

Traveling Soldier

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**July, 2009
Issue #23**

"They helped kill my daughter"

Dear Traveling Soldier,

Hello. My name is Lindsay Wiedman. My daughter SSgt. Danielle Nienajadlo died from her battle with AML Leukemia on March 20th. She was in the University of Washington's cancer center. Danielle was exposed to the toxic chemicals from the Burn Pits in Balad, Iraq.

The Army still did not consider Danielle a Iraq casualty!

And she was!! Her very bosses that she went to while being very sick didn't believe her that she was sick. She suffered. SFC Addy was whom she went to and he said she was just trying to get out of Iraq! That was not who my daughter was. She valued her Army career, her family, me, her sister and would never not complete a hard days work. She could work Addy!

Danielle died on the 20th. She would have completed her chemo the 21st. They were trying to get her to the stage of stem cell transplant. I miss her and am grieving! I blame Addy, and Balad, Iraq. And I believe she should have been considered a casualty! She deserved a big medal and the honors worth so more! I pray with time that Addy and her other bosses realize they helped kill my daughter. She died! It's hard to believe.

Please help save others.

– Lindsay Wiedman, Spokane, WA

P.S. Danielle was interviewed by Kelly Kennedy on the Burn Pits. This was posted on www.armytimes.com. I wish I could get an apology from SFC Addy and others

that made her suffer and work in the ill state she was in. I happened onto the article on the computer today. And this address was at the bottom. I wanted Kelly Kennedy to know that Danielle didn't make it.



Dear Lindsay Weidman,
Hello, my name is Jeff Englehart, an Army veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom II, and a proud member of the Editorial Board of *Traveling Soldier*.

Much to my own personal dismay, I was forwarded a letter that you had written in regards your daughter's passing. I quickly volunteered to respond back to you. I feel honored to be able to comment on your

daughter's service, as well as to her lost battle with a combat related illness she received while in Iraq.

You quite elegantly pointed out that your daughter, Staff Sergeant Danielle Nienajadlo, was no less a hero of this conflict who had died from leukemia that she received from burn-pit exposure in Balad, Iraq. Heroism in war comes in many different variations, and we here at *Traveling Soldier* have no doubt whatsoever that Danielle served her country honorably, and her loss as leader is enormous beyond words.

The act of war brings out the very best and worst in humanity. There is a certain dignity that you will find in people facing extreme hardship. On the other hand, war can also cause good people to commit some of the most

incomprehensible acts imaginable. Danielle's devout service and brave commitment to a mission in a combat zone should be loudly commended.

Her needless death at the hands of uncaring criminals should be duly exposed. To hear of such a loss is devastating and infuriating. I will never be able to completely understand the pain you and your family must feel for your loss, but I can say that based on my own experience in Iraq, I can surely sympathize.

Our brigade lost many fine soldiers in Iraq. Yet many were not killed in the heat of battle. Many soldiers were killed in vehicle crashes and roll-overs, accidental firearm discharges, and because the most powerful and wealthy nation in the world did not issue them adequate body and vehicle armor.

Other soldiers in Iraq have died to protect Halliburton convoys delivering empty containers, while other soldiers were rendered horribly ill from consuming contaminated food and water. I have two battle buddies who are still undergoing intense operations battling cancer from exposure to depleted uranium while in Iraq.

Other friends of mine battle through Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, fighting bouts of depression, substance abuse, and urges of suicide on a daily basis.

As they say, the war is not over; it's in their face every time they look in the mirror.

Many young Americans have laid down their lives in Iraq. They fought in a mission that has always been extremely vague and clouded with controversy. Yet nonetheless, every one of those soldiers bravely stood their ground for what was expected of them as defenders of a democracy. As far as I'm concerned, that can never be taken away from them.

I would like to believe that Danielle's loss is an isolated incident, based on a rare occurrence of negligence and incompetence in her chain of command. The sad fact is that many soldiers have died needlessly in Iraq simply because the orchestrators of this war do not have the same human

compassion and level of camaraderie as the soldiers who fight it.

It grieves me to hear of Danielle's lost battle to leukemia, but it infuriates me to no end to understand of her pitiful treatment by the Army.

Indeed, I am angry about all of this, because from the Revolutionary War to the Occupation of Afghanistan, the American government has a long tradition of treating its soldiers as disposable tools whose loss is inconsequential.

We as a country should demand more for those who fight to preserve our Constitution and our liberties at home.

Those in uniform are the backbone of this country, and should be honored and revered, not betrayed and abused by their own chain of command.

In my humble opinion, Mr. Weidman, your daughter was unfortunately lumped into a category of the unspoken

and unknown many others who were betrayed by those over them, and who were needlessly killed by military incompetence. It is to those soldiers whom I tip my hat at the end of the day, and consider them fallen heroes in service of their country.



Again, I am terribly sorry to hear about your loss.

Without a doubt, your daughter served her family and her country with a loyalty and integrity that deserves much more respect than she received. We here at Traveling Soldier express our deepest sympathies to you and your loved ones, and we proudly acknowledge the duty and sacrifice paid by SSgt Danielle Nienajadlo.

Most sincerely,

– Jeff Englehart
United States Army
Operation Iraqi Freedom II
Military Project

P.S. I very much believe that stories such as Danielle's need to be exposed for the benefit of many other soldiers in our readership. It would be an honor to run your letter – as well as our response – in our next edition of Traveling Soldier.

Soldier-Killing Toxic Burn Pits Unnecessary But Profitable

June 22, 2009 By Kelly Kennedy, *Army Times* [Excerpts]

As legislators work to pass a bill ending long-term use of open-air burn pits in combat zones, military officials must figure out what to do with all that garbage.

A contractor at Kandahar Air Base, Afghanistan, thinks he has hit upon at least a partial solution: composting. “Composters would solve 98 percent of the problem,” said Clarke Jones, an environmental officer with contractor IFONE Inc.

“I’m an environmental guy. I’d like to make the living conditions better.” Jones said so-called “in-vessel” composting units, used on many farms in the U.S., could compost organic material within five days, and the resulting mulch could be used by Afghans or Iraqis to add nutrients to their crops. Local workers could be hired to recycle plastics and sort out hazardous waste, which should not be burned in a pit anyway.

Jones said he believes the cost would be about the same as what’s needed to operate the pits.

He said he experienced the burn-pit operation at Kandahar firsthand.

His office was about 250 yards from the pit, and he said he saw troops breathing in the dense, black smoke. He returned to the U.S. last fall.

“It was deplorable,” he said. “Four men were sent home while I was there for respiratory infections.

“Our environmental health officer went jogging one morning at 5 a.m. and caught the burn-pit operators burning 150 mattresses. There was no oversight.” Jones said he was told that two used incinerators were brought in to handle the waste but were worn out, so contractors continued to operate the pit.

Jones began working with his partner, Dean Richardson, also of IFONE, to come up with a composting plan and a budget.

But he said every time someone gave him and Richardson the go-ahead, something would happen to deter the project.

Now, Jones and Richardson are trying to work through Pentagon sources, rather than Kandahar officials, to bring composting online in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“We have a completely non-burn solution,” Richardson said. “The labor is cheap and the people need jobs, and they could use the mulch to grow food.” Richardson said composting would even work at a large base, such as Joint Base Balad, Iraq, which produces 240 tons of waste every day.

He said composters can last up to 20 years, and local workers could be taught to keep them running long after U.S. forces leave.

"I Lost Three Buddies In My Platoon In Iraq And For What?"

May 26, 2009 By Rebecca LaFlure, *Killeen Daily Herald*

"Get up. Get down. There's an anti-war movement in this town."

A group of active-duty Fort Hood soldiers and nearly 70 other anti-war protesters took to the streets of Killeen Monday afternoon in the city's first peace march since the Vietnam War.

Toting picket signs that read, "War is not the answer," and "Blessed are the peacemakers," the demonstrators gathered for one common purpose – to call for an end to the wars in the Middle East.

The action, held on Memorial Day, was organized to honor the nation's fallen soldiers, and help prevent the further loss of lives in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"We're paying homage to the ones we've lost. We don't want to lose anymore," said Chris Saylor, an Iraq War veteran who traveled from Detroit to participate.

The protest was organized by Under the Hood Cafe – a local outreach center for soldiers. Members from peace organizations across Texas as well as college students, active-duty soldiers and veterans came out to show their support.

The march began at the cafe house at 17 College St. and continued down Veteran's Memorial Boulevard to Fort Hood Street and then up to Fort Hood's East Gate.

The demonstrators waved colorful flags decorated with peace symbols and chanted slogans like,

"They're our brothers, they're our sisters. We support war resisters," and "What do we want? Peace! When do we want it? Now!"

Many people honked their car horns as they drove by. Not all the responses were positive, however. One man shouted, "You don't have the right to do this!" as he drove by.

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Ben Fugate, an Army specialist who returned from Iraq two months ago, was one of several Fort Hood soldiers who came to the event.

Wearing a black T-shirt with the slogan, "Got rights?"

Fugate called the Iraq war "unjustified" and recently decided to speak out against it.

"They say they're there to build up Iraq, but all you see is destruction of Iraq," he said.

"There are thousands of guys who are not coming home to their mom and dad. I lost three buddies in my platoon in Iraq and for what? Why lose more

when we don't have to?"

Cindy Thomas, manager of Under the Hood Cafe and the protest's organizer, said she hopes the day's action will influence other military community members to speak out.

"We want to let the soldiers out there know that we're here. They have somewhere to come to," she said.

"A lot of them don't know that they actually have rights. You're allowed to speak out. You're allowed to march."