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Troops mourn teenage comrade who insisted: 'I ain't no baby'

- Story Highlights
- Army Spc. Christopher D. Kube was memorialized by comrades
- He enlisted at age 17 and volunteered to be a gunner on Humvee
- The newlywed soldier was killed after eight months in Iraq
- "You were like a little brother to us all," wrote one soldier

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq (AP)-- Army Spc. Christopher D. Kube was memorialized Thursday in a packed theater at this outpost in east Baghdad. Another fallen soldier. Another reminder, far from the public spotlight, of the grief that hits not only families of this war's casualties but also their comrades in arms.

He was 18.

He was a newlywed.

He was killed on July 14, eight months after he arrived in Iraq on a deployment that made him nervous from the start, as one fellow soldier remembered. Back at his home station, Fort Carson, Colorado, he drew attention for being so young, so short, so slight and so cheerful.

"When I saw him I asked, 'How old are you, 10?'" recalled his platoon sergeant, Staff Sgt. Eugenie Byron-Griffin. "'What are you doing here? You're a baby.' He looked me straight in my eye, with his chest poked out like he does, and he said, 'I'm 17, and I ain't no baby. I'm a man.'"


Tears flowing, she added: "Everyone in the unit used to mess with him because he was so small. And almost always he would fight hard to prove his manhood. Like when he purchased his first vehicle and bragged about how little he paid for it."

He was determined, Byron-Griffin said: "Even when he was afraid, he would face his fear straight-up. And that was what he did when he enlisted in the Army. He said he was afraid he would deploy to Iraq. But he wanted to make a better life for himself and his family."

Born on September 7, 1988, in Sterling Heights, Michigan, Kube enlisted on October 25, 2005, just making the minimum legal age of 17 for joining the military.

Last November he and his unit said their goodbyes and headed for war.

Last Saturday, as he stood in the gun turret of an armored Humvee that was ferrying a team of soldiers to a meeting to promote reconciliation among rival Iraqi religious rivals, a roadside bomb -- the leading killer of American soldiers -- struck him, killing him instantly.

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Kube was with G Company, 2nd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division. Originally assigned to supply duty, he volunteered to be a gunner and a driver in convoys that ferry commanders and, in some cases, visiting VIPs. He chose danger.

His memorial was, in some ways, like those held almost every evening across Baghdad and beyond. A chaplain gave an invocation. The soldier's commander gave a heartfelt tribute. Fellow soldiers recalled their time together, their sense of loss, their grief and pain.

It was commonplace and yet so extraordinary, knowing that this youngster's death was another loss for an America torn by four years of war, divided over how to end it, weary of the cost in blood and treasure.

In their remembrances, no soldiers questioned the war. Instead they honored a life. They sat in silence as a series of photos of Kube were projected on a large screen. Words of tribute flashed on the screen.

"You were like a little brother to us all," wrote one.

"I feel sorry for the rest of the world," wrote another.

Music played in the background.

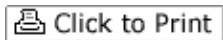
At the foot of a stage a helmet with Kube's nameband around it sat atop an upright rifle, his dog tags dangling, a pair of desert combat boots neatly in front.

"To my fellow soldiers I say, Kube is gone but never forgotten," said Capt. Steve Poe, his company commander. "I ask you to pick it up and drive on. That's what I believe Kube would do. He's just that kind of guy."

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