

New Housing Possibility Reignites Debate

By Gregory Reed
Features Editor

The proposed construction of a new off-campus housing complex has reignited the ongoing struggles between Penn State: Mont Alto students and the Mont Alto community. In a recent town meeting, to discuss and announce the chances of a new student housing complex off Slabtown Road, citizens and several students were given the chance to confront one another.

The property, which would be built by Educational Property

Group inc., would house up to 177 students and feature 24-hour surveillance cameras, in-room washer/dryers, and, due to its proximity to the campus, it still would be able to offer the 'college experience' while granting the freedoms that commuters share.

However, in light of recent transgressions and negative press surrounding campus behavior, the proposition of more students in a freer environment does not sit well with many members of the Mont Alto community.

The students in attendance were able to voice concerns with the community consistently grouping

all of the students into a mass of vandalizing deviants, rather than determining whether or not certain students are to blame, or if non-student vandals are escaping prosecution. While the community was given this view, the concerns cited were still prevalent with the rise of disconnect with the students and the citizens.

The University's formal stance on the issue is sparse, as affiliation with off-campus housing reaches only on-campus advertising and posting on the campus's website. Nonetheless, more local student housing would be beneficial to the campus, as the past Fall 2007

semester reports that 96 students requested on-campus housing that could not be filled by current housing.

In response to the community's question of why campus land cannot be used for housing, Ron Swope, Business Director at Penn State: Mont Alto explained that the campus land available for that type of housing is already in use and that Housing and Food Services is a business-like entity that would have to take time to consider the benefits of more housing. Foremost, the cost of that type of proposed housing is much cheaper for a non-University company to

build.

In addition, Dr. Gnage, Chancellor of Penn State: Mont Alto, has also written a formal letter to the Mont Alto Borough requesting an audience to address the recent student transgressions and the possibility of a committee that would consist of faculty, students, and citizens.

As of print, there has been no response from the Borough.



A Soldier's Perspective: Fahad Jaha's Story

By Jordan Martin
Editorial Division Editor

Fahad Jaha's association with the military began when he was 18. After he was forced to drop out of college due to housing problems, he spent some time working, and eventually enlisted. According to Jaha, "I was homeless for about a couple months, almost a year, and then I joined the Army. I did a bunch of odd jobs and stuff [in the interim]."

Jaha served in Korea for two years on the tenuous border opposing North Korea, the DMZ. The function of the U.S. forces at the border was to slow down invading North Korean forces. "When I was in Korea, intelligence told us that there were 500,000 artillery pieces in North Korea pointed at our motor pool, so if it did pop off, we would have been obliterated within seconds," Jaha said.

After his time in Korea, Jaha returned to the U.S. to serve at Fort Hood in Texas. Circumstances were quite different back in the States. "When I got to Fort Hood, it was all about the standard. It was all about looking good; it was about being a good soldier," said Jaha.

After a year in Texas, Jaha was shunted back and forth between

Kuwait and Iraq for a year. Jaha pointed out that he traveled far and wide during this time. "I've been to Germany, I've been to Japan, I've been all around the States," he said.

"I pretty much went to the armpit of everywhere in the world."

Iraq has been a highly controversial and polarizing subject for the last several years. Especially now, one of the major

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-Fahad Jaha

political issues on many minds, voters and politicians alike, is the war in Iraq.

Jaha shared some of his experiences in Iraq, and gave some of his perspectives on being a soldier and becoming a civilian again.

I asked Jaha, "How did serving in Iraq differ from serving in Korea or Fort Hood?"

His reply was, "We did a lot of training at Fort Hood, to prepare for Iraq. I was ten days away from

getting out of the Army, and they told me to pack up my stuff, I was going to Iraq. So I served an extra year and a half in Iraq. We got to Kuwait, and it was about 120 degrees. I stayed there for two days, did a little bit of operations, and they sent me out on an op mission by myself for 40 days, and I ended up meeting up with this warrant officer because we were pulling all of 4ID's (4th Infantry Division) equipment up to Iraq. We'd find IED's (improvised explosive devices) right outside the gates, I don't even understand it because we have guards patrolling the area, and how could they be setting up IED's in front of us? And also, when I made the first jump into Iraq, we went over seven IED's, and they just didn't go off. And the convoy right behind us got blown up."

He continued with, "And this one time in particular, me and [the warrant officer]... were trying to fix this vehicle... A vehicle had broken down and we needed to pull out that vehicle as soon as possible. Me and [the warrant officer] jumped in the Humvee, and I only had my Kevlar on, and [he] only had his Kevlar, too. We were trying to jump start this vehicle from our Humvee and get it ready to go, and we started getting shot at. My first initial reaction was to drop to the ground so the bullets won't be able

to hit you. They won't be shooting that close to the ground. So [he] yells at me, "Get up, start shooting, do something. We've got to get out of here." I jumped up, and we fixed the vehicle real quick, and we rolled out. The sound that it makes when a bullet flies by your head, it sounds like popcorn popping. And then it sounds like something's going by your head real fast. We could hear the muzzle fire off in the background. So we fixed that vehicle as quick as possible. We didn't have any body armor on. One shot anywhere, and I probably would have been done for."

"It was crazy. We used to have mortars come in, and we'd see rockets go over our head. They were trying to attack us all the time... When I got to Baghdad, it seemed to slow down a lot more, because we have our biggest operations base, the Green Zone, that's the international zone. So, a lot of things slowed down, and my whole time there I was in charge of an airport. I would go on missions by myself with civilian contractors because we had some duty where we had to go and help civilian contractors. I went all around Iraq. It was a long year."

My next question for Jaha asked him about his feelings involving the media's portrayal of the war in Iraq? And has it been accurate?

Jaha told me, "The media, what you guys hear, and what we hear in the Army, they are almost two totally, completely different things. You hear about the missions while we're doing the missions, or right after we've completed the missions. That's a good way for terrorists to be able to set up positions, if the media's putting us out there like that."

"I don't really like how Fox News portrays it. I think that we're doing a lot of good in Iraq. What I learned is those people are scared just like anybody else. They just want normal, stable lives. Like America. With their religion. They just want to lead normal lives, and have somewhere nice to bring up their children. We're doing a lot of good, and we're trying."

"The main thing is, I wish we had a good reason. It seems like our commanders aren't telling us enough; our commander in chief, President Bush. I just wish they could give us a better reason why my friends are dead. A lot of my friends got killed. I just wish they could give me a straight answer. They knew that it was going to be totally crazy to go into Iraq. If you look throughout history, they all tried. It was all religious wars. They were fighting with the Muslims. They've been fighting there for

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