe it was seeing what his "25 mike-mike" did to human bodies.

A buddy walked up and asked, "Hey, Franqui, how many kills you got?"

Franqui looked down, the smile slipping off his face.

"I don't know, man," he said. "Sometimes they sort of vaporize when we hit 'em."

Franqui was standing in the front room of the house where he and his First Platoon mates had been catching off hours of sleep for the past couple days. They'd urinated in the corners and defecated on the floor.

Many of the men wore skull and crossbones patches sewn onto their vests.

But Fallujah was not the place for bravado. It was constant, pounding violence, the sort that left the heat of passing bullets on a young soldier's face, and the crack and boom of RPGs ringing in his head.

On Tuesday, about eight men from the platoon had been trapped on the roof of a schoolhouse, with RPGs thudding into the walls and bullets coming down on them. A Bradley shot smoke rounds, and the soldiers jumped off the roof to escape slaughter.

Soldiers didn't discuss it when sitting around and sharing cigarettes.

Resting against his SAW machine gun - a large gun with a tripod that weighs more than 16 pounds - Spc. Sheldon Howard, 20, listened as his platoon commander gave orders to move out in a few minutes. Dark rings formed below his eyes. Dirt showed in thick bands across his forehead when he took off his helmet.

Howard, who wore glasses and had a round face, grew up near a Navajo reservation outside of Farmington, N.M., and usually didn't speak much.

"I'm tired and I don't want to be here," Howard said. "I don't want to take all of this back with me, but I probably will."

Picking through a box of MREs, Sgt. Scott Bentley, 22, said he didn't mind killing insurgents in Fallujah because it would keep them from coming up to his base north of Baghdad. "I'm tired of my buddies dying," he said.

Bentley, of Philadelphia, allowed that the past few days had been rough.

"Every place we take a roof, the RPGs come flying," he said. At times, he said, he and his men were "just kind of spraying and praying."

The lieutenant walked in and said it was time to go. Howard hefted up his weapon and jogged outside to his Bradley, the one with the number "16" written on an orange tarp hanging off the back of the turret.

The vehicle began taking fire almost immediately. Its 25 mm gun roared.

A group of fighters darted from one house to the next, launching RPGs, which were exploding all around.

Spc. Arthur Wright watched out of the porthole-like windows of the Bradley.

"They killed somebody," he yelled. "There's body parts all over the streets. Yes! Yes!"

The back of the Bradley lurched open, and the men scrambled toward a house where insurgents had fled.

A shotgun blasted the front door, a kick and then another shotgun blast. Smoke filled the house.

"Don't touch anything," said Sgt. Isaac Ward. "They may have deliberately broken contact to lure us in."

M-16 fire rang through the next room. Howard ran that way, only to find soldiers staring at an open back door.

The soldiers went through the door and down an alleyway, scanning the roofline for movement. Gunfire started a couple blocks away.

Ward wiped sweat from his eyes.

"They've got this shit figured out," he said. "They're running around the back of a house as we bust in through the gate."

Outside, the bodies Wright had seen were lying in the street.

One of them had been run over by a Bradley, leaving a mound of meat and bones in the sunlight. A large green bag lay next to the remains.

Howard took out a camera and clicked a few pictures.

Bentley ran over to grab the bag. He gave it a yank, and an arm rose out of the pile, but the strap would not give. With his friends looking on, Bentley pulled harder and harder, and the arm flapped in the air. Another soldier joined in the tug of war, and the arm leapt up, disgorged from its body, and Bentley fell back a little, bag in hand.

"F----- Hajji," he muttered, using grunt slang for Iraqis.

Inside, a stack of \$100 and \$20 bills was covered with gore. Bentley flipped through quickly, and counted about \$800 in all.

Back in the Bradley, Wright asked if Bentley would get to keep the money. No, said Sgt. Randy Laird. It was being put in a plastic bag and handed over to an intelligence officer. Laird, a 24-year-old from Lake Charles, La., with dirty blond hair, paused.

Besides, he said, who would want cash with all that blood on it?

Sgt. Dave Bowden laughed.

"It's just a little bit of Hajji blood," he said. "What's the problem?"

11.11.04, Thursday

Despite heavy gunfire outside, Laird popped open the Bradley's rear hatch a few inches for fresh air. Alpha Company was pushing through southern Fallujah, a maze of factories and empty buildings they called Queens. Hardcore insurgents were rallying there, some of them swimming across the Euphrates river to join the fight.

A pack of Marlboro Reds, one of the last good packs of cigarettes left in the platoon, was passed around. There was no moon in the sky, the crescent having disappeared a few nights before.

The battle had pushed 72 hours straight, and the soldiers had gotten, maybe, seven hours sleep.

Wright began to talk about his past in a jumble. He'd joined the Army after the state of New Jersey sentenced him to probation for marijuana possession. His mom was an administrative assistant at a hospital in Harlem.

The Army made him a supply clerk. He hated it - passing out notebooks and pencils while others went out on field exercises. So he'd asked Sims if he could switch with a guy who was leaving the infantry unit. He got his wish. The two were close - when Sims heard Wright wasn't getting care packages, Sims called his own wife, a school teacher, who got a class to adopt him. Wright would walk into the captain's room, sit down and talk about "girls and what I want to do with my life."

Touching his hand to his gaunt face, Wright's voice softened.

"I've gotten so skinny since I've been in Iraq," he said. "I mighta lost 30 pounds."

In the glow of his night-vision goggles, hanging off his helmet, the high cheekbone of his ebony face glistened with sweat.

Throughout the week, most of the soldiers had moments of confession - in the back of a Bradley, lying on the ground just before closing their eyes, taking a break between firefights.

Their voices came out of the darkness, tired and usually directed at no one in particular. Some were sweet. The men missed their girlfriends and wives, and they took their pictures out of notebooks to look at them one more time.

Some stories were hard. One guy talked about guard duty in Kosovo one day and getting angry about being there, in the middle of nowhere, in the middle of nothing. He saw a mentally ill child who always came to the gate, asking for candy. The soldier told him to come over, and then he punched him as hard as he

could, over and over, just to see if the kid would come back the next day. When he did, the soldier beat him again, laughing.

After that story, Laird told the soldier he was a coward and an ass.

Laird's father committed suicide when he was 12, and Laird dropped out of school when he was 14. He spoke often about his son, 2 1/2 year-old Brayden, who was back at home in Germany with his mother.

"Every time he sees somebody in uniform, he thinks it's daddy," Laird said.

Brayden would run up to soldiers and hug their legs, thinking he'd found his father. "I'm sure after a while, he'll understand that I killed people, that I've seen dead bodies," Laird said. "It's emotional now when I see a war movie because I know what they're going through. Especially when guys in full dress uniform go to a mother and say her son is dead and she falls to the floor. It makes me think about my mom getting that call."

Sitting a couple men over on the bench of a Bradley was Bowden, whose father was in the 82nd Airborne Division and who grew up knowing he'd join as soon as he turned 18. His father later became a sheriff's deputy at the Pike County, Pa., sheriff's department, and his mother got a job at a local factory.

"When people say that war is the most terrible thing, they ain't wrong," Bowden said. "The things it does to people. You think that killing people for your country is cool, but when you do, it just numbs you."

Bentley re-enlisted last October because he knew his unit was headed to Iraq and he didn't want them to go without him. "I remember every face I see out there, every moment out there," he said. "I can't forget it. I can't make it go away."

11.12.04, Friday

Standing in the rubble, the soldiers gathered the AK-47s and RPGs left by the group of fighters who'd fled.

The house, yet another in a line of dozens if not hundreds, was blown apart by Bradley and Abrams tank fire. "It's intense, that's about all there is to say," said Spc. John Bandy, 23, of Little Rock, Ark. "The determination these guys have against our forces, these little bands of guys shooting at tanks, it's almost admirable."

He took a long drag from his cigarette. Bullets were in the air. Artillery shells whooshed by, on their way to punching a hole in some building or person.

A sofa survived the shelling, and some men were sitting on it, taking a breather. They could see into the next house through holes in the wall.

The cat and mouse pursuit, insurgents flitting from one spot to the next, a step ahead of heavily armored vehicles and the infantry, made the men angrier.

Increasingly, they turned to Laird, a forward observer for the artillery, and asked him to pound a house with 155 mm shells.

"We trained to fight a country with armor on a field," Laird said. "These guys shoot at us, drop their weapons and become a civilian again."

The men picked up their weapons and jogged to the next house. Spc. Fredrick Ofori was in the lead. A 24-year-old from Ghana, whose family moved to New York looking for work, Ofori's face was drawn tightly, without emotion, as usual. His lithe, compact body showed muscle at every movement.

Wright teased him about not going out to clubs back in Vilseck, about not throwing down drinks with his buddies and picking up women. "That is your life," Ofori would respond. "It is not for me."

Ofori said more than once that getting a Combat Infantryman's Badge meant little to him. The ribbons, he said, were for talking, and he was here to fight so he could go home.

He respected the insurgents, he said, for their willingness to fight to the death.

The streets outside were littered with dead men, their corpses left for cats and dogs to gnaw on after the sun set. The sight of bearded insurgents, eyes open, lying in gutters was no longer a novelty.

Walking through the house, Ofori turned his gun toward a doorway. Shots rang out. A fighter in the room had been waiting with a grenade in hand. He'd probably been listening the entire time as the men sat on the sofa next door, their voices wafting through the holes in the wall.

When he jumped forward, he didn't scream "Allahu Akbar" - God is Great - as insurgents often did. He moved in silence, until Ofori's fire blew him back. Ofori looked down for a few seconds and walked out of the room. The soldiers behind him went inside to ogle. "Damn, look at Hajji," one said.

Walking into the garage, Ofori found a dead fighter lying on the ground next to a pickup truck outfitted with a machine gun.

Having heard of the incident, the New York Post wrote a headline calling Ofori a "Coney Island Hero."

His mother told the newspaper, "he doesn't like that Army food."

Later in the day, an RPG tore through the torso of Lt. Iwan, the company's executive officer, ripping his body apart. He was 28.

11.13.04, Saturday

The day before his men pushed into Fallujah, Capt. Sims went through a "rock drill" with Task Force 2-2. The platoons' leaders stood around a sketch of the city, fashioned in

the dirt with rocks for houses and the tips of artillery shells for mosques. Code names such as Objective Panther and Objective Lion marked schools and mosques to be taken.

Six days later, sitting with a map of the city in front of him, Sims no longer spoke in military lingo.

His friend, Lt. Iwan, was dead. The fight had creased Sims' face, bleared his eyes and turned his voice more hesitant.

"It's tough. I don't know what to think about it yet," he said slowly, searching for words. "All of this will be forever tainted because we lost him."

A reporter offered him, again, a phone to call his family. Sims thought about it, and said no. He wanted to get through the fight first.

A CNN crew came by, accompanied by an escort from Task Force 2-2's headquarters. They wanted to see houses where there'd been fighting, and they were taken to the one where Ofori killed a man the day before.

One of the reporters asked Ofori to talk on camera about killing the insurgent in the first room. He said all he'd agree to do is point to where it happened.

The fighter Ofori found by the pickup truck had been nibbled on, probably by neighborhood cats who always went for the softness of the lips first. With his lips eaten away, the man's teeth were frozen in a joker's grin.

Most of the First Platoon soldiers stayed outside. They'd already seen the dead and didn't need to see them again.

The men then loaded up in their Bradleys and, with the tracks crunching the concrete below them, rumbled down the street.

Sims took a group of men to clear a house so they could set up an observation post on the roof.

Inside, a group of rebels was waiting. They'd slept for days on dirty mats and blankets, eating green peppers and dates from plastic tubs.

Gunfire raged when Sims and his men came through the front door. Two soldiers were hit near the shoulder and were rushed out by the men next to them.

Crouching by a wall outside, Laird screamed into his radio, "Negative, I cannot move, we're pinned down right now! We have friendlies down! Friendlies down!"

He crouched down on a knee, sweating and waiting for help. A line of troops ran up, taking cover. They shot their way into the house.

They found Sims lying on the kitchen floor, his blood pouring across dirty tile. An empty teapot sat on concrete stairs nearby. A heart, drawn in red with an arrow through it, adorned a cabinet.

Someone grabbed a radio: "Terminator Six is down."

"The b-----," Bentley said. "We've got a blood trail leaving the building, going into the next house."

A group of soldiers ran out the door, looking for revenge. Others gathered blankets.

They couldn't lift Sims' body, so they called in Howard, who lugged the squad's heavy machine gun but whose broad shoulders were sagging from the news.

Once Sims was laid on the floor of a Bradley outside, six soldiers and a reporter climbed in, slowly at first, trying not to step on the body. Someone outside yelled at them to cram in, if they had to step on Sims' body, do it, god damn it, do it.

Gunfire was pounding back and forth.

The hatch closed. The soldiers stared at each other. The soldiers stared at the ceiling. The soldiers stared at the hatch. The soldiers stared at anything but the mound on the floor.

Wright was sobbing and shaking. Howard had tears streaming down his cheeks.

The Bradley dropped them off at another house, where the platoon leaders from Alpha Company had gathered in a courtyard. Their commanding officer and their executive officer were dead.

An airstrike with a 2,000-pound bomb was ordered. Men huddled around each other, hugging those who couldn't stop crying. They passed out a handful of cigarettes.

Ofori had no tears on his face. He'd been looking at the ground for 10 minutes.

Sgt. Isaac Ward walked up to him, put a hand on his shoulder and said: "We have work to do now. We'll talk about this later. Get ready to go."

Artillery and mortar fragments flew over the courtyard wall.

It was Bowden's 22nd birthday.

"I had to help put him in the body bag," Bowden said. "When we took the blanket off him and saw his face, all these thoughts ran through my head — I'd just seen him in the morning."

Laird and Ward rode to a house a few streets away, where Marines had taken up camp. They climbed some stairs, jumped over a wall and stayed low as the bullets flew by. Looking out over the houses, Laird called in artillery and gave coordinates for the 2,000 bomb.

Smoke covered the horizon, and with a boom, a mosque's minaret disappeared. Buildings burned.

Spc. James Barney, who drove the Bradley that carried Sims' body, stood by the vehicle outside, talking to himself. "We need to just finish it, level the whole damn city," he said. "I'm tired of this place, I'm tired of this shit."

11.14.04, Sunday

Saturday night, the men rested for the first time in seven days, sleeping on a patch of dirt just outside the city. They huddled beneath tarps, close to each other for body heat. When they awoke, they walked around looking at their Bradleys and the deep gouges on the sides from AK-47 fire and shrapnel. One caught fire after an RPG hit it, and its crew was sorting through charred ammunition boxes and pulling out bullets that hadn't cooked off. An RPG destroyed the protection plate on the side of another, and in daylight the soldiers could see the tip had been an inch or so from exploding into the cabin.

Their uniforms were almost brown with dirt and sweat. Several had blood on their pants.

The 1st Infantry Division's commanding officer, Maj. Gen. John R. S. Batiste, came by, his uniform clean and neatly pressed. He moved quickly from one vehicle to the next, talking in a low tone and shaking hands.

The soldiers looked at him with sunken eyes and said little.

A few days later, Laird and some of the guys were given a few hours at camp near Fallujah to get some chow-hall food and take showers. They sat at the table, with TV news about Iraq in the background, and ate without talking much. A discussion of Sims tapered off. The men who had killed the captain had gotten away.

"Being in our track and smelling him — I'm glad I never saw his face," Ward said of Sims.

On his way out, Laird turned and said he'd been thinking about his son.

"I don't want my boy to know his daddy's a killer," he said. With that, he picked up his gun and walked out the door.

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