

LTC Waite provides an honest and raw perspective on the Iraq War from that of a citizen-soldier. He describes for any interested American the effects war has upon the extraordinary people that fight in it, and the families left behind.

400 Days - A Call To Duty Volume 1

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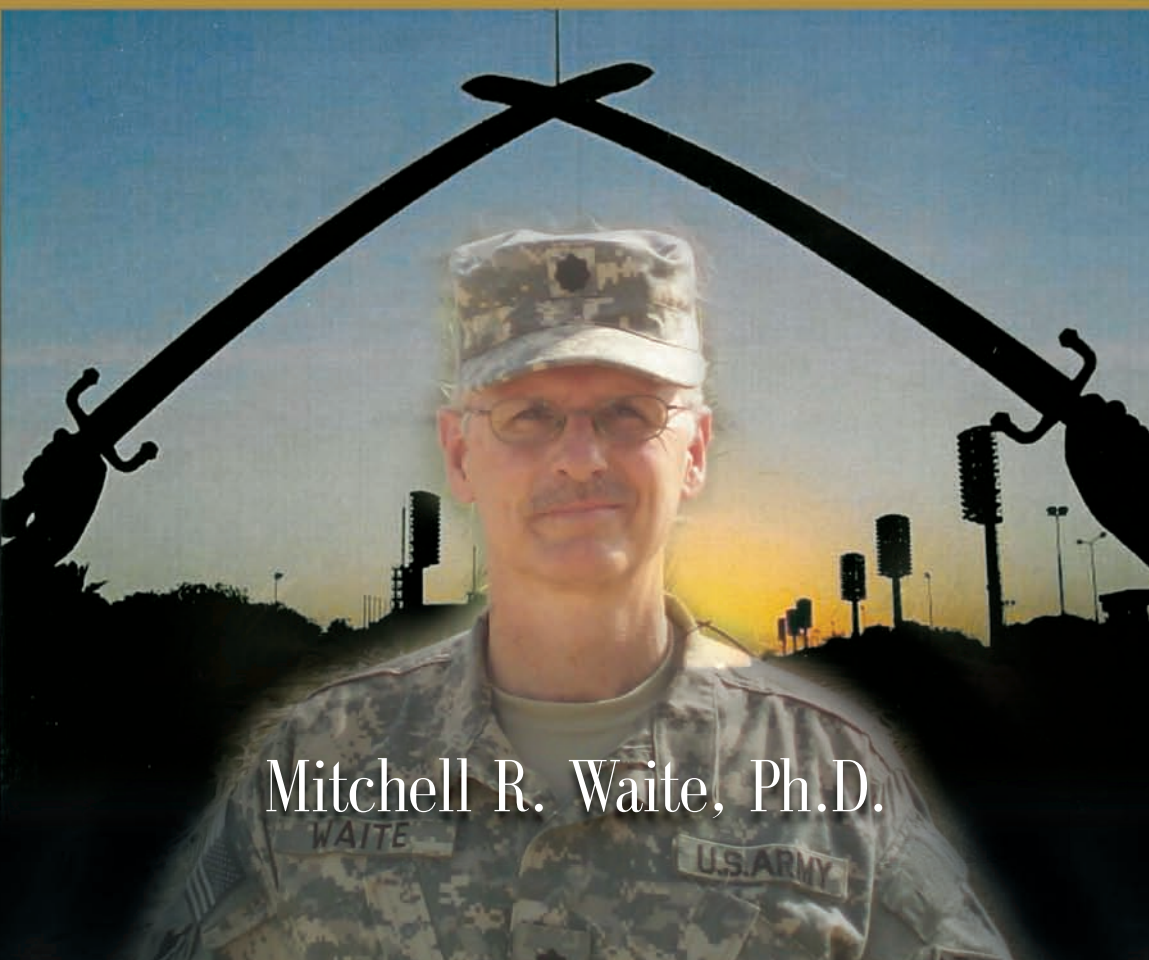
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400 Days

A Call to Duty

VOLUME ONE

A DOCUMENTARY OF A CITIZEN SOLDIER'S EXPERIENCE
DURING THE IRAQ WAR, 2008 - 2009



Mitchell R. Waite, Ph.D.

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PROLOGUE

This book is being written to share my experience with the American people. I hope I do justice in articulating this experience, which even though unique, is very similar to a journey many other American troops have taken. While thousands of soldiers, marines, sailors, airmen, and coastguardsmen have had this experience, as have their families, the overwhelming majority of Americans have not. In fact, only about 1% of all Americans currently serve in the military. Those that do not rely upon what they are told by our media and politicians, which is often not reflective of the real picture on the ground. I hope to share my experience with you as seen through my eyes, and capture the essence of the thoughts, the feelings, the strategy, and the atmospherics in relation to the war in Iraq in 2008-2009. This perspective comes to you from an ordinary citizen-soldier that has been pulled away from his family and civilian career to fight in this war and my views do not necessarily represent the viewpoints of the military or our government.

This book is not intended to be a political statement of any type, although politics will be mentioned often. This book is not intended to berate the Army in which I serve and love, although I will point out several systemic challenges and possible recommendations for change. This book is not intended to be written in politico-babble or Pentagonese, but rather in terms that the average American can understand and relate to at some level. This book is a story of sacrifice and of duty, and I truly hope to capture some of the extraordinary acts of our brave men and women in uniform that fight to protect the freedoms you enjoy. I am a soldier, but more importantly, I am an American just like many of you who will read this book. Many of us in uniform, and our families, have sacrificed much during this war. Many other brave souls have sacrificed everything. I hope to honor them by educating you.

While I did some cursory editing before sending it to my editor Rickey Pittman, I did not want to change the observations I made or soften the way I felt at that particular

moment in time. To do so would have diluted the transition one moves through when deployed thousands of miles away from home. After being in the eye of the storm, so to speak, one's perspective evolves with the ebb and flow of the situation at hand in a war zone where everything becomes so much more personal. Due to these important variables I did not change the raw emotion or sugarcoat reality for the reader. I hope you enjoy the book and by its conclusion better understand the trials and tribulations that our men and women in uniform must endure in times of war.

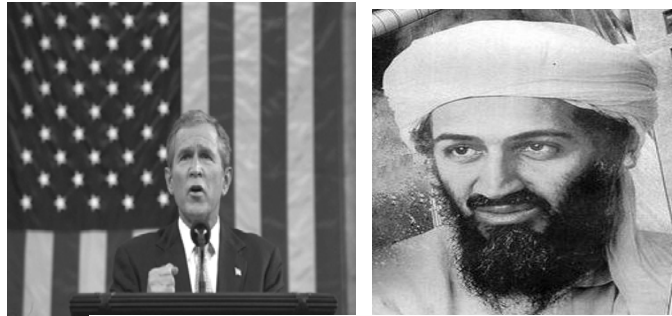
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US Air Force photo – MSG Robert R. Hargreaves

INTRODUCTION 400 DAYS



Tonight, we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done.

--President George W. Bush/2001-2009

America is a great power possessed of tremendous military might and a wide-ranging economy, but all this is built on an unstable foundation which can be targeted, with special attention to its obvious weak spots. If America is hit in one hundredth of these weak spots, God willing, it will stumble, wither away and relinquish world leadership.

--Terrorist Osama bin Laden/2001-????

Americans often take for granted the rights and freedoms they enjoy. We are a great and generous people, but not everyone in the world likes us or enjoys the same freedom of rights. The enemy we face today is not one who accepts life as a gift, but rather as a rapid passage to the next state of being. Americans value life and our enemy values death. These two completely differing philosophies have engaged in a war that is likely to be protracted and last for decades.

The global war on terrorism must be taken to the enemy. Pressuring them to stay on the run, cutting off their funding

sources, eliminating their key leaders, restricting their access to weapons and explosives, and reducing their labor pool are methodologies to achieve some level of success against such a determined enemy. This enemy really has no political agenda, nor do they do not seek ransom for their deeds of evil. They simply want to create terror in the hearts and minds of those who will allow them to do so.

The Middle East has endured a lifestyle of terrorism for decades. On September 11th, 2001, this world so far away was brought to our shores. This tragic event was sudden and unexpected. This act of violence did not occur at a military base or upon a military target. Rather, it was directed at innocent civilians who had no idea that going to work that day would be their last. The reason for such a cowardly act offered by the perpetrators was to strike at the perceived sources of American power. Terrorists struck at symbols of the American economy and military. If not for the brave deeds of Americans over Pennsylvania that day these terrorists would have struck at a symbol of American government as well. Little did these terrorists know that the true source of American power is the resiliency and determination of the people that lie within our borders.

America did not let the dastardly deeds of the Nazis go unchallenged when they attempted ethnic cleansing during World War II. Evil was challenged again in Bosnia for similar reasons. And the cowardly acts of 9/11 have not gone unchallenged. America has often responded to human tragedy around the globe, but the burden of being a superpower and a beacon for human rights around the world comes at a heavy price. What many Americans forget all too often is that freedom is not free. If you do not believe me, just ask the spouses, the parents, the children, or the friends of those who have lost a loved one on foreign soil. The high cost of this freedom is seared into their consciousness forever. Their loss is permanent and they bear the burden of this cost for a lifetime.

The majority of people who join the military understand that going to war and protecting the freedoms that we as Americans enjoy may entail sacrificing our lives for such a cause. It is not because we want to leave our loved ones or die in some foreign land. It is because we want our families,

our children, and the generations yet to come to enjoy these same freedoms.

This intent of this book is to capture one soldier's thoughts and observations on the Iraq War during 2009 from a very unique perspective. It is written from the perspective of a reserve officer who left a loving wife and family, as well as a great fulltime occupation in order to serve his country and assist the good people of Iraq. This perspective comes at arguably the most important period in the Iraq War. The year 2009 has been called 'A Year of Transition' and will go a long way in determining how history will look back upon the eventual outcome. This is my story, my observations, my journey through a 400-day deployment to assist our country with this noble cause.



I, for one, begin with intent. There is no question that, Saddam Hussein had intent to do harm to the Western alliance and to the United States of America.

--CENTCOM Commander General Tommy Franks

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