



## Police ID 4 killed in Texas veterans parade



Midland police, fire and sheriffs respond to an accident where a trailer carrying wounded veterans in a parade was struck by a train in Midland, Texas, Thursday, Nov. 15, 2012. / **AP PHOTO/REPORTER-TELEGRAM, TIM FISCHER**

**MIDLAND, TEXAS** At least four veterans were killed and 16 other people were injured when a train slammed into a parade float carrying returning heroes to a banquet to honor them in West Texas, officials said Friday.

### **Four killed at Texas veterans event**

A float decorated with American flags and carrying wounded veterans and their spouses took the full force of a train at a railroad crossing in Midland, killing at least four veterans and injuring 16 people. There were 26 people on the flatbed at the time of the accident.

Some managed to jump clear as the train, with its horn blasting, bore down on the float decorated with American flags Thursday afternoon.

Pam Shoemaker from Monroe, La., said she and her husband, a special operations veteran, were on the float ahead of the one that was struck. Shoemaker described how the celebration so quickly turned sour.

She said her truck had just crossed the tracks and was moving slowly but never stopped. All around, the crowds lining the parade route cheered.

"It was beautiful," she said Friday. "There were lots of people with signs. Children yelling 'thank you!' waving flags."

## **West Texas veterans parade crash**

Then they heard the train coming. There was no warning -- she hadn't seen or heard it until it was upon them. The Shoemakers jumped from their truck and ran toward the other one, knowing it would be hit in a matter of seconds. The crossing barriers had just started to come down, she said.

"We started to jump off of our trailer. We saw people jumping from the other trailer and then there was the impact," Shoemaker said.

Horrified spectators at the parade could only watch as the carnage unfolded.

"The train honked its horn, but the 18-wheeler could not go anywhere because of the other one (truck) being right in front of it," said Daniel Quinonez, who was waiting in his vehicle as the parade went by. "It was a horrible accident to watch happen right in front of me. I just saw the people on the semi-truck's trailer panic, and many started to jump off the trailer. But it was too late for many of them."

Sudip Bose, who was a front-line physician in Iraq, said Friday that the immediate aftermath reminded him of a combat triage situation. Veterans were already tending to the wounded when he reached the crash site. Bystanders tried to help with the limited medical supplies available.

"Instincts kicked in. They were applying tourniquets, holding pressure to the wounds," said Bose, who served in Fallujah and Baghdad and was volunteering at the parade.



This combination of undated family photos provided by the Show of Support, Hunt for Heroes committee show, from left: Sgt. Maj. Gary Stouffer, 37; Sgt. Maj. Lawrence Boivin, 47; Army Sgt. Joshua Michael, 34, and Sgt. Maj. William Lubbers, 43, four veterans killed when a parade float they were riding on was struck by a freight train at a crossing, on Nov. 15, 2012, in Midland, Texas.

/ **AP PHOTO/COURTESY SHOW OF SUPPORT**

Despite their efforts, Midland city spokesman Ryan Stout said 37-year-old Sgt. Maj. Gary Stouffer and 47-year-old Sgt. Maj. Lawrence Boivin were pronounced dead at the scene. Army Sgt. Joshua Michael, 34, and Sgt. Maj. William Lubbers, 43, were pronounced dead later at Midland Memorial Hospital.

According to [CBS affiliate KOSA in Odessa, Texas](#), Stouffer, 37, served in the Marine Corps for 17 years in Albania, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. He was injured in Afghanistan after the vehicle he was traveling in was hit by IEDs. He had been awarded two combat action ribbons, commendation medals and campaign medals, among other awards, and was awaiting approval for the Purple Heart.

Forty seven-year-old Boivin was with the U.S. Army for 24 years and had several tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, KOSA said. He was hit by an RPG in Iraq in 2004. For his service, he had been awarded the Silver Star, Purple Heart, Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal and the Bronze Star.

Michael, 34, was among one of the first troops to be sent to Iraq in 2003 with the U.S. Army, KOSA reported. He had been injured three times by IEDs in three different incidents in 2006.

Lubbers, a 43-year-old Army officer, had served many of his 24 years of service in the Special Forces and was stationed in Afghanistan and Pakistan several times, according to KOSA. His arm was shattered by a bullet during his second tour in Afghanistan. He had previously received the Special Forces and Ranger Tabs, Master and Freefall Parachutist Badges, three Bronze Stars, a Purple Heart and other awards.

- [Many jumped from float before train rammed it](#)
- [4 dead, 17 hurt when train hits Texas vets parade](#)

Police confirmed the identities of the dead. Of the 16 others hurt in the crash, four are in stable condition and one is critical. Ten others were treated and released from the hospital.

Shoemaker credited the training and courage of the veterans who jumped to help the injured. Her husband, Tommy, resuscitated one person and applied a tourniquet to a bleeding woman.

"They are trained for tragedy," Shoemaker said.

The parade had been scheduled to end at a "Hunt for Heroes" banquet honoring the veterans. The wounded service members were then going to be treated to a deer-hunting trip this weekend. The events were canceled.

The events were organized by Show Of Support, a local veterans group that says its mission is to "lift the spirits of our U.S. troops and disable veterans" through hunting and fishing. The group's president, Terry Johnson, has not responded to emails seeking comment and his phone number was unlisted; the phone rang unanswered at the group's offices.

The National Transportation Safety Board has arrived at the scene of the incident and they are working in coordination with other agencies on the investigation.

Late Thursday, Union Pacific spokesman Tom Lange said a preliminary investigation indicated the crossing gate and lights were working. He did not know if the train crew saw the float. The black box from the train will determine its speed at the time of impact.

Federal Railroad Administration records reviewed by The Associated Press show that there have been 10 previous collisions -- five cars and five trucks -- at the same railroad crossing since 1979. Six drivers were injured in those accidents, but there were no fatalities. The trains involved were moving slowly at the time of the previous accidents, between 15 and 25 miles per hour.

Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta was saddened by the news of the accident, Pentagon spokesman George Little said in a statement, adding that Panetta's "thoughts and prayers" are with the victims and the community.

A community-wide prayer vigil was held this morning at Centennial Plaza in downtown Midland to help show support for the victims and their families and the city was asked to fly their flags at half-mast until Monday morning, according to press release from the City of Midland.

Mayor Wes Parry's voice cracked as he described how he had met Boivin and his wife a day earlier.

"It's hard to believe today that he's not here anymore," Parry said.

Reference: [http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-201\\_162-57550964/police-id-4-killed-in-texas-veterans-parade/](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-201_162-57550964/police-id-4-killed-in-texas-veterans-parade/)