

# Defend the 343rd Nineteen!

On Oct. 12, nineteen reservists from the US 343<sup>rd</sup> Battalion were placed under arrest and held at gunpoint by army MP's for refusing to carry out what they called a "suicide mission". They refused to carry contaminated fuel on a dangerous trip several hundred miles north of Baghdad, in broken down trucks that had no armor and without an armed escort. Reserve units in Iraq routinely complain of lack of proper equipment.

While the US military spares no expense to kill Iraqi people from the skies (up to some 15,000 plus killed so far), they won't spend money to protect their own reserve units. This shows the total disregard for human life that the US government has.

fathers grieving, of homes destroyed, of lives ruined – all this must be also a nightmare for any working class young person in the US military. It must be a nightmare to know that they are responsible for this destruction of human life there. Nobody believes that they

are there to "liberate" the Iraqi people; they are there for oil and wealth and power and corporate profits.

These are the same corporations that are destroying the lives of millions of young working class people here at home. Why should young people have to join the military in order to have a chance to go to college?

## Recruits Beware!

It's not only the 1100+ troops killed so far in Iraq. Up to 22,000 US troops have had to be evacuated due to illness or injury as of 12/03 and close to 1,000 were wounded in April of this year alone (Coastal Post Online, 4/27/04). Many of these had serious brain and internal injuries which would have killed them in previous times. The troops in Iraq also have a suicide rate of 13.5 per 100,000 (AP 1/14/04).

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of US troops are returning home sick from radiation poisoning due to the use of "Depleted Uranium" (armor piercing) shells. In some places, radiation in Iraq is 1000 times normal due to the use of these shells. Nobody knows the long term results of this, but birth defects of Iraqi women have skyrocketed. According to the British Sunday Herald, "A study of Gulf war veterans showed that 67% had children with severe illnesses, missing eyes, blood infections, respiratory problems and fused fingers."

*Is this the future you want for yourself and your family?*

The scenes of little Iraqi babies dead and dying, of mothers and

## *"War is a racket..."*

*"War is a racket.... I helped make Mexico, especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefits of Wall Street. The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912 (where have I heard that name before?). I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. In China I helped to see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested.*

*During those years, I had, as the boys in the back room would say, a swell racket. Looking back on it, I feel that I could have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents."*

Former Major General Smedley Butler, US Marine Corps

**for all!**

**For the US labor movement to make links with Iraqi workers and their unions and build a global workers' movement for a decent life for all!**

**Drop the charges on the 343<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 19 and bring all troops home now!**

**For a massive program to rebuild Iraq and rebuild the US inner cities and other poverty areas!**

**For decent jobs at a \$15 per hour minimum wage with fully paid health care and free college education**

**Bay Area Strikers' Solidarity Organization**

**BASSO**

**(510) 496 6020**