

Greetings from B dad

Starting to get warm in the desert these days. I am hoping I get out of here before the heat wave hits Bdad. Things are still pretty slow in terms of US casualties. We still get our fair share of Iraqi Police and Army casualties. Picked up some new burns, but thank goodness they are adults. One of them is really bad and quite sick. The guy was involved in a propane fire. The burn pattern looks like he was riding a propane tank like it was a broom. Both are Iraqi and both will be here long after I am gone.

I was on call with the Vascular Surgeon about a week ago and we got the call to the ED around 4am. A young Iraqi was shot in the pelvis and came in without a recordable blood pressure, but a palpable carotid pulse (ph 6.8 and BE -22). We got him to the OR and opened his belly to find liters of blood clot in there. We got to Greeting gut and packed him off. We got control of the abdominal aorta and began digging around in the pelvis. We got the iliacs out on both sides and got control. We then opened the groins and got control there. We got the bleeding stopped pretty quickly and anesthesia did a great job. The patient had several holes in multiple loops of small intestine that must have been down in his pelvis when he was shot. We stapled it off for another day. We marched down on the iliacs and finally found a large hole in the left external iliac vein, and the right the epigastric coming off of the external iliac artery was transected. We ligated the injured vessels and had to open up the muscle compartments in the thigh and calf of the left leg because of increased pressures after ligating the vein. We left his belly open and took him up to the ICU. He finally stabilized and all of his numbers got better. He received about 25 to 30 units of blood, 25units of plasma, two doses of factor 7, cryoppt, and platelets. The case was tough but a lot of fun. I assisted the vascular surgeon on his side and he assisted me on mine. He is a young guy and finished his fellowship this summer when I was finishing residency, so we get along pretty well and have recently done some great cases together. We took this patient back to the OR the following day and hooked his intestines back up. He is now out of the ICU and starting a diet. He will probably go to the Iraqi facility soon. Sorry about all the technical details I included, but this was a big save.

More recently we had a soldier come in with a lot of abdominal pain and his CT scan showed intussusception. This is where one portion of intestine telescopes into another, and in adults is usually associated with bad things like cancer. Anyway it was Paul (the vascular surgeon) and I again so we took him to the OR and resected a portion of his small intestine and colon. There was no obvious cancer or cause that we could see for the intussusception, but we will see what the Pathologist says. That patient has also done well and should be heading back to Germany soon.

I did a few appendectomies, the most recent this morning at 4am. Yesterday another group of docs left for home. They were here with me back in the day before the current command arrived in December. The only Doc still with me is Matt the Cardiologist. Really funny guy, big Notre Dame fan. He crushed me in a game of darts last night. He has been really busy lately, mostly taking care of contractors. These folks work for KBR or other big government contractors. They are an odd bunch for the most part. Some have been here for years, because the pay is really good. The problem is that lots of them have terrible medical problems and really should not be allowed over here.

Other big news this week was the Basketball tournament. A lot of the boys get it on Wed and Sat nights at Rucker Hall. This is the living area for the noncommissioned officers. There is a halfcourt over there with lights. So I went out a few Wednesdays ago and played some ball. They are a rough bunch and like to bang it around down low. Reminds me of playing with Phillip and Alex (not a lot of finesse, but will pound your face if you bring it inside just kiddin P and A). Some of them decided to put on a little 3 on 3 tournament. We had 9 teams and began at 7pm with a round robin. Everyone played 3 games and then the elite 8 were put in a bracket. We made it to the finals and lost in a close game. It was surprisingly rough and pretty damn competitive. Two players in an earlier game almost got into a little on court skirmish. There was a ton of trash

talk, which brings back fond memories of the Graf's backyard. I must admit, I felt really old. In the finals I think that I was the oldest player by at least 7 years. I was knockin it down from the cheap seats, but was a little leery about taking it to the hole. We finished that night at around 11:30. I think we are gonna have a rematch with those three in the near future. I met two really cool NCO's from Alabama that were out there playing b ball. One is from Talladega and the other from a small town outside Greenville. It was a good time; however the next morning I could barely walk up and down a flight of stairs. Thank God, I was not on call the following day. I was pretty much worthless.

Paul and I have been going out to the driving range quite a bit in the afternoon when things are slow. Behind the LZ there is a net with tons of range balls and some old beat up golf clubs. You hit towards the LZ and 90% of the time the net stops the golf ball; however there are a few holes in the net. The other day there were some choppers on the pad with the rotors going and Paul launches one that escapes the net and winds up on the LZ. Thank God, it was an errant slice, and it faded wide right of the choppers. We definitely would have gotten our bells rung for a golf ball into the rotor blade. Now we wait for the choppers to take off before slamming balls into the net. Anything to pass the time.

I have not had a roommate since December. Two days ago the company commander calls and tells me that my new roommate will be here that same night. Thanks for the heads up friend. You obviously have no idea what I have done with the room since the ole roommate left. While I am not as messy as my last roommate who made Alex Graf look like a choir girl, no one could mistake me for clean and orderly either. Anyway a few hours later I was cleaning up the last bit garbage that had floated over to the empty side of the room when my new roommate knocks on the door. Surprise, he caught the early helicopter flight from Mosul. Welcome Alex, the new pharmacist. He is a real good guy, but unfortunately for him he has a terrible schedule on the night shift. No worries though, next month he should have the room to himself when I am gone. On that note I will sign off.

I can't wait to see you all and catch up when this is over. Hope all is well. Will include some pics.

One more month.

Will keep in touch

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