

[When Stan Goff is about to speak, I don't want to say much. Just this: may all the bereaved find recovery, and the repentant find forgiveness, and the cruel find punishment. Even if they're all the same person. -JAH]

"For the last three months, the per capita rate of American military casualties in Afghanistan has exceeded that in Iraq..."

DIALECTICS ON METH

The Southwest Asian Debacle

by
Stan Goff

© Copyright 2005, From The Wilderness Publications, www.fromthewilderness.com. All Rights Reserved. This story may NOT be posted on any Internet web site without express written permission. Contact admin@copycia.com. May be circulated, distributed or transmitted for non-profit purposes only.

The life of a people ripens a certain fruit; its activity aims at the complete manifestation of the principle which it embodies. But this fruit does not fall back into the bosom of the people that produced and matured it; on the contrary, it becomes a poison-draught to it. That poison-draught it cannot let alone, for it has an insatiable thirst for it: the taste of the draught is its annihilation, though at the same time the rise of a new principle.

- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel



[Hegel's](#) conception of the [dialectic](#) - the process underlying the constant shifting of forms and essences - stated that over time, things turn into their opposites.

The [dialectic](#) is a way of thinking, an interpretive method that regards contradictions not as obstacles, but as the most important places to begin asking questions. British philosopher Bertrand Russell said the dialectic is "to teach how to live without certainty, and yet without being paralyzed by hesitation... perhaps the chief thing that philosophy, in our age, can still do for those who study it"

I write this on June 13th, 2005. There can be no better example of Hegel's claim than what has happened in Iraq, and how the Bush administration cannot let go "that poison-draught."

Yesterday, the American military death toll went over 1,700 in Iraq. No one is counting Afghanistan. No one is counting Iraqis or Afghans. Some are counting Englishmen. As Kurt Vonnegut so eloquently put it, "So it goes."

In today's news, the increasingly frequent and effective attacks against the U.S. military and the Karzai-government culminated with a bomb attack that wounded four American troops doing a civil-affairs mission in a Kandahar suburb. This is the last in an increasingly frequent and sophisticated series of Taliban attacks in recent weeks. Though you'd never know it from the American press, for the last three months, the per capita rate of American military casualties in Afghanistan has exceeded that in Iraq, making Afghanistan stand out as the other victory-turns-to-defeat story in the region.



In Baghdad, four more U.S. troops were wounded by a martyr-bombing aimed at a mobile U.S. diplomat (and two Marines were killed in an ambush outside of Ramadi, and four more troops were killed near Baghdad).

Diplomats do not widely announce their movement routes, so logic tells us that this was an inside job - and that the puppets are now turning - Pinocchio-like - into "real boys."

Meanwhile, in Kirkuk, shortly before the "president" of autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan, Masoud Barzani, was to be "sworn in," a bomb exploded in a crowded market, killing at least 18 and wounding at least 53... right there in the "capital of Kurdistan."



Another suicide-bomber took out five Iraqi policemen in Baquba this same day.

The White House issued a veiled order - barely concealing its panic - to the Iraqi "government" to make haste in overcoming the obstacles to drafting a constitution. The primary obstacle being reported is the failure to include more than the current two Sunni Arabs in the drafting body. But given that the "presidential concern" is being directed at Jalal Talabani, the Kurdish "president of Iraq," it is hard not to speculate that the deeper and more insoluble contradictions involving Kirkuk are not being considered between the lines.

Kirkuk sits atop almost 20 percent of Iraq's oil, and the violence there is an expression of the Kurdish attempts at de-Arab-ization and de-Turkmen-ization - backed up by the second largest military force in Iraq, the Kurdish peshmerga. The Shia-majority government, that to the unending worry of the Bush administration is getting cozier with Iran by the day, is pushing for a *regional* Iraqi federation, while Talabani and the Kurds are fighting for an *ethnic* federation. With the Kurds as the most significant minority in this newly-constituted government, and the armed resistance showing not the least sign of flagging, this question will be a much bigger hurdle in the development of a constitution than the inclusion of a couple more token Sunnis.

Condi Rice was there last month, sowing more lollipop trees for the U.S. press and spouting inanities like an artesian spring, but to no avail. With even the legendary timidity of the press, they are now obliged by the sheer, undeniable scope of this military disaster to ask a few pointed questions.

In response, presidential press prevaricator Scott McClellan offered these enlightening words yesterday: "Just to keep in perspective here, this is still less than a year since we transferred sovereignty to Iraq. In that time period, Iraq has made important strides on the political front. . . . And it's important that they continue to move forward on the political front, because that helps improve the security front as well."



If anyone can extract the actual information from that, please contact me immediately. Inquiring minds want to know.

Another story in today's papers is that Pew just released a poll showing that almost 60 percent of Americans now think going to war in Iraq was a bad idea. While many remain unsure exactly how to get out, half of those who said it was a bad idea were unequivocal about the solution - just leave, now. This is a sea change in American public opinion, and it is being reflected by some of the more predictable legislative shenanigans, the most noteworthy being from North Carolina Republican Walter Jones, the very Congressman Jones who publicly re-anointed fast food potatoes from "French fries" to "freedom fries," during the administration-orchestrated Francophobia of early 2003. If you want to watch a thing turn into its opposite, watch Jones changing colors like a thermotropic mood ring.

He is submitting a resolution to Congress calling for a definite departure date from Iraq, and flagellating himself over the freedom-fries flap, albeit with the excuse that the Bushies lied to him. All the Congressional cnidarians who authorized this savagery are using that excuse nowadays as they prepare to ride the changing political currents. Some lies, it must be said, people have to work at believing.



Nonetheless, this bit of political theater - and that is what it is - is important. It is theater, because even if this B-Movie administration decided today to get out, no one knows what it would take to do it. It is designed to put the administration on the spot, and it has worked. But why is this effort now spotlighting a Republican who is approximately with Jesse Helms along the political continuum?

Let's begin by noting that Jones' district is the 3rd Congressional District of North Carolina. For those who don't immediately see the significance of this by consulting their personal memories for the geographic boundaries of 435 districts, allow me to elucidate.

Jones represents a portion of Eastern North Carolina with a significant number of African American voters, and he relies on Republican white-bloc voting to hold his seat. White voters vote consciously as white voters thereabouts, and therefore as Republicans, to beat back the melanin-threat that still relies on the Democratic Party. So one thing that this change of heart is telling us is that a significant part of George Bush's popular base is growing increasingly uncomfortable with this war. You don't get to 60 percent of the American public without some Republicans.

But the other thing about the 3rd District is that it contains two big military installations: Seymour Johnson Air Force Base and Camp Lejeune, home of the 2nd Marine Division. Three groups of people in and around these bases are unhappy. One group is among the Marines themselves, who have been used and abused in Bush's little adventure, particularly in the most unseemly operations, like the criminal destruction of Fallujah. Another group is the families, who are seeing some of their loved ones go on second and third tours, having spent more time away than at home over the last two years. And the last group are retailers, who constitute a very sizeable portion of base satellite economies, and who suffer terribly during every extended deployment.



Jones is responding to his base, not to some religious epiphany.

There are two aspects to the Walter Jones phenomenon: One is that many Republican elected officials are facing election challenges in 2006, while George Bush and his hallucinogenic court are lame ducks. The other is that there is resistance growing each day in the heart of the very institution tasked with carrying out the indeterminate wars of neo-conservatism - the American military.

If we wanted to spook the administration these days, all we would have to do is post signs at every corner bearing the triumphant image of Richard Nixon after his re-election. When the leaks in that ship of state burst into a full-blown breach of the hull with the Watergate revelations, Republicans were fighting Democrats for space on the lifeboats.

Who will this year's Deep Throat be? Only yesterday, the *Detroit Free Press* printed:

In candid confessions about the ongoing violence in Iraq, an increasing number of senior U.S. military officers claim there is no long-term military solution to defeat an evasive and resourceful insurgency.

"The more accurate way to approach this right now is to concede that... this insurgency and terrorism in Iraq is not going to be settled through military options," Brig. Gen. Donald Alston, the chief U.S. military spokesman in Iraq, said last week.



The Plame affair has not disappeared, simply receded from the scene as we bent our ear to the weighty issues of the day - the Michael Jackson trial, the Runaway Bride, and American Idol. It is still there, a felonious serpent tucked away somewhere in the room. There are hundreds of outstanding FOIA requests for the still sequestered photographs of Abu Ghraib that have never seen the light of day. And in the news today, the debate heats up, even on the issue-averse CNN, about whether to close Guantanamo Bay's Mulsim-holding pens.

On this, too, already Republicans are defecting. Senator Chuck Hagel, a Republican from Nebraska and Congressman Mel Martinez, a Florida Republican, have taken point by saying that Guantanamo is an international public relations nightmare that is endangering American lives, not protecting them.

"It's becoming an icon for bad stories," said Martinez.

This is how Nixonization begins - as a trickle. But when the next Deep Throat appears and the water rushes in, the Hagels and Matinezes and Joneses will have already secured the first lifeboat.



There is another, more directly disturbing story that has appeared in the last few days, and that is the possibility that fragging will begin to happen in Iraq. It probably already has.

The first instance was with Hasan Akbar on May 22, 2003. Akbar turned off the generator that provided lights in the tents at his Kuwaiti transit camp, then threw an incendiary grenade into one command tent, followed by two fragmentation grenades, one in each of two command tents. The official story is that he followed the grenade detonations by opening fire on the tents with his automatic rifle. Two officers, Army Captain Christopher Seifer and Air Force Major Gregory Stone, were killed. Fourteen other members of the unit were wounded.

What can be inferred from this case is that Akbar, a recent convert to Islam - with the passion of any recent religious convert - was subjected prior to his deployment to Kuwait for the Iraq invasion to racial and religious harassment by other members of his unit.

Akbar's father reported that his son was the sole Black and sole Muslim in his company. He further alleged that Akbar was subjected to this racial and religious harassment, including innuendo that Akbar would be 'mistakenly' shot as one of 'them.' because he 'looks like them and prays like them.' Reports that members of Akbar's unit sported racist tattoos and indeed did subject him to racial and religious hectoring were given a non-denial-denial by 101st Division spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Ed Loomis, who responded that the Division did not 'tolerate extremist behavior.' This is a fairly typical military disclaimer that means this wasn't the subject of the investigation, without saying that the harassment of Akbar was not investigated. Or, more seriously, that the investigation revealed facts that might embarrass the military, which is institutional anathema.

Hasan Akbar is quoted as saying, "You guys are coming into our countries, and you're going to rape our women and kill our children." We may assume he meant Muslim countries. As the record now shows, these things did actually happen. Children were killed by occupation troops, and women were raped. (Troops also raped female fellow soldiers and got away with it). It is claimed that Akbar opposed the war, and further claimed that he had written in the infamous diary that he had been 'punked' and 'humiliated' by his fellow soldiers, rather supporting his father's claims of harassment prior to deployment. He is reported to have written that he would soon be faced with a 'choice' about whom to kill. Given the circumstances, this isn't all that surprising, if true.

Akbar, then, may have become the first fragger in the Centcom theater.



While there hasn't been much information forthcoming so far, the Army has also launched a criminal investigation into the deaths of Captain Phillip Esposito and 1st Lieutenant Louis Allen, who were assigned to the 42nd Infantry Division, New York Army National Guard, as company commander and executive officer respectively. In this case, the assailant is not clear-cut. The killings happened, however, in Forward Operating Base Danger, near Tikrit, where command errors and missions beyond the wire in general are sure to be fraught with danger - even as support for the war among the troops, National Guard troops in this case, is

falling.

The idea that the only cases of a particular crime are those which are uncovered is consistent with military logic that says nothing happened in Abu Ghraib unless a picture was taken, but it doesn't square with sense. It would be reckless to assume that the only cases of fragging are the ones being investigated. In fact, a good fragging - if you'll forgive me - is the kind where it looks like enemy action.

And fragging is the most extreme manifestation of flagging morale and discipline. It is also what has been called "spontaneous" resistance. An attempt to survive or take revenge, but motivated by personal desire or fear or unfocused rebelliousness. The other kind of resistance, which will not likely include fragging, but which acts in concert with spontaneous resistance, is "conscious" resistance - the kind that is taken up in defense of a principled opposition to a war.

It is possible that Akbar's actions were "principled" in some sense, though he has claimed duress in his trial, not offered political statements.

There is a combination of both self-preservation and principle operating together with the number of people who have simply left the military without authorization - or in military parlance, gone AWOL (absent without leave). In a May 16, 2005 article by Andrew Buncombe in the *Independent/UK*, he reports:

The most recent Pentagon figures suggest there are 5,133 troops missing from duty. Of these 2,376 are sought by the Army, 1,410 by the Navy, 1,297 by the Marines and 50 by the Air Force...

But campaigners say the true figure could be far higher. Staff who run a volunteer hotline to help desperate soldiers and recruits who want to get out, say the number of calls has increased by 50 per cent since 9/11. Last year alone, the GI Rights Hotline took more than 30,000 calls. At present, the hotline gets 3,000 calls a month and the volunteers say that by the time a soldier or recruit dials the help-line they have almost always made up their mind to get out by one means or another.

People like Camilo Mejia, Pablo Paredes, and Kevin Benderman, however, are not exercising self-preservation, but breaking military law to draw attention to their belief that the war is illegal and immoral. Mejia and Benderman both refused to return to Iraq, having seen combat there, and Paredes refuse to board his ship. All three took their actions with the certainty of prosecution.







These three are also members of *Iraq Veterans Against the War*, a formation similar to *Vietnam Veteran Against the War*, that has formed close contacts with VVAW and *Veterans for Peace*. This overtly political consciousness translated into activism is surely giving the administration an ulcer (though they'd never admit it), and it is combined with a growing and aggressive movement of military families that includes *Military Families Speak Out* and *Gold Star Families for Peace*, the latter being the surviving families of war fatalities.

The military's own members and communities are now beginning to turn into their opposites - into anti-militarists.



Then, of course, there is the more sweeping historical backdrop of the war, which I have described in these pages before. Political Islam collaborated with imperialism when it had secular nationalism as its common enemy. Now it is objectively anti-imperialist, and it has both Islamic and nationalist content.

Hegel's dialectic is a temporal process, bound to the velocity of change. If he saw the turbulence inhering in the almost stately pace of things at the turn of the 19th Century, imagine how he might react if he were yanked through time and deposited in the present. Not only in a world connected by digital light-speed communications and digital light-speed disruptions, but one with six times as many people, fed with a diminishing fuel, and that includes day traders swapping derivatives while they are amplified on caffeine and sugar.

For Hegel, this would be the dialectic in a never-ending succession of fractals at every scale, running on crystal meth; a people with its "fruit ripening" like time-lapse photography, compressing whole seasons into a frenetic ten-second scene, its rulers gulping down the toxic draft with the urgency of a fraternity initiation beer chug.

