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Fort Bragg killings raise alarm about stress

No connection established to assailants' Afghanistan duty

CNN Washington Bureau

From Barbara Starr

WASHINGTON (CNN) --The killings of four military wives in the past six weeks -- allegedly by their husbands who are based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina -- have led commanders to take a new look at whether combat deployments may be causing undue stress.

Sources at Fort Bragg, home to the Army Special Operations Command, say there's no common thread among the cases, and suggest it may simply be an "anomaly" that so many incidents have occurred so close together.

Officials acknowledge that three of the men had recently served in Afghanistan, and at least one of them had been brought home early to deal with unspecified family problems. But authorities have not established any connection between their service in Afghanistan and the incidents.

Military and local authorities say two of the Special Operations soldiers committed suicide after their wives were killed.

Two of the women were fatally shot, one was strangled, and one was stabbed to death. All four killings took place off the base.

In one incident, the man is suspected of setting the couple's house afire after his wife was killed.

The Fort Bragg garrison commander, Army Col. Tad Davis, is reviewing counseling and stress-management programs available at the base.

A spokesman said the Army wants to see if there is something it could do better. But one military official who had previously served at Fort Bragg pointed out that Special Operations soldiers may be reluctant to seek help.

Benjamin Abel, an Army Special Operations Command spokesman, gave these details on the four incidents:

- On June 11, Sgt. 1st Class Rigoberto Nieves, 32, and his wife, Teresa, were found shot to death at their residence in a suspected murder-suicide. Nieves was assigned to the 3rd Special Forces Group. He was deployed to Afghanistan in early January and returned in mid-March.
- On June 29, Jennifer Wright, the wife of Master Sgt. William Wright, 36, was found strangled. Wright was charged with first degree murder. He was assigned to the 96th Civil Affairs Battalion. He was deployed to Afghanistan in mid-March and returned in mid-May.

- On July 9, Marilyn Griffin, wife of Sgt. Cedric Griffin, 28, was stabbed to death. Griffin is charged with first degree murder. He was assigned to the 37th Engineer Battalion, 20th Engineer Brigade. He had not been deployed to Afghanistan and no such deployment was planned.
- On July 19, Sgt. 1st Class Brandon S. Floyd, 30, and his wife, Andrea, were shot at their home in an apparent murder-suicide. Floyd was assigned to Headquarters Company, U.S. Army Special Operations Command. He was deployed to Afghanistan in November and returned in January.

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