

# TARGET: WAR

*Student Poll*  
Survey of 100 ACHS students

- Students who support war in Iraq: 37%
- Students who currently know someone in the war: 61%
- Students who don't support war in Iraq: 58%
- Looking to join military branch in future: 16%
- Undecided: 5%



**FAR LEFT: Schump (circled) and his unit during their down time. MIDDLE: Iraqi terrain overview in Baghdad. RIGHT: Schump in his bunker in Iraq.**

## The Life of a Soldier

### Lake Forest College student reflects on active duty in Iraq

S spurred on by his grandfather's stories fighting in heroism in WWII, Joe Schump, Marine Reserves Corporal assigned to an artillery regiment, looked forward to the day that he could dress in uniform and be in a position to defend his country. Schump is a native of Colorado and is currently a freshman at Lake Forest College.

Schump spent 13 months in the Middle East and conveys vivid images of life as an active duty marine. Schump first arrived in Kuwait at the end of January of 2003. While in Kuwait, Schump's unit spent time preparing equipment and waiting for political issues to be resolved, before moving into Baghdad.

Once they arrived in Baghdad, Schump and other soldiers encountered an overwhelming sandstorm that posed serious security problems for the marines.

Several nights into the sandstorm, Schump was assigned to stand watch. Alongside him was his 50 caliber machine gun.

"You couldn't seem much in the sand storm," said Schump. "Even with the night vision goggles on, I couldn't see five yards in front of me."

The situation that these soldiers were in was risky because the enemy could attack at any given moment without their knowledge. The sandstorm was one of many hardships that the soldiers had to endure.

When Schump's unit first arrived in Baghdad, they moved into an abandoned house. Schump remembered some close calls while they stayed there.

"We heard the (a group of marines who were in the streets) talking, saying they heard a long string of AK 47 (fire) going off. It

seemed close, said Schump. "We went and checked the streets, but nothing was there."

According to Schump, they later heard a rumor that the gunfire resulted when an Iraqi broke into another Iraqi's home attempting to rob him.

Schump and his fellow marines also had to be alert for land mines. Schump stated that the military engineers usually cleared the area, but there was always that chance that one land mine might have been missed.

The living conditions for the soldiers were at times inconvenient and far from comfortable.

Schump along with other soldiers were required to sleep in six inch deep holes for protection. Also, according to Schump, the soldiers were required to wear gas masks while they slept.

"We had to wear them in case the enemy came in," said Schump.

According to Schump, the soldiers received at most five hours of sleep each night due to sudden fire missions which required them to move out at a moments notice.

The Marines' meals left them sorely unsatisfied. Schump stated that their food supply consisted of pre-packaged meals in preservatives.

"We had 24 different menus, but most of them were horrible," said Schump.

At one point, the soldiers were cut back to eating only two packaged meals a day.

"We were advancing quicker than the supplies could keep up," said Schump, of the apparent food shortage.

American troops were frequently warmly greeted by the Iraqi citizens. Schump recalls the reaction of the Iraqi people when the American soldiers showed up.

"The kids we really happy that we were there," said Schump. "We were helping them out."

Schump believes that the war was definitely necessary. "Maybe Saddam Hussein didn't have any weapons (of mass destruction), but he needed to be taken out of power," said Schump. "He was a major threat to the Iraqi security. From what I understand, he murdered his own countrymen and treated his own people badly."

Although some would say there are factors that make it difficult to be a soldier, Schump saw it differently. Schump regarded it as something that needed to get done.

"I wanted to complete the mission and get out," said Schump.

In April 2003, Schump, along with other soldiers, were informed that they would be heading home soon. There was a catch, however. The transportation back to the U.S. was via military ship. The trip home would take them 2 ½ months. On their journey home, they stopped in Sydney, Australia, Pearl Harbor, and then they arrived at their final destination—Camp Pendleton, California.

"I was excited," said Schump. "I completed what I had to do and it was time to come home."



## Iraq stirs up memories, passions

Joe Schump, Marine Reserves Corporal

## Vietnam Trauma Vet takes a look back

You think you know what war is all about. You see the fighting in war movies, but war is more than dodging enemy bullets and planning the next attack. It's not simply about the heroes. It's everyday people like the guy next door. What the movies don't show is the everyday life—the everyday misery of a combat soldier.

"You don't know how it feels to sleep in the rain or in the mud, or to sleep knowing tigers could carry you off. You don't have to live with the poisonous bugs or the jungle rot," said Vietnam Veteran and 30-year Antioch resident, Al Vandrush, who served as a combat soldier in the Marines from 1967 to 1970. "Everyday life is just passed off. We were wet, we were miserable, and we were lonely."

Imagine being relocated to another country for months or even years on end without family or friends, you build relationships with those around you—the people who are sharing your pain. You create a bond with your fellow soldiers, and eventually, they become closer to you than relatives. You make your very best friends in the war, not knowing which will survive, or which will perish—never to return to family or the security of home.

"You bond with these guys closer than family. You laugh together, you cry together, you sweat together, and you bleed together. There isn't a bond much stronger than that," said Vandrush. "The hardest thing was losing the people that you become closer to than relatives. One minute they're there, and the next minute they're not. One thing that will forever be engraved in my memory is the day that I had to identify my very best friend. I cried for days."

Vandrush lost his best friend in Vietnam, and was asked to bring the young soldier home to his mother. He refused, but still to

this day wonders if he did the right thing. The two friends went on leave together in Australia, and shortly before leaving for home, Vandrush's comrade was killed by our own artillery. Now imagine preparing to come home. For the fortunate ones who make it through, returning home can cause other challenges and adjustments.

"You had to leave knowing that a lot of these guys may not make it home—well, they all came home, but most of them were in boxes," said Vandrush. "You had to break away from the guys who became your family out there."

Leaving war is one thing, but dealing with life when you get home is another. Living in the pouring rain for months at a time makes it a challenge to take a shower. Looking death in the eye and seeing the destruction of your unfamiliar surroundings makes it hard to sleep at night. Witnessing the defeat of your best friends makes it difficult to put the experiences of war in the past. Leaving your adopted relatives behind with uncertainty and trepidation makes it a struggle to think about moving on. The effects that combat and war can have on a person are beyond anything we could ever imagine—they are worse, explained Vandrush.

Vietnam, like today's war in Iraq, was an unpopular war. Young people were dying and there was no end in sight.

"Today's war (in Iraq) reminds me so much of Vietnam, and I am torn apart by it. I don't want to see our kids go, but I am proud of those who do," said Vandrush. "I just wish there was more of a purpose."

“Today’s war [in Iraq] reminds me so much of Vietnam, and I am torn apart by it.”  
-Al Vandrush  
Vietnam War Veteran

**BELOW: A view of Schump's bunker from the outside. RIGHT: The soldier's home for seven months at a time. At night, the soldiers are required to wear gas masks in case of attacks.**



## Students battle over war issues

If nothing else, junior and senior year required United States History and Government courses make students realize that it is important to develop a strong opinion and awareness toward political situations going on in our world.

It may seem unreal right now, but this generation are the future leaders and representatives of this country. The hopes, dreams, and thoughts structured in the minds of the young adults today will eventually be known and understood throughout the United States. That is why Antioch Community High School students are speaking now about their thoughts concerning the war in Iraq.

Carter Bell, ACHS senior, stated that his future is in the military and will attend the United States Military Academy at West Point next year. According to Bell, U.S. troops in Iraq are serving a necessary purpose.

"I feel that the war in Iraq was justified and that we have ended a dangerous regime," said Bell. "I feel that we have eliminated a threat to the U.S."

Like many wars in the history of the United States, much political debate is over the reason why the U.S. is occupying Iraq and what actions the U.S. should take next, after four years of war.

"I believe we have troops in Iraq to liberate the Iraqi people from a dangerous dictator who was killing his own people," said Bell. "We need to establish a strong democracy in Iraq and get out."

Steve Suhar, ACHS senior, represents an alternative position concerning the war in Iraq. Suhar indicated that the war in Iraq is unnecessary and not serving any important causes.

"I hope this war is reveal to be an atrocity and a big mistake," said Suhar.

According to Suhar, the real reason United States troops are fighting in Iraq has to do with financial reasons, and nothing to do with the war on terrorism.

Suhar also stated that if in fact, the U.S. wants to help Iraq build a strong government that will benefit Iraqi citizens, the U.S. has not made much progress.

"Killing Iraqi troops [is] counterproductive to help rebuild Iraq," said Suhar. "It is important that we let Iraqis have the sovereign nation they deserve to have."

Suhar maintained that there are several different groups of people to blame for the United States being mislead into a war with Iraq.

"I certainly think the Executive Branch should be held accountable, as well as the [CIA]," said Suhar.

Although Bell and Suhar hold different opinions on several different aspects of the current war in Iraq, both believe that the war will end no sooner than four or five years from now.

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