

- Introduction to Ian ???

- + former infantry and special forces, deployed and intel
- + currently a pastor and sells insurance

- What drew you into the military? For my generation it was 9/11. Was it some sense of duty, to pay for college, a love of country?

+ You had mentioned to me that you grew up on war flicks, including anti-war films, and how those - even the anti-war ones - were alluring to you. I loved and still love war films too. I always loved Memorial Day weekend because TBS would play The Dirty Dozen and other movies like that. A film that stands out to me is full metal jacket. It's a classic anti-war film, yet it got my juices flowing when I watched it. Upon reflection, the part I always remember - and I don't think I'm alone in this - is the R Lee Ermey scenes where he's calling everyone maggots and such - then one of the recruits snaps. And you know, what goes on in my head isn't, "the war machine is a horrible thing." I'm thinking to myself, this chump can't cut the tough military selection and training. I'm glad he got weeded out. I don't know if you experienced anything similar with your viewing of war films. Could you talk a bit about what you saw in those films that drew you in to desire military service?

+ It's interesting that you mentioned your dad who served in the military, how he had no interest in war films, and now, after you've lived through deployment, you said you don't like

films on modern conflicts. What is it about experiencing the real deal that transforms these movies for you?

- OK, so we just talked about your military experience more on the deployment side of things. But you told me that you also spent seven years in the DIA being an "Intel Weenie," as you put it. Would you briefly describe that transition and your experience?

+ You told me that you think - and you stressed that this was your opinion, though I'm assuming you have anecdotes and evidence to back it up - but you told me that you think the intel workers were propagandized, and that they were propagandized by the intel itself, because the intel was cooked. Could you lay out that case for us?

- I am not surprised by this idea at all, and I think we see that this is the M.O. of the military intel. I mean, the one that stands out to me the most is "The Best and the Brightest," which is the cornerstone of books in regard to the Vietnam war. He talks a lot about how the intel community cooked information to give to the Brass or to the public to make it appear that there was success where there wasn't. I mean, just look at what's come out of the Afghanistan reports in the last few years as well. Same thing. Your intel helps you to maintain a certain concept of success and exceptionalism, until the whole structure crumbles under it's own weight of B.S. The Pentagon Papers, Snowden, Manning, Wikileaks, Assange - the list of exposures of the intel community is endless. But I guess the big question that comes out of this

for me is, are they really self-deceived? Like, do they actually believe this stuff? If so, how can they actually believe what seems so apparently false?

- You told me earlier that the real propaganda you experienced was not about the enemy, because everyone is the enemy, including Americans. I think this is a VERY important concept to grasp. Most people in the U.S. are crying about China or Russia worrying about them as enemies, when it's really our own government we should be worried about because we're their enemies if we don't fall in line. Can you explain how Americans are the enemies of our own government?

[NTS - Nixon and the hippies, COINTELPRO]

"You want to know what this [war on drugs] was really all about? The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. You understand what I'm saying?

We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news.

Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did."

~ John Ehrlichman, *Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs under President Richard Nixon*

+ So everything you did, in your mind, was not even to protect Americans, but rather to protect this ideal of America, right? I mean, you take an oath to a document - an ideal - the constitution. That's scary to me because it seems like you could do all sorts of evils in the name of doing good. Spy on foreigners and U.S. citizens alike - do what you need to do to preserve this country and this image we have of ourselves [coups, MK Ultra, James Olson's Fair Play]. You know, a lot of people are worried about countries like China or Russia, yet you have a lot of Anarchists pointing out how the biggest threats tend to be one's own military and police force. Could you talk about the threat of internal propaganda - this idea of American exceptionalism and doing whatever we need to do - poses a danger not just for foreign nations, but also for U.S. citizens?

+ It seems like American exceptionalism is the behemoth that has to be exposed for people to see the threat of our current militarism, nationalism, and exceptionalism. You said that this facade of our exceptionalism was uncovered for you in Afghanistan. Would you explain how Afghanistan helped you to see through the propaganda?

- One of my fears in discussions like these is that I'll offend those in the military. I have several really close friends who are still in the military. I mean, they were both deployed and their cynicism has definitely gone up a whole lot, but it's still their career and I think they still cling to the overall goodness

of our country, even if they see a lot of bad. I really do respect individual soldiers and the bravery it takes for them to do what they do at times. And I recognize that most aren't heartless imperialists who just want to conquer. They really think they're doing good in the world. Could you talk about how your current understanding of our militarism colors how you think about your former occupation, and how you deal with that in regard to your friends and family who are still in the military, or who still value that service to a high degree?

I might be suitable. Former infantry and special forces. Got out in dec 06. Saw through the crap that year. Was a hard core true believer prior.

1. I was Infantry and Special Forces. Growing up the son of a Vietnam vet with grandparents who also fought in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam, I had a bit of family history of service. I always found it odd these movies panned as antiwar, are loved by guys in the military. At least my generation. I do recall my dad saying he had no interest in watching any of them, "Because I lived it." So maybe there is a difference between generations and how they see the films. Perhaps the Boomer Generation saw these films and took them one way and my generation saw them as excellent and a boost to recruitment.

First Blood, this movie is a classic and favorite of mine showing how a Green Beret comes home and all his friends are dead and he cant get a job and he struggles with PTSD. All it made me want to do was go Special Forces. I probably watched it a dozen times before I enlisted.

Platoon, another movie supposed to show the rigors and stupidity of Vietnam and being a grunt, all it made me do was want to join.

Apocalypse Now, same thing

Full Metal Jacket, Same thing.

The Deer Hunter, Same thing

I have watched these movies for decades and still love them to this day. However, the recent movies made on Afghanistan and

Iraq I usually find stupid and ridiculous, perhaps because I have first hand experience with Afghanistan?

For my generation, I am nearly 50, raised on the Cold War, anti-communism, and America is always right, no matter what. These supposed anti war movies were nothing but recruitment tools. The thing is, I do not know what the younger kids are watching, but I have no doubt there are some crappy movies out there they watch and think how cool and great it would be to go kick butt or whatever but I laugh at them because they are nothing like it was/is.

2. I also spent another seven years in the DIA as an Intel Weenie. These folks are as brain washed as the military guys and believe every piece of propaganda even more because they think they are special as intel pukes. I absolutely hated being an intel weenie and surrounded by elitists who spend every day thinking they are better than Joe American because they have access to classified material. They have no idea the classified material is used to propagandize them to write the intel assessments that justify whatever the heck DC and the Pentagon wants to do. It never occurs to them the raw intel they are looking at might be cooked! I figured this out after a couple of years. The Intel is cooked, but the intel weenies have no idea, so they write papers and hold conferences and do all this stuff that makes everything worse. Look at all the assessments they always release before something happens. They are always

wrong, but they always push the narrative. It doesn't matter what it is. The intel community has an air of legitimacy because they are looking at classified stuff and coming up with these assessments, so it must be right and accurate. The problem is, the intel that enters the system is bad. **This is my opinion.** I have not shared it with anyone and frankly I never hear anyone else say it, but I am saying it and I spent seven years doing it. The intel pukes are propagandized by bad intel and they are too blind to realize it so they write what the Pentagon wants. There are plenty of movies on the CIA/FBI/DIA/NSA that promote them as honest agents and super human for your hollywood angle.

3. I now pastor a church and work for Mutual of Omaha as an insurance agent. These are honorable professions that make people's lives better.

4. As far as recruitment practices, I was never a recruiter. I have a funny story about how I went Army instead of Navy, but nothing was weird about it. My recruiter even tried talking me out of going infantry. The real propaganda I experienced is not about the enemy. Everyone is the enemy, including Americans. The real propaganda and it is 100% effective is about the place of the United States and its role in the world. I 100% believed the US military was a force for good. I 100% believed the rest of the world needed us. I 100% believed the world was better off for our presence in it and there was nothing odd about



threatening other countries to do what Washington said, or they could expect a visit from the military. I 100% believed we were always in the right. The only thing that changed this was seeing the "enemy" in Afghanistan and the people. Had I never deployed I would probably still think these ways.

These people are dirt farmer. They sit on their haunches in flip flops all day. They are poor and have nothing. Yet they were our enemy? When I saw how poor Afghans were and how bad they lived and the bags and bags and bags of American wheat sitting in bakeries like giving away wheat would make them rich and peaceful. I could not help but see how absurd it was. I was signed for something like 1 million dollars worth of equipment as the Senior Engineer on my team. Every guy on my ODA was kitted out in stuff that cost more money than these folks would probably earn in a lifetime. It was not a fight or a war. It was a bloodbath. They were simply defending themselves against invaders with the only means they had and they never quit. Those people could not point to the US on a map, let alone the Twin Towers or the Pentagon. They were/are 100% focused on Afghanistan, which they really do not even see as real since they are so focused on their tribal allegiances. The nation of Afghanistan is an English construction with national lines they do not even recognize. They are members of a tribe and thats it without any care in the world what is going on outside their very small circle.

5. The propaganda starts from birth in the US and it is against everyone. The US is good. The military is good. Our dictates in foreign policy are good. Other countries and their opinions and thoughts do not matter. All that matters is what the US says and if what the US says changes, that does not matter either. The oil in the Middle East is our oil. The fruit and coffee in central and south America, is ours. The resources around the world are ours and we as Americans have every right to them for whatever costs we want because we have a navy on the ocean. No one else has first dibs to these resources, the rest of the world only gets to glean our fields. If you do not agree with this, we will launch Cruise Missiles at you until you agree. Americans believe this entire paragraph, nearly to a man, woman, and child because this is what comes out of hollywood and occurs in the schools and is pushed in the news and I believed it back then, just like everyone else still does.

That might help you. Let me know if you want to record whenever you are ready.

Ian

Does current realization invalidate people in the military? How do you redeem that experience? I have friends in who are genuine.

## Moral injury

Episode with...we'll call him John Smith, because that's what his email name is.

John served in the special forces as a green beret, was deployed in Afghanistan, and then entered into the intelligence services at the DIA.

Important to have John for an interview for two reasons

1. Knows the inner workings of the armed forces and intelligence communities and give real world examples
2. Provides credibility.
  - Not just an anti-war pacifist with know patriotism or skin in the game, but someone who actually put their life on the line, but who now has a changed mind

So, what should you be listening for in this episode.

- We reference A LOT of different movies.
- I'll try to put them all in the show notes, though I don't necessarily recommend that you watch them all, as some can be pretty harsh.

- We've talked about how Hollywood often gets kickbacks from the government for changing scripts and painting them in a good light, and John talks about a number of the films that were instrumental in his elevation of the armed forces and American exceptionalism.
- Beyond Hollywood propaganda, we also dig into the more conspiratorial aspect when we get to John's experience in the intelligence community
- Much of what John lays out, from both the governmental perspective as well as the individual perspective, is that actions are taken, beliefs formed, and truths accepted based on comfort and convenience.
- This is what we so often find is true of conspiracies.
- It's Hannah Arendt's banality of evil, or the Ordinary Men of the execution squads in Germany.
- What's more banal than a 40 hour work week, a car and mortgage payment, and paying for a kid's sports team?
- The banal, every day necessities of life - the comfortable home, a family provided for - those drive our actions and our beliefs.
- We don't want those things threatened
- I think John gives some great specific examples of self-propagandization and American exceptionalism in action, but it'll definitely be hard for newbies to accept what he says here.

- If you're jumping into the podcast here, I strongly recommend you listen to the rest of the season to build up to the argument at this point.
- Finally, neither John nor I can separate our moral and political decisions from our Christianity.
- We are both devoted to the Kingdom of God.
- We talk quite a bit about this Kingdom towards the end of the episode.
- If the notion of the Kingdom of God is new to you - I mean, if you don't recognize that Jesus brought the Kingdom, as the gospels declare -
- And if you don't believe that that Kingdom is in competition with the human kingdoms of this world -
- Then you'll probably want to skip the ending of our discussion and check out season 9 of this podcast on Christianity and Government - or Christian Anarchism.
- What John and I talk about in regard to Christianity and politics won't make much sense divorced from a whole lot of background.
- All right.
- Enough of me blabbering.
- Let's jump into the episode and hear from John Smith.