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Mother: Soldier hanged with hands bound behind back

By Kevin Maurer
Staff writer

Sgt. Sameer Abdel Monem Rateb was found handcuffed and hanged May 6 in Iraq, his mother told a newspaper Thursday.

Army officials say that Rateb's death is under investigation but that it was caused by noncombat-related injuries.

Deaths are considered noncombat-related if enemy forces or combat are not involved.

There are five noncombat-related categories: accident, illness, foul play, suicide or an act of God, such as lightning.

"If the cause of death is not readily apparent, there will be an investigation," said Staff Sgt. Shannon Wright, an 82nd Airborne Division spokesman.

Rateb, 22, died at Forward Operating Base Summerall in Baiji, Iraq. He was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team.

Rateb's mother, Elizabeth Howell of Summerville, S.C., told The Press of Atlantic City on Thursday that her son was found hanged — with his hands bound behind his back with flex cuffs — the day he was supposed to leave for the United States.

His father, Mohamed Rateb, said he was shocked to see details of his son's death in the paper.

"That should never have been published right now," his father said. "The investigation is still ongoing."

He said Army officials told him the investigation could take up to 18 months to complete.

Rateb enlisted in March 2004 and reported to the 82nd Airborne Division in August 2004.

He joined, in part, after visiting the site of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York.

Howell told the New Jersey paper that she didn't think her son was killed by his unit mates.

Rateb was an infantryman with the 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

He went to Afghanistan with the unit from September to November 2004.

Iraq was his second combat deployment.

Staff writer Kevin Maurer can be reached at maurerk@fayobserver.com or 486-3587.

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