

**Sean Baker (former Guantánamo guard, military police)**

**11.30.11**

Q: Mr. Baker, how old are you now?

A: 45, sir.

Q: Tell me a little bit, if you can, about your life before you enlisted in the Air Force. That was right out of high school, wasn't it?

A: Yes, sir. I grew up in a rural area, near eastern Kentucky, graduated high school when I was 17 years old. There wasn't much there as far as industry or education or anything. So you had to leave there, you know. So I chose to leave for the military and joined the Air Force when I was 17 as a combat security specialist.

Q: Is that sort of a police job?

A: Yes, as a security policeman, yes.

Q: How long were you in the Air Force?

A: 13 months.

Q: And then what did you do?

A: Got out of the Air Force and came back to Kentucky, relocated back here after several months. Just worked, you know, one job after another, pretty much, for the next few years until I went back into the military. You know, managed a restaurant, things like that.

Q: When did you go into the Army the first time?

A: 17 May '89.

Q: And how long did you serve then?

A: Eight years.

Q: And you were involved with the Gulf War, right?

A: Yes, sir. I deployed first to Saudi Arabia and then spent time in Kuwait and Southern Iraq, briefly. I was a military policeman at that point.

Q: What sort of duties did you have as a military policeman?

A: You know, tracking control points, MSR, convoy escorts, but over there it was primarily collection of enemy prisoners of war. Back then they called them EPWs, that's detainees. I spent the majority of my time at a camp there in Northern Saudi Arabia, just outside Kuwait, approximately 36,000 EPWs there at the time. We would go and collect them in Iraq and transport them back and process them. You know, obviously the war didn't last that long. In a few months, we were releasing them.

Q: Was that fairly routine, nothing as dramatic as what happened to you in Cuba?

A: It was. No, there were a few moments when you were in areas that maybe you weren't supposed to be for whatever reason, you know, intelligence was wrong or you were lost or whatever, things would get a little uneasy, but not bad, you know what I'm saying, because they all wanted to surrender. They were starving. They were dying of thirst out in the desert. They wanted to surrender, you know. So there were very few combatants, a few of the Republican Guards, they would give you a little hard time saying "fight to the death," stuff like that. But for the most part it was corrections duty, in the desert. I mean just it's in an open area with concertina razor wire everywhere. Nothing was state of the art. It was all primitive.

Q: Then after you got out of the army, in I guess '97, then what did you do?

A: You know, I did mechanic work, worked in dealerships, you know, and primarily General Motors dealerships as a technician, motor technician. I was an ASC master technician so, you know, that work came fairly easy to me. That's what I did until I re-enlisted and went back in.

Q. What were you doing on September 11 when you heard about the attacks?

A: Actually, I was working in a tire distributor. I was a mechanic, did mechanical work here in Lexington, Kentucky. I'd come in from a test drive, you know, a vehicle that I worked on yesterday and the day before. You know, I was just checking it out. When I came in the manager, service manager, had mentioned, he had said something about somebody had flown a plane into a building in New York. He was kind of country. So, I didn't think that I was more intelligent than he, but I knew they didn't fly no planes around downtown New York. They stay on the outside of cities, usually, up there. I walked into the customer lounge, and as soon as I did, I saw the second plane hit the second building. "What are they doing there? What do you think the odds of that are?" I said "That's terrorism." In some form, I knew it was. I wasn't thinking military units. I just thought some agency has got a hold of two planes. Ingenious that was, who used those, you know, to take down the towers. I immediately, you know, knew what was going on and went and got the telephone book and called an army recruiter. Of course he was being flooded with calls. You know everybody from eighty-year-old men, wanting to say: "I'm healthy, I want to re-enlist," to every other crazy person who was out there. He just kind of dismissed me, like "Just bring the paper work in, your 214, and we'll get into it." The next morning I was there when he arrived. I joined. I took the physical where they had something wrong during the physical, something in my urine or whatever. So I ended up having to wait, and went back and re-physicaled and joined the National Guard, the Kentucky Army National Guard. To me, my nation was at war and somebody had attacked us and I felt I was healthy and able and willing and if not me, then who?

Q: And you had had some experience?

A: Exactly. I could step right into a role where others would have to be trained up. I'm not saying I was the best soldier, you know, but I was fairly intelligent, picked up what was going on no matter what unit or what area I was put in. You know, called up the recruiter, passed the physical and he asked me what unit do you want to join. You know, I said "the first unit leaving." He was back, "How would we know what that is, which unit that would be?" I thought about that for a while: this guy is a recruiter, he ought to know this. Obviously, from previous deployment, it's going to be MPs, infantry, MLRS and whatever, you know, and medical. And so I said, you know, just put me in an MP unit right here. I knew there was one here in Lexington, and I ended up swearing in that day, joined that unit. Within a couple of months that unit was set to deploy to Afghanistan and had strength issues, couldn't come up with enough personnel, they ended up bypassing that and then I rolled into another unit that was short and started calling for volunteers first, and after that, if they didn't get enough volunteers, they were going to just tell, you know, direct order people to, you know, report to that unit. So I went ahead, you know, I knew what was coming down. I raised my hand immediately.

Q: I got recalled in the Berlin Emergency, into a postal unit myself, back in '61.

A: Wow.

Q: But my tenure in the service was a lot duller than yours. I ended up as the company clerk of a postal unit that never had a letter to deliver.

A: Oh, my goodness [Laughs]

Q: I've read Beetle Bailey ever since.

A: Right. Of course, of course.

Q: Your unit got to Guantanamo in November, 2002. What were your initial duties there?

A: Well, you know, you always, when you arrive somewhere, there is a little time to acclimatize and regroup, once you're there. And then a train-up, they give you the policies and this is what we're going to do here. These are your responsibilities. That usually takes two weeks to a month. But within a couple of weeks, within less than that probably, we were in the camp. Because they were short, you know, short on personnel. And we were in the camp, learning the duties. And it was pretty much, it was pretty simple actually. These are the cages, you know, within the cages. There are 15 doors, you know, 15 gates to get through to get to it. And keep every door, or every gate, locked. Nobody leaves. There were a lot of escort duties, and movements, you know, to keep track of. There was something a little bit to it. There was a lot of psychological stuff, you know, too, you know, having to deal with them, very small cages, you know. And it does something to a person, you know. So you couldn't just be all harsh with them. You couldn't coddle them. But, you know, the people are in cages. You know how animals get sometimes in cages; they freak out. Humans, we are softer than any animal. So you had to really monitor the psychological issue. Some of them had psychological issues especially people like most warriors would, sent there because they were accused of crimes, you know what I'm saying, they weren't beat somebody up, people had lost their lives.

Q: What were you told about who the detainees were that you were guarding?

A: Weren't told anything. They were assigned a number.

Q: I mean, were you told in a general sort of way, "These are people who worked for Al Qaeda or these are people who killed Americans," or anything?

A: No, the mood was usually, you know, to keep you hyper-vigilant, you were told "these are the baddest of the bad." You now, as I started my rounds and daily duties, we were short every day. Because we were short. Every unit was short-handed. There were no days off, for a while. And you were told these were the "baddest of the bad," to keep you vigilant, you know what I'm saying. And you didn't get lax and let your guard down. But after a while, you know what I'm saying, if you were an astute person, you could pretty much evaluate, or I could, you know, and I was a former police officer before. So you could get good at kind of reading through people's poker faces or read their eyes and reading how they're acting. I kind of knew who was bad and who was playing bad and who didn't have a clue what planet they were on, you know.

Q: Before that night in January, 2003, had you ever seen an IRF team subdue a prisoner?

A: Yes, you know, participated in several of that, because I was on the IRF team from my unit. So, and I was the number one man, the shield man. I went in first. So I was familiar with, not seeing any from another unit, because you generally worked, there was camp one and camp two. A unit usually generally worked that entire camp. IRF team had to go that shift anywhere, no matter what cell block, and there was yet another unit was over at camp one, doing their thing, occasionally on escort detail. You were on escort detail, sometimes you'd be with another unit, and pull a squad out, or a platoon, and send you over for escort detail, and you may be attached, you may be conducting your movement operations while another unit is conducting security operations, and then you've got the infantry up in the tower, you know, they are on sniper duty. Pretty much, I never saw another unit's IRF team coming in before, for whatever reason, onto my cell block and extract someone. I mean, I knew what was going on with them.

Q: Do you remember seeing a training drill for an IRF team?

A: Oh, yes, yes sir. I participated in a couple of them myself as the detainee before the extraction that night on 24 January.

Q: Tell me about the training drills, how they were different?

A: It was half-speed. We couldn't afford to get anyone hurt. So you weren't going in there, gloved up and fast, you know, double-time. It was slow and methodical, because it was our own troop. There wasn't any major resistance, just went in, put the shackles and handcuffs, the three-piece suit, you know, what the shackles and handcuffs were called. You just kind of put those on, stood up, came out, whatever. But it was different with the detainee, you know, because it became, it got to the point where they were being extracted, for the most part, they had reached the limit, you know what I am saying, they were, you know, climbing the walls inside. You know what I am saying, they were fired up. They couldn't stay in there any longer. Or they were hurting themselves.

Q: When you went in as part of a team, did the detainees resist?

A: Sometimes. To be honest with you, at first, and it depends, you know, during Ramadan, they would get fired up, you know. There were times that they were receiving orders, you know. They were calling out orders throughout the camp, you know, and you can't stop it. None of us were linguists. We didn't know what they were saying. They were just hollering it out, you know, from one building, you know what I'm saying, it was an open-style building, mesh, but there was obviously areas that they had been just calling it out, just like they would call out prayer, and tell them from one camp to the next, you know, saying that "IRF team is coming." They were letting everyone know that they knew we were coming before we got there.

Q: When that request came on 24 January, did it seem at all strange that it was two o'clock in the morning for training, or was that sort of normal?

A: No, that didn't seem strange to me, because that is the slow time. You know, after they get their midnight chow or whatever, because they were feeding them four times a day and once you came on shift at usually 2100 or nine o'clock at night, you got your head count, and then got them fed and that cleaned up and then there was be a midnight ration for the soldiers to go eat. By the time you got back and got through that rotation and settled down, then there was between two and four like any night shift job, there is that lull, you know what I am saying, where you're either asleep or you're working, but if you are working, you are quiet about what you are doing. So that was an optimum time for training, you know, when everything's done, get it out of the way before time to start ramping up for morning chow and shift change and starting prisoner, you know, detainee movement.

Q: Take me through what happened leading up to the point where you volunteered. You were sitting around with your unit in this quiet time, and the sergeant got a phone call or something. How did it work?

A: The little detachment I was with that night, almost like a squad element actually. You know, there was seven or eight of us, sitting around in a room, you know, three or four out back, smoking or whatever. And we were on escort detail, but there no escorts that night. The OGA, you know, the FBI or CIA, OGA, they had already left because they had been there for days. They were getting good intel, apparently. They were in there for a few days, running them one after the other, and then it was just like "we're out of here," you know. And so there was nothing to do that night. So we were just sitting in like a classroom, in, you know, double-wide trailer, sitting around doing what we weren't supposed to be doing, you know some were napping and some of us were playing cards and my squad leader, he was in there, staff sergeant Howe. And of course everybody had already removed their ear pieces from the radios, because if you are in a room full of radios, you know, there is always that squalling and squeaking and carrying on and so, you know, only one person needed to be monitoring. He was sitting over there, you now, doing what he was supposed to be doing. I was actually dealing cards. And I saw him reach up and touch the earpiece so I knew traffic was coming in, and I was just monitoring him, like is it nothing or is it something. Because you never knew, sometimes a bunch of IRFs would happen and they would call out the escort teams to go in there, more personnel, you know, when they would get out of control and want to riot, throw water and stuff, you know, feces and urine, you know, all that. Staff sergeant Howe, he just touched his ear and looked over and said "Somebody needs to go over to Oscar Block for training." And of course I looked around the room, there are several people sitting around, you know, any of them could have jumped up, you know, but here I am playing cards. But nobody moved, you know, nobody, as usual. I looked and said "Don't everybody jump." [Response] "You know, you're going anyway, why would we move? You're always the one that's up there."

Q: You had a reputation for volunteering, didn't you?

A: You know, if something needs to be done, let's get it done. You need to drive the tank, we need to fly the plane, we need to drive the truck, tractor-trailer, whatever, drive the bus, whatever. I'd rather do that than sitting around, killing time. It would, you know, pass a little more time. You know, I was expecting, the same half-speed drill, 50 percent.

Q: You were told it was an IRF training, right?

A: Correct. I was told that somebody was to go to Oscar Block for training. So obviously I knew it was going to be IRF training. I was going alone, I really wasn't sure, but I believed it would be the role of the detainee that that unit didn't know. I arrived there shortly after two and reported to Lieutenant Locke, and another sergeant first class from his unit, from the 303<sup>rd</sup> MP company. And I don't remember his name because, you know, we didn't wear name tapes, but I just remember reporting to him, he said "go ahead and strip your uniform off and put on this orange suit," you know, it's like a hospital scrub, two piece, orange, "and we're going to put you in a cell and extract you." And I said "Roger that." I started taking my uniform off, and he said, "Just put it over your BDU's." So I did.

He said, "here's the drill," you know, he was giving me my SOP, my standard operating procedure, which was "Specialist A, we need you to get in there," because when I got there I introduced myself, obviously. I don't know these people. I had seen him around, but, you know, introduced myself. "Specialist A, we'll put you in a cell, and send the IRF team in and extract you. Your orders are to get in the cell, get under the bunk, and don't say a word. We'll come in there and extract you and that will be good." I said "Roger that, sir." I reported back to him "I get in the cell, get under the bunk, and don't say a word." He said "correct." I said "Roger that." And then he said "Should anything go wrong, the word to stop, or index or stop the exercise is 'red.'" I said "Roger that, sir, the index word is 'red.'" Letting him know that I knew what the word was to stop it. No confusion there. We were good. I'm telling you back, "What you're telling me, I comprehend." So they put me in a cell, and I tell you what now, in isolation, there was some tiny little dim bulb up there, but it was pretty much pitch black. And quiet. And after 20, 25 minutes in there, I myself was becoming uneasy. I was like "Oh, my Lord, how do these men deal with this?" This would take some, you know, strong mental courage to fight through this. But then, by that time, by the time I was feeling that way, I could hear movement in the causeway out in front of the building and I knew they were getting ready to come, you know. Because by that time the medical team, I could hear people mulling around. I couldn't hear a lot, but then I heard the dog, canine, barking, and so I knew they were getting ready, getting ready to get on with it, which was strange because they had never had a medical team or a canine unit at any of the other drills, you know, it was just half-speed, everybody knew what was going on.

Q: Let me break in there and ask you one question. When you had done IRF drills yourself, you had always done it with members of your own unit?

A: Correct. I was in BDU's, you know. I was in uniform, and, you know, they could see who you were. It was well-lit, it was usually during the day.

Q: And these guys, of course, the only one who knew who you were was Lieutenant Locke?

A: Correct, and the duty operations sergeant, Burke, you know.

Q: But none of the people who came in as part of the IRF team?

A: No, they were told they had an uncooperative detainee in Oscar Block who refused to cuff up, who refused to come from his cell, who had assaulted the guards and abused--- just was belligerent and needed to be extracted.

Q: Did you express any misgivings to Lieutenant Locke? Were you at all uncertain when you were talking to him, as to whether they knew it was a drill or that sort of thing?

A: I did. The last thing I said to him, and I don't know why I questioned him, because he was a high-speed individual. He looked the part. He played the part. He was just a poster child for U.S. soldier, you know, Army soldier, you know. But I just, right before I stepped into the cell, right before we turned to go up in there, I turned and looked at him and I said "You are going to tell them I'm a U.S. soldier, right?" He said "Specialist A, you will be fine." He just laughed.

Q: He didn't answer you directly, did he?

A: No.

Q: What about where you had talked about the interpreter saying to you "They are really going to fuck you up"?

A: Right. You know, once the drill had started, you know, they come up there, and let you know, an NCO and a lieutenant, they come up there and they try to talk to you first, like: "You need to come out of there." And they are shaking the pepper spray, dope, OC spray, Oleoresin Capsicum. You know, as a threat, say "We're going to spray you." And then, once the IRF team arrived, to pre-stage, they simulated spraying, you know they dropped the food flap to simulate spraying the pepper spray. So the IRF team, you know, they thought, here he is being sprayed. And then at that point they brought the interpreter up there and he started talking to me in Urdu first, I recognized, and Pashto, and then English. I didn't understand exactly what he was saying, a word here and there, but yet couldn't get the whole sentence. But the last thing he said was "Man, they're here and they're pumped up. I'm telling you, you need to come out of that." I didn't say a word. I was under the bunk with my head down, and finally he said, you know, "Man, they are going to fuck you up." He said it in a slang dialect or whatever from wherever he was from. He was from California, a Hispanic gentleman, you know, who said it "Man, they're going to fuck you up." Of course that raised my eyebrows, I was like he's out there and he has seen it. These dudes, I could hear them stomping in the gravel outside the building, just as they were getting ready to come up and come in. They were all marching in unison, stomping in unison. They were pumped up. They were pumping themselves up, getting charged up so that they could come in there and have that extra power to control the detainee, you know.

I was the shield man, the number one man from my unit a lot. I was involved in many IRFs myself. You know, I always took that, went up there and the shield was clear and I always could look through it to the detainee and I usually moved the shield out from in front of my face so they could see me, and I would always say "la," trying to get them to calm down and go easy, but I would say "you're coming. You're coming out of that cell. Because five of us coming in there. We come in peace."

It was my duty to protect their heads. As soon as I went in and pinned them, dropped the shield and rolled them to the ground when everybody else came in and got on them because my job was to protect the head, not let anyone hit them, not let them wrestle around and hit some steel, you know, something hard so you know that just by doing that I could try to decompress them. But they would act up. They knew you were coming. They knew you would show up. Obviously there were hearts racing. They would come up and show, in front of their brothers, that they were hard core. And so, a lot of them didn't want to fight. And I saw it in their eyes. So I always could talk them down. Just come right up in there, get in there, run through it slow. And I let them know, you did a good job, you know. And if there was an interpreter, I said, "tell him 'I appreciate what you did,'" you know. Could have been me in there hand to hand with him, for two seconds, till I got him down, but I didn't have to do that if I talked to him, I noticed, you know.

Q: How many were in the IRF team that came in to subdue you?

A: There were generally five on a team and there were every bit of four in the cell with me. I mean I don't know, because it was segregation, you know, it was stamped steel, solid. You couldn't see out. When that door opened, the light came in, they rushed in, you know. My orders were, you know, as soon as they came in to just go limp and let them do their job. So I did. But then, you know, then they started to hurt me, and you know, twisting me up. There wasn't a lot of room in there. It didn't go as planned. And from me being on the IRF team from our unit, I saw, you know, real quickly, things were rushing by real fast. And it was dark. But the camera, you know, I could see the little light from the camera in there where they were filming it. But you know I remember one of them twisting my foot, you know, nearly breaking it, breaking my ankle and I finally snatched it away and I maybe kicked at him or something and I think one of them got injured during the struggle. But then after that, they just took me out and started, what I thought they were going to put the suit on me, you know, the shackle and handcuffs. But it kind of took a different turn then. One of the guys got up on my back and they were twisting my legs up behind me, and they finally got the chain and stuff on me. He finally got on around, got a hold of my throat, you know, put a pinch hold on me.

Q: From behind?

A: Yes, at a pressure point behind the jaw and just had his hands around my throat and of course with my legs up and with his knee on my back and him choking me. Most people think they can hold their breath for a couple of minutes, but if you're being stressed like that, you're ramped up, your body's being torqued, you know, contorted, within ten seconds you're out of air in your body. I'm saying you immediately go into panic mode, like all humans do, or mammals, whatever. But you need that air, you want that air now, and you're going to do whatever it takes to get it. And I felt like, you know, in the back of my mind I thought my orders were to get in this box and say nothing and be extracted. So was going to let up. I felt myself going out. My ears were already ringing and I could see little spots in front of my eyes in the dark, you know. And at that point I felt myself going out, you know, becoming unconscious. I was slipping away. Couldn't hear anything, was ringing, you know, still light-headed, you know. I was going. And for whatever reason I just got in sheer panic. I just turned my head real hard. I said "red, red" and as soon as I said "red" twice, the dude who was on my back, was choking me, slammed my head down against the steel floor, against the grate, you know, the stamped steel, and the first one jarred me. I said "red" a couple of times, he slammed my head down. After he slammed my head, I said "I'm a U.S. soldier," he slammed my head again. And then I was out. I was gone.

Q: Did he say anything during this?

A: I don't recall him saying anything, you know. I probably wasn't out long, you know, seconds, because they were there. Soon as I went limp, I'm sure they were dragging me, you know, and moving me, and I just remember when I came to, I couldn't see out of my right eye and I was very disoriented. The second time he hit me, he slammed my head down against the grate, it was like ice cold water was injected down my spine, you know, and my hands and feet limped, went numb temporarily, just for a second or two, just that shocked. So I knew then that I was hurt, you know what I am saying, he rang my bell. I remember coming to, and he was still on me when I came back to. I remember just grabbing whoever was back there. I didn't know. It was dark. They were wearing black, you know.

And I remember holding on to him and saying, "This guy right here, I want this guy right here." Because I'm an MP, too. I know he had just assaulted me. If he was doing that to me, he was doing it to detainees. And you know, I never witnessed that from our unit. I'm not saying we were held to a higher standard, but I felt like we were held to a higher standard. My supervisors, officers and non-commissioned officers, you know, they were concerned about reputation and fairness. You know, we're not down here to beat these people. We are not the Connecticut unit, that knew people that were real close to Manhattan or whatever, you know, Long Island. You know we were way over here from Kentucky, and so we going to go in and keep it in neutral, you know what I am saying. That was always my thought was to just keep it neutral. I don't know these people. I don't have anything against them. But if I had to kill him, I am going to kill him. If it's me or him, or him or somebody else in my unit, or another, sorry, they are going to die.

Q: Coming back, you said you kicked at one of them. Did you resist in any other way? Did you hit anyone or anything like that?

A: No, sir. Not that I'm aware of. And I think, just to be honest with you, I didn't remember kicking anyone. But as time passes, you know, it comes back to you here in dreams or whatever. But I don't know. And you know, I remember when they were hurting me, probably moving around or whatever, to try to pull my foot away or whatever, but I don't really remember kicking the guy. If you read the reports and stuff, they are saying he got injured, so.

Q: Some of their statements, I think just about all of their statements, say that they stopped immediately when you said "red." Why do you think they said that?

A: Heh, well, because that is the prudent thing to say. Obviously.

Q: Got it. They also said they all used "The minimum amount of force necessary."

A: An officer, police officer, military police officer, you always put that in your report. And I "always used the minimum amount of force necessary to effect arrest, to effect movement, to effect whatever." I am always used "the minimum amount of force necessary," I'm going to put that in writing. So whether you did or whether you do, or not, is a different story. Not going to say "I went a little overboard, you know, I really cranked him up and pounded that head." No one is going to write that. They are going to make it sound like, you know, like they are writing their log or something, you know, to try to play it short at this point, to cover all the bases, protect their own.

Q: Probably, I don't mean that you ever did it, but you may once in a while have observed somebody using more force than you would have, but this is what they put down, that they used the minimum amount of force, right?

A: Oh, right, absolutely. But you know "the minimum amount of force necessary," that is so subject to interpretation, upon every individual, every individual's strength, you know, some people are stronger than others, and some people get afraid and it causes them to over-react and use too much force. But you know, that was always the duty of the team leader, or every member. You know if I saw somebody that was, if I thought things were ever getting worked up too much, because maybe the detainee is hurting you, and maybe he's got a free arm. You, man, you've got a chain, somebody's got a leg, he's hit you in the jaw maybe hurting you. You have to step in immediately and said "Hey, hey, hey relax." You know what I'm saying. But it's hard, it's seconds, it's real quick.

Q: What do you think would have happened if they hadn't, finally, realized that you were a U.S. soldier?

A: I'm sure that I would have probably sustained far more damage than I did. Because initially, you know what I'm saying, I was out. So, you know, if I hadn't said anything, I might have got my head hit once or two more times. Pure speculation. I would have probably, I don't know. On its natural course, it would have gone farther. Finally, one of them realized, when they were putting shackles on me, I guess, that I had combat boots on instead just slippers, you know, flip-flops or whatever. So that's when it all, that's when they, I could see it in their eyes, out of my one good eye, I could see their eyes were huge.

Q: And somebody shouted "index" at that point, right?

A: Right. At first I heard "whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa," you know, somebody saying like "whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa." One of the supervisors on that IRF team, you know. He was an NCO, I'm sure, because he was toward the end of the train, the end of the five men, you know you send your brawler in first, the big guy. But I could tell that he realized, "Whoa, something." And then I came tripping out here. I just sustained a brain injury, apparently. I tried to collect myself, and the dog is barking and the medics are looking at me. And the medics are hollering "He needs to go to the hospital, now." You know, blood is running down my face and up around my eyes, and all this stuff. And I just think that he, you know what I'm saying, stopped it right then. Eventually, see, it was going to stop. They wanted me actually out of there and to take me to the hospital. And I don't hold any malice against these individuals. I just think they got ramped up and one individual in particular, you know, just let it get out of control, let his emotions get away from him.

Q: That is the one you pointed to, when you said "I want that man," right?

A: I had hold of some part of his uniform, because I could not see. But I knew this person just got up off my back. I was holding on to some part of his gear or something. You know I was trying to turn around. It was dark. I couldn't see nothing. I could just see he had a big head. He had this big mask on, but his head filled up the helmet.

Q: Do you believe there was no videotape or do you think they erased it? Or what do you think happened?

A: Oh, I know they erased it. Because when I came out of the Oscar block, into the causeway, at first they were screaming "Cut that suit off him." Because an officer, captain, the brass, was going to have to come down, the company commander. And they cut the suit off of me and tried to make the dog calm down, too. And then once everybody realized "Oh, my God, we've been set up, this wasn't real, this was a drill, and now this dude is one of ours, and he's hurt." But I don't know.

Q: When you were in the hospital a few days later, Major General Miller came to talk to you. What did he tell you?

A: It's sketchy, but he and the Brigadier General --

Q: Payne?

A: Payne. Yes, sir. They both came in there, you know, and obviously I am sitting there in a neck brace and kind of drugged and out of my mind, and here come the top two generals from the post in the hospital room with me. My first thought is, you know, I've done something wrong. I'm in trouble here. But then immediately, within a second or two, I realized that they wouldn't be coming to read me my rights. It would be someone else. And then I realized what it was about, they were checking on the troop, and they were about their troops. They were good men, in that respect, you know, they were fairly high speed individuals, and they were trying to do the best job that they could, they were only just coming to check me out, you see, because they have got a report that one of the M.P.s got hurt in camp, he is hospitalized. And I remember Major General Miller, you know, same old stuff, you know, saying "How are you doing, son?" you know, "Is there anything I can get you?" you know what I am saying, because I guess, thinking "I'm one of yours, and if something was going on in the hospital, was he getting medication, wanting to check on his troops, make sure he is getting everything "Are you hungry?" whatever. I remember him touching my arm and saying "Don't you worry about a thing. You just rest up. Tell the person everything is going to be fine. Reassure them. Get better. Don't worry, we're going to look into this, and if there was misconduct, we're going to find out. And then General Payne just kind of walked up and kind of shook my hand, you know, because he was with the two-star. He was kind of his escort. Wasn't there and to talk, he was just there as my immediate JTF commander. You know, he was in charge of all units, and General Miller was in charge of the post. But, you know, it was a comforting feeling, but I told him, you know, I still feel, the person that I am, saying what I would always say, you know, I'm ready to roll, you know, I'm ready to rock. Here I am, I had both eyes black and I'm in a dollar collar and tubes running in and out of there. And I felt ashamed that those generals came in that room and saw me like that. I felt like a malingerer right then. But I was alive. I could move my body. But I felt like, you know, I was in pain. You know, my head was killing me. I really wasn't that coherent. I still felt like this was not the place for me, get these tubes out of me. Because the generals were just here, I needed to go back to work. I don't want them to think that I am a malingerer.

Q: Did they say there was going to be an investigation of how you got hurt?

A: Yes. Yes, they did. I remember, to my recollection, you know there has been a few years now. Although it comes back quite frequently to me, as the years pass, you know, it bleeds and fades and gets distorted. But it was General Miller himself that said, you know, that there was going to be an investigation. I found that, you know what I'm saying, whether it be his staff, you know what I'm saying, or CID or whatever the investigating authority was, there on that post, you know, naval intelligence, you know, NIS, whatever, you know. But I didn't want that, you know what I'm saying. I wanted to reassure him that I was going to be fine. I didn't want to make any waves. I was not a whistle-blower. I never have

been, I sucked it up and drove on, every time. And I was ready to take my ass with them, my jurting, and drive on. I was ready to go back to duty because we were short, you know, short-staffed. But I felt they were sincere, I don't think it was political, just political statement. I think they were sincere, you know, because they wanted to find out if somebody had committed misconduct within their command. They wanted to know about it, they wanted to deal with it immediately, you know, swift action. They were high-speed individuals, you know.

Q: Tell me what your life is like today.

A: Life is good. You know, I tell myself that every day because, you know, a positive mental attitude takes me a long way. You know, I take a lot of medications, and I am currently medicated. You know, I'm on it. And life is much better this way. It started out, it was anti-seizure medication. Because I was having grand mal seizures as the result of the head injury, apparently. And you know they issue medicines for that, and then they find other things wrong with me. Before you know it, you're taking 50 pills a day, you know. Currently, you know, it's down around 28 or so, less than 30. But, you know, a lot of the psychological issues that go along with it, that I can't, for whatever reason, I can't control on my own, because I try. I try. I don't know if it is from the head injury. At first, a lot of stuff was coming back, flashing back, you know, not so much that incident but stuff from the first Gulf war, and just traumatic stuff in your life that comes back, you know, life or death situations. All those kept flashing back, coming back. And before you know it, you're on a psychotropic. You can't sleep, and you are vigilant, you know. You're used to being alert all night long and after the head injury everything, you know, became hyper-vigilant there. Slept through the day, and up all night, was armed and well-lit, you know, I had a weapon on me, was looking around for something to use because I always felt like I was going to be attacked. And so, you know, they medicate me for that, and I see, you know, these several individuals at the VA Medical Center, doctors, and they all want to issue something to you. You know, something to sleep, and here's something for your mood, here's six pills for your mood and take 20 of those a day, and here is something to help you with your liver because we're destroying it with all these pills, but we're really trying to help you. You know, I believe, I think they are, but there are effects from using the medications, you know. It's one after the other, you know. Stomach pills because you've got bleeding ulcers, and they are cauterizing them because you're taking so many medications.

Q: What do you do with your time? Do you work? Do you have any recreation? How is your life that way?

A: You know, there for a while, I spent a lot of time with my family and baby-sitting my nephew for my sister while she could work. When I came out, I never asked for any of this. I was trying to stay in the Army. I want to be there today. I don't care, the worst job in the worst assignment, I'll take it. But obviously, I had the head injury, and you can't put a weapon back in somebody's hand who may have seizures. You can't put the trust. And I realize that now. As a team leader, I admit, you know, a section leader, could I trust someone like me with a weapon to defend, to get my back? No. Because you never know, you know. But, you know, I've got some hobbies. You know, work on a few vehicles and stay busy. And I have many counselors, you know, the Army Wounded Warrior program, there is someone that monitors me there, that says, you know, "What are you doing with your life? Do you want to go try to work?" And every time I said "yes," it's like, you know, "You just go on and try to get you a little job, like a hobby job or something because we really don't want you out there around people." And I don't know if they are afraid I'm going to snap, or whatever. But they encouraged me to maybe have my own business, you know, do whatever I liked and try to make some money at it, and not to just be stagnated, either. But, you know, I have a home now, I take care of it, and my son takes up a lot of my time, trying

to keep him squared away and straight. But work on vehicles for family and friends, and relatives and all that. Just doing a lot of that. And doing some traveling. But I try to live, you know, [not] beyond my means or anything of the sort. I'm grateful that I do have the compensation. I don't want it. I don't want a dime of it. I would much rather be out there working, but every time I go to the doctor, every three months, I see a series of them, and I say the same thing, you know. "I think I'm good to go. I'd like to be released from this program, dismissed from the VA totally, I'll go do my thing somewhere else." They immediately said no, no. I feel like I'm capable to work.

Q: I talked to Bruce [Simpson, his lawyer] a couple of times. And he said you still wanted, if you could, to get back into the Army. Why, after the Army turned its back on you, as it did, do you want to rejoin?

A: I'm a soldier. Everything else out here pales in comparison to it. I could be the mayor of this city or the president of the United States, and I would still feel like I was on a lower level than a soldier because they are down there, making a difference. They are out there in it, and I'm not fanatical about it. I'm not the type that says "I love the United States Army." No. It sucks. No, really, this sucks. But that's what a soldier always says, you know, saying, wherever you go in the world, you know, it sucks. No, really, it sucks. But someone has to do it. And I feel like that I am physically, and, you know, yes, I have partial blindness, from the head injury, and I do realize that. Now, I finally after what, nearly eight years, I am finally come to the rationalization that perhaps I am not fit enough to fight, in that perspective, you know, regimented, whatever. But in my mind, you know what I'm saying, I still think that I had to do it, and with a little train-up, I could beat this again. I think the mental issues, the instability that obviously is with me forever, you know, 4F, whatever.

Q: Well, a lot of people in the Army don't fight. I told you about my silly story. Would you do a clerk's job if they gave it to you?

A: I would do any job they would allow me to do. I will take the worst job in the worst assignment in the armpit of the world for the rest of my life if they would allow it. Dark room, back somewhere in supply, nobody sees me, whatever. And I know for a fact I could do it. I could, any job. I could learn anything. I've flown a military aircraft. I've driven everything you can drive, from wheeled to track. There is nothing that I can't learn, with time. I run in and be an army surgeon, you know, that's going to take a little time to learn. But I feel like I can do anything. That's me, from my personal Sean A's standpoint, saying, you know, all hoo-hah, I'll come aboard fired-up and all motivated, you know, that's the person that I am and always wanted to be was a soldier, you know. I don't know how I'd feel if someone like me came to my unit. Once I found out that this dude's, you know, got some issues or whatever. And obviously they present themselves from time to time. I can't stop that. I can't stop the flashbacks. I can't stop feeling like I'm on fire again.

Q: Are you still having seizures?

A: You know, rarely. I haven't had one in probably two months. And before that it was probably three or four. But they are so rare. But I have learned how to control it, I think. I think I have learned how to help it and ease it when I feel them coming on, just try to relax and try to take the stress away from it, and it doesn't make it as hard as when I was freaking out about it. My whole body would tense up, and you know I had to sleep for two days afterwards because it would just devastate me, you know.