

Psychological Operation

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A Santa Rosa man in his thirties who works as a tradesman, whose parents are academics, who lived with his anthropologist dad in a small village in Africa, who wandered about for years with a knack for writing and a soulful reputation....suddenly feels he is too aimless and although he disagrees with the Bush administration and dislikes the very idea of war...re-enlists as an active reserve...is assigned to the "Psy-Ops" unit as a writer...thinks he will just be writing morale stuff for the troops...is whisked away to Kuwait & then plummeted down in a C-130 to Iraq...his unit works to "provoke" the enemy with psychological ploys, like blasting loud Metallica tracks at neighborhoods with suspected snipers...writing leaflets that insult the insurgents in various ways offensive to Arabs. He tries to keep a journal and to be an observer, someone who is influencing a war machine from within to be more reasonable and calm.

The newspaper prints his journal in part, and what he writes about is an operation in the middle of the horrific urban warfare in Falluja last April. His unit had to get in an armored humvee and slowly drive down a street at night that was the no man's land between the Marines & the rebels. They broadcast very loud rock music and insulting statements, trying to "draw fire" so the Marines could spot the muzzle-flashes and bombard those locations. This was done several times each night. He describes how terrified they were, sitting ducks. At one point he went in to a frenzy of anger, firing his assault rifle and screaming *motherfuckers!* Over & over. The tactic worked fairly well so they brought in an air assault to augment the ground fire and just tore up the neighborhood with heavy ordnance. And that's his story, on home on leave and heading back to Iraq.

It's more upsetting than the usual GI stories. Men either describe hating the situation they are in...or they describe tough experiences but that "it's all worth it"...the company line. This is a guy who claims a kind of loftiness, who has all the background of an intellectual family, sensitivity to Third World peoples, interest in writing and reason. They put him in Psy-ops, and he felt good when they accepted his first draft of an insult leaflet to be used in some hostile town. Damn it. Why can't he see anything? They *used* his sensitivities, and his talent with words, to encourage him to insult the people resisting the Occupation of their country. They used him as a *target* in a slow-moving insult machine. He acknowledges that the Arabs hate that music. "*We were having a good time, taking requests, like AC-DC & so on.*" You understand that Western pop culture has some offensive tonalities for village Muslims in Mesopotamia? You understand that your commanders want you to come up with the Most Insulting & Aggravating presentation of United States culture and to pump it out at the "enemy" until they are provoked to shoot at you to silence the satanic screaming? Their reward is a volley of high-velocity explosives, carnage, body parts... Pink Mist. And then. Then when fired upon you have the experience of great rage. *Motherfuckers* you scream and fire indiscriminately at the neighborhood. As if *they* were the abrasive, invading, hostile, insulting, cheating, murdering, satanic, lurid, bestial, amoral sons of dogs in this scenario!?? And who is it now that has been most affected by the Psychological Operations?

