Vietnam vs Iraq: A Comparison of the Soldier’s Experience, Preparation for Each War, the Fighting in Each War, and the Return Home for the Soldiers of Each War

A Comparison of the Emotional and Psychological Adjustment of the Returning Veterans of Vietnam and Iraq

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The papers are based on parts of the upcoming book, 
Two Soldiers, Two Wars: Forty Years Apart by Worthington & Heffner
Introduction

• Two Objectives
  – Total destruction
  – Elimination of the enemy
• How they began
• Similarities
• Differences
How they began

• Vietnam
  – Slow Build up
  – 1950 – Helping the French
  – Advisors to Brigades
  – Prevent communist takeover

• Iraq
  – Quick invasion
  – Regime change/WMD
Differences

• Vietnam
  – Began as insurgency
  – Enemy has centralized control
  – Enemy with common objectives
  – External support
  – Unending supply of troops

• Iraq
  – Began as army vs army
  – Enemy with no or little centralized control
  – Enemy with no common objective
  – Little or conflicting external support
  – Unsure of troop supply
Similarities

• Political actions
• Lack of unwavering support from US populace
• Harsh environment
• Difficult to differentiate friend from foe
• Peaceful settlement unlikely
• Counterinsurgency operations
Vietnam

The Soldier’s Experience

Emotional and Psychological Adjustment
Iraq

- 500,000 troops
  - 233,000 Army
  - 11,000 Army Reserve
  - 9,000 Army National Guard
  - 74,000 USMC
  - 10,000 USMC Reserve
  - 61,000 US Navy
  - 2,000 US Navy Reserve
  - 55,000 US Air Force
  - 2,000 US Air Force Reserve
  - 7,000 US Air National Guard
  - 700 US Coast Guard
  - 43,000 Coalition Nation troops (38 nations)
Iraq

- Planning began day after Operation Desert Storm
- Four Phases
- 150,000 troops – Running Start
- Joint force
- Information-based war
  - Satellite communications
  - UAV
Iraq

- 1 May 2003 – “Major combat operations have ended.”
- 23 May 2003 – Bremer disbands Iraqi Army
- Zarqawi/Al Qaeda Iraq
- Civil war?
- Marines and 101st Airborne remember Vietnam (Combined Action Platoons)
- Ratios
- The Surge
- Statistics
Iraq

- Tour 12 months – now 15
- R&R 15 days – now 18
- Training sessions
- FOBs
- Weather
- IEDs – EFPs – SAF – IDF
- Complex attacks – chemical attacks
- Risk management (IBA, armor, PT belts?)
- Redeployment (weeks to months)
- Reintegration - BATTLEMIND
Iraq

- Prediction: 30% PTSD
- Is PTSD political?
- 1.5 million troops
- Pre- & Post-Deployment Health Assessment
- Post-Deployment Health Reassessment
- At risk for PTSD
  - Army & Marine
  - Reserve component
  - Multiple deployments
  - Iraq
  - Women
PDHRA Battlemind Training
Continuing the Transition Home

Audience: Service Members and leaders
Training Timeframe: 3-6 months after deployment as part of the Post Deployment Health Re-Assessment (PDHRA)
(Reconstitution phase of Deployment Cycle Support)
Version 2.0 9MAR06.ForVideo

*See Notes Pages for Briefing Instructions
Combat Skills You All Possess

- Battlemind skills helped you survive in combat… but may cause problems when you get home… if you haven’t adapted them

  - **Buddies (cohesion) vs.** Withdrawal
  - **Accountability vs.** Controlling
  - **Targeted Aggression vs.** Inappropriate Aggression
  - **Tactical Awareness vs.** Hypervigilance
  - **Lethally Armed vs.** “Locked and Loaded” at Home
  - **Emotional Control vs.** Anger/Detachment
  - **Mission Operational Security (OPSEC) vs.** Secretiveness
  - **Individual Responsibility vs.** Guilt
  - **Non-Defensive (combat) Driving vs.** Aggressive Driving
  - **Discipline and Ordering vs.** Conflict

- **Battlemind Checks** allow Soldiers and their Buddies to identify when help is needed.
Two Buddies

- To play video scenario, click the link to play the video.

buddies_driving.wmv