

Tucson Army officer co-authors vivid war novella

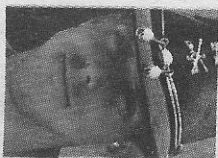
By Carol Ann Alaimo

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Maj. Mike Burgoyne hasn't been in Iraq since 2005, but he can still see, hear and smell the place.

It's tough to forget a lunch of boiled sheep's head with two milky eyeballs staring at you.

Or the stench of sweat-soaked soldiers sleeping in 100-degree heat.



Maj. Mike Burgoyne

Or the horror of trying to drag a fallen comrade to safety, only to realize his legs were still back at the battle site.

Such scenes are vividly captured in a new novella co-authored by the Tucson Army officer — a book being used at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and elsewhere to teach future troops what to expect

in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"A lot of that stuff doesn't leave you," Burgoyne, 32, said of his own two tours in Iraq.

A political science graduate of the University of Arizona, commissioned through the school's ROTC program in 1999, Burgoyne said he returned from war determined to chronicle his missteps so other jun-

ior officers "won't have to learn the hard way like I did."

"The Defense of Jisr Al-Doreaa" — *jisr* is the Arabic word for bridge, located near a tiny village named Doreaa — is a fictional work heavily influenced by Burgoyne's time as a troop commander with the 7th

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BURGOYNE

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Cavalry Regiment in Iraq.

It was co-written with a fellow Army officer, Maj. Albert Marckwardt, who served with Burgoyne in Iraq in 2005 and returned in 2007 as part of the U.S. troop surge.

The book is modeled on a military classic, "The Defence of Duffer's Drift" by E.D. Swinton, which recounts a British officer's tactical blunders during the Boer War in South Africa in the early 1900s.

Burgoyne and Marckwardt updated the tale for today's troops, crafting a modern version with images of Iraqi culture, Apache helicopters and al-Qaida figures in black ski masks.

The new book's main character is a greenhorn U.S. Army officer facing a vast disparity between the Cold War-era theories he learned in school and the realities of life on the ground in the midst of an insurgency.

In a series of dreams, the young lieutenant relives the same failed military operation over and over, each time incorporating lessons learned from his previous errors.

TO LEARN MORE

Go to www.defenseofjad.com for more information and to order "The Defense of Jisr Al-Doreaa" online. The novella also is available in Tucson at Barnes & Noble locations.

ample, he allows his men the luxury of sleeping outdoors, causing many to be killed when their outpost is attacked before dawn. Another time, he unknowingly insults Doreaa's religious leaders by eating with his left hand — the one used for bathroom hygiene in Iraq — and by sitting with the soles of his shoes facing his Iraqi hosts.

Over time, the officer comes to realize that his efforts to root out terrorists are futile if he creates more enemies in the process by alienating the local populace.

The book provides glimpses of the raw emotions of war, from the bloodlust some troops feel when a comrade is killed to the tears shed when an Iraqi child is ripped apart by gunfire.

Army Maj. Jimmy Smith, who served with Burgoyne in Iraq in 2005 and now teaches future Army officers at West Point, said

ing tool because it's easy to read and realistically portrays the challenges of soldiering in an insurgency.

The Army has reams of field manuals, he said, but one of the skills most crucial for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan is the ability to improvise in situations not covered by the manuals.

Young officers "are hungry for this kind of information. What they've done with this book is really important," said Smith, who predicts the volume soon will be on reading lists Army-wide.

The two authors, both captains when the book was written, aren't making any money from the venture. Burgoyne said all royalties are being donated to Fisher House, a charity that aids families of wounded veterans.

Burgoyne, who was born in California but has called Tucson home since his UA days, now is headed to Ecuador with his wife and son for a new Army assignment at an embassy there.

He said he hopes the book also finds a civilian audience.

"Maybe it can help people gain a better understanding of why things are the way they are over there."

Contact reporter Carol Ann Alaimo at

Monday, May 11, 2009 /

next to foundation vents.
carry a fire up and onto the house.