

a special soldier

Private Gregory Michael Sher was killed in a rocket attack in Oruzgan Province, Afghanistan, on 4 January.



The 30-year-old soldier was a member of the Sydney-based 1 Commando Regiment and, at the time of the attack, was with a Special Operations Task Group element that had deployed from Tarin Kowt to a provincial patrol base.

Private Sher leaves behind his parents, two brothers and a partner.

In the days after this tragic death, Greg's family issued a statement that spoke of the devastation felt by his entire family and circle of friends.

"Greg, for all who knew him, was a man of purpose and committed determination. He was an extremely positive person with a kind soul," they said.

"He was the sort of mate who would do anything for anyone, and his friends knew him for the great guy that he was.

"He was a loyal and loving family member who always put his family high on his list of priorities.

"His decision to serve his country was a true indication of his character. He always wanted to help and be of assistance, and he had this opportunity on a previous deployment to East Timor.

"Greg was much admired by his Army colleagues and was seen as a quiet achiever who always got the job done. His mates have described him as the best operator they have ever known."

The long journey home for Private Sher began in Tarin Kowt where his flag-draped casket was carried on a patrol vehicle along a route lined by Australian, Afghan, Dutch, Singaporean and Slovakian service personnel, to a waiting Hercules. Soldiers along the route held cyclume sticks to light their colleague's way.

A solemn ceremony at Australia's Middle East logistics base was attended by the Chief of the Defence Force Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston and the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel Warren Snowdon.

Air Chief Marshal Houston said the loss of Private Sher was a reminder of the sacrifice that Defence personnel make in the service of their nation.

"It is also a time for us to remember Private Sher's family. They deserve our respect, our support and our admiration," he said.

Commander of Australian troops in the Middle East Major General Mike Hindmarsh said Private Sher's death was a sad loss.

"Here was a digger doing his bit, doing what he wanted to do, and he has made the ultimate sacrifice. This loss is felt by his mates and all of us across the Task Force," Major General Hindmarsh said.

Upon arrival in Melbourne, the aircraft carrying Private Sher home, was met by family, friends and dignitaries. A Special Forces bearer party carried the casket from the aircraft through an honour guard.

On 12 January – eight days after his tragic death – family, friends and colleagues gathered at Melbourne's Chevra Kadisha Cemetery at Lyndhurst, Victoria, for the final farewell.

The casket, draped in an Australian flag, was taken to the cemetery aboard an Australian Army gun carriage, escorted by a bearer party and honour guard from the soldier's unit, and other Special Forces soldiers.

At the request of the Sher family, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd spoke at the service and paid respect on behalf of the nation to Private Sher's dedication and service to Australia and its people.



Private Sher's partner and brothers also spoke, describing him as a man who overcame his fears to achieve all that he had in his life.

A volley of shots was fired by a party from Private Sher's first Army Reserve Unit, 5/6 Royal Victorian Regiment, before he was finally laid to rest.

Private Sher was born in South Africa in 1978 and moved to Australia with his family in 1986. He joined the Army in 1998 as an Army Reserve infantryman and deployed to East Timor in 2002. In 2004 he completed the commando selection course and joined the 1st Commando Regiment, going on to complete the suite of Special Forces courses required to become a qualified commando.



Words from a friend

Private Greg Sher was both an inspiration to me and a role model. From the moment I met Greg, he gave off the aura of the invincible Special Forces soldier. Greg was, to many who knew him, a machine – someone who could complete any task set before him without the slightest hesitation, no matter how hard it seemed. At the same time, however, Greg was a caring friend to all, a friend who would take time out of his busy day to advise others. He

encompassed all the virtues of an Australian soldier and then some. Greg once told me that the difference between Special Forces soldiers and regular soldiers are the "one percenters"; the willingness to do those little extra things that make a big difference. That was what made Greg who he was, both in and outside of the army, going out of his way to help others, even people he barely knew. Greg spent his life giving to others, volunteering for causes that he believed in and requiring nothing in return other than his own personal satisfaction from having done so. During the process of my joining the army, to which Greg was so instrumental, I went down to see him march on ANZAC Day 2007 and he said to me, "next year we will drink here together as equals." And so, on ANZAC Day 2008, I was privileged to drink with him as a fully qualified soldier. This ANZAC Day I will drink to Greg and the amazing impact that such a kind, fun and strong person that he was, had on me and all those around him.

Thanks for everything Greg, I'll miss ya mate.

Private Paul Jurblum