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# THE NET IS CLOSED

By Col. Mark T. (Two Gun) Lisi

**Lacey, WA** – Who would have ever thought that I would have a culminating event that would punctuate my time in Afghanistan? Certainly not me! However, I had one. On the 26th of October, while returning to Afghanistan, I had a motengator (major) heart attack on a small Air Force station in Kyrgyzstan. I was a stalwart trooper during the heart attack, never really understanding the scope of the situation; it's easy to be unafraid if you are clueless. I just wanted to get back to Afghanistan and my buddies in Kabul.

I owe: Ranger Borja a debt for forcing me into the truck as quickly as he did (you must look very ill while having a heart attack), the medical crew at the Manas Air Force station for their reaction and initial care, the staff of the Kyrgyzstani hospital I spent two days in, the CATT that flew me to Germany, the staff of Ward 10 D at the Landstule Army Medical Center, and the crew on Ward 41 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. I am here today because of these skilled and caring professionals. Thanks and well done.

The good folks at Walter Reed fixed me right up with a stint. What that really means is I didn't require depot-level maintenance and "they" didn't need to crack me open. I suffered little heart damage and the stint has opened the blockage. I am BACK! I need to get into the gym and start banging some steel. My daughter asked, "Dad, where did your arms go?" I got it!

As much as I would like to make this column about me, I can't. First I left my buddies in Kabul without a goodbye. It's nice to be home, but I feel there is unfinished business in Afghanistan. I also compelled my replacement (who I have never met) to rummage through all my belongings, pack them up, and mail them to me. How sad a chore is that?

More importantly, I had to spend two weeks locked up in a hospital. Once through the initial danger of the heart attack, I felt good and was much like a caged animal. I spent my time visiting the other kids on the ward who were being evacuated from Iraq. I felt so humble while visiting these kids. First, I didn't have a hole in me, had all my fingers and toes, and was not burned.

"Hey sir, what happened to you?"

"Nothing very manly, just a stinking heart

attack," I explained in an apologetic tone.

"Sounds like you were working on being as dead as anyone, pull up a chair and stop your whining...."

It did my heart good to be treated like a soldier by these real warriors. I was in my element making them laugh until their wounds hurt, holding their hands, cutting their meals, and making sure they phoned their mothers.

My heart was also sad. For the first time, I was being exposed – on a very tactile and visual level – to the damage war causes. Some days, it was all I could do not to just jump up and run away. These young soldiers and

Marines are remarkable. They knew the score when they signed up, and they sallied forth and met the Philistine in mortal combat. Even after being battered, broken and burned, they wanted more. The most telling comment I heard was "Sir, I gotta go back!"..."It

ain't like they can blow my leg off again!" Yikes...I know why I love these kids!

As the Nation deals with the events in Iraq and Afghanistan, make it your business to support and love the kids who are carrying out the work of the Nation. I have to say that the two most meaningful things I have from Afghanistan are a

small US flag in a baggie folded by some children and sent to "any soldier" to be carried "into battle in a pocket," and a star in a baggie recovered from an unserviceable US flag for the same purpose by a group in Florida.

I'm done...put a fork in me! I am currently in a "medical hold" loop and will retire in May. I have done my duty. Perhaps all who counseled me not to go in the first place were right, but I had to do what I had to do. I'm still here, and that balances the ledger for me. Try as I might, I guess I did get a penalty deduction while I was in the box. After discussing it with the SO, I didn't lose the points. I'm a very lucky shooter indeed. I'm back to gunfight

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Top photo from left: Col. Lisi, Kyrgyzstani Cardiology Fellow, and Dr. Lazaro O. Bravo, Maj. MC USAF (CCATT Team Chief) in Col. Lisi's room in the Kyrgyzstani hospital. Bottom photo: Col. Lisi reads a hunting magazine on his KC-10 evacuation flight.

