

The Unseen Protectors of America

I am the unseen shield of the United States. I have sworn to serve my country and vigilantly defend it from anybody who might want to do it harm. I ask for no praise: I do what I do because I am a servant to the public.

Today I have another top-secret mission. You might think I'd get nervous for something so important, but my extensive training has taught me to remain completely expressionless. While getting ready, I make sure my face is as still as possible: My Gators Magnum aluminum Mil-Spec tactical sunglasses also help in this department.

My arsenal of tactical gear sits in front of me. I'll need the best today, so I pick my Garment T8 Nfs boots. These have "zero optical refraction hardware and ball bearing hardware at the instep for flawless performance in all operating environments": perfect for the tactical mission at hand. For my top, I pick my Softe Lightweight crew neck T-shirt. I'll need to have the most breathable clothing possible, and this will suffice. The dust will shake right out of it pretty easily should I need to do any crawling on this mission.

Last stop before the command center is a final drink. I look at my watch: military time is 15:37:43. That's 3:37 PM for *non-military personnel*. I'll need to be at the command center by 15:45:00 (3:45 PM), so I decide to make a run over to the vending machine.

I pass by my fellow soldiers on the way to get a drink and they all wish me good luck. They're all there, patting me on the back. Out of respect, I give a slight nod to Cody "Black Smoke" James and Justus "Duck Face" Sanders, but for the most part I remain expressionless. It takes all my training and willpower not to smile when Chet "Ball Buster" Murphy gives me a quick smack to the groin and says: "go get em' soldier." He's been with me from the start, even before boot camp, even before we were just lowly recruits: the two of us took our vows together, right after high school graduation. I would trust him with my life on a mission--wouldn't trust him with my balls--but his entire unit's been suspended for taking a dump in the urinal. He's just here today to cheer me on.

I punch in Delta-6 at the vending machine. Water comes out, and I slide it into my tactical belt. This will come in handy for later. I'm not allowed to disclose much for the sake of our men's safety, but where I'm stationed is very hot. Let's just say where I'm stationed rhymes with "We-ran." Keeping up hydration in the desert weather is paramount to survival; drink too little and it's almost guaranteed heatstroke.

15:45:00 and I am at my command station, ready for combat. The lights are all off in the command center, and there's an ominous gloom which always precedes a mission. My spotter, Joshe "McRetard" Locke, is already posted up and ready for combat. I pull up a swivel chair next to him and take over at controls. Josh is a decent spotter, but he doesn't have the skills or training needed to go above and beyond like I do. He got the standard 10 weeks of boot camp, while I took an additional 2 week-long course to be a gunner.

I take a deep breath and the screen flickers on. It is a live feed from an infrared camera, circling what appears to be at first glance an innocent cluster of buildings. We begin to stake it out, waiting for any sign of movement. Joshe and I know that this compound is much more dangerous than it appears, and it's quiet... too quiet... I look around me for a second, trying to remember if I brought any earbuds to blast "Where the Hood At." *Goddamnit command never gives us enough time to gear up.* We'll have to go stealth for this mission. After a few minutes, I notice a small white speck moving around on the screen, moving around in circles. I hesitate for a moment because I'm not sure what it is. Could be a terrorist, could be a goat. I'm trying to bring the screen closer to my face when all of a sudden Joshe reaches forwards and tactically plants his index finger *on* the screen--right over the small white speck. He does this so violently that I almost--*almost*--lose my shot. I hiss at him: "Joshe, you fucking idiot, I can see it. Jesus, you're getting your greasy fingerprints on the monitor." Shows what only 10 weeks of boot camp does for you: he needs more training as a spotter. Maybe then he'll be able to spot targets without touching the goddamn screen. At any rate, my fast-twitch muscles kick in now and I slide the crosshair over the terrorist or goat and pull the trigger, and a few seconds later, the screen silently lights up with an infrared explosion. Joshe emits a little sexual moan. I give him a good kick in the shins and think to myself: *the Garmont T8 boots were definitely a good choice for this mission.*

I sit back for a second and unstrap the water bottle from my tactical belt. After a quick sip, I reupholster it and zone in again. The line of duty allows for little respite. We're going to be on patrol for 6 hours. 6 hours is a long time to be in the heat of combat. It takes a toll on you, but I didn't sign up for a whole 10 weeks of boot camp plus an additional 2 weeks of drone classes right out of high school to have it easy. I did it because I wanted to serve my country and protect it. I did it because "drone operator" sounded cool on the pamphlet the high school recruiter handed me. I did it because I wanted power.

There are heroes of American history who have legends told about them; people like George Washington, Andrew Jackson, George S. Patton... Jeremy Renner in *The Hurt Locker*. Unlike them, I will get no recognition for my service. I am called the unseen protector because I do my work in the dark (It's cooler in command with the lights out), and because I am invisible to the people I kill. I have taken a vow to uphold American values regardless of what country I am sent to (virtually), and I will continue to remain unquestioningly faithful to them. No matter the threat, I, Sean "Donkey Fucker" Wheeler, will continue to protect America.