

Soldier from Alaska dies in Afghanistan



By Rebecca Palsha, Kalinda Kindle | Posted: Tue 8:21 PM, Dec 12, 2017 | Updated: Wed 8:25 AM, Dec 13, 2017

ANCHORAGE (KTUU) A U.S. Army Alaska Soldier from Alaska died Tuesday. The military says it was "from injuries sustained in a non-combat vehicle accident in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan."

Staff Sgt. David Thomas Brabander, 24, was an airborne infantryman and served as a squad leader in the 3rd Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, U.S. Army Alaska at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

According to the Governor's office, he was from Wasilla.

His older sister Brittany Hunnings told Channel 2 that her brother loved to hunt and fish and that he was proud to serve his country.

"He died doing something that he loved," said Hunnings, "something that he was proud of. He believed that we should be there (in Afghanistan) helping the people that we should help them."

Hunnings says her brother was very close to his family.

"He was a very big family man, very very adamant about loving his family, very close with his friends," Hunnings said.

A close friend of Brabander, Army Spc. Daniel Hernandez, describes Brabander as highly intelligent, kind and incredibly loyal.

"One time my car broke down and I sent him a message and he was there right away," Hernandez said.

Brabander deployed with the brigade to Afghanistan in September, 2017 in support of Operation Freedom Sentinel.

Brabander enlisted in the U.S. Army in March, 2012 in Anchorage, Alaska. He was assigned to U.S. Army Alaska since November 2015.

His previous assignment was in Hawaii.

Governor Bill Walker ordered that United States and Alaska State flags be immediately lowered to half-staff in honor of Brabander.

"Staff Sergeant David Brabander died in service to his country, fellow Alaskans and his family," Governor Walker said in a news release. "When a soldier is deployed, his loved ones are enlisted for an emotional journey. I urge Alaskans to support David's friends and family during this incredibly difficult time. Byron, Toni, Donna and I are holding them in our prayers."



Hansen Bradee Kirkpatrick(1997 - 2017)

Private First Class Hansen Bradee Kirkpatrick lost his life on July 3, 2017, serving his country in the Helmand Province of Afghanistan. Hansen was born on Oct. 10, 1997, in Crescent, Calif., to Anngel Norkist and shortly moved to Alaska, where they met William Newnham. Will and Anngel were wed and Hansen was welcomed into what he liked to call "his too-large family."

As a child, Hansen loved to explore, taunt his baby brother, Hart, question authority and pester his little sister, Aujza. As a young adult, not a lot of that had changed and aside from being the typical big brother, Hansen loved his family and was a fiercely loyal friend to everyone he met. He would always lend a hand when he could and never denied a person in need. It's not often that you meet a person who can be a listening ear and comedic relief, but Hansen was great at both. He would offer a shoulder and, at the same time, would have a mischievous glint in his eye that told you he was about to make you laugh with an outrageous story or escapade. Hansen was self-proclaimed fluent in sarcasm, often joking, lovingly, at his friends' and family's expense. He had a quick wit and a smart mouth that often landed him into a spot of trouble. As soon as it started, Hansen would also talk himself right out of the mess. His family moved to Wasilla, Alaska, in 2015, but Hansen stayed behind with a friend to graduate early from Service High School in May 2015. It was during high school that Hansen met the love of his life, Anastasia Carr, and they began dating on Oct. 23, 2015. They married on Dec. 30, 2016, before his deployment and planned on surprising his family of his marriage once he returned from his tour in Afghanistan.

He often spoke of his future and his plans to join the U.S. [Army](#) and travel the world. He was fearless and had a craving for adventure and a thirst for excitement. Hansen loved to dream aloud about traveling to crazy places or fueling his inner adrenaline junkie and on his 18th birthday, Hansen planned to go skydiving. However, the weather decided not to cooperate so Hansen jumped a few days later instead. Hansen met with recruiters soon after his birthday and was sworn into the United States Army on Feb. 20, 2016. He completed basic training as a Mortarman for the Infantry in June 2016, and was stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas. On Jan. 10, 2017, Hansen deployed to Afghanistan assigned to the 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division.

He was due to come home on Oct. 5, 2017.

Hansen is preceded in death by his cousin, Devon Taylor.

He is survived by his wife, Anastasia Kirkpatrick of Anchorage, Alaska; mother and father, Anngel Norkist and William Newnham of Wasilla; brother, Hart Norkist; and sister, Aujza Norkist of Wasilla; grandmother, LoAnn Nelson of Newport, Ore.; grandfather and grandmother, Jeffrey and Carol Lowell of Anchorage; great-grandmother, Lola Kindt of Siletz, Ore.; aunt, Marjeana Backlin (Leif) of Wasilla; uncle, Cody Grella (Kory) of Anchorage; aunt, Makila Herd (Geoffrey) of Anchorage; aunt, Shamera Desinger (David) of Anchorage; and too many cousins to name; as well as the High Angel Hell Assassins, 2nd Platoon.

A private service will be held later this week at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. Hansen will be laid to rest at the Fort Richardson National Cemetery following the service. Donations to help cover the funeral service expenses can be made through GoFundMe at <https://www.gofundme.com/hkfund>.

Published in Alaska Dispatch News on July 18, 2017

Alaska Dispatch News

Alaska News

Alaska soldier killed in Afghanistan helicopter crash

✍ Author: Michelle Theriault Boots ⓘ Updated: October 29 📅 Published October 29



U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer Jacob M. Sims, 36, of Juneau was killed in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan on Friday, Oct. 27, 2017. Photo courtesy U.S. Department of Defense.

A U.S. Army soldier from Skagway was killed in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan Friday, military officials and the man's family said.

Chief Warrant Officer Jacob Michael Sims, 36, died in a helicopter crash in Logar Province, Afghanistan, the Department of Defense said in a statement.

Six other U.S. crew members were injured. The cause of the crash is under investigation, according to NATO's Operation Resolute Support in Afghanistan.

A provincial governor's spokesman told Stars and Stripes that the helicopter had "taken troops to the Kharwar district for a night raid" when it hit a tree, according to the newspaper.

Stars and Stripes reported that the NATO coalition denied that the crash was the result of enemy action. It's not clear whether Sims was the pilot of the helicopter that crashed.

Sims joined the Army in 1999 and trained as a combat engineer before becoming a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter pilot, according to a biographical statement from the U.S. Army's Special Operations Command.

The Department of Defense listed his hometown as Juneau. But Sims' sister-in-law Trisha Sims said he grew up in Skagway and graduated from school there. Sims' parents briefly lived in Juneau around the time that he joined the military, Trisha Sims said.

Sims was assigned to the 4th Battalion, 160 Special Operations Aviation Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington State. The unit is known as the "Night Stalkers."

He was a decorated veteran of numerous overseas operations in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, according to his biography. His awards included an Air Medal and a Joint Service Commendation Medal.

"Jacob lived by a creed that few understand and even fewer embody," said Colonel Philip Ryan, the commander of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment. "He will not be forgotten and his legacy will endure through his family, friends and fellow Night Stalkers."

Alaska Governor Bill Walker on Sunday ordered that U.S. and Alaska flags be lowered to half-staff in honor of Sims.

"Chief Warrant Officer Sims and his family made the ultimate sacrifice for the rest of us," Walker said in a statement. "Byron, Toni, Donna and I are holding his parents, his wife and his children in our daily prayers. While our state and our country lost a dedicated soldier, they lost their son, husband and father. Our military service members put themselves on the line in defense of the values we hold dear. We owe them a debt of gratitude."

** A previous version of this story listed the hometown of Chief Warrant Officer Jacob M. Sims as Juneau, based on Department of Defense information. Sims' family says he grew up in Skagway.*

**About this
Author**

Michelle Theriault Boots

Michelle Theriault Boots is a reporter for Alaska Dispatch News.
