

Growing Casualties

Undercovered #36: More war news from the international press.

On Sept. 22, the U.S.-backed Iraqi Governing Council invited foreign firms to buy 192 Iraqi public sector companies, including health care, telecommunications, water and electricity — everything but oil and gas. All profits can be taken out of Iraq, top income taxes will be 15 percent, and no Iraqis need be hired (*Independent* and Geov Parrish, www.workingforchange.org).

- Families of U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard troops are protesting a new policy that troops must stay in Iraq one year, away from families and jobs. Many of these soldiers plan to quit the service when they get home (*Washington Post*). The Pentagon finds promise in young Latinos — including non-citizens, 37,000 of whom are currently enlisted — and hopes Latino numbers in the military will increase from 10 percent up to 22 percent. Recruiters may appear even at primary schools and sometimes recruit inside Mexico (*Independent*). Non-citizen and immigrant soldiers are likely to serve in the front lines because they don't have security clearance for specialized jobs (*La Opinion*).

- An unusual number of accidents, suicides, and other non-combat incidents among U.S. troops in Iraq have helped push the death toll since the war began to 302. Many wounded have lost limbs. Injured soldiers have over-

flowed into cancer wards of Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., and staff have been working 70- to 80-hour weeks (*Guardian*). Recent figures on medically evacuated troops list 1,157 combat-wounded, 316 wounded in other ways, and 4,500 others "who became physically or mentally ill." Soldiers' families fear anthrax vaccines and depleted uranium exposure (*U.N. Observer*).

- U.N. Environmental Program is worried about DU's impact on Iraqis as well, and plans field studies "once the security situation allows, but there's no telling when that might be" (*U.K. Observer*). Meanwhile, Uranium Medical Resource Center is fund-raising for an upcoming Iraq trip to collect and analyze samples of soil, water, and human urine for uranium

es, they certainly found them. This is a bit risky" (Reuters). According to previous remarks of Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, however, "Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence" (Howard Zinn, *Progressive*).

- Journalist Robert Fisk, visiting Iraqi doctors and mortuaries, numbers the violent deaths among Iraqis at almost 1,000 a week, victims of looting, revenge killings, family feuds and "increasingly vicious raids carried out by American forces." Thousands of Iraqis have been taken away by American soldiers, and in many cases, their relatives are still trying to discover where they are (*Independent*). Rumsfeld predicts that Iraq will soon have a major tourism industry (*Harper's Weekly Review*).

- U.S. Strategic Command met with scientists and Bush administration officials to discuss new nuclear weapons of "counter-proliferation." Critics fear that low-yield "mini-nukes," recently approved by the U.S. Congress, will create fireballs that scatter radioactive dust into the atmosphere (*Asia Times*).

- NASA and Stratcom have fused, uniting

- Western governments are encouraging, paying and/or ordering Afghan refugees to go home. But when they arrive, Human Rights Watch reports, many are attacked and robbed. Gunmen and warlords funded by the U.S. and its partners rule Afghanistan outside Kabul with violence, intimidation, and rape of women, girls, and boys. Human Rights Watch asks the U.S. and U.K. to choose between support for Karzai's government and support for warlords.

- During past weeks, fighting in Afghanistan has been heavy. Casualties include eight civilian nomads asleep in their tent, bombed during a Sept. 21 U.S. air strike against Taliban guerillas (Reuters). Thirty-five women recently jumped into a river with their children and died, saving themselves from warlord rapists, according to a RAWA worker (*Guardian*).

- Israeli-Palestinian Bereaved Parents for Peace founded a project to build empathy through telephone conversations. Any Palestinian can call an electronic system to talk to an Israeli and vice versa. In nine months, 211,000 people have conversed (www.theparentscircle.com).

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(www.umrc.net). The British Army has announced the phasing out of DU tank ammunition within six years (*U.K. Telegraph*).

- After a 1,400-person U.S. team searched two months and found no evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, former U.N. chief weapons inspector Hans Blix condemned the "culture of spin and hype In the Middle Ages, when people were convinced there were witch-

space and military research. NASA work will now be "dual-purpose," according to its director. "Military space planes" that can destroy satellites will replace space shuttles. Russia and China, concerned about an expensive new arms race, have requested a global space weapons ban. The U.S. refuses, inviting other countries to share expenses in what could be the biggest industrial project in history (*Counterpunch*).

- After an eight-year legal battle, a federal court barred the U.S. Navy from broadcasting its deafening low-frequency sonar across Earth's oceans. Though this is a major reprieve for whales and other marine mammals, the Navy may appeal, and the Bush administration is seeking military exemptions from environmental laws on which this decision was based (Natural Resources Defense Council). **EW**

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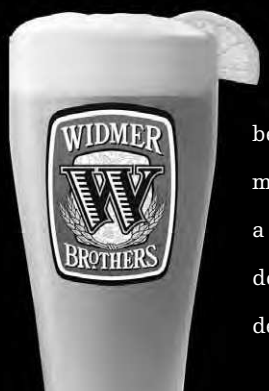
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Rob (right) finds the anaerobic bottling machine funny. Kurt, not so much.

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