

So the other day we had a guy get shot right in our camp. He was about 100 feet away from my office. He was hit in the leg just above the knee and he is going to be all right. I got to be the ambulance driver. The bullet went all the way through but did not make it out the other side of his pant leg so now the guy has one hell of a souvenir from Iraq. Below is a picture of where the guy was dragged to after he got shot. He was standing on the opposite side of the "t" wall you see with the shovel. The red spot you see on the ground is blood.



There was a soldier that was also hit in the back of the head just a few days after the guy hit in the leg. He was just walking along on base and got shot from someone off base. The bullet went in slightly off center from the bottom of the back of his skull and it went out his mouth. He is still alive and apparently going to eventually be o.k. He is not paralyzed or anything. I don't know if you call that lucky (that he is going to be o.k.) or unlucky (that he got shot).

We have had two other people get shot on the base also since I have been here. The other two were both soldiers (that's one every three weeks on average). One was hit in the shoulder (I met that guy) and the other was hit in the foot/ankle. Fortunately, no one has been killed and I hope it stays that way. Keep in mind these shootings I am mentioning are of people on the base. People that are walking in the same spots and locations that everyone here, including myself, walks and works everyday. Just last night we had a round come into the camp and go through someone's metal door to their hooch, through a wooden door to their closet and into the metal rod that you hang your cloths on. The bullet got stuck in the metal rod so he has a souvenir also. Not nearly as hard earned as the others guys, but a souvenir nonetheless. This guy's hooch is about 5 or 6 hooch's over from mine.

The reason I mention these shootings is to illustrate the constant source of stress that is prevalent here and the fatalistic attitude that one must have in order to work here. Now when I say fatalistic I don't mean the kind of attitude that where one is walking around saying "we are all going to die". What I mean is an attitude that says, "If it happens, it happens. I have a job to do". People here take precautions and try and minimize there

exposure to getting shot but it is nearly impossible to completely eliminate it. You almost have to have an attitude that it's not going to happen to me. Don't get me wrong, people here realize it can happen to them but you have to do your work and move about the base. In order to do so you have to take an attitude that it could happen but it won't. It's hard to explain.

There are times during the most inexplicable moments when it will just occur to me that, right now, any second I could get shot and it would all be over or maybe I would get hit in the leg or arm or something or maybe it will be the guy I am talking to that gets shot. I go over what I would do in a situation like that, how should I react? Where is the nearest bunker? How would I summon help? Over the radio? What do I say in order to not give away details to the enemy? First aid to someone else, to myself? Where again are the pressure point to stop bleeding. I am glad that I have taken Red Cross First Aid/CPR training so many times. It's a requirement for working Captains. For those that don't know I am also a United States Coast Guard licensed Captain. I have not had to use my first aid training yet but I am glad that I have it.

One thing about potentially getting hurt over here is the fact that we have some of the best emergency medical people and staff in the entire world right here within a mile of me. I could get shot and within 4 – 5 minutes I will have the best-trained emergency experts in emergency trauma working on me. That is somewhat comforting. Chances are if you make it to these guys alive, your going to live. They very rarely let someone slip through the cracks. So that is somewhat comforting.

Two days ago, I again was called on to be the ambulance driver. We had a Turkish worker that was having severe chest pains and thought maybe it was a heart attack. Turns out it was too much caffeine coupled with dehydration and a panic attack. Typical day, 23 hours and 50 minutes of pure boredom with 10 minutes of differing concentrations of excitement/panic thrown in just to keep you on your toes.

I have always wondered about myself how I would react under pressure. If you will recall a recent journal where I mentioned that I was a bit disappointed with myself about not reacting to the sound of a rocket coming in because I had never heard a rocket coming in before. Well we are tested almost everyday in some form or another. A bomb goes off, or bullets are flying overhead or you hear gunfire and you are out in the open. You are tested in some fashion and your reaction may save your life. Well I can say that I am pleased with myself on my reaction time and behavior now. I am quick to react and even if I am not sure, I react appropriately and encourage others to react appropriately as well. There is a tendency for some of the "tough" guys to kind of walk around like they are Charles Dugal or George Macarthur or something. Not me. I don't have a gun. I am not a fighter. I know I am just a target of opportunity and I am going to minimize the "opportunity" for the enemy to make me a propaganda tool as much as possible.

Just yesterday morning a huge car bomb went off at the gate, which is just on the other side of the wall less than a ¼ mile from us. Well it's hard to tell initially if it's a large bomb far away or a smaller bomb close-up. This thing actually rocked the container I

was in and knocked things off a shelf. Well I don't care to wait for the next small bomb close up to come in to find out the difference. I told the two people in our office to hit the bunkers and we ran out (I make sure I'm last but not too far behind). We could see from the smoke plume from the bunker that it was a large bomb off the base at the gate. So we came back out but it illustrates my point. React first, figure it out later.

This brings me to another point that I talked about before. Gate security and the Italian Reporter and her Body Guard that got shot. Let me tell you about car bombs at gates. They happen about 4 -5 times a week at this base alone and it is increasing. Just about everyone of them either hurts or kills Iraqi Soldiers or American Soldiers. You hear the car bomb, minutes later you see the military ambulance and then 15 minutes later you see the medi-vac (medical evacuation) helicopter. It is to the point where they do not trust anyone in a car. You have to stop your car 500 feet from the checkpoint and walk up to the soldiers with your hands in the air, no jacket, lift up your shirt to show you have no bomb attached to you. After they are convinced you are a good guy you can go back to your car and drive it up slowly to the Iraqi Guards and they will do a search of your vehicle. Then after that, you can drive up to the American Guards and they do a search of your vehicle. Any suspicious move beyond that gets you shot. They have signs explaining the procedures in English, Arabic and Turkish but a lot of the people over here can't read. Last week at this base a Turkish guy did not follow the procedures, maybe not knowing the procedures, panicked thinking they wanted him to get closer, well he got shot like 8 times. Remarkable he is still alive and expected to live. He lost a leg, an arm and was shot in one eye but he is still alive. To these guys at the gate, it is kill or be killed. If you want to live very long working at the gate you need to be quick on the trigger because 4 or 5 times a week someone is going to try and blow your ass up. Put that Italian Reporter or anyone that thinks we are too heavy handed at the checkpoints at a gate for a week. She or they can be the first one to search the cars and look for bombs. Put them in an Iraq National Guard uniform or an American Soldier uniform. Let them figure out a way to tell the good guys from the bad guys. I bet they decline the offer.

I see the smoke plume from the car bombs at the gates. Depending on the wind direction, sometimes you can smell it. Every time I see or hear one, I wonder if someone's just got killed. I would not want that job.

Oh, I am leaving in the middle of April. I am going to try to be home by April 20<sup>th</sup>.