

Military Resistance: 7/14: **[GI Special]**



Half Being

From: Dennis Serdel
To: Military Resistance
Sent: September 27, 2009
Subject: Half Being by Dennis Serdel ... Now MR

By Dennis Serdel, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th Brigade, purple heart, Veterans For Peace 50 Michigan, Vietnam Veterans Against The War, United Auto Workers GM Retiree, in Perry, Michigan

Half Being

**Sandra is only a half being since Shawn died
they said he was killed instantly so he did not suffer
as she turns on the TV and watches
and then nothing turns it off then turns it on**

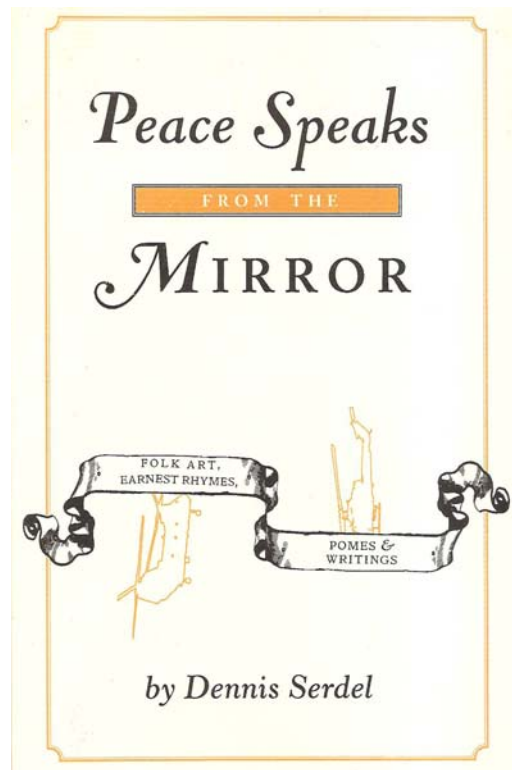
grabs a beer turns it off goes on Ebay buys a CD
takes some pills the doctor prescribed for her
depression but they only half work while
Shawn is missing on the other half all the talks
of what they will do when the war ends
have some children build a dream house on 10 acres
dig a pond in the back so the kids can swim and fish
a small orchard so the kids can pick cherries
apples pears peaches grapes and eat them
think of what their names will be
But Hell No she screams in her hair twisted like a knot
no makeup anywhere teeth with green moss
and finally anger because the War Never Ends
it goes on and on first with Bush and now Obama
who she voted for because he said
he would end the war and she gets her gun
wants to kill Obama on TV or
she wants to kill halfself so to be with Shawn again
she turns the light on in the kitchen then
forgets why she's there
turns them off puts a CD in the player that only
reminds her of when Shawn bought it for her
then there's death half life half death as the clock
that slowly spins with numbers day and night
are both the same it ticks 3AM and she lays down
but gets up walks around looking for him
who invented grieving young men who go to war
Sandra goes in the garage turns on the lights
looks at the car with Go Army an Army of One
a flag a ribbon that she puts a hammer to
she walks around opens her door but then
the driver isn't there she turns the lights off
goes to the kitchen takes more pills for
her half nothing because before there were
the phone calls the emails the funny pictures
his funny facebook now she bites her nails
until they bleed they said Shawn didn't suffer
and died instantly that she thought before
in circles at least he did not have to suffer
from tragic wounds it's 5 in the morning
but I Have To Suffer
another horror night she opens
the refrigerator door with beer and dancing politicians
doing the shoo-fly in a man made time
but for Sandra time means nothing anymore
she feels so mad she thinks she

will have a heart attack eats more pills
to calm her down looking for something but
it is missing finally she lays on the bed and collapses
4 hours straight dreaming with half of her being
oh she will be alright she is just grieving
an emotional lie explained by all
but she wants to kill Obama she wants to kill Bush W
No she will Not grieve anymore
she wants revenge an eye for an eye and a
half being for a half being Bitches

MORE:

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[You know the power of the poems by Dennis Serdel from the front pages of GI
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DENNIS SERDEL:

Shipped to Vietnam in November 1967.

Returned home in October 1968 to Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Joined Veterans For Peace in January 1990.

Joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War when Iraq and Afghanistan War started.

Books are \$15 Post Paid: Check or Money Order Payable to Dennis Serdel

Dennis Serdel
339 Oakwood Lane
Perry,
Michigan 48872

**Walt Whitman
Carl Sandburg
Allan Ginsberg
Now: Dennis Serdel
T**

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Resistance Action



The ruins of police barracks are seen after a bomber blew himself up in the area west of the city of Ramadi September 28, 2009. REUTERS/Ali al-Mashhdani

Sept 27 (Reuters) & Sept 28 (Reuters)

A bomber driving a water tanker packed with explosives blew himself up near a police station, killing seven policemen and wounding 10, said Hussein Ali, a police major in the area west of the city of Ramadi, 100 km (60 miles) west of Baghdad.

A car bomber killed three policemen and wounded eight when he detonated himself outside a police station near Ramadi, 100 km (60 miles) west of Baghdad, local police colonel Ahmed Abood said.

Insurgents killed an off-duty policeman on Saturday in a parking lot in central Mosul, police said.

A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol wounded two policemen on Saturday in northern Mosul, police said.

Two bombs in west Baghdad's Ghazaliya district killed at the commander of the local army battalion, and wounded at least nine soldiers, Baghdad security sources said.

A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol exploded, killing two policemen and wounding two in east Mosul, police said.

A bomb planted on a police officer's car wounded him on Sunday, in northern Kirkuk, 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

**IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE
END THE OCCUPATIONS**

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Kentucky Soldier Killed In Kandahar



Sept. 28, 2009: Spc. Kevin J. Graham, of Benton, Ky., died Sept. 26 in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Graham was an infantryman on his first deployment. (AP Photo/U.S. Army)

September 28, 2009 U.S. Department of Defense News Release No. 750-09

Spc. Kevin J. Graham, 27, of Benton, Ky., died Sept. 26 in Kandahar, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his vehicle with an improvised explosive device. He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment, 5th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Fort Lewis, Wash.

Private James Prosser Killed In Afghanistan

Sep 28 Ministry of Defence

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that Private James Prosser from 2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh was killed in Afghanistan, on Sunday 27 September 2009.

Private Prosser died as a result of an explosion that happened during a vehicle patrol in Musa Qaleh district, northern Helmand province.

U.S. Soldier Wounded By Eber IED Attack



9.26.09: U.S. soldier from the 10th Mountain Division based in Fort Drum, New York, gives help to another soldier wounded when an IED laid by the Taliban exploded and damaged their armoured vehicle along the road near the village of Eber in Logar province. REUTERS/Nikola Solic

Three Danish Soldiers Wounded East Of Gereskh

25-09-2009 Army Operational Command

Three Danish soldiers from the security and escort sharing Stabs and Logistics Company was today injured when an explosive device was triggered during a footpatrol in the Green Zone to the east of Gereskh city.

The soldiers were brought to the field hospital at Camp Bastion by helicopter. Here it was found that they were hit by fragments and were quickly processed.

They have not been in mortal danger, but remains at field hospital. From there, they have called home for relatives and even told what happened and how they feel.

The three wounded, all from Gardehusarregimentet in Slagelse.

Military Supply Convoy Attacked In Kunar, Six Trucks Destroyed

Sep 28 By RAHIM FAIEZ, Associated Press Writer

On Sunday, Taliban militants ambushed a truck convoy in eastern Kunar province, killing six drivers and burning their vehicles, the Interior Ministry and provincial police said. A seventh truck driver was kidnapped in the attack near the Pakistani border.

The trucks were loaded with construction materials bound for a military base, said Gen. Khaliullah Zaiyi, Kunar's police chief.

"We have already told them whenever they move from one place to another there should be a police escort," Zaiyi said. He said police were not informed the convoy was coming.

"We have extra forces on the highways with extra checkpoints, but it is very difficult to control such ambushes," he said.

Resistance Action

Sept 27 (Reuters) & By VOA News & Sept 28 (Reuters)

Afghan police say the country's energy minister has survived an explosion that killed four people in the western city of Herat. The Taliban say they carried out the car bombing targeting Minister Ismail Khan Sunday. Authorities say the explosion wounded at least 17 civilians who were passing on the main road to the Herat airport.

A car bomber killed three policemen and wounded eight when he detonated himself outside a police station near Ramadi, 100 km (60 miles) west of Baghdad, local police colonel Ahmed Abood said.

Insurgents killed an off-duty policeman on Saturday in a parking lot in central Mosul, police said.

A roadside bomb targeting a police patrol wounded two policemen on Saturday in northern Mosul, police said.

Taliban attacked an Afghan army convoy in the village of Shewan in western Farah province. Two Taliban fighters were killed and two Afghan soldiers wounded, a spokesman for the Afghan army said.

The Taliban hanged a man they accused of being a government spy in Bala Morghab district of northwestern Badghis province on Saturday, a police spokesman said.

**OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION
ALL TROOPS HOME NOW!**

**NEED SOME TRUTH?
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SOLDIER POSTED TODAY!!!**

Telling the truth - about the occupations or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance to Imperial wars inside the armed forces.

Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces.

If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/> And join with Iraq Veterans Against the War to end the occupations and bring all troops home now! (www.ivaw.org/)

“What Was The Point Of Being Here?”

“What A Waste Of Time!”

“The General Had Plainly Not Grasped The Realities Of Going To War”

The Descent Of Britain’s Afghan Campaign Into A Vietnam-Style Madness



Doug Beattie, map in hand, calls in support during fighting in Attal

[Thanks to Michael Letwin, New York City Labor Against The War & Military Project, who sent this in.]

26th September 2009 By CAPTAIN DOUG BEATTIE MC, Daily Mail

The beautiful little Afghan girl stared straight back at me, blankly. How could she be so expressionless? For she must have been in absolute agony. There were at least three penetration wounds to her young body, caused by a mortar shell exploding close to where she'd been playing.

The round that had done the damage had been ours - British - fired as we edged forward through part of a village in Helmand.

There had been no immediate threat, none I could determine anyway, but someone else had thought otherwise.

An old man, her grandfather, approached me. Of course he couldn't have known I'd just become a grandfather too; couldn't have known the effect the suffering of a child would have on me. After the girl - Shabia - had been airlifted to hospital, I stayed with her family, desperate to show I had some humanity.

I told them not to worry; she'd be OK for sure. Hollow words from a fool who knew no better.

I never saw Shabia again. And nor did her relatives. Because within hours she died.

She was just seven years old. I heard later how the British authorities refused to pay her father the compensation he'd requested, based on the size of dowry Shabia would have received when she married.

The excuse for not paying?

Her death had been 'incidental'; she was a casualty of conflict.

It made me ashamed - of myself, of the Army, and of my country.

Even if there were rules, did no one have a degree of compassion? An ounce of foresight?

How were we going to win the battle to bring the civilians onside if we killed one of their number and offered nothing to ease the pain in terms they understood?

It was heartless. It was wrong.

And it was no way to wage a campaign against an enemy ready to exploit any of our mistakes to turn the 26 million people of Afghanistan against us. Christ, as if things weren't tough enough.

“The General Had Plainly Not Grasped The Realities Of Going To War”

I was 42 and just three weeks away from making a go of it in Civvie Street when my commanding officer asked me to postpone my retirement and go on one last mission to Afghanistan with 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, to help train members of the Afghan National Army (ANA).

All my married life I had been a soldier.

My wife Margaret knew the ways of the Army inside out. And she knew me. She understood I wouldn't refuse the request, though it didn't mean she was happy about it.

In all I'd done 14 operational tours, including Iraq, Northern Ireland, Bosnia and, in 2006, Afghanistan.

But this last tour had been without the rest of the battalion. It had not been a rousing finale to a long career, which perhaps is why I volunteered to go back. I was after the last hurrah with my band of brothers.

I emerged from a Hercules into near darkness and to jeers from outgoing troops: 'Enjoy your stay at Club Helmand!'

Yet for every two or three giving us lip there was another standing silent, a haunted, exhausted look on his face.

He was the one who had actually been on the front line, battling the Taliban, fighting to survive.

By early 2008 there were 43,000 coalition troops from 38 nations in Afghanistan. Even Prince Harry had been doing his bit. Now it was my turn again.

The first briefing upon arrival at Camp Bastion was from a sergeant-major.

He stood before us and recounted the thoughts of a visiting U.S. general on the modern British soldier.

'I served in Vietnam,' he'd said, 'and witnessed first the collapse of military discipline and then the collapse of our campaign. We looked a defeated army. And now as I walk about here, I see it once more: a defeated army.'

His beef was that the Brits were not immaculately turned out.

They had sideburns, moustaches and beards; their hair was unkempt. I couldn't believe it.

It was a contemptuous and arrogant thing for him to say.

And now a British warrant officer was wasting time telling the story.

The general had plainly not grasped the realities of going to war.

When it comes to putting his life on the line, a soldier wants to be treated as an adult and wear kit that is comfortable and practical. He wants to concentrate on guns, bullets and bombs, not razors, scissors and irons.

And any commander worthy of the title will recognise this and cut his men some slack.

But then nothing was subtle about the Americans. You could tell that by the Stars and Stripes that flew sneeringly above their bases, in full sight of the local population. This wasn't the way to win friends and influence people, just as the death of Shabia had not been.

It was bad enough that the natural and societal hardships robbed Afghan children of the innocence of youth. Yet there we were, compounding the misery.

I desperately wanted to believe the greater good was being served by our presence in Afghanistan. But I wasn't convinced; not by a long shot. Yet I could not allow introspection to get in the way. There was too much to do.

“What You Don't Want To Do - What We Had Ended Up Doing - Is To Stop In A Killing Zone”

The patrol base in Marjah, 30 kilometres west of the Helmand capital Lashkar Gah, was located in a disused school. Home to 69 British and Afghan soldiers, it was vulnerable and had no power, not even a generator. Batteries were being delivered by vehicle every three or four days.

It wouldn't need a genius among the Taliban to clock our routine and plan an ambush.

On my first supply run there, I was jumpy.

I had witnessed enough roadside bombs to know I had no desire to meet my maker the same way. After four arduous hours we arrived, to be greeted by Sergeant Jon Mathews, who was leading the team there.

Genuine, diligent, hard-working and kind, he held the respect of his men. We worked quickly to unload the supplies and get out before the Taliban could organise a surprise for our departure. But we were not quick enough.

We had got three kilometres from the base when a large bang echoed around us. A rocket had been fired from behind, so we needed to keep pressing forwards. But after another few hundred metres the convoy ground to a halt. An ANA pick-up had been shot up and stopped.

Stuck behind them, we were sitting ducks.

The enemy was putting down sustained fire.

One soldier was making futile attempts to get the TacSat, the satellite communications equipment, to work. He gave up and grabbed his rifle instead.

I pulled at an Afghan who was cowering by his vehicle. In my best Pashtu I screamed: 'Fire!'

Now there was another problem. Eighty metres away, sitting square across the track, was a car I'd seen careering across the desert towards us just minutes before the attack. Beyond it were the mud walls of the huts some of the Taliban were sheltering in.

'Any joy with the TacSat?' I asked.

'One call, that was it.'

The TacSat should have been our link to the outside world but to get a signal the aerial had to be pointed into the sky at an exact angle of 45 degrees. It was hopeless.

In any sort of ambush the key is to keep moving, blast through without stopping.

What you don't want to do - what we had ended up doing - is to stop in a killing zone.

But the ANA had been trained by the Americans. The U.S. way is to pile out of the vehicles and bring as much firepower as possible to bear on the threat.

We had to get going.

And that meant ramming the blockade in front of us out of the way.

With a wrenching of metal, the lead vehicle in our convoy hit the hijacked Toyota saloon and bulldozed it off the road. As we thundered through the Taliban positions I brought my machine gun to bear on a group of the enemy cowering behind a wall.

Except they weren't Taliban.

They were a wedding party whose car we'd just annihilated. Yet more innocent Afghans caught up in the fighting. Carjacked by the Taliban and nearly shot dead by us - it wasn't their day.

Back at camp we received bad news; it was announced we would be going back to the school - the next day, by road.

I demanded a helicopter but was told none was available.

In 27 years of serving Queen and country, I never had better personal equipment than during my time in Helmand.

But when it came to the big-ticket items - helicopters, vehicles, radios - there were real holes in our inventory.

Take the TacSat.

What we needed to get it to work properly was an omnidirectional aerial but we were not given this kit, which meant the operator had to fiddle with the antenna until he finally managed to establish comms.

Not easy when you are under fire as we had just found out.

And whatever anyone at the Ministry of Defence might say, as I write this there are not enough helicopters. To my mind this costs lives.

With no helicopter available for our return to Marjah, it seemed clear to me that we should at least be sending in enough stores to last a month.

Eventually this was agreed.

We set off along a different route but many of the tracks marked on the map petered out or ended in ditches. With increasing frustration, we tried to box round the obstacles.

Word had got about and to the watching locals we must have looked a sorry sight: the cream of the British and Afghan armies blundering around like five-year-olds in a maze.

Then the inevitable happened. With the fury of a tornado, the enemy struck. Bullets started to rake the convoy. AK-47 rounds pummeled and punctured the skin of the vehicles.

As soon as the shooting started, the ANA soldiers once again bailed out of their pickups.

'Get back in and move forward,' I yelled at them.

They pointed at two flat tyres. I was getting annoyed.

'Get going before I start shooting you.'

Just ahead a pair of RPG rounds exploded close to a group of the ANA soldiers who were pressed into the dirt, praying for deliverance. If we stopped fighting, the Taliban would finish us off. The only way to respond was to give as good as we were getting.

I ran forward and screamed at the driver: 'Arocat! Move!'

He turned to the tyres then gave me one last imploring look.

'NOW!'

He scurried away.

Thanks to one of the radio operators, who was standing on top of the Land Rover, antenna in hand and arm outstretched, amazingly we had continuous comms. We were being sent an Apache to help us.

I tried to raise the pilot of the attack helicopter.

'Ugly 40, this is Amber 43. How copy?'

'Roger, Amber 43. Send grid references.'

To give him that I needed the code word for the day to translate the numbers into letters so our location could be transmitted securely even over the open frequency. Unfortunately no one knew it. Rather sheepishly I spoke again.

'Ugly 40, this is 43. Send code word. Over.'

'Boulevards.'

'Boulevards?'

What was this, University Challenge? I turned to my teammates.

'How do you spell boulevards?'

No one seemed sure. It was our fault we didn't have the code word but who had come up with boulevards? Hadn't they heard of KISS? Keep it simple, stupid!

We had an Apache desperate to assist, an enemy trying to destroy us yet it all looked set to fall apart for lack of a dictionary.

'B-o-l-e-v-a-r-d-s'? Not enough letters.

'B-o-o-lev-a-r-d-s'? Don't be stupid.

'B-o-u-l-e-v-a-r-d-s'? That looked better.

I turned to one of my men.

'Use B-O-U-L-E-V-ARD-S to translate this grid.'

Ducked down behind a wall, he did as I had asked. Thirty seconds later I spoke to the Apache pilot again and passed on the co-ordinates in code.

The reply was sobering.

'That grid puts you somewhere in Pakistan. If you want us to help, you had better get it sorted on the ground.' Who was he to order me about?

'Ugly, I am a small unit, under fire. I have the ANA with me and trying to control them is like herding cats. Over.'

We had the code but had wrongly applied it. We were no where near Pakistan. Time was running out.

I decided to broadcast our location without using code. It was too late to matter. By now just about the whole of Helmand must have known we were there given all the shooting.

Within seconds the Apache was overhead. A flurry of airburst cluster rockets exploded above the tree line, releasing a deadly storm of flechettes - small darts - designed to rip through flesh.

Up ahead, the first vehicle had reached the school. After three kilometres and two-and-a-half hours under fire, we were in sight of our goal.

Once again the enemy had shown real tenacity. Even when the Apache arrived they didn't just melt away. They regarded Marjah as theirs and it didn't bode well for us.

“It Was Announced That The Base Was Being Closed. So What Had Been The Point Of Ever Setting It Up? In My Mind It Had Been A Waste Of Time, A Waste Of Resources And A Waste Of Jon’s Life”

Days later, I was walking into the cool shadow of the school building, unable to believe I was back in Marjah yet again, when there was a huge eruption of noise and a blast wave swept over me. It was a suicide bomb.

There, amid the blood and the screaming and crying, the violence and its aftermath, my men couldn't have done more. Over in a makeshift medical room, the injured - including a nine-year-old with shrapnel wounds to his leg - were being tended to.

The ANA commander explained what had happened. His men had been manning their checkpoint and spotted a teenager wearing a suicide vest. He was told to keep his arms outstretched and back off. As the human crucifix walked away, he'd glanced repeatedly at a young boy nearby. Then he exploded.

'We think the bomber was detonated by the boy,' concluded the commander. 'Well, give a description of him to the police.' 'No need, it's the boy in the medical room with the leg injury.'

The enemy had used small boys to attack us before. Women were used too. I wanted to have some sympathy for this wounded child but I couldn't find any. He was the enemy and he had tried to kill us.

That night, as I lay staring into the inky blackness, the horrors replayed themselves time and again in my mind. I kept coming back to the futility of it all. The waste of lives - on all sides. How had things got so bad that children were prepared to act and die in such a hideous manner?

Soon afterwards news came that Sergeant Jon Mathews had been killed in Marjah. He left behind a wife and young daughter.

Then it was announced that the base was being closed. So what had been the point of ever setting it up?

Of allowing ourselves to get bogged down in yet another enemy town with limited manpower and no easy way of being re-supplied?

In my mind it had been a waste of time, a waste of resources and a waste of Jon's life.

But once again there would not be much time to dwell on what had happened. For me, the ever-shifting sands of operational requirements would lead to Patrol Base Attal, in the heart of bandit country on the western side of the Helmand River. We would be working alongside some American National Guards.

On a map of the region where red was used to signify enemy-held territory and green was for areas that we influenced, Attal was a pea bobbing about in an ocean of crimson.

“It Was So Far Beyond My Comprehension - Murdering A Prisoner. What A Waste Of Time! What Was The Point Of Being Here?”



© Charles Eckert
Captain Doug Beattie and British troops, in liaison with Afghan National Army forces, capture and handcuff a Taliban fighter. The ANA are told to deliver him safely to interrogators...



© Charles Eckert
...only to drag him into scrubland and shoot him dead moments later. An ANA medic delivers the first shots; his fellow soldiers then shoot into the Taliban prisoner's corpse

To compound matters, there were concerns about collusion between the ANA and the Taliban, which had resulted in everyone refusing to go out and patrol.

But what was the alternative? Wait to be attacked, like fish in a barrel?

So I insisted we push out into the lush fringes of vegetation and cultivation either side of the river. Because of the camouflaging foliage, this was where most of the enemy activity took place. We had to take the fight to them.

Somewhere ahead of me several shots rang out, accompanied by frenzied shouting from the ANA.

'What's happening?'

'The Afghans have taken a prisoner. He had a rifle and a radio.'

'Good. Make sure they search him, cuff him and take him back to the company commander.'

I started to feel nervous again, the sick feeling returned. I hated these moments. It was all but inevitable someone was about to shoot at us. But who was in their sights? Me? The guy behind?

Without warning, a rocket-propelled grenade snaked through the undergrowth past us, fired from a compound no more than 70 metres away. Everyone dived for cover.

Cautiously I raised my head to see exactly where the enemy positions were as I radioed for help.

Fire continued to whip towards us. I didn't find it easy to identify where the enemy was firing from but somehow the ANA had a knack for doing so. Close by lay an Afghan officer. I shouted out to him. In return he gave a big smile and held up the arms of the bound prisoner next to him.

Slowly the ANA troops moved towards the compound. They used their grenades to clear it, with devastating results - at least for the six Taliban who were killed. We'd been successful. We'd killed a number of the enemy and recovered some of their equipment.

Crucially, the ANA had - eventually - stepped up to the mark and done the job. We'd even taken a prisoner - though, as I looked round at him, I could see he was taking a bit of punishment from one of his captors.

'Oi! Don't be doing that,' I screamed. The soldier meting out the blows gave me a quizzical look and wandered off.

We started to pull out. The ANA soldiers were in front with Stevo, a Royal Irish colleague, and our prisoner. Suddenly a burst of gunfire stopped me in my tracks.

I grabbed my radio: 'Stevo, what the hell is going on?'

'They've shot the prisoner. The Afghans - they've bloody shot him.'

I waded through the field to where he was lying, dead. Stevo described what had happened: the ANA soldiers had dragged the prisoner off the path and one had stepped forward to execute him. No hesitation, no discussion, no qualms. And who'd pulled the trigger?

Their medic, using his AK-47. Several others had then opened fire to finish him off, as if that was necessary.

In 27 years of soldiering I had never experienced anything remotely like it. It was so far beyond my comprehension... murdering a prisoner. I let my head sink into my hands, trying to rub the frustration and anger out of my eyes. How had it come to this?

For five months we had trained and mentored and advised the ANA, trying to equip them with the skills and standards necessary to provide security for their country and its population.

At that moment, the prospect of such a thing happening was about a million light years away. These people were never going to preside over a just system. Look at what they were capable of.

What a waste of time!

I glanced up and saw the blokes around me were thinking the same.

We were ordered to return to base, leaving behind the ANA and the body, but only after we had taken pictures as evidence.

Through all the blood and bullets, the dead and the wounded, and the sickening sights, I wanted to believe I had done some good and changed things for the better. Now I seriously wondered whether I could ever make any difference, whether anyone could. What was the point of being here?

What was the point of risking my life, of risking anything, for a country that at that moment didn't seem worth saving - perhaps couldn't be saved? But I'd signed on the dotted line, agreed to remain in the Army and complete my tour. And so I carried on.

We went out on patrol the next day, and then every day after that, tackling the Taliban head-on, giving as good as we got. Judging from the enemy radio traffic we intercepted after one skirmish, we had killed or wounded more than 30 of them. Corroboration of our success came in the form of a delegation of elders who said that so badly had the Taliban been bloodied that they'd retreated north. Through the villagers, the local Taliban even offered us an unofficial truce.

Going out got harder and harder.

As the end of my tour approached all I wanted to do was keep my head down and get home safely. In six months I had racked up 50 major contacts. I was exhausted. But at last it was time to leave Attal, salvation arriving in the form of a Chinook swinging in low from the south-west, the rhythmic clatter of rotor blades quickly growing louder. We rushed on board.

Lifting off, I twisted round to look down at the camp. Even when we were in it, it had seemed small and vulnerable; from the air it looked pathetic. To me it symbolised the war in Afghanistan.

Here we were in the 21st century, yet the scene laid out below me could have been straight out of the Beau Geste era: an outpost made of mud, situated in a harsh environment, manned by a tiny contingent of coalition soldiers, surrounded by adversaries who hated us and locals who didn't understand us.

I wasn't sorry to be leaving.

Back in Britain, on October 17 2008, three days after my 43rd birthday, those soldiers of the Royal Irish Regiment who had served in Afghanistan received their campaign medals. As the presentation finished, we marched off the square to the strains of Killaloe, played by the regimental band.

I was mindful of the ones who weren't taking part - not because they didn't want to but because they couldn't.

One was Ranger Andy Allen. Just 19 years old, he was missing both his legs and - at that time - some of his eyesight. But if I was inclined to feel any pity for him, he immediately put me straight.

'Things aren't so bad,' he said, peering up at me and holding my gaze.

'At least I've still got my arms to hold my child.'

If I was an ordinary soldier, then truly he was an extraordinary one. There is an old saying: 'I am no hero but I served alongside heroes.'

Alone, I walked off to my car, got in it and went home. As a civilian.

**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT
THE BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE
WARS**

**DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE
MILITARY?**

Forward GI Special along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on 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 wars, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 888.711.2550

WELCOME TO AFBAGHVIETISTAN: HAVE A NICE DAY



U.S. Marines from the 5th Marines patrol in the Nawa district in Afghanistan's Helmand province July 3, 2009. (AP Photo/David Guttenfelder)



Members of the 10th Mountain Division from Fort Drum, NY, patrol the Tangie valley, Aug. 5, 2009, in Afghanistan. (AP Photo/Dima Gavrysh)



U.S. Marines from Delta Company of 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion patrol near the town of Khan Neshin in Rig district of Helmand province, southern Afghanistan September 9, 2009. REUTERS/Goran Tomasevic



Sept. 13, 2009: A member of the U.S. Army's 3rd Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment (Airborne), based at Fort Richardson, Alaska, patrols through Zerok District, East Paktika province in Afghanistan. (AP Photo/Dima Gavrysh)

TROOP NEWS

**NOT ANOTHER DAY
NOT ANOTHER DOLLAR
NOT ANOTHER LIFE**



The remains of Army Sgt. James D. Pirtle, of Colorado Springs, Colo. May 3, 2009 at Dover Air Force Base, Del. Pirtle and two other Americans were killed Friday, May 1, 2009 in Afghanistan as they were attacked with rocket-propelled grenades.
(APhoto/Jose Luis Magana)

**Republican Congressman Demands
Immediate Withdrawal Of U.S. Troops
From Afghanistan:
“I Think We’re Losing People By The
Day, Here And Over There, With No Even**

Indirect Relationship To Our National Security”

September 22, 2009 By Tom Kacich, The News-Gazette

GIBSON CITY, ILLINOIS

– U.S. Rep. Tim Johnson, R-Urbana, told a town hall meeting Monday night that he plans to sponsor legislation calling for the immediate withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan.

"I want to protect America, but I don't want to lose lives senselessly," Johnson said following a one-hour, open-air session with about 300 people at a park pavilion in Gibson City. "And we cannot police the world."

Johnson's unexpected comments were reminiscent of a break he made in early 2007 with former President Bush over the war in Iraq.

At that time, he came out against a "troop surge" in Iraq. "People believe and I believe that we are at a point in history where, unless we have dramatic change in direction, we can wind up being mired and continue to lose large numbers of lives – American, Iraqi and others – indefinitely," he said in January 2007. "And I'm not going to be a part of it."

Two years later, regarding a different country and with a different president, Johnson said he sees a similarity.

"I'm suggesting to you that there is no end game. I believe that our men and women are there in a mission that is ill-defined," Johnson said of the war in Afghanistan and the growing pressure to send more American troops there.

"I think we're losing people by the day, here and over there, with no even indirect relationship to our national security.

"Within a couple of weeks, I'm going to be looking at legislation and issuing a definitive statement on my position on Afghanistan which at this point I would suggest would call for our withdrawal of troops forthwith."

"We've had a succession from Vietnam to Iraq to Afghanistan, and the net result has been thousands of lives lost, and very little progress made.

"It's kind of like one of those whack-a-moles at the fair. You knock down one and there are four others to get up. I'm in favor of doing everything we can to make America secure, to make sure we don't have another 9/11 or even anything analogous to that, but I'm also convinced that our continued presence in Afghanistan is not serving that role. And we need to seriously re-examine where we're at."

Johnson said he is working with a bipartisan group, including Reps. Ron Paul, R-Texas, Jim McGovern, D-Mass., and Jerry Costello, D-Bellefonte, on the Afghanistan withdrawal legislation.

Gibson City and Ford County have always been strongly supportive of Johnson, ever since he began his state legislative career in 1976 and his congressional tenure in 2001. Last year, he got 80 percent of the vote in Ford County over Democratic challenger Steve Cox.

And for the most part, he won praise Monday night.

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.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

**“Hope for change doesn’t cut it when you’re still losing buddies.”
-- J.D. Englehart, Iraq Veterans Against The War**

Episode Five: No Longer a Monster: Available Now



From: Displaced Films
To: Military Resistance
Sent: September 22, 2009 1:06 AM
Subject: This is Where We Take Our Stand final episode now live!

"No one could hear our stories and still support this s!" -- Geoff Millard***

Dear friends,

I am pleased to tell you that the sixth and final episode of the series, This is Where We Take Our Stand, is now live.

Episode 6--No Longer a Monster, presents some of the most damning testimony yet from both occupations, along with the inspiring closing concert by Tom Morello.

No Longer a Monster is now live at <http://www.thisiswherewetakeourstand.com>.

The full series is now up and available for you to watch, share, spread, and act on.

As we have said all along, there is nothing that more clearly and chillingly tells the real story of what this country is doing to Iraq and Afghanistan than the courageous testimony of these soldiers and veterans.

They cannot be denied, no matter who is president.

This is Where We Take Our Stand is here for you to use.

Please do everything you can to get all of the episodes into the hands of students, veterans, soldiers, anyone and everyone who wants to take a stand to end these endless wars.

The slaughter in Afghanistan has gone on for EIGHT YEARS. Are we really going to allow eight more? The choice is ours.

- David Zeiger

No Longer a Monster: "There are no more authoritative voices to speak out about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan than the people who have been there under fire," declares singer Tom Morello (The Nightwatchman, Rage Against the Machine), as he leads a raucous celebration of three days of intense, painful, and liberating testimony.

And while James Gilligan reveals the deep similarities between the "bad war" (Iraq) and the "good war" (Afghanistan), Jon Turner declares for all, "I am sorry for the things that I did, I am no longer the monster that I once was."

This is Where We Take Our Stand: the series that tells the riveting and timely story of the hundreds of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who testified at last year's Winter Soldier investigation, continues today. Watch episode five, tell friends, forward this email, spread the word and fan the debate.

These stories must be heard.

Spread the word!

SPREAD THE LINK, MARK YOUR CALENDAR, STAY TUNED!

**ADD US ON:
TWITTER
FACEBOOK
"SHARE" US:**

WWW.THISISWHEREWETAKEOURSTAND.COM

Where's The Debate?

Are we watching passively while Barack Obama carries out the same policies as George W. Bush?

When an American bombing raid this May killed over two hundred civilians in a village in Afghanistan, it was met with a deafening silence.

When Obama's promised "withdrawal" from Iraq leaves 130,000 troops there for at least two more years and 50,000 permanently, it's hailed as an end to the occupation. And who is demanding to know just what the mission really is when 30,000 more troops are sent to Afghanistan?

Where's the debate?

In March of 2008, two hundred and fifty veterans and active duty soldiers marked the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq by gathering in Washington, DC, to testify from their own experience about the nature of the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. It was chilling, horrifying, and challenging for all who witnessed it. Against tremendous odds, they brought the voices of the veterans themselves into the debate.

That was then. This is now.

Today, we present to you **This is Where We Take Our Stand**, the inside story of those three days and the courageous men and women who testified. And we present this story today, told in six episodes, because we believe it is as relevant now as it was one year ago. Maybe more.

Here is our challenge to you: Watch the series; spread it far and wide; and ask yourself is this about the past, or the present and future. Then add your voice.

If you are a veteran or active duty, present your own testimony. If you are not, but you are still a living, breathing member of the human race, then do whatever you can to join and fan the flames of debate.

David Zeiger, Director of *Sir! No Sir!*

Bestor Cram, Director of *Unfinished Symphony*

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 send email to

contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe. Phone: 888.711.2550

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