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BY MICHAEL CARRIGAN & KATE ROGERS GESSERT

Undercovered #43

Ghost prisoners, Iran missions and other news getting little attention.

A memo signed by Gen. Ricardo Sanchez has come to light authorizing interrogation methods in Iraq that violate the Geneva Conventions. The U.S. has established in Afghanistan a network of detention centers that may represent "a plan to replace Guantanamo Bay," beyond the jurisdiction of the U.S. Constitution and the Geneva Conventions. "Ghost detainees" — unrecorded, unmonitored prisoners — now exceed 10,000 (*Guardian*). Rep. Peter DeFazio is not yet a co-sponsor of the Torture Outsourcing Prevention Act, HR 952, which would outlaw the U.S. practice of rendition.

- The Bush administration has conducted secret missions inside Iran since last summer to identify three dozen or more targets that could be destroyed by "precision" strikes and commando raids. U.S. Central Command has been asked to revise the military's war plan, providing for a maximum ground and air invasion of Iran (*New Yorker*).

- The Real I.D. Act, hard on immigrants, refugees and the environment, passed the House and has arrived in the Senate, now attached to the emergency-spending bill for Iraq and tsunami relief (humanrightsfirst.org). Senators Wyden and Smith are said to be in a position to disentangle the Real I.D. Act from the emergency bill so it can be discussed on its own, and then oppose it. Capitol Switchboard is (202) 224-3121.

- Senate confirmation hearings begin April 7 on Bush's nominee for ambassador to the U.N.: John Bolton, a hawk who dismantled the ABM treaty and reversed Clinton's approval of the International Criminal Court (Institute for Public Accuracy).

- So far, the cost to Oregon taxpayers for the Iraq war has been \$1.3 billion. Oregonians will pay \$156 million for increases in military spending proposed for Bush's 2006 budget. The budget proposal includes \$155.3 million in cuts for discretionary grants to Oregon state and local governments, including \$4.4 million cuts in wastewater treatment and clean water projects, \$2.9 million in low-income home energy assistance, and \$20 million in community and economic development. Programs constituting the No Child Left Behind Act would remain under-funded by \$124.4 million (nationalprioritiesproject.org).

- A recent CBS poll revealed that the largest number of U.S. respondents, 26 percent, consider the Iraq war our most important issue, followed by jobs/economy with 15 percent, and moral values/family eighth on the list at 3 percent. Environment was not included among the problems (Angus Reid Consultants).

- Up to 18 percent of Iraq War veterans suffer from major depression, generalized anxiety, or post-traumatic stress syndrome, compared with 6 percent of troops returning from Gulf War I. Since 41 percent of soldiers said they would be too embarrassed to seek help for mental problems, accurate reports of military mental health problems may be severely under-reported (*New England Journal of Medicine*).

- Montana's Gov. Schweitzer has asked the federal government to send home some of the 1,500 Montana National Guard troops stationed in Iraq and elsewhere, to help protect the state during a summer of intense wildfire danger. Most of Montana's Guard helicopters, which carry water and firefighters, are also in Iraq (planningforpeace.org). Will Governor Kulongoski ask for our Guard to come home? His address: 160 State Capital, 900 Court Street, Salem, OR 97301, 503-378-3111.

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- Controversy persists about the 2004 U.S. presidential election, as a group of university statisticians released a new report analyzing the discrepancy between national exit polls (+ 3 percent for Kerry) and election results (+ 2.5 percent for Bush), a discrepancy that could occur accidentally one time out of a million (freepress.org).

- Responding to protests, Royal Dutch/Shell will reroute planned oil and gas pipelines off Sakhalin Island in the Russian Pacific to move them away from feeding grounds of the endangered Sakhalin population of 100 gray whales. Sakhalin II is the biggest gas and oil-drilling project being constructed in the world. Indigenous groups and environmentalists continue to oppose it because of its impact on rich marine ecosystems and traditional livelihoods (Pacific Environment).

- In 2003, the B&B and Link fires affected more than 95,000 acres in Mt. Jefferson Wilderness, adjacent roadless areas, and old-growth reserves. Several logging ("salvage") projects have been proposed for the area. The U.S. Forest Service's preferred alternative proposes logging 30 million board feet (more than 5,000 log truckloads) on 6,800 acres just east of Mt. Jefferson Wilderness. Nearly 5,000 acres are in old-growth reserves. Public comments are due April 18: comments-pacificnorthwest-deschutes-sisters@fs.fed.us (Cascadia Wildlands Project).

- E-mails by U.S. Geological Survey scientists working on the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump suggest they planned to create and manipulate data results to accelerate the construction process. As one scientist wrote, "Science by peer pressure is dangerous but sometimes it is necessary." Another wrote, "If they need more proof, I will be happy to make up more stuff ... I keep track of two sets of files, the ones that will keep QA [quality assurance] happy and the ones that were actually used" (*Las Vegas Sun*).

- Parliament Coach Corp. and Homeland Defense Vehicles have created a \$1.6 million motor home that protects its occupants from nuclear radiation and chemical and biological attacks for "several days" (Parliament Coach).

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