

'Atypical Soldier' Learns From Experiences

'It has made life easier for my family'

Jan 22, 2021

Veteran Cory Isaacs, 49, of Abilene, Texas, describes himself as an atypical soldier. The Texas lawyer served later in life and had no desire to become an officer or move up the ranks.

"I wanted to do my part and be a combat soldier," he said.

Isaacs enlisted in 2010 and for four years, he served as an infantryman. He completed his training at Fort Benning in Georgia, before he was stationed at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington, and eventually, deployed to the Zabul Province of Afghanistan.

Today, Isaacs, married to Kristin and father to Connor, Dayton and Ulysses, is pursuing his PhD in security studies at Princeton University. He is grateful to have received the VFW "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship," which has helped make his education possible.

"It is real money that makes a real difference," he said. "It has made life easier for my family."

Once he graduates, Isaacs hopes to become a law professor and plans to write books to help change the way our culture thinks about fallen veterans and the wars in which they participate.

As he works toward his future, Isaacs appreciates the role education has played in achieving his goals. He encourages other veterans to see past obstacles and consider going back to school, as well.

"I think formal education intimidates a lot of veterans. For many, concerns about it played into their decision to enlist in the first place," he explained. "In the end, though, education is very doable. I wish more veterans would pursue it."

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Ultimately, it is Isaacs' drive to learn from his experiences that continues to push him today — and is largely what motivated him to serve in the first place.

“I’m not sure how great I was as a 40-year-old infantryman,” he said. “But I certainly learned a lot from my experience.”