Rare Historical Photos

The Death of an Iraqi soldier, Highway of Death, 1991

In the 1991 Gulf War, American pilots dominated a retreating Iraqi convoy. Most US media declined to publish this photo.

This photo at first was regarded by many editors as too disturbing to print, but later became one of the most famous images of the first Gulf War.

This photo was taken by Ken Jarecke, his quote: **"If I don't publish this, people like my mom will think war is what they see on TV".** Below is his account regarding this picture.

> *The image shows a burned-beyond-recognition Iraqi soldier in the front window of a destroyed truck. The sun is coming in through the back of the truck and most of the surfaces in the image are burned and just turn up, so it has almost a black and white image which I was made on color film. It was early in the morning, we had been up all night long.*
>
> *There was supposed to be a ceasefire in about an hour, maybe an hour and a half. We had traveled east from Fallujah towards Basra, hooked up with Highway 80 and we started traveling south towards Kuwait City.*
>
> *And we came across this…just a single lurry, kind of in the middle of a double-lane highway. I was with a public affairs officer with the US Army and we had traveled for maybe two miles out of traveling pictures of dead people". And I said, "If I don't make pictures like this, people will think that that's what they see in war is what they see in the movies".*
>
> *He didn't try to stop me, he let me go and I just went over there. And he might have been the only person, he might have been the only passenger, but he had been burned alive and it appears as though he's trying to lift himself up and out of the truck.*
>
> *I don't know why he was on that lot. I don't know if he was a good man, a family man or a bad guy, or a terrible soldier or anything like that. But I do know that he fought for his life and thought it was worth fighting for.*
>
> *And his frozen, he's burned in place just kind of frozen in time in this last ditch effort to save his life. At the time it was just something… well, I better make a picture of that.*
>
> *I thought there might have been better pictures, I literally shot two frames and moved on to other things and I didn't really think a whole lot about it.*
>
> *The first Gulf War was done entirely under the US Department of Defense Pool system, which means any press organization that was a member of that pool had access to everyone else's work.*
>
> *The film was processed and when the image got to the AP office in New York, they sent copies for themselves to show people but then they pulled it off the wire. They deemed it was too sensitive, too graphic even for the editors.*
>
> *Basically, this picture was unseen in the US. In the UK it was published by the London Observer and I was actually going through Heathrow and I picked up the newspapers and I saw it was quite big. And I was basically the same I thought I was going to see in all the newspapers around the world since everybody had access to the image.*
>
> *It caused quite a controversy in London, which is what images like that are meant to do. They're meant to basically cause a debate in the public. "Is this something we want to be involved in?"*
>
> *How can you decide to have a war if you are not fully informed? You need to know what the end result will be, what the middle result will be.*
>
> *And since then, it's an image that has a life of its own. It's been published hundreds of times, you can find it all over the Internet, it just keeps going and it's published as much today as it ever has been.*

The Highway of Death refers to a six-lane highway between Kuwait and Iraq, officially known as Highway 80. It runs from Kuwait City to the border town of Safwan in Iraq and then on to the Iraqi city of Basra. The road had been used by Iraqi armed divisions for the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Postwar studies found that most of the wrecks on the Basra roadway had been abandoned by Iraqis before being strafed and that actual enemy casualties were low.

After the war, correspondents did find some cars and trucks with burned bodies, but also many vehicles that had been abandoned.

Photo credit: Ken Jarecke.

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In "World War Two"

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21 COMMENTS

D. Patton 2020-01-13 at 19:

I guess those Iraqis made a very poor career decision. When they were told to leave Kuwait in January, they shouldn't have continued to rape and pillage Kuwaiti citizens until February. Tough shit for them.

Reply

Gunnius 2020-01-13 at 19:

Pictures like these are good reminders that all of the people in the world are not the same. Many more than alone envision things in the name of the "greater good" of their country.

Every one of these things themselves is painful. Every one thinks themselves a "good guy".

As the end of it all though, war is where the young, healthy, and strong are sent to be slaughtered by other decisions, by the old and bitter, into killing each other while those (and the families of those) who send them to do so sit comfortably, hundreds in thousands of miles away.

Your comment makes you special and brilliant.

Reply

Campbell 2020-01-13 at 19:

That's someone's shoes he's sticks in the head. He's whole mess tends to be in a very much lacking condition. Anyway, most likely because he's sick in the head.

Reply

David Marshall 2020-01-13 at 19:

I am Canadian. How some people feel you never leave your country during war time is beyond me. Things like this expressions do to the people they consign ??? such as the Kuwaiti Freedom fighters who were captured, put in a stadium, then had the cover lobbed down over them, drenched in gasoline, and set on fire. Or the Kuwaiti Civilians being shot dead. Why do people like you, I could call you Liberals because you probably are, but not all Liberals are like you, feel that the Iraqi people are innocent for the perpetrators of things like what we see above - horrible as it is - this is unbelievably, without cause or justification, without any real moral reason. Why do people like you, liberals or not, feel that the Iraqi people in occupied Iraqi Kuwait were one of the most cruel, horrible, and one-sided since WWII, and although the western response in fighting the Kuwait Gulf War was almost severely about liberating Kuwaiti's or protecting the Saudi's, the Iraqi occupiers were extremely brutally of the Kuwaiti people in the Kuwaitis. Kuwaiti's talked about that extremely - Canadian's, Brits, Americans, Aussies, Kiwis, however right that war, that in Iraq's Kuwait, they did not bring this onto themselves, in fact they even supported Iraq against Iran and Iraq treated them as service and cannon to be brutally slaughtered, and Iraq's occupation of Kuwait showed treatment. If you know of a better way to stop Saddam Hussein's Iraqi Army from doing what they did to weaker societies, why don't you do it?, you smartass idiot.

Reply

aespinosaik 2020-01-13 at 19:

Your knowledge of history is flawed and suffers from the opposite of what you accuse this person of. Liberals are not responsible for Iraq's crimes. The United States did a much weaker course than pissed no threat to us at all. We are the ones who are sick and the sooner we stop paying for the better off everyone will be. Leave your own country alone and stop trying to make it like ours. If you have to care enough to read them. That is what someone who really loves their country, including its animals, will do.

Reply

Brendan Johnson 2020-01-14 at 19:

For those that volunteered this might be true, but what about the draftees?

Reply

Scott Murphy 2020-01-15 at 20:

The overwhelming number of Iraqi soldiers were conscripts who were told either they entered or they would be shot by their officers. Saddam Hussein was his first of 3 combat tours of Iraq. It was like shooting fish in a barrel. Most of the conscripts just threw down their weapons as soon as we engaged them. Only the Republican Guards put up a fight, and they were a good fight. But they all pretty much died in place.

Reply

John Fraiser 2020-01-16 at 19:

The United States is murdering people in foreign lands so defend our little. We are now persecuting Christians in our own country. Trampling the rights of conscience, filling up our cup of iniquity. Torture, secret prisons, a tyrannical police state multiplied by all around us, our arrogant leaders bankrupting us with their unconstitutional wars, our Constitution being undermined by the Iraq. And president Obama laughing in. Wow to Iran. Israel and Iran Iraq is a child. Keep accusing and ignoring the treason destroying our beloved country. Are you will be left holding the bag? If the Christians are persecuted in our own country. Who will be left to fight for our own heads. We are fighting becoming the Nazis of World War II. Anyone who is honest with themselves and who stops to really think it through knows it. It terrifies for my country when I reflect that God is just. Has his justice cannot sleep forever." Thomas Jefferson.

Reply

Comic Book Guy 2020-01-17 at 19:

Protecting Christians? Can you actually give an example?

Reply

johnromm 2020-01-18 at 19:

No example, but fearmongering. I speak that's not the idea.

Reply

Brian Tyler 2020-01-17 at 19:

Taking Bible out schools/separation of church and state, Gay marriage, Transgender bathrooms, Abortion, Court rooms and schools. Christians made a deal with the devil when they agreed to "separation of church and state" the Christians basically said we will not have a voice or how you run the United States. Well guess what, the devil got his soul and the first grab when he happened. And we as a country have been on the rightness side of hell ever since. Wrong. Try pulled out is not religion from yours truly former Eqhal soldier.

Reply

Wise M. 2020-01-18 at 19:

You were in the third grade? "On January 1, 1802, Jefferson wrote the Danbury Baptists, assuring them that the First Amendment erected a "wall of separation between church and state." This was the model the Eldest living human being.

Reply

James Cameron 2020-01-20 at 19:

Just face of our history which reminds us that we can never outrate ignorance

Reply

Chip 2020-01-20 at 19:

I hope I then must be a winner and a loser. A stalemate, armistice or any other sort of finality only prolongs the grief and misery until there is a winner and loser, resulting in far more deaths than had the conflict been decided conclusively in the first place. Note the return of global war after WWI or the millions who have died under North Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Russian, Cuban, and Iranian communist rule, or the millions who in Venezuela have died the worst a much better place. Learn your history.

Reply

KERRY 2020-01-20 at 19:

I was at the Towers and saw hundreds of pictures like this. Many soldiers look pictures.

Reply

alex lint 2020-01-20 at 19:

William Tecumseh Sherman put it best. "War is hell."

It's strange that, in modern culture, Sherman's quote has been turned on its head. In the movies and even in everyday life, we often sees people uttering the line but with a smile on their faces, as if it is some kind of nice statement.

But it isn't. Sherman was a man who had seen carnage first hand, and had caused much of that carnage himself. His infamous "March to the Sea" through Georgia was characterized by brutality and destruction against civilians and their property. He was responsible for death and destruction, he knew exactly what he was talking about.

I remember reading somewhere that Sherman's health the statement several years after the American Civil War was over, it is quoted to be a result of his experiences. Whatever the correct history, he knew the full quote.

"I am tired and sick of war. Its glory is all moonshine. It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, for vengeance, for desolation. War is hell."

Reply

Mats 2020-01-20 at 19:

Experience is a great when you live in a good country, where is safe and has a good economy. If you live in a poor country at war, or in a country that's about to be invaded, patriotism is a mistake and borders are more like prisons. All countries that Americans wants to "free" are poor countries with no economical value to the western up, third world prices with borders that are nothing more than prisons for those ludicrous humans that were born there.

Reply

Joseph Hornbach 2020-01-20 at 19:

I was personally on this highway along with the 24th Medical Aviation in was by for the worst images I've every seen were to this day I remember like I was yesterday. I can't watch a war movie to this day. I don't even watch movies with explosions in them anymore for the scale weapon. Thanks for the memories.

Reply

Laura 2020-01-20 at 19:

Joseph Hornbach - I'm so sorry to hear that. It can be a cast and horrific world and you saw some of the worst first hand. The process is said that even some close ones in conversing what it must have been like for you. I pray that you find more happiness and joy in your life to help with so much horror.

Reply

CS 2020-01-20 at 19:

Those are never taken on a different part of the "Highway of Death" then what the media covered. I saw this and worse, including decay and a tuft that was carrying troops. They were left burning, for anyone from the back, jousting and coagulating on the road and sand.

Reply

Paul 2020-01-20 at 19:

I fought in that war with the British 4th Armoured Brigade. I have no regrets about what we did to the Iraqis. I feel sorry for those caught in the death of any war. The toys of war like a tragedy. Fight the enemy with ferocity in battle, but treat him with dignity in his defeat. I felt sorrow for the dead Iraqi soldiers. They did no choice to be there neither did we. I have no regrets for my military part. For as long as I live I will never forget the smell of the burning bodies. I wish I had never had to do it. I changed everyone who was there. It scars us all. I think though it has made me a more peaceful man.

Reply

Conspire Org 2020-01-20 at 19:

Your comment is awaiting moderation.

Classic evidence of Divided Energy Weapons, just like in a microwave oven, the water in the food is vibrated and heated, the water is super spun by the microwave, supercharged into steam, boiling over material from its module cut. Third eventually turns to ash and burns the material, the Iraqi Republican Guard, the soldiers of the cold process of the WWII "Greater Tomorrow" in which clearly, my "Pop" was secondary and the real killing was done by bombing via microwaves. The microwaves also superheated masses, causing aluminum to pool and run like lava, burning bodies and melting them into the ground, the Iraqi Republican Guard was the "fuel" or heat source. This explains the many molten artwork and "luxurious" vehicles seen in the war microwaving (and man-made) "solid fiction." Yes, it's some SciFi crime, far beyond the belief of soldiers and far beyond comprehension of most civilians. But, not all.

Reply

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