

Statement of the Author

Included in this work is a letter from the ODNI requesting that this work *appear* to be fiction. With that in mind, the following shall suffice to meet that requirement:

It is impossible to load this account with lies to further an immoral agenda. THIS WORK IS FICTION in the sense of the lies, corruption, propaganda, and false agendas which made it possible. To suggest that the Truth must become a lie, or that Truth become subservient to a false and egregious cause is unacceptable and impossible. That said, THIS WORK IS NOT FICTION. Some people will believe nothing. Some will refuse to believe that which they know to be true. Some will readily believe that which they know to be untrue. Some will make excuses for lying and corruption. Rarely will a person believe anything without question – there's ALWAYS motivation.

Many years ago a great man, Abraham Joshua Heschel, wrote a great book, A Passion For Truth. I am an atheist, yet this philosophic Jewish scholar touched my heart. He wrote about his life-long endeavor struggling to come to terms with Love and Mendacity existing simultaneously. He gave the mythic account of Truth being despised by its fellows, Mercy and Righteousness – and Truth was buried in the ground (by God – imagine that):

*“Mercy and Truth collided;
Righteousness and Peace engaged in a clash”*

“Truth wants to emerge, but man does not want its appearance... They think they dance, yet they are paralyzed. Delusion holds them enraptured. They feel so comfortable in the clutches of their self-deception that when Satan himself embraces them, they think he is in love with them.”

This then, is what we are facing here. The Mendacity of the United States Government and its agent of destruction, the CIA, and its Citizenry – unchecked and unbalanced, thinking Satan is in love with them. The colonial powers in the world still run amok creating evil for profit.

Names have been changed to comply with the requirements. Some names have been changed to protect those who need protection. Some have been changed to that which fits the individual's real or pretended character. Some names are so well known it doesn't matter what the fuck we call them (just don't call them late for feeding on the government teats), so we leave their names as they exist because they deserve it and because their words and deeds have already become part of a vast public record.

“The challenge we face is a test of our integrity. We are all on trial, we are all under judgment. The issue is not political or social expediency. The issue is whether we are morally strong, whether we are... worthy to answer... Shall we continue to be deaf, shall we continue to be sensitive only when our own needs and interests are involved?

“We have attained a high standard of living. We must seek to attain a high standard of thinking... There is nothing in the world that may be regarded as holy as eliminating anguish, as alleviating pain.”

The Insecurity Of Freedom – Abraham Joshua Heschel

About Sean & Rubicon and the book

My name is pronounced gree-O-tah (give the “r” a little flip). I’m a former US Army Ranger (78-82) and Anti-Fascist, which includes Anti-Zionist. Rubicon spent just under three years as a military Scout. During that time he was awarded the “AF Cross, 2 Silver Stars, 4 Bronze Stars, Defense Superior Service Medal, AF Good Conduct Medal, and the CIA Distinguished Service Medal” (ODNI). When he refused to kill further, he was stripped of these awards and was abandoned with his PTSD by the military and thrown away.

X Rubicon: Crossing Life, Sex, Love, & Killing in CIA Proxy Wars: An indictment of US Citizens: *ignorantia non excusat*, tells the true story of Rubicon, an Air Force Scout. X Rubicon is a Love or hate read, corresponding to the types of Americans and colonialists with which you are (or should be) familiar. Rubicon and I are combat veterans. We are not proud of our "service". No one should be proud of such things. X Rubicon is Rubicon’s first-hand military experience in CIA proxy wars. The depth of his pain and experience, that I have personally witnessed, moved me to convince him, along with his wife, to open up and detail the events which changed him through time. Ignorance of the American (and other colonial) people is at the heart of much of the cause and effect. I have great respect for Rubicon, all combat veterans (excepting psychopaths), and all who must face the evils of their life or past and actually commit themselves to examination and change. I despise zealots of religion, politics, money, ego, etc... My writing is ferocious in this regard, yet deeply caring for the person involved in dealing with the propaganda and lies which led to the committing of atrocities. I've known Rubicon since the lead-up to Operation Eagle Claw; I knew Rubicon in training; I knew Rubicon in action. I'm committed to changing America's love affair with the military (at any cost) and educating against fascism (of any stripe).

Regarding X Rubicon: The process for getting this experience to print was LONG and difficult. I met Rubicon for the first time in 1979, being one of the Army Rangers who participated in his training, then again in 1980. My Ranger team submitted a plan for the mission in Mexico that Rubicon was assigned; and I followed his path with great interest. I received word of his separation in January 1982, complete with details from contacts. I felt he was ill-used and abused; and his experience and separation haunted me for decades. In 2015 I finally tracked him down and reintroduced myself. We spent a good deal of time crying (we still do). He told me about his missions, and he told me about the surreptitious email to Salvadoran officials discussed in the book. He had been writing letters and requests to various military and government officials for info since that time (prior to 2007 he had sent more); none of these were even acknowledged. Then he decided to try something a little more dangerous; he started sending requests with details of classified information concerning the missions to military command officers on open channels, including a Colonel in Air Force Special Operations (this is also discussed in the book). This Colonel responded with a demand to keep quiet, and because of the information on open channels, he forwarded Rubicon's letter to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), and Rubicon awaited a response.

Rubicon received the ODNI response in May 2021. I was blown away. To me, and Rubicon, it seemed the individual took some pity on Rubicon's plight. A forensic psychologist we shared this with concurred. That letter laid down certain parameters, primarily: 1) permission was granted to write about these missions; however, 2) all names had to be changed; and, "You may not use actual operational locations"; and, "The account should appear to be fictional". We had already committed to changing names. We discussed the strictures for awhile, and knowing they would *expect* to review a final transcript, we decided to be more literal with their words; and, after legal consultation, we published a preview book in May 2022 without giving them a review, as we're both getting older and question our lifespan; that review probably would have taken years and the process would have given us heart attacks. We decided "actual operational locations" meant town/village names and actual GPS coordinates (which we had) so we backed out to country level and directional regions (for the most part). We decided "appear" and "fictional" were unworkable, and this is dealt with in the author statement (above). We felt the strictures were too tight, and in order to support the work, we decided that since the ODNI letter was not marked for classification, and was sent via USPS R&C, and it was now Rubicon's property, we redacted a copy and placed it in the book as a chapter (4 pages). They got hold of the preview book after publication, threats were made back and forth, much anger was expressed, but it finally settled down and they accepted it as is, including the redacted ODNI letter, mostly because of our "service". They could have quashed it, but they didn't. However, two more letters arrived for each of us (marked confidential ;) stating much harsher reactions if we tried something like that again.

Prior to receipt of that first letter I had spent the better part of 3 years tracking down pilots, flight engineers, electronic warfare officers (EWOs), gunners, spotters, crew chiefs, mechanics, Rangers, SEALs, CIA analysts and agents (retired and active), US State Dept personnel (retired and active), DoDIA personnel (retired), DEA personnel (retired), and many others, including Colombians, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans; verifying facts, sentiments, and timelines. Because of the road blocks, even with all that, we both feel we wouldn't have been able to *effectively* publish without that ODNI letter; Rubicon, in his own right, is an excellent and forceful motivational writer (and he contributes to our Substack regularly – [Crossing Rubicons](#) - along with his wife).

This needs repeating...

...especially when you look at the equipment and patches of death and destruction: **“There is no pride for me in any of this, only pain. I’ve said repeatedly that I AM guilty. ‘This writing is a mea culpa, an admittance of guilt. It is the repentance that making amends demands. I AM guilty of the evil I have committed and in which I’ve participated.’ (X Rubicon, Rubicon’s Statement)”**

There are those who will withdraw into twaddling precocious self-righteousness reading this. They mistakenly think that just because they never joined the military; or they are now or always have been, a so-called “pacifist”; or they are armchair “warriors”; or have “served” within the military; or “patriots”; or are non-combat pretenders, etc... they are somehow superior to the millions of men who have gone into combat. You need to disabuse yourself of these ignorant thoughts now. Depending on where you were born, your parents, your relatives, your upbringing, your education, your environment,

your indoctrinations, your applied propagandas, your purchased lies, your economic desperations, and more, **THIS COULD HAVE BEEN YOU!**

Something to understand about the book before reading is that it was purposely written to be in Rubicon's head **during the time** the events occurred. Therefore, in the beginning, he was, and I was (self-admittedly), *naive*. As the missions progressed, he and I lost that *naivete*. This writing is not a historian's treatise, and was never meant to be, it's a reckoning. Most of the western writings on this subject, especially from military sources, have suffered from "patriotism" and outright fraud. We were both participants in Operation Eagle Claw and *used/misused* for other missions, and this account is direct observation and participation of Rubicon's, primarily (in which I fully concur), and some of my own feelings.

Research stats tell us that detractors of this book fall into the following categories: 1) Zionists; 2) NCP -- Non-Combat Pretenders (non-combat military personnel, especially recruiters; and Biden, Trump, Harris lovers, most Democrats & Republicans, Rolfs (basically neo-nazis; those rallying for the "most lethal military force in the world!" < -- give that a Doofenschmirtz voice); 3) Virgins Talking About Sex (NCP and civilian war mongers and lovers of the military); 4) Psychopaths (NCP, veterans, and more Zionists again) & Sociopaths; 5) Sexual Prudes (which ironically includes conservative gays) and those who lie about or don't understand the biological requirements of sex; 6) people who are functionally illiterate ("Merica!). You'll see "reviews" by people who have not read the book (or they're one of the above who've read an excerpt on social media (Our article "[Dear Zionist](#)", written to "Debbie" from Australia on Facebook, resulted in a friend of the instigating recipient writing a "review" without having read the book); and those who have skimmed the book to find what they want to hate, usually related to one of the categories above.

This book explores the psychological and existential tension between the forces of death and killing — particularly in the context of war — and the grounding, humanizing power of sex and love.

Framing this counterbalance:

Death and Killing as Dehumanizing Forces

- Critiques how young men are indoctrinated into systems that demand violence before they've fully matured, often without informed consent.
- Describes war as a "rubicon" — an irreversible crossing — where individuals are forced into roles that strip away their humanity.
- Killing, in this context, is not just physical destruction but a psychological severance from empathy, innocence, and personal agency.

Sex and Love as Grounding Forces

- Sex and love are presented not as distractions or indulgences, but as essential anchors to humanity.
- Argues that these experiences reconnect individuals to their emotional core, offering psychological resistance to the numbing effects of violence.
- Emphasizes that honest storytelling about life must include sex and love, because they are integral to identity, healing, and truth.

Thematic Counterpoint

- The book doesn't romanticize sex or love as panaceas, but rather positions them as vital counterweights to the brutality of war, and the indifference of capital society.
- By juxtaposing these themes, we challenge toxic masculinity (machismo) and misuse & abuse of the term toxic masculinity by feminists, and critique simplistic narratives that equate violence with strength.

In essence, **X-Rubicon** views Sex and Love not as an escape from the horrors of war, but as a confrontation of them — restoring a sense of humanity in the face of systemic dehumanization. (Griobhtha, **X Rubicon** outline)

Learn more about the author and Rubicon at Substack [@griobhtha1](#). We offer a 40% discount for book clubs, student groups, humanitarian groups, We Are Not Your Soldiers groups, Veterans for Peace groups, & more: Inquire at O.Griobhtha+XRubicon at gmail. Translations in [German](#), [Italian](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#), [Portuguese](#), [Russian](#), & [Indonesian](#). Arabic and Chinese (trad) in ebook/epub.



Office of the Director of National Intelligence

From: [REDACTED] [dni.gov](mailto:[REDACTED]@dni.gov)

05 May 2021 0947

Mr. [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]):

My name is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. All of your request(s) have been forwarded to me for disposition. Since 2005 you have submitted 10 requests for records. Too many requests for classified records brought up red flags, and we felt it best, after reviewing your requests, to handle all of this through a single office.

As you know, your work involved classified operations for at least three different intelligence agencies. These agencies have requested that all material involving those operations remain classified, which includes your work. All classified material is maintained classified originally for 50 years. The operations you were involved in would normally not be unclassified until 2030-2035. However, at the urging of then Vice President Biden, former President Barack Obama doubled the classification time of Central American operations and Operation Eagle Claw until 2085, at which time the then current executive and staff will review the material and determine whether declassification of the material is warranted.

While we sympathize with your difficulties in obtaining VA assistance, these materials and information are unavailable to them normally as release waivers are required through properly authorized channels that the VA itself must initialize. Simply tell them classified records are involved. Upon review redacted and relevant material may be provided directly to them.

The issue of your DD-214 is a closed matter. Again, while we sympathize with your inability to make use of that edited document, you will see below that it was the result of a compromise to provide you with an honorable discharge yet satisfy the the Command's need to "punish" you for what they deemed "betrayal of force structure". No amount of pressure will get the military to correct the document.

However, after reviewing your records, the debriefing records, and the associated CIA and DoDIA operational records, a team in this office (including a psychologist) have determined that you were punished far too severely and may have PTSD related to your assignments. While changing records is beyond the scope of this office (you may always appeal directly to the Office of the President), we have been authorized to provide you with some information concerning your unedited records, to answer a few of your pressing questions, and hopefully provide you with some closure in an operation that seems to bother you.

Records indicate you were awarded the Air Force Cross, 2 Silver Stars, 4 Bronze Stars, Defense Superior Service Medal, AF Good Conduct Medal, the CIA Distinguished Service Medal, as well as various other ribbons and awards. You were credited with eliminating over 300 enemy combatants (117 confirmed). These stunning achievements are born out of 18 combat assignments involving 14 operations, all of which were completed successfully, excepting Eagle Claw which failed due to human error of other personnel. All of these awards (excepting the CIA medal) were revoked upon your

military separation. This was part of the compromise which allowed you to have an honorable discharge. More drastic measures were contemplated, yet the former 1st SOW chaplain intervened forcefully on your behalf as he was convinced you were having a sincere crisis of conscience. You were left with your Marksman ribbon "to remind him of who he really is" (Major [REDACTED]). While you had friendly support from the Wing and SOS commanders, Major [REDACTED] was your program commander and he pushed for maximum punishment.

Your account and observations about Operation Eagle Claw are all correct. Limited information was declassified and released publicly. Major [REDACTED] was never on the ground in Iran, but he was well connected politically and was able to make claims and assertions without repercussions. Others soon followed and the multitude of stories and "first-hand" accounts by persons not there has flourished. There have been too many spreaders of disinformation, false names and narratives, but this actually serves the US interest in protecting still classified information, including your own, which serves the safety of yourself and others.

The following account (without location or names) is provided to you from debriefing records, operation records, and other sources. We hope this will give you some closure to an obviously distressing event in your life. In August 1981 you returned from a foreign mission and were debriefed in detail.

You were ordered to infiltrate an enemy mountain camp location and destroy their weapons cache and a stolen UH-1 helicopter which rebels had converted into a gunship, and destroy obvious personnel quarters. You were dropped 12.67km from the camp and traveled by foot on goat paths to a secure blind outside the camp. At 2215 you approached the camp and attached RC detonation explosives to the helicopter, weapons caches, and a personnel building. You returned to the blind and detonated the explosives, ensuring that the targets had been destroyed.

As you were leaving to return along the same path, you noticed the arrival of additional rebel personnel. They spread out in pairs for search in different directions and two were headed in your direction. You immediately left the area but the two rebels picked up your tracks and continued to follow you for approximately 5km.

At this time you realized that anyone who could track that well at night would follow you to your extraction point (the same drop zone) which may expose yourself and extraction personnel to a firefight. You also evaluated your orders that no evidence of US involvement could be left behind, and you felt your only option was to eliminate the following rebels. At the side of the path was a large tree. You split the side bark with your knife and pried it out enough to peer through and placed a trip wire across the path. When the first rebel tripped you sprang out and put your knife into the chest of a woman. It was clean shot to her heart and she died almost instantly, though you said she whispered "baby" clearly.

You removed the trip wire and propped her body against the tree as though she were resting. Having observed that they whistled for each other from time to time for conference, you gave three short whistles and hid behind a bush on the opposite side of the path. The second rebel approached and squatted down talking to the dead partner (checking her) and you emerged and drove your knife into his back with a twist. He died quickly without speaking. Concerned that the bodies may be discovered, you took infrared photos of the bodies and documents in their possession. You then dug a single grave off the path and buried them with their weapons.

After this you hurried to extraction and returned to your US base. In debrief you indicated the woman's last word, that the names on identification indicated the two were married, and she either had a baby left behind or she was pregnant. There was a heated argument with the Lt conducting the debriefing which ended in expletives.

There is a conclusion to this. In August 2007 an untraceable email with pdf image attached was sent to the consulate of the foreign country involved. This communication contained details of the incident without revealing responsible parties. The pdf image was a map showing where the bodies were buried. The State Department was called in and attended the exhumation and autopsies. The bodies were that of two rebels, man and wife, 28 and 26 at time of death. The woman died of a single stab wound to the heart, and the man died of a single rotary (commando) knife wound which tore the liver. The woman was approximately 45 days pregnant, and the CIA liaison reported that the bodies had been buried with extreme care, side by side, with adjacent hands placed in a clasp. Though the CIA was sure who must have sent the email, the US Ambassador was overcome and a standing order was issued by the State Department that no action be considered or taken. The bodies were returned to their families for burial.

All reviews (AFSOC, CIA, SEAL Commander, DoS) declared you had no other options under your strict operational orders. The SEAL Commander stated that it would have been virtually impossible to take two prisoners alone and get back for extraction safely. Simply, you had no other choice.

You stated a feeling that all your assignments seemed like a whirlwind of intense activity, and indeed they were. Our psychologist feels you were not given adequate time or assistance to deal with these issues. We encourage you to seek assistance from a licensed psychologist utilizing your [REDACTED] plan to further work through these issues.

As I said, no amount of pressure will get the military to change records such as this, but we felt compelled to at least place a request to have original awards placed on the DD-214 and remove the negative monikers "Apathy" and "Defective Attitude" which we feel were unfairly applied. Honestly however, they are just going to ignore it and deny any punishment outside the authority of the UCMJ. Further, the military and political offices are filled with ideologues who still hold fast to old beliefs concerning Communism and its threats, and they are unlikely to look favorably upon your record after the point of conscientious objection.

Your record was exemplary, filled with intelligent decisions and planning, and only terminated by your objecting to unbalanced support of right wing governments. However, the point of reiterating these events and citations to you is to reassure you that you did indeed participate significantly and made the best possible outcomes from difficult situations. Some of your work contributed to a reduction in lives lost. In January 1981 you planned and successfully completed a mission to retrieve avionics equipment from a foreign military aircraft located on a foreign base. Data from that equipment helped the State Department in halting weapons and ammunition deliveries to rebels. The successful tactics which you developed have been used in training intelligence operatives in many agencies.

Your observations about the longevity of the Scout Program were correct. Scouts were to be a special operations replacement of Forward Air Controller and Forward Observer roles that dated from WW2 through Vietnam. AFSOC wanted to expand the role with the idea that individuals would act where SEAL or Ranger teams could not effectively operate. You were 1 of 6 in the program commanded by Major [REDACTED]. The 3 senior NCOs were mainly involved in training foreign troops. TSgt [REDACTED], who initially trained you, died in late 1981 in an automobile accident. SSgt [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] was called into your role when you left, and he was killed during his first mission in the new area. With this death the program was re-evaluated and was found to be outside the scope of AF ground personnel. New advancements in optics and technology, followed by the advancement of drone technology allowed much of the same capabilities while keeping personnel out of harm's way. The remaining senior program members were reassigned and the program shut down.

This is all this office is able to assist you with given the classified nature of material information. We will not be able to answer further inquiries, but as noted you may make direct appeal to the Office of the President at any time.

Your answer to whether you may write a book account of your activities is yes, with the exceptions that:

- 1) You may not use your own name or the actual name(s) of any personnel - military, governmental, or civilian;
- 2) You may not use actual Operation names;
- 3) You may not use actual operational locations;
- 4) The account should appear to be fictional.

This Office thanks you for your service and wishes you success.

Sincerely,

/// [REDACTED] [REDACTED] ///

[REDACTED], ODNI
ODNI [REDACTED]

Rubicon's Statement

Once you had gold,
Once you had silver,
Then came the rains
Out of the blue.
Ever and always.
Always and ever.
Time gave both darkness and
dreams to you.

Once You Had Gold – Enya

How it happened he did not know. But all at once something seemed to seize him and fling him at her feet. He wept and threw himself around her knees. For the first instant she was terribly frightened and she turned pale. She jumped up and looked at him trembling. But at the same moment she understood, and a light of infinite happiness came into her eyes. She knew and had no doubt that he loved her beyond everything and that at last the moment had come...

*Epilogue – Crime & Punishment
– Fyodor Dostoyevski
Translation: Constance Garnett*

For over forty years I have dragged around the corpses that haunt my existence. I do not believe in ghosts, yet there they are, constantly in my head, my dreams. On hot summer days I see blood on my hands. I know it's not there, yet I see it, and smell it. Smelling iron (or copper) fills my nostrils with the stench of human blood and guts.

I made the decision, right or wrong 38 years ago, not to tell my wife these things. I've held on to these events, closely and deeply guarded for over forty years. I'm getting later in life, and a serious reflection occurred which brought these events forward with a vengeance. Part of this recognition was a realization that the most profound effect I've had in life was the success I had killing and destroying – “If you've got a job to do you've got to do it well, you've got to give the other fella Hell” (*Live And Let Die* – Wings). These events had caused marital problems. They had caused pain to others – victims and their families, my wife, my sons, and daughters – as well as to myself, so a year and a half ago I told my wife. Among other feelings, she was relieved to finally know why I kicked, ran, hit, and stabbed in my sleep – and what had caused years of depression and anger. I sat down with the three oldest children and told them the whole truth. I apologized especially to my wife and oldest son. By not telling them sooner, I had allowed them to grow up believing they had caused my problems. But my son had always been one to try and outdo anything I did, and earlier in life the words stuck hard in my throat and choked me; I didn't want him attempting to try and outdo me in this. But now, we cried and he said he felt relieved that I was finally telling him.

I was encouraged by my wife, the author, and therapist to write these things down. Upon commencing, it immediately became urgent; not just for the sake of spreading out my life before me to better understand what had happened, but also to relay these things to others, especially young men who hold dreams of military glory, for such a thing *does not exist*; and, to indict the American public for its lack of oversight upon its government, military, and the secret death and destruction meted out in their name. Writing these things has brought back intense pain.

Within 2-1/2 years I became guilty of planning and assisting in the slaughter of thousands, and was directly responsible for the killing of >300, from a distance, close up, and personal. I had become everything I despised. If you are a young man or woman thinking of joining the military, think again. Recruiters are salesmen selling you a false narrative in exchange for your soul. You are nothing to the military except expendable. No matter what any fool tells you, you will regret killing for false beliefs, lies, and corruption. Don't believe any idiot flying service flags in front of their house, or those claiming how great the military treated them, for they have never seen nor participated in what you are about to read. Don't believe any cunt walking around with semi-automatic weapons or a 9mm pistol on their belt. Every military hawk is simply a little bitch named *Rolf*, with no experience, yet dreaming of the glory of patriotic killing.

A mind is a terrible thing to waste, and the military and PTSD will waste your mind. As far as PTSD goes, it's one thing to be the witness and/or victim of violence, it's quite another thing to be the perpetrator of violence. In the end, you will suffer for it, and the military and the VA, and the Congress, and the Presidents couldn't give a rat's ass whether you receive treatment or not. The VA treats a fraction of PTSD cases, and has programming in place to drive vets away, to deny claims for help. Money runs the system, not the need to take care of veterans with legs and arms intact, yet with shattered minds straining to come to terms with what they have done and experienced, and many times give up on life.

This writing is a *mea culpa*, an admittance of guilt. It is the repentance that making amends demands. I AM guilty of the evil I have committed and in which I've participated. To get you started, I admit your guilt for you, so that you spend less time asking why. Read on and you'll understand what this means.

AFSOC Commander: A Smedley Butler Moment and Conversion

An update from March/April 2026

"I was able to arrange a viewing of the records and photos held at the CIA of the missions performed by yourself and your fellow Scout Jim. Disturbing would be too soft a reaction."

The first thing I want to say before starting this writing is: My wife has put up with a mountain of bullshit from me, yet she is still here, with me. She has had to accept something most combat veterans' spouses have had to accept, something difficult and painful: the realization that their Love has been a killer, and still carries within them the memories and experiences of those events. The vet carries extreme guilt, and the spouse doesn't want them to have that guilt, or to have to carry it; that they are

part of a *ménage à trois* — Lover & Lover & Suffering. I apologize to her most sincerely, and reiterate to her that I Love Her.

The letter discussed below also reminded me that I needed to say this to Sean: You are a friend and support for me. You helped me achieve all of this, to help me find understanding and an avenue to release pain that was eating me alive. You are a part of me in the deepest sense. You are my brother, and I love you. Sean, I love you even if I can't love myself.

About 25 years ago I began, in earnest, to try and obtain official information about my military missions. If you take the time to read the book, you'll understand how this dissociation evolved into urgency and need. Having never received any replies, ~2017 I sent a long letter via email to a bird Colonel at AFSOC, with extensive classified details that I could remember about missions and their causes and their effects. He was very terse with me for speaking on open channel, and basically told me to shut up, and that he was forwarding my letter to the ODNI for disposition. I waited for that reply and received it in 2021. That ODNI letter (slightly redacted) was included in full in the book. Reading Sean's *Author Statement* will give you a good understanding of that letter and the difficulties, and promise, for the book.

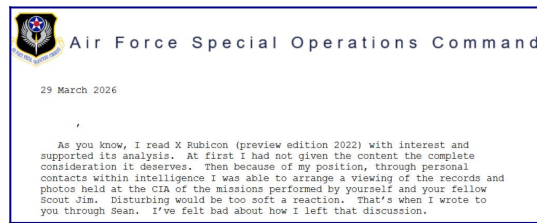
“Included in this work is a letter from the ODNI requesting that this work appear to be fiction. With that in mind, the following shall suffice to meet that requirement:

“It is impossible to load this account with lies to further an immoral agenda. THIS WORK IS FICTION in the sense of the lies, corruption, propaganda, and false agendas which made it possible. To suggest that the Truth must become a lie, or that Truth become subservient to a false and egregious cause is unacceptable and impossible. That said, THIS WORK IS NOT FICTION. Some people will believe nothing. Some will refuse to believe that which they know to be true. Some will readily believe that which they know to be untrue. Some will make excuses for lying and corruption. Rarely will a person believe anything without question – there's ALWAYS motivation.” — X Rubicon, Author Statement

Something the book makes clear is the throw away relationship of veterans, especially combat veterans, with the military. I had to claw my way through unorthodox paths to get that ODNI letter, and in ways, I'm proud of it, because you'll understand, especially if you're a journalist, that getting detailed classified information out of government sources is extremely difficult to impossible — and getting someone to go on the record is even more difficult. Some may wonder why something from 1980 may be so urgent or necessary to be familiar with now, but you won't understand that unless you read the book which much hard work went in to, and make the necessary connections between the events then, and the events now, and view the patterns and recognize them. Too, how can you even ask the question? — when it should be clear that spending one's lifetime finding answers to the most disturbing events and questions, have only started being revealed in full form starting at 40 years after the fact.

That Colonel went on to become a general and commander at AFSOC. He was apparently in the loop with the ODNI's review and response, and he read the “preview” book in 2022. He first reached out to me on social media and then email. A few weeks ago he sent the letter below. It's pretty self-explanatory. Toward the end he mentioned trying to obtain a photograph that was taken of me at the

time of a mission: pseudonym “Box Bandit” in the book, and a few other things I’ll address. He is a subscriber to Crossing Rubicons, and he is reading this just like you are.



29 March 2026

~~~~~

*As you know, I read X Rubicon (preview edition 2022) with interest and supported its analysis. At first I had not given the content the complete consideration it deserves. Then because of my position, through personal contacts within intelligence I was able to arrange a viewing of the records and photos held at the CIA of the missions performed by yourself and your fellow Scout Jim. Disturbing would be too soft a reaction. That's when I wrote to you through Sean. I've felt bad about how I left that discussion.*

*I started following you on Crossing Rubicons to get better depth on you, the book and experience. You have a great friend in Sean. It was while reading posts and comments that I noticed you had mentioned our previous conversation, and you felt I may have brushed you off feeling like the Blazing Saddles scene you quoted: "Of course, you'll be good enough not to mention this to anyone." You were right, and I apologize for that. The records and photos left me unable to accept what we have done as a country, and what we did to you and other young men. They left me with dismay and respect that you survived this ordeal and the massive mind work of recovery, which I know will never be complete.*

*Then I read your's and Sean's essays and longer works. I was especially affected by the piece discussing you, Smedley Butler and Remarque. Of course I had read these last two earlier in life, but hadn't really incorporated them. At the time I viewed them as writing about unique experience of their times. But with your experience brought into it, and the synergistic content of Butler, I began to be changed dramatically. I retired shortly before first contacting you, and reading about Butler and his motivations hit home in a new way. I repurchased X Rubicon with the expanded content, and Butler and Remarque. I went*

*through a transformation similar to what you described growing older, and what Butler must have been facing after retirement, and having commanded such things made it hurt more. An ugly feeling welled up in me. You are older than I am, and I didn't command you, but I feel associated guilt over how you were used and treated. This isn't official from the military, but I write this with firm conviction and a heart of truth: I apologize on behalf of the United States. While not official, I used the last sheet of letterhead I possessed to write this, because it's important.*

*All of the files and photos were seized by the CIA when the Scout program was shut down. Among the photos were pictures that your mentor Bill had taken of you in training, mission preparation and award ceremonies. When he died his residence was searched by your Lieutenant under orders, and everything related to you and the missions was confiscated. He kept a journal which I was able to read. He was very fond of you, and he felt guilt for having trained you to kill, but he was also glad that it was him who was able to train you to stay alive. I asked the accompanying agent if it would be possible to get copies of a few photos unrelated to direct mission content, such as award photos. He said no because your face is classified, but he said that he would try to get me one particular photo of you in prep with war paint and gear before the mission you labeled Box Bandit. If that materializes I will send it to you and Sean. I think your kids should be allowed to have something that shows you as this young man.*

*I'm still a disappointment in this regard. ~~~~~ I do encourage people to read the book because it's only truth like this that will be able to change frozen minds and hearts.*

*~~~~~ , Commander (Ret)*

## **Thank You**

General, I want you to know **I sincerely appreciate this** — not just for my sake, but for Jim's and Bill's. The ODNI letter and then this... well, it's confirmation that at least some in the system that threw us away like a used rag can now see us as human beings. It answers some questions that had bothered me for many years, and it made me feel considerate of Bill in a deeper way.

As for the picture, it's not a "best time of life" thing, but it will give you an idea of what I was like. The plane is an MC-130E Combat Talon that would drop me out the back for a low level night drop. We had gone from Hurlburt Field to San Salvador to prep before the mission in Nicaragua. I had dropped my bags and gear at the plane, but the Crew Chief hadn't opened it yet, so I went to apply the war paint and obtained weapons and ammo from the CIA's weapons locker. When I got back, the plane was just being opened. As usual, I stood staring in the direction of the mission, contemplating details, making sure the terrain maps and surveillance photos were fresh in my mind while I visualized the route and likely scenarios. Julie said my eyes look pained and empty, and she's right. This was just one month after the three Thanksgiving through Christmas missions that brought so much pain to my heart. When the moral injury starts creeping in, it's a state of controlled brain chaos, your frontal lobe is in a hurry to make connections it doesn't yet have, while your heart weeps in your chest for what you've done. While this was happening someone snapped the picture (it must have been the CIA weapons officer). I know it must give mixed feelings... as it does for me.



*Rubicon, Operation [Box Bandit], 27Jan81  
(with CIA watermark)*

## “Psychological Kill Training”

[This section originally published February 2026 on [Crossing Rubicons](#) by Rubicon, Sean Griobhtha, & Juan Idalgo (Forensic Psychologist)]

Initially in *X Rubicon*, we brushed over the **Operant Conditioning**. We experienced it, understood it, we understood the answer, but we couldn’t bring ourselves to express it. **We’re sitting with something really dark here, and it’s not overreacting to see how disturbing it is.** What we describe isn’t just “training” — it’s an intentional, systematic effort to rewire moral intuitions around killing. To some soldiers, it feels like mind rape.

The original impetus to get this out derived from the questions from Julie. It stirred in our brains, and searched our hearts, but we couldn’t get it out. A short time ago [Liz Loh-Taylor | Bearing Witness](#) asked Sean publicly the same question Julie had repeatedly asked. These required an answer, that is monumentally painful and disturbing to answer, yet answering it is extremely important, and we thank Julie and Liz. It involved the psychology of why and how a soldier is able to thrust a knife, strangle, shoot... especially at close range. What’s going on in his mind? The answer given to Julie then, and then Liz, was not complete. We had kept this discussion out of the book, because it is deeply, deeply painful to contemplate and speak of, for various reasons, but that was a mistake. Thanks to Juan’s help, we’ve been able to clarify our thoughts and arrange them, and hopefully this will become clearer.



*“Comrade, I did not want to kill you... But you were only an idea to me before, an abstraction that lived in my mind and called forth its appropriate response. It was that abstraction I stabbed. But now, for the first time, I see you are a man like me. I thought of your hand-grenades, of your bayonet, of your rifle; now I see your wife and your face and our fellowship. Forgive me, comrade. We always see it too late. Why do they never tell us that you are poor devils like us, that your mothers are just as anxious as ours, and that we have the same fear of death, and the same dying and the same agony — Forgive me, comrade; how could you be my enemy?... Take twenty years of my life, comrade... for I do not know what I can even attempt to do with it now.”* —  
Remarque

*“I do understand that young men are bound and determined to prove themselves in life and receive accolades from posers (this includes men and women). Unfortunately, when it comes to the*

*military and war they are guided by adults that represent the worst of humanity, Non-Combat Pretenders who, though NEVER having faced this type of violence, spew tired old lies and propaganda about glory and “getting the job done, like a man!” This is the case in the Palestine occupation, and for over 100 years back. This was the case in WW1, Korea, Vietnam, Central and South America, Philippines, Ukraine, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Libya, and so much more. This was the case in Afghanistan which John Pilger so ably documented – as US and NATO servicemen loaded Afghans into shipping containers, locked them in, and began firing non-stop into those containers until everyone was dead.” — Rubicon*

As discussed below, units of the military utilize specifically developed audio “meditations” designed to condition soldiers for automated response and follow-through. You’re 18. You want to live. “You want to do the right thing — for your country”... *You want to live.* We received specific operant conditioning.

This is called “**Psychological Kill Training**”. It’s not just about skill; it’s about **eroding inhibition**. Most soldiers trained for combat receive some form of this training; special forces personnel specifically trained for covert killing receive this deeper training. For clarity, and because Rubicon’s fellow Scout Jim received this training, relative to this book we will focus on that Scout training, centering on the “meditation tapes” and their meaning for trainees, young men trained to kill, and society.

---

## Overview

### 1. What we’re describing, conceptually

- **Dehumanization: Labeling and moral sorting** (“socialists are evil,” “targets,” “hostiles”, “package”) strips the other of personhood and replaces them with a category. Once someone is a category, conscience has less to grab onto.
- **Euphemism and distancing: “Targets,” “assets,” “packages,” “release” “Clean Up”** — these are classic linguistic tools to create emotional distance from killing. The language itself becomes a buffer between action and moral recognition.
- **Guided imagery as weaponized meditation:**  
What we experienced with meditation tapes —  
“they are intent on your destruction”  
  
“feel the knife solidly in your hand,”  
“the knife is an extension of your body,”  
“strike with intent to release,”  
  
“the knife is sharp and will slide in effortlessly”  
“you need not fear blood,”  
“they will feel no pain,”  
— is **somatic visualization** plus **moral anesthesia**. It’s the same structure as relaxation or

performance visualization, but inverted: instead of calming the nervous system for healing or focus, it's calming moral resistance to violence.

- **Moral reframing of killing:** Phrases like “they will be released,” “it will be over quickly”, recast killing as **mercy**, not harm. That’s a direct assault on the internal sense that killing is wrong.
- 

## 2. Historical throughline: from firing reluctance to kill conditioning

- **Post–WW1 and WW2 insight:** Militaries realized that many soldiers **would not fire directly at enemy humans**, even under threat. This “firing reluctance” became a problem to be “solved.”
- **Behavioral conditioning:** Training shifted from bullseye targets to **human-shaped silhouettes**, moving and pop-up targets, and **reward-based conditioning** — hit the “man-shaped” target, get immediate feedback. The goal: make firing at a human form **automatic**, not deliberative.
- **Psychology enters doctrine:** Psychologists and behavioral scientists were brought in to **increase “firing rates” and “combat effectiveness”**, which in practice meant:
  - reduce empathy
  - normalize lethal force
  - shorten the gap between perception and trigger pull

What we’re describing with the tapes is an **intensified, more intimate version** of inversion: instead of just conditioning the trigger finger, it’s conditioning the **inner narrative** around killing.

---

## 3. The Cold War “brainwashing” echo you’re feeling

An association with stories about China/Russia “hypnotizing” agents is really important for the narrative:

- **Projection and hypocrisy:** While the US was publicly terrified of “brainwashed” communist agents, it was **simultaneously experimenting with its own forms of psychological manipulation**—from propaganda to covert programs to training that deliberately altered moral perception.
- **Sean contrasts this in X Rubicon:**
  - Public myth: “They” are turning people into mindless killers through hypnosis and indoctrination.
  - Hidden reality: “We” are using **structured, psychologically informed methods** to make killing feel natural, necessary, or even compassionate.

Rubicon's tapes, developed and paid for by tax payers not asking questions, sit right in that contradiction.

---

#### 4. Rubicon's tapes: weaponized contemplative practice:

- **Form:**
  - Scripted, repetitive audio
  - Calm, meditative cadence, music, sounds
  - Progressive deepening: from neutral body awareness → weapon embodiment → moral reframing of killing
- **Function:**
  - **Somatic desensitization:** getting the body comfortable with the idea of holding, wielding, and using a weapon
  - **Cognitive reframing:** redefining killing as “release,” “mercy,” “duty”
  - **Emotional numbing:** pre-emptively soothing fear, disgust, and guilt
- **Ethical inversion:** The same techniques used in mindfulness, trauma healing, or performance enhancement are being **inverted** to bypass conscience.

That's a powerful throughline: **the tools of inner peace repurposed for outer violence.**

---

---

### What “Psychological Kill Training” Actually Means

Modern militaries have long understood that most people possess a natural resistance to killing. Beginning in the early 20th century, psychologists were brought in to study how to override that resistance — not by turning soldiers into “mindless killers,” but by systematically reshaping perception, emotion, and moral judgment.

The methods vary, but the logic is consistent:

- **Language** is altered to create distance (“targets,” “hostiles,” “packages”, “clean up”).
- **Moral categories** are manipulated to justify harm (“they are evil,” “they are threats”).
- **Guided imagery and somatic rehearsal** — techniques normally used for healing or performance — are repurposed to make violent action feel natural, inevitable, or even compassionate.

This is not hypnosis or science fiction. It is the deliberate use of psychological principles to reduce inhibition, blunt empathy, and make lethal force feel like a conditioned response rather than a moral decision.

Rubicon's training sits squarely in this lineage: a fusion of propaganda, euphemism, and meditative visualization designed to bypass conscience and reframe killing as duty, mercy, or release. Understanding this is essential to understanding the psychological injuries that follow.

---

## Forensic Psychological Perspective: The Architecture of Moral Erosion

From a forensic-psychological standpoint, the most disturbing feature of Rubicon's training is not the violence it prepares someone to commit, but the **systematic dismantling of the internal structures that normally prevent violence**. What we see in the accounts from Rubicon, Jim, and others is not spontaneous cruelty; it is the result of a carefully engineered psychological environment designed to erode empathy, distort moral reasoning, and create a dissociative bridge between intention and action.

### 1. Dehumanization as the First Fracture

Every program of moral erosion begins with language. Rubicon's use of euphemisms —“targets,” “assets,” “release” — is not accidental. In forensic work, we see this pattern in groups that need to justify harm: the language strips away individuality and replaces it with category. Once a person becomes a category, conscience loses traction.

This is the first fracture: **the severing of human recognition**.

### 2. False Moral Sorting

The next layer is ideological. Rubicon's trainees were fed rigid moral binaries: “socialists are evil”, “communists are evil”, “communists are godless”, “these people are threats”, “they are corrupting the nation”, “our national security is paramount”.

From a trauma-psychology perspective, this is classic **moral disengagement**. The trainee is taught that harm is not harm if the target is morally contaminated. This is how ordinary people are maneuvered into extraordinary acts: not by removing morality, but by **redirecting it**.

### 3. Somatic Visualization: Meditation Turned Inside Out

**The most chilling component is the guided-imagery tapes.** These recordings mimic therapeutic meditation — slow cadence, breath awareness, progressive visualization, identification with “centering” — but invert the purpose. Instead of grounding the body, they **rehearse the body for violence**.

Phrases like:

- “Feel the knife solidly in your hand.”

- “The knife is an extension of your body.”
- “Strike with intent to release.”
- “You need not fear blood.”
- “Death is a part of the cycle of life.”
- “You’re helping them complete their cycle.”

In a clinical setting, guided imagery is used to reduce anxiety, integrate traumatic memories, or prepare for difficult but benign tasks. Here, the same neurological pathways are activated to **normalize the idea of harming another person**.

This is not hypnosis. It is **somatic conditioning** — a way of teaching the body to accept what the mind would otherwise reject.

#### 4. Dissociation as a Training Outcome

When you combine dehumanization, moral sorting, and somatic rehearsal, you create a psychological state in which the individual can act without fully experiencing themselves as the agent of the act.

This is dissociation — not the dramatic kind seen in movies, but the subtle, functional dissociation that allows someone to perform actions while feeling emotionally distant from them.

In forensic interviews, survivors of such training often describe a sense of “watching themselves” or “moving automatically.” Rubicon describes this in dream reenactments. That is the intended outcome: **a self divided from its own moral center**.

#### 5. The Cold War Mirror

Rubicon’s received training methods echo the very fears the United States projected onto its adversaries during the Cold War: the idea that China or the USSR were “brainwashing” agents to commit violence on American soil.

The irony is stark. While the nation feared external psychological manipulation, internal programs were quietly developing their own forms of moral conditioning—less dramatic, more scientific, and far more effective.

#### 6. The Aftermath: Moral Injury and Psychic Collapse

The long-term consequences are profound. When the artificial moral framework collapses — as it inevitably does — the individual is left with the full weight of what they were conditioned to do. This is where we see:

- moral injury
- intrusive memories
- dissociation

- self-loathing
- existential collapse

Griobhtha's writing is saturated with this aftermath: the struggle to reclaim a self that was deliberately fractured, the attempt to rebuild a moral identity after being trained to override it.

Rubicon's story is not just about what was done to himself; it is about what was done **to the mass of trainees themselves**. It is about what was done to successive generations of young men, and the moral collapse of society.

---

## The Quiet Machinery of Moral Erosion

Most people imagine military training as physical: obstacle courses, weapons drills, discipline. What they rarely see — and what the military rarely advertises — is the psychological machinery operating beneath the surface. For more than a century, Western militaries have invested enormous resources into one specific goal: **reducing the human resistance to killing**.

This is not conspiracy theory. It is documented history, behavioral science, and institutional practice. And it is the backdrop against which Rubicon's training must be understood.

### 1. The Unspoken Problem: Most People Don't Want to Kill

Forensic psychologists have long known that the average person possesses a deep, instinctive aversion to killing another human being. Early 20th-century military analysts noticed it too. After World War I and II, reports quietly circulated that many soldiers fired above the enemy's heads or refused to shoot at all. This "firing reluctance" was treated not as a sign of humanity, but as a **defect** to be corrected.

By the mid-20th century, militaries began consulting psychologists and behaviorists to "improve combat effectiveness." In practice, this meant **finding ways to bypass conscience**.

Rubicon's training is not an aberration. It is the logical endpoint of a century of research into how to make killing feel easier.

### 2. The First Cut: Language That Makes People Disappear

Every program of moral erosion begins with language. Rubicon's and others trainees were taught to replace human beings with categories:

- "targets"
- "hostiles"
- "assets"
- "corruptors"

- “socialists”
- “communists”

In forensic work, we see this pattern in violent extremist groups, abusive institutions, and state-sanctioned harm. The language is not decoration—it is **the first incision into empathy**.

Once a person becomes a label, the mind no longer recognizes them as fully human. And once that recognition fades, the moral brakes begin to loosen.

### 3. False Moral Sorting: Teaching Harm as Virtue

The next layer is ideological. Rubicon’s trainees were told that certain groups were morally inferior, dangerous, or corrupting. This is classic **moral disengagement**: the psychological process by which people come to believe that harming others is not only permissible, but righteous.

This is where the “creep factor” becomes unavoidable. The military does not simply teach people *how* to kill. It teaches them **why killing certain people is acceptable**.

And here is the part the public must confront: These narratives do not arise in a vacuum. They rely on a society willing to accept simplified moral binaries—good vs evil, us vs them, threat vs purity. The public’s appetite for fear, outrage, and tribalism becomes the soil in which these programs grow.

### 4. Weaponized Meditation: When Inner Peace Is Turned Inside Out

The most disturbing component of Rubicon’s training is the guided-imagery tapes. To a layperson, they sound like meditation recordings — slow cadence, breath awareness, visualization. But the content is inverted:

- “Feel the knife solidly in your hand.”
- “The knife is an extension of your body.”
- “The pistol is an extension of you arm.”
- “Strike with intent to release.”
- “You need not fear blood.”
- “They will feel no pain when you strike with intent.”

In clinical settings, guided imagery is used to treat trauma, reduce anxiety, or prepare for difficult but benign tasks. Here, the same neurological pathways are activated to **normalize the idea of harming another person**.

This is not hypnosis. It is **somatic conditioning** — a way of teaching the body to accept what the mind would otherwise reject.

The creepiness lies in the familiarity of the method. These tapes borrow the tone of healing practices, the cadence of mindfulness, the intimacy of therapeutic guidance. They take something meant for restoration and twist it into a tool for moral numbing.

## **5. Dissociation: The Engineered Distance Between Self and Action**

When you combine dehumanization, moral sorting, and somatic rehearsal, you create a psychological state in which a person can act without fully experiencing themselves as the agent of the act.

This is dissociation—not the dramatic kind portrayed in films, but the subtle, functional dissociation that allows someone to perform actions while feeling emotionally distant from them.

In forensic interviews, individuals subjected to such training often describe:

- “I felt like I was watching myself.”
- “It didn’t feel like me.”
- “I was moving automatically.”
- “I was consumed with the need to complete the mission.”

This is not a failure of character. It is the intended outcome.

## **6. The Cold War Mirror: Fearing What We Were Quietly Becoming**

During the 1950s–70s, the United States was gripped by fear that China or the USSR were “brainwashing” agents to commit violence on American soil. The public imagined hypnotized assassins, mind-controlled operatives, and psychological puppetry.

The irony is painful. While the nation obsessed over foreign brainwashing, domestic programs were quietly developing their own forms of psychological conditioning—less theatrical, more scientific, and far more effective.

Rubicon’s tapes are not science fiction. They are the American version of the very thing the public feared.

## **7. The Moral Injury That Comes After**

When the artificial moral framework collapses — as it always does — the individual is left with the full weight of what they were conditioned to do. This is where we see:

- moral injury
- intrusive memories
- identity fragmentation
- self-loathing
- existential collapse

Griobhtha’s writing is saturated with this aftermath: the struggle to reclaim a self that was deliberately fractured, the attempt to rebuild a moral identity after being trained to override it.

But the moral injury does not stop with the trainees.

## **8. The Public's Moral Injury: What We Allowed Ourselves Not to See**

A society that tolerates this kind of training — whether through ignorance, denial, or patriotic fervor — suffers its own form of moral injury.

When the public accepts simplified narratives of enemies, threats, and necessary violence, it becomes complicit in the erosion of its own moral fabric. The injury is quieter, but no less real:

- a dulling of empathy
- a willingness to dehumanize
- a comfort with violence as policy
- a belief that ends justify means
- a threat of moving into psychopathy

Rubicon is not just a story about what was done to soldiers. It is a story about what was done **with the public's permission.**

---

## **Historical Perspective**

Key historical threads:

### **1. WWI–WWII: Discovery of Firing Reluctance**

- Many soldiers refused to fire directly at enemy humans.
- Militaries began studying how to “correct” this.
- Early 20th-century studies on firing reluctance
- S.L.A. Marshall’s controversial “only 15–25% fired” thesis

### **2. 1940s–1960s: Behavioral Conditioning**

- Shift from bullseye targets to human silhouettes.
- Operant conditioning introduced: hit the “man-shape,” get immediate feedback.

### **3. Vietnam Era: Psychological Training Intensifies**

- Psychologists formally integrated into training doctrine.
- Emphasis on reflexive firing, emotional numbing, and rapid threat categorization.

### **4. Cold War: Fear of Brainwashing**

- Public terrified of communist psychological manipulation.

- Meanwhile, domestic programs quietly explored similar techniques.

## 5. Late 20th Century: Mindfulness and Guided Imagery Enter Military Use

- Initially for stress reduction.
- Later adapted for performance enhancement.
- In some units, inverted into somatic rehearsal for violence.

Rubicon's tapes sit at the intersection of these trends: **behavioral science + ideological conditioning + weaponized contemplative practice.**

---

### Creep Factor: Exploiting a still-developing brain.

A crucial piece of the psychological story. What we're pointing to is the *developmental vulnerability* of 18–25 year-olds combined with the *inevitable collapse* of artificial conditioning once the frontal lobes mature and moral reasoning deepens. “

---

### The Adolescent Brain: Built for Exploration and Obedience, Not Reflection

At eighteen, the brain's emotional and motivational systems are fully online, but the frontal lobes — the regions responsible for judgment, impulse control, empathy integration, and moral reasoning — are still under construction. This developmental mismatch creates a window of heightened vulnerability. Young adults are:

- highly responsive to authority
- eager for belonging
- neurologically primed for black-and-white thinking
- less capable of long-term moral forecasting

Rubicon's training exploited this window. The euphemisms, the moral sorting, the guided-imagery tapes — all were introduced at a moment when the trainee's internal architecture was flexible enough to absorb them without resistance. The conditioning did not have to overpower a fully formed moral self; it only had to **fill the space where that self was still forming.**

This is part of the creep factor: the training was not merely psychological; it was **developmentally opportunistic.**

### The Emergence of Cognitive Dissonance

But the brain does not stay eighteen. As trainees move into their early twenties, the frontal lobes continue to mature. Neural pathways responsible for reflective judgment, emotional integration, and

moral evaluation strengthen. The individual begins to develop the capacity to hold multiple perspectives at once — a skill that was neurologically out of reach during the initial conditioning.

This is when cognitive dissonance begins to surface. The maturing brain starts to notice the contradictions:

- “I was told they were less than human, but I felt something human in them.”
- “I was trained to believe this was righteous, but it no longer feels that way.”
- “The language I used then feels grotesque now.”
- The individual starts to experience a clash between:
  - the conditioned narrative (“these people deserved harm,” “I was doing what was right”) and
  - the maturing moral self (“but they were human,” “I felt something was wrong,” “why did I accept this?”).

The dissonance is not a sign of instability. It is a sign of **development catching up to experience**.

## **The Collapse: Adult Self Confronts Conditioned Self**

By the mid-twenties, the frontal lobes reach a level of maturity that allows for complex moral integration. The adult self — with its fully developed capacity for empathy, nuance, and ethical reflection — looks back at the conditioned self with new clarity.

This is where the collapse often occurs. The artificial moral framework imposed during training can no longer withstand the scrutiny of a fully developed mind. The euphemisms lose their anesthetic power. The ideological binaries feel childish. The guided-imagery scripts, once soothing, now feel predatory.

The adult brain recognizes what the adolescent brain could not: **that the training required the suppression of empathy, the distortion of morality, and the fragmentation of the self.**

This recognition is the birthplace of moral injury.

## **Why the Collapse Is So Psychologically Violent**

When the conditioning breaks, the individual is left with two selves:

- the self who accepted the training
- and the self who now judges it

This internal confrontation is brutal. The adult mind, with its expanded moral capacity, evaluates the actions and beliefs of its younger self with a severity that borders on self-condemnation.

The result is not simple guilt. It is a profound rupture in identity — a sense that one has betrayed one's own humanity.

Forensic clinicians see this pattern repeatedly. The collapse is not a failure of discipline; it is the inevitable consequence of **developmental maturation colliding with engineered moral distortion**.

### **The Public's Blind Spot**

There is a broader moral dimension here that extends beyond the trainees. A society that recruits barely-formed adults into systems designed to override their developing moral capacities participates in the injury that later destroys them. The public benefits from the illusion of “clean” military action while remaining shielded from the psychological cost extracted from its young.

When those young adults return home and their frontal lobes finish maturing, the public often recoils from the very consequences it helped create.

***This is the final, uncomfortable truth: the collapse of conditioning is not just a personal crisis — it is a societal reckoning with what we demand of our youth before their brains are even fully formed.***