

Thank You for Your Service

Americans have no idea what kind of burdens our military is bearing. In World War II, 11.2% of the nation served in four years. In Vietnam, 4.3% served in 12 years. **Since 2001, only 0.45% of our population has served in the Global War on Terror.** These are unbelievable statistics. Over time, fewer and fewer people have shouldered more and more of the burden and it is only getting worse. Our troops were sent to war in Iraq by a Congress consisting of 10% veterans with only one person having a child in the military. Taxes did not increase to pay for the war. War bonds were not sold, Gas was not regulated. In fact, the average citizen was asked to sacrifice nothing, and has sacrificed nothing unless they have chosen to out of the goodness of their hearts. The only people who have sacrificed are the veterans and their families, the volunteers, the people who swore an oath to defend this nation.

You. You stand there, deployment after deployment and fight on. You've lost relationships, spent years of your lives in extreme conditions, years you'll never get back being apart from kids, and beaten your body in a way that even professional athletes don't understand. And you come home to a nation that doesn't understand. They don't understand suffering. They don't understand sacrifice. They don't understand that bad people exist. They look at you like you're a machine – like something is wrong with you. You are the misguided one – not them.

When you get out, you sit in the college classrooms with political science teachers that discount your opinions on Iraq and Afghanistan because YOU WERE THERE and can't understand the "macro" issues they gathered from books with your bias. You watch TV shows where every vet has PTSD and the violent strain at that. Your Congress is debating your benefits, your retirement, and your pay, while they ask you to do more. But the amazing thing about you is that you all know this. You know your country will never pay back what you've given up. You know that the populace at large will never truly understand or appreciate what you have done for them. Hell, you know that in some circles, you will be thought as less than normal for having worn the uniform.

But you do it anyway. You do what the greatest men and women of this country have done since 1775 – **YOU SERVED.** Just that decision alone makes you part of an elite group. Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few. You are the 0.45%.