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Army MD under fire for article

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The Canadian doctor who treated a Nova Scotia soldier killed in Afghanistan has come under fire for writing an article detailing the final few minutes of Cpl. Kevin Megeney's life.

A story in the recent edition of Mother Jones provides explicit details of the 25-year-old Stellarton, N.S., reservist's death.

"I just wish I had seen it first," Karen Megeney, the dead soldier's mother, said yesterday. Her family was away on vacation when the magazine sent them an advance copy of the article.

"It was on the stands before we even knew about it," she said.

Five months after Megeney's death, military police are still investigating. Sources have said he was shot in the chest by a member of his own platoon.

In the Mother Jones story, Dr. Kevin Patterson describes the evening of March 6, when the soldier was brought into the hospital at Kandahar Air Field. He writes at length and in excruciating detail about his and other medical staff's desperate and ultimately doomed attempt to save Megeney's life.

Readers posted several comments on the Mother Jones website, praising and condemning the text.

"Beautifully told account of a war that is hardly covered in what our U.S. media calls 'the news' and is mostly the latest breathless goings-on of celebrities," Anne McGravie said in a July 28 posting.

Mother: 'I just wish I had seen it first'; Article about Stellarton soldier's final few minutes upsets family

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald

DATE: 2007.08.04

SECTION: Metro

PAGE: B1

BYLINE: Chris Lambie Staff Reporter

ILLUSTRATION:

A recent article in Mother Jones magazine graphically details the last moments of Cpl. Kevin Megeney's life. (CP); Karen Megeney after her son's funeral. (Tim Krochak / Staff); Pallbearers from the Nova Scotia Highlanders take the casket carrying the remains of Cpl. Kevin Megeney out of Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church, following funeral services for the fallen soldier in Stellarton on March 16. (Tim Krochak / Staff); A recent article in Mother Jones magazine graphically details the last moments of Cpl. Kevin Megeney's life. (CP); Karen Megeney after her son's funeral. (Tim Krochak / Staff); Pallbearers from the Nova Scotia Highlanders take the casket carrying the remains of Cpl. Kevin Megeney out of Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church, following funeral services for the fallen soldier in Stellarton on March 16. (Tim Krochak / Staff)

WORD COUNT: 1210

THE CANADIAN doctor who treated a Nova Scotia soldier killed in Afghanistan has come under fire for writing a magazine article detailing the final few minutes of Cpl. Kevin Megeney's life.

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"I just wish I had seen it first," Karen Megeney, the dead soldier's mother, said Friday.

Her family was away on vacation when the magazine sent them an advance copy of the article.

"It was on the stands before we even knew about it," Ms. Megeney said.

Five months after Cpl. Megeney's death, military police are still investigating. Sources have said he was shot in the chest in his own tent by a member of his own platoon.

"I know this may seem simple, based on the facts that were disclosed in the media, but doing an investigation in a combat zone is always a little trickier, especially overseas," said Lt.-Cmdr. Pierre Babinsky, a spokesman for the military's justice system.

Ms. Megeney is not faulting the military police for their lengthy investigation.

"I know that they wouldn't be taking this long if it wasn't necessary," she said. "I fully trust them. They're going to do the best job they can and that takes time. So if it takes a year, it wouldn't put me out a bit."

In the Mother Jones story, Dr. Kevin Patterson describes the evening of March 6, when the soldier was brought into the hospital at Kandahar Air Field. He writes at length and in excruciating detail about his and other medical staff's desperate and ultimately doomed attempt to save Cpl. Megeney's life.

Mother: "I just wish I had seen it first"; Article about Stellarton soldier's final few minutes upsets family

"Cpl. Kevin Megeney's uniform is soaked with blood where the bullet has entered his right chest, just below his armpit. His eyes are wide open and his pupils fixed and dilated; there is no pulse. One of the men who brought him in says, 'We were just walking by his tent and heard the shot. Sounded like a 9–mm. No idea what happened.'

" 'We need a surgeon here right now!' I holler. . . . Lt.–Col. Dennis Filipis appears. . . . He takes a scalpel and runs it between the soldier's ribs from his sternum around to his back. . . . Filipis saws through the sternum and extends the incision around to the right chest; this is called a 'clamshell' incision and is done only in emergencies. It exposes the contents of the chest completely; surgical residents trying to sound hardened call it 'opening the hood.' Filipis tries to find a bleeding vessel to repair, while I attempt to get my needle into his femoral veins, which are collapsed flat. One of the nurses finally gets an IV started in his arm; 10 units each of blood and plasma are ordered from the lab. Filipis finds the bullet hole in Megeney's inferior vena cava and aorta – the great vessels leading directly in and out of the heart. There is no cardiac activity at all. The lab tech arrives with armloads of packed red blood cells at the same time I manage to get a line into Megeney's femoral vein. Filipis says, 'He's been pulseless now for 20 minutes. We should stop.' The room freezes as we all realize he is right.

"Megeney has red hair and blue eyes and looks cheerful even in death. We step back as one of the medics begins sewing up the enormous incision stretching around his chest. Someone says, 'It wasn't a pistol. It was a roommate's rifle.' . . . The military police begin swarming; everyone in the facility sags as the story comes out. An accident. Ten thousand soldiers who have to carry weapons in order to be served breakfast, and it is bound to happen sooner or later."

Readers posted several comments on the Mother Jones website, praising and condemning the text.

"Beautifully told account of a war that is hardly covered in what our U.S. media calls 'the news' and is mostly the latest breathless goings–on of celebrities," Anne McGravie said in a July 28 posting. Another person who identified as being from Nova Scotia said in a posting the article should be struck from the site for the sake of the Megeney family.

"It's horrible enough to loss a son over there. They do not need the details of the operating room."

Another person who was identified as a physician said the soldier's name and the "graphic details" of his death should be removed from the website.

"This is a flagrant violation of patient confidentiality and medical ethics," R. Brisebois said in a July 30 posting.

A person who identified herself as a "Pictou County girl" wanted the entire article removed from the Mother Jones site.

"Those details of his death (do) not help our grieving process," she said in a July 31 posting.

Ed MacIntosh said in a posting no one from the soldier's family knew about the story before it was published.

"How irresponsible of you as a 'news organization' to do such a thing," he said in an Aug. 2 posting. "Do you not investigate such things before you publish?"

That same day, the magazine's co–editor, Clara Jeffery, defended the story in a posting.

"First, we sent a letter to Cpl. Megeney's parents, uncle and sisters, ahead of publication, informing them that this 7,000–word diary of a doctor's month of service at Kandahar Air Field did contain a scene involving the

Mother: "I just wish I had seen it first"; Article about Stellarton soldier's final few minutes upsets family

tragic death of their son; that it was written by a doctor present when Cpl. Megeney was brought in for emergency surgery; and that it would likely be disturbing to those close to him.

"We offered to send it to them or any intermediary they would like if they thought it would be too disturbing to read it themselves. I then spoke with Mrs. Megeney by phone at length. She assured me that the family would like to see the article and that she was a nurse and would read it before any other members of her family; she said it would help to have closure to know more about what happened. We heard from other members of the family who also wanted to read it. (One of them) after they did expressed the desire to write to Dr. Patterson 'to express my appreciation to him for exhausting every effort to save (him).'

There was no way to write about the incident without identifying the soldier, the editor said.

"Doctors can and do publicly talk about how patients die when the story is already in the news – consider press conferences following tragic accidents. And there was certainly nothing in this account that disparaged Cpl. Megeney, who served his country admirably and died in a tragic accident.

"This was an extremely emotional story to work on. The account of Cpl. Megeney's death was particularly poignant, but there were many other stories in there of death and injury to soldiers and civilians that are hard to read. But in our opinion, for the greater public to live in denial about what happens in a war does a disservice to those soldiers who serve and the civilians who are affected."

Another Nova Scotian said in a posting it was difficult to imagine that the Megeney family would be anything but grateful to Dr. Patterson for fighting to save their son's life and writing such a poignant account of the horror of his death.

"Hard to read? Yes. Although the real tragedy is that these soldiers deaths are so easy to ignore. It isn't pleasant, but we all need to open our eyes and see what is going on in Afghanistan and not forget the sacrifices these young men and women make."

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Editor's choice: 8 recommended titles from recent releases

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PUBLICATION: Vancouver Sun
DATE: 2007.08.04
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Weekend Review
PAGE: C9
ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: BOOK COVER: Odori by Darcy Tamayose; Colour Photo: BOOK COVER: The Diana Chronicles by Tina Brown ; Colour Photo: BOOK COVER: Canada and Arctic North America: An Environmental History by Graeme Wynn ; Colour Photo: BOOK COVER: The Boys From Dolores: Fidel Castro's Classmates From Revolution to Exile by Patrick Symmes ;
KEYWORDS: 0
SOURCE: Vancouver Sun
WORD COUNT: 425

ODORI

BY DARCY TAMAYOSE

Cormorant Books, 268 pages (\$22.95)

Darcy Tamayose is an Alberta woman who works as a graphic designer and magazine writer. Okinawa, Pearl Harbor and the survival of art and families in wartime run through this debut novel, with chapters titles like "Once Upon a Saffron Death" and "Pig's Blood and Other Subjects of Extreme Beauty."

CONSUMPTION

BY KEVIN PATTERSON

Vintage Canada, 393 pages (\$19.95)

Consumption is a novel about the unremitting harshness of life in the Arctic. Kevin Patterson, who practises medicine there, as well as in B.C., impressed reviewer Kevin Chong, who called it "quietly devastating." This is the paperback edition.

THE DIANA CHRONICLES

BY TINA BROWN

Doubleday/Random House of Canada, 560 pages (\$35)

Unfurled here are all the incarnations of the People's Princess — shy Di, wronged wife, glamourpuss, humanitarian — but Brown's analysis of the fatal car crash is what really impresses. Recently, she asked Tony Blair if Diana showed the world a new way of being royal. "No," he replied, "a new way of being British."

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THE OBSESSION: TRAGEDY IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC

BY JOHN CHIPMAN

Viking Canada, 243 pages (\$32)

John Chipman is a producer with CBC Radio, which did the two-part doc that preceded this book. Both tell the wrenching true story of Thomas Evensen and his ill-fated decision to sail from Ontario to Norway with his son and two nephews.

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CANADA AND ARCTIC NORTH AMERICA: AN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

BY GRAEME WYNN

ABC-CLIO, 503 pages (\$90)

Graeme Wynn is the head of the University of B.C.'s geography department, and this reference book (ask your bookseller to bring it in or order it online), opening in one of the Ice Ages and advancing to the present day, is a definitive environmental history of Canada and Alaska.

— — —

LITTLE CHILDREN

BY TOM PERROTTA

St. Martin's Griffin/H.B. Fenn, 355 pages (\$17.95)

This is a handsome movie tie-in edition of the 2004 novel, which features a pedophile and begins and ends at a playground. Reviewing it in 2004, The Sun's Kirk LaPointe wrote that it "will mean almost nothing to anyone without children, almost everything to anyone with them."

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THE BOYS FROM DOLORES: FIDEL CASTRO'S CLASSMATES FROM REVOLUTION TO EXILE

BY PATRICK SYMMES

Pantheon Books/Random House of Canada, 352 pages (\$34.95)

This is a collective biography of los Dolorinos, the graduates of the Colegio de Dolores, a Cuban Jesuit academy. One is Fidel Castro. The New York Times has called this "an atmospheric, richly evocative history of modern Cuba" containing both "extended dramatic scenes and lightning-quick vignettes."

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THE EMPEROR'S CHILDREN

BY CLAIRE MESSUD

Vintage Books, 479 pages (\$21)

One of last year's best novels, now available in paperback. Messud sets her story in Manhattan in 2001 -- that annus horribilis -- and focuses on three friends who are nearing 30 and failing to realize their potential. One reviewer called it "fat, delicious and very smart."

Canadian doctor under fire for writing about N.S. soldier's death

DATE: 2007.08.03
KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL
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WORD COUNT: 977

HALIFAX (CP) _ The Canadian doctor who treated a Nova Scotia soldier killed in Afghanistan has come under fire for writing a magazine article detailing the final few minutes of Cpl. Kevin Megeney's life.

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"I just wish I had seen it first," Karen Megeney, the dead soldier's mother, said Friday.

Her family was away on vacation when the magazine sent them an advance copy of the article.

"It was on the stands before we even knew about it," she said.

Five months after Megeney's death, military police are still investigating. Sources have said he was shot in the chest in his own tent by a member of his own platoon.

"I know this may seem simple, based on the facts that were disclosed in the media, but doing an investigation in a combat zone is always a little trickier, especially overseas," said Lt.-Cmdr. Pierre Babinsky, a spokesman for the military's justice system.

Megeney's mother is not faulting the military police for their lengthy investigation.

"I know that they wouldn't be taking this long if it wasn't necessary," she said. "I fully trust them. They're going to do the best job they can and that takes time. So if it takes a year, it wouldn't put me out a bit."

In the Mother Jones story, Dr. Kevin Patterson describes the evening of March 6, when the soldier was brought into the hospital at Kandahar Air Field. He writes at length and in excruciating detail about his and other medical staff's desperate and ultimately doomed attempt to save Megeney's life.

"Cpl. Kevin Megeney's uniform is soaked with blood where the bullet has entered his right chest, just below his armpit. His eyes are wide open and his pupils fixed and dilated; there is no pulse. One of the men who brought him in says, 'We were just walking by his tent and heard the shot. Sounded like a 9-mm. No idea what happened.'

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``....We step back as one of the medics begins sewing up the enormous incision stretching around his chest."

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``We offered to send it to them or any intermediary they would like if they thought it would be too disturbing to read it themselves. I then spoke with Mrs. Megeney by phone at length. She assured me that the family would like to see the article and that she was a nurse and would read it before any other members of her family; she said it would help to have closure to know more about what happened. We heard from other members of the family who also wanted to read it. (One of them) after they did expressed the desire to write to Dr. Patterson to express my appreciation to him for exhausting every effort to save (him).'"

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(Halifax Chronicle Herald)

THE AFGHAN MISSION Doctor's gory tale angers soldier's family Military investigates published account of dying moments

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BYLINE: ALAN FREEMAN

SECTION: National News

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE: Ottawa ONT

WORDS: 960

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ALAN FREEMAN With a report from Hayley Mick OTTAWA The military has launched two investigations into the actions of a Canadian doctor and author, whose graphic description of a Nova Scotia soldier's dying moments in Afghanistan has unleashed a torrent of criticism from family and friends who say the account is tasteless and violates medical ethics.

The Department of National Defence said it has initiated a military police investigation as well as a summary investigation into the conduct of Kevin Patterson, a physician and novelist who worked at the coalition medical facility in Kandahar this year.

In the July–August issue of Mother Jones magazine, Dr. Patterson describes in gruesome detail the death on the operating table of Corporal Kevin Megeney, a 25–year–old reservist from Stellarton, N.S., who was shot in the chest in his tent at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization base in Kandahar.

The death, which has been described as resulting from non–enemy action, is still being probed by the military's National Investigation Service.

Details of the efforts to save the soldier's life are recounted by Dr. Patterson in the narrative climax of a 7,000–word memoir detailing his six weeks as a doctor in Kandahar.

"Corporal Kevin Megeney's uniform is soaked with blood where the bullet has entered his right chest, just below the armpit," Dr.

Patterson writes, describing the moment when the soldier was brought to the coalition–run base hospital.

Dr. Patterson's description becomes more vivid, detailing the massive bleeding from the wound and the desperate and ultimately unsuccessful efforts made by the surgical team to save Cpl. Megeney's life through an emergency operation to open his chest.

The doctor's grisly depiction of the young soldier's final moments on the operating table has angered George Megeney, Cpl. Megeney's uncle. The family is also close to the family of Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay, who attended the soldier's funeral.

"Certainly the family are not happy, not at all," Mr. Megeney, a retired police officer, said in an interview from New Glasgow, N.S. "It was very graphic. That doctor was way out of line.

"In my opinion, he breached doctor-patient confidentiality," the uncle continued. "It was very unethical of him. He could've written it without naming him. . . . It was very self-promoting.

"This boy died less than six months ago. Put yourself in the parents' situation," he continued. "This guy betrayed the trust of the Megeney family." Friends of the dead soldier have also expressed their distress in a series of postings on Mother Jones's website.

"I think this article should be removed," wrote one reader, identified only as "a Nova Scotian." "How awful to read about the death of your son and what the doctor did to him on the operating table in detail." "When I read this article, I was completely shocked," wrote Donna from Pictou County, N.S. "I can't believe these graphic details are made public. Kevin's family is suffering enough. They don't need this." "Shame on you," wrote Ed MacIntosh, saying he was disgusted by the account. "I hope you get sued too." Responding to the onslaught of criticism, Mother Jones's co-editor, Clara Jeffery, said in a posting on the magazine's website that she had contacted the family prior to publication and that Cpl.

Megeney's mother had said that the article would help the family have closure.

Ms. Jeffery concluded that it would be a disservice to soldiers like Cpl. Megeney for the public to "live in denial about what happens in a war." Lieutenant-Commander Pierre Babinsky, a spokesman for DND, said the investigations will determine whether there have been any breaches of laws or regulations under the National Defence Act. The summary investigation will be undertaken by National Defence's health services group.

He said that civilian contractors like Dr. Patterson are subject to the National Defence Act and to the military code of service discipline.

Dr. Patterson, 42, who has written a memoir of sailing to Tahiti as well as a novel tracking the history of an Inuit family, defended his decision to identify Cpl. Megeney in the article.

"His death was well covered in the Canadian media and it was already in the news that he had been shot in the chest and brought to the hospital where he underwent emergency surgery," he said, adding that the corporal's identity would have been easily guessed by readers even if he had declined to name him.

In the past, when he has written about patients he has treated, Dr. Patterson said he had changed details of their identity to protect their privacy. But the case of Cpl. Megeney was different, because he had died and his name had been in the news.

"The fact is that writing about war is always charged," he said, adding that it is important for Canadians to understand what the war in Afghanistan entails.

Asked whether he had gone to Afghanistan with the intention of writing about his experience, Dr. Patterson responded that he had signed up as a doctor but conceded, "I had an idea that I might write about my time there." A version of the account will be included in *Outside The Wire*, an anthology of writing about Canada's Afghan military mission co-edited by Dr. Patterson, to be published this fall. He has also written freelance material for *The Globe and Mail*.

Dr. Patterson, a native of Selkirk, Man., who put himself through medical school by enlisting in the Canadian Army, said he understood that the military's "instinct tends to be protective of everything that happens out there," but said it was important that Canadians "understand what's going on there."

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan; Canada

SUBJECT TERM: medical profession; medial ethics; privacy; strife; deaths; magazines; statements

PERSONAL NAME: Kevin Patterson; Kevin Megeney

ORGANIZATION NAME: Mother Jones magazine; Armed Forces

Doctor's article too graphic

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PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
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PAGE: A3
DATELINE: HALIFAX
SOURCE: The Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 158

The Canadian doctor who treated a Nova Scotia soldier killed in Afghanistan has come under fire for writing a magazine article detailing the final few minutes of Corporal Kevin Megeney's life.

A story in Mother Jones provides explicit details of the reservist's death. Sources have said Megeney, 25, was shot in the chest in his own tent by a member of his own platoon. Military police are still investigating.

In the Mother Jones story, Dr. Kevin Patterson describes the evening of March 6, when the soldier was brought into the hospital at Kandahar Air Field.

Readers posted several comments on the Mother Jones website, praising and condemning the text.

A person who's identified as being from Nova Scotia said in a posting the article should be struck from the site for the sake of the Megeney family.

A person identified as a physician said the soldier's name and the "graphic details" of his death should be removed. "This is a flagrant violation of patient confidentiality and medical ethics," R. Brisebois wrote this week.