Pentagon Releases Hundreds of Casket Photos

In this undated image, one of more than 700 photos released by the Pentagon in response to a lawsuit, honor guards at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, remove the remains of four soldiers killed in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan. A gallery of the photos is available at washingtonpost.com. Story, A10.
Hundreds of Photos Of Caskets Released

Pentagon Action Is in Response to Lawsuit

By Ann Scott Tyson
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From a row of solemnly tarped coffins at a convoy of olive-green trucks each bearing a casket, hundreds of images of flag-draped coffins of American service members killed at war were released by the Pentagon this week in response to a lawsuit.

The more than 700 photographs, taken by military photographers from 2001 to 2004, show coffins from Iraq and Afghanistan lining the mechanical silver interiors of Air Force C-17s. Many depict solemn honor guard ceremonies for the fallen troopers at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware and other U.S. military facilities.

“Today is an important victory for the American people, for the families of troops killed in the line of duty during wartime and for the honor of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country,” said University of Delaware professor Ralph Beegle, whose October 2004 lawsuit sparked the release.

The Pentagon blacked out the faces and identifying information in some photos showing honor guards for coffins being the interiors of C-17 transports. Thomas Blanton of the National Security Archive called the edited images “an outrage and an insult.”

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Soldiers conduct a memorial service at Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan, over caskets containing the remains of Army Staff Sgt. Anthony Lagman and Sgt. Michael Esposito of the 10th Mountain Division.

The Defense Department released more than 700 photos of the coffins of American troops killed in Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries. Many of the photos are unaltered and unidentified, such as this photo of a convoy of coffins.

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Soldiers prepare to unstrap the casket holding the body of Navy SEAL Chief Hospital Corpsman Matthew D. Romo, killed in Afghanistan in March 2002, from the floor of a C-17A transport at Ramstein Air Base, Germany.