

# Life As A Special Agent

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Every night while millions of people lay peacefully asleep in their beds, some men and women, like Special Agent William Simmons, are awake—and at war.

Simmons is a Captain in the United States Air Force and was one of the hundreds of thousands of men and women who risked their lives in order to fight for their country in the Iraq War. As a result, he is all too aware of the harsh realities that living the life of a soldier entails.

After he joined the military in college at age 18 through the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), Simmons was commissioned when he was 22 and says he has always known he wanted to be in the military.

But life as a soldier is far from easy.

"It's tough," Simmons confesses. "But you rely on the friends you have over there and stay in touch as much as possible through email and letters. I always had something on my person to remind me of my family."

Apart from having to deal with this pain of missing his loved ones, Simmons exclaims that the worst part of his time in Iraq was, by far, "losing friends in combat." Since the war's inception in 2003, there have been approximately 4,185 American casualties with about 60,000 men and women wounded or injured. And those numbers will unfortunately and most certainly continue to rise.

In addition to these possibly fatal consequences of serving in the war, individuals in the military live extremely unpredictable daily lives. According to Simmons, "There was no 'average' day for me. Every day was literally something different. I slept when I could usually averaging about 3-5 hours a night. Sometimes missions would last until 4 a.m. Other times they wouldn't start until 4 a.m. and go all day."

In fact, it is this grueling and constantly changing schedule which calls for those serving to be both mentally and emotionally stable on top of being physically fit.

However, despite all this, life in the military is not as horrible as it seems. In Simmons' eyes, he says, "Watching people under my command succeed and be rewarded for their hard work [and] to watch them develop as leaders [has been] the best experience." He also reveals that, "[My favorite part about being in the military is] waking up to freedom every morning and knowing everybody in the U.S. can do the same."

And it is with this freedom that American citizens will elect their new President come November 4th, 2008. The two candidates, Barack Obama and John McCain, have both acknowledged that the Iraq War will be a hot-button issue in this coming election by each discussing their separate goals and plans for the future. Obama, by stating that he hopes to end the war by 2011, and McCain, providing a more indefinite answer, by saying he planned on continuing for as long as it was necessary.

Whichever man Americans choose to elect, Special Agent William Simmons has faith that the new leader will do what is best for his country and make "the right decision that best serves the interest of the United States";

In the meantime, however, Simmons has since returned from the war which, he admits, took several months for him to readjust to after having served his 15 months overseas. He recalls that "being in crowded rooms, fireworks, [and] even driving" were completely different experiences after leaving Iraq. He has also since moved to another unit where he currently serves as the Chief of Investigations and has plans to attend law school one day, but resigns himself to possibly being in the military "for the long haul";

As for now, he says, "Everything is great, but there are still some things--a smell, a noise, a song--that will remind me."