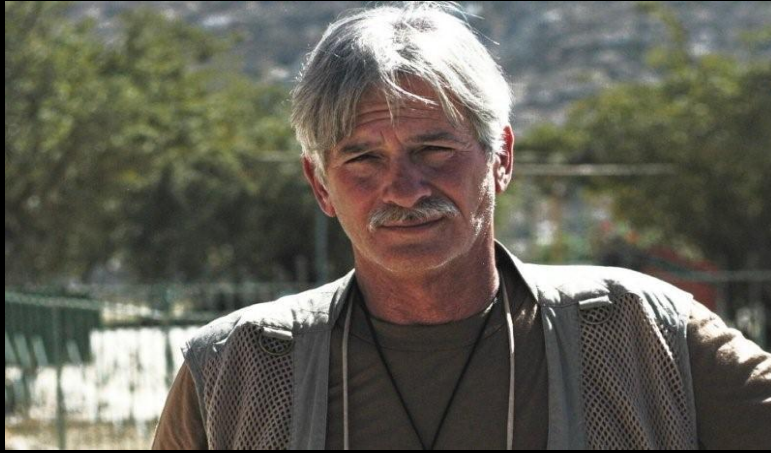


The Second Time Around



Getting ready for the second time around isn't proving to be any easier than the first trip. Seems as if the experience gained from the first journey has grown the "to do" list by a mile. Since this trip entails being embedded in two separate theatres with different geographic and weather environments it involves packing appropriate clothing and gear to cover both situations and still be able to carry it all.

The military doesn't provide bellhops.

And of course there are other details that need tending to: Pay bills (some in advance), make arrangements for the cat, stop mail delivery, clean the house, check and double check equipment-- recorder, camera—batteries. Pack the ruck... check the list, passport, long-sleeve shirts, short sleeve shirts, sock, skivvies, toothbrush, etc. Wet weather gear, sleeping bag, pants...

Details.

Waiting for the departure day has been the worse part. Not much different than the pre-deployment days of Vietnam. At least this time I know the unit and the mission.

Anticipation, questions, curiosity...anxiety level starting to climb...not out of fear, more from thinking about the travel: KC/Chicago/London/Delhi/Kabul than back via thru Delhi/Doha/Kuwait/Baghdad...waaah!

And what the hell am I whining about?

Think about what deployment means to thousands of the "Joes" who are deployed for months on end? Think about all of the particulars they have to take care of and the dangers they face...

Why again?

Short answer.

Because the media does a lousy job of reporting the stories of U.S. servicemembers and what they do. For the most part, the wars being fought by OUR people in Afghanistan and Iraq-their successes, heroism, valor-is reported by some over-paid, make-up wearing talking head, sitting on their fat ass in an air-conditioned hotel. They rely on Iraqi stringers to bring the stuff to them and then call it reporting. And what we end up with is a short scroll across the bottom of the TV screen. What we get is crap.

And it seems that as a consequence Americans don't get it. They don't get that we are at war with an enemy that is overly committed and over zealous in its desire to destroy our way of life. Pure and plain, they don't get that we are at war with a bunch of evil sons-of-bitches that want to kill all of us...no exemptions to the rule.

It seems as though the majority of Americans don't have a clue as to what it means to be a soldier. They sure as hell seem oblivious to the values learned and maintained by our Armed Forces: duty, respect, loyalty, service, honor, integrity, and personal courage.

The same values carried over to civilian life by members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Why go again? Why not? Look, the leaders of this organization believe in the VFW's mission to assist those who deserve it most. They just don't talk the talk when it comes to providing support to the people who have and are still serving this nation.

I believe it too.

And there's nothing wrong with believing in something.

