

All they have is each other...

by Sheila Samples
(Monday, June 4, 2007)

"George Bush and the corporate war profiteers have blanketed the landscape of the entire country with yellow ribbon. "Support the Troops" is non-sequitural double think -- a psyops tool cleverly used by both Republicans and Democrats to desensitize and control the slobbering masses. It means you are anti-American if you scream in pain each time a soldier or marine is killed -- innocent Iraqis are massacred. It means shut the hell up and support whatever deranged blather comes out of Bush's mouth, even if we must sacrifice our sons and daughters on his killing fields."

*"The darkest places in hell are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in times of moral crisis."
-- Dante*

Okay. Let's talk about troops. Everybody's doing it. We're bombarded round-the-clock with "support the troops...fund the troops...bring the troops home...surge the troops...use the troops for Commander Guy photo opps..." Congress is embroiled in a ghoulish "troop" food fight that has gone on far too long. Democrats say Republicans demoralize and dishonor the troops by sending them into an unwinnable war built on lies. Republicans counter that, by suggesting the war is lost, Democrats demoralize and dishonor the troops by calling them "losers."

Losers? Oh, yes. Big time. The men and women who wear this nation's uniform are losers every day, in every way. They are not only demoralized and dishonored, but are dehumanized by a diabolical den of dimwits whose eyes never waver from the 2008 prize, and who view "troops" as a faceless mass of political capital to be spent toward winning that prize. Their deserter commander-in-chief and his chickenhawk minions are very careful to call military personnel "troops," lest they assume human form and enter the slumbering masses' consciousness -- a vacuous pit otherwise known as the "dead zone."

Killing the Troops

On Armed Forces Day, May 19, eight soldiers were blown to bits by roadside bombs in Iraq -- a total of 15 for the weekend, which brought the casualty toll since the March 2003 invasion to 3,419. As the troops lay dead and dying, body parts scattered amidst the explosive ruin in a foreign land, their president took to the airwaves to somberly discuss...how to make life easier for illegal immigrants here at home. Less than a week later, as Bush and the press were bobbing and weaving in the Rose Garden, the [number of dead troops](#) rose to 3,432, a day later to 3,444 and, finally, on May 26 -- two days before Memorial day -- to 3,455.

That's 36 American men and women, most under the age of 30, lost in one week. Lost forever. On Memorial Day, as Bush yet again disgraced the hallowed ground of Arlington National Cemetery with more babbling about how his will cannot be broken and the only way to honor the dead troops is to complete his "mish-shun," [eight American troops](#) were slain in a Baghdad roadside explosion, another in an explosion near Tahir, two perished in a helicopter crash, and five British troops were kidnapped. It's difficult to keep up, but the total now stands at 3,467. No, 3,471. No, 3,474. No, 3,480. No, 3,495.

God, I can't keep up with the numbers. It's impossible to do the math -- to stay abreast of the burgeoning number of precious human beings who were lied into a death trap and who return to orphans, widows, and parents physically maimed, psychologically deranged or as neatly folded US Flags. There is no evidence

that Bush knows, or cares, that 633 soldiers and marines have been brutally wiped off the face of the earth since he was given the Iraq Study Group report, then strutted off like a college kid on Christmas break to "decide" whether to pull the troops out of the trap or to keep using them as bait. We knew, and Congress knew, what his decision would be -- and what it was -- more troops.

Betraying the Troops

The surge has been quietly ongoing since then, in spite of angry shouts from the American people -- shouts that fell on deaf ears not only in the Oval Office, but throughout the Congress. House Majority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid caved to Bush's demands, while vowing to come back in September and "hold the president to account." Reid announced with bowed head, "We will never, ever, ever, ever give in to this president." Then he gave in.

Sad. There is no honor in a nation whose leaders are given the power to choose life or death for their fellow citizens held captive in an illegal, treasonous, bloody occupation -- and choose death. What do you do after betraying those who elected you -- trusted you -- to stem the needless flow of American blood? Do you dash off to Greenland to check on the climate, or do you stand in the well of the Senate, eyes downcast, with your tail between your legs?

It doesn't matter. They knew what they were doing -- extending tours of duty from 12 months to 15 months, sending other troops back for second and third tours -- weary, wounded and disheartened. They had the purse strings, the Constitutional power, and the mandate of the American people to bring Bush's madness to a screeching halt -- to save the lives of those citizens he daily condemns to death.

They chose, instead, to back down. They chose to allow Bush -- as Texas commentator Jim Hightower said - - to stick the troops in another country's vicious civil war. "They're under attack from every direction by every faction, every hour of every day," Hightower wrote, "hit by car bombs, roadside bombs, chlorine bombs, IEDs, suicide bombs, rocket fire, mortar rounds, snipers, and assassins. There is no safety in Iraq."

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The legislators who voted to fund Bush's folly until September were casting votes of betrayal. Nothing will change in September. A second surge, sans the initial fanfare, is underway that could double the number of troops in Iraq by December, bringing the total to more than 200,000. We can disregard December if we are to believe CNN Pentagon correspondent Jamie McIntyre, who reported on Memorial Day that "no major troop reductions are planned until at least January 2009."

We can also disregard January 2009. According to Gen. Peter Pace, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, there is no plan to even plan withdrawal of troops. "We do have ongoing replacements of forces, and we do change the size of the force over time so that that system is available to either plus-up or draw down," Pace told the Senate in early May, "but we have published no orders saying come up with a complete plan for total drawdown." However, Pace did say they planned to maintain a series of military installations for a long period of time -- maybe a few decades...

You'd think as a minimum, the top military brass and the troops' commander-in-chief would know at any given moment exactly how many lives were lost in their war. However, the only thing Bush knows is that he "grieves 'n mourns" for the heroes who "give their lives" for his mission. Numbers aren't important. What's important to Bush is that he "pre-shates" their sacrifice. And Pace, who monitors the number of gays wearing

the hetro-military uniform, commented last week that we lost "nearly 3,000 Americans on 9-11," and then warned we are "getting close" to losing that many troops in Iraq.

Actually, Pete, we are losing three or more American men and women every single day. It's six months -- 180 days -- 540 dead troops until December. It's 18 months -- 545 days -- 1,635 dead troops until January 2009. How many days -- how many dead troops -- are there in a "few decades"? You do the math.

Supporting the Troops

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So many of them died in vain.

In Feb. 2005, the Marines sent a "[priority 1 urgent](#)" request for more than 1,000 Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles. In spite of the MRAP's proven ability to withstand blasts from IEDs and to save lives, it was 21 months (Nov. 2006) before this urgent plea was acted upon. After a few MRAPs trickled into the area and their life-saving value was recognized, both the Army and Marines requested as many as 18,000 to replace the totally inadequate humvees. Although Defense Secretary Robert Gates "talked the talk" that the MRAP is the Pentagon's "[highest priority](#)" new gear buy, until the Pentagon "walks the walk," Americans will continue to be slaughtered by the ever-present IEDs.

Supporting the troops is ensuring they have sufficient equipment and materiel in order to survive, and providing the proper care for the wounded and maimed when they return. This type of support is not a high priority with the Bush administration. In addition to forcing soldiers to dig through scrap piles for metal to reinforce vehicles, injured troops are billed for damaged or lost body armor, charged for food while in the hospital and routinely have their pension benefits cut. Because of Bush's brand of support, troops are faced not only with having to deal with the traumatic reality of their injuries, but most of them face financial ruin as well.

Bush has relentlessly fought supporting the troops from the outset. He not only opposes, but "strongly opposes" any pay raise for his troops. He threatened to veto the 2008 defense authorization bill if it included a paltry 3.5-percent raise for the military, a \$40 monthly increase for widows and survivors, or any attempt to curb prices for prescription drugs the troops are forced to buy under TRICARE. Current pay and benefits are "sufficient," he said, echoing the refrain of Barbara Bush, his mother, as she looked out over the

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[Katrina refugees penned up](#) in the Houston Astrodome -- "...so many of the people in the arena here, you know, were underprivileged anyway, so this -- this (she chuckled slightly) is working very well for them."

And, on Mar. 18, 2003, the day before Bush's bloody invasion of Iraq, the former first lady appeared on ABC's "Good Morning America" to shrug aside the death sentences he was imposing upon an entire

generation of Americans. "Why should we hear about body bags and deaths? Oh, I mean, it's not relevant. So why should I waste my beautiful mind on something like that?"

Bush is truly his mother's son -- shallow, unfeeling, incapable of compassion. In a recent meeting with five families of slain soldiers, one, Elaine Johnson, asked him why we were in Iraq. Bush could not answer that, nor could he explain what we were fighting for. But he did toss each of them a presidential coin and quipped, "Don't go sell it on eBay."

To Bush, body bags and deaths are simply an inconvenience and, with the help of the corporate media, he is very adept at hiding them from prying eyes. Bush is on a righteous mission -- he is the President, the Decider, the Commander-in-chief and God has chosen him to lead this country to its [destiny](#).

And the troops? They have learned when it comes to support, all they have is each other. All they have is each other.

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