



God Willing: My Wild Ride with the New Iraqi Army

Capt. Eric Navarro USMCR

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Ten U.S. Marines are assigned to live, train, and go into battle with more than five hundred raw and undisciplined Iraqi soldiers. A member of this Adviser Support Team, Capt. Eric Navarro, recounts their tour in vivid and brutally honest detail. Their deployment comes at a particularly important time in the war. The Battle of Fallujah is raging, and President Bush has proclaimed training the Iraqi forces is the key to winning the war. Once they stand up, we can stand down, or so the theory goes. Navarro's team, nicknamed The Drifters, faces countless roadblocks—no interpreters initially, limited supplies, little contact with other U.S. forces, and a vast cultural gulf with the Iraqis. One hackneyed and fatalistic Arabic phrase seems to sum up the mission, "Insha Allah," which translates as "God willing" or "if God wills it." Whether riding into downtown Fallujah in an unarmored Nissan pick-up truck, living in squalor in abandoned buildings, dodging trigger-happy troops, sharing *FHM* magazine with Iraqi soldiers to boost morale, or getting attacked by insurgent rockets less than an hour after arriving, life is never easy and more often surreal. The Drifters' trials and tribulations help shed light on this most under-reported aspect of the war: What is wrong with the new Iraqi Army? The answer is not as pretty as the politicians would like.



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