

A letter from one MOM and DAD to the government, the American citizens and the World:

With each letter from a government official we received I'd look at the return address and think, 'I don't believe we have received a letter from so and so'. Or I'd say 'look, so and so has sent a letter'. Once open I'd quickly skim through the letter and make comments like "whoever wrote this at least was briefed on the story" or "This person doesn't have a clue"

After my initial thoughts I'd study the signatures carefully. Was this really signed or was a stamp used. Everyone else tried to convince me that they were really signed with a pen but then I wanted to know, who really signed them. Was it just another paper passed across their desk for a signature? Did they really even have a clue what my son was doing in Afghanistan? He wasn't part of the military. Were they just lumping him in with all the other men and women who have died over there by the terrorist? There's just one more body we can add to the count so we can get some more money to pump into programs that aren't working or managed properly.

We received calls also. As I listened to most of them I would imagine them at their desk, the secretary got us on the phone and then connected the line. Some times I would tell them just a minute and also have my husband get on the other phone. They'd start their little condolence talk all over again. Reading from the same letter that they probable just use over and over with each condolence call they need to make. We were glad to have them call; at least we could pretend that someone really cared. We'll see if we ever hear from any of them again, we do have many questions we want answered, we have talked to many in our sons position and do have things to say.

I know there are many that know what my son and all the other men and women of the USDA and the reconstruction teams are doing over in Afghanistan and the importance of their work. Their commanding officers, the men at the PRT Bases charged with assisting in their projects and their safety, members of the local Afghan community, the Ghazni Governor, the US Ambassador, the other military personnel working in the country, men like John Minnick who was willing to bring Tom all the way home to us in Auburn, Larry and Katya who were smart enough to except him into the program, all those past and presently working as advisors in the program, and the Foreign Agricultural Service.

To this date there are over 99% of the population (from my own experiences and conversations) including regular citizens as well as government officials, have no clue as to what these men and women are doing in these foreign lands. One of Tom's biggest frustrations when we talked was the news. He'd tell us stop watching they will only be telling the bad side of things. They will never tell the story of the good things, the things that are really making a difference. Everyone said Tom had a way of getting things done. Two weeks before his death I had told him write the info you want everyone to know, get me the information, I'll find a way to get the story out. I expect with his death now is the time to get the story out. The government and the news didn't want to carry it before, it

isn't death and destruction, but how can they deny what these men and woman are doing, guiding and teaching those people of the world that are in the most need.

Tom didn't like us asking about his safety. He always said, "my men are protecting me, they won't let anything happen". Many people have commented that he said that because he wanted to shield those he loved, from the every day fear that something would happen to him. We do watch the news, we know it is a war zone, we knew there was real danger, we know he had good and dedicated men and women watching after him, we know he believed what he said. If there was anything they could have done it would have been. We also know Tom was committed to what he was doing, he was not going to be intimidated, he'd do whatever it took to make the progress that he expected to achieve, he would not leave things hanging.

The Elko paper, thanks John, Elko channel 10, and other Nevada television stations have wonderfully covered his death and his life. Also, we've had great coverage from our local Auburn papers, the Sacramento Bee and local Sacramento news stations. Thank you, channel 10, 13, and 40, sorry channel 3 – I know you did a brief report from the USDA release but we were never contacted for the important information. We made it clear from the beginning that this was not to be a story of another person killed by the terrorist with a roadside bomb, maybe that's why national news never picked up the story. Someone needs to tell the American people and the people of the world about these brave men and women who are there without guns, guiding, teaching and sharing there expertise's with the Afghani people as well as their government.

I've watched and read the press briefing that Mr. McCormack did on October 5 numerous times now. The whole thing is very sad, that's the best I can say about it. I realize he's probable just passed notes as he's walking to the podium but if what he said is all the info he could give the press then I guess I had a hell of a lot more information than anyone in Washington. If that was the case, how can you all be making decisions on peoples lives and billions of dollars in spending?

I do have much more to say. These past few weeks when I wake up between 4 and 5 in the morning is when I think the best. You will be hearing from me again. I need a break now and try to decide what Tom wants me to do next.

Thank you guys at the Ghazni PRT.

Barb and Steve Stefani