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Testimony: Soldier's son suffered severe injuries

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FORT RUCKER — Five-month-old Dedrick Fisher Jr. suffered injuries as severe as those an older child would have suffered from a television falling on his head, according to testimony during a hearing on post on Wednesday. The child's father, Dedrick Fisher Sr., was present at the Article 32 hearing to determine whether there was enough evi-

dence to continue through court proceedings against him. Federal authorities charged Fisher with involuntary manslaughter the day after Dedrick Jr. died last week.

With both a civilian and an appointed military attorney at his side, Fisher held his head down and wrote in a notebook while pictures of his dead child were passed among legal counsel. Dedrick Jr.'s mother, Eliana Arias Fisher, did not show up to testify.

A Fort Rucker special agent said during the hearing that Fisher admitted he was irritated when he shook Dedrick Jr. at least once in November before rushing him to a military police officer and saying the child choked.

Children's Hospital Dr. Melissa Peters said via phone on Wednesday that Dedrick Jr. suffered injuries not consistent with being shaken just once.

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Maj. Susana Watkins, a deputy judge advocate at Fort Rucker, speaks Wednesday in front of the Soldier Service Center. Max Oden/moden@dothaneagle.com

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Peters said she believed the child suffered critical traumatic brain injury and needed a tracheotomy. Dedrick Jr. also had

bruises on his arms and what appeared to be finger-nail pinches between his fingers, which might have been from someone checking to see if the child was still responsive, Peters said. Fisher Sr.'s civilian attorney, Victor Kelley, said he believed there was no evidence supporting an involuntary manslaughter charge

against Fisher. It could be another month before an autopsy report is completed.

Article 32 investigating officer Maj. Cayla Slusher, who presided over the hearing, is expected to make a recommendation to Fort Rucker Commanding Gen. James Barclay on whether enough evidence is present

to continue with the charge against Fisher.

Barclay is then expected to decide whether to forward the case to a general court martial who, within 120 days of the recommendation, would be expected to hear the case before deter-

mining Fisher Sr.'s fate. If convicted, Fisher could face dishonorable discharge and up to 10 years in a federal prison.

"You can see this case has been aggressively pursued by legal counsel, and that there is a system of checks

and balances," Fort Rucker Public Affairs Officer Lisa Eichhorn said.

Graveside funeral services for Dedrick Jr. were Monday in Greenville, Miss. It was not immediately known whether Fisher attended.

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