With American bloggers reporting on life in Iraq, the war is only a mouse click away

Off the beaten path, nifty and novel memoirs. But the war in Iraq has brought a new kind of literature. In real time, on the Internet, officers and enlisted men and women are writing dispatches and war blogs—better known as blogs. Two weeks ago, one of the most popular new bloggers, a soldier stationed near the northern Iraqi city of Mosul who identified himself only as CBERT, was disciplined by the Army for violating "operational security." His guilty post was titled: "Sorry, that's not the war." Last week, he revealed himself from his "digital retreat" as journalist Michael Isikoff of the online magazineomite. Now the number of other military bloggers remains on the Web. Here are extracts from some of the blogs of Americans serving with the U.S. military in Iraq.

A 'resting sere'

Lt. Col. David G. Bellon was commissioned as an officer in the Marine Corps in 1996 after graduating from law school. He remained on active duty until 2004, then continued as a reserve officer while building a law practice in Greenbelt. In January 2005, he was deployed to Iraq with the 2nd Marine Division. He returned home in September of last year and came back to Iraq in February 2006. Bellon, who is serving in the northern Saudi Desert, has a daughter who's age is 6. He hopes to be home by Christmas. His family maintains a website, www.chapnellson.com, on which they post Bellon's letters to his father.

Aug. 17, 2006

My regiment has been involved in a fight outside of Fallujah for the past week. On August 15, insurgent in the city kidnapped the two Iraqi National Guard battalion commanders. By the next day, the insurgents were killing at least one of them. It is another clear example of the successes of the enemy. The city is now under a de facto isolation as conflict intensifies. The insurgent are not only killing the local military that was captured as a solution to the April fighting but have become a defensive army that is in conflict with the insurgents. The police are committed with the enemy and the city is literally run by terror.

The Iraqi National Guard battalion commander who was killed was Lt. Col. Soliman Hamed Ali. In addition to Ali, two others were injured in the battle. The Iraqi forces were heavily outnumbered and they were forced to flee their positions.

The Iraqi official news agency said that the battle started when the Iraqi forces attempted to retake control of the city from the insurgents. The Iraqi forces were heavily outnumbered and they were forced to flee their positions.

As a result of the battle, the Iraqi forces were forced to retreat from the city and the insurgents have now control of the area.

The battle is being broadcast live on television and social media platforms, allowing people around the world to see the events as they unfold.

"Getting settled in"

Both is a 22-year-old Class III techne-
matic with a husband and a 1-year-old son named Cody back home. She arrived in Iraq late last month. Her blog, "She's Alain's Journey," is at www.desertdiet.blogspot.com.

August 30, 2006

Pretty good day. Tuesday was the best so far. We are getting settled in and finding where the thieves are coming. The group we are replacing can't wait to leave. For a short period of time, we must endure, we have to double up in our rooms. The sunshine and sunsets are very pretty here. That is about the only beautiful thing, though. The laundry is taking about 5 days to come back instead of overnight due to some people up and quit-
ing. Last night they had better and weak for dinner. Everyone was so happy. Not quite my cup of tea, though. I am a Powerelor. I am still very of the food here but hopefully that changes -- or get lost of food in the yard. We live with a British GPO with a lot. But the overall thing functioned out and got to see Cody last night -- made me happy. He has already grown to be such a big boy. His hair is longer and he has gained weight.

Operation Cheats

Paul Blackfoote enlisted in the Army Be-
sers during the Vietnam War. After completing their training course in 1968, he was ordered to attend a special duty course for commando operations. In 1972, he was married and moved to California. In 1976, he was discharged from the Army.

"I was born a 'powerelor'" says Blackfoote. After being discharged from the Army, the former Blackfoote has started Operation Truth. "We empower empowerment organizations that seek to alleviate the American public about the truth of the war in Iraq," he says. From the perspective of the Beatnik, the protest is a key element in the protest. Those who don't know what they think you know can be

The Iraq War Is Brought Home on Blogs

June 19, 2004
It’s surprising how much wildlife we’ve run into. Every night we find a bigger camel spider, and the Marines gather around and say “Wow, that’s the biggest one I’ve ever seen,” which leads to other sorts of fights. They’ll catch scorpions and other bugs and toss them in. They tossed a mouse in once and you could hear the cheering from hundreds of yards away. Marines are just big kids. Take them to a body of water, and they’ll be happy skipping stones for hours; give them a magnifying glass, and they’ll find an ant hole. If they invade your country, expect silly stuff to be written on all the walls. We’ve run into snakes both venomous and non. I’m glad I was the only one that spotted the non-venomous one. I took its picture and let it go. I’m not much into killing the wildlife. I believe that nature is beautiful. Camel spiders have ten legs and two eyes and are not even related to true spiders. And don’t ever use a k-bar knife alone to kill a venomous snake.

”To do right by Allah”
Nicholas J. Cademortari is a 22-year-old infantryman with the Army’s 1st Infantry Division. After four years in the National Guard, he was asked to be released from his Guard contract so he could join the regular Army. He left Iraq since March. His blog can be found at www.thequestingcat.com.

May 7 and May 24, 2004
One thing I always notice about old war movies is that soldiers always attach a tag word to their enemy’s name. In WWI and WWII, it was the name. In Vietnam, it was the name. So there, I am in Baghdad, Iraq, running in place in Saddam’s conference room so that my girlfriend can watch me on the other side of the Earth.

I showed her my muscles, my big ol’ arms that are twice the size as when I left. She was impressed — or she at least faked it for me. She’s a good woman.

I left hating this place more then ever, but also feeling a bit more relaxed. I made it to my cot, and I sweated off into sleep. This is almost over.

The brave, the spider-men
Sean Dustman is a Navy medic, corpsman who served for seven months during the 1990s, then reenlisted after Sept. 11 because he “realized my talents were going to waste, and I wanted to make a difference.” He arrived in Iraq in March and returned home late last month. His blog can be found at www.docinthebox.blogspot.com.

August 5, 2003
Tonight I got to talk to my girlfriend via video teleconferencing. It went really well. I waited around until the middle of the night, and then I was escorted into the area where all the magic happens, past giant wall-sized television screens with maps and diagrams, past rows and rows of desks with computers and soldiers working around the clock on the war effort, and into the conference room, which was exactly what I’m used to seeing rooms and quarters converted into conference rooms. They are set up in kitchens or garages or boiler rooms. But this one was an honest-to-god conference room that I’m sure was used by Saddam and all of his buddies. Now it belongs to us, because we took it.

I got to see the family of the sergeant who went before me still on the giant screen. I see his wife trying desperately to keep her composure and get her three kids out of the room where they were filmed in an orderly fashion. Then, in the corner of the screen coming through the doorway is a woman. I don’t know her — but the video recorder is trying to focus on it. It looks like my girlfriend. It’s the same size as my girlfriend. And it is my girlfriend. She giggles, and I wave and smile.

I have to press a button every time I want to speak so that the microphone don’t pick it up. Otherwise the camera is trying to focus on us. It looks like my girlfriend. It’s the same size as my girlfriend. And it is my girlfriend. She giggles, and I wave and smile. The other day, a sergeant and I were told to take our truck and go pull security. This is generally a very dull job (thank god). So we went out and were just sitting peacefully when we saw a middle aged Iraqi farmer in his field waving to us. Curious, I went to investigate while my buddy covered me with the 50 cal.

When I reached his field it became obvious that the man did not speak English. He was tall and thin, and smiled continuously. He had a small patch of land with a little shack off in the corner of the fields, and a slow, small stream ran down the middle for irrigation. You could tell that this was this man’s life, his entire livelihood.

He held a tomato out to me, it was not entirely ripe, and a little mishapen, but it appeared entirely edible. I took it, since it is rude here to refuse food. He seemed ecstatic about this, and hurriedly began root- ing through his fields for ripe tomatoes.

Hadjil vendors love to give you the product first, let you take a few bites, then give you the price. I took out all the money I had — one quarter — and offered it to him in exchange for two or five or six tomatoes, anything not to seem rude. He pushed aside my meager offering and offered me an eggplant.

Once I realized he didn’t want money, I was very curious what he was doing. I mean, was this some kind of tribute he would pay to Iraqi soldiers under Saddam? Was he trying to bribe me to do something for him? He signed that he wanted me to try the tomato, and pointed to the brook and made washing gestures. I washed myself a little and the tomato, then gave it a shot, eating it like it was an apple.

By this point he had collected up quite a batch of tomatoes and an eggplant in his robe, and he wanted me to take them over to my truck for my buddy. I asked if he was sure he didn’t want any money. He shook his head and pointed up. “For Allah,” I said, and he nodded and said “Allah.” He was doing it to be a good man. To do right by Allah. By this simple act, he touched me deeply. He gave me faith in the people of Iraq. He let me know that what we have done here is appreciated, and that these people and I are not alone.

I will never believe that my enemy is unredeemable. I will never believe that all Iraqis are the enemy. But I can have no faith in man untested, and truth be told, I have never gotten a truly unselfish vibe from anyone in this country no matter where I’ve been. They want desperately to take advantage of soldiers’ paychecks. But this man making a living off the main road has become the first Iraqi I have met since coming here who didn’t.

I hope to God that we don’t let him down.

Daddy & son
Army Pfc. Brian McGovern (www.brian.mcgovernville.com) has been serving as a paralegal near Baghdad since June. His first child, Vincent, was born July 9. McGovern will see him for the first time this week, when he starts a 15-day leave.

July 27, 2004
I heard “Cat’s in the Cradle” this afternoon, the song by Harry Chapin. It’s that song that talks about how a guy had a kid and put off spending time with him. Eventually, he loved him. Not that I have the same concerns — not now that I am home, but my mind races with other concerns of safety.

One day at a time, I keep telling myself. Then I laugh. Maybe I should make a personal threat indicator that I carry in my pocket and update it as I feel necessary. Today, I feel Orange.

Code normal
Koka Sexton, who was a team leader in the Army’s 1st Infantry Division, was a staff captain in the Army Reserve Company from San Jose, enlisted in the Army Reserve because he believes “that everyone should do something to support their country.” He got his call to go to Iraq on Feb. 14, 2004, and “by June I was in the desert realizing that the Army Reserve was more than one weekend a month.” He posted the following to his blog, “A Walk Through the Valley of the Shadow of Death,”(www.okokasexton.com) after arriving back home earlier this summer.

August 1, 2004
Getting back to feeling normal is harder than it sounds. What is normal? I can barely remember what my life was like before I left for Iraq. I have memories of loved ones and friends that carried me through the hard times overseas but other than that, life has been a blur.

I find myself walking through the city waiting for the next gun shot or explosion. Driving a car is still an adventure. For no reason whatsoever I have moments where I feel like a coiled spring ready to snap. Tension building up in every muscle preparing for the chance to explode on what stands in my way. Neurotic? Maybe.

I miss my rifle and the security that it gave me when I was walking through unknown areas. I knew in Iraq that my life was in my hands. As long as I was prepared for the attack, I was prepared for the assault. Now I find myself walking through the city after I got me. I’m always thinking about the “what if” now, because in Iraq preparing for the “what if” made me better able to deal with the next roadside bomb or rocket being fired in my direction. Being prepared could make the difference between life and death.

One day at a time, I keep telling myself. Then I laugh. Maybe I should make a personal threat indicator that I carry in my pocket and update it as I feel necessary. Today, I feel Orange.