



The Ultimate Sacrifice

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Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

Tags: [iraq](#), [oil](#), [sacrifice](#), [war](#) [[list all tags](#)]



Captain John J. McKenna IV, USMC (Reserves)

[Update: John's Family has indicated the following charities to honor John's life]:

[New York State Trooper Foundation](#) c/o John McKenna Scholarship fund 3 Airport Park Boulevard Latham, New York 12110-1441

[Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund](#) 825 College Blvd Suite 102 PMB 609 Oceanside, CA 92057

Last week, [I lost a good friend to our war in Iraq](#). John and I met in high school and were good friends ever since. He wanted to be a Marine all his life. John was a great guy, Eagle Scout, always wanting to make people laugh, very interested in history and very proud to be a New Yorker.

All words fail me in describing what this loss means to his family, his friends and fellow Marines and state troopers. But one phrase that I like seeing in relation to his death has been "He made the ultimate sacrifice". He did. He put himself in harm's way for all of us, agreeing to fight wherever he was sent as honorably as possible, no matter what he personally thought of the war, the President or the myriad reasons for why we are there. He wanted to serve his country. He wanted to sacrifice for us.

Sacrifice is a word that should be elevated in our society because without it there would be no society. We depend everyday on many people to make sacrifices large and small for us and we do the same. Some do a lot more than others by putting the good of society ahead of our own. Others flagrantly put themselves ahead of everyone else by showing apathy to those in need, distaining people who ask them to sacrifice a little of their time or money and only engaging in quid pro quo relationships with others. Those people are freeloaders just as much as anyone on persistent welfare, but instead they are the ones that the media obsessively idolizes.

It doesn't take much thinking to figure out some of the root causes of why we are in Iraq: OIL

Are we there to fight for a free Iraq? Sure, but we could be fighting in dozens of countries around the world with much worse regimes. If it was not for the importance of oil in our economy or the world's economy, it's pretty clear that we would not be sacrificing so much over there.

And why is oil so important? Because we collectively have let it become so important by investing so much in a car-culture that is completely dependent on oil. Now more than ever, during war time, we should each be making our own sacrifices to conserve fuel and live lives that are less dependent on oil. A lot of little sacrifices now can help prevent others from making "the ultimate sacrifice" later.

A few days after his first tour of duty in Iraq, we spent an afternoon walking around the city on a beautiful Spring day. He was glad to be back, going to resign his commission and become a State Trooper. He joined the reserves to stay with "his guys", the Marines who he loved like brothers.

From my conversations with John, he had misgivings about the war, but that did not matter to him as long as other soldiers needed him and the country needed him. He was proud to do his job well, but left the politics aside from his duty to serve his country. In his last email to me less than a month ago he expressed a strong desire to build a better Iraq. This was the last paragraph from his last email to me from Iraq:

"I know this isn't the most popular war of all time, but what can you do. I just got back from a "still hunt" patrol. It was a great success. We killed an ied (improvised explosive device) triggerman about 20 min before a convoy came through. I take days one at a time here and look for little goals like, a good kill, building rapport and trust with the people, and just trying to make this country a better place. It won't be easy, the middle east is full of bad stuff."

- Captain John McKenna, US Marine Corp. July 27th, 2006

Rest in Peace John. I value your sacrifice. I hope to build a future in which less people must make the ultimate sacrifice, especially in future oil wars.



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