

It wasn't a bullet or roadside bomb that felled Lance Cpl. Josef Lopez three years ago after nine days in Iraq.

It was an injection into his arm before his unit left the states.

The then 20-year-old Marine from Springfield, Mo., suffered a rare adverse reaction to the smallpox vaccine. While the vaccine isn't mandatory, the military strongly encourages troops to take it.

However, it left Lopez in a coma, unable for a time to breathe on his own and paralyzed for weeks. Now he can walk, but with a limp. He has to wear a urine bag constantly, has short-term memory loss and must swallow 15 pills daily to control leg spasms and other ailments.

And even though his medical problems wouldn't have occurred if he hadn't been deployed, Lopez doesn't qualify for a special government benefit of as much as \$100,000 for troops who suffer traumatic injuries.

The hangup? His injuries were caused by the vaccine.

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