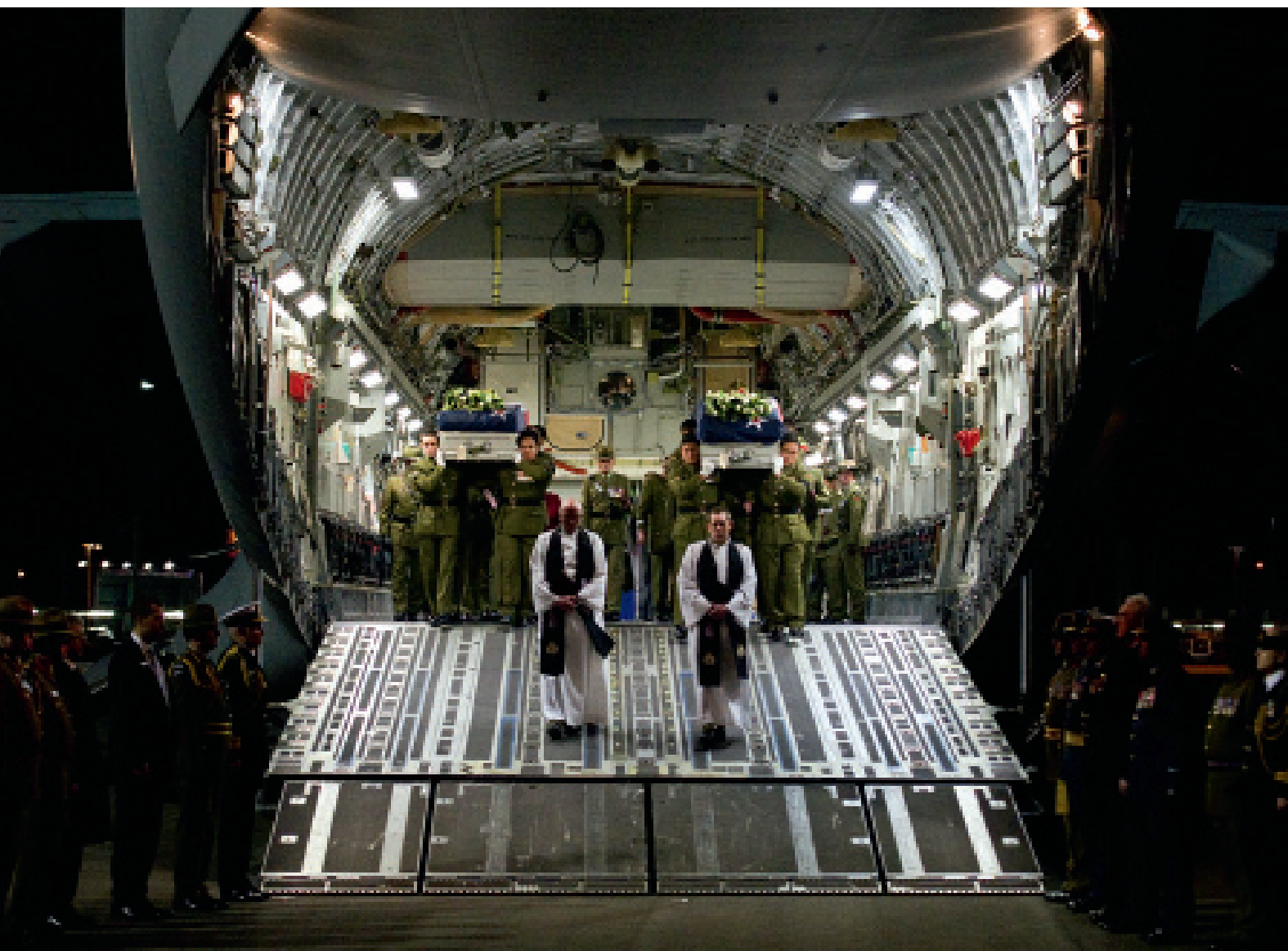


DOUBLE BLOW

On 5 August, Chief of the New Zealand Defence Force Lieutenant General Rhys Jones had the unenviable task of informing a shocked New Zealand nation that it had lost two of its young sons in battle.



"The New Zealand Defence Force can confirm that two personnel serving with the NZ Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan have been killed during an incident in the north-east of Bamyan province," Lieutenant General Jones said. "At approximately 1900hrs (NZ time) yesterday, NZ Defence Force personnel came to the assistance of local security forces who encountered suspected insurgents near a village south of Do Abe. "A further six NZ Defence Force personnel were wounded during the incident, and they were evacuated to a military hospital. Two local security personnel were also killed, and a further 11 personnel, including one civilian, were wounded."

The New Zealand soldiers killed were Lance Corporal Pralli Durrer and Lance Corporal Rory Patrick Malone, both aged 26, who deployed with the NZ Provincial Reconstruction Team in April – the first deployment to Afghanistan for both men.

Lance Corporal Durrer joined the NZ Army in June 2004 as a rifleman and was posted to 1st Battalion Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment. In September 2009 he trade changed to crewman, Royal New Zealand Armoured Corps and was posted to Queen Alexandra's Mounted Rifles, now based in Linton. Lance Corporal Durrer had previously deployed to Timor-Leste in 2006/07.

Lance Corporal Malone joined the Army Reserve Force in November 2002 and transferred to the Regular Force as a rifleman in September 2005 and was posted to 2nd/1st Battalion Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment, based in Burnham. He had previously deployed to Timor-Leste in 2006 and again in 2007.

Lieutenant General Jones said everyone in the Defence Force was deeply saddened by the loss.

"The events over the weekend reinforce to all that ours is a dangerous profession and, while we accept these risks, the death of colleagues and friends is always difficult to take.

"But New Zealand can be proud of the contribution being made, and so too the families of those who have been killed in the service of New Zealand in Afghanistan. Their sacrifice has not been in vain.

"On behalf of the entire New Zealand Defence Force, I again extend my deepest sympathies."

The two fallen soldiers were farewelled with a Ramp Ceremony at Bagram Air Base on 6 August, which included a send-off haka, led by Regimental Sergeant Major Warrant Officer Class One Ray Kareko.

Senior Military Advisor to the PRT Lieutenant Colonel Pete Hall said, "The Ramp Ceremony provided a solemn send off to our

mates and we remembered that they had fought courageously and acted bravely".

"I reminded those of us gathered around the caskets as we bade our final farewells, of the words of Pericles from almost 2500 years ago when he said of the dead Athenian warriors "Take these men for your example. Like them, remember that prosperity is for free, and that freedom is the sure possession only of those who have the courage to defend it," Lieutenant Colonel Hall said.

Lance Corporals Durrer and Malone were escorted by comrades from the New Zealand Provincial Reconstruction Team on a United States Air Force C-17 back to New Zealand where they were met by members of their families, senior military officials and personnel from their units.

A military commemorative service was held at Burnham Military Camp on 11 August before Lance Corporals Durrer and Malone were returned to their families for private funeral services.

