



## **Packed for the Wrong Trip: A New Look inside Abu Ghraib and the Citizen-Soldiers Who Redeemed America's Honor**

*By W. Zach Griffith*

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#### **How an Unprepared, Undertrained Group of Maine National Guard Troops Went to Abu Ghraib to Fix the Irreparable**

The prison at Abu Ghraib was still a relatively unknown part of America's War on Terror when—with no special training and their gear lost somewhere between the United States and Baghdad—the 152nd Field Artillery Battalion of the Maine National Guard was sent there to serve as guards in February 2004. Just before their arrival, the now infamous photos of the abuses suffered by the prisoners hit the world stage. Abu Ghraib became the focal point not only for global condemnation but for the insurgents' outrage.

Over the next year, the 152nd would come under attack by snipers, suicide bombers, vehicle-borne IEDs, and constant rocket and mortar fire. Yet at the same time, the Mainers would form close bonds with some of the prisoners, among them an Iraqi boy struck by a mortar in one of two mass casualty events, and Kamal, a community leader who acts as an envoy between the detainees and the soldiers and yet is assassinated after his release for helping the Americans.

The men of the 152nd were an eclectic group of citizen-soldiers caught in one of the darkest corners of the war in Iraq. *Packed for the Wrong Trip* tells the true story of how they relied on each other and their own ingenuity to survive and to transform one of the most inhumane detainee centers into a functioning, humane prison—or as close to one as you could get when tucked between Baghdad and the insurgent stronghold of Fallujah.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Part journalist's investigation and part righteous polemic, Griffith ably adds another piece to the growing puzzle of the Forever War: the gripping story of how a few dozen Maine National Guard soldiers, armed with little more than grace and courage, survived the most absurd job in Iraq." —Brian Castner, author of *All the Ways We Kill and Die*

"What was it like to fight in Iraq? *Packed for the Wrong Trip* puts you right in the middle of a very personal war inside the barbed wire at the infamous Abu Ghraib prison camp. Combat correspondent W. Zach Griffith's darkly brilliant book will make you laugh, make you cry, and most of all, make you ask why. If you wonder what we did to our enemies—and to ourselves—in Iraq, read this book." —Daniel P. Bolger, lieutenant general, US Army, retired, author of *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*

"[An] exceptional true story . . . revealing how soldiers adapt, persevere and overcome obstacles with sound, innovative and determined leadership."—*CentralMaine.com/Kennebec Journal/Morning Sentinel*

"Griffith's writing is energetic and conversational. . . . [He] ably describes the delicate relationship between the Iraqi prisoners and their overworked captors. . . . A tough and vivid account of war and redemption." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"Using one of the darkest incidents in recent American military history, Griffith . . . recasts the atrocity of torture and torment at Iraq's infamous Abu Ghraib as a moment of redemption. . . . Offers a new perspective on what happened at Abu Ghraib in the wake of the torture scandal." —*Publishers Weekly*

#### About the Author

**W. Zach Griffith** served as a combat correspondent in the United States Marine Corps for eight years. He has published hundreds of articles and thousands of photographs for the US military and was the recipient of the 2011 Thomas Jefferson Award for his work as a broadcast journalist. His latest project, *Packed for the Wrong Trip* is the true story of Maine National Guard soldiers serving at Abu Ghraib prison following the torture scandal of 2004 and is his first book. He lives in Portland, Maine.

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