

Traumatic experiences led to combat stress

Aaron: We were being rocketed, mortared, RPG'd, a car bomb detonated just outside our main entrance. We didn't receive any air support for at least two hours into the attack. I was within 40 meters of 120 mm mortar incoming explosion. At the time it took out a diesel fuel container which released the fumes of the diesel, but it didn't explode to the great scale, but there was shrapnel from the actual munition that spread around the whole area. I was shielded by a bunker that was in between my location and where it detonated, so the bulk of the shrapnel was deflected away from me, however, the concussion did knock me down and I was unconscious for maybe two seconds to thirty seconds, really don't know.

After that particular event, once the all clear was given, I was seen at the Field Hospital for diesel fume inhalation, which I probably should've been seen for traumatic brain injury, but the symptoms are very similar, and with the sheer chaos of everybody coming in wounded to the Field Hospital, they were immensely over crowded. I sat down with an oxygen tank for maybe 20 minutes and then just left. The sight of all the blood and carnage and stuff coming in directly through where I was sitting, next to the emergency room, got to be a little too much.

At that point, I was unable to sleep for probably a week and a half at all, and when the time came for me to get back on duty, when I approached my previous compounds, something inside of me just wasn't letting me make that next step. I was never able to return to the scene of where the explosion took place.



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