

BIOGRAPHY OF ZAID F. AL-BAYATI

Combat Medically Retired U.S. Army Soldier

Early Life and Service

Zaid was born and raised in Baghdad, Iraq. In 2003, during his third year of college, he witnessed the pivotal events of the United States invasion of Iraq and the subsequent removal of the Saddam Hussein regime. Amidst this historic transition, Zaid stepped forward to serve as a vital bilingual and bicultural advisor for the U.S. Armed Forces. In this critical capacity, he deployed to numerous Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) across the region. His service footprint included FOB Honore, FOB Union 3, and FOB Prosperity within the heavily fortified Green Zone, as well as Camp Liberty and Camp Victory at the Baghdad International Airport, and FOB Hammer on the city's outskirts.

Immigration and Path to the U.S. Army

In 2009, as U.S. forces began to draw down in Iraq, Zaid was granted a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) to relocate to the United States. This vital program was established to protect linguists and advisors who had worked closely alongside the U.S. military and whose lives faced imminent threats from insurgent groups. Deeply grateful for his new home, Zaid felt a profound sense of duty and obligation to give back to the country that had welcomed him. After spending his initial years in the U.S. acclimating to a new culture and way of life, he made the resolute decision to continue his dedication to the nation by enlisting in the United States Army.

Military Career and Deployments

Over the course of his 12-year military career, Zaid has built a distinguished record of service characterized by extensive overseas deployments. He completed three combat deployments to the Middle East, spanning Jordan, Syria, and Iraq, in support of the Combined-Joint Special Operations Task Force-Levant (C-SOJTF-L). Operating as part of a specialized four-member Special Operations team, he held critical roles as both a civil reconnaissance non-commissioned officer (NCO) and a Targeting NCO. In addition to his combat tours, Zaid completed two operational deployments to Europe, serving in Poland and Romania as the Executive Assistant to the Commander of the 16th Sustainment Brigade.

Professional Qualifications and Decorations

Throughout his career, Zaid has earned a diverse array of specialized military qualifications that highlight his technical proficiency and leadership capabilities. He is Airborne-qualified (Paratrooper) and has achieved the highest tier of Expert Marksmanship for both the M4 carbine and the Glock 9mm pistol. Reflecting his commitment to teammate safety, he was certified as a Special Operations Combat Lifesaver, training him to administer lifesaving, advanced tactical medical care under combat conditions. He also serves as a certified Master Fitness Trainer, designing physical readiness programs for personnel, and is an expert operator of heavy wheeled tactical vehicles, having logged over 30,000 miles of accident-free driving.

Zaid's exemplary service and performance have been recognized with numerous military awards and decorations. His commendations include the Army Commendation

Medal (4th award with Combat Device) for meritorious service under combat conditions, the Army Achievement Medal (8th award) representing consistent outstanding performance of duty, and the German Armed Forces Badge for Military Proficiency (Gold Level)-a prestigious foreign decoration awarded for elite physical endurance, marksmanship, and tactical skill. Additionally, Zaid received the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal for his dedicated community service. His career is further distinguished by multiple service and campaign decorations, including the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary and Service Medals, the National Defense Service Medal, the Armed Forces Service Medal, the Army Good Conduct Medal (3rd award), the Overseas Service Ribbon (2nd award), the Army Service Ribbon, and the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon (3rd award).

Combat Injuries and Medical Retirement

Following years of demanding service and extensive medical treatments for his back and knees, the difficult decision was made for Zaid to medically retire. His back injuries originated during an airborne operation in a combat zone alongside Iraqi and Jordanian Special Forces, where sudden, unpredictable shifts in wind direction resulted in a severely hard landing. Demonstrating profound dedication to his team and mission, Zaid continued his duties without complaint until a second airborne accident post-deployment severely exacerbated his condition. Furthermore, the cumulative physical toll of repeated airborne operations, combined with the grueling physical and psychological training inherent to Special Operations, led to significant and lasting knee injuries. In honor and recognition of his sacrifices in the line of duty, Zaid is officially designated by both the Department of the Army and the Department of Veterans Affairs as a Combat Medically Retired Soldier.

Current Civilian Career

Today, Zaid continues to leverage his extensive military background and regional expertise as an Assistant Exercise Planner and Cultural Advisor. In this critical civilian role, he supports strategic training and joint exercises with U.S. partners throughout the Central Command (CENTCOM) Area of Responsibility. Remaining highly engaged in the mission, Zaid travels overseas six to eight times annually to ensure the success of these international training initiatives.

Personal Life and Family

While stationed in Germany, Zaid met his wife, Viktoria, through an online dating platform. The couple dated for exactly one year-from September 1, 2019, to September 1, 2020-traveling extensively across Europe and building a deep connection that led to their marriage.

Professionally, Viktoria works in municipal engineering, where she finds great fulfillment in serving her community. She leads an active and healthy lifestyle, with a passion for sports, fitness, preparing nutritious meals, traveling abroad, and exploring diverse cultures. She also possesses a deep appreciation for the arts, frequently attending theater performances, live concerts, museums, and art galleries. Above all, Viktoria cherishes spending quality time with her husband and their son, Daniel, creating new adventures and lasting memories together.

Today, Zaid and Viktoria are proud, devoted parents to five-year-old Daniel (Danny). A bright and highly social kindergartener, Danny is known for his mature conversational skills and loves playing with his friends and his father. He also has a deep passion for Lego cars, Monster Jam, and anything automotive. The family is deeply committed to raising a healthy, well-educated child, and they cherish their traditions-especially their weekly ritual of spending Sundays at the beach followed by dinner at their favorite Turkish restaurant. On a personal level, Zaid maintains a disciplined exercise routine to manage the physical pain from his service injuries, ensuring he remains active and able to keep pace with Danny.

Throughout Zaid's military career and multiple deployments, the family endured many missed anniversaries and birthdays and had to put their shared love of travel on hold. Now that Zaid is retired, the couple is dedicated to making up for that lost time. They are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to spend a week at the Jersey Shore for Warrior Weekend. Both Zaid and Viktoria look forward to bonding as a family in a city they have never visited before, and they are excited to connect and share experiences with other military families during this special event.