



DONA KAY RULE IS RUNNING FOR ARMY CAPT. GUSSIE M. JONES

41, of Raleigh, Ark.; assigned to the 31st Combat Support Hospital, Fort Bliss, Texas; died of a non-combat related cause on March 7 in Baghdad.

Nurse dies in Baghdad

By Laura Cruz - El Paso (Texas) Times

A registered nurse assigned to Fort Bliss' 31st Combat Support Hospital died in Iraq on a Sunday morning, Department of Defense officials announced Tuesday.

Capt. Gussie M. Jones, 41, was a nurse at Beaumont Army Medical Center's intensive care unit here, and she had volunteered to serve as a medical surgical nurse in Baghdad. Army officials said she was having symptoms similar to those exhibited by heart attack victims, but her death in Baghdad is still under investigation.

"Beaumont is sad and in disbelief. Why would someone be taken away so young?" Clarence Davis III, Beaumont spokesman, said of the hospital's first Iraq war death. "Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family. We regret their loss."

Davis said a memorial for Jones is tentatively scheduled for Friday.

She was the 12th soldier with El Paso ties to die in Iraq since the operation began in March 2003, and the highest-ranking person.

Jones was one of about 500 soldiers from the 31st Combat Support Hospital who left Jan. 7 from Biggs Army Airfield in two flights. About 160 soldiers were from Fort Bliss. The 31st Combat Support Hospital is under the 31st Air Defense Artillery Brigade at Fort Bliss.

Jones was born in Arkansas and was one of eight children. She began her Army career by enlisting in 1988 as a personnel clerk and climbed to the rank of a sergeant.

In 1986, Jones earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Arkansas Central University. She was selected to attend the Army Enlisted Commissioning Program and earned her second bachelor's degree from Syracuse University in 1998. It was in nursing.





Her career as a registered nurse and a commissioned officer began in September 1998 at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio. In 2002, after completing a course in critical-care nursing, she was assigned to Beaumont, where she became a mentor.

“She was a very dedicated person and was always smiling,” said a co-worker and friend, Capt. Susan Gilbert. “If anyone asked her to do something, she would do it. And she was very kind and gentle and patient with the patients.”

Gilbert said she learned Monday of Jones’ death from a supervisor who read a report from the Defense Department.

“It was really shocking because she packed her duffel bags to do her duty and she died from an illness,” Gilbert said. “It was totally tragic because it’s very dangerous over there, although the war is over.”

Gilbert said Jones’ death affected the hospital and will also impact soldiers in Iraq who worked closely with her.

“She was so much a part of their team, and so her death must really affect their morale,” Gilbert said. “I’m very worried about the other soldiers because they’ve lost their battle buddy.”

Jones, who was a member of the Abundant Living Faith Center, was remembered at the East Side church as a devoted Christian who started attending service in 2002.

“The church is pretty shook up. She participated in our women’s conference and attended our volunteer program,” said Elena Delman, a church spokeswoman. “Before she left, she filed some paperwork telling us about her deployment, and our church and pastor would pray for her and other soldiers before every service.”

Army officials said Jones’ death was the 143rd noncombat death and the 553rd death in Iraq. During her 15 years of military services, Jones received a Joint Service Commendation medal, four Army Commendation medals and three Army Achievement medals.

