



# Vietnam Veterans In Canada

## General Meeting (2008-03)

# GM 541

## 07 February 2008

*British Columbia Regiment (DCO), Vancouver, B.C.*

### Moment of Silence

## United States Military Casualty Reports

Received since 23 January 2008

**Lance Cpl. James M. Gluff, 20, of Tunnel Hill, Ga.,** died Jan. 19 while conducting combat operations in Al Anbar province, Iraq. He was assigned to 1st Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, N.C.

**Sgt. Michael R. Sturdivant, 20, of Conway, Ark.,** died Jan. 22 in Kirkuk, Iraq, of injuries sustained in a vehicle accident during convoy operations. He was assigned to the 431st Civil Affairs Battalion, U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), Fort Bragg, N.C.

**Staff Sgt. Robert J. Miller, 24, of Iowa City, Iowa,** died Jan. 25 in Barikowt, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when he encountered small arms fire while conducting combat operations. He was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), Fort Bragg, N.C.

**Sgt. Tracy Renee Birkman, 41, of New Castle, Va.,** died Jan. 25 in Owesat, Iraq, from non-combat related injuries. She was assigned to the 626th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Ky.

**Pfc. Duncan Charles Crookston, 19, of Denver, Colo.,** died Jan. 25 in Brooke Army Medical Center, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle during combat operations in Baghdad, Iraq. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, Kan.

**Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Matthew R. Kahler, 29, of Granite Falls, Minn.,** died Jan. 26 at Forward Operating Base Fenty, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered from small arms fire in Waygul, Afghanistan. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment (Airborne), 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, Vicenza, Italy. The incident is under investigation.

**Staff Sgt. Robert J. Wilson, 28, of Boynton Beach, Fla.,** died Jan. 26 of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated while he was conducting a dismounted patrol in Baghdad, Iraq. He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Ky.

**Maj. Alan G. Rogers, 40, of Hampton, Fla.,** died Jan. 27 of wounds suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated while he was conducting a dismounted patrol in Baghdad, Iraq. He was assigned to the Military Transition Team, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, Kan.

**Sgt. Mikeal W. Miller, 22, of Albany, Ore.,** died Jan. 27 at the National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Md., of wounds suffered in Baghdad, Iraq on July 9, 2007, when the vehicle he was in encountered an improvised explosive device. He was assigned to the 3rd Squadron, 61st Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo.

**Sgt. James E. Craig, 26, of Hollywood, Calif.** Craig died from wounds suffered when his unit encountered an improvised explosive device during convoy operations Jan. 28 in Mosul, Iraq. He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo.

**Staff Sgt. Gary W. Jeffries, 37, of Roscoe, Texas.** Jeffries died from wounds suffered when his unit encountered an improvised explosive device during convoy operations Jan. 28 in Mosul, Iraq. He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo.

**Spc. Evan A. Marshall, 21, of Athens, Ga.** Marshall died from wounds suffered when his unit encountered an improvised explosive device during convoy operations Jan. 28 in Mosul, Iraq. He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo.

**Pfc. Brandon A. Meyer, 20, of Orange, Calif.** Meyer died from wounds suffered when his unit encountered an improvised explosive device during convoy operations Jan. 28 in Mosul, Iraq. He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo.

**Pvt. Joshua A. R. Young, 21, of Riddle, Ore.** Young died from wounds suffered when his unit encountered an improvised explosive device during convoy operations Jan. 28 in Mosul, Iraq. He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo.

**1st Lt. David E. Schultz, 25, of Illinois**, died Jan. 31 of wounds suffered when the Convoy Support Center at Scania, Iraq, was attacked by indirect enemy fire. He was assigned to the 3rd Squadron, 73rd Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C.

**Cpt. Michael A. Norman, 36, of Killeen, Texas**, died Jan. 31 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when his vehicle encountered an improvised explosive device. He was assigned to the Military Transition Team, 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, Kan.

**Spc. Matthew F. Straughter, 27, of St. Charles, Mo.**, died Jan 31 in Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds suffered when his vehicle was struck by a rocket propelled grenade. He was assigned to the 1138th Engineer Company, 35th Engineer Brigade, Missouri National Guard, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

**Staff Sgt. Chad A. Barrett, 35, of Saltville, Va.**, died Feb. 2 in Mosul, Iraq, as a result of a non-combat related incident. He was assigned to the 64th Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo. The incident is under investigation.

# Casualty Count is now 4477

**Since 10 November 2001**

*Compiled by the VVIC S-2, Menga Station, Valley of the Cauca River, ROC*

## **A Veteran Writes**

### **A Bad Mood, A Six-Pack, And A Typewriter**

**by Fred Reed**

**Harper's, December, 1980**

**I begin to weary of the stories about veterans that are now in vogue with the newspapers, the stories that dissect the veteran's psyche as if prying apart a laboratory frog-patronizing stories written by style-section reporters who know all there is to know about chocolate mousse, ladies' fashions, and the wonderful desserts that can be made with simple jello. I weary of seeing veterans analyzed and diagnosed and explained by people who share nothing with veterans, by people who, one feels intuitively, would regard it as a harrowing experience to be alone in a backyard.**

**Week after week the mousse authorities tell us what is wrong with the veteran. The veteran is badly in need of adjustment, they say-lacks balance, needs fine tuning to whatever it is in society that one should be attuned to. What we have here, all agree, with omniscience and veiled condescension, is a victim: The press loves a victim. The veteran has bad dreams, say the jello writers, is alienated, may be hostile, doesn't socialize well-isn't, to be frank, quite right in the head.**

**But perhaps it is the veteran's head to be right or wrong in, and maybe it makes a difference what memories are in the head. For the jello writers the war was a moral fable on Channel Four, a struggle hinging on Nixon and Joan Baez and the inequities of this or that. I can't be sure. The veterans seem to have missed the war by having been away in Vietnam at the time and do not understand the combat as it raged in the internecine cocktail parties of Georgetown.**

**Still, to me Vietnam was not what it was to the jello writers, not a ventilation of pious simplisms, not the latest literary interpretation of the domino theory. It left me memories the fashion writers can't imagine. It was the slums of Truong Minh Ky, where dogs' heads floated in pools of green water and three-inch roaches droned in sweltering back-alley rooms and I was happy. Washington knows nothing of hot, whore-rich, beery Truong Minh Ky. I remember riding the bomb boats up the Mekong to Phnom Penh, with the devilish brown river closing in like a vise and rockets shrieking from the dim jungle to burst against the sandbagged wheelhouse, and crouching below the waterline between the diesel tanks. The mousse authorities do not remember this. I remember the villa on Monivong in Phnom Penh, with Sedlacek, the balding Australian hippie, and Naoki, the crazy freelance combat photographer, and Zoco, the Frenchman, when the night jumped and flickered with the boom of artillery and we listened to Mancini on shortwave and watched Nara dance. Washington's elite do not know Nara. They know much of politicians and of furniture.**

If I try to explain what Vietnam meant to me-I haven't for years, and never will again-they grow uneasy at my intensity. "My God," their eyes say, "he sounds as though he liked it over there. Something in the experience clearly snapped an anchoring ligament in his mind and left him with odd cravings, a perverse view of life-nothing dangerous, of course, but...The war did that to them," they say. "War is hell."

Well, yes, they may have something there. When you have seen a peasant mother screaming over several pounds of bright red mush that, thanks to God and a Chicom 107, is no longer precisely her child, you see that Sherman may have been on to something. When you have eaten fish with Khmer troops in charred Cambodian battlefields, where the heat beats down like a soft rubber truncheon and a wretched stink comes from shallow graves, no particular leap of imagination is necessary to notice that war is no paradise. I cannot say that the jello writers are wrong in their understanding of war. But somehow I don't like hearing pieties about the war from these sleek, wise people who never saw it.

There were, of course, veterans and veterans. Some hated the war, some didn't. Some went around the bend down in IV Corps, where leeches dropped softly down collars like green sausages and death erupted unexpected from the ungodly foliage. To men in the elite groups-the Seals, Special Forces, Recondos, and Lurps who spent years in the Khmer bush, low to the ground where the ants bit hard-the war was a game with stakes high enough to engage their attention. They liked to play.

To many of us there, the war was the best time of our lives, almost the only time. We loved it because in those days we were alive, life was intense, the pungent hours passed fast over the central event of the age and the howling jets appeased the terrible boredom of existence. Psychologists, high priests of the mean, say that boredom is a symptom of maladjustment; maybe, but boredom has been around longer than psychologists have.

The jello writers would say we are mad to remember fondly anything about Nixon's war that Kennedy started. They do not remember the shuddering flight of a helicopter high over glowing green jungle that spread beneath us like a frozen sea. They never made the low runs a foot above treetops along paths that led like rivers through branches clawing at the skids, never peered down into murky clearings and bubbling swamps of sucking snake-ridden muck. They do not remember monsoon mornings in the highlands where dragons of mist twisted in the valleys, coiling lazily on themselves, puffing up and swallowing whole villages in their dank breath. The mousse men do not remember driving before dawn to Red Beach, when the headlights in the blackness caught ghostly shapes, maybe VC, thin yellow men mushroom-headed in the night, bicycling along the alien roads. As nearly as I can tell, jello writers do not remember anything.

Then it was over. The veterans came home. Suddenly the world seemed to stop dead in the water. Suddenly the slant-eyed hookers were gone, and the gunships and the wild

drunken nights in places that the jello writers can't imagine. Suddenly the veterans were among soft, proper people who knew nothing of what they had done and what they had seen, and who, truth be told, didn't much like them.

Nor did some of us much like the people at home-though it was not at first a conscious distaste. Men came home with wounds and terrible memories and dead friends to be greeted by that squalling she-ass of Tom Hayden's, to find a country that, having sent them to Viet Nam, now viewed them as criminals for having been there. Slowly, to more men than will admit to it, the thought came: "These are the people I fought for?" And so we lost a country.

We looked around us with new eyes and saw that, in a sense the mousse people could never understand, we had lost even our dignity. I remember a marine corporal at Bethesda Naval Hospital who, while his wounds healed, had to run errands for the nurses, last year's co-eds. "A hell of a bust," he said with the military's sardonic economy of language. "Machine gunner to messenger boy."

It wasn't exactly that we didn't fit. Rather, we saw what there was to fit with-and recoiled. We sought jobs, but found offices where countless bureaucrats shuffled papers at long rows of desks, like battery hens awaiting the laying urge, their bellies billowing over their belts. Some of us joined them but some, in different ways, fled. A gunship pilot of my acquaintance took to the law, and to drink, and spent five years discovering that he really wanted to be in Rhodesia. Others went back into the death-in-the-bushes outfits, where the hard old rules still held. I drifted across Asia, Mexico, Wyoming, hitchhiking and sleeping in ditches until I learned that aberrant behavior, when written about, is literature.

The jello writers were quickly upon us. We were morose, they said, sullen. We acted strangely at parties, sat silently in corners and watched with noncommittal stares. Mentally, said the fashion experts, we hadn't made the trip home.

It didn't occur to them that we just had nothing to say about jello. Desserts mean little to men who have lain in dark rifle pits over Happy Valley in rainy season, watching mortar flares tremble in low-lying clouds that flickered like the face of God, while in the nervous evening safeties clicked off along the wire and amtracs rumbled into alert idles, coughing and waiting.

Once, after the GIs had left Saigon, I came out of a bar on Cach Mang and saw a veteran with a sign on his jacket: VIET NAM: IF YOU HAVEN'T BEEN THERE, SHUT THE FUCK UP. Maybe, just maybe, he had something.

# Capitol Crime of the Century: Time for Congress to Act

By Dave Lindorff

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## Who's minding the store in Washington?

While President George W. Bush was standing before the members of Congress on January 28 laying out his plans, such as they are, for the final year of his second term in the White House, he was also seriously and perhaps fatally undermining the authority of Congress with a new signing statement, attached to the latest National Defense Authorization Act, in which he declared that he would simply violate or fail to comply with four provisions.

Let me say that again. The president states in writing that he is not going to obey and will not be bound by four parts of a law duly passed by the Congress.

Just so you know that we're not talking about the naming of a bridge or a new ship, the four provisions of the act which the president is going to ignore are:

- the establishment of a commission to investigate contractor fraud in Afghanistan and Iraq
- the protection of whistleblowers who report contractor fraud from harassment or official retribution
- a requirement that US intelligence agencies respond to Congressional requests for documents
- a ban on funding for any permanent military bases in Iraq, and on any actions that would seek to give the US control over Iraq's oil resources or oil money.

Now first of all, let's see what the Constitution has to say. Article I, the first actual statement about how our government works, which comes right after the preamble about "We the People," states unambiguously:

"All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives."

It goes on to state that:

"Every Bill which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, shall, before it becomes a Law, be presented to the President of the United States; If he approve he shall sign it, but if not he shall return it, with his Objections, to that House in which it shall have originated, who shall enter the Objections at large on their Journal, and proceed to reconsider it. If after such Reconsideration by two thirds of that House shall agree to pass the Bill, it shall be sent, together with the Objections, to the other House, by which it shall likewise be reconsidered, and if approved by two thirds of that House, it shall become a Law...If any Bill shall not be returned by the President within ten Days (Sundays excepted) after it shall have been presented to him, the Same shall be a Law, in like Manner as if he had signed it."

Note that there is no asterisk or footnote saying anything about the president having the power to simply ignore those legislative powers or to violate them at will. If he does not veto the entire bill--and in this case he did not, he signed it--it becomes the Law of the Land.

Article I also defines the powers of the Congress expansively, stating that it has the power to lay and collect taxes, to regulate commerce, to coin money, to declare war, to call forth the militia, and

"to make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the government of the United States or in any Department or Officer thereof."

Article II goes on to define the powers of the president. It states:

"The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America."

It goes on to explicitly define and limit the president's powers, specifically to being "commander in chief" of the armed forces (not of the country or of the government!), to the granting of reprieves and pardons (except in the case of impeachments), to making treaties (subject to Senate approval) and appointing officers to the cabinet and the courts (all subject to Senate approval).

That is it. There are no other presidential powers in the Constitution. Certainly there is no power granted to disobey or ignore Acts of Congress or to violate the law.

And yet here we have the president, at the start of his last year in office, announcing that he will not obey a law duly passed by the Congress that requires his administration to establish a commission to investigate the rampant corruption among private contractors operating in Afghanistan and Iraq, that he will not obey a law barring him from punishing whistleblowers who disclose such corruption, that he will not obey an order that his intelligence services must respond to requests from Congress for information (about such issues as torture of captives, or spying on American citizens, or destroying documents), and that he will not obey an order banning the establishment and construction of permanent military bases in Iraq, and banning attempts to gain US control over Iraqi oil. (Bush's refusal to obey a Congressional spending bill is particularly egregious, as the Constitution clearly gives Congress primacy in matters of finance and appropriations.)

Logically one would expect members of Congress in both parties to be up in arms over this illegal and clearly unconstitutional defiance--the more so because both houses of Congress are in the hands of the Democratic Party.

But we have heard barely a peep from the "people's representatives" at this brazen abuse of power--and certainly no one in Congress, save Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), is calling for action.

The reason: Congress is afraid of impeachment.

It is so afraid to confront this usurper president that, incredibly, its members, Republican and Democrat alike, seem happy to surrender not only their own power, but the power of the institution of Congress, to avoid doing what the Constitution calls upon them to do: to impeach a criminal in the White House who has abused his powers of office, who has violated his oath to "preserve, protect and defend" the Constitution, and who has broken the law multiple times.

This is an appalling abrogation of responsibility on the part of our elected representatives in Washington, who also took oaths of office committing themselves to "preserve, protect and defend" the Constitution.

How can these hundreds of cowards and traitors in the Capitol, with straight faces, hold hand to heart and pledge allegiance, as they do at the start of every day in Congress? How can they with straight faces go before their constituents and pose as honorable men and women?

The Constitution is clear. It states that:

"The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors."

Please observe that the operative word is shall, not may.

Now although the evidence is overwhelming, one can nonetheless debate whether the president broke the law when he went to war in Iraq or whether he knowingly lied about the reasons for that war. One can debate whether he broke the law by personally authorizing torture of captives. One can even debate whether he broke the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. These are matters that require hearings in the House Judiciary Committee. But there is no need to hold hearings to decide whether the president has abused his power by declaring his intention to ignore laws passed by the Congress. This is an objective fact. A High Crime has been committed and openly confessed to by the President of the United States. Congress has only to vote on it as an impeachable act to restore its Constitutional authority, and to restore the damaged Constitution.

There is no question here of "diverting" Congress from its important duties. This need not be time-consuming business. Moreover, defending its authority from a usurper is surely the most important thing Congress can do. Neither is there any question of this being "divisive." Every member of Congress should want to protect the Constitutional authority of the legislative branch from this fatal encroachment which, if unchallenged, renders Congress nothing but a talk shop no better than the local diner. Nor can there be any question about whether the votes are there or not, either to vote for an Article of Impeachment, or even to convict in the Senate. What member of Congress, of either party, would vote to approve and to sanction in perpetuity this or any president's right to ignore the Constitution and willfully violate laws passed by the Congress--particularly given the likelihood that the next president could be a Democrat?

Here then, is an issue that Congress cannot ignore. Here is an issue that renders ludicrous House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's assertion that "impeachment is off the table." Here is an issue that should inflame every American citizen. Here is an issue that should be put to every candidate for office, including those running for the office of president:

Is President Bush, and is every future president, a dictator, who personally determines what laws are to be obeyed and what laws are to be ignored? Or is the president bound, like the rest of us, by the rule of law and the Constitution?

The choice is now squarely before us all.

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