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### E63 It's Not Over at the Death

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand how the United States Army Criminal Investigation Command (CID) Special Agents-in-Charge (SACs) brief family members and the challenges associated with conducting the briefings. This presentation will help make attendees aware of the policies and procedures of conducting casualty liaison briefings based on three case studies which identify the results of casualty briefings to the primary and secondary Next of Kin (NOK).

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by presenting an understanding that once an individual has died, it does not mean the death is over for the family. Understanding and the time it takes to understand the death of the loved one may take years.

In every Army CID office there is a SAC. The SAC is identified as the Casualty Liaison Officer and responsible for contacting and briefing the primary and/or secondary NOK five working days after the official initial notification. After the initial contact is made, the SAC will then contact the NOK every 30 calendar days. The SAC will brief the NOK on the status, any significant changes, or developments in the investigations.

**Case Study 1:** In 2003, a soldier completed a patrol in Iraq and upon returning to base became agitated with members of his unit. The soldier went to his sleeping area; later the supervisor and others heard a single shot. A thorough investigation, a full autopsy, and a toxicology examination were completed. The death was listed as a suicide by a single gunshot wound to the head. Policies for the CID were different in 2003. The soldier's mother requested information through her congressman, questioning the death investigation. This situation continued for several years as the mother did not accept how her son had died. In 2010, an agent met face-to-face with the mother. At the end of the briefing, the mother indicated she believed her son had committed suicide.

**Case Study 2:** In 2007, a female soldier with an intra-oral gunshot wound to the head was discovered deceased in an abandoned tent. Days before her death, she was diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease and discovered her boyfriend no longer wanted to be with her. She gave away several personal items and destroyed others. A thorough investigation, a full autopsy, and a toxicology examination were completed. There were multiple reviews of the investigation by outside agencies and it was determined that the case had been thoroughly investigated. Multiple briefings were given to the family and to congressmen. To this day, her father does not believe his daughter committed suicide and posts on the internet how he believes she was murdered.

**Case Study 3:** In 2011, a soldier was dating a married woman. When the married woman decided to reconcile with her husband and work on her marriage, the soldier, prior to his death, sent her a text message with a photograph depicting all the medications he was prescribed. A thorough investigation, a full autopsy, and a toxicology examination were completed. The death was listed as suicide by multiple drug toxicity. The investigation revealed multiple searches on his computer regarding how to commit suicide with the drugs he was prescribed and with various over-the-counter drugs. He left a note with suicidal ideations; the laboratory examinations determined the note was in his handwriting and his fingerprints were discovered on the note. He also left a message on his married girlfriend's cell phone. His parents were briefed every 30 days. Approximately nine months after their son's death, the mother still had questions and contacted the CID. The investigation was re-opened to clarify the questions and concerns the mother had. A psychological autopsy was conducted and multiple coordinations were conducted. The investigation was still determined to be a suicide and the mother still questions the results.

As documented in the first case study, the mother indicated that she was not ready for the results of the investigations. As most people realize, there are different stages of grief and everyone processes their grief in a different manner. The CID will answer the family members' questions for as long as they have questions and will use every resource available to assist family members. As long as human nature is involved, there will be questions.

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#### Investigation, Death, Briefing