

E-mailed letter dated March 29, 2007 from Major Page Karsteter

Below is a message or two from Major Page Karsteter. He refers to Scottie, which is his son. Unfortunately, Page has been tending to the injured (recall that he is a West Point graduate, with a doctorate in Physical Therapy) that resulted from the recent bombings in Tall Afar. The first message is a "report" that vividly describes what he has been doing and what the peoples of Iraq, particularly the children, are going through.

"Some of you may have read about a double bombing in a large town called Tall Afar in Northern Iraq two days ago. It's in our sector and has been a model of sectarian peace and cooperation. Sadly, unknown forces filled two trucks with explosives, covered the explosives with flour and vegetables and went to the market. The resulting explosions killed over 60 people and wounded over 150. Multiple explosions is a hallmark of Al Qaeda. 17 casualties (6 children) came to our combat support hospital (CSH) that night. Fortunately, we have 2 pediatricians in our Brigade and both were able to help out. My friend, Dina, spent all night at the hospital that night (by the way, her son's name is spelled "Tej" not "Tage" — it's Indian, meaning illuminated or bright). Last night she went to the CSH to check on the kids so I went with her to see if I could help. The kids are unlikely to get rehab once transferred out to an Iraqi hospital. The first little guy looks just like Tej.

Tej reminds me of Scottie, just with black, curly hair, dark eyes, and dark skin. They both have awesome smiles and a twinkle in their eyes. The good news is that the little boy has a pulse in his foot so he should keep his leg. He has a femur fracture that the surgeons put this tiny external fixator on. Unfortunately, we don't know what happened to his parents. They may be in another hospital or they may be dead. The next little girl only had a small laceration on her spleen and should be just fine. Her little sister (just bumps and bruises) and an adult neighbor were with her. Ahmed was sleeping with his dad resting next to him. The surgeons had removed shrapnel from his intestines. He was in some pain but I got a smile when I showed him a picture of Scottie. He waved to me as I walked to the next patient. The last little boy has a pelvic fracture and lost most of his calf muscle. I won't be able to do anything with him — he'll be moved to an Iraqi hospital before he's ready for rehab. Hopefully a few will still be there tonight so I can get them started. The other child is a 13 year old girl that is being managed by the non-pediatricians so I don't know her injuries.

It's amazing how many have anglo bone structures. This is the melting pot of Iraq. There are a lot of different ethnic groups; Kurds, Turkomen, Sunni, Shia, and apparently a little bit of European Crusader. It's hard to see kids injured, especially ones that are Scottie sized. If anyone doubts the evil of the enemy I have now seen it first hand. Sadly, much of the violence is because we are there. More bombings will happen if we are here or not. I'm just glad that we could help with these individual human beings. The Iraqi medical system could not have handled all these casualties and several of these kids would have died without us. Many more went to our military hospitals in Balad and other places. I know the same thing happens in Baghdad far too frequently and our military hospitals work just as hard on the Iraqis as they do on the wounded Americans."