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PAULA ZAHN NOW

U.S. Army Notifies Families of Killed Soldiers; Giving Troops Second Chance at Life; Attack Survivor Becomes Police Sketch Artist; Bible Trivia Big Draw for Georgia Deli

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BILL HEMMER, CNN ANCHOR: And good evening. Good to be back tonight and welcome, everyone. We begin this evening now with new fears for the safety of U.S. forces in Iraq. You know the numbers by now, 22 dead, including 13 U.S. troops, 69 others wounded after yesterday's suicide bombing at a U.S. military base in Mosul. The troops stationed there came from the Stryker Infantry Brigade out of Fort Lewis, Washington, but also National Guard units from the states of Virginia and Maine.

And in Maine today, Alina Cho spent the day with what the military called a notification unit. Few had a tougher job than this group today.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

ALINA CHO, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): A father is about to get the worst news imaginable.

LT. COL. JACK MOSHER, U.S. ARMY: He'll be home in about 15 minutes.

CHO: And these two men will deliver the message. Colonel Jack Mosher and Chaplain Andy Gibson begin by rehearsing what they'll say.

MOSHER: We have some difficult news for you this evening. May we come in?

MAJ. ANDREW GIBSON, U.S. ARMY CHAPLAIN: Yes, you may.

CHO: Next, they day a prayer.

GIBSON: Dear father in heaven, we have to go on a very difficult mission, perform a very difficult duty.

CHO: Then the silent drive to the home where a military family will soon hear their loved one has died in Iraq. This is what Mosher will say.

MOSHER: It is my solemn duty to report to you the death of, stating the person's name, who died early this morning in combat in a forward operating base just outside of Mosul, Iraq.

The message that you deliver has to be an assertive message, because people will hold out in their hearts for some hope that perhaps there's been a mistake made, a mistaken identity.

CHO: Once the family understands there's no mistake:

GIBSON: We've had people right fall on the floor when we've told them. Every once in a while, you have somebody who gets extremely angry. You also have some people who just get very blank with very little affect. And those are the tough ones, because you don't know what's coming next.

CHO: Last night, the Dostie family in Somerville, Maine, got a knock on the door. Their 20-year-old son Tommy was killed in the bombing in Mosul. Ron Cyr, who himself has two sons in Iraq, was with Tommy's mother when she got the



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news.

RON CYR, FAMILY FRIEND: She saw the uniforms and she immediately started crying.

CHO (on camera): She knew?

CYR: Oh, sure. Sure she knew. For the past year, that's what we've all been dreading, two uniformed officers coming up to your house. Nobody wants to see that.

CHO (voice-over): Mosher and Gibson are told not to touch the family during notification. This time, they broke the rules.

MOSHER: I think it's the first one that we've done where we actually hugged the mother. And she clung to us for a long time. That was difficult.

CHO: These two men in uniform are best friends. They call their work a solemn duty, a job they hope to do until they retire.

GIBSON: The bad thing has already happened. We didn't do the bad thing. What we're doing by doing the notification correctly, by doing it with honor, we are actually starting the family's healing process.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

HEMMER: Alina Cho reporting tonight in Maine.

With us now from Knoxville, Tennessee, is Marsha Stanford. Marsha was with us last night by telephone waiting for word from her husband Kenny.

Marsha, good evening.

MARSHA STANFORD, WIFE OF U.S. SOLDIER: Good evening.

HEMMER: What a difference 24 hours can make, huh? The phone rang earlier today. Give us a sense, if you can. Relay us the feeling you had when that telephone rang.

M. STANFORD: When the phone rang, I basically had an idea that Kenny was OK. And to talk to him was relief. It wasn't happiness, because I felt for the other families. But it was relief.

HEMMER: That phone rang about 2:00 this afternoon, is that right, if I have my numbers correct?

M. STANFORD: Yes, it did.

HEMMER: So you're dealing with about 20 more hours after we talked of just waiting.

M. STANFORD: Waiting.

HEMMER: And having that anticipation. Give us a sense of what your mind was reeling there.

M. STANFORD: Well, as I talked to you and to the people the night before, I felt like he was OK. In my heart, I knew that Kenny was OK and he would be home. It was just waiting to hear to know that he wasn't hurt.

HEMMER: You've given us the privilege to eavesdrop, in a sense, to that conversation. Listen to part of it now.

(BEGIN AUDIO CLIP)

M. STANFORD: I've really been worried about you since I didn't hear from you. Are you sure you're not hurt?

SPC. KENNY RAY STANFORD, U.S. ARMY: No, no. I'm fine.

M. STANFORD: Were you still on the base when it happened?

K. STANFORD: Yes. Yes. I can't go into a lot of details, though, OK?

M. STANFORD: OK. I know you can't talk. How about the rest of our people from here? Are they OK?

K. STANFORD: Yes, as far as I know. Everybody's doing good. I'm ready to come home.

M. STANFORD: I know you are. I'm ready for you to come home. I love you. Please be careful.

K. STANFORD: I will. I love you with all my heart.

M. STANFORD: I love you, honey.

K. STANFORD: I love you.

(END AUDIO CLIP)

HEMMER: Marsha, there is a better phone call than that?

M. STANFORD: I think that's the best one I've ever had.

HEMMER: What goes through your mind when you hear your own voice now and hear the voice of Kenny, too?

M. STANFORD: Well, I'm still relieved to hear from him. I didn't realize I was scared. I'd like to try to be positive and make him feel like I'm OK and things at home are OK. But, at times like this, I don't think it would be possible to be that way.

HEMMER: Well, you say and you admit that you felt scared. Is that right?

M. STANFORD: I was very scared.

HEMMER: I could hear it in your voice last evening, the concern that you brought to our broadcast and the emotion really that came through the telephone. I want to wish you the best of luck going forward, OK, Marsha?

M. STANFORD: Thank you.

HEMMER: And thanks for coming back and sharing with us tonight.

Marsha Stanford, my guest tonight in Tennessee.

Much more in a moment, including the extraordinary work of those who cheat death on the battlefield.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

HEMMER (voice-over): Soldiers seriously injured in combat. In an earlier war, this might have been the final journey. But now modern battlefield medicine ensures a second chance at life. Tonight, we'll follow the wounded warriors.

And a cheating spouse, a willing computer.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: The Internet is a sexual smorgasbord. You can find anything.

HEMMER: How can you tell if the biggest threat to your marriage is right inside your home?

Also, the PZN meter question tonight: Have you ever snooped on a loved one's computer use? The results and much more tonight on PAULA ZAHN NOW.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

HEMMER: Welcome back.

There is an FBI team in Mosul now to help investigate that deadly explosion that killed 22. A radical Islamic Web site claims the attacker had been working undetected at the base about for a period of two months. That, though, has not been verified.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE) HEMMER (voice-over): Official word that a suicide bomber is suspected came at the Pentagon.

GEN. RICHARD MYERS, JOINT CHIEFS CHAIRMAN: Investigators are about to conclude their look into the exact cause of the blast. At this point, it looks like it was an improvised explosive device worn by an attacker.

HEMMER: Casualties arrived in Germany this afternoon. Slowly, carefully, in the gloom and blowing snow, they were carried off the cargo jet, then loaded into ambulances for treatment at the nearby U.S. medical center at Landstuhl. The center is now scrambling to care for this unexpected holiday influx of 40 to 50 wounded.

Eight are in extremely critical condition. Cameras were not allowed to show another arrival in Kuwait, 13 body bags. The likelihood of a suicide bombing raises disturbing questions tonight about base security.

DONALD RUMSFELD, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE: It is an enormous challenge to provide force protection, something that our forces worry about, work on constantly.

HEMMER: A CNN photographer who's been to the base says it's protected by barriers and barbed wire. Only military and official traffic gets through. A series of road barriers keeps potential suicide car bombers from getting to the checkpoints. Iraqi workers and most on foot go through an I.D. check and pat-down search, although there are no bomb-sniffing dogs or metal detectors.

Once through the checkpoint, Iraqi workers are relatively free to roam about the base with no systematic rechecking or searching. Everyone eats at the mess tent, soldiers and civilians. It's surrounded by tall concrete blast barriers. But there are several entrances there. Joining the chow line by the kitchen would be no problem for a hungry Iraqi worker or a suicide bomber.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

HEMMER: A U.S. construction company called Contract International says it's giving up a \$325 million deal in Iraq. It says the cost of keeping its employees safe is getting too high now. And Halliburton reports that four of its employees were killed, 16 others seriously wounded in the attack of yesterday.

Michael Karem knows all about the dangers of working in Iraq. He was a senior adviser to the former U.S. ambassador in Baghdad, Paul Bremer. He is my guest tonight.

We welcome you. Thanks for your time.

How in the world do you do a background check in Iraq today?

MICHAEL KAREM, FORMER SENIOR ADVISER TO AMBASSADOR PAUL BREMER: It's almost impossible. They don't have the sophistication of an FBI or a database where they can turn in a name and go back to your date of birth and find every job, every place that you've been.

So, for this, is it possible? Absolutely it's going to be possible. It's going to be possible for several more months and years to come.

(CROSSTALK)

HEMMER: If it is possible, then how does the vetting process work, then? Can you give us a sense of that?

KAREM: Yes.

Let's take a particular company, Titan provides some secretarial services within the Green Zone. I'm familiar, because that's where I worked and lived. And they -- a person may have a national I.D. card that was issued by Saddam. They may have an old passport, OK? And they have a list of some of the people that were in the Baathist Party. They go through that process. And then that information, once they determine that that vetting process has gone through, they turn it over within the Green Zone to our military people, force protection.

And they do a little bit further checking. An then an I.D. is issued. But when you go into these places in the Green Zone, in the palace, all the servers, they're Iraqis. The people that clean the streets are Iraqis.

HEMMER: Sure.

KAREM: And they have the freedom of coming and going.

HEMMER: Yes. But it is far from perfect, correct?

KAREM: It is not perfect. And that's the problem we're going to have.

They're trying to build -- when I was there some months ago, they were trying to build a national database. And once an individual -- whether you visit or whether you're employed, every time anybody comes into the Green Zone, they're put into a database. But they did not have anything to work with when we first got there.

HEMMER: Well, here is what I'm trying to understand and give our audience a better perspective on this. At a typical U.S. military base, say the one in Mosul, how many Iraqis are working in that base? Is it hundreds or could it be thousands?

KAREM: It could be -- I don't know about Mosul. But it could be hundreds.

But I know that, in Baghdad, there were thousands not only that worked, but lived, actually lived inside of the compound, because there were apartments that they lived in.

HEMMER: So, then, if that's the case and if you're just trying to get this database up and running now in 2004, heading into the new year, can you keep it safe? Or is that an impossibility at this point?

KAREM: I think right now that, when this happened, I wasn't surprised that it happened.

HEMMER: Not at all?

KAREM: No, not at all, because we knew six months ago, seven months ago, that, up until the elections, these types of attacks are going to -- were going to occur.

We have to be right 100 percent of the time.

HEMMER: Sure.

KAREM: They only have to be right 1 percent of the time. So if there's any lapse or any failure, we pay the consequences.

HEMMER: And the consequences were dear, indeed, yesterday.

One other issue here I think is worth raising. Part of the U.S. military's mission is to get closer to the Iraqi people.

KAREM: Correct.

HEMMER: Events like these just make that wedge greater, does it not?

KAREM: Well, I think it does because -- on both sides, because then you have the mistrust.

One of the things that we tried to do when we were over there, through -- was to employ Iraqis to work with us, so that they would start understanding us, because the best advertising you can have is by word of mouth. And so it makes it tough, because our military men and women, every time they look at an Iraqi, maybe not all of them, but just human nature, are going to be suspect.

The Iraqis will look at our soldiers and think, well, what do they think of me? So it's a catch-22. And there's no easy solution to it. And there's not going to be for some time to come.

HEMMER: You have helped bring out a number of great points tonight. And we thank you for your insight. Michael Karem, thank you for your time.

KAREM: Thank you.

HEMMER: In a moment here, a war story you rarely see, an up-close look at the race to save those wounded in battle.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I actually got shot in my pistol. Then I got shot through my leg.

ALEX QUADE, CNN PRODUCER: So where's your pistol at this point? UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It's probably in my armory. It was recovered, but it was destroyed.

QUADE: But you got probably...

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Hurt.

(LAUGHTER)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HEMMER: In a moment, the incredible work and dedication that is giving U.S. soldiers a second chance at life.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

HEMMER: The U.S. military did not allow close-up pictures of those wounded soldiers arriving today for medical treatment in Germany. We were not allowed to talk with them either.

Recently, however, our producer Alex Quade was given extraordinary access to the U.S. military's medical operations ongoing in Iraq. She saw firsthand the dedication of the caregivers and the gratitude of the wounded. Now, some of what you're about to see tonight is gra