

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with

JEFFERY CARNES

Translator/Linguist, U.S. Army, Kosovo and Operation Iraqi Freedom

2004

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Carnes, Jeffery., (b.1977). Oral History Interview, 2004.

Approximate length: 2 hours 47 mins

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

Jeffery Carnes, originally from Jefferson, Wisconsin, discusses his time as an Arabic translator and his service with the 1st Airborne Division in the peacekeeping operations in Kosovo and his service with the Second Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division during Operation Iraqi Freedom, as well as his thoughts on the conflicts in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan. Carnes describes his enlistment in October of 1977, and why he left University of Wisconsin-Madison to do so. He discusses his training at Fort Leonard Wood (Missouri), the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center at Presidio of Monterey (California), and Fort Huachuca (Arizona). Carnes outlines his service at Fort Campbell (Kentucky and Tennessee), and talks about what it felt like to be in the service during the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. He gives anecdotes of his time in Kosovo and Iraq, including his time guarding county jails, searching for mines and weaponry and trying to rebuild the Iraqi infrastructure. Carnes also discusses themes of morale, comradeship and coming of age as a serviceman. Lastly he comments on his use of the G.I. Bill to continue his schooling and his experience as an Army reservist.

Biographical Sketch:

Carnes (b.1977) served with the Second Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division as well as the 1st Armored Division during the peacekeeping operations in Kosovo and during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Carnes was out-processed December 20, 2003 and joined the Reserves. As of 2004, he was to travel to Fort Huachuca (Arizona) to serve as an instructor.

Interviewed by Russell Horton, 2004

Transcribed by the Audio Transcription Center, 2015

Transcription reviewed by Claire Steffen, 2015.

Abstract written by Claire Steffen, 2015

Interview Transcript:

[Tape 1, side A]

Horton: Testing, one, two. Testing.

[break in recording]

Horton: This is an interview with Jeffrey Carnes, who served with the Second Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, during the peacekeeping operations in Kosovo and during Operation Iraqi Freedom. This interview is being conducted at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in Madison, Wisconsin, on June 18, 2004. The interviewer is Russell Horton. Jeff, if you could just start out by telling me a little bit about your background, when and where you were born, education, experience, family, stuff like that.

Carnes: Okay. I was born in 1977, and I grew up in Jefferson, Wisconsin, graduated there from high school in 1995, and then I became a student for two years at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, and I majored in Russian before going into the military. And my dad still lives in Jefferson, and one of my sisters still lives there. My other sister lives in Fort Atkinson.

Horton: Okay. How did you decide to join the military, or how did you go about joining the military?

Carnes: Well, that's kind of an interesting story, because I found out as a Russian major in college that with a bachelor's degree, I'd end up pretty much unemployed. And--.

Horton: I'm a history major. I know what you're talking about.

Carnes: Oh, exactly. So you know all about that. And then as--even if I got my master's and doctorate, and all of that happy stuff, I would still not be in the position where I wanted to work. I wanted to work for the government, and the military I saw was not the only option, but at the time the best option for me when I was 20. And so I decided to enlist, and I did this the eighth of October in 1997.

Horton: Okay, in Madison?

Carnes: Actually--well, in Milwaukee, technically, at the federal building.

Horton: And did you intend to go into a particular unit, or did you just kind of let them take you where the tests told them to take you?

Carnes: Well, I wanted to become a linguist, and that was it. I went to the recruiting office in Beaver Dam, and I said, "I know some Russian; I want to learn a foreign language," and the recruiter's jaw just dropped on the ground. I didn't know what unit I was going to. Nowadays, you can't really determine that. It's pretty much, you're told where to go, so--so I knew I was going to become a linguist, didn't know what language, and didn't know where I was going to be.

Horton: Are there any stories from your induction interview, or any sort of pre-basic training that are of interest?

Carnes: Not really. Well, actually, there's one thing. Well, I had to take the exam to qualify for military service. Um, what is it called? Oh, the ASVAB. But in addition to that, I had to take another test. It's the Defense Language Aptitude Battery, called the DLAB, and it is the craziest test I've ever taken in my life. Its six sections. Five are listening, and it's kind of a goofy language, a made-up language, and they see how well you can actually learn it in about fifty minutes. And so--.

Horton: That's interesting.

Carnes: It is--well, it was interesting. And I took it with two Marine Corps recruits, and one I thought was about ready to cry, and the other one just put his head on the table and took a nap. And so, I did pretty well at that. So it's kind of a--it was kind of a weird process to even get in, because I had this really strange test that lasted--it seemed like forever.

Horton: Yeah, that's very interesting. Now, going in, the Cold War being done, did you have any expectations of what you might be able to do, speaking Russian?

Carnes: Well, actually, not really. Kind of--well, that was kind of one of the hard lessons about the world and the military, I learned right away, is that--that they didn't necessarily place you where I would have been most appropriate, if you will. I got--in basic training, we all got our orders saying what we were going to be--where we were going to be going next. And mine said Korea, and I said, "You've got to be kidding me." Well, I didn't exactly say it that way. But then I kind of somehow weaseled my way out of it and ended up in Arabic. So I didn't really have--I didn't really have any expectations of what I was going to be doing,

didn't really even know, partially because you don't really have the background knowledge to even ask the questions that would be pertinent at what you're going to be doing, and so on and so forth, so--.

Horton: Okay. Well, why don't we talk a little bit about your basic training? Where did you take care of that?

Carnes: Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, in the middle of nowhere. If you find the map, and you find the most desolate area on the planet, that's where it is.

Horton: So was it an oasis in the middle of nowhere, or was it pretty rough lodging?

Carnes: Well, I mean, it was a--if you've ever driven through Missouri, it's halfway between Kansas City and St. Louis. There's nothing out there, so all it is is woods. They actually call it "Fort Lost in the Woods." But--I mean, they have all the basic facilities of a military installation. I mean, our buildings were probably built in the seventies. And you know, it was eight person bays, and you know, the gang latrine. But you know, I mean, it was pretty much just you; I mean, didn't really see much. We saw the barracks where we had our classrooms. We saw the pit outside, which was not a fun place to be. We saw the mess hall, and we saw the Rangers in the field, and that was about it. So--.

Horton: So you were there in, probably, '98?

Carnes: No, actually, I --well, I enlisted in September of '97, and then I went into the military the next month.

Horton: Oh.

Carnes: So it was kind of a whole shock for--.

Horton: Right away.

Carnes: --my family and my friends, the whole nine yards, because all of a sudden they'd show up at college. They said, well, you know, "How is your apartment?" and I said, "Well, I don't have one." And they said, "What?" You know, and uh--. So it was a lot for my friends to take, let alone my family. But it was--it was a bit different. I went there from October until December. So right before Christmas is when I graduated from basic training.

Horton: Now, going in as a linguist, do you still do the same basic training that everyone else joining the Army does?

Carnes: Yeah.

Horton: Or do you do anything different?

Carnes: No. Well, they always say in the military that, you know, you're an infantryman first, blah blah blah blah blah. But in reality, combat arms--infantry gets trained at Benning, artillery at Fort Sill, and so on and so forth. I think they still do armor training out at Fort Knox in Kentucky; I'm not really sure. But for us, it was--it was just generic basic training, but it just so happened in my unit, it was mechanics and linguists. So there were, like, two hundred mechanics and then twenty linguists, and it was kind of like--you know in *Sesame Street*, "One of these things is not like the other," because we were all relatively intelligent and probably too intelligent for--we were intellectually too developed for the social development that we had. So we were kind of a little bit different, kind of like typical idealist college students, so.

Horton: Any memorable instructors or friends that you made at basic training?

Carnes: Well, it was kind of--it was kind of interesting, well you had a--well, "instructor" is kind of an interesting word to put with that. No, um, the drill sergeants were pretty interesting. You always remember them your whole life, because one of my--one of my coworkers in my reserve unit right now, he was a drill sergeant. And basically, how they are trained is that you're not only a sergeant, an NCO, blah blah blah, but you're basically a god for these people, and they will remember you the rest of your life. And I still remember them. So one of my drill sergeants, Drill Sergeant Dickens--or Mickens [sp??], I'm sorry--he actually--the next cycle of basic training, he wasn't invited out to be a drill sergeant anymore, for throwing a rucksack [inaudible] and hitting a female soldier in the head.

Horton: Oh!

Carnes: But the other one actually did believe in me for this kind of goofy, liberal, skinny white boy from Wisconsin. So he actually kind of guided me through a little bit, and I still remember him to this day. I don't know where he is, but--.

Horton: So, you know, you think about basic training back in World War II, and we think of the meanness, and the yelling, scowling drill sergeant. And do you think there's

a perception that the Army's getting more friendly or more--did basic training seem like that to you at all? Was there more PC-ness, or did it still seem pretty screaming, yelling, calling you bad names?

Carnes: Well, that's kind of interesting, because when I went through, it was a time--the Sergeant Major of the Army, the highest enlisted person in the Army, he was actually court-martialed for sexual harassment of I don't know how many--there were quite a few, and it was a whole big scandal at the time. And especially in the, you know, shiny, happy nineties, where we'd never go to war again, and you know, that whole thought concept behind it, a lot of people, especially the--especially Congress really latched onto that. And so a lot of things changed in a hurry. And it was a really bad time. In addition to that, some drill sergeants at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland also were caught having sexual relations with some of the female soldiers. So it was a very--you could feel a lot of tension behind it. So a lot of the doctrine that they're using now is--was developed at that time. So it was a lot different. I mean, there was still, of course, the yelling and screaming and everything. But there was a lot more--they did a lot more sensitivity training, and so on, and so forth.

And now, actually, the commander of the infantry school, General Freakly [sp??], he was one of the assistant division commanders of the 101st. He's now down there, and they are actually changing basic training a lot, and I don't want to say go back to what was, like, in *Full Metal Jacket* in the seventies, but there's going to be a lot more emphasis on combat training as opposed to, like, sensitivity training and all of this kind of political correctness, which is good in indoctrinating people with certain values, the way you're supposed to live up to it. But you know, all--but, on the other hand, the point of the military is not necessarily the most politically correct thing in the world. You're doing some relatively violent things, so--.

Horton: Okay, that's real interesting. Did you have any time for recreation during basic training? And if so, what did you do?

Carnes: No. Well, when I went through, too, it was kind of a perfect time of year, because I lived all my life in Wisconsin. So, you know, you have, you know, relatively warm summers and really cold winters. And it was kind of the same way down there. So at least I wasn't dying. But we didn't really have any recreation in terms of basic training. When I completed my training, when I went to California for advanced individual training to the Presidio of Monterey, that's a whole different story. So that was pretty much college with a uniform. And it was--Monterey,

California, is on the Monterey Peninsula, with Pebble Beach and Carmel-by-the-Sea, so--.

Horton: Rough, huh?

Carnes: That--oh, that wasn't rough, but I--I knew, though, I wasn't dumb enough--I was smart enough in the world to know that I was going to pay for it, you know, for this paradise, and so--which I did. But that was a whole different story. It was incredibly beautiful. It was two hours from San Francisco. It was right in the heart of the wine country, and I turned twenty-one at the time.

Horton: Oh, goodness.

Carnes: And, and I traveled all over California, all the way from, you know, northern California where it kind of looks like, you know, a cross between *Northern Exposure* and Ted Kaczynski's little hideout in Montana, all the way down to San Diego, [inaudible]. So that was a whole different story. Fort Leonard Wood, no, we saw--we saw the PX once, and that was recreation. That was it.

Horton: Really? Why don't we talk about the next step, then? So after basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, you went to the Presidio?

Carnes: Uh-huh. I went to--well, it's the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center at the Presidio of Monterey, California. It's the longest title in the military for a military installation. But that was a lot different situation. You went from--oh, you put DLI, that's usually what--Defense Language Institute, that's what we referred to it as. But there was a whole different situation. It was a lot more intellectually based. And they--it's also a center of linguistic research. As a result, they've done--over the fifty or sixty years that it's existed, they've done a lot of research into what will make the student absorb the most language in the least amount of time, basically.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: Which is what--language acquisition as fast as possible is kind of the goal of--it's--

Horton: Oh, sure.

Carnes: --of the Institute. And so, as a result, once you got into a class, you pretty much--it was six hours a day. You saw your platoon sergeant in the morning. You saw two hour--or you--well, I had a woman platoon sergeant--you saw her in the afternoon for physical training in the afternoon. And that was it, and the rest of time was studying and drinking, basically. So it was a totally different environment. And so, being a student here at one of the most liberal universities in the United States, and then going there, it was a little bit like kind of going home, because all I did all day was sit on my butt, listen to Arabic tapes, and listen to my--my instructors, who were all native speakers, and then I'd go home and study. So I mean, it was a lot like reverted to my old life.

Horton: Hmm, interesting.

Carnes: Of course, you know, things are going to change in a hurry, so--.

Horton: Right.

Carnes: But at the time, it was--it was intellectually challenging. And it was a lot of fun. It was hard and frustrating, because all you do, six hours a day, is, you know, do the different modals [??] of Arabic, listening, reading, speaking, and some writing. And that's all you did all day. So you had one hour of listening, one hour of speaking, one hour of reading, and then you'd kind of go through the same cycle again. But it was also very stressful, because at the end you had your proficiency exam. And that's not like--for an undergraduate, you don't really have that. I mean, of course, for your master's, and for a PhD program, you do have a comprehensive exam, but you don't really have it.

Horton: No, yeah.

Carnes: So it was always very stressful, because no matter what, if you always kind of had this shadow, sometime in the distant future, somewhere around July 15, 1998--or '99, where I was going to have to take this damn test. And so that was always very stressful. And we'd--after you took it, it was such a relief that--you know, they--they put you through such a battery of exams, anyway, just dissecting your head, that you were just tired of exams. But I think that that was part of the point, too, that--that they wanted to pick your brain and make sure you learned how to do something. And it's kind of ironic, because in Army, you just do what you're told. But this is one of the few places where they actually use your brain. So--

Horton: So you're talking about Arabic now. So at some point between Fort Leonard Wood and the Presidio, you changed from Russian to Arabic?

Carnes: Well, yeah. That was kind of an interesting thing. How you scored on the DLAB, that goofy test when you came into the military, whatever score it was, it spits out a number, and then it says, well, you qualify for a certain amount of languages. Because so much--for an English speaker, some languages are easier than others. It was like, category one was, like, Spanish [inaudible], and they teach some French; it's rare. And all the way up to category four, which is Mandarin Chinese, Arabic, Korean, and there's another goofy language in there; I don't even know what. And so, since I scored in that category, they just kind of stuck me in there. So it was kind of--that was kind of one of the cold, hard, realities of the Army, is you're pretty much a body, no matter how brilliant you think you are. And you just go with it. And actually, I was a lot happier as a result. I really did enjoy Arabic. It was a lot different challenge than Russian was.

Horton: Okay. So you have been--you had known, even before you went into basic training, that you were going to be doing Arabic?

Carnes: No, I didn't. Actually, at the end of basic training, we got our orders, and at the end of it--.

[interruption from intercom]

Horton: Sorry about that.

Carnes: That was okay. At the end, they have your orders, and you know, they all have two different--they have different codes. And Arabic is "alpha delta." And Korean was "kilo papa." And I had that, and I thought, Oh, crap. The last place I want to go is Korea, because there's only two little countries that speak Korean, and it would be stationed in the United States Korea, and I didn't want that. When I--in process at Monterey, by that time I knew, ha ha ha, like, if you could change anything in the military, they'd have a little form, and it said, you know, "Do you want to do this language?" and I checked no. But most people--99 percent of the people must have checked, actually, yes. And they asked, well, what your preferences were, and I put Russian, Arabic, and Serbo-Croatian. Well, I ended up getting my second choice, but I wasn't all that angry, because you know, anything but Korean. Because in the late nineties, that was one thing you didn't want, was Korean, because Korea was kind of a hot spot. And this was--when I came in, it was even before Kosovo, and Bosnia was kind of boiling down a little bit. It

wasn't as bad as like, say, 1995, when we inserted troops in IFOR and SFOR. But it was still, Korean was the language you didn't want go into. It's like a graveyard. So I was very fortunate to get out of it. So--and of course, they switched the people, so I kind of screwed some guy who was in Arabic, and then all of sudden he's going to Korea.

Horton: Don't think about that, huh?

Carnes: Oh, I [inaudible].

Horton: Okay. So, any other vivid memories from California, Monterey, that you want to go over? Instructors, or recreation, or anything?

Carnes: Well, that was kind of interesting, because it was more of, like, a South American style education, where you had ten-person classrooms, and then the instructors came to you. And so, the instructors were changing, so you know, the opposite in the United States, where you'd go to the teacher. And so we all had native speakers, so I had one Palestinian, two Egyptians, and three Iraqis. And it was--and then a military instructor, and he kind of did more of the administration type stuff. But that was always very interesting, because you were kind of--I don't want to say inundated into a culture, kind of like an intensive language program or study abroad, but pretty much for the United States, that's--that was about as good as you were going to get. And it went fast. I--by the end of the course. In the beginning, we were like--we were like on crayons, and the big, fat pencils in kindergarten, and by the end we were reading newspapers. And so, in 63 weeks, it was very, very intense.

So about half--it was kind of interesting. My older sister got married in--on Labor Day in 1998. Well, I started in March. Well, I took home an Arabic newspaper, you know, just to show people what I did, because a lot of the military was, is I was too smart to go into the military, because I was the salutatorian of my high school class, I was an honor student here at UW, blah blah blah blah blah. And they thought, no, I wasn't going to make it at that, and I'm kind of sarcastic. So they never thought I would do it. Well, I kind of went--it was kind of one of those, "I'll prove it to you."

Well, by that time, all I could read was headlines, and on the plane I was practicing it. But I could actually read the headlines and then kind of give a basic summary of, like, *Al-Ahram* or *Asharq Al-Awsat* newspapers, which are two of the very famous newspapers in the Middle East. And my family all of a sudden

kind of understood that there was a method to crazy madness, so--going into the military. That was kind of one of the more interesting moments.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: There were tons and tons of, you know, silly little things that just kind of--growing up, because being twenty years old, twenty to twenty-two years old, being stationed there for a year and a half, it's a relatively formidable time. And so--and there was a lot of socialization that I learned, and you know, being a young adult, and just generally learning about military life. So there was a lot of growing pains, lots and lots, you know.

Horton: Yeah.

Carnes: Actually, I got to talk to my platoon sergeant, who is now a first sergeant, and--because my chief at Fort Campbell was best friends with her. And I got to talk with her afterwards. She said, "Yeah, you were the goofy one. You really had some growing pains, but I'm happy that you turned out well."

Horton: Well, good. Okay, so what came after Monterey?

Carnes: Well, I did some additional training for a couple of months down at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. That was a whole different situation, because you know, all of a sudden, reality hit, and you went back into the military. And yeah--and we actually reverted back to drill sergeants and the whole nine yards, which actually was--I think was very intelligent. Even though we complained about it, we were kind of thankful, because you ended up--you ended up kind of relearning the military a little bit. And it was kind of at the right time in my military career. And that was a very intense course. It was two months, and it started at 5:30 in the morning for physical training, PT. And I think we started classes at, like, eight, and we went until 1700, five in the evening. And it was a totally different environment.

And so it was very fast, very quick. Out of--it just went so fast that you didn't even really have time to do much of anything, so--But Fort Huachuca, it's in southeastern Arizona, right next to Tombstone. And it was like twenty miles away from Tombstone and Douglas, all these famous Western towns. And Tucson has a lot of history behind it, so--I mean, it was a very, very different situation going from the coast of California to the desert, and it was still kind of interesting. I don't really remember--but I was also only there for two months, so--

Horton: This is in 1999?

Carnes: 1999, so I graduated from there in September, so a couple of years shy of two years. So, most people, when they go through training, it's like twenty-some weeks. And for me it was almost--it was eight days short of two years.

Horton: Okay.

Carnes: It went for a while.

Horton: Okay. What came after that?

Carnes: Well, then I went to Fort Campbell. I got stationed at Fort Campbell, the 101st Airborne Division. And that was kind of a shock, because you kind of think you--you're kind of arrogant, you get just to call--being--you know, being twenty-two, I was pretty arrogant, not a shock. And I thought, well, you know, I'll be working for the Department of Defense, and I'll be running around in a little suit doing God only knows what.

Well, we all got our orders, and there was a big list of them. And they grouped them by language. So the Korean students, you know, they all went to Hawaii or Korea. The Arabic students, it just so happened they went to Germany, Germany, Germany, Fort Campbell, Germany, Germany. And of course, I ended up with Fort Campbell. I wasn't the happiest camper in the world, because, you know, I was a bit intimidated, because the 101st had a bit--this incredible history. They're a band of brothers, and the whole nine yards. And it's an infantry division, so it was a completely different environment from what I was going into. And it's still kind of interesting. I still remember when I drove to Fort Campbell. And I came through--I was driving down 41A, which is the main highway that goes next to Fort Campbell, and it was 1630, and that's about when most people are getting off of work. And it was just mass chaos. It was just--I mean, it made the Beltline seem like a two lane road in Jefferson County. It was just--it was surreal, so I didn't know what to think. And you know, going from a relatively intellectual environment to the strip bars and the tattoo parlors--.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: --it was a bit different take. I was--and yet I was very thankful for where I ended up. And it was a big, big shock, all of a sudden going from a bunch of linguists to

a bunch of--a bunch of infantrymen, aviation mechanics--because, of course, with the 101st, you have lots and lots of rotary wing aircraft, or helicopters.

And it was very, very much a challenge at first, because all of a sudden, I had to go from being smart to being Army smart, which is a wholly different situation. So I had to catch on in a hurry. I was very fortunate, though, because I had a really good platoon sergeant and a really good--we had warrant officers and second lieutenants for our platoon leaders, and they're specialists. They are in a certain field, and for a linguist, you'd kind of--that's, like, the way to become an officer as opposed to infantry. You know, if you want to become an officer, you become a lieutenant. And so my chief--as we call warrant officers--he was very, very, very good. And he steered me in the right direction, and eventually, eight months later, I went to Kosovo with him, and he taught me a lot. So I was very fortunate. Some of the other units didn't have that type of leadership, so you know, when you're an arrogant private first class, about ready to become a specialist, it was--I got--I got whooped in a hurry.

Horton: Yeah.

Carnes: So they taught me a lot. So all of a sudden I went from learning about--learning about Arabic syntax, to all of a sudden learning how to fix a Humvee, how to fill a SINCGARS radio with the COMSEC, or with the encryption in order to speak securely, putting up camo nets. We didn't have tents; we lived in our Humvees.

Horton: Oh, [laughs].

Carnes: Uh-huh, which, actually, we were very fortunate for in Iraq, because a Humvee--this is an aside, but a Humvee hood is very comfortable, by the way.

Horton: Really?

Carnes: In the middle of Baghdad. But anyway, I digress. I learned how to rope march. I learned all this crazy stuff, and that all actually kind of, in a weird way, helped me a lot when I actually went to deploy, because I realize, number one, I'm not that special and I'm not that arrogant. And then I also learned how to survive in a--you know, if I actually needed to. I mean, of course, with me, I was taken pretty well care of, because I was, you know, usually attached to an infantry commander or someone like that. So that helped out a lot. So I didn't need to learn, like, all the infantry skills, like setting up hind sights [??] and the whole nine yards.

But I knew enough to survive. It was--and I was very thankful for Rob teaching--or my chief teaching me all of that, and he was my platoon sergeant as well, so--.

[Tape 1, Side B]

Horton: This is side B of tape one, an interview with Jeff Carnes on June 18, 2004. Jeff, when tape one stopped, we were talking about Fort Campbell, and you had just explained how it kind of brought you back down to earth, in a sense. So you were there for eight months, I think you said.

Carnes: Well, I was actually stationed there for the rest of my military career, for four years.

Horton: Okay.

Carnes: But--and for the first eight months, it was all just training. I did a rotation down at Joint Range Training Center, Fort Polk. The whole brigade went, and that's a normal training exercise. Well, when I mean normal, before 9/11, especially before Iraqi Freedom. But we did some training there, did a lot of field training, everything from land navigation, to first aid type stuff, to [inaudible], the whole nine yards. And it was about--I got there--actually, it was ironic. It was Halloween of 1999. And by about--and we went to JROTC in February of 2000. Our--yeah, it was 2000. And then right after that, we knew we were going--some of us were going to be going to Kosovo, to the point where when we're actually at JROTC--because--well, also, too, to give a little caveat, before September 11, Kosovo was the most dangerous place to go in the world for the United States military.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: It was six months. People got--now I'm looking back on this. Everyone from, I'd have to say, Washington on down, during the late nineties, and during the Clinton administration, the worst thing that was ever going to happen was that we were going to have to send cruise missiles in, and then maybe deploy some troops to Bosnia or Kosovo. Also, with [Arabic], al-Qaeda, that's how you say it in Arabic. That--you know, we were just shooting cruise missiles at the Sudan or Afghanistan, or whatever. So it was--a lot of things changed in a hurry once the World Trade Center fell, and the Pentagon. But at that time, Kosovo was the worst place to go, and people feared it. We were finishing up a rotation, and two

of my peers also got told that they were going to be going to Kosovo in April, so they had a month to go. Now, it turned out they didn't. But that was a lot to take.

So I was--I'm the type of person where I just don't like--I can only take training for so long. And even as a specialist, I wanted to go. And about May time frame, I knew we were going to--that we were going to go, or at least I was. I was begging to go. I was literally on my hands and knees one day, beginning my [inaudible]. So--so, now, there were--there were eight of us from Fort Campbell who got attached to the 1st Armored Division, which is out of Germany, and we went to Kosovo. And it was a whole different situation. We flew in from Fort Campbell while we--we weren't with our--we got taken from our brigade combat team. We were just kind of thrown into 1st Armored Division, which is kind of typical. But we hitched a ride with an infantry battalion, because the 101st had deployed an infantry battalion to Kosovo to work. But we worked with the 1st Armored Division, and it was just a completely different, different mindset. We flew into Macedonia, and it was a real shock to--all of a sudden we drove our Humvees into Kosovo, and we're used to, you know, just wearing--wearing our gear--.

[interruption from intercom]

Horton: Sorry again.

Carnes: That's okay. You know, wearing our Kevlar, and wearing our LBD, wearing the equipment, and that's it. All of a sudden we're in a flak vest, and it just so happened that the route from Macedonia, which is--it's a former Yugoslav republic, now independent, located south of Kosovo. They're taking that--taking the highway into Kosovo. It was just a complete shock. That was one of the worst places of ethnic violence between the Yugoslav--well, the Serb-dominated government and the Albanian Kosovars. That's also the only route. That was one of really two highways that went out. One went from Kosovo to Albania; one went to Macedonia. And so, as a result, it was a huge bottleneck surrounded by mountains. And the mountains--the Serb army, the VJ, they were very intelligent. They mined all these mountains around--around this highway, and really this whole border, which we're actually still dealing with, cleaning up landmines. So--and it created a bottleneck. And so people were pick--these Albanians that were fleeing were picked off left and right. The men were separated--the women and children were sent to Macedonia. The men--some, well, we don't know. We're still digging up mass graves. So that was a lot to take. All of a sudden you're going into, you know, remnants, 13 months later, of a war zone. You saw burnt-out buildings. You saw a lot of, you know, anti-everything graffiti. And it

was a lot to take, and it--really Kosovo was the poorest place--the poorest place in one of the poorer former Soviet-bloc countries. It was very, very depressed, relatively speaking; I saw the worst of that. But it was a lot to take for someone who's twenty-two, twenty-three years old. And it was really just hard to take the ethnic violence.

We were very lucky. Because we were attachments, pretty much the 101st kind of forgot about us, once we found out. So we got to do some training at Walt Disney World, it was rough. But we did a lot of reading. I spent hours upon hours reading about the Battle of the Blackbirds in 14--in '53 [*sic*], where the Serb armies in Kosovo Polje defeated the Ottoman Turks, and it was the first European--well, it was really--the battle was really a tie, but the first European stopping of the Ottoman Turks expanding into Eastern Europe, blah blah blah blah blah. And that's all the justification for the Serbs, you know, taking over this land, and all this other stuff. I got to read all about that, but actually living it on the ground was a completely different story. Being able to talk with Albanians, and being able to talk with the few Serbs that were left, because there were--there were only--it was 90 percent Albanian, 10 percent Serb. Well, the Serbs were slowly but surely moving--migrating back to Serbia proper, and the whole nine yards. And it's a very interesting situation to be able to deal with different ethnic groups, so understanding what the actual history book said, but being on the ground and living that.

So--and--for six months. And being able to see the development of the different attitudes of, you know, what the Albanians thought of the Serbs, what the Serbs thought of the Albanians. See ethnic tension in some of the mixed villages, because right outside where I was stationed, there were about four or five mixed villages, and they were a flashpoint--flashpoint towns where there would be a lot of ethnic violence, every now and then. And then, you know, we'd have to send peacekeeping troops in, you know, some of our guys, and basically kind of play referee. One of the hardest things to take--and from people I went to Bosnia, they say the same thing--is that people would tell us time in and time out, you know, "Thanks for coming. We really appreciate it," and especially the Albanians, because the Albanians were just getting slaughtered. We're the only reason why they're still living. So they were very, very pro-US. They said, "Thanks for being here, but as soon as you leave, we'll go back to killing each other." So, I mean, that was very hard to take, that a lot of what you were doing was futile, and you were kind of, like, playing a referee between the Hatfields and the McCoys, kind of.

Horton: Yeah, yeah.

Carnes: So that was a lot to take. In Kosovo, I was very busy, though. I got to work a lot, doing all crazy things. One of the most memorable things was working with the air contingencies, because there were--I think it was thirty-four or thirty-seven countries that deployed troops, the most being, of course, the United States, the UK, France, Germany, and Italy. And those five main powers split Kosovo into five different parts. We had the eastern part, which actually ended up, when I was there, being the flashpoint area, because it was right on the border of Serbia proper, and there was kind of a buffer zone from the Kosovo border into Serbia proper. And that's where an Albanian insurgency was really kind of taking hold. So we were dealing with that quite a bit. And when I left, actually, it almost broke out into a civil war. And it spread to Macedonia, and Macedonia was almost in a civil war. So it's--Macedonia is about 67 percent ethnic Macedonians and Slavs, and then 30 percent--33, you know, about a third of ethnic Albanians. So it kind of got worse. So I got to see kind of some of the original parts to it.

But I got to work with a lot of the Arab contingencies, the Jordanians and the Emiratis. And that was a lot of fun. That was the first time I had ever met, I don't want to say "real Arabs," because I would, you know, go to Nashville, because Nashville is only forty-five minutes away from Fort Campbell. And there were a lot of Arabs that lived there, lots of Kurds, actually. Ethnic Kurds make up--or the ethnic Kurds in Nashville make up the largest population of Kurds outside of Kurdistan.

Horton: Really?

Carnes: Mm-hm. For some odd reason; I don't know why they moved to Tennessee.

Horton: They like country music, maybe?

Carnes: I don't know. Maybe. But it was my first real opportunity to speak with people who didn't know English, most of them. And they were great; I loved working with them. And also, too, especially the Jordanians, who--a lot of them worked on the border between, well, the West Bank, Israel, Palestine, you know, whatever you want to call it. They worked right on the border, so, you know, Kosovo for them was like, they were getting paid a lot of money through NATO to--because NATO was paying non-NATO countries to actually be there to--and so they were making a pretty penny. Most of them just volunteered to go to Kosovo, which for them was incredibly frozen in the winter, to get a dowry in order to be able to pay

for a bride, because that still heavily exists in lots of the Middle East. So that--I mean, they were great.

I remember one time, the first time we got to go out with them was a checkpoint, a hasty checkpoint we set up just to basically make sure that people weren't carrying weapons. Because in Kosovo, all you were allowed to own were hunting rifles with a license. Any kind of automatic assault weapon you couldn't own, which, you know, in Eastern Bloc countries--basically, anywhere but Western Europe and the United States, the AK is the weapon of choice, I mean, even for hunting. Everyone owns an AK. It's not like the M-16 equivalent in the United States, where, you know, you're in the military, or you know, you're part of the NRA. But I don't want to get into that.

But it was really interesting working--working with them, because they--and they loved me, because I spoke Arabic, and I--you know, they--and I would translate for them. And it was kind of a weird thing, because they only had one Arabic-Albanian translator. So it's kind of like the *I Love Lucy*. You know, they would translate into Arabic, I would translate into English, and the Albanian would translate from English to Albanian to explain the instruction. But they were really, really great. And you know--and especially after reading *Al-Jazeera* at DLI for so long, the terrorist newspaper, and *Asharq Al-Awsat*, which is out of Pal--well, it's out of London, but it's a Palestinian newspaper--you got a really different view of who Arabs are. And I think a lot of--and a lot of people actually worked with the Arabs when they were stationed in Kosovo. And a lot of people kind of forgot that after September 11. Fortunately, I didn't, so--even though I made my share of racial slurs when I was in Iraq, I still kind of--I still remembered that a little bit, that you know, Arabs are pretty much just like an average Joe, so--.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: It was kind of funny, one thing they actually asked for, because Arabs are very big on gifts, and they'll just very blindly just ask you for something. And you know, especially in the Midwest, you don't do that, you know.

Horton: Oh, right.

Carnes: They at one time asked me for Viagra. I said, "I can't get that without a prescription," and they said, "Well, go to the doctor." I said, "I'm not going to go to the doctor in Kosovo to explain that I have a problem." And then they--and then they asked for--well, [Arabic], sex films, you know, pornography. You

know, that was the next thing. I said, "Okay, I'll deal with that. I can deal with that." But--and, you know, realizing that they were just average Joes. They weren't these, you know, like, holier-than-thou Muslims you see going to Mecca and all this other stuff.

Horton: Yeah.

Carnes: That was kind of one of the more interesting things I liked.

Horton: Did you take advantage and ask them for any gifts?

Carnes: Actually, I didn't. And that was--well, being a Midwesterner, I just couldn't do that. They did--they would do stuff like, I would go over there, and they would fix me tea, and that would be the first--they would--I would go over to their barracks, and they would drop everything just to make me tea. And that was enough for me, you know. And I'm just that--kind of that type of --. That's just my way. And they didn't really give me a whole lot. And I never really asked them for anything, partially because a lot of those guys--well, you had--I think they had, like, one or two officers, and for them, they were--I don't think they were a part of the royal--I think one was part of the Hashemite royal family that rules Jordan, which is still a kingdom. And the Emiratis only had one officer, and the rest of them were just, you know, like--some of them were actually Palestinian, because more Palestinians live in Jordan than the Hashemites. And, you know, a lot of them--a lot of them were just, you know, like average people, just trying to kind of get by, even a lot of the Emiratis. So that helped a lot, and I didn't really want to ask them for anything, because a lot of them didn't have a whole lot.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: There was one incident where, actually though, a Jordanian troop shoplifted from the PX. Because we had a PX--I mean, you go to Kosovo, it was amazing. Kellogg Brown & Root, which is now the infamous subsidiary of Halliburton ripping off the government in Iraq, well, they've been ripping off the government for a very long time. And so a lot of people say, "Oh, well, they're bad. You know, it's just Dick Cheney doing this." Well, they were doing the same thing during the Clinton era. And it was almost extravagant. I mean, where I lived, it was just--I mean, the mess hall would have put Old Country Buffet to shame, I mean, for that much food. And we had barracks, and the PX, the whole nine yards. But anyway. The Jordanian troop shoplifted a bottle of cologne, and he was

caught. And he was--he was disgraced, he was shipped back. And I mean, I'm sure he might not be alive.

Horton: Really?

Carnes: I'm--because--well, for them, it was a big source of pride, shipping troops somewhere, because they only times they really do that was Desert Storm, and, well, the Arab-Israeli wars, a whole series of them in the late sixties, early seventies. So for them, it was a big source of pride to be shipping Arab troops, and there was a whole contingency of Arabs and Christians. There was kind of this whole happy utopia--.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: --of what the military--of what a military intervention should be. And so it was really ugly, and you didn't--I didn't even mention that. And it was very honorable to see something like that. A lot of what you see now--oh, especially during the Operation Iraqi Freedom, during the beginning of it, now that I get to watch the media coverage that I lived through, that, you know, you saw a lot of the looting and everything else. And that was kind of an exception, you know, to see this whole just looting of everything, and everyone, just like this free-for-all, you know, like, worse than the L. A. riots after a Super Bowl. It was a--it was very--actually refreshing to see something like that. So the same thing would happen in--well, actually, they were worse than what we would do with you in the United States. So--well, first of all, the killing thing. I think, you know, we wouldn't even do that, for a bottle of cologne. But--I mean, it was kind of interesting, seeing that they lived this--same typical values that we did, in a weird, roundabout way, so--.

Horton: Okay. So did you see any combat when you were in Kosovo?

Carnes: I got shot at once.

Horton: You got shot at?

Carnes: Well, one of the places we would go--well, now I say I was shot at, but at the time--you know, now I look back on it, it was not a whole lot of anything. But--compared to some of the things I lived through. But one of the places we would go is this checkpoint. And this checkpoint-slash-observation post was right on the border with Serbia proper and Kosovo. And in this buffer zone was, as I

said, this insurgency, the Liberation Army of Preševo, Bujanovac [??], and Medveđa--I can't spell that--which became the Taresi [sp??]--e Preshevës, Medvegjës dhe Bujanocit. That's what it is in Albanian; I still remember it.

But their headquarters was literally five hundred meters away from this checkpoint, in this little village called Dobrosin. Well, they would--we would watch them, basically. We couldn't do anything. That was part of the NATO charter, was that we could not go into Serbia proper, no matter what, even if someone shot at us. You know, and actually this started happening in early 2001, after I left--I left in February of 2001, but in May, June, July--well, mid-2001, they started actually shooting at American troops. So that kind of--and their point was not to shoot at us to kill us, but to try and incite us and try to get us to go over the border, and then not fight them, but keep going and fighting the Serbs. They were trying to kind of fire, hide, and say the Serbs did it. And that was very typical.

One time we were at the checkpoint, and I was--it just so happened that I was just a driver. I was going out; we were changing out--we were changing out mission there, just changing out some of our people. And it was really bad. And we would watch; about once a week, there would be mortars firing off. And it would be, like, four or five kilometers away, but, you know, I mean, it was kind of Fourth of July in a weird way, you know, once a week.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: But this time, they actually started firing over the checkpoint with--I think it was an RPK, which is like our equivalent of, like, an M60. And you--there were tracer rounds flying over our head. I mean, it was like, probably, ten feet above our head. And then, of course, they went and blamed the Serbs afterward. But, you know, it was kind of one of those things where the--or the armor commander on the ground said, you know, "You can stay or you can leave, *now*." And, well, we chose to leave, *now*, because what were we going to do, anyway? So that was about the only time we saw anything.

When I left Kosovo--it was kind of one of these weird, ironic things. We left Kosovo, and then the 101st replaced the 1st Armored Division. So my guys--three months later, my unit left, and they saw a lot more. They saw--one of--some of my--one of my guys--they're in a different job. They put sensors in the ground. Their very first mission, they actually got shot at, and--by insurgents. And they actually had to fire back a couple of rounds, which was just unheard of in Kosovo

by that time, partially because Kosovo was completely disarmed, as I said earlier. So if you heard an AK, that was a bad thing. You were thrown in jail if you had an AK.

The worst thing I actually saw, though, was when the--because I got put on all the goofy things to do, all of the crazy things to do. One of the things I had to do was go to this one county jail--we had two main base camps. One was called Camp Bondsteel, and the other one was named Camp Monteith. And Camp Bondsteel was where American headquarters was, and the American sector. Monteith was a smaller one, and it was farther east, and they were the ones who controlled all of the checkpoints on the border. But in that time, it was called Gnjilane, G-n-j-i-l-a-n-e. Albanian spelling makes no sense. It's non-phonetic, or highly non-phonetic, almost as bad as English but not quite. But the county jail, I would have to go and check up on it, basically kind of play babysitter. Well, at the time, KFOR, which--Kosovo Forces--was working with the local police in order to basically reinstitute the police system, because the former way, or the Yugoslav way, was basically you had the military, you had the police force, and then you had a paramilitary, somewhere in between. But the police force was kind of pushing more of the paramilitary side. Well, we were trying to set up civil authority, "we" being KFOR and NATO. So there were American advisors with the local police, and you know, it was basically all the same people doing the same job, in terms of, like, some of the beat cops and the--like, the prison wardens. But the rest of the stuff, they were trying to train them.

Well, I ended up having to go into the jail. Well, one of the things they were trying to crack down on was--was heroin, because the--the second largest producer of heroin in the world, or poppy, is Macedonia. And of course, the most--the biggest producer is Afghanistan. And well, it just so happened that the trade from both Macedonia and Afghanistan went through Kosovo to the rest of Europe. It would go from Afghanistan to--you know, eventually to Turkey, and then it would go up through Kosovo and Albania, up to Italy and Germany. And heroin is, like, the drug of choice in Germany. Well--and a lot of Albanians work--they're kind of like the Mexicans of Europe. They would--along with a lot of other Eastern Europeans, but especially Albanians, they would always send one person to Germany, or Italy, or something like that like, in the family, to work and send back money. So the drug trade was just rampant.

Well, they were going after all the drug dealers. Well, by the time I got there, they were going after the--kind of like the mid-level drug dealers, the ones who--or the ones basically the addicts would buy from. Well, they didn't understand the

concept of methadone, because heroin is physically addictive to your body, unlike, say, marijuana, which is just psychologically. Well, you have to go--to basically get weaned off heroin, you have to go through a detox clinic, and you get shot up with methadone. Well, they didn't have methadone in Albania. So their idea of it was, put you in jail, strap you to a cot, sedate you for a week, and then, of course, while--what we made the joke is, you know, hope that they live, because I mean, they would be convulsing, the whole nine yards.

Horton: I'll bet.

Carnes: And I mean, these guys were like real hardcore drug addicts. I mean, they had--I mean, their whole arm is--arm vein system just completely collapsed. One guy had all of these track marks on his neck. And this was the worst thing I saw in the military, and the whole time I was in the military, I asked them--you know, because I knew what they were, I asked them, "Well, what are these?" And he said, "Well, these are--they're track marks." And I said, "Well, why do you do it there? Why don't you do it, like, in your legs or your arms or something?" And his arms were just--I mean, just a whole big bruise. And he said, "Because it gets faster to my brain that way." He couldn't wait for it to go from here to his brain. And then he started convulsing, and I told our interpreter, "Get the blank--get him the blank out of here, and get the guard, because I don't want him to blank die on me." So I mean, it--now I laugh about it, but at the time, I mean that was--that was--and of all of the things I ever saw, that was the worst thing I ever saw, believe it or not. And it was--well, needless to say, you know, it turned me off of drugs, seeing something like that, so--.

Horton: Sure. Okay, um--.

[Tape 2, side A]

Horton: This is tape two, side one, in the interview with Jeff Carnes on June 18, 2004. And at the end of tape one, we were still talking about Kosovo, but I think we were kind of starting to wrap it up a little bit.

Carnes: Yeah.

Horton: Is there any stories or people that you met at Kosovo that you wanted to talk about?

Carnes: Oh, well, the only thing about it, it was kind of interesting. A lot of my--we were--the people I was with was kind of a hodgepodge from everywhere. And so I got to run into some of my old friends again from Monterey. So that was--.

Horton: Cool.

Carnes: --and that was kind of like, we were a small world. There's only--well, it's hard to tell now, after 9/11, how many people are being trained, but before 9/11--before, really, Iraq, there were only fourteen hundred of us in the military. And so--or in the Army, I should say. And so, everyone knows everyone else there. We--and it kind of continuously happens, where you'll run into people, and no matter where you go, even if you know no one, you know, someone's going to still know you. And the flip side of it, your reputation precedes you. You know, if you're not--if you're a scumbag, everyone knows it. But I got back from Kosovo in February of 2001. And it was kind of one of these things that people don't think about, because in--well, during the Vietnam era, of course, you know, people would fly back to, you know, the San Francisco airport, or whatever, and they would get spit on and the whole nine yards. And you know a lot of bad things. Well, I mean, we got back, and it was kind of like an initial, "Oh, thank God you're back," but then, all of a sudden, I reintegrated with my unit. Well, they were leaving for Kosovo, so it--I was in a really unique situation, and everyone kind of forgot about me. You know--or, you know, not about me; you know, all of us that come back. And about half the people they got back from Kosovo--that I went with to Kosovo, half the people, they PCSed, permanent change of station, basically a transfer to somewhere else.

So I was very bitter at first. It was--it--and the worst part was, was I didn't have the best command structure when I got back with my unit. And all they were worried about was getting to Kosovo. And, you know, not only not taking care of us, but they hardly asked us any questions about what Kosovo was like--.

Horton: Uh-huh, sure.

Carnes: You know, background, because if you want--the people who were the experts on it, though, you know, we only lived it, were us.

Horton: Sure, sure.

Carnes: Because the media in Kosovo, they were all--they were okay. They got it about 60, 70 percent right. But a lot of the whole daily routine, what the people are

like--because, of course, you stick a microphone in front of an Albanian, and they know you're a reporter, they're going to say whatever--you know, they're going to become glory hounds. And so you--yeah, it's a whole different situation. But I was very bitter. And I was having some issues, because of course, part of the 101st Airborne is going through the Air Assault School, which is basically going--or assaulting and doing combat assaults with rotary wing aircraft, helicopters. So--and I was having a lot of issues with that. After September 11, I finally went through the school and passed, but I almost, actually, got out on it, just out of principle. I mean, I--I don't know why it was such a big deal, but at the time it was. So I was very bitter, and it kind of lasted all the summer. And I went to the Science Academy at Fort Campbell, and my first day back at work was September 11, 2001.

Horton: That's [inaudible].

Carnes: So that was a shock. My chief and I, we were about the only two left that--from my unit, actually, because all the people that were left at the unit were--you know, a few of us, the people who were getting out of the military, and the people who were too much of problem children to send over there. And we were just cleaning up the storeroom, because our guys were getting back in November, 2001, and we knew that. And all of a sudden I get a knock on my barracks door, from this one woman she was [inaudible], [knocking]. "Jeff, you'll never guess what happened." And that was about--oh, about 8:30 in the morning on September 11. "What?" "A plane slammed into the World Trade Center." I said, "You have got to be kidding me." And went into her barracks room--because I didn't watch TV. I didn't have cable or anything. And I saw--and she actually saw the second one, you know, because there was very little footage of the first one. And she saw the second one, you know, make that U-turn and slam right in. And I could not believe it; my jaw dropped on the ground. And our work hall was nine, because we had PT in the morning and then nine was work hall. And all we did was watch TV. We just didn't know what to do. We were just horrified. I mean, then they showed the Pentagon, that was slammed into, and no one knew what damage happened to the Pentagon.

Horton: Right.

Carnes: And then you saw the plane in Pennsylvania, Flight 93, that fortunately those brave people took the plane down for us. And by the time the two towers actually fell, and I think it was about 10:30 Central Time, we could--I couldn't handle it anymore. My chief couldn't handle it. We said, "Screw it." We went down to the

supply room. Well, it just so happened, Fort Campbell was going through a terrorist training exercise the next week.

Horton: Oh, wow.

Carnes: So everything was all planned out. And you know, it's kind of like one of these hypothetical, "yeah, right, like it's ever going to happen" type things. Well, by about eleven o'clock, around--no, by about 12:30, there were barricades everywhere, and the whole post was mobilizing. About a third of the post was gone; they were in Kosovo. So, I mean, it was one of those things where--and you know, I don't know what it would be like being a civilian, and you know, seeing everyone--I mean, everyone just is like, "Oh, my God," kind of wandering around. Being military, we were real--we were kind of gearing up, ready to go. You didn't have time to really think about it.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: Being an Arabic linguist, I was very busy.

Horton: I bet.

Carnes: I wasn't doing so much Arabic, though. We were doing a lot of force protection, security type stuff. Lots and lots of that. I mean, I flew--actually, it was interesting. I had to fly to one location in eastern Kentucky, and that--it was an obercolonel [??], like lieutenant colonel, three or four majors, a bunch of captains, and specialists. I wasn't promoted yet from sergeant. And it was goofy. Well, this was during--when the eleven days after September 11, I can't remember if it was nine or eleven, where no flights were allowed besides fighter aircraft. Well, it was supposed to be cleared through RG-3, which is division level operations. They were supposed to clear it with the FAA that we were going to have two Black Hawks flying. They didn't. And so, you know, we find--we come to find out later, all of a sudden we started doing ovals in the middle of Kentucky. I can only imagine what people, you know, on the ground were thinking, you know, because this is all farmland. And apparently it was, you know, we were threatening to get down--get shot down. And this was--and one of the people on this--on one of the Black Hawks was one of the brigade commanders, and he was actually the brigade commander in the 101st who took his troops to Afghanistan. So, I mean, that was--I mean, it was very real.

Horton: Yeah.

Carnes: And we didn't have time to mourn or anything. I mean, we were so busy. Finally, when George Bush--George W. Bush spoke in front of Congress nine days later, that's when we--it finally kind of hit us, what all happened. And we were finally able to kind of half take a break. And it was very--it--all of a sudden, it just went from, you know, kind of like the shiny, happy Clintonian nineties, where, you know, the economy was good, there's peace everywhere, you know, kind of ignore some problems, blah blah blah, to all of a sudden, you know, we were at war with someone. We didn't quite know who. And it was a lot to take. By about November--and it--it was late October when--or was it early October, 2001, when George W. Bush--I was in the mess hall, because aviation had the best mess hall at Fort Campbell, because there's--all the pilots are officers.

Horton: Oh, sure.

Carnes: So we always kind of snuck over there. And I still remember, it was a Saturday, sitting there, and you know, George Bush saying, "Hey, we're going to Afghanistan. You know, we've already started lighting it up, and we have some troops on the ground." And it became very, very, very real in a hurry. And no one knew who was going to go, or what. It turns out I didn't go. I was about ready to go to Afghanistan. I was kind of mentally preparing for that, and kind of starting to get my life in order, and it didn't happen. It was very fortunate, because one thing that I don't think people understood, one of my friends, he volunteered to go. He got from Kosovo; literally a month later, he went to Afghanistan. And he's just that type of guy. His dad is a first sergeant at Fort--I think he's at Fort Bragg with the 82nd, so--It was a fact that--there was very little understanding on a national level about what was going on. They sent a bunch of Arabic language--which is good, because Al Qaeda was, like, highly Arab.

Well, the Taliban, they're not. They spoke Pashtun [*sic*], and it got to the point where people would throw stuff in front of me. They'd say, "Read this." I'd say, "I can't read it." They'd say, "Why not? It's Arabic." I'd say, "No, it's Pashtun." Well, I had to carry around a little piece of something I'd printed off the Internet in Polish. I'd say, "Here, sir, try to read this." "Oh, I can't read it." I said, "No, it's English." And then it kind of sunk in. Pashtun, I couldn't read, maybe--I couldn't even read, like, about 10 percent of it. I mean, it was in Arabic script, and Pashtun--oh, I'm sorry--Pashtun is one of the ethnic groups in Afghanistan. When you read the media, they, well, Pashtun is the majority in Afghanistan. Well, there's not--there is no ethnic majority in Afghanistan. About 38 percent is Pashtun. The Taliban, they were almost all exclusively Pashtun. And in northern

Afghanistan were the Tajiks, the Uzbeks, and they were all--formed the Northern Alliance, and they were the ones who controlled the 10 percent of Afghanistan that was not under the control of the Taliban pre-September 11. And that's actually--and Mazar-i-Sharif, that was their center, and that's where Johnny Walker, the American Taliban soldier, that's where he was found, and also Micheal Spann, the CIA agent, was killed in that prison.

But it was a lot of problems, and I knew that there was going to be a lot of problems off the bat, because people didn't understand the Middle East, and number one, that Afghanistan is not part of the Middle East. No matter how you classify it--I mean, I put Iran in the Middle East, but Afghanistan is kind of--along with Pakistan, it's kind of in that transition zone, similar to like how Turkey, is it in Europe, is it in Asia? Or, you know, the Urals in Russia, is--And people--I would go around and around with officers who just didn't know. And I started reading a lot. I read a little bit in foreign affairs about Afghanistan, and I kind of knew the ins and outs, kind of ish, you know. But I started reading very extensively about it. I don't think very many people did. So that was, like, a big problem to overcome, you know, the fact that there were Sunni Muslims that can be ethnically Pashtun that are Afghani nationals, versus, you know, somewhere in Iraq, or you know, say, Saudi Arabia, who is a Sunni Muslim, but an ethnic Arab that's a Saudi national. Very hard to understand; you could teach a college class on it, you know, just, who are--you know, put this label on this person. And ethnicity is very hard to understand. So it was very difficult. And I kind of won some converts over. By that time I had finally gotten promoted to sergeant, so people kind of half listened to me.

Horton: This was at the end of 2004?

Carnes: Yeah, '04. And--but it was still hard to kind of get through people's heads how it all worked, because it's very complicated to understand, a lot worse than World War II, which was very easy. You know, Hitler is Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, bad. We are good.

Horton: Right, right.

Carnes: You know, who are these muftis, you know, that have--they all have towels on their heads, you know, [inaudible], you know. Well, we've--the 101st ended up sending a brigade to Afghanistan, and I--well, I was not--I'm not part of that brigade, so I didn't go. And my--people who were Arabic linguists, that went, a couple that did, they had a lot of problems, because everything they were doing

was--they were doing, like, low-level Pashtun stuff, and they couldn't understand the people. They couldn't understand anything. It would be like, you know, shipping you to Sweden and expecting to be understood--you know, to understand that.

Horton: Right, yeah, yeah.

Carnes: And that was a big problem. And then a big problem--but for us at Fort Campbell, a lot of problem was--it's, who's next? You know, we have to do all of this Operation Noble Eagle, you know, all the force protection around Fort Campbell and lots of other stuff. We had this brigade in Afghanistan. We're kind of starting to get tapped a little bit. Who's going to go next? So we started reading. And so, along 2002, we were going hardcore, you know, reading up about Afghanistan, even starting to learn some Pashtun and Dari Farsi, which is the language of another prominent ethnic group, the Daris, in Afghanistan. We started learning a lot about that. Some of my friends were actually sent to learn Uzbek and Somali. And so, you know, it was kind of like, "Ooh, where are we going to go next?" You know, no one knew, after Afghanistan. You know, maybe Somalia, maybe Sudan, but hopefully not, because I don't feel like getting malaria. Yeah, man, Syria, maybe--and Iraq was kind of on the back burner. And we're like, okay, well--you know, especially in the whole Axis of Evil thing during the State of the Union address in 2002, we knew it was kind of, like, going to be Iraq and Iran eventually. You know, North Korea, you know. But we never expected it.

Well, then the rhetoric along 2002 kind of started getting ratcheting up. We started doing a lot more training. It was like, uh-oh, you know, it's going to happen. We were expecting, actually, to leave in September of 2002. What did it was--because, also, we started ratcheting up on weapons of mass destruction. This is--and then, the National Assembly of Saddam Hussein said, "No inspectors, no UN inspectors. No, no, no, no, no." And then Saddam Hussein said, "Yes, okay, we'll allow inspectors." And, of course, what I thought was that that was a big show. And this is something that people have kind of forgotten now about this whole kind of show. And so it kind of delayed Operation Iraqi Freedom by six months. But we still were--you know, we were expecting to go, and then it got ratcheted down. We were thinking, Okay, we're going to go to Afghanistan.

This is--and this is something that's kind of hard, because now I look back on it. The time between Operation Enduring Freedom start--which kind of started October, November, 2001, and like, say, March, 2003--that time period is kind of like this window, and we're still kind of--and all--and the United States was still

kind of wandering around, you know, so--I mean, there was just blatant support for the administration, just complete support for the military. Everything we were doing was right. And it was kind of a--on the one hand, it was kind of a glorious time to be in the military.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: On the other hand, there was all of this uncertainty, because we knew we were going to go somewhere next. I mean, George W. Bush is a Texan, after all. We knew that something was going to happen. And we never thought Iraq. Well, then, over 2002, we started ratcheting up for Iraq. Well--and Iraq kind of what I liked studying when I, you know, studied in 1998 in Monterey, because Iraq is one of the hardest countries on the Arabic-speaking Middle East to understand. You know, Egypt is very easy. You have 10 percent Coptic Christian. You have 90 percent Sunni Muslim, and the two groups don't get along, and you have some fundamentalist Muslims. You have the moderate Muslims. Hosni Mubarak, the president of Egypt, is kind of one of those. And then you have the Coptic Christians, who are just persecuted, and you know, they're slowly but surely filtering out of Egypt.

And Iraq is a whole different story, because you have--it's around 8 percent Christian, which people don't realize. The Assyrians and the Babylonians, now called Chaldeans, they're all Christian. You have the ethnic Kurds, who are about 20 percent of the population, and they are Sunni Muslim. And then you have the other majority--the rest of the Arabs--or I'm sorry, it's about 5 to 7 percent Christian, 20 percent Kurdish, who are Sunni Muslims, and then you have the rest of them, being ethnic Arabs, who--the majority are Sunni Shiite [*sic*], and then the minority are Sunni Muslim, but they were--but they're--they were the ruling class. So it's just a whole very diverse--.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: --ethnic society, broken factions along ethnic and religious lines. And it's very difficult to understand. Of course, I loved it. Unfortunately, the bad part is, is unless you're an Arabic linguist, or you're an academian about Iraq, it's very, very difficult to understand, especially since a lot of the labels, Sunni Muslims especially, apply to Afghanistan, because they're also Sunni Muslim, but they're ethnically different--.

Horton: Right.

Carnes: --and they're culturally much, much different. I mean, it's kind of like saying, well, you know, a French Catholic is like a Catholic living in Boston. It's totally, totally different.

Horton: Oh, yeah.

Carnes: But the media doesn't portray that very well, and I think it's a lot because the journalists don't understand that. They get their little blurb from wherever, and you know, then it gets shipped out. And a lot of the journalists you saw in Iraq were the same ones you saw in Afghanistan, so--and the American public really doesn't understand this. And as a result, the American public and the media never asked the right questions. And these are some of the questions we were asking. My chief--this wasn't his first trip to Iraq, and he wanted it to be true. He--and actually, reading Richard Clarke's book, *Against All Enemies*, he was a counterterrorism expert for the White House at the time he quit, and he wrote this very damning book about the Bush administration. I agree some of--most of what he says; some of it I really don't, especially about Clinton. But he same the same thing. He said, "I wanted it to be true. I wanted to pin 9/11 and international terrorism on Saddam Hussein." But you couldn't. There was just no way. The American public wasn't asking the right questions. And this is what--this is something that I have a hard time dealing with now, is that you watch--well, of course, Fox News, being the most conservative one, they were very pro-war. But even MSNBC, and to a small extent CNN, they were all very pro-war, but they didn't understand the whole situation. And they didn't understand that, you know, just because someone has weapons of mass destruction, it didn't mean that they were going to use it. I mean, Pakistan is much more of a threat with their nuclear weapons than Iraq ever was. Also, if you look at the list--the list of terrorist countries that the United States had, pre-9/11, it was Cuba--Cuba, Libya, Syria, Iraq, North Korea, Iran, and Afghanistan. If you compare the ones who were the actual biggest threat to the United States, versus--the ones who actually were a threat to us, i.e. Afghanistan, they didn't have nuclear weapons--weapons of mass destruction.

So this was something very hard for me to swallow, going to Iraq. But being a soldier, I had to go. You know, and that was my duty. And how I looked at it--I mean, some people would say rationalized, but I don't really think of it as rationalizing, that my job was to keep people alive, to make sure that I translated properly, and make sure I got the right information in order to keep our troops alive. Then, maybe, you know, to try to solve the problems of the world.

Horton: [laughs]

Carnes: I found out, 7 February 2004, that we were going to go to Iraq. Fortunately, I had--got to take some leave. At Fort Campbell, the diff--the three infantry brigades, and all the attachments to them, get rotated on who's going to be on the--we'd call it block cycle. Who's the one that, you know, is going to get deployed for--it's supposed to be 36 hours, but it usually doesn't happen that way. But you know, the ones who are going to basically be in the shoe, which in the nineties, it kind of meant nothing; it was like a joke. You could only go--you were on certain restrictions. You could only go fifty miles, blah blah blah. After--in Afghanistan, that actually became true, because that 3rd Brigade just happened--the only reason why 3rd Brigade, 187th Infantry Regiment got sent was because they were on that cycle. We were actually the last brigade to go out of infantry, but we knew; 7 February 2003 [sic] we found out.

And it was--and we knew it was coming. We actually got to the point where we had our Humvees packed and everything. I mean, we pretty much were ready to go. But still, we found out that--that day was a Thursday. Friday, we were going to get our desert uniforms and our desert boots, all that stuff. And we found out we were going to be shipping our vehicles that day. We were supposed to do it, like, eleven days later, but you know, for some reason, they all--someone waved their magic wand and said, "You're going to do it today." So we got the--I stayed up until 3:30 in the morning, and it was freezing cold that day. It was about ten degrees outside. It was freezing cold, trying to get these Humvees pushed through. By that time I was promoted to staff sergeant, and so I had a lot more responsibility. And my responsibility was for my company, to make sure all the vehicles got pushed through the line, the inspection line. And so I was literally running all over the place, partially to keep warm, and going from Humvee to Humvee, making sure things were fixed; there was no leaks or anything. And then, after that, it was just training. And we didn't know what to expect.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: So one of the biggest threats, of course, was, you know, having chemical weapons used on us. The Iraqi regime actually used chemical weapons against the Kurds after the Iran-Iraq War, 1988, and wiped out a small city called Halabja. And that was very much in my minds. I had known some people that have actually been to Halabja, that were in the military, and they said it was just horrible, the people that survived. Because five thousand people instantly died, and fifty thousand

people were, I mean, infected with blister agent and nerve agent. And blister agent is especially nasty, because blister agent covers your whole body, and it's--even inside your mouth, you get blisters. There was also chemical weapons used in the Iran-Iraq War, and there's some footage of it being used on Afghani children by the Taliban and some--and you know, other--because Afghanistan was just riddled with war forever, since I was born, basically. Well, I was born in '77; in '79 it all started up, and it hasn't been peaceful since. So, I mean, that was the biggest scare we had, you know, getting something really nasty used on you. So we did a lot of training on that.

We did a lot of training going to the infantry units and teaching them Arabic. And actually--and we did the same thing by the time we got to Kuwait. And actually, one of the most memorable moments I had in Iraq was, eight months later I was in the barbershop, because our base camp--well, we were at--I was at the brigade headquarters, so our base camp was very tiny. It--like, the loop around it was not even half a mile, you know, the perimeter, so it was like a high school track size. But I had some infantry sergeant come up, and he said, "I know you. You speak Arabic, don't you?" I said, "Yeah." And he started doing, you know, "[Arabic]" because we taught them how to, you know, get prisoners on the ground, and that was basically what we were doing. And it was very, very rewarding to see that. They--you know, eight months later, someone remembered what we did.

Horton: Right, yeah.

Carnes: You know, so it kind of gave you a sense of fulfillment. So between--we left on March 7, so we had a month; we did a lot of training, a lot of relaxing, getting our things in order. The seventh of March, and we were one of the last to leave. Literally, we were like, the third to last planeload of soldiers, and it just so happened to be that way. So we flew to Kuwait, and by the time we got there, the 3rd Infantry Division--because they have a brigade that rotated, that has always rotated out of Kuwait, they actually had their whole division there by that time, and they actually pushed to the frontier, and Kuwait is a desert wasteland. It is the most God-forsaken place I've ever been in my life, because you have Kuwait City, and like, a bunch of cities that are all involved with oil production, and then, it would be kind of like, if you take, like, the suburban parts of New York and New Jersey, and then, in the state of New Jersey, you know, Newark and Jersey City, and then you just have nothing for the rest of the state. It was just nothing. It was kind of like the Bugs Bunny cartoons where it's got a little arrow above the camel riding over the sand dunes. That's what it looked like.

But by that time, they--the 3rd Infantry Division pushed to the frontier, because there were, like, a bunch of, I don't want to say temporary camps, but they're called cabals [sp??], and they were, like, transitional camps set up in the desert, in the middle of nowhere. And theres five of them. Udari [sp??], you hear about it in the news; that's the most permanent one. Then you have New York, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Pennsylvania is where--it occurred in the news, where one of the soldiers, who was Muslim, from the 101st took a grenade, rolled it into the pock [sp??], and killed a bunch of people. And that really brought it to--so, I mean, it--so all of a sudden, it got very real in a hurry, because that happened within a week of us getting on the ground.

So we were actually at Camp New York, and the 101st was spread out among the different camps. And we got our by--and then we just waited around, basically. Our vehicles showed up. We got everything ready. And it was kind of like one of those things where, okay, you got everything? Good, because you're going to see--if you don't have it, you're not going to get it. And that was hard to swallow, that, you know, our Humvee, for--well, our platoon had two--our two Humvees were going to be our life for a while. We had borrowed something else, another Humvee from another platoon, so we got three. And we looked like the Clampetts going from Arkansas to Beverly Hills. We--.

[break in recording][File 2, 30:20-30:44]

Carnes: --and we looked like the Clampetts going from Arkansas to Beverly Hills. We had rucksacks and duffel bags strapped to the outside of the vehicle, and the whole nine yards. And we took everything we could. And that--and then we were just waiting to go. We had--then we didn't actually go in right away. The air war--

[Tape 2, side B][File 2, 31:16]

Horton: This is side B of tape two of the interview with Jeff Carnes on June 18, 2004. Jeff, before, we were interrupted by the tape ending. You were just talking about moving out into Iraq. You were talking about loading up everything onto your Humvees, and just take it from there, okay.

Carnes: Yeah. Oh, yeah. So we were loading up our Humvees, because it was like—that is it, we don't--I mean, well, also, too, it wasn't like Kosovo, where, you know, you can always get something. And it was pretty well established, even though I got there about--I think it was about fifteen, fifteen months, it wasn't thirteen like I

said earlier. It was fifteen months after getting there, so things were pretty well established that we were going to be it. And whatever you took was what you were going to have for a while. And you know, we didn't know when the supply lines were going to catch up, or anything. So it was, you know, take what you had, and everything. And it got very real when we got the actual atropine injectors, which are the real thing, in case you get in a chemical attack. Basically, the atropine injectors, what we do is, it's a series of two. One is the atropine, and you inject it into your leg, and it's a self-injecting--you know, you just stick it in, and the needle shoots out, and puts basically a pseudo-narcotic in your system, to basically speed up your whole system and try to work out whatever nerve agent you had, out of your system, and then what's it called, too, "toocloropam," or I can't remember what, the second injector to slow you down. When you get something like that, it gets very real.

Horton: I'll bet.

Carnes: I actually got to see some of the troops leaving for Afghanistan where they got the brief and everything. And they were handing these out in this briefing, if you want to see some people all of a sudden get a shock of reality. For us it was a little milder shock. But I mean, that was very--bringing home the reality. I mean, when you were going to go to war, and that was--what you have was what you have. And also, when we finally we about ready to leave, because we were so tired of Kuwait, because people were getting sick, because I have bad allergies. So I was getting--I got sick from the sand, in a hurry--it was also--March is--well, if you want to call a wet season in Kuwait. It was the wet season, and that's also when the winds would pick up. And the dust storms, like, I couldn't--it was so bad, a couple of them, you couldn't see from here to the door.

Horton: Wow.

Carnes: And these camps were very spread out because of Scud missile attacks. Now they're at least set up a little bit different, because there's no threat from Iraq of Scud missiles. So, I mean, it would be a quarter mile to anywhere. And if you got caught in one of these things, you might be wandering around for a while. So accountability was very important. But we were so tired of Kuwait, and the desert, and so on, that we just wanted to go. And all we knew was we were going to go to Iraq. And the plans kept on changing. This is something I found out later, kind of like on a national level. You know, a lot of people say, "Well, Bush lied, and blah blah blah blah." Well, it's not that he lied about weapons of mass destruction and all this other stuff. He said, I think what it is, and--is that they're both

[inaudible]. Obviously, I think the plan was, is--we were going--and a lot of people say it's about oil, and I'll get to that later, why I don't think so. But basically, I think the plan was, is we were going to go into Iraq, get rid of the Special Republican Guard, the Republican Guard, get rid of the--you know, destroy the military infrastructure, get rid of the political regime. The people are going to rise up, kind of like they did in Germany, and Japan, post-World War II, and then they're going to set up their own government, and we're going to be just like an observing force, and you know, kind of like shiny, happy people.

Horton: Right, right.

Carnes: We knew better. You know, I've been studying Iraq for a while --I knew better that it wasn't going to be like that. I didn't know how bad it was going to be, and so we were like "Oh God". But we didn't know where we were going to go. There was some talk about us--because the 3rd Infantry Division, basically they went around all the major cities, and they went to Baghdad. They weren't in Baghdad by the time we were there. They--they were getting close. The Marine Corps, 1st Marine Corps Expeditionary Force, basically the 1st Marine Corps Division, they were starting to go in. We thought we might be stuck on a checkpoint for six months, you know, translating or something like that. We didn't know. It turns our first mission was to An-Najaf. Actually, if I could have a sheet of paper, I know I'm going to take away your pen.

Horton: I got a pencil. That's okay.

Carnes: Or a pencil would be just fine. Okay. Here is [inaudible]. I remember some of this it in Arabic. I don't remember it in English. So, if I start doing it in Arabic, please tell me. Okay, well, you know, here is Iraq. We were kind of, like, out here, and here's Kuwait City. And there's only one place to--there's only really two places to pass. One is called Umm Qasr, U-m-m Q-a-s-r. This is right on the border, in the Shatt al-Arab, which is where the Tigris and the Euphrates kind of come together as a tributary and then flow into the Persian Gulf. And this is where most of the oil production is found in Iraq. The [inaudible]--Marine Corps went this way, and there's a little called--here called Safwan. That's--it's kind of like the little town the world forgot. That's where, during Desert Storm, Norman Schwarzkopf and the minister of defense, oh, [tapping], I can't remember his name, the Iraqi minister of defense. Because we ended up chasing him around; he's from Mosul, where I ended up. We called him Fat Bastard, from *Austin Powers*, because he was big.

Horton: Really?

Carnes: He--I didn't get to see him personally. I did see his brother, and he was big, even for an Iraqi. But they signed the truce in Safwan, which is located here. It is the worst city in Iraq. It is poor. But my commander, he actually went to Afghanistan, and he said that Safwan was the nicest place he saw.

Horton: Oh, really.

Carnes: In Afghanistan--or, excuse me, the equivalent. I mean, it was horrible, because it was literally right on the border. And the border between Iraq and Kuwait is heavily fortified. It has dudes [sp??]--it has razor wire, concertina wire, the whole nine yards. So I mean, it is--it is bad.

And this little town, it didn't have an economy, because it's stuck out in the middle of nowhere. All this is--all this is is desert out here. So we--and so that was a lot of reality. And there was a lot of--they're Shiite Muslims. We kind of abandoned--well, they perceived that after Desert Storm. I go back and forth, whether or not we should we go--whether we should have just destroyed Saddam Hussein or the regime, right then and there. I said no, because what were we going to put in place? And it would have been a worse situation than what we have now, in my opinion. It would have just been mass chaos. But a lot of these Shiite Muslims that live in southern Iraq, the majority, even though they weren't ruling--and they're actually an ethnic-religious majority. They're, like, about 60 percent of the population. They thought that we had forgotten them.

So we--especially in this town, because it's right on the border, there's nothing around it. It was--they had no economy. I mean, we got dirty stares, rocks thrown at us, oh, my God, just driving through. Also, too, I mean, they had the whole 3rd Infantry Division, all this mechanized and armor going through their town. That must have been very disruptive.

Horton: Oh, sure, sure.

Carnes: So we went from there, and we knew we were going to go An-Najaf [emphasis on "na"], An-Najaf [emphasis on "jah"], as they say in English. It's on the news now a lot, because this is one of the holiest sites of Shiite Islam. And that's where Ali, one of the--he was a son-in-law of Muhammad, and he's buried there, and he's kind of like the first true Shiite Muslim, depending on, you know, which sect you're in. It's a very holy shrine. And we knew we were going to end up here, in

An-Najaf. So we drove. But we had take--because all of these old towns, Samawah, Diwaniyah, they weren't cleared yet. So we had--we had to drive all around it, like how they--it would be like, instead of taking 90/94 to go to Milwaukee, it would be like--it wouldn't be like taking 18 through Waukesha. It would be like taking, you know, like these little twisty county roads through Helenville, and all these little burgs. And we didn't even go through those burgs. So that's what we did. It was about thirty-six hours, and it was sheer hell, driving through it. Because we had--we ended up--and my Humvee broke down. We picked up--picked up some metal in our tire. We ended up with a flat tire. We didn't even get into Iraq yet, and we broke down. The only time we broke down, ironically, and so we ended up getting picked up by someone else, and we got a new tire. And there were--and actually, someone else from our company, their radiator blew a hose. And so they ended up getting pulled into Iraq. And this is what it was like. If you broke down, that was the end of it. I saw--on these highways, you would see, like, your trailer, you know, military trailers and stuff just abandoned because there weren't any more tires. They all blew out.

Horton: Yeah.

Carnes: So it was almost surreal along the route, because the--[inaudible], the Special--or I'm sorry, not Special Republican Guard, the Republican Guard was all around here in the desert. And the 3rd Infantry Division, their job was to go around, like, An-Najaf, Karbala, go up to Baghdad. And they kind of went around all the towns and cleared out all this armor. So all you'd see were all these hulks of stuff. And all this is is desert out here. I mean, all it is is just rocks and sand, no vegetation. It's not like--like Arizona, where there is vegetation, or like SoCal. So it was surreal.

Also, to show how horrible, just despicable the Iraqi Army was, you'd see these little farms--because a house in Iraq, or a farm, you know, of course, it was a compound. It had a house, and you know, whatever barn or whatever, and then walls around it. And they were putting air defense artillery and anti-aircraft artillery inside these compounds. So you're--I mean, so of course, we'd go bomb them, and then, you know, have all this civilian collateral damage. I mean, that just shows how bad the Iraqis were. I mean, you would see this quite a bit, so--

Well, I'll get to that in a little bit, what we found out about the military, anyway. So we were seeing this--so it was all surreal. I mean, and we were covered in sand, because the 3rd ID went this way. Well, all their logistics trains were coming back, so you have all these 18-wheelers kicking up sand, the whole nine yards.

So, I mean, we would be in the back of the Humvee, because there were four of us. We would be rotating out, you know, who's driving, who's in the troop command seat, you know, shotgun, controlling the radio, and who's in the back sleeping. And I mean, there was one time where we were literally covered in a quarter inch of sand. And it was miserable. But we knew we were going to be outside An-Najaf. We didn't quite know where, because they gave us a grid, a location that you can use, global positioning to find out. And you know, that's how our military maps are set up. We had the grid, but there were so many maps of just nothing. And it was just follow the leader.

And I mean, we had Ur over here, and we passed by it, which was the ancient Sumerian capital. And so we got to see all this historical stuff. And I knew we were getting close, because we--the 3rd ID's main was out in the middle of the desert somewhere. Or their--3rd ID's main division command post. We saw that, so I knew we were getting close. And there's a plateau, and An-Najaf isn't exactly on the Euphrates, al-Furat in Arabic. It kind of runs next to it, so [inaudible], and the Tigris kinda runs this way and [inaudible]. There's this plateau, and it was a like a--it really wasn't like a mesa, but it was as flat as a mesa. We saw it, we'd go up this hill--I mean, we knew we were getting close. And come over the hill, and we were actually some of the first from my brigade actually to get there. We saw some Humvees. We're out in the middle of nowhere. I mean, it was like as flat as can be. It was about as flat as a sheet of paper, and we saw nothing.

Horton: Oh, gee.

Carnes: And we're like, "Oh my God." So we set up there. We found out we were not going to be there very long. The three battalions in the brigade, they got parsed out. I got attached, actually, to 1st Battalion. First Battalion went to a checkpoint north of An-Najaf. Second Battalion went to Hillah, which is ancient Babylon. Third Battalion went to Kufa, which, actually, [inaudible], which was--it's on the Euphrates at a strategic point, but it's also the center of Islamic learning [inaudible]. And so, I mean, this would be like--like if Harvard all of a sudden, you know, a thousand years later, [inaudible].

So we were, like, in this whole area. And it was surreal. I ended up on a checkpoint north of An-Najaf, on the city, and hung out there for three days, didn't do anything. Well, eventually, we closed off--we were on a major highway that went around An-Najaf. But--well, and--after we got mortar attacked and ambushed, where I almost--actually, we almost died. We came ten--not even ten meters away from a mortar landing. It was in a grove of trees, and thank God the

trees were there. They threw a couple of us into a pit, because we were just--we were too valuable. There's nothing you can do. But what were we going to do, anyway? All we had was the M4 carbine that replaced the M16. And if it wasn't for those trees, I'd be dead.

And the tree--but at the time, people asked, "Well, were you scared?" It's like, "No." I mean, it was surreal. We didn't--we couldn't be scared. We were kind of at flight or fight [inaudible]. Well, after all that happened, they closed off the checkpoint. But people are coming through, you know, people our age, men our age. It's like, hmm, they're military. "So where are you going?" "I'm going home." This is something we didn't expect.

Horton: Really?

Carnes: Because you saw during Desert Storm all of the--all of the huge amount of enemy prisoners of war, EPWs. We didn't have that, and this was something we didn't--we just didn't foresee, that the Iraqi Army just quit, basically. They put on their civilian clothes at whatever base they were at and somehow got home. That's where--this is where I disagree. There's a lot of public anger because we just spent our--Paul Bremer, and Tom [sic] Garner before him--the civil administrators of Iraq disbanded the Iraqi Army. Well, they just went home and quit. Well, what are you going to do, all of a sudden say "do over" and then you go back?

Horton: Right.

Carnes: I mean, it's kind of hard--I mean, and that's something people don't understand. And that's what happened even with the Special Republican Guard and the Republican Guard around Baghdad, to a large extent, except for the paramilitaries, and that's who ambushed us. So eventually, we went into An-Najaf, and it was just classic. I got to go with classic infantry techniques. It's amazing, seeing that we went--I was with the infantry battalion commander, and actually, my whole platoon, we all ended up at that point. They got pulled from Kufa and Hillah to come for us. That was for no apparent reason. And it was kind of one of those things; when we left Kuwait, we didn't know if we were going to see each other again. So we ended up kind of having this whole reuniting thing. And my chief and I went into An-Najaf. It was kind of like--it was supposed to be a three-hour mission. You know, it's kind of like *Gilligan's Island*, a three-hour tour. And it was--we followed behind the mortarmen, and the mortars--the American mortarmen were mortaring into An-Najaf. The infantry [inaudible]

were above us. They were, you know, following--they were ahead of the mortars, and then we were right behind them. And so we got to see it. I mean, and it was just amazing to see, and we cleared northern An-Najaf. And it was just--it was just one of the most amazing things to see the American military might of doing it, you know.

By that time--and by that time, you know, they all fled. Or the paramilitaries, they were either killed or captured. So we were in An-Najaf for a week. And it was kind of like one of these things where, like every seven days during the war, high intensity conflict, we moved somewhere else. They'd ask us to coop up [??] for a couple of hours, and it was surreal. We took over a soda factory. The Kufa soda factory. And we ended up--well, our JAG officer, lawyer, she ended up tallying up how much soda we took, because we ended up, you know, basically looting the soda factory, but we paid the Iraqi government, part of the Geneva--the Convention of [inaudible] Warfare. And it was surreal to have, you know, like, a soda, and it was good. It was in the middle of Iraq; it was weird. And most people think of it as desert. Kufa, and especially where we were, there were palm trees everywhere, palm groves. It kind of looked like Vietnam, actually. We saw the pictures of it. I gave Gale some of the photographs of it. And it really did look like Vietnam, this compound. You would never have guessed it was Iraq. Actually, where I was, too, I mean, in An-Najaf, there is a river that goes near it, and so it was kind of like the edge of the river valley, and then the rest of its desert. Oh, yeah, I was also allergic to a tree, so--in Iraq, so my eye completely swelled shut. It was nasty. But anyway. In Kufa, we got all the soda, and then we found out we were going to Karbala, which is the second holiest site of Shiite Islam. And that's where I learned a lot about Iraq. This was, like, a big flashpoint, because there is kind of, like, a gap. There's a big salt lake out here. There is--it's called the Karbala Gap. And this is where the Republican Guard was. But they just kind of gave up. Otherwise, 3rd--the 3rd Infantry Division was supposed to have a lot of resistance here in the beginning. It was very little. So, I mean, you saw, just like, literally, a brigade's worth of armor just sitting out there, either abandoned or blown up.

So we actually--our job was to clear the city. And my job, actually, was--and the city wasn't even completely clear yet, but three battalions from 2nd Brigade, 101st, took different parts. I got to go in and go find landmines. This was literally my job. I got attached to 2nd Battalion [inaudible], and we had a vehicle blow up. One of the--nothing very much happened to it, just a tire. It was an anti-personnel mine. So that was my job. So--.

Horton: What did you--how did you go about trying to find mines?

Carnes: Well, Iraqis weren't very good with mines. It wasn't like Afghanistan or Angola. It wasn't--what they did--it was more of a deterrent. They had various different types of mines, but the most common, we would call them toe popper mines, only like, you know, three or four inches big, and about this big around. And they would just drill into the pavement, or the dirt, the ground, and put them in, and they'd just put them alongside the road. When I was in An-Najaf, there was actually--they would literally just throw out landmines onto the street. I mean, in the middle of the night, and hope that people weren't watching and get blown up. Actually, we did have--lost a vehicle that way.

And so we stopped, you know, and it got called in. And you know, I got to go--go find landmines. And literally, we stopped and hopped out of the Humvee, and they were on the sides. There were only like--well, kind of on either side. So my job was to ask people where all the mines are. So people are literally coming up with hand grenades, giving them to us. I was like, ugh! And Soviet hand grenades are not very well made. And these were Iraqi and Syrian knockoffs, so they were, you know, more likely they're duds than being used, but on the other hand, it might have the other extreme.

Horton: Right.

Carnes: I learned the hard way. I made one of my few errors in translating, because I was so nervous. You know, I asked--they were trying to point it out, and I kept on saying where, the place with the blue window. But I really said the place with the blue net. It's similar or--so I learned how important the job was to get it right. Well, the next day--we ended up at a Ba'ath Party headquarters. The Ba'ath party was the only political party in Iraq, and--but it was more than a Ba'ath party. They had, like, a paramilitary wing. It was--I mean, they controlled Iraq. It was basic--it was the government. And we actually took over the party headquarters. But they left it like--they didn't have anything. I mean, it was like they up and left. You know, I mean, it would be like, say, at Fort Campbell, some of the soldiers just leave, or even this building. And so there were papers, just stacks of everything. Some of the stuff had to have probably been removed, but most of it wasn't. I mean, it was really interesting to see the fact that Iraqis must have just--you know, they must have saw all of the tanks go by, and all the Bradleys from 3rd Infantry Division, went, whew, thank God, and just stayed there, thinking, you know, some sort of surreal reality. I mean, and you know, that was kind of like--and we all saw the Ministry of Information in Baghdad. "Oh, no, the

Americans, you know, not in Baghdad,” and there’s tanks rolling by. This was my version of it.

Well, the next day, and the next few days, my job was to go--was to go find weapons. And this battalion commander I’m attached to, he’s by far the greatest commander I’ve ever seen. He’s also crazy. We walked, we did a patrol, and it was 95 degrees and humid. So it wasn’t a pleasant thing. But my job was going and finding mines, and finding weapons. What the Iraqi government--Army did, they moved weapons in the schools. And you know, that’s--and were more than happy. They were like, “Thank God you’re here,” and giving us hugs and everything. And it was just like this whole euphoria that the American troops were there. In six days, just one battalion, in part of Karbala, found six semi loads worth of weapons.

Horton: Wow.

Carnes: In schools, basically. That’s where they moved them all to. And that just shows how their--the Iraqi mentality that--of how--and how little importance on life they had. Well, that’s--and so there was this whole euphoria. But the people wandering around, like, “What now? What do we do now?” I could kind of see, but this was a--kind of like a dystopia, an anti--but it was completely a negative welfare state. People are completely dependent on the system. People are coming up to us, “Turn on the electricity.” I’m like, “We can’t turn on the electricity. You do it.” And I’m a big believer in, you know, people have to help themselves. And this is something that, I think, we made a mistake in Kosovo, that we spoon-fed the Albanians, the Kosovar Albanians, everything. And we said, “Well, why don’t you turn it on?” “Well, we can’t.” “Why not?” “The Ba’ath Party owns it.” “Well, they’re gone.” “No, it’s theirs.” And this--and so I would tell them, “Well, you have--you have all these tanks of diesel outside of town because an armored, you need lots of fuel.” Yeah. Or, you know, we’re going to--it was--or it was gasoline, I’m sorry, *binzin*, as they say in Arabic. “Well, you have electricians, right?” “Yeah.” “Well, why don’t you take the *binzin* from outside of town, bring it in, and turn on the generators?” “Oh, we can’t do that.” So, oh, God! You know, you’d be going crazy. It’s--so you’d see, on the one hand, people are coming up, can we destroy--because there were pictures of Saddam Hussein everywhere. You know, and you’d see--and I mean, I was literally there when, you know, you saw the media footage of people burning them, and--I mean, there was, at the Ba’ath Party headquarters, right next door was kind of like their lush apartment complex. They got completely set on fire and looted. But you saw--I mean, there was--it

was a very powerful moment to see this Iraqi with a metal pipe just smacking the picture of Saddam Hussein.

On the other hand--and this was a big mistake on the American part. We didn't understand the concept of, well, you know, these people are completely dependent on the system. They are not--they're going to depend on us. This isn't, you know, the shiny, happy, they come up--this isn't like Germany. Though I'm not sure what the difference between Germany--because Germany was very much the same way, so--.

Horton: Yeah.

Carnes: I'm not sure of the whole difference, but--how it differed, and that's something I want to research. But it was hard. Like, people are coming up to us, "We need this. We need that." Saddam Hussein controlled the complete infrastructure, and electricity was God there, because of the heat and the air conditioning.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: Baghdad got 100 percent, and Tikrit got 100 percent electricity, and the rest of the governorates got the rest. Governorates are the provinces. Well, what the Ba'ath Party did, is they would shut off--they would leave and shut off the electricity. And so then we had to kind of figure out how to turn it on and everything else. Well, now, it's more of an egalitarian society where, you know, everyone gets the same amount. And so that's where everyone complained to Baghdad about not having electricity. Well, you're kind of living the way that the rest of Iraq was. The press doesn't get it. This is something that took me a long time to learn. And so this was going to be, like, just huge problems; it was like oh hell. So--oh, yeah.

[Tape 3, side A][File 3, 00:04]

Horton: This is tape three, side A, of the interview with Jeff Carnes on June 18, 2004. Jeff, we were--you were just talking about--at the end of the second tape, you were talking about the electricity, and the dependence of the Iraqi people on the government, and how it kind of caused a lot of problems when they retreated. So if you could pick up from there.

Carnes: Sure. Something that I found up later, I ended up in Mosul. We found out--this was kind of a common question. I would just kind of, you know, ask people, just for my own curiosity, well, what do you want now, you know, in terms of an

economy, political system--or, I'll get to the political system in a second. And they said pretty much the same, they wanted the same political or economic system, which was a socialist, rationed economy, and literally people would get rationing cards. This was a big problem, because people had rationing cards up through April, the war. And then after that, we had to, in a hurry, try and figure out a way to, you know, start distributing food. We were a little bit better at it in Mosul than in some of the other places.

But in the political system, we asked, "Well, what do you want now?" And a lot of the very intelligent people--because people didn't understand the concept of democracy. An example being, when I was at Mosul--I know I'm skipping ahead--we were helping out the newspapers, because they would report some of the craziest things, like that American soldiers were scared, and so 150 of them dressed up like women and crossed into Syria. But, oh, boy, that's a real smart place for Americans to go. We'd get stuff like this. And--but the journalists, and we were just trying to help them out. You know, I don't want to say control them, because we weren't. We would let them print anti-US stuff, as long as it was stuff that was, in general, true.

But--but this reporter, she said, "Oh, this is Baghdad," and she would always come in and say, "Oh, well, the editor, he is bad. Blah blah blah blah blah. And we want him fired." Well, it comes out he wasn't qualified. Because he was a lawyer, he wasn't qualified to be an editor. "Well, why don't you get rid of him?" "No, you get rid of him. You'd say that." It's like, "No, no, no, this is how democracy works. You all vote to get rid of him, and it's a consensus." "Oh!" You know, and then it kind of sunk in a little bit. That was--I mean, people didn't understand. You know, they saw through satellite TV a--but, you know, a little bit of the United States, but they thought it was like *Beverly Hills 90210*, where, you know, everyone's rich, everyone has three cars, everyone is fat. You know, everyone eats McDonald's every day, and it's a feast. No, it doesn't work that way. So I knew, right from the beginning, there was going to be a lot of these problems, something the media doesn't catch. They don't understand, because they didn't live there long enough.

So after--anyway, after Karbala, I got to go in Baghdad. And we were in southwest Baghdad. And Baghdad is kind of like along this belt, because like, around Basra in southern Iraq, An-Najaf, Karbala, it's--it's all very--it's almost all Shia. You know, it's like--there's like--this is like sixty, seventy kilometers here. It's about seventy kilometers to Baghdad from Karbala. And this was--oh, boy, it seemed forever. But it's like a couple hundred kilometers. Well, and Baghdad is

kind of where it starts to get mixed, and then up to Tikrit, Sunni and Shia. So we were in some of the poorer Shia neighborhoods. And basically, our job there was, you know, the same thing, clear out weapons, try to find any paramilitary forces, try to make sure--and kind of start setting up. By that time, we were kind of starting to set up, you know, like a local government system.

We actually had some people come to us from the neighborhood we were in, because we were at a technical school. That's where we ended up camping out. And they came up to us and said, "Hey, we want to help out. We want to, you know, start up setting up a neighborhood council." Because how the government worked is that you had--you had the governorate, and you had all the Ba'ath Party officials, and then, by the time you got to the neighborhood level, for about every hundred people, you had what's called a mukhtar, and he was like--well, in reality, what he was, was kind of like the spy for the regime in every neighborhood, but their main job was to ration out food. But they kind of wanted to start, you know, the council, and you know, start up this whole mukhtar thing again. So we learned a lot in a hurry.

But that's kind of where we started to see the first, like, real anti-US weariness--it wasn't anti-US sentiment--weariness of that. Like, you know, we started, you know, finding out where mosques were, even though we knew we weren't going to permanently be there. We were trying to figure out what the infrastructure was. Basically, okay, we're here. We've got to figure out what it for the next--you know, because we knew our next move was going to be the last. And we kind of started doing some of the preliminary groundwork for it. And it took a lot. The first thing we had to do was get the electricity turned on; we never did. And so Baghdad at night was black as could be. I mean, you might as well go out to, like, Spring Green and sit underneath the stars. And there was--and a lot of violence kind of started up, as a result, at night. People would be shooting at each other, and it wasn't necessarily at Americans. It--but it would be--literally rounds would be flying all around us. But it was, like, interethnic violence. So we were trying to kind of--or interreligious violence. We were trying to figure all of this stuff out in a hurry. You know, our lives depended on it. It was so bad the night before we left, I got a little glass thing from one of the schools. I mean, you know, it was Arabic calligraphy. It was in the back of our Humvee. We actually got a spray round that went into our Humvee, broke the glass, and the glass shattered, and it hit one of my guys in the head.

Horton: Wow.

Carnes: I mean, fortunately, you know, it was just glass shards. It wasn't that bad. But I mean, things like this were starting to happen, and people were kind of, more and more, "We want electricity, we want this, we want that, because that's--we want everything the government provided us. Now you're the government." This was--and I knew at that point, this is going to be a long, long haul. After that, we found out in Baghdad that we were going to go to Mosul. It was about 230 kilometers away. Mosul is in northern Iraq. And--and it really--oh, you've got to be kidding me. But thank God, I mean, it was a long haul, because, I mean, we went to, here's Baghdad, here was Tikrit. We got to go around Tikrit; we didn't get to see it, which is where Saddam Hussein was born. And then we ended up in Mosul, which is along the--this is the first major river along the Tigris, because the Tigris goes to Turkey. And Mosul is here, so we actually got to drink--our drinking water came from the Tigris itself, before it got really polluted by [inaudible]. It would be--it's kind of like seeing the Mississippi in northern Minnesota, versus seeing it in Memphis.

So we ended up here. Mosul is a really interesting city. Northern Iraq is where the Kurdish areas are. And about 20 percent of Iraqis are Kurdish. And there is a line called the Green Line, similar to the Green Line in Beirut during the civil war, their civil war in the eighties. And it separated the three Kurdish governments from the rest of Iraq, and they had their Kurdish autonomous zone, the KAZ. And this was--basically it was like another country. I got to go to Duhok, which was one of the main centers. And it was--I mean, it was very modern. It would be like--kind of like going to Turkey. I actually got to ride bumper cars in Duhok. Yeah, it was kind of surreal. You know, I tell that to people, and they're like, "What?" But they had their own political system, the Kurdish two political factions. They had their own militia, called the peshmerga, and they were very professional. Also Special Forces, other groups, were working in the Kurdish areas a lot. Mosul was, like, forty kilometers away from this, and so it was mixed. It was--the majority was Arab. It was part Kurdish, and then a lot of Assyrian Christians. Mosul, its former name was ancient Nineveh, which was--

Horton: Jonah.

Carnes: Yeah, from Jonah and the whale in the Bible--.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: --but also, that's where the ancient Assyrians had their--the first empire in the world, had their capital. So, I mean, you see this--my sister is an art history major, so she was drooling when she found this out.

Horton: I'll bet, yeah.

Carnes: I mean, and a wall still exists from, you know, four thousand--three to four thousand years ago. So we showed up there, and it was very pro-American. We did have an incident--because the Marines were here; they pulled out and we went in. The Marines, being Marines, they had a small riot, so they decided to shoot, and they killed seven civilians. So we had to fix that in a hurry. We actually stayed--our base was actually--for the battalion I was in, was actually a hotel. Because Sheraton actually bought the other hotel, on the other side of the river. And this--Mosul is a tourist trap, because of all the history behind it, and also, it's a lot--a slightly nicer climate, and during the winter it was very nice. It was all green. This is semi-desert; it's not, it's--people see trees, and they're like, "What?" you know, when I show them pictures. But that's the way it is. It's all--this is all semi-desert, and it's all mountains up here.

There was a lot of ethnic tension. I'm sorry, there was a lot of ethnic groups, but not as much ethnic tension as, like, a Kosovo situation. They didn't like each other, but we made jokes that they were too lazy to fight each other. But, you know, in reality, the Kurds depended on the Arabs, because the Kurdish autonomous zone, their economy is based on--or was based on smuggling oil from the--into Turkey, from the Oil-for-Food Program. This is something, especially--well, the PUK, which is one of the Kurdish groups, they control eastern Iraqi Kurdistan. They actually had some reserves down here in Kirkuk. The oil isn't very quality, but it isn't--but it's still oil. PDK, which is in the west, western Kurdistan, they didn't have anything, any oil, so their main thing was this main highway, Highway 1, going through Mosul, from Baghdad, up to Turkey. They smuggled, and that was their economy. So we kind of had to break that, so that was kind of hard to deal with.

But the Iraqi--but the Kurds in northern Iraq exported a bunch of stuff from Turkey, kind of smuggled, black market. They actually had, like, a Walmart type place in Duhok, called Masimart [sp??]. But they smuggled stuff in, and they smuggled oil out. So it was kind of a win-win situation for the Arabs and the Kurds. The Christians were kind of caught in the middle, and they--there were some tensions there. There were some small bombings, and threats, and people would get threats put to their houses. There was actually a Catholic church called

the Church of Duhok. It's the most beautiful church I've ever been in in my life, in the United--even compared to the United States. And the priest, he was having some issues about that, you know, fundamentalist Muslims who are now becoming prominent, because, you know, it was kind of--the Iraqi government was very secular, except, you know, when it was convenient. And they--and so all of these fundamentalist Christians--you know, it was kind of like opening up Pandora's box. They were allowed to operate, and they were starting to threaten.

Well, we got there at the end of April, 2003. It was pretty quiet, because everyone was pretty happy. Okay, Saddam's gone, torture is gone. You know, we can finally take a breath. And these people have been living for thirty-five years like this. When I was in--to give you an example, when I was in An-Najaf, the very first guy I got to talk to was called Muhammad. He came up to American troops, and he said, "I want to go to Kuwait. Make--take me as a prisoner." What it was, is he was a Shiite opposition spokesman in the nineties, and he spoke too loud. In 1996, he was--he was charged with attempting to assassinate Saddam Hussein. I mean, and it went to a show trial--usually they did it. But it was kind of like the Soviet--Stalinist Russia in the thirties, or the Soviet Union, excuse me. And so he was put to the show trial. The first thing that happened to him was, he was strapped to a chair. The Iraqi intelligence service brought in his wife, and they raped her in front of him, raped her so hard she had a heart attack and died in front of him. I mean, and he had all of these--and things that people shouldn't live with. I mean, he had marks all up and down his back of--from--permanent scars from whipping. He would get chained like this for days at a time, and then do it the other way for days at a time, put in a jail cell for fourteen months that was three feet by four feet. He had one glass of water full of rice a day, and that's what he lived on.

And then I asked him, it's like, "Well, what are you going to do now that you're free?" And that's when he finally broke down. He just broke down and he said, "I want to have a family and to have a normal life." That's kind of the typical mentality. And in Mosul, I had literally dozens of people, and it was kind of like a whole feeling--like a South African Truth and Reconciliation, I think it was what the trials were called.

Horton: Right, right.

Carnes: It was kind of like a similar type of grassroots thing. They would come up--especially because I spoke Arabic, they would come up to me, like getting

naked, and showing me the marks, and showing me--because they were finally able to show someone.

Horton: Right.

Carnes: And it was like this whole outpouring. Well, then, kind of reality set in. And with the heat of the summer, it got a little worse, because people wanted their food. The military wasn't--the largest employer in Iraq, and people weren't getting paid, so you had all these unemployed young males sitting around. It was a very bad situation.

Horton: Sure, sure.

Carnes: I was against--I was against setting up the Army, because you know, like I said, what are you going to do, call a do over, and you know, everyone go back? And we had bombed most of what, you know, their military installations were. So we ended up eventually, by August, paying them a small amount. It was like--it depended on the officer. Like, a four star general was getting 150 bucks a month. And that's what they were--I mean, they were living high on the hog. Like, a soldier is getting like 20 bucks a month. And they got, you know, their back pay. But there were some riots starting up. And by the--and by that time, you know, there were some car bombs happening in July and August, all the way up through November. I left in October, but up through November, it started getting really bad. We got shot at a few times. One of my soldiers, he was a bullet magnet, the one that got a little bit of shrapnel in his head? He was this poor little skinny redneck from Georgia, and he was a gunsmith, and so he knew how to take apart anything. He was teaching infantry guys how to clear AK series weapons.

He got--we were driving once, and it was my damn fault. We went in a one-person--vehicle convoy, and you're supposed to go in two. So where we were going, we followed a convoy, it was only a mile, and he got grape in his shoulder while we were driving.

Horton: Just one shot?

Carnes: Yeah. It was just one of those, you know, [gun sounds], and then, you know, we got three holes in the Humvee, and he got one in the shoulder. So that was hard to take. That kid actually, later, you hear about these improvised explosive devices, IUDs? Well, he actually--some guy came up to the convoy when they were driving through town, pulled out a pin, threw a homemade hand grenade in, and

he got shrapnel up and down his leg, and in his arm. The kid has two Purple Hearts, and he's twenty-two years old.

Horton: Wow.

Carnes: I mean, he's okay now. He actually went through--he finally went through the surgery to get--because some of the stuff they couldn't remove in Iraq. It was better for him to recover and have it by his hip. But it looks like he's going to be okay, thank God.

Horton: Yeah.

Carnes: So, I mean, things started to get bad a little bit. I mean, to the point that when we left in October--when I left in October, you were kind of a little bit wary to go out of the gate, because you never knew. Because, like, where he got shot the first time was one of the most peaceful neighborhoods we had. And so things were just kind of, like, popping up. And all of these guys that were idle, sitting around, were getting used by elements from the former Ba'ath Party, and all of these other splinter groups to try and, you know, do something against the Americans. So it started getting a little worse, and that's kind of when I left. That was kind of the state we were in, trying to kind of, you know, root out the bad guys, and try and get the whole infrastructure going in Iraq. The infrastructure is so bad, like, the roads were almost impassable in some parts. Like, the Highway 1, the main highway from Baghdad to Mosul, was horrible. Well, from Baghdad to Tikrit it was beautiful. What a shock. Once you got after Tikrit, it was awful. I mean, it was like--it would be worse that--or, it would be kind of like some of these county highways you get in western Wisconsin that are not the best roads in the world.

Horton: Right.

Carnes: That was it.

Horton: Really?

Carnes: Yeah. The electricity, I think--my theory is, is as I said, they had 100 percent electricity in Baghdad. Well, afterwards, it wasn't. Obviously, Iraq could produce enough electricity. I think it was a weapon that they would use, you know, to turn it on and off.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: And so, there's such deep infrastructure problems that they're incredibly hard to solve. There's a dam on the Tigris River, and, what a shock, the lake was called Saddam Lake, Lake Saddam. Now it's called, I think, Freedom Lake.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: Or, that's what the Iraqis actually named it. It was in such bad--the dam was in such bad condition; of course, with dams, there's a lot of maintenance to them, that it--it's constantly in jeopardy of falling apart, which would have just completely inundated Mosul, or lots of it. So that's kind of where we ended up when I left.

And a lot of the problems are--it's that you have all of these random splinter groups. You have the Shiites in the south. You have these Ba'ath Party guys in the middle. You have all these random people in the north. You're trying to control, like, a whole bunch of things, trying to integrate the Kurdish economic system into the Iraqi economic system, because they--the Kurds had their own autonomy to the point where they had their own monetary system. And our Kurdish dinar didn't count what an Iraqi dinar did. So there was a lot of very intricate, difficult problems to deal with right now.

And when I left, I was actually very fortunate when I did, because it started to kind of get a little worse. Now, it's gotten a little bit better in Mosul, but some of the other interviewees will talk about that.

Horton: Right, right.

Carnes: But I flew back because I was getting out of the Army. I had gotten invited to stay in the Army an extra year.

Horton: Yeah.

Carnes: I flew out, and I ended up back in Kuwait. And--.

Horton: You came straight out of Mosul, or--.

Carnes: Yeah. We had--there was actually an airport in Mosul, and we took it over, because--well, the airport existed, but it's in the no-fly zone. And civilian air traffic wasn't allowed since Desert Storm, anyway, so it was kind of sitting idle.

So we took it over. They're actually try--that's one of the big things that we're trying to get instituted, enough security where it can be like the airport in Basra. The airport in Basra actually opened up, and there's commuter traffic from Kuwait to Basra. They wanted to do the same thing from Turkey into Mosul, and they're still working that issue, from what I understand. I haven't heard of something like that. That would have been in the news. But I flew right out of Mosul, and ended up in Kuwait, and it was just like a breath of relief. I gave up my weapon, my weapons--my 9 mil and my M4 stayed in Iraq. And I came back, and that was one of the hardest things to do, was to leave my guys.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: I mean, we lived together in the same building. I mean, I actually--my chief and I stayed in the room. But, you know, like, we even had an open bay, and the men and women in my company were living together. And, I mean, you know, it was like--it was hard to leave. I mean, and that, still, was one of hardest things to leave. But my guy got all the shrapnel in my--in his leg. I flipped out, and I wanted to go back, I mean, to go fix it somehow.

Horton: Sure, sure.

Carnes: That was hard to do.

Horton: There is a strong sense of camaraderie.

Carnes: Incredibly so. Then--and that's one thing I don't like about a lot of the media coverage. I'm thinking about writing about it a little bit more, because they're taking a lot out of context, because they're saying, "Oh, the morale is so bad, blah blah blah." Well, yeah, but I mean, who wants to be in a dump like Iraq, you know what I mean?

Horton: Right, right.

Carnes: Are you going to be happy? No. In Kosovo, I wasn't very happy, even with all the creature comforts. In Mosul, we actually had a lot of creature comforts. Our building for our company is a Ba'ath Party headquarters--I moved from the hotel to a former Ba'ath Party headquarters. And we had satellite TV from--we had couches. People, saw what I was living in, they were--they were appalled. You know, some of my friends, like, one of my friends in my Reserve unit, he was

at--in Baghdad at the airport, and they were living in tents. So I had it a little bit better.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: But it was--it was hard to leave, because we were such a close family. And I still talk to them on the phone about once a week, I call all of them, you know, sit there and gossip. And it was hard to swallow. It was really hard. But on the other hand, it was just a sense of relief, once I got to Kuwait. And even though--it was about mid-nineties, in terms of temperature, in Mosul. It was about a hundred degrees and a lot of humidity in Kuwait. And during the summer, it was hot in Mosul, but it was like 120. Not that much humidity, though, compared to Kuwait. When you got off the plane, and it was just this sense of relief that, wow, I am almost safe.

Horton: Yeah.

Carnes: You know, I'm out of danger, because every day, you never knew when you'd go out--even if we stayed inside, we might get attacked. Our compound didn't get mortared, but some of the other ones in Mosul did. And some of them almost semi-regularly, like, every ten days. So that was a really--it was just an incredible sense of relief. I mean, that was October of last year. I mean, it still kind of taking a little bit to get over. That's kind of one of the reasons why we donated stuff, you know, the stuff. You know, it's kind of a healing process--.

Horton: Yeah, sure.

Carnes: --if you will. But, for example, when I got back to Fort Campbell, I was driving. And some people were lighting off some firecrackers. No big deal. All of sudden, I flipped out. I started reaching for my 9 mil and just bolted on the gas. It was just an automatic reaction. And things like that.

Horton: Sure.

Carnes: The fact that you can sleep at night, and it's--there was some loud banging. It was a coon going through the garbage, instead of a bomb going off, which happened occasionally. I got to take some R&R up to Duhok, which is in western Kurdistan, and it was soft--we didn't have to wear any of the gear or anything, no weapons. And a peshmerga, a Kurdish soldier, led us around and kind of basically babysat. But, still, you never knew if you were completely safe. And now I know how kind

of some people were like when they got back from Vietnam, and I was only there eight months, and some of my guys, they have it even a little bit worse, you know, that were there a year. You know, having that feeling of actually being safe, and being welcomed home.

And it was--of course, too, we actually had the support of--well, even though some people here in Madison were like--who don't understand, even after the, you know, little scandal now in Abu Gharib and all of the prisons, there's still a lot of support for the military, which actually helps in the healing process a little bit and going through that. But it is still kind of hard. You know, you--I watch on the news, and they say, well, "Thanks--thanks to the soldiers. You know, screw you, we don't want to be here." So it's kind of like, they're damning what we're doing, but they're supporting us, so you kind of get these--.

Horton: Yeah.

Carnes: I mean, it's a mixed message.

Horton: Definitely.

Carnes: And it's really hard--especially, you know, you leave--you leave Iraq, and all the news says, you know, by that--by the time I left, it was a little bit later, so we all knew--everyone knew what was going to happen. We were going to go into Iraq. Third ID was--the 3rd ID was in Kuwait. The 101st was going there. The 4th ID was spinning in the Mediterranean, waiting to go into Turkey, which didn't happen, so they got rerouted over to Kuwait.

Horton: Right.

Carnes: The Marines were there waiting, we all knew. And there was an incredible amount of support. Well, all of a sudden, they're damning--the media is damning what we were doing, but they weren't asking the right questions to begin with, questions of weapons of mass destruction. That's a sensitive subject for me. But--but you know, they never asked the right questions. They said, well, "Bush lied, and you know, it was really about oil," and all this other stuff. Well, it really wasn't. I think it was, you know, that we were trying to set up a quick democracy, and prove the might of the American military, and you know, the fact that Saddam Hussein is just a generally bad dude. I think the thing was--and I read all the stuff about oil. Well, the main oil fields are around Umm Qasr and Basra in the Shatt al-Arab, which is, you know, right next to Kuwait, like I said. But who's

there? It's British troops, and of all people, the Poles. I mean, if it was all about oil, why aren't the American elite troops guarding these facilities? Come on, now.

Horton: Right.

Carnes: You know. And they're saying, "Well, they didn't have any weapons of mass destruction." And it's like, well, but you didn't--the media didn't ask the right questions, and ask the question, "Well, what threat was Iraq to the United States?" I think it's--well, partially because Americans like to be spoon-fed. And this was, like, a really big sticking point with me that people didn't think critically about it. Now that--now that I am a college student at UW, this is really, really hard for me to swallow. And sometimes I lash out, and it's not pretty, because they--students, they don't understand Afghanistan versus Iraq, so they lump them both together. They don't understand what's going on there, and all they do is read--you know, listen to the little blurb on NPR, and go, "Well, in An-Najaf, they're doing this, so it's all bad." Well, An-Najaf, as I--you know, as I hopefully explained, it's a lot different than Baghdad and a lot different than Mosul. So it's kind of hard for me to swallow now. But--so, but I do in stride, and I kind of laugh. Now, I'm a Reservist, and--.

[Tape 3, side B][File 3, 29:56]

Horton: This is tape three, side B, of the interview with Jeff Carnes and--June 18, 2004. You had just, I think--well, at the end of tape side A, you were talking about your feelings about the perception of Iraq, and then you were just about to move on to kind of your current situation where you're in the Reserves. But before we talk about that, I was wondering if you could maybe compare Kosovo and Iraq.

Carnes: Well, I'm going to throw Afghanistan in there, too.

Horton: Throw in Afghanistan, too. Wonderful.

Carnes: Well, it was kind of hard, because during the nineties, there was a lot of disagreement about--and it was a lot of Clintonian policy that the United States military became a peacekeeping force essentially. Most of our doctrine now, instead of being Soviet doctrine, went to, you know, Bosnia, Haiti, Somalia, that I don't like to mention, and Kosovo. And so, all of a sudden, things really had to change for Iraq and Afghanistan, actually thinking high-intensity conflict. So lots of doctrine has changed and is still changing.

My experiences in Kosovo were, in general, very positive, but they were bittersweet. It's a multiethnic society. Unlike Bosnia, where everyone spoke the same language, these are two completely different linguistically, culturally ethnic groups, the Albanians and the Serbs. So it was very different to try and deal with people in a different way--you know, as an American, dealing with a multiethnic society, like what we have. And we're kind of like the exception, in terms of the world right now, in terms of a multiethnic society, because most of them are riddled with conflicts.

Horton: Right.

Carnes: It was very frust--it was very positive. We were doing things, we've got a government set up, they had elections, they were going to have national elections as soon as I left. They had local governments set up, the police force was getting set up, the infrastructure was getting set up. People were poor, but they weren't starving, and the economy was kind of taking off, even though they didn't have much of anything to go on for an economy. On the other hand, it was bittersweet. We weren't going to fix anything. And the same thing in Bosnia, talking to people that went there. We weren't going to fix anything, because as I said, you know, the people want--they would tell us, "Thanks for being here, but as soon as you leave, we're going to go back to it." And I can't imagine living in a society like that, and it was very difficult to even get anything done, because people are kind of stubborn like that.

And an example was--was Kellogg Brown & Root hired a bunch of civilian employees, or local workers. Like, this happened in all wars. Well, they had--Kellogg Brown & Root said, "No, forget it. You're going to get along. We're going to hire Albanians and Serbs." And the area where we were was mixed. Well, they weren't getting along, the Albanians and the Serbs. They were fighting over everything from language over to, you know, just being bullies. And it got to the point where you had the major base camps, which were run by Albanians, and then some of the smaller ones for the infantry guys were run by the Serbs. And, I mean, it was kind of a metaphor for what the situation was like. You know, we're kind of like playing referee, or you know, being the elementary school teacher out on the playground in recess. So it wasn't like we were getting anything done.

In Afghanistan, it's just so hard there to try and get peace, because--well, partially because of the terrain, and partially because these ethnic groups actually have gotten along historically in the past. It's just in the past thirty years, the Soviets would--starting with the Soviet-Afghan War, they started playing on ethnic

tensions and actually creating ethnic tensions, because ethnicity wasn't as hardened, you know what I mean?

Horton: Oh, right, right.

Carnes: Someone was an Uzbek, but you know, a Tajik is kind of close to that, and a Pashtun is kind of close to a Dari, kind of ish. Well, everything got hardened, and as a result, now--and then after the civil war, all of these groups are trying to grab power. And eventually, you know, after a few years of civil war, the Taliban, actually, in 1996, gained most of the power. And--which are mainly ethnic Pashtun. And so, on the one hand, you know, we are trying to fix it and trying to use our existing structures, such as the loya jirga, which you see in the news. And we're trying to do it, but--and we're trying to make them actually fix it. Hamid Karzai is actually a Pashtun, the president of Afghanistan, and trying to kind of force him to fix the problem. And it does kind of look like things are kind of generally getting fixed, even though things--it's kind of like, they're kind of getting fixed, they're kind of falling apart.

Horton: Yeah.

Carnes: In the media coverage, unless you read some, like, more in-depth news coverage, they've kind of, like, forgotten about Afghanistan. A lot of people coming back from Operation Iraqi--or Enduring Freedom now say, you know, they--people ask them, "Oh, well, I didn't even know anything was going on in Afghanistan right now." It's because the media coverage shifted.

Horton: Right.

Carnes: And people don't know that there is still tension, and the opium trade is firing up again. And you know, it's something that, we're stretched so thin right now, in terms of militarily, we can't send anyone else to Afghanistan. And it's starting to become a problem that's going to get worse. But there is some--at least we have done some progress.

I actually saw kind of one of those artsy-fartsy films. It's called *Osama*, and I saw that at Westgate Cinema, and it's about the situation--well, a woman in a small village, because you don't think about things like that, that most of the men were killed off. And so you have all these widows, I mean, these--but they weren't allowed to work or anything because of the Taliban. And there is some progress. You know, women are actually--can kind of come out and participate in life.

Iraq was a lot--is another multiethnic society, very secular. But it--it was a lot crueler. It was the cruelest thing I had ever seen in my life. The stuff that Slobodan Milošević, what he did was bad, and the ethnic tensions, the ethnic cleansing, was--I can't even imagine. But it wasn't as methodical as the Saddam Hussein regime. Basically, the Soviet bloc fell, and then Slovenia first, and then Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia broke off. And then there was a lot of ethnic tension, and then Bosnia, and it was a mess. And--but in Iraq, it wasn't spontaneous. It was very cold, calculated, where you had the Republican Guard during Desert Storm, and then it was just circle upon circle of protection around the regime, and it just choked the people more and more and more.

And this is something--and now that--now, the people, they don't know how to live. Two generations--our generation and our parents' generation are now dealing with this. They don't know how to live anymore. And I just can't imagine what the future is going to be like for them, as a result of this. However, at least there is some hope in Iraq, because even though there is this, you know, religious tension between Sunnis and Shia, and there is slight ethnic tension, people in general get along in Iraq, partially because of the natural resources. You know, if people have money, they're happy.

Horton: Right.

Carnes: So hopefully, in a few years, this--there isn't as much ethnic tension as the media tries to portray. Southern Iraq, which is poor, it's a little more wealthy, you know, especially like An-Najaf and Karbala, which are flashpoint towns, which you see in the news along with Falluja. Then I think everything will be happier from Iraq. It's just going to--getting to that point. So--and being interviewed now, it's kind of interesting, because we're kind of in that interim of, you know, we got rid of the regime, and we've got to go somewhere. You know, I'm kind of interested in--to see what will happen in ten years, to see if it will end up more like a Germany or a Japan. Whoever thought that Japan would be an economic powerhouse in the world? I mean, you know, they were just some--a bunch of poor rice farmers, you know, and you know, that had built an empire. Maybe Iraq would be the same way. And Kosovo, I don't see that in their future. Afghanistan, maybe, but in Iraq, I hopefully do. So it will just take time, so I guess we'll see.

Horton: Oh, that's great. That's very interesting insight. Okay, so, now you were saying that you are in the Reserves. You came back; you were discharged at Fort Campbell?

Carnes: Yeah. I got--well, I outprocessed on the twentieth of December, 2003, but I actually got out of the military on the seventh of February. It was a little Christmas present. Now I'm a Reservist, because I knew--I wasn't stupid. I knew that I was going to get recalled back into the military if I didn't go into the Reserves, because we're short.

Horton: Right.

Carnes: Well, everyone is short, but especially people who speak Arabic.

Horton: I'll bet.

Carnes: So now, actually, I found out last week, ironically, I'm going to Fort Huachuca for a year to be an instructor.

Horton: Oh!

Carnes: On the one hand, that's kind of nice. On the other hand, that's like, well, I might get my bachelor's degree when I'm 40. So--but it's the way it goes.

Horton: So you have gone back to school at UW?

Carnes: Yes, actually, I did my first semester back there.

Horton: What are you going for?

Carnes: Linguistics.

Horton: Master's?

Carnes: No, I don't even have my bachelor's yet.

Horton: Oh, because you--right.

Carnes: Yes.

Horton: Okay, so you're going for a bachelor's in linguistics. Are you using the GI Bill there or anything?

Carnes: Yeah, I'm using that, and I'm sucking off the government.

Horton: No, you earned it.

Carnes: No, I earned it. But--no, I'm going there. I'm actually taking--I was going to take two summer courses. Now I'm only going to take one, because I'm leaving at the end of--well, around August first. So--so that's kind of my life right now.

Horton: Have you had--ever here needed to take advantage of any other veterans' benefits type things, other than the GI Bill?

Carnes: The tuition [inaudible] assistance. That's come in very, very handy. I've also gone to the VA Hospital, and they're kind of taking care of health stuff. I--not that I have a whole lot of problems yet. I'm not that old. But--but yeah, we--they're very good here at Dane County; I'm very fortunate. I talked to--I gave--I participated on a panel a couple of months ago, and one of the people was from Phillips, which is way up--it's almost to Superior.

Horton: Right.

Carnes: And he said--he's a VA rep, and he said that that's one of the hardest things, is, you know, how to get these soldiers that aren't in the National Guard or anything, you know, involved, and I said, "Well, you know, you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." If it wasn't for the university, you know, and the benefits directly from that; you know, it helped a lot as a result. So they've been very good.

Horton: Have you joined any veterans' organizations?

Carnes: I've joined the VFW. I'm not really active, partially because of my whole situation right now. You know, because I kind of had the feeling for a while that I was going to be in limbo, and now I'm going to Fort Huachuca. So I try not to get too involved in life here in Madison. It's kind of hard thing.

Horton: I'll bet.

Carnes: And I know a lot of Reservists that kind of like that. You know, you're at home, but you know, kind of not. Because right now, the Reserves and the National Guard, they've just kind of hung out for so many years, and now, all of a sudden, they're going in full force. So--so I haven't been too involved in that yet.

Horton: So I don't know if you want to just give a general overview of, what has your military experience and your experience in Kosovo and Iraq kind of meant to your life?

Carnes: Well, it's kind of hard. I can't even imagine what it would be like if I wasn't in the military, partially because I'm 27 years old. And now it's coming up on seven years in that--.

Horton: Oh, yeah.

Carnes: --has been in the military.

Horton: Quarter of your life.

Carnes: Yeah, almost a quarter of my life, and almost all of my adult life. And being in college is almost--it's kind of pseudo-being an adult. And it's hard. I've changed a lot. I've become--on the one hand, I've become a lot more focused. And college for me, it was hard and frustrating, and all my friends who have their bachelor's degrees now, and they work, you know, as engineers, whatever, now in Madison, or wherever. They all say, "Oh, I never want to go back to college." It's like, well, "Thanks for letting me in on your little secret society here. Thanks!" But it was a lot easier, because I look at life a lot differently now. I don't have people shooting at me. You know, as long as I'm not on a date here, I'm really straight. You know, but that's a rarity.

Horton: Right, right.

Carnes: You know, I--if I don't get--if I don't do so well on the exam, it's not like my life is going to end. It's not like, if I'm translating in a meeting for a full bird colonel, it's not--if I get it wrong, there's a lot more serious consequences. And it's not just career stuff. I mean, people will die. And now life is a lot simpler, now. I also looked at life a lot more black and white. Especially here in Madison, there's all these shades of, you know, happy, shiny gray, you know. This is--on the one hand, it's black and white, you know. George Bush bad, Democrats good. On the other hand, there's kind of like this gray little pseudo-reality that people want to get to. And that's the hardest thing, being a veteran and living in a city like this, kind of getting used to, you know, people kind of living in--you know, that there's all these fuzzy corners. And I don't see the world so fuzzy, black and white

anymore. You know, I mean, I'm not the extreme of, you know, this is evil, this is good.

Horton: Right.

Carnes: But on the other hand, you know, life is a lot easier for me now, because I see it that way. I see life for what it is. It's just something to enjoy, as opposed to, you know, stressing out, you know. What [inaudible] about, you know, relationships, or dating, or you know, what am I going to wear to the bar? Oh, my God! And you know, what's going to happen? And things are simpler now, and not so hard.

Horton: Good, that's great.

Carnes: [inaudible] for my warm, fuzzy--[laughs]

Horton: Well, I think that those are pretty much all of the questions I had. Is there anything else that we didn't touch upon that you wanted to discuss, or any--

Carnes: Oh, I think I've talked enough. No, I--no, I just--it's hard--it's kind of a whole process to look back on everything. And you know, every time I, you know, talk about it, because now I'm a crusty old war vet, people really want to know. And every time I look at it, I look at it a little bit differently. So I kind of wonder what I'll look--how I'll look at it in five years, you know, when I'm wherever. So--and it's--it's kind of like a whole a process of looking over my life. You know, just like anything else, you know, kind of look over your college years, or you know, you see the really bad high school photos, or old TV programs, you know, high school was so great. You know, I like to see improvement.

Horton: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

Carnes: Thank you.

[End of Interview]