



Drew Francis Cameron

Objects for Deployment

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Perhaps we will be able to stop telling war stories.



When people ask me what I did, I tell them I was Field Artillery.



They nod and then tell me "I can't imagine  
what it was like..."

Then I begin to tell them.





The thing is, I really want you to understand.



I drove trucks and looked at the landscape. We drove trucks full of captured weapons and took them to other places. Sometimes they were blown up and sometimes they were stockpiled. Mostly we moved munitions around the country and I took in the landscape.







خطبة يوم الجمعة  
بمكة المكرمة























This is my attempt at being honest.

I served in Bravo Battery 6th Battalion 27th Field Artillery Regiment out of Fort Sill, Oklahoma. I was sent in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom from April 7th-December 2nd, 2003.

I was 21 years old.

Most of the time I had no idea where I was.

I told myself that I wanted to be a part of something that would in the end be better for the people of Iraq.

I never fired a shot.



But I really wanted to.

Sometimes I still want to go back.





During that summer I drove thousands of miles. The land began to have a rhythm.

To the west there were irrigation farms.  
To the south, the open desert and salt ponds. To the east, the river valleys and canals.  
To the bunkers that housed the weapons.

Shepherds and children, traffic and the sweet smell of burning diesel. Broken tanks and roadside markets. Orange and white taxis and blown up buildings.

























On the road, we could buy everything.

Whiskey, pills, ice and movies. Soda and blankets. Lighters and bayonets.

We were told to never stop, not to give anything away and keep our weapons at the ready. We kept one round in the chamber anywhere outside the gate.





Desolate desert and people begging for water,  
begging for food. Bands of children with no  
house or adult in sight. I still wonder how they  
got there.

















Trash and blowing soil. Burned out rubble in the desert from the remnants of war.

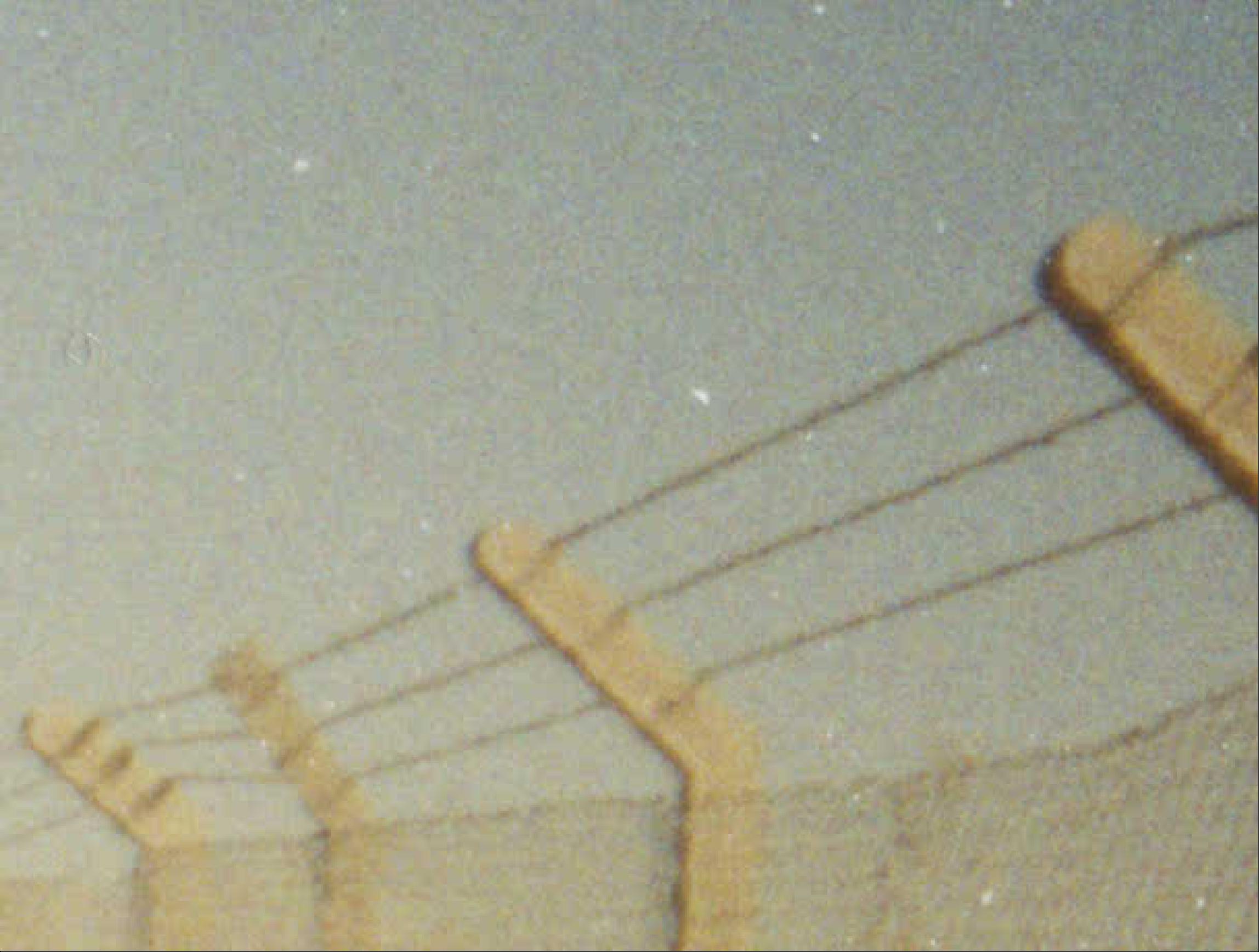




We drove over a car filled with a family. We woke up in the night to the thumping of mortars walking in. We watched blood stain the streets and listened to the rising resistance. We had rocks thrown at us by children and were spit on by teenagers. Men stared at me and I dreamed about home.















I want to believe that the war didn't have a profound effect on me. Maybe it didn't. Maybe it was the whole military that changed me. I know it did.

I know that it has become a part of my behavior, my interactions and my relationships. I have all of these walls built up inside of me and am struggling to find ways to keep them from coming back.

I keep on the move.

I have been back for over six years and I can't wait to get back on the road. I keep looking for something comfortable. I want to see how other people live. I want to know what other people feel.

I want to know who I am.



I want to know what I have done.



I want you to know what it has done to me.





I want you to know what it has done to us.





After I left the unit they got orders to go back. The nature of the war meant my friends were sent to drive trucks again. I heard from my chief that they had gotten hit - that everyone eventually got hit out on the road.

Blown up.



Maybe he is able to walk again but I still haven't heard.





Some of us disappeared.





You can find a job, maybe. Go build houses or use the education benefits. Deliver flowers and accidentally have kids.





Some of us stayed in, most of us got out. Some of us got called back up and some of us went to live in our parents' basement and stayed there.

Some of us found it easier on the inside.





We grow up and have families. Three children  
and three deployments later, another one is on  
the way.

This time Afghanistan.





Some of us found the bottle and some of us  
found the end.







It can be like this:

I am a veteran and I carry it in my back pocket-an old camouflage hanker chief...

A tip of the hat to those who have come before.  
A tip of the hat to those who might notice a familiar pattern, or hesitate and want to talk.

It can be like this:

I am sewn with the stolen threads of youth, in company with the occupied with murmurs of the enemy.

I am stolen youth.  
I am the occupied.  
I am the occupier.  
I am the enemy.

But I know it's like this:

I am a veteran and I keep on the move. No, I'm not a veteran, I'm an artist who has memories.













## COLOPHON

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This book is the result of the author's courage and focus at the Veterans Book Workshop, where we work to make manageable and material personal archives of images, words and memories from the current wars.

This book is one of many made in the Veterans Book Workshop. Each emerged from different circumstances and each finds its own unique use. One veteran may reference this book regularly, while another may set it aside in order to move on.

Regardless of the ways they are used, no dust settles on these archives. This book contains a powerful living collection of data, memory, and experience that is so relevant it trembles. You must pay very close attention to hear its call.

We made this book for listening. Please accept our invitation. We made this book for deployment. Please pass it along and invite someone else to listen.

Thank you,  
Monica Haller

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Drew Cameron is originally from Iowa City, Iowa. He left home to enlist into the US Army after graduating from high school in 2000. After finishing his military commitment he moved to Vermont to pursue academic studies in forestry. He found hand paper-making as an outlet and practice. Along with other artists and veterans he now teaches veterans to make paper from their uniforms. Traveling with their project throughout the country they aim to encourage others to do the same. [www.combatpaper.org](http://www.combatpaper.org)

