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Tim King in Iraq






Ugandan Soldiers at Al Asad

About

Salem-News.com is a locally-owned news service for Salem - Oregon's capitol city and the region surrounding it.



Aug-23-2008 01:20   

Vietnam Veterans Burn Candle Late to Show Support for Iraq Soldiers (VIDEO)

Tim King Salem-News.com

Soldiers are reminded by Vietnam Veterans that they are supported and loved by their country, regardless of the politics involved.

(CAMP BEURING, Kuwait) - Boarding a giant aircraft bound for Kuwait with a number of U.S. Army units this week, I moved one step closer to Iraq, and the combat theater where I will be embedded with an Oregon Guard aviation unit sent in country for a six-month tour of duty.

This leg of the journey began in Fort Benning, Georgia, from there we were flown to another base, Hunter Army Airfield, to refuel.

Waiting at the air facility for these U.S. troops, bound for war, was a career Green Beret Vietnam veteran named Walt Peters. He says the support of the people of this nation is vital to the overall success of deploying soldiers. Sometimes these groups of soldiers roll through at 4:00 AM, but this man makes a habit out of being there to greet them.



CNN News captures Vietnam vet Walt Peters greeting troops enroute to Iraq at Hunter Army Airfield
Photo by Tim King

"It makes a lot of difference. In my day, the only thing I had in my first 19 months was one letter and a stale box of cookies, and a tomato to hit me in the back when I got off the damned plane," Peters said.

As if to underscore the importance of this personal support, a CNN news crew was on hand to record a story on this historic interaction between this soldier of yesterday, and the combat forces of today's Army.

Steve Hart works in the public affairs office at Hunter Army Airfield. He says he has a personal connection to the treatment of these warriors.

"My dad was medevac'd from Vietnam and when he came home, it wasn't under pleasant circumstances and there is still come disdain in this country toward servicemembers. And to see how it has evolved... whether they support the war or not, they still support the soldiers."

John Breyer, an Oregon soldier serving as a military policeman, is a deploying soldier who also has a close family connection to the Vietnam War. He says his grandfather, a Vietnam Vet, talked to him about the treatment of returning soldiers in the late 60's and early 70's.

Another person familiar with that treatment is Marine Corps vet Allen Harvey. He works with Walt Peters in their ongoing effort to keep these soldiers feeling the love of their nation, "He was a lifer in the Green Beret's and now he's doing this story with CNN and he deserves it. He's done more stuff than anyone I know around here."

As it turns out, our plane needed repair, and we would settle in for a long night with no hope of departing until the next morning. It allowed more time to explore the notion of what this steadfast support means for people who will in most cases, not see their families for an entire year.

"United We Stand" has never been more important.

WATCH THE VIDEO BELOW:
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Photos of soldiers who've made the ultimate sacrifice in Iraq and Afghanistan.
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Produced by Tim King

Tim King is a former U.S. Marine with twenty years of experience on the west coast as a television news producer, photojournalist, reporter and assignment editor. In addition to his role as a war correspondent, this Los Angeles native serves as Salem-News.com's Executive News Editor. Tim spent the winter of 2006/07 in Afghanistan with Oregon troops, and his coverage from Iraq that was set to begin in April has now commenced and will be ongoing throughout the next many weeks. Salem-News.com is the nation's only truly independent high traffic news Website, affiliated with Google News and several other major search engines and news aggregators.



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Comments

Bonnie August 27, 2008 9:04 am *(Pacific time)*

It is very exciting to see this special series begin, I am really proud of you. We all look forward to your experiences being brought forth so quickly, and teaching us what it's really like over in the hot desert of Iraq. I know these reports will bring loved ones closer to the solders, and vice versa. Good work Tim. Be sure and wear your sunscreen!

JoAnne August 27, 2008 9:00 am *(Pacific time)*

what does it mean when the intenet is the only place to see this news? tv acts like its not even going on. thanks for telling us what's happeninig over there, we can't believe anybody else because they arent there with our kids they just give numbers and no details.

Oregon Soldiers Mom August 27, 2008 6:13 am *(Pacific time)*

Thank you Thank you Thank you. I am shocked and amazed, my husband and I are so happy to see this coverage. We live in eastern Oregon and feel disconnected from our son, but now I'll watch every day for these reports and hopefully I'll get to see him sometime. You're the only people who seem to care that they went to Iraq, thank you again from the bottom of my heart.

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