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Marine says he did not desert post

By Matthew Barakat
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

QUANTICO, Va. — Cpl. Wassef Ali Hassoun, the Marine who disappeared under mysterious circumstances while on duty in Iraq, insisted on Monday that he was captured by insurgents and that he is still a loyal Marine.

"I did not desert my post," he told reporters outside Quantico Marine Corps Base. "I was captured and held against my will by anti-coalition forces for 19 days. This was a very difficult and challenging time for me."

He did not answer any questions during his brief appearance. He was joined by his brother, who arrived from Utah.

"I would like to tell all the Marines as well as all those others serving in Iraq to keep their heads up and spirits high. Once a Marine, always a Marine, Semper Paratus," Hassoun said, invoking the Marine Corps motto, Latin for "always faithful."

Marine spokesman Lt. Col. Dave Lapan said the Marine Corps was not in a position to confirm or refute Hassoun's claim.

Hassoun, 24, of West Jordan, Utah, disappeared June 20 from his base near the troubled Iraqi city of Fallujah and turned up unharmed at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut on July 8. It remains unclear how he traveled from Iraq to Lebanon, where he was born and still has some relatives.

On June 27, Arab television showed a videotape of a blindfolded Hassoun, a sword hanging over his head. At one point during his disappearance, a group claiming to represent his captors announced that he had been beheaded after being lured from the base by a love affair.

The military is investigating whether the reported kidnapping was a hoax and whether the Muslim Hassoun deserted his unit.

Hassoun is in the midst of what the Marines call a "repatriation process" in which he is debriefed and given time to decompress and avoid the media spotlight, officials said.

Hassoun arrived at Quantico on Friday after six days of medical evaluation at a military hospital in Germany. In the coming days, he will leave Quantico for Camp Lejeune, N.C., his home base, Lapan said. He will continue the repatriation process there, Lapan said.

VP

Continued from page 1

so students should have more convenient access to our office," Bresciani said.

Kathy DiSanto, an administrative assistant who helped plan the event, said being in a high-traffic area is important.

"At the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs, students are our main interest," DiSanto said. "We have an open door policy and we want students

to feel comfortable in our office."

The vice president for student affairs serves as a senior administration officer of the University and oversees several departments focused on providing a high quality environment to students to promote success, Bresciani said.

"This is the students' University; we're here to serve students and we want them to know where we are and that they're welcome here," DiSanto said.

Bresciani said he hopes faculty and staff will reference the

new location in their interactions with students this summer.

"We want students to be familiar with our location," Bresciani said. "It's an incredible improvement in terms of accessibility."

There may be a similar event held in the fall when more students are on campus, but nothing has been planned yet, Kelley said.

"We want students to know where we're located so that they can utilize services in student affairs," Kelley said.

Suicide

Continued from page 1

he had driven from Saudi Arabia into Iraq.

The fuel tanker attack on the police station in the Seidiyeh neighborhood of Baghdad took place just after 8 a.m., as police gathered to receive their daily assignments.

"We were all standing in a row, listening to our officer as he gave us our assignment for the day," said Mehdi Salah Abed Ali, 32, lying in a bed at al-Yarmuk hospital with his leg bandaged.

The police station was fenced in, and the tanker exploded about 500 feet away in the

middle of the neighborhood. The attack killed nine people and wounded at least 60, said Saad al-Amili, a Health Ministry official.

The tanker's presence in the industrial area did not raise concerns until it started speeding toward the police station, said Ahmed Nouri, who works at a nearby car wash.

"I was standing with a friend when we saw the tanker speeding in an unnatural way," Nouri said, describing the driver as a young man with a light beard.

After the attack, protesters gathered and chanted, "Long live Saddam!" before police dispersed them by firing in the air.

Militants have used near-constant car

bombs, sabotage, assassinations and kidnappings as weapons in their 15-month insurgency. They increasingly have targeted police and local officials to try to destabilize the interim Iraqi government and pressure those it considers collaborators with the forces who drove Saddam Hussein from power last year.

Monday's attack was the fourth since July 14. At least 31 people have been killed.

On Sunday, two car bombs in Tikrit killed two police officers and wounded five others.

On Thursday, attackers detonated a bomb near police and government buildings in the western city of Haditha, killing Iraqis and wounding about 40.

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Flag Room

Continued from page 1

major, said that bettering A&M's campus will be a recruitment tool for the University.

"I think that it was a good part because (the Flag Room) looked so dated that it could have been a recruitment tool for the University," Slocum said. "I mean the center of campus."

Chief

Continued from page 1

in title only.

"The president is very open to ideas that build the reforms that we're implementing," McClellan said.

The commission report is expected to discuss any relationship between Iraq's traditional foe Iran and al-Qaida terror organization.

Rudder

Continued from page 1

Battle Monuments Commission and visitors to the site.

Everett, the team's geophysicist, brings the ability to use ground penetrating radar, magnetics to find buried concrete, iron and disturbed underground fortifications, we would then build maps of subsurface structures."

Everett said that unlike other research conducted at the Big Horn, which changed the way historians have viewed battle "this will give us a clear picture of the battle, but the shouldn't change too much."

Everett said there is primary interest in doing research at San Jacinto.

"There are a lot of unknowns down there," Everett said. "There is a lot of potential for reconstructing the history of that particular

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