

# Family of Fort Hood soldier demands answers after military refuses to release report on his death

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Seventeen months have passed since Private First Class (PFC) Logan Castello, a soldier stationed at Fort Hood, a US military installation in Killeen, Texas, took his own life. Castello had only been on the base for five months. He was the 11th soldier to commit suicide at Fort Hood in 2019, one of the largest US military installations in the world, which is known for its high rates of suicide, homicide, and sexual assault. His body was found in his apartment by Killeen police.

After nearly a year and a half little documentation has been received by the family. Patricia Troyan, Castello's mother and a licensed therapist in Ohio, told the *World Socialist Web Site* that the only way that his cause of death is known is because "the Army said so."

The US Army Criminal Investigative Division (CID), which the Army stated has performed an investigation, has not released their investigative report to Castello's family. Troyan, speaking with the WSWS, stated, "We haven't received the CID investigation and it's been 17 months." Only a two-page "Line of Duty" report that confirmed the cause of death was released.

Castello's family is not the only one waiting for answers. The family of Sgt. Elder Fernandez, whose body was found on Aug 26, 2020, is going through a similar experience, according to Representative Stephen Lynch of Massachusetts. The Fort Hood Independent Review Committee reported earlier this year that off-post suicides and deaths were not being fully investigated by CID.

Despite repeated requests, Castello's mother has not received any substantive response from any government agency, department, or individual that she has contacted.

"I have emailed the Governor of Texas, the White

House, the secretary of the Army, and the Department of Defense," Troyan said, "and no one has responded to me, so I am going to keep emailing them until someone just responds. So if I am going to accomplish nothing else, they are going to know Logan's name. I don't know how government agencies can be so indifferent to suffering families."

Troyan noted that of the major media outlets who previously reported on Castello's death, none of them had responded to her requests for a story in February, likely out of fear of offending the military authorities.

Five months ago, on December 8, three top commanders were fired and two others were suspended at Fort Hood, following revelations of rampant violent crime and sexual assault on the base. These were accompanied by proclamations that there would be "reforms."

But Castello died on November 20, 2019, meaning that the family was waiting for answers for a year under the old leadership and for five months under the new leadership. From the standpoint of the family, it is the same old story.

The autopsy report was received by the family only after they took it upon themselves to contact the center that performed it. "We shouldn't have to wait 17 months to track down the autopsy," Troyan said, "to do everything ourselves." The autopsy report showed that Logan was in perfect physical health, ruling out drugs or alcohol as a factor in his death.

Troyan described emotional strain beyond what any family should have to endure. Castello's "dad is the same as me, we are barely hanging on by a thread every day. He has an 11-year-old brother and Logan was his hero. And when he asks me what happened I don't

have answers to tell him. Not knowing, you know, leaves me with just sleepless nights. All we have is our own speculations.”

According to the family, as Castello’s mental health deteriorated in the period leading up to his death, the Army only afforded him three visits to a case management service, not a therapist, with a month between each visit. Following his own statements that he was contemplating suicide, the military put him on isolation duty where he would watch a parking lot in 24 hour shifts by himself. The only treatment that Castello received was for insomnia, for which he was described as “unresponsive” to treatment.

Referring to the Line of Duty Report, Troyan explained it “said he was ‘not of sound mind’ but they did not provide adequate treatment.”

“They were negligent in providing adequate treatment for Logan, and afterwards they have been grossly negligent in providing any of the documentation that they told us they would provide in six months.”

Troyan has received a police report on her son’s suicide with everything but personal identifying information blacked out. For “11 pages every line was blacked out and redacted,” she said. When she called after receiving the redacted report, she was told, “I knew you would be calling.”

The Killeen police told the Castello family “that a woman asked for 10 years for info on her son’s death and never got it,” Troyan said, “and that that was going to be me.”

Troyan was also told “that they don’t release any information they don’t have to.” She appealed to the Texas Attorney General, who gave “no response. .. not even the slightest acknowledgment.”

The response of the Killeen authorities—that there is an established practice of withholding information from families and a history of doing this—is remarkable for its outright hostility to democratic forms and procedures.

The long and unjustified delays, the run-around, the secrecy, and the shameless redactions underscore something essential about the character of the US military, which employs 1.4 million active personnel and vacuumed up a budget of \$738 billion in 2020, the highest such expenditure in the world. Behind all of the flag-waving rhetoric about “supporting our troops” and

“brave men and women in uniform,” the lower enlisted ranks, drawn from among working class youth, are regarded as expendable.



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