

Gone another Christmas

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I thought the weather here in Kabul would be a little warmer than it is. I admit it's a little warmer than where I was born in the states, but not much. This is my second Christmas here and I don't know when we will leave this God Forsaken place. I could have gone back to the states with my unit, but I decided to stay another Christmas and let someone else be at home. I have no family; the Marines are my family now. I have been a Marine for about ten years and what a better place to be then with family. Since it's already Christmas, I don't think Santa will make it here, all I wish is for it to be warmer. The cold and the rain really make it a miserable Christmas Day. Well it's 0400 and there are still sentries to check so I must put my mind on the job at hand. At least in a couple of hours I can get some blankets on top of me.

The seas are rough and the ship is being thrown all over the place, not to mention the crew. I can't believe that I actually did it. I decided to join the Navy and do my part for my country, after all my friends all went. I made it through Boot Camp and after leave in between they sent me to a navy Destroyer out of Norfolk. Being a new Sailor I wasn't prepared for this. One week after reporting aboard and just two weeks before Thanksgiving we left the states for a six-month deployment. I thought that I would be in the states at least through all the holidays. We spent Thanksgiving at sea, the food was great but it wasn't home. I thought I could do this, but my first Christmas away from home is all very hard. It's Christmas Eve and if the storm doesn't stop Christmas Diner will be all over the place. If I make it through tomorrow the rest of the six months will go all right, Christmas is the hardest and I don't need to cry in from of my division.

Well it has been almost a month that my unit has been flying the No-Fly Zone around Baghdad. The Air Force has been over here since the Gulf War doing this every day. It's 0830 at home now and I know that the kids will be up and opening Christmas Presents while their Mom makes a special Christmas Breakfast. The last letter I got from my wife said that my parents are driving from the East Coast to spend Christmas in Tucson with the grandchildren and her. My Dad feels right at home in the kitchen so I know he will give my wife a break and do most of the cooking. Before I left we talked about Christmas, presents, artificial or real trees, but I know all they want is for me to come home safe. My mind has become like a mental camera remembering Christmas's past with my family. Sometimes I think I'm too old to be doing this, but there is no way for me to let go. I love flying these jets and I love my country, my wife and two boys know that and love me for it. For me Christmas Day is almost over but back in the states my family has just begun their day. As I race through the sky like Santa Clause all I want to say is Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night.

Afghanistan is a place I never thought of or even knew where it was until the Army sent me here about eight months ago. My team has been on the move since. We never spend too much time in one place always moving, always searching. We thought that we would be close to a temporary base to get a Christmas Dinner, but not this time, cold chow will be the best we can do. I am assigned to the Special Forces part of the Army and we have a lot of country to cover, looking for terrorists. Right now all I want for Christmas is a warm shower and a hot meal. It's funny as you grow older and don't have certain luxuries how they seem like a Christmas present when you get them. While we are waiting for transportation I think about Christmas on the farm. The whole family gets together Christmas Eve at my Grandparents farm and we all stay over. Sometimes it's the only time you get to see the whole family. There is a lot to do for everyone. All the food is home cooked and the meat is either raised on the farm or hunted in the local woodlands. Some of the ladies in the family help Grandma can foods all year long and everyone gets a chance to sample a lot of it during Christmas. There is church Christmas Eve and a lot of Christmas songs and eggnog. Next Christmas I promise I will be there, or at

least I hope. I do what I love and I know that my whole family will take the time and say a special prayer for me and all of the people in my unit. Thanks to all of them and the best of Holidays.

This water is really cold even though I have a special suit on. Being with the Coast Guard special rescue unit has its ups and downs, this is one of those down times. At least I got the people from the fishing boat to safety of the helo. For the life of me I can't understand why they were out in the water on Christmas Eve, but as they say all is well that ends well. Now I just have to stay in the freezing water until the helo comes back around to pick me up. I thought that I just might make it home to Alabama this year, but with the heightened alert we all have to do our part. It gets me thinking that there is nothing better than Christmas in Fort Payne. I guess it's just a southern thing, but everything is just so different being up here in Maine. My parents are long gone but we all gather at my older sister's house on Christmas day. She does the best she can to make Christmas just like Mama used to make. We get away from all the commercialized version of the season and that's what I like the best. Well here comes my ride so I must get back to work. I do think of all of our men and women serving outside the USA and pray for them.

This story is fictional in nature but it portrays some of the things that go through the minds of our men and women in the armed forces. We all need to say a prayer for each and every one of them for their safety while protecting our country and for their safe return home. While you are all enjoying your safe Christmas at home, take time this year to pray for all those Heroes whom serve our country every day. They truly need our prayers to bring them home safely.