The Daily Collegian
New England's Largest College Daily online

Iraq vet speaks out

Former soldier discusses desertion

Matt Rocheleau, Collegian Staff

Issue date: 11/7/08 **Section:** News

Print Email Page **1** of 3 next >

"We were killing mostly civilians," said 33-year-old Iraq veteran Camilo Mejía during a speech at the Student Union Ballroom Wednesday night. "We killed people caught in the crossfire, in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Media Credit: Matt Rocheleau/Collegian
Carlos Mejia, a U.S. soldier who resisted deployment in 2003, signs copies of his book in the Student Union Ballroom. Mejia spoke with students about his experience in the Iraq War.
[Click to enlarge]

After a six-month tour in Iraq, Mejía was the first U.S. soldier to refuse deployment in October 2003, filing for conscientious objector status and going absent without leave (AWOL). He was convicted on a charge of desertion and served nine months in military prison.

Since his release in February 2005, Mejía has spoken out against the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

In his first visit to the University of Massachusetts, Mejía described a story which he said became one of a collection of reasons in developing his anti-war sentiments during his time in Iraq as a staff-sergeant in the U.S. Army.

Mejía's lieutenant wanted to punish a young Iraqi boy, who Mejía said looked to be around eight years old, for throwing a rock at the lieutenant.

Mejía said he remembers the lieutenant saying, "I'm going to get this mother [expletive] and teach him a lesson."

The lieutenant wanted to put the boy in custody at the U.S. base several miles away. A crowd of Iraqis formed as the lieutenant grabbed the boy, Mejía said. The Iraqis and several sergeants pleaded with the lieutenant to change his mind.

An Iraqi man, who Mejía said looked to be in his 50s or 60s, could not convince the lieutenant with what little English he knew, so he slapped the boy several times to show there was no need for any other punishment.

However, the lieutenant was not convinced. As a result, the Iraqi man, while weeping, proceeded to publicly beat the child until the lieutenant agreed not to take the boy away, Mejía said.

Continued...

Page **1** of 3 next >

POLL

What kind of dog should president-elect Barack Obama get for his family?

- Bichon Frise
- Chinese Crested
- Miniature Schnauzer
- Poodle
- Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier

Submit Vote
View Results

24 Hour News

Article Tools

Share: Facebook Blogger del.icio.us digg newsvine
Subscribe: My Yahoo! Google

The Massachusetts Daily Collegian has an 'open door' policy with regards to reader comments. In the interest of facilitating an open discourse, comments are not screened or edited for spelling, mechanics or content. Comments on our website cannot be verified by The Collegian and in no way represent the opinions of The Massachusetts Daily Collegian or its staff.

Be the first to comment on this story

Name: (required)

Email: (required)

NOTE: Email address will not be published

Website:

Notify me of followup comments via e-mail

Type your comment below (html not allowed)

I am not posting spam. I understand posting spam or other comments that are unrelated to this article will cause my comment to be flagged for deletion and possibly cause my IP address to be permanently banned from this server.

Post

News

Atwood captivates the FAC
Experts predict snowy winter
Iraq vet speaks out
Teach for America recruits grads-to-be for employment

Arts & Living

Shakespeare troupe to play UMass
'Zach & Miri' make a so-so
American Ale to yield tart results

Editorial / Opinion

Bigotry preventing change
Feeding the hungry with a meal plan
Speech deja vu
Gay marriage: a divorce between church and state

Sports

Men's Soccer: Minutemen reach for tourney
Men's Soccer: DeNormandie comes up big
Two guys, one column
Field Hockey: Orlando earns Atlantic 10 POY
Women's Basketball: Minutewomen to host Bishop's University
Swimming & Diving: UMass goes for third-straight sweep

Features

Merry-go-round reminder of years past

Multimedia

SLIDESHOW: Election at UMass

National College Advertising and Marketing | Privacy Policy (8/15/07) | Terms of Use (4/28/08)
Content Submission Agreement (8/23/07) | Copyright Compliance Policy (8/25/07) | RSS Terms of Use

© **The Daily Collegian**

Powered by **College Publisher**

College Publisher powered by and NETWORKS