

The Real Call of Duty

by Andrew O'Connor

Author's Note

I often see the military portrayed in negative and unrealistic lights through mediums ranging from television to video games, and the aim of my piece was to clear up this notion. Your average day does not look like a level in Call of Duty, and you aren't out eradicating people like some believe. I chose the images I did to show that military members are everyday people with everyday feelings that have a not-so-everyday job, and even in these conditions, find a way to smile, have fun, and help in any way they can.

With a population of nearly 303 million people currently living in the United States, the number of people serving in the United States military is 2.2 million, or less than one percent of the total population. Liberal media outlets such as MSNBC and BBC will often depict the war efforts of the United States as heinous, offensive atrocities. Most of the people reporting such fallacies have never, and will never, experience life in the military or gain enough of an understanding to pass such judgment. These media centers and correspondents are "in the cave" based on their lack of truth or belief in perceived truth. Being in Plato's Cave is like anything else in our lives: a choice. If you do not question life or form your own opinions, you are doomed to forever dwell in the cave. Trusting the information provided by the aforementioned media outlets is a choice that only you can make, and rather than mindlessly eating from the hand that feeds you, you can create your own plate and decide how you want to eat it.

As a former military member, I have been to most of the places covered by the media and have experienced some of these events first hand. In my time in the navy, I visited a good portion of Europe and the Middle East. I have been to Spain, Portugal, Greece, Italy, Turkey, Bahrain, and the U.A.E. I was able to gain a different perspective on life in different parts of the world, and empathize with how some of the people of these countries lived. When I would come home, people would ask me how many people I killed or how many terrorists I hunted down. The truth of the matter is that your average day in military life is rather uneventful. The perception of your average soldier being a Rambo-esque killing machine is due to lack of exposure, flawed perception of truth, and misinformed propaganda, as well as the market for video games such as Call of Duty, which basically tells kids that being in the military is just running around with an M4 and a few dive knives killing everything in sight with a pulse. In truth, though, most of the soldiers seen on television are just like any other normal human being. They laugh when something is funny and they cry when something is sad.

In her book *On Photography*, Susan Sontag uses the allegory of Plato's Cave to illustrate that we exist in a false sense of truth, mainly through the pictures we see. I felt this argument was a bit nearsighted, and countered by saying that truth is not something that can be learned or taught; only experienced. The viewer of the photograph decides what is truth and what is perceived truth, and must make the judgment on their own. If you are told what truth is and find no need to

question it, then you not only have a false truth, but no personal truth. Sontag raises a key point when she says: "While real people are out killing themselves or other real people, the photographer stays behind his or her camera, creating a tiny element of another world: the image world that bids to outlast us all." I agree with Sontag in the fact that choosing an image over life shouldn't even have to be a choice at all, but carrying the element into another world is the fascination behind photographs. War pictures carry the same weight as those of the Holocaust in that their use is not designed to scare but to inform. The viewer decides the interpretation of a photograph, and it is their choice to decide whether it is despicable or informative, unattached or genuine. Photographs allow us to gain glimpses into the life and reality of another, with military pictures being no different.

As a human being, you decide what you will believe is truth and what is falsehood. My own experiences partnered with my cognitive thinking have allowed me to differentiate between truth and what is perceived as truth. Truth is not something that can be taught or memorized; it can only be experienced. As you gain a greater understanding of the world you live in, your truths will undoubtedly change—as will your opinions and how you form them. What shouldn't change is your ability to think and decide for yourself. Create your own worldly truths and opinions, rather than being blindly lead to another's interpretation of truth.



America's favorite pastime



Soldier helping woman



Soldier shakes hand with child



Puppy gets a ride



Back to business



Sniper and sniper's best friend



Soldier gets a lift



Need a lift?



Puppy likes Pops

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