



**T**he Australian Defence Force took a terrible hit on 29 October when three soldiers were killed when a member of the Afghan National Army (ANA) opened fire with an automatic weapon at Forward Operating Base Pacemaker in northern Kandahar province, Afghanistan, immediately after a parade.

Seven Australian soldiers were also wounded in the attack. Thankfully, one with 'life-threatening wounds' improved after surgery but was still listed as serious – as were five of his colleagues.

Australian soldiers, including some of those who were wounded, engaged the gunman and killed him.

One Afghan interpreter was also killed. Two other Afghan interpreters and an ANA soldier were wounded.

The wounded were treated by Australian personnel at the scene before being evacuated by helicopter to nearby ISAF medical centres for emergency treatment. All seven Australian wounded were moved to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany within days.

The incident occurred during a weekly parade held by the 6th Kandak of the Afghan National Army's 4th Brigade and their Australian mentors.

Chief of the Defence Force General David Hurley said it was difficult to find words that adequately reflected the profound sense of sorrow and loss.

## TERRIBLE BLOW

### THREE STRUCK DOWN BY MENTEE

"As I'm sure you will understand, our troops in Afghanistan are in shock and they are in pain, but they are tough and they are resilient. I know that in these difficult circumstances they will find the strength and the determination to continue their mission and to honour their mates," General Hurley said.

"On behalf of the entire Defence community, I extend our deepest sympathies to the three soldiers' families, friends and comrades."



Bryce Duffy was born in Sydney, NSW, in 1984. He was educated in Brisbane and entered ADFA in January 2003, completing a Bachelor of Science, and graduated from RMC, Duntroon, in December 2006.

He was posted to the 1st Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, based in Brisbane where he served until 2010 before being posted to the 4th Field Regiment in Townsville in January this year as the assistant operations officer.

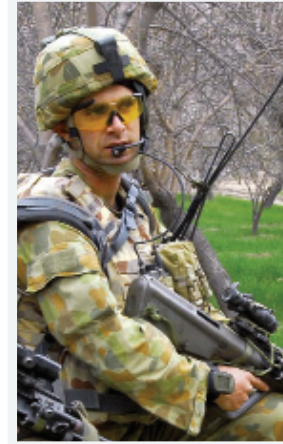
Captain Duffy was a well-known and highly-regarded young officer. He was recognised by his commanders for his strength of character, determination and diligence.

His peers remember him as an officer who maintained the highest possible standards. His selfless dedication to duty was demonstrated by the fact he had volunteered for his second tour of duty in Afghanistan at short notice, after a fellow officer was wounded in action.

Captain Duffy is survived by his partner, parents and family.

In a statement release by Defence on behalf of the family they said he was a Churchie (former student of the Anglican Church Grammar School), a rower, a surfer, a fisherman, a scuba diver and a much-loved member of a very-proud military family.

"He was the consummate professional, extremely competent and very well respected by his colleagues and commanders."



"He was passionate about what he did and truly believed in his cause, and always strove to serve his country in the best way possible."

"He held long career aspirations in the Army, having recently completed the SAS selection course and was looking forward to joining their ranks in the near future."

"We loved Bryce to the ends of the world and not a day will go by where he will not be thought of."





## RIP CORPORAL ASHLEY BIRT

Ashley Birt was born in Nambour, Queensland, in 1989. He enlisted into the Australian Regular Army in June 2007 and was allocated to the Royal Australian Engineers.

Following his Engineer Initial Employment Training and Specialist Technical Geospatial Basic Course in December 2008, he was posted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Topographical Survey Squadron as a geospatial technician.

Due to his natural leadership style, maturity, work ethic and dedication to his specialist trade, he was quickly promoted through the ranks – to lance corporal in February this year and to corporal in April.

Corporal Birt was serving with Combined Team Uruzgan.

His colleagues describe him as being a proud and well-liked soldier of the 1<sup>st</sup> Topographical Survey Squadron. He maintained a very high level of physical fitness and played hockey at the highest levels. His mates remember him as a great

bloke, a distinguished sportsman and an excellent soldier. He was a great mate to his many colleagues and was well liked by all. He was a larrikin and someone who was always smiling.

Deputy Commander Combined Team Uruzgan Colonel Dave Smith remembered Corporal Birt as a popular soldier, highly regarded by his peers.

"He was a well-respected member of CT-U headquarters and an outstanding soldier who was everything we want in a junior non-commissioned officer," Colonel Smith said.

Corporal Birt is survived by his parents Don and Linda and his brother Dale.

In a statement released by Defence on behalf of the family they said Ashley's death was a tragic shock to the whole family, his mates and the Gympie community. Ashley was a proud soldier who loved his job. He was a loving son, devoted brother, wonderful uncle and loyal friend who will be dearly missed.



## RIP LANCE CORPORAL LUKE GAVIN

Luke Gavin was born in Manly, NSW, in 1982. He enlisted in the Army in 2004 and, on completion of basic and initial-employment training, was posted as an infantryman to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, in 2005. He was promoted to lance corporal in January 2009.

Lance Corporal Gavin was a highly qualified soldier, having completed specialist training as a combat first aider, Pashtu linguist and infantry support weapons operator.

He was a highly respected member of 2RAR and was acknowledged by his superiors for his positive attitude and loyalty. His subordinate soldiers were motivated by his professionalism, mateship and outstanding specialist skills.

Commanding Officer MTF-3 Lieutenant Colonel Chris Smith described Lance Corporal Gavin as a fine and courageous soldier who was dedicated to the task of mentoring the soldiers of the Afghan National Army.

In a statement released by Defence on behalf of Jackie Gavin, she said, "On Saturday evening we received the most shattering piece of news that anyone could ever receive. My beautiful husband, best friend and father of our children lost his life."

"Luke was an amazing man, husband, father, soldier, son and brother. He always did the best thing for his family. He loved his country and truly believed that what Australia was doing in Afghanistan was a worthy cause.

"His parents and family are absolutely shattered and loved him so very much.

"Luke and I had been together for 12 years and married for three. We have three beautiful, amazing children, Joshua 7, Holly 5 and Olivia 7 months. I can't explain how we feel except that our hearts are broken.

"Luke and our kids were my life. I'm not sure how to live a life without him in it.

"We are all so extremely proud of him. He died doing what he loved and what he believed in.

"We will never forget him. We love him now, always and forever and he will live on through our beautiful children."



**Australian Defence Force, Coalition and Afghan personnel paid respects to their fallen comrades in a moving memorial service at Multi National Base – Tarin Kot on 1 November.**

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Australian, Afghan and Coalition personnel lined the road to an awaiting RAAF C-130 Hercules, saluting as the three Australian flag-draped caskets moved through their ranks.

The procession signalled the final departure from Afghanistan for the fallen soldiers and the commencement of a long journey home to Australia.

On 6 November, Captain Bryce Duffy, Corporal Ashley Birt and Lance Corporal Luke Gavin were met by their families and colleagues in a solemn and dignified ceremony at RAAF Base Amberley.

Soldiers from the 4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment Royal Australian Artillery, 1<sup>st</sup> Topographical Survey Squadron and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, formed an honour guard and bearer party to receive and carry the three caskets from the RAAF C-17 Globemaster.

Chief of Army Lieutenant General David Morrison, Commander 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Brigadier Stuart Smith, and Commander 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade Brigadier David Coghlan, attended the ceremony and paid tribute to the fallen.

"We are deeply saddened by the loss of these fine young soldiers. The circumstances in which they died were terrible," Lieutenant General Morrison said.

"I offer my deepest sympathy to the families, friends and comrades of those killed and wounded."

