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U.S. ARMY EUROPE PARATROOPER KILLED IN COMBAT WILLS \$20,000 TO HIS UNIT REAR DETACHMENT

By Staff Sgt. David Hopkins

Southern European Task Force Public Affairs Office

CASERMA EDERLE, Vicenza, Italy -- All Soldiers, especially those who deploy to combat, want to take care of their families in the event something happens to them, but one U.S. Army Europe Soldier took that concern one step further by including his fellow paratroopers in his family.



STAFF SGT DAVID HOPKINS

Staff Sgt. Michael Gabel of USAREUR's D Company, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry, shares a laugh with Capt. Jonathan Ng during a unit-sponsored trip to Poland in August 2007 designed to build partnerships between Southern European Task Force Soldiers and allied troops from five countries. Gabel, who died in combat in December, bequeathed \$20,000 to his unit's rear detachment.

Staff Sgt. Michael Gabel of USAREUR's D Company, 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, who died of wounds received in combat in Afghanistan Dec. 12, donated more than \$20,000 of his life insurance to the 173rd's rear detachment.

"It isn't a surprise that [Gabel] donated the money to the rear detachment, because of the kind of person he was," said 173rd South Rear Detachment 1st Sgt. Richard Howell.

"But it is surprising that he snuck it past us and went through with putting it in his will," he said.

The donation originated as a way to help pay for flowers for memorial services, but is turning into a way to take care of injured Soldiers.

“When the brigade first started getting casualties we were unable to get the government to pay for flowers for the memorial ceremonies,” said operations NCO-in-charge Sgt. 1st Class Michael Arroyo.

“We had to pass a hat to get the money, but before Staff Sgt. Gabel deployed he came to me and mentioned that he wanted to do something so the rear detachment wouldn’t have to pay any more.”

But after Gabel’s death the rear detachment discovered the government will pay for the flowers, so Gabel’s bequest will now go for a different cause.

The rear detachment leadership is still working out the details.

“We want to make it so wounded Soldiers get some comforts when they are recovering from their injuries,” said Arroyo.

“We’re working something out ... so the interest from the money goes toward helping Soldiers without depleting the original donation amount.”

Making the donation in his will may have been unexpected, but Gabel’s peers say his willingness to help others was no surprise.

“One of the biggest things [Gabel] ever gave to people was his time,” said Howell. “He put a lot of time and research in to helping people solve their problems.”

“Whenever the brigade had a loss, Gabel did all he could to help,” the first sergeant added.

“He helped organize things here on post, but he also helped families to make sure they were taken care of, by donating his time to mow lawns and help with other household chores.”

“He will be remembered as being a great person -- noble, righteous,” Arroyo said. “From small things to big, he did what was right and took care of people. Giving this money just shows how he cared about people and took care of them.”



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