

# A different kind of 'hero'

Some soldiers might think Joe Darby hurt the Army, but the Abu Ghraib whistleblower says 'it had to be done'

By Kelly Kennedy  
STAFF WRITER

Joe Darby laughed — it came out as a bitter puff of disbelief — when asked about new Defense Department rules outlawing acts of detainee abuse during interrogations.

Darby was just another Army specialist until January 2004, when he leaked photos of fellow soldiers tormenting detainees at Abu Ghraib prison.

"The soldiers involved at Abu Ghraib were not interrogating inmates," he told Army Times in a telephone interview. "These guys were doing nothing but occupying themselves in very sick ways. It was never about interrogations."

Darby blew the whistle and set off an international scandal. The photos he provided first appeared on "60 Minutes" in April 2004.

Much of the world was outraged by the abuses inside the prison walls.

At the same time, many soldiers were angry with Darby for taking

what he knew outside the confines of the military establishment.

The seven soldiers pictured piling naked prisoners in pyramids; or pointing at a naked, hooded Iraqi; or grinning as leashed working dogs lunged at a naked, cowering man became poster children for detainee abuse.

The scandal was a setback for the war effort, a black eye for the Army. Seven soldiers were court-martialed; six were sent to prison. President Bush continues to refer to it as one of the worst black eyes in the Iraq war.

On Sept. 6, the Defense Department issued a new human intelligence field manual with detailed rules of interrogation procedures (See story, Page 19).

For Darby, now 27, the new rules are "too little, too late." The 372nd Military Police Company soldier got out of the Army last month, but his life will never be free of the decision he made while at Abu Ghraib.

He says his decision earned him

enemies who wish him harm.

He can never go home.

He refuses to reveal where he now lives.

He is so worried about his family's safety that he won't discuss how many children he has — if any.

Until recently, Darby has refused requests to discuss his decision to go public with the Abu Ghraib abuses and his experiences since then.

This is what he has to say: Despite the hardships he has endured and the turmoil the Army went through, he would do it again.

"I didn't know it was going to be this big and hurt the Army," he said, "but it had to be done."

In January 2004, Darby asked Spec. Charles Graner for copies of some photos as mementos, and Graner gave him a CD. While sorting through photos on his computer, Darby hit one that stopped him.

"It was the pyramid of Iraqis, but I didn't realize it was Iraqis," he said. "Soldiers do some pretty



JEFF RIEDEL/GQ

Abu Ghraib whistleblower Joe Darby has since left the Army.

messed-up things for entertainment, so I thought it was the MPs. I laughed at it and moved on the next picture. That's when I realized they were prisoners."

Graner was sentenced to 10 years in military prison for aggravated assault, maltreatment and conspiracy. Darby said he knew the deeds captured in the pictures were wrong, and he knew he had to do something.

Albert Pierce, chair of military ethics at the National Defense University, said Darby had to

make that decision because of a "leadership vacuum" that developed at the prison.

Pierce said that although some soldiers have expressed animosity toward Darby, they should place him on a pedestal.

"We need to honor and celebrate those soldiers who try to do something to stop things like this as an example of positive leadership," he said. "I think Joseph Darby is one of the ... heroes of Abu Ghraib."

See **DARBY** Page 20



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