

BLOOD BROTHERS

The war hit Charlie 1-26 harder than any unit in Iraq. They have a story to tell. This is it.



For 12 months, Spc. Tyler Holladay, 22, patrolled the violent streets of Adhamiya, Iraq. He raced to strap tourniquets on wounded buddies to save their arms and legs. He picked out pieces of shrapnel and performed battlefield tracheotomies to open airways.

As a medic, he'd seen more than enough to know he wanted to avoid bullets, grenades and roadside bombs — especially roadside bombs. Back in March, when a military police company had hit a daisy-chain of roadside bombs, Holladay helped fill

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body bags with the liquefied remains of fellow soldiers.

"That was the day I thought, 'You're not only going to die here, you're going to be disfigured,'" he said. "It's going to hurt. It's

Picking up the pieces

Charlie 1-26 comes home from war

going to be quick. And it's going to be messy."

Now it was the last day of July 2007, almost exactly a year since he took up residence at Combat Outpost Apache in Adhamiya, one

of Baghdad's worst neighborhoods, and Holladay was out on patrol with Alpha Company. The platoon was searching an abandoned car. Normally, they would have first surrounded it with

Bradleys to keep themselves safe from snipers, but not this time. They were in a hurry and had only one Bradley on the patrol.

"I'm on one knee between the car and a wall," Holladay said. "I

Family and friends greet members of 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, as they return home to Schweinfurt, Germany, from Iraq on Oct. 27.

take two steps back, and I'm joking about a girl, and all of a sudden, I heard a loud bang. I looked down and realized I'd been shot."

The bullet entered through his back and exited through his stomach. He understood instantly that he had a stomach wound — on a soldier's most-feared list, it stands just behind a sucking chest wound. He also knew he would have to treat it himself.

"My gunner was looking at me with a dry Curlex bandage," Holladay said. "I needed a wet dressing. I had him treat my back while I concentrated on the front."

He could tell his large and small intestines had been hit.

"I realized my stomach was fill-

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