

William D. Frank

Objects for Deployment

AUG 20

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veteransbookproject.com

You may have one view of the war, I may have another. But we'll have common ground in the middle. We can be at totally opposite ends of the political spectrum, but there is always a middle ground. There is always a place to meet.

I have to believe this; I have the internal debate every day. I have to find the balance within myself.

Sept 11, 2001: Called at home and told to report to work. Was told I'd start as the Night NCOIC (Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge) of the JOC (Joint Operation Center).

March 5, 2003: Got married one month early to accommodate impending deployment.

March 12, 2003: En route to Alu Deid, Qatar

September 2003: Transferred to Nellis AFB, NV for Joint Firepower course to learn how to collaborate across military branches and with foreign counterparts

March – November 2002: Promoted to NCOIC of Operation Border Guardian in Montana. Manned 10 border crossings throughout Montana's 575-mile border.

March 7, 2003: Began deployment training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

March – September 2003: Deployed to Alu Deid, Qatar

October 2003: Deployment ends

2001 changed my military career for good. It also changed all of my relationships.

On September 11, I had just come back from teaching a MILITARY TRAINING class in California. I didn't have a regular civilian job yet. I slept in that morning; Sarah got up and went to work. Soon after, I got up, checked my military email and logged into a military chat line where I heard about the fall of the Twin Towers.

I turned on the TV and watched everything. Within 15 minutes, Colonel Pete Mohan called me and told me I needed to report to work. I had no idea why a full colonel was calling me into work, but I went. When I showed up, the loop of the Twin Towers' collapse was playing. We sat there and watched it, over and over.

That was the beginning of my new military life.

From September 11, until now, I've had no more than nine months off from active duty, including four tours. Between Title 10 and 32, I've been constantly busy.

This was inevitable; the military spent a lot of money to educate me and I had a lot of very high security clearances.

This is why, when we waged war, I knew my time was up. Montana is a small state for soldiers. They pull us often.





I was a GLO (ground liaison officer). My job was to brief the missions and send instructions about which targets to bomb. I rolled right into the first bombing in Baghdad in 2003. From the day I landed in Kuwait, I was coordinating air space.

We watched on live TV our bombs drop on the targets we told the fighters to hit. And we watched them explode along with the American public. The uproar in the room was phenomenal. It gave me a huge sense of pride, a huge sense of patriotism. It was instant gratification.

I was making my Dad proud, I was making Uncle Sam proud. You could see the joy on peoples' faces back home. It was a great time to be a soldier.

From everything we were told in our briefings, this was the right thing to do. We were setting the score straight. I thought, "I'm part of the big picture." I was effectively changing a lot of peoples' lives.

Then, after everything calmed down, I started counting numbers. I had to come to terms with what I'd done.

I dealt a lot of death. You think you're hitting a tank, a truck, an artillery shed. You don't look at the picture with all the people on it.

It's a tough thing to sit down and think about: get up in the morning, do some PT, eat breakfast, then get in your truck and go take someone's life....

My job was also to debrief the pilots after their missions. I was the one who told them what they hit, what they killed, and what they destroyed.

It's messed up. I took a sense of pride in it at first; we're getting the Joe's to go home. But, it's a tough thing to sit and think about.

About three weeks later, it really started to hit me.

I went to talk to the Chaplin. A child, you're taught that "Thou shall not kill." What had I done? The Chaplin helped me a lot. I grew up half Mormon, half Baptist, but I'm not deeply religious. I don't know where I sit with God. But I was watching bodies fly through the air and part of that was my fault. I had questions. I was confused.

The Chaplin said, "You have to focus on what you're doing. It's either Joe comes home, or he does not come home." The Chaplin put it in context, but it still lingers.

There still aren't hard and fast answers.

It's a huge moral dilemma. But you have to find ways to work through it. I did it for the American way. For preserving pie and baseball if that's what it takes. We don't need war here in our back yard (we don't need it their back yard either).

In my own sick, twisted mind, I'm helping Iraq rebuild. That's my justification.

But, in reality, all I did was dump thousands of pounds of pure metal onto equipment.

I got an Air Force accommodation award for destroying tons of enemy artillery and infrastructure. The award doesn't say anything about the people that were destroyed, though. I'm not dumb, nor am I simple. I know how many people each piece of equipment carries. A tank holds four people; we bomb a tank, we kill four people. I destroyed 300 PERSONNEL CARRIERS. Each vehicle carries nine people.

Just the sheer numbers alone, well... I can't think that way.

17,000 died over the first four months in Iraq. I probably had a hand in a good third of those deaths.

3 million tons worth of ordinance are listed on my awards. Those will be with me for the rest of my life.

When you watch the video and see something hit, you know the things that fly are really body parts – arms and legs in infrared.

There are days I'll go back and watch the videos. It's not about reliving my 'glory days.' It's so I don't forget. They were also fighting for what they thought was right. They had families too. Watching the videos is my way of... remembering them. They made the same commitment I did: to give their lives for the cause. I was just better equipped. Distance and firepower saved me.

I tell you what I'll never do again – I'll never take joy in someone's death. Joy is too easy. It's instant gratification. You have to wait before you react, because next you'll see a guy stagger out of the building. If you do, next you'll see a guy stagger out of the building you just bombed and fall to the ground.

All that excitement reveals that he fell to the ground because of you.







This is where we lived (near the end of the flight line) . It was next to the perimeter fence and as far away from our work area as anyone could possibly be.

It was very cozy, as you will see in the following pictures.







CAUTION





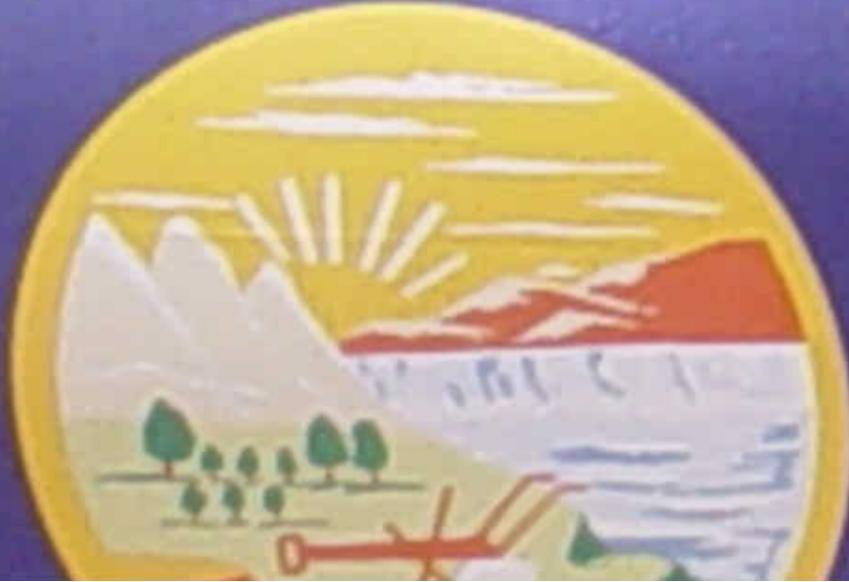
FRANK

U.S. ARMY

EPOS



MONTANA





November 2003
– December
2004: Started
as the Night
NCOIC of
Physical
Security at
Fort Harrison,
Helena, Montana

January 2005:
Stationed at
Fort Drum, New
York. Began
Safety Officer
training

June – October
2005: Became
PSD (Personal
Security
Detachment) in
Kirkuk. Escorted
and protected
senior U.S. military
officers in the city

December 2005:
No rest for the
weary! Resumed
the night shift at
Fort Harrison in
Helena

December 2004:
One of three people
mobilized from
Montana to augment
the 42nd INF Div out
of NY. Became a
Safety NCO for the
Division

March 2005:
Deployed to
FOB Danger
in Tikrit, Iraq.
Assigned as
the Safety
NCO for the
116th Brigade

November 2005:
Back at Fort Drum,
NY. Stayed for a
month to prepare
for the 42nd
Division's homecoming

September
2007:
Began a
(Liasion
Officer)
post with
the RMCC
(Rocky
Mountain
Coordination
Center).
Called
about an ETT
(Embedded
Training
Team) mission
in Afghanistan



NO
PARKING
ANY
TIME
BY
ANYONE

FEB 12 2005

We trained for Iraq at Fort Drum in New York.
It felt ironic to train for a desert
environment in the middle of a winter
wonderland.

It only makes sense in the Army.







MAY 7 2005

In 2005, during my second tour of duty, I worked with the 42nd infantry division safety team at FOB Warrior in Kirkuk, Iraq. Basically, I looked for safety hazards. At that time, we were losing a lot of soldiers to safety accidents. I no longer dealt with death on a daily basis, but I was bored. No one wants to be lectured on safety regulations. One day, I was asked to help with an escort mission. I had never driven in a big city in my life. There I was, driving a Humvee through Kirkuk.

For me, it was an incredible adrenalin rush.
“Yes, this is what I’m here for. I can do this!”



2005 3 31



Sometimes you have to take time out for Ice Cream.

You should always take time for the little things.

This is Eric, he kept showing up in the theater of combat that I was in.

The next page gives a whole new meaning to "Sweating one out."

Times I was scared to death, but you don't ever show it, show it by using some really bad humor.





JUN 10 2005



We were on our way to Baghdad to take a couple of soldiers to the airport for a conference in Jordan. We drove 250 miles out of our way for two soldiers. That's the way the army works. We go to all this work, whether or not it's the simplest or most efficient way. The trip made sense to our "Army logic."

Our gunner spotted the black smoke we're seeing in the photo. We were the first Coalition force to roll up on it. Nobody was injured.

It was in an impoverished area of the country in the south. The road was blocked.

I was taking pictures in case we needed to show proof later; first picture, second picture, in the third, I noticed a little kid out there. Not more than 150 feet away from the bombing, he was yelling "USA, USA!"



Here was a kid, dirty and unkempt, risking his safety to show his gratitude. It's amazing to me that the kid understood it. His parents may not have understood why we were there, but he did.

According to protocol, we're not allowed to stop on a convoy mission. But when you see a little kid in the middle of nowhere, it's hard not to pull over and give him a little water and food. Ultimately, we can't do that, and I felt bad because we couldn't.

I couldn't help but feel good about his reaction to us, however. He gave me the idea that maybe we were doing something right for the country. At least, that's what I wanted to believe.



NOV 28 2005



KELLEY

U.S. ARMY

FRANK

U.S. ARMY

HAYAT

JUL 20 2005

When you lose a friend, you don't put the picture up. It's just too tough. I sent two guys on a mission and told them where to go; they never came back. Even though their memory never fades, I don't talk about them. I have to remember, though. Someone always has to remember.

The evening of the memorial service was a nice calm night, about 85 or 90 degrees, 2200 hours. 'Amazing Grace' was playing on the bagpipes. No one ever wants to hear 'Amazing Grace' on the bagpipes because it's never good news.



This is a guilty feeling when you're getting ready to leave and you have to say good-bye to your dogs. Basically, you raise them from puppies and teach them to get along with each other then have to leave them.

They help you reminisce about being at home; it's calming and I think that's why people latch on to pets. I had quite a few dogs over there. It was comforting for me because I was away from my own dog. I have a deep personal attachment to my own dog. He's my and Sarah's kid.

They were a good asset to us, because they always let us know when Iraqis were around. Good, bad or anyone, they simply let us know. They never barked at Americans; I suppose they're not going to bite the hand that feeds them.

Iraqis don't respect dogs. They believe they are filthy animals. They believe that we Americans put dogs in too high of a place.

Western societies generally look at animals differently than eastern society. As soon as you realize it's a cultural difference, you're good to go. It's all relative.

The dogs were another way for Sarah and I to connect. She helped me get the dogs healthy enough to see if we could get them back to the States. She sent me shots, and Vita bones. I would bring them my own lunch from the Chowhall. When you're eating trash all day, you're not going to be healthy. So Sara sent me dog food to feed them. They were the healthiest looking dogs in the city; the Iraqis couldn't figure out why we were taking care of these dogs so well. Sara and I tried, but ultimately we couldn't take them back to the States.

We passed the dogs on to the incoming groups and hope that they were taken care of, but... you never know.



JUL 21 2005



JUL 21 2005

Randy and I took care of the puppies every day.
On the previous page, I'm petting Tank and
Snow Flake.



These pages show Tank and Snow Flake grown up, right before we left. Can you see how sad they are?

It was so hard to leave them. It kind of tears your heart out a little bit.







OCT 28 2005



NOV 4 2005



I literally went from sand storms to snow storms.



NOV 25 2005

October –
December
2007: Began
training for
the ETT mission
at Fort Harrison

March – May
2008: Deployed
to FOB Black
Horse in Kabul,
Afghanistan.
Become a mentor
to the 3rd Kandack
(3rd Battalion to
the 201st Corps).

July 2008:
Stationed at
Sarobi Dam

September –
October 2008:
Went on leave
for Sarah's birthday

January 2008:
Deployed to Fort
Riley, Kansas to
learn how to train
foreign militaries.
(Crash course in
Special Forces.)
Invented a mission
motto: "It's so easy,
an ETT could do it."

June – July 2008:
Conducted
Humanitarian
Assistance Site
Survey to build a
school

August 2008:
Assigned Prisoner
Transport post
north of Kabul





I've got more pictures in Afghanistan than anywhere else just because of the technology. It was easier because everybody had a camera, and I took more time to document my surroundings. I didn't do that much the first few times.

The next few pages that come are of the training that we did at Fort Riley to prepare for our up coming trip to the glorious land of the Silk Road.









WELCOME TO KABUL

Being in Afghanistan was enjoyable and very different. We were assigned to the Third Company; this meant we were embedded with Afghans.

This is not a war of attrition. It's a war of second- to third-generation effect. The Afghans were trained under different doctrine - Soviet doctrine. Simply put, they don't think the same way we do. You can't go into a place and change a whole nation's mentality in two short years.

We roll heavy when we roll down the road. Everywhere you drive is a combat patrol mission. You're always on guard.

Insurgents would slow down or stop Coalition convoys by getting kids to walk or run into the street. Whether it was a tactic or just part of the culture, kids were always in the street. It made you constantly alert and afraid, watching for kids. A seven-ton vehicle doesn't stop on a dime no matter how good your brakes are. With high-speed convoys racing by, it gets to be very dangerous.

Because of this, I learned to be hyper-vigilant. Now, I can't not be.

You never know what you're rolling into. I had seventy pounds of ammo and explosives strapped onto my vest and always carried a gun. Do I shoot him, or do I talk him out of shooting me? Nobody ever wants to be put in that position.

I dealt enough death on my first tour; I didn't want any more of it.

Afghanistan is a country that's been in civil war for over 33 years. Its people are resilient. You look into the eyes of the children and the elders, and you see hope and desire. But, look into the eyes of people in their twenties or forties, and their eyes look dull; you see death. They've been in war their whole lives. Two generations know nothing but war.

The country will heal itself once they find the right balance. Once it finds its center, they'll rebuild. They need to find the core of Afghanistan. I see that in some ways, I never really left Afghanistan.

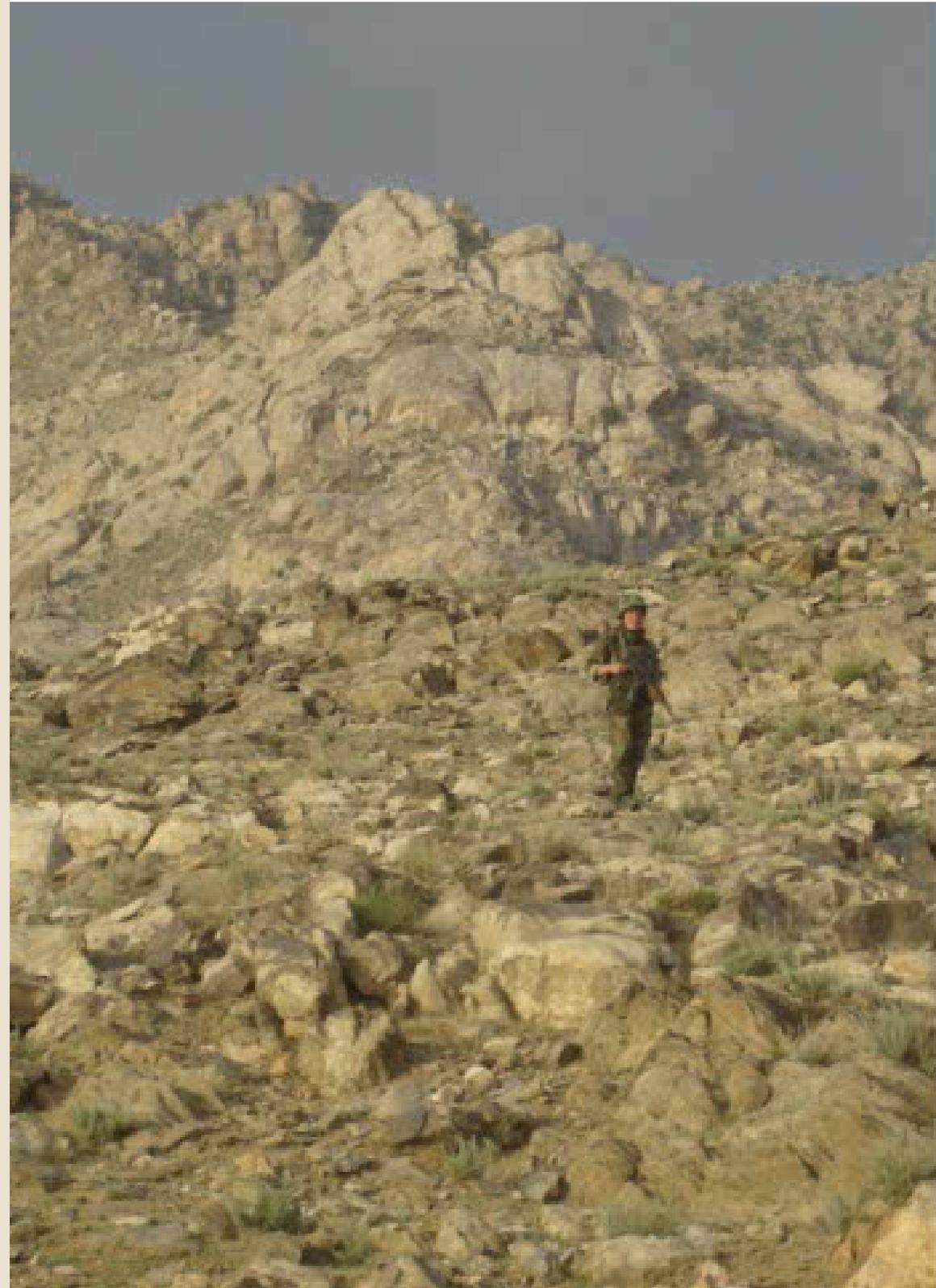


MAY 4 2008



This is a brilliant example of the terrain we dealt with in Afghanistan. There were so many nooks and crannies, it was difficult to see if anyone was there. We call these types of visual challenges "implied hazards."

If you take a quick glance, the landscape blends in to itself. But, if you look closer, there's actually a lot of depth here. A series of hills and valleys snaking through.



Sarah and I had this thing that we would do together at night. She emailed to let me know that “Orion was in the northern hemisphere.” So, we’d go watch the sky together. There was a 12-hour time difference between us, which made it possible to stargazing together, especially during the long, dark nights of winter.

It was nice to do this with Sarah. We felt close in those moments, and that was important. You make do with what you can. You have to try, at least.

We would also use Microsoft Outlook to live chat. We’d put our conversation into an email and bounce them back and forth. This worked until others picked up on it, at which point the bandwidth significantly decreased.

The next picture shows one of those times when you sit back, and put your personal problems into perspective. Another day is done. We’ll try again tomorrow.

This isn’t so much philosophy as it is just how I feel.





I don't even want to know what was on my face. If you look at it, it's not gray, it's green. There was dust everywhere. There was fecal matter everywhere - in burning trash, human waste, animal waste. I've got respiratory problems now because of it.

Nothing ever washed away because it never rained. Our running joke was, "How do enjoy inhaling Alexander the Great?"



APR 29 2008



**TALK TO CLARE - CLARITY ISSUE

This is from one of my very first missions in Afghanistan.

We had abandoned our outpost because we thought we didn't need it anymore. Local bad guys came in and stripped everything - light fixtures, copper wiring and all plumbing.

We were getting ready to go on a poppy eradication mission in May. So we had to go re-secure the area because that's where battalion headquarters would be.





MAY 4 2008



My dad gave me the best advice: if you can hear the explosion, you're okay. Don't panic. Keep calm and collected. Figure out who's hurt and help them.

I think this is the best advice he's ever given me. And he is not a very deep man.

After all, he's Sicilian.



This is me after a very long night. I had slept with my ear next to the radio and now it was my turn for watch. This is near the end of my shift.

I took the picture on the next page after a long (very long) night. I had slept with my ear next to the radio and now it was my turn for watch.

The next picture I took from up on the gun. This is the road the valley we secured for the poppy eradication mission. We all slept on the road, for six days, civilian traffic drove by at all times.

To the right is the road that all cars used. So how do you keep your perimeter secure?



MAY 9 2008

Same truck, same position. Beautiful valley, but scanning it all day got long. Fishermen fished out of intertubes while I roasted in the 120-degree heat.





MAY 10 2008



MAY 11 2008





MAY 20 2008





JUL 10 2008

One of my darkest days.

One of our ETT was attacked. The soldiers were pulled out of their vehicles, burnt, killed hacked up and drug through the streets south of Kabul, in Wardak Province. We thought this team was the other half of our team from Montana.

We couldn't get a hold of them by radio and we had tried calling everybody. We only new their ETT team was operating in the same area. It ultimately wasn't the MT team, but we thought it was.

We were enraged; we had vehicles lined up ready to go. We were ready to go deal death. Whatever was in the way would be down on the ground. We were all wrapped up in our emotions. And that is not good.

Thankfully, someone saw that look in our eyes and sent another team. We wanted so badly to go deal the death. And we didn't know who the bad guys were. I am so thankful that someone saw that look in our eyes.



AUG 20 2008

You're hyper vigilant; this is life on a daily basis. You live it looking down a gun sight every day. You have to be ready at all times.

But I'm on the positive end of the barrel not the negative.

When you're driving down the road, you're probably looking at this view 40% of the time, especially in crowds. If you're heads not on a swivel, something is wrong.

You swing left you swing right., when you come down through the middle, this is your view. You're heads on a swivel, you look like a bobble head.

You feel like a bobble head.







SEP 3 2008



SEP 3 2008

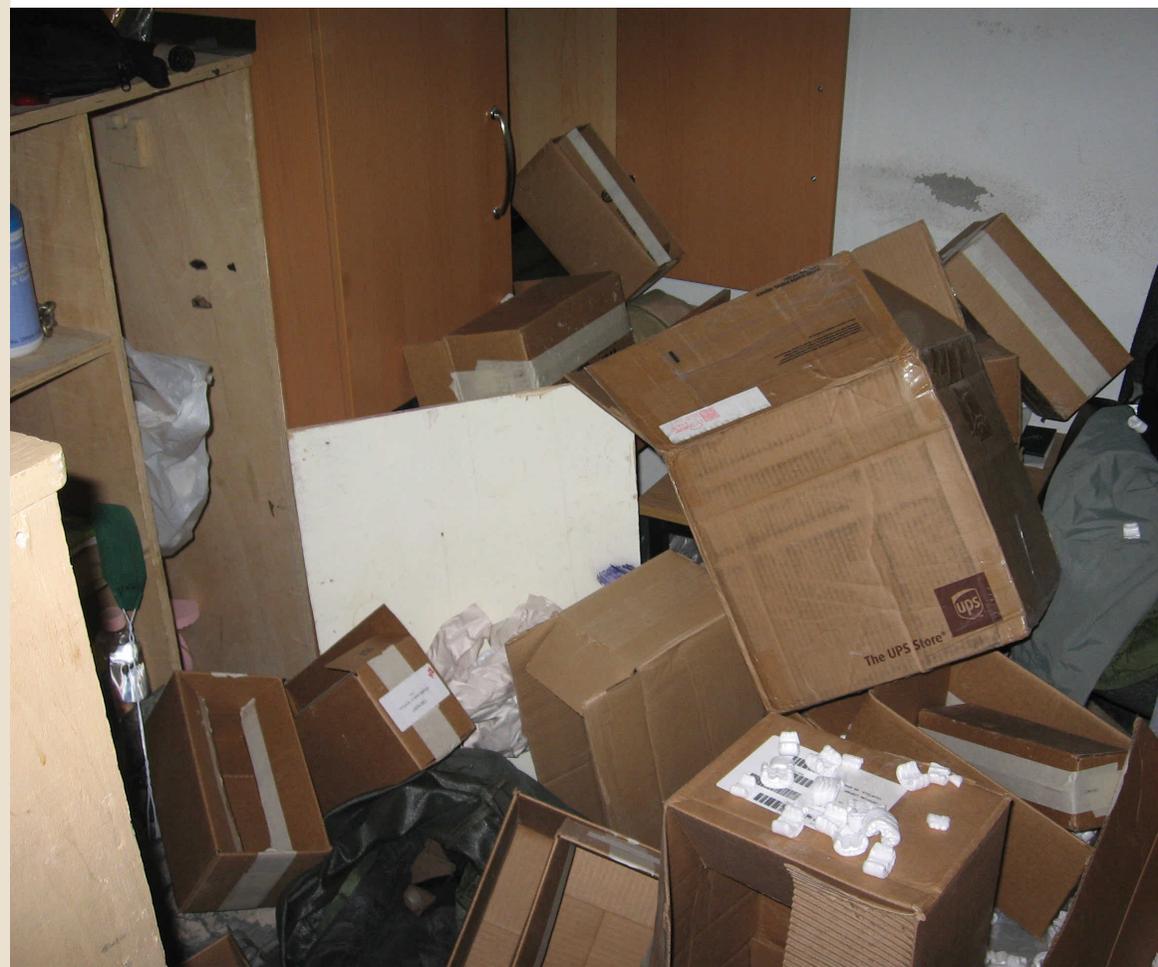


SEP 3 2008





This is how my roommates welcomed me back. You have to pull pranks – it's its own form of flattery. If someone's not trying to pull something, then you know something's up. You have to keep it light. If you don't, you'd go crazy.





There were the fun times and the jokes, but ultimately, this was my team. I would, and will die for them.

Blackhorse Cigar Lounge









SEP 11 2008



Isn't it funny that every FOB you visit their clearing barrels their have bullet holes in them.

Clearing barrels are for clearing the ammo out of your personal / crew served weapons when coming onto the FOB.

No one can hit the center of the barrel. Kind of ironic I think, since we're suppose to be an army of marksmen.

Flipflop was a great dog. We had a company of Afghans that stayed in Sarobi , and we'd rotate in every 15 days between teams as operational support. Flip-Flop lived there.

She got her name the second day we were there. We always brought our flip-flop sandals to Sarobi in order to air out our boots and relax. One morning, no one could find their flip-flops.

Here comes this puppy, running around the corner with a flip-flop in her mouth. We followed her back to her pile of 15 flip-flops.

She was a very good dog. And she was well fed. I have a dog everywhere I go, apparently.



MAY 12 2008

This is the last mission we were on prior to leaving Afghanistan. I had just returned from leave. I'm wondering, "I'm going home in less than a week. Why are they sending me on a mission to get shot up?"

But, I didn't totally feel that way. I was there to work until the last day.

If they wanted me to go and protect America until the last day, I'd do it. I wasn't worried; I knew that I was surrounded by the best guys. We made promises to each other and we were all able to keep them. Nobody escorted anyone home.

These photos are from my last combat mission in Afghanistan. I will not see combat again.



NOV 19 2008







NOV 19 2008



NOV 19 2008



NOV 20 2008



This is the last picture of me taken on a combat patrol. I look rough here; I was done. I look tired. I felt weary. I know I was older.

I am more knowledgeable for the experience that I had there. I think all the experiences I had made me a better man. Honestly, I do. This tour changed me the most. Mentally, physically, emotionally. It made me understand human pain and suffering better. I saw it in the Afghan people.

Here, I'm coming home. I made it home safe to her. I felt more emotional that day because Sarah got what she wanted. She got to have a big homecoming. She got to run through the crowds and give me a huge hug. I think the homecoming gave her closure. It maybe wasn't as important to me. I am a private person. I just want to come home, no fanfare.







USMC
U.S. ARMY
U.S. NAVY

F I D O

3rd KANDAK, (ARMOR)
3rd BRIGADE
201st CORPS
ANA MENTOR'S
AFGHANISTAN NATIONAL ARMY

LT COL YAEGER
MAJOR CROUCH
CWO-3 FERGUSON
MGY SGT HERMES
MSGT MOONEY
MSGT KELLEY
SFC FRANK
SFC STONEKING
SSGT RODGERS
HM2 FLEURY
HM2 FOLKS



CAMP BLACKHORSE,
KABUL
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC
OF AFGHANISTAN

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM
MARCH 2008-DECEMBER 2008





My wife Sarah says I am the most emotionally unattached person. I hope one day she will understand. She understands a little bit now, but I hope some day she'll understand one-hundred percent.

I generally think this is my own issue to resolve. I also think this mentality is part macho, part bravado, and potentially self-destructive.

It's hard to get my thoughts and feelings out, though I want to. First this book is for me. Then it's for Sarah, then my friends and family.

Even with all these pages, I lost a lot of photos from my three tours. I don't know where they went, but I still have the memories in my head. These are memories you never want to forget; you have to keep them close to you.

I have my own mental scrapbook. When they figure out how to hook into my head, it will be scary. I'll just plug myself into the printer and the pages will keep coming.

I've been home two years now, so I know my clock is ticking. It's probably time for me to pass the torch, but how do I walk away? This is the only job I've ever had. It's defined me for the past twenty years.

How are you supposed to make humanity better? I have to think that it's through service. For me, the military has been my vehicle for doing something. For trying my best.

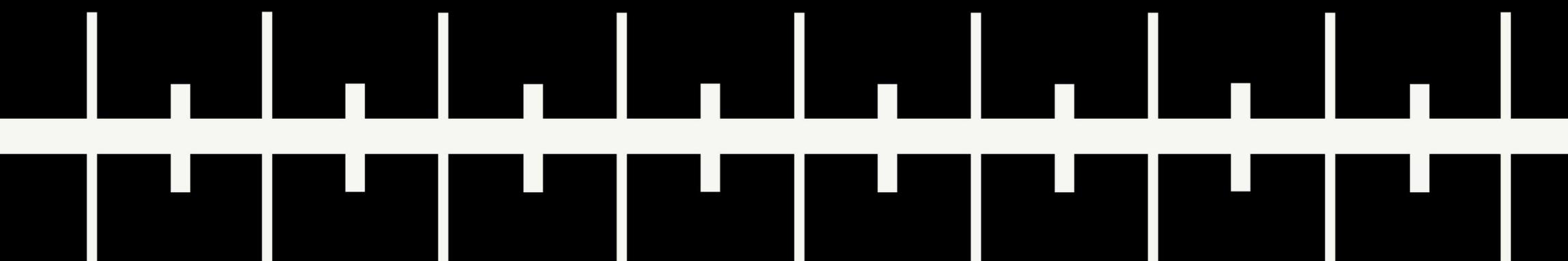


November –
December 2008:
I returned from
leave to find out
we were leaving
country earlier
than thought
(December, not
March).
Preparation for
the rotation
rollover

December 12,
2008: We land
in Helena to a
very large crowd.
My wife runs to
me and hugs
and kisses me

December 7, 2008:
Land at Fort Riley,
and took 5 days to
out-process. Got a
ride home with the
Idaho ETT in their C130

End of mission



You may have one view of the war, I may have another. But we'll have common ground in the middle. We can be at totally opposite ends of the political spectrum, but there is always a middle ground. There is always a place to meet.

I have to believe this; I have the internal debate with myself every day. I have to find the balance within myself.

COLOPHON

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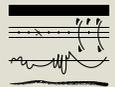
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We made this book for listening. Please accept our invitation. We made this book for deployment. Please pass it along and invite someone else to listen.

Thank you,
Monica Haller

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William D. Frank has been a member of the Montana National Guard for twenty years. He was the first man in the state of Montana to be deployed four times — three times overseas and one time domestically. Since 2003, he has completed two tours in Iraq and one tour in Afghanistan. From March to October 2003, he served as a GLO in Qatar in Operation Iraqi Freedom 1. From January to December 2005, he served as a Division Safety Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) on a Personal Security Detachment Team (PSD) in northern Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom 3. From January to December 2008, he was an ETT team member in Afghanistan, assigned to the 3/3/201st Corps in Operation Enduring Freedom 7. William currently lives in East Helena, Montana with his wife, Sarah, and their dog Woody. He works for the Montana Guard in the J5/7 State Partnership Program.

