

Traveling Soldier

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org>

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**October, 2009
Issue #25**

Fun Times at Fort Drum: My Story

My name is Pfc. Paul.

I have served in the Army for 5 years now, at Fort Drum, Ny. With one deployment to Iraq from 06 to mid 07 (extended deployment).

Upon returning to the states, medical problems sustained in Iraq became more pronounced.

I have now been fucking with Army medical for over 2 years. I now posses a P2 and a T3 profile, with a P3 on the way. I have just started the Med Board process, and am trying to be transferred to a Warrior Transition Unit.

4 days ago my unit, (2-14 infantry of the 10th mountain div), told me I was deployable.

My first sgt. told me it was the sgt majors call and there was nothing I could do about it.

The chain of command found my situation funny and openly laughed about it.

Last month I SRC'd on fort drum, and was stamped non deployable due to med board. So

in turn my medpros was also changed to non deployable.

The reasoning behind redeploying me was due to lack of information. My unit has lost my SRC folder and my medpros has been changed to deployable status.

When I asked my chain of command about what happened to my paperwork, they went into typical cya mode and said it was a mistake.

What a bunch of bullshit. As of today they are trying to have me SRC again in the hopes of getting me stamped deployable. And with the first flights leaving next week there trying to rush me.

As of right now, I have Senator John Cornyn and Congressman Kevin Brady (both from Texas) launching congressional inquiries into my situation. The wounded warrior support center is also helping me with my med board, and is looking into how my medpros got changed.



With all this help, time is still running out for me.

After is all said and done, its a damn shame how this all turned out. You bleed for your country and try to do your best and you just get fucked in the end.

Im tired of this shit.

Sincerely,
Mike Paul

Mailbag

Dear Traveling Soldier,

My name is Michael Anthony and I am a huge fan of everything you've all been doing at Traveling Soldier. And being a fan, I knew I'd have to email you once the time was right.

Last October I returned home from a tour of duty from Iraq as an Operating Room Medic with the Army reserves. Upon returning home I began writing a memoir of my time in Iraq. A few months ago I signed a deal and my memoir is now in bookstores.

The book is titled: "Mass Casualties: A Young Medic's True Story of Death, Deception, and Dishonor in Iraq". It is about how a young boy (myself) comes to terms with being in a war he knows nothing about as he goes through a journey from boy, to man, to veteran.

Meanwhile woven throughout are the true stories of what went on in Iraq -think along the lines of, Abu Ghraib and Walter Reed.

I am now the youngest Iraq War Veteran Writer, and Mass Casualties has now become one of the most endorsed Iraq war books (from all sides).

[Note from *Traveling Soldier*. For more reviews:
<http://www.masscasualties.com/anthony-praise.htm>]

In this world of politics and activism, *Traveling Soldier* has a unique and colloquial voice in respect to the war and how to deal with its happenings.

I believe and know that we both have the same goals for our country and soldiers, and I would love to combine our efforts to spread the word.

I am now starting a blog, radio, tv, and print tour, to promote the book; perhaps we could do something together.

Best,
Michael Anthony

"If You Are A Private, You Are Treated Like Complete Dog Shit"

From The Editors:

To protect the writer, his identity has been removed from this email as published here. Military Project, which produces *Traveling Soldier*, will follow up with the writer privately. We welcome other letters from members of the armed services.

My name is [XXXX].

I have never been deployed. I just finished Basic and AIT and am now stationed at fort Drum. The Army's structure surely resembles communism.

There is no freedom of speech. You keep your opinions to yourself. Rank rules all. Even if you know the order you get from your Sargent is wrong, you still gotta follow it. My conscience has been torn in 2.

The Army loses your paperwork, feeds you the shittiest food they have, and then expect you to be grateful for what the Army has provided for you!

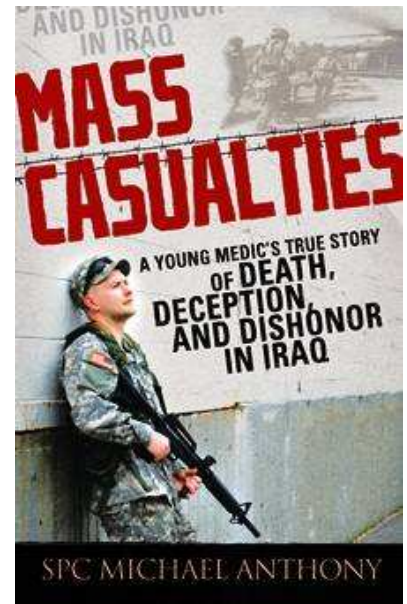
The chain of command contain deep control over your life. If you want to do ANYTHING, it must go through them, such as a doctor's visit or mental health. If you are a private, you are treated like complete dog shit, and must do all the shit that the sargents won't do. (clean trash, clean bathrooms, etc..) If you don't sleep or skip a meal,

oh well. Mission first...hooah.

I could go on and on, but must stop. Writing this is making me too angry.

Your site, has helped me relieve some of the many stresses I have being part of the US Army. Thank you.

- PVT M, Fort Drum



“Michael Anthony's memoir is not about the politics of Iraq. Instead it takes us deep inside the war, inside and outside the operating room, the barracks, the talk of the soldiers, the feeling of the situation. It joins the body of war literature in a unique and powerful way.” - Howard Zinn: Civil Rights Leader, Historian; Author of *A People's History of the United States*

“A scathing, satirical and often shocking trip through “the other war” in Iraq — the war within the U.S. Army, and within a soldier's soul. Michael Anthony's memoir is the perfect antidote for anyone who would glorify war or its impact on warriors. He has penned his generation's MASH, with echoes of Catch 22 and Hunter Thompson's Fear and Loathing sagas.” - Charles Jones, Journalist in the Iraq war, Author of *Red, White or Yellow? The Media & The Military at War in Iraq*

Veterans Call For Immediate Withdrawal From Afghanistan

10/01/2009 by Anonymous,
Iraq Veterans Against The War

Iraq Veterans Against the War believes an escalation of the war in Afghanistan will only serve to exacerbate the plight of the Afghan people, destabilize the region, and further the breakdown of our military.

IVAW, which includes veterans who served in Afghanistan, opposes President Barack Obama's planned expansion of the occupation and calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all occupying forces in Afghanistan and reparations for the Afghan people.

"We're entering our seventh year of war in Afghanistan," said Jose Vasquez, IVAW's executive director. "Casualties among the Afghan people are rising while U.S. and Coalition forces are facing their deadliest year since the invasion.

"This war dehumanizes the Afghan people and denies them their right to self-determination.

"We have members who serve in Iraq and in Afghanistan and we believe it's time for them all to come home."

While IVAW was formed to call for an end to the war in Iraq, the anti-war organization's membership, which includes more than 1,600

active-duty military members and veterans in 48 states, passed a resolution to declare their opposition to the war in Afghanistan.

The resolution states "there is no battlefield solution to terrorism, and any escalation of the war in Afghanistan will only serve to exacerbate the plight of the Afghan people, destabilize the region, and further the breakdown of our military."

IVAW member Donna Perdue said she believes the war in Afghanistan is threatening our national security.

"The war becomes larger and more destructive, the number of necessary American forces will further increase, and the cycle will continue to rage on," said Perdue. "This cycle will continue to strain the struggling economy and the already over-taxed military. It's imperative that the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan end."

IVAW is a national organization of veterans and active-duty service members who have served since September 11, 2001 – including those who took part in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. IVAW also is dedicated to fighting for adequate physical and mental healthcare, full benefits, and other support for returning veterans.



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Bullshit!

"Vietnam Without Napalm"

September 30, 2009

By Hal Bernton,

McClatchy Newspapers

JELAWUR, Afghanistan — The men of Bravo Company have a bitter description for the irrigated swath of land along the Arghandab River where 10 members of their battalion have been killed and 30 have been wounded since the beginning of August.

"Like Vietnam without the napalm," said Spc. Nicholas Gojekian, 21, of Katy, Texas.

A prime agricultural area of vineyards and pomegranate orchards, the 18-miles of valley that the 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment patrols includes Taliban insurgents, booby traps and buried explosives.

The troops call the area the "green zone," but unlike Iraq, where it's a fortified area in the heart of Baghdad, this green zone can be a hellish place.

The soldiers have one of the toughest tasks in Afghanistan: improving security and winning the support of villagers in an area where the Taliban have been gaining power.

The battalion arrived in southern Afghanistan this summer as part of a brigade of more than 3,800 soldiers from Fort Lewis, Wash.

The unit took its heaviest losses in August, when it had the highest casualties in what was the deadliest month so far in America's eight-year war here.

So far, the Army mission here has been an uneasy mix of trying to woo elders with offers of generators, roads and other improvements while fighting a nasty war with an often-unseen enemy.

Bravo Company arrived in Afghanistan with 24 Strykers, the first of the eight-wheeled combat vehicles outfitted with high-tech communications and surveillance gear to arrive in Afghanistan.

A third of the vehicles are now out of service due to bomb attacks or maintenance.

The bomb threats are so pervasive that Stryker drivers have abandoned some stretches of road in favor of driving through the deserts on different routes.

The road to one smaller outpost has so many homemade bombs that the soldiers usually arrive on foot, a treacherous hike due to buried land mines.

"We have had enemy contact almost every day," said Lt. Col. Jon Neumann, the commander of the 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment.

"Until we do clearing, we can't hold or build here right now," a reference to the U.S. counter-insurgency tactic of "clear, hold and build."

Neumann said that a "perfect storm" of factors has bolstered the Taliban in the Arghandab. They include a successful spring insurgency campaign, the death of a strong tribal leader who supported the U.S.-backed Afghan government and the wounding of a charismatic police chief.

The Americans are up against a foe who's adept at creating unforeseen hazards. Often the Taliban fill large yellow water jugs with explosives — packing some underneath road culverts and burying others in the sandy desert soil.

Some battalion soldiers perished when their Strykers hit roadside bombs — known as IED's or improvised explosive devices — and others were killed by bombs that exploded while they patrolled on foot.

On a single deadly day in August, a Bravo Company 1st lieutenant on a patrol had both his legs blown off by a mine, and explosions killed two soldiers temporarily attached to the unit as they walked through the green zone.

Bravo Company is responsible for an area that's considered a key staging point for Taliban as they organize forays into Kandahar, a major southern city



where the insurgents rule by night and set off bombs by day.

The Arghandab valley is starkly divided between a flat, barren desert and the fertile stretch of irrigated orchards, vineyards and cornfields along the river.

In the 1980s, Soviet troops spent more than a month in an unsuccessful attempt to defeat U.S.-backed mujahedeen forces that took refuge in the orchards.

From the green zone, the Taliban fan out to villages, which consist largely of mud brick homes inside mud-walled compounds that sprout out of the ground in the same dun colors of the surrounding desert.

In the nearby village of Jelawur, the U.N. was able to complete a rebuilding project a few years after the fall of Taliban, an effort marked with a plaque on a wall. Seven years later, however, several dozen Bravo Company soldiers found a walk down the main street to be a tense one this week.

The soldiers were in full battle gear, scanning culverts for IED's and checked their gun sights to search the surrounding fields for signs of a Taliban attack.

Some soldiers stripped off their shoulder patches to make themselves less of a target.

Villagers warily monitored their passage.

A soldier threw out a piece of candy, and a shopkeeper quickly admonished a young boy to leave it alone.

The company had 152 soldiers when it arrived, which was more than a dozen short of its authorized strength.

Since then, some platoons have been depleted by injuries, including concussions from bomb blasts.

"I don't have enough troops for everything they want me to do here," said Capt. Jamie Pope, the company commander, a West Point graduate from Sherrills Ford, N.C.

One platoon authorized to have more than 40 soldiers is now trying to get by with fewer than 32 soldiers.

After guard duty is assigned, a platoon may be at less than full strength for patrols.

"We may go with 10 to 11 guys, when we like to have 14 to 21," said Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Dimico, a 1st platoon soldier from Yakima, Wash.

Another platoon that arrived with 39 soldiers was operating this week with 22, according to Sgt. 1st Class Zalman Dass from Renton, Wash..

The tempo was set on one of the first patrols back on Aug. 10 as Bravo Company soldiers trekked through a cornfield and were attacked at close range by nearly a dozen fighters who fired from the edge of some orchards.

Spc. Richard Thiebault was one of the lead soldiers. He heard the slam of a rifle bolt, and then went down with a bullet in his chest from an RPK machinegun about 60 feet away.

His ballistic vest probably saved his life: The bullet left a half-dollar sized dent in the armor, but it didn't penetrate.

"I'm still shook up to this day," said Thiebault. "I don't like going near the orchards."

