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**Staff Sergeant Daniel Riley was in Iraq from April 30th 2003 to February 5th 2004. Prior to invasion he spent several months in Kuwait.**

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**\_\_\_ Streugut: What kind of job have you done?**

**Staff Sergeant Daniel Riley:** My army job is an infantryman. However, during security and stability operations after the war we were responsible for rebuilding schools, security at gas stations, propane distribution sites, court houses to include other government buildings. It was also our jobs to conduct daily presence patrols, IED<sup>1</sup> or roadside bomb clearance patrols and most importantly: raids to capture insurgents<sup>2</sup>. Not combat-related jobs were pulling security for army engineers to clean the city streets and rebuilding of the neighbourhoods.

**\_\_\_ Do you see yourself as liberator or member of the occupying forces?**

We had to occupy Iraq in order to liberate it from Saddam Hussein. If we were to leave immediately after the war Iraq could very well have crumbled

into a civil war due to the fact of the instability, lack of infrastructure and three major ethnic groups<sup>3</sup>, which generally do not get along with each other. My personal opinion is that we are liberator only because how grateful the Iraqi people were and their willingness to express this to me first hand<sup>4</sup>.

**\_\_\_ DO you have contact to the local population? How was the reaction?**

We had Iraqi interpreters living with us. We hired Iraqis to come on our compound to provide us with phones and later towards the end computer services. We had contact to the local population on a daily bases, on every presence patrol. I, as a squad leader, was responsible for meeting with local Sheiks<sup>5</sup> and Inmans<sup>6</sup> to discuss any issues they had concerning security or issues with their neighbourhood. I also worked closely with gas station owners and the local police. During patrols to win the hearts and minds we would sit down and eat and drink tea with the Iraqis. The Iraqi people were very generous and would offer this to us. We were more than happy to accept their offer

<sup>1</sup> improvised explosive device  
<sup>2</sup> bad guys

<sup>3</sup> the Shite Moslems, the Sunni Moslems and the Kurds  
<sup>4</sup> e.x. they said Saddam donkey, or good Bush

<sup>5</sup> tribal leaders  
<sup>6</sup> neighbor hood leaders



Our Iraqi interpreter living with us.\*

not only to win their hearts and minds but to build friendships as well. Most of the Iraqis were very thankful. It is hard to determine how much of this was true. The Iraqi people are a very scared people. I do not know for sure how many were sincere they could say I love America and then as soon as you were gone talk bad about you. But my personal opinion is that the majority was truly thankful. The only open discord that was openly displayed was dirty looks or refusals to talk. It is my general opinion that it was almost always a warm response. However, how much of that was genuinely true, I don't know. The Iraqi people are very scared people. I would like to think that all the smiles and waving were true and not just something that was conducted when we were around.

#### \_\_\_ Have there been nice experiences?

I had a lot of nice experiences. I spent almost a year there and I still remember it like it was yesterday.

Here are some of the biggest experiences I had: During the war we received hundreds of care packages from American citizens. It got to a point where there was so much that we just piled it into the train station for soldier to take. I told my squad to fill up their rucksacks with everything

that was available: toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, pens, pencils, paper, candy, and anything else we could find. During a patrol we gave all those items to a all girls school. The girl's ages were from 6 to 10. Some of my very nice experiences were our pets. We had two dogs and raised them from the time when they were pups. We trained one dog to be our guard dog. Another not so pleasant but fulfilling experience was when I gave medical attention to a 9 year old boy who suffered from explosions. I dressed his wounds and stopped the bleeding and cared for him until the Iraqi ambulance arrived. A really fun experience was swimming in the Tigris River with Iraqi people. Also as usually on many occasions drinking tea with them. A very fun and relaxing time was when I spent the day at Saddams brother's palace. I was also afforded opportunity to go on a 4 day pass to Northern Iraq<sup>7</sup> while there I stayed in a beautiful hotel and was able to walk the city streets with no gear or weapon. The best experience was attending church with the Iraqi people<sup>8</sup>. Yes, we were able to attend church with the Iraqi people. After church was over we went outside of the church, signed autographs, took pictures with the children and talked with the adults. I had a lot of nice experiences. But during my time there I had a lot of bad too.



One of the dogs we found in a destroyed village.

**\_\_\_ During your time in the Iraq your wife lived in Germany. Because of that you know what the German media report about the war, and you know the real situation. Did the German people get wrong or incomplete information?**

Yes, I definitely think that the Germans received misleading info about the Operation Iraqi Freedom issue. I strongly feel about this. It is not only the German media the American media is as fault as well. They only portrait the negative stuff. Make no mistake about it: bad and really terrible things are happening there, but there are also good things as well. It is my personal opinion that the war was generally unpopular with the German people and therefore the media would put out news that favours the opinion of the German.

**\_\_\_ I have seen pictures of soldiers moving forward in the desert and sleeping in foxholes. Have you ever been on such a mission?**

There were only a few times when I had to sleep in the desert. Prior to going into Iraq I spent a month living in a tent in Kuwait. The weather conditions were extremely harsh especially with the sand storms. The desert has a very barren landscape as well. Once into Iraq I spent most of my time in the city of Mosul. Mosul is Iraq's third largest city with a population of over 1 Mio.

So I went from vast desert to open city or urban area. Once in the city we lived at a train station hotel, water treatment facility and textile factory, that we took over.

**\_\_\_ Somebody told me, that the soldiers even went at the lavatory with their guns?**

It is true that soldiers went to the bathrooms with their guns. When outside your weapon is usually not more than arms length distance away. There were numerous occasions, when the train station was attacked, so you need to be prepared to defend yourself in seconds.

**\_\_\_ Can you describe a typical day? What time did you get up, for example?**

The time we got up very depended on the days priors mission. If we conducted a raid in the middle of the night, we were allowed to sleep later. A typical day would be getting up between 8 and 9 o' clock, conducting a day patrol along with a night patrol. In addition to the patrols there was also always a guard shifts both during day and night to be conducted. In addition to patrols there were also tasking to pull a security at gas stations, refineries, government buildings, banks, pay sights and propane distribution sights. Theses details would last from morning until close



During a patrol in the streets of Baghdad.

of business. There would also be raids on targeted houses that would happen in the middle of the night. There were also sector clearance operations, where we would search every house in a designated area. Those would last from 8 in the morning until 14 in the afternoon. These searches were different from raids. During a raid you would have some sort of intelligence on the target, we would kick down the door, clear the house and snatch up the target and detain him. With the sector clearance searches we would knock on the door and ask the people living in the house, if it were ok if we could search the house and if they were cooperative, we would pay them anywhere between 5 to 10 Euros.

**\_\_\_How dangerous has been your operation?**

How about being woken up in the middle of the night by explosions from RPGs<sup>9</sup> and gunfire because the building that you were sleeping in was being attacked? The main weapon of the insurgents is the IED or what you might here on the news as a road side bomb. It was our job to clear roads of possible devices that could have been placed there. There were many times, that I was shot at, but couldn't return fire, because I didn't know where the shots came from. On more than one occasion the aircraft in which I was flying was

also shot at. You think this is dangerous?

**\_\_\_Has there been a time you were afraid of never coming home?**

Yes, there was an instant where intelligence said, at a certain time an IED was going to explode. Higher informed us to drive up and down the road in order to trigger the explosion. Once the explosion went off, another element was supposed to catch the individuals that detonated the device. The explosion never went off, but that was one instance in where a friend and I made preparations to take care of each other's things if one of us would have died.

**\_\_\_What do you feel when you heard that they caught Saddam?**

My first reaction was wondering how the Iraqis would react. It was also a feeling of joy, because a lot of Iraqis believed, George Bush and Saddam Hussein were friends and had planned the whole war together and Saddam Hussein were safe somewhere in the US or Russia. I was happy when he was caught, because it could finally prove those absurd, stupid rumours wrong. I was still in Iraq when it happened. In fact Saddam's sons Uday and Qusay were killed by my Unit less than a few kilometre from where I lived.