

**Cody Herbert Full**

**Honorably Discharged 11/11/11 from US ARMY**

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Chairman Royce, Members of the Foreign Affairs committee, thank you for allowing me to share my first-hand account of my experiences serving in Afghanistan.

I arrived at FT. Richardson at the end of January 2008; I was assigned to Blackfoot company 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon. 1-501 Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. Bowe Bergdahl arrived to 2<sup>nd</sup> PLT around Oct 2008. I want to share some of my observances about Bowe Bergdahl, since I was around him a lot. In fact, he was my roommate.

One of the first things I noticed about Bergdahl was that he was always asking questions and taking notes. He seemed focused. Bergdahl was well-read, intelligent and blended in as well as he needed to. Upon arriving, though, Bergdahl made comments about how he wanted to kill as many Taliban as he could. I never heard him say anything about helping the Afghan people; his comments were all about killing as many Taliban as he could.

In November 2008 our unit deployed to the National Training Center in California to train for our upcoming deployment to Afghanistan. During this time Bergdahl was a good soldier; he was on time, in the right uniform, taking notes and asking questions. During this time neither I nor anybody I have spoken with and served with can remember Bergdahl walking off the base and abandoning his team. While this story seems to be repeated over and over, I don't believe it happened. Platoon members would have known if someone walked off or noticed if someone wasn't in their proper place. We would at least have heard about it and no one there can remember it happening.

I've recently heard another story that doesn't make sense. Bergdahl's father has referred to an email, reported by a magazine, that his son became friends with a LT Bradshaw while at NTC. Bradshaw was part of Comanche Company. Officers from other companies do not fraternize with the lower enlisted. Comanche Company was not even in the same area as our Blackfoot company while at NTC.

The only time Bergdahl could have spoken to LT Bradshaw was in passing. The idea that Bergdahl and Bradshaw were close friends or even friends is false in every sense; this has been vetted by common knowledge of how an infantry brigade structure works as well as speaking with former members of Bradshaw's PLT and friends of LT Bradshaw.

In March of 2009 our Brigade deployed to Afghanistan but Bergdahl did not make the deployment with us. He had gotten a staph infection and would not make it until May 2009.

Soon after arriving in Afghanistan, we were tasked with building an observation post called OP MEST, named for the location of the post. While at OP MEST, platoon members including Bergdahl were photographed out of uniform and in short sleeves. This is a common occurrence for military members on the front lines. After all, it's hot and dirty and tough work. This photograph has been used by some to say our platoon had problems. It's a ridiculous charge. Security was always in place. These acts of common sense survival did not jeopardize the security or put anyone in danger. Leaders in the platoon, however, were reprimanded and punished after the photos were released to the media. Many of us didn't agree with the punishment and felt it was without merit. At the same time, we received a new leader called a PL (Lieutenant). Morale was restored and even raised with the leader because we finally had a PL who inspired and actually led from the front. The reports about our PLT having discipline problems have been taken out of context told in half-truths and are simply false.

It didn't take long for Bergdahl to start voicing his disagreements with the way our missions were being led. He didn't understand why we were doing more humanitarian aid drops, setting up clinics, and helping the populous instead of hunting the Taliban. At one point, Bergdahl said, "Why can't we dress like the locals and ambush the Taliban". In my opinion Bergdahl wanted to do the exact opposite of what we were instructed to do. He wanted to hunt and kill. He was clearly frustrated that we were instructed to win the hearts and minds of the local populous. Bergdahl was told by our Team

Leader and Squad leader, these are our orders and we will follow them. But Bergdahl was not happy about not getting to shoot and kill.

A week or two prior to Bergdahl deserting our platoon, we were tasked to help a QRF (Quick Reaction Force) that had struck an IED in the mountains near Omna. They needed assistance and aid and our PLT was tasked to quickly help; it took around 8 hours to get to the other team. While making our way up the switchbacks, a truck in the middle of the convoy struck an IED. Another truck towed the blown up truck to the Afghan National Army/Afghan National Police's Omna compound. Security was set in place and our platoon remained there for 6 days waiting for the truck parts, with supplies for us like water, fuel, ammo and food airdropped in. While there waiting, Bergdahl told us "I could see myself getting lost in these mountains". It was an odd thing to say since we were alone in a combat zone.

Once set, our PLT took a different route leaving and an ambush soon took place. It started with an IED in middle of the convoy and continued with RPGs, Machine gun fire and AKs. Our PLT was surrounded by the enemy with the enemy having high ground, cover and concealment. It was a tense situation and one that Bergdahl had claimed he was itching for. Bergdahl was in the lead truck but in the back as a passenger holding his machine gun when the truck's main gun went down. The guys up front urgently needed a backup gun from one of the two SAW gunners in the back seat where Bergdahl was. A machine gun was passed up along with ammo to the truck's gunner. What's troubling for me is that a version of this story has been told to the media portraying Bergdahl as frustrated with his superiors and platoon members because he didn't get to fight. Yet he claimed to want to walk into the mountains alone.

Another war story that Bergdahl told in an [email to his father stated:](#)

“We don’t even care when we hear each talk about running children down in the dirt streets with our armored trucks...” This is completely false. Our unit did NOT run over a child. In fact, we didn’t run over anyone at all.

Other emails Bergdahl sent his father stated “...I am ashamed to even be American...the horror that America is disgusting...There are a few more boxes coming to you guys, feel free to open them and use them.”

This tells us a few things, what Bergdahl was telling his platoon members and what he was telling his parents were polar opposites. In reality, we were doing exactly what Bergdahl was telling his parents we should be doing. For some reason, he was complaining to his parents about events that weren’t happening; and complaining to us about what we were actually doing. Bergdahl said in emails he wanted us to help the afghan people, but in real life he disagreed with this and wanted to kill more. Bergdahl was complaining to his parents that our PLT was committing atrocities instead of helping the local populous but he was telling our PLT that we needed to stop trying to win hearts and minds and focus more on killing the Taliban.

About a week before June 30<sup>th</sup> 2009, our PLT was told this would be the last time we would be going out to OP MEST. We would be tasked to a different area, one more 5 day rotation and we would be done. It was during this time that Bergdahl sent his personal items home. We did not know this at the time but only found out after he deserted us. While returning to FOB Sharana, members of the PLT were tasked with inventorying Bergdahl’s equipment and property. His missing items were discovered then.

While out at OP MEST for the last time, Bergdahl asked one platoon member “If your M9 (9mm Beretta Pistol) went missing, would you get into trouble?” The platoon member responded with “yes”.

On June 29<sup>th</sup> we were told that we would be leaving OP MEST a day earlier than scheduled so June 30<sup>th</sup> 2009 would be our last night.

On June 30<sup>th</sup> 2009, 100% accountability was around 6 am local time. 100% is done every morning and every night, leaders check all sensitive equipment like Night vision, Gun, Optics and anything that has a serial number and could aid enemy if lost. Everyone was good on the proper number of men and equipment except 3<sup>rd</sup> squad Alpha Team, my team and Squad. PLT members immediately started searching the tiny OP for the missing items. We looked under cots, the latrine, in trucks, under trucks, in different trucks, everywhere we could think to look. Bowe Bergdahl was nowhere to be found. In the single man tent Bergdahl had been sleeping in we found his gun, ammo and plate carrier.

Patrols were immediately kicked out in the surrounding areas to look for Bergdahl. According to some school children we spoke to, they had seen a single American matching Bergdahl's description crawling low on the ground through the reeds earlier in the day on their way to school. This story was also confirmed by a Cleric and a Teacher who saw the same thing. A couple of days later we heard over the radio via our interpreter that there was an American looking for someone in the Afghan village who spoke English. The witness said he needed some water and wanted to talk to the Taliban. During this time or very shortly after DUSTWAN was called up on the radio. The process of trying to find him before calling up DUSTWAN happened for many reasons. DUSTWAN is sort of like BROKENARROW once it's called up all assets are pushed to that effort; you want to make damn sure that he indeed needs DUSTWAN before calling it up.

Bergdahl shipping his items home, local accounts of seeing him crawling and asking for the Taliban, the false stories he emailed to his father and the odd questions he was asking all helped us to connect the dots later. But at the time of the unfolding events, it seemed like normal off the wall BS common with the infantry when deployed. The facts tell me that Bergdahl's desertion was pre-mediated. Bergdahl had a plan and was trying to justify it in his head. How long he had planned this I don't know, but it is clear to me that he had a plan and executed it. Countless people looked for him when he went missing, putting their own lives on the line for his. I have said it before and I will say again here, I do not know how he felt about us in the platoon but we all would have died for him.

Combat is difficult. The only thing you can count on in combat is the commitment of your fellow American. Knowing that someone you needed to trust deserted you in war and did it by his own free will is the ultimate betrayal.

Now that Bergdahl is back in the United States, an investigation needs to take place as to why he left us. All of the documents, including the intelligence, known on Bergdahl now need to come to the public view. Americans need to also see the original investigation on Bergdahl's desertion. You should not be able to desert your fellow Americans without consequences. Bowe Bergdahl should not be characterized as having served with Honor and Distinction. Any armed service member who violates UCMJ gets punished; Bergdahl should not be an exception. If Bergdahl hadn't deserted us then he would have never been held in captivity.

In my opinion, Bowe Bergdahl needs to be charged with the following:

Article 85-Desertion: (1) without authority goes or remains absent from his unit, organization or place of duty with intent to remain away there from permanently (2) quits his unit, organization or place of duty with intent to avoid hazardous duty or to shrink important service

Article 87- Missing Movement: Any person subject to this chapter who through neglect or design misses the movement of a ship, aircraft or unit with which he is required in the course of duty

Article 89-Disrespect toward superior commissioned officer: Any person subject to this chapter who behaves with disrespect towards his superior commissioned officer

Article 90- Willfully disobeying his superior officer: (2) willfully disobeys a lawful command of his superior commissioned officer

Article 91- Insubordinate conduct toward Non-Commissioned Officer: (2) willfully disobeys the lawful order of an NCO

Article 92- Failure to Obey Order or Regulation: (1) violates or fails to obey any lawful general order (2) having knowledge of any other lawful order issued by any member of the armed forces, which it is his duty to obey the order (3) is derelict in the performance of his duties

Article 99- Misbehavior before the enemy- (1) runs away (2) shamefully abandons, surrenders, or delivers up any command, unit, place or military property which it is his duty to defend (3) through disobedience, neglect or intentional misconduct endangers the safety of any such command, unit, place or military property (4) cast away his arms or ammunition (5) is guilty of cowardly conduct

Article 105- Misconduct as Prisoner: (1) for purpose of securing favorable treatment by his captors acts without proper authority in a manner contrary to law, custom or regulation to the detriment of others of whatever nationality held by the enemy as civilian or military prisoners.

Thank you.