

# Daily Kos

## Slain Soldier Feared ‘Something Might Happen to Her’

By Ekaterin

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This soldier was from my home state, and her story caught my attention. Several local media outlets have carried stories about the confusion surrounding the death of Massachusetts National Guard Spc. Ciara Durkin.



*Spc. Ciara Durkin*

From a Boston Herald article, Slain soldier told kin to investigate if she died:

The Quincy soldier mysteriously slain by a bullet to the head on a secure Afghanistan airbase feared something might happen to her after discovering “something she didn’t like,” her devastated family revealed.

Massachusetts National Guard Spc. Ciara Durkin, 30, was found with a single gunshot wound to her head behind a building at Bagram Airbase on Sept. 27.

“The last time she was home she said she had seen things that she didn’t like and she had raised concerns that had annoyed some people,” said Durkin’s sister Fiona Canavan, 44, of Quincy.

“She said, and I thought she was joking, that if anything happened to her we had to investigate.”

Senator Kennedy, Senator Kerry, and U.S. Rep. William Delahunt have contacted the Department of Defense to help the family get answers. An excerpt from Senator Kerry’s letter to Robert Gates:

As you can imagine, the confusion and potential misreporting around Specialist Durkin’s death have added to what is already an extraordinarily painful time for her mother, her siblings and her extended family, here in Massachusetts and in Ireland. The Durkin family desperately needs answers to the following questions:

1. Why has the Army not responded to the Durkin family's request for an independent autopsy?
2. Why, after not responding to the family's request for an independent autopsy, did the Army fail to contact the Durkin family with the Army's autopsy results? The family was told to be available to receive a phone call between 1 and 3 PM on October 1 and the Army never called.
3. Why has the Army refused to make Specialist Durkin's will and paperwork available to her family so they can respect her wishes as they plan her funeral and burial?

The family was originally told that Durkin was killed in action, but officials changed their story over the weekend. Now the family has been told that her death was the result of “non-combat-related causes.”

An article from the Boston Globe:

Durkin's family says Army officials have told them she was found with a single bullet in her head, lying near the church where she worshipped on the secure Bagram Airfield. The Army has not publicly disclosed whether a weapon was found near her body.

The Massachusetts National Guard initially reported that Durkin was killed in action, though a Guard spokesman later said the term meant only that Durkin was serving in Afghanistan at the time.

Ciara's family speculated that she may have been a victim of a hate crime:

**“Ciara was a lesbian, and that's bound to come out,” Canavan said. “It is possible that someone over there found that out, and, you know, maybe they were very homophobic.”**

This reminds me of the controversy and confusion surrounding the death of Pat Tillman. Families of dead soldiers are already suffering from the tragic loss of their loved ones, and these secret military investigations only add to their distress.

Why does it take Congressional intervention to force the military to produce some answers? Why does it seem so difficult for the DoD to determine what really happened to National Guard Spc. Ciara Durkin?

And why does the family have to plan her funeral without being given her will?

**Update:** Some commenters have suggested that Ciara may have discovered financial irregularities, and this article I just found in the *Patriot Ledger* seems to confirm that line of thinking. **The article also says her family reported her safety concerns to the Army three weeks ago:**

GI to her family: Ask many questions if I die; ‘I made some enemies,’ Durkin said

Fiona Canavan, Durkin's older sister, said today that when her sister was home three weeks ago, she told family members that she had come across some things that concerned her and had raised objections to others at the base.

"She was in the finance unit and she said, 'I discovered some things I don't like and I made some enemies because of it.' Then she said, in her light-hearted way, 'If anything happens to me, you guys make sure it gets investigated,'" Canavan said. "But at the time we thought it was said more as a joke."

The family did not know what she was referring to, said Canavan, who lives in Quincy.....

**When her sister told the family three weeks ago about her concerns over her safety at the base, due to whatever information she had found out, Canavan said, "we reported it to the Army."**

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