

Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing
“An Oversight Hearing on Accountability for Contracting Abuses in Iraq”

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Thank you for inviting me to speak here today.

My name is Edward Sanchez and I am from Silver City, New Mexico. In late 2003, I was hired by KBR/Halliburton to drive a fuel tanker truck in Iraq. On Good Friday, April 9, 2004, I was part of a fuel convoy hauling 250 tons of JP8 jet fuel from Camp Anaconda to Baghdad International Airport (also known as BIAP). Unbeknownst to those of us driving in the convoy, our convoy was sent by KBR/Halliburton down a road where they knew there had been an ongoing battle for at least the past 48 hours. As a result, seven of my friends who worked for KBR/Halliburton were brutally murdered that day.

I would like to pay tribute to my colleagues who died that day – Steven Fisher, Stephen Hulett, Jeffrey Parker, William Bradley, Jack Montague, Tony Johnson and Timothy Bell, who is “missing” and presumed dead. I would also like to pay tribute to the soldiers in our convoy who died that day, including Sgt. Elmer Krause; PFC Keith Matthew Maupin, who is still missing; and another soldier who rode in my truck, PFC Gregory Goodrich.

I heard about the job with KBR/Halliburton from another truck driver whom I met in Calixeco, California. My wife and I sent my resume to KBR/Halliburton and I was hired for the job. I attended KBR’s orientation in Houston, Texas in December 2003. Prior to going to work for KBR/Halliburton, President Bush had already declared the war over and I was told by KBR/Halliburton that I was part of the “rebuilding” effort in Iraq.

At orientation, I was told that only one KBR/Halliburton employee had been killed in Iraq and that it was his own fault. I was reassured by KBR/Halliburton that I was not going to be a soldier but that I was a civilian – a “non-combatant.” I was told to not wear camouflage so I would not be confused with a soldier. I was told that we would not be sent into battles or areas of known attack. Unfortunately, KBR/Halliburton broke that promise. Although I knew there were more dangers than driving a truck in the United States, I trusted that they would not send us into areas of known combat.

Once I arrived in Iraq, my base was Camp Anaconda and I drove on fuel convoys north to either Camp Ridgeway or Camp Webster. During convoys, we were not armed and we drove unarmored trucks. We wore helmets and flak jackets. We never had maps, but were just told to follow the truck in front of us. Prior to April 9, 2004, I had never been shot at nor had rocks thrown at me while in Iraq.

On April 8, 2004, we attended our usual 7:00 p.m. meeting, at which we received our assignments for the following day. At that meeting, we were told that we would be hauling JP8 jet fuel to Camp Webster the following day, with Tommy Hamill as our convoy commander. At that 7:00 p.m. meeting on April 8, a fellow driver, Jack Montague, asked a foreman what was going on out there and whether the war had resumed. The foreman sarcastically replied, "I don't have CNN." Sadly, my friend Jack died that day in the massacre.

The morning of April 9, we were informed that the mission destination had changed: we were going to Baghdad International Airport (BIAP). Very few of us had been to BIAP before. Prior to leaving, a soldier drew a map of our route in the dirt with his boot. Three KBR/Halliburton employees from the water department who had never driven in a fuel convoy were asked to drive on our convoy. Prior to our departure, fellow truck driver Steven Fisher pulled these three men aside to give them a quick lesson on driving in a fuel convoy. All three men from the water department survived the attack, but Fisher died.

Then we staged our trucks. I was the 12th KBR truck in the convoy. Prior to departing the gate, a soldier, Gregory Goodrich, was placed in my truck. I had never driven with a soldier in my truck before.

Our convoy left the gates of Baghdad International Airport that morning driving military camouflage fuel tankers. There were 17 KBR/Halliburton drivers and 2 trucks without trailers, called bobtails, at the rear. Shortly after we rolled out, we saw a child standing next to fuel cans on the side of the road. When we turned onto MSR Sword near Abu Ghraib prison, there was no traffic. One of the drivers ahead of me radioed that he was having mechanical trouble. We did not know it at the time, but his engine had been shot by insurgents. We passed under a bridge and black flags were hanging from the bridge. There was a white tanker on the right side of the road on fire. One of our trucks went to the right of the truck that was on fire, and was hit with an improvised explosive device (IED). At about that time, all hell broke loose.

We began taking rounds of small arms fire from both sides. We could not see the enemy, but the shots were coming like a hail storm. PFC Goodrich was firing on both sides of my truck. The black smoke from the burning fuel was so thick that it was difficult to see. My fuel tanker began leaking fuel like a water sprinkler. The road became very slippery from the fuel spewing onto the road.

Early on in the battle, I took a round in the buttocks. I could hear other drivers pleading for help over the radio. My radiator light went on and my truck slowed down,

indicating that my engine was hit. Other trucks started to pass us. I heard one of the drivers crying on the radio, "*I'm hit, I'm hit!*" I heard another driver screaming, "*I'm burning!*" Then the radio went silent. I passed one of our trucks and through the black smoke; I could barely see one of our drivers kneeling by the truck holding his hand held radio. I heard him cry, "You son of a bitch, you passed me," to another driver who could not see him due to the smoke. I passed other trucks from our convoy on fire with the drivers slumped in the vehicle.

As we reached the top of the bridge on the road, I saw fellow drivers Ray Stannard and Mike Brezovay on the side of the road. They ran toward my truck and jumped on the running board on the driver's side. My tanker had now caught fire. The gunfire intensified as the insurgents saw Ray and Mike on my running board. A bullet struck and lodged in center of Mike Brezovay's helmet. Mike and Ray rolled off the running board and PFC Goodrich and I escaped the truck as rounds were coming through the passenger door. My boots were caught in the steering wheel while trying to jump through the driver side window.

We began low crawling on the pavement. The deafening noise from rocket propelled grenades, small arms fire, improvised explosive devices and other weapons continued. A military Humvee passed but did not stop for us. A second Humvee approached and I knew it was our last chance. Thankfully, the Humvee stopped for us. As we were getting into the Humvee, PFC Goodrich, my soldier, was shot in the chest before our very eyes.

Inside the crowded Humvee was Ray Stannard, Mike Brezovay, Nelson Howell, Steven Fisher, PFC Goodrich, and soldier Jarob Walsh. Fellow driver Steven Fisher was bleeding profusely from his left upper arm. Fisher was parched with thirst and begging for water. I bandaged his wound and we gave him water. Fisher asked us to tell his family that he loved them and he asked us to relay other messages to his three children. Nelson Howell told him, "You can't die – you're a Marine." I placed Mike Brezovay's fist into the chest wound of PFC Goodrich in an attempt to stop the bleeding. Blood soaked the floor of the Humvee.

All the while, we were under heavy attack. The other KBR civilian drivers and I began shooting weapons at the enemy. Ray Stannard handed me an M16 and I fired that weapon for the first time in my life. Nelson Howell was firing the 50 caliber that was on the top of the Humvee. Meanwhile, we continued to nurse the wounded. Eventually the Humvee engine died and, while still taking fire, we were rescued by a Bradley Fighting Vehicle. Fisher and Goodrich died shortly after being taken from the Humvee.

Once we arrived at the gate at BIAP, we learned that there was no reason for us to be out there. The whole ordeal was preventable. Once inside the gate, a soldier came up to me and said words to the effect, "Who are you guys? What are you guys doing out there? The roads are closed. We have been fighting those guys for over 48 hours. They own that road out there." Another KBR convoy commander, who was not part of our convoy, told several of us that he could not believe that we had been sent down that road since he was

attacked on the same road earlier that day, and sent word to KBR/Halliburton to not send anyone down that road due to the hostilities. We later learned that another KBR/Halliburton convoy, the Reina convoy, had traveled to BIAP through a different route and when they arrived at BIAP, they could not unload the fuel because the fuel bags at the airport were already full. Was our convoy a decoy for the Reina convoy?

I can guarantee that our convoy would not have rolled if the individuals who made the decision that we would go out that day were riding with us. My friends did not “give their lives” – they were murdered.

I was treated for the wound to my buttocks, and to remove shrapnel from my neck. Some of those who lived through the massacre have hearing loss as a result of the deafening gunfire and explosions. The emotional scars of hearing my friends burning that day, and not being able to stop and help them, will be with me forever. I still wonder whether, if the Humvee had not stopped to pick up Mike, Ray and me, maybe Fisher would have gotten to surgery in time to save him.

One question haunts me: Why would KBR/Halliburton knowingly send unarmed non-combatant civilians in military tankers down a closed road where there was an ongoing battle, when they knew that we would be injured or killed? Halliburton has conducted an investigation into the Good Friday Massacre, but refuses to share the results with the injured or with the families of the men that died that tragic day. Why?

I thank you for your time and attention and remain ready to answer any questions you may have for me.