

Wednesday, February 22, 2006 – Colorado Springs Gazette – Page METRO2, Column 2

Death at Fort Carson under investigation

Military police are investigating a death at Fort Carson after a body was found Tuesday morning near the post's water treatment facility.

The body was reported about 8:30 a.m.

The victim has not been identified and Dee McNutt, Fort Carson spokeswoman, did not know if it was a soldier or civilian or the victim's sex or age.

Military authorities will conduct the autopsy.

Thursday, February 23, 2006 – Colorado Springs Gazette – Page METRO3, Column 1

Carson, FBI probe death of ex-soldier

Fort Carson officials were working with the FBI on Wednesday to determine what happened to a former soldier whose body was found in a sewage-treatment pond on the post.

Joseph Barker, 21, of Tulsa, Oklahoma, left the Army last May after serving with Fort Carson's 3rd heavy Brigade Combat Team. Dee McNutt, Fort Carson spokeswoman, said Barker had been reported missing by relatives February 8.

Barker's body was found Tuesday morning inside a fenced-off sewage-treatment compound near Gate 20, a short distance from where Colorado Highway 16 enters Fort Carson from Fountain.

McNutt said autopsy results weren't expected to be available until today. Sources said the body was severely decomposed.

The Army and FBI officials declined to comment on the investigation. The FBI routinely investigates civilian deaths on federal land.

Why the former soldier was at Fort Carson remained unexplained. McNutt said personnel records that could show why Barker left the service weren't available Wednesday.

All soldiers who stayed in Barker's brigade were required to sign up for three-year tours in October 2004. Barker apparently left after completing only seven months of that tour.

Friday, July 14, 2006 – Colorado Springs Gazette – Page METRO1, Column 5 – By Tom Roeder

Ex-soldier's death still a mystery

Army officials say they still haven't figured out what killed a former soldier whose body was found in a sewage treatment pond on Fort Carson five months ago.

The Army's Criminal Investigation Command says an investigation is continuing into the death of former 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team Specialist Joseph Barker, 21. Officials acknowledged, though, that the biggest question in the case remains unanswered.

"At this point, the cause of death is undetermined," said Christopher Grey, a spokesman for the command based at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Barker, an Iraq war veteran who was discharged in 2005 for medical problems, had remained in contact with friends at Fort Carson after he left the service.

Relatives have said Barker, who had re-enlisted months before he was discharged for a bad back, had occasionally stayed with friends on the post after he got out of the Army.

A two-week search for Barker started on February 8 when he was reported missing by family members. His decomposed body was found two weeks later in a fenced-off sewage-treatment compound, a short distance from where Colorado Highway 16 enters the post from Fountain.

Authorities won't say whether they think Barker was alive when he reached the sewage-treatment plant or was taken there after he died.

An autopsy was performed at Evans Army Community Hospital by a medical examiner from the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology.

Pathology institute spokeswoman Michele Hammonds said Thursday that she wouldn't reveal autopsy findings.

Grey, whose agency is cooperating with the FBI in the investigation, said investigators do have some ideas about what killed Barker.

"Our agents have several theories, but at this point in the investigation, we are not sharing with the public until we have a chance to pursue all possible leads," he said.

The agency is also issuing a rare call for help, asking those who may have details about Barker's death to contact the FBI or local police.

Monday, February 5, 2007 – Colorado Springs Gazette – Page METRO1, Column 5 – By Tom Roeder

A mom's lament: How did son die? 1 year later, Army case unresolved

One year ago this week, ex-soldier Joseph Barker disappeared from the barracks he was visiting at Fort Carson, and the mystery of the 21-year-old's death remains.

The Army, which has taken a leading role, in investigating Barker's death, still can't say how he died.

Barker's mother worries that as time passes, the case will fall lower on the priority list for investigators and the family may never know what happened in the 14 days between the disappearance and when Barker's body was found in a sewage-treatment pond on the post.

"He was just a kid," Barker's mother, Lynda Carlock, said in a telephone interview from her home in Tulsa, Oklahoma. "He deserves better than this."

The Army's investigation has been secretive.

Army Criminal Investigation Division spokesman Christopher Grey said his agency will only confirm the investigation continues and the cause of Barker's death is undetermined.

Grey would not give information on how many investigations are on the case or why, after a year, it remains unresolved.

Barker went to war in 2003 with Fort Carson's 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team and attained the rank of specialist. He re-enlisted and got married before he was discharged in 2005 because of chronic back problems.

After the discharge, Barker drifted, separating from his wife and moving back to Oklahoma. Carlock said painful memories of war led Barker back to Fort Carson, where he could spend time with friends who shared his Iraq experience.

It was with those Army buddies that Barker spent his last day, partying at a friend's house on post before going to the barracks with other friends for a few more beers.

He fell asleep on a bunk, where his friends saw him snoozing as they left for early morning physical training.

That's the last time Barker was seen alive.

Soon after his disappearance, he was reported missing to authorities. His body was found February 22 by a sewage plant worker who was investigating a blocked pipe.

Carlock said an Army autopsy showed only what didn't kill her son. It wasn't an overdose, a stabbing or a bullet that claimed his life.

But the decomposition caused by the sewage-treatment pond erased other clues to the death.

"It eats up evidence. I still don't know how he died," she said.

Carlock said investigators have all but ruled out suicide or accident, deeming that nobody would kill themselves by leaping into the treatment pond or accidentally fall over the high fences that surround the sewage.

But any information about what investigators may have found in hours of interviews about Barker's death is being kept secret even from his mother.

"I keep hoping the secrecy means the case is going good," she said. "It's hard to believe it's been almost a year and they still don't know."

Carlock said she dreams of finally knowing who or what killed her son.

"I want to come to Colorado Springs, come to a trial and have this resolved," she said.

Monday, September 5, 2011 – Colorado Springs Gazette - Page A3, Column 5 – By Tom Roeder

REWARD UP TO \$15,000 FOR INFO ON DEATH OF VETERAN **Frustrated mother says investigators didn't act soon enough to crack her son's 2006 case**

The Army has upped the reward to \$15,000 for information on the death of Joseph Eric Barker, an Iraq war veteran whose body was found on Fort Carson more than five years ago.

It's the first move in two years in case that has left investigators and Barker's mother, Lynda Carlock, of Oklahoma, frustrated.

"There are more questions than answers," Carlock said.

What's known about the Barker case today isn't much more than what came out on February 21, 2006, when Barker's body was found in a sewage treatment pond on the post two weeks after he was first reported missing. The cause of death remains unknown. No arrests have been made, and the Army hasn't gone public with any theories.

"I have no answers, no justice," Carlock said. "I have nothing for my son."

The wording of the reward offer from the Army makes it appear that investigators are looking to discover the basics on how Barker died.

"The U.S. Army Criminal Investigations Division is offering a \$15,000 reward for information leading to the apprehension and conviction of the person(s) responsible for the death of Joseph Eric Barker, or any person(s) with knowledge of the circumstances surrounding Barker's death," Army investigators wrote in the announcement.

Barker, 21, served in Iraq in with the post's 3rd Brigade Combat Team in 2004. He was discharged in 2005 with back problems.

Carlock says her son was different when he came home from Iraq, more distant and troubled. A brief marriage fell apart, and the Oklahoma native drifted.

Carlock said painful memories of the war drew Barker back to Fort Carson, where he could spend time with buddies who had shared the experiences.

The night he disappeared, Barker was drinking and sharing stories with friends in a barracks, where he was staying temporarily, on the post.

Friends told investigators they saw Barker asleep in a barracks room when they left for morning exercises at 5 a.m. on February 6, 2006. Barker's family reported him missing on February 8.

Barker's body was found two weeks later by a worker who was sent to fix a clog at the post's sewage plant.

The investigation into Barker's death started slow and hasn't gotten faster.

The first speed bump for investigators was the autopsy, which didn't reveal how Barker died. The fact that he body was submerged in the bacteria rich pond and was damaged by sewage treatment equipment befuddled forensic pathologists, who left the case of death "undetermined" on Barker's death certificate.

Emails sent by investigators to Carlock show a growing level of frustration as leads evaporated.

"I know you don't want to hear this, but there's nothing more that can be done at this time," an investigator wrote Carlock in 2009.

Carlock said investigators simply didn't act quickly enough to crack her son's case. She says the trail went cold, and delays that followed made it colder, she said.

"Every bit of this is the military's fault," she said.

Christopher Grey, a spokesman for the Army's Criminal Investigations Division in Maryland, said the increased reward is a sign of determination to find out what happened to Barker, though not a sign that investigators are closer to finding out how Barker died.

A \$10,000 reward was offered in the case in 2007. Grey didn't say why, after four years, the reward was increased.

"We never give up," Grey said.

Carlock hopes the \$15,000 reward will bring clues.

Tuesday, January 10, 2011 – Colorado Springs Gazette - Page A1, Column 4 – By Jakob Rodgers

SOLDIER'S DEATH FUELS HOMICIDE INQUIRY **Body found in Carson barracks, post says**

Authorities are investigating the death of a Fort Carson soldier as a homicide, Army officials said Monday.

The body of a 28-year-old woman was found early Sunday in the barracks, said Major Crystal Boring, a Fort Carson spokeswoman.

The soldier's name has not been released, pending notification of next of kin.

Details of her death, such as autopsy results or the location of the barracks where she was found, also have not been released.

No arrests have been made, Boring said.

The Army's Criminal Investigation Division is investigating the death, Boring said.

The soldier's apparent homicide comes as the Army continues to look for answers in another death.

In December, Army officials renewed offers of a \$15,000 reward to whomever can supply information about the death of Joseph Eric Barker, 21, a former Fort Carson soldier whose body was found in February 2006 in a sewage treatment tank on the post.

Barker, who saw combat in 2003 with the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, was discharged in 2005 with chronic back pain.

On February 8, 2006, he had a few beers with friends and went to sleep in one of the post's barracks. He was last seen being led to a dark-colored vehicle, investigators said. Illicit drugs might have been involved.

Barker was found about two weeks later by a sewage plant worker after a pipe became clogged. No arrests have been made in his death.

Tuesday, February 26, 2013 – Colorado Springs Gazette - Page B1, Column 2 – By Jakob Rodgers

Army probe of ex-soldier's death nearly finished

Army investigators plan to soon formally close their investigation into the death of a former Fort Carson soldier, claiming to have "exhausted all leads" after his body was found seven years ago blocking a pipe inside the post's sewage treatment plant.

Homicide

Wednesday, February 8, 2006

VICTIM(S):
SUSPECT(S):

Joseph Eric Barker
Unknown

The move to stop actively investigating Joseph Barker's death rescinds a \$15,000 reward for tips leading to an arrest and conviction in the case, said Christopher Grey, a spokesman for the Army Criminal Investigation Command at Quantico, Virginia. No date for was given.

The decision outraged the veteran's mother, who called it "horrible" and another sign that agents reneged on a promise to figure out what happened to her son.

"I've worked on this case with them all this time, for results," said Barker's mother, Lynda Carlock. "And not I feel seven years later, that it was for nothing."

The answer to how Barker ended up in the post's sewage treatment center has eluded a revolving door of Army investigators since the grisly discovery on February 21, 2006.

Barker visited the post often after being discharged from the Army in 2005 – relishing the chance to spend time with friends who could relate to his 2003 deployment to Iraq with the 3rd Brigade Combat Team.

On February 7, 2006, he was partying with friends off post and then went to the barracks. His friends recalled seeing him sleeping in a bed the following morning when they left for physical training.

Barker was last seen being led from the barracks "to a dark colored vehicle," Medical examiners found cocaine in his system, Grey said, but were unable to determine the cause and manner of death.

His estranged wife reported him missing six days later.

Since then, few clues have been released.

"It's extremely challenging," Grey said. "You've got a very badly decomposed body . . . the variables that could have happened to this young man, there's quite a few of them."

In late 2011, the Army raised its reward from \$10,000 to \$15,000 – upping the incentive for tips while issuing a promise.

"We are confident that someone out there knows something about the death of Mr. Barker and we are not resting or giving up until we determine exactly what transpired," said Christopher Vitatoe, an Army investigator, in a 2011 news release.

Even with the case classified as "closed," investigators will continue to "periodically" review Barker's case file, and special agents will pursue any new tips, Grey said.

But without a reward, Carlock said people won't have incentive to share tips.

"There has been no closure," Carlock said. "And I don't know if closing the case without any answer is closure either."

Wednesday, March 6, 2013 – Colorado Springs Gazette - Page B5, Column 2

Investigation into Carson death closed

Army investigators on Tuesday formally closed an investigation into the death of a former Fort Carson soldier whose body was found inside a sewage treatment facility on post.

In closing the case, the Army also rescinded a \$15,000 reward to anyone who could provide information leading to the successful prosecution of whoever might have killed Joseph Barker, a former Army specialist who disappeared in early February 2006 while visiting friends on post.

A medical examiner wasn't able to determine a cause or manner of death, and a dwindling number of tips have yet to pan out, said Christopher Grey, spokesman for Army Criminal Investigation Command.

The Army will investigate new tips, he said. Anyone with information regarding Barker's death can call Fort Carson's Criminal Investigation Division at 526-3991.