

Dear Friends and Family,

I got pummeled yesterday. I was on call. Started with a little girl burn patient we were taking back to the OR for skin grafting, and I got called emergently down to the ED to see some guys involved in an IED attack.

It was a young MP on patrol when an IED blew up. It basically tore through both of his legs and he had a lot of arterial bleeding and broken bones. The ortho surgeon and I operated on him, and cleaned him out. I am not sure that his legs will be salvageable. I do not think that they will. We set him up to get to Ballad and then on to Germany last night but there was not enough room on the helicopter so he will go today. He will get reoperated on there and then again in Germany. He lost so much soft tissue and bone I just don't think they will be able to save his legs. After surgery he kept falling asleep while I was trying to talk to him. This morning was hard. He was wide awake with a lot of questions. His biggest fear was that they weren't going to let him stay in the Army. He biggest fear was that he would not be able to continue the fight with his unit. He is so young. Unbelievable. We spoke for a long time, and I will never forget that patient.

Just a little while later two Marines came in without any forewarning. Basically the helicopter landed and they came crashing through the door. One with CPR in progress. Unfortunately he did not make it. These two were again on a foot patrol and were hit by an IED. The other was peppered with shrapnel to his arms and legs as well as his face. Nothing broken and no internal injuries. He said that it hurt to open his eyes and the ER doc really did not look into that much. He got a CT scan, and then my plan was to take him to the OR and wash him out. On the way upstairs I decided to take a look at his eyes again. He could count my fingers with his eyes open. He could count them with his right eye, but he could not count them with his right eye covered. Holy shit we got lucky. I had to hold up the anesthesia in the OR, which they were thrilled about. I called the Optometrist and she brought up her u/s. I had never seen this. She put ultrasound jelly on his eyelid with his eye closed and did an U/s of his eye. You could see the iris, anterior chamber, optic nerve, and a DETACHED RETINA. Too easy. She did this with the Trauma FAST u/s. We were really lucky we found this because we do not have an Ophthalmologist. So we were able to get him to Ballad that night. While we were waiting in the OR we were shooting the breeze. He has three little ones at home, and this was not his first time away from home. He had a significant amount of shrapnel in his face, arms and legs. He will definitely not look the same when his children see him again.

Had a few other hits that night but nothing too bad. That night when the helicopters came to pick up our guys getting flown out of theater, I was asked to help and be on the litter team. We carted our guys out to the landing zone with these Blackhawks opened up with the blades turning and the engines louder than hell. We loaded them up and watched them take off. Amazing how much power those machines have. On the way back into the hospital I started talking with one of the MP commanders. He was on the litter team with me. He began telling me how many people they had lost this month. Now that this is a peace keeping mission, a lot of the burden is placed on the military police units. They are getting banged up the most. They are the ones on the street. They are training the Iraqi police, and they are the ones we see a lot of. This guy had a really tough job. He was doing his best to take care of his men. I have so much respect for the

guys here in his position. Trying their best to lead their young soldiers. Trying their best to keep their morale up, when one their buddies has been killed by a sniper or blown up by an IED. They are truly heroes for their genuine effort and dedication to take care of the guys they lead. I cannot imagine having to go back on that street the day or the week or even the month after my best friend or battle buddy was blown up or shot. They are truly amazing people.

Prior to yesterday the week had not been too bad. I took care of quite a few Iraqis. I had one young male who fell off of a four story building and came in with a bad head injury. Based on his Neurologic exam, our Neurosurgeons who are in Ballad did not accept him so we had to take him off of the ventilator and let him die. He most likely would not have made it anyway. This country has major medical resource issues.

I got another little Iraqi girl burned by hot kerosene. I think she will do OK. Her little brother accidentally knocked over a pot of really hot kerosene. I have been told that these situations occur quite frequently during the winter here and to expect a lot more burn injuries as the weather gets colder. She is the one we were operating on yesterday when the fun began.

We also had a handful of patients earlier in the week that were in an IED attack, one with a really bad liver injury. He got 40 u of blood and had to go back to the OR for continued bleeding. He is alive, but I am not sure he is going to make it. He is going into renal failure and we don't have dialysis machines here. He is part of the Iraqi military and as I mentioned there are just not enough resources available to give him everything he needs. My roommate had an Iraqi policeman that had been hit by a sniper. Terrible liver injury, duodenal injury, transverse colon, multiple small bowel injuries, renal injury. He is alive but going into renal failure. Without dialysis here I am unsure of what the outcome will be for this guy.

The Iraqi Prime Minister was here in the hospital this week, and one of the other surgeon's that I have become really good buddies with had his picture taken with him that I will attach. His name is Troy Houseworth and he wears a pathetic combat moustache. Mine is growing out nicely. It looks like I have a big mud stain just above my lip. My boss was there too. He is a West point guy. He used to be a family practice doc, and now is the director of clinical services. Col Rowe. Really nice guy.

The other night myself and several of the other docs went up to the roof top of the hospital and smoked a few cigars. You can see a lot of Baghdad from up there. Helicopters flying all over the city. It is really neat.

There is a Urologist here, a cracker from Georgia, who is really funny. He had his Bow mailed out here, and was recently caught by the Seargent Major shooting at targets here in the hospital just outside of his room. As you can imagine that went over well.

There has been a step up in the violence lately in terms of IED and suicide bomber attacks. Most of the injured have been Iraqi police. We have seen a few of them, but most have gone to the Iraqi hospital.

I am excited for the Alabama Auburn game coming up. There has been some serious s-talking going on around me. One of the scrub techs is from Alabama and is a big AU fan. It would make his day to beat us. Several other guys here are Michigan State alumni, and they dislike Saban almost as much as LSU fans. They have been doing a lot of chirping lately to. We will see how things go.

Anyway I love and miss you all
Take care
will keep in touch

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