

Where is the accountability in death of Fort Lee soldier?

How can the death of a Fort Lee soldier lead to two very different conclusions about whether anyone was a contributing factor in the tragedy.

A safety report prepared by an investigative team from Fort Rucker, Ala., says that numerous safety lapses lead to the death of a soldier in what should have been a routine training exercise at Fort Lee.

However, two other recently obtained reports on the March 4, 2010, death of Pvt. Anthony R. Milo, 24, prepared by the Fort Lee Criminal Investigative Division and the unit he was assigned to lay the blame for the incident somewhere else — Milo himself.

The differences in the three reports is vast.

While the Fort Rucker report notes that high winds on March 4 may have had a role in the accident and were above the local Fort Lee limits for training parachute jumps at McLaney Drop Zone — the reports prepared at Fort Lee note that wind wasn't a factor.

The conclusions of the CID report are that Milo's death was accidental despite failures in the training. The report also notes that 20 of 22 jumpers landed in the Drop Zone. A lieutenant colonel whose name was redacted, notes "organizations like the 82nd airborne rate the operation a success if 90 percent land in the DZ (Drop Zone)."

The Fort Lee reports conclude that no one at Fort Lee should be disciplined as a result of the accident. Yet the Fort Rucker report details numerous safety lapses and violations in training. Interesting.

James Gerken, Milo's father, said he believes the Fort Lee reports indicate that the unit and the Army are trying to avoid responsibility for his son's death. Milo's father said that he has faith in the Fort Rucker report because the duties and responsibilities of that team are to protect soldiers. Gerken says that while the Fort Lee reports seem to lay responsibility for the incident on his son, he believes responsibility lays with the chain of command responsible for the jump. "Safety should never be sacrificed," Gerken said. "The biggest thing is they put every single trainee in danger that day," he said.

It seems odd that no one at Fort Lee will be disciplined in the training accident that killed Pvt. Anthony R. Milo especially since a report noted the numerous safety lapses that led to Milo's death.

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