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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Dear Kit,

Happy New Year! I opened your presents on Christmas morning and they were great, especially the Ray-Bans. They are great for sunburn. There was a T#Z [handwritten, unclear] of all day, I wore them anyway. I really miss you and wish I was there to hold you.

These really funny camel showed up yesterday and tried to make off with our Christmas tree - owen to God. We had a real tree about 1 1/2 ft, tall that another of my male parents cut and its gone. These camel came into our not yesterday and this had never happened to us figure, and started eating coke and condiment and all sorts of this. So any way this one real bad and stop up and chomp onto our Christmas tree. Can't come in all, and protects it drag it away, now we are...
Pissed off right? So we threw this tiny corn out of the net and he
doesn't catch it, he's really set on
making our tree breakfast, so we start
poking at him, and he drops it, then another guy gets some pop corn
and leads all of them to the
next tank down (we were pissed at
the guys on their tank anyway and any-
ing he wants to keep those hellbound Cornell away)
Not your usual stuffy Christmas
surprising! Hope you were less eventful.
I took pictures so maybe they will
convince you.

Brett

Brett G. Coughlin to Kit, December 26, 1990, page 2 (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