

Chris Capps

Hello To everybody here, my name is Chris Capps. I am a deserter of the United States Army and now I live in Hanau.

Let me begin my story of desertion by going back to spring 2004 when I was recruited into the United States military. I was 20 years old, I was not attending college, and I was delivering pizza in my small town of Hackettstown, New Jersey. I was living with my parents, and the military appeared to offer me a way out of my small town in New Jersey, a shot at a college education, and to give me financial independence. I talked to my recruiter, and even though it was 2004 it was something my recruiter definitely seemed to avoid. I as soon as I arrived at Basic Training in Ft. Jackson, South Carolina my drill sergeants were quick to beat it into mine and all the other soldiers heads that we were going to be sent to Iraq. After training I was sent home to the same situation I enlisted into the army from. I was determined to get out of my situation, and I had done well in the army so I managed to get into the Active Army.

I came to Darmstadt, Germany in Sept 2005 and learned as soon as I arrived that the unit the army had sent me to was deploying 2 weeks after I arrived. I did not deploy at first and instead behind an extra month so the army could give me the mandatory training and equipment needed to deploy me to Iraq. I arrived in Camp Victory, Baghdad in November 2005. I found Camp Victory to be unexpectedly safe and luxurious. While this was happening you could tell there was chaos outside the safe walls of Camp Victory. The blast from a car bomb miles away could be enough to shake your chair or table, there was constantly gunfire in the distance, and you could often see smoke rising from the other side of the walls after an explosion.

It wasn't long before I read of stories of corruption occurring on Camp Victory, especially targeted toward contractors. The main contractor on Camp Victory was KBR, which was then at the time a subsidiary of Haliburton. They ran the Cafeteria on Camp Victory, imported cheap labor from such places as Pakistan, and the Philippines, and did maintenance on our trailers, all for an extremely steep cost to the American taxpayer. There were almost as many Contractors in Iraq as there were soldiers. The average American Contractor made typically around 100,000 dollars a year tax free, (much more than the average American soldier) while the Pakistani and Phillipino workers got paid much more meagerly in comparison.

After I returned to Germany from Iraq I found that I was going to be redeployed to Afghanistan. I decided I was not going to go and contacted the Military Counseling Network here in Germany and soon learned that I could get out of the army through desertion. This was a shock but there were three conditions.

1. I had no orders to deploy (I narrowly avoided this)
2. I was not in trouble with the army already.
3. I was stationed overseas from the United States (not from a combat zone) or in your initial training in the army.

This March I did exactly this, I stayed AWOL for 60 days and turned myself into Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. I was released with an other than honorable discharge 3 days later and I have been living in Hanau, Germany ever since. I am now a member of an organization known as *Iraq Veterans Against the War*, and I try to help out soldiers who feel they no longer wish to continue military service.

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