

Iraq war casualty receives honorable burial

By Askia Muhammad
Special to Sentinel-Voice

B A L T I M O R E (NNPA)—About 250 people, including local, state and federal officials, attended services for U.S. Marine Staff Sgt. Kendall Waters-Bey, one of the first American casualties in the U.S. invasion of Iraq. He died on the first day of the war with two other Marines and eight British commandos in the crash of a Sea Knight helicopter on March 20 just inside the Iraqi border.

A Muslim and a member of the Moorish Science Temple of America, 29-year-old Sgt. Waters-Bey will be remembered as a popular man who was literally "loved by all" who knew him. He was saluted and buried as a true "hero" with full military honors by dignitaries including Maryland Gov. Robert Ehrlich, Congressional Black Caucus Chairman Elijah

Cummings (D-Md.), both of the state's U.S. senators, as well as by ordinary citizens who wanted to pay their respects.

"My son is a true hero and he was a very, very great person," Michael Waters-Bey told "The Final Call." "He didn't have (any) enemies. And he was loved by everybody who was in his company."

"I was not angry. I was hurt, and at that time it was a sensitive moment for me," Waters-Bey said, explaining his tearful, live television response during which he held a picture of his son in his hand and declared, "I want President Bush to get a good look at this, really good look here. This is the only son I had, only son."

"That's why I looked and said what I said. Because I had to direct it to the person who started all this. He's his father's first born, and first



Michael Waters-Bey and his grandson Kenneth, son of Marine Sgt. Kendall Waters-Bey, one of the first U.S. casualties in Iraq, hail the soldier as a hero.

born (and) a boy too, so you have to understand (his feeling in that way) too. Seriously," Waters-Bey insisted.

"My son's mother told me about it (son's death). My son's wife had called her and

told her that the Marines knocked on her door and told her that my son was one of the Marines that was in the first casualties," he said, recalling how he first learned of his son's death. "It was

devastating to me. Not only shock, but it was devastating to me to hear that because that was my only son. I loved that boy," said Waters-Bey.

Sgt. Kendall Waters-Bey joined the Marine Corps 11 years ago, in part, "to get away from the streets and also he wanted to do something positive with his life and also have a nice career," his father said.

To other Muslims and Moorish Americans who may have relatives in the armed forces fighting in the Iraqi invasion, Waters-Bey offers timeless advice.

"I would say, first of all, one thing we must maintain is our faith in Allah. That's the first thing, right?"

"Second of all, even though you have different views about the war and things that's going on, still be supportive with your relatives (serving in the military) because that's a duty and a job

that they chose to do.

"And just have that faith in Allah. Whatever decision to be made, just don't stop having your faith in Allah with it," said Waters-Bey, whose 9-year-old grandson Kenneth lives with him now. "He's hurt. He's hurt. But like he said, his father's his hero. Just like he's my hero, his father's his hero."

"Basically, he has to get over the fact of his father's passing. The deepest thought in his mind right now, is his father's passing, because they were so close knitted together," he said.

"My son is a true hero," Waters-Bey concluded, "and he was a very, very great person, and he didn't have no enemies, right? And he was loved by everybody who was in his company. You know? And that's why I put that out there like that."

Askia Muhammad writes for the Final Call.

Sergeant Akbar's family fears reprisal for grenade attack

By Askia Muhammad
Special to Sentinel-Voice

W A S H I N G T O N (NNPA)—A Muslim soldier from the 101st Airborne Division has been charged with murder in a grenade attack on Army officers' four days after the U.S. invasion of Iraq that killed two U.S. servicemen in Kuwait, officials at Ft. Campbell, Ky., have announced.

Sergeant Asan K. Akbar, 32, was officially charged on March 25 with two counts of premeditated murder and 17 counts of attempted murder along with other charges under military law. He was transferred from Kuwait to a military detention center in Mannheim, Germany immediately after the attack, then to an undisclosed military location in this country on March 28.

If convicted, Sgt. Akbar could face the death penalty, according to military law experts quoted in published reports.

His mother however insists that he is innocent.

"No, I don't think he would do anything against his country or his fellow servicemen," said Quran Bilal, Sgt. Akbar's mother, in an exclusive telephone interview with The Final Call. "He didn't do that. He didn't do anything like that. 'My belief? I believe he was framed.'"

Bilal had not spoken with her son and did not know his location at Final Call press

time. But she was visited by F.B.I. agents, and told not to grant any interviews with the news media, Los Angeles Imam Abdul Karriem Hasan, the family's spiritual adviser said in a broadcast interview.

"He told me that nobody in his platoon liked him. He said, 'Mom, nobody in my platoon likes me.' And I said, 'Well, they don't have to like you. Just go ahead and teach them.'"

"He was a sergeant," Bilal continued. "He had his own squad, you know. And he was saying that nobody really liked him, and that was basically because he was a Muslim. That's what he told me."

Bilal has been reluctant to tell her story publicly because of her concerns about how White, non-Muslim reporters might distort her comments. "They print stuff up and twist it around and everything, you know," she said.

She is also concerned about what appears to her to be lax security at the base, and the fact that her son appears to be the only one who was ever a suspect in the crime.

"I'm just wondering how in the world did he throw grenades at three tents, and then sit up there and shoot" at those who came out of the tents when the grenades exploded. "I'm saying, where were the guards?"

Officials are still investigating the attack, which killed

Army Captain Christopher Scott Seifert, 27, of Easton, Pa., and Air Force Major Gregory Stone, 40, of Boise, Idaho, and injured 14 others. The attack happened in the early morning hours in the command center of the 101st Division's First Brigade at Camp Pennsylvania in Kuwait.

"And they said (there was) only one witness. And who was that witness? And did that witness like him or what? And then they said they had two other guys, two other Arab guys (in custody), but they let them go," she continued.

A disciplined young man who grew up in the Nation of Islam in Los Angeles, he remained in the American Society of Muslims under the leadership of Imam Warithudeen Mohammed. Akbar was not unhappy with his life in the Army, and he viewed his role in the armed forces, simply as a "job," according to his mother.

However, Bilal does have advice for other parents of young Muslims considering military service, and one profound question about the American body politic. "I would say if you have any doubt, leave it alone."

When asked if her son had any doubts, the mother of the young man accused of the only so-called "fragging" incident—similar to more than 200 such incidents where mostly Black enlisted men

threw grenades into the tents of mostly White junior officers during the Vietnam War—had her own doubts.

"I don't know what he was. The only thing I know is America flies two flags."

"Why does America fly

two flags? If they condone flying two flags then that's the answer to everything."

(See Framed, Page 7)

LAS VEGAS JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION

Saturday, June 14, 2003 • Sammy Davis Jr. Plaza

Sponsorships & Vendor Booths Available

Join area businesses and thousands of attendees for Juneteenth on Saturday, June 14th. This important community event will be promoted through local radio, television and newspapers!

Single vendor booths are \$150.

Deadline: May 31, 2003.

There are a number of sponsorship opportunities offering great exposure through media and at the event.

For information contact Diane or Monique
(702) 255-6659 • Fax (702) 255-8464
www.lasvegasjuneteenth.com

