

# SAVING LIVES AND SOULS IN IRAQ

Story by Christmas McGaughey  
Photos by U.S. Army

Iraq



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jacob N. Bailey

*Iraqi army soldiers carry a fellow soldier to a U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter during a medical evacuation mission near Tall Afar, Iraq.*

**The leader of an Army medical platoon relied on Christ as they treated wounded soldiers.**

Working at the military base in Baqubah, Iraq, had been relatively quiet for the U.S. Army's 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment (2-69)—until one afternoon in March when a suicide bomber drove a vehicle into the checkpoint just outside the base, killing several soldiers.

That night, Sgt. Casey Brennan—a good-hearted, hard-working young medic from Connecticut with a knack for leadership—didn't sleep well. Fitful dreams about the bombing and his family back home—his wife, 2-year-old son, and another baby on the way—caused him to fall out of bed, startled awake. The

next day, he sought out his friend 1st Lt. Adam Head, a born-again Christian from Little Rock, AR, who had been talking to him about having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The two young men, then both 24, had been stationed at Fort Benning, GA, together before being sent out as part of the same medical platoon with the 2-69 Armor Battalion.

Talking to Casey the next day, Adam again delineated the basics of the Gospel: that man has sinned and cannot go to heaven on his own merits; Christ's death on the cross paid for those sins; those who will turn away from sin and turn to Christ with simple faith and ask for forgiveness will have eternal life. There in the small building they used for makeshift chapel services, Casey prayed with Adam to accept Christ. Two weeks later, Casey stood before a hand-

ful of fellow soldiers at a chapel service to share his newfound faith. Growing up, Casey didn't have a close relationship with his father. He constantly tried to please his father but never felt loved by him. With a smile, Casey shared: "I know that I have a heavenly Father now who loves me and is proud of me."



*Sgt. Casey Brennan, left, and Lt. Adam Head.*

Adam and Casey met every week to study the Bible, and Casey grew in his faith. When the two men later returned to Fort Benning, GA, in January of 2006, Casey brought his wife to CC Columbus—Adam's home church. The Brennans attended for several months and have since moved to New Hampshire; he and Adam keep in touch.

## The Battle Intensifies

After Baqubah, Adam and the 42 men and women in the medical platoon under his command were moved in July to Ramadi—one of the more dangerous towns in Iraq for American forces because of terrorist cells. In the Forward Operating Base (FOB) in Ramadi, the entire 2-69 regiment of 850 soldiers worked with U.S. Marines, Iraqi Army soldiers, and other armed forces. During their yearlong deployment in 2005, an estimated dozen soldiers from the 2-69 lost their lives. Hundreds more were wounded but returned home safely—thanks to their fellow soldiers and the grace of God, Adam said.

"We treated anyone who was injured. ... We were the first ones that an injured soldier



Photo by Specialist Cassandra Grace

*Iraqi Army medics go to a five-week school to train on being a medic in addition to training with Coalition Forces medics and Iraqi hospitals.*

saw when they were wounded out on the field,” Adam said of the 2-69 AR Medical Platoon. “We would treat them, stabilize them, and run them out to the helicopter” that would take them on to a nearby hospital. Usually the wounded—in bloodied camouflage, sometimes missing an arm or leg, sometimes yelling in pain, sometimes unconscious—were brought to the Battalion Aid Station (BAS) by their fellow soldiers. Once in a while, medics would have to leave the safety of the base and head onto the battlefield. Being near the front lines, the station itself was sometimes in danger. Mortars pummeled their base more than once. “A mortar is a shell shot out a tube [that] explodes on impact,” he ex-

plained. “You don’t really hear it coming in. There’s a loud boom, and it kind of rumbles the ground if it’s close by. You want to get under something with some protection.”

“It was a normal routine: you slept on edge,” Adam remembered. “I would sleep all night with a radio beside my bed.” He recounted an intense two days in early October when nearly 30 wounded soldiers were brought in and treated from after midnight until 3 a.m. Four hours later, another attack brought a fresh wave of the wounded. “It was crazy; all of us were hopping and going like crazy,” he said. While the men worked frantically to stabilize the wounded, they heard small arms fire and mortars going



Photo by Staff Sgt. Jacob N. Bailey

*The staff of the 47th Combat Support hospital in Mosul, Iraq, treat a wounded Iraqi soldier who suffered a gunshot wound to the leg.*

off less than a mile away. He thanked God for helping them save many lives. “We figured it up one time: In five months, we had treated 300+ wounded casualties with about a 99 percent survival rate.”

### Partners in Christ

Adam and his team also had to preserve bodies of dead soldiers who were brought in. “I was specifically praying that God would protect his eyes and his heart—so many devastating things he had to see and deal with on a regular basis,” said Courtney, Adam’s wife. “And God has definitely answered our prayers. Aside from a few nightmares when he first came back, everything’s been normal.” Courtney, also from Little Rock, said that even though she knew many men who came back traumatized—resulting in several broken marriages—God brought her and Adam closer together during the yearlong deployment.

Married only a year and a half before Adam departed, the couple said God used them as a team. Courtney got to know many of the 2-69 soldiers’ wives, and later started

a Bible study for the officers’ wives. Adam continued to share with the men in his battalion. “When we talked on phone, I could tell him what was going on with the wives, and he could tell me about the husbands,” she said. “We were able to work as a team and encourage each other—and the spouses we were with.” Although it would be hard to be separated again, Courtney said, “It was amazing to see what happened here and how God used him over there; I would do it again.”

While in Iraq, Adam wrote a song inspired by Ecclesiastes 4:12 for his wife called “These Three Strands.” He explained, “A cord of three strands is not easily broken. I’m a strand, she’s a strand, and the Lord is the third strand that binds us together; we were able to grow closer through that experience and become stronger.”

Adam watched soldiers around him deal with the hardship of fallen or wounded comrades day after day: “They would either become kind of calloused to it or have a breakdown—not know how to handle it, asking questions like ‘why?’ Being a believ-

er, you know the Lord doesn’t make mistakes—even if you don’t understand—and that His will is perfect.”

### Praises in a Foreign Land

Never having played guitar before, Adam wrote his first songs in Iraq. While deployed, he met a chaplain called Rev. Park, a born-again believer from Korea. Adam offered to help Rev. Park with the Sunday chapel services, and the chaplain taught him how to play the guitar. Pretty soon, Adam was strumming chords on a little orange-colored Iraqi six-string. After learning several worship songs, Adam started a Friday night worship service called ‘Catacombs’ which usually drew nearly a dozen soldiers.

“Most of the soldiers at our FOB were not believers,” Adam explained. “Every once in a while, a guy would be there who had lost a friend or saw a buddy get injured, and we would pray for him or the friend, if he was having a hard time. It was an encouraging time, an opportunity for guys who normally had never been around church or been exposed to the Gospel before to hear the Word. Being in that difficult situation made them really open to spiritual things. They were seeking something; they were seeing death all around them.”

Now Adam leads worship at CC Columbus, GA, a fellowship planted by Pastor Mark Swift. Nearly half the families there also serve in the U.S. Armed Forces, said Mark.

<http://calvaryofcolumbus.com>  
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Photo by Senior Airman Desiree N. Palacios



*Pfc. Christopher Benson, a medic from the U.S. Army’s 101st Airborne Division, attends to a sick Iraqi man while visiting local families during a patrol in Mahmodiyah.*

**“You know the Lord doesn’t make mistakes ... and that His will is perfect.”**

Lt. Adam Head