



"Very sadly, overnight, an Australian soldier serving with the Mentoring Task Force Two in Afghanistan was killed in action. An Afghan local national, employed as an interpreter, was also killed. Both our soldier and the interpreter were struck by gunshots and despite immediate first aid, were unable to be saved."

COUNTRY BOY THROUGH AND TRUE



So came the all-too familiar message from Chief of Defence Force Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston on 20 February. "At the time of the engagement, as part of Operation Geelong, MTF 2 was undertaking an un-partnered patrol in an area to the south-east of Patrol Base Wali, aiming to extend our influence in the Mirabad region where we are building a new patrol base.

"The patrol was dismounted from their Bushmaster vehicles and stationary at the time of what appears to have been a coordinated insurgent attack, employing both machinegun and small-arms fire. The other soldiers on the patrol were able to repel the attack, provide immediate first aid and call for a medivac.

"Unfortunately, the soldier and interpreter showed no signs of life despite best efforts.

"The family of the soldier has been notified, and though they are obviously very distraught, they have agreed to the release of his name.

"Sapper Jamie Ronald Larcombe was 21 years old and from the Darwin-based 1st Combat Engineer Regiment. He had just passed the third anniversary of his enlistment into the Army.

"Jamie had also served on Operation Padang Assist and this was his first tour to Afghanistan.

"Sapper Larcombe is survived by his parents, three younger sisters and his girlfriend. They are a very close family, and can be very proud of Jamie.

"Though nothing compares to the grief of the Larcombe family today, I also want to acknowledge that this is another very hard day for the Australian Army. This is the 23rd soldier they have lost on this operation and the fifth combat engineer.

"And it is a most difficult day for the members of the 1st Combat Engineer Regiment who are deployed in Afghanistan – Sapper Jamie Larcombe is from the same Regiment as Corporal Richard Atkinson, who was killed earlier this month [2 February]. They have lost two of their mates in a very short period.

"The unit is doing it tough, but I have great faith in their professionalism, their determination and their ability to support each other as they focus on their mission and also return their fallen mate home to his family."

Sapper Larcombe's journey home began with a memorial service and ramp ceremony in Tarin Kot.

MTF 2 Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Darren Huxley said at the service, Sapper Larcombe was a young soldier who epitomised the core values of an Australian soldier.

"Mateship is what defines the best in an Aussie Digger and Jamie was among our best," Lieutenant Colonel Huxley said.

"Jamie was a volunteer for his country. He knew the risks of his chosen profession and he accepted them. He shared the danger and austerity, but mostly, I am sure, he was driven by his desire to protect and support his mates.

"Jamie Larcombe is now part of our nation's history and his name will echo in Anzac Day toasts long after all of us have gone."

At the conclusion of the memorial service more than 2000 soldiers from a coalition of six nations stood side-by-side to pay their final respects as the casket was loaded on a Royal Australian Air Force C-130 Hercules for the first part of his final journey home.

Sapper Larcombe arrived home eight days after he was killed, and was greeted in a dignified ramp ceremony by family, friends and dignitaries, at RAAF Base Edinburgh.

Jamie's parents, Steve and Tricia, his three sisters, Emily, Anne-Marie and April, and partner Rhiannon, were joined at the ceremony by the CDF Air Chief Marshal Houston, Chief of Army Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie, Commander 1st Brigade Brigadier Gus McLachlan, and Commanding Officer 1st Combat Engineer Regiment Lieutenant Colonel Matt Pearse.

Hundreds of family, friends and fellow diggers gathered on Friday 4 March on Kangaroo Island for Sapper Larcombe's funeral, and to honour his life.

The funeral service was held at Flagstaff Hill, Kingscote, in recognition of Jamie's childhood on the Kangaroo Island coast.

Jamie's mates from the 1st Combat Engineer Regiment formed an honour guard as a bearer party placed his coffin on a gun carriage to be carried to the cemetery. He was laid to rest as a firing party fired a volley of three shots, and the Last Post was played.

Larcombe family statement

Jamie Ronald Larcombe was born on 14 September 1989 at Kingscote Hospital on Kangaroo Island, South Australia and went to Parndana Area School where he was loved by all his peers.

He was a community-minded person who was a Country Fire Service volunteer, and played for his local footy club, Western Districts.

His life ambition was to serve his country.

Jamie was a fun, loving individual who loved life and loved to give where he could.

A dedicated brother, son and partner, he could always be relied on.

Anyone who came in contact with Jamie grew to love him for his personality and great sense of humour.

He was cherished by his local Kangaroo Island community, friends, family and his close Army mates, who are now mourning this great loss.

He will always be in our hearts.

