

April 6, 2019

Victim of Egyptian Military Attack Pushes Trump to Back Her Case Against Egypt

By Mary Margaret Olohan

- Former pro roller skater April Corley was brutally attacked by the Egyptian military in 2015, severely injuring her and killing her boyfriend.
- The Egyptian government has offered a variety of excuses for the accident but has not paid for Corley's medical expenses.
- Corley now presses President Donald Trump and lawmakers not to finalize the \$1 billion sale of 10 Apache helicopters to Egypt until the Egyptian government agrees to repay her bills.

An American woman who was attacked by the Egyptian military is pushing lawmakers to block the sale of 10 Apache helicopters to Egypt until her medical expenses have been fully reimbursed.

Former professional roller skater April Corley thought she was going on a romantic vacation with her boyfriend in Egypt in September 2015. Instead, a helicopter with Egyptian military members repeatedly fired on Corley and her tour group, killing Corley's boyfriend Rafael Bejarano and 11 others and severely injuring Corley.

The attack took Corley's group by surprise, she said in an interview Friday with The Daily Caller News Foundation. The group, composed of mostly Mexican tourists and Egyptian tour guides, was taking a lunch break and listening to music. Corley's boyfriend took pictures of her as she did cartwheels in the desert sand. Then a Boeing AH-64 Apache attack helicopter approached and began to fire on them — and proceeded to do so for hours until sundown.

"It felt like they wanted to take everything out, leave no trace left," Corley, 40, told TheDCNF.

Egypt's Interior Ministry claims the Egyptian military mistook them for militants, The Wall Street Journal reported Monday. Egypt's Interior Ministry also said the group was in a banned area. However, the group had a permit and was traveling with a police escort, according to WSJ.

Corley described one of the tour guides waving a white scarf to signal they were not a threat. Yet the helicopter repeatedly fired on them, flew away and then returned to fire on them again.

While some of the dead were able to be rescued from the wreckage, many of them had been incinerated, The Middle East Eye reported. Corley revealed two survivors made it to a military checkpoint but soldiers did not come help them for hours, in a Wednesday op-ed on Fox News.

“I was left in the desert carnage, surrounded by charred bodies, bloodied and blackened sand, and burning vehicles,” Corley wrote in her op-ed. “It was hell on earth – and a hell I relive every day of my life.”

“They say it was a mistake,” Corley told TheDCNF. “It felt like a massacre.”

Corley’s injuries were so severe Egyptian authorities were forced to transport her from Cairo to Los Angeles for medical treatment. Since 2015, she has been in and out of hospitals, doctor’s appointments and therapy and she has received help for post-traumatic stress disorder. Formerly a professional roller skater who had performed and trained with celebrities like Madonna, Katy Perry and Usher, Corley’s lifestyle has changed.

“My life went from being all glitter and rhinestones and roller skates,” Corley told TheDCNF. “I’m so taken down by pain that often I’m surprised when I have a good day when I can get up and do a little bit more. To go from being so vibrant and lively to dealing with all this medical trauma has been severely shocking to my life.”

When asked if Friday was a good or bad day, Corley laughed. “Today is an in between day,” she said. She was about to head to Fox News as part of the media appearances she has been making while in Washington, D.C.

Corley was injured by a Boeing AH-64 Apache attack helicopter purchased from the U.S. government. As an American and a taxpayer, Corley’s lawyer told TheDCNF, she paid for that weaponry.

Now she is ready to demand justice from the Egyptian government. Corley wants Egypt to repay her medical bills.

In order for the Egyptian government to compensate for Corley’s past and projected future medical expenses, livelihood, pain and suffering, it needs to reimburse her at least \$14 million, according to Corley’s lawyers. So far, it has offered her \$150,000 in damages.

She also wants to ensure that no more U.S. weapons are used to harm tourists. She wants laws allowing U.S. citizens to sue the Egyptian government if they are injured in violent crimes in Egypt.

Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont, vice chairman of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, co-authored a letter with Democratic Rep. Nita Lowey of New York, chair of the House Committee on Appropriations, on March 29 in which the two urged U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo not to finish the sale of 10 AH-64E Apache helicopters to Egypt for \$1 billion until the Egyptian government agrees to repay Corley. The State Department approved the sale in November 2018.

Corley said Pompeo also raised her case with the Egyptian government in January during a trip to Cairo. She hopes that President Donald Trump will raise the issue with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi when the two leaders meet on April 9 at the White House.

“Postponing the sale would give a clear message to Egypt that they can’t do this to people. I want them to take some accountability,” Corley told TheDCNF.

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