

IRAQ'S BATTLEFIELD SLANG

A list of soldiers' lingo, including 'embrace the suck' and 'Rummy's dummies.'

By Austin Bay

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PRIESTS, PROSTITUTES, psychologists, cops, jazz musicians, poker players. Every trade has its jargon and “insider lingo.”

Soldier slang, however, has a peculiar appeal. That's understandable. Waging war is a risky, all-encompassing endeavor — physically, emotionally and psychologically. War reveals humankind at its best and its worst, and war-fighter slang, reflects the bitter, terrifying, sometimes inspiring hell of it.

Every war adds something new — and often obscene — to the soldiers' vocabulary. World War II-era Hollywood dialogue glamorized (and often scrubbed) combat slang, but the warrior's rhetorical swagger, irony and biting humor predate film by several millenniums.

Often, new idioms and phrases describe old, difficult truths. Prussian strategist Carl von Clausewitz said that war is the realm of “friction.” World War II veterans invoked Murphy's Law: “If something can go wrong, it will.” As you'll see in the brief lexicon I've pulled together below, the New Greatest Generation (the generation fighting the war on terror) dubs it “the suck.”

“Embrace the suck” isn't merely a wisecrack; it's an encyclopedic experience rendered as an epigram, gritty shorthand for “Face it, soldier. I've been there. War ain't easy. Now deal with the difficulty and let's get on with the mission.”

That's sound advice for a nation at war.

AIR JOCKEY: Fighter pilot or a fixed-wing pilot.

On rare occasions, might refer to a helicopter pilot.

ALI BABA: Slang for enemy forces. Originated in the Persian Gulf War.

BATTLE RATTLE: Slang for combat gear. “Full battle rattle” means wearing and carrying everything (helmet, body armor, weapons).

BELTWAY CLERK: A derisive term for a Washington political operative or civilian politician.

BILAT: A bilateral conference between coalition military units and local people.

(“We're going on a bilat to discuss the security situation with Haji.”)

BLACKWATER: Specifically, a private security firm operating in Iraq. Used as slang, can mean any private security firm. “Gone to Blackwater” indicates that a soldier quit the armed services and went to work for a private security firm.

BLUE CANOE: Slang for a portable toilet.

BOHICA: Bend Over, Here It Comes Again. Pronounced “bo-HEE-ka.” Means “we're about to get screwed, as usual.” This term was in use in the Army in the 1960s.

BOMBACONDA: Slang for Logistics Support Area Anaconda, a major supply base near Balad, Iraq. Balad is also called "Mortaritaville."

CAMP ASS: Refers to Camp As Sayliyah in Coha, Qatar.

CASPER: Slang for someone who always disappears when there's work to be done.

CHRISTIANS IN ACTION: Slang for Central Intelligence Agency.

DFAC: Dining facility. Pronounced "Dee-FAC."

DOME OF OBEDIENCE: Slang for a military helmet. Also called a "brain bucket" or "skid lid."

DYNAMIC TRUTH: Basically means "this is the plan when my supervisor gave it to me, but change is already in the works."

ECHELONS ABOVE REALITY: Higher headquarters where no one has an idea about what is really happening.

EMBRACE THE SUCK: Phrase heard in OIF1 (the original Operation Iraqi Freedom force). Translation: The situation is bad, but deal with it.

FLASH-BLASTED: Being screamed at or chewed out by the unit's senior noncommissioned officer.

FOBBITS: Derogatory term for soldiers who never leave an FOB (Forward Operations Base).

GEARDO: Derogatory term for the guy who has to have all the latest and greatest gear

on his uniform, even though he does not know how to use it.

GENERAL ORDER NO. 1: General order that does not permit drinking or fraternizing in Iraq and Kuwait.

GHETTO GRIP: A detachable, pistol-type grip that can make a carbine easier to use.

GROUNDHOG DAY: Every day of your tour in Iraq.

GRUNT-PROOF: Idiot-proof.

HAJI: Slang for an Iraqi, but may mean any Middle Easterner who hails from a predominantly Muslim country.

IDIOT STICK: Slang for an M16 (or any weapon).

JERSEY BARRIER: Slang for a small concrete barrier.

JOHNNY JIHAD: Slang for a Muslim or Muslim combatant.

Lifer juice: Coffee.

MARSALAMA: GI Arabic. Corruption of Arabic for "Go in peace." In conversation, it means "See you later."

MOOKIE: Nickname for Iraqi Shiite leader Muqtada Sadr.

O DARK 30: Pronounced "oh dark thirty." A word play on military time. Means a very early hour during the night. ("We had to get up at oh-dark-thirty.")

OPSEC: Operational security. "Loose lips sink ships" of World War II fame is an OPSEC warning.

OSCAR MIKE: On the move (Marine lingo).

OZ: Australia. Hence “Ozzies” — Australians.

POG: People Other than Grunts. Pronounced like “rogue.” Used by grunts as a derogatory word for everyone else.

PUBIC PLATE: Also pube armor or pubic pad. Kevlar pad that flops over the crotch. Other terms: Nad Pad or Nut Guard.

PUC: Person Under Custody. (“We got two PUCs on that last raid.”)

RED ZONE: The area outside the Green Zone. “Haifa Street” is a main drag in the Red Zone.

RUMINT: Rumor level intelligence. A variant is BOGINT — bogus intelligence.

RUMMY’S DUMMIES: A derogatory name for the U.S. military under the leadership of former Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld.

SEMPER I: Pejorative Marine lingo for being overly concerned with one's own personal interests.

SINGLE-DIGIT MIDGET: A member of the armed services who has nine days or less remaining on his tour of duty.

SPEED BUMPS: A tanker's derogatory term for infantry soldiers. Operation Desert Storm-era slang still occasionally used.

TERPS: Slang for interpreters

TREAD HEAD: A soldier serving in an armor (tank) or armored cavalry (armored recon) unit.

TURKEY PEEK: To glance around or over an object or surface, such as a corner or wall.

WAXED: To get hit hard or get killed.

WEEKEND WARRIOR: U.S. reservist or National Guard soldier.

YALLA: GI adaptation of Arabic word for hurry up or run.

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