



(U) Memorable Fourth of July

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(U) SIDtoday [asked readers](#) to tell us about their most memorable Fourth of July celebration. Here's what we learned...

(U) Fireworks, But Not the Usual Variety...

(U) My most memorable July 4th in quite a while was July 4, 2005. Our team celebrated the holiday at the Villas Compound in sunny Baghdad. The cooks moved the evening meal to poolside and put out a great spread of potato salad, baked beans along with grilled hamburgers and hot dogs. We also had a huge sheet cake with white icing and a large American flag with red, white and blue icing. It was a great meal. The only complicating factor is that we had to admire the scene and eat rather fast because a large sandstorm was bearing down on us rather quickly. You learn quickly not to mix sandstorms and food. They didn't go well together.

(U) That night the insurgents launched a rocket attack at the Embassy but didn't hit much. We all got to see the real "rocket's red glare" and "bombs bursting in air." A Fourth I will remember for a long time to come. I look forward to celebrating this July 4th at home with my family.

-- [REDACTED]

(U) A Warm and "Fez-y" Feeling for the Fourth

(U) One of my favorite 4th of Julys happened while I was studying in Morocco with Virginia Military Institute. We were a group of about 15 American students in an Arab country ten months after 9/11, so we toned down the festivities a bit (no fireworks, sadly). Our instructor (a lieutenant colonel) cooked us hamburgers on a grill, and somebody taped a little paper flag to a tree (I don't know where he got it from). I guess... there was just such a nice sense of solidarity, and *home*. We had been away for about five or six weeks by that point, and most of us were getting a little homesick, so I think it was good to remind ourselves of our roots.

-- [REDACTED]

(U) Cheeseburger in the "Evil Empire"

(U) My most memorable July 4th dates back to the Orwellian year of 1984, when I was a college student spending a summer in Moscow studying Russian. When word got around that the US Embassy had invited all Americans in the city to celebrate the Fourth at the Embassy dacha (country house) outside Moscow, my fellow students and I eagerly looked forward to the event.

(U) We took the subway over to the Embassy, and from there joined the rest of the crowd in riding American-style school buses out into the birch-covered countryside. A few US Marine Corps guards were riding in my bus... When we passed by a truck loaded with Soviet troops, one of the Marines let the "enemy" know what he thought of them!

(U) When we arrived, large tents covered a number of picnic tables that were loaded with food. A country music band was entertaining the crowd and people were playing horseshoes.

(U) I had been living on a starvation diet for about a month (there was no fast food available, and it was a chore to obtain food of ANY kind, except for bread) and had fantasized all week about eating a huge stack of hamburgers. However, when the big moment came, I quickly

wolfed down a single cheeseburger, and felt so full, I could hardly eat another bite!

(U) As the event wound down, the Marines held a drill ceremony and later some fireworks were shot off. Being on an embassy facility and seeing the State Department staffers, Marines, etc. was the first time I'd ever really witnessed organs of the US federal government in action. I suppose it was ironic that I had to travel to Moscow to see it.

-- [REDACTED]

(U) Leave the Gear -- Take the Cannoli

(U) It was 1998 and the U.S. Army was in full "battle-rattle" on Task Force Eagle Base (TFE). (Full battle-rattle for all you that aren't Army, means that you are wearing every piece of clothing and every piece of equipment that the Army issues to you, no matter how hot it is.) The temperatures were in the high 90's with the humidity high to boot. Our guys and gals were suffering terribly through the heat.

(U//FOUO) Our group, by contrast, was fortunate to live "off-base," wear civilian clothes, and travel all over Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, etc. I can't tell you what we were there for, but we did have a nice building to work in, a bar-b-cue pit, and we wanted to share a holiday with a few troops -- especially share it on our Nation's Day of Independence. Hmmm, we didn't invite any British over. Oh, well. Oh, they were all in Sarajevo.

(U) Anyway, we wanted to invite as many as possible of the troops that we worked closely with at TFE. Our Group Commander was able to get three of them off base, carrying their change of clothes in a bag. I have to tell you, these troops were so thrilled to be off base, out of all the Army gear and into civilian clothes, it really escalated the joy of the day. They were like kids let free in a dog park! We had the best German-made franks (from a German butcher just down the street), Bosnian bread (from a bakery on the other side of the street), and fresh vegetables grown along the side of the hill (our neighbors).

(U) What a celebration! What a great Day of Independence!

-- [REDACTED]



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