Six years in Iraq takes big toll on Southland

Midlothian soldier’s death a reminder that danger is shifting to Afghanistan

Christopher Abeyta’s mother worried he’d need a plane when he went to Iraq on his first deployment in 2004. It seemed like more of the dangerous two fronts in what former President George W. Bush dubbed the war on terror. And for the majority of the time since then, the Iraq war has been forgotten. At home, he went to battle — with much bigger battles in the Middle East.

But the sixth anniversary of the American invasion of Iraq, in the Southlandawakes the return of the body of one of ours, its Afghanisthat is in the

Christopher Abeyta, 23, of Midlothian, was one of four American troops killed Sunday in eastern Afghanistan, one of eight Illinois National Guard soldiers to die in the last first of the year.

President Barack Obama said he’d get American-troops out of Iraq, turning the military’s focus to defeating the Taliban.

The Defense Department announced Wednesday and said to his bloo Loss policy, which retained soldiers after their terms of service expired.

But an end to the Iraq War before a march seven years won’t ease the heavy tolls taken on the Southland.

Army reservist John Trump and Marine Matt Clark, soldiers from Franklin and Oak Forest, lived to told of the original charge into Iraq in the first days of the war. Hickory Hills native Col. James Hickey coordinated the 69-member unit that captured Saddam Hussein in a “spider hole” in December 2003.

But at least 13 other Southlanders have lost their three fighting in Iraq, fathers and sons and brothers.

And they were welcomed home with honor the way today Midlothian awakes the arrival of a fall-

en son.

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Midlothian PAYS RESPECTS
TO ITS LOST SON, SGT. ABETYA, A3

WITH WAR’S END IN SIGHT, HOW
DOES IRAQ’S FUTURE LOOK? A3

Football Giant joins McLegends

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brings 300 pounds of power to the star-studded McLegends lineup in the upcoming State vs. McLegends trophy game.

Read about how the Chicago native was one of the tag-along little guy.

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52 WEEKENDS

HE’S 83 YEARS OLD
AND UNEMPLOYED

Matteson senior has applied for unemployment compensation and been told he makes too much money to qualify. •Kadner, A2