

Think About It!

August 09, 2004

Family and Friends:

Who Would've Thought?

Muktadr Al Sadr. He is a radical Shiite cleric in Iraq stirring up much trouble for the coalition forces. In April alone, he and his militia were responsible for over 100 U.S. soldier deaths. He is 30 years old.

Sudip Bose. A regular guy with a fairly normal upbringing stirring up no trouble and minding his own business! I too am 30 years old.

We live on opposite ends of the world. We have totally different lives. I grew up one way. He grew up another. Under ordinary circumstances our paths would have never crossed. Never. But now I wonder how could this man have such an effect on my life? Many people have shaped me into the person I am today. Parents, family, teachers, coaches, professors, neighbors, and friends. All of you. But Muktadr Al Sadr?

I am no longer in Baghdad. I am now heavily immersed as front line medical support and the sole doctor in a series of intense raids aimed at capturing Muktadr Al Sadr. The pursuit of this man and his militia has completely altered my life here. I am coupled with select Marine troops (who do not have their own doctor) and elements of my Army battalion. The fighting is extremely intense. This is not car bombs. This is not explosive devices. This is one force (us) versus another force (the Al Sadr militia) on the battlefield which is a cemetery in Najaf, Iraq. In the thick of things I am immersed. Who would've thought?

Since my last letter to you all this trip out of Baghdad was not quite the one I had anticipated. With about 4 hours notice I was emergently pulled from my weekly shift at the Combat Support Hospital and instructed to pack up my items and head "elsewhere." After several hours of convoy, now I write you from Najaf, Iraq. I have been here for a few days now. Who would've thought?

I roll around the streets of Najaf in a tracked vehicle. We stop and set up the canopy. It is here we treat patients. It is my life. I sleep in it. In the afternoon sun I roast in it. I watch blackhawk and apache helicopters flying overhead in it. I hear loud explosions from it. I transport in it. I work out of it. I live in it. Hey, not all of us are lucky enough to work out of our own home!



Life is no longer out of a building once infested with rats. But now I long for that. Who would've thought? No longer in Baghdad for now. Now a homeless nomad in Najaf, Iraq. Uncertain where I will be even two weeks from now. Uncertain if I will live out of this vehicle and sleep in the cot pictured on the side of it for the rest of my deployment (March 2005?). Uncertain when and if I will have internet access again. Uncertain if we will accomplish the mission of capturing this man. Uncertain if I will be able to one day look the man who placed me in this intense battle in the face. Uncertain why I do not feel anger or hate towards this man, just awe that his actions can affect my life in such a significant manner. Uncertain how and why things end up the way they do.

I lie on the top of a tracked vehicle staring at the stars in the desert sky. I try to motivate for another intense mission. I ponder the above thoughts. Think? Don't think! Just execute! This is the life of a deployed soldier in Iraq.

