

Thank you everyone, my name is Rick Hanson, I am the proud father of three children. Eric, the youngest, is a 21 year old marine, nearing the end of his second deployment in the hell of the Al An bar province of western Iraq. I am also a proud member of the Minnesota chapter of Military Families Speak Out. MFSO is a national organization of thousands of individuals that have loved ones serving in the military and that adamantly oppose the war on Iraq. We are outraged at the blatantly criminal policies that lead us into the war and the lies that keep our loved ones in the Bush administrations unending carnage. The mission of MFSO is urgent and truthful, bring our troops home NOW! And take care of them when they return! However, I am not here today at this event representing MFSO, instead I'm here speaking as a father, with a son whose service to his country, is being criminally abused.

Right now, today is ending in Iraq. Today, the 1,647th day of this war, was the last day of life for a hundred or more human beings in Iraq. Until today, they had defied the odds of survival in war. Their lives were ended today, with their own very personal knowledge that the value of their existence had been intentionally reduced to an insulting level of obscene irrelevance. Nameless, faceless they'll be dumped into another numb, incomprehensible number. To us, anonymously dead from a bullet or bomb. Each and every hour, of each and every single day, our troops and their families attempt to survive this very same intentional, immoral, de-valuation of our lives. We endure each day, insulted by politicians that speak empty words, hiding the despicable truth of this war behind self serving political greed. To have your child's life willingly consigned to death by individuals whose connections and cowardice enabled them to avoid the horrors of combat is a reality that strips away your parental privilege and the deeply human obligation we have to guide our kids to the good of this life. We hang on through a tolerance that comes from somewhere deep inside the human instinct to survive. It demands that each and every one of us scream out to this country to end this crime. Our loved ones lives hang in the balance of a war that cannot be won. Yet each day we are bombarded with political absurdity. The surge is working, we can't leave now, the Iraqi's have failed. Well here is our harsh truth, the ignorance of this invasion of Iraq has literally broken our military. The proof has been hidden right in front of us. Now, unfortunately for Mr. Bush and his mongers of war, the press is covering yet another Blackwater disaster in Iraq. The group that brought you this war, knew full well that the U.S. military was not big enough for this unending war. So as is their tactic, while we were kept busy debating their litany of intentional mistakes, they were contracting out what they deceptively call "security forces", Blackwater and the like. These are not security forces, they are in fact, Mr. Bush's private army. Not the American peoples army, it is by any definition,

George Bush's private army. Unregulated by the laws of the U.S. military and free of consequence of action in Iraq. Most estimates are that Mr. Bush has a fully armed private army of between 40 to 50,000, and you are paying for it. And yet Mr. Bush inhumanely plays a real life game of Russian roulette with our loved ones, sending them broken, to multiple deployments in Iraq. His enablers in the senate deny our troops essential rest, continue to fund the death of 3 or 4 of our troops daily and this, as a growing number of them, "cut and run" to retirement unwilling to fix the horror that they so willingly created. It is a outrageous failure of human decency.

The catastrophic reality that was predicted to happen if Mr. Bush started his war, has happened, that horror is today's reality. But we should not naively expect the politicians that have their name signed in permanent ink on the death certificate of every human being that has died in Iraq to admit to the criminal ignorance of their decision and miraculously find the humility to end their war. The solution to this will not come from endless, ignorant debate of tactical mistakes made, or the arrogance of now blaming the Iraqi people of incompetence. The solution will come from voices of humility, that know that we were wrong to have invaded Iraq in the first place.

You need to be that voice, I need to be that voice, each one of us has to be that voice. And we need also to be people of honor and decency, to fulfill an enormous debt to OUR kids that have endured the horrors this president has demanded of them. The vastness of that debt will last their lifetime. Their scars of war, PTSD, and the bone deep, DNA altering affects of depleted uranium, need our commitment of help. It is our human obligation help each one of them. Call your representatives, demand they change their vote and end this war now, or the very good people of Minnesota will change their occupation.

On behalf of the MN chapter Military Families Speak Out, on behalf of my son, and on behalf of myself personally, thank you all so much for your time today. Please, work each day to end this for us. Bring our troops home now! And please help us take care of them when they return.....PEACE!