

cc: S. Trahan

Sept 21, 199,

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San Francisco CA
94110

Dear Mr Lamb,

We here in San Francisco
played proud and brave in our
1989 earthquake. The American
people are not playing proud
and brave over our "War Blows
Bury Iraqis, alive, in their
Trenches" Stories?

I would like you to have
Pentagon Spokesperson, Pete Williams
on your Show to explain his
"WAR IS Hell" remark!

I am turned off to America.
I Love My Country, I Fear My
Government.

Viet-Vet, USA
(C.V.V.V.)

U.S. Officers Say Iraqis Were Buried Alive

'War plows' pushed sand onto soldiers in trenches

By Patrick J. Sloyan

Newsday 9-12-91

Fort Riley, Kan.

The U.S. Army division that broke through Saddam Hussein's defensive front line used plows mounted on tanks and combat earth-movers to bury thousands of Iraqi soldiers — some still alive and firing their weapons — in more than 70 miles of trenches, according to Army officials.

On February 24 and 25, the first two days of ground fighting in Operation Desert Storm, three brigades of the First Mechanized Infantry Division, nicknamed The Big Red One, used the grisly innovation to destroy trenches and bunkers that were being defended by more than 8,000 Iraqi soldiers, according to division estimates.

While 2,000 Iraqis surrendered, Iraqi dead and wounded, as well as defiant soldiers still firing their weapons, were buried beneath tons of sand, according to participants in the carefully planned and rehearsed assault.

"Once we went through there, other than the ones who surrendered, there wasn't anybody left," said Captain Bennie Williams, who was awarded the Silver Star for his role in the assault.

Not a single American was killed during the attack.

The assault made an Iraqi body count impossible.

"For all I know, we could have

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IRAQIS WERE BURIED ALIVE

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killed thousands," said Colonel Anthony Moreno, commander of the Second Brigade, which led the assault on the heaviest defenses.

A thinner line of trenches on Moreno's left flank was attacked by the First Brigade, commanded by Colonel Lon Maggart. Maggart estimated that his force buried about 650 Iraqi soldiers.

Estimates could not be obtained from Third Brigade commanders. The Third Brigade was made up of units from the Germany-based Second Armored Division. Officers of that unit were unavailable for comment.

General Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of the allied forces, said U.S. troops found "very, very many dead" in the Iraqi front lines. His staff has privately estimated that between 50,000 and 75,000 Iraqis were killed in their trenches.

The unprecedented tactic had been hidden from public view. Reporters were barred from witnessing the attack, which occurred near the tip of the neutral zone that straddles the border between Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

Defense Secretary Dick Cheney made no mention of the First Division's tactics in a recent report to Congress on Operation Desert Storm. The only mention of burying Iraqi troops came when Cheney acknowledged that 457 dead enemy soldiers were buried by U.S. forces at 56 sites during the ground war.

The Pentagon has withheld details of the assault from Congress.

Moreno and Maggart were among First Division troops who provided the first public details of the trench-line attack during a series of interviews.

In most cases, each section of trench line was assigned two Abrams main battle tanks with plows shaped like giant teeth. The tanks took up positions on either side of the trenches, most of them three feet wide and six feet deep.

Bradley Fighting Vehicles and Vulcan armored carriers straddled the trench lines and fired at the Iraqi soldiers as the tanks covered them with mounds of sand.

"I came through right after the lead company," Moreno said. "What you saw was a bunch of buried trenches with peoples'

arms and things sticking out of them."

Every American in the assault was inside armored vehicles, impervious to Iraqi small-arms fire. As the juggernaut rolled along, it had a dramatic effect on Iraqi troops watching the operation.

"As (Iraqi) soldiers saw what we were doing and how effective and fast we were doing it, they began jumping out of their holes and surrendering," Moreno said.

Moreno and Maggart said the tactic was used as a means of minimizing U.S. casualties.

"I know burying people like that sounds pretty nasty," Maggart said, "but it would be even nastier if we had to put our troops in the trenches and clean them out with bayonets."

Burying the Iraqi trench lines was part of the bloodiest phase of the war for Iraqi troops as the First Division breached an 11-mile-wide gap in the front line.

The First Division assault began with a 30-minute barrage of howitzer and artillery rockets that dropped 11,000 rounds of high explosives on trenches designated as Phaselines Colorado and New Jersey.

Moreno and Maggart's brigades, with 8,400 troops inside 3,000 vehicles, sliced through the main Iraqi line of mine fields, barbed wire and tanks ditches within 17 minutes. Tanks plowed up the mines, and other tanks with rollers made sure the assault lanes were free of hidden explosives.

Williams, one of the first Bradley commanders to maneuver atop an Iraqi trench line, said his 33-ton vehicle moved easily down the line, blasting Iraqi troops with machine-gun fire.

"The targets in the trench line were 'soft,'" he said — a euphemism for people. The Bradley's cannon with high-explosive rounds was saved for bunkers.

One unidentified soldier received a Silver Star for burying a bunker from which Iraqi troops were firing automatic weapons.

And Private First Class Joe Queen of the First Engineers was awarded a Bronze Star for both piercing a sand berm while under fire and burying the Iraqi trenches with his combat earth-mover.

"A lot of the guys were scared," Queen said. "But I enjoyed it."

THIS IS UN-AMERICAN!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Buried Alive

SF Chronicle
9-17-91

Editor — Happy to oblige William Heller (Letters, September 13) about burying enemy soldiers alive in their trenches. This bleeding heart was commissioned on the field of battle during the Battle of the Bulge in World War II.

The accepted tactic for dealing with entrenched immobile enemy forces is simply to bypass them, cutting off their rear echelon and leaving them isolated. The classic example is the end run the Germans did around the French Maginot Line in the spring of 1940.

Not even the Nazis, inventors of super-horrifying warfare, used this particular tactic, because it's time consuming and an unnecessary diversion from rapid advance.

This "carefully planned and rehearsed assault" had no military purpose but it did have a major political and psychological objective which ran right through the entire story from the first day of the Iraqi invasion of that great bastion of human freedom, Kuwait.

The message is "Don't mess with Uncle Sam! Or you'll be damn sorry." It's the message behind the so-called "precision bombing" which hit less than 40 percent of its targets. Behind the destroyed water supplies leaving a nation of 30 million suffering from epidemic diseases, no food, no shelter.

But did any of this reach Saddam Hussein and his terrorist government? Not by a long shot. They are still in power, still riding roughshod over their own people, the only difference is that now Saddam Hussein is "our S.O.B.," and doing his dirty work for us. The poor Iraqi and Kuwaiti people get short shrift from George Bush and the oil moguls who make foreign policy these days for the land which has been called "the last best hope on Earth" and will be again when the American people get around to electing a government "of the people, by the people and for the people" once more.

PAUL ROTHKRUG
San Francisco

The Chronicle welcomes letters from readers. Letters are subject to condensation. They must include signature, valid mailing address and telephone number. Mail to:

Letters to the Editor, San Francisco Chronicle
901 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103

'Desert Massacre'

Editor — "Desert Massacre" is the correct title for the Iraq war. This is clear with each new revelation about the conduct of the conflict. We have the "highways of death" leading out of Kuwait. Here, thousands of desperately fleeing Iraqi soldiers were blocked from advancing, and then mercilessly slaughtered by U.S. warplanes using cluster bombs and napalm. As one American pilot said, "It was like shooting fish in a barrel."

Now we learn that U.S. forces used specially equipped tanks to bury alive unknown thousands of Iraqi soldiers in their trenches. The epithet on this episode comes from the American Bronze Star recipient who said, "Many guys were scared, but I enjoyed it."

People can believe that military force was necessary to counter Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. However, the slaughter of some 200,000 people, including women and children, in just 43 days of war is not something to celebrate.

Most disturbing is the complete lack of remorse over the human carnage inflicted on this small Third World country of only 18 million people. To the contrary, the majority attitude is reflected by the above comments of U.S. soldiers. Perhaps seeing thousands of murders over the years on television and in the movies as entertainment has eclipsed reality. Violent death — even if it numbers 200,000 Iraqis — has little meaning.

This could help explain the extraordinary violence within our na-

tion, with the U.S. number one in murder, rape and assault. No other developed country is even close.

The point is that it's time to stop dictating to other countries on how to act, and focus on our own national problems. The increasing violence, militarism, greed, corruption and lack of concern for future generations, pose a far greater threat to our country than any outside foe.

DOUGLAS MATTERN
Palo Alto

STEPHANIE SALTER

A terrible thing made invisible

THAT'S A tough image to take, don't you think? The specter of U.S. tanks plowing through the Middle Eastern desert, burying Iraqi soldiers alive in their trenches?

It's the kind of thing you expect to hear coming out of the Ethiopian civil war or what you'd figure our cruel and subhuman enemies would do.

But to imagine some fresh-faced kid from Iowa or Pennsylvania taking part in such a grisly exercise, well, it's like "friendly fire" and the way the Army refers to human beings' bodies as "soft targets." It's an element of war you'd just as soon not think about.

Like everything else in modern warfare, the trench-plowing unit had a terrific nickname: The Big Red One. Do you suppose that was in honor of the University of Oklahoma, Indiana or Alabama?

Whatever, The Big Red One's maneuver, which took place near the Saudi-Iraqi border on Feb. 24 and 25, was fantastically destructive. How destructive?

They say it made an Iraqi body count impossible.

"For all I know we could have killed thousands," Col. Anthony Moreno told the New York newspaper, *Newsday*. "I came through right after the lead company. What you saw was a bunch of buried trenches with peoples' arms and things sticking out of them."

Whoops, check that, colonel. What you saw was a bunch of buried trenches with soft targets' appendages and things sticking out of them.

YOU TEND to get this sort of residue when you soften up the soft targets with a half-hour's worth of artillery rockets and howitzers (11,000 rounds) then roll the first of 3,000 armored vehicles in to do the more precise landscaping.

"I know burying people like that sounds pretty nasty," another U.S. colonel from The Big Red One told *Newsday*. "But it would have been even nastier if we had to put our troops in the trenches and clean them out with bayonets."

Who would argue with that logic? Except maybe a few Iraqi soldiers who got buried alive, and they aren't talking.

In "War and Peace," the Prokofiev opera after the Tolstoy novel, a Russian general sits alone and heavy-hearted in his command headquarters outside of Moscow in the winter of 1812.

To everyone's surprise, the Russians have Napoleon's celebrated troops on the ropes but, to ensure victory over the French, the mother city of Moscow must be abandoned by her own army.

It is an unthinkable sacrifice but necessary because, as another military strategist has earlier pointed out, "Russia is her army."

Cradling his military map in his arms, the Russian general stares morosely into space and twice asks the air, "How did this terrible thing come to pass?"

The world's most rhetorical question. Yet surely it is a question that has been asked at countless battle fronts by countless generals, colonels, lieutenants, sergeants and no-rank enlisted men.

For a question with such a simple answer, you would think that somebody, somehow, somewhere along the way would have gotten it.

HOW DID THIS terrible thing come to pass?

Terrible things always come to pass in war. They go with the territory. Always have, always will.

Of course, the more you can think of a human being as a soft target and feel better because you buried him alive instead of impaling him on a bayonet, the easier it is to live with the inevitable, inherent horror of it all.

It helps a lot, too, when — as in The Big Red One — your side doesn't have to send a single Iowan or Pennsylvanian home in a human remains pouch.

**ERIK LARSEN:
7 years in jail
for refusing
to kill?**



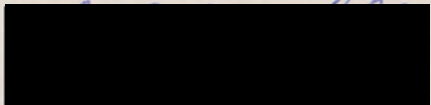
Bay Area Marine Reservist Erik Larsen is being court-martialled at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, because he spoke out against the U.S. war in the Middle East. He faces up to seven years in jail if convicted of alleged "desertion." Based on strongly held religious and moral beliefs, he asked for a discharge from the Marines as a Conscientious Objector. His request was denied. The Marines have violated his constitutional right to freedom of speech, his right to be a Conscientious Objector, and his right to a fair trial.

Erik Larsen spoke out publicly against the impending war more than 100 times throughout the U.S. and in Italy, Germany and Britain. Amnesty International says Erik "is being prosecuted because of his conscientiously held beliefs against participation in war," and, if convicted, "he would become a prisoner of conscience." Twenty-one G.I. war resisters have already been declared "prisoners of conscience" by Amnesty International. They have been sentenced to between 6 months and 6 years in prison, because they refused to kill. The U.S. military wants there to be no Conscientious Objectors to their next war.

**Drop the charges!
Grant C.O. status!
Amnesty for Erik Larsen
and All War Resisters!**

ERIK LARSEN DEFENSE COMMITTEE
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*The G.I.
resisters did
the right thing!*



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CELEBRATE
NATIONAL STAMPS
COLLECTOR
OCTOBER 1991

