

Iraq war vet: We've heard enough from the generals and the politicians

Bill Van Auken
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Among the several hundred spectators who joined hundreds of members of the media and the Democratic and Republican Senators on the Armed Services and Foreign Relations committees was a fairly small, but particularly skeptical audience—a group of veterans returned from Iraq.

“I would have rather not heard from General Petraeus at all,” said Geoff Millard, who served with the Army’s 42nd Infantry in Tikrit in 2004 and 2005. “I think we are at capacity of hearing from politicians, pundits and generals.”

Millard, who joined the Army in Buffalo, New York and is now with the Iraq Veterans Against the War, said that it was time that the voices of the enlisted men and women who have participated in the Iraq war and occupation were heard.

“I want to start hearing from E-5s and E-4s; I want to start hearing from boots-on-the-ground soldiers about their experiences,” he said. “I think that every experience in Iraq, no matter what the political views of that veteran, the stories themselves inherently expose this war. Take a story of a guy grabbing his buddy out of a burning Humvee, and that’s a story that tells you what this war is really about. These experiences have been completely left out of the debate.”

The former soldier said that if he had been asked to testify he would have spoken about experiences that opened his own eyes to the real character of the war.

“I would talk about hearing generals, up to and including Gen. George Casey, use the word ‘haji’ to talk about the Iraqis. I would talk about upper-echelon officers and their racist attitudes towards the people of Iraq, to whom we are supposed to be bringing ‘freedom.’”

Millard said that while he believes the war remains today as bad as it was when he was there three and a

half years ago, the mood of the soldiers themselves has undergone a change.

“Most soldiers when I was there were against the war, but they couldn’t admit it,” he said. “And now, it’s like, after doing two or three tours, those who still support the war are in the minority.”

Millard said that he and other veterans hope to soon have the opportunity to give their own testimony on Capitol Hill, reprising the “Winter Soldier” hearings that they themselves organized recently in Maryland in which soldiers and Marines returned from Iraq spoke of their experiences and the brutality of the war against the Iraqi people.



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