



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

CONDOLENCES

Sapper Jacob Daniel Moerland

SPEECH

Tuesday, 22 June 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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| <p>Date Tuesday, 22 June 2010 Page 6207 Questioner Speaker Robert, Stuart, MP</p> | <p>Source House Proof No Responder Question No.</p> |
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Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (5.31 pm)—I rise to speak on the condolence motion for Sapper Darren Smith and Sapper Jacob Moerland, and to pass on my sympathies and support to Angela Smith and their beautiful little boy, Mason; and to Jacob's fiancée, Kezia.

Sappers Jacob Moerland and Darren Smith from the Brisbane based 2CER, the 2nd Combat Engineering Regiment, died as a result of wounds sustained when an IED, an improvised explosive device, was remotely detonated on the morning of 7 June 2010, Afghanistan time. They were part of an Australian dismounted patrol conducting operations in the Mirabad Valley region of Oruzgan province. They were serving with the 1st Mentoring Task Force in Afghanistan, based around the 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment. Sapper Smith's explosives-detection dog, Herbie, was also killed. They were two young soldiers, sappers and engineers.

Sapper Smith's military career commenced as part of the Army Reserve, enlisting in November 2001, completing recruit training in January 2002 and then becoming part of 3rd Field Squadron in South Australia. He went on to become a combat engineer in 2004 and part of the Australian Regular Army, and he was posted to 1CER in Darwin in late 2004. Whilst at 1CER, he also successfully completed his explosives-detection dog handler course. He was subsequently posted to the 2nd Combat Engineering Regiment in January 2009. He had also completed his junior leader course in late 2008. His deployment with MTF1 to Afghanistan was his first operational deployment.

I still remember the first time I was deployed overseas on military operations; it was a mixture of much excitement as well as concern about some of the daunting things we would face. I have no doubt that Sapper Smith felt exactly the same thing, as well as incredible pride in the uniform he wore. When he looked at the left and right sleeves of his shirt, where velcroed on each arm was the Australian flag and the rising sun of the Australian Regular Army, it would have reminded him of why he served and who he served—his nation—and what he was part of.

Sapper Smith was deployed to Afghanistan in March 2010. As part of his deployment he received the Australian Active Service Medal with clasp International Campaign against Terrorism or ICAT, the NATO Service Medal and the Afghan Campaign Medal. He was also a recipient of the Australian Defence Medal. Sapper Smith leaves behind his beautiful wife, Angela, and a 2½-year-old son, Mason. They lived in Brisbane. He was 26 years old, born in Adelaide, South Australia. As I said, Sapper Smith's dog, Herbie, a 3½-year-old collie cross to whom he was very close, was also killed in action.

Sapper Jacob Daniel Moerland enlisted on 9 July 2007. He completed his initial recruit training at 1st Recruit Training Battalion in late 2007. After a suite of combat engineering courses in 2008, he was posted to 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment in Brisbane. It was his first posting as a combat engineer. Whilst there he went on to do a range of courses including protective mobility vehicle driving and combat first aid. Again, his deployment in January this year as part of Mentoring Task Force - 1 was his first deployment. As part of his tour he has been awarded the Australian Active Service Medal with Clasp, International Campaign against Terrorism (ICAT), NATO Medal and the Afghanistan Campaign Medal. He leaves behind his fiancée, Kezia, who lives in Brisbane. The young Sapper was 21 years old.

I met these two lads on a bright summer's day in Oruzgan province. Dust was everywhere. The second Combat Engineering Regiment had a detachment there that they brought out to demonstrate for a few members of parliament—who were visiting and embedded in the combat zone for just short of a week—their equipment, the gear they were using, how they operated and how they moved around obstacles. I remember seeing the two lads, one of them with Herbie, his dog, demonstrating how they clear mines, how they moved about and how effective the dog was in working for the troops. They demonstrated their mine clearing equipment and how they detect mines.

They had a couple of their mates and I grabbed all their gear because they were saying the gear was 'so heavy'. We talked about operational experience, what we have done and how much gear I used to carry in the paras. I

grabbed their gear and chucked it on. I put on their MCBAS—their modular combat body armour system—and their webbing. I grabbed their rifle, ammunition and water and I grabbed their portable ECM. I tell you what; I was weighed down by 50 kilograms. These guys were right; they were carrying an enormous load.

Combat engineers were in enormous demand and desperately sought after by every formation on the ground because whenever the troops would go out with the MTF or whenever our boys were deployed they would desperately seek combat engineers. As they came to obstacles, corners in the road or areas where they could not see they would stop and prop, and the engineers would go out searching for mines—improvised explosive devices. These are devices that are difficult to see and that have little or no metal content. Here they were with their metal detectors looking for the thinnest of wires by which to discover the mines and to protect their fellow soldiers.

These two men were proud of their jobs. They were proud of the fact that they kept coalition soldiers alive. They did their job well. Even as we spent a brief 30 minutes, you could see the pride they had in their work and in what they did, the pride in which they kept their equipment and their vehicle always ready for deployment and they were certainly always working hard. The hardest working guys in Afghanistan, I am sure, are the engineering guys, the combat engineers, the EOD technicians and the like.

It is attributed to George Orwell that:

We sleep safe in our beds because rough men stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm.

These two sappers were killed by a remotely detonated improvised explosive device, which meant that the Taliban insurgent who detonated it could see the target, waited until the men approached and then detonated the device. That should give the nation pause to think and should illuminate clearly the type of enemy we fight. This is not an enemy with any compassion or any compunction in destroying coalition forces, as they desperately seek their own extremist views of Islam and seek to impose that way of life upon the nation of Afghanistan.

We sleep safe in our beds here because of rough men like these two sappers, like the men of the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, like men of the Special Operations Task Force and like men and women of all the ancillary forces that make up the combat force in the Middle East. We sleep safe in our beds because rough men and women stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm.

Whilst it may sound a small statement, the sacrifice of these men is not in vain. They are a beacon of inspiration to others because they sought to provide a better future for the people of Afghanistan. They sought to provide freedom. They sought to provide a platform where little Afghani girls could go to school; where Afghan women were not brutally repressed and stuck in their homes; where violence was not the order of every day and where progress, freedom and aspiration could rein and grow. They sought to build a world in which the 93 per cent of the world's heroin that currently comes out of Afghanistan would not. They sought to build a world where infrastructure was the norm, where banking systems operate, where schools, retail establishments and opportunities in manufacturing could grow in Afghanistan. That is the world they went over there to try and build. That is the world they went over there to secure, to allow that world to be built.

These men stand tall as men who believed that all people, wherever they may live, should have the opportunity to live in a better world. They stand tall because they believed in a world free from violence, free from intimidation and free from oppression. It can only ever be a small comfort, but these men died doing what they loved; they served their country. They died with the Australian flag on their shoulder. As two highly professional, skilled and dedicated soldiers, they knew the great dangers—be under no doubt about that. They knew the great sacrifices required. They served in the great tradition of their country, knowing that the only way that evil prospers is if good men do nothing. They will never share a place with those cold, miserable souls who stand by in ambivalence. Their place is one of honour. They are universally saluted. And if freedom is indeed a sure possession of those alone who have the courage to defend it then may I say that Sapper Darren Smith and Sapper Jacob Moerland stand tall in this nation's history as men with the courage to defend freedom.

The ancient warrior, statesman and king Pericles, who founded the Athenian nation 2½ thousand years ago and led that nation during the first two years of the Peloponnesian War, said:

What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.

Lads, your families will not forget you. This nation will not forget you. Mason, you are only 2½ but one day you will read this, and you need to know that your dad was a deadset hero. And I will always remember that mild

April day in Afghanistan when I spent half an hour with a couple of combat engineers who proudly showed me their gear and their drills and spoke with pride of their responsibilities keeping coalition troops alive. They truly epitomised the Aussie digger. They were young men—keen, on their first appointment—and I think they added to and made the Anzac name incredibly proud.