

GI SPECIAL 3C29B:



Soldiers' Stories

This issue of GI Special contains three accounts of the Iraq war, uncluttered by other news.

Each deserves that respect.

Purists will not be happy.

Although each of the soldiers came to realize they had been betrayed by their own government and put into an impossible situation, their words do not read like a speech at an anti-war rally.

Life, and death, isn't that easy.

First, "The Legacy Of "Johnny K"

Second, "If We Didn't Go Home In About Another Month Or Two There Would Have Been A Rebellion"

Third, "Dearest Moms: One Soldier's Year in Iraq," by Sergeant Ryan Montgomery Campbell (KIA)

The Legacy Of "Johnny K": "A Patriotic American Who Was Betrayed -- By His Own Government"



"They had to hide under their cots -- there was nothing they could do," Kulick's brother said. "The Humvees weren't armored, or lightly armored -- they were basically useless. At first they were sending them out in pickup trucks. They weren't really equipped to fight this war."

Kulick told his family that troops were taking police vests that had been donated to them and putting them on the floor of the Humvees instead of wearing them.

August 20, 2005, Attytood, Pnionline.com

Last week, we wrote about the unspeakably sad story of Gennaro Pellegrini Jr. -- Philly cop, welterweight boxer, and National Guardsman. The 31-year-old's life was hitting full stride when he received a fateful phone call ordering him to serve in Iraq, just two weeks before his hitch was supposed to end. Pellegrini was quite unhappy, but he went -- and he paid with his life, along with three of his Pennsylvania National Guard colleagues who were killed in a ruthless ambush near the Iraqi town of Beiji.

Also slain in that Aug. 9 attack was one of Pellegrini's brothers-in-arms, a Whitpain Township firefighter named John Kulick. Kulick -- a 35-year-old from the suburbs, an

avid fisherman who loved too much mustard on bologna sandwiches and was called "Johnny K" -- had become fast friends with Pellegrini, the tough, tattooed city cop from a rowhouse block of Port Richmond. But the road that these two salt-of-the-earth guys had taken to Beiji could not have been more different.

As a professional firefighter, Kulick was devastated by the loss of so many colleagues at the World Trade Center in the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. That sense of duty is what prompted him to join the Pennsylvania National Guard, even though he was already on the far side of 30 and the devoted and involved divorced dad to his daughter, Amanda, who is in grade school. And when his Guard unit from Northeast Philly was called up last December, he told his worried family that he wanted to go, to fight terrorists "over there."

In fact, Kulick's brother Jim -- in a radio interview this morning -- said they watched the movie "Blackhawk Down" just days before his departure for Iraq. After the end of the movie (which depicts the 1993 Somali insurgent attack that killed 18 U.S. troops), John Kulick declared, echoing his commander-in-chief and without irony, "Bring 'em on."

We heard Jim Kulick this morning on the Michael Smerconish show on WPHT-1210. The reason Smerconish invited him on was to talk about the emails that John Kulick had sent home from northern Iraq in the months before he was killed.

Over the eight months that the Philly-area firefighter served in Iraq, his opinion of the mission changed radically.

As described by his brother, John Kulick's emails tell the story of a patriotic American who was betrayed -- by his own government.

Because it was John Kulick's government that -- after spending more than \$100 billion on Iraq -- sent him into hostile territory without the proper armor.

And it was John Kulick's government that sent him into a war that lacked a strategy, and that, as a result, not only eliminated the enemy but was waged in a way that created new enemies every day.

Jim Kulick said his brother's emails showed a man who was becoming more and more worried.

John Kulick said the insurgents were using increasingly sophisticated IEDs -- improvised explosive devices -- and were firing rocket-propelled grenades, or RPGs, into their camp.

"They had to hide under their cots -- there was nothing they could do," Kulick's brother said. "The Humvees weren't armored, or lightly armored -- they were basically useless. At first they were sending them out in pickup trucks. They weren't really equipped to fight this war."

Kulick told his family that troops were taking police vests that had been donated to them and putting them on the floor of the Humvees instead of wearing them.

Jim Kulick noted that at the same time his brother was reporting this, two of his friends who are area police officers serving in Iraq told him they had needed to bring their own sidearms. In his emails, John Kulick had begun to describe the war as "a quagmire."

As disturbing as those reports were, what Kulick had to say about the conduct of the war was even more troubling.

He told his family that the Iraqi police "were corrupt and inept and there was no way they could ever train them to the degree where they could keep order."

And when his unit went out after insurgents, far too many innocent Iraqis were killed in the crossfire. And, Kulick reported home, "the more hate that created." When the Americans left an area, the insurgents came back the next day.

Eventually, when Kulick saw Iraqi citizens kneeling in the street in prayer, his interpreter would tell him they were praying for the Americans to leave. "They would rather live with evil they knew rather than live with us," Kulick said in his emails. "We were killing them as much as the insurgents were."

Kulick and his fellow Guardsmen were riding in a Humvee, reportedly armored, on night patrol on Aug. 9 when a large bomb -- containing as much as 25 to 30 pounds of explosives -- that was hidden in a drainage culvert under the roadway exploded and killed them. Just hours earlier, Kulick had called his father to tell him where his will was located and that he would want a full military funeral.

Jim Kulick said this morning that the U.S. needs to set a timetable for getting out, and host Smerconish -- a political conservative who supported the war from early on -- was surprisingly sympathetic. Said Smerconish: "We're adrift."

Yesterday, John Kulick received the type of funeral he had asked for. His flag-draped funeral procession along York Road in Montgomery County drew firefighters from 61 local departments, and featured all the pomp and circumstance that is appropriate for a true hero like John Kulick.

But today, the cameras are gone, and flags are folded up -- and Kulick's family will continue to live with the loss. Jim Kulick said his family is "devastated" by what happened in Iraq.

None worse than his 9-year-old daughter. "Amanda is in denial," Jim Kulick said. "She said her father promised her he would come back from the war, and she still believes that."

Amanda Kulick doesn't understand what happened to her father.

Neither do we.



“If We Didn't Go Home In About Another Month Or Two There Would Have Been A Rebellion”

Just imagine if George W. was a dictator and all of a sudden Canada invaded. We would be happy at first, but after almost 2 years of them still hanging around and nothing getting done, I'm fairly certain we would rise up against them too.

I, to this day, have no clue why I fought over there, have no clue what I fought for, and am upset because my friends were maimed and killed for nothing.

August 7, 2005 By Bill, From Veterans Against The Iraq War

Hello, my name is Bill. I'm 24 years old and live in NJ. I fought in Sadr City, Baghdad Iraq from Feb. 2004 to Feb. 2005. I served in C. Co 759th MP Bn 89th MP Brigade.

I still wholeheartedly support the decision to remove Saddam from power, however I am completely against the continued occupation of Iraq.

When I landed in Baghdad, the US had roughly 350 deaths. When I left the number was close to 1300. I had 4 of my friends killed and another 27 in my company wounded, which gave us a 1 in 3 rate of being a casualty.

I saw a good friend of mine have half of his face blown off when a RPG blew up on our windshield.

Another friend of my was wounded twice in separate IED attacks and still wasn't allowed home.

I killed 4 people during an 18 hour firefight, one of whom was a little girl that got caught by the burst of a 203 round.

I think about Iraq every day even though I've been home 6 months. And I still cannot figure out why I was there or why Americans died over there. I'm all for war, but only "right" wars. I was decorated for valor and congratulated by Colonels, and it's all hollow because it is for nothing. That's why I'm against the war in Iraq.

I can definitely say nothing in suburban America ever EVER prepared me for anything I saw over there. Besides the actual combat, the simple fact that instead of just watching one of those UNICEF commercials with the babies with flies all over them, I was actually in one.

I can't tell you how dirty and malnourished the small children were. Begging for food and eating whatever we threw out of our MRE's. I'll never forget this girl probably like 8 years old came up to me with probably a 2 month old asking me to help the baby because it had some sort of nasty looking scabby rash. I told her I didn't have anything. It's not like I was a medic or like we even had one with us, but she was so insistent and so upset, and the baby was just motionless, flies all over her face. It was probably the most heartwrenching thing I ever saw over there. So just to make her feel better I gave her some alcohol pads, just so she thought she had something. When I went back to base I hit the medics for some sort of antibacterial cream which they gave me, but I never ended up going back to that area.

There was also this family of 3 girls that lived next to a police station, which their father happened to work at. All the guys in my unit would give them candy when they stopped by on their way home from school. We knew these kids for like 3 months. Then we left and about 2 weeks later a car bomb blew up their father when he was at a checkpoint. A mother and 3 girls don't have much to look forward to in Iraq when they are alone. That bothered me and the guys a lot.

It just amazes me now that I'm home that for the most part (except families affected by the war) people don't even pay attention to it anymore. It's like we come home get a pat on the back and a smile and then poof, that's it. You're just supposed to get on with your life.

I just don't understand America anymore. People spending \$100 on shoes, that's what the average Iraqi makes a month. People worrying about stupid stuff like their clothes or cars. They need to see a woman throw out a chamber pot into the street at 6am and then 2 hours later her kids are playing in it naked.

Or for example the inordinate amount of birth defects I saw in Sadr City. I have never seen more physical deformities, not even on television in my entire life, than I saw in Iraq. There were people with chicken wing arms, people that were basically just a torso and a head. It amazed me.

I dont know, America just isn't what I wanted to come home to.

I was stationed at Camp Cuervo (was Camp Muleskinner when I first arrived) in Baghdad Iraq. My primary area of patrol was Sadr City, which is North of the green zone. Basically a square shaped set of a couple hundred blocks in which Saddam shoved roughly 2 million Shiites, in a sort of modern ghetto.

We arrived when the invasion was at its ending point, and we were starting to build up the Iraqi police force. (I was an MP) At first my friends and I were all full of &*@!# and vinegar to go out and kill haji's (comparable to charlie in the Vietnam war). It was about 3 weeks before we got in our first firefight.

It was an odd thing because when someone shoots at you for the first time you can't really believe that you just go "Oh Sh*t!!" and return fire. My first firefight consisted of roughly 15 other MP's at a police station in Sadr City under seige by approximately 50 Iraqis of Muqtada Al Sadr Mahdi army milita. It lasted 3 hours and was ended by the arrival of bradleys from the 1st Cav division. During the course of the firefight, I killed a man shooting at me from an apartment window with an AK47, and 3 other of my friends saw that they had hit and killed people, although with all the rounds we expended, between regular 5.56, .50 cal and MK19 grenades, I'm sure the Iraqi toll was much higher.

Our only casualty was one of the gunners in a humvee was shot in the arm. We had 11 RPG's shot at us and 3 mortars, none really came to close.

The Iraqi police we were protecting (the ones that didn't leave minutes before the firefight, thus obviously knowing something was up) refused to go out and fight. That was my first glimpse of how ruined Iraq was.

For the next 3 months other platoons had firefights. We were mortared almost every night, and had suffered some wounded through IED attacks.

That all changed in June when we were at the same police station I had previously been in a firefight at. Roughly 2 hours after we arrived all hell broke loose. I was driving an ASV when a RPG exploded on the passenger side window horribly wounding my friend in the passenger seat. In addition to the vehicle being on fire, he was unconcious with blood pouring from his face from the shrapnel he recieved (I later found out his left lung was deflated from shrapnel going through it, and he had a broken collar bone.) My

gunner was hit in the rear by shrapnel. I miraculously wasn't injured at all, even though it exploded only 6 inches to the right of my head.

After what seemed like 15 minutes (I was later told it was nearly instant) I reversed the vehicle back to our perimeter, My gunner jumped out the side hatch and ran to our lines. I popped out the top hatch and yelled for a medic and then dragged my friend out of the still burning vehicle and started administering first aid into what I then realized was a raging fire. The medics arrived soon after I got my friend out and bandaged him up all around his head and evac'd him.

I then stayed there for another 16 hours getting shot at. During the course of the firefight 20 MP's were attacked by over 100 Mahdi army soldiers. More RPGs were fired than I could count. One of my friends who was previously wounded in an IED attack was hit by shrapnel when an RPG exploded on the side of his Hummvee. Another soldier was shot in the foot.

We were basically leveling buildings shooting back. One store exploded when the propane in side caught fire. I killed 3 people during that fire fight. 2 men with an RPG with a M203 grenade and a little girl that was in the area of the blast. Because whenever the Iraqis attacked, they made sure they had plenty of women and children around them in order to discourage us from firing back. I could care less about the men I killed, but I almost daily think about the girl.

I received the Army Commendation Medal with Valor device for my actions that day, although I could care less. (I found out I did not receive the bronze star because I was only an E-4 Specialist)

2 of our men were killed transporting supplies to us by an IED on the 2nd day of the battle and another 2 were killed the 3rd day (by which time I was relieved and back on base). The total of that firefight was 4 dead, 12 wounded from my company. It really struck me during the firefight though was when 2 apaches were circling overhead and left. I later found out that they couldnt receive permission to fire because it would cause too many civilian casualties.

For the most part the Iraqi's are glad america is there, but they are the silent majority. They are too scared that if they speak out for us they would be kidnapped or murdered. One Iraqi asked me why America doesn't build schools or donate cars like the Japanese did. I told him it's because every time we try to build something either the workers get scared and don't show up because they are working for Americans and scared of retribution or because it is constantly attacked by one of the various militias.

I was never once in my entire year in iraq, attacked by Saddam loyalists or Al Qaeda, I was attacked by shiite milita that was sick of the American military bullying its way through traffic, never delivering on any promises it said it would keep, and just generally sick of a foreign military presence. Yes they were also religious extremists, but most were just disillusioned with America's presence.

Just imagine if George W. was a dictator and all of a sudden Canada invaded. We would be happy at first, but after almost 2 years of them still hanging around and nothing getting done, I'm fairly certain we would rise up against them too.

Another thing is that Iraq has been ruled by a dictatorship for basically its entire history, from Hammurabi to King Faisal to Saddam Hussein. All they know is ruling by fear, that is why either someone in the the new government is going to become another Saddam only with US backing, or some Iraqi General will stage a coup. It will take at least 2 generations for any sort of democracy to come to Iraq, and it won't help when they direct all their energy into killing Americans.

I'm glad we ousted Saddam, but we should not still be in Iraq.

I, to this day, have no clue why I fought over there, have no clue what I fought for, and am upset because my friends were maimed and killed for nothing.

The one of the biggest problems I deal with is the fact that even though we fought a three day battle to secure an IP station and we won. We abandoned it the next day and within a week the Mahdi army bullied all the Iraqi police out of it, placed demo charges and blew it up. And our leadership didn't even bat an eye. Can't figure out why we would fight so hard for something that had 4 guys killed and 12 wounded just so we can let it get blown up.

And it happened all the time, we'd go somewhere, hang out long enough for stuff to quiet down, move on and then the place we left would be just the same as before we showed up.

I think the only people that had any sort of morale were the officers and higher NCO's (E-8 and up) that didn't have to go out and face the possibility of getting blown up every day.

We had guys breaking down left and right and had to go see psychiatrists because they couldn't deal with being out in the city for 7 days straight in a shot with 12 hours up and 4 hours down.

Towards the end of our deployment if we didn't go home in about another month or two there would have been a rebellion.

I tried to explain it to people at work and they pretty much nod and say well that sucked and then when i showed them pictures of what was done over there and then they realize its not just some little 3 minute spot on the nightly news.

<p>That's another thing that I think most americans dont understand, when you hear about a bombing or attack in Iraq on the news, there are about 20 other bombings or firefights that you don't hear about.</p>

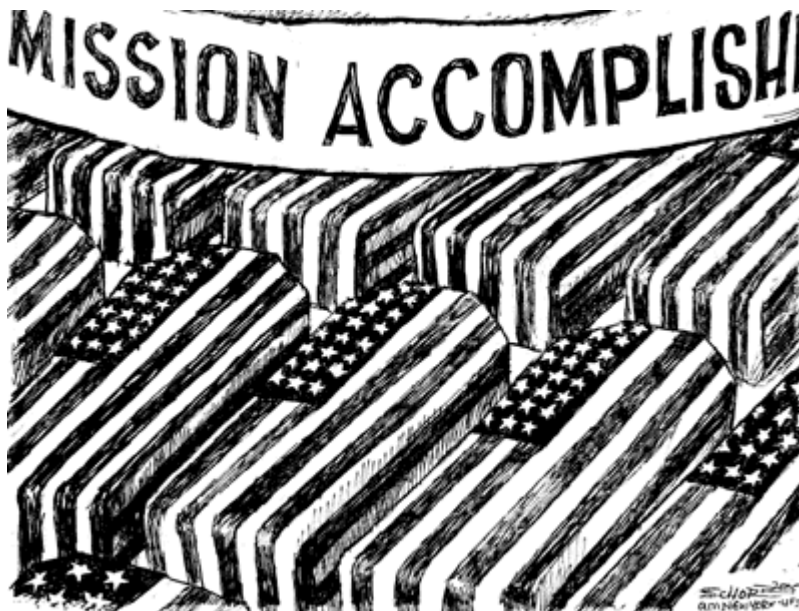
I would call or email home about a carbombing or shooting to see if they heard anything about it on the news and until our 4 guys were killed the answer was always no. So it astounds me as to how little information really filters down to the american people.

There is sometimes days that go by now that I'm home that I wont hear anything about Iraq, and I can promise you something happens every day. My camp was mortared so frequently during one week it was as if we were underseige, like 20 mortars a day for 5 days straight, and when your camp is only about 1square mile those booms sound awfully close.

And you never hear about how many Iraqi civilians are killed just because they work for Americans and are trying to provide for their families. We had a restaurant on our FOB run by haji's that we used to go to whenever we were either sick of the chow hall food or if we came in too late to get dinner. One night a bunch of us went there to get dinner and we ordered french fries. The guy that took the order, who was also the owner said he didnt have any french fries, so we started ribbing him about how we could give some kid that lives under a bridge \$2 to get us fries but yet here he is with a restaurant without a fairly basic item, so after about 2 minutes of busting this guy a little he gets red and says, " I will tell you why we have no fries, man that delivers fries was killed because he works with americans". When he said that it just floored us. We couldnt imagine some one who delivers french fries would be killed just because he delivers food to a guy that works for americans.

We had interpretors' relatives killed, let alone interpretors themselves for working with us. Our interpretor whom i still talk to through email on occasion (badly wants to come to the US) only told his immediate family who he works for, his neighbors all think that he does construction work.

Whatever you do, don't take what you have here for granted.



© United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

Dearest Moms: One Soldier's Year in Iraq: by Sergeant Ryan Montgomery Campbell



**Sgt Campbell, Photo Taken February 11, 2004
KIA April 29, 2004**

From: Mary Ann MacCombie
To: GI Special
Sent: August 21, 2005
Subject: One Soldier's Year in Iraq

I just returned home from 5 days at Camp Casey.

I want to share with your readers what it was like for my son as a soldier in Iraq.

I spent the last day and a half going through letters, e-mails and instant messages my son sent me and have compiled excerpts in journal entry form.

I have many, many photos he took while in Iraq.

**Sincerely,
Mary Ann MacCombie**

Prologue

My son, Sergeant Ryan Montgomery Campbell, was born in Enterprise, Alabama, November 7, 1978. He grew up in Alabama, California and Missouri.

He joined the Missouri Army National Guard in 1999 and enlisted in the U.S. Army shortly after 9/11.

He was stationed in Iraq with the 1st Armored Division, 2nd Brigade, 4/27 Field Artillery, Charlie Battery (aka "Cobras"), 2nd Platoon, from the end of April 2003 through the end of April 2004.

Throughout this year, Ryan and I stayed in touch as much as possible through telephone calls, letters, e-mail and instant messaging.

The following are excerpts from his communications to me.

Mary Ann MacCombie, August 2005, Atlanta, Georgia

30 May 03

I'm in Baghdad finally – no phones, no electricity, no running water. It is a little cooler than Kuwait at least. My days consist of mostly mounted patrols within our sector. We take the tracked vehicles out in the streets. We always have the right of way, it's great.

Most of the natives within our sector are thrilled that we are here. Most of the children wave and shout, running after the vehicles. We throw lots of candy and food to them, most are hungry. Trash covers the streets and sewage has overflowed in some places. It is not a pretty place, but supposedly we have been assigned one of the safer sectors of Baghdad.

We have no cots, so I'm still sleeping on the floor. But at least we are in buildings now instead of tents, so we aren't so affected by the sandstorms. Complacency right now is our biggest enemy right now. I suppose it's easy to forget that there are still many hostile people here. People that would kill us rather than have us here.

Well, I think about you a lot. When I do finally come home on leave, you'll have to help me hunt for a good car. I should be able to get something pretty nice for a change. I'd like a jeep, but I dunno.

14 June 03

Still chillin' here in Baghdad. Well, not really but you know... Most of the time, we're just pulling guard at various places here. I just got done pulling 12 hr. shifts for four days. It sucked and it was hot as hell.

I go to the promotion board next month and I should get pinned in October. It's about time.

I don't know if I'll be back by Christmas. Nobody really knows just yet.

24 June 03

Things are extremely shitty here, but I won't go into all that 'cause I don't want you to worry about me.

On a good note, I go to the promotion board in a week and should be a sgt in a couple of months.

I've heard we may be getting out of here in January, but nothing of course is certain so don't look forward to it. I'm getting out of the Army, mom, I'm taking my money and running. I can't live like this. I can, but it sux.

I love you mom's and I will be coming home eventually.

14 July 03

Well, things still suck here. No AC, no real food, no women **sigh**. But I'm still truckin' along. I did extremely well on the board I told you about. I scored a 148 out of 150. I definitely got recommended for promotion and will get pinned Sgt in September. I'm making a lot of money out here, but when you can't spend it, you don't really notice. I'd still rather be home, but I don't have much choice.

There's a lot of stuff I'll tell you about when I get back, but I just won't write about, because I don't want you to worry. I'm sure you've probably seen a lot in the news anyway.

Right now my section is pulling guard at the Iraqi Army MEPPS station. (military entrance processing) It's still being built right now – should be finished in a couple of weeks and then we'll be stampeded by all the Iraqis wanting to join. On the inside of our compound is a structure that is only halfway complete. I guess it was supposed to be the world's largest mosque. Sadaam was overseeing its construction. I have pictures, but soon we are going to destroy it. The Iraqi people want to get rid of anything and everything that reminds them of Sadaam. It's a funny feeling to walk into one of his palaces and see American soldiers running operations out of it.

...keep sending me stuff too, 'cause it's about the only thing keeping me going. I love getting mail.

23 July 03

I wish right now that I could sit down with you at the dinner table and eat a nice homecooked meal. I can't wait to come home.... It's been longer than I ever dreamed it would be.

Right now, things in Baghdad are finally setting into a routine for me. Our main mission right now is to guard the military processing station for the new Iraqi Army. It's suspected to be a desirable target of former members of the Ba'ath party. We end up getting a lot of pissed off former Iraqi captains and majors and such. They don't want to accept the fact that they have to join the new Army as soldiers with the same rank as everyone else. They bitch and moan, but still join because the money is good. I guess the average income here is between \$50.00-200.00 a year. Pretty crazy, huh?

24 July 03

The fauna here is pretty much just palm trees. It's weird because I always pictured those within water, but I haven't seen rain since I came to Baghdad – a little in Kuwait, but no trees –go figure.

29 July 03

I love getting mail. It's about the only thing to look forward to out here.

Well, we finally have AC in our building. I'm working 12 hr nightshift right now, but it's still a good sleep during the day.

If I end up being here a year, I'll be able to get rid of most of these loans. The consolidation should make things easier anyway for the time being. Right now I'm guarding the Iraqi pension center. It hands out money to the Iraqis, kinda like welfare I guess. I work at night though and I don't have to deal with any of that shit. Every area that we guard is referred to as a "static display". This means that we basically just sit there. We're right by the Tigris right now though, so at least there's somewhat of a view. There are a lot of Iraqi squatters around constantly. They're basically gophers. They get you food, soda, whatever you want for a very small fee. It's convenient.

I go back and forth about the Army. Some days I want to go OCS and make it a career. The outside is just intimidating because there are no guarantees, you know? In the military, "I'm guaranteed sustenance for the duration. Ya know?"

And it's OK to cry, but try to prepare yourself for the long haul, because I fear I may be here a long while.

03 August 03

Hey, I bet you didn't expect to hear from me via email, huh? There's a group of military guys that goes from place to place and gives us all access to the internet and phones for few days. So if I don't send you anything again for awhile, you know why.

It'll be nice to communicate with you real time for a change, though. I tried the phones, but it's next to impossible to get through unless you are calling a military dsn line. So sorry about that, it looks like you'll have to wait to hear my voice a little while longer. It's a rarity that we get the opportunity to go to the phone center at the airport, but I'll call when I can. Anyway, there's finally ac in the buildings, so that's nice.

The packages are getting here in good shape overall.

I've got everybody sold on Mitchum deodorant too, the stuff works! Anyway, just want to let you know that I'm ok...estimated time of return between Feb.-April...I know...sux. Keep writing me and praying for me. It's not the safest place in the world over here ya know. I should be a Sgt. in less than a month...scored 148 out of 150 on my board.

04 August 03

Ummmm...this will definitely be the last time for a little bit that I get to mail you because they're leaving early tomorrow morning. If we are here for the full year, it will count as a hardship tour, which means I will have both that and my overseas tour out of the way. Yay! Well, still working nights and I'm about ready for bed, things have changed up now though, so I'm back to mounted patrols for a bit.

It's nice to be able to sleep with a blanket finally!

06 August 03

It's the same old shit over here. The monotony is killing me.

I try to stay away from things that suck, too, like RPG's!

I'm going to be very out of shape when I get back. There's not much motivation here to work out and stuff. I'm doin good just to stay motivated to do my job. It's amazing everything you take for granted.

10 August 03

Hey wassup? Well, I'm going to have access to email for the next couple of weeks. My platoon has moved from the compound to the Meps station again where we now have access to the internet. We're also in the air conditioning and the shifts are a lot shorter than they are at the compound. We're on guard for about an hour and a half and then we're off for around four. I just got through talking to you on the phone yesterday of course. It was wonderful to hear from you. But I hope you understand why I don't call more often. It just tears me up ya know. I miss you a lot and it's easier to just send letters because I don't think about it quite so much ya know?

The last couple days have been HORRENDOUS! My buddy's watch has a thermometer and it said it was 135 degrees out here. It hurts just to go outside. I've never been so hot, officially, in my entire life. I think around the middle of the month it's supposed to cool down though. Maybe like 100 or so??? ☹ Well, I'll be checking my email every day pretty much for the next couple of weeks, so feel free to conversate as much as you'd like. I love you and miss you tons.

11 August 03

Yes, I have lost weight. It's not so much loss of appetite as it is malnutrition. MRE and t-rats don't exactly cut it. I came out here with a bit of muscle and I can't feed it with that crap. And since all we do is run guard points, I don't get enough exercise and I'll probably be in the worst shape of my life when I get back. It's kinda depressing so I try not to think about it.

We are required to be in full battle rattle at all times that we are off the compound with a weapon on red status, i.e., loaded and chambered on save. We have two Kevlar plates, front and back, with Kevlar helmet. Gear weighs somewhere in the neighborhood of 80 pounds or so. It's not light and it adds about 10 degrees to any given temperature out doors, as far as body heat is concerned.

...two of Sadaam's brothers were killed by American forces recently. I was at MEPS that night and it was chaos in Baghdad. They're idea of celebrating is to go outside and fire off bullets in the air. The night sky was full of tracers, making the sky look like a fireworks show. Bullets began landing around us, not because they were being shot at us, but because the one's in the air were falling down. Everyone had to stay under cover and could not sleep outside of their vehicles or the building that night.

Anyway, about a month before that happened, our convoy was hit with an IED. We were supporting another unit doing a raid on Hyfa street (one of the most dangerous streets in our sector). We had to stop traffic. There were two one way streets and my vehicle was blocking one corner of course. After the raid, we all assembled into our convoy and began to head back. The IED went off shortly thereafter. It was no more than 25 meters behind me. They waited for the hummers to drive by it before they set it off. They knew they could cause more damage that way. The humveee tthat was two vehicles behind me was destroyed, the interpreter took shrapnel to the abdomen and face, and a soldier took shrapnel to the neck and face. He was bleeding from the ears and in critical condition, but I believe he survived. Instead of breaking contact, the convoy turned into a clusterfuck and just stopped. If there had been any more contact, it would have been even worse for us. But thank God that there was not and we made it back without any more events.

Another time we were on guard at the cemetery where we were pulling a raid to search for a weapons cache. A couple of Bradley's were there to help us out because once again, it was right next to Hyfa street. An RPG slammed directly into the front of a Bradley on the other side of my three way intersection. The Bradley, unphased roared off down the road in pursuit, guns blazing. It was a sight to see. There were no injuries in the Bradley, hence why they now pursue Hummers instead. Anyway, things have calmed down a bit since we stopped doing patrols and raids and the like. We've settled down into mostly just guard points. I'm glad because it was getting rather unnerving. I still get nervous when I have to ride around in a HummV. So that's a few things that have gone on. Every night there is gun fire, some nights more than others. Oh, I didn't even tell you about the village riot. But I'll tell you that one later. It involved a 300 lb Iraqi woman grabbing the barrel of my weapon, not pleasant.

12 August 03

Wassup? I just got off guard. We're working 2 on, and 6 off, so it's not too bad. There's a lot of other bullshit that we do on our supposed "off" time, but it's still a sufficient break I suppose. Yeah, I meant to say sons, I don't know why I said brothers. But anyway, support over here is pretty good from the Iraqis. Most were quite happy to see Sadaam uprooted. But there is still plenty of bad sentiments though, it's just not as prevalent.

...an IED is just that, a homemade bomb, or crude bomb, so to speak. ...an RPG is shoulder-fired from a rocket launcher. A pin is pulled from the grenade and the second the tip makes contact with anything, it explodes.

...The vehicle I normally ride in is a CAAT or FAASV, Field Artillery Ammunition Supply Vehicle. And yes, it is much more heavily armored and less likely to come under attack than a hummV.

I'm still weighing the idea very heavily of getting out when this is all over. Just taking my money and trying to make it out there, ya know? I'm tired of giving up my life for this shit.

13 August 03

Ummm...grenades. Handheld or fragmentary grenades are not part of standard issue anymore. The grenade has two safety mechanisms, the pin and the spoon (looks like a handle). Once you pull the pin, the spoon is released and you can only stop the detonation by keeping the spoon squeezed tight against the grenade, once the spoon is released, usually by throwing, the grenades electronic fuze is set and after a few seconds, boom. You can only change your mind if you are still holding the spoon down, at which point, you can replace the pin and no boom. There is no detonation from impact, the detonation is timed.

The RPG on the other hand has a pin in the tip of the nose. It also has a shaft which slides into the launcher. But once the pin is pulled, the grenade will detonate on IMPACT. There is no timing sequence. So once the pin is pulled, if the person should fall forward and let the nose of the grenade hit the ground...boom. But once the trigger is pulled on the launcher, the RPG sails forward like a bullet and blows up whatever it hits on IMPACT.

As far as the RandR, they call it the big blue bus and yes it takes soldiers to some hotel or something where they have a couple of days to relax. I doubt 1AD will ever see it though, I just read about it in the paper.

I have also heard of the two weeks, but what I heard is that they will send us back to Germany, I don't know if there will actually be leave in which we get to go home. We'll see I guess. I will definitely take advantage of it if it is true. But I don't think it will happen. There would be too many AWOL's and people getting into trouble because noone would want to come back to this hellhole.

15 August 03

I just gotta make sure I keep enough money for my jeep when I get back.

16 August 03

Today, I was at the south gate with 5 other guys. They opened it for payments to the former Iraqi military. Today was just for Generals. They each get a one time payment of like 150 bucks. The safe here has 6 million dollars in it! It's crazy, we had thousands of people there. All of them trying to jump the concertina wire. We had to take a couple people out. I caught one dude jumping the wire. When I yelled at him it startled him and he fell over. His hand was draining blood like a spring gutter drains water. It was his own fault however....alas.

18 August 03

...I suppose women are the last thing I should be thinking about right now. I've never had any luck with them, and I don't miss all the hurt I usually go through.

19 August 03

I'm still pulling the same shit over here, static guard positions at MEPS and the South Gate. We switch every two weeks with 1st platoon, so I won't have internet access for a couple of weeks starting the 25th. SORRY!!

I'm alive and well, and I miss u like always. Love you Moms!

20 August 03

I was pulling guard when the UN blast went off! It was like a deep, thunderous roar. Not really loud, because it was on the other side of Baghdad, but you could tell it was an extremely large blast. There haven't been any significant changes where we are, just a little more watchful I suppose, the recruiting station over at Bahsra (sp) got nailed, so we're definitely trying to be careful.

21 August 03

I miss you so bad, so I just have to take it in stride and try to keep my composure when I'm talking to you. I appreciate the things you send me so much! I think I'm pretty lucky to have such a great relationship with my moms, I don't think too many people here have that. I was working all damn day on my vehicle, from 5 in the morning until 10 at night. Had to pull the motor and replace a fan tower, a generator, an idler wheel, a road wheel, had to break track....whew, it was a tough day! So at least I don't have guard for awhile....I've gotta take a shower and wash my uniform...well I love you and I'll talk to you later....Mwah!

23 August 03

Well, they've opened up an internet café at the other location too, so I might still be able to communicate with you via email. No guarantees though! Well, the temps aren't so bad, very much bearable after the way it has been. Umm...well same old stuff here, not a lot to say...I love you Mom.

25 August 03

Wassup? Well, I had to wait in line for like 2 hours, but I'm finally on, the computers here are really slow, so I'll probably only be on line once every couple of days, but I guess it's better than nothing.

26 August 03

Hey wassup??? The wait wasn't so bad today. We're at the South Gate now, well, actually at the compound, but we roll out to the south gate every 12 hours. It's 6 on, and 12 off.

27 August 03

Worked on the vehicle a bit today, but my six hour shift at the gate sucked. The Iraqis were extremely unruly today for some reason and it just gets old after awhile, and you just want to kick everybody's ass, ya know?

01 September 03

I forgot that today was labor day, it's funny how holidays mean absolutely nothing out here, huh? I work every day.

02 September 03

Umm...well, I have learned quite a bit of Arabic or Farsi or whatever you want to call it. If you ever get the chance, tell somebody...ir deezak...that's how it sounds, don't ask me how it's spelled...it means fuck you in Arabic...☺ Oh, and tanta...means fag...yup, I learn all kinds of cool words!

13 September 03

They screwed up all our paperwork...so yes, me and Lamon are both still rotting away over here as spec...our pay reflects sgt, but our collars still reflect spec. Oh well, I've waited this long, I'm sure I can wait a little longer.

15 September 03

Well, a soldier from Bravo battery in our battalion died at 0800 this morning. He was the tc of a CAT, and got hit directly with an rpg. Noone else was hurt, but he was a mess...literally from what I hear. Yeah, there's only about 18 guys in the battalion that do what I do. He was one of them. Kinda narrows things down a little bit, huh? It starts to get scary if I think about it too much, but you'll probably see it in the news soon....Things are getting a little too close for my comfort. But I deal....I love you mom!

16 September 03

I try to tell myself the same crap....I'm not on patrols anymore, but I still drive the streets when we swap out every two weeks, or when I have to go back to the comopound for vehicle maintenance....Also, there's talk that we will no longer be working over at the MEPS, if we aren't, we most likely will continue to do patrols again....

Well, no more news here thank God.

17 September 03

Hey, wassup! Well, the memorial service for SSG _____ was today. There were a lot of good words said about the man. I wasn't really close to him, but I hated feeling so mortal.

22 September 03

I'm so sorry I haven't been able to write. We had an emergency mission come down at Meps the other day. They said that we had to be ready to fire in five days. We're going to this place called Camp Dogwood...it's about 456 minutes away from here and I don't know if I'm going to have internet access....probably not though....So anyway, it's been train, train, train for the past few days and I haven't even really had enough time to sleep much less write anybody.

30 September 03

Hey Moms, sorry that I haven't been able to stay in very good contact, but we're in Camp Dogwood with the guns and the lines of communication aren't quite as well developed over here.

8 October 03

Hey Mom's!! What's happening!? I'm still in Camp Dogwood right now. We actually got to fire some rounds out here – that was pretty cool. Our section was actually the only one to fire an actual “combat mission”. We fired an illumination round for a forward recon element.

Phones and e-mail are practically non-existent out here. And when you do use the phones, they cost a dollar for every minute – not cool.

Well, basically, the way things work out here...let me fill ya in. We come out to the guns – just our section for 24 hrs. Then we go back to the camp for two days. It's called “hot gun”. One section come out at a time. There are three sections in our platoon. Our platoon is the only one that came to Camp Dogwood. 1st Plt is still at the compound guarding MEPS and the South Gate. We came here because of “Motar Mike”. I guess some rebels have run up to the camp and rained down some mortars. Since I've been here, not shit has happened like that. I imagine we scared 'em off with all the shootin' we've done out here.

Anyway, on our off days, we stay back at the camp in tents inside an old Iraqi factory warehouse.

I've got a lot of time on my hands these days. Anyway, so things are pretty cool right now. I don't have to deal with Iraqi crowds and all the other bullshit.

5 November 03

Hey moms! Well, I'm back to having email access again! Of course I'm working 12 hour night shifts too, so I might not be able to check it every day...so bear with me.

Well, I'm back to working the South Gate again, but I still hit the gym all the time....

10 November 03

Hey mom's! Sorry about not being able to write sooner, but I ate a bad Iraqi chicken and I was REALLY sick for a few days.

Access to the phones is very limited by the way...Ummm...ok, well I love you and I'm thinking about you...not too much longer and I'll be chillin' at yer dinner table again...Mway!

15 November 03

You shouldn't worry. Nothing is going to stop me from coming home. I don't know anything about the soldier that was killed yet, I haven't heard. It wasn't in our battalion I don't think. There's a lot more mortar fire around the south gate and our compound since we got back from Camp Dogwood. We hear em just about every night....Kinda scary, but I think it's just because it's getting closer to the time that we pack up and get outta here. So naturally I'm more worried about some stupid random explosion or bullet taking me out of the ball game. I just don't think about it though and you shouldn't either. I'll be sure to email you if I die. HA! ;)

18 November 03

Oh and it's not nice over here...last night I was freezing my ass off over here on guard. It was 49 degrees and for us right now that is cold as shit!!

19 November 03

Yes, the nights are really cold and it sux cause I have the night shift.

24 November 03

God knows how long I will be out here. Today has been an absolutely wretched day. I worked twelve hours, but then had to go to brigade to get some cash, got back from there finally and had just laid down when I got a message that the first sgt. Wanted to see Sgt _____ and I ASAP back at the south gate. So we go back there and he just wants us to empty the trash....so that sucked and then I couldn't get back to sleep and I just laid there, and now I'm going to try to work out, but I feel like a zombie...sux to me.

02 December 03

Hello again! Sorry that I haven't written in a bit...but I've been horribly busy working 6on and 6off for fob security...sux!

06 December 03

Hey mommas!!! What's up? Sorry I haven't been able to write, but I've been working 12on, 12off at the South Gate again day shift. When I get off, the computer place is usually packed, so it's hard to get online.

I love you mom....I can't wait to see you and I will hurry back as fast as I can.

07 December 03

Well, it was supposed to be a surprise, but I'm scheduled to come home on leave Jan. 9 and there is a good chance that I will be bumped up a week or so.

08 December 03

Manoman!!! Just when I think things are sucking, they start to suck even worse! Not only am I back on FOB security, but this time it's 12 on and 12 off. And on top of that I was just informed that I've been chosen to go to the NCO of the Month Board. The Battery board is on the 12th and the Battalion on the 15th. So they expect me to prepare for a board while I work 12 hours a day...yeah...whatever.

The plane goes to Germany, then goes to Baltimore...from there you are on your own.

I was going to rent a car from KCI, but now that you know, I'm going to make you pick me up. ...I'm sorry for ruining you all's plans, but things are out of my hands.

11 December 03

Things are really messed up with leave now. It looks like I may not be coming back until the end of January now. I don't think anybody really knows what's going on. I'll let you know as soon as I get something definite. Well, I have the board tomorrow, wish me luck. I can't say as I'm too excited. Working 12 hours every day as well as trying to get prepared has been a living hell. I just want to get it over with. I don't even care how well I do. I still can't believe they picked me for this shit. Not much else going on here. It's getting a little chilly and downright cold at nights.

12 December 03

Well now they're saying that my date is January 23rd! *sigh* I dunno what's going on. I went to the board today. I begged the first sgt to met me get out of it because I had just gotten through working straight twelve hours through the night and I didn't feel I was ready for the board. But he made me go. I tied for first place and will be representing Charlie Battery at the NCO of the month board next month. I guess that's good....I know with a month to study I will easily win it. It'll look good in my file I suppose...For God's sake, I've only been an NCO for a couple of months, ya know? Basically, the board I went to today was a Battery Board to see who would be going to the Battalion Board. Oh, good news! Watch FOX television! Today I got to get some camera time! I don't know when they'll air it, but I'm almost positive I'm going to be on tv! I'm not a very good actor, but I got to hold a mic and everything, it was cool! Be sure to let me know if you see anything....Well, I'm gonna run....I love you so much....Soon I will be seeing you....soon!

13 December 03

Damn, they probably haven't even got back to the states yet. It takes awhile for them to develop the footage and everything....It might be a week or even a month...just keep an eye out.

Well, it's getting a little colder out here now....I can see my breath at night...probably in the thirties sometimes....I spent all today as the Battalion escort...riding around Baghdad in a Humvee following the Captain to his meetings....got to eat at the Al Rasheed hotel...that was cool....Also got a lot of great digital pics of the city cause it was a sunny day...got a picture of the Tigris finally....Well, another day goes by that I didn't get blown up, so all is good. I love you moms....Take care.

14 December 03

...I guess they caught sadaam a few hours ago in Tikrit. The uniform for now is flak vest and Kevlar because of all of the celebratory fire going on out here.

15 December 03

The celebratory fire for Sadaam wasn't that bad, it was much worse for Oday and Qusay believe it or not....I wonder why? Well, I better run...I love you....my date is still the 23rd.

19 December 03

Well, I had to go to class in this place called Camp Muleskinner for a couple of days....It was a last minute thing and they were like "grab your bags and pack for three days, cause your leaving in 10 minutes...." But it ended up being pretty cool. That place was much more built up than Thunder FOB is.

Well, I guess I'm the permanent author of second platoon's monthly newsletter...somehow I knew that bullshit would happen. Oh well...I can think of worse jobs to have.

26 December 03

...they're working me to death and I can't keep up. My chief goes on leave today so on top of everything else, now I have to take care of the entire section...and they're probably going to cancel all leave after January 16th, so I won't even get to come home at all...so Merry Christmas!

29 December 03

Well, we gave up the South Gate yesterday...

I just got out of a formation...they wanted to make sure that we had our dog tags and id cards...and then all of the NCO's got an asschewing from the 1SG for being late to a formation that we didn't even know about....

Well, I have no idea what is going on with leave...

The division commander said that they would continue until the 30th, but I dunno....there are rumors both ways....

I heard the reason was because they needed to free up the airways for the people coming in to eventually relieve us....

30 December 03

...there's nothing like sitting at the South Gate on Christmas day with the Sgt Major, a task force and the quick reactionary force hell bent on relying on some MI information that says we're an attack target for a car bomb....

They said between 6 and 7 am...so I'm sitting there like...ok...so I'm waiting to get blown up or what???

It was an interesting experience...never seen the force protection measures stepped up so drastically....

I went to a school on vehicle and personnel searches for a couple of days a couple of weeks ago and they showed us a lot of interesting little dohickies that'll kill ya....

I don't really get to put my hands on anybody anymore...kinda sux...

But I do get to slash tires...that's always fun...!

Complacency shmacency...everybody around here loves that word.....I'm so tired of it...it's like get a goddamn thesaurus people...

21 January 04

Well, things over here have calmed down...We just do patrols every day now...that's about it... The gunner's test is over. I maxed it...we have section evals on Friday...once we get all that stuff over with, we'll be able to focus on the redeployment back to Germany.

14 February 04

Well, I'm sitting at the terminal at the Baltimore airport. My flight leaves out of here in a couple of hours...I just wanted to let you know that I was okay. I tried to call you back from the hotel last night, but the line was busy for some reason. Well, I love you and just want to wish you a happy valentine's day. Thanx for a great visit and a great couple of weeks. I'm sorry if I was hard to get along with at times...but it's just tough having to deal with all this bullshit...I'll try to get ahold of you when I get to Kuwait. I love you!

17 February 04

Well, I'm in Baghdad again, if that's good, I dunno. Not much has changed. I was right that that place that was bombed was the one we were guarding. It was, and

about 50 Iraqis died. 2nd plt had to respond to it since it was in our sector. Glad I wasn't there. People say the smell of burning flesh is something that you will never get rid of.

I might be without email and phone for awhile because I think I will have to go to Biap for the hot gun mission. All the rest of 2nd platoon is already there.

19 February 04

Oh I can't receive any mail after March 30th so don't send any, k? Because of redeployment and everything.

I'll be home before ya know it...!

22 February 04

Well, I put my pic on hot or not...a website where people vote on whether or not they think your hot. I've had 86 votes so far and my rating is 9.3 out of 10. Pretty good, huh?

Thanks for bein my moms!

22 February 04

But guess what? We took mortar fire yesterday. They landed like maybe a hundred meters from us, like six or seven of them. We were inside the building and it sounded like somebody was pounding on the wall or something. It took us awhile to realize that we were under attack...anyway, so maybe I'm not as safe as I thought I was...*sigh* of well, there's probably not too many safe places left in Baghdad anyway.

29 February 04

Wassup momma? Well I'm back in town! So to speak, back at the FOB. So it's been a long day cleaning the vehicles and such. I don't know, but Ill probably be back on guard duty again soon, the bastards!

01 March 04

We just got through with NCO professional development courses....

After which I guess the first sgt sat down with my chief to discuss my reenlistment...and they're making a pretty sweet offer.

They're offering me 5000 to reenlist for 3 years...I'm guaranteed at least a year of that in Germany, non deployable status, and then I'm guaranteed the duty station of my choice...and they also offered to send me to the E-6 board as soon as I am eligible, which is in about 3 or 4 months....

They're all saying that since I want to go to OCS, anyway, I might as well take the money now, while it's tax free...

I told my chief if they could get me Hawaii, I would do it.

I also told him if they get me that E-6 fast as they say I can, I might not even put in an ocs packet.....

As an E-6 I would be a chief of section.

05 March 04

...still kinda waiting it out...I don't want to rush into anything ya know...the only difference between now and later is about 600 in taxes or whatever...and the bonus might go up later on anyway...so we'll see...I'll be sure to let you know....

I'm almost done in Baghdad.

Ah, don't worry...it's not that bad right now....just a few explosions here and there...nothing big....

08 March 04

...things are really wrapping up over here right now...not much longer...I'll be back before April 30th...well, back to Germany anyway...I've been thinking, how would you like to come to Germany this summer, and go on a trip to Spain, for like a week or something like that? The packages are real cheap from Germany when I use SATO. The only expensive thing would be the round trip ticket to Germany. Anyway, just wanted to throw that out there. I know you've always wanted to go back there, and I've never been and I really need to get out and see some things while I'm overseas ya know...

11 March 04

...things have been real slow here...had to go around the past couple of days picking up old gnarly concertina wire around our sector and replacing it. My hands will never forgive me!

18 March 04

...things are crazy just trying to get everything ready to get the hell out of here. I may be leaving to Kuwait sooner than I thought, which is a definite plus, but I can't give out exact dates or anything...if I call from Kuwait sometime though, you'll know. And then I won't have to worry about dying anymore ! Yay! Anyway, other than that, same old bullshit.

31 March 04

I miss you too...it'll be over soon....

...but I'll make it...still one month left to get a purple heart.... ;)

04 April 04

Hey mom, wassup? It was good to hear from you! Don't worry so much about me ok? I'm still safe over here...well as safe as can be....

Anyway, I just found out today that I'm on force package one, which basically means that I'm among the first to leave out of here...and when I do leave, I'm not even going to Kuwait, I'm going straight to Germany yay! This also means that I will be coming home on leave sooner as well...I should be coming home on leave sometime around the 25th of April...

...and within a couple of weeks, you should be getting that wonderful phone call...;) I love you! Mwah!

06 April 04

Well, I've decided to reenlist...I'm signing a contract for 6 more years and a 10000 dollar bonus, tax free, lump sum payment. The good thing is that when I go OCS, it cancels out the contract...and I keep the money...I'm also guaranteed a one year stabilization period in Germany where I Will not be deployed.

08 April 04

Well, what you heard on the news is true. I didn't want to say anything until it was official. All of us were informed last night that we were facing a four month extension and that it would be a definite answer within 48 hours. Well, we are staying, in Iraq, but not thunder FOB. 1st Cav will move in here as scheduled and there is about a 95 percent chance that we are moving to Fallujah. I have cancelled all action towards reenlistment. I have read articles concerning Fallujah, and for the first time since I've come here, I must admit that I am scared. All I can say is be prepared for the worst Mom. I truly fear the worst is upon us. I love you so much, don't ever forget that. Thank you so much for your continuing support...I miss you. love, Ryan

09 April 04

Hey Moms! Well, I guess I'm in a little bit better mood tonight..I'm coming closer to accepting all the bullshit...It was a hard pill to swallow and at first I think it got caught in my throat for awhile. Anyway, I guess now we're most likely going to Najef, Nijef, Njef...whatever...instead of Fallujah. Don't think that's much better, but I guess I came out here initially to fight, so I just kinda have to go about getting back into that frame of mind. We have no actual mission right now, we're just waiting, kinda on standby for everything to come down from up top. We have been extended "indefinitely" rather than for four months, so God knows how long I'll be here. The new plan is to get through this, hopefully come back by the end of August. I won't go immediately on leave because I will be so close to my ets date. I'm going to apply all of my leave days towards terminal leave and hopefully be home for Christmas. Home for good. I am done with this. I am so done. I just cannot do this anymore.

10 April 04

Hey Moms! Well, the days are just dragging by over here...before at least there was something to look forward to, but now there isn't shit, so it really, really sux, and it's really, really slow. We still haven't had our exact mission come down yet...so everybody

is just kinds waiting like somebody pressed pause on the remote, ya know?? OH, guess what, I won't be getting any extra money while I'm extended either. Usually, if you go over 365 days deployed, you get like an extra 800 or so a month, but since I went on leave for two weeks, I guess they're saying that it broke my time deployed, so my 365 days begins the day I got back from leave. Yeah, so basically, the army has been planning on fucking us over for some time now...They didn't start the r and r program to benefit eh soldiers, the only reason they started it was so that they could save money in the long run, because they knew they were going to be extended long before we ever found out.

Anyway, I continue to hate this place, I hate the army, and I'm definitely ready to go kill someone, so I guess I'm just waiting now to get the word. Wish me luck! Love Ryan-

11 April 04

Hey! Well, the timeline is that we should be leaving in about 4 days for Najaf. Phone internet access, etc...is unknown, but most likely will be non-existent for the next couple of months...Mail services have been restored so you can send me snail mail...

Just count on the fact that I will keep in touch with you one way or the other, by regular mail if necessary.

I love you so much.

11 April 04

Hey! Well, the timeline is that we should be leaving in about 4 days for Najaf. Phone internet access, etc...is unknown, but most likely will be non-existent for the next couple of months...Mail services have been restored so you can send me snail mail...

Just count on the fact that I will keep in touch with you one way or the other, by regular mail if necessary.

I love you so much.

Epilogue:

My son, Sgt. Campbell, was killed April 29, 2004, while his platoon was providing security for army engineers who were digging up IEDs on a country road just south of Baghdad.

A suicide car bomber pulled into the midst of the 2nd platoon and detonated what has been estimated as more than 500 lbs. of explosives.

Ryan, along with 7 of his fellow soldiers were killed in the blast, and 3 other soldiers were wounded.

Ryan was buried May 11, 2004 in Arlington National Cemetery.

I moved to Atlanta, Georgia, a week later.



Web Copies:

For back issues see GI Special web site at <http://www.militaryproject.org/> .

The following that we know of have also posted issues:

<http://gi-special.iraq-news.de>, <http://www.notinourname.net/gi-special/>,

www.williambowles.info/gispecial,

<http://www.albasrah.net/magalat/english/gi-special.htm>

GI Special distributes and posts to our website copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in an effort to advance understanding of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. We believe this constitutes a "fair use" of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law since it is being distributed **without charge or profit** for purely educational purposes to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for educational purposes, in accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107. Go to: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml> for more information. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

If printed out, this newsletter is your personal property and cannot legally be confiscated from you. "Possession of unauthorized material may not be prohibited." DoD Directive 1325.6 Section 3.5.1.2.