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Death of soldier's brother was suicide

By: Associated Press

06/23/2005

VAIL - Authorities have ruled that the death of Justin "Paul" Byers, the brother of a soldier killed in Iraq, was a suicide.

Justin Byers, 19, of Schleswig, died Monday night after he was hit by a pickup truck when he walked out of ditch one mile west of Vail on U.S. Highway 30.

The Crawford County medical examiner announced the death was ruled a suicide on the same day Byers' family held a funeral for his brother, Sgt. Casey Byers.

Casey Byers was killed in Iraq on June 11 when a bomb detonated under his armored Humvee. The funeral was at the Iowa National Guard armory in Denison on Wednesday. He was to be buried later at Arlington National Cemetery.

Justin Byers, a member of the U.S. Army Reserve transportation company of Sac City, was upset about his brother's death and that his military unit was scheduled to leave for Iraq this fall, said Dr. Dennis Crabb, Crawford County medical examiner.

The circumstances at the scene of the accident led officials to conclude that Byers' death was an "intentional act," Crabb said. No alcohol was found at the scene, but a toxicology report wasn't yet available.

Iowa State Patrol Trooper Chuck Downing said his agency's investigation is continuing.

A letter Byers wrote for his brother's funeral was read at the services by Casey Byers' brigade commander, Col. Tim Orr.

"If I could say anything to him, it would be 'Yes, Casey, I'm exactly like you and I stand here today proud to say it,'" Justin wrote. "I will not cry for my brother because I know he would not want me or any of you to."

Teresa Smith, a unit administrator with the U.S. Army Reserve in Sac City, said it hadn't been decided whether Justin Byers would be sent to Iraq, but that he would have fallen under the Army's regulation regarding a sole surviving son or daughter. That policy says if one or more family members have died as a result of serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, the surviving son or daughter can request a discharge.

She said Smith's family had been notified of the policy.

Funeral arrangements for Justin Byers were pending.

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Information from: The Des Moines Register, <http://www.desmoinesregister.com>