

Think for a moment how you would feel should an Army representative show up at your front door and tell you that your son or daughter will be coming home piecemeal in a box. Would you still think patience was a virtue? Or would you forever regret accepting that continued violence was necessary and ending war takes time?

Think for a moment how you would feel should your child be killed by an occupier's bomb and then hear her murderers render her death insignificant as collateral damage. Would you still welcome the invaders as liberators? Or would you strap dynamite to your chest to avenge your child's slaughter?

**RAVE TO THE GRAVE! Demand an end to war and occupation. Now, not later. Someone's child is dying while we wait. You copy?**

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# Fratricide at Camp Liberty

Camillo "Mac" Bica 20 May 2009



Army Sgt. John M. Russell. Russell has been charged with five counts of murder after opening fire at a counseling clinic in Iraq.

**S**gt. John Michael Russell, 44, was a career soldier with over twenty years of honorable military service in places like Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**H**e was on his third tour of duty in Iraq, however, when it all went terribly wrong. On Monday, May 11, 2009, Sergeant Russell walked into a stress-counseling center at Camp Liberty in Baghdad and shot five American soldiers to death.

Everyone seemed shocked by the murders. **What could possibly have caused a soldier to commit such a heinous act, to murder five of his own?** Some said, "fratricide was a phenomenon of the Vietnam War, of draftees and dope addicts. Today's soldiers don't do that, you know, they're volunteers and professionals."

Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey Jr., while recognizing that "Combat deployments are, by their nature, stressful," noted that killing and dying in war has a positive influence on most soldiers. "The vast majority of people that go to combat," the general said, "have a growth experience because they are exposed to something very, very difficult and they succeed."

Others wondered what Sergeant Russell's childhood was like: "Surely he came from a broken home," they speculated, "or was toilet trained too early." Searching for answers in all the wrong places, never the obvious. Never thinking that killing is what war is about, that life loses its meaning in war - all life, every life.

Gen. S.L.A. Marshall, a respected Army combat historian, concluded in a series of articles and in his landmark World War Two study, "Men Against Fire," that **"the average and healthy individual - the man who can endure the mental and physical stresses of combat - still has such an inner and usually unrealized resistance towards killing a fellow man that he will not of his own**

**volition take life if it is possible to turn away from that responsibility."**

Consequently, following the Second World War, warrior preparation - basic training/boot camp - was modified to shift its focus from acquainting soldiers with tactics and weaponry to rather sophisticated techniques of value manipulation, moral desensitization and psychological conditioning, aimed at destroying /overriding the recruits' moral aversion to killing.

Further studies indicate that this indoctrination and conditioning program proved successful indeed, as the percentage of soldiers in battle who fired their weapons at the enemy - soldiers who would kill - increased from fifteen percent during WWII to 55 percent during the Korean War and to 95 percent during the Vietnam and Iraq wars. **Sergeant Russell, then, was not a killer by nature, but had to be created.**

According to a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine, during the Iraq war 56 percent of soldiers and Marines have killed or participated in the killing of another human being, 20 percent admit being responsible for noncombatant deaths, and 94 percent had seen bodies and human remains.

According to Col. Charles Engel, MD, MPH, director of the deployment health clinical center at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, between 15 and 29 percent of soldiers serving in and returning from Iraq and Afghanistan will suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Because of multiple deployments with inadequate dwell time, experts say that the PTSD rate among servicemen and women serving in and returning from Iraq and

Afghanistan could well eclipse the 30 percent lifetime rate found in a 1990 national study of Vietnam veterans. Every day five soldiers/veterans try to kill themselves. In 2008, one hundred and forty were successful, up from one hundred and twenty-two in 2007.

Sergeant Russell's behavior in killing other than the enemy is not an aberration if one includes the 20 percent who admit to killing noncombatants. While apologists search for answers in issues of professionalism, family, relationships, finances, etc., there is a far more reasonable explanation of the conditions that led to these murders - one that is straightforward and foundational.

Military training - creating soldiers who will kill - reinforced by combat, the "growth experience" that General Casey referred to, and impacted by multiple tours with inadequate dwell time, traumatized and dehumanized Sergeant Russell and the others turning them into murderers capable of such atrocity.

This is why war is an outrage and unnecessary war sacrilege. This is why we cannot accept the military programming our young people to kill. This is why we cannot support the architects of war, no matter their political party. This is why we cannot tolerate the Army Experience Center, a multi million-dollar recruitment video-game arcade in Philadelphia, where children as young as thirteen are manipulated into believing that war is a game.

This is why we cannot sit back and be patient while war and occupation continue. This is why we must reject the "Obama is doing his best with the wars he inherited" excuse and be out there in the streets yelling and screaming for peace.