



Corporal Luke Douglas Tamatea



Lance Corporal Jacinda Francis Elyse Baker



Private Richard Lee Harris

NEW ZEALAND'S TRIPLE TRAGEDY

Three soldiers serving with the New Zealand Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan were killed in an improvised explosive device (IED) incident in the north-east of Bamyan province on Sunday 19 August.

They were travelling in the last vehicle in a convoy, and were hit by an IED north west of Do Abe, on the road to Romero, when the bomb detonated. All three were killed instantly.

The loss was a huge shock to the New Zealand Defence Force coming hot on the heels of another incident in which two soldiers were killed on 4 August.

The three soldiers were named as Corporal Luke Tamatea, aged 31, Lance Corporal Jacinda Baker, 26, and Private Richard Harris, 21.

All three were from the 2nd/1st Battalion, Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (2/1RNZIR) based in Burnham, and had deployed with the NZ Provincial Reconstruction Team in April.

Chief of Defence Force Lieutenant General Rhys Jones said, "Ours is a dangerous profession and, while we accept these risks,

the death of colleagues and friends is always difficult to take."

Senior Military Advisor to the NZPRT Lieutenant Colonel Pete Hall said he was a better man for having known them, during a farewell ramp ceremony at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan on 21 August.

An RAAF C-130 Hercules, with escorts from the NZ Provincial Reconstruction Team, transported the soldiers from Afghanistan to meet up with an Australian A-340 for the journey to Australia, from where a Royal New Zealand Air Force C-130, with escorts from 2/1RNZIR, 1RNZIR, and 2nd Health Support Battalion, took the trio on the last leg of their journey home.

A memorial service for the three was held at Burnham Military Camp, before the families held separate and private funeral services.



Luke Douglas Tamatea joined the New Zealand Army in February 2000 and was posted to 1st Battalion Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (1RNZIR) in Linton.

He deployed to Timor-Leste in 2001, to Solomon Islands in 2003 and to Sumatra to help with the Tsunami in 2005.

Corporal Tamatea had also previously deployed to Afghanistan in 2007 after being posted to the unit the same year.

He was promoted to Lance Corporal in September 2005 and to Corporal in June 2008.

Statement on behalf of Tamatea family:

There is no statement that could describe how saddened we are by the passing of Luke. This is a difficult time for our family, Luke's friends and his brothers in the battalion.

Luke took his job in the Army extremely seriously and was very proud of his service.

When he went to Banda Aceh in response to the tsunami, he really wanted to be on the first flight in as this meant he could make the most difference in people's lives.

The Army provided Luke with so many opportunities and it really changed his life around. He was a natural leader and was able to use his skills and experience helping others.

We are immensely proud of what Luke achieved in 31 short years.

Luke was a consummate professional as a soldier as his accomplishments show, but his proudest achievement is in his family he is leaving behind who will miss him most, particularly his four beautiful daughters who will remain his legacy.

The loss of Luke, the father, son, grandson, partner, brother, nephew, cousin and friend is difficult for us and our wider friends and family.



Jacinda Francis Elyse Baker

joined the New Zealand Army as a medic and was posted to Burnham Regional Support Company in April 2007.

She was posted to 2/1RNZIR in December 2007, and was deployed to the Solomon Islands in 2010.

Lance Corporal Baker received a Chief of Army Commendation in 2011 for her professionalism and courage during Exercise Southern Warrior in June 2008.

She was promoted to Lance Corporal in July 2008.

Statement on behalf of Baker family:

Jacinda was and will always be remembered as an amazing daughter, partner, sister, granddaughter, great granddaughter, cousin, niece, friend and soldier in the New Zealand Army.

We are still coming to grips with what has happened and words cannot express what we are feeling.

We feel forever blessed to have known her in her short 26 years. She was only nine days away from her 27th birthday on August 28th.

Jacinda was a girl full of spirit, always ready for her next adventure. She was fearless and would give anything a go.

Jacinda was loyal and our rock. She was the one to turn to if you needed someone calm, with practical help to get you through whatever it was you were going through.

Jacinda was professional. She was proud to be a medic in the New Zealand Army, proud of the work she carried out, and we in turn were and are so incredibly proud of her.

We know that she is in an amazing place with her Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, however, we will miss her more than she ever will know. She leaves behind a hole in our family that can never be filled.

We realise that we are not alone in this – there are two other families also grieving with the loss of their loved ones – and all of our sincere best wishes and condolences go to those families. Our love and prayers are with them.

We also wish to give thanks for the amazing love and support we have experienced from so many different people.

Richard Lee Harris joined the New Zealand Army in February 2009 and was posted to 2/1RNZIR.

Private Harris had previously deployed to Timor-Leste in 2009/2010.

Statement on behalf of Harris family:

Richard Lee Harris lwi affiliation Ngapuhi/Ngati Maru, 30 September 1990 - 19 August 2012

Richard was our pride and joy. He was such a good boy who loved his whanau dearly, and loved life.

Rich was a laid-back, quiet, fun-loving, mischievous guy who would light up the room with his smile.

He had a passion for rugby, playing junior boys for Patumahoe, then the First XV for three years while at Pukekohe high school.

In his free time he liked chilling with the bros.

Richard, the youngest son of Sandra and the late Harry Harris, grew and matured into a really cool young man who we are all so proud of.

He travelled back to his kainga Hokianga in April this year prior to being deployed to Afghanistan and spent time with his extended whanau.

Richard loved the Army and was looking forward to going to Afghanistan.

Richard's tangi will be held at Piki Te Aroha Marae, Rahiri, Hokianga and he will be laid to rest beside his father, the late Harry Harris in the Hutoia Urupa, Rahiri Settlement.

