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The U.S. Citizen-Soldier and the Global War on Terror: The National Guard Experience

By Larry Minear



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A photograph of three soldiers in camouflage uniforms standing together. The soldier on the left is wearing a bucket hat and has 'STRALS' on his chest. The soldier in the middle is wearing sunglasses and a cap. The soldier on the right is wearing a cap and has 'ADLER' on his chest. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The image is semi-transparent and overlaid on a white background with a brown border.

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Cover image: Staff Sergeant Mark P. LeBlanc Returns to Concord, New Hampshire, February 28, 2005. Photo by First Sgt. Mike Daigle, New Hampshire National Guard.

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Summary

In its initial five-plus years, 1,562,469 U.S. troops were deployed to the Global War on Terror's two principal theaters, Afghanistan and Iraq. Of that number, 1,322,291 were members of the active-duty armed forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines) and their respective reserve units. The remaining 240,178 were members of the National Guard (including the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard), of whom 54,513 were deployed more than once. Thus between September 11, 2001 and June 30, 2007, upwards of a quarter of a million members of the U.S. National Guard served in Afghanistan and/or Iraq.¹

The National Guard is made up of citizen-soldiers, “part-time” military personnel who train regularly but maintain fulltime professions and occupations in their own communities. While they may be called up for domestic or international duties, the commitments they make are fundamentally different from those of their counterparts in the active-duty military forces, who for a stated period are full-time military career professionals. The Global War on Terror was not the first time that National Guard personnel had been deployed abroad. However, it meant their deployment in unprecedented numbers for uncharacteristically lengthy periods of time.

This report presents a composite picture of the impacts of the Global War on Terror on those who have fought it. It relies where possible on the troops' own words, both citizen-soldiers and active-duty military personnel. The report is based on interviews with about 100 soldiers—some conducted specifically for this study, some otherwise available. It also draws on e-mails, letters, and other commentary produced by an additional three dozen soldiers. The report makes extensive use of media coverage and incorporates the viewpoints expressed in interviews for this study with another 50-plus members of military families and organizations, local communities, public officials and policy-makers, helping professionals, and members of the general public. In all, the study makes use of some 200 sources.

The study focuses largely but not exclusively on the experiences of members in the National Guard, citizen-soldiers being a particularly illuminating bellwether of issues associated with the Global War on Terror. The core message is that the first-hand experience of fighting in the Global War on Terror—fulfilling and satisfying for some, searing and traumatic for many, daunting and unsettling for most—raises issues of policy and practice that have only begun to be pondered. These include the high costs—personal and social, direct and indirect, financial and institutional—of the current approach to tackling terrorism, the need for more energetic efforts to re-integrate returning veterans into American society, the viability of continuing to respond to future threats of a divisive political nature with all-volunteer forces, and the future of the National Guard as an institution.

In the report's opening section, extended narratives by four veterans provide a sense of the range of experiences and the thoughtfulness and diversity of the views of the soldiers engaged in the conflicts. Following a presentation of the actors and the theaters in the Global War on Terror (Chapter 1), successive chapters review the sense of duty and service among soldiers (Chapter 2), the challenges they faced in Afghanistan and Iraq (Chapter 3), the relationships they forged with other key actors (Chapter 4), and their re-entry into life in the United States (Chapter 5). The study concludes with an examination of some of the wider issues raised by their experience (Chapter 6).

Interspersed throughout the study are quotations from a wide variety of sources, photographs taken by soldiers themselves, and figures, charts, and tables providing statistical detail. Citations to this illustrative material are located on pages 77–78; other annexed material includes a list of persons interviewed and other items related to the report.

This study provides a composite view of reflections by U.S. veterans from the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq on their experiences in the Global War on Terror. It draws on interviews with soldiers, their families, and their communities, and on materials that the soldiers themselves have written describing their experiences. This opening section contains excerpts from four individuals, reproduced in some detail to convey the richness and diversity of views. The experiences of the four also surface throughout the body of the report, where their reflections are, to one extent or another, echoed by the comments of scores of others from the ranks.

Lieutenant Colonel Brian D. Perry, Sr.

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A member of the U.S. Army Reserve, Lt. Col. Perry was attending a briefing at the headquarters of the U.S. Central Command in Tampa, Florida, on the morning of September 11, 2001. In short order, he would close his full-time legal practice in New Orleans and depart on a classified mission to Afghanistan.

Col. Perry describes his sudden departure from home, his trip to Afghanistan, and his first impressions upon arrival. The disruption of his professional and personal life and the challenge of adjusting to a new and intense situation resonate with the experiences of many who served in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The following excerpts are from a personal narrative, "In-Country," by Brian Perry, copyright © 2006 by Brian Perry, from Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front, in the Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families, edited by Andrew Carroll. Used by permission of Random House, Inc.¹

From the time I departed New Orleans to the moment we landed in-country, I had been traveling almost non-stop for three days. There were only two passengers on the MC-130 taking us to our final destination: me and a Marine who had recently retired but was called back to active-duty.

On the last leg of the journey, fatigue was getting the best of me. I would doze off and on, but the web seats were

uncomfortable and made sleeping a challenge. Time became difficult to track.

My mind drifted back to New Orleans. It was just a few days ago that I had served my last trial as a judge ad hoc. It was a coveted position but, unfortunately, the appointment came just a week before September 11, 2001. My lovely wife, Karla, and our six children spent part of the day in the courtroom with me, and it was an emotional moment for all of us. The youngest, our seven-year-old son, had hidden behind the massive bench and secretly handed me small notes telling me how proud they all were of me.

I thought back on my decision to stay in Tampa [Florida] in the days immediately after 9/11. I did not want to leave headquarters, as there was so much to do to get ready for war, and I remained on duty until my wife received my mobilization orders. One week was all the time I had to close down my law office and return to CENTCOM [Central Command].

A sudden movement in front of me brought me back to the plane, to the mission. The loadmaster was no longer asleep. He was aggressively searching through one of the military duffel bags, from which he pulled out a helmet, flak vest, and what in the darkness appeared to be a pistol. He opened his hand and dropped the weapon onto the pallet beside him. The Marine and I watched the crew member retrieve and strap on the pistol, which we could now see was a military-issue 9mm. He had already worked his way into the flak jacket.

"We are going in hot," he shouted over the pulsating engine noise. He started making movements with his hands indicating that, to avoid surface-to-air missile attack, we were going to zigzag in.

The plane shifted and swayed in the air, jerking us back and forth and pressing us hard into the unforgiving seats. This was part of the "corkscrew" landing procedure to evade surface-to-air fire against an unarmed plane.

The plane then rose in altitude. We watched the crew members, now in full battle gear, pull their seat belts tighter. We did the same. I heard the familiar rumbling of the plane's flaps extending, followed by the clamor of the wheels extending beneath us. The engines were

slowing and then increasing in no discernible pattern, as if the plane were faltering. Losing, then gaining altitude. Suddenly I felt the jolt of the wheels contacting the pavement.

The loadmaster was out of his chair in a flash. After struggling with the side door, he was finally able to force it open, and the noise and rush of air startled me. The prop wash blew into the plane with a deafening roar. I expected the propellers to be slowing to a stop, but we still seemed to be at full power. The Marine bolted out of his seat while I fumbled for a second with the double latch of the seat belt. The crew was throwing our gear out of the door, and another crew member made frantic hand signals for us to exit.

The Marine made it to the door first but stopped abruptly before descending the ladder. I felt a hand on my shoulder pushing me out of the plane, but the Marine hadn't started moving yet.

"Go!" the crew member yelled at us as he prodded the Marine forward with his hand. The Marine glared back at the crew member, but finally he was down the stepladder into the darkness, and I was right behind him.

Mines, I thought, beware of the mines. This was why the Marine had hesitated. We had been forewarned that the place was full of them. Stay on the hardstand. The airplane took up most of the width of the runway and there was no place for us to go. Darkness surrounded us. I pulled a small flashlight from my pocket and, aware of the need for light discipline, lit the area around us only for a split second. We were right on the edge of the cement. The minefield lay just beyond where we stood, out there in the darkness. The Marine was standing next to me but I could barely see him.

Above, a million stars shone. The sight was overwhelming. In that moment I felt totally alone but surprisingly at peace. I knew I was where I was supposed to be. I thought of my wife and family, left behind with my closed law practice. I was comforted knowing that they, too, believed I was where I needed to be. Here in the fight. . . .

We looked around, squinting into the pitch black nothingness. There was no one there to meet us. We had no radios on us, no way to communicate with anyone. We had rushed to get on that plane back to Uzbekistan, and even though we weren't on the manifest, they had agreed to drop us off in-country. We knew that our final destination, the Task Force headquarters building, was near the runway, but it was about 0130 (one-thirty in the morning) and we didn't dare walk blindly off into the darkness.

After about fifteen minutes of standing in the cold night, we heard a slight rumbling in the distance. The silhouette of a truck started to grow larger and larger as it approached. Unarmed and exhausted, we hoped it was

friendly. The headlights were mostly blacked out but still projected a faint glow, and we walked quickly over to where the truck seemed to be heading. It stopped. A young airman looked out and, by the expression on his face, appeared more surprised to see us than we were to see him. To our relief, he gave us a ride.

It was two o'clock in the morning by the time we made our way to the support base, which was not really a base at all but just an old bullet-riddled roofless building. A makeshift entranceway was added to keep light from seeping out of the cracks of the front doorway. A sliding hatch opened into a vestibule of hefty tarps. No security guards were posted; no barbed wire protected the perimeter. The American troops we met inside all had beards and wore civilian clothes. Their defense was being low key, and they relied on the Northern Alliance and their own intelligence to notify them of an attack. Any Taliban in the area would be dealt with quickly, long before they could get close to the special operations forces.

The light was dim inside the building. Special Forces teams slept in two large rooms off the main hall. Camouflaged poncho liners acted as interior doorways. Plywood and two-by-fours were used to fashion a separate operations area at one end of the main room. Maps with overlays hung professionally on the bare wood walls. Radios and field telephones of different types were silent. The light was brighter here.

"I'll take you to the general," a bearded man who identified himself as the unit's sergeant major said, obviously not happy that he was awakened to greet the two lieutenant colonels unexpectedly dropping in.

"You were brought to the wrong place. Follow me." We grabbed our heavy bags and dragged them along the dirt road to our headquarters. Our task force was separate from the war fighters here. We had a special mission. The sergeant major carried two of our bags and used a small flashlight strapped onto a headband to find his way as we moved clumsily through the darkness.

Out of breath and disoriented in the blackness, we made it to our destination and into a dusty old building. The lights here were dim. There was a hole in the door where the handle was supposed to be. A water bottle filled with sand as ballast was used instead of a spring to keep the door closed. A lanyard tied to the upper corner of the wooden door fit through a small hole in the doorjamb. The sand weight pulled the door tightly closed.

A lone figure sat in a chair guarding a plywood door. He was a bearded, tired-looking man, in jeans and a heavy sweater. Even with his longish hair and coarse wool hat I could tell he was an American soldier. He stood slowly as we entered, adjusting his M-16.

“These officers belong here,” the sergeant major said while he moved quickly back to the door. The young man just nodded.

As we made our way through the darkness to our sleeping quarters, I was struck by the contrast between the building’s decrepit condition and the twenty-first-century technology I knew was in these rooms, installed by the first troops who had arrived at this desolate base. There would be STU-III secure telephones; state-of-the-art computers monitored continually by signals, technicians, and information analysts; and a video-teleconferencing uplink system that enabled the general and his staff to communicate with fellow commanders back in the States. This was the “the cell,” the nerve center for the task force in the region.

We were led into a small, cramped room with no heat. It was cold enough that I could see my own breath. Military equipment and weapons were suspended haphazardly from nails in the wall. A bare light bulb seemed to be hanging precariously from frayed wires in the center of the ceiling, and I could make out the dark outline of men sleeping in cots. For the next five months, this was home. The Marine and I looked at each other. We had finally made it. I could tell by the half smile on his face that he, too, knew that this experience was history in the making and we were now a part of it.

Before leaving, the sergeant major turned toward us and said respectfully but matter-of-factly, “Gentlemen, welcome to Afghanistan.”

Colonel Mark R. Warnecke

Following enlistment in the Army in 1975 as the Vietnam War was winding down, Col. Warnecke traveled extensively and served in a variety of posts throughout the United States, Europe, Africa, Central America, and the Middle East. In Iraq he commanded an infantry battalion from the New York National Guard during Operation Iraqi Freedom, entering the country from Kuwait and operating in the heart of the Sunni Triangle. Following his return to the United States, Warnecke continued as a New York Guard officer and was assigned as Post Commander at Camp Smith Training Site.

His reflections on his experience, transcribed from an interview on video cassette conducted by members of a local Veterans of Foreign Wars post in Saugerties, New York, and available in the Veterans History Project of the Library of Congress, speaks to a number of themes elaborated in this study, including the motivation for service in the Global War on Terror, the nature of the combat, and the special qualities of National Guard units within the U.S. Armed Forces. Warnecke’s comments are used with his permission.²

Please describe your combat activity.

The Iraqi war is an insurgency war, so the majority of it is counter-insurgency operations: hit-and-run tactics on the insurgents’ part and suicide bombers, although we tended to limit the suicide bombers in our area through an aggressive campaign of making it unsuccessful for them so that they didn’t want to waste their suicide bombers in our area. . . .

In April 2004 things escalated. For about a week to ten days it was pretty much what you would call a traditional war: multiple contacts every day. The enemy, rather than hitting and running or just blowing an IED and firing a few shots from RPGs or heavy machine guns, was actually conducting complex ambushes and operations, with engineering obstacles, mortar fire, RPGs, heavy machine guns, mines, and IEDs all from the same ambush sites, actually trying to overrun and hold pieces of terrain and keep the infrastructure. That was a very intense time for us. . . .

What were your most memorable experiences?

From my standpoint as a commanding officer, watching young soldiers grow up and mature in combat and how they handled it. They grew up rather quickly. . . . no matter what your training is, the first time you get shot at, your initial natural reaction is just to get away from whoever’s shooting at you so you don’t get shot at any more. . . . You could see that change rather rapidly. Usually one type of contact like that and they would realize that the smart thing to do was to maneuver on and destroy the enemy [so as to deny them] the opportunity to keep shooting at you day in and day out. [Seeing] those soldiers mature into combat-hardened soldiers was satisfying, if I can use that term, for me as a commander, after taking them through training and having trained with a lot of them for years and years and years prior to that as a Guard unit. . . .

As a reserve component soldier, as a National Guard soldier, I think it was very satisfying for me to prove to the active-duty [members of the armed forces] that we could do our job as well as any active-duty unit. In fact those

THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

This war began with a sudden attack on September the 11th, 2001. That morning, we saw the destruction our enemies intend for us—and we accepted new responsibilities. . . . Like generations before us, we’re taking the fight to those who attacked us, and those who share their murderous vision for future attacks. Like generations before us, we have faced setbacks on the path to victory—yet we will fight this war with resolve and without wavering. And like generations before us, we will prevail. (Applause)

—President George W. Bush addressing the Veterans of Foreign Wars, January 10, 2006.

were some of the accolades we received. There were good units and bad units, whether active-duty or reserve. But we proved in my mind—I know we did in the division commander's mind and the brigade commander's mind as well—that a reserve component combat arms unit is perfectly capable of doing its job and doing it well.

What did you think of your fellow officers and soldiers?

They were excellent. The philosophy I lived by was [that] to be leader was not necessarily to be a friend. Friendship was something in combat that you needed to check at the border. I told all my junior leaders that if you tried to lead by friendship—which was what I saw as a potential risk with a Guard unit because they had been together so long—you'd probably kill them by friendship. You need to be a leader first and worry about being a friend later. I told all of my guys that if I bring all of them home and you all hate me, I did my job. If I bring every one of you home but one and you all love me, I didn't do my job. . . .

They performed very well. In the reserves you tend to have a lot of guys that were active-duty and were very experienced from the military standpoint. Then the other thing you have is a lot of experienced non-military [people] that are useful skill sets to have, especially in a counter-insurgency war. I had prison guards so when I had to run my own detention facility, I didn't have any problem: this was not a new thing. We were not reinventing the wheel. We had prison guards that were perfectly capable of running a small detention facility and taking care of the prisoners for us.

While there were contract electricians [in the Army] available to fix things, I had electricians so that if I had an immediate need to fix something electrical, I could lean on an electrician. . . . Carpenters, plumbers: we had all those skill sets. Cops: I had a lot of cops, anywhere from New York City cops to [New York] state troopers. I had eight state troopers. A lot of counter-insurgency emergency operations are kind of similar—not to everyday police work but the raids and stuff like that are similar.

Having all those skill sets was great. Maintenance guys: as a light air assault infantry battalion going into combat, we only had eight maintenance guys for 150 vehicles. I managed to acquire four more maintenance guys bringing me up to about twelve. Most battalions with the same vehicle density would have 30-40 maintenance guys. But I was also able, when I needed to, to grab some of my guys who were mechanics in the civilian world and throw them in. My mechanics did an outstanding job. We had probably the highest operational ratings in the . . . area. They would literally rebuild a vehicle from the ground up to get it back into operation because there wasn't another

one sitting there waiting to take its place. It was either that one or none.

Has your military experience influenced your thinking about war and the military in general?

This conflict and my experience for me reaffirmed why we need to be in Iraq. There are things I know that I can't share that if the American public knew I think would reaffirm for them all the more why we need to be in Iraq but for whatever reason it's classified and can't be shared. . . . The things that we know convince me and the things that I saw on the ground convince me that we absolutely need to be there.

First and foremost, the vast majority of the Iraqi people want us there, don't want anything to do with the insurgency. It is forced on them and they're forced to live with it. . . . The insurgents make it a policy to punish those that support any activities against them. . . . It's unfortunate that we've not always performed in a professional manner when it comes to dealing with our detainees and our prisoners, but there's nothing that we have done that would even approach what the Iraqis or the insurgents in general do to the people they get control over, which is primarily to execute them, and in some cases in a brutal, brutal manner. . . .

I was at Ground Zero. I remember those smoking holes in the ground. I remember all those people that died there at the Pentagon and in that field in Pennsylvania where the other plane went down. I know why we're there and that it will take a long time. I know that Al Qaeda has patience, Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda tried to blow up the World Trade Center in 1993 and waited eight years to do it again. They will wait another eight to hit us again if we give them the opportunity to do that and don't continue to seek them out wherever they are.

There are those who would say . . . that the only reason there are Al Qaeda fighters going into Iraq is because the United States is there. . . . O.K., so what? The point is: we're killing them in Iraq, they're not coming here. . . . If we are drawing them into a battlefield of our choosing and getting an opportunity to kill or capture them, then I see that as a positive thing, not allowing them to plan operations against us in the continental United States or in any other place where we or our allies are—because they will do that. Their goal is to establish a fundamentalist Islamic state similar to what was in Afghanistan under the Taliban throughout the entire Middle East and in all Muslim countries. . . . That's their goal and they'll do this and maintain it by whatever terrorist means it takes to do it. We need to be there and it reaffirmed for me that we need to be there.

You know, the first time you're actually looking an Al Qaeda guy in the eye and you know you've got a major Al

Qaeda player—to me that made the whole year worthwhile.

Specialist Abbie Pickett

Abbie Pickett enlisted in the Wisconsin National Guard as a junior in high school during the Clinton years. At the time she was called up, she was enrolled in college, having worked for a stretch as a nursery school teacher. Her first day of basic training was on September 11, 2001. In Iraq, she served for fifteen months beginning in 2003 as a member of the combat support unit of an engineering company, where her duties included driving fuel tankers.

She described her experience in Iraq and her return to the United States as part of After the Fog: Interviews with Combat Veterans, a documentary also featuring the experiences of other veterans of Iraq, Vietnam, and World War II. The following excerpts, transcribed and edited by Larry Minear and amplified in a telephone interview with Pickett, are used with permission.

Enlistment and Training

At the time I signed up for the National Guard, I was very idealistic and patriotic. I came from a family that was very active in public life. I felt that I had ended up in a great country and had no difficulty putting on the uniform to defend freedom and people's rights. But, at seventeen I was still a little bit green as to how everything works. I plunged into the National Guard experience with a lot of enthusiasm.

You know, getting up early in the morning and being gung ho. In the service I was excelling for the first time in my life. How about a minefield? O.K.! You know—anything that if you're going to get a pat on the back for, you'll do it because you want to be a good soldier.

Initial Experiences of Combat

You'd run to the bunker. Lots of times we were really excited that we got to yell, "Incoming!" I remember when the first one hit—there was no question. You didn't have to ask whether it was incoming or outgoing. You could just feel it in your body. It was just really, really close and everybody hit the ground.

There was a female on the ground, she was down on the ground and prone, and there was a soldier over the top of her that had his hand on her neck. "Is this all her blood?" I asked him. He replied, "I think I've been hit, but she's worse than I am." That's all he kept on saying: that she's worse than I am.

All of a sudden I could see that he had been hit in an artery in his arm and there was blood coming out all over, and we didn't have anything to put on this guy's arm. We finally were able to scrounge up a medic bag. I applied a bandage to his wound and we set off for the hospital.

When we got to the hospital, at this point I'm covered in this guy's blood, pretty much from head to toe. Everything was chaotic. The hospital didn't have blood there for transfusions. They were turning their sleeping cots into gurneys.

Bam! Another one hits. Cover your patient! Cover your patient! We didn't have anything. We didn't have flak jackets, for goodness sake. The only thing we could cover our patients with were our own bodies, because we weren't hurt at this time—at least not as bad as they were.

I remember how angry I was after the attack. I was out there feeding these people during the day, I said to myself, and now they're attacking us at night. I was really pissed off and just wanted to go out and find the people that had hurt that guy and hurt them as bad as they had hurt him.

I've been having some problems since the time that this experience with incoming fire happened. I've become really noise-sensitive. Someone pulls the tailgate down on a dump truck and I jump and think that we are coming under attack again. But it's just a tailgate.

Interactions with Civilians

I remember having a conversation with Theisen. He asked, "Are you willing to kill a kid if you have to?" "There's one thing I'll never do—I'll never lie to you," I replied. "I don't know." After that first convoy that we pushed through, I realized that if I should get an RPG, it wasn't just me who would die. It wasn't just me and that little kid. It was me, the guy that was in my passenger seat, or the guy I was giving surveillance to, plus the vehicle in front of us, and the vehicle behind us. That's a lot of people, and coming to those terms was really, really hard to do.

I think that's another hard part. When you come back home, you think: I know I could kill a kid. I know I could take a life if I had to.

Sexual Harassment

I was nineteen at the time of the incident. I didn't know what to do; this guy was getting on me. I was kind of taken aback by the whole thing and I never reported it to anyone in the military. I didn't know how to even go about such things. I knew it was wrong, but sexual harassment? They may give us a briefing, but everybody goes out and makes fun of the briefing afterwards.

I didn't want to kind-of put myself in that square, away from everybody else. I just wanted to be one of the guys. I've actually come across quite a few women who have been raped or sexually assaulted or even just sexually harassed in the military.

Re-entry

It was so much harder transitioning back to the U.S. than going over to Iraq. At least when I was in Iraq, there were a hundred other guys who were going through the same thing that I was going through. There are always those people to go back over there with. It's really hard. I thought for the longest time about going back over to Iraq. It's easy to go back over there. There's always the army to fall back on.

You don't understand; you don't know if it's normal because there's nobody else to the right or left of you that is going through the same thing. I struggled with that a lot. I've talked with other vets in past wars who have come to find that the reality in civilian life is so much harder than the reality of war.

When I came home I was what I called the classic vet. I didn't want to talk about the war. Back at school, when you'd go around on the first days of class and introduce yourself, I'd tell people I'd been abroad for the past year.

I couldn't relate to other people my age, which of course made me much more isolated. I didn't really want to go out and spend my time with other people, and when I did it would just flop. It was horrible, a downward cycle, and one that I still fight till this day.

For the longest time after I got back, I didn't have a good healthy relationship with a male. The experience of being in the service changes you so much. Two people who were close: we would leave one way and come back another. For any relationship or marriage that's going to make it, you have to fall in love with the person all over again, because it's not the same person.

Every day . . . I think about the war every day. It's just not fun. . . . I was hoping that this would all go away, that it would eventually stop and that it wouldn't be so intrusive and that I would start to forget Iraq. But it doesn't sound like it's the case, huh?

Within the first week after I got back, I went to a supermarket with my sister. I stayed up at her place for a while to hide out. "Kristen, we need to go." She'd say, "What?" "I don't feel comfortable. We just need to go." There were probably three or four times in just that one week that I stayed up there with her that we had to leave because I was having panic attacks.

How can I explain the experience I've been through to people who haven't ever been in that kind of environment? I tell them it's like when you've been in a car accident and you have tingling throughout your body and there's just so much adrenaline you don't know what to do with it.

When I first got home, it happened all the time. Now I'll be fine for maybe a couple of months, and then for some

reason I'll just snap back into the mode. . . . The nightmares: that's another way I can tell I've been up during the night. I'll wake up and everything will be locked up, sometimes with the furniture shoved in front of the door. It's a terrible feeling not to know what you've done during the night.

I remember a friend from the military who was suffering from PTSD. "We'll get you all the help you need," we promised him. They put him on an anti-depressant and a sleeping pill and soon he was back in Iraq. I was on an anti-depressant and a sleeping pill and given a weapon while I was over there. It's very sad. They always ask you, "You're not going to hurt anyone; you're not going to hurt yourself, are you?" No, but the idea was always there. So what about someone who is not strong enough to fight off those thoughts?

Things that make me abnormal here make me a better soldier there. Over there, the whole heightened sense of alert. Hearing a really big bang and throwing somebody on the ground is O.K. over there. Hearing a big bang and throwing your roommate on the ground: it's not so socially accepted here.

There are so many people coming back who are so messed up, plus there are so many people from Vietnam and Desert Storm and World War II at the VA hospitals that are overbooked to begin with. Now budget cuts and a shortage of the necessary funding is making it so hard for someone like me who has just come back.

The Future

Looking back on my experience, I'd have to say that there are both positives and negatives. Yes, there are moments when I feel somewhat resentful for things I think could have been avoided. There is this whole thing of lost innocence and youth: you grow up so fast. I came back as a completely different person, and I wasn't even twenty-one yet! I had expected to pick back up in college without any difficulty, but that's not the way it turned out.

But I say it with a smile because there's nothing I can do about it. What I can do, though, is to look at the problem and educate myself and hope that we can find a good solution. The unfortunate part about that is that the only time we'll know if it was a correct solution is years afterwards.

Sergeant Benjamin J. Flanders

Sgt. E-5 Ben Flanders joined the New Hampshire National Guard in 1998 and served in Iraq from March 2004 through February 2005 as part of C Company of the 172nd Mountain Infantry Regiment. His task was to provide convoy security, chiefly for the vehicles of military contractors who were supplying the troops with goods and services. He kept

a journal throughout his deployment and since returning has elaborated his views in blogs and other writings.

The following excerpts are from an interview with Larry Minear on May 2, 2007, at Boston College, just prior to his graduation with a Master's Degree, supplemented by comments that have appeared elsewhere. They focus on his experience in Iraq and, upon returning, his work as team leader for the New Hampshire Guard's Global War on Terror History Project, an initiative to identify the lessons to be learned from the Guard's experience in Afghanistan and Iraq.³

What was your assignment in Iraq?

I joined the New Hampshire National Guard in 1998 and served with the 172nd Mountain Infantry in Iraq from March 2004 through February 2005. I was part of Charlie Company, a 180-person unit, based at Anaconda, some thirty miles north of Baghdad. We had two primary tasks: convoy security, which was taking the supplies through the heart of the country and Baghdad, and we also patrolled major roads we used for supply routes. We looked for bad guys and dealt with them.

Almost all of the trucks that we guarded were operated by the private contractor, Kellogg, Brown, and Root. Some of what we protected, including food and laundry, was essential, but a lot of what was in the trucks was not. When you were the one escorting the damn stuff, it was crazy. We were risking our lives for that. We guarded ice, which is frozen water. You just didn't know what you were escorting. We got ambushed. We had amputees. Some of the civilian drivers got shot in the head and died transporting Lord knows what.

My year in Iraq was, as it turned out, the most tumultuous year for the Guard due to the Army's Transformation Program that left many active-duty units non-deployable. As a result the total forces deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2004, 40 percent were from the National Guard and Reserves, the remaining 60 percent from active-duty forces. During this period, quite apart from events in the Global War on Terror, the armed forces were being reorganized. With fewer regular army units deployable, the importance of the Guard increased further still.

THE MILITARY IN U.S. SOCIETY

Military personnel, military veterans, and their families constitute 25 percent of the U.S. population.

—Easter Seals organization

How vulnerable did you feel in doing your day-to-day duties?

It was an extremely stressful environment in Anaconda. It was prone to attacks. You were not safe on the outside or the inside. I lived in constant dread. You never knew. We were lucky. We never had a death in our company, but we did have a number of serious injuries.

I'm wearing the uniform and driving around in an American vehicle. The enemy knows who I am. But I remember driving around Iraq and wondering how many bad guys I passed on the road or driving through villages. Where were they, who were they? I just wait for the bombs to go off or to get shot at and then respond.

A moving target is harder to hit than a stationary one, so speed was your friend. Certainly in terms of IED detonation, absolutely, speed and pacing were the two things that could really determine whether or not you were going to get injured or killed, or if they just completely missed, which happened a lot.

While our troops were vulnerable to attack at any time, asymmetrical wars such as Afghanistan and Iraq need to be fought and won. Winning, however, requires soldiers to be savvy and resourceful.

Were there any particular incidents which convey the combat in which you and your unit were involved?

On July 30, 2004, we were escorting a convoy moving south from Anaconda to Taji, north of Baghdad. I was in the last vehicle. In the midst of the darkness, the convoy was attacked by RPGs and small-arms fire. My gunner opened up with his MK-19, a weapon that can discharge 350 40-millimeter grenades per minute. He was just holding the trigger down, but it jammed and he didn't get off as many shots as he wanted. But I said, "How many did you get off?" I knew we'd be asked that when we got back. He said, "Twenty three." He had launched twenty three grenades.

I remember looking out the window and seeing a little hut, a little Iraqi house with the light on. We were going so fast and obviously your adrenalin's flowing. It's dark out and you really can't see what's going on. I couldn't really see where the grenades were exploding, but it had to be around the house or perhaps even hitting the house. Who knows? Who knows? And we were the last vehicle and couldn't stop.

What role did military ethics play in your day-to-day activities?

In asymmetrical wars, the enemy has a major say in where and how the war is fought. You can't invite the enemy to a certain place and invite him to abide by certain rules.

You have to respond to the givens of the situation. It's hard to cogently think through moral dilemmas such as ensuring minimal collateral damage as you're being fired on or if an IED has just exploded. In those situations the inherent need for survival trumps.

How does it feel to have been a participant in the Guard and the Global War on Terror?

The "Global War on Terror" nomenclature doesn't really fit the situation on the ground. Are the troops in Iraq fighting terrorists, or are we baby-sitting a civil war? Was it even smart to call this a "war"?

Nobody stands around and wonders, "Is what I'm doing part of the Global War on Terror?" Even the Pentagon itself seems unsure. The GWOT expeditionary medal was seemingly changed overnight into the Iraqi campaign medal. I know a lot of guys who wear both.

When you're over there and people are trying to kill you, your survival trumps everything else: kill them before they kill you. Are they Shi'a, Sunni, al Sadr militia, Al Qaeda, the Egyptian Brotherhood, Iranians? Who cares? They're trying to kill you. In such circumstances, there is no time to debate or reflect on why we're there.

What 9/11 reinforced and what my time in Iraq taught me is that you need to convince people not to take up

arms against people they disagree with. The military is the big green button that the president pushes to defeat other forces and take down governments. The big green button is not good enough to win the Global War on Terror. That's too one-dimensional an approach—we've got to be more creative.

Please describe the New Hampshire National Guard's Global War on Terror History Project.

The History Project was launched when Lt. General H. Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau in Washington, sent a memorandum in May 2005 to Adjutants General around the country encouraging each state to conduct a lessons-learning review of their involvement in the Global War on Terror. "We cannot ignore our history," he wrote, "because nobody else is going to write it for us." Blum was concerned with the impact of extensive deployment overseas on the character of the Guard and, in a sense, feared for its future. The National Guard Bureau provided \$30,000 to each state, which the state was able to use as it saw fit.

At the time I was just back from Iraq and was asked to head up the group of four soldiers—all combat veterans from Afghanistan or Iraq—who interviewed our colleagues and recorded their experience. We realized that most soldiers would not be in a position to tell their

NEW HAMPSHIRE NATIONAL GUARD MEMBERS IN AFGHANISTAN ON AFGHAN ARMY TRAINING MISSION, APRIL 11, 2005



story without some encouragement, so we developed a questionnaire designed to elicit comments on “the full arc of a deployment,” from call-up through combat to re-entry back to civilian life. Once we had identified thirty key questions, we realized that soldiers might not take time to fill out an elaborate written questionnaire so we decided to conduct taped interviews. We began by focusing on ranking officers, but it soon became clear that the perspectives of lower enlisted soldiers were important as well.

We made it clear that soldiers need not be concerned with the quality or organization of their accounts. The idea was that they would tell us their own story, in their own words, and we would then compile a comprehensive history of the New Hampshire Guard’s involvement. Major General Kenneth Clark, New Hampshire Adjutant General [the title given to the senior official in the National Guard unit of each state] fully supported the History Project and put his full weight behind encouraging soldiers to participate. As a result, we got a wide range of opinions and experiences.

What were the principal findings of the History Project?

12

The thing that commanders were most vocal and most consistent about was the lack of quality training for National Guard soldiers at their mobilization stations. Commanders felt that the training was too basic and inflexible. They felt their units wasted a lot of essential time needed for unit cohesion and on training that didn’t prepare them for the actual battlefield in Iraq or Afghanistan.

THE VOICES OF VETERANS

Today’s American military is the best trained and best educated in our nation’s history. They have witnessed events that are changing both our nation and the world. Their perspectives enlarge and refine our sense of current history. It is time to let them speak.

–Dana Gioia, Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts

How was your report received and to what extent has it led to changes in New Hampshire or other states?

I was pleased with our final report, but was disappointed that it did not have more impact on the Guard. As it stands today, the History Project is a mammoth record that is not very accessible. There are some interviews that I would put on NPR today if it were up to me. But with 40-plus total hours of interviews and hundreds of pages of transcripts, the project needs a few more iterations of data reduction. It is currently raw material that needs a refining process to pull together common themes among the interviews and analyze the essential lessons learned.

The History Project has the potential to be an invaluable asset to soldiers and their families. It is the only true record to date that speaks to the global footprint the tiny state of New Hampshire made in the Global War on Terror. As I look back, I wish I had had more time to bring their story to life. I hope one day to see some variation of this project available to all soldiers and their families to help prepare for future deployments.

Chapter 1: The Actors and Theaters

The National Guard and the Active-Duty Military Forces

The National Guard has its roots in the state militias of colonial times, which were comprised of ordinary citizens prepared at a moment's notice to drop their plows, grab their muskets, and defend their communities from whatever threat, foreign or domestic. The fear of standing armies that permeated the colonies and figured in the American Revolution itself led the new republic to organize military formations along state rather than national lines, with "citizen-soldiers" remaining the core element. Today each unit of the National Guard, as the militias came to be called, reports to the state's governor and draws its personnel, with a few exceptions, from the citizens of that particular state.¹ There are 54 such units: one for each of the 50 states, plus individual units for the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the territories of Guam and the Virgin Islands.

As in earlier years, National Guard units continue to serve the needs of individual political jurisdictions and are accountable first and foremost to the respective (primarily state) authorities. National Guard contingents are comprised of people drawn from, and resident in, local communities who attend training sessions once a month and for two weeks each summer and who remain on 'round the clock call year in and year out to respond to floods, droughts, civil disorder, and other emergencies.

Major General Kenneth Clark, Adjutant General of the New Hampshire National Guard and himself a member of the Air National Guard for over 29 years, explains that, "Those in the National Guard are essentially saying, 'I'm willing to do my part, but I don't want to be a full-time, active-duty military person. I don't want my being defined exclusively by soldiering. It's only one part of my life.'"² A chaplain associated with the Vermont National Guard confirms that many who serve as "part-time troops" are attracted to the idea that you can acquit yourself of your military duty "and still have a life." Underlining the citizen element in the citizen-soldier amalgam, nineteen former members of National Guard units have gone on to become presidents of the United States, including, most recently, George W. Bush, who served in the Texas Air National Guard from 1968–73.

The fact that the National Guard enlists people from local communities and trains them at local armories (Figure 1) has a direct impact on the culture of the institution. It is not unusual for family members to find themselves deployed together, a rarity in the regular armed forces. A national TV feature on the Iowa National Guard's service in Iraq entitled "Fathers, Sons, and Brothers" noted that the battalion was "a band of brothers—literally," including several fathers and sons, one pair of twin brothers, and a husband and wife.³ One Vermont Guardsman was particularly pleased to be deployed to Afghanistan with his son so that the two could share the experience together. Their family expressed apprehension about their heightened vulnerability.

The fact that Guard units tend to be comprised of people who know each other and their families creates a different situation from that of the regular armed forces, which group individuals from wider geographical areas together on military bases. Common origins contribute to a more consensual approach to tasks than in the active-duty military, where a more authoritarian approach prevails. The Guard also has a greater diversity of ages, which likewise has its advantages and disadvantages from the standpoint of expertise and discipline. Drawing on the assets of civil society, the Guard taps into a wider range of skill sets and capacities than does the active-duty military.

History, provenance, and character of the National Guard notwithstanding, the domain of Guard units has never

THE CITIZEN-SOLDIER TRADITION

Army National Guard (ARNG) members are volunteer citizen-soldiers who covet their rights as citizens as much as they do their responsibilities as soldiers. As citizens, they exercise the right to share views on defense matters with the American people and their elected representatives. In contrast, Regulars [that is, active-duty members of the armed forces] accept restraints on their full right of citizenship in order to honor the sacred tradition of civilian control over the military. . . . Today, the men and women of the ARNG cling just as proudly to their status as citizen-soldiers as did the early militia.

-National Guard Historian Michael D. Doubler

been entirely circumscribed by state borders. Guard contingents have been deployed with some regularity outside their own states, assisting in times of need in other states and serving overseas in every war since the birth of the nation, as photos and other memorabilia in Guard offices and armories recall. While it is not unprecedented for the Guard to be engaged outside the territorial United States, explains Major Gregory Heilshorn, state public affairs officer for the New Hampshire National Guard, “What is novel right now is the number of National Guardsmen being called up to support our missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other locations around the world.”

In the period between September 11, 2001, and the end of 2006, there have been 16 deployments of New Hampshire Guardsmen overseas, mobilizing soldiers with infantry, artillery, medical, transport, training, and administrative skills for service in Afghanistan, Iraq, Guantanamo Bay, Bosnia, and Kosovo. The New Hampshire Air National Guard, a separate entity but still an integral part of the New Hampshire National Guard, has deployed 13 times, providing air refueling for U.S. operations in the Middle East as well as functioning on the ground in Spain, Diego Garcia, Guam, and Curacao.

New Hampshire Guard units were also posted to the Gulf Coast following Hurricane Katrina and in the southwestern United States to assist the U.S. Border Patrol in combating illegal immigration. The Guard’s return to the border in Operation Jump Start brought the institution full circle, recalling a deployment in 1916–17, when “More than 158,000 Guardsmen served on the Mexican border . . . to protect against raids by the Mexican bandit Pancho Villa.”⁴

The experiences of National Guard personnel in Afghanistan and Iraq are in some respects similar to the experiences of their counterparts in the “regular” U.S. armed forces and, for that matter, of military personnel from other nations participating in the U.S.-led coalitions in those theaters. Yet the fact that National Guard units are comprised of members of communities throughout their respective states who, in addition to training one weekend per month and two weeks each summer, continue their workaday responsibilities as lawyers and policemen, teachers and nurses, business people and farmers, gives their involvement a special flavor. The fabric of these relationships also provides home communities a sense of first-hand involvement in the Global War on Terror.

FIGURE 1: NATIONAL GUARD ARMORIES: 3,200 LOCATIONS, 54 STATES AND TERRITORIES



The experiences of these “citizen-soldiers”—well over 250,000 as of June 30, 2007—thus offer a particularly instructive point of entry into the Global War on Terror. The fact that the Guard is comprised of men and women drawn from all walks of life, with intimate ties to local communities dispersed across the nation, also makes it a particularly sensitive bellwether of public opinion on the Global War on Terror. Citizen-soldiers are arguably a more diverse, representative, and instructive sounding board of views than are the full-time “active-duty” warriors who comprise the regular armed forces, who live on or near military bases, and who make full-time professional commitments to military service.

Although concentrating on members of the National Guard, their families, and communities, this study also draws on the experiences of members of the regular armed forces. It does so, first, because a number of interviewees served in the regular armed forces before enlisting in the Guard. Second, Guard personnel when serving overseas are incorporated into active-duty units, increasing their interaction with fulltime professional military personnel. Third, the burgeoning body of reflections by military personnel themselves in the form of letters, journals, photos, and documentaries includes significant contributions by active-duty military as well as Guard personnel. The inclusion of non-Guard personnel within the scope of the study also provides a wider data set for analysis.

The outlook for the immediate future would seem to provide no reprieve for the National Guard. Discussions among U.S. officials during the first half of 2007 of increasing the numbers of soldiers serving in Iraq focused on call-ups of regular military personnel as part of President Bush’s “surge” strategy. Yet National Guard units in Arkansas, Indiana, Ohio, and Oklahoma had also been put on notice, and in the coming year other Guard units may also be pressed into service to fill gaps in manpower and function.⁵ Guard personnel were also among those whose tours of duty in Afghanistan and Iraq had been extended by several extra months.

A Focus on New Hampshire and Vermont

New Hampshire and Vermont are the focus of this study in part because of the researcher’s familiarity with the two states and because of their geographical proximity to the Feinstein International Center in suburban Boston. In a larger sense, however, the two states are typical of the predominantly rural roots of many National Guard units. One recent review found that “rural families are paying a disproportionately high price for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.”⁶ It is noteworthy that for U.S. military forces as a whole, “About half of American military casualties in Iraq have come from towns with fewer than 25,000 resi-

dents.”⁷ New Hampshire and Vermont, small in population but heavily engaged through their National Guard units in Afghanistan and Iraq, provide something of a laboratory for studying the effects of the conflicts.

For New Hampshire, a small and predominantly rural state of 9,000 square miles with a population of 1.3 million, to thrust some 7,500 soldiers into military theaters around the world is remarkable. New Hampshire military personnel include, in addition to the 2,200 who have served in the National Guard, another 5,000-plus in the regular armed forces. On the third anniversary of 9/11, more than half of the New Hampshire Army National Guard, along with a contingent of the New Hampshire Air National Guard, was “in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other locations on various security details, carrying and occasionally using their loaded weapons.”⁸ In 2004, some 1,200 members of the state’s National Guard were deployed, making it, with about half of its ranks out of the state, the state with the fourth-highest percentage of its Guard troops deployed.

“We haven’t had this number deployed since World War II,” observes Col. Deborah Carter, human resources director of the New Hampshire National Guard. “Almost every community in the state was probably affected.”⁹ As of August 2007, two members of the New Hampshire National Guard had lost their lives in the Global War on Terror. At the state level, the Guard has sought to identify lessons from recent experience in terms of recruiting and retention, training and professionalism, financing and accountability.¹⁰

The experience of New Hampshire’s neighbor Vermont is similar. With a population of about 600,000 (13.6 percent of whom are veterans), Vermont has a median household income of about \$41,000; 6.3 percent of its households have incomes below the poverty line. The Vermont National Guard had ten major deployments during the 2003–06 period, with units dispatched to Afghanistan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Iraq.¹¹ The appropriateness of U.S. military involvement in Iraq has been more of a major grassroots political issue in Vermont than in New Hampshire. In Vermont, “50 communities in 2005 passed referendums that asked the administration to re-

VERMONT AND THE MILITARY

... the innate pride in Vermont’s troops is countered by deep misgivings about the Pentagon’s heavy reliance on the “weekend warriors” of the National Guard. For most Vermonters, who have no active-duty military bases in the state, the National Guard is their only connection to the military. And although the Guard’s soldiers and airmen have long known the risk, few could have imagined the cauldron of combat in which they now find themselves.

—Brian MacQuarrie, reporter

consider its involvement in Iraq.” In 2007, the Vermont State legislature expressed similar sentiments on behalf of the state as a whole. By one tally, “nearly three quarters” of the state’s residents opposed the war.¹²

“The country’s second-smallest state in population has the country’s second-highest National Guard enlistment—5.7 per 1,000 residents. That participation rate is almost four times the national average, almost three times that of New Hampshire, almost five times that of Massachusetts.” Vermont attracted national attention in 2006 because it had the highest proportion of deaths in Iraq in relation to the population of any state. In the number of deaths per capita in Iraq, Vermont also ranked first.¹³ As of August 2007, ten members of the state’s National Guard had been killed in action. Members of the Vermont Air National Guard, scrambling aloft following the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers, took 22 minutes to reach New York City. The Vermont National Guard had served on the Mexican border in 1916, only six months later to be called up for service in World War I.

The Global War on Terror

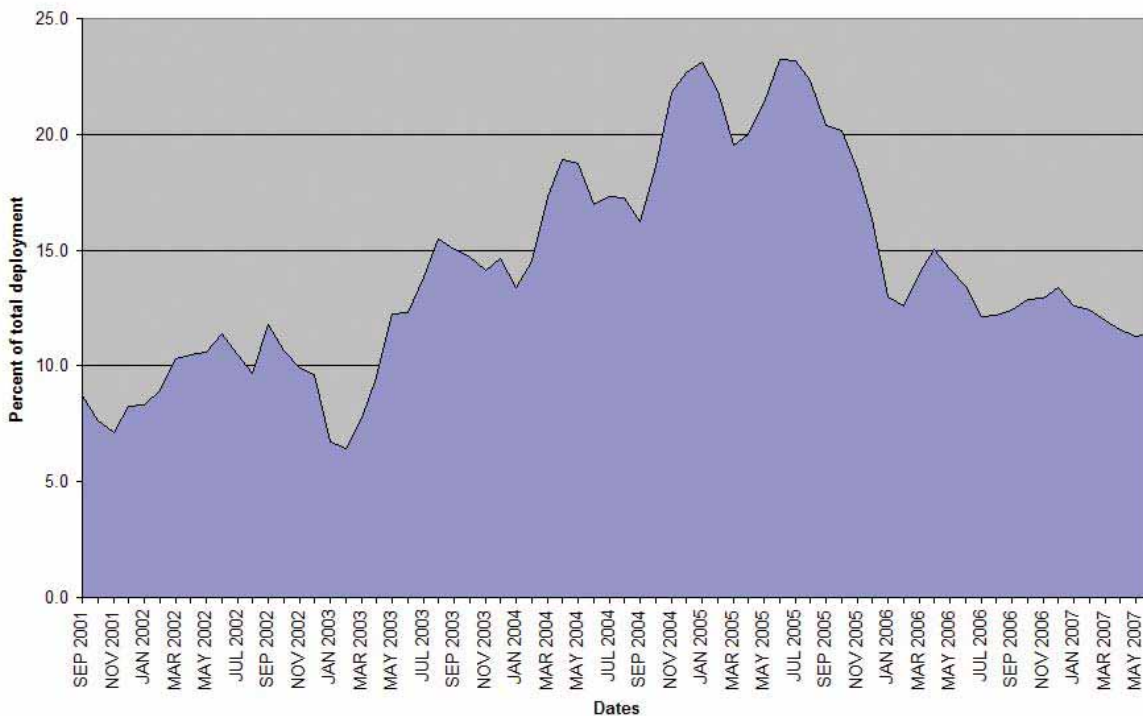
The Global War on Terror represents the overarching response of the George W. Bush administration to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, on the United States. The events of that day, said the president looking back a month later, represented “an attack that took place on

American soil, but it was an attack on the heart and soul of the civilized world. And the world has come together to fight a new and different war . . . against all those who seek to export terror, and a war against governments that support or shelter them.”¹⁴ The war has had three major theaters: Afghanistan, Iraq, and the home front.

U.S. military operations against Afghanistan began on October 7, 2001, with air attacks, followed by ground action, designed to capture Osama Bin Laden (confessed mastermind of the 9/11 attacks), destroy his Al Qaeda organization, and remove from power the Taliban regime that provided him sanctuary. On September 12, 2001, NATO declared the New York and Washington bombings an attack against all of its members. In late 2001 the U.N. Security Council endorsed creation of an International Stabilization Assistance Force, which drew support from 26 NATO-member and 11 non-NATO-member nations. As of August 2007, 23,500 U.S. troops, along with 26,300 troops from other nations, were participating in the U.S.-led coalition, working with 114,600 Afghan security forces in Operation Enduring Freedom. As of that date, fatalities among U.S. military forces were reported at 428, including 52 members of the National Guard. Coalition deaths stood at 652.¹⁵

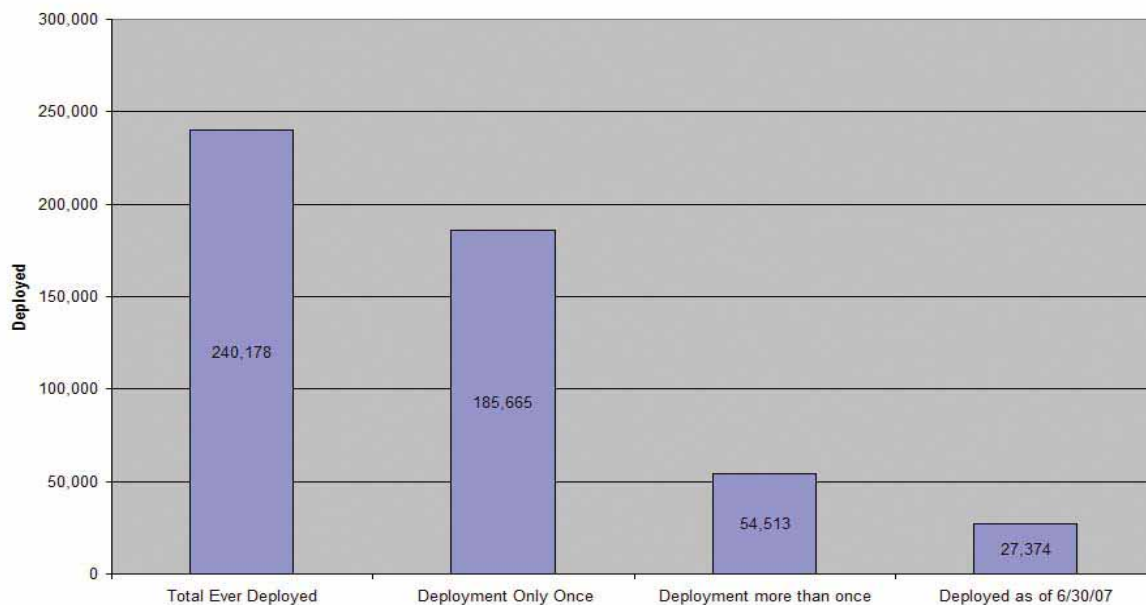
The Global War on Terror was broadened with the U.S. attack on Iraq on March 20, 2003. The purpose of the invasion, said President Bush, was to disarm weapons of

CHART 1: THE NATIONAL GUARD AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL U.S. MILITARY DEPLOYMENT



U.S. Department of Defense data

CHART 2: NATIONAL GUARD DEPLOYMENT IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ, SEPTEMBER 2001–JUNE 2007



U.S. Department of Defense data

mass destruction, end the regime's support for terrorism, and free the Iraqi people.¹⁶ (The U.S. Congress in October 2002 had authorized the use of force against Iraq, if necessary, to prosecute the War on Terror.) Iraq quickly became the second major theater in the Global War and over time came to overshadow then-existing operations in Afghanistan. While Operation Iraqi Freedom did not receive the imprimatur of the United Nations Security Council, the United States assembled a "coalition of the willing" among governments to prosecute the war.

On May 3, 2003, following the overthrow of the regime of Saddam Hussein, President Bush declared major combat operations completed, with reconstruction to follow. Yet fighting continued and involved a widening array of actors, including Iraqi armed forces and sectarian militias, foreign fighters, and criminal elements. As of August 2007 there were more than 155,000 U.S. troops in Iraq, supported by 10,000 coalition soldiers from 33 countries, working in collaboration with 300,000 Iraqi security forces as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. As of May 2, 2007, the 144,202 U.S. force members in Iraq included 23,534 members of the National Guard or Reserves.¹⁷ As of August 2007, 3,737 U.S. service personnel were reported to have been killed, 27,186 wounded.¹⁸ Of those killed, 435 were members of the National Guard.

The third major theater has been the home front, where the administration mounted a cluster of activities under Operation Noble Eagle. The activities involve U.S. military operations designed to provide homeland defense

and support to the work of federal, state, and local agencies. Operation Noble Eagle was launched on September 14, 2001, when some 9,600 National Guard troops were already performing functions such as flying air interceptor patrols and buttressing security around potential civilian targets. President Bush authorized 50,000 troops for Operation Noble Eagle, of which 35,000 (about 10,000 in the National Guard) were mobilized. Some 6,000 personnel were deployed along the Mexican border to help deter illegal immigration in Operation Jump Start, not formally part of Operation Noble Eagle.

The Global War on Terror was framed from the outset in terms of doing battle not just against Al Qaeda but against terrorism of global reach. Accordingly, the administration stepped up activities in many locations around the globe other than Afghanistan and Iraq. Beginning in 2002, administration requests to Congress for foreign assistance funds began to emphasize the importance of 28 "frontline" states which were cooperating with the U.S. in the Global War on Terror or themselves faced terrorist threats.¹⁹ In October 2002, the administration extended Operation Enduring Freedom into the Horn of Africa, with a taskforce based in Djibouti, to disrupt terrorist activities in the region.

Since the outset of the Global War on Terror, the National Guard has contributed a significant portion of the U.S. forces deployed in Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (Chart 1). As of June 30, 2007, the number of deployments to those

theaters totaled 240,178 individuals, of whom 185,665 persons were deployed a single time and 54,513 persons more than once (Chart 2). As of that date, 27,374 members of the National Guard were serving in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Guard's authorized strength is 350,000.²⁰

To manage the Global War on Terror, the president introduced a number of policy, organizational, and administrative changes in the U.S. government, including creating an office and department of Homeland Security. The U.S.A. Patriot Act ("The Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001"), which became law on October 26, 2001, and has since been extended, gave him broad authority to protect the country

from future attacks. Early priorities included strengthening U.S. intelligence and implementing new airline and other security measures.

Administration figures place the direct costs of the Global War on Terror from its inception in September 2001 through early 2007 at \$548 billion, including \$3 billion for Operation Noble Eagle. The administration has requested an emergency supplemental appropriation from Congress for fiscal year 2007 of \$94.3 billion and funds of \$141.7 billion in fiscal year 2008. (The figures represent direct costs, excluding, for example, substantial funding for military health care.) If all of the requested funding is provided, the direct costs for the Global War on Terror are projected to reach approximately \$690 billion.²¹

Chapter 2: Duty and Service

Reflections by members of the National Guard on their experience in Afghanistan and Iraq contain a number of recurring themes. They include the reasons for their presence in the Guard, the role played by the events of September 11, 2001, their assessment of the meaning and importance of their service in the Global War on Terror, and the influence of their involvement on their understanding of their responsibilities as citizens and of the United States' role in the world. This chapter provides a composite narrative on these topics. Commentary by soldiers themselves is contextualized by observations from a wider circle of interviewees.

Americans have typically enlisted in the National Guard with no expectation of serving outside of the United States. Many viewed it, said one of its chaplains, as “a rural community fraternity organization” rather than a military entity. During the Vietnam War, some sought out the Guard in the hope of avoiding being drafted and deployed in Indochina. One of the enduring attractions of the Guard over the years has been that members can improve their lot in life while staying connected with their families and communities. Interviewed for this study, Nancy Brown of Waitsville, Vermont, whose son Ryan Maloney served for eleven months in 2004 in Iraq, recalled a relevant bit of family history. In the absence of family funds for college, two of her brothers had enlisted in the Guard and served in Vietnam (one of whom is still struggling with resulting post-traumatic stress disorder). Brown's son Ryan, she said, like so many of his counterparts, had joined the Guard because of economic need.

Educational benefits enjoyed by Guard members also figured prominently in enlistments. Specialist Jennifer Schwab signed up for the New Hampshire National Guard in May 2000 while still in high school with an eye to defray looming college expenses. “When I enlisted,” she explains, “I had no expectation of overseas service. A year later,” when her unit shipped out to Afghanistan following the events of 9/11, she confesses with some amusement, “the joke was on me.”¹ Some of her colleagues were less amused. “The only reason I joined the Guard,” recalled one, “was not to be deployed any more.” He is bitter at what he perceived to be the Bush administration's manipulation of the Guard, the purpose of which, he recalled, is supposed to be “homeland se-

curity.”² Collections in the Library of Congress Veterans History Project confirm that the Guard has traditionally attracted people with limited economic and educational opportunities.

The data suggest that the majority of those who served with National Guard units in Afghanistan and Iraq did so without specific motivation related to the Global War on Terror. The prevailing sentiment of people in the Guard seems to have been that a citizen's duty required service at a time of national duress. For many, the fact that the duress was the result of a terrorist attack from abroad was largely of secondary importance. Most of those interviewed stated that they would have responded to the call, whatever the specific events that triggered it. Terrorism is undoubtedly a real threat to the country, notes one Vermont Guardswoman interviewed for this study. In her personal view, however, U.S. policy related to the Global War on Terror is “not serious” and had no bearing on her own interest in serving in the Guard.

While the articulated desire among National Guard soldiers to participate in the Global War on Terror is thus conspicuous by its relative absence, some citizens sought out the Guard—and others signed up for the active-duty forces—specifically in response to the events of 9/11 and with a particular interest in protecting the United States from terrorist threats. Specialist Gregory James Schulte recalls that “September 11 changed a lot of things. After September 11, I got tired of everybody talking—all talking and no show—so I tried to join.” In December 2001, halfway through his senior year in high school, he was accepted into the Missouri National Guard and served in Iraq as part of a helicopter detail.³

Staff Sgt. Neal I. Mitchell, who by 9/11 had already served in the Marines, takes pride in having signed up for the New Hampshire National Guard following the attacks on New York and Washington. He viewed himself as following in the footsteps of his father, who had enlisted in the Navy in the immediate aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor and served as a navigator on PT boats. Mitchell explained in an interview that he was not necessarily looking for front-line exposure. “You have to have a screw loose,” he says, to seek out combat. Yet he recalls that he “at the very least expected to be participat-

ing in some domestic security effort.”⁴ One Vermonter who had enlisted in the Guard in 1987 expressed his view that following 9/11 the United States clearly needed to assert itself overseas and wage a war against terrorism, which he was himself to support through his own personal involvement.

As in the case of Mitchell, family military traditions played a key role in encouraging quite a few men and women to step forward in the wake of 9/11. “I come from a family of warriors,” Jay Czarga wrote in his blog. “I am a product of their collective service to the nation.” Czarga, who had three tours of duty in Iraq, explained, “This isn’t about adventure or money or some death-wish, it’s about doing the right thing.”⁵ Eric James March “felt the call of duty” to enlist in the Guard in June 2001 despite the fact that no immediate family members had served in the military. On his first day of basic training, which happened to be on September 11, 2001, he recalls, “I remember the drill sergeants saying that we were getting ready to go to war. I had that on my mind and heart.”⁶

In the wake of 9/11, the active-duty armed forces also received its share of inquiries and recruits. Marine Corporal Stephen Wilbanks writes in his blog that on September 11, 2001, “when the news about the terrorist attacks in New York City came over the radio . . . I immediately drove to the recruiter’s office to inquire about reenlistment options.”⁷

For a number of National Guard soldiers from non-U.S. backgrounds, service was an expression of their own particular sense of obligation. Specialist Mario Raymundo, who deployed to Iraq with the New Hampshire National Guard’s mountain infantry company from January 2004 to February 2005, came from El Salvador, where violence

was his daily experience and “freedom only a dream.” He viewed the U.S. as his home country and considered it his duty “to protect it for my family and for everybody else’s family.”⁸ For Camilo Mejía, whose parents played prominent leadership roles in the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua in the 1980s, “I needed a radical change. I needed to do whatever it took to be a part of [American] society. Instead of becoming a political icon, like my parents, I decided to find my own path and . . . joined the U.S. Army.” Mejía served in the Florida National Guard in Iraq for seven months beginning in March 2003.⁹

For people such as Raymundo and Mejía, the National Guard—and, for that matter, the active-duty forces—have served as stepping stones not only into the American economy and society but also into U.S. citizenship. Warnecke commented on the presence of eight non-citizens in his New York Guard unit, who as a result of their mobilization to Iraq were put on a fast track to citizenship. (A Nigerian in the same group who had sought out a recruiter in New York City following 9/11 was killed in an ambush in Iraq but died a U.S. citizen.) On Independence Day 2007, “325 foreign-born soldiers who are fighting in the United States military took the oath of allegiance in two ceremonies in Iraq.”¹⁰ One estimate placed the number of immigrants in the U.S. armed forces in 2007 at 60,000.¹¹

In the light of the military service of non-U.S. nationals, there was a certain irony in a statement during the 2007 congressional debate on the immigration reform bill by one of the bill’s opponents, Senator Jeff Sessions (Republican of Alabama). Sessions stated that “The bill would provide amnesty and a path to citizenship for people who broke into our country by running past the National Guard,” a reference to the deployment of Guard

TABLE 1: NATIONAL GUARD FATALITIES IN IRAQ: TEN HIGHEST STATES BY HOSTILE FIRE, AS OF OCTOBER 7, 2006

State	Hostile	Non-Hostile	Total
Pennsylvania	25	3	28
Louisiana	21	1	22
California	19	3	22
Georgia	15	13	28
New York	15	6	21
Mississippi	15	3	18
Arkansas	15	2	17
Tennessee	12	4	16
Illinois	11	5	16
Michigan , Iowa	11	1	12

Note: Vermont is often cited as the state with highest per capita losses, with eight KIA.

VFW Magazine, 2006

units under Operation Jump Start to counteract illegal immigration along the U.S. border with Mexico.¹²

Given the traditionally domestic focus of the National Guard and the fact that many of its members who served in Afghanistan and Iraq had enlisted well in advance of September 11, 2001, it is not surprising that many do not speak of terrorism or the Global War as a major motivation. They often present themselves, as does Captain Michael Fortenberry, as simply doing their duty, meeting their obligations whether or not they specifically agreed to deployment in Afghanistan or Iraq when they enlisted. “I’m not a war monger—I’d rather be home with my family,” he says, “but someone has to do it.”¹³ As 9/11 recedes into the past and its connection with the war in Iraq becomes more contested, the terrorist attack against the United States may become even less of an ongoing motivating factor for new Guard and active-duty enlistments.

While doing one’s duty at a time of international duress was a constant refrain, many of those interviewed downplayed their involvement in any sort of global anti-terrorism effort. In fact, they use the term “Global War on Terror” only exceptionally, and even the terms “terror” and “terrorism” are conspicuous by their relatively infrequent use. Specialist Raymondo, the Salvadoran, says the idea of terrorism “doesn’t fit” the circumstances. He would prefer the concept of “a war against extremism.” As noted earlier, Flanders also has his doubts. “Nobody stands around and wonders, ‘Is what I’m doing part of the Global War on Terror?’” The link to terrorism seemed something of a stretch. “Are the troops in Iraq fighting terrorists,” he asks, “or are we baby-sitting a civil war?”

Major General Kenneth Clark, adjutant general of the New Hampshire Guard, finds Global War on Terror a “non-descript” term. In an interview for this study, he noted that “You don’t sign up for the Global War,” as you didn’t for the Cold War either, but instead for Iraq. “Terrorism” is vague and open to debate. “Even the militias who fought and won America’s independence from the British would be considered terrorists,” he points out. What 9/11 has enabled the Guard to do, explains Clark, is to assemble a group of people, “now with their eyes wide open,” who are expressing “some level of patriotism in the sense of placing service above self.” The desire for economic and educational advancement is still present but perhaps less of a motivating factor. The New Hampshire National Guard estimates that a sense of duty represents the major motivation for about 60 percent of enlistees, a figure they believe has remained roughly constant in recent years.¹⁴

Data reviewed for this study also suggest a certain correlation between the rationale for an individual’s engagement in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and their assessment

of the experience. Some who saw their involvement as a source of income and professional advancement were able to build on the skills that they honed overseas, move up the career ladder, avail themselves of educational benefits, and explore new careers. Schwab’s combat pay allowed her to underwrite college tuition costs (she took distance learning courses while based in Afghanistan and completed her degree upon returning). Building on her experience in the Guard, she is now involved in journalism and non-profit organization work. A school bus driver and special education teacher from Bradford, Vermont, Cindy Clemence, took some personal satisfaction from using her hazard duty Guard pay from a year’s deployment in Afghanistan—a “windfall,” as she put it—to launch and underwrite a high school football program that had been talked about but had remained unfunded for years. (For some in the Guard, however, overseas deployment meant a sharp reduction in income.)

Interviewed for this study, a platoon sergeant who commanded a unit of 34 members of the Vermont National Guard in Iraq gave a measured but, on-balance, positive assessment of his own experience. Since 9/11, he said, he had felt the need for the United States “to assert itself overseas and to take on the Global War on Terror.” He welcomed the opportunity to play a leadership role in an effort to do just that. While his full year overseas had created difficulties for his family and while the Guard unit that he had grown up in was being stretched to the maximum, “The whole experience, overall, was positive, though scary at the time.”

For many who lacked a sense of purpose or passion in their workaday and civic lives, deployment overseas provided a new sense of direction. They returned home with a new or renewed understanding of the importance of family, community, and nation, a reality confirmed by family members and community leaders as well.¹⁵ “They came back with a sense of individual empowerment from having taken on a difficult assignment and performing it well,” notes Ernest Loomis, chairman of the New Hampshire Committee of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). They also had “a new-found sense of the worth of our way of life and our type of government.”¹⁶ In a statement echoed by others in the Guard, Lt. Ron Maloney, a home contractor who had joined the New York National Guard in high school, noted that he had progressed from “banging nails every day” to being “part of something bigger.”¹⁷

Some soldiers upon returning became more engaged in community activities, participating in civic affairs and even seeking out positions in town and city government. About a dozen veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq (one of them a Republican) ran for federal office in 2006. One who gained particular prominence was Tammy Duckworth, an army helicopter pilot and Illinois National

Guard major. “I was not originally slated to go to Iraq,” she recalled, but when the troops she had trained were activated, “I called my commander up and said, ‘Listen, please take me. I can’t be one of the only aviation officers in this state standing here waving good-bye to the unit as it goes to war.’”¹⁸

In Iraq she lost both legs in an RPG attack in 2004 and nearly died. “I can’t deny the interest in the fact that I am an injured female soldier,” she commented during her bid for the House seat from Illinois’s sixth congressional district. “Understand that I’m going to use this as a platform.”¹⁹ Head of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, Duckworth won the Democratic primary in March 2006 but lost narrowly to the Republican candidate in November. She is said to be considering another bid in 2008.

Initially aggravated at the disruption that military service meant for work, school, and family life, Matthew Sean Neely ended by viewing his experience in positive terms. “I put my life on pause for a year,” he says in words that ring true to the experience of many others, “maybe to help somebody for the rest of their life. I think it was worth it, certainly.” He describes his time in Iraq as “a life-changing experience for sure. I view life a lot more differently. I have a better handle on things.”²⁰ Philip Wade Geiger of the Missouri National Guard assessed his own experience similarly. He believes that his service “has made me a better person, it’s made me more respectful, and more socially conscious. Before I enlisted, I didn’t care about any world events or news. This keeps my eyes open now because I’m interested in things that are evolving that could involve me or friends of mine.”²¹

Some who sought to participate specifically in order to defend their country from terrorism found particular satisfaction in their work. “Before 9/11,” recalls Specialist Dave Bischel, “I was doing wireless communication sales and always feeling that there was something missing in my life. But 9/11 changed a lot of people’s lives and how they viewed their lives, including me. After 9/11, I started reevaluating my priorities. I wanted to be able to help if something bad happened on the West Coast, so I joined the Guard.” Ten years out of the full-time army, he re-enlisted in the Guard and soon found himself in Iraq, where he served with a California Guard unit from March 2003 to April 2004.²² Warnecke’s assessment has already been noted: “The first time you’re actually looking at an Al Qaeda guy in the eye made the whole year worthwhile.”²³

A number of those who served in Iraq saw themselves as supporting preventive action. One was Timothy Rieger, whose service in the Marine Corps since his enlistment in 1982 included stints in Okinawa, Korea, Moscow, and Canberra. A California Guard member in a unit of the Judge Advocate General (JAG) in Afghanistan, he noted

in an interview, “There’s an old saying that the greatest warrior is one who does not need to kill. If you demonstrate that you’re prepared and willing and that you will sacrifice in order to defeat the enemy, that is a great deterrent. I think that we have to continue to demonstrate that, particularly to these radical organizations that will blow up the World Trade Centers or the Pentagon or the stadium in which you or I are watching some baseball game.”²⁴ Others were reminded during their deployments of the reality of terrorism. One New Hampshire state corrections officer who served as a block guard over detainees in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, recalled that prisoners would sometimes seek to provoke their captors by “referring to their causes, jihads, stuff like that.” He was proud that he managed not to fall for the bait.

Some who had been ambivalent about their mission upon deployment became more persuaded over time. “You don’t necessarily agree why you’re fighting,” explains James R. Welch, a Toledo, Ohio, native who enlisted in the Army to improve his life and served for seven months in the infantry in Iraq. “But when you get over there and you see the way these people are living, and you see the way Saddam was living and his family was living, you really want to give these people a better life, because you know what you have back home. . . . Regardless of what the government says you’re doing it for, regardless of what your superiors say you’re doing it for, you know you’re over there doing it because you’re freeing these people from a dictatorship they’ve been under for the past thirty years. Whatever keeps you going from day to day is why you’re doing it.”²⁵

Others became more negative in their views during their service, certainly in Iraq and, to a lesser extent, in Afghanistan. A CBS documentary noted a certain erosion over time in the commitment of Iowa Guardsmen to the Iraq mission, with two members of the same family sometimes ending up with opposing appraisals of the progress of the war. With the passage of time, the view that the troops were advancing freedom for the Iraqi people had fewer proponents. By May 2007 there was growing disenchantment among the troops. One reporter who spent time with the 82nd Airborne Division found that “A small minority of Delta Company soldiers—the younger, more recent enlistees in particular—seem to still wholeheartedly support the war. Others are ambivalent, torn between fear of losing more friends in battle, longing for their families, and a desire to complete their mission.”²⁶

Growing disenchantment was also the experience of the three New Hampshire National Guardsmen whose experiences are chronicled in dramatic fashion in *The War Tapes*, which they themselves filmed. Sgt. Steve Pink, who enlisted partly for help with college tuition and also to “test myself and make sure I could accomplish something,” said upon returning, “I don’t want to

tell people what it was like over there. What a fucking mess, you know? I went over there and I did the job I was supposed to do.” Pink’s colleague, Sgt. Mike Moriarity, who described himself initially as a “substantially patriotic person,” contacted a recruiter shortly after 9/11 and said, “You slot me into a unit only if they’re going to Iraq.” Upon returning, he said, “I’m so glad I went. I hated it with a God-awful passion and I will not go back. I have done my part and I feel like it’s someone else’s turn.”

The third in the trio, Sgt. Zack Bazzi, joined the army after graduating from high school in hopes of seeing the world. “Most soldiers,” he observed on returning, “want to think they’re there for a good cause, something noble. You’re fighting for freedom and everything that’s right. It was tough, because you have to do some not-so-nice things sometimes.” His conclusion: “I love being a soldier. The only bad thing about the army is you can’t pick your war.” Two of the three felt that guaranteeing oil resources had been a compelling reason for U.S. involvement. All three had medical and/or post-traumatic

stress issues needing attention upon their return to the United States.²⁷

The rewards of service thus need to be held in tension with the negative aspects of the experience. These include, in addition to the disruption of personal and family life, illness, injury, loss of life, and the regular confrontation with death and destruction. Subsequent sections of the report, particularly the chapter on re-entry, examine the downsides in more detail.

These varied views of soldiers regarding duty and service are mirrored by a wider public debate about the nature of the threats to U.S. security, utility of the Global War on Terror, and impacts of warfare on the individuals, families, and institutions involved. One longtime observer of the New Hampshire scene, David Lamarre-Vincent, executive director of the New Hampshire Council of Churches, commented in an interview that “People here don’t perceive what is taking place in Afghanistan and Iraq as involving a clash of civilizations or an assault on

STAFF SERGEANT MARK P. LEBLANC RETURNS TO CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE, FEBRUARY 28, 2005



the U.S. by *jihadis*. They are much more concerned about economic security and health care here at home. The concept of terrorism and the idea of a war being waged against it don't resonate."²⁸

His observation is borne out by a public opinion poll in which, looking to the presidential primary of January 2008, 400 randomly selected New Hampshire voters were asked to identify the single most important issue. Those who expected to vote as Democrats placed the issue of terrorism and national security second to the situation in Iraq (33 percent) (only 6 percent of those polled ranked terrorism and national security first) and well behind health care and prescription drugs (15 percent), the economy and jobs (14 percent), retirement and social security (10 percent), and education (10 percent). By contrast, Republican respondents ranked terrorism and national security first (24 percent), followed by the situation in Iraq (12 percent), the economy and jobs (11 percent), and immigration (11 percent). Data from the other three presidential primary states polled (Iowa, South Carolina, and Nevada), confirmed the same sequence of priorities for members of the two parties.²⁹

A GUARDSMAN REFLECTS

I like helping people. . . . If the army told me I had to go back, would I like it? No. Just like the first time I didn't like it, but I'd go back because I'm being told that I have to go back. I signed up; I signed on the dotted line and that's my job. Would I enjoy it? No. Am I Hooah? Yes. I have enjoyed the military. I like everything about it. But war is not necessarily the same thing—and if anybody really likes war, and wants to go, maybe they should get psychological help—because I don't think it's a pretty thing at all.

—New Hampshire Guardsman who served in Iraq while on leave from his civilian job as a corrections officer

The poll suggests a fissure in the political consensus about the nature and relative importance of the Global War on Terror, largely along party lines. Republicans as a whole give higher priority to national security and the war on terror than do Democrats. At the same time, however, Democrats are experiencing difficulty in finding politically acceptable alternatives. “The congressional vote [in August 2007] that authorized eavesdropping without warrants on international communications, including those involving Americans within the United States,” observed one analyst, “has shown that there is at least one arena in which Mr. Bush can still hold the line: terrorism.”³⁰

The lack of resonance between the Global War on Terror and the sentiments and priorities of the wider public

reflects, in part, confusion among policy-makers themselves. The Pentagon itself has seemed unsure about the nomenclature. “In 2005, the Pentagon argued unsuccessfully with President Bush that the phrase ‘war on terror’ should be replaced by ‘global struggle against violent extremism.’” For its part, the House Armed Services Committee no longer uses the term “Global War on Terror” in its reports.³¹ A February 2007 audit by the Inspector General's office of the Justice Department found a lack of clarity and consistency in the Department's reporting on terror activity.³² The trajectory of the so-called “Global War on Terror supplemental appropriations bill” in the spring of 2007, which was passed by Congress, vetoed by President Bush, and then later passed and signed in a form acceptable to the president, demonstrated how divided and divisive the situation had become.

Confusion about the Global War on Terror extended to the National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, and to other places where veterans were buried and honored. The issue of how cemetery markers should read perplexed David McPhillips, the father of a marine, Brian Michael McPhillips, who was killed during Operation Iraqi Freedom in an ambush on April 4, 2003, two days before the fall of Baghdad. Interviewed as part of the Veterans History Project shortly before his son's burial, the senior McPhillips, himself a marine decorated for his service in Vietnam, mused, “The plaque with Brian's name on it is made. It's going to say Iraq. . . . Most of the names say Dominican Republic or Vietnam so it seemed fitting that Iraq would be best.”³³ The conclusion of an analyst—that “the war-on-terror frame has obscured more than it has clarified”—seems applicable to the experience of many U.S. soldiers and their families as well.³⁴

At a time in its history when the nation relies on voluntary enrollments to people its military forces, the ability of the United States to prosecute the Global War on Terror turns in large measure on the ability of successive administrations to make a compelling case for doing so. Here, too, the views of soldiers who express skepticism have a certain resonance with public sentiment. David Kennedy, father of a soldier killed in April 2007 in Diwaniya, Iraq, made no secret of his anger and frustration with U.S. policy in a memorial service at the University of Norwich, Vermont, America's oldest private military academy, from which his son, Adam P. Kennedy, age 25, had graduated. The elder Kennedy, a self-described hawk, said, “Winning the war on terror is just a lot of nonsense. It is not a plan, it is a slogan. This lack of a strategic plan is the biggest failure of this government, and trust God and the voters to judge them for it.”³⁵

Widespread confusion about the Global War on Terror recalls one of the findings of Phase 1 of the Tufts study mentioned in Annexes 4 and 5: The label was found to be an imprecise and opportunistic concept that blurs rather than clarifies critical issues. In the case of Colombia,

which the Bush administration situated on the front lines of the Global War on Terror and inundated with (largely military) foreign aid, the study found that the violence rending the fabric of Colombian society was a function of a half-century of economic and political struggle rather than something of post 9/11 vintage. Many Colombians themselves disagreed with the Global War on Terror characterization.

Against the backdrop of confusion among soldiers, policy-makers, and the public, the response of future citizen-soldiers to a summons to arms in the Global War on Terror will bear close scrutiny. In mid-2007 the administration was facing increasing difficulty in attracting and retaining new recruits for the full-time active-duty forces, where family traditions of military service and commitments to military careers may play a larger role than in the National Guard. Recruiting targets were met only by raising the incentives and lowering the qualifications. According to one analysis, “The percentage of high-quality recruits entering the Army is the lowest in ten years . . . a troubling sign for the Pentagon, which is waging wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and plans to add 90,000 ground troops to its ranks within the next five years.”³⁶ The early retirement of West Point army officers has also alarmed military planners.³⁷

The military may experience an even tougher sell among potential citizen-soldiers who by definition have opted to give priority to established careers in civil society. The National Guard unit in Bradford, Vermont, has experienced considerable attrition, apparently reflecting the desire of members, having met their obligations in Afghanistan and Iraq, to avoid redeployment. A concern not to overplay its hand may lead the Pentagon to proceed with utmost caution in extending the tours of Guard units currently deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq. The view that the National Guard has now become, and will likely remain, an integral element within the active military forces rather than returning to its more traditional support role may reduce its attractiveness to potential citizen-soldier recruits further still.

Recruitment into both the full-time and the part-time military may become even more difficult as the experiences of those with frontline duty since 9/11 becomes better known and should such gains as may have been

achieved prove difficult to sustain. Certainly the searing experiences of U.S. military personnel, interpreted through their own channels to their communities and political leaders, offer a counterweight to official interpretations of events. Should growing disenchantment with their mission, as characterized by the three New Hampshire Guardsmen featured in *The War Tapes*, resonate across American society, the ability of the United States to mount and manage the human resources necessary for military action may be called into question. In a broader sense, the experience of New Hampshire National Guard staff sergeant Brian Shelton may be instructive. Recruiting soldiers to fight in a controversial war, he said, has been “like selling the black plague.”³⁸

Today’s military recruitment functions as something of a referendum on U.S. national security policy in ways the pre-9/11 composition of U.S. military forces did not. That is the thrust of a Defense Department review of black enlistment in the active-duty military. Noting a major falling off in the share of blacks as a proportion of total recruitment, from 20 percent in 2001 to 13 percent in 2006, the official in charge of Army recruitment flagged “several reasons for the change, including a healthy job market for youths but also African-Americans’ disapproval of the [Iraq] war.”³⁹ The recurrent perception among those interviewed that the risks taken and sacrifices made by the military are neither broadly understood nor widely shared may work against the nurturing of consensus regarding the scenarios in which the projection of military force is supportable.

Indeed, the contentious nature of the Global War on Terror and of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, and to an even greater extent Iraq, raises fundamental questions about the country’s capacity to carry out such undertakings in the future. Re-instating conscription might help ensure adequate manpower, but for political reasons such an initiative seems unlikely in the foreseeable future. A draft might also, as in the past, increase the attractiveness of the National Guard, unless the Guard continues to evolve into a ready resource to supplement the regular armed forces. In short, the availability of personnel to enable the prosecution of the Global War on Terror along current lines seemed uncertain.

Citizen-soldiers deployed in the Afghanistan and Iraq theaters faced numerous challenges. Above and beyond the technical requirements of their specialties—for example, as members of infantry, military police, engineering, or intelligence units—three challenges loomed particularly large. First, the local context within which they were required to function was daunting in its unfamiliarity. Second, their operating environment was dangerous and insecure. Third, they were confronted with troubling ethical issues associated with the rules of warfare and the treatment of civilian populations. This chapter examines these challenges with an eye to identifying the tools of the trade required by soldiers in the Global War on Terror.

Adapting to the Unfamiliar

Most soldiers deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq experienced some degree of “culture shock.” Many were struck—some even overwhelmed—by the strangeness of their new surroundings. Many in the New Hampshire and Vermont Guard units, having trained in sub-zero weather in the White Mountains and at Camp Drum in northern New York, faced a one-hundred-degree shift in temperature overnight. Members of the National Guard unit from the Virgin Islands, deployed to the mountains of Afghanistan, experienced the problem in reverse. One Guardsman from a Navajo reservation in Arizona, deployed with a Texas Guard unit, commented upon arrival in Kuwait how everything “looked so different. There were no deer, no mountains, all desert. It was about 120 degrees. It took some time to get used to it.”¹

Numerous soldiers made mention of the strangeness of local attire and customs. One Guardsman from New Hampshire commented on the difficulties of identifying the enemy. “They all dress in civilian clothes,” he said. “They put those dress things on—the man dresses, we called them.”² James Joseph Maddix of the Michigan National Guard, who saw a lot of Iraq as a transport driver for sixteen months beginning in December 2003, noted that “The language was confusing, the culture was confusing, and it was us who had to adapt.” Maddix experienced misunderstandings, some of them intentional, as “Iraqis pretended not to understand when asked to do things.” At the same time, he welcomed his interactions

with the Iraqis who worked on his military base: “It was nice to learn about them and to meet new people.”³

Aubrey Shea Youngs of the Indiana National Guard found her encounter with Afghan people and culture a positive learning experience. “You’re forced to figure out who you are and what your values are and what you want in life. We got a chance to interact with the locals on a first-hand basis. We got to see what they wanted as a country, not just: ‘Oh, we have all the terrorists over here that we have to wipe the country of.’”⁴

Some soldiers looked beyond the obvious differences to discover commonalities and shared values and aspirations. One New Hampshire Guardsman, who received what he considered to be inadequate advance training at Fort Carson regarding cultural differences, was struck by the fact that things considered odd in Afghan society were “commonplace” for Americans, and vice versa. Among these he mentioned praying five times a day, even in the midst of combat. “But in the end,” he concluded, “when we got there, aside from [not] speaking the same language, we were the same people.”

Some identified similarities between their new surroundings and their home settings. Sgt. August C. Hohl, who supplied Afghan schools with pencils and paper provided by people from his native Wisconsin, wrote that “Coming here has shown me that while we might all live differently due to environmental, geographical, and educational conditions, people are basically the same inside. Learning some of the history, social habits, and religion of this country has left me with a profound sense of hope that we can assist the people here. But we’re not so smart that we can’t learn from them, too.”⁵

Some soldiers sensed a common humanity across cultural lines. “I shall never forget the 10 minutes I spent with this family,” recalled Corporal Michael Bautista, a cavalry scout in the Idaho National Guard who accepted an invitation to stop at a home for a cup of tea. “No conversations of substance transpired, no earth-shattering foreign policy formed. Simply hospitality and gratitude; just smiles, body language, and handshakes. For a while, there was no fighting, no explosions, no terrorist possibility lurking around the corner. Even though I was in full combat gear, sharp steel sheathed, ammunition and

explosives strapped to my chest, rifle slung at my front, for a moment, I was just a guy enjoying a hot beverage and some candy with the neighbors.”⁶

Capt. James Sosnicky, who saw Michael Moore’s trenchantly anti-war film, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, in a theater in the presence of an Arab audience in Amman, Jordan, noted that during the scene in which an American mother weeps for her dead son at the White House, “every headscarf-wearing Muslim Arab woman around me was sobbing. The pain of a mother grieving for her dead son cut through national and religious boundaries and touched on an emotion common to us all. That compassion, the compassion of the average Muslim Arab, is hardly ever put on display.”⁷

Some sought to interpret the local culture to their families and friends back home. In a Letter from Afghanistan that appeared in the local *Caledonian Record*, Jeffrey Bitcon, sheriff of Vermont’s Caledonia County who worked in a police training program in the Afghan Ministry of Interior, provided a detailed description of Ramadan, a holiday celebrated by “more than a billion Muslims worldwide—including some eight million in North America.” After explaining the elements of prayer, fasting, and charity, he remarked that the holiday “sounds a little bit like Christmas to me.” His conclusion: “Our Holy celebrations are not all that different than other cultures or theirs different from ours.”⁸

Some family members as well, struggling to come to terms with the violence experienced by their loved ones, looked past the strangeness and differences to embrace commonalities. Myra E. Bein, the mother of Charles Bein, a 26-year old army infantryman who had been seriously wounded in an ambush May 2, 2004, near Kirkuk, shared her thoughts in correspondence with friends as she visited him over a period of months at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC. “I’m not a sage, or a politician, or anyone with answers to all the hard questions,” she wrote. “I’m just a mother. I know what I’m feeling down in my soul is what countless other mothers have felt over the centuries. I know the mothers in Iraq and Afghanistan feel the same thing. It’s a timeless and universal grief.”⁹

Familiarizing oneself as a soldier with the local context was not simply an academic exercise or a personal pastime; it was a matter of security and survival as well. In fact, one recurrent theme was the critical importance of understanding the cultural and political contexts in which the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were taking place. Certainly soldiers felt uneasy—and sometimes even vulnerable—at their lack of ability to communicate and connect. “When having a conversation with someone in English,” observed Lt. Col. Terry F. Mooror of the Alabama National Guard, “I can focus on their inflection, demeanor, gestures, and eye contact to form an im-

pression of how truthful they are being. This was much harder to do when you didn’t know the language.”¹⁰

Numerous soldiers commented that the task of getting to know the local culture was complicated by the limited nature and extent of their interactions with local people. The constraints were often dictated by security concerns as reflected in the rules of engagement. According to Flanders of the New Hampshire National Guard, “We were confined mostly to the main roads and weren’t allowed to go to the villages. We were segregated from the population.” The constraints on normal interaction with the local population were more confining in Iraq, particularly in the later years of the occupation, than in Afghanistan, although U.S. troops stationed in Afghanistan also become more wary over time.

Stephanie Corcoran, a military police officer whose army unit, the 988th Military Police Company was deployed from Fort Benning, Georgia to Iraq for a year beginning in late 2005, articulated the trade-offs between two competing objectives: reaching out to local people and maintaining the soldiers’ own security. “What a great privilege it was,” she says in retrospect, “to have been able to escape the fortification of this camp [Camp Kalsu] and explore this [Iraqi] way of life. Traveling outside ‘the wire’ has made me gain new appreciations for things I never thought twice about before now. I know this is true for others that have seen different walks of life. I’m very grateful to the military for this opportunity.” Describing the country and its people as “a classroom,” she noted, however, that “everything over here has an invisible ‘approach with caution’ sign on it. Not realizing this could compromise the mission and duty to protect others around you.” She was challenged to find “an enjoyable balance between experiencing a new culture and staying as safe as possible in a war zone.”¹¹ She came to view establishing good working relationships with local people as an investment in the security of the troops.

One soldier recounts a highpoint of his time in Afghanistan: the evenings when he would slip away from his base to chat with local tribal elders at a roadhouse in a nearby town. The conversations confirmed the purpose and the value of his being there: to help “keep people like that safe and free.”¹² There was a certain irony in the fact that pursuing such contacts required being absent from his base without leave (AWOL).

As a result of their enforced isolation and lack of familiarity with the local culture, soldiers relied heavily on interpreters, or “terps.” They were often the Afghans or Iraqis whom the soldiers got to know best and trusted most. The only Iraqi friend that Jeffrey Daniel Bartling of the Michigan National Guard made during his time in the country was, he said, his interpreter.¹³ Yet the interpreters sometimes proved unreliable or otherwise unequal to the task. While some were beyond reproach, said a New

Hampshire guardsman whose task was to train members of the Afghan National Army, “Every Afghan that you talk to has an agenda. They may like you, they may be nice, they may even be loyal to a degree, but every single one of them has their own agenda as well.” The lack of ability or opportunity to communicate with local populations and the consequent dependence on interpreters contributed to the pervasive sense of uncertainty and fear discussed below.

Some of the misunderstandings that occurred were inevitable. As New Hampshire’s Moriarity observed, “You take 150,000 U.S. soldiers out of America and transport them to Iraq, for a year, with absolutely zero training whatsoever about the culture. It doesn’t take a shrink to tell you ignorance is one of the first steps toward prejudice.”¹⁴ Others suspected something more insidious. “Every war has got its own little term to dehumanize the other side. And we had ‘Gooks’ in Vietnam and this war has ‘Hajis,’” observed New Hampshire Guardsman Zach Bazzi, himself an Arabic-speaking American of Lebanese extraction. “The bad guys, or the insurgents, I’m sure they have their own derogatory term towards us. Maybe it’s just part of human affairs in war.”¹⁵

In a wrap-up e-mail to family and friends, Corcoran commented on what she considered “the most disappointing part” of her deployment: “hate toward the people of Iraq” expressed by members of the military. She expresses her revulsion at “racist and ignorant views heard by people expected to promote great things like the rights of life, liberty, and property. I’ve learned that it’s very easy to hate everything about Iraqis if you let yourself.” To guard against developing that attitude, she concentrated on “the simple things. . . . Receiving a genuine smile from someone whose country we’re occupying is always nice and has the power to light my day. Seeing compassion and pain through someone’s eyes is moving, and really helps you grasp how tough life is for the Iraqi people. Seeing a mother hold her child with the same nurture and love that an American mother holds her child makes me understand that these people love the way we do. This is the chip that I take from an iceberg that’s complex, complicated, and exhausting to understand at times.”¹⁶

Kelly Dougherty, a sergeant in the Colorado National Guard, deployed to Iraq from February 2003 through February 2004, expressed her own revulsion at having to search Iraqi women for weapons. She explained that “in their culture, you can’t touch a woman who is not your wife, and they would get upset. There was a lot of misunderstanding. What we are doing now is racist and goes beyond that,” she concluded. “It’s like they can’t take care of themselves. The only way to live is how we tell them to because they’re not capable of doing it themselves. They are too uneducated, savage and poor. That feeling really permeates the military,” including people whom she

liked and respected. Dougherty even caught herself on occasion saying that she hated the Iraqis.¹⁷

Developing a working understanding of the cultural and political context was essential to the troops’ mission and security. “If the United States is going to be engaged in the endeavor of dealing with countries and helping reconstruct countries,” noted one soldier, “then we really do need to understand them in a much deeper way than we did in Iraq.” The military sought to provide the troops with advance training regarding what to expect. Soldiers carried a wallet card confirming that they had received sensitivity training and reminding them of the basic dos and don’ts. But the military had limited capacity to prepare troops adequately for what they would encounter, or at least limited success in doing so.

Reflecting upon the training received at Fort Drum prior to deploying to Afghanistan, one officer in the New Hampshire National Guard noted that the focus was on “basic soldiering skills,” combined with “some very sparse training on what you could expect in theater.” The trainers, he said, were more familiar with Iraq than Afghanistan. The on-the-job learning from the actual deployment far exceeded the value of any orientation the military provided. Even after receiving training, however, most soldiers were initially taken aback by what they encountered. In one effort to connect troops with the local scene, the military provided guided tours of the Mesopotamian city of Ur, home of the prophet Abraham, once the area had been secured.¹⁸ The military provided some contingents with anthropologists who helped interpret the local culture and encouraged the adaptation of military tactics accordingly.

Many soldiers found the political complexities of Afghanistan and Iraq particularly mind-boggling and unnerving. Lt. Col. Ross Brown contrasted the situation in Iraq, where “there is nothing black and white; it’s all about gray,” with the simplicity of the Berlin Wall and the Cold War.¹⁹ The difficulty of identifying the enemy and of distinguishing between combatants and civilians—both themes that are examined later in this chapter—contributed to a sense of bafflement and insecurity. A series of incidents in early 2007 in Iraq underscored the murkiness of the situation. In one instance, U.S. troops killed a man planting a roadside bomb who carried papers identifying him as a sergeant in the Iraqi army. “We’re helping guys that are trying to kill us,” observed one of the Americans. “We help them in the day. They turn around at night and try to kill us,” he said,²⁰ recalling a comment by Pickett earlier.

In foreign surroundings, units placed a premium on having Americans within the ranks who could speak the local languages and on Iraqi nationals as interpreters.²¹ (Iraqis who served in that capacity often put their own lives at risk in doing so.) New Hampshire’s Bazzi received

a commendation for “using his Arabic language skills to question three enemy prisoners on the spot, extracting information leading to a hasty raid on an enemy stronghold [which resulted in] the capture of a stockpile of enemy weapons, ammunition, and explosives.”²² Notwithstanding the importance of interpretive skills in the ranks, the U.S. armed forces are reported to have dismissed 58 Arabic-speaking linguists who were openly gay. The observation was made by one interpreter who was himself a casualty of the “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy for the treatment of homosexual service personnel.²³

In sum, most who served in Afghanistan and Iraq found the experience strange and unsettling. Compared with the situations from which they came, the circumstances in which they were required to function—in terms of geography and climate, language and custom, culture and politics—seemed vastly different. Many remained isolated from local people and institutions, interacting primarily in carefully structured situations and with heavy reliance on interpreters. A number reached out to bridge the isolation, forging friendships with interpreters and local individuals, families, or leaders. While pre-deployment orientation in the United States sought to prepare troops for what they would encounter, most felt that such efforts were of limited value. There was no substitute, many said, for “boots on the ground” exposure.

In confronting unfamiliar contexts such as these, military personnel share a common challenge with aid workers. As stated in our *Handbook for Practitioners*, “humanitarian action in armed conflicts requires active involvement in situations of considerable complexity—military and political as well as economic and social. The causes of these conflicts are often deeply rooted, the societies in which they are played out deeply riven. The difficulties of providing humanitarian assistance and protection are multiple, the ripple effects from attempting to do so wide-ranging.” From a review of humanitarian efforts in a variety of conflict settings, we found “a positive correlation between a thorough understanding of the contexts of suffering and effective efforts to respond.”²⁴ Understanding the context is arguably no less important for military interveners than for their humanitarian counterparts.

Coping with Danger and Insecurity

For the vast majority of those who served in Afghanistan and Iraq, the experience generated an unnerving sense of danger and uncertainty. While soldiers in every war have struggled with fear, the new element for soldiers in the Global War on Terror theaters seems to have been the constancy and the pervasiveness of it. There was no hiding place.

CHANGES IN THE OLD GUARD

In this modern age of warfare, members of the National Guard and Reserves are no longer “weekend warriors,” they have become front-line combatants on the ground in Iraq.

—Susan Katz Keating, National Guard publicist

Flanders described his sense of impending danger from his vantage point at a transportation hub in Iraq. “I had to contend with an imminent threat. It was an extremely stressful environment in Anaconda. It was prone to attacks. You were not safe on the inside or the outside. I lived in constant dread. You never knew.”²⁵ A New Hampshire compatriot confirmed the observation. “This is the most helpless feeling I’ve ever had,” he said. “I have no idea if I’m going to wake up tomorrow.”²⁶ “On a day-to-day basis you try not to think about it, but when you get woken up by a mortar shell coming in, it’s hard not to be afraid,” recalls Col. Ralph Riley, who served with the Mississippi National Guard as a dentist in Iraq in early 2005. “It keeps you up at night. After a while, you just get used to it.”²⁷

The invisibility and elusiveness of the enemy, particularly in Iraq, contributed to the underlying sense of fear and uncertainty. “The whole time I was there,” observed Specialist Josh Nadeau of the New Hampshire National Guard, “I never fired at anything but muzzle flashes. You never saw them. I found myself screaming at the top of my lungs, you know, ‘Come out, come out.’”²⁸ “I trusted no Iraqi. I barely trusted the children,” wrote National Guard Specialist Mark Mitchell from Pennsylvania, who served for the last nine months of 2003 in Iraq. “You can’t trust any of them. To me they smile in your face in the day, then shoot at you at night. In the daytime, they are all out there. They want to sell you this or that, all smiling, but when night falls, all you hear is a bunch of shooting.”²⁹

Some soldiers were struck by the new dynamics of military action in the Global War on Terror as contrasted with earlier wars. “The big change,” observes a ranking officer in a New Hampshire National Guard transport unit, “is the front-line concept. A lot of what we do is still based on the whole World War II concept that there is a frontline and then there is a rear echelon farther back . . . and that it’s safer. That’s not the case right now. We have FOBs [forward operating bases] in the middle of countries like Iraq and Afghanistan and it’s a 360-degree front all around these bases or areas that we’re operating in. You can be a logistician that typically would be 100 miles away from the front and you could be smack dab in the middle of

Baghdad. It's a totally different concept. There is no more rear echelon. Everyone's there in the middle of it and that's the current operating environment."³⁰

This change in the topography of warfare increases troops' vulnerability and enhances psychological stress. As noted by Warnecke, the traditional distinction between combat troops on the frontlines (normally, active-duty forces) and supply troops in the rear (normally, National Guard units) no longer obtains. Most bases were subjected to incoming fire; convoys supplying them and patrols operating "outside the wire" were subject to IEDs, suicide bombings, and small arms fire. Guard troops were exposed to a much greater incidence of military action than in previous wars.

In such circumstances, there was not much humor in the day-to-day lives of the soldiers, little reason for levity. Being deployed was deadly serious business, and one relaxed at one's own peril. Vermont's Clemence concluded a review of the disruptions she experienced in her personal life by summarizing her own strategy for dealing with day-to-day events in Afghanistan. Whatever the problem, large or small, she said, the typical reaction was the same: "Suck it up and move on. If you stew too much, it might eat you up."³¹ She helped maintain her equanimity through listening to tape recordings of the sounds of the woods back home. Brown varied his approach to the daily uncertainties in Iraq over time. On arriving, he recalls, he read books on insurgency and counterinsurgency in an effort to understand the local terrain. "Now I'm reading Harry Potter," in part as an escape and in part to connect with his own children at home.³²

A certain steely stoicism to the ever-present danger emerged as the prevailing reaction among many soldiers. Soldiers lacked the relative seclusion of World War II-style foxholes a la Bill Mauldin cartoons to sort out their emotions and, with their cohorts, come to terms with what they are experiencing. Many tended to minimize the dangers, not sharing them fully in e-mails and other communiqués with family and friends for fear of alarming them. "You almost have to have a false sense of security to do this business," observed Moriarity in *The War Tapes*. "You almost have to convince yourself in your head that it won't happen to me. . . . If you didn't have any faith, you'd probably have a very hard time leaving the wire everyday."

A chaplain in the Veterans Administration hospital system, himself a veteran of a lifetime of frontlines assignments, confirmed the pervasive sense of impending disaster. He describes the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as involving an inescapable feeling of "living 24/7/52 with the fear, inside the wire, of artillery attacks and mortars, and outside the wire, 'Is it my turn for my jeep to get hit by an IED?'" Joelle Farrell, the reporter who chronicled the experience of the National Guard soldiers from

New Hampshire, concluded that the injuries and deaths sustained by compatriots underscored for everyone the precariousness of their own exposure. "For some," she writes, "being a soldier means surrendering the past and the future. In war, soldiers live breath by breath, each minute another that could have been lost."³³

Data reviewed for this study are replete with reflections by soldiers on their sense of insecurity and danger. One New Hampshire Guardsman, puzzling over the fact that he had felt far more secure in Operation Iraqi Freedom, where there was much more danger, than in Operation Desert Storm, concluded that "I guess it might be the difference between being a dumb private and being a grown man." Looking back, he concluded that the experience of serving in Iraq "fucking changes you. It doesn't mean it changes your personality [and change] doesn't have to be all bad. Any given year of your life changes you. . . . This is a huge, life-altering fact."³⁴

While most of those deployed considered themselves in some danger, contingents had differing degrees of exposure. Vermont units that participated in Task Force Saber found themselves on the front lines in central Iraq. By contrast, Task Force Green Mountain, which managed a supply and transport depot in Kuwait at the Iraq border, was exposed to comparatively little risk. The experience of the New Hampshire Guard chronicled in *The War Tapes* was dramatic in its daily diet of danger. Yet cohorts providing support for operations at the Bagram Airforce Base in Afghanistan encountered only the occasional stray mortar or organized protest by detainees. One Guardsman who spent an entire year there noted that on only a dozen occasions did she and her unit venture "outside the wire." But even those who did not consider themselves directly in harm's way felt the prevailing insecurity.

The differential degrees of exposure to risk and danger stirred up feelings not only of insecurity but also of guilt, as noted in an e-mail home by an Air Force psychologist stationed in Qatar with a medical group. "No one ever feels like they are doing enough," wrote Dr. Lisa R. Blackman. "If you are in a safe location, you feel guilty that your friends are getting shot at and you aren't. If you are getting shot at, you feel guilty if your buddy gets hit and you don't. If you get shot at but don't die, you feel guilty that you lived, and more guilty if you get to go home and your friends have to stay behind."³⁵

The everyday aspect of danger and death took its toll on the families of those deployed, even those without a full picture of the risks. "My wife tried not to think about the danger," Flanders recalled. "She was just missing me. I remember having a conversation with her, and she is crying, 'I miss you, I miss you.' I celebrated our first-year wedding anniversary in Iraq. We never talked about the danger I was in."³⁶ Some troops wished for more action

and felt guilty that they were less exposed than their colleagues. On the other hand, many of their spouses and families were quite happy that they were not on the front lines. “Thank God they were bored!” exclaimed one spouse in a focus group of her peers.

As soldiers shared their experiences, one recurrent theme was that adversity and uncertainty promoted solidarity and esprit de corps. “For troops in combat, returning to the comforts of home becomes an obsession, each day, a single goal: stay alive and get home.”³⁷ Most soldiers exhibit a growing sense of the importance of simply surviving and returning home intact. Asked how she would evaluate her experience, one woman in the Vermont National Guard said simply, “I accomplished the mission and came home alive.” The bearing of the survival preoccupation on the conduct of troops is examined in a later section.

The strong sense of solidarity that developed led a number of those interviewed to express willingness to re-enlist and return to their duty stations and their cohorts. In fact, solidarity was often also strong enough to overcome lingering doubts about a given mission. Reporter Farrell concluded, “No matter how the soldiers felt about their reasons for being in Iraq, once they got there, they were there for each other.”³⁸ As Pickett’s experience suggested, some veterans, following their return to the United States, surprised themselves by their own willingness to volunteer to redeploy into the fray, however terrifying that experience had been.

While the sense of solidarity that developed in Afghanistan and Iraq functioned as an antidote to fear and insecurity, it did not overcome widespread misgivings among the troops about the quality of the military and political leadership to which they were accountable. Misgivings about the Iraq undertaking were particularly pronounced. Some expressed anxiety about the rationale for the U.S.-led war against Iraq, about the extent to which the Iraq war had been allowed to upstage the conflict in Afghanistan, or about the specified rules of engagement for each conflict. Others were more concerned about tactical and operational matters, such as the adequacy of body and vehicle armor or of ammunition, supplies, and radio communications. “We didn’t trust our higher-ups to keep us safe,” said Dougherty. “It seemed at the time the top leaders’ goals were to get us far into Iraq and put us into as much shit as possible. . . . With my unit, there were no strong bonds of loyalty and trust.”³⁹

The fears and insecurities noted by soldiers had a basis in fact. The results of a study of a sample of troops who saw combat duty in Afghanistan and Iraq detailed the Global War on Terror experience. Of the army troops interviewed, 58 percent in Afghanistan and 89 percent in Iraq reported being attacked or ambushed; 84 percent and 86 percent (respectively) had received incoming artillery,

EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE

Today was the first day I shook a man’s hand that wasn’t attached to his arm. I looked down and he had his hand dangling from the exposed bone that used to be his elbow like a child’s safety clipped mitten dangling from their winter coat.

—Sgt. Steve Pink, speaking of a civilian driver for whom he provided first aid.

rocket or mortar fire; 39 and 95 percent had seen dead bodies or human remains; 43 and 86 percent knew someone who had been seriously injured or killed; 30 and 65 percent had seen dead or seriously injured Americans; 46 and 69 percent had seen injured women or children whom they were unable to help; and 12 and 48 percent reported having been responsible for the death of an enemy combatant, 1 and 14 percent of a non-combatant. The study found rates of major depression, generalized anxiety, and PTSD to be higher in Iraq (15.6-17.1 percent) than in Afghanistan (11.2 percent).⁴⁰

Mental health experts speak in alarming terms about the impact, both short and long term, of the experience on those who have fought in the two theaters. Even soldiers who were spared direct involvement in combat, however, often did not emerge unscathed. Dr. Matthew Friedman, who heads the Veterans Administration’s network of post-traumatic stress disorder centers, has concluded that “Most people who have survived this experience will be changed by it, whether crossing some psychiatric threshold or not.”⁴¹ The problems encountered are not limited to PTSD, which is defined as “exposure to a traumatic event in which the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted by serious injury to others and responded with intense fear, helplessness, and horror.”⁴²

Much of the public attention to the wounds of war has focused on the failure of the Department of Defense, the Veterans Administration, and individual installations such as the Walter Reed Army Medical Facility to provide adequately for the physical and psychological rehabilitation of the troops. Attention has also been given to the reported denials by military officials at places such as Fort Collins, Colorado, of the seriousness of PTSD and to their decision to attempt to link recent psychological trauma to pre-existing conditions. Redeploying affected soldiers back into conflict situations has also drawn critical comment. As a result, the full force of the damage on soldiers and their families has yet to be assayed.

Dr. Friedman’s conclusion is indeed sobering. “The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq,” he says, “are likely to produce a new generation of veterans with chronic mental health problems associated with participation in combat.” If the impact is so debilitating and wide-ranging—and medical and psychological professionals are not coming for-

ward to challenge his conclusion—then fundamental questions follow, some of them articulated forcefully by those who have paid their dues. Can the U.S. national security goals that animate the Global War be pursued in less withering ways? If viable alternatives are not found, is there a threshold beyond which the wear-and-tear of the war overtakes the gains likely to be achieved?

However such broader questions are answered, the data reviewed for this study convey a picture of individuals struggling to preserve their individual sanity and their cohesion as fighting units in the most taxing of circumstances. The prevailing sense of insecurity and risk was reinforced by other realities examined elsewhere in this study: the foreignness of the terrain, the difficulty of identifying the enemy, the ruthlessness of the warfare, the pressure for accountability. The section on re-entry looks in greater detail at some of the issues relating to the resumption of normal lives by citizen-soldiers.

Wrestling with Ethical Issues

Most of the soldiers whose experiences are reviewed for this study are not particularly conversant with the details of military ethics. They mention only on rare occasions their legal obligations to function within the framework of the Geneva Conventions and Protocols. However, many of those interviewed do indeed wrestle with basic questions about the rules of engagement for the conflicts, the justness of the wars, and the impacts on those involved—Iraqi or American, military or civilian. Viewing survival as their primary and overriding objective, they articulate a far greater sense of the difficulties of functioning within established parameters than of the possible benefits of doing so. Four factors emerge from their ongoing struggle with the ethical issues of the Global War on Terror and their personal involvement in it.

First, the situation on the ground in both Afghanistan and Iraq is maddeningly fluid and confusing. Multiple actors and agendas make it difficult to identify “terrorists,” who are the target of U.S. and coalition military action, and to differentiate them from non-combatants, who are to be shielded from attack. “Civilians and insurgents looked the same, and insurgents often fired at convoys from crowds,” observed the reporter who chronicled the experience of New Hampshire troops. “Sometimes children waved, and the soldiers threw candy. Other times, children threw rocks.”⁴³

How would soldiers recognize the enemy and make the requisite discrimination between combatants and civilians? “That was the really hard part about it,” observed Ohioan Welch. “A lot of what we did as infantry is, we’d go into cities and towns, but we didn’t know who the enemy was. Civilians and the enemy looked exactly alike.” The situation in Iraq was more like Vietnam than Korea, he said, the last war in which one army in uniform

fought another army in uniform. In the absence of other identifiers, “As far as what our soldiers on the ground knew,” Welch said, “if they were a bad guy, they were a bad guy.”⁴⁴ The bases for separating good from bad were often distressingly murky.

At the outset, the focus in both theaters was trained on terrorism and terrorists. In Afghanistan, targeting Al Qaeda and the Taliban regime animated the war in the early months. However, the conflict soon broadened to include rogue and criminal elements—sometimes allied to Al Qaeda and the Taliban, sometimes not—and other threats to the Karzai government which the Coalition was supporting. That some of the local elders who supported the Karzai government were anything but friendly to the occupying troops and that there was tension between warlords who during the occupation by the USSR during the 1980s had been armed and bankrolled by the United States complicated the situation further. After initial improvement and widespread optimism that the conflict was over, the Taliban re-emerged as a shadowy force clearly to be reckoned with militarily. Politically, the situation became more and more confused as ineptness and corruption permeated government structures.

In Iraq, amid a steady worsening of the security situation, U.S. troops experienced heightened difficulty identifying and targeting terrorism and terrorists. Controversy about the extent to which the Saddam Hussein regime had been involved in the 9/11 attacks and confusion about the objectives of the U.S. invasion muddled the picture further still. Was the purpose of the war to pre-empt weapons of mass destruction, to bring about regime change, to deny sanctuary to Al Qaeda, or all of the above in some combination?

By 2006 experts were concluding that much of the violence in the cities and countryside was the result not of terrorism but of civil war. By mid-2007, the situation had become even more murky. “Iraqi society has continued to fracture and is so incoherent that it can’t even have a proper civil war any more,” noted one analyst. “[W]hat’s happening in Iraq is not one civil war or one insurgency. Instead, Iraq is home to many little civil wars and many little insurgencies that are fighting for local power. Even groups like the Mahdi Army are splitting.”⁴⁵ In each theater, the ranks of the “bad guys” had grown to include a host of people with weapons, including criminals as well as insurgents and terrorists. The challenge of discriminating between combatants and non-combatants had become more complex as well.

Second, with the amorphous “enemy” not playing by “the rules,” observance of the international rules of warfare seemed to put U.S. soldiers at a disadvantage. It was clear to U.S. troops that in neither theater did the enemy have regard for the proverbial “decent respect for the opinions of mankind.” New Hampshire’s Shelton said of his adver-

U.S. CONVOY MOVING THROUGH NAJAF , IRAQ, 2004



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The photograph above was taken by Luis Almaguer of the U.S. Marines, deployed in Iraq from June 2004 through February 2005. The task of his Personal Security Detachment was to provide security for a U.S. colonel who was making a first-hand appraisal of security in Najaf's market area, where U.S. troops had been seeking to contain violence and were helping rebuild the community. The photo was taken from the passenger side of an armored Humvee, the second in a six-vehicle convoy.

"Most of the ambushes we got were on small streets like this," Almaguer explained. "Our threat level immediately goes up as we traveled through close quarters. There are many hidden dangers in areas like this one. For example, insurgents used pot holes, like the one you see in the middle of this road, to hide IEDs. They also hid weapons that they would use against us after we passed through, under 'man dresses' like the one you see to the left. The street is a little congested with the daily traffic of people. We had experiences in which a group of insurgents would crowd the middle of the street and slow or even stop our convoys. At that point we would come into contact with live firing from the top of the buildings and windows. One moment they're waving at you, the next moment they're shooting at you."

Asked about his enlistment, Almaguer recalled that having dropped out of high school to earn money, he felt a deeper calling in life. Returning to high school at age 20, he completed his diploma and was accepted into the Marine Corps in March 1997. Attached to a Marine Expeditionary Unit at Camp Pendleton, California, his overseas deployments included East Timor, Jordan, Australia, Thailand, Seychelles, Africa, and Kuwait. He also provided back-up support for Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan). He was aboard a ship returning to the West Coast when the 9/11 attack occurred. He was honorably discharged in early 2006 after serving a month shy of 10 years.

Almaguer returned to the United States from Iraq in 2005 eighty percent disabled due to combat-related injuries. To be closer to a veterans health care facility for treatment, he moved from Del Rio to San Antonio, Texas. Looking back on his time in Iraq, he commented, "It has been a rough experience. War is surreal, a strong reality that I deal with every day of my life. The VA has been a great help to me and my family in helping us to move forward."

Almaguer's collection in the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress includes 25 photographs, in addition to the one shown.

saries along the Pakistan border, “They don’t have rules. They’re not afraid to die for whatever they believe in.”⁴⁶ Others, too, questioned why U.S. troops should abide by the rules of war when there seemed no particular incentive or reward for doing so.

In such a dog-eat-dog environment, the survival imperative trumped all else, military codes of conduct notwithstanding. “You see people out there walking around on the road and automatically you assume that they may have something to do with an IED going off,” said Pink. “It’s unfortunate for Iraqi civilians . . . but any guy will tell you that it’s gonna be our safety before theirs.”⁴⁷ “On a practical level,” added his cohort Zach Bazzi, “when I’m on the road, it’s my guys versus them. The hell with the immorality of it.”⁴⁸

That extenuating circumstances would upstage ethical comportment comes as no surprise to the experts. “Research has shown that individual servicemen and women are not driven by high-flying ideals when under tension in the areas of operation,” notes C. van der Knaap, Netherlands State Secretary for Defense. “In that situation, they operate within the context of a small combat unit. Moral choices under those circumstances reflect loyalty to comrades [and] solidarity with the combat group. On the battlefield, the combat group operates as a kind of surrogate family. Threats to one are seen as being a threat to all of the members of the group.”⁴⁹

By most accounts, U.S. troops came to place a premium on survival at virtually any cost. “When you’re over there and people are trying to kill you,” commented Flanders in the earlier interview, “your survival trumps everything else: kill them before they kill you.” In Pink’s view, the assumption that the troops’ behavior should be exemplary belied the nature of the war. “Why the fuck are we there? . . . The U.S. Army is not the fucking Peace Corps. The Marines are not the Peace Corps. . . . We’re in Iraq for money and oil. . . . Look at any other war in history and tell me it’s not about money.”⁵⁰

Given the vulnerability of the troops to no-holds-barred behavior by the enemy, a number of soldiers expressed the view that the rules of engagement, particularly in Iraq, were too restrictive. In the case of one of the New Hampshire units that was escorting convoys, “Insurgents fired bullets and rockets at their trucks, shelled their camp and left bombs along the roads they traveled. But the soldiers weren’t allowed to chase down and kill those who fired on them. Their mission was to deliver supplies; if they were shot at, they fired back but didn’t stop.”⁵¹

Moreover, the rules of engagement evolved over time and were open to interpretation. Reflecting a lesson learned from Vietnam, for example, the rules specify that mosques, which were occasionally used as launching pads by insurgents, were not to be attacked. Yet, as the Michigan Guard’s Maddix explained, his own com-

mander defended those who fired on the enemy in such circumstances: “If you feel you need to shoot, shoot. Do whatever you need to do to get yourself home alive.”⁵² Other commanders were less supportive, as one soldier who was disciplined for shooting in such circumstances discovered.

Many soldiers simply did not understand the rationale for the rules of engagement. “We’re thinking: we’re at war,” Maddix continued. Articulating his perspective as a citizen-soldier, he said, “We’re away from our families. We all have jobs on the outside and you’re worried about whether or not we should have shot?”⁵³ Welch disagreed with the court-martialing of a soldier for having shot and killed an Iraqi civilian who refused to stop his vehicle at a checkpoint. “I have to shoot to protect myself,” he reasoned, as did the person on trial. “He was a guy who wanted to go home to his family.”⁵⁴

To what extent did the troops give thought to the issue of whether U.S. engagement in the two theaters met the specifications of international law? A National Guard soldier who had served in Kosovo as well as in Afghanistan and Iraq expressed the view that some of her cohorts had shied away from pondering the rights and wrongs of the conflicts in which they were engaged for fear of undermining their fragile sense of well-being. When they did make distinctions, however, “Afghanistan was the right war to fight,” she believed. Responding to a direct attack by Al Qaeda on 9/11, U.S. military action in Afghanistan gave many of the troops a sense of occupying the moral high ground. In Iraq, by contrast, the circumstances of U.S. involvement were more controversial and suspect, the connections between terrorism and Coalition military presence more murky, and the imprimatur of the international community more belated and tentative.

One soldier who gave serious thought to legality of the conflicts was First Lt. Ehren K. Watada, a resident of Hawaii who in June 2006 became the first commissioned officer to refuse to deploy with his unit to Iraq. After considering the views of international law experts, Watada concluded that “the Bush administration had falsely used the 9/11 attacks to justify the war,” which had itself failed to uncover any weapons of mass destruction. Watada requested to be sent to Afghanistan, a war which he believed met the requisite international standards. His court-martial ended in a mistrial in February 2007 in a case which could still be retried.⁵⁵ By then, an estimated 8,000 soldiers had deserted from the armed forces during the course of the Iraq war, although not all of them on ethical grounds.⁵⁶

Among the soldiers who felt that the U.S. invasion of Iraq was justified was David McPhillips, a First Lieutenant killed in combat during Operation Iraqi Freedom on April 4, 2003, two days before the fall of Baghdad. As his father Brian, a Marine who had served in Vietnam, ex-

plained it, David wanted to participate in a just war and believed that the war in Iraq was such a war. Interviewed in March 2005, the father conceded that the war was not going well. However, he cautioned, “The history on Iraq, the history on Baghdad is not written yet.”⁵⁷ A number of other soldiers deployed to Iraq also believed that while the jury was still out, the eventual establishment of a democratic system in Iraq would vindicate the rightness of the war.

Some who had misgivings initially became more persuaded about its appropriateness over time. As the Iraq conflict wore on and violence intensified, others were less sure or less concerned. For some, violations of international law—for example, in the treatment of detainees—undermined the case for staying the course. “We were there when the prison abuse took place,” recounts Sgt. Dave Bischel of the California National Guard of his presence at Abu Ghraib, “but we didn’t see any of it. We worked 12-hour days with no days off for four months. . . . There was a point at Abu Ghraib, I didn’t realize it [at the time] but I just started deteriorating mentally. I was like, ‘Fuck Iraq. I want to kill these motherfuckers and go home.’ You get to the point you lose it. It’s like, ‘Fuck it, fuck them. They don’t want us here.’ It drove me crazy.”⁵⁸

“You know I supported the mission,” said Moriarity of the New Hampshire National Guard, “but I’m starting to say to myself, ‘What the fuck?’ If the problem isn’t going away, then kick it up a notch! And I don’t give a fuck if that means nuking this fucking country! Meanwhile there are fucking innocent fucking U.S. soldiers getting killed.”⁵⁹

A third aspect of the struggle of the troops with the ethical aspects of the conflicts was the lack of importance attached by the military to specified conduct. Sometimes international ground rules were specifically rebuffed; more frequently, they were simply not brought to bear on the situation. Exemplifying the former, National Guardsman Patrick Resta of Philadelphia recalled an exchange in Jalula where his infantry platoon was tasked with running a small prison camp. “The Geneva Conventions don’t exist at all in Iraq,” he remembers being told by his commanding officer, “and that’s in writing if you want to see it.”⁶⁰

International ethical ground rules, it seems, were more often ignored than rebuffed. Judging from interview data, rank-and-file soldiers in the two theaters seem to have received little training in how to function in this regard. “I had never heard the word ‘detainee’ until I got to Iraq, but I soon found myself in charge of a compound filled with nearly 600 of them,” observed Ryan T. McCarthy. “The only effective training we ever received was the news coverage of how real MPs [military police] treated detainees up at Abu Ghraib. The Military Police did

provide us with some training, but a PowerPoint slide-show about prison cells in Fort Leavenworth [Kansas] is useless in a sprawling prison camp. The most effective training they provided was their smug reminders that if an incident occurred with the detainees and we were to fall back on our training and experience as soldiers, we would go to jail.”⁶¹

The widespread lack of awareness of the basic requirements of international law regarding such matters as the treatment of detainees, the interrogation of suspects, and the protection of civilians did not mean that the military made no efforts at all. The rules of war were included in the pre-deployment training of many soldiers. In the wake of the Abu Ghraib abuses, some soldiers in the field received a crash course in Geneva Convention law—reportedly conducted, however, by trainers sent over from the States without experience in the region. “The best training,” concluded a soldier in the New Hampshire Guard who attended the hurry-up sessions, turned out to be “just going down [to the detention facilities] and doing it.”⁶²

To what extent is this picture of attitudes toward international law and applicable codes of military conduct typical of U.S. troops serving in the two theaters? A survey conducted by the Army in Iraq in 2006 found that more than one-third of those interviewed believed that torture should be allowed if it helped gather important information about insurgents. Some four in ten would approve of such illegal abuse if it saved the life of a fellow soldier. About two-thirds of marines and half the Army troops surveyed would not report a team member for mistreating a civilian or for destroying civilian property unnecessarily. “Less than half of soldiers and marines believed that non-combatants should be treated with dignity and respect,” the Army reported. About 10 percent of the 1,767 troops surveyed reported that they had mistreated civilians in Iraq, such as kicking them or needlessly damaging their possessions.⁶³

Ward Cassells, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs, noted that Army researchers “looked under every rock, and what they found was not always easy to look at.” The report observed that the troops’ statements are at odds with the “soldier’s rules” promulgated by the Army, which forbid the torture of enemy prisoners and state that civilians must be treated humanely.⁶⁴ Other research found that ethical standards are twice as likely to be violated by troops that are experiencing high levels of anger and stress.

Confirming evidence is also contained in a report published in mid-2007 based on discussions with some fifty combat veterans of Iraq. The study, which suggests that “the killing of Iraqi civilians by occupation forces is more common than has been acknowledged by military authorities,” found that 24 of the 50 soldiers interviewed

“said they had witnessed or heard stories from those in their unit of unarmed civilians being shot or run over by the convoys. These incidents, they said, were so numerous that many were never reported.”⁶⁵ The study quotes a description by Sgt. Camilio Mejía, the Nicaragua-born soldier in the Florida National Guard mentioned in Chapter 2, of an incident in Ramadi in which he and his squad riddled with gunfire the body of a youth who was holding a grenade. “The frustration that resulted from our inability to get back at those who were attacking us,” Mejía is quoted as saying, “led to tactics that seemed designed simply to punish the local population that was supporting them.”⁶⁶

Fourth, the relatively minor role played by the laws of war in the behavior of many in the U.S. military seems to have reflected and reinforced a perceived absence of accountability for their observance. Mejía himself recalls that “By Geneva Convention standards, you were not supposed to conduct missions near hospitals, mosques, schools, or residential areas. We broke every rule there was.” On one occasion, he was criticized by his superiors for “sending the wrong message to the enemy” by not

MILITARY ETHICS

Moral dilemmas can be described as a collision of two or more moral values that in a given case cannot be respected at the same time. One will have to be violated in order to salvage the other. . . . Effective leadership demands judgments which are sound from the operation and the ethical point of view. It requires a generation of commanders of moral integrity. Moreover, moral integrity is required at all levels of command.

—Th. A. van Baarda and D.E.M. Verweij

having his unit stand its ground and fight following an ambush, even when doing so would have risked the lives of Iraqi civilians as well as American troops.

The task of Mejía’s unit was to ensure that prisoners at a detention facility were deprived of sleep for periods of 48 hours. “I was a squad leader, so I didn’t have to do it myself,” he recalls, “but my men were doing it. I remember my platoon sergeant saying this doesn’t meet Red Cross or Geneva Convention standards. There were no medical people around except the platoon’s medic, and God knows how many other violations were found. He was thinking of calling the Red Cross, but he was told that if he did that, he would piss off the commander and mess up his career, and conditions for these people would not improve. So he didn’t do anything, and neither did I.”⁶⁷

Mejía returned home to sort out issues related the expiration of his green card, and then, on the spur of the moment, decided not to return to Iraq. He eventually served time for dereliction of duty, attracting public attention in

a press conference at which he gave a public explanation of his actions and over time becoming more outspoken in his opposition. “Maybe God put war in my path so I could see its ugly face and tell its story,” he concluded.⁶⁸ The fact that those court-martialed for the Abu Ghraib abuses were for the most part junior military personnel rather than higher-ups fueled the perception among the rank-and-file that accountability was selectively applied.

The confusion evident in the Afghan and Iraq theaters regarding military ethics, including comments made about the uneven enforcement of the rules of engagement by various commanders, may reflect a wider problem of a lack of assertiveness and consistency in the exercise of authority by senior U.S. military leaders. Richard Armitage, former Deputy Secretary of State, is quoted as having said that over the course of several visits to Iraq, he noticed that increasingly “the commanders would say one thing and the guys in the field would say, ‘I don’t care what he says. I’m going to do what I want.’” Armitage concluded that “we’ve sacrificed the chain of command to the notion of Special Operations and GWOT. . . . You’re painting on a canvas so big that it’s hard to comprehend.”⁶⁹

Lax enforcement of international ethical canons extended beyond the military into the political arena. The wider context for the ethical confusion conveyed by soldiers arguably mirrors efforts by the president, the vice president, and senior Pentagon officials to redefine and relax the country’s established international obligations, both of individual soldiers and of the U.S. legal system as a whole. There would seem to be a connection between the views of administration officials who regarded the Geneva Conventions and Protocols as “quaint” and the actions of soldiers who felt no particular obligation to function within internationally agreed parameters.

With respect to the Abu Ghraib abuses in particular, President Bush, concluded one investigative journalist, “made no known effort to forcefully address the treatment of prisoners before the scandal became public, or to reevaluate the training of military police or interrogators, or the practices of the task forces that he authorized. Instead, Bush acquiesced in the prosecution of a few lower-level soldiers.”⁷⁰ When the administration issued an executive order in July 2007 to provide the CIA with ground rules for the interrogation of detainees, some—but not all—of the methods that had been criticized as humiliating and degrading were proscribed. However, the list of specific interrogation practices that were thenceforth to be banned or permitted remained classified in an effort to deny Al Qaeda the opportunity to prepare its members for those techniques that might still be used.⁷¹

Not all of the experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq underscored the constraining aspects of the rules of war. Also evident on occasion was a sense of the importance

of international standards. Individual soldiers' reactions to the abuses committed by U.S. troops, intelligence operatives, and contractors at the Abu Ghraib prison offer a particular case in point.

A number of soldiers expressed revulsion at the abuses, commenting on the negative impacts that they had on their ability to accomplish their missions and on their own security. "What they did was obviously wrong," said Maddix, who objected to the humiliating treatment of prisoners in U.S. care. But there were practical as well as moral reasons for objecting to such behavior. "We actually started getting attacked more" as a result of the backlash to the abuses, he said.⁷² Fortenberry viewed the events as a setback in terms of perceptions held by the local population. In his view, they confirmed the stereotype that Americans soldiers "do dumb things."⁷³ Some soldiers were particularly irate that such behavior, carried out by U.S. personnel in the protected confines of detention centers, increased the vulnerability of units that were considerably more exposed.

Sgt. John McCary, an intelligence officer who served with an infantry division in Iraq's Anbar province in early 2004, affirmed the importance of playing by agreed international rules, even given the apparent short-term disadvantages of doing so. "What do you say to your men," he asks in an e-mail to his family in North Carolina, "after you've scraped up the scalps of an entire Iraqi family off the road, right next to the shattered bodies of your soldiers, held together only by their shoelaces, body armor or helmets? 'We're fighting the good fight?' I don't think so. We're just fighting. And now we're dying." Despite the brutality of the struggle, Sgt. McCary was committed to fight fairly. "With all, we will be harsh, and strict, but not unjust, not indiscriminate. And we will not give up. We cannot. Our lives are tied to those lost, and we cannot leave them now, as we might have were they still living."⁷⁴

The inhumanity of the conflicts led others to appreciate the value of rules that humanize the conduct of warfare and minimize its impacts on civilians. Bazzi of New Hampshire described an incident in which his platoon was ordered to keep Iraqi civilians off a road separating a residential area from a hospital. He was approached by a father with a sick baby who wanted to cross the road to get to the hospital. "We're a disciplined army," recalls Bazzi, "so I had to say 'No.' But it didn't make any tactical sense." He then refused to translate the order into Arabic, saying that if his commanding officer wanted to convey the message, he would have to do so himself. Denying access to a hospital, he said in retrospect, "goes against why we're there. It goes against a lot of our beliefs and our value system we operate under as American soldiers."⁷⁵

Jonathan Miller, a Massachusetts native who served two tours of duty in Afghanistan, came to a sobering realiza-

tion during his initial tour that some of the enemy that he was seeking to kill may have themselves been forced to fight. "Immediately," he said, "you begin to lose the myth of war. . . . These people might just be fighting for their families. What would I do if I was just trying to keep my brothers alive, my mom and dad? It starts to get real complex at that point. These are actually people that I'm going to be killing," he said with evident dismay.⁷⁶

While the rules of warfare have traditionally sought to humanize the conduct of war, the violence of Afghanistan and Iraq seemed to many to be beyond their civilizing potential. "War is war, and it is not pretty," says a chaplain in the Veterans Administration hospital system. "But this war seems especially nasty." That inhumanity was underscored by the special difficulties confronted by U.S. soldiers in dealing with Iraqi children. The conundrum as they articulate it touches on all of the major ethical challenges identified in this section, including the difficulties in distinguishing civilians from combatants, the perceived risks of treating them according to international law, and the wrenching impact of indiscriminate violence on Iraqis and American soldiers alike.

Captain Ed Hrivnak, a veteran of Rwanda, Somalia, Bosnia, and Operation Desert Storm, recalled a conversation with a soldier whom he was treating during a medical evacuation. The soldier confided "that he had witnessed some Iraqi children get run over by a convoy. He was in the convoy and they had strict orders not to stop. If a vehicle stops, it is isolated and an inviting target for a rocket-propelled grenade. He tells me that some women and children have been forced out onto the road to break up the convoys so that the Iraqi irregulars can get a clear shot. But the convoys do not stop. He tells me that dealing with that image is worse than the pain of his injury."⁷⁷ The recollection was similar to one by New Hampshire National Guardsman Kevin Shangraw, who recalled the remains of a woman struck by a convoy being zipped into a body bag: "I'll remember that for the rest of my life. . . . The Iraqi people are who we are there to help and we just killed one of them."⁷⁸

The issue emerged in stark terms in depositions taken following the suicide of Tech. Sergeant David Guindon, a member of the New Hampshire Air National Guard who took his own life on August 18, 2004, one day after returning from six months in Iraq. In a deposition for the police following Guindon's death, the operations officer for his unit, Major Chris Hurley, said that "the Iraqis would actually send children out to blow up truck convoys, so when the children were seen in the road, the soldiers were told to actually keep going and run right over them . . . because if they stopped for the children, as would be the norm, there was a possibility that these children could be armed or wired with explosives." In his judgment, the state's Guard members—Guindon among them—while they had received a certain amount of

training, “weren’t prepared for what they saw.”⁷⁹ Several soldiers and their spouses acknowledged in interviews that upon returning to their families after service in Afghanistan and Iraq, they had major difficulties in reconnecting with their own children.

Yet children were not beyond legitimate suspicion as instruments of the insurgency. In an area where IEDs were frequently planted, a gunner reported regularly seeing two young boys. “I told my gunner not to worry about them,” recalled Mark Lachance, “they were kids and there was nothing to fear from them.” Several days later, however, in the investigation of a roadside bomb incident, a notebook was found on the boys, “filled with information on all the U.S. convoys that had traveled the highway in the past month. They had recorded the time of day, number of trucks, whether they were gun trucks or logistical trucks. They even had identifying features for each convoy. As it turned out, the two boys were selling the information to men from Baghdad for food for their families. I learned . . . that day . . . [that] there are no innocent people in war.”⁸⁰

In sum, ethical issues associated with the conduct of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq proved problematic for many of the troops, wrenching for some. Concern about their own survival in the face of a ruthless enemy made the established ground rules chafe. The uneven commitment to and application of the rules of war by U.S. authorities was also a source of confusion and, in some instances, bitterness. Yet U.S. soldiers were also angered when flagrant violations by their own colleagues undermined their cause. They were pained when civilians were

killed or wounded and recoiled at the violence, particularly its effects on civilians, most notably on children.

More broadly, the conflicts highlight a significant problem for the United States in the conduct of wars such as these. Adversaries use tactics that provoke bad behavior on the part of U.S. soldiers, who know better—or should know better. In the process, American troops are implicated in abuses, robbed of their humanity, and diminished in the eyes of international coalition partners and world public opinion, thereby essentially playing into the hands of their adversaries.

The experience of the soldiers suggests that not only is much more intensive training in international law and military ethics required on the part of the military, but that U.S. political leadership itself needs to promote fundamental respect for international standards. Yet even if training were exemplary and fidelity by U.S. political leaders to international obligations unswerving, related issues would also require attention, including the narrowed range of options available in asymmetrical war settings and the dynamics of decision-making by soldiers operating under duress.

At the end of the day, the experience of the troops in Afghanistan and Iraq frames a deeper question. Even in the most just of wars, what is the appropriate response of a modern Western military to an enemy who does not subscribe to international norms? Are there circumstances in which, if those norms cannot be respected, a war should not be prosecuted?

SPRAY-PAINTED VEHICLE IN TIKRIT, IRAQ



Chapter 4: Relationships

One of the challenges identified by citizen-soldiers and others in Afghanistan and Iraq was that of seeing their activities in relation to those of other actors. There were four arenas with which the troops interacted on a regular basis: the political dimensions of the Global War on Terror, the conduct of hearts and minds activities, the work of military contractors, and the media. This chapter examines the troops' perceptions of their interactions with each of these sets of actors.

The Political Interface

Soldiers are frequently said to be private or even reclusive about expressing their views on political matters. In introducing the *Concord Monitor's* five-day series of investigative articles based on interviews with members of the New Hampshire National Guard who served in Afghanistan and Iraq, editor Mike Pride observes that "As in all wars, most combat veterans are reticent in public. Many have had extreme experiences or witnessed frightful scenes, and they think—rightly—that there is no way civilians can understand what they went through. Or when they do want to talk, they find that even their friends don't really want to hear it."¹ Soliciting the views of returned soldiers, the New Hampshire Guard's own Global War on Terror study noted a reticence among some to join the issues in public. "There has been considerable and heated debate over many aspects of the Iraq war," the report concluded, "and most veterans would rather not participate in the debate in a public forum."

Many of the interviews consulted for this study confirm that reticence. "As far as I could see," recalls Josh Bradley of his time as a field artillery captain during Operation Iraqi Freedom, "the focus in my unit was entirely on completing the assigned mission and bringing everyone back home safely. I never heard anyone publicly express his or her opinion about the rightness or wrongness of the overall effort."² At the same time, there are ample data to conclude, as does the *Concord Monitor* reporter, that "For some soldiers, their experiences on the ground shaped their political views about the war."³

In comparison with earlier conflicts, active-duty soldiers in the period since 9/11 have become more outspoken in their views on matters political, as have their families.

Among the recurring topics of comment are the rationale for U.S. involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq; the rules of engagement governing deployment; management issues by the Defense Department (and oversight by Congress) of such matters as equipment, training, and re-entry; and participation in public discussions of the wars in the United States. Both the continuing reticence and the greater outspokenness are developments that deserve careful examination in view of their potentially wide-ranging implications for future mobilizations.

Many citizen-soldiers give clear priority to their soldierly function, deferring public expression of their views as citizens for the duration of their military service. They are at pains not to let their own views about the war interfere with doing their job. "Politics?" asks New Hampshire Master Sgt. Michael Pascalis, who deployed to Afghanistan. "No time for politics. I can't sit here and think if this is the right thing or the wrong thing for me to do. Every man or woman decides that among themselves. However I feel about the situation, I still have a job to do."⁴ Sgt. Jeremy Feldbush, left blind and brain-damaged by an artillery attack, comments, "I don't have any regrets. I had some fun over there. I don't want to talk about the military any more." He says he has no political opinions.⁵

I am quite happy to leave the politics to others, said one of the Vermont Guardsmen interviewed for this study. "Mine it is not to reason why," he says earnestly. "Mine is but to do or die." "President Bush is my Commander in Chief," observes Mississippi's Riley. "As long as I'm in the army, whatever he says goes."⁶ Lt. Colonel Ron Maloney of the New York National Guard expresses much the same view. "I'm part of the military, and I believe in its ways. [When] the military says you go, I go, and I believe in it. It's the teamwork, the values, the ethics, the morals, the camaraderie. Where else do you get a job that constantly enforces those types of values: personal integrity, personal courage, selflessness? Not too many bosses out there say, hey, these are the key requirements for you to be in this job."⁷

Often-encountered reticence, however, should not be mistaken for an absence of deeply felt or strongly held views. In letters and blogs, soldiers describe heated debates in billets and bunkhouses. "I always find it amusing when

people talk about ‘the military’ vote, perspective, or whatever,” wrote Sgt. Sharon Allen, a driver of diesel fuel tankers with the Ohio National Guard in Iraq in 2004. “My company has 170-some soldiers, and 170-some opinions. We might have more invested in foreign policy than people back home, but that doesn’t mean we all agree on exactly what those policies should be.” She went on to say that “tempers can get heated, and on some days it probably isn’t a good idea that we are all armed.”⁸ The expression of political views among those with boots on the ground could interfere with the chain of command, undercut morale, and perhaps even impair functioning.

Political issues surfaced regularly in the banter of the New Hampshire National Guard soldiers whose experience is filmed in *The War Tapes*. “I think that five guys out of the whole company didn’t vote for Bush,” speculated Bazzi, “and they probably kept it low. If you’re a guy, you know the whole Bush macho ‘let’s kick ass’ thing sounds pretty good.”⁹ His cohort Moriarity chimes in, “I support George Bush and everything, but for him to say that major combat missions are over kind of conflicts with what we are seeing and dealing with every day.”¹⁰

Some soldiers have difficulty concealing their irritation with the debate in Washington and around the country about the appropriateness of the Afghanistan and Iraq missions. “Let’s stop crying about whether we had reason to go in there or not because we can fight about that forever,” said Moriarity. “It’s a done deal. We’re in Iraq.”¹¹ Expressing a similar view, Shelton, who served in Afghanistan in 2002 and Iraq in 2003, recalled a Chinese proverb, “Those who say it cannot be done, should not interrupt the person doing it.” He went on to observe that “For all the people that are saying we can’t accomplish what we were sent there for, we’re doing it every single day.”¹²

Others are more tolerant of the airing of a wide variety of views, seeing the public debate as itself affirming the very values they are fighting for. In the final posting in his blog before returning to the States, First Lieut. Rusten Currie of the California National Guard, who believed that the Coalition was winning the war in Iraq, thanked “those of you who engaged in healthy and heated debate with me over our political views. . . . Soon we’ll see one way or the other, won’t we. Those of you who continue to question this war and why we are here, good for you; without different opinions, there is no debate.”¹³

What, then, are the views of the military on political issues, whether privately held or publicly expressed? As might be expected, they cover a wide spectrum. Andrew Carroll, the editor who transformed some 10,000 pages of writings submitted by soldiers for inclusion in what became the 374-page *Operation Homecoming* volume, comments on the breadth of opinions expressed. “There are contributors who voice staunchly antiwar opinions and accentuate in their writings the pain and destruc-

tion the hostilities in Iraq and Afghanistan have inflicted, while others express a strong sense of pride about going off to serve and focus on the positive achievements made in both countries over the past few years.”¹⁴

Summarizing her extensive discussions with members of the New Hampshire Guard in 2006, reporter Joelle Farrell found a number of soldiers who were more comfortable with U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan than in Iraq. “When the American government invaded Afghanistan in response to the September 11 attacks, soldiers said they were ready to go,” she wrote. “But when Bush and his administration stretched the war on terror to include Iraq, some troops had reservations.”¹⁵ Her generalization is confirmed by soldiers in other states as well. Operation Enduring Freedom was widely perceived as more supportable than Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Some soldiers who had kept their opinions to themselves while on duty overseas went public with their views upon returning to the United States. At that point they had more time for savoring their experiences and may have felt less constrained by their military affiliation. Although the ethos of the active-duty forces makes the personal opinions of soldiers about the rightness or wrongness irrelevant to the performance of their duties, members of the National Guard and retired active-duty personnel seem more outspoken in their views.

Interviews with soldiers who have fought in Afghanistan and Iraq evidence an impressive amount of thoughtful reflection on the conflicts. Pressed to amplify his discomfort with the Global War on Terror nomenclature, one New Hampshire Guardsman suggests that “global war on extremism” might be preferable since it would leave room for including home-grown American terrorists such as the Unabomber and the Oklahoma City bomber who are themselves a threat to U.S. national security.

Guardsmen also show a remarkable ability to live with a mission that, while a matter of life and death, is anything but assured of success. “Do I think we’re making progress?” asked Pink. “No, I don’t know. I think any country should be allowed to have its own civil war without people getting in the way. But I also believe that there are some pretty dangerous people in Iraq.”¹⁶ Establishing the proper balance between the two elements that Pink identifies—the sovereignty of other nations and the protection of U.S. national security—is the stuff of presidential decision directives and high-level congressional policy pronouncements.

Individual soldiers express strong views about their own personal involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. A Native American from a Navajo reservation in Arizona who trained at Fort Hood in Texas before deploying as part of a National Guard unit to Iraq articulated serious misgivings about his involvement. Julius Tulley de-

scribed himself as being “patriotic for my people,” the Dine people. Accordingly, he served four years in the Guard following his 13 years of active-duty. “I fought in Iraq for my people, but in some ways, it has killed me. In some ways, I am not the same person I used to be.” While in training, he visited the Fort Hood museum where “I saw pictures of the Navajo people being rounded up, and then I thought this is the very unit, the very divisions, that came over and rounded my people up like animals. . . . I’m hoping that what my people went through will never happen again, and I’m not just talking about my Dine, Navajo people. I’m talking about all people, including Iraqis.”¹⁷

Tulley’s comment flags the broader point that the U.S. armed forces, and particularly National Guard units, need to be attentive to the personal views and histories of their members if they are to command their loyalty and sacrifice. Rather than seeking to stifle the expression of political and personal views, officials may need to acknowledge that the Global War on Terror is proving more controversial than some of the wars which preceded it. “We were true New England guys,” said one of the New Hampshire contingent with a touch of pride as he recalled his unit’s time in Iraq. “We could work with our hands and talk about politics.” Upon returning, he insisted on exercising his rights as a citizen to express his views in the public debate and was supported by his state’s Guard officials in doing so.

Whatever their specific views, soldiers, their families, and their organizations are playing a much more visible and public role in public policy debates now than in earlier wars. Families of service personnel clearly feel less constrained in expressing personal views about the wars. “I believe that being anti-war and being patriotic are compatible,” says Carole Welch, whose weekly column, “My Soldier,” in the Bradford Vermont *Journal Opinion* kept local people in touch with the doings of her son and his National Guard unit. Reflecting in an interview on the negative impacts of the experience on her son, his family, and her own life (she resigned from a paying job in order to care for his young child), she makes no secret of her view that “War is having a big impact on unraveling the things that this country and community were built on.”¹⁸

It is also clear that some soldiers are looking to veterans organizations to play a more critical and outspoken role in the political process. With respect to the administration’s surge strategy of 2007, groups such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, founded in 1899, and the American Legion, created by an act of Congress in 1919, “issued pro-war position statements and lobbied skeptical Republicans to back the current Iraq strategy.” With memberships of 2.4 million and 2.7 million members respectively, they were being recruited by the administration, and were in turn recruiting other members, “to argue for the surge strategy at town hall meetings.”¹⁹

But the lay of the land is changing. “The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have spawned some new veterans groups, many of which are in a rebellious mood,” noted one reporter. “They have different agendas and different approaches.”²⁰ Among the newcomers putting pressure on more established groups, are the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, which has some 60,000 members, and votevets.org. The group Iraq Veterans against the War, comprised of active-duty personnel as well as veterans, offers ten reasons for opposing the war, including the fact that it allegedly violates international law.²¹

The wars have also spawned new groups of families with members in the armed services who are actively engaged in the political sphere. The organization Military Families Speak Out is comprised of more than 3,600 military families opposed to the war in Iraq and working to bring the troops home. Among that number are the 100-plus members of the Gold Star Families Speak Out group, modeled on a similar group during the Vietnam War who have lost family members due to hostile action or suicide. Organizers of the new group explain that their organization was not set up to counter other voices but to be a voice in their own right.²² The original Gold Star Mothers group, established in 1928 to link people who had lost “a son or daughter in service to the country,” has been encouraging the administration to “stay the course” in Iraq.

Traditional and neophyte veterans groups have shared since the beginning of the Global War on Terror a commitment to advocate public policies to meet veterans’ needs. However, newer breed groups have sometimes taken a more adversarial approach toward meeting those needs. Two members of Military Families Speak Out have filed a lawsuit against the VA for negligence in the suicide of their son following his return from Iraq.²³ As the Iraq war has proceeded, veterans groups have increasingly come to play high-profile and politicized roles in the broader political debate about the rightness and win-ability of the conflict.

Veterans from the Global War on Terror and earlier wars who were interviewed as part of the Veterans History Project were often asked, “Are you a member of any veterans’ or other organizations related to your service? Why? Do you attend reunions?”²⁴ A large number of those interviewed responded in the affirmative. However, it is unclear how that response compares to patterns of response in earlier U.S. conflicts. In addition, some of those interviewed were explicit in their resistance to keeping the war alive through membership in veterans’ organizations. Some expressed the strong desire simply to put the war behind them once and for all.

Several of those interviewed expressed discomfort with the profile assumed by their parents on political issues, whether because of the sensitivity of the issues or because

they may not have agreed with their parents' sentiments. "Just make clear that you're not speaking for me, Mom," said one Vermont Guardsman of her public advocacy efforts. Carole Welch's son was nervous about her weekly update on the nitty-gritty of daily life in Iraq, which was read with interest by his cohorts and superiors in the field. People across the political spectrum, from peace activists advocating the withdrawal of U.S. troops to members of the Blue Star Mothers of America and other traditional veterans groups applauding U.S. involvement, made reference to the experience of their sons and daughters in uniform. Perhaps the readiness of people of all political stances to appropriate soldiers' views, or on some occasions to put words in soldiers' mouths, has contributed to the reluctance of some soldiers to engage in the public arena.

The outspokenness of military families who have advocated withdrawal of the U.S. military has made it difficult for those urging stepped up prosecution of the wars to question the patriotism of those advocating bringing U.S. troops home. The presence at the January 2007 demonstration in Washington, DC of military families (some carrying pictures of their sons' or daughters' graves) and of soldiers themselves—some in uniform, some suffering from PTSD—underscored the message that those who were expressing their views had paid their dues and had earned the right to be taken seriously. As of early 2007, peace groups were cautiously optimistic that momentum is on their side. "One of the reasons that the ranks of peace activists continues to grow," notes Anne Miller of New Hampshire Peace Action, "is the growing [public] skepticism that the war is not working."²⁵

The experiences of soldiers reviewed for this study suggest that most of those who served in Afghanistan and Iraq, faithful to military tradition, have kept their personal views of the appropriateness of U.S. involvement and of the strategies and tactics employed in those conflicts largely out of the public spotlight. At the same time, many held and hold strong views on the subject, shared with each other in theater and communicated to families and friends in e-mails and blogs. Upon returning to the United States, members of the National Guard may be more outspoken in the public arena than their counterparts in the active-duty forces. Such engagement would reflect the return of citizen-soldiers to their lives as citizens, the active and varied roles—both professional and personal—that they play in the communities and states in which they reside, and the established right that they are exercising where they express their views.

As the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have proceeded, the level of political consensus in support of the Global War on Terror has eroded. This was evident in the mid-term congressional election of November 2006, in which the major factor in the recapture by the Democrats of both houses of Congress was widely held to be the unpopularity

of the war in Iraq. (In New Hampshire, two Republican incumbents were replaced by two Democrats, with voter sentiment on the war figuring prominently in the upset.) Media attention to the reentry problems experienced by veterans in need of mental health and social services and the formation of new associations of returning veterans contributed to the public disquiet. Also contributing to a new level of political controversy around the war have been the views expressed by soldiers themselves.²⁶ While the new Congress in 2007 ultimately did not withhold appropriations from the Pentagon as a political lever for imposing measurable benchmarks to evaluate progress in Iraq, the traditional axiom of earlier American conflicts—that politics stops at the water's edge—has been significantly qualified.

The fact that New Hampshire is likely to be the scene of the first primary election in the contest to win the parties' nominations for the presidency in 2009 suggests that a number of the political and policy dimensions of the Global War on Terror may figure prominently in the campaigns in this and other states. The fact that, as noted in Chapter 2, public opinion polls show a major difference between the parties in attitudes toward the Global War is likely to provide political grist for the mill. Should the trajectory of the conflicts in both Afghanistan and Iraq continue on its current downward course, the issues for the next election may be further sharpened.

Already interest groups have held a seminar in New Hampshire for likely Democratic nominees at which the importance of a revival of fidelity to international norms for the conduct of warfare in the wake of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo has been stressed. "There are many facets to this issue" of adhering to the Geneva Convention ground rules for detaining and interrogating prisoners, retired Marine Corps commandant General Charles Krulak told the group, "but overshadowing all of them is a basic moral imperative to show the American people, and in fact the world, that the United States can wage and win the war on terrorism without sacrificing its overall value system and rule of law."²⁷ As the primary approaches, the experiences of the New Hampshire National Guard and its members in both conflicts may figure to one degree or another in the public square.

The debate has played out somewhat differently in neighboring Vermont which, in proportionate terms, has enrolled—and lost—more of its citizens than most other states. There, as noted in Chapter 1, numerous town meetings have passed resolutions calling for the phase-down of U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. In April 2007, "reflecting growing grass-roots anger over the [Iraq] war," the Vermont Senate in a 16-to-9 vote "urged Vermont's representatives in Washington to introduce a resolution in Congress requiring the House Judiciary Committee to start impeachment proceedings against Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney." While the

Vermont House of Representatives was not expected to follow suit, existing congressional ground rules allow a state legislature to initiate impeachment proceedings.²⁸

It remains to be seen whether the experience of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq will contribute to a fundamental rethinking of U.S. engagement in either of these theaters or in foreign affairs more broadly. As of mid-2007, peace activists were hardly optimistic. One noted that while the war in Iraq was the single most important factor contributing to the shift at the polls in November 2006, that vote, rather than representing a referendum on the wrongness of the war, reflected only a sense that the then-current strategy of military engagement was not winning the day. The larger issue of whether the United States can or should engage in future asymmetrical wars has yet to be addressed. There may also be a certain disconnect between the generally negative reaction of many soldiers to their experiences and the absence of a larger groundswell of opposition to continuing the Global War on Terror along current lines.

Hearts and Minds Activities

In settings in which the foreignness of the cultural and geographic terrain and concerns about security limited engagement with local people, one of the positive activities, as the soldiers saw it, was the assistance they provided to local communities. Indeed, “hearts and minds” work provided the military with one of only a few avenues for direct contact with local people.

The Commander’s Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) provided National Guard and other units in Afghanistan and Iraq with discretionary funds for activities that would benefit local populations.²⁹ An officer in the New Hampshire National Guard who was involved in some 35 CERF undertakings during his tour in Afghanistan gave those initiatives high marks. They were a way, he said, of showing goodwill to local people, particularly those in immediate proximity to military bases. “We wanted to make sure that the surrounding communities saw that we supported them,” he said, with special consideration given to areas “friendly to us—if they actually provided information and helped us pursue different people who weren’t so friendly to the United States.”

Such civic action work, the officer continued, served another important purpose: “to get people off post and actually get them exposed to the local economy and people and locals and so on. Quite a few people took advantage of that.” One of the specific benefits of hearts and minds activities was “to get females that were in uniform out on each mission so that they can interact with local females, who are pretty severely oppressed there.”³⁰ In Iraq as well as Afghanistan, female U.S. soldiers played important roles, both in interacting with local communities and in monitoring the work of contractors working

on the reconstruction of schools, roads, and other public infrastructure.

A female sergeant with the New Hampshire National Guard witnessed some of those efforts first hand. Serving as a truck driver and convoy gunner in Iraq for fifteen months beginning in late 2003, she comments on the “huge” changes she observed. “We did a ton of humanitarian aid,” she commented. “Before we left, there were 17 schools built . . . thousands of school books given out, thousands of school bags. More people were thanking us for being there than were trying to shoot us.”³¹

The distribution, in a “humanitarian operation” in April 2007, of school equipment and supplies as well as cookies by a U.S. Cavalry regiment, accompanied by Iraqi troops, was also a positive experience for those involved. In a U.S. Armed Forces news release, the First Lieutenant in the U.S. contingent commented on the win-win situation: “It makes me feel all warm and fuzzy inside, helping the children,” he said. At the same time, by giving them “the ability to learn and get an education, they’re less vulnerable to other influences—like extremist views.” A platoon leader involved in the operation was also impressed with the political as well as the welfare benefits. “Seeing the kids respond to us handing out toys and book bags is always great—they are so happy. It’s like we’re Santa Claus.” Doing such missions jointly with Iraqi soldiers in his view strengthens the Iraqis’ hand as they begin to assume greater responsibility themselves.³²

At the individual level, too, hearts and minds work was viewed as overwhelmingly positive. Such was the experience of Warrant Officer Jared S. Jones, a 23-year-old who served in Afghanistan with the Aviation Attack Helicopter Battalion of the Utah Army National Guard. “Combat is only one facet of the military, a necessary evil we must sometimes wage against evil people,” he observes. Yet “the highlight of my deployment,” as he describes it, was a series of civic action activities in which he participated in the village of Jegdalek during the course of his year in the country. Among these was Operation Shoe Fly, in which Chinook helicopters dropped shoes, blankets, clothing, and toys on selected villages.³³

For many of the soldiers, civic action activities provided an all-important link with the people in the area. “I dealt a lot with the Iraqi people,” recalled one medic from the New Hampshire Guard. “They got dehydrated quite a bit, and we had to do a lot of IVs [intravenous treatments].” While treating locals was not part of the original mission, it became so over time. One of his colleagues was also impressed with the civic action efforts that he witnessed. For Afghans involved in agriculture, he recounted, the services provided to their livestock by military veterinarians were much appreciated. He also applauded the linking of immunization and other health activities for villagers with voter registration efforts. “They would get

people there to get medicine and then they would register them there for the vote so they could get a census for the country's population." In this way, he felt, the broader national reconstruction agenda was successfully advanced.³⁴

Civic action activities not only provided a significant link between outside military forces and local communities. They also connected American soldiers to their own communities in the United States. Hearts and minds work reminded troops of their own families and communities back home, some of whom mobilized collections of items needed in Afghanistan and Iraq. Wisconsin's Hohl distributed school supplies that he received from his home community to a group of rural schools which he visited regularly. "The kids sit there and learn with old bullet holes and bomb-scarred walls around them. They are usually lucky if they even have wooden benches to sit on. Most of the time there's just the bare floor or a plastic tarp. But the children there are so proud to open up their book bags and show you their math, writing, or art books and what they can do."³⁵

In a world of so much violence and bloodshed, providing assistance gave soldiers something to write home about. The experience of two medics from New Hampshire who served in 2005 with an Alabama National Guard unit in Afghanistan offers a case in point. In private life

a salesman and a volunteer fire fighter/emergency medical technician, the two were given responsibility by the military for what the pair called a "hugs and drugs" program in Paktia Province. "The medics traveled to villages to treat ill Afghans and opened their clinic for several days to treat sick villagers who came to the base." They insisted on treating women at a time when only men sought help. Over time they gained the trust of villagers, who were enormously grateful for their services, even though a clinic that was constructed did not outlive their departure.³⁶

"We'd be riding through the streets" of towns in Iraq, recalled March of the California National Guard, and "hundred of kids would just flood our vehicles. Every person in our unit had families and friends just send tons of candies and toys and books and literature for the kids to read . . . we'd always stop in the community. . . . We'd show them that we care about you guys. We're not just here to occupy you guys' land. We're here to help you, we want to help you, so we would always take time out of our days to help the kids and give them toys and candy and put smiles on their faces."³⁷

Many of those interviewed commented enthusiastically on the civic action work performed by U.S. troops in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Efforts to contribute to the health and welfare of local populations seem unques-

NEW HAMPSHIRE GUARDSMAN ROBERT PRATT LYMAN DURING CLOTHES DISTRIBUTION IN AN AFGHAN VILLAGE



tionably constructive, given the extent of unmet basic human needs. Such work also provided soldiers with an otherwise rare opportunity to interact with local people, conveying a message that not only the soldiers but also the people in their home areas who sent the items to distribute, cared about the welfare of Afghans and Iraqis. Several of those consulted also mentioned the role played by female soldiers in hearts and minds work, including the opportunity for them to “model” for local populations a kind of role unfamiliar to people locally. Defense Department officials in Washington and their counterparts in the National Guard units in various states have also made frequent use of the civic action work of the troops.

Individual Guard units over a period of years had developed, independently of and prior to the Global War on Terror, civic action partnerships in a variety of countries. The New Hampshire National Guard, for example, for several years had sent units on training missions to El Salvador, where providing medical services for local populations had offered training opportunities for Guard soldiers. The National Guard’s State Partnership Program, of which the El Salvador activities provide an example, “is active in over 55 countries, providing critical support for national security objectives, global peace and freedom.”³⁸

The importance that soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq attached to hearts and minds activities was shared by Guard hierarchies in the various states. As a video produced by the New Hampshire National Guard puts it, “In the wars, it is not enough to be a warrior. In the battle for the hearts and minds of Iraqi and Afghan citizens, kindness and generosity can be a Guardsman’s most powerful weapon.”³⁹ The state Guard’s publications are replete with references to civic action activities. C Company of the 172nd Infantry Regiment reports that “Our operations supporting the local children are in full swing. We regularly distribute shoes, clothing and school supplies to the kids in our area. It is truly a double benefit, as they receive much-needed items, and we receive the smiles, waves and hugs of grateful kids.” The items distributed “were sent by our soldiers’ families, friends, as well as organizations and schools in southern New Hampshire.”⁴⁰

At the national level, Guard publicists emphasize civic action activities as well. The Global War on Terror section of the Pentagon’s Web site frames the military’s civic action activities worldwide as “a force for good.” It states that “Every day the men and women of the U.S. military help others in humanitarian missions across the globe.” Full-page newspaper advertisements by the National Guard from time to time emphasize the benefits of its activities to civilians under duress. “Whether it’s rescuing local families from floodwaters, securing our borders, rushing humanitarian aid to the other side of the world or defending our homeland, that’s where you will find the

National Guard.” The photos intersperse human interest scenes (such as medics treating young children) with defense and security (helicopters and ground patrols). The Guard is presented as “the nation’s greatest counterterrorism asset.”⁴¹

While most soldiers and their state and national hierarchies are enormously positive about such activities on behalf of local populations, a few of them also question the strategy and tactics underlying such work. Some articulate an implicit contradiction in a fighting force also providing succor. Gregory James Schulte, a warrant officer in the National Guard deployed to Iraq, senses a “Catch-22” at the heart of hearts and minds activities. “You want to look scary on the roads so that you don’t get attacked,” he says. “At the same time you want to have a friendly face so that people understand that you’re there to help them.”⁴²

New Hampshire’s Shelton made it a practice of taking off his gloves when he walked through villages. He wanted to show Iraqis “that he wasn’t a monster or a machine; they might trust soldiers more if they recognized that they’re human.” His work, which combined combat and civic action activities, was, in the words of the New Hampshire newspaper reporter, “part open hand, part closed fist.”⁴³ Another New Hampshire Guardsman believed that in conducting work with local populations, a show of force would act as a deterrent, giving pause to “anybody that was driving by that wanted to do something.”⁴⁴ There were no incidents reported. But the fact that civic action work required military protection underscored the tensions involved and the political-military nature of the assistance.

Some Guardsmen found themselves put off by contradictions they sensed in hearts and minds efforts. Colorado’s Dougherty commented on the extent to which hearts and minds work in Iraq was dwarfed by “the destruction and unnecessary violence” of the war itself. She recalled an incident in which a water tanker for which she was providing convoy support lost a pallet of plastic bottles filled with water. The soldiers ran over the bottles to destroy them, rather than letting them fall into the hands of Iraqis, whose water is often contaminated but who “can’t afford bottled water.” She noted that “The same guys who ran over the water were the same ones you’d see go in an orphanage and give out care packages. Then they’d feel really good because they were helping. One day they do something great; the next day it’s totally different. The most I can say is we gave candy to their kids. ‘Sorry we blew up your neighborhood and killed your father, but here is some candy.’”⁴⁵

Other soldiers identified a second difficulty with hearts and minds work. In selecting villages for assistance by asking, “Where do they stand on the insurgency?” American troops were in essence drawing local populations

more deeply into the conflict. Shelton himself observed that “You could be in a town all day long handing out food and blankets and water and pens and pencils and notebooks. And you’d leave the town and head back to the camp and they’d ambush you. Why are we doing all this stuff,” he asked, “if they’re not appreciative of it?”⁴⁶ In the case of the clinic set up by the two medics from the New Hampshire National Guard in Afghanistan’s Paktia Province, relations between the troops and village elders deteriorated when their base came under fire in circumstances that, the soldiers felt, implicated the elders. As a result, rather than leaving medical and other supplies behind for use by the community as planned, the departing troops “blew up the remnants of their camp before leaving Afghanistan.”⁴⁷

Finally, some soldiers sensed that addressing the human needs targeted by “hug-and-drugs” activities was much more essential to the future of Afghanistan and Iraq than were U.S.-led military efforts to defeat insurgent elements. The terrorist attack of 9/11, which provided the rationale for international military presence, seemed remote from the experience of most Afghans. “It didn’t affect them, it didn’t bother them, and it wasn’t an issue with them,” noted one New Hampshire Guardsman. “They just lived their lives day to day, just plant their seeds, did their crops, and eat and support the family. They don’t have a preference for what type of government is in effect. They just want to know that things are good for them and their kids. They don’t believe in the cause of the Taliban or the Al Qaeda.” Our own earlier case study of Afghanistan, conducted in 2005, also confirmed a serious disconnect between the priorities of local populations for human security programs (jobs, health care, education and the like) and the overriding security orientation of outside military forces, including civic action work.⁴⁸

Against such widespread enthusiasm for “hugs and drugs” activities, only an occasional question is raised by soldiers themselves about their more equivocal or even negative aspects. Earlier studies by the Tufts research group and others have identified some of the potential negatives: the selection of villages and villagers for such undertakings according to strategic considerations, the increased vulnerability to which such populations may be exposed as a result of accepting assistance from one party in a conflict, the high costs and sustainability of such work after the military unit has left or after a conflict has passed, and the relationship between such inputs and those of a country’s government agencies and humanitarian organizations.⁴⁹ In short, the ambiguities of hearts and minds activities are far more of a serious issue than realized by many of the troops, or by their publicists.

Interviews with soldiers and other data consulted for this study are also noteworthy for the relative absence of mention of the work of humanitarian and human rights organizations. This is somewhat understandable in Iraq,

where United Nations agencies and other aid groups maintained a low profile following the bombing of the UN’s Baghdad headquarters in 2003. Yet in a broader sense it suggests a lack of familiarity among the military with the work of such agencies, whether multilateral, governmental, or non-governmental. The troops are far more aware of private DOD contractors such as Kellogg, Brown, and Root—in part, no doubt, because they were providing convoy support for its movements. Their lack of awareness of assistance efforts is even more telling in Afghanistan, where numerous agencies, both international and indigenous, were active in both emergency and reconstruction activities before and during the time when U.S. and other Coalition forces were present.⁵⁰

In Iraq and Afghanistan alike, the work of humanitarian and human rights agencies is of course critically important, despite the difficulties experienced by those groups in functioning in situations of great insecurity. Their work was often complicated by the presence and activities of international military forces. In Afghanistan, conducting aid work around the country by provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) operating under military aegis was fiercely opposed by aid groups from the outset, although later such work was reluctantly accepted. In Iraq, United Nations agencies and non-governmental aid groups felt that the political-military framework imposed by the United States and its allies compromised their own independence and security.

On the assumption that the military will continue in the future to be involved in civic action work, there are without doubt lessons that soldiers may learn from humanitarian organizations that operate in situations of internal armed conflict to deliver assistance and protection to vulnerable groups. As noted in Chapter 3, such organizations face challenges similar to those confronted by the military, and their ability to succeed can be affected by their relations with international political and military actors.

Contractors

A third set of interactions that looms large in the experience of soldiers in both Afghanistan and Iraq involves the civilian contractors who provide services to the military. Many of those stationed in Afghanistan and Iraq were struck by the sheer number of civilians from the U.S. and other countries involved in day-to-day activities on, around, and between military bases. Troops no longer prepared meals, stocked and operated PXs (post exchanges), or ran communications switchboards. These functions were largely outsourced by the Defense Department to the private sector, which also provided security to senior military officials, operated rendition flights, and sometimes even engaged in combat. The panoply of contract personnel and functions gave military bases the

feel, observed the soldiers, of small towns with private sector businesses thriving and economies humming. Much of the reconstruction of energy, health, and transport infrastructure was also spun off to the private sector, with the military doing only the occasional demonstration hearts and minds project.

The impressions of the troops are confirmed by independent analysts. Estimates place the number of companies that have contracts with the U.S. government for work in Iraq at 630; with 180,000 employees, their numbers exceed those of U.S. troops. Some 48,000 of them are employed by private military security firms. Private hires hail from some 100 different countries. Since the beginning of the war in Iraq, 900 contract personnel have lost their lives; another 13,000 have been wounded.⁵¹

Among the troops who contributed to the present study, the predominant perception of private sector actors was overwhelmingly negative. That a number of those interviewed served with National Guard units having transport functions may help account for the frequency of the interaction and of the oft-expressed scorn. In any event, soldiers made no secret of their unhappiness in particular with Kellogg, Brown, and Root, the subsidiary of Halliburton with which the Defense Department had contracted for a variety of services. “KBR annoys me,” says Shangraw in *The War Tapes*. “I don’t want to talk politics but man, they got it good. . . . Take every store in your town, every gas station, police department, fire department, and let it all be run by one company. I mean that’s basically what they do. They have their hands in anything you can think of. One-hundred-and-twenty grand to do the same job” as soldiers might do. “Kellogg Brown and Root, owned by Halliburton, run by the Vice President Dick Cheney,” mutters one of his colleagues. “Everybody there [at KBR] stands to make money the longer we’re there,” chimes in Brandon Wilkins. “So that’s why we refer to it as ‘the war for cheese.’”⁵²

What rankled was not just the hefty remuneration that KBR and other private sector suppliers received but the particular items that soldiers were required to protect. Members of the New Hampshire National Guard, as one of them put it, escorted “trucks filled with things like big-screen televisions, plastic plants and pet goods, which were trucked onto military bases and sold to soldiers at the post-exchange or PX. ‘I’m risking my life for kitty litter,’ said Staff Sgt. Patrick Clarke. . . . ‘I could see [the need for] food, water, fuel. I realize the PX was for our comfort. It’s just kind of out of hand.’”⁵³ KBR vehicles, which were often poorly maintained and driven by Third Country nationals who did not speak English, added security risks to convoys that otherwise contained only military vehicles. “I feel like the priority of KBR making money outweighs the priority of safety,” said New Hampshire’s Moriarity in a sentiment shared by many.⁵⁴

CONTRACTORS AND CONSCRIPTION

[The increasing use of contract personnel by the military means that] the United States no longer needs to rely on its own citizens and those of its nation-state allies to fight its wars, nor does it need to implement a draft, which would have made the Iraq war politically untenable.

—Jeremy Scahill, Analyst

A U.S. government review confirmed the augmented role played in Iraq by private contractors carrying out activities commissioned by the Defense Department. The situation was similar, if somewhat less pronounced, in Afghanistan. “[T]here has been a substantial shift in the types of contracts for troops support services, the size of the contracts, and the lack of effective management control over the administration of the contracts, and the oversight of the contractors.”⁵⁵ “Four years into the occupation [of Iraq],” writes one analyst, “there is absolutely no effective system of oversight or accountability governing contractors and their operations.”⁵⁶

The experiences of National Guard personnel raised a number of questions regarding the interface with private contractors. These include the extent to which key decisions are being made not by military personnel but by companies and people ostensibly under contract with the military. Also at issue are broader questions about the relationship between U.S. Armed Forces and private sector corporations. The impression was widespread that such firms were not operating according to professional ground rules nor were the profits reasonable and competitive. One recent review of “the unprecedented use of private contractors” by the military in Iraq has found that “the most basic questions” regarding contractors cannot be answered.⁵⁷ The outsourcing to non-U.S. government personnel of terrorist suspect interrogations also raised serious questions of accountability, as did the failure of many reconstruction projects to be completed on time and according to specifications.

Some of those interviewed noted one advantage of the “army” of private contractors: The numbers of military personnel in the two theaters were kept to a minimum. Others pointed out that private sector involvement was vulnerable to the same security problems that affected the troops. In short, even if private firms did not continue to provide goods and services in the future at the current scale, fundamental issues of cost, chain of command, legal status, and accountability required attention. The prevailing sentiment among those interviewed seemed to be, however, that the difficulty of finding enough troops to retain the performance of such services within the military may make outsourcing a reality for the foreseeable future.

Communications

In reflecting on their experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, many soldiers expressed strong views about the roles played by the media. Most leveled sharp criticisms at the media's perceived lack of accuracy, with some also holding it accountable for what they saw as a widespread lack of awareness among Americans about the conflicts and the United States' stake in them. Individual soldiers offered their own correctives in the form of e-mail dispatches and blogs designed to keep their families and friends in the picture. However, those cyberspace connections, a major new departure in American military history and a partial complement to normal media coverage, had limitations as well.

With respect to the accuracy of the media's portrayal of what was taking place on the ground, many troops expressed disenchantment in the strongest possible terms. The media, many believed, had a negative agenda that exaggerated the difficulties experienced by the troops while at the same time downplaying their accomplishments. Soldiers in New Hampshire and other units commented on what they perceived as the media's fixation on the violence and carnage and its lack of attention to constructive developments, including hearts and minds activities. Soldiers would frequently "lash out at the media for only reporting when a bomb is detonated and not when a school or water treatment plant has been rebuilt."⁵⁸

One who sensed a negative media bias was Brian P. Clousen of the Indiana National Guard. When it comes to the media, he said, "You don't see the soldiers going out and building schools and setting up hospitals for the Iraqi people. . . . They don't show the people just trying to actually live their lives and get through another day. They're not all over there trying to kill us or plotting our destruction. They don't all hate America. That's all you see on TV. . . . It seems that the news people there want you to think that this is the worst thing that happened in the world: that we went over there. A lot of the people there hate Saddam and tell you that and are glad to see us over there."⁵⁹ Because civic action work was viewed so positively by the troops, this criticism was implicitly a critique of a negative bias in all of the media's coverage.

Several soldiers saw the media's bias confirmed in the attention it lavished on the abuses committed by U.S. personnel at Abu Ghraib. Coverage of the "sick pranks" at Abu Ghraib, where Iraqis were wrongly humiliated, went on month after month, noted Maddix, while the media moved on quickly from the outrageous beheadings of U.S. soldiers to other issues after only a few days. "Which is more important," he asked, "a person being humiliated or an American soldier getting his head lopped off?"⁶⁰ "I just know the media will only let you know how bad something is, not how good it is," added Mississippi National Guardsman Justin C. Thompson

following his time in Iraq. "I quit watching anything on the news about the war because it was mostly out of context or misinterpreted."⁶¹

"In a violent, faraway land, where everything is unfamiliar, 99.9 percent of the American soldiers have behaved professionally, compassionately, and bravely," noted Capt. James R. Sosnicky of the U.S. Army Reserve's 3544 Civil Affairs Brigade in some trenchant comments on Michael Moore's film, *Fahrenheit 9/11*. "Of the hundreds of thousands of soldiers who have rotated into and out of Iraq, a handful has embarrassed us. The names of the a-holes of Abu Ghraib taste more bitter on the tongues of our troops in Baghdad than they do on those of the incensed-for-the-camera politicians who will sleep off cocktails tonight in their Georgetown abodes. And while the film showed a few conquering Americans talking about the rush of war, chanting 'the roof is on fire,' it did not show the faces of countless Americans rebuilding hospitals, delivering textbooks to schools, or providing Iraqis with clean water to drink. Those things, even I'll admit, do not make for interesting cinema."⁶²

The disenchantment of soldiers with the media was deepened by the perceived lack of resonance between its coverage and their own experience. On numerous occasions, troops returning to their bases from dangerous activities outside the wire would watch televised news that seemed unreal or unimportant. "Only the sensational gets reported," fumed Sgt. Matthew Miller, a paramedic with the Maryland National Guard in Iraq. "You hear 30 Iraqis killed by a suicide bomber, but the one private that got killed in the Humvee, you don't hear about. That happens a lot."⁶³ "I have lost all faith in the media," remarked New Hampshire Guardsman Pink, "a hapless joke I would much rather laugh at than become a part of."⁶⁴ The fact that media coverage was virtually continuous—"this war has been fought in our living rooms more than any other," one chaplain observed—simply increased the troops' disenchantment.

As the attention of the media—and the nation—shifted from Afghanistan to Iraq, some of the troops deployed to Afghanistan criticized the media accordingly. "Everything's Iraq, Iraq, Iraq, Iraq, Iraq," observes a sergeant in the New Hampshire Guard. "You don't really hear anything about Afghanistan." Yet there is "more progress" to report in Afghanistan, and Afghanistan, after all, is "the foundation" for the war against terror. Coverage of Iraq itself also came in for criticism. The Global War on Terror study conducted by the New Hampshire National Guard found that many of its troops expressed a sense of the "failure of the media to report on the progress made in Iraq."

A nuanced view of the media's coverage of the conflict was offered by Bryan Groves, a captain who led a Special Forces team in Iraq for eight months beginning in

November 2004. “From what I have seen,” he said during a panel discussion among veterans who had returned to the United States to take up their studies, “the press does not provide adequate coverage of the positive actions taken by our military, the Iraqi military, or the Iraqi government. Most of the air time allotted to the war focuses on the violence that occurred that day, not on the bad characters that were removed from the streets, the infrastructure projects that were completed, or the political negotiations conducted. . . . [T]he broadcast media could do a better job of highlighting the political sticking points the Iraqi government needs to navigate in order to achieve national reconciliation: oil-revenue sharing, revision of de-Baathification, demobilizing militias, and amending key points of their constitution. . . . Those are the issues . . . of utmost importance for Iraq and America alike.”⁶⁵ In short, the media did not meet its responsibility to help educate the American people about the issues and the progress of the war.

If one of the major criticisms of the media concerned the accuracy and the comprehensiveness of its reporting of events, a second concerned its perceived failure to convey a sense of the wider importance of what was taking place. The stakes of the Global War on Terror for the United States and Europe—to say nothing of the Middle East—were perceived as being far higher than the media conveyed. “Is this war in the present tense, here in America?” asked Brian Turner, an award-winning poet who served in an Army combat brigade in Mosul in 2004. “Iraq is on the other side of the globe and the events there are mostly reported in the past tense.”⁶⁶ While some soldiers held the media accountable for the limited engagement of the American public with the issues of the wars, others were equally critical of politicians, who were viewed as prevailing on the media to limit coverage of certain aspects of the war and committed to avoid spreading the sacrifice more widely among the general population.

The disconnect between frontlines and home front struck soldiers with particular intensity—and cruelty—upon their return to the United States. “My frustration coming back is, I go to work and I talk to guys and they don’t care,” says Moriarity in a poignant scene during a ceremony in which his company president and co-workers had gathered to welcome him back to work. “Somebody will even ask me a question: ‘Jeeze, do you have any pictures?’” Moriarity continued. “And I will say ‘Sure’ and I’ll take out some pictures and start to show them and they’re like, ‘Yeah, yeah, yeah,’ and I want to grab them by the throat and say, ‘You look at my f-ing pictures. You asked me to look at ‘em. Okay, I’m not going around showing ‘em off to every body. You asked to look at them. Give me the god-damned respect of looking at my pictures. Do you have any idea of what I’ve done?’”⁶⁷

One of the correctives to the perceived inaccuracy and lack of immediacy of the media was the information con-

veyed by the soldiers themselves. The soldiers’ own communications from the field were an important and separate source of information and opinion. “More than any generation of troops before them,” observes the editor of a compendium of dispatches from the front, “servicemen and women today have the ability to see and hear what the media are reporting back home and how the conflicts in which they are fighting are being portrayed.”⁶⁸ If the newspaper—or, in a broader sense, the media—offers the “first draft of history,” dispatches from soldiers themselves represent the second draft, offering the possibility of major corrections in the process.

A VIEW FROM THE GROUND

That’s what military bloggers are doing today—offering unfettered access to the War on Terror in their own words.

—Maj. Matthew Currier Burden

Although some soldiers stationed in the Balkans a decade earlier had made use of the Internet, the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq were the first wars in which most soldiers in theater had the possibility of instant and regular communication with friends and families. Thanks to developments in satellite technology and to the efforts of foundations and the military itself, cyberspace gave people deployed overseas a virtual seat at their own kitchen tables. “A person can now keep his commitment to his family and keep his commitment to his country,” noted an official from Freedom Calls, one of the organizations facilitating such contacts.⁶⁹

“The blogging phenomenon began in 1999,” explains Major Matthew Currier Burden in his introduction to *The Blog of War: Front-line Dispatches from Soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq*. However, “Like everything else, blogging changed after September 11, 2001. The United States and its allies were officially declaring a war against terrorists worldwide. Soldiers were being deployed in massive numbers to the Middle East. The world was rapidly changing. People were nervous and curious about what was going on with the government and the military—curious beyond their nightly or cable news. In Afghanistan and Iraq, technologically adept young soldiers were making sure they didn’t lose contact with family and friends back home. Blogging was the perfect way to maintain contact, to tell their stories. And those blogs—soon known as milblogs (military blogs) were ideal for filling in the gaps that both the media and the military left out of the war. Now anyone with an Internet connection had the ability to find out what was happening overseas from the soldiers themselves.”⁷⁰

“We always had access to phones and we always had access to the Internet where people could e-mail home,” confirms one New Hampshire Guardsman. “I could e-mail home multiple times a day. A lot of people had digital cameras. This is probably the most photographed conflict and the most communicated conflict there has ever been because I know if something happened to me it was [conveyed] home, people already knew about it quickly, which is good and bad. It’s good to stay in contact because you see the news on TV and it’s negative, negative, and negative. All you see is just the bad stuff happening.” Anxious to convey his own perception of the importance of what was taking place, he shared with his e-mail network his elation when 70 percent of electorate turned out to vote—despite threats. “To me that made it all worthwhile and told the world, Guess what? The Iraqis do want us here.”⁷¹ The multiplicity of information available through the Internet clearly resulted in the circulation of more diverse perspectives about the wars than would otherwise have been available.

Communications from the troops had overwhelmingly positive results. Internet-based telephone calls kept families in touch with the day-to-day lives of their loved ones, even though soldiers often sanitized what they shared. Regular contact was particularly important for children, psychologists reported, who were bearing the burdens of having one or, in some instances, both parents in harm’s way. Cyberspace also gave soldiers an up-to-date sense of what was happening at home, although sometimes the news was not easy to deal with. “The constant communication makes for fewer unpleasant surprises after couples reunite, though there can be a downside,” observed one reporter. “It brings the anxieties of the living room into the war.”⁷² Todd B. Walton of the Nebraska National Guard says he found it stressful when he learned from his wife, who was home in Kearney with his 13-year-old daughter and 15-month-old son, that “there was moisture on the bathroom floor.” By contrast, he said, the stress he experienced as a medic accompanying convoys around Fallujah was minimal. “Once we actually got deployed,” he recalled, “a lot of the bullshit went away. It was ‘Here’s a job. Go do it.’”⁷³

From the standpoint of the military itself, direct communications between the war theaters and the home front were a mixed blessing. E-mail access 24/7 represented a tremendous boost to morale, noted one officer in the New Hampshire National Guard. Nevertheless, it constituted “a huge challenge” for him as commander. There were occasions when word of injuries or deaths to members of a unit spread among families back at home before the authorities were able to convey it, leading officials to close down Internet access until affected family members could be notified. Of course, such interruptions in information flow themselves created anxieties at home. On one occasion, the authorities were concerned lest news

of a unit’s departure for the United States reach the enemy, and therefore kept the particulars from the soldiers themselves. Officials were also concerned lest domestic issues interfere with soldiering. Liabilities notwithstanding, concluded the Guard official, “all in all it was excellent and allowed people to communicate back and forth and stay in touch.”⁷⁴

Sgt. Tina M. Beller, a U.S. Army reservist stationed in Baghdad with a civil affairs unit, lived through a mortar attack on the Green Zone in September 2004 which killed a number of her cohorts. In the evening, she e-mailed her parents in Pennsylvania, who, she believed, had seen pictures of the attack; they received her communiqué on September 11. “I am just writing to let you know that physically I remain unharmed. Emotionally and mentally, is a different story.” Her superiors, she explained, “told me not to write home about it. ‘We don’t want it all over the Internet.’ But even talking to all the right people,” she explained, “isn’t helping the heavy weight I am carrying on my tightened chest.”⁷⁵ Beller herself may have been relieved by sharing the news; her family was doubtless alarmed.

In 2005, the military tightened up operational security regulations so as to limit the access of military personnel overseas to the Internet and avoid transmittal of information that could compromise security. Unrestrained blogging and the posting of photos and other material on Web sites, the Pentagon said, “needlessly place lives at risk and degrade the effectiveness of our operations.”⁷⁶ In May 2007, further restrictions prohibited access by the troops to 13 communal Web sites, including YouTube, “to protect operations from the drain on computer capacity.”⁷⁷ Even so, it is likely that within the National Guard, comprised as it is of people drawn from wide geographical areas and remote rural communities, information flow was far more regular and rapid than it would have been in earlier conflicts.

If the pace of communication between soldiers and their families and communities has been accelerated by technologies that have come into their own in recent years, so too has been the speed with which developments in the Global War have begun to be processed by the society as a whole. Arts critics have commented on the “cornucopia of works being done in the United States and Great Britain that approach Iraq from perspectives both political and personal.” One such stage play, *The Rhode Island Project*, is an amalgam of the stories of soldiers, families, and others touched by the Iraq war. They are drawn from a state in which the National Guard is the fourth-largest employer and has deployed some 3,800 troops into Iraq. Of course, U.S. experiences in the Vietnam War were also the subject of plays written and performed during and after the war. The difference, in the judgment of one director, is that this new generation of plays is “coming faster.”⁷⁸

Photography has also been an essential means of connecting the public and the wars. In what one art critic has described as perhaps “the most intensively photographed war in history,” the lens has often been a powerful instrument, often wielded by the troops themselves, as *The War Tapes* reminds.⁷⁹ One newspaper columnist, who has sponsored Iraq poetry contests for two successive years, notes that “Throughout history, the most memorable accounts of war—from Homer to Wilfred Owen—haven’t been journalistic or historical, but poetic.”⁸⁰ His comment underscores the importance of paying close attention to the voices of veterans and others who have sought to convey in one fashion or another the impacts of the Global War on Terror.

The view among soldiers that the media have had a major influence on the public’s perception of the conflicts is surely accurate. Yet, as an earlier study in the Tufts series observes, “Media roles in publicizing crises, influencing public opinion, and reporting international response are nothing new.”⁸¹ Did the media play a more active and/or more negative role in the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts than in previous American wars, and, if so, what effects did media coverage have on the actions of the military and public support or opposition? Did the media have its own agenda?

It is beyond the scope of this study, which seeks primarily to present the perceptions of soldiers, to assess whether

those perceptions in fact corresponded to the realities of the situation. The perception that the media played down the positive importance of hearts and minds activities while playing up the negative significance of Abu Ghraib may or may not prove to have been the case. Indeed, as more detailed research is conducted, it is quite possible that the reverse will prove to have been the case: that as regards their relative importance to the outcome of the conflict—well beyond what the media itself was able to influence—the damage done by the abuses at Abu Ghraib will have far exceeded that positive contribution made by the troops’ civic action work.

Similarly, unprecedented access enjoyed by the troops to Internet and phone links to their families is well documented. The result of this communication has given people in the United States an added source of information about what is taking place, a greater up-close-and-personal sense of day-to-day developments, and perhaps also a greater perceived stake in the outcome. But here, too, questions must wait for another day. Why did increased news flow ostensibly not result in even greater public engagement in the issues of the conflicts, wider concern for the impacts sustained on Americans (and for that matter, on Iraqi civilians as well), or more assertive demands for accountability on the part of political and military decision-makers?

IRAQI CHILDREN AT A CIVIL AFFAIRS EVENT IN A VILLAGE NEAR TIKRIT IN 2005



In an earlier study, the Tufts research group examined the influence of the media during a variety of different crises, including Iraq, Liberia, Somalia, the Balkans, Haiti, and Rwanda. As an analytical device, we suggested a “crisis triangle” comprised of three sets of institutions: the news media, governments, and humanitarian organizations. We found that each set of institutions had its own identity and agenda, but that each also interacted with the other two in a variety of ways. Reviewing the interaction across the decade of the 1990s, we concluded that the influence of the media on government officials and on public policy tended to be greater in situations where official policy had yet to be clearly formulated.

In exploring the wider implications of the media’s function in the Afghanistan and Iraq theaters, it might be useful to think in terms of another crisis triangle, this one involving the media, governments, and the military. Certainly the media benefit from information received from the troops, as from aid agencies. Certainly the media have a significant influence on government policy, perhaps more so in some circumstances and less in others. Certainly public opinion has been influenced by media coverage of events on the ground. Once again, however, additional study is needed to provide a broader context against which the perceptions of the troops may be checked. From such a review would emerge a conclusion on whether the media’s agenda and its influence were indeed as negative as perceived.

Soldiers are generally silent regarding the practice of embedding journalists within the military, a practice that also distinguished the coverage of the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts from that of earlier wars. Additional research would be required to establish the impacts that “embedding” will have had on the content and independence of news coverage and analysis. For the moment, the gap between the many opinions expressed by the troops

regarding the military and their virtual silence regarding working relationships with members of the media seems puzzling. Perhaps few of those interviewed had first-hand contact with embedded journalists.⁸² Commentary by the soldiers on explicit efforts by the administration to manage news of the conflicts—for example, in forbidding the media to carry photos of caskets returning soldiers to Dover Air Force base—is also conspicuous by its absence, again perhaps reflecting a development outside the personal experience of those consulted.

Finally, the media have functioned in this, and in earlier wars, as a point of entry for the American public into the issues of the conflict. That role is noted in editorial in a local Vermont paper, written upon the return of 170 National Guard troops from an 18-month deployment to Iraq. “From a safe distance,” the paper wrote, “Vermonters have been trying to comprehend the full complexity and tragic cost of the war—the competing values, the clashing goals, the frustration and sacrifice.”⁸³ In this context, the question asked by so many of the troops is an important one: how well has the media conveyed to the American public as a whole the progress and the importance of what is taking place?

In a still wider sense, one might ask—and this again runs beyond the scope of this study—to what extent the media’s coverage of the Global War on Terror has proceeded at the expense of its necessary attention to other important issues and developments. In the past, public engagement with the international scene has taken place through a variety of different channels including trade and commerce, travel and educational exchange, the Peace Corps and non-governmental groups. Will the recent focus on security issues and activities of the military affect Americans’ perception of the wider world and their willingness to engage in a rich multiplicity of ways with it?

Chapter 5: Re-entry

Having lived in a pressure cooker for what seemed like endless months, soldiers expressed great relief when they returned home. “Thousands turned out at Haymarket Park to welcome back all the soldiers,” reported the *Lincoln Statepaper* upon the largest-ever return of 250 Nebraska National Guardsmen following 22 months in Iraq. “Welcome back. . . . Welcome back. . . . We’re glad you’re home,” Nebraska [U.S.] Senator Ben Nelson said greeting the troops. . . . All the Guard . . . said they were completely overwhelmed and humbled by the support and love Nebraskans showed today, but standing there, it was everybody else who felt humbled being in the presence of these soldiers who’ve risked so much.”¹

This welcome home ceremony in June 2007 was replicated in communities across the country whenever National Guard units that had served in Afghanistan or Iraq returned home. A Guard chaplain in Vermont described his unit as “ecstatically happy to be back.” Ceremonies such as the one in Nebraska’s state capitol reminded World War II veterans of their own homecomings. Yet Vietnam veterans noticed a significant difference. The nation had learned a lesson from Vietnam, observed Dr. Matthew Friedman, head of the Veterans Administration’s network of post-traumatic stress disorder centers: to separate the warriors from the war. Unlike Vietnam, “Americans no longer confuse the war and the warrior; those returning from Afghanistan and Iraq enjoy national support, despite sharp political disagreement about the war itself.”²

Some of the troops sensed a certain irony in the welcomes received by those who had served in Afghanistan and Iraq. “I returned home to the dichotomy of being universally welcomed with open, respectful, grateful arms,” writes Staff Sgt. Parker Gyokeres, “by a country that is increasingly against why I was ever in Iraq.”³ Many soldiers felt they were carrying heavy baggage that they would struggle to share. As soldiers perceived it, people remembered them the way they had been when they left. Having been profoundly changed by the experience, many would have difficulty finding a comfortable niche.

On the positive side, many soldiers returned with a new or renewed sense of values; appreciation of family, community, and country; and purpose to their lives. “They

come back with a sense of individual empowerment from having taken on a difficult assignment and performing it well,” notes Ernest Loomis, Chair of the New Hampshire Committee of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). “They also have a new-found sense of the worth of our way of life and of our type of government.”⁴ Major Tracey Ringo, an African-American medical doctor with an Ohio National Guard unit in Iraq for five months beginning in July 2004, was enormously positive about her experience. “It’s the best work I have ever done.” Now that she is back in the United States, she says, “The flag means so much more to me than it ever did before. I’ve always been patriotic, but even more so now.”⁵

The desire to return home and reconnect with families and friends was so great that when tours of duty were involuntarily extended by the authorities, as had been the case for the Nebraska Guard unit, the disappointment was palpable. Sergeant Michael A. Thomas of the Colorado National Guard, who served with a military police unit in Tallil, Iraq, describes touching down en route home in Bangor, Maine, early one morning. “We were tired, hungry, and as desperate as we were to get to Colorado, our excitement was tainted with bitterness. While we were originally told our National Guard deployment would be mere months, here we were—369 days later—frustrated and angry.” In this instance, bitterness was transformed into gratitude by the welcome provided by a contingent of veterans, including some from Vietnam, from the local Veterans of Foreign Wars post who had waited out a 36-hour delay to embrace the returnees and thank them for their service and sacrifice.⁶

For some, soldiers and families alike, the initial days back home were perhaps the most difficult. Returning from a tour of duty in Iraq, Nebraska’s Walton described his reunion with his wife. “I was home for like half an hour and finally she said, ‘Do they speak in full sentences where you come from?’ And I had to stop and think about that and said, ‘I don’t know.’”⁷ The fact that absence and the uncertainty of returns had put serious strains on marriages became apparent as soon as soldiers returned. Although the troops had been alerted in debriefings to anticipate re-entry problems, some were largely unprepared for what awaited them. One Vermont Guardsman

in an interview described his anguish at the discovery that his wife had taken up with his best friend. Many soldiers experienced difficulties not only reconnecting with spouses but also in relating to their children. Karen Cox, wife of New Hampshire Guardsman Lt. Ken Cox, found her husband “changed.” She found that “his temper is shorter and he sometimes yells at his sons when he doesn’t mean to.”⁸

There were some exceptions to the typical shocks of re-entry. “After exchanging the required hugs and kisses” with his wife, recalled Jeffrey D. Barnett, who returned from Falluja to the typical welcome at Camp Pendleton, California, “I thought, ‘What do I do now?’ I thought for a moment and offered the suggestion, ‘Let’s go home.’ And that’s what we did. At T plus four minutes from setting foot in the continental United States, it was as if I was just coming home from another day of work.”⁹

While some found re-entry, however difficult, far less traumatic than their time in Afghanistan and Iraq had been, others found the reverse to be true. Reconnecting with families and friends, veterans realized what little awareness people had of the realities that they themselves had experienced on a relentless, 24/7 basis for so long. One female Guard soldier from New Hampshire found herself frustrated with the way Americans take things for granted. “I don’t really tell a whole lot of people [about my experience] because they don’t understand,” she explained. “Until you actually smell and feel the environment, you don’t understand what it is like.” On returning from a year in Iraq, Colorado’s Dougherty, found that “you stop talking to people”—even to friends who might be expected to want to know what the experience had been like. “It was hard to relate to people that I’d been through such a huge experience, and it had a huge effect on thousands of lives instantly and so many more through the association. I didn’t understand why everyone didn’t care about this war.”¹⁰

By their own accounts, those who served in Afghanistan and Iraq had been significantly changed by the experience. Even before New Hampshire Guardsman Pink returned, he had been aware that things would be different. “Every once in a while as we’re driving down the road or creeping along in a patrol,” he said during his deployment, “I have a recurring epiphany: this is happening and will have a lasting impact on me for the rest of my life.”¹¹ But the full extent of the change for many would become apparent only as they sought to reconnect with families and communities, employers and pastimes. For some, the reconnecting process would take years. When the soldiers were in the line of battle, Pink’s colleague Shelton had said, “you can’t let your emotions make decisions for you. You have to deal with your emotions later.”¹² When soldiers returned, “later” had become “now.”

Soldiers were confronted with the need to unlearn coping skills that had helped them to survive in Afghanistan and Iraq and to relearn the skills necessary to function in families and communities back in the United States. The skills, it turned out, were quite different and sometimes even opposite. “Combat has taught them to make life-or-death decisions within seconds,” observed the New Hampshire reporter, “and some have trouble changing that behavior when they come home. Their tempers are shorter; they drive faster and make decisions without consulting spouses. Sometimes they spend money impulsively.”¹³ Pickett noted how a heightened sense of alert, essential on the battlefield, was misplaced at home. Replacing the suspicion and distrust, the watchfulness and defensiveness that had been so essential in-theater with the qualities needed for the home scene did not come easily for many.

Families soon began to realize that however profoundly “their soldier” had been affected by the experience, he or she often resisted pressure to get the necessary help, even from insistent peers. Returning from a year in Iraq, Sgt. Michael Durand wrote in his blog about his encounter with a mental health worker whose help he had sought out after a month of languishing at home. “What I didn’t want was this to be another bullshit-feel-good-I-have-problems-please-feel-sorry-for-me headshrinker deals. I have had enough of those. . . . Look,” he said, “I have shot more goddamn people than you ever have. So don’t bullshit me about ‘Duty, Honor, and Country.’ Been there, done that. . . . And you know what? It ain’t there, man. It’s just War, and War don’t give a good Goddamn what the fuck.”¹⁴ Other soldiers report unsuccessful attempts to persuade their cohorts to seek professional help, a turn-down which, to their distress, could and sometimes did lead to suicide.

Participants in a focus group in Bradford, Vermont, convened for this study and comprised of spouses and other family members of Vermont Guard personnel who had

MEMORIES

Though it has been two and a half years now since I’ve breathed the dust in Iraq and walked in the dirt there, the war shadows me every day. It forces itself into conversations. It whispers into my ear, as I’m driving under an overpass, that I’m lucky I no longer need to scan the trash for roadside bombs. When I sat out on the patio at Bullwacker’s Restaurant and Pub in Monterey [California] on a recent weekend, the war whispered for me to sit with my back to the stone wall (so that I could see everything in front of me). It keeps me up late at night, thinking.

—Brian Turner, U. S. Army

served in Afghanistan, evidenced a wide range of reactions to the experience. One reported that her husband, mild-mannered when he left, had returned hating the world and “angry at everybody.” Another described how her husband, once mellow and easy going, had turned into someone with “an attitude.” One who had struggled to re-establish communication following her husband’s return was pleased when he agreed to attend a “marriage enrichment weekend,” which was then cancelled, to her distress. She doubted that their marriage, already under stress from the initial deployment, would survive a then-removed second deployment. Another woman, who had found her spouse maddeningly incommunicative since his return, was “ready to walk out.”

From the vantage point of the mother of a young person who had been deployed to Iraq just after high school graduation, the change had been more positive. Somewhat directionless before his military service, he now took a greater interest in family and community events, she reported. The deployment, observed another, represented “a new experience for Vermont and the Vermont National Guard and everyone here” in the group. The fact that the group had met during the time of their family members’ deployment had provided members with a source of strength and solidarity. The substance of their exchange, however, seemed to confirm the view expressed by a chaplain that “The whole shape of the family has changed as a result of deployment.”

As the focus group itself demonstrated, those who had managed to function on the home front on their own during a spouse’s training and deployment had changed as well. Many had learned to cope as single parents, providing anxious children with the support they needed. Others had availed themselves of help from outside, a difficult step for Vermonters who pride themselves on their independence. Some had benefited from a separate institution called the Vermont State Guard, which had provided welcome assistance with household and family problems—Thanksgiving dinners had been especially appreciated—supplementing what was available from the social services staff of the Vermont National Guard.

Among the problems for single parents in Vermont was the need for emergency oil heat and food stocks when monthly budgets ran out, along with particular problems such as grass-mowing, dandelion control, and in one instance, the care of pregnant goats. The challenges of adjustment in Vermont were a microcosm of the situation nationally. As of 2006, U.S. military forces were reported to contain 140,000 single parents. At the end of that year, 12,734 single parents were serving in Afghanistan and Iraq. Some 330 couples with children were deployed in the two theaters, increasing the hardship at home with neither parent available.¹⁵

THE CASELOAD, NEW AND OLD

The number of mental health visits to the Boston Vet Center has risen a steady 10 percent every year since September 11, reaching 6,000 visits a year. Among them . . . are at least a dozen Vietnam veterans who have sons in Iraq and have re-experienced trauma through their sons’ service and through televised images of war.

– Charles M. Sennott, *Boston Globe*

Such changes in the lives of soldiers and their families and communities required adjustments all the way around. Many spouses were committed to try to find what some called “the new normal.” Some came to realize, however, that the necessary changes would be difficult—perhaps even impossible—to make. Randi Moriarity, the wife of the New Hampshire Guardsman, took a dim view of what was possible. “He so badly wants me to understand what he went through,” she acknowledged. “I will never understand, just as he will never understand what I went through.”¹⁶

The nature and complexity of re-entry problems was demonstrated by the experience of the New Hampshire National Guard, which received some 800 soldiers back from Iraq in early 2005. The suicide mentioned earlier of one among a smaller group of five New Hampshire returnees had alerted Guard officials to the life-and-death issues involved. “We started to realize,” says one of those involved, “that there was more to this than we thought.” Almost overnight, the focus shifted from ordering bunting for traditional Welcome Home ceremonies to identifying needs among returning Guard personnel and facilitating their immediate and ongoing access to the necessary support networks.

In the wake of the suicide, one crucial decision by Guard officials proved to be their insistence that the standard debriefing for soldiers en masse be followed up by mandatory counseling sessions for each individual returnee. Officials were stunned by what emerged from the sessions. Of the roughly 800 returnees, 48 required immediate assistance; 398 requested a follow-up phone call during the first month and 84 more had sought help before a year was out. In all, 530 of the returning 800 availed themselves of mental health services. Reflecting on the data compiled, Carter, who as the Guard’s director of human resources spearheaded its efforts to assist in the re-entry process, identified a pattern: The greater an individual’s exposure to combat, the more the person was likely to need mental health services and support.¹⁷

The needs discovered were so extensive that the New Hampshire Guard’s commanding officers, who (along with soldiers’ families) had originally fiercely resisted the

idea of delaying their troop's reunions with their families by an extra day or two, in the end expressed gratitude for the mandatory individualized approach. Breaking new ground, the New Hampshire Guard adapted the standard re-entry programs of active-duty forces to its special circumstances. The idea of mandating individual counseling sessions, an idea that several other state Guard units adopted, seemed particularly important given that, unlike the professional duty forces, Guard personnel would quickly disperse to communities throughout the state, many of them to areas lacking adequate mental health services.

The predominantly rural and dispersed nature of the Guard, it turned out, would have both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, there was a sense of camaraderie and cohesion born of having trained and served together. Bonding had taken place among the families on the home front as well. "We're a close-knit community," said one of the Guard chaplains, "and everybody knows everybody." "The Guard *is* the family," said one official. Returning together, many Guard soldiers stayed in touch, both informally and through the mechanism of resumed monthly training sessions. "The fact that we are so small," says one New Hampshire state social services official, "contributes to the culture of neighbor helping neighbor."

Yet the fact that Guard personnel returned to far-flung communities throughout the state made staying in touch and receiving follow-up services more difficult than for regular soldiers who returned to military bases. "The nature of the National Guard itself," observed one social service provider in New Hampshire, "involves one person here, one person there." One VA official noted that the shrinkage in medical facilities following the end of the Cold War—he himself had witnessed a reduction from 129 to 79 facilities during the years 1987–1995 when he served in the Air Force—meant that many Guardsmen had fewer options for treatment and traveled even greater distances to access resources still in existence. In most rural states, he said, soldiers had access to only a single VA facility.¹⁸

One of the New Hampshire Guard officials spearheading the effort to put veterans in touch with available services was stunned to learn from a VA outreach center that flyers were being posted in mailboxes at the center and at the local armory in addition to being sent to individuals through the mail. When she asked why the posted flyers were not mailed out to individuals like the others, she was told that this was the best way to reach homeless veterans who, sleeping under bridges in Manchester, did not receive mail deliveries. The reality that New Hampshire citizen-soldiers who had performed their military service in Afghanistan and Iraq with distinction and without complaint would return to a hand-to-mouth existence on the streets of the state was profoundly disturbing.

But homelessness among veterans was indeed a major problem. "No one keeps track of how many of the 750,000 troops who have been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan since 2001 are homeless," notes one reporter. But there has been a significant change since the days of re-entry following Vietnam. "The approximately 70,000 veterans of the war in Vietnam who became homeless usually spent between five and ten years trying to re-adjust to civilian life before winding up in the streets. . . . Veterans of today's wars who become homeless end up with no place to live within 18 months after they return from war."¹⁹

Fresh wounds from the Global War on Terror have also brought new exposure to the still-festering wounds of Vietnam. Dr. Gonzalo Vera, chief of mental health programs at the VA hospital in Northampton, Massachusetts, has noted that "of his caseload of 120 psychiatric patients who have fought predominantly in Vietnam but also in the Gulf War and elsewhere, 'virtually every single patient has been affected by the Iraq war and has experienced a retriggering of trauma.'"²⁰

Because of the nature of the National Guard, re-entry offered a particular set of challenges. "The complexity of going from warrior to citizen in the course of just a few days," recalled Nancy Rollins, director of the New Hampshire Division of Community-based Services of the Department of Health and Human Services, called for mobilizing all possible resources.²¹ With the encouragement of the Guard, an interagency task force was formed, including representatives from the state's departments of youth and family services, education, state and local police, and others around the state. The group reached out to some 10,000 "natural helpers" at the local community level who would be dealing with the returnees: primary care doctors, child welfare personnel, ministers, mental health professionals, and the like. Workshops were held to familiarize human resources personnel with "military culture" and promote suicide and PTSD awareness. The Guard, which trained its own 350 New Hampshire-based administrative personnel, credits the overall effort with averting several suicides.

A key element in planning for re-entry involved a state-wide survey assessing the adequacy of available social services in light of anticipated demand. The Easter Seals organization convened a group of public and private stakeholders to examine the likely needs of returnees, assess available resources, and, in the words of chief operating officer Christine McMahon, "construct a response architecture."²² The goal was to promote "change within our communities by creating an integrated system that leverages all services and resources."²³

The inventory concluded that some 80 percent of the services that would be needed already existed somewhere in the state, while the remaining 20 percent would have to be devised. In the category of existing resources were the

public schools, where teachers and administrators would nevertheless require alerting to the special needs of children in the families of returnees. In the “capacity deficit” category were programs which, with some broadening of existing guidelines, might include National Guard personnel and their families as well. Thus, child welfare services, open to children experiencing neglect or abuse, became available as well to National Guard families in which a member was deployed. The planning process also sought to anticipate the needs of future soldiers, rather than to wait for them to materialize. Guard personnel readying themselves for future deployment were encouraged to think in terms “your boots, your belt, your shirt—and your pre-deployment social worker.”

RALLYING AROUND THE FAMILIES

One of the issues facing “suddenly military” youth and families is a lack of community awareness of the unique stressors and challenges they face during times of conflict and war. When Guard and Reserve members are deployed, their children may feel alone and misunderstood. They are often geographically isolated from other military youth and may not have access to traditional military supports.

—Operation Military Kids, New Hampshire

Re-entry, however, was more complex than identifying the need for mental health and social services and arranging treatments. The re-employment of returning veterans was also a major concern. In New Hampshire, of those mobilized and deployed, “Thirty-five percent or more of all the reserve military personnel are employed as civilians in local, state, and federal government agencies,” noted Loomis. These included public safety personnel such as state and local law enforcement officials, EMT technicians, fire fighters, corrections personnel, educators from kindergarten through college, and even one sitting judge. Some departments were more affected by the post 9/11 call-ups than others. The New Hampshire Department of Corrections alone had more than 55 of its employees deployed, 45 of them at the same time. Among the 190 members of a military police company from Massachusetts activated in July 2007 for service in Iraq, at least thirty were taking leave from positions in law enforcement and other emergency services agencies.²⁴

Private sector employers were affected in a major way as well. In New Hampshire, the remaining 65 percent of the state’s National Guard troops were employed in private sector jobs. The Guard called up a range of citizen-soldiers, Loomis points out, including “cooks, bakers, candlestick makers, clergy, health care professionals, and

educators.” Younger enlistees at early points in their careers were easier to accommodate than the more senior people in the Guard, more fully settled in their careers, who often posed special problems in returning to the workplace. The most difficult re-entries were often those who were self-employed, of which, given the structure of the New Hampshire economy, there were quite a few.

The agencies and companies involved—private sector as well as government—are legally obliged to release employees for military service, whether domestic or international, training or combat. In addition to maintaining health care benefits, employers are required to place returning veterans in positions of the same or similar status and pay. But from the employers’ vantage point, the challenges were substantial: to maintain productivity while significant numbers of staff were gone, as well as to re-engage them once they again become available. Some state agencies found it difficult to “back-fill” the job vacancies while their employees were deployed, even though their absences were only temporary.

One of the social service programs that benefited from the mobilization of public and private resources was Operation Military Kids, an effort to meet the needs, as one workshop session framed it, of “Suddenly Military Kids with a Parent at War.” Drawing on resources of the Cooperative Extension of the University of New Hampshire and the state’s network of 4-H clubs, a one-week summer camp held in 2006 provided children with parents in the military with an opportunity to share their experiences with each other, compare notes on their “dual roles” as siblings and adults, and discuss the extra responsibilities they assume when one or both parents are deployed. A DVD created for use around the state describes the issues, with young people themselves answering questions such as “What should non-military kids know about military kids?”²⁵ A “Speak out for Military Kids” team, including non-military as well as military kids, was formed to help build public awareness. Some 34 other states have received funding for Operation Military Kids from the Army’s Department of Child and Youth Services and the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

As of mid-2007, it was too early to tell whether public and private efforts in New Hampshire will expand sufficiently to meet burgeoning need. At the national level, news accounts abounded of veterans whose post-traumatic stress was misdiagnosed,²⁶ of military officials who had been unsympathetic to pleas for assistance,²⁷ and of health facilities overwhelmed by the demand for services.²⁸ The challenge may in fact grow as more veterans return home and larger numbers acknowledge the need for professional help. As of mid-2007, it was also too early to tell whether efforts being made on behalf of veterans would also energize existing social services available to non-

veterans, although the energy being generated by those involved in New Hampshire was impressive.

The consensus among the wider circle of those involved at the national level is that the extent and severity of the re-entry crisis is only beginning to be understood, with institutional responses proceeding only haltingly. The gravity of the situation has been expressed in alarming terms by Veterans Administration officials such as Dr. Matthew Friedman, who alerted Congress and the public in no uncertain terms to the looming legacy of “an entire generation of veterans with mental health problems.”²⁹ PTSD, experts note, has been a feature of every war, though called by a variety of names. Some expect the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq to generate a higher incidence of the condition than did Vietnam or the Gulf war.³⁰ “What’s different here,” explained one chaplain with reference to the Global War on Terror, “is that those affected seem less able to buffer the shock, in part because they have a less well-developed framework of values and codes of conduct.”

Statements by mental health professionals are alarming in their categorical aspect. “We will be dealing for decades to come,” says one VA official, with “the signature wound of this war: traumatic brain injury” (TBI). According to the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, as of early 2007 1,882 TBI cases involving Iraq veterans had been treated in military facilities, Veterans Administration sites, and private institutions. As of mid-2007, “more than 83,000 veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq have sought care for psychological disorders.”³¹

The much-publicized false start made by the showcase Walter Reed Army Medical Facility in caring for the needs of recent veterans tempered optimism that imme-

diately and longer term needs will be identified by the VA system, much less that the shattered lives of traumatized individuals will somehow be made whole. “On several occasions,” observed Captain Marc A. Giammatteo, an Iraq veteran who served on a presidential commission appointed to review the government’s treatment of recent veterans, “I, and others I have spoken to, felt that we were being judged as if we chose our nation’s foreign policy and, as a result, received little if any assistance.”³²

“The government does not want to face the life-long legacy of combat in its individual, community, financial, and other dimensions,” says Jay Craven, the documentary film-maker whose *After The Fog* provides compelling commentary by soldiers on their experiences from World War II through the Global War on Terror. “Military service confers on combat soldiers a life-long sentence,” Craven observes. In the case of Afghanistan and Iraq, the data suggest, that sentence is proving particularly harsh and resistant to commutation.³³

One of the reflections by veterans that captures something of the uncertainties and ambiguities of the re-entry process is found in an extended entry by First Lt. Lee Kelley of the Utah National Guard in his blog, “Wordsmith at War.” Returning from a year in Ramadi, Kelley was both grateful and sardonic.

“We wouldn’t expect you to alter your lives for us—you’re not soldiers. You don’t have to travel 7,000 miles to fight a violent and intelligent enemy. We’ll take care of that. You just continue to prosper in the middle class, trade up on your economy-size car, install that new subwoofer in the trunk, and yes, the red blouse looks wonderful on you—buy it. . . . But please remain constant as well, because we have changed. . . . Just be Americans with all your ugliness and beauty, your spectacular heights, and your flooded cities, climbing the corporate ladder or standing in the welfare line. Live your lives and enjoy your freedoms. We’re not all walking idealist clichés who think your ability to work where you want and vote and associate with whomever you want are hinged completely on our deployment to Iraq. But you know what? Our work here is part of that collective effort through the ages that have granted you those things. So don’t forget about us, because we can’t forget you.”³⁴

RE-ENTRY

It is hard to fit into a life where everyone around me has no understanding that I lived my life for a year in a place where every decision I made either killed someone, or saved someone. I hope that in time we veterans will find a way to bring our experience from the war into society so that our children will know the truth: war makes monsters of us all.

—Mark Lachance, 1st Infantry Division

Chapter 6: Wider Issues

The experiences of soldiers in the Global War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq frame questions for the future that require urgent attention. They have to do with the extent to which the Global War is a new phenomenon, unlike earlier wars in U.S. history; the extent to which the National Guard and its citizen-soldiers are evolving, by default or design, into a new and different institution; and the unfinished business in American society highlighted by the most recent calls to arms in Afghanistan and Iraq.

A New Type of War?

To what extent do those fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq view the Global War on Terror as something new in the annals of American military history? Here, as elsewhere, the perceptions of soldiers offer a rich set of observations. The richness reflects, among other things, that a sizeable number come from families with long traditions of military service; that of those with boots on the ground, many are themselves veterans of earlier wars, whether in the active forces or in National Guard units; and that many bring to their experience their own perspectives as citizens as well as soldiers.

Many of those interviewed commented on the sharp discontinuities between the Global War and its predecessors. Two of the most obvious differences involve the blurring of distinctions between front lines and rear lines and the difficulties of identifying the enemy, now no longer wearing uniforms and bearing weapons in the open. Michael Daake, who served with an Indiana National Guard engineering battalion in Operation Iraqi Freedom, signed up in 1988 during the Cold War, when the Soviet Union was the adversary and U.S. units were trained for land battles with the USSR in Europe. His exposure in Iraq “changed not only my view of war but also [of] what war would be like.”¹

Soldiers with extensive experience in other theaters noted many differences in relation to Afghanistan and Iraq. One who had served in Somalia found the conditions in east Africa even more rugged than those in Iraq. In Somalia, he said, the posture of U.S. troops was defensive, the rules of engagement more unsatisfactory, and the UN involvement a complicating factor. (His experience ran

counter to the findings of a survey which concluded that the rate of PTSD among U.S. troops in Somalia during the years 1992–94 was about eight percent, or roughly half of that in Afghanistan and Iraq.²) From the soldier’s postings in Somalia and Jordan alike, he had taken away the same basic lesson: “Just do your job,” however untoward the setting and rules of engagement and whatever the geographical or political obstacles.

A New Hampshire Guardsman was struck by the fundamental changes that had emerged in the landscape of warfare. With the Cold War past—remnants of it are visible only in North Korea and China, he said—classical confrontations in which military formations face off against other military formations have been replaced by small-scale conflicts needing a fire brigade to respond rather than a large, artillery-centered army. Warnecke observed an evolution in warfare during the course of the Iraq conflict itself. At the outset, he said, the enemy’s tactics involved complex and coordinated military operations by substantial numbers of soldiers designed to take and hold territory. Over time, hit-and-run guerrilla operations designed to intimidate came to predominate.

Some soldiers also perceived differences in the rationale for U.S. involvement in the Global War, compared with earlier conflicts. One observed that “Afghanistan historically is the Number One most-invaded country in the history of all time. . . . It’s very tribal.” As he saw U.S. involvement, however, “we are doing the most right thing that can be done. . . . We are succeeding where just about every other sovereignty . . . from the outside has failed. We have a different mindset. We are enabling. We are not taking anything.” By contrast, a number of soldiers, particularly as the war wore on, felt that the Iraq undertaking was driven more by traditional considerations, including the protection of U.S. oil imports.

Compared to Iraq, commented the Marine Corps’ David James Paxson, Kosovo was “a fairly easy deployment.” There were no IEDs, no armed insurgents blending in with the crowds of civilians, no suicide bombers. By contrast, he said, the troops in Iraq were tested in a major way when the Republican Guard removed their uniforms, “making it hard to tell who was friendly and who was the enemy.” Enemy attacks against U.S. convoys and

civilians were part of a last-ditch effort, he felt, to intimidate American troops. While augmenting the number of U.S. troops on the ground would increase the risk, there was simply no substitute for doing so in the effort to root out all the pockets of insurgents. “Now that we’re there,” he concluded, “if we leave now, no matter if the war was wrong or right, we’re going to look like the bad guys.” In his view, the U.S. troops needed to remain until the Iraqi army could take over. If they can’t assume responsibility, this will be considered “the Vietnam of our generation.”³

In the minds of Paxson and many others, the clearest—and in some ways most troubling—parallels for the War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq were with Vietnam. The asymmetry of the three wars seemed comparable. All placed a premium on such essentials as understanding the dynamics of the local scene, obtaining accurate intelligence, mounting quick responses to attacks, and maintaining control over strategic areas once they had been taken. Likewise, the importance of counter-insurgency operations seemed comparable. An additional constant was the predicament of being caught in the crossfire of a civil war, increasing the peril faced by outside military forces while delaying achievement of a political solution that could form the basis for durable peace and social reconstruction.

Many saw parallels with Vietnam in the psychological and physical damage sustained by U.S. troops,

with PTSD a recurring but now heightened problem. A number took pains to point out, however, that despite the growing unpopularity of the Iraq war, returning veterans were receiving better treatment than their Vietnam predecessors. Ty Simmons, chief warrant officer with the Illinois National Guard, had enlisted in 1968 and served in Vietnam for a year. “After Vietnam, I was a nobody,” he recalls. “I was spat upon, discarded. I was called a baby killer. I hope and pray that we never do that again, that the young soldiers will not have to go through that. The soldiers are just doing their job, the best way that we can. Always support the soldier in the fight even if you may not like what the government is doing. You may not like why they are there, but please support the soldiers. . . . These young soldiers are heroes. We need to support them no matter what.”⁴

Some of the troops saw a more ominous parallel with the Indochina chapter in U.S. military history. In that war, overwhelming U.S. firepower did not ensure victory nor did it necessarily set the stage for the indispensable political settlement. “We’re supposed to be the most technological army in the world, and we can’t figure out what the hell these guys are shooting ‘em from,” exclaimed Steven Rizza of the New Hampshire National Guard. “We’ve got more aircraft. We could probably line the Persian Gulf with aircraft and just walk across.”⁵ In the face-off against an arsenal of low-tech but lethal weaponry, the

VERMONT NATIONAL GUARD, BRADFORD ARMORY



world's most advanced warriors, in their view, had lost the advantage enjoyed in more symmetrical warfare.

Whether today's conflicts are continuous or discontinuous with those that preceded them, soldiers sensed that the U.S. military was learning as it goes. "We were taking some equipment that was really built for the Soviet doctrine," observed one, "and using it in a non-standard way and we were actually being quite productive." Another felt that the U.S. was not learning rapidly enough. "A lot of what we do is still based on the whole World War II concept that there is a front line and then there is a rear echelon that is further back . . . and that it's safer. That's not the case right now."⁶

Siding with those in the military who stressed the discontinuities of Afghanistan and Iraq with earlier conflicts, policy-makers in the Bush administration and Congress have emphasized the uniqueness of the Global War and the resulting need to develop new approaches to combat a more devious and elusive enemy. Such practices as the abusive treatment of detainees in the battle theaters and at Guantanamo Bay, rendition, and the domestic wiretapping of U.S. citizens were often justified as needed new strategies and tactics to counteract the unprecedented nature of the threats.

Some independent analysts have also underscored the novelty of the challenges to which the Global War on Terror responds. "September 11 left nearly five times as many Americans dead as all terrorist incidents of the previous three decades combined," wrote Strobe Talbott and Nayan Chanda. "The carnage was . . . about double what three hundred Japanese bombers left in their wake at Pearl Harbor. Commentators instantly evoked that other bolt-from-the-blue raid, sixty years before, as the closest thing to a precedent. But there was really none. This was something new under the sun."⁷

Other analysts have accentuated the continuities between the Global War on Terror and its predecessors. One, for example, challenges the view that "we inhabit an entirely new world in which the experience of other countries has no relevance, our national security doctrine is irrelevant, and our protections of civil liberties are unaffordable." Louise Richardson concludes a review of the issues with the observation, "It is not quite true . . . that, in the words of President Bush, 'September 11 changed our world.' Rather it was our reaction to September 11 that changed the world."⁸

The commentary provided by veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq itself underscores the archetypal experiences of soldiering across the history of American wars: uprooting from family and community pursuits, baptism by immersion in withering conflict, solidarity among those thus exposed, testing of principles and instincts by the unfamiliar and unknown, stresses of re-entry, and challenges of fashioning a "new normal" after the conflict.

Earlier research of the Tufts Center also emphasizes commonalities across so many apparently idiosyncratic post-Cold War conflicts. In a fundamental sense, our studies suggest, "no crisis is unique. . . . As long as every crisis is perceived as wholly without precedent or parallel, there will be little scope for institutional learning."⁹

A New National Guard?

The Global War on Terror has been a time of testing for the National Guard as well as for its individual citizen-soldiers. In the perception of many of those interviewed, the Guard has risen to the challenges and acquitted itself well. At the same time, the experience has raised questions about the capacity of the Guard to engage in the ongoing Global War and about the future roles of U.S. citizen-soldier volunteers in meeting the country's needs, international and domestic alike.

The experiences in the Afghanistan and Iraq theaters highlight both the strengths and the weaknesses of the National Guard. On the positive side, the Guard contributed a seasoned group of professionals with a variety of welcome and essential skills. Deploying police officers drawn from state and local police forces in the United States to train Afghan and Iraqi policemen made good sense. Having competent tradesmen on hand to keep the military machine operational also had its points. Not only did those in the Guard tend to be older and more experienced but, as one Guardsman pointed out, "they could build a wall, do some carpentry, or fix the plumbing, things that some of the active-duty folks would have had to wait for a specialist to come in and fix for them." Certainly Guard personnel received better marks from the military rank-and-file than did the Defense Department's private contractors. The fact that many Guard personnel knew each other and their families before they were deployed contributed to a strong sense of solidarity and esprit de corps.

But there were also negatives. From the standpoint of some in the active military, the citizen-soldiers of the Guard were too little the soldier and too much the citizen. One Marine Corps officer made no secret of his impatience. "I like the military being structured," he explained. "But here [in the Guard], it's small town communities. . . . It's everybody knows everybody and just because you're an E-5 and he's an E-3 [and thus outrank him], if he knows you, he's going to say, 'Shut the hell up' to you. He lives in the same town as you. He goes to school with you. . . ." The officer found the more hierarchical and authoritarian culture of the Marine Corps more to his liking and more needed in order to function in situations of danger and insecurity. "You may be my boss in civilian life," he says, "but I'm your boss here. When you get an order, do it." The marine also took exception with what he considered excessive bitching and moaning among

Guardsmen, who, he said, displayed the attitude, “It’s one weekend a month—I shouldn’t have to do this.” He told them in no uncertain terms, “You signed the paper, guys. Shut up and do your job. . . . Let’s fight for our country and for our fellow Americans that are out here dying. . . . Guys, this is a war. It’s not ‘punch the clock.’”¹⁰

Others in the active-duty military took strong exception to such comments. “I don’t wanna hear any Regulars [Active-duty] talking down the Reserve Component [the Army National Guard and the U.S. Army Reserve] unless they are being specific about people and places,” wrote Lt. Col. John Donovan, himself a Regular, in his blog. “Don’t hand me any generic crap.”¹¹ Others emphasized that without a major boost from the Guard, the active-duty military would have fared much less well.

Soldiers in the Guard differed among themselves in their view of the professional military. Some were critical of the training they had received before deployment from the active-duty forces into which Guard personnel were then integrated. “We didn’t go over anything that we used in Iraq,” said one National Guard soldier of her time at Fort Drum, New York. “Our training was just completely a waste of time.” By contrast, another Guardsman felt that the training received from the Alabama National Guard contributed to the ability of his New Hampshire unit to function with exemplary professionalism.

Members of the Guard, both at the rank-and-file and leadership levels, believe that the Guard acquitted itself well in its Afghanistan and Iraq deployments. Their contingents, they said, had performed at least as well as the professional military counterpart units. “We proved,” concluded the New York National Guard’s Warnecke, “that a reserve component combat arms unit is perfectly capable of doing its job and doing it well.”¹² “We train to the same standards” as the active-duty forces, explained Heilshorn of the New Hampshire National Guard. “There is absolutely no difference,” in his view, even though training on bases rather than in armories does give the professional military something of an advantage.¹³ One serviceman observed that apart from the patch on a soldier’s sleeve, one couldn’t tell the difference between active-duty and Guard personnel.

But there were other views. Marine Lance Corporal Jeffery Pynduss, who was familiar with the work of the National Guard in Iraq, feels that the Guard is “ill-suited and ill-prepared for such a hazardous mission. They’re not properly trained,” he says, “and they don’t have the right military mentality. Most of them joined for the benefits, and a lot of them are getting hurt.”¹⁴

Even after the solidarity-building that took place in the Afghanistan and Iraq deployments, there remained a strong undercurrent of defensiveness among members of the Guard about how they were viewed by professional warriors. The Missouri National Guard’s Geiger

speaks of the “stigma” which he and his cohorts felt that they carried. “They disparage us as ‘weekend warriors,’” he said wryly of the active-duty professionals under whose commands they served, “but they don’t hesitate to call you when they need you.” He also suspected that the Guard’s casualty rate was high—perhaps even higher than that of the active-duty forces. His appreciation of the Guard’s contribution notwithstanding, Geiger recommended service in the professional armed forces to the alternative of serving in the Guard and being forced to live with the stigma.¹⁵

These diverse experiences raise questions small and large about the future of citizen-soldiers in the ongoing Global War on Terror. Are the skills of butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers sufficient to the challenge of doing battle with terrorists? While counter-insurgency operations require different and more diverse capacities than traditional soldiering, to what extent can such resources be found in the civilian and private sectors? What are the implications of expanded reliance on ordinary citizens for future challenges in the Global War on Terror? Given the searing nature of the recent experience in Afghanistan and Iraq, can U.S. national security be allowed to rely on people who voluntarily place themselves in harm’s way? Alternatively, given the bruising and controversial nature of U.S. involvement in these two theaters, would the reinstatement of a draft help ensure that the terms of engagement do not outdistance the prevailing political consensus?

By virtually all accounts, negative and positive alike, the National Guard has been profoundly changed by its engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq. It won new respect from the active-duty forces and gained self-respect in the process. While differences between citizen-soldiers and career military professionals continue to exist, the Guard, in the view of one New Hampshire Guardsman, has become “a lot more professional.” The effects will be felt for some time to come, even with the return to the United States of some Guard contingents. “The war is not over for Charlie Company or New Hampshire,” notes one Guardsman. “The war is still going on and just because you’re not there doesn’t mean anything. You are part of the war and you need to take everything seriously, even if it’s just sharpening pencils. The Guard is different than it was before.”

The experience in the Global War on Terror has energized the institution in fundamental ways. Guard units have become more fully integrated, in both concept and practice, into the “Total Force Policy” of the U.S. military. That integration paradoxically makes the combat roles of the active forces more dependent on reinforcement by Guard personnel. Traditional distinctions between combat and support functions themselves, and thus the traditional division of labor between active-duty and civilian soldiers, have been overtaken by events. Clearly the

THE HOME FRONT IN THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

Perhaps never has the critical role of the National Guard—at least in my lifetime—been demonstrated to the people of this country as it has during the past year. . . . The National Guard is now recognized by the public as a group of heroes, a group that can step up and handle all missions, whether it's something that nature throws at us or something that terrorists throw at us, overseas or here at home, or whether it's just the pressure of economic migration at the southern border. . . . You blend uniquely, and your civilian skills and your military determination and training are wrapped together in a spirit of volunteerism which has characterized this nation from its founding over 200 years ago.

—Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff, addressing the National Guard Association, September 2006

skill sets needed for such conflicts differ from what was required in bygone years to provide logistic and administrative back-up away from the front. “Some units will go out and be the ones that kick down doors, do raids that go out looking for bad guys so they can kill them,” a commanding officer in the New Hampshire Guard observed. “And there are some people whose jobs are to move equipment around to feed those troops and provide other support roles. But we're all right in the same area all the time. . . . We all have to train to be warriors.”

The recent experience is already having major implications for the preparation and training of Guard troops. “During the Cold War,” observed one senior New Hampshire Guard official, “we were deploying to hardened bases in Europe and Asia, and with the new GWOT and our basing in Afghanistan and Iraq we have sent people into areas that don't have a hardened facility.” In her view, the “more austere environments” in which future conflicts might take place will require not only more careful screening of recruits but also more thorough immunization of those deployed (for example, against anthrax and smallpox). Post-Gulf War innovations that deserved to be continued, as she sees it, were “blood banking” in advance for all of those deployed and mandatory mental health screening upon re-entry.¹⁶

Individual Guardsmen now take their commitment to the Guard with a new degree of seriousness. “People don't join the military to sit around on a weekend—even if it's a Guard type of deal,” observed one New Hampshire Guardsman. “They want to be challenged, they want to be used, they want some good training, they want to be treated with a certain degree of respect, and they also want a certain degree of accountability in what they're doing.” One weekend a month and two weeks each summer is not enough time, concluded one New Hampshire Guardsman, “to prepare a unit to successfully go

to war,” a sentiment with which many of his superiors concurred. Yet more training time and longer deployments might tip the traditional citizen-soldier balance more toward the soldier, rendering the amalgam less attractive to civilians.

Some of those interviewed speculated that significant incentives would be needed to attract talented personnel into a National Guard that is more routinely called on for international assignments. Suggestions included better health care and educational benefits, shorter overseas deployments, and greater predictability of demands and obligations. Yet how much predictability can be expected? “If something happens in the world,” observed one soldier, “all that predictability is going to go out the door. We had pretty good predictability—the Guard and Reserve didn't get deployed—and then we end up with the situation in Iraq and it all changes.”

“The whole notion of volunteerism has shifted since 9/11,” says one senior Guard official, in ways which have no doubt affected recruiting for the active-duty forces as well as National Guard personnel. As the planning process goes forward, “the uncertainty of how long this GWOT is going to last” points toward the continued use of Guard units in federal deployments overseas rather than the more traditional state units for domestic emergencies.

The experience in Afghanistan and Iraq has sharpened a pre-existing tension between the two major resource-providing functions of the National Guard: first, and traditionally always foremost, to state governors for crises within their own jurisdictions, and second, and only exceptionally, to the president for emergencies, both domestic and international in nature. Members of all of the country's National Guard units responded to the needs generated by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. Deployment of some 50,000 troops to areas of immediate impact in and around the Gulf Coast represented “the largest stateside deployment in Guard history.”¹⁷ At the time, however, the presence of National Guard units in Afghanistan and Iraq had limited the capacity of some states to respond. The much-criticized federal response to the Katrina disaster has raised the question of “whether some of the storm's more than 1,000 victims could have been rescued if a larger part of the [Louisiana] state militia were nearby. Other Guard units have had to transfer key equipment such as trucks, Humvees, and helicopters to Iraq.”¹⁸

Since 9/11, the National Guard continues to be called on to respond to domestic emergencies in individual states. During fiscal year 2005 alone, there were a staggering 23,000 such incidents within the United States, several of them calling into question the Guard's capacity to perform its traditional functions.¹⁹ Periodically that capac-

ity becomes a matter of public debate, most recently and most prominently in the aftermath of a tornado in May 2007 that flattened a small Kansas town. At the time, the Kansas governor criticized the impact of the use of her National Guard unit overseas on its ability to step quickly into the breach at home. “I am so proud of the role our men and women play, and they do it selflessly,” said Kathleen Sebelius. “They are citizen soldiers. And I’m proud of my role as commander-in-chief of the [Kansas] National Guard. But, frankly, they’re being asked currently to do two jobs, used in a way they’ve never been used before in the history of the country, in the history of the Guard. And they only have equipment to do one.”²⁰

Reflecting the concerns of state officials that the Guard’s new international portfolio may be bending its traditional persona out of shape, governors have sought to protect their shrinking authority over state militias. In a statement to the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, the National Governors Association noted that “The role played by the National Guard following the September 11 attacks has raised questions about its primary mission. Should the Guard be relegated to only the Homeland Security mission, or retain both its state and federal mission?”²¹ Responding to a provision in a Defense Department authorization bill, the governors expressed the view that the proposal to give the president clearer authorization to federalize state units of the National Guard in emergencies represented an “unwarranted expansion of federal authority.”²² “Perhaps this administration should rename the National Guard the ‘International Guard,’” suggested the writer of one letter to the editor with a touch of sarcasm.²³

The new level of tension between the Guard’s in-state and out-of-state missions has led to a variety of recommendations. Most analysts accept the likelihood that the Guard will continue, and should continue, to serve U.S. national security needs abroad. Acknowledging the inroads that National Guard call-ups of police and security personnel potentially make on public safety at home, the sheriff of Worcester County, Massachusetts, observed that “Responsibility to the nation should trump any inconvenience to public safety. I am more concerned about the United States winning the war on terrorism than coping with people unavailable on a shift” in a local police or hospital agency.²⁴ Reflecting the perception that Afghanistan and Iraq represent what the foreseeable future holds, one respected defense analyst and former DOD official, Lawrence Korb, has proposed creating an altogether new cadre of state institutions in order to free up existing National Guard units for international assignments.²⁵

Indeed, the future may change some of the deeply rooted traditions of the National Guard in ways that are for the moment only dimly understood. One Guardsman has suggested an innovative concept to reflect emerging realities. When you put on your army hat for the weekend of

training each month, he says, you’re in the regular army, not the National Guard. “The National Guard is what you’re in when you’re at your other job” as mechanic or teacher, policeman or judge. Even if you’re activated by the Guard for only a year or two, you’re a professional soldier. “That’s what you do to make your living, even if it’s only a part-time living.” The Global War on Terror may thus redraw the lines of military professionalism in new ways.

The leadership of the National Guard is still early on in the process of examining its experience in Afghanistan and Iraq and charting the next steps in its evolution. One source of input into those discussions is the review already conducted by the New Hampshire National Guard. Harbingers of the future doubtless include changes in the Guard’s structure that are already taking place. The metamorphosis in one Vermont Guard contingent from a tank to an infantry unit acknowledges the changed na-

THE CHALLENGE TO THE VA AND BEYOND

We must prepare for some unprecedented challenges presented by our newest veterans. These include the stigma against disclosing psychiatric difficulties to military mental health professionals, the problems unique to the National Guard and Reserve troops, the effects of sexual assault occurring within a military unit, and the uncertainties of life after discharge for the remarkably large number of amputees and other wounded combatants.

–Dr. Matthew J. Friedman, Veterans Administration

ture of conflict in the post-Cold War era.²⁶ Indeed, even before the heavy deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had launched a “transformation” of the Army National Guard, to be completed in 2008, which would, among other changes, create thirty-four new “modular brigades.”²⁷

U.S. military leaders, savoring the experience to date of the National Guard in the Global War on Terror, acknowledge the positive contribution made by citizen-soldiers to the broader effort. With upwards of 250,000 individuals having been deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq as of the end of July 2007, their contribution as soldiers, now more fully integrated into the active-duty forces, is, by all accounts, indisputable and indispensable. Yet it is their function as citizens, paradoxically, to which the active-duty military in its hour of need seems to be turning.

“Army to ask Guard for recruiting help,” reads one newspaper headline in late August 2007. “The Army, struggling to meet recruitment goals in the midst of a long and unpopular war in Iraq, is turning to the Na-

tional Guard for help in signing up would-be soldiers in hometowns across America,” wrote an Associated Press reporter. Secretary of the Army Pete Geren was quoted as confirming the reality that Guard members are “much more in contact with the civilian population than the active-duty soldier is. So they give us reach into a larger segment of the community on a personal level, a one-to-one basis, than we get through our relationships.” While the \$2,000 bonus offered to Guard personnel for each recruit may provide something of an incentive, it remains to be seen whether experiences such as those chronicled in this report will make National Guard veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq theaters enthusiastic proponents of enlisting friend and colleagues.²⁸

There are early indications that the increasingly operational roles played internationally by the Guard since September 11 are likely to be confirmed, strengthened, and institutionalized in the foreseeable future. One high-level official in the New Hampshire National Guard has acknowledged, as a result of the Global War on Terror, “a dramatic change and shift from training to operations.” In a reversal of pre-9/11 priorities, which involved 60 percent of available Guard resources being invested in training and the remaining 40 percent in operations, the balance now stands at 80 percent in operations and 20 percent in training. While training may receive fewer resources overall, however, it is likely to be approached with greater realism and intensity. As Matthew Warren Manning of the Nebraska National Guard noted, the events of 9/11 have already injected some additional seriousness into the otherwise routine once-monthly weekend sessions.²⁹ The implicit message from the experiences of many veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq is that the Guard may never be the same again.

Unfinished Business

The experiences of U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq—positive for some, searing for many, mixed for most—leave soldiers as well as their families with many challenges as they seek to reconstitute their lives and establish “the new normal.” A barometer for their progress is the perceived effectiveness of what society now does to facilitate their re-entry. The outrage generated by disclosures of veterans’ treatment at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center served as an indicator that those obligations needed to be taken more seriously. The outrage led to the creation of a President’s Commission on Care for America’s Returning Wounded Warriors which recommended fundamental structural changes, including “a major overhaul and a simplification and a rationalization of the disability system in this country for our veterans.”³⁰

Looking beyond re-entry, the reflections of soldiers have identified a number of specific changes they see as needed

in the military as an institution. Problems requiring attention include the high incidence of sexual harassment of women, difficulties experienced by gays, and problems encountered by other minorities.

The contributions made by women were widely acknowledged and applauded in interviews and other documentation reviewed for this study. The roles played by women in these conflicts were somewhat new to the military. Women, who make up some 15 percent of the regular armed forces, reserves, and National Guard, have been allowed in the Guard only since 1956 and only since 1968 have they begun to perform in “almost all military specialties except in direct combat roles.”³¹

In both Afghanistan and Iraq, women in Guard units assumed leadership roles, including in combat situations. In Iraq as of August 2007, 84 female soldiers had lost their lives, representing just over two percent of U.S. casualties. Eleven women from the National Guard had been killed, eight of them by hostile fire, the others through illness and accidents.³² One female officer who commanded a unit that included six female soldiers observed that “My females saw combat. My females were in combat. My females did combat, and a lot more than some of these ‘all-male focused’ combat units.” While the experience helped lay to rest the stereotype that females could not handle combat, there was, she believed, room for improvement in the military’s ability to harness the differential abilities of men and women.

The military’s activities in Afghanistan and Iraq also highlighted the value of having women play prominent roles in hearts and minds activities in local communities in those countries, many of which had not previously encountered women in roles of authority. As evident from the experience of New Hampshire, women were also impressive in the key decision-making roles they exercised in stateside Guard hierarchies.

Against this backdrop, the frequent incidence of sexism, including sexual abuse, stands out as needing urgent attention. New Hampshire’s Schwab, who was otherwise

WAR AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION

Each day the war goes on, the hatred increases in the heart of the Vietnamese and in the hearts of those of humanitarian instinct. The Americans are forcing even their friends into becoming their enemies. It is curious that the Americans, who calculate so carefully on the possibilities of military victory, do not realize that in the process they are incurring deep psychological and political defeat. The image of America will never again be the image of revolution, freedom, and democracy, but the image of violence and militarism.

—A Buddhist leader from Vietnam

highly positive about her experience in the military, filed a formal complaint regarding harassment against one of her superiors. “I felt like I had to continually defend my honor for a year,” she explained.³³ As noted in her earlier reflections, Pickett chose not to make an issue of an incident of attempted rape because she “just wanted to be one of the guys.”³⁴ Such experiences are not isolated incidents. The majority of women from the New Hampshire National Guard interviewed by a reporter for her series, “War Stories,” “had dealt with sexual harassment at some point in their careers.”³⁵

Incidents involving abusive attitudes toward gays and racial minorities also emerged from the interviews. The military’s lack of tolerance for gays deprived it of the services of numerous interpreters, already in short supply and demonstrably essential to the successful conduct of military operations. The “rejection of military service as an option of young blacks throughout the country” during the Global War on Terror years, now confirmed by the army itself, may also reflect an element of discomfort with the treatment of African-Americans already in the ranks.³⁶ The lament of a Native American from Arizona about the insensitivity of the Texas Guard unit to which he was assigned has also been mentioned. More positive is non-U.S. citizens’ involvement in the ranks, often for idealistic reasons, and the associated expediting by the military of the citizenship process for such persons.

What veterans are flagging in identifying such issues as sexism, homophobia, and racism is not simply the shortcomings of the military as an institution, whether the National Guard or the active-duty forces. They are also calling attention to unfinished business of society as a whole, starkly reflected in the policies and practices of its armed forces. Some of those interviewed would take heart if the Global War on Terror were made the opportunity for protecting the rights of women, gays, and other minorities in the military and for accelerating the citizenship process of others.

In this sense, the Global War on Terror may be like other American wars: in fighting for certain fundamental ideals, soldiers turn the spotlight on American institutions, military and civilian alike, whose blemishes thus appear in more stark relief. Reforming the military, of course, has its own logic and urgency. The identified difficulties undercut the military’s effectiveness by depriving it of much needed human resources and technical skills and by reducing the attractiveness to enlist or re-enlist. As in the past, changes in the military, hastened by the pressure of war and related events, can also accelerate overdue reforms in American society. This latest group of veterans, like its predecessors, may thus represent a powerful force for change, both within the military and beyond.

WARRIORS

Instead of thinking of soldiers and veterans as “warriors,” we must remind ourselves that they are fathers, mothers, coworkers, or the girl next door, who may desperately be struggling with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or living near poverty level in need of groceries, or who has just been fitted with a prosthetic limb.

—Easter Seals organization, New Hampshire

Conclusions and Implications

The experiences of the almost 250,000 troops who have participated as citizen-soldiers in the Global War on Terror, and of their families and institutions, is rich and varied in its detail and profound in its implications for the country. A number of themes recur throughout the testimony of the troops who served in Afghanistan and Iraq. Some are distinctive to the National Guard itself; others are reinforced by the experience of active-duty counterparts, of whom 1.3 million have served in Afghanistan and Iraq. The major themes are summarized briefly here.

Most of the citizen-soldiers who make up the National Guard enlisted in advance of 9/11 for reasons, often economic or educational, largely unrelated to U.S. national security. A number, however, articulated reasons specific to 9/11 for signing up, and many in the ranks see the Guard’s service in Afghanistan and Iraq as an expression of their duty as citizens to serve their nation, whatever the nature of the threat. The concept of a Global War on Terror, however, does not resonate with the experience of many of the soldiers interviewed. There is widespread confusion within the ranks and beyond regarding the extent to which the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are indeed part of such a Global War. The nomenclature is perceived as more appropriate to the mission in Afghanistan, which was launched with an Al Qaeda-specific objective, than in Iraq, where the U.S. occupation over time has come to be viewed as creating more terrorists than it eliminates.

Many of the nation’s citizen-soldiers are drawn from rural areas and small towns. Members of the National Guard and active-duty personnel alike were often struck by the sizeable cultural differences between Afghanistan and Iraq and their accustomed worlds. Some of the troops looked beyond those differences to affirm basic commonalities, including a sense of humanity and compassion. Most soldiers in the Afghanistan and Iraq theaters have had few regular interactions with local civilian populations. Their relative isolation contributed to a sense

of the otherness of the local culture, decreased perceived commonalities, and enhanced feelings of danger and insecurity. Many saw a tension between engaging with local populations and preserving the security of military operations. Some saw civic action as exposing the troops to greater danger, while others held that engagement in local communities contributed to the credibility of the troops and enhanced their security.

U.S. political-military objectives provide the framework within which hearts and minds activities were carried out. Many soldiers took pride in such activities as a positive contribution to nearby local communities. National Guard as well as active-duty units frequently distributed items collected back home, thereby providing a positive link with their home communities. At the same time, many soldiers seem largely unaware of the downsides of military civic action, including the extent to which such activities complicate the work of humanitarian organizations and draw local communities more deeply into the conflict.

While the military tradition of not allowing one's views as an individual soldier to interfere with the performance of one's duties continues more or less intact, many soldiers express—often privately among themselves and to family members—strongly held political views about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The “citizen” element in the citizen-soldier amalgam ensures the rights of Guard personnel to express their views, positive or negative. Some soldiers and their families are becoming more vocal in expressing reservations: for example, that U.S. political-military strategy in Afghanistan and/or Iraq is anachronistic given the situation of “asymmetric” warfare. Others are firmly convinced of the rightness of U.S. involvement, all the more so as the result of their on-the-ground exposure. Different approaches regarding the Global War and the needs of the troops are also evident among veterans groups, with the stances of traditional organizations increasingly being challenged by newer ones.

Observance of international law and military ethics is arguably a key to winning broad public and international support for undertakings such as the Global War on Terror. However, circumstances on the ground, including the tactics of the insurgents, render it difficult for U.S. troops to make the requisite distinctions between civilians and insurgents and to function within accepted ethical frameworks of soldiering. With the enemy deliberately flaunting established international ground rules, many soldiers have difficulty with the concept that they themselves should be held accountable. Most soldiers view their own survival as paramount, even trumping applicable rules of engagement. The lack of clarity among the troops regarding behavioral expectations shows an apparent lack of training and reflects not only on senior military but also on high-level political officials. A num-

ber of those interviewed expressed repugnance at abuses perpetrated by U.S. personnel at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere. Some believe, however, that a more balanced approach by the media would have highlighted more egregious excesses by the insurgents.

Military service in Afghanistan and Iraq is taking an enormous physical and psychological toll on Americans and their institutions, a toll that is only beginning to be understood and addressed. The toll is often greater for members of the National Guard, who upon re-entry disperse across wide areas, many of them largely out of reach of services to which active-duty forces, congregated on military bases, have access. Many soldiers, Guard and full-time professional alike, describe their continuing sense of insecurity and danger post-reentry in dramatic and unsettling terms. Virtually all have been affected by their experiences, many of them profoundly. Some states have taken creative initial steps toward mobilizing rehabilitative services, although many veterans express a sense of bitterness, neglect, or exclusion. On a more positive note, the public, implementing a lesson from Vietnam, is distinguishing between the warriors, whom they support, and the war, about which opinions differ.

National Guard units having narrowed the traditional gap with active-duty military forces in terms of readiness and war-fighting capability. Deployment of large numbers of Guard personnel in Afghanistan and Iraq has hastened the evolution, already evident pre-9/11, of the Guard into a major operational element in the larger and now more integrated U.S. military force structure. Yet the experiences reviewed in this study raise serious questions related to the Guard's readiness, comparative advantages, financing, and accountability. Identifying and nurturing the necessary skill sets for asymmetrical warfare needs continued attention. A number of those interviewed also question whether the civilian skills that citizen-soldiers bring to the table are sufficient to challenges posed for the National Guard, described by its publicists as “the nation's greatest counterterrorism asset.”

Absent conscription, the all-volunteer military, in both its National Guard and active-duty components, depends on a broad consensus of public support for particular foreign policy undertakings. The politicization reflected in current public debate about the Global War on Terror and associated initiatives in Afghanistan and Iraq raises fundamental questions about the sustainability of such undertakings and of an all-volunteer force. Several of those interviewed see the introduction of conscription, however unlikely, as a desirable brake on the prosecution of wars that lack the undergirding of a broad political consensus. The use of civilian contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq to perform tasks hitherto accomplished by the military is also viewed by some as

providing back-door personnel and resources that lack the necessary accountability.

The media, an object of widespread distrust among the boots on the ground, is playing an important role in shaping public perceptions of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Dispatches by soldiers themselves and expressions of their viewpoints upon returning to the States are offering a partial corrective to mainstream media coverage. Communications advances have shortened the lag time between battlefield and home communities. The reflection process among the wider public, as shown by the activism of military personnel and by the uptake on the issues in theater and film, may be proceeding more rapidly than during earlier wars.

In sharing their experiences, veterans pose serious questions as to whether the costs of engagement—physical and psychological, social and political, short-term and long-term, individual and institutional—are worth the price. Their experience suggests an urgent need to review

WAR AND CHANGE

I wish that civilians and policy-makers really understood, at an emotional level, the tremendous toll and cost of war on those who actually experience it.

—Jonathan McMaster, Marine injured in Iraq in 2004

the traditional calculus. As one counselor who works with recently returned veterans observed when interviewed for this study, perhaps the most positive outcome in an otherwise largely bleak landscape would be “a heightened awareness of our citizens as our most valued asset.” That is true both of the citizen-soldiers who make up the National Guard and the career military professionals in the active-duty armed forces. Upon this asset might well be constructed, over time, a new and more humane U.S. international and domestic security policy.

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End Notes

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Page 66. Warriors

“Veteran and Family Support Services: A Concept Paper,” Easter Seals organization, undated.

Page 68. War and Change

Quoted in Conrad Mulcahy, “Outward Bound, Looking In,” *New York Times*, August 24, 2007, D8.

Citations for Photographs

Page 11. New Hampshire National Guard Members in Afghanistan on Afghan Army Training Mission, April 11, 2005

First Sgt. Mike Daigle, New Hampshire National Guard.

Page 23. Staff Sergeant Mark P. LeBlanc Returns to Concord, New Hampshire, February 28, 2005

First Sgt. Mike Daigle, New Hampshire National Guard.

Page 33. U.S. Convoy Moving through Najaf , Iraq, 2004

Luis D. Almaguer Collection (AFC2001/001/34147), photograph (PH 09), Veterans History Project Collection, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

Page 38. Spray-Painted Vehicle in Tikrit, Iraq

Brian Coles Collection (AFC2001/001/41574), photograph (PH01), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, used with permission.

Page 44. New Hampshire Guardsman Robert Pratt Lyman During Clothes Distribution in an Afghan Village

First Sgt. Mike Daigle, New Hampshire National Guard.

Page 51. Iraqi Children at a Civil Affairs Event in a Village near Tikrit in 2005

Sergeant Shawn Stenberg Collection, member of civil affairs team (AFC2001/001/41268), photograph (PH01), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, used with permission.

Page 60. Vermont National Guard, Bradford Armory
Larry Minear.

Citations for Figures, Charts, and Tables

Page 14. Figure 1: National Guard Armories: 3,200 Locations, 54 States and Territories

National Guard Bureau, Department of Defense

Page 16. Chart 1: The National Guard as a Percentage of Total U.S. Military Deployment

Chart derived from Department of Defense, Contingency Tracking System as of June 30, 2007, Number of Members Deployed by Service Component and Month/Year.

Page 17. Chart 2: National Guard Deployment in Afghanistan and Iraq, September 2001–June 2007

Chart derived from Contingency Tracking System Deployment File for Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom as of June 30, 2007. Comparable figures for the period through July 31, 2007 are 242,271, 186,868, 55,403, and 24,512 respectively.

Page 20. Table 1: National Guard Fatalities in Iraq: Ten Highest States by Hostile Fire, as of October 7, 2006

Statistical Information Analysis Division, Defense Manpower Data Center, printed in Kara Petrovic, “Outside the Wire: Citizen-Soldiers in Combat in Iraq, *Veterans of Foreign Wars Magazine*, 2006, 19. The article reports that in Afghanistan and Iraq combined, the citizen-soldiers of the National Guard and Reserves have made up 22 percent of those Killed in Action and 24 percent of those Wounded in Action.

Annex 1: Acronyms

AFC	American Folklife Center (Library of Congress)
ARNG	Army National Guard
AWOL	Absent without leave
CENTCOM	U.S. Central Command (Tampa, Florida)
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CTS	Contingency Tracking Service, DOD
DOD	Department of Defense
DVD	Digital Video Disk
E-3	Private First Class
E-4	Specialist
E-5	Sergeant
EMT	Emergency medical technician
FOB	Forward operating base
GWOT	Global War on Terror
Humvee	High-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV)
IED	Improvised explosive device
IV	Intravenous treatment
JAG	Judge Advocate General
KIA	Killed in action
MIA	Missing in action
MP	Military Police
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO	Non-commissioned Officer
NPR	National Public Radio
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan)
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq)
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PT boat	Small maneuverable craft used by the U.S. Navy in World War II
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
PX	Post exchange
RPG	Rocket-propelled grenade
SSG	Staff Sergeant
Stryker	Infantry carrier vehicle
TBI	Traumatic brain injury
U.N.	United Nations
U.S.	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VA	Veterans Administration
VFW	Veterans of Foreign Wars
VHP	Veterans History Project (Library of Congress)
VHS	Video cassette
WIA	Wounded in action

Annex 2: Sources of Data

Persons Interviewed for this Study

Members of the New Hampshire National Guard

Staff Sergeant Neal I. Mitchell, Retention NCO Team East
Specialist E-4 Jennifer Schwab
Sergeant E-5 Benjamin Flanders
Major General Kenneth R. Clark, Adjutant General
Colonel Deborah Carter, Human Resources Director
Major Gregory D. Heilshorn, State Public Affairs Officer
1st Sergeant Mike R. Daigle, Deputy State Public Affairs Officer
Sergeant Mario Raymundo

Members of the Vermont National Guard

Sergeant Sulhan, Staff Sergeant, Bradford
Jeff Roosevelt, Public Information Officer, Colchester
Greg Plante, Staff Sergeant, Bradford
Shelly White, Sergeant, Bradford
Barry Emerson, Platoon Sergeant, Bradford
Captain Keith Davio, Public Information Officer, Colchester
Cindy Clemence, Staff Sergeant, Bradford

Members of Vermont State Guard

Robert Jaccaud
Lance Colby
Malcolm Wetherell

Relatives of National Guard members

Anna Briggs, Thetford Center, VT
Nancy Brown, Waitsfield, VT
Betsy Johnson, Corinth, VT

Tammy Wilson, Wilder, VT
Jennifer Fischer, Newbury, VT
Carole Welch, South Ryegate, VT

Others

Walter Alarkon, Reporter, *Concord Monitor*, NH
Luis D. Almaguer, U.S. Marines, San Antonio, TX
Harvey Bartlett, Minister, United Church of Christ, Bradford, VT
Cynthia A. Bascetta, Director, Health Care, U.S. Government Accountability Office, Washington, DC
Tim Beebe, New England Regional Director, Veterans Centers
Mark Bevis, New Hampshire Public Radio, Concord, NH
Dr. Andrew Breuder, Chief of Staff, Veterans Administration Medical Center, Manchester, NH
Jay Craven, film producer, St. Johnsbury, VT
Charlotte Cross, Coordinator, Operation Military Kids, Cooperative Extension Service, University of New Hampshire
Paul Deignan, Disaster Behavioral Health Coordinator, Department of Safety, Division of Emergency Services, Bureau of Emergency Management
Professor William Estill and students Cody Hatt, Michael Kaiser, Steve Robotaille, and Amanda Sue Sugai, Norwich University communications program
Joelle Farrell, Reporter, *Concord Monitor*, NH
Marty Fors, Minister and volunteer chaplain, Lyndonville
John Fortt, Chaplain, VA Hospital, Washington, DC.
Dr. Matthew Friedman, Director, National Center for PTSD, Veterans Administration
Daniel B. Ginsberg, Legislative Assistant, Office of Senator Patrick Leahy, Washington, DC
Jacob Grant, Reporter, *Rutland Times Argus*, VT
Tracy Hobbs, Intern, Veterans Center, White River Junction, VT
Andy Kolovos, Vermont Folklife Center
Madeleine Kunin, Former Governor of Vermont

David Lamarre-Vincent, Executive Director, New Hampshire Council of Churches
 Nancy Lessin, Co-founder, Military Families Speak Out
 Eleanor Longfellow, Newbury, VT
 Christine McMahon, Chief Operating Officer, Easter Seals
 Anne Miller, Director, New Hampshire Peace Action
 Father Joseph O'Keeffe, VA Chaplain, White River Junction, VT
 Stephanie O'Neil, U.S. Army, Fort Benning, GA.
 Aroline Putnam, West Newbury, VT
 Charley Richardson, Co-founder, Military Families Speak Out
 Cicely Richardson, Managing Editor, *Bradford Journal Opinion*
 Nancy Rollins, New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services
 Greg Sharrow, Vermont Folklife Center
 Laurie B. Slone, Associate Director for Research and Education, National Center for PTSD, White River Junction, VT
 Shawn R. Stenberg, U.S. Army
 Madeline L. Tobias, Readjustment Counselor, Veterans Center, White River Junction, VT
Several additional people were interviewed who preferred not to be identified by name.

Veterans History Project Collections, Library of Congress, Washington, DC

Collections reviewed include participants in the National Guard and active-duty personnel who served in Afghanistan and/or Iraq. State units of the Guard represented include California, Indiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Luis Daniel Almaguer
 Jeffrey Daniel Bartling
 Jeffrey Scott Beard
 Larry Bond
 Geraldine Bowers
 David Coulter Brown
 Brian P. Clousen

Brian Lloyd Coles
 William Congleton
 Michael Daake
 Mark Eisaman
 Philip Wade Geiger
 Nels Norman Huffman
 Krystyna Kalski
 David Lee
 Henry Lujan
 James Joseph Maddix, Jr.
 Matthew Warren Manning
 Eric James March
 Brian M. McPhillips
 Joseph Valentino Medina
 James Nappier
 Matthew Sean Neely
 Bradley Keith Oxford
 David James Paxson
 Nathan J. Reicks
 Timothy Rieger
 Ralph Riley
 Lori A. Scherzi-Brubaker
 Gregory James Schulte
 John Shoepach
 Shawn Russell Stenberg
 Gabriel Stone
 David Sudberry
 Justin C. Thompson
 Joseph Tippman
 Joshua Townsend
 Karen Gruber Trueblood
 Jason William Urlacher
 Christopher Lawrence Walotka
 Edward Waller
 Todd B. Walton
 Mark Robert Warnecke
 James R. Welch
 Shannon Charles Wilde
 James Joseph Wyza, Jr.
 Aubrey Shea Youngs
 Maria Zambrano

Persons Who Have Offered Their Own Reflections

The details of the following volumes and the citations of other documents consulted are provided in Annex 3.

Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front, in the Words of U.S. Troops and their Families, Andrew Carroll, editor

Sharon D. Allen
Myrna E. Bein
Tina M. Beller
Lisa R. Blackman
Clint Douglas
Peter Gyokeres
Ed Hrivnak
Jared S. Jones
John McCary
Brian D. Perry Sr.
Michael Poggi
Guy W. Ravey
James R. Sosnicky

In Conflict: Iraq Veterans Speak Out on Duty, Loss, and the Fight to Stay Alive, Yvonne Latty, editor

Dave Bischel
Kelly Dougherty
Ben Flanders
Camilo Mejía
Matthew Miller
Mark Mitchell
Tracey Ringo
Ty Simmons
Julius Tulley

The Blog of War: Front-line Dispatches from Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, Matthew Currier Burden, editor

Michael Bautista
Matthew Currier Burden
Rusten Currie
John Donovan
Michael Durand
“Major E”
Patti Fitzpatrick
Rachelle Jones
Lee Kelley
Mark Partridge Miner
Jason Van Steenwyk

After the Fog: Interviews with Combat Veterans, Jay Craven, producer

Jonathan Miller
Abbie Pickett

The War Tapes, Deborah Scranton, director

Zack Bazzi
Mike Moriarity
Steve Pink

Contributors to the New Hampshire National Guard’s Global War on Terrorism History Project

Under the ground rules of the research, quotations of the views of the 34 veterans interviewed are not attributed by name.

Annex 3: Bibliography

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- Andrew Carroll, ed. *Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front, in the Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families*. New York: Random House, 2006.
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- Thomas Farragher. "The War after the War." *Boston Globe*, October 29–31 and November 1, 2006.
- Lt. Colonel Dave Grossman. *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1995.
- Liz Halloran. "Vermont's War: It's Known for Liberal Politics. But the Green Mountain State Has Also Paid a Heavy Price in Iraq." *U.S. News and World Report*, January 27, 2007, 43–47.
- Kristin Henderson. *While They're at War: The True Story of American Families on the Home Front*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston and New York, 2006.
- Yvonne Latty. *In Conflict: Iraq War Veterans Speak Out on Duty, Loss, and the Fight to Stay Alive*. Sausalito, CA: PoliPointPress, 2006.
- Robert J. Lifton. *Home from the War: Vietnam Veterans: Neither Victims or Executioners*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973.
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- Larry Minear and Philippe Guillot. *Soldiers to the Rescue: Humanitarian Lessons from Rwanda*. Paris: OECD, 1996. (Also available as *Soldates a la Rescousse*.)
- New Hampshire National Guard. *New Hampshire National Guard Responds to September 11, 2001*. Pamphlet 870-2-1. Concord, NH: New Hampshire National Guard, 2004.
- Dana Priest and Anne Hull. "Soldiers Face Neglect, Frustration at Army's Top Medical Facility." *Washington Post*, February 18, 2007, A1, also February 20, 2007, 22–23.
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Annex 4: Methodology

This review of the National Guard experience uses a methodology developed by the Feinstein International Center's Humanitarianism and War Project in a series of country and thematic studies conducted since 1991¹ and in a 2005 report, "Mapping the Security Environment: Understanding the Perceptions of Local Communities, Peace Support Operations, and Assistance Agencies." The Center's approach, unlike that of many other research groups, relies heavily on input from participants themselves—local populations, humanitarian aid workers, and/or international military personnel. Our experience suggests that the perceptions of ordinary people, whether local or international, are often quite different from those of village, aid, or military officialdom and are often ignored by officials at their own peril.

The Center's approach is also inductive, casting the net as widely as possible to capture a broad cross-section of views and to identify recurring issues. The Center's research is independent in nature, with funding drawn from a mix of foundation, NGO, and government sources. Although funders may assist in establishing the terms of reference, the studies undertaken and the findings and conclusions reached are not subject to their approval. This arrangement preserves the independence of the research while giving funding agencies a buy-in and helping to ensure the relevance of the findings to their needs.

This report is part of a larger study by the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University, "Humanitarian Agenda 2015: Principles, Power, and Perceptions." Phase 1 of that study resulted in a preliminary report in 2006 that examined, through case studies conducted in Afghanistan, Burundi, Colombia, Liberia, northern Uganda, and the Sudan, four principal challenges to current and future humanitarian work. These challenges were (1) the perception that humanitarian activities, despite their purported universality, are in reality shaped by the political and security agendas of northern governments and thus at variance with local cultural norms; (2) that "the Global War on Terror" is an imprecise and opportunistic construct that complicates the conduct of professional humanitarian and human rights work; (3) that association with U.S. and United Nations political frameworks undermines the independence and effectiveness of humanitarian work; and (4) that the insecurity

of humanitarian operations compromises the functioning of aid activities. Phase 2 of the Center's study, which includes, along with this report on the National Guard experience, country studies of Iraq, Nepal, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the occupied Palestinian territories, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, is scheduled for release in late 2007.²

The present study is different from earlier reviews in which humanitarian organizations have been the major stakeholders and focus. This study was initiated by the Center rather than solicited by the National Guard. The New Hampshire National Guard facilitated the research, helping to arrange interviews with headquarters officials in Concord, with personnel who had served in the field, and with others familiar with the Guard's experience. The Vermont National Guard was aware that interviews were being conducted but chose not to make senior officials available for interviews. Nothing prohibits individual Vermont soldiers from discussing their views with you, we were told, but they are not allowed to speak globally or to represent the views of the Vermont National Guard. The Defense Department's National Guard Bureau provided information but declined several requests to meet with the researcher. It is hoped that the present study will prove of interest and utility to the National Guard, policy makers, and the American public.

As social scientists, the Tufts researchers are committed to provide an analytical framework for the available data. That framework benefits from earlier case studies that have identified key issues and challenges for international interveners in the internal armed conflicts of the post-Cold War period. As in the earlier Tufts studies, the perceptions of those interviewed are presented in their own terms. Those perceptions may—or may not—correspond to external reality. Thus the view of U.S. soldiers that their efforts to win the hearts and minds of local populations were very important to the longer term futures of Afghanistan and Iraq is presented as such, whether or not the research team subscribes to the assessment.

Afghanistan and Iraq have figured prominently in the earlier work of the Feinstein International Center. Afghanistan was the subject of reviews of humanitarian action in 1996,³ 2004,⁴ and 2006.⁵ A country study published

in 1992 on the Gulf crisis⁶ was followed by a series of reports monitoring the humanitarian crisis in Iraq during the years 2004–07.⁷ The Guard study also converges with recurrent themes of earlier work, including the importance of understanding the political and cultural context, the ingredients of professionalism on the part of outside interveners, the roles played by international military actors in the humanitarian sector, and the impact of the media. Such studies are referenced throughout the body of the present report. A bibliography of the Center's work is available at fic.tufts.edu.

The data on which the present study is based are of four kinds. The first is comprised of material from the Veterans History Project of the Library of Congress. Since the passage of legislation in 2000 creating the project, interviews with some 14,000 veterans from World Wars I and II, the Korean and Vietnam wars, and the Global War on Terror have been archived and are now available to researchers and the general public. These materials, which form a part of the 50,000 collections that make up the world's largest oral history project, were reviewed on visits to the Library's American Folklife Center reading room by Larry Minear.

The interviews consulted were conducted by a variety of people, including the soldiers themselves, their families, members of veterans' organizations, state and local historical societies, and students from secondary school through graduate level. The Veterans History Project provides interviewers with a field kit containing sample questions to guide their conversations. To date, the project has assembled some 600 collections of veterans who served in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The interview with Colonel Warnecke, in the Voices of Veterans section, transcribed from VHS by Larry Minear, is an example of this kind of data. The names of the 48 soldiers whose VHP collections were reviewed for this report are contained in Annex 2.

A second source of materials is comprised of narratives and films by soldiers themselves. The study draws extensively on *The War Tapes*, a documentary filmed by three members of the New Hampshire National Guard during their deployment in Iraq in 2004–2005.⁸ *Combat Diary* is a documentary drawing on filming by several Marines in a unit from Lima, Ohio.⁹ *Operation Homecoming* is a collection of materials written by soldiers from Afghanistan and Iraq, selected and published in cooperation with the

THE SERIES "WAR STORIES," PRODUCED IN THE CONCORD (NEW HAMPSHIRE) MONITOR BY REPORTER JOELLE FARRELL

CONCORD MONITOR

'Risking my life for kitty litter'

Halliburton raises the ire of some soldiers

By JOELLE FARRELL
Monitor staff



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LESSONS OF WAR

IN IRAQ, THE 744TH CAME TO EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Montage by Michael Craig

National Endowment for the Arts.¹⁰ *In Conflict: Iraq War Veterans Speak Out on Duty, Loss, and the Fight to Stay Alive* is another such collection,¹¹ as is *Warrior Writers*, a collection of writings by members of Iraq Veterans Against the War.¹³ *The Blog of War: Front-line Dispatches from Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan* has also provided a rich compendium of material.¹² As in the case of the Veterans History Project collections, some of the materials were authored by soldiers in the National Guard, others by members of the active-duty armed forces. The opening narrative by Colonel Perry provide an example of this genre of data.

A third source of data is comprised of news features and documentary films detailing the viewpoints of veterans. Print, radio, and television media have provided considerable coverage devoted to the issues under study, coverage that increased significantly during the period of the study. The views expressed by soldiers in a five-day series of newspaper articles that appeared in the *Concord Monitor* (NH) have proved particularly useful.¹⁴ Other newspaper series, such as one in the *Boston Globe*,¹⁵ and individual articles have provided data for this report. A PBS series that aired in April 2007, “America at a Crossroads,” contained three segments relevant to this study. “Warriors: What it is really like to be a soldier in Iraq” highlighted the experience of five men and a woman. “Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience” interviewed several of the soldiers who had contributed to the *Operation Homecoming* volume. “Kansas to Kandahar: Citizen Soldiers at War” featured the experience of that state’s National Guard. The experiences of Vermont soldiers mentioned in the study draw from the documentary, *Vermont’s Fallen*,¹⁶ produced by students at Vermont’s Norwich University.

Illustrating this third type of data are the comments of Abbie Pickett, transcribed by Larry Minear from a documentary by Jay Craven, *After the Fog: Interviews with Combat Veterans* and used with permission. (Produced in Vermont, the Craven documentary toured the state widely in 2006 and is also being used by the Veterans Administration as a training tool.) Other news features and documentary sources are referenced in the end notes as they appear in the text.

A final source of data is interviews conducted specifically for this study. Minear conducted interviews with more than sixty veterans and family members, community leaders, members of state National Guard units, chap-

lains, officials of the Veterans Administration, congressional staff, and members of the media. These conversations, principally in Vermont and New Hampshire, were held during the period September 2006 to May 2007. Several interviews were held in Washington, DC in January 2007 at the time of a national demonstration against the Iraq war. The study also draws on about three dozen interviews conducted during March and September 2005 by the New Hampshire National Guard as part of its Global War on Terror History Project. The opening comments of Sergeant Ben Flanders are an illustration of this type of data.

A partial list of those interviewed and otherwise consulted is provided in Annex 2. The list is partial because some of those interviewed requested to remain anonymous and because some of the materials provided by the New Hampshire National Guard were shared on the understanding that individuals would not be cited by name. The sources of quotations are provided wherever a given individual has consented to being identified.

Given such an abundance of sources, the process of selecting materials to incorporate into a report such as this is a delicate one. The study has made an effort to draw on the experiences of soldiers of all ranks, of women as well as men, of persons from a range of professional and occupational categories within the military, from members of minority communities, and from a variety of age groups. Special attention has been paid to the perspectives of those whose service in Afghanistan and Iraq was preceded by other deployments such as Vietnam, U.S. and U.N. peacekeeping operations, and Desert Storm, as well as to the views of those whose service won special recognition, such as the Global War on Terror award. While discussions with members of the Vermont National Guard provided the starting point for this research in September 2006, the active interest in and facilitation of the research by New Hampshire National Guard officials meant that by the conclusion of the interview process in July 2007, the New Hampshire experience loomed larger in the study than did Vermont’s.

The study was conducted by Larry Minear following his retirement as director of the Humanitarianism and War Project in June 2006. His first draft was reviewed by the research team in May 2007, revised in the light of suggestions received, and then reviewed again by the team in August 2007 before publication in September 2007.

END NOTES, ANNEX 4

1. For an overview of the findings of the Project and a listing of publications, see hwproject.tufts.edu
2. These studies and other publications of the Feinstein International Center are available at fic.tufts.edu.
3. Antonio Donini, *The Policies of Mercy: UN Coordination in Afghanistan, Mozambique, and Rwanda* (Providence, RI: Watson Institute, 1996).
4. Ian Smillie and Larry Minear, *The Charity of Nations: Humanitarian Action in a Calculating World* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian, 2004). See chapter on Afghanistan.
5. Antonio Donini, *Humanitarian Agenda 2015: Afghanistan Country Report* (Medford, MA: Feinstein International Center, 2006).
6. Larry Minear et al., *United Nations Coordination of the International Humanitarian Response to the Gulf Crisis 1990-1992* (Providence, RI: Watson Institute, 1992).
7. See, for example, Antonio Donini, Larry Minear, and Peter Walker, "The Crisis of Humanitarian Action," *Humanitarian Exchange* 26; also Greg Hansen, "Coming to Terms with the Humanitarian Imperative in Iraq," Briefing Paper 2007.
8. *The War Tapes*, directed by Deborah Scranton, produced by Robert May and Steve James, a SenArts Films Production.
9. *Combat Diary—The Marines of Lima Company*, A&E Indie Films, 2006.
10. Andrew Carroll, ed., *Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front, in the Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families* (New York: Random House, 2006).
11. Yvonne Latty, ed., *In Conflict: Iraq War Veterans Speak Out on Duty, Loss, and the Fight to Stay Alive* (Sausalito, CA: Poli PointPress, 2006).
12. Matthew Currier Burden, *The Blog of War* (New York, London, Toronto and Sydney: Simon and Schuster, 2006).
13. Lovella Calica, ed., *Warrior Writers: Move, Shoot and Communicate* [A collection of creative writing by members of Iraq Veterans Against the War], Burlington VT, April 2007.
14. Joelle Farrell, "War Stories," *Concord Monitor*, September and October 2006. The series was comprised of individual articles, including "War Stories" (September 30); "Through a Soldier's Lens," "Veterans Divided over Politics," "A Soldier, A Father," and "Fighting the Internal Battles" (October 1); "The Forgotten Five" (October 2); "Lessons of War" (October 3); and "Bringing it Home," "Female Soldiers Face Their Own Challenges," and "Risking My Life for Kitty Litter," (October 4).
15. Thomas Farragher, "The War after the War," *Boston Globe*, October 29–31 and November 1, 2006.
16. *Vermont's Fallen*, a documentary produced by Professor William Estill and the communication students of Norwich (Vermont) University.

Annex 5: About the Center and the Author

The Feinstein International Center strives to improve the lives and livelihoods of communities caught up in complex emergencies, war, and other crises. Established in 1996 as part of the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, the Center carries out field-based research in complex emergency environments. These include Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Sri-Lanka, and many other areas affected by humanitarian crises.

The Feinstein International Center's research—on the politics and policies of aiding the vulnerable, on protection and rights in crisis situations, and on the restoration of lives and livelihoods—feeds into both its teaching and its long-term partnerships with humanitarian and human rights agencies.

Through publications, seminars, and confidential evidence-based briefings, the Feinstein International Center seeks to influence the making and application of policy in the countries affected by crises and in those states in a position to influence such crises. The Center's Web

site is found at fic.tufts.edu. The present study is part of ongoing research by the Center entitled "Humanitarian Agenda 2015: Principles, Power, and Perceptions."

Larry Minear has been associated with the Center since 2000, when the Humanitarianism and War Project, which he co-founded in 1991, moved from Brown University to Tufts. As the project's director, he was responsible until his retirement in mid-2006 for managing its work: conducting case studies regarding countries in crisis, formulating recommendations to the major actors, publishing an extensive array of reports and training materials, and conducting follow-up discussions with the various agencies involved.

Minear's publications include *The Humanitarian Enterprise: Dilemmas and Discoveries* (Kumarian, 2000) and, with Ian Smillie, *The Charity of Nations: Humanitarian Action in a Calculating World* (Kumarian, 2004). The Humanitarianism and War Project's Web site is located at hwproject.tufts.edu. Minear has been involved in relief and development, research and advocacy since 1972.

Annex 6: Acknowledgements

Assistance by a number of people in framing and conducting this study is gratefully acknowledged. They include Major Gregory D. Heilshorn, State Public Affairs Officer and First Sergeant Mike R. Daigle, Deputy State Public Affairs Officer, New Hampshire National Guard; Rachel Mears, Alexa Potter, and Monica Mohindra of the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress; Deborah Scranton, producer of *The War Tapes*; Jay Craven, producer of *After the Fog*; Joelle Farrell of the *Concord (New Hampshire) Monitor*; Mark Bevis, New Hampshire Public Radio; Laurie Slone of the Veterans Administration's National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; Dr. William Estill, Norwich University; Robert Jaccoud and Lance Colby, Vermont State Guard; Roger P. Davis, University of Nebraska at Kearney; John

P. Reeder, Jr. of Brown University; Lottie Bailey, North Dakota Historical Society; and Robert V. L. Wright.

Thanks also go to Gladys Minear and Richard Minear for comments on the manuscript, to Michael Craig for creating the montage in Annex 4 from materials supplied by the *Concord Monitor*, and to the members of the Tufts research team—Antonio Donini, Larissa Fast, Greg Hansen, Simon Harris, Tasneem Mowjee, Ian Smillie, and Andrew Wilder—and the Center's director, Peter Walker. A special thanks goes to the editor of this report, Joyce Maxwell. Finally and most importantly, the author is indebted to veterans and their families for sharing their experiences and reflections.



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