

GI SPECIAL 6H14:



**IVAW Base Tour Rocks:
Inked Up At Camp Lejeune, And
A New Chapter On The Way:
“The Local Marines Were All
About Supporting IVAW”
“Never Again Will One More Soldier
Die In My Name For A Cause I Don't
Believe In Without Me Fighting To
Save Him”**

“Never Will Another American Troop Struggle Alone Against Tyrannical Leadership”



[These are the words of a most honorable soldier. You shit-eating traitors in DC, be afraid. Be very very afraid. Payback is coming, not soon enough, but sooner than any of you can possibly imagine. T]

Aug 16 2008 By Kristofer "K-Goldy" Goldsmith, writing on behalf of the State of the Union Base Tour Crew, Iraq Veterans Against the War.

Goldsmith, Kristofer
Unit: 1-30 Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division
Rank: Sergeant

Served in: State Side Duty OSUT- Jan-May 2004: Ft Sill, OK Permanent Duty Station-
May 2004 - August 2007: 3ID Ft Stewart, GA Deployment- OIF III Jan 2005-Aug 2005:
Sadr City, Baghdad (FOB Hope) Aug 2005-Dec 2005: Central Baghdad (Camp Liberty)

With April and Dane Somdahl waiting with open arms at Alien Art Tattoo, it was reassuring to stand on the sturdy ground where Iraq Veterans Against the War has already established a foothold.

April described how much comfort IVAW's work brings her and reminded us of the annual base tour's importance.

After loosing her brother (a Marine and Iraq veteran) to PTSD, April felt completely alone. She says that IVAW has given her hope towards the future in much of the same way it has for me.

The Somdahls have established Alien Art Tattoo as a venue for IVAW members to practice with their bands, a distribution point for Sit-Rep and a place where IVAW can get discounted tats.

With thousands of Marines on Camp Lejeune looking for custom art every day of the week, Alien Art has not only become the home away from home of members and allies, but the very foundation of our outreach in Jacksonville, North Carolina.

Running behind schedule and recovering from the RV break-in the night before, we had just a few hours to set up at Fast Freddy's--a pool house frequented by enlisted Marines.

The local media beat us there and cameras were rolling as we pulled into the parking lot of the pool hall. Fast Freddy's owner approached us concerned that the show might turn off her regulars, and she knew that the media could make or break her business.

We decided to make our message completely obvious to the media--we were there for the Troops.

The media too commonly labels us an "Anti-War Group" or as "protesters" when first and foremost we are Veterans who are exercising the very freedoms which we swore to protect and defend. When she saw Bill Perry set up shop with his VA Benefits Counseling table, the owner of Fast Freddy's realized we were there for the right reasons.

On a Friday night, this show would have our biggest turnout to date.

The night started with some real heavy riffs as local band Crew Served Carnage--a bunch of IVAW supporting Marines--opened for the show.

Throughout the night dozens of Active Duty Marines came out for the free show and approached us looking to learn more about IVAW and its mission.

During Rebel Inc.'s performance, a man came in and stood before the stage with a one finger salute on display towards the band. Being more than familiar with military bars and smelling the excess of testosterone and alcohol, I expected disaster.

But Rebel Inc. frontman "Strong" handled it perfectly; he thanked the young man for being courageous enough to express his free speech.

After the song ended, a few Marines who we had just met stood in front of the stage and verbally defended Rebel Inc and IVAW.

The situation turned out to be highly positive for us. No one was beaten to a pulp, no one was arrested and the owner of Fast Freddy's saw that the local Marines were all about supporting IVAW.

The night ended on a high note as we announced the formation of the new Camp Lejeune chapter of IVAW-- the second chapter that's been created during this tour.

Fast Freddie's told us we were welcome back any time, and thanked us for Supporting Our Troops. Upon returning to the RV park, the crew split up to hang out with our friends (the Somdahls, Rebel Inc. and local supporters) and to set up the RV for the night.

Sometime after midnight, fire ants attacked Jason Washburn and I as we set up the sewage tube in the dark. Marlisa watched and laughed. The next morning I woke up with a tiny piece of glass in my eye from the broken window, resulting in a scratched cornea and excruciating pain for days.

The next morning started pretty bad for Marlisa. Kharma got even with her for laughing at my fire ant incident: she got splashed with raw sewage from the RV septic system. Extremely sensitive to light and miserable as hell, I buried my head for most of the morning. With Marlisa dry heaving, a broken window, no air conditioning and my eye feeling like it had an icepick in it, we moved back to Alien Art Tattoo for the Veterans Benefits Workshop.

By the time we got to the tattoo studio, a line of active duty Marines from last night's concert were waiting for tats and benefits information from Bill Perry.

Honestly, I felt strange seeing so many active duty guys feeling comfortable enough to speak their minds anywhere in a military town.

My entire time in the service, I never felt like I could discuss war policies and the like with civilians in a public place.

Camp Lejeune must be ready for some serious GI organizing!

With the buzz of the needle in the background, a few of us felt compelled to get new tattoos.

Steve and Jay-Wash both got custom work inspired by the Constitution. Jay's Greek lettering across the scroll roughly translates to "take it over my dead body," representing his continued will to fight for our Nation's birth certificate.

Steve's scroll shows his Combat Action Badge and the Cross Sabers of the Cavalry, reclaiming the time he spent in the service as a dedicated combat soldier.

My tattoo, drawn up by myself and inked by "Great" Dane, is a Soldier's Cross and a ribbon with the words "Not In My Name - Never Again - Never Alone" surrounding it.

The tattoo represents my promise to the fallen, and to those who still serve in uniform.

Never again will one more soldier die in my name for a cause I don't believe in without me fighting to save him.

Never will another American troop struggle alone against tyrannical leadership.

In agonizing pain and with a ridiculous looking pirate patch on my right eye, the crew got ready to leave Lejeune and head towards Fort Stewart, Georgia.

We had more of a successful stop here in North Carolina that surpassed all of our expectations.

With a new chapter formed and dozens of Marines warmed up to IVAW, we knew the Base Tour had changed Jacksonville for the better.

Now on to the place I had been stationed for my entire time in the Army.

I swore to myself, when I ETS'ed on August 16th, 2007 that I would never return to the state of Georgia.

But thinking back to the first time I saw a couple of "Iraq Veterans Against the War" t-shirts donned by Sholom and Adam from the last Base Tour, I knew I owed it to my fellow Marine Soldiers to be a part of this crew by breaking my promise to myself.

Being the only one on the crew who knew guys still in the Third Infantry Division, I have a duty to fulfill--a duty to my friends that I used to work with.

Its time to face my old nightmares and deal with "The Rock of the Marne".

MORE:

[The Stop Before Lejune] IVAW Base Tour Rocks Fayetteville:

**“We Got Enough Active Duty Troops
To Be Able To Establish A Chapter”**

**“IVAW Now Has Another Safe House
And Hangout Right Outside An Active
Duty Post”**

Aug 15 2008 By Kristofer "K-Goldy" Goldsmith, writing on behalf of the State of the Union Base Tour Crew, Iraq Veterans Against the War.

Goldsmith, Kristofer
Unit: 1-30 Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division
Rank: Sergeant

Served in: State Side Duty OSUT- Jan-May 2004: Ft Sill, OK Permanent Duty Station-
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We hit the ground running in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Due to a delayed shipment of outreach materials, the crew covered down and built signs advertising our events. But for two days, posted outside each of Fort Bragg's three major gates were yard signs painted with information about the show for every Soldier to see.

The day of the concert, we split up the crew with local allies to spread flyers out at the local VA hospital and close to base in the insanely humid, 102 degree heat of the afternoon.

This was one of those times we had to tell ourselves- "well, at least we're not in Iraq."

At the end of the day, I remembered that if just one poster handed out resulted in an active duty Soldier finding the comfort of IVAW the way that I did because of the Base Tour 2007, that's worth nearly any sacrifice.

So sweating until I was ready to pass out really wasn't anything.

Having secured Docks at the Capitol, an awesome venue for the show and the workshop in downtown Fayetteville, we knew we were in for a major success. Yet, a bit of nervousness struck us all, to include the bands, as the clock ticked toward go time.

Would the last minute attempt at outreach have done the trick? Would Matthis' radio spot during Rush Limbaugh bring out the pro-war maniacs to try to sabotage the show? Were these bands what active duty guys wanted to hear?

Then the Fayetteville Fire Marshall shows up.

It's just hours before the show, and he's telling us our 300-person venue is more like 60, and he'll shut us down in a quick second if he thinks we have just one person over his occupancy level.

This venue has hundreds of people come in every Friday for jazz shows, and the management had never seen the Fire Marshall here once.

He claimed, "I saw the ad in the paper, and for a place that normally doesn't have shows, I knew I needed to do an inspection."

Fire Marshall Bill began counting ceiling tiles, counting paces across the room, running around with some rolling measuring device, sweating over a calculator and a formula sheet... It quickly became obvious that measuring a room and determining its max occupancy wasn't what this chubby mustached man is used to doing.

Dock's staff dealt with him for us and eventually got our occupancy numbers up to 150.

Fair enough, we figured if we got over 150 people up there and old Bill tried to shut down the show, the scores of veterans there might influence his strategic retreat.

The show kicked off with Rebel Inc, who became my new favorite band overnight. With spot-on messaging with the vocals, an insane set of guys on the strings, and Detroit born beats, these guys were easy to - ahem - "dance" to.

Ray had been swearing up and down that these guys rocked, and I can tell you now, the recordings they made for their CD and Myspace do NOT give these guys justice. I'd have to say they were one of the best bands I've ever personally seen perform live, and that includes when I went to the Warped Tour in '98, back before it was infested with Emo.

We had our brand spankin' new active duty Bragg chapter getting pumped up and introduced to how the IAW holds its functions.

A few songs (and drinks) into it, everyone learned to stay away from Jay-Wash's elbows when he's in the pit, and that we'd all be sore as hell the next day.

I don't think that anything builds strong and successful "unit cohesion" within IAW like the shows I've been to with you guys.

Next up was The Greens, a West Virginia based band, who saved our show by bringing all the sound equipment that we needed. With the ability to put on a 4 to 5 hour show on their own, these guys only gave us the best and were intensely entertaining musicians. When we get the videos up, you'll see what I mean, because I can't describe it in words.

Our show in Fayetteville was successful for more reasons than I think most of us on the crew intended.

Not only had we established new membership in the area, but we got enough Active Duty Troops to be able to establish a chapter.

We also succeeded in something the local Peace Movement had been unsuccessful with since the Quaker house burned down in the 70's- we linked up Active Duty guys to their local anti-war support network.

Thanks to the Quakers in the Fayetteville area, IAW now has another safe house and hangout right outside an active duty post.

We also planted a ton of seeds in Fayetteville for future IAW friendly events, especially at Docks- the nicest venue/restaurant/arcade/bar in town.

The following day we returned to Docks at the Capitol early to sit down to our nightly crew meeting over dinner. When we started setting things up, Ray ran outside to get the computers from the RV. But when he got there, he noticed the RV looked a little too clean, a little less cluttered...

I got a phone call at around 6:30 p.m. from Ray, who's monotone voice makes me wonder if he's serious.

He tells me, "the doors were still locked, but the passenger window to the RV is destroyed, and stuff is definitely missing."

In about 30 seconds, the whole crew was outside searching for what had been taken.

Two laptops, one belonging to Jason Washburn, the other, bought about a week ago with IVAW money. Both had mobile internet capability. One GPS system, brand new and top of the line, which had kept us from the frustration of using maps through half the states in the union, which belonged to me, Goldsmith.

What they didn't steal is what made some of us suspicious. Four iPods laying in plain sight. The locked, but portable cash-box. Steve Mortillo's paycheck.

Why would someone steal only what we needed for navigation and communication, and neglect all the easy to steal, pocket-sized items with a combined value of a couple thousand dollars?

Some might say that sounds like government work.

But I guess we'll never know.

After calling the cops and waiting nearly an hour for a unit to show up, the forensics team hastily dusted everything without finding a single fingerprint.

Yeah, they dusted an entire guitar without even finding our fingerprints!

While I dealt with the cops and then pulled guard on what remained in the RV, and Steve cleaned up the glass in the vehicle, the rest of the crew ran a pretty successful Veterans Benefits Workshop with Bill Perry.

So the next day with a broken window, a generator that doesn't work (meaning no air conditioning), and the RV seeming to fall apart piece after piece, we headed to Best Buy to repair some of the damage done the night before.

I blew just about every dollar I got paid for being on staff for the State of the Union Tour and got a new TomTom (RIP TomTom #1) which I immediately programmed to say "You stole this from a Disabled Veteran" on startup.

We got a computer lock-box and a new laptop with cellular internet capability.

With stress levels high, pockets empty and no air conditioning, we set out towards Camp Lejeune to see if Jacksonville is ready for IVAW.

MORE:

**“Iraq Veterans Against The War Is
On The Road On A GI Outreach**

Tour That Is Taking Us To 8 Military Bases”

**Please Donate Now To Sustain This
Tour Through Mid-September**



**STATE OF THE UNION
BASE TOUR 2008**

FREE CONCERTS FOR TROOPS AND VETERANS
HOSTED BY IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR
TROOPS AND VETERANS GET IN FREE WITH ID

AUG 1-3 2008	FT. DRUM, NY
AUG 5-7 2008	FT. BRAGG, NC
AUG 8-9 2008	CAMP LEJUENE, NC
AUG 10-12 2008	FT. STEWART, GA
AUG 14-16 2008	FT. HOOD, TX
AUG 17-19 2008	FT. SILL, OK
AUG 24-25 2008	FT. CARSON, CO
AUG 26-27 2008	DNC-DENVER, CO
SEPT 3-5 2008	CAMP PENDELTON, CA

IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST
THE WAR

★

IVAW.ORG/BASETOUR

August 15, 2008: Kelly Dougherty - IVAW [ivaw@ivaw.org]

Throughout the month of August, IVAW is on the road on a GI outreach tour that is taking us to 8 military bases.

We need your help to cover expenses essential to our work to reach the troops. To sponsor a leg of the tour, or help us cover other tour expenses go to our website, and make a donation.

Our six-member base tour crew has already visited Ft. Drum, NY, Ft. Bragg and Camp Lejeune, NC, and Ft. Stewart, GA.

They are sharing Winter Soldier testimony, informing GIs of their rights to speak out, and offering legal information and workshops on how to navigate the Veterans Administration.

The costs for IVAW's State of the Union Base Tour are substantial.

You can help out with donations to cover some of the expenses below.

Fuel and tolls combined add up to mileage costs of \$1.00 per mile for this tour. Sponsor a leg of the journey by calculating the number of miles you'd like to support at \$1.00 per mile.

Ft. Drum, NY to Ft. Bragg, NC = 775 mi.

Ft. Bragg, NC to Camp Lejeune, NC = 145 mi.

Camp Lejeune to Ft. Stewart, GA = 395 mi.

Ft. Stewart to Ft Hood, TX = 1,150 mi.

Ft. Hood, TX to Ft. Sill, OK = 325 mi.

Ft. Sill, OK to Ft. Carson, CO = 575 mi.

Ft. Carson, CO to the DNC in Denver, CO = 80 mi.

Denver, CO to IVAW National Meeting and RNC in Minneapolis, MN = 925 mi.

Minneapolis, MN to Camp Pendleton, CA = 2,000 mi.

TOTAL MILES = 5,370

You can also support other numerous expenses for this project:

A donation of \$10,000 will cover the cost of the RV rental for the entire tour.

\$5,000 will feed the 6-member base crew for the entire tour.

A gift of \$1,000 will cover the cost of RV maintenance and repairs.

\$450 will pay for local radio ads to let GIs know IVAW is coming to their community.

\$250 will purchase supplies for a BBQ for troops at a tour stop.

\$85 will cover the cost of lodging for the base crew for one night.

A donation of \$65 will pay for outreach materials to GIs at one tour stop.

A gift of \$25 will feed a member of the base crew for one day.

Be sure to mark "Military Base Tour" in the special projects section of our donation page.

Please donate now to sustain this tour through mid-September at:

<http://ivaw.org:80/basetour/support>

Thank you for your continued support,

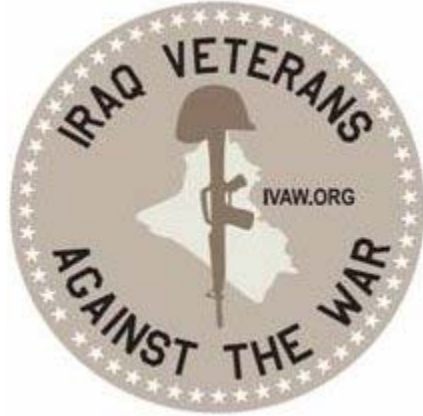
Kelly Dougherty

Former Sergeant, Army National Guard

Executive Director

Iraq Veterans Against the War

Upcoming Base Tour Stops



Fort Sill:

Concert - 8-bit Cynics, MC Jabee
Sun, August 17, 2008
7pm
Cross Rhodes Tavern
2548 N.W. Ft Sill Blvd
Lawton, OK 73507

Fundraiser
Mon, August 18, 2008
7:30 pm
1st Unitarian Church
600 NW 13th St
Oklahoma City, OK 73103

BBQ - VA Benefits / GI Rights information
Tue, August 19, 2008
7pm
Location TBD

Fort Carson / Denver: (Democratic National Convention)

BBQ - Kickball
Sat, August 23, 2008
Noon-6pm
Palmer Park
3650 Maizeland Rd
Colorado Springs, CO 80909

Concert - John Streleck, Ryan Harvey, Jeff Englehardt
Saturday, August 23, 2008
8pm

WeUsOur Gallery
10 Ruxton Ave
Manitou Springs, CO 80829

Camp Pendleton:

Fundraiser - Potluck BBQ
Thur, September 4, 2008
6:30PM
1462 Burroughs St
Oceanside, CA 92054

BBQ
Fri, September 5, 2008
4pm
Capistrano Park
770 Capistrano Dr
Oceanside, CA

Concert
Sat, September 6, 2008
Location: TBD

Meet The Base Tour Crew: Bios Of Crew Members

Jason Washburn:

Originally from San Diego, CA, Jason Washburn served four years in the United States Marine Corps as an Infantry Rifleman. He was deployed to Iraq three times with two different units during his enlistment, serving in Al Hillah, Najaf, Haditha and much of Al Anbar province.

Jason's experiences with repeat combat tours and neglect by the VA, along with witnessing "only death, destruction, fear-mongering and racism" in Iraq, led him to Join IVAW in 2007. He enlisted in the Marines to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies, and he is doing that through his work in IVAW. He believes the best way to support our troops is to bring them home from an illegal and immoral occupation, and make sure they get the care they deserve when they get back.

"This tour is so important because servicemembers have the most credible voice in the nation in regards to what is being done in Iraq in the American people's name, but that voice is continually silenced," said Jason.

Steve Mortillo:

Originally from Nutley, N.J., Steve Mortillo served 3 years in the US Army as a Cavalry Scout. In March of 2004 he deployed to Iraq with the 1st Infantry Division and returned home in February of 2005.

“The biggest threat to American freedom is not at the hands of foreign extremists, but a corrupt government that refuses to abide by the Constitution or the will of the people,” said Steve. He wants to ensure servicemembers who disagree with the administration’s occupation of Iraq are no longer silenced. “This base tour is about making sure our brothers and sisters know they are not alone,” he said.

Marlisa Grogan:

Originally from Wayne, NJ, Marlisa Grogan received her commission in the US Marine Corps in May 2002. She underwent officer training at The Basic School in Quantico, VA and was stationed at New River, NC, as an adjutant for Marine Aircraft Group 26 (MAG-26) for her four years of service. In 2005, Marlisa deployed with her unit to Al Asad, Iraq, for 12 months before her end of active service in June 2006.

Marlisa Grogan is currently a Captain in the IRR and transitioning from her work as a union organizer to graduate school at the Columbia University School of Social Work. She intends to focus her study on veterans’ issues, namely the rising rates of suicide and homelessness.

Marlisa joined IVAW in June 2007 after realizing that the illegal occupation of Iraq will not end until veterans organize their stand against it. The 2008 State of the Union Base Tour is a valuable opportunity to strengthen that organized resistance and build support networks for our active duty servicemembers.

Kristofer Goldsmith:

Originally from Long Island, NY, Kristofer Goldsmith fulfilled his lifelong dream of becoming a Soldier when he enlisted at age 18.

Fueled with anger by the events of 9-11, he chose the occupational specialty of Forward Observer to direct mortars and artillery strikes.

Stationed with the 3rd Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, Kris deployed to Iraq in January 2005. In Sadr City Kris worked closely with interpreters and scores of Iraqis, and soon discovered that the American Occupation Forces were unwelcome by most of Iraq's populace. During his eight months in Iraq, Kris witnessed the ineptitude of the US Military in repairing the destruction caused by US Forces during and after the invasion.

Just before Kris was scheduled to leave active duty, Bush announced “The Surge” – causing Goldsmith's unit to fall under Stop-Loss orders. Overwhelmed by the combination of PTSD and the feeling of losing all control of his life to the military, Goldsmith attempted suicide the night before he was supposed to get on the plane.

Jason Hurd:

Jason Hurd, of Ashville, NC, joined the Army as a medic in 1997 after graduating from high school. He did so despite his father's opposition, a Marine who served in the Pacific campaign and saw both the battles of Tarawa and Guadalcanal – two of the bloodiest occurrences of the war.

Hurd was “gung-ho” at first, but slowly became disillusioned with the Army's prevailing leadership style of threatening and intimidating Soldiers to keep them submissive.

In November 2004, Jason deployed to central Baghdad with Bristol, Tennessee's Troop F 2/278th Regimental Combat Team. Over the next year, he saw numerous car-bombings, body parts, dead civilians, dead Soldiers and witnessed the general suffering that followed the U.S. military across Iraq.

Since his return in November of 2005, Jason has spoken out against the occupation of Iraq throughout Southern Appalachia as the president of the Asheville chapter of IVAW.

Along with his fellow chapter members, Jason intends to do everything in his power to put an end to the massive suffering the U.S. has caused in Iraq. Jason feels the State of the Union Tour is an important and very powerful way to bring this message to active duty troops.

Ray Curry:

Ray Curry was born and raised in Annapolis, MD, on a diet of GI Joe, Rambo and Full Metal Jacket. The week of the attacks on Sept 11, 2001, he found himself shaking hands with a Marine Corps recruiter and signing papers at age 17.

As a 19-year-old Non-Commissioned Officer, he was deployed with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit to the Al Najaf Province of Iraq.

After 10 months of the Muqtada Militia, fallen servicemembers, Iraqi civilian “collateral damage” and providing security for the regional “elections,” it became clear that the occupation of the Sovereign Nation of Iraq was both illegal and immoral.



DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE SERVICE?

Forward GI Special 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, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 917.677.8057

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

UNREMITTING HELL ON EARTH; ALL HOME NOW



U.S. Army soldiers from 25th infantry division return fire while guarding construction of a concrete wall running through Sadr City, Baghdad, May 4, 2008. (AP Photo/Petr David Josek)

Marine Killed In Iraq Firefight

13 August 2008 By RUSS OLIVO, Pawtucket Times

WOONSOCKET — A city native, Marine Sgt. Michael Ferschke Jr. was killed in Iraq on Sunday, family members and friends said.

Ferschke, 22, was killed when a firefright broke out as his unit was conducting a house-to-house search for enemy combatants, said Douglas Cooper, a family friend.

“When they entered one of the homes, a gun battle broke out and he was fatally wounded,” Cooper said.

Cooper said Ferschke had been stationed in Fallujah, but the military has not yet informed Ferschke’s parents exactly where he died.

Ferschke is the son of Michael and Robin Ferschke of Maryville, Tenn., said Cooper. The Ferschkes had lived in Woonsocket until 1995, and they still have many relatives and friends in the area, he said.

The younger Ferschke joined the Marines directly after graduating from Maryville High School and had served in the military for almost five years, according to Cooper. He could have been discharged last October, but Ferschke agreed to reenlist on condition he would be returned to Iraq.

“Michael joined up right out of high school because he wanted to serve his country,” said Cooper. “This is something he had dreamed of doing for a long, long time.”

“He looked at all the other forces, but that didn’t look like a challenge for him,” his father, Michael Ferschke Sr. told the Associated Press. “He loved his job and he loved what he was doing.”

His mother, Robin, said Ferschke was an energetic and adventurous teenager who liked riding BMX bikes and skiing. They talked a lot by phone even while he was in Japan and he was always giving advice or trying to help his friends and family, she said.

“He was like a male ‘Dear Abby,’” Robin Ferschke said. “He helped me through things and I helped him. He always used to say his dad was his hero, but he’s our hero.”

Ferschke said her son was excited about becoming a father and talked a lot about the things he wanted to share with his child.

“He had lots of dreams, but the only one he wanted was to make sure that child grew up to be the best,” she said.

Ferschke was a radio operator with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit’s Deep Reconnaissance Platoon. He did his basic training at Parris Island, S.C., and was later stationed in Okinawa, Japan, where he met his future wife, Hota.

He and Hota were married approximately a month ago in a videoconference, and she was expecting their first child, according to Cooper.

In a Father’s Day message aired on WBIR-TV in Knoxville in June, Ferschke greeted his father and brother from Camp Fallujah, Iraq, and said, “Hopefully next year, I’ll be down there with you guys. Have a couple of beers, celebrate. Love you guys.”

The military notified Ferschke’s parents of his death by telephone on Sunday night just as two military officers were knocking on their door to inform them of his death. The

Ferschkes are terribly shaken by the tragic news, but they were extremely proud of him and believed in the mission he was trying to achieve in Iraq, Cooper said.

“Michael will be greatly missed by all who loved him, all who knew him, and all who wanted to know him,” his parents said in a statement released with his obituary. “He was a very proud Marine, and his family was most important to him. Michael will always be remembered in all of our hearts forever. Thank you for all the calls, visits, and support you have given to us.”

There will be no local memorial service for Ferschke, but funeral services are under the direction of the Smith Mortuary, 1402 Tuckaleechee Pike, Maryville, TN 37803.

In lieu of flowers, the family has established a Memorial Fund in Michael H. Ferschke Jr.'s name at Regions Bank for the benefit of his wife and child.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Leavenworth Soldier Killed In Afghanistan

05 Aug 2008 Fox

LEAVENWORTH, KAN. -- The parents of a 20-year-old soldier said he'd always planned on serving his country. Just a few days ago, Specialist William Mulvihill was killed in Afghanistan. He'd been there about one month.

He was killed with three fellow soldiers as they cleared a road of explosive devices. He graduated from Leavenworth High School. To honor him, his dad asks that we exercise our freedoms with responsibility.

Notes From A Lost War:

**“I Never Thought It Would Be
As Bad As This,” He Says:
Since The Taliban Have Regrouped,
More Of These Isolated American**

Camps Are At Risk Of Being Picked Off: “The Most Powerful Military Capabilities In The World Count For Nothing In Paktika”



Wood-lined corridors at Margha connect the shipping containers in which the soldiers live

[Thanks to Pham Binh, Traveling Soldier & The Military Project, who sent this in.]

09/08/2008 By Stuart Webb, Telegraph Media Group Limited [Excerpts]

For all the money, technology and military might America can throw at the Taliban, conditions at the US Army's most attacked outpost in Afghanistan are reminiscent of the First World War trenches.

Just after dawn at Forward Operating Base Salerno, the Chinooks, Apaches and Black Hawks are starting their engines. Amid the building roar of the helicopters, the camp comes alive.

In this part of eastern Afghanistan, Salerno provides the gateway to a string of isolated American military outposts along the frontier with Pakistan.

No one is in a hurry to board the helicopter destined for Combat Outpost Margha. As the ground slips away, the tail-gunner takes up position on the Chinook's open ramp and the banter between the men evaporates.

The soldiers, 18 of them, have a grim resignation about them now.

Among US forces in Afghanistan, Margha has a formidable reputation, and is the most attacked combat outpost in Paktika province.

Located at the top of a mountain on the lawless, porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, it is one of the farthest flung and most vulnerable outposts in America's global war against terrorism.

Once these troops from the 173rd Airborne Brigade are dropped here they are effectively cut off from the outside world.

Most are young, in their late teens and early twenties. With every pocket and pouch stuffed with ammunition, and chests crossed with grenade belts, they already look battle-hardened.

Some were only 12 years old when the Twin Towers came down in 2001 - a stark reminder of how long the war has been going on.

The mountains seem to go on for ever.

Under their gaze have passed some of the greatest warriors and empires in history: from Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan to the British and Soviet armies. These men are just the latest to pass through.

As we skim the ground, the gunners - fingers on triggers - scan the trees and boulders that flash past.

The view is beautiful, yet across this frontier the Taliban come and go freely, mounting attacks, resupplying and regenerating.

Looking down at the endless landscape, it seems impossible that all the gaps in this border could ever be plugged.

Many commanders in both Britain and America accept that the war cannot be won by military means alone.

From up here, you can see why.

The most powerful military capabilities in the world count for nothing in Paktika.

For all the technology, money and might, the young men in this helicopter are at the sharp end of an old-fashioned war.

A puff of white smoke from a signal flare on the ground guides us in. A pyramid-shaped mountain looms into view - nothing but steep sides and sharp ridges.

Army engineers have somehow managed to carve a tiny shoulder for a landing spot and the Chinook hovers for some time to line up. We sit uncomfortably, suspended and exposed, while a Black Hawk swirls around to provide cover.

Finally, the ramp lowers and the men pile off, the speed of their exit matched by the speed of the 18 men getting on.

Hours before our arrival, Margha had been hit by six Taliban-fired rockets. On this occasion, no one had been hurt.

The soldiers head immediately for cover.



One of three guard towers at the Margha outpost. In the background is Rocket Ridge

Margha is looked down on by a series of towering ridges.

The main ridge forms the border with Pakistan and it is from here that most of the frequent rocket and mortar attacks come: the soldiers call it Rocket Ridge.

The troops at Margha - always men - come under a serious rocket and mortar attack from the Taliban at least once a week.

But this is a significant improvement. The base at the top of the hill is the 'new' Margha, only a couple of months old - it used to be located down the hill, next to the village from which it takes its name, and was attacked constantly.

Specialist Max Dorsa from California is on his first tour and had a miraculous escape at the old camp when a rocket-propelled grenade tore through the back of the guard tower he was in, but failed to explode: 'I never thought it would be as bad as this,' he says.

Pte Jason Stewart has equally bad memories: 'We were taking rocket fire every day; they just looked down and shot at us from the hill above. It was insane.'

The position became untenable and Combat Outpost Margha was relocated. It is still perilously exposed but the ridges, while within range, are now just over half a mile away.

General David Petraeus, the commander in Iraq, has rewritten the American military's manual on counter-insurgency.

The strategy has been to move out of huge 'super bases' and instead install the troops in smaller camps closer to the Afghan people. By showing a highly visible presence and aiding the communities the Americans hope to offer an alternative to supporting the Taliban.

But the practice is leaving the Americans more vulnerable than ever.

The platoon commander, 24-year-old Lieut Joe Corsi, tries to build up trust and confidence with the local population by inviting village elders to Margha once a week for a meeting. The local leaders ask for help ranging from drilling wells to power generation, pleas that Corsi will pass on to his commanders at Camp Salerno.

In return, Corsi asks if they have seen anything suspicious or any outsiders in their villages.

But Corsi is hampered in what he can do - with only 18 soldiers, he cannot allow his men to patrol the vicinity.

There are several reconstruction projects ongoing, but the Americans are largely unable to protect them.

All Corsi can do is radio headquarters and ask for air support if he hears of an attack.

But in such mountainous terrain reports of incidents can take hours to filter through, by which time the Taliban are long gone.

And with military helicopters and jets stretched to the limit on other operations, support is not guaranteed.

Margha is resupplied by private contractors using civilian aircraft.

Supplies are parachuted into the base by light aircraft or dropped off by a Ukrainian crew using an old Russian helicopter, flying at high altitude to avoid enemy fire.

The relationship between the Pakistani and American military along the border is limited and strained. For Sgt Daniel Cowden it is a frustrating situation. 'The worst thing is that they can seek refuge in Pakistan; the Pakistan military really don't do anything so they can come and go real easy. They can fire at us from the ridge and just go straight back into Pakistan.'

Often, the Taliban shoot from within Pakistan itself. The US soldiers have to get permission from Camp Salerno to return fire across the border - and permission is not guaranteed, in part out of concern that Pakistani civilians could be hit.

The stress of facing repeated bombardment and not being able to fight back makes the soldiers at Margha feel like sitting ducks.

Pte Greg Gardiner is in charge of the heavy mortar with which, in theory, they can return fire. 'We take all these rockets and mortars, then we get our big gun ready and then we just have to stand around,' he says.

But more force and more money could merely provide more cannon fodder for the Taliban unless resources are used in a much more targeted and sophisticated way.

Ask the men at Margha about this and they will usually say, 'Sir, that's way above my pay grade.' Some, like 21-year-old sniper Danny Miller, joined up to be part of the 'war on terror'.

'A big motivational factor for joining the army was September 11,' he says, although he does sometimes wonder how much can be achieved at Margha. 'I'm sure everybody thinks it. Hey, it sucks but you just put it behind you and get the job done.'

Up on the hill, it is a lonely and isolating experience.

The outpost is tiny: about half the size of a football pitch.

To help protect them from incoming fire, the men live in shipping containers surrounded by earthen blast walls and sandbags.

The containers are connected by tunnels of wooden beams and walkways. The scene is reminiscent of the First World War trenches, the claustrophobic feel intensified by the sense of impending attack.

Because of the constant threat, the men spend most of their day inside the containers. With summer temperatures topping 50C, conditions can be grim.

The men's routine is one of constantly revolving guard duty in the camp's three watchtowers. There are four to a tower, and they sleep in a shipping container underneath.

At night they guard in pairs to keep each other awake. The senior NCOs and Corsi work the same 24-hour shift pattern in the radio room.

There are no showers or laundry, just wet wipes for washing and ration packs to eat. The time crawls by. The men pass the long hours playing cards and video games, watching DVDs and listening to their iPods, and waiting for the next rocket attack.

Last month a massed attack by several hundred insurgents on a similar base in Kunar province to the north killed nine US soldiers and injured 15 in one day. The base had to be abandoned.

Since the Taliban have regrouped, more of these isolated American camps are at risk of being picked off, though in general the situation remains a bloody, expensive stalemate.

The soldiers will stay at Margha for about a month, when the next Chinook will arrive to take them back to a forward operating base for two days' break - just enough time to rest, take a shower and do their laundry, before they are sent out to one of the other remote combat outposts for another month of relentless guard duty. The men do 15-month tours in Afghanistan.

Many of the soldiers wear black wristbands bearing the names of friends who have been killed. At Margha it seems that everyone has lost someone close.

Corsi wears two wristbands. One is for his good friend Cpl Jacob Lowell, who was travelling in a Humvee when the Taliban fired down from the hills; a bullet went through the roof. Corsi has had extra metal plates welded to the tops of all his Humvees.

The other wristband is for his commanding officer, Major Thomas Bostick. 'I knew his wife and two daughters,' Corsi says. 'He was my mentor. It's a way to celebrate his life, and it helps me just remember.' The bands also help Corsi keep perspective. 'When you start to think selfish thoughts, like how close you are to going home, you just look down at your arm and remember that some people aren't able to go home.'

The Americans have lost more than 550 military personnel in Afghanistan since 2001.

British military deaths in Afghanistan now stand at more than 100. The great majority of these have come since 2006 when the British moved into Helmand.

Margha's platoon medic, 22-year-old Specialist Trevor Ramey from Florida, hopes more than anything that his skills won't be needed again. It is only his first tour, but he is already a veteran.

On his very first day in Afghanistan, at an outpost just north of Margha, he had a shocking reality check.

He had just disembarked from the helicopter and put down his bags when he was called to treat an Afghan commander. 'The round traced the top of his skull and exposed his brain. They brought him in and it just blew my mind. I wasn't prepared for that in any way.'

Ramey's best friend Juan Restrepo, a fellow medic, was killed during a fire fight in Kunar.

They had trained together, shared a room and deployed together. 'He was going to try and pull back another dead soldier. He took two AK-47 rounds to the neck. He was the only medic on the patrol, he couldn't tell anyone how to treat him. He died on the

Medivac bird. I'm not going to deny it, I cried.' Ramey has lost five close friends during the tour.

'That sticks with you. Being here, it changes you.'

In the middle of my eight-day visit, I prepare to visit the Afghan border police at the old Margha fort to see how conditions compare down in the valley.

Even though it is little over a mile away Corsi's men cannot leave the base and so cannot provide an escort.

While I wait for the police to come and collect me the platoon sniper Danny Miller, 21, is instructed by Corsi to plot the exact range of points along my route so he can provide covering fire if I get into trouble.

Miller has already had the Taliban in his sights - and pulled the trigger. 'It's unfortunate that it needs to be done,' he says. 'To me, when I look through the scope they are an enemy of the United States.' He explains that the police base is at the limit of his range. 'I can still hit someone at that range but it won't be accurate. But in the bazaar (half a mile away), I'll be able to drop the guy standing next to you.'

Within an hour of my return to the American base a policeman is kidnapped in the bazaar by three armed men and thrown into the boot of a car.

In the radio room, Sgt Cowden does not rate his chances. 'Being a policeman I think they'll kill him, leave his body by the side of the road as an example not to work with the Americans.'

With the American military fighting simultaneous conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is not uncommon for soldiers to be on their third or fourth tour of duty.

The situation has got so bad that about 20,000 troops serving in Afghanistan and Iraq have been prescribed antidepressants - 17 per cent of those currently serving in Afghanistan, and 12 per cent of those in Iraq.

The drugs help the soldiers cope with the unimaginable stress - for an overstretched military, it helps keep them in the field.

Issuing drugs to armies is nothing new. Amphetamines were issued to various German, British, US and Japanese units during the Second World War to keep the men alert; prescribing amphetamines to American forces during Vietnam was widespread.

But the wholesale issuing of antidepressants, sleeping pills and anxiety medicine to a military on active operations is a new and potentially shocking development.

No one at Margha will talk about taking pills.

Some feel they can't in the macho atmosphere of the army; others are worried that by admitting to it they could hurt their chances of promotion.

During their 15-month tour the soldiers get two weeks' leave.

Ramey knows he has been affected by what he has seen - on his last return home his friends and family noticed changes in him, too.

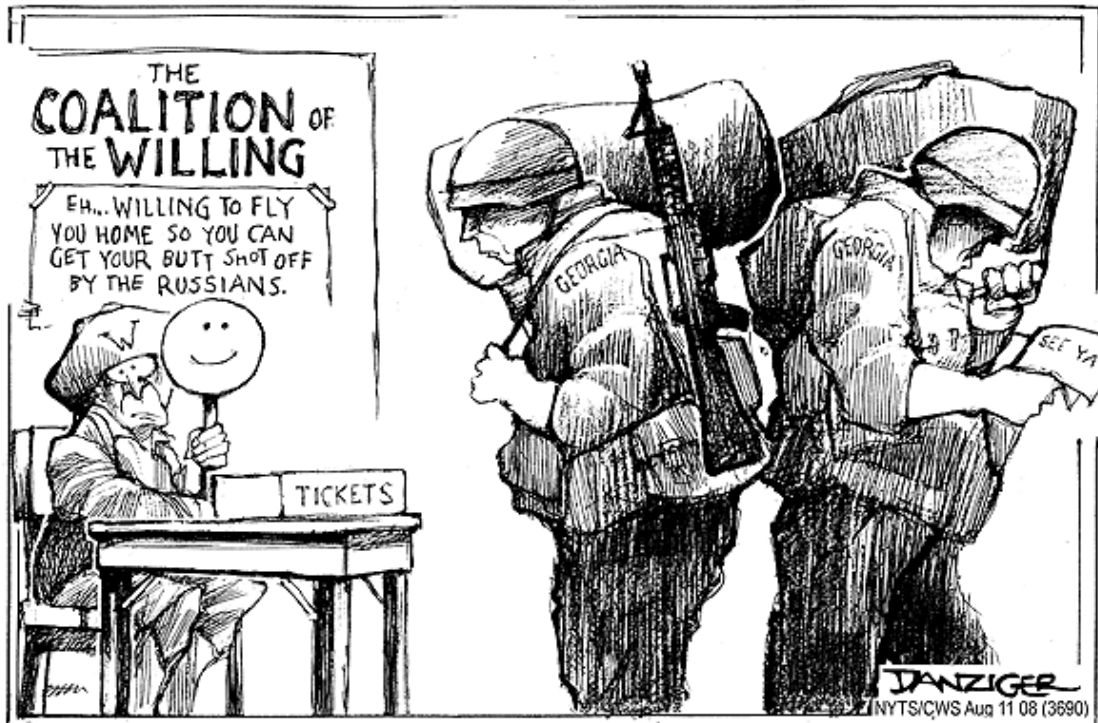
He came to Afghanistan in the hope of saving lives, but in the process he may have damaged his own. 'I guess this place has messed with me, subconsciously,' he says.

'My friend slept over at my hotel with his girlfriend one night. I'd been drinking and passed out drunk and they said I was screaming in my sleep.

"I had a dream I was still here.'

TROOP NEWS

US Flies Georgian Troops Home from Iraq



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OCCUPATION PALESTINE

**In Memoriam: Mahmoud Darwish:
"His Loss Is Felt Not Only In Palestine
But In The Hearts Of Those Fighting For
Justice, Lovers Of The Finest Poetry,
Everywhere"**



Mahmoud Darwish, 1941-2008

August 15, 2008 By Snehal Shingavi

MAHMOUD DARWISH--a Palestinian poet who could consistently sell out football stadiums for his poetry recitals--passed away on August 9, 2008, in a hospital in Houston, Texas, after complications from heart surgery.

His death was commemorated by hundreds of thousands of Palestinians when his body was moved to Ramallah a few days later.

Darwish was probably the second most recognized Palestinian figure behind Yasser Arafat, and perhaps the poet most commonly associated with the cause of Palestinian self-determination.

The reason for his enormous reputation was not only the wonderful quality of his stunning verse, but also his unflinching commitment to the idea that Palestinians had a right to return to their homes, homes from which they were expelled in order for the state of Israel to be founded.

Darwish was born on March 13, 1942, in al-Birweh, a village near Acre. In 1948, when the state of Israel was established and more than 400 Palestinian villages were razed to the ground as part of the systematic ethnic cleansing of Palestinians under Plan Dalet, al-Birweh was erased from the map.

His family was forced to flee to Lebanon where he joined the ranks of the enormous refugee population. Darwish recorded the experience of this flight in his recent collection of poetry, *Why Have You Left the Horse Alone?*

Later, his family would sneak back into Israel, where Darwish spent the majority of his childhood as part of the population of "present absentees," the nebulous legal category given to Palestinians in Israel who had no legal standing to own property or participate in civic life but whose presence was indisputable.

Golda Meir, former prime minister of Israel, once famously said, "There are no Palestinians," implying that the idea that there was a Palestinian nation was a hopeless fiction.

It was in response to official attitudes like these which refused to recognize the rights of Palestinians to return to their homes and the humiliating fact that Palestinians were required to carry identification at all times while living in Israel that Darwish penned his most famous poem, "Identity Card," (Bitaqit Hawiyya) in 1964.

**Record!
I am an Arab
And my identity card is number fifty thousand
I have eight children
And the ninth is coming after a summer
Will you be angry?**

**Record!
I am an Arab
Employed with fellow workers at a quarry
I have eight children**

**I get them bread
Garments and books
from the rocks...
I do not supplicate charity at your doors
Nor do I belittle myself at the footsteps of your chamber
So will you be angry?**

"Identity Card" appeared in Darwish's first collection of poetry, *Leaves of Olives*, and it launched his reputation as a poet of the Arab resistance to Zionism.

Between 1964 and 1970, Darwish was imprisoned and put under house arrest several times for his political activism as well as for reading poetry from that collection as he traveled from village to village in Israel.

In 1961, Darwish joined Rakah, the Israeli Communist Party, and traveled to the Soviet Union in 1970--a trip that made it impossible for him to return to Israel. (He was, incidentally, not allowed to return to Israel until 1996, to attend the funeral of his friend, the writer Emile Habiby).

He first went to Cairo, where he briefly wrote for *Al-Ahram*, before settling in Lebanon and joined the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Beirut in 1973. His experience as a refugee in exile would inspire numerous collections of poetry: *I love you, I love you not* (1972), *Ode to Beirut* (1982), *Splinters of Bone* (1974) and *Victims of a Map* (1984).

He lived in Beirut until 1982, when Israel invaded Lebanon and drove the PLO and thousands of Palestinians from the country. Darwish's experience of that period are recounted in his haunting memoirs, *Memory for Forgetfulness* (1995), and his remarkable long poem, *A Eulogy for the Tall Shadow* (1983) which recounts the heroism of the Palestinian resistance to the Israeli invasion.

AFTER LEBANON, Darwish spent time in Cyprus, Lebanon, France and Tunisia, before returning to Ramallah in the West Bank in the 1990s. During that period, Darwish was a member of the executive committee of the PLO, a position from which he resigned in 1993 in disgust with the compromises made by the leadership of the PLO during the Oslo Accords.

In 2002, Ramallah was heavily bombarded by Israeli forces who were hoping to use the attacks on the city to crush the second Intifada. Darwish described the unfaltering resistance of the Palestinian population in his long poem "State of Siege":

**Here, where the hills slope before the sunset and the chasm of time
near gardens whose shades have been cast aside
we do what prisoners do
we do what the jobless do
we sow hope**

**In a land where the dawn sears
we have become more doltish**

**and we stare at the moments of victory
there is no starry night in our nights of explosions
our enemies stay up late, they switch on the lights
in the intense darkness of this tunnel**

Here after the poems of Job, we wait no more

**This siege will persist until we teach our enemies
models of our finest poetry**

It was, certainly, his political convictions that made Darwish popular. But his poetry revolutionized Arab poetry more generally, not only through formal innovations in the conventions of the lyric but in the range of materials that could be incorporated into Arab poetics.

But moreover, the one thing that set Darwish apart was his ability to unite an otherwise divided population. Palestinians have, since the creation of the state of Israel, been split into three categories: the Israeli Arabs (Palestinians inside of Israel); the Palestinians in the occupied territories and Gaza; and the Palestinians living in the ghurba (the Arabic word for diaspora).

Darwish's poetry was unique in its ability to join the experiences of these various populations through the subtle and powerful oscillations between his descriptions of the land and his sensitivities to the experience of exile, displacement and dispossession.

With the death of Edward Said, George Habbash, and Yasser Arafat, Mahmoud Darwish's death marks the last in a long list of Palestinians who contributed much to the cause of Palestinian self-determination.

His poetry moved generations, inspired Arabs everywhere, and gave voice to the experience of the Palestinian people.

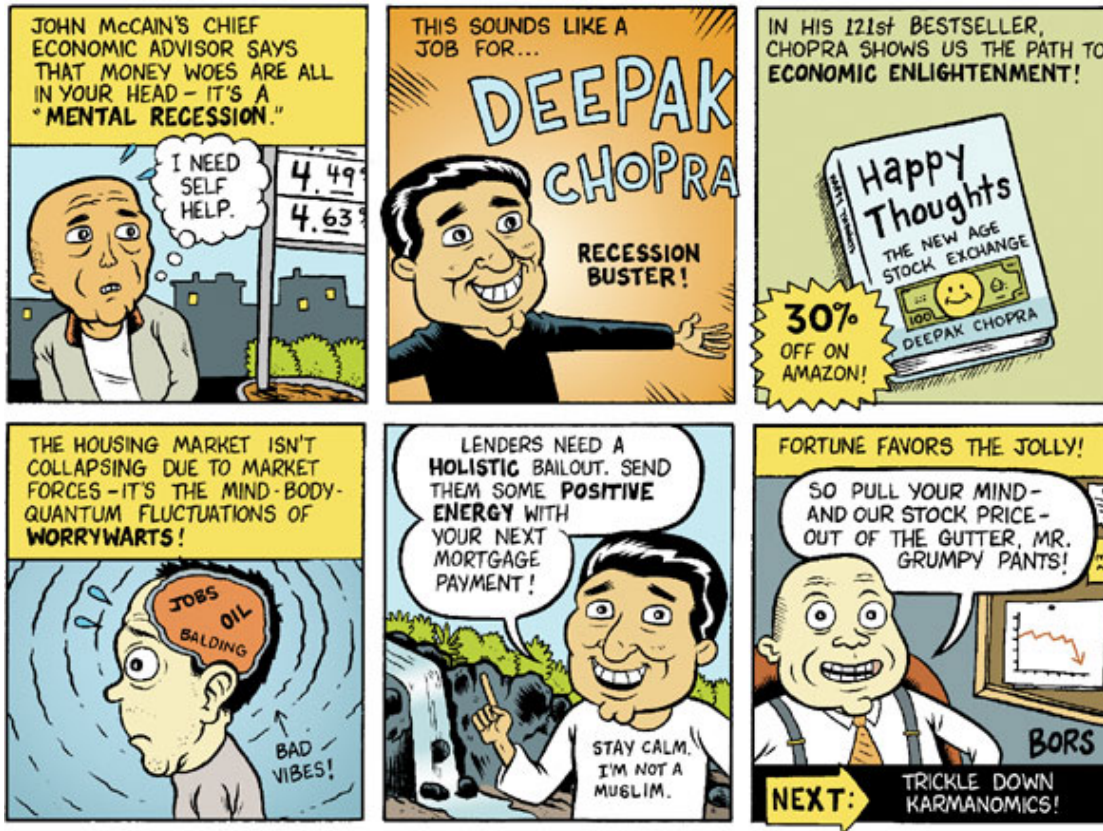
His loss is felt not only in Palestine but in the hearts of those fighting for justice, lovers of the finest poetry, everywhere.

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by foreign terrorists, go to: www.rafahtoday.org The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves "Israeli."]

Troops Invited:

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send email contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Replies confidential. Same address to unsubscribe. Phone: 917.677.8057

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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