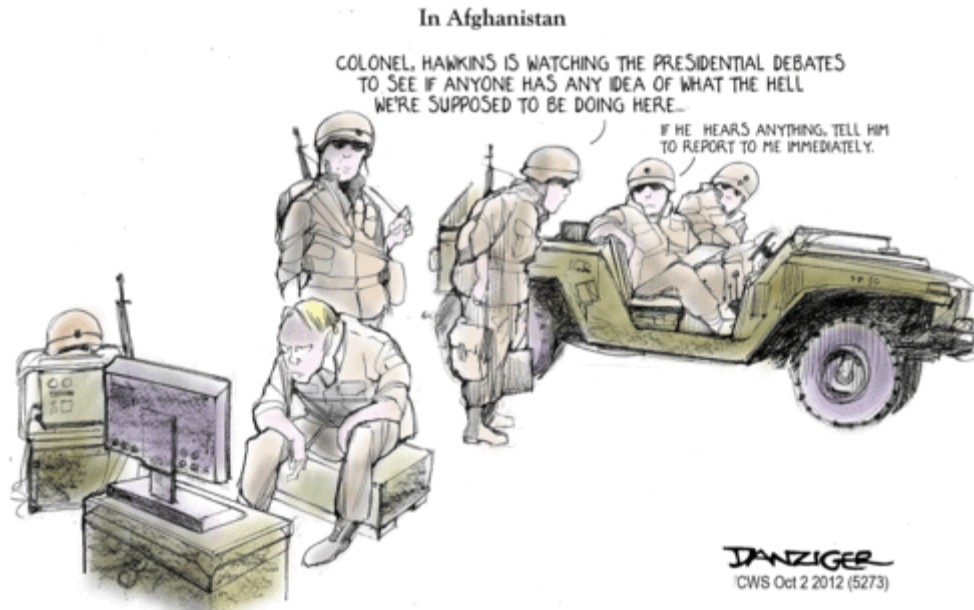


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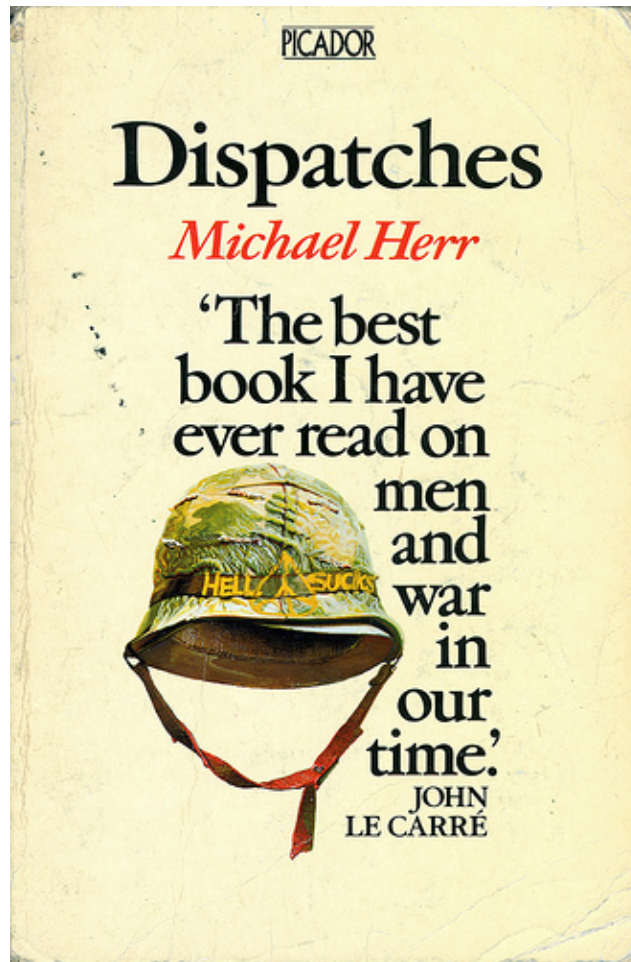


[THEN AND NOW]

“What They Understood And Their Leaders Refused To Acknowledge Was That Battles And ‘Victories’ Didn’t Add Up To Anything”

“The Number Of Communist Dead Meant Nothing, Changed Nothing”

“There Is A Point Of View That Says That The United States Got Involved In The Vietnam War Simply Because We Thought It Would Be Easy”



[Farm4.static.flickr.com]

[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, Military Project, who sent this in.]

While a colonel in Saigon was declaring that the enemy “no longer maintains in our view capability to mount, execute or sustain a serious offensive action,” out in the countryside soldiers were looking around uneasily, saying, “Charlie’s up to something. Slick, slick, that fucker’s so slick. Watch!”

By Wendy Smith, *The American Scholar* [Excerpts]

Michael Herr’s brilliant, bitter, and loving book was hailed as a masterpiece when it was published in 1977, and the critical consensus has held steady ever since.

Somehow, a young journalist whose previous experience consisted mostly of travel pieces and film criticism managed to transform himself into a wild new kind of war correspondent capable of comprehending a disturbing new kind of war.

“Herr is the only writer I’ve read who has written in the mad-pop-poetic/bureaucratically camouflaged language in which Vietnam has lived,” wrote playwright and Vietnam draftee David Rabe.

It created enough of a sensation to prompt me to shell out \$8.95 for the hardcover, a lot of money for a college undergraduate in 1978. That was less than three years after North Vietnamese troops had marched into Saigon, during the odd political lull between Richard Nixon's resignation and Ronald Reagan's election.

I read *Dispatches* then through particularly rose-colored glasses, confident that we had learned the lessons of Vietnam and Watergate. In the ensuing 29 years, my awe at Herr's achievement has never lessened, but each of the three times I've re-read it, I've found new things.

The book hasn't changed, of course, but I have.

“Herr's Contempt For The Authorities Who Had Dumped American Troops Into Combat, His Matter-Of-Fact Depiction Of That Combat As Senseless, Dehumanizing, And Futile, Seemed Like Givens”

ON FIRST READING, the images *Dispatches* implanted in my mind were unquestionably harrowing: the corpse-strewn streets of ruined Hue, Vietnam's imperial city; the spooky vistas of Khe Sanh, where the Marines endured near-perpetual fire from ghostly North Vietnamese divisions invisible in the jungle. But those blasted landscapes painted in swaggering rock 'n' roll brushstrokes were as remote from my own experiences as the implacable rituals of guilt and expiation in Greek drama — indeed, I naively thought the book offered overdue catharsis for the Vietnam tragedy and expressed a new national consensus about it.

Herr's contempt for the authorities who had dumped American troops into combat, his matter-of-fact depiction of that combat as senseless, dehumanizing, and futile, seemed like givens.

Didn't everyone feel that way by 1978?

My liberal, urban friends certainly did, and few voices anywhere were being raised in defense of a military and political strategy whose ultimate fruits (helicopters evacuating the last Marines from the roof of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon while desperate, abandoned Vietnamese civilians swarmed the grounds below) were a painful recent memory.

What impressed me most forcefully about *Dispatches* was the window it opened on the surreal texture of ordinary soldier's lives.

Liberated from deadlines by his freeform assignment from *Esquire* magazine, Herr spent much of his time hanging around with grunts like the exhausted kid who replied to the standard question, “How long you been in-country?” by half-lifting his head and saying, very slowly, “all fuckin' day,” or the soldier detailed on reconnaissance patrol who told the reporter that the pills he took by the fistful “cooled things out just right” and that “he could see that old jungle at night like he was looking at it through a starlight scope.”

Unlike his colleagues working for mainstream media, Herr was under no obligation to solicit and report the military command's unwaveringly optimistic statements; instead, he listened to "grungy men in the jungle who talked bloody murder and killed people all the time," men who despised sugar-coated official platitudes about what they were doing there as much as the most committed antiwar activist did.

Dispatches made it clear, I assumed, that hating the war didn't mean hating those stuck with fighting it.

The virtually unanimous praise lavished on this searing text, the general conviction that it was a definitive portrait of the American experience in Vietnam, suggested that Vietnam was behind us now.

How young I was, and how much I missed.

I still didn't get it in 1982, when I stood weeping in front of Maya Lin's memorial lined with the names of Americans killed or missing in Vietnam from 1959 to 1975. Looking at the flowers and the handwritten notes placed along its black granite wall, testament to the anguish we still felt over the loss of so many lives, I couldn't understand the veterans who angrily viewed the unconventional memorial as a "black gash of shame," one more example of the way their service had been stigmatized.

I didn't realize it then, but Vietnam was on its way to becoming the war we weren't allowed to win.

During the 1980s, I heard that revolting phrase uttered with increasing frequency by people who sought to erase our national trauma, not by acknowledging the mistaken analysis that entangled us in Vietnam and the stubbornness that kept us there, but by shoehorning it into a conventional saga of courage and sacrifice in an honorable cause betrayed by the weak and the disloyal.

Every scathing word in Dispatches belied this pat scenario.

"Whatever Else, I'd Loved It There,"

WHEN I PICKED UP Herr's book again in the late '80s, however, I became uncomfortably aware that it also belied my blithe collegiate certainties. The first time through, I had breezed right over Herr's description of the questions people asked him upon his return as "political, square, innocent . . . I'd practically forgotten the language." I didn't even remember the troubling passage in which his pal Tim Page, solicited by a publisher to write a book that would "take the glamour out of war," erupted with glee: "The very idea! Ohhh, what a laugh! Take the bloody glamour out of bloody war!"

Herr and his fellow misfits among the press corps, dope-smoking longhairs though they might have been, not so secretly saw themselves as belonging to the time-honored, movienourished image of the swashbuckling war correspondent. They hailed helicopters like taxis, hitching rides into places like Dak To and the Ia Drang Valley, where they risked their lives to observe the nightmare reality buried underneath words like body count and pacification.

Then they grabbed the next chopper out, heading back to Saigon to print their photos and write it all down. There was glamour in war, and they got to experience the buzz of combat from a uniquely privileged position.

“Whatever else, I’d loved it there,” Herr admitted.

Soldiers felt that way too, William Broyles Jr. acknowledged in “Why Men Love War,” a 1984 essay in *Esquire*, which I read not long before I tackled *Dispatches* for the second time.

Broyles probed war’s “great and seductive beauty,” the enduring comradeship created among men who trusted each other with their lives, the knowledge that in battle you touched the fundamentals of human existence.

A Vietnam vet, he didn’t scant the uglier aspects: the sense of power inherent in killing, the covert joy when someone else got wasted instead of you, the unpalatable fact that being surrounded by death was, in some weird ways, a turn-on.

His polished, articulate prose was light years removed from the pop-apocalyptic urgency with which Herr tried to capture the particular nature of Vietnam. And yet both conveyed a message I hadn’t been able to hear in 1978.

For those who were there, the Vietnam War, like every war, was horrible and wonderful, the greatest experience of their lives as well as the worst thing that ever happened to them.

There was an important political discussion to be had about Vietnam, but there was another level on which politics was beside the point.

Dispatches was more than simply a great book about Vietnam, I began to understand.

I spend a lot of my professional time interviewing authors, and over the years I heard several of them refer to Herr’s work with a reverence that bordered on awe.

Dispatches was “one of the greatest memoirs of all time,” remarked Mary Karr, no slouch in that department herself. “It intimidated the pants off me,” confessed novelist Bob Shacochis, who, when I talked with him, had recently completed a nonfiction portrait of American soldiers in Haiti. “I can’t imagine writing a better book than *Dispatches*; it’s a blast of genius.”

The blasts of Herr’s rage, scorn, and agonized tenderness have been disturbing my peace for nearly three decades now; few works in any genre have haunted me the way *Dispatches* has.

“I Realized That The Only Corpse I Couldn’t Bear To Look At Would Be The One Whose Face I Would Never Have To See”

IN 1999, IT REENTERED my life in the oddest way, forcing itself anew on my attention when I least expected it. I’d had a baby at age 39 and sank happily into the swamp of

my son's all-consuming demands and my equally consuming love for him. The domestic world was my kingdom; war was one of those absurd male pastimes that had no relevance to me. (I know this is ridiculous: remember, I was a new mother.)

One day, reading a book about helicopters to my vehicle-obsessed four-year-old, I came across a photograph of a Huey landing under fire somewhere in South Vietnam. The next thing I knew, *Dispatches* was back in my hands.

It was placed there by my recollection of Herr's amazing description of the Vietnam chopper: "the sexiest thing going; saver-destroyer, provider-waster, right hand-left hand, nimble, fluent, canny and human; hot steel, grease, jungle-saturated canvas webbing, sweat cooling and warming up again, cassette rock and roll in one ear and door-gun fire in the other, fuel, heat, vitality and death, death itself, hardly an intruder."

Rereading that fabulous effusion, I remembered Mary Karr's appreciative appraisal: "Just at the level of sentences, it's never boring." The third time around, I was swept away by the sheer magnificence of Herr's prose as much as by what he had to say. Of course, the two were inextricably connected, and *Dispatches* had something new to say to me in my 40s.

The book was a personal testament, I belatedly grasped.

Herr wasn't just showing me what the war did to other people; he was examining what it did to him. He was terrified, naturally — take a look at his defoliating depiction of being under fire:

That passage took me through Vietnam to the eternal terrain of stark, animal fear.

At its existential heart, *Dispatches* was about what happened to someone living for months on end with that kind of fear, about what the omnipresence of death did to your soul.

Herr summed it up for himself in a single bleak sentence. Walking through the streets of Hue during the Tet Offensive, past hundreds of bodies decomposing in the cold rain, he wrote, "I realized that the only corpse I couldn't bear to look at would be the one whose face I would never have to see."

The grunts' moments of individual reckoning were blunter. "All that's just a load, man," said one young soldier, dismissing the domino theory and other official rationales. "We're here to kill gooks. Period."

Being a mother, I flinched at the thought of my son growing up to say something like that. Being a journalist, I flinched again at Herr's sardonic addendum: "(That) wasn't at all true of me. I was there to watch."

I'd never covered a war or grilled a duplicitous politician, but anyone who writes nonfiction is familiar with the queasily mixed emotions inherent in using other people's experiences as your raw material. Herr dissected that complex, fraught relationship in a situation where the stakes were mortally high.

He thought of himself as the grunts' brother, sharing their miseries and dangers in the field. On the surface, they seemed to agree. They gave him their helmets and flak jackets, found him mattresses to sleep on, threw blankets over him when he was cold. "You're all right man," they said, "you got balls."

But then would come "that bad, bad moment . . . the look that made you look away," or the comment of a rifleman watching a jeepload of correspondents drive off: "Those fucking guys, I hope they die."

Then the distance was clear.

"They weren't judging me, they weren't reproaching me, they didn't even mind me, not in any personal way," Herr wrote. "They only hated me, hated me the way you'd hate any hopeless fool who would put himself through this thing when he had choices."

He was not their brother, and he came to a conclusion many reporters prefer not to draw: "You were as responsible for everything you saw as you were for everything you did."

There was only one way to honor that responsibility, and the grunts told him what it was.

"They would ask you with an emotion whose intensity would shock you to please tell it, because they really did have the feeling that it wasn't being told for them, that they were going through all this and that somehow no one back in the World knew about it."

Herr told as many of their stories as he could cram into a narrative burning with his fierce belief that "conventional journalism could no more reveal this war than conventional firepower could win it."

He told the story of a freaked-out Marine, throwing away fatigues soaked with the blood of "some guy he didn't even know (who) had been blown away right next to him, all over him."

There was no way to wash them clean, the soldier said, near tears: "You could take and scrub them fatigues for a million years, and it would never happen."

He told the story of a battalion in the midst of the Tet Offensive's worst days, afflicted with despair so terrible that men from Graves Registration going through the personal effects of dead soldiers sometimes found letters from home "delivered days before and still unopened."

All wars produce horror stories, but in most wars before Vietnam reporters were constrained from telling them, by censorship, of course, but also by their sense that there was a greater goal that at least partly justified the horrors.

Herr cared very little about the big picture — and who could blame him, when one month Khe Sanh fit into the big picture as "the Western Anchor of our Defense" and the next it was "a worthless piece of ground"?

He cared more about what he could learn from the Special Forces captain who said, “I went out and killed one VC and liberated a prisoner. Next day the major called me in and told me that I’d killed fourteen VC and liberated six prisoners. You want to see the medal?”

“What They Understood And Their Leaders Refused To Acknowledge Was That Battles And “Victories” Didn’t Add Up To Anything”

THE HUMAN TRUTHS of Dispatches were also political truths,

I could see when I angrily reopened it on the eve of the 2006 midterm elections.

Because Vietnam was an unpopular war that we lost, it was possible for Herr to say things about the essential nature of combat that it had been unacceptable to say about, for example, World War II. (The U.S. Army was so upset by John Huston’s Signal Corps documentary about veterans suffering from what we would now call post-traumatic stress disorder that it suppressed the film for more than 30 years.)

Herr took full advantage of that freedom.

He took very seriously his commitment to tell the grunts’ stories, but he made no pretense of telling them from the grunts’ point of view, and he told stories they undoubtedly wished he’d kept to himself.

He wasn’t “embedded,” the cynical tactic invented by the Bush administration to enmesh reporters in a conflict they were supposed to be covering impartially. “I crossed the line from observer to participant,” said Time correspondent Michael Weiskopf, who lost his right hand when he picked up a live grenade tossed into the Humvee carrying him and four soldiers on patrol in Baghdad. “It became very difficult to objectively assess the role of U.S. soldiers who were housing, feeding, befriending and protecting me. After three weeks in a platoon, I came dangerously close to adopting the mindset and mission of a soldier.”

Herr never fell into that trap.

His affection for the grunts didn’t prevent him from seeing what Vietnam had done to some of them. “They were killers,” he wrote of the soldiers hunkered down at Khe Sanh. “Of course they were; what would anyone expect them to be?”

With the appalling photographs from Abu Ghraib still vivid in my memory, I found my fourth journey through Dispatches halted time after time by grim glimpses of the atrocities committed in Vietnam.

Herr heard stories about “the man in the Highlands who was ‘building his own gook,’ parts were the least of his troubles”; about the door gunner, asked how he could shoot women and children, who replied, “It’s easy, you just don’t lead ‘em so much.”

He saw a photo of a Marine “pissing into the locked-open mouth of a decomposing North Vietnamese soldier”; albums with pictures of smiling soldiers holding up severed heads

or necklaces of ears. “There were hundreds of those albums in Vietnam, thousands,” he noted wearily. The inevitable snapshot of a dead Viet Cong woman stripped naked was inevitably accompanied by “that same tired remark you heard every time . . . ‘No more boom-boom for that mamma-san.’”

Herr was sickened by what he saw and heard, but he didn’t judge the grunts. He knew what they were up against.

The North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong were not good guys; he observed without surprise that they were supplied by the Soviets and the Chinese, that they were responsible for plenty of atrocities themselves.

What unnerved American soldiers about their enemy — and drove the brass purely crazy — was that he wasn’t playing by their rules.

Over and over, Herr described major battles with massive casualties on both sides that didn’t so much end as stop when the North Vietnamese picked up most of their dead and vanished into the jungle.

Command proclaimed them victories, but it was hard to feel victorious at the top of Dak To’s Hill 875, which hundreds of Americans had died to take, where there were exactly four Vietnamese bodies.

“Of course more died, hundreds more,” Herr wrote, “but the corpses kicked and counted and photographed and buried numbered four. . . . Spooky. Everything up there was spooky . . . you were there in a place where you didn’t belong.”

The grunts knew it, and they didn’t make their commanders’ mistake of underestimating their opponents.

While a colonel in Saigon was declaring that the enemy “no longer maintains in our view capability to mount, execute or sustain a serious offensive action,” out in the countryside soldiers were looking around uneasily, saying, “Charlie’s up to something. Slick, slick, that fucker’s so slick. Watch!”

What they understood and their leaders refused to acknowledge was that battles and “victories” didn’t add up to anything.

“They killed a lot of Communists, but that was all they did,” Herr wrote of the campaign in the Vietnamese highlands.

“The number of Communist dead meant nothing, changed nothing.”

Iraq is not Vietnam. The desert is not the jungle.

“It’s Beyond Politics, But We Ignore, And Have Ignored, Its Political Lessons At Our Peril”

The Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army, infuriatingly hard to pin down though they were, were miracles of coherence compared to the rat’s nest of sectarian death

squads and fundamentalist splinter groups accountable to who knows who that toss IEDs at American jeeps in the streets of Baghdad and Mosul.

What is shockingly, shamingly similar is the arrogance, criminal blindness, and willful obfuscation that ensnared America in both places.

In 2006, no other sentence in Dispatches distressed me more than an almost casual aside in the midst of Herr's exegesis of "the bloody, maddening uncanniness" of Vietnam's terrain.

"There is a point of view," he wrote, "that says that the United States got involved in the Vietnam War, commitments and interests aside, simply because we thought it would be easy."

Like all great books, Dispatches is inexhaustible. I have learned from it, changed with it, made mistakes about it. It was never the document of national reconciliation I once thought it was.

It was and is the timeless portrait of war's bedrock realities — fear, death, murder, madness — that I was finally ready to confront in my 30s.

It's also a revelation of the beauty that unfolds in extreme circumstances, the clarity of vision possible when everything extraneous has fallen away. It's a brazen display of unbridled romanticism and extravagant prose.

It's a chastening exploration of our complicity in what we see from a safe distance.

It's beyond politics, but we ignore, and have ignored, its political lessons at our peril.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Insider Attacks: "Statistics Show A Previously Unreported Pattern Of Attacks Happening Either In Multiple Locations On The Same Day Or On Consecutive Days"

Oct 5, 2012 The Associated Press

On Friday the AP was given a previously unreleased set of data about 2012 and 2011 insider attacks.

The data show that in addition to the 53 U.S. and allied personnel killed so far this year, more than 80 have been wounded.

Although the coalition had previously said there were 21 attacks killing 35 allied personnel in 2011, it had not said that another 61 were wounded.

The statistics also show a previously unreported pattern of attacks happening either in multiple locations on the same day or on consecutive days.

MILITARY NEWS

NOT ANOTHER DAY NOT ANOTHER DOLLAR NOT ANOTHER LIFE



9.19.12: An Army carry team moves a transfer case containing the remains of Pfc. Jon. R. Townsend at Dover Air Force Base, Del. Claremore, was killed during an “insider attack” by Afghan police. ANN HEISENFELT/Associated Press

**POLITICIANS REFUSE TO HALT THE
BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE
WAR**

**America's Top Military Officer
Opposing Punishment Of Thieving
Four-Star General:**

**“Ward Is Accused Of Spending Tens
Of Thousands Of Taxpayer Dollars
On Lavish Travel And Other
Expenses”**

**“Ward ‘Conducted Official Travel For
Primarily Personal Reasons,’ Misused
Military Aircraft” And “Billed The
Government For A Refueling Stop
Overnight In Bermuda, Where The
Couple Stayed In A \$750 Suite”**

The inspector general's report found that Ward used military vehicles to shuttle his wife on shopping trips and to a spa and billed the government for a refueling stop overnight in Bermuda, where the couple stayed in a \$750 suite, a Defense Department investigation found.

Oct 4, 2012 By Lolita C. Baldor - The Associated Press [Excerpts]

WASHINGTON — America's top military officer is opposing the demotion of a four-star general who is accused of spending tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars on lavish travel and other expenses in a case that has been sitting on Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's desk for weeks, U.S. officials said Thursday.

Army Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is among those who believe that Gen. William Ward, the former head of U.S. Africa Command, should be allowed to retire at his full four-star general rank, **[and pay]** the officials said.

A Defense Department inspector general's report released in mid-August concluded that Ward "engaged in multiple forms of misconduct related to official and unofficial travel."

It said Ward "conducted official travel for primarily personal reasons," misused military aircraft and received reimbursement for travel expenses that far exceeded the approved daily military rate without authorization.

Other officials have argued that the allegations made against Ward in the IG report were very serious and that senior officers need to be held accountable.

Officials have suggested that similar misconduct by a lower ranking officer or enlisted military member would garner severe punishment or dismissal.

Asked about the matter, Dempsey said Thursday that he doesn't comment on recommendations he makes to the defense secretary. Pentagon press secretary George Little also declined to comment.

Retiring as a three-star would cost Ward nearly \$30,000 a year in retirement pay — giving him about \$208,802 a year rather than the \$236,650 he would get as a four-star.

He also could be required to reimburse the Defense Department for tens of thousands of dollars in flight costs and other expenses that he incurred while at Africa Command.

The inspector general's report found that Ward used military vehicles to shuttle his wife on shopping trips and to a spa and billed the government for a refueling stop overnight in Bermuda, where the couple stayed in a \$750 suite, a Defense Department investigation found.

It detailed lengthy stays at lavish hotels for Ward, his wife and his staff members, and the use of five-vehicle motorcades when he traveled to Washington.

It also said Ward and his wife, Joyce, accepted dinner and Broadway show tickets from a government contractor during a trip during which he went backstage to meet actor Denzel Washington.

The couple and several staff members also spent two nights at the Waldorf Astoria hotel.

The allegations, coming after a 17-month investigation, have delayed Ward's planned April 2011 retirement. And they were an embarrassing end note to his career, since he had claimed a place in history as the military's first commander of Africa Command.

Panetta's options regarding Ward are limited by complex laws and military guidelines. He can only demote Ward and force him to retire as a three-star lieutenant general.

**Stupid Navy Command Plan To
Fuck Over Vieques Puerto
Ricans Made Public:
“Under A Proposal Favored By
The Navy, The Cleanup Of The
Area Would Be Deemed Complete
Even Though About 200 Acres Has
Not Been Cleared Of Munitions”
“You Found This Clean, You Can’t
Just Give It Back Full Of Bombs”
“Now You Want To Do The Cheap
Version And Leave The Bombs There”**

Oct 5, 2012 By BEN FOX Associated Press [Excerpts]

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico —

The U.S. government has a new fight in Vieques, the Puerto Rican island that was used as a Navy bombing range for decades.

An extensive cleanup of the eastern portion of Vieques is years from being finished, but the government says it is ready to declare work completed on a nearly 400-acre site on the western side that was used to store and detonate expired munitions.

The former storage site was turned over to the U.S. Interior Department and declared a nature reserve.

Under a proposal favored by the Navy, the cleanup of the area would be deemed complete even though about 200 acres has not been cleared of munitions debris, some potentially still live.

That has sparked outrage among activists and officials in Vieques and the main island of Puerto Rico who favor a complete removal of all debris. And it has brought back some of the angry rhetoric that helped force an end to Vieques' use as a bombing range in 2003.

“It’s not a cleanup. It is an affront to Puerto Ricans that those responsible for the explosives would refuse to remove them,” Maria de Lourdes Santiago, a vice president of the Puerto Rico Independence Party and a candidate for the U.S. territory’s Senate, said Thursday.

Navy officials say it would hurt the nature reserve by tearing up the dense vegetation to clear the remainder of the debris.

Opponents suspect the plan may have more to do with the cost of cleaning up all the debris, estimated at \$50 million.

Jorge Fernandez Porto, director of the territorial Senate’s natural resources commission and a member of a citizen advisory board that monitors the Navy cleanup of Vieques, said he fears a partial removal of debris will set a precedent for other parts of the island.

“You found this clean, you can’t just give it back full of bombs,” Fernandez said. “I’m sorry if it’s costly. You should have thought about that before. Now you want to do the cheap version and leave the bombs there.”

Under the plan favored by the Navy, the area that has not been cleared of munitions debris would be enclosed by a barbed-wire fence to prevent people from scavenging for potentially explosive scrap metal and souvenirs, said Kevin Cloe, a manager of the cleanup project.

Vieques, which is ringed by clear blue waters and pristine beaches that have made it a popular tourist destination in recent years, was used as a bombing range from the 1940s until the government agreed to give it up in 2003 after years of angry protests.

The U.S. has removed more than 16.5 million pounds of munitions, but the cleanup of the old bombing range on the island’s eastern portion is expected to run through at least 2025. The full cleanup of Vieques, one of the most extensive rehabilitation efforts ever undertaken by the Navy, is budgeted at around \$350 million.

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN MILITARY SERVICE?

Forward Military Resistance along, or send us the address if you wish and we’ll send it regularly.

Whether in Afghanistan or at a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war and economic injustice, inside the armed services and at home.

Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Resistance, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.

-- Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach”

Why Obama Lost The Debate:

“The Political Problem Of The Democrats Is That They’re A Party Of Capital That Has To Pretend For Electoral Reasons Sometimes That It’s Not”

“The Dems Are Afraid Of Their Base Because It Might Cause Them Trouble With Their Funders”

“Romney Believes In Money. Obama Believes In Nothing”

04 Oct 2012 LBO News from Doug Henwood [Excerpt]

The Republicans are a gang of terrifying reactionaries, which flatters the gaggle of wobbly centrists that make up the other party.

But the Dems have some serious foundational problems that help explain what is almost universally regarded as Obama’s dismal performance in the first debate.

More broadly, the political problem of the Democrats is that they’re a party of capital that has to pretend for electoral reasons sometimes that it’s not.

All the complaints that liberals have about them — their weakness, tendency to compromise, the constantly lamented lack of a spine — emerge from this central contradiction.

The Republicans have a coherent philosophy and use it to fire up a rabid base.

The Dems are afraid of their base because it might cause them trouble with their funders.

What do liberals stand for these days?

Damned if I know.

It’s not a philosophy you can express in aphorisms. (Yeah, politics are complex, and slogans are simple, but if you’ve got a passionately held set of beliefs you can manage that contradiction.)

Too many qualifications and contradictions.

They can't just say less war and more equality, because they like some wars and want to bore you with just war theory to explain the morality of drone attacks, and worry about optimal tax rates and incentives.

Join an empty philosophy to an empty personality and you get a very flat and meandering performance in debate.

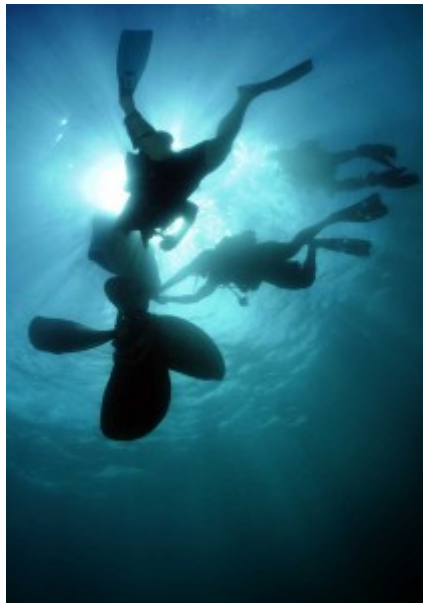
Romney believes in money.

Obama believes in nothing.

Troops Invited:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or email contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

Defense Department Investigates Fraudulent Navy SEAL Operation in Bahamas



Navy SEAL Divers search near a coral reef for any underwater al Qaeda operatives



SEAL Team 11 requested the use of this luxury catamaran, equipped with an indoor pool and private movie theater, as its mobile command post.

September 10, 2012 by G-Had. The Duffle Blog

Washington, DC – The Pentagon’s inspector general announced today an investigation into whether or not a group of Navy SEALs committed fraud by spending several hundred thousand dollars on expensive hotels and other items during what they claimed was a month-long mission to search for Al Qaeda operatives in the Bahamas.

The small island chain east of Florida has no known connections with the terrorist organization, terrorism in general, or the Middle East.

The sailors of SEAL Team 11 allegedly concocted a fake mission to the island resort last December, based off of what they described as “classified intelligence, which shows a plan by Al Qaeda to smuggle two radiological devices to the islands in preparation for use against Miami.”

Investigators now believe that the alleged Al Qaeda operation was really the plot of the movie *Thunderball*.

Once SEAL Team 11 arrived in Nassau, they undertook several weeks of “elaborate reconnaissance”, searching various beaches, reefs, surf shops, casinos, strip clubs, and luxury penthouse suites for any sign of terrorism before declaring the mission a success.

On their way back to Dam Neck Annex in Virginia, their plane was also somehow diverted to Las Vegas, Nevada, for an additional week of repairs.

Pentagon spokesman John Able said that rumors of the trip had been circulating for months, but only recently were investigators able to pinpoint the unit and mission.

“Our first tip-off was when we saw the gear list for the mission. Usually members of our Special Warfare Development Group ask for things like weapons and ammunition, communications gear, night vision goggles, and so on.”

“SEAL Team 11 asked for a three seabags full of money, twenty cases of champagne, and an unlimited line of credit for both the blackjack table at the Caribbean Club Casino and what is believed to be an escort service.”

While not as well-known as its more famous cousin SEAL Team 6, SEAL Team 11 has an equally-long, but less-distinguished, history with the US military.

Formed during the Vietnam War, SEAL Team 11 conducted countless long-range patrols looking for North Vietnamese army units in the Saigon Red-light district, supported the failed Desert One rescue mission from a Kuwaiti luxury hotel, and spent the months following the September 11 terrorist attacks securing Disney World from any Al Qaeda plots.

In fact, the movie *Three Kings* was loosely based off a SEAL Team 11 mission in Desert Storm.

Pentagon officials have now vowed to investigate other questionable SEAL Team 11 missions, such as a six-month hunt for Usama bin Laden in Monte Carlo, training operations which suspiciously coincided with Mardi Gras and Oktoberfest, and multiple counter-terrorism missions to Atlantic City.

Members of SEAL Team 11 declined all requests to be interviewed, and a Duffel Blog reporter trying to reach them at Dam Neck Annex was guided away from top secret training in preparation for their next mission, which appeared at a distance to consist of pounding the drum beat from [Wipe Out](#) onto a surfboard.

CLASS WAR REPORTS

“Tens Of Thousands Hit Jordan Streets”

“For How Long Will The Regime Protect Corrupt Officials?”

“The Demonstration Also Insisted On The Right To Elect The Prime Minister”

“At The Moment, This Is The King’s Privilege”



Amman, Jordan: Still from AP video

05 October, 2012 TV-Novosti & Al Jazeera

Tens of thousands of people have held a protest in the heart of the Jordanian capital of Amman for a pro-reform rally, despite King Abdullah’s decision to dissolve parliament.

Over 50,000 people were expected to take part in the “Friday to Rescue the Nation” demonstration called by the Muslim Brotherhood’s Islamic Action Front (IAF) political arm.

Witnesses and journalists estimated attendance at between 10,000 and 15,000 people, with the crowd expected to grow as protesters travelled to Amman from elsewhere around the country.

“The corrupt are God’s enemies” and “For how long will the regime protect corrupt officials?” read the placards of the protesters flocking to the main street leading to the Hussein mosque in downtown Amman after Friday prayers.

“Democratic electoral law, constitutional changes, parliamentary governments, independent judiciary, constitutional court, effective anti-corruption efforts and preventing security services from interfering in political life,” said another large banner spelling out the demonstrators’ demands.

The Friday protest focused on demands for reforms that would create a less centralized government and ensure more opposition seats in parliament.

The IAF is outraged that the 120-member lower chamber of the parliament still provides only 27 seats for party candidates, even after the MPs managed to raise this number from just 17 seats.

The demonstration also insisted on the right to elect the prime minister.

At the moment, this is the king's privilege.

Some 2,000 police were deployed to the capital of Middle Eastern country, while proking demonstrations had got suspended as organizers want to prevent clashes.

The protest convened despite King Abdullah's Thursday orders to dissolve the two-year-old parliament. Though the monarch did not elaborate on the dates of new elections, the poll is expected to take place by the end of 2012.

The Muslim Brotherhood, the only effective opposition in the country, is already threatening to boycott the election, as they did in 2010, unless demands for wider representations are met. They say that while the dissolution was "expected", this is "not the right step forward."

There should be democratic election law reform and "real" changes to Jordan's constitution, says IAF Deputy General Secretary Nimer Assaf.

Abdullah, who ascended Jordan's throne in 1999, has been facing waves of unrest since January 2011.

The current laws allow the king to personally appoint senators, the cabinet and the prime minister.

The ruling system has also been slammed by the opposition for political discrimination of Jordanians of the Palestinian origin, who feel they are kept from power by the native Jordanians.

With tensions escalating, Abdullah pledged in June 2011 the government would in the future be elected, not appointed. But this initiative was left without any specific timetable.

On September 2, the Jordanian parliament signed a motion of no confidence against the government of Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh. The PM was blamed for rising fuel prices and accused "of recent appointments in top posts based on nepotism," the official local news agency stated.

Bahrain:

“The People Want The Regime To Fall”

“Water Cannon And Tear Gas Have Been Deployed To Disperse Hundreds Of Anti-Government Demonstrators”

“Riot Police Units Were Showered By Petrol Bombs And Stones, With One Water Cannon Catching Fire”

Oct 05, 2012 Press TV & 06 October, 2012 TV-Novosti

Police have been deployed to disperse hundreds of anti-government demonstrators in the capital of Manama. Protesters hurled firebombs at police, as they gathered after the funeral of an activist who died whilst in custody.

Demonstrators shouted anti-regime slogans and called for an end to the rule of Al Khalifa dynasty. “The people want the regime to fall” and “Down with Hamad,” a reference to King Hamad, the protesters shouted.

Clashes broke out after the crowd tried to break through to Pearl Square, which was the cradle of the popular uprising in Bahrain last year.

Witnesses said regime forces, who were heavily deployed in the area, used tear gas, water cannon, sound bombs and buckshot to disperse the demonstrators.

Riot police units were showered by petrol bombs and stones, with one water cannon catching fire.

The clashes followed a memorial service for Mohammed Ali Ahmed Mushaima, who died on Tuesday. Mushaima, 23, had been in hospital since August.

Authorities say he died of blood disease, but opposition activists insist he was refused the proper treatment, which led to his death.

In March 2011 Mushaima was detained with hundreds other protesters, inspired by the Arab Spring uprising in Egypt and Tunisia. He died whilst serving a seven year prison term on charges of “vandalism, rioting, assaulting a police officer and resisting arrest”.

Bahraini officials said he was suffering from sickle-cell anemia and that he was admitted to the hospital on August 29.

Several anti-regime activists have died of the same illnesses while in custody over the past year and this has prompted Human Rights Watch to call for an investigation.

Lawyers say they had asked the court to release Mushaima because of his bad health but court rejected their request.

Bahrain, which hosts the US Navy's Fifth fleet, continues to see almost daily demonstrations and clashes. The Shiite Muslim majority demands a bigger role in running the country controlled by al-Khalifa family, who are Sunni Muslims.

At least 50 people have died in nearly 20 months of unrest, with a 16-year-old boy becoming one of the latest victims. Thousands of anti-government activists have been arrested, says the Bahrain Center for Human Rights.

This includes human rights activist Nabeel Rajab who, after several detainments, was sentenced to three years in jail for "participation in an illegal assembly" and "calling for a march without prior notification." His bail request was rejected on September, 10.

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



Troops Invited:
Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or email contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

Vietnam GI: Reprints Available

Vietnam GI

January, 1969

Free to Servicemen

“... he threw his rifle at his Commanding Officer...”



WHEN HAWKS RETIRE

All of us who've had our "free" trips to Sassy Nam and Sassy Korea shouldn't feel guilty about accepting such "gifts" from the Government. Lots of hawk politicians are raising Government trips too. Of course, their trips are a little bit different.

Take Senator Edward V. Long (D-Mo.), the Senate Judiciary Committee highest witness retirement in January was preceded up by graft scandals. The good Senator decided that as a last sacrifice to his country he would give himself TDY to Europe. The reason was to "get firsthand information on foreign aid and military assistance programs." Doubtless, that's why he took his wife along.

Of special interest was his visit to Switzerland, which neither gets US aid nor wants any. It doesn't really make any difference, since as soon as Senator Long returned from his "fact-finding mission" he retired from the Senate, thus depriving our Congress of all his "facts" (mostly on airplanes and ritzy hotels).

Going to and from Europe Long travelled on Senate funds, but while on TDY there, he economized by using US military aircraft, cars and chauffeurs to get around. The Pentagon ordered the red carpet rolled out around the world. Nothing too good for a retiring hawk politician. As the saying goes, in America we're all equal — only some are more equal than others!

As we go in press we learn that the government has finally agreed on the shape of the table and seating arrangements for the Paris talks. How that everyone is seated and comfortable, maybe we can expect further "breakthroughs."

The grim fact is that while the government hawks are jiving in Paris, thousands of our buddies are still dying in Nam. In fact, since they began talking last May 7,000 GIs have been killed in action.

Talk or no talk, the only solution is to get the hell out of Nam, immediately. Stop talking and start shipping us home.

The next issue of VGI will discuss the Paris talks in greater detail. By that

Below is an interview with a Marine who didn't like the war and figured out why. This guy is a Platoon SGT with five years in the Green Machine, and over a year in Nam, mostly in long range recon with Charlie Company, 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion. VGI spoke to him while he was on leave during his second Nam tour. Since he doesn't ETO until 1972 we've left out his name.

VGI: How did you feel about the war when you went over there. Did your feelings change?

A: When I first went over there, I thought it would be a great thing in pay, and a great new experience of being in war. I really thought it was going to be something different. But then I got put on some of these patrols and I got to see the people and get to talk to the people. That was the big thing that finally changed me. I finally saw that it wasn't worth while, and that they actually don't want our help because it actually isn't help.

VGI: Did you have any contacts with the Vietnamese, with the people?

A: There was a place called Ben Son and for a while I was stationed down at the hedge there. This is where I lived, ate, slept, drank, everything. There were houses right next to my bunker, we had an address for ours and we gave everybody else addresses. We explained to the people what the addresses were and they got all shook up about the whole thing, now, they got addresses now.

VGI: What was it like, living there?

A: We lived with them, we shared our food with them. They used to really go for the little treats in the cation packs, the gum and the cation cigarettes and everything, and in turn they'd bring back bananas. There was this one gal, her name was—I can't think of her name now—I had her picture but I lost it. This one gal, she really stands out in my mind because the used to come over and bring us her every day and in turn, all she expected from us was the empty boxes of cations, that's all she wanted, the empty boxes. But then we started putting little things in the empty boxes and told her we wanted her to have them.

VGI: What would she want with the empty boxes?

A: I don't know, the Vietnamese people, they could take an empty can of nothing and make something out of it. She made me a scappel which she had made out of a cation tin. She had pounded it out with a nail and a hammer. It had a little handle on it and I wore it all the time. I actually got to feel naked after I lost it.

Next year, later on, during the Tet holidays, the Viet Cong came in and burned out half of the village, and the marines naturally went in, present. In order to stay there, the VC took this gal and they cut off her breasts. She was brought up to the hospital and later she died.

VGI: Did the brass give you any static about living with the Vietnamese?

A: The incident when I almost got into trouble was, there was a convoy of about 15 to 16 trucks. I think it was. We had a whole bunch of plywood on it and we took this plywood over to a village chief in Ben Son, he was one of

the older. We dropped off something like 14 sheets of plywood. Naturally, when we got back, there was one truckload of plywood missing, and they asked where it was. They later found out that I had given it to this village chief, not for my own good relations with him, but because there was times when we didn't get resupply in our observation point, and they brought us food. So we gave them something else in return.

interview

VGI: What are some of the things you saw and did that led you into deciding in the middle of them not to fight anymore?

A: Well, I saw times when COL Bull Fisher, when he would call his men to disassemble their personal-cartridge flame-throwers, take them out on a company sleep and put them back together once they got out, he went into a village and told them, "Are there any Viet Cong here?" The village chief naturally said "No" because he knew that if he said yes, he didn't know what'd happen to him. Then COL Fisher said, "Well, if there is any Viet Cong in this village, we'll show you what's going to happen." He sent one of his fans men up to the house, he didn't check to see if there was anybody in it or not. Later we found out there was a woman in there who was real sick, she couldn't move or anything. She was hurt to death. It was terrible. And seeing guys being carried in on ponies. A full grown man weighed about two pounds after he was brought in as a sack of raw flesh or something like that.

VGI: Did you see any other incidents like that?

A: There was this little village just out of Ben Son where we brought our rice and got out for it's not pretty, it's really true. It was just this small village, maybe 16 or 17 houses. It was a "gray to white" village, off and on there'd be Viet Cong visiting the area. No hospitals at all, they'd just go in there to be resupplied. Yet one day, they found out that VC were coming into that village and they called "Puff!" "Puff!" came over and leveled the whole village down. I think maybe three people lived out of this whole thing. One was a little baby about two years old whose mother and father was gone.

One of the guys sort of adopted the kid, the little two year old. He took this kid real close. When we went on R and R we brought him back toys and trucks and things like that. It was really interesting, because they don't get too many trucks over there. We'd round up a few dump trucks and stuff like that from Hong Kong. They were really surprised to see the new toys, I mean, the toys they play with, the cation cars and stuff like that are their toys. They're a fascinating people. If you just have an opportunity to see them, to get to know them, they're really great.

VGI: How do you think they feel about us?

A: The one incident—I know of the letter one north Vietnamese who was down south wrote to his brother up north who was interested on coming down it and he took this plywood over to a village chief in Ben Son, he was one of

Edited by Vietnam Veteran Jeff Sharlet from 1968 until his death, this newspaper rocked the world, attracting attention even from Time Magazine, and extremely hostile attention from the chain of command.

The pages and pages of letters in the paper from troops in Vietnam condemning the war are lost to history, but you can find them here.

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