



Voices In Conflict

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Early Version

VOICES IN CONFLICT

1st Lt. Melissa Stockwell:
 For all the free people that still protest.
 You're welcome.
 We protect you and you are protected by the best.
 Your voice is strong and loud,
 but who will fight for you? No one standing in your crowd.
 We are your fathers, brothers, and sons,
 wearing the boots and carrying guns.
 We are the ones that leave all we own,
 to make sure your future is carved in stone.
 We are the ones who fight and die,
 We might not be able to save the world,
 Well, at least we try.
 We walked the paths to where we are at
 and we want no choice other than that.
 So when you rally your group to complain,
 take a look in the back of your brain.
 In order for that flag you love to fly
 wars must be fought and young men must die.
 We came here to fight for the ones we hold dear.
 If that's not respected, we would rather stay here.
 So please stop yelling, put down your signs,
 and pray for those behind enemy lines.
 And then when the conflict is over and all is well,
 be thankful that we chose to go through hell.
 -Corporal Joshua Miles
 and all the boys from
 3rd Battalion 2nd Marines, Kuwait
 Armed Services Characters:
 Introductions and Christmas Greetings

Sgt. Robert Sarra:
 I saw "Top Gun" when i was in 8th grade and I just.....I knew, I knew what I wanted to do, I knew what i wanted to be.
 Ummm, And Then I saw a marine in High School and I was like, thats it. They're mean, They're tough and they got cool
 uniforms and Chicks dig em.
 Here's the big book of all the oppurtunities in the marine corps, what do you wanna do? shooosh..... Push it across the
 desk at me. I looked him in the eye and pushed it across the desk and said I wanna be a grunt, I wanna go blow shit up.
 Thats what i wanna do. (pause) That's what i got to do, I got to go blow shit up.

1st Lt. Paul Rieckhoff:
 I grew up in a family where my father was drafted during Vietnam, my grandfather was drafted during World War Two
 and spent three years in the South Pacific and they hated the military in the large part but they got a lot out of their
 experiences so I felt I had (pause) an obligation to give something back. Just because I didn't have to go doesn't mean I
 shouldn't go.

Cpl. Sean Huze:

Well, he talked about health care and talk about pay, and, and your benefits and y'know and all these things that, that are positive. Without a doubt. All your educational, uh, benefits all these things, hah, I mean they're great, uhm, but that's not what your purpose is in the military. I mean, your purpose is to kill. That's your primary... especially as an infantryman, hah, make no mistake about it, that what your purpose is, to take life.

Sgt Kelly Dougherty

I was 17 and a senior in high school. I was looking at my options for college and I really didn't know how I was going to pay for my education. I had been encouraged to talk to a recruiter for the National Guard, and so I... thought that it would be a good way to get some money for school and also learn medical, some medical skills, and I went in as a medic... I joined as a medic. And I thought that would also be good for me -- to get good training and further my civilian career, and also pay for my education. There was a change in transit: I went to Iraq as a military police [officer] rather than a medic.

US Army Specialist Aiden Delgado:

I was one of those people who didn't think about the full picture of military service because recruiters and military people tend to softpeddle all the objectionable parts of the military. You never hear "oh well, you get a chance to shoot prisoners" or "you may get a chance to shoot Iraqi civilians" or "you may get a chance to see your friends killed." The killing and the blood business in the military, they downplay that because parents don't want to hear it and people don't want to think about it.

Sgt Demond Mullins:

I didn't join the active duty, I joined the National Guard and my recruiter told me dat I would be state-side. He said "National Guard doesn't get deployed...you will receive the college benefits. The only thing that will happen is if there is ever a riot or anything like that; you will be deployed for that." But he was like other than that you won't get sent over seas.

???? IRAQI WOMAN (Taylor):?????

Another sad day in Iraq....

Lt. Charlene Anderson:

It starts in basic training. They systematically break you down. When they bring you in, they make sure that everybody shows up in the middle of the night. They keep you up through the night. Your day starts at 2:30 in the morning and that happens for the first couple of weeks and actually through basic training we got up after 4 o' clock once, because they want to keep you tired because that puts everybody on the same wave length

Sgt. Robert Sarra:

In training you're shooting a man-sized target and you figure, its gonna be no big deal, i mean you've seen enough movies. You pull the trigger, pull a hit, they drop, its done.

Cpl. Sean Huze:

The training program is so effective that the vast majority of individuals that goes through emerge as a warrior. Taking someone's life is not something that's abnormal. It's taking it when you're not in a state of rage- that's abnormal. Being able to have a sustained desire is what requires training. This is what is instilled in you. I mean these are cadences you sing when you are jogging. Someone, or I mean a group of people made very well-thought out decisions about cadences, about training, so that by the time you actually need it for real, y'know, in a combat zone, That you, that you, you don't stop and become paralyzed by it, um, because then you're dead.

Us Army Spec. Aiden Delgado:

The psychological process began months before we entered Iraq. There was all sorts of chanting and songs about, y'know, 'kill ragheads' 'kill Osama Bin Laden'. And then like the little targets that pop up for the rage training, they would call them like 'Bin Ladens' or 'Taliban' or other ethnic things. As well as the dehumanization of The Haji's, the ragheads, y'know, those kind of terms.

Sgt Kelly Dougherty:

They have you do all these different chants and cadences about killing and stabbing, and I just thought, oh my God, I can't believe we're saying this—when I first went into basic training—but then as the weeks kind of went on you just go with it, and you say ut and you don't really think about it anymore cuz they're just words, so I think we're killers, but I mean we're not killers, or we're trained killers but I don't, I don't know.

US Army Spec AIDEN DELGADO:

I used to ask guys "What are we doing here?" or "What are we doing in Iraq?" And by and large they said 'because of September 11th. There was a disconnect between the facts or, y'know, the reported news and the emotional justification. Most soldiers felt that what they were doing was related to terrorism; either revenge or prevention. It's the

way the military operates; it's the way they've (the government and the military) trained soldiers to think that it's ok to do this to Arabs, to do this to Muslims, to do this to the enemy.

1st Lt Paul Rieckoff : The thing you have to understand about Iraq is that there are no front lines or rear lines the—the moment you get off the plane you're in harm's way / this is a new war and the action is kind of everywhere.

Sgt Demond Mullins:

I've been on over 150 combat missions and on most of those missions it had no purpose. I grew up in Brooklyn, I been in a lot of fist fights, and the one thing that I know is that if somebody hits me first, I'm pretty much done, ya know, if they get a good hit in, and that's basically what it was like in Iraq; you wait for someone to sucker-punch you, so you can punch back.

Cpl. Sean Huze:

(about killing) I mean, I did it. I wanted to do it. I wanted that experience. I wanted to know what it was like. We got into a lot of fire fights where we didn't lose a single marine. It was because, in certain areas, uh, everything was considered hostile. Taking fire from that general direction there are fifty frigging people there, it's one guy shooting at us, y'know we can't find that one guy... Frigging kill everything y'know, hah, lay fire down there— suppression fire— area target uhm, y'know... You don't think, 'Oh, okay, there's a lady in a pink dress, let's take her out. There's a kid, y'know, let's take him out. No, we're taking fire from over there, blanket the frigging area... (long pause) It works. It's effective, y'know, you don't take fire from over there anymore. Hah, y'know, threat's eliminated and, uh, you keep, you keep going.

Lt Charlene Anderson:

When we finally got to Baghdad and I spent some time with the infantry company that was attached to us, those guys actually tease each other if they didn't get a killing during the day. Um... and until you got a kill, you'd be made fun of. It's very hard to take somebody and turn them into someone that can do that and then, what they want you to believe is they can do that and then revert you back to a civilian, and that's absolutely as ridiculous as it sounds.

Sgt. Robert Sarra:

You take a 19 year old kid, give him a rifle and as much ammunition as he can carry or put him behind the wheel of a tank and tell him, "You wanna go back home to your girlfriend and all your buddies and drinking beer and mtv and internet? Go destroy that city. Go through those guys that are trying to stop you and i'll let you go home" sir yes sir. Done deal, see ya.

Sgt KELLY DOUGHERTY:

The enemy could be anyone that you see, you don't know where to focus your attention, you don't know where to focus your anger—the aggression and the hatred that would be focused on a clear enemy gets focused on every single Iraqi.

IRAQ EXILE:

I left my country, Iraq, 7 years ago! During all those years I lived in the US and I longed for the fall of the dictator. In exile I worked for it. Then Donald Rumsfeld said, 'Stuff happens.' It seemed to me the most racist remark I had ever heard.

They came to us but they had no plans.

And now the American dead are counted, their numbers recorded, their coffins draped in flags. How many Iraqis have died? How many civilians? No figure is given. Our dead are uncounted.

We opposed Saddam Hussein, many of us, because he harmed people, and anybody who harms innocent Iraqis I feel equally passionately and strongly about, and I will oppose them. And I will.

I mean, if there's a word, Iraq has been crucified. By Saddam's sins, by ten years of sanctions, and then this. Basically it's a story of a nation that failed in only one thing. But it's a big sin. It failed to take charge of itself. And that meant that the worst person in the country took charge. Until this nation takes charge of itself, it will continue to suffer.

I mean, Iraqis say to me, 'Look, what is happening here. Tell America'. I tell them: 'You are putting your faith in the wrong person. Don't expect America or anybody will do it for you.

'If you don't do it yourself, this is what you get.'

Islamic Woman:

Don't blame it on Islam. Every religion has its extremists. In times of chaos and disorder, those extremists flourish. Iraq is full of moderate Muslims who simply believe in "live and let live". We get along with each other - Sunnis and Shi'a, Muslims and Christians, and Jews and Sabi'a. We intermarry, we mix and mingle, we live. We build our churches and mosques in the same areas, our children go to the same schools...it was never an issue.

Someone asked me if, through elections, the Iraqi people might vote for an Islamic state. Six months ago, I would have firmly said, "No". Now I'm not so sure. There's been an overwhelming return to fundamentalism. People are turning to religion for several reasons.

The first and most prominent is fear. Fear of war, fear of death and fear of a fate worse than death (and yes, there are fates worse than death). Encroaching Western values and beliefs have also played a prominent role in pushing Iraqis

to embrace Islam. Just as there are ignorant people in the Western World, there are ignorant people in the Middle East. In Muslims and Arabs, Westerners see suicide bombers, terrorists, ignorance, and camels. In Americans, Brits, etc. Iraqis see depravity, prostitution, ignorance, domination, junkies, and ruthlessness. The best way people can find to protect themselves, and their loved ones, against this assumed threat is religion.

1st Lt Paul Reikhoff:

We found out yesterday that there's more information that's been revealed and how the—the Department of Defense took 167 days just to get the bulletproof vest ordered, just to get them started took 167 days, and for our allies it took twelve days / and that 167 was—was during the insurgency, it was a time when people were getting wounded and people were getting killed and body armor could have saved lives. / If you sat with me and five guys in my squad I could have told you about this problem a year and a half ago, it didn't need a Congressional testimony it didn't need a New York Times investigation but, all too often they listen to the bureaucrats and the general gives them the thumbs-up and says well sir everything's great.

KELLY

It's really hard too, when you're down low in the chain of military command. I was a Sergeant and that's a little higher up -- it's above the privates and the specialists -- but it's still low. Everyone on the unit level is pretty low so you don't really know what's going on. You hear a lot of rumors. And when we first got there, we thought we might be there for four months. And then we thought, 'Oh six months, the longest.'

1st Lt. Melissa Stockwell:

I was a transportation officer which basically entails moving a certain number of trucks from point A to point B with supplies and we were on a routine convoy through central Baghdad, and I was in a humvee behind the driver and it was an unarmored humvee, it had no doors and we went under a bridge and a roadside bomb went off. And that caused our vehicle to swerve where we hit a guardrail and from there that took off my left leg from the knee down. And from there I was subsequently rushed to the aid station where they did my first amputation. I was awake the whole time, and I knew something was wrong. I wasn't quite sure how serious it was. In my head I was kind of playing it out to be oh, its probably not that bad, not too bad. When they put the tourniquet on I knew—they put the tourniquet on my femur and I knew then that is was probably a little more serious that I thought.

Cpl. Sean Huze:

You wanna be the coward? You wanna be the guy who doesn't do it? You wanna, wanna everyone to look back at you, uh, and, and it's shame. I mean, it's, uh, uh, you'll do it, you're just gonna do it. Everyone... I mean, peer pressure, group killing, hah, I mean, and you just go ahead and you do it. I don't think, I don't think it's necessarily courage.

Sgt. ROBERT SARRA:

We had been in a firefight, we had been in an engagement, and the engagement was over and I see this woman walking out in all black, shes got a bag in her arm, shes wearing a berka. Uh and shes walking out towards the armoured vehicle. And the guys on the Amtrack start waving their hands and yelling at her stop stop and their raising their weapons and i went, "ok one or two things are gonna happen: this woman is gonna put up her hands and surrender and start talking to the marines or she's gonna walk up to these guys and explode. And if she blows up, she's gonna kill a bunch of those guys or wound a bunch of them. I've got a clear shot with nothing behind her. And this was all, i mean (snaps fingers continually, while nodding head) the was spilt second ya know? It happens all that fast. Pulled up my rifle, took two shots at her. (takes deep breath) I know i probably missed the first shot, the second shot, I'm pretty sure i hit her. And as soon as that second shot went off, the guys on the other vehicle opened up and they cut her down. She fell to the dirt, and as she fell, she had a a white flag in her hand. At that moment there, I lost it, I threw my weapon down on the deck of the vehicle and I was crying and i was like Oh my god, what are we doing here? whats happening? I had a gunnery sargent, who had been in the first war, he said it happens there's nothing you can do to bring her back, it happens we gotta keep going.

Cpl. Sean Huze:

We all become casualties of war— who we are when we leave is not who we are when and if we're lucky to physically return, because psychologically, you, you, you're completely changed by it.

Sgt. Robert Sarra:

Spilt second decision that's all, you pull the trigger, you trigger something else. You cant take it back, no matter what i do, if i got back to Iraq ya know if I become a Muslim, if ya know read the Koran everyday, I cannot bring back that woman and there's nothing i can do.

Stephanie Parker:

Hey, I'm Stephanie Parker. My brother is Army PFC Daniel Parker from Lake Elsinore, CA. Dan is... is 18 years old. He sends us a lot of letters. Here's one of my favorites...

Hey guys, what's up? Love you and miss you al. I'm doin' okay, just really bored. Sitting in the middle of the desert writing this. How is it back home? Sorry, haven't wrote lately. It's been busy. We crossed the Border on the 27th. W went

to a city called Najaf (look it up). It took about 3 days to take that city. We had more resistance than expected. Now we are outside of a city called Curballa. Looks like we will move in tonight. The field artillery has been hitting them hard today.

Just got done with lunch. It was a good one today. Grilled beefsteak. Those damn MRE's are getting old. I would kill for some hot food. Ya, it's like 105 degrees here. It gets pretty cold with the wind though. It gets really windy and makes sand storms a lot. These days stink cause sand and dust gets everywhere. Mostly in out eyes. Out weapons get sandy so we have to constantly clean them. The flies are real bad when it's hot, not to mention the snakes and scorpions. Cool, huh?

Well, please send some stuff:

- 1) those powder packs of Gatorade that make like a gallon. Send a lot of those.
- 2) "AA" batteries
- 3) Candy
- 4) Lotion. My hands are so dry they are cracking, bad.
- 5) This one is not for me but for my team. Chief said send some cigarettes. He said Marbolo Red (I don't know) Okay
- 6) More girl scout cookies
- 7) Anything you feel like sending, okay?

Remember, I'm not sending it back. Haha.

I got your other package. Thanks, I liked it a lot. And I got Mom's, Steph's, and Dad's letters. Wow, I can't believe I missed all that snow! I got those pics and Kayla is sooooo beautiful. I can't wait to see her. Congratulations Steph on making honor roll. I'm so proud of you. Keep doing you best.

Well, anyways, I guess Bush wants Baghdad by the 17th. Huh, well tell him to get an M16 and fight. I doubt that very much, be we'll see. We still have 2 more major cities to take out first after this one, but we'll see... I'll talk to you guys late, okay? Oh ya, send bug spray. Love you.