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Australian Soldiers Banned From Blogging



THE Australian Defence Force has banned soldiers from writing online journals and has deleted blogs from troops serving in Iraq. Critics say the soldiers are being denied the very freedoms they are fighting for.

The blogs were destroyed in September, hours after pictures of Australian soldiers playing with guns surfaced on the internet in the days before the inquiry into Private Jake Kovco's death in Baghdad.

Australia's leading defence think-tank, a civil libertarian and an internet expert have blasted the move as heavy-handed, saying it denied freedom of speech and destroyed Australian history.

"This shows how far behind the times the ADF is," Australian Council for Civil Liberties president Terry O'Gorman said.

"If the American army allows blogs, why doesn't the Australian army? If it does not pose a security threat, why are these soldiers being denied the rights of democracy that they are fighting for?"

Milblogs -- the online term for military weblogs -- emerged as warfare's latest phenomenon.

Across Iraq, soldiers sit at computers typing out their fears, concerns and first-hand accounts of life, sometimes moments after returning from battle.

The Pentagon harnessed the power of milblogs for positive publicity and recruitment.

There are more than 1600 milblogs from 28 countries, according to milblogging.com but Australia has none.

A 26-year-old Sunshine Coast soldier serving in Iraq was placed under review and his milblog "Iraqi Letters" was deleted during the ADF's move to silence servicemen online.

The soldier's writing was positive of the army and at times poetic, detailing the taste of cold water on a dust-parched throat and the friendly ribbing soldiers received after the Socceroos lost to Kuwait.


Minutes after "Iraqi Letters" was destroyed, Brisbane IT consultant and blogging expert Mike Fitzsimons salvaged it for safe-keeping.

"I think it is a valuable piece of Australian history," he said.

"Look at how today's historians revere letters from Gallipoli.

"Deleting the blogs was a total over-reaction from the top.

"It was a heavy-handed political reaction without any further thought." [More here](#)

Posted by Stewart Rhodes at 10:11 PM 

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