

Iraq War Veteran Speaks Out: Open Letter to the Government from an AWOL Soldier

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Region: [USA](#)

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To those Businessmen and women holding seats in Congress,
To the Highest Court of America,
To every Department within the U.S. government,
To the President's Cabinet,
To the Joint Chiefs of Staff,
To the Vice President and President of the United States of America:

My name is James Circello. I am sure some of you already know who I am now that wiretaps and spying on American citizens has been approved.

Or maybe you've heard of me when you saw my name on a comprehensive list of Anti-War activists.

Or maybe you just know of me because I was a Sergeant in the United States Army and served as an Airborne Infantryman for six years, went to Iraq in March 2003 and served until March 2004, remained in the Army a little longer before refusing to take part in the Occupation of the Middle East and went AWOL.

I am writing you today, not asking for forgiveness for what I decided to do, but to give you an idea of what brought me to that decision to leave the Army and speak out against the Occupation. Though some will claim I left for other reasons and will try to force the discussion away from the facts and at the same time attempt to assassinate my character with half truths and out right lies, these are the facts. If later we wish to get into more of my personal life, we can do that: I have no fear of it.

I will first like to say that I am no longer a member of the United States Armed Forces. When I left the military on Easter morning, April 2007, I had officially resigned from service to that military. There are no ties between myself and an oppressive military regime set on occupying groups of impoverished indigenous people.

I am no longer a Sergeant or a paratrooper.

I will not respect an organization that can and does, at its own will, change entire enlistment contracts for the purpose of extending soldiers;

Gives quarterly sexual harassment courses and still allows roughly 30% of women to be sexually assaulted in some way, shape or form;

Openly discriminates against people based on homosexuality, race, gender and ethnic

background;

Allows crimes against humanity and peace to occur and covers them up with internal investigations;

Actively recruits young boys and girls from low level income high schools and communities with false promises of health care, school and job experience and fails on all accounts;

Refuses to recognize conscientious objectors (C.O.), and when individuals apply for C.O. status that are administratively "punished" by their chain of command;

I refuse to be a part of a military and Administration that continue to abuse and torture, doesn't recognize the rights of detainees and allows them to be shipped to secret detention facilities for "National Security" purposes; a military that is illegally, based on all U.S. as well as International Law, inside of Iraq; a military that is over extended, under funded in a war with no foreseeable end (because time tables give our enemy a "sense of victory", but how can the enemy have victory when "Mission Accomplished" has been declared?); a military that watches billions of government contracts given to private military outfits, while they run through the streets of Iraq unchecked, and allows soldiers to be poorly equipped and the V.A. poorly funded.; the No Child Left Behind Act and it's policy of making it mandatory for schools to send out the information of all students attending the school to military recruiters, or they are threatened with being cut off from Federal funding (I thought school was a place of learning, not a place of turning our youth into the:" (insert Arabic country name here) Veterans Against The War".

This and many other reasons are why I tell you today, I do not recognize any of the warrants that may have been placed upon me. These warrants are merely a way to silence any opposition to this criminal war. I do not support the United States foreign policy and will not be the fool that enforces it.

The United States has a history of using the poor of this country to massacre and oppress the poor of other countries and I say to everyone that is able to read this - I am no longer a member of the United States Armed Forces.

I also say, this by no way makes me Un-American. I love this country and feel very strongly that it can be saved and that it must be saved.

I say this without a growing ego, but my acts as of now are what the Founding Fathers envisioned and wrote about. This is what Democracy looks like.

Dissent isn't Un-American, it is what Patriotism means.

Patriotism is not blindly following a Flag waver, it is Direct Action.

I joined the Army after the towers of New York fell. Swept up in the fervor, I left college to enlist. My country was attacked - I, like many, wanted to defend it.

But here is where a majority of Americans, as well as Politicians have made their largest mistake: Defending your country does not mean destroying other Nations out of and/or for Revenge. But the People bought into the outcry that we must kill to feel better, and the Politicians sang their songs and danced their dances, in an attempt to show who was the most Patriotic of them all!

America stayed fixed to the lies from Fox News (can it really be called "News"?) and we watched the towers fall so many thousands of times until we were all ready to go kill and die for the Eagle and Red, White and Blue.

Though, I will admit, I was angry and young but it didn't take me too long to see that this wasn't about defending America, but creating an entirely new enemy.

It was all there.

It was almost too perfect.

They are of different color.

They speak a different language.

They are a people that have been made to be poor - not a people that are poor; there is a difference.

They follow a strange religion that Americans don't understand! A religion so very similar to Christianity, that - get this - it recognizes almost the same individuals as being Prophets that the Bible does.

They "hate us (you) for our (your) freedom".

They will come here and kill our women and children if we do not go there (and kill their women and children first).

The Administration and all of its men and women sold it and Americans bought it.

How many people got chills when the American flag was placed there at Ground Zero?

Remember when there were so many flags outside of houses, and flag stores ran out of them?

So I went to Iraq and I saw their faces. People that I thought wanted to kill me, and hated me because I was free, brought me into their homes, offered me food and something to drink.

Was the food poisoned? No.

Was it a poor family that could barely afford the food they were offering, but offered it to me without charge or regret? You bet.

I was quickly disillusioned by the military. Senators and Representatives from Congress would come to visit us - and we would be told to get everything clean for the Dog and Pony Show.

We would up the security levels, to make everything look ship-shape. When it was time for the questions and answers portion, we would never be without a question, because the chain of command was always there for us - and thankfully they had come up with the questions we were allowed to ask our Representatives. This is what happens every time someone from D.C. came for a little sight seeing visit. I can only imagine what kinds of shows they put on now.

Long story short, I left Iraq feeling really uncomfortable with America's position in this entire conflict. It didn't feel right. It didn't look right. And after much soul searching and researching, I discovered that it plain out just wasn't right.

It took me a while to finally decide to leave. I wanted to leave prior to invading Iraq, while witnessing the illegal "Shock and Awe" that killed so many innocent people and destroying the infrastructure of the country that we hadn't destroyed from the first bombings in the Gulf War and what wasn't antiquated and useless from the illegal sanctions held over the heads of the every day Iraqi citizen.

I fell for the trap of “don’t let your buddies down”. And what a well spun web it is. I can not control the conscience of another man. I can only follow mine. And after deciding what I believe in is not consistent with the United States military and learning that “don’t let your buddies down” is just a form of domination through guilt, I left my post in Italy to return to America. I began speaking out against this Occupation. I do not fear arrest. I do not stay hidden. I go to all national events and travel the country at my own leisure.

I say this to you Congressional Democrats: you have failed us. I delayed my going AWOL, because when I learned both Houses of the Congress were controlled by Democrats I was confident that the war was finally over. You ran on the platform of ending the war. I told all of my friends to just hang on, it will be over very soon. You funded the war and you continue to fund it. By no means is my hostility solely directed towards the Republican bench of the government. You lied to the American people, and more so, you failed the American people. We are finally awake and more and more are realizing that we don’t have a two party system in America, we have a single party that is not representing the will of the People.

Realize this Congressional Democrats, that when you agreed to continue funding the Occupation, this was no longer the President’s war against the Arabs. You helped buy this Occupation and now you own it as well. And I will remind you every time that I see your faces.

The People say end the war. Stop funding the Occupation. The Soldiers want to come home. The insane idea of we must stay in Iraq and Afghanistan so that these thousands of soldiers will not have died in vain should never be said again! We tried saying that in Vietnam! The Iraqi people are strong and can defend themselves. They also want us out.

It took years for a G.I. Resistance to begin within the Military during Vietnam, but I am telling you right now – the feeling of resentment is there. The feeling that Politicians and Businesses are profiting off of this Occupation while we suffer through extended tours and battle Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, depleted uranium, losing friends and family and losing our lives and limbs through wounds.

We come home and barely have time to adjust to being home before we begin training to leave again.

Families are falling apart.
Iraqis are dying.
For what?
A red, white and blue flag that says, “I’m a Patriot”?
Dissent is Patriotic.

Open discussion is Patriotic (this to Speaker of the House Pelosi who refuses to have an open forum with the people of her district. I believe it is going on just over 2 Years now.)

And I say to you dissent is filling the ranks of the military and it doesn’t even need a charismatic figurehead to come forth and say “Dissent; Desert!”. They are doing it and will keep doing it.

And the military’s attempt to censor free speech will not contain it. Blogs, Youtube, Myspace: these sights, and others, weren’t blocked for any reason other than these are the most popular places to find out that the G.I. Resistance Movement is growing daily.

So proud Patriots of America, I ask you today for nothing. You are my Employee, never forget that. My tax dollars pay your salary, never forget that.

I do however have demands for you:

- End the Occupation Now. Not tomorrow.

- Bring home all American troops. Replace them with a true international coalition designed specifically for peace keeping operations, NOT military operations.

- Remove all U.S. contractors from the Middle East that continue to benefit off of the death of the Iraqi and Afghan people and the destruction of their countries.

- Allow the Afghan and Iraq governments the freedom to decide what kind of country they want to be in, not what kind of country we want them to have.

- Allow the Afghan and Iraq governments freedom to choose who is given reconstruction contracts – which none should be American companies, for obvious reasons.

- Fund in full all reconstruction projects in Afghanistan and Iraq: We destroyed their countries, by International Law we must pay. By Moral virtue we must pay.

- Support the Troops means take care of them when they come home, not blindly fund their continued existence in a war zone – Completely fund the V.A. Department!

- Fund the Levees; Do NOT allow another Hurricane Katrina or Rita.

- Oversight on Gulf Region reconstruction (where is it?) – I was just in New Orleans, it is still a disaster area two years later. Fix it now.

- Open Diplomatic negotiations with Iran – Do not allow another war to take place. We have Diplomats that are paid by taxpayers to do just that: to Talk and Discuss. Use Diplomats not Depleted Uranium and Cruise Missiles.

I also want to say this before I close, I wrote it in a letter, just yesterday, to the people of Italy that stand up and actively oppose more U.S. military bases in their country. And it says:

The Iraq war is a War of Aggression, led by a cry of “We Will Never Forget”; the famous quote from September 11, 2001. Well, I have something to say for the people of the World and to the People of this Administration, as well as to the members of the U.S. Congress.

We WILL never forget.

We will never forget that the men who hijacked those aircraft on September 11, 2001 were not Iraqi.

We will never forget that Iraq had no Weapons of Mass Destruction (W.M.D) when we invaded.

We will never forget that the W.M.D’s that Iraq did have years before, were sold to them by

the U.S. Government.

We will never forget the millions of Iraqi men, women and children who have suffered through the Dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, The Iraq-Iran War, The Gulf War, Depleted Uranium, Years of Illegal Sanctions, Shock and Awe, "Liberation" from a Tyrant only to find a new Tyrant take his place.

We will never forget the 2 million of Iraqi men, women and children who are now displaced refugees within their own country.

We will never forget the 1.5 million refugees in Syria, the 775,000 refugees in Jordan and the nearly 200,000 refugees in Egypt.

We will never forget the 1 million dead Iraqi men, women and children since March 2003.

We will never forget that nearly 100,000 Iraqis flee the country each month since 2003.

We will never forget the widows, widowers and orphans of those dead.

We will never forget the effects of depleted uranium in American ammunition that litters the countries of the Middle East.

We will never forget the increased infant mortality rate. The sewage on the streets. The sectarian violence that was never in the streets of Iraq until we installed a Pro-U.S. Government.

We will never forget the destruction of Shock and Awe that destroyed Iraq's entire infrastructure.

We will never forget Abu Ghraib.

We will never forget the Lost men and women of Guantanamo Bay and other Secret U.S. Detention facilities.

We will never forget the every day Iraqi that is gunned down at a Traffic Control Point by a tired American teenager.

We will never forget the sounds of Improvised Explosive Devices (I.E.D) directed not at the American soldier, but at American Policy.

We will never forget the Women and Children gunned down at random after an I.E.D. explodes, because they were working the vegetable fields and were frightened and began to run.

We will never forget that War is, in fact, Terrorism. And America is the largest State Sponsor of Terrorism.

We will never forget that the Men, Women and Children of the Middle East may be of the same color as Saddam Hussein, but they do not have his face. They are not him. They do not deserve what they have been made to endure.

And we will never forget that corporations are profiting off of the death and destruction.

We will never forget that Blackwater and other private armies, which are in themselves illegal, are running around the Middle East killing at will – and are left unchecked.

We will never forget amazing photo opportunities with the soldiers, whether its walking through a market in Iraq with security all around you and Apaches in the air, or sitting on the deck of a ship under a “Mission Accomplished” banner.

We will never forget that a majority of the American population want the Occupations to end and we will keep repeating it until you do what you are paid to do – and that is, Listen to the People.

The People are United and I know that attempts will be made to have me appear a fool and soon you will have my grade school photographs, my coloring books, a list of every library book I have ever checked out, and whatever other records these incredibly large and over-funded Secret Agencies compile on Activists in America, but I do not fear you.

You have no moral authority over me.
Or any authority at all.
I do not fear you.
Any of you.

We The People,
United within The Struggle,

James Circello; Iraq Veterans Against The War

[Editor: AWOL Absent Without Official Leave]

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