

“I Helped Create ISIS”: Testimony of An Iraq War Veteran

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After 14 years of War on Terror the West is great at fomenting barbarism and creating failed states.

For the last several years, people around the world have asked, “Where did ISIS come from?”

Explanations vary, but largely focus on geopolitical (U.S. hegemony), religious (Sunni-Shia), ideological (Wahhabism) or ecological (climate refugees) origins.

Many commentators and even former military officials correctly suggest that the war in Iraq is primarily responsible for unleashing the forces we now know as ISIS, ISIL, Daesh, etc. Here, hopefully I can add some useful reflections and anecdotes.

Mesopotamian Nightmares

When I was stationed in Iraq with the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, 2003-2005, I didn’t know what the repercussions of the war would be, but I knew there would be a reckoning. That retribution, otherwise known as blowback, is currently being experienced around the world (Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, France, Tunisia, California, and so on), with no end in sight.

Back then, I routinely saw and participated in obscenities. Of course, the wickedness of the war was never properly recognized in the West. Without question, antiwar organizations attempted to articulate the horrors of the war in Iraq, but the mainstream media, academia and political-corporate forces in the West never allowed for a serious examination of the greatest war crime of the 21st century.

As we patrolled the vast region of Iraq’s Al-Anbar Province, throwing MRE (Meal Ready to Eat) trash out of our vehicles, I never contemplated how we would be remembered in history books; I simply wanted to make some extra room in my HUMVEE. Years later, sitting in a Western Civilization history course at university, listening to my professor talk about the cradle of civilization, I thought of MRE garbage on the floor of the Mesopotamian desert.

Examining recent events in Syria and Iraq, I can’t help but think of the small kids my fellow marines would pelt with Skittles from those MRE packages. Candies weren’t the only objects thrown at the children: water bottles filled with urine, rocks, debris, and various other items were thrown as well. I often wonder how many members of ISIS and various other terrorist organizations recall such events?

Moreover, I think about the hundreds of prisoners we took captive and tortured in makeshift detention facilities staffed by teenagers from Tennessee, New York and Oregon. I never had the misfortune of working in the detention facility, but I remember the stories. I vividly remember the marines telling me about punching, slapping, kicking, elbowing, kneeing and head-butting Iraqis. I remember the tales of sexual torture: forcing Iraqi men to perform sexual acts on each other while marines held knives against their testicles, sometimes sodomizing them with batons.

However, before those abominations could take place, those of us in infantry units had the pleasure of rounding up Iraqis during night raids, zip-tying their hands, black-bagging their heads and throwing them in the back of HUMVEEs and trucks while their wives and kids collapsed to their knees and wailed. Sometimes, we would pick them up during the day. Most of the time they wouldn't resist. Some of them would hold hands while marines would butt-stroke the prisoners in the face. Once they arrived at the detention facility, they would be held for days, weeks, and even months at a time. Their families were never notified. And when they were released, we would drive them from the FOB (Forward Operating Base) to the middle of the desert and release them several miles from their homes.

After we cut their zip-ties and took the black bags off their heads, several of our more deranged marines would fire rounds from their AR-15s into their air or ground, scaring the recently released captives. Always for laughs. Most Iraqis would run, still crying from their long ordeal at the detention facility, hoping some level of freedom awaited them on the outside. Who knows how long they survived. After all, no one cared. We do know of one former U.S. prisoner who survived: Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS.

Amazingly, the ability to dehumanize the Iraqi people reached a crescendo after the bullets and explosions concluded, as many marines spent their spare time taking pictures of the dead, often mutilating their corpses for fun or poking their bloated bodies with sticks for some cheap laughs. Because iPhones weren't available at the time, several marines came to Iraq with digital cameras. Those cameras contain an untold history of the war in Iraq, a history the West hopes the world forgets. That history and those cameras also contain footage of wanton massacres and numerous other war crimes, realities the Iraqis don't have the pleasure of forgetting.

Unfortunately, I could recall countless horrific anecdotes from my time in Iraq. Innocent people were not only routinely rounded-up, tortured and imprisoned, they were also incinerated by the hundreds of thousands, some studies suggest by the millions.

Only the Iraqis understand the pure evil that's been waged on their nation. They remember the West's role in the eight year war between Iraq and Iran; they remember Clinton's sanctions in the 1990s, policies which resulted in the deaths of well over 500,000 people, largely women and children. Then, 2003 came and the West finished the job. Today, Iraq is an utterly devastated nation. The people are poisoned and maimed, and the natural environment is toxic from bombs laced with depleted uranium. After fourteen years of the War on Terror, one thing is clear: the West is great at fomenting barbarism and creating failed states.

Living with Ghosts

The warm and glassy eyes of young Iraqi children perpetually haunt me, as they should. The

faces of those I've killed, or at least those whose bodies were close enough to examine, will never escape my thoughts. My nightmares and daily reflections remind me of where ISIS comes from and why, exactly, they hate us. That hate, understandable yet regrettable, will be directed at the West for years and decades to come. How could it be otherwise?

Again, the scale of destruction the West has inflicted in the Middle East is absolutely unimaginable to the vast majority of people living in the developed world. This point can never be overstated as Westerners consistently and naively ask, "Why do they hate us?"

In the end, wars, revolutions and counterrevolutions take place and subsequent generations live with the results: civilizations, societies, cultures, nations and individuals survive or perish. That's how history works. In the future, how the West deals with terrorism will largely depend on whether or not the West continues their terroristic behavior. The obvious way to prevent future ISIS-style organizations from forming is to oppose Western militarism in all its dreadful forms: CIA coups, proxy wars, drone strikes, counterinsurgency campaigns, economic warfare, etc.

Meanwhile, those of us who directly participated in the genocidal military campaign in Iraq will live with the ghosts of war.

2013 Video

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