

★ Thursday, June 5

★ Dear Mom and Dad,

★ A couple of days ago, my squadron commander told me that I would be taking command of Fox Troop in
★ June, after all. . . . SWEET! I left my conversation with him walking on air! Not only will I soon be a cavalry
★ troop commander (the most lethal combination of fire power that a captain can be in command of, in any
★ service), BUT I will have the opportunity and the incredible responsibility of commanding in combat. I have
★ to admit that I am really nervous and just pray that I am up to the task out here to lead 120 men in combat
★ operations. I will give them everything I have to give — I love them already, just because they're mine. I pray,
★ with all my heart, that I will be able to take every single one of them home safe when we finish our mission
★ here.

★ Friday, June 20

★ It seems like I've been here for so much longer than I have. My life away from here seems so far away. In
★ some ways, I don't think I'll ever have it back completely. I think war takes certain things from you, or maybe
★ it gives certain things that change your perspective.

★ I love being in command. It's so great to lead again. I love taking care of my men and accomplishing our
★ missions together here. I am blessed.

★ Thursday, July 3

★ In the past two nights we've been attacked each night while on patrol. No casualties for us. . . . I see more
★ bravery in a day here than I had seen in my entire life prior to this. I'm healthy and doing fine — although I
★ really want to get that redeployment order and come home (as everyone does) — I don't dwell on it. We are
★ accomplishing our mission here and I think I'll take a lot of pride in that for the rest of my life. Although the
★ sacrifice is great, the rewards of service are so much greater.

★ Friday, July 18

★ Life here continues to be challenging, but we're all hanging in there. We got a blow to our morale a few days
★ ago when the corps commander visited us (three-star general). He said there was no way we were going home
★ in less than nine to 12 months. Man, that's going to suck. We're working on month No. 4 right now and it
★ already seems like we've been here forever and a day.

★ I still love being a commander. I love leading troops and taking care of them. It is a huge responsibility and I
★ feel the weight of it every day. I send the thing I love most out here — my men — into harm's way every day
★ and every night. I just do my best to ensure they're ready, trained, equipped and properly led in every
★ situation.

★ I love you both with all of my heart! I'm working very hard here — adding honor to our country and to our
★ family name!

★ Love,
★ Josh

★ *Excerpts of letters from Army Capt. Joshua T. Byers, 29, of Anderson, S.C.,*
★ *who was killed on July 23, 2003, when a bomb detonated under his vehicle in Iraq.*