

WORTH IT?: Recent events have impacted veterans

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Battalion and 1st Special Forces Group at Fort Lewis, Washington. He is one of the very few who make the cut for DELTA, our premier counter-terrorist unit. Allen told us that evening that the powers-that-be were looking at our company moving directly to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, with possible deployment to Afghanistan. A year later, in 2002, we deployed to Kuwait in the knowledge we would become “boots on the ground” in Iraq. Once he’d launched our operational detachments Major Allen headed into Iraq by vehicle, where he participated in the liberation of several Iraqi towns and later in the rescue of PFC Jessica Lynch.



“Greg [Walker] came out in the process as the number one candidate. I hope in the future there is an opportunity for him [Officer Walker] to compete again for another position with this agency.

– Sheriff Les Stile, Deschutes County Sheriff’s Office, April 18, 2002

Putting our lives on hold

As we continued to train and prepare for war, I’d interviewed with Sheriff Stiles and his staff for the open sergeant’s position with the agency’s search and rescue capability. I’d shared with him our unit’s upcoming deployment projection and that I would be part of that deployment. Carol and I were looking forward to returning to Central Oregon when the towers came down. Stiles needed the position filled – I could not in good faith accept his offer of employment at that time. Sheriff Stiles understood. He is a former Green Beret himself. It wouldn’t be until late 2004, after multiple deployments to Iraq and Malaysia in support of the global war on terrorism, that I would join the Sheriff’s Office.

In 2005, I would honorably retire from the U.S.



AUTHOR COLLECTION

Company A, 1/19th Special Forces ramping up for war in Kuwait 2002. Operation Iraqi Freedom was the author’s (kneeling third from the left, front row) second U.S. wartime campaign.

Army/Washington National Guard.

In 2006, I would medically retire from the Deschutes County Sheriff’s Office due to my service-connected wounds and injuries incurred over 24 years of honorable service to our great nation.

I was a lucky one. We’d left men in the field in Iraq and Afghanistan since our deployments. Killed in Action. Others like myself had been injured, wounded, or made ill. After three intense years of care, treatment, and rehabilitation I would be blessed to transition from a law enforcement career to that of a Warrior Care case manager — first for the U.S. Special Operations Command where I worked with our most seriously wounded, injured, or ill warfighters and their families, and then in the private sector with conventional force and our veteran populations.

Was it worth it?

Even as I write this, Afghanistan has been abandoned by the President of the United States, Joe Biden.

Iraq is, likewise, a shattered country in great part due to the very poor political leadership of the Bush, then Obama, then Trump, and now the Biden administrations.

And our country is once again facing a resurgence of global terrorism, newly inspired by these incredibly poor decisions that will haunt us and the rest of the free world for decades to come.

Just prior to coming home from Iraq in May 2003 I wrote, in part, this for our local paper, the *Daily Astorian*, where we lived at the time:

“The time has come for me – As the plane gathered

speed and headed down the darkened runway, I offered a brief prayer of thanks for our safety during the past year. We’d come over here together, gone our separate ways and done our separate missions, then come back together to enjoy the liberation of a nation from under the twin heels of torture and tyranny.

“I’d made great new friends and been privileged to serve with men [and women] – not only professional soldiers in the most elite units in the world, but with citizen-soldiers who’d put their lives and families on hold and were now preparing to pick up where they’d left off when we’d watched the twin towers of the World Trade Center fall under the weight of terrorist attack.

“We knew we’d be going to war even then...and now we were coming home after delivering justice to many of those responsible for that singular act of mass murder.

“The plane lifted free from the ground and Iraq slipped away from beneath us. I shifted back in my seat, closed my eyes, and relaxed for the first time in days. It was good to be an “old guy,” good to be among friends and comrades, good to be alive and well, and especially good to be on the first leg of an 8,000-mile journey home.”

Was it worth it?

As I was given the opportunity to draft, staff, and then supervise the execution of the Friendly Forces Combat Identification System (CIS) for the U.S./Coalition, Special Operations, and other government agencies — a system officially identified as having been “a huge success during Operation Iraqi Freedom, saving thousands

of lives from possible blue-on-blue fratricide situations” — then yes. It was worth it.

After becoming re-abled to enter the workforce in 2009 and in a role to provide care, treatment, and renewed hope to my fellow warfighters and their families, efforts described in part by Colonel (Ret.) David Heintz, my

employer during this period, noting “[his] unsurpassed level of compassion and commitment for this mission. His actions were directly responsible for the enhanced recovery of countless Wounded Warriors,” — then yes.

It was worth it.

“No fallen comrade left behind.”



PHOTO COURTESY GREG WALKER

We’re the lucky ones. We’re going home. (Greg Walker in sunglasses, holding flag).



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Author bio

Greg Walker (Ret.) served with the 10th, 7th, USASFC, and 19th Special Forces Groups (Airborne). He is a veteran of the war in El Salvador and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

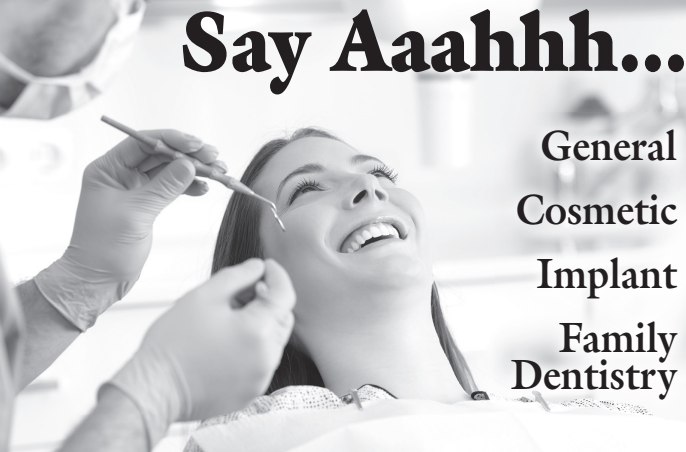
He is a life member of the Special Operations Association and Special Forces Association.

His awards and decorations include the Combat Infantryman Badge (X2), the Special Forces Tab, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (X2), the Meritorious Service Medal (X3), the Joint Meritorious Unit Award (El Salvador), the Iraq Campaign and Global War on Terrorism medals, and the Washington National Guard Legion of Merit.

A DoD trained and certified Warrior Care case manager with the U.S. SOCOM Warrior Care program (2009-2013) Walker advocated for the most seriously wounded, injured, or made ill Special Operations Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Airmen serving during the global war on terrorism.

He is the author of “At the Hurricane’s Eye – U.S. Special Operations Forces from Vietnam to Desert Storm” (Ivy Books, 1994), among other literary contributions to U.S. SOF history.

Today, Greg lives and writes from his home in Sisters, along with his service pup, Tommy.



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