

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Mystery Behind Deaths Of Soldiers

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/mystery-behind-deaths-of-soldiers-20111031-1msc8.html>

Dan Oakes
1 November 2011

ONE of the Australian soldiers killed by an Afghan counterpart at a remote patrol base at the weekend was about to join the elite Special Air Service, while another had three children and had learnt to speak the language of the province in which he was killed.

Yesterday Defence released the names of the three Australians, who were shot in the back at close range after watching a morning parade by Afghan soldiers on Saturday. They were Captain Bryce Duffy, Lance-Corporal Luke Gavin and Corporal Ashley Birt. An Afghan interpreter was also killed.



Proud servicemen ... Corporal Ashley Birt and Lance-Corporal Luke Gavin.
CREDIT: AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE

It is believed Corporal Birt has a brother serving in Afghanistan.

The information was released as the Labor MP Jill Hall told ABC News 24 she was "not 100 per cent convinced that at the end of the day we'll achieve a result in Afghanistan" and she would support any decision by the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, to pull out ahead of schedule.

Last night, hundreds of Afghan soldiers at the base at Shah Wali Kot in Kandahar province had been released from confinement in their barracks but their weapons had not been returned to them - a decision of the Afghan commander.

Sources said there was still no indication of why the Afghan soldier had "flipped" but there was nothing yet to suggest the killer was a Taliban "plant". He was shot dead by two Australian soldiers, one of whom was wounded in the initial attack.

Seven Australian soldiers wounded in the incident have been taken to the coalition base in the southern city of Kandahar and will be flown to the US military hospital at Landstuhl, Germany.

The condition of the most seriously injured of the seven soldiers has improved from life-threatening to extremely serious.

Captain Duffy's family said in a statement that the 26-year-old Queenslander was a "loved member of a very proud military

family" and he had just completed the SAS entry course.

It was revealed that he had volunteered - at short notice - for his second tour of duty in Afghanistan, after a fellow officer was wounded in action.

Lance-Corporal Gavin, 27, left a wife and three children. He had been trained as a combat first aider and Pashto linguist.

Corporal Birt's parents, Don and Linda, and his brother Dale said the 22-year-old's death came as a "tragic shock".

"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," they said.

The Defence Minister, Stephen Smith, said the Afghan commander would *decide* in the next couple of days whether to rearm the Afghan soldiers.



Captain Bryce Duffy, 26. CREDIT: AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE

He said it was not known whether the shooter was a rogue soldier or a Taliban plant, but he had recently transferred to the unit. "We may never know the motivation," he said.

"This is the second incident that has occurred in a number of months of this nature."

In May, an army cook, Lance-Corporal Andrew Jones, was shot dead by an Afghan soldier. His killer escaped but was later cornered and killed by US special forces troops on the other side of the country.

After Lance-Corporal Jones's death, it was concluded his killer was a "rogue soldier" rather than a Taliban sympathiser who had infiltrated the Afghan army.

Planning for the repatriation of the bodies of Captain Duffy, Lance-Corporal Gavin and Corporal Birt to Australia has begun but no date for their return has been decided.

The Opposition Leader, Tony Abbott, described Australia's mission in Afghanistan as "freedom's fight" and said the betrayal by the Afghan soldier was a reflection of the "malice of the enemy" rather than the unworthiness of Australia's involvement in the country.

Slain Soldiers Begin Last Journey

<https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/gympie/slain-soldiers-begin-last-journey/news-story/32c3344a77e953328ffa219cf528ed3f>

Arthur Gorrie
3 November 2011



Catafalque Party rests on arms during the memorial service. Australian soldiers and their Afghan coalition partners pay their final respects to their fallen comrades Corporal Ashley Birt, Captain Bryce Duffy and Lance Corporal Luke Gavin at Tarin Kot. Picture: Australian Defence Force

CORPORAL Ashley Birt has begun his last long journey home to Gympie, after a moving memorial service in Afghanistan.

The service, on Tuesday morning (Afghan time), was held at Multi National Base - Tarin Kot and was attended by thousands of his Australian, Coalition and Afghan comrades.

Corporal Birt, 22, was one of three young Australians who were tragically killed on Saturday, when a rogue Afghan soldier turned upon them and opened fire, immediately following a parade.

Captain Bryce Duffy, 26 and Lance Corporal Nathan Gavin, 29, were also killed.

Australian Defence Force commander in the Middle East, Major General Angus Campbell, said the army had lost three courageous soldiers who had served with distinction.

"Cpt Duffy, Cpl Birt and L/Cpl Gavin were held in high regard by their mates and their commanders and their loss has deeply affected all Australian and Coalition personnel serving in Afghanistan and the Middle East," he said.

"In true ANZAC spirit they gave their all because they believed they were making a difference for the people of Afghanistan - their sacrifice will inspire us as we go about our crucial mission here in Afghanistan," Maj Gen Campbell said.

Australian commanders in Tarin Kot reflected on the qualities of the soldiers during their eulogies at the service.

Deputy Commander CT-U, Colonel Dave Smith remembered Cpl Birt as a popular soldier who was 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."

Commanding officer of MTF-3, Lieutenant Colonel Chris Smith described Cpt Duffy as a reserved bloke with a sharp wit.

"He was a talented and dedicated young officer. This was his second tour of Afghanistan, having served with the first Mentoring Task Force," Lt Col Smith said.

"His comrade, L/Cpl Gavin, was also a fine and courageous soldier who was dedicated to the task of mentoring the soldiers of the Afghan National Army.

"(He) was a loving husband and father who had an infectious laugh and loved a joke. He leaves behind his wife Jackie and three lovely kids; Joshua, Holly and Olivia."

Maj Gen Campbell also acknowledged the seven Australian soldiers wounded and the Afghan casualties from the same shooting incident.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Australian, Coalition and Afghan personnel lined the road from the memorial service to a waiting RAAF C-130 Hercules, saluting as the three flag-draped caskets moved through their ranks. Col Smith said the three soldiers would never be forgotten.

Fallen Soldiers' Bodies Arrive Home

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-11-06/fallen-soldiers-back-in-australia/3638158>

6 November 2011



The Bearer Parties carry the caskets of the fallen soldiers at the commencement of the ramp ceremony to farewell Captain Bryce Duffy, Corporal Ashley Birt and Lance Corporal Luke Gavin on arrival to RAAF base Amberley, November 6, 2011. They were received by their family and colleagues from the 4th Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, 1st Topographical Survey Squadron, and 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment during a ramp ceremony held at the RAAF Base Amberley. (Defence: LS Andrew Dakin)

The bodies of three soldiers who were killed in Afghanistan last month have arrived back in Australia.

Captain Bryce Duffy, 26, Corporal Ashley Birt, 22, and Lance Corporal Luke Gavin, 29, were killed week ago when a rogue member of the Afghan National Army opened fire during parade.

A C17 transport plane carrying their bodies arrived at the Amberley Air Force base, west of Brisbane, around 2.30pm (AEST).

Soldiers and service chiefs formed a guard of honour as the three coffins, draped in Australian flags and carrying the men's hats, were carried from the plane.

The men's relatives joined the procession as it made its way to a hanger, where the families spent some time in private with their loved ones.

Chief of the Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison, then joined men's families and their units for a repatriation ceremony where the three soldiers will be recognised with service medals.

Lieutenant General Morrison was visibly shaken as he paid his condolences to the soldiers' families.

"I am deeply saddened by the circumstances under which these three brave men died," he said.

"These were three great men with such futures in front of them.

"They believed in their mission. Now we've got to keep the faith [and] stay focused on the mission."

Members of the military have described the fallen soldiers as talented and highly respected.

Captain Duffy was based in Townsville, as was father of three Lance Corporal Gavin. Corporal Birt was based in Brisbane.

All three soldiers were shot and killed by a rogue Afghan soldier.

Several other Australian soldiers were wounded and are recovering in Germany.

It was Corporal Birt and Lance Corporal Gavin's first deployment to Afghanistan, and Captain Duffy's second.

All were due to return to Australia early next year.

The deaths have brought the number of Australian soldiers killed in Afghanistan to 32.



Killed: (left to right) Captain Bryce Duffy, Corporal Ashley Birt and Lance Corporal Luke Gavin. (Australian Defence Force)

Fallen Soldiers Honoured At Repatriation Ceremony

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-11-06/fallen-soldiers-honoured-at-repatriation-ceremony/3638450>

11 November 2011



Visibly shaken - Chief of Army Lieutenant General David Morrison, AO places medals on Captain Bryce Duffy's casket during the ceremony. (Defence: LS Andrew Dakin)

Three Australian soldiers who were killed in Afghanistan have been honoured with service medals at an emotional repatriation service in Queensland.

The bodies of Captain Bryce Duffy, Corporal Ashley Birt and Lance Corporal Luke Gavin arrived at the Amberley air base, west of Brisbane, on Sunday.

The men's relatives joined the procession as it made its way to a hanger, where the families spent some time in private with their loved ones.

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The Commanding Officer of the 4th Regiment of the Royal Australian Artillery - Lieutenant Colonel Charles Weller - says Bryce Duffy was an excellent soldier.

"We know that as an army and a nation we are in safe hands because of warriors like Captain Bryce Duffy who put service before self and whose unconquerable will and indefatigable courage allow them to endure and to succeed and to put themselves into harm's way for their beliefs," he said.

Lieutenant Colonel Weller told the service Captain Duffy was an inspirational leader, "who comes home, unbowed, his duty done,

to a grateful nation, a saddened army and a grieving family".

Brigadier Stuart Smith described father of three Luke Gavin as a highly experienced soldier and devoted father.

"Troops under Luke's command said it was because of his courage, his initiative, his determination that enabled them to achieve success in several clashes with insurgents," he said.

"We deliver Luke to the care of his family."

The Commanding Officer of the Sixth Engineer Support Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Matt Galton told the service Ashley Birt served with passion and loyalty.

"Ashley leaves behind a grief stricken, yet supremely proud family," he said.

"His mother Linda, father Don, and brother Dale know better than anyone else that Ashley was one of a kind. Ashley's family, mates, and his home town community of Gympie are feeling his loss deeply and profoundly and we grieve with them."

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A memorial service will be held at the Enoggera Army Barracks in Brisbane this week.

Fallen Soldier Honoured At Brisbane Funeral

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-11-11/fallen-soldier-honoured-at-brisbane-funeral/3659634>

Annie Guest, Natalie Poyhonen and Siobhan Barry
11 November 2011



Captain Bryce Duffy's pallbearers place his casket on a gun carriage before it is taken to a waiting hearse. (Department of Defence)

The funeral for one of three Australian soldiers killed in Afghanistan, Captain Bryce Duffy, has been held at his former Brisbane school.

The Chief of the Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison, was among hundreds of people who filled the hall of the Anglican Church Grammar School on Brisbane's east-side, where Captain Duffy had been a student.

Captain Duffy, 26, died alongside Corporal Ashley Birt and Lance Corporal Luke Gavin almost two weeks ago after they were gunned down by an Afghan soldier training with the Australian Mentoring Taskforce.

The Townsville-based soldier had served Queensland's disaster recovery efforts and had volunteered for his second tour of Afghanistan when he was killed.

Captain Duffy had recently been accepted to join the ranks of the SAS.

Members of his unit based in Townsville in north Queensland, the fourth Regiment Royal Australian Artillery (4RAA), attended the funeral.

A member of Captain Bryce's regiment read the Ode of Remembrance and other gave eulogies.

Captain Duffy's family expressed gratitude to supporters for their compassion.

His family described Captain Duffy as a beloved son, loved brother and dedicated partner, and a friend and comrade to his school and army mates.

His sister, Cassie, told of wonderful sibling adventures, saying "Bryce, you were the best brother".

Captain Duffy's school friend, Ashley Lovell, remembered an adventurous larrikin.

"You were the salt of the earth mate, you'll be dearly missed," he said.

'Leader and warrior'

Captain Duffy's Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Weller, said in a statement he remembers a reliable soldier who was a "leader and warrior, respected and admired by all ranks".

Lieutenant Colonel Weller said Captain Duffy was an officer with unbounded energy, diligence and belief.

"Bryce is one of those magnificent people for whom life is about more than personal advantage – he believed in duty, honour and country, and dedicated his life to them wholeheartedly," Lieutenant Colonel Weller said.

"He was a consummate professional who loved soldiering – his chosen vocation.

"He accepted its privations and relinquished many of society's luxuries.

"Our nation is poorer for his passing but richer for his service - we will miss him."

Lieutenant Colonel Weller said Captain Duffy readily agreed to replace a wounded soldier and serve a second tour in Afghanistan.

"As a warrior he put service before self and went once again into harm's way," he said.

Captain Duffy was buried with full military honours at the Mount Gravatt War Cemetery on Brisbane's southside.

Funeral of Afghanistan Digger Captain Bryce Duffy held on Remembrance Day in Brisbane

<https://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/queensland-remembers/news-story/6cf9b2f491c6c4a96ede897cac72f4fc>

Sophie Elsworth and Kate Higgins
11 November 2011

THOUSANDS of people have turned out to Remembrance Day services in the southeast, as a fallen Digger is laid to rest in Brisbane.



Soldiers killed L-R: Corporal Ashley Birt, Lance Corporal Luke Gavin, Captain Bryce Duffy

THE body of slain Digger Captain Bryce Duffy has been carried into the grounds of his old school where hundreds have gathered to honour his life and mourn his loss.

The 26-year-old's slouch hat sat atop his flat-draped casket, as it was escorted into the grounds of Brisbane's Anglican Church Grammar School where he spent his teenage years.

An hour before Queensland will fall silent to mark Remembrance Day, Captain Duffy's family and defence force colleagues were offering silent prayers for a young life lost in Afghanistan. Captain Duffy died alongside two other Australian soldiers when a rogue Afghan army sergeant opened fire on a parade at Shah Wali Kot base in Kandahar province last month.

The Townsville-based soldier, who was part of Australia's mentoring taskforce serving in Afghanistan, was on his second tour in the country when he was killed.

Captain Duffy was described as a "highly regarded officer" who served his nation proud.

Duffy's sisters, Cassandra and Samantha, paid tribute to the fallen soldier who said he loved Crocodile Hunter Steve Irwin and hoped to join the army from a young age.

His sister Samantha spoke fondly of her older brother.

"You bleed green, you were army through and through," she said.

"Every time we spoke during your time in Afghanistan you would tell us of things you would do."

They told how Captain Duffy was born nine weeks premature and his parents were told he only had a 50 per cent chance of survival.

He was a popular man who was known to many as "Duffy, Duff, Duff Man or Duff Beer."

A fellow soldier read out a tribute on behalf of Captain Duffy's partner Candice who stood in front of his casket, covered an Australian flag with a slouch hat, wreath and sword resting on top.

"Bryce you were my childhood sweetheart, my life partner, my best friend, my soul mate," she said.

"You were the love of my life."

Defence force chiefs have joined Captain Duffy's family, and his partner, at the service.

Meanwhile, a memorial plaque will be unveiled in Gympie today to honour Corporal Ashley Birt, who died in the same attack.

The plaque will be unveiled as part of the community's Remembrance Day events, ahead of the 22-year-old's funeral in Gympie on Monday.

The third soldier who died was Lance Corporal Luke Gavin, 29. His funeral details are yet to be announced.