

PREFACE:

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Time: 4:00 p.m. (PST)
Interview Duration: 43:27
Interviewee: Johnny Wolvert
Interviewer: Alex Milshtein
Transcribed: Megan Ortega

TRANSCRIPT:

Alex Milshtein

So, you were part of the Marine Corps?

Johnny Wolvert

Yes.

Alex Milshtein

So let's start with why did you decide to join?

Johnny Wolvert

I wanted to get things started in life, help pay for college and get a good start on everybody else.

Alex Milshtein

Alright. What were your parent's reactions?

Johnny Wolvert

My mom was devastated, she was very scared, and thought there was a war going on. "You're my only son", but I told her I would be fine. I had my best friend joining with me, and she said, "All you guys keep each other safe." Not much she could have done. Moving to be an adult and all.

Alex Milshtein

Alright. How old were you when you signed?

Johnny Wolvert

About 20.

Alex Milshtein

Do you have any other family that is in the military?

Johnny Wolvert

My brother in law was in the Marine Corps for like for years and then he was in the army for another three years. I don't think there is very much, but his brother as well so just kind of married into the family did military. My whole family really didn't.

Alex Milshtein

Why did you decide to join the Marine Corps?

Johnny Wolvert

I thought it was more of a challenge than the other branches. They always say it is the hardest branch to join and it's true. I also had some influence from my brother-in-law and other people saying that you can do it, so I decided I was up for the challenge and I went on to it.

Alex Milshtein

When did you go to basic training?

Johnny Wolvert

I shipped off in July 2010 and it was a 13-week-long thing. It is three months of being miserable.

Alex Milshtein

Where were you doing your basic training?

Johnny Wolvert

In San Diego, California.

Alex Milshtein

Do you know what base?

Johnny Wolvert

It is Marine Corps Recruiting Depot [MCRD]

Alex Milshtein

What did you do in basic training?

Johnny Wolvert

First you just learn to keep quiet and do as you're told. They kind of strip you down of who you are and try to rebuild you back up. Then you learn how to fire a rifle and all that.

Alex Milshtein

How did they strip you down? What do you mean by that?

Johnny Wolvert

In the Marine Corps, this is not all branches, but in the Marine Corps you are not allowed to say I. You have to speak in third person and say, "this recruit". You are not a Marine yet, you are a recruit. So you say, "This Recruit," and you just say "Ay, Sir!" and "Yes, Sir!" to

everything. You don't really get to talk unless you are in your own free time, which you get about an hour at night.

Alex Milshtein

What was part of the most intense part of your basic training?

Johnny Wolvert

The Reaper. I don't know how long of the hike it is but you go through this, it is actually called the Crucible, the whole thing is called the Crucible. In the Crucible you have three days, with only an MRETE per a day, and then the final night you start early in the morning. Four o'clock in the morning before the sun is up and you start this hike to the Reaper and you are wearing all kinds of gear, all kinds of weight and it is this really steep hill that we had to hike all the way to the top of. Once you made it to the top of the Reaper you just got to make it back to the praying deck where they give you your pin and they say, "You made it, you are now a Marine." That was the toughest thing, everybody lost like ten pounds or so. It was just three days with barely any food and non-stop excruciating, and you are in the middle of the summer in San Diego, so we we're hot and dying.

Alex Milshtein

Do you remember anyone that you were with in basic training that you are still in contact with or just really sticks out to you?

Johnny Wolvert

My friend in basic training, my best friend Nick went with me. We are still in contact, but we are not very close friends anymore. The Marine Corp kind of changes some people and we were stationed in different places we only did our basic training together. He had a different occupation than I did. I went to high school with him and we decided to join together so that's the only person I have really been in contact with that I went through basic training with.

Alex Milshtein

What was your specialization?

Johnny Wolvert

I was a 311, which is MOS [Military Occupational Specialty] code for infantry rifleman, but I also had billet, which is a secondary job that I actually did first before I did the infantry. It is security forces, so it was kind of like a glorified security guard.

Alex Milshtein

After your basic training where did you end up?

Johnny Wolvert

If you are infantry you will have to go through infantry training. That is in camp Pendleton, which we did visit while we were in basic for a month, or two or three weeks, something like that.

Alex Milshtein

Did you want to be infantry?

Johnny Wolvert

I initially joined for the security force portion and didn't realize ... It is a lesson learned to look through your contracts more. I didn't really know it was infantry as well. I thought it was doing the same training as infantry. After my years in security forces I went to the infantry.

Alex Milshtein

What was your reaction when you found out, "Oh, I am going to have to do infantry?"

Johnny Wolvert

I was scared honestly. I was like, there is a war going on, I thought I was going to get to go to cool embassies around the world and guard them and just kind of fun things like that, not on the front lines where people are getting blown up and shot at. I'm like that is a little scary but I learned to deal with it over time.

Alex Milshtein

How long did infantry training last?

Johnny Wolvert

Infantry training I went there from mid-October to late January, so I guess three months or so. That was in Camp Pendleton, California, it is right by Oceanside area.

Alex Milshtein

Anything about your time in infantry training stick out to you?

Johnny Wolvert

Infantry training was just pretty tough. The boot camp was more mentally tough. You are shipped in. You don't have ribs[sic]. You are scared the whole time. People wake up in the middle of the night screaming, "Ay, Sir!" thinking they are getting yelled at. Infantry training is more relaxed, you got weekends off. So that little bit of time you get back. We got weekends off, but most of the time we were in the field for the whole week. That was what was tough about it and the hikes were worse. We had a 5k hike, a 10k hike, and then a 15 and then a 20. These are all on steep hills and we thought the Reaper was tough. We hiked every range, we got to shoot a lot of weapons, that was kind of fun. We got to shoot a bunch of cool weapons but it hits you, it gets real low when you are in infantry training. When they talk to everybody, all the new students there, they tell you look around not all of you will be here by next year. Some people get deployed, some people die, and they try to get you in the mind state to prepare you for that possibility. So it gets real when you get there.

Alex Milshtein

Did you feel you were prepared for that possibility?

Johnny Wolvert

I wasn't at the time. I was kind of still in my own mental struggle with dealing with that but I didn't want to quit so I just kept going along with it.

Alex Milshtein

After you finish your infantry training you went on to do a security deployment or ..?

Johnny Wolvert

For the security forces a regular contract is about four years, mine was five years because of the security forces. I had to spend time there and the training was longer because I had to go train for that also in Virginia. I did Virginia training from January to March. My whole training was about nine to ten months total.

Alex Milshtein

Where did you do your security force training?

Johnny Wolvert

That was in Virginia, in Chesapeake, Virginia. That was kind of cool to be on the East coast and check it out. There we got weekends and nights off. So you had no time off but like an hour a night if that in boot camp, then you get your weekends off, then you finally get nights and weekends off. So I was able to go to the gym on days, keep myself healthy and I was in the best shape of my life there. It was not bad.

Alex Milshtein

What was the security force training like?

Johnny Wolvert

It was actually so much easier because in California there is mountains everywhere and you are climbing up hills, our hikes were flat ground in Virginia. It was great. We were just walking. One time I had to carry some ammo in my pack and it was extra weight and I was like this is still way easier than that night. Plus I got to work out a lot at the gym so I got stronger. So all the training there was so easy compared to what we had in California.

Alex Milshtein

So I think what is confusing me is your like you got to work out when you were doing the security force but wouldn't basic training, wasn't that considered working out?

Johnny Wolvert

It is but it is a lot more running and standing the whole time. You don't get to actually build that much muscle because you are constantly getting skinnier. Everybody loses weight. My best friend went in there 180 to 190 pounds and he came out 160 to 170 just from all that. I've seen people go there actually really muscular and kind of skinny everybody gets out really scrawny because you are just always running. You don't get to lift weights and get the strength building. You get endurance but not strength.

Alex Milshtein

What did the security force training actually entail?

Johnny Wolvert

We learn how to mostly kind of guard a base, vehicle inspections, personnel searches. We learned how to fire a pistol. I mean we had to qualify for it. Most Marines only had to qualify with a rifle and then we had to qualify for a pistol. We got to shoot shotguns, we got to shoot all kinds of stuff. It was about learning our weapon distance too, and learning vehicle search procedures, where to look what to look for, if you are at a check point. We call it “death by PowerPoint” because it is the most miserable thing just watching the PowerPoint presentation all day for maybe six hours a day or so. Just watching different PowerPoint presentations and we took a lot of test to make sure we memorized the nomenclature of a weapon system, the procedures for vehicle inspections, personnel inspections. So most of the time we were in the classroom so we had days were it was just three days in the classroom. We worked out and we ran every morning, I worked out at night and went to the gym so I was busy. Other than that we went to the range maybe a couple times for two days or so. We were in walking distance, we hiked to them and it wasn’t that far and we just shoot a couple weapons and come back.

Alex Milshtein

Were you still in base at the time?

Johnny Wolvert

Yes that was, we lived in squadbay it was like rows of bunk beds. From boot camp you got a squadbay, infantry training you got a squadbay, so we had to clean them. We had cleaning times where we would all just have to clean the whole thing. In Virginia we had a squadbay as well, but we had our nights off and every once in a while we had to clean it. By then you kind of grow up like “I want to keep my free time that they are giving me so I’m going to make sure this is clean”.

Alex Milshtein

What did you feel about living on base? The struggles, likes, dislikes?

Johnny Wolvert

Sometimes you are around people you have to be around but you don’t want to be around them. You meet some of the best people you will meet in your life in the military. That is one of the biggest things that I miss about it but sometimes you meet people that you don’t want to be around very much. One thing that was kind of depressing about being in Virginia was the fact that I got to go out on the weekend, but I had to go back to base and just get treated kind of like crap again because you still are in student status. Whenever you have a higher up and you are a low, low rank then they are just going to use their power to ridicule you and all that. If you haven’t established yourself as a good Marine yet, so you can’t get away with anything really.

Alex Milshtein

You mentioned you had to be around people you had to be around, I suppose what did you do to get through being around them?

Johnny Wolvert

Well I would just hang out mostly around the people I wanted to hang out with. Sometimes you had a team though, luckily you always had somebody else usually there to relate to, and then you have people that are just kind of idiots I would say. We would have people who were just made terrible decisions, did stupid things, and got us punishments. They would get us all in trouble.

Alex Milshtein

What is an example of a stupid thing?

Johnny Wolvert

They wouldn't hold their own weight when we would be doing timed training. They wouldn't try very hard, it is kind of like what you do outside of work also influences what you do inside of work. They just on weekends, they would go out and just get drunk and do stupid things and get in trouble out in town because they are just miserable. For me on weekends, I just liked to go check out site seeing, so me and my friends go see what the area is like because you get to travel for free. They would come back and they would do something wrong or they would do something wrong during training, and they were out of shape, and we would all get mass punishment for it. Then their attitude about it, like they don't care and you're like you should care because it affects us all.

Alex Milshtein

Did some of the people who did that bad behavior eventually shape up?

Johnny Wolvert

Some did. Sometimes you would just get people who made a complete 360, or 180 I guess not 360. A complete 180 and changed and went the right way, and then sometimes you just got the same people. When you are in a rough situation though, and we are all in the field for a while you get along with them no matter what, just because you want to make sure everybody is good and that your moral is up. Sometimes they just still, there are some people that you are just like let's not even talk to this guy.

Alex Milshtein

Do those people just kind of become social outcasts?

Johnny Wolvert

Sometimes they do. Sometimes they do. I have seen people very depressed. We would joke about it at times like, that guy is going to shoot us all when we are not looking, but like you never know it has happened in the army a lot actually. You see it on the news sometimes. So sometimes I would talk to them, you know you would have those clear minded people who would be like, "Alright, let's make sure he's not mad at us, make sure he is good," because we would want ... I mean there is a lot of military suicides and all that so, "Let's not antagonize him too much." I knew one guy, he was very depressed and he would cry a lot. He would make fun of him for it and it's like, "No, he needs help man," and some people finally came up and stepped in and was like, "We need to get him out of the Marine Corp. This guy is not right and he will never get along or fit in because we gave him over a year to try and fit in and he just

didn't." He would always just sit alone and we would see him crying somewhere and he would stress out and panic in certain situations, like you can't have that on the battlefield. Someone who is panicked and didn't know what to do and ran away, so he got out.

Alex Milshtein

So after your security force training, where did you find yourself?

Johnny Wolvert

I got stationed in Washington actually, so pretty close to home here in Oregon. I got stationed up in Bangor, Washington, which is in the Puget Sound area. I got there in late March and it was almost time for my twenty first birthday, so it was like perfect, hopefully I can go out and can do something.

Alex Milshtein

What was your job at that base?

Johnny Wolvert

When you first get there you have to go through more qualifications to be able to plumb job. Then we would go on to job training and we would have to get qualified to go there because it is a restricted area of a secret clearance. We made sure our clearances were good. I remember talking to a guy and saying have you ever been in trouble with the cops, and I was like no, and later on he called me back and he said there is something here about something. I had to explain what happened and it was nothing that was my fault I just had to talk to the cops one time, and he was like "Oh, okay. Yeah, you are good. I just wanted to make sure you were being honest," and I was like, "Alright." So I get our secret clearance on the job training and after that we are guarding standing machine gun posts, patrolling post around the piers, we worked on piers there. We were guarding the strategic assets of the United States Military. A lot of submarines and we worked with the [inaudible] there.

Alex Milshtein

How long did you spend at the base in Washington?

Johnny Wolvert

I was there from March 2011 to summer of 2013. So about two years and three months I think it was.

Alex Milshtein

What stood out to you about that experience while you were in Washington?

Johnny Wolvert

The friends you make, you stay on post with the same people for 6 to 12 hours at a time and you meet some people. You would know everything about them after a week of standing post with them and sometimes it would suck because you are on post just holding a machine gun and just two guys in a small room, a small little box with bulletproof glass. You just sit there and talk to them, learn everything about each other, and tell stories about your last time out was. We lived with them, we were in the secure area for like two weeks at a time and then we didn't get to

see the outside world and then we would go back for another two weeks in and so you meet a lot of good people, make friends with them, and stand post with them. Sometimes it sucks because you don't know what to talk about anymore. That was the cool thing we got to learn about people and make really good friends. Friends I would say friends for life.

Alex Milshtein

When you were in Washington is that what you would expect to do as a Marine?

Johnny Wolvert

Not at all. I thought because the security force branches off into three different ways. One way you had to qualify for it, it was personal security details. Those are the ones who are guarding important personnel from like senators, and all that. I had a friend who got to go with Bill Clinton and Hillary on a ship and that is pretty cool. You got to hang out and drink with Bill Clinton. He didn't like Hillary though. You get to meet all kinds of people. You get to branch off into three different, there's that, personal security detail, and then you got fast companies. Which they get to go to embassies around the world and work around with them and keep a report with all the other embassies, guard it, and then you got security force personal reliability program. If you are qualified to teach your assets and that was either in Washington or Georgia. I just was like I don't get to go anywhere cool, but I was glad to be home after being away from family for so long. I was like I get to be close to family that is great.

Alex Milshtein

Do you know what you were guarding?

Johnny Wolvert

Yes.

Alex Milshtein

What were you guarding?

Johnny Wolvert

It is kind of classified. I mean I am sure everybody can guess what we were guarding. I mean strategic assets means, it's pretty clear what that is.

Alex Milshtein

I really don't know what that is.

Johnny Wolvert

But yeah, we were said we're not supposed to talk about it.

Alex Milshtein

So, moving on then. So spent two years in Washington and talked about assets that you can't talk about. So that was at the end of 2013?

Johnny Wolvert

Summer.

Alex Milshtein

Summer of 2013. So where did you find yourself at after that?

Johnny Wolvert

I started working in an office towards my end of my time there as guarding.

Alex Milshtein

In Washington?

Johnny Wolvert

Yes, yes, before I left. I was going through some real serious issues in life and I just was kind of, I knew my time was coming to go to my infantry and I was still scared of it and I was still struggling into that. So I told them I didn't want to do it and I talked to my [inaudible] and of course I got treated pretty badly for it because they don't take to that pretty lightly in the Marine Corps at all. They were saying so you wouldn't defend yourself if you had to kill someone and I was like I just don't want to go there and fight in a war that I really didn't think the war would be going on still. I don't want to be fighting in a war that I don't believe in. I don't think we should just go there and these guys don't know it and just kill people, so they took me out of the security force part and I got to work in an office for a bit because I wasn't allowed to touch a weapon.

Alex Milshtein

I want to quickly touch on the whole procedure of you requesting to not be put into the infantry. I guess how did that start?

Johnny Wolvert

I was Lance Corporal at the time and the Corporal above me, I talked to him about it. He said that he is fine with that, he didn't have a problem he is a nice guy. He was like I am going to talk to our company commander and I was like wasn't sure we should go straight to him. He was like oh you can for serious things like this. So I talked to him and the company commander was telling me all kind of things that I knew weren't true. He was trying to get me to like back off and change. He was saying I could go to the brig, go to jail, it is kind of like desertion in a way, I wasn't scared at all I knew, I mean I had to tell them that and hopefully I would be able to suspend my time there. They ended up taking me out of the system of the security force thing and putting me in the office.

Alex Milshtein

What was the reaction of your fellow Marines? Did they ever find out?

Johnny Wolvert

Some of them, yeah they knew before from talking and we get to know each other. They knew I didn't want to do it. Some of them were like, "just do it man", "come on man", you know, I was friends with everyone. Nobody had anything against me but then you got those people who are, they say they are military brainwashed, because in a way it does it to some individuals and they were like, "oh no you're weak" and all that "you just don't want to do it", so some people got like that and they thought that I wanted to just get out of the military

completely. I was like I just do not want to do the infantry, so I got a lot of flak for that but some of my friends were still supporting me and we hung out still and nothing changed really.

Alex Milshtein

And there was no direct punishment because of it or would you consider moving to the office formal punishment?

Johnny Wolvert

First I thought it was great, I didn't have to do the field. The field in Washington you are sitting in the rain all day miserable and have to go out in two weeks and away from society, I got more free time, it was great. Then I was kind of rushing, there was inspections going on for the office and it was very unorganized organization is what the Marine Corps is, is what we call it. It just, it was bad and I had to help out in the office and learn all their procedures, and do all their office work and help out and it just became a hassle because we were in there from like six in the morning to eight at night. So later on it felt more like a punishment, but at first it was alright this is cool. I was kind of going through a bunch of procedures trying to sit there and see if they discharge me out of the military, or if they were going to just say no you are going to do your job, or if they were going to give me a new career within the military. I didn't know what was going on, I was just waiting.

Alex Milshtein

I guess what was the biggest anxiety that you had at the time?

Johnny Wolvert

Just working a lot all day and being around the battalion commander and all that. Thinking that they're judging me the whole time, that was one of the biggest anxieties. Other than that I had a lot of free time, I got to go hang out with friends, and go home on weekends because it was a two and a half hour drive. I kind of got to work out more all the time, gym on days, they had a really nice gym there and it was nice, so I didn't really have too much anxiety after a while. The fact that I didn't know what was my future, what was my fate.

Alex Milshtein

Was it possible they could have just said we are sending you to the infantry training?

Johnny Wolvert

That is what happened, yeah, I went to the infantry after that. That is what ended up happening. They said, "Well were not discharging you so you are going to do your job, and if you don't do it then you are going to get in trouble."

Alex Milshtein

What was the trouble purse?

Johnny Wolvert

I don't really know, I mean I'm sure, probably just a dishonorable discharge, or not dishonorable I don't think they would go that far. I think they would give you just a other-than-honorable discharge, which isn't as bad but you don't get your benefits after that. I was like I

have already been in for three years at the time, I was like I got to keep going with it. I just did it and they stationed me in 29 Palms, California and that is the worst place to get stationed. You can either get stationed in Camp Lejeune, South Carolina, Camp Pendleton which is another base in California, Hawaii, or 29 Palms in the middle of the desert, California. So it was the worse place but at the same time it is three hours from Vegas and I have family there, my sister lives there and I was dating a girl there at the time. So I got to go home every once in a while and go see them.

Alex Milshtein

It is 29 Palms?

Johnny Wolvert

Yes.

Alex Milshtein

How long did you spend there?

Johnny Wolvert

‘Til I got out. So from that June of 2013 to I technically got out mid-January but I got to leave early because you save up your leave days and you just extend those to the end so I just got to leave in December.

Alex Milshtein

What was life like at 29 Palms?

Johnny Wolvert

It was kind of miserable. I didn't really like our commander, nobody really did. He had a really bad company battalion and really unorganized, we would have to be at work all day when we were not in the field training but we wouldn't do much. Then whenever they would call you up like, "oh you got to go do this", I'm like I already did that because it's so unorganized. You had to keep up with your records and all that. Your dental and all that just so you are able to deploy at any moment's notice. They were really just unorganized and it was kind of stressful that way and we would be at work. If we're not in the field we were working but we would just be sitting there waiting in the barracks in our cannons waiting to be off work so we could go home. That was just kind of annoying and then going into the field for a month at a time is like kind of annoying but then again you think people are actually deployed like this for several months at a time so I was like that's not too bad. So it wasn't too bad in the end. Like at first it was like I didn't know if I was going to get deployed and then later on I was like whatever. I had accepted it by then. The training was harder because you were in the middle of the desert and it is like 120 out sometimes and just constantly sweating. I had some friends that I was stationed with in Washington that came with me there and then I made some good friends so it wasn't too bad.

Alex Milshtein

First of all you were there until you got out?

Johnny Wolvert

Yes I got out instead of five years I did four and a half years because they had a volunteer early release program because they were cutting down numbers at the time and if you wanted to get out six months early, just write up your reasoning's in a letter, get it indorsed and they will send it up and then you get approved or not. So I did that and I got out six months early. I wasn't going to be able to do it if I went on deployment. The deployment when we were in the month long training for it we actually got to watch the Super Bowl on projector they had a satellite there projector in the field because we had the training in the field. At halftime they told us my company was not deploying. The whole battalion was deploying but my company was not deploying. I was happy. Some people were upset because they wanted to get their deployment in. I was happy but at the same time it would be nice to get the deployment money and all the hazard pay and that kind of stuff. But you know we didn't, so I just got back and got back home from that and I told my mom I wasn't deploying. She was so happy she was like you're safe and after that I was like I need to get out. So I did the early release program and then I was like I'll be out within this year instead of next year. So it was nice.

Alex Milshtein

Overall, when you are looking back at your career as a Marine, did you expect that is what you would have done when you signed up?

Johnny Wolvert

No not at all. I thought it was going to be a lot different. I thought, I mean some of it yes but I really I was kind of clueless. I mean you are young and you are just like oh I am just going to get to train and learn how to shoot a gun and run out there, but there is a lot more to it than that. A lot more stress than that and Marine Corp is one of the hardest, they don't sign, it is mentally and physically challenging. More physically by many ways but also more mentally challenging as well. In army they have stress cards, so you can pull out a stress card in basic training and say oh I am too stressed out and get free time. Yeah you can't do that in the Marine Corp. It is weird they don't accept that kind of stuff and so it was rough.

Alex Milshtein

Overall did you feel like you made a difference?

Johnny Wolvert

Not really actually. I mean I filled up a spot is really all I feel. I didn't go to deployment and I mean I did help out some people in the military while working in the office, guarding I guess. We help each other out, we help each other cope with the stress but other than that I really don't feel I made a difference to America or anything to the world. I mean it was kind of, it felt like a waste of my time but at the same time I get benefits now which is good but I don't feel like I made much of a difference.

Alex Milshtein

Would you do it again?

Johnny Wolvert

Probably with the Airforce.

Alex Milshtein

Why Airforce?

Johnny Wolvert

Because it is the easiest branch. We call them the “chairforce.” I mean no disrespect to the airmen they are great guys, I have met some great guys in the Airforce. But it really is the easiest branch. They have the less run time, they don’t have to run as much, they don’t have to do really much anything. They have the nicest stuff too. They get a lot of the budget for the military goes to them.

Alex Milshtein

As a Marine, what was your opinion on the other branches?

Johnny Wolvert

We worked with the Navy mostly. It is funny because sometimes you talk to people and they are like, in the Marine Corp, and they’re like oh I wish I was with them, their life is so much easier, I should have joined the Navy or I should have joined the Airforce or this or that. But then you see them on like Facebook or something and they are all like being really just kind of cocky about it, like oh I am a Marine, we are better. It’s like no, no you just wish, you are just jealous that they have an easier life. It was kind of, it was kind of funny but our opinion of it, my opinion was like same team same fight. So that is what we end up saying in the end you make fun of them sometimes but it’s like same team same fight we got to help them out, they will help us out. You know we are, Navy was our corpsman so like our medical doctor who went to the field with us, went to war with us. He got to use a gun too but he is our guy so he is probably one of the most important guys in your platoon. So we can’t really dock on the Navy very much.

Alex Milshtein

Something that just occurred to me and I am sorry for backtracking this so much but it just occurred to me now, when you were talking about going to your commander and not wanting to be in the infantry and you know talking to him about that you mentioned your own opinion about the war when describing it to me and I was wondering did you actually say that to your commander?

Johnny Wolvert

I told him I don’t know if I, I didn’t want to kill a person for, just go over there and self-defense to me is different. I didn’t want to go there and just raid somebody’s home and kill some people but I mean it is self-defense there but at the same time we are kind of putting ourselves in that situation and I didn’t really like that. I was like what are we fighting for in the war because I have watched plenty of debates on the war about why we are there in the first place, what have we accomplished by this time, will we ever get it accomplished, and to me I just felt like those countries in the middle east have been in war with each other for centuries so it is like you can’t really do much there. I told him I didn’t believe that we should be there and I don’t want to go there and put myself in a situation to kill someone and I don’t know if I could do it. I told that to him and yeah that was one of the most awkward conversations of my life. Back then I was still

kind of scared to talk to higher ups, we call them higher ups because they are higher ranking. So it was very stressful.

Alex Milshtein

One last thing that again just occurred to me, again sorry for backtracking so much but the rise of ISIS, did you ever have a reaction to it?

Johnny Wolvert

It makes me think that when we pulled out of Iraq it was like maybe we should have been there but at the same time are we supposed to police the whole world then? Why doesn't anybody else do it? It is kind of weird because the rise of ISIS happened shortly after we pulled out of Iraq because we stayed in Afghanistan, but in Iraq and all those other countries where ISIS just kind of formed, they are all over Iraq and it's like how are we going to take that back? But the same thing happens in Afghanistan all the time. The Marines are at a base and they stay there, then they realize there is not Thalaivan there and they are like we don't need to be here anymore. And the Thalaivan raided again. They're all over there and it's like I don't think we can stop it. I am not really intellectual and all that in the situation but I really don't think we can stop them unless I mean there are some bad things you have to do to wipe out people but you can't just do that.

Alex Milshtein

Any last thoughts you have about your time in the Marines?

Johnny Wolvert

It has led to some good things in my life but at the same time it has led to a lot of stress but I have met some lifelong friends, I mean they are all over the country but we plan to meet up this summer and one of my best friends wants to go to Vegas because we used to go there all the time in 29 Palms. So I mean I think the best thing about it is just the people you meet. You meet some of the greatest people, friends of your life and I mean I wouldn't change that I went into it, because of all the experiences I had ups and downs and I came out with honorable discharge and I got my benefits and I made great friends.

Alex Milshtein

Excellent, well thank you very much.

Johnny Wolvert

Thank you.
[End of interview]