

Going Home!!!

February 08, 2005



So now, after nearly fifteen months in Iraq, we are getting ready to go home. As the time draws near, the anticipation of reuniting with loved ones becomes almost unbearable. It is hard to imagine anything more wonderful than the first hugs from family and friends. Over the last several months, we have watched as our normal life passed us by. Soldiers have missed the birth of their first child, first words, and first days of school. They have missed birthdays, graduations, and funerals of family members. We've missed good food, quiet, a day off, showers, carpet, and mattresses. We've missed everyone and everything in our lives.

Leaving a combat environment to go home will definitely be an adjustment. Our return to Fort Hood, Texas, will be followed by 14 days of mandatory debriefings designed to help soldiers with the adjustment process. "This is not Baghdad", "Stop at red lights - you will not be ambushed", "Do not yell when asking for something", "You may have scary dreams." Hmm...

After a grueling front-line tour through the peaks of insurgency in Baghdad, Najaf, and Fallujah, we have seen everything ever shown in a war movie. We have seen the hardest of men break down and cry. We have believed in the cause and at times questioned it. We have been told the truth. And we have been lied to. We have watched and read about "experts" and "officials" sitting in their air-conditioned offices, ordering us to battle, boasting "they know how hard it is." They will never know.

It is beyond my comprehension that I served in the same battalion that legends such as General Robert E. Lee once led. I marvel at the fact that General George S. Patton was once a Captain like myself in this same unit. These men seem so different from me. I still have trouble grasping that Sudip Bose, a regular guy with a regular upbringing, served in one of the longest tours by a doctor since World War II for a front-line infantry unit, was selected for promotion from Captain to Major, and earned the Bronze Star. Since the time of General Lee, much about combat has changed. Yet the challenges and emotions remain the same:

- Cleaning up brain matter and closing the eyelids of a fellow soldier prior to the command arriving to see his body
- The same shell shocked look in the eyes of a 35-year-old sergeant as in a 19-year-old private
- Feeling a tingle down the spine when hearing the words “Medic!”
- Frantically tying a tourniquet as the patient bleeds onto the sidewalk
- Assuring a soldier gasping from a collapsed lung and open intestinal wounds that his friend is “okay” and promising they will meet again
- Swearing at the radio after hearing we are receiving twenty-four more patients after struggling with the resuscitation of the first four
- Fighting sleep
- Gaining new appreciation for life as shrapnel whizzes overhead
- Providing care to the enemy who spits, swears, and glares at you as you attempt to listen to his lungs. He recently killed two fellow soldiers. He would have killed us too if we had driven
- Receiving genuine gratefulness from Iraqi civilians, fellow soldiers, and commanders after saving a life. They love me.
- Jumping at the sound of harmless objects
- Hitting the ground looking for patients after an explosion
- Consoling a suicidal soldier who “just can’t take it anymore!” while trying to keep self morale
- Riding in a vehicle with Kevlar helmet, eye protection, flack vest, aid bag in hand, and M16 pointed out the window
- Knowing that kids are trying to kill us
- Staring the enemy in the face and realizing they are ordinary men just like us-not monsters
- Telling a soldier’s wife and kids as a last dying request that he fought hard

Too many brave soldiers lost their lives here. They are the true heroes. Their memories will live on and they will not be forgotten. I am honored to have served with them and all of the heroes of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

It was a privilege to have done my duty for my country.

"The secret of contentment is the realization that life is a gift, not a right"

ON CALL IN IRAQ



by
Sudip Bose, MD
&
Dean Stulz, Physician Assistant

This nonfiction book about our experiences in Iraq — treating Saddam Hussein, providing medical support while under attack, and enduring the daily hardships in a combat zone — is currently editing. This book will portray the situation in Baghdad, Najaf, and Fallujah through our eyes as opposed to how it is often portrayed by the media. Due to certain “red tape” regulations and confidentiality issues it will (hopefully) publish and hit bookstores near you about one year after my release from the Army in July 2005. Check back periodically to this website for further details about purchasing the book. A portion of any funds generated will go to those we were blessed to treat but who are not fortunate enough to read this book without assistance: the blinded, paralyzed, and severely injured veterans of this war.

On Call in Iraq

In memory of my brothers who paid the ultimate sacrifice

Dedicated to my family and friends

*Without whom this book would not be possible and for whom I am eternally grateful
Thank you for your support!*