

# New Poetry by Jennifer Smith: “So This is My Career?”



BLANK AND CONFUSED / *image by Amalie Flynn*

## So, This is My Career?

Ecstatic to deploy, I qualify on 9MM handguns—

Battle ready Air Force lawyer to defend both Iraqi and  
Enduring Freedom

Engineers advance to the front lines:

spend billions, move like lightning, build tents, site  
trailers,

provide food, water, and air conditioning. Our soldiers'  
beddown

enables our fight for Oil

*Sign off on this funds request,* the Engineers demand

*What is our mission?* I ask

*Make the Afghans modern,* the Department of Defense

replies. *We will build 200 police stations, use a US blueprint*

*to cut costs. The villagers can reign in their warlords*

*What do the Afghans want?* I ask

The US Generals look blank and confused

the second-floor bathrooms flood—the

Afghan soldiers' Islamic practice of making wudu requires them  
to wash their feet in waist-high sinks before praying salah

I fly in a contractor's Russian MI-12V-5 helicopter to inspect  
one remote station

for future construction claims. *Are there any?* I ask

*We bribe the local warlord—to keep the peace,* the Lieutenant  
says in a whisper