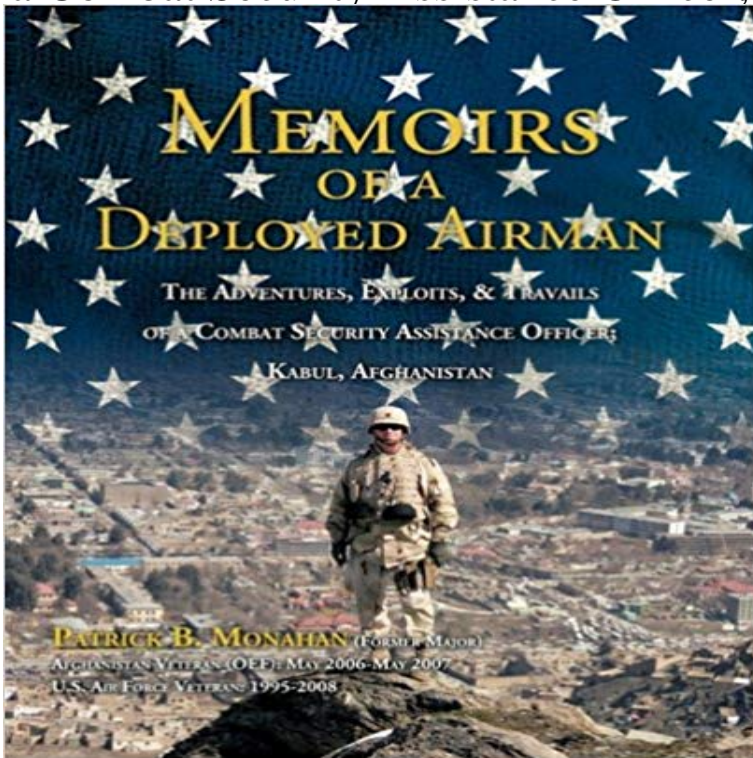


Memoirs of a Deployed Airman: The Adventures, Exploits, & Travails of a Combat Security Assistance Officer; Kabul, Afghanistan



Almost as if it were a dream, day number 360 came and I was transported into another world. The flights were long, but within just a couple of days, I found myself back at my original starting point-Salt Lake City, Utah. Before arriving in Salt Lake City though, I was greeted by my parents and my in-laws at Baltimore-Washington International (BWI) airport. As I scrambled through the baggage claim area and customs, I made my way towards my release from the regimented deployment world. Both sets of parents were poised and ready to greet me and my friends returning from overseas. Upon catching a glimpse of me, they popped out of their seats and began waving small American flags in my general direction. It was very nice to see them and it was a nice patriotic sight. I arrived at the airport at approximately midnight and I was hungry, so we all went out to eat at an all night diner in Arlington, Virginia. It was about 0300 in the morning when we finished up our meal and headed back to my in-laws house to sleep. I caught an 1800 flight the next day which brought me to Salt Lake City at approximately 2300 that night. The second leg of my flight from Phoenix, Arizona was very comfortable and relaxing. Wearing my DCUs, one of the flight attendants decided to move me to First Class. Not only did this provide me with more comfort, but it also provided me an opportunity to sit next to her husband who had joined her on the flight. I had a really nice conversation with the flight attendants husband throughout the flight. Then, as we landed in Salt Lake City, the flight attendant announced to all of the people on the flight that I had just returned home from the war in Afghanistan. Everyone began to clap and I received the honor of being the first person off of the airplane. I then began my mad dash towards my family. People noticed that I was in uniform, holding two little bears (one for each of my girls), and I was

practically running, so everyone pretty much got out of my way. Within minutes, I saw Melanie holding a Welcome Home poster and my girls waving small American flags. It was a very impressive and precious sight. I scooped up both of my daughters in my hands and I embraced the whole family. The nice thing was that Suzanna didn't cry...everyone seemed to at least have some idea who I was this time. In fact, Annabelle wouldn't hardly let me go out of her sight for the next few days. I learned several days later that Annabelle had a lot of trouble sleeping while I was gone...which was attributed to me not being there and her not knowing when I would come home. This latter fact is what changed my mindset from wanting to go back to the combat zone any time soon. While I was gone, I made the most of my deployment and I even learned to enjoy many aspects of the adventure. However, when you see the effects of being gone on the homefront, nothing else seems to matter but family. Would I go again? Absolutely. But, I would certainly wait for my number to come up or for someone to come asking for my assistance a little more passionately. When I arrived at my actual home in the Ogden, Utah area, I quickly noticed several decorations on the property. I hadn't expected such extravagance, but I was certainly impressed by what I saw. As I walked around the house and the yard in my civilians clothes the next day, surrounded by my family, I finally felt like I was home.

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