



## Iraq War Stories From Those Who Served

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America is America's first and largest nonprofit non-partisan organization for veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. IAVA helps troops to tell their stories in their own words.

IAVA brings a fresh and honest discussion about the War in Iraq and what it means to really "support our troops." IAVA is fighting against VA budget cuts, advocating real support for troops' families and demanding accountability for poorly planned policies that have put Troops' lives in unnecessary danger. Many of these young heroes are college students themselves, and can speak to college students in a language they understand.

Iraq War Stories is educating the American public about the truth of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan from the compelling perspective of the troops who have experienced the wars first-hand. Veterans tell stories about firefights, working with Iraqi civilians, being wounded, missing home, and what they think of our military policy. Whether the subject is the role of private contractors in military operations, the lack of body armor for troops, the closing of V.A. hospitals, or the effects of the 'back-door draft', the men and women who have served and who have returned to civilian life truly have a uniquely informed and valuable perspective.

### Speakers include:

Paul Rieckhoff, President and Founder, is a 1st Lieutenant and infantry platoon leader. He will share with the audience some of his personal experiences in Baghdad and expand upon IAVA's mission. He is a recognized authority on the war in Iraq and the author of *Chasing Ghosts, A Soldier's Fight from Baghdad to Washington* (Penguin, May 2006). His unit spent 10 months conducting combat operations in Iraq. Rieckhoff was called by *Esquire* magazine one of America's "Best and Brightest for 2004", and his media appearances include: *The NBC Nightly News*, *CNN's Paula Zahn Now*, *Fox's Hannity and Colmes*, *CBS 60 Minutes II*, *CNN Live*, *ABC World News Tonight*, *The CBS Evening News*, *NPR's Morning Edition* and *Air America's Al Franken Show*.

Robert Acosta, an Army Specialist and Purple Heart recipient will talk about his experiences in Iraq, the injury behind the Purple Heart, and his treatments at Walter Reed and at his local VA Hospital. Acosta, 21, joined the Army straight from high school. He says that joining the army was the best thing he could have done: "If it weren't for the army, I'd probably be locked up right now."

Perry Jefferies, from Texas, served as a First Sergeant with the Army 4th Infantry Division in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Perry was frustrated by the problems he encountered as he tried to take care of his soldiers - including over-extended troops, deplorable living conditions and the lack of basic necessities including food, water, and supplies. Jefferies was also angered by his inability to prevent the looting that followed the US invasion.

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Abbie Pickett, of Darlington, WI, joined the Army at 17 years old, while still in high school. A member of the Army National Guard, Abbie served with the 229th Combat Support Equipment Company. Her unit built check points, helipads, and runways throughout Iraq, often facing mortar attacks. She now lives in Madison, WI.

Originally from Bayonne, New Jersey, Marissa Sousa was ready to be a “one woman army” after September 11th. During her year in Iraq, Marissa Sousa served as a Staff Sergeant, performing raids and patrols with the 1-8 Cavalry. Marissa served in the Army for seven years, and is now pursuing a degree in TV and Radio production.

Herold Noel left Brooklyn, New York to serve as a Private First Class with the 3rd Infantry Division. Herold was driving trucks delivering fuel to the front lines as U.S. troops invaded Iraq. A year later, Herold found himself unemployed, homeless, and unable to provide for his wife and four children. After being honorably discharged, Herold was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and discovered that support for returning vets can be severely lacking. Thanks to IAVA, Herold is now living comfortably with his family in the Bronx and he is receiving the treatment and counseling he needs.

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