

Christmas in Kuwait, 1990

Introduction

Cpl. Brett G. Coughlin arrived with Delta Company in Saudi Arabia at the port of Al Jubail on September 13, 1990. For the next three months the company trained in the northern desert of Saudi Arabia. By Christmas, its headquarters were near the Al-Wafra oil fields of southern Kuwait. Coughlin wrote this Christmas letter to his girlfriend, Catherine, whom he later married.

Questions for Discussion

THE LETTER CONTAINS SOME WORDS THAT MAY BE OFFENSIVE TO SOME READERS. IT CAN BE SUGGESTED FOR MATURE STUDENTS.

Read the document introduction and the transcript of the letter. Then apply your knowledge of American history as well as the content of the letter to answer the questions that follow.

1. During what military action did Cpl. Brett Coughlin find himself in Kuwait? Why was the United States involved?
2. Soldiers have always anticipated gifts from home. Why was the gift Coughlin received very appropriate?
3. How does this letter support the often-heard complaint from soldiers that “all we do is hurry up and wait”?

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Image

Dec 26

Dear Kit,

Happy New Year! I opened your presents on Christmas morning and they were great especially the Ray Ban's they are great & even though there was a Toz (sandstorm) blowing all day, I wore them anyway. I really miss you and wish I was there to hold you.

These really obstinious Camels showed up yesterday and tried to make off with our Christmas tree - swear to God. We had a real tree about 1 1/2 ft. tall that another of my mate's parents sent and it's gone. These Camels came into our net yesterday, and this had never happened to us before, and started eating socks and cord-wood and all sorts of shit. For any way this one real baby one steps up and chomps onto our Christmas tree. Camels come and all, and proceed to drag it away, now we are

Brett G. Coughlin to Kit, December 26, 1990, page 1 (Andrew Carroll/The Legacy Project)

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Pissed off right? As we chase this
 dirty Camel out of the net and he
 doesn't drop it, he's really set on
 making our tree breakfast, so we start
 growling at him, and he drops
 it, then another guy gets some popcorn
 and leads all 9 of them to the
 next tank down (we were pissed at
 the guys on that tank anyway and any-
 thing to keep those hellbound Camels away)
 Not your cup of the mild Christmas
 snuffling! Hope yours was less eventful
 I took pictures of maybe this will
 convince you. ~~Anyway, I'm not sure~~
~~if you'll want to see them or not~~
~~to see them.~~ I love you
 Brett

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Transcript

Brett G. Coughlin to Kit, December 26, 1990 (Andrew Carroll/The Legacy Project)

Dec. 26

Dear Kit,

Happy New Year! I opened your presents on Christmas morning and they were great especially the Ray Ban's They are great & even though there was a Toz (sandstorm) blowing all day, I wore them anyway. I really miss you and wish I was there to hold you.

These really obnoxious camels showed up yesterday and tried to make off with our Christmas tree – swear to God. We had a real tree about 1 ½ ft. tall that another of my mates parents sent and its gone. These camels came into our net yesterday, and this had never happened to us before, and started eating socks and cardboard and all sorts of shit. So anyway this one real balsy one steps up and chomps onto our Christmas tree. Candy canes and all, and Proceeds to drag it away, now we are [2] Pissed off right? So we chase this dirty Camel out of the net and he doesn't drop it, he's really set on making our tree breakfast, so we start growling at him, and he drops it, then another guy gets some popcorn and leads all 9 of them to the next tank down (we were pissed at the guys on that tank anyway and anything to keep these hellbound camels away) Not your run of the mill Christmas mourning! Hope yours was less eventful. I took pictures so maybe those will convince you. [*struck*: Anyway I can't wait to see you [*illegible*]]

I love you
Brett