

AFSOC Airmen killed in Afghanistan helicopter crash

HURLBURT FIELD, Florida -- *Posted 8/11/2011* Air Force Special Operations Command Public Affairs

Three Air Force Special Operations Command Airmen died Saturday morning when their aircraft, a coalition CH-47 Chinook, crashed in the Maiden Wardak Province in eastern Afghanistan. They were among 25 U.S. Special Operations Command operators who died in the crash, which also took the lives of five U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers, seven Afghan commandos and one civilian interpreter.

The Department of Defense announced today the Airmen were pararescuemen Tech. Sgt. Daniel L. Zerbe, Tech. Sgt. John W. Brown, and combat controller Staff Sgt. Andrew W. Harvell. All three Airmen were assigned to the 24th Special Tactics Squadron, Pope Field, N.C.

"This crash leaves us in AFSOC with heavy hearts," said Lt. Gen. Eric Fiel, AFSOC commander. "My deepest sympathies extend to the families of our fallen brethren and to their teammates. As we remember their sacrifice, we will press on and continue to provide unparalleled air support to our combatant commanders."

There was a private memorial for the Airmen at Pope Field today. There are no details on funeral arrangements at this time.





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SANFORD, NC Daniel Lee Zerbe, 28, stationed in Fayetteville, N.C., formerly of Red Lion, died while serving in the [U.S. Air Force](#) in Afghanistan on Saturday, August 6, 2011. Born in Chambersburg, on June 27, 1983, he was the son of Terry and Susan (Noel) Zerbe of York. Dan graduated from Red Lion High School in 2001 and enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in August of 2001. He served as a Technical Sergeant in the Pararescue Unit of the U.S. Air Force. In addition to his parents, he is survived by a brother, Christopher Zerbe of York; a sister, Megan Zerbe of Virginia; and paternal grandparents, Douglas and Shirley Zerbe, and maternal grandparents, Leslie and Sheila Noel, all of York. He is also survived by aunts and uncles, Wendy and Victor Spangler of York, Julie and Allen Bell of Virginia, and Steven and Kelly Noel of California; cousins, Libby Spangler, Chloe Noel, and Phoebe Noel; and his girlfriend of six years, Amanda Harke of Raleigh, N.C. A memorial service will be held on Wednesday, August 17, 2011 at 7 p.m. in the Auditorium of Red Lion High School, 200 Horace Mann Ave., Red Lion, with his pastor, the Rev. Richard Stuempfle, officiating. The doors will open at 6 p.m. Wednesday at the high school. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to That Others May Live Foundation, 4855 Ben Salem Way, Hahira, GA 31632; or to The Four Diamonds Fund, P.O. Box 852, Hershey, PA 17033-0852. www.etzweiler.com

Airman Daniel Zerbe, 28, of Red Lion, Pa., was a pararescue jumper in the Air Force, a special-ops position reserved for an elite few.

His family and friends say Zerbe decided to join the military long before the attacks on Sept. 11, 2011.

“He was proud of what he was doing. I know he was doing what he wanted to be doing. I hope something we taught him about being a team player carried on to his life’s mission,” Zerbe’s high school football coach George Shue told pennlive.com.



RED LION, YORK COUNTY—

Among the dozens of Navy SEALs and Special Forces killed in a chopper crash in Afghanistan, was a local Red Lion High School graduate.

28-year-old Daniel Zerbe was in the Air Force and was on the Chinook that the Taliban claim they struck.

The 2001 Red Lion graduate wrestled and played football all four years of high school.

"If you're gonna be in battle, this is the person you want to have with you in that foxhole," that's what his football coach, George Shue said about Daniel's character.

His coach speaks to Fox43 about Daniel's focus and aim to train not only for football but so that he can also serve his country in the Air Force.

"He was so proud of what he was doing and I think he couldn't wait to explain that to me about, you know, he's jumping, he's diving, he's doing the type of things his goals were set," said Shue.

Memorial arrangements are set for this week and he will be laid to rest in the Arlington Virginia national cemetery.

York County airman killed in Afghanistan helicopter crash succeeded in his military dream, family and friends say Published: Tuesday, August 09, 2011, 8:06 AM

Airman Daniel Zerbe's job was to keep other military families from getting that dreadful knock at the front door. He was a pararescue jumper in the Air Force, a special-ops position that requires rigorous training and is reserved for an elite few. In plain terms: He saved the lives of soldiers.

And that's what he was doing Friday night in Afghanistan along with 30 other troops, most of them Navy SEALs. They were protecting Army Rangers on the ground in a firefight with insurgents, and as they were trying to land, a rocket-propelled grenade brought down their Chinook twin-rotor helicopter.

Saturday morning in Red Lion, where Zerbe grew up loving football and dreaming of a military career, his family got a knock on the front door.

Their 28-year-old son and everyone else aboard that chopper died in the crash, including another Pennsylvanian, Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Michael Strange, a SEAL from Philadelphia.

It was deadliest single loss for U.S. forces in the decade-long war.

Friends and family gathered at his family home on Christensen Road, just east of York, where there is a "Support Our Troops" sign planted in the yard and an American flag flying.

Neighbors and friends said the family had requested that no one speak publicly about what happened.

Zerbe was a senior at Red Lion Area High School in the Spring of 2001 when he decided to join the military. The attacks of Sept. 11 hadn't happened when he set a goal of joining the Air Force.

His football coach, George Shue, remembers Zerbe creating a workout plan of swimming and lifting weights after practice to get ready.

For the next decade, his life was military. Pararescue jumpers are the last resort — called in the worst situations to perform rescues. Commonly known as "PJs," they are well-known for recovering NASA astronauts from water splashdowns. But they also are members of the only military unit trained specifically in the recovery and medical treatment of soldiers in battle.

About three years ago, Shue saw Zerbe while he was visiting home. He couldn't talk much about his missions or even say where he was going. But he wasn't shy about his task: saving lives. "He was proud of what he was doing," Shue said. "I know he was doing what he wanted to be doing. I hope something we taught him about being a team player carried on to his life's mission."

Zerbe was an active kid. He was on student council, prom court. He wrestled, too. And Shue wasn't surprised to hear that Zerbe — nicknamed Zerb by other kids — had succeeded in his dream. When Zerbe joined the football team as a sophomore, he wasn't the biggest, strongest or fastest. "But what he did with his offseason workout and work ethics helped him overcome that," Shue said. And football was a family affair for the Zerbes. His older brother played, his sister was a cheerleader and his parents were active booster club members.

That close sense of family carried onto the field, Shue said, and then into his career.

"Ironically, I used to say that if I have to go to battle, the guy I want beside of me is a member of this football team," Shue said. "That is the kind of individual that he was."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Pararescueman are no "ordinary" airmen. Their qualifications and special operations backgrounds are second to none. All are special forces combat divers, HALO and basic parachutist qualified, and highly trained weapons and small team specialists. PJs are the most highly trained and respected combat trauma medics the military world has to offer. The Pararescue career field has been around since Korea which makes it older than Special Forces and SEALs and should be acknowledged as such. HOO-YAH!!



Christie L. Wright



Daniel Zerbe

Congratulations Dan! We are all so proud of you. It seems like only yesterday we were watching this bright eyed little boy and now we are looking at a wonderful young man. We have many lasting memories and look forward to watching you begin your next journey.
Love,
Mom and Dad

Dearest Jen
I can't believe
yesterday
greatest joy
would grow
prayer that
phase of
same. R
that moment
always
you.
Love,
Mom

Air Force Tech. Sgt. Daniel L. Zerbe Died August 6, 2011 Serving During Operation Enduring Freedom

Dan was 28 years old, of York, Pa.; assigned to 24th Special Tactics Squadron, Pope Field, N.C.; died Aug. 6 in Tangi Valley, Wardak province, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when the CH-47 Chinook helicopter in which he was riding was shot down.

The Associated Press

A relative of an airman has confirmed his death in a Chinook helicopter crash in Afghanistan, a Pennsylvania television station reported. Daniel Zerbe joined the Air Force soon after graduating from Red Lion Area High School in 2001, according to WGAL-TV. Zerbe wrestled and played football in high school, according to The York Dispatch.

The Aug. 6 crash took the lives of 30 U.S. service members and eight Afghans. Military officials say the Chinook was involved pursuit of a Taliban leader. Red Lion is located in York County, about 15 miles north of the Maryland state line.

Friends have 'heavy hearts' after airmen deaths *By David Larter Staff writer*

One was a medic who abandoned plans to become a nurse anesthetist when he saw a recruiting ad for special operations. Another was a high school football player and wrestler who knew how to make people laugh. The third had a "terrier-type" mentality, according to his football coach.

All three were among the Air Force's elite — assigned to the 24th Special Tactics Squadron at Pope Field, N.C. And all three died Aug. 6, when the Taliban presumably shot down their Chinook helicopter during a night raid with soldiers and Navy SEALs.

"This crash leaves us in AFSOC with heavy hearts," said Lt. Gen. Eric Fiel, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command.

Friends remembered Tech. Sgts. John Brown and Daniel Zerbe, both pararescuemen, and Staff Sgt. Andy Harvell, a combat controller, as lifelong athletes who were proud of their jobs.

Brown, 33, grew up in Siloam Springs, Ark. The Pentagon listed his hometown as Tallahassee, Fla.

His mother, Elizabeth Newlun, told The Associated Press in a telephone interview that she was maintaining her composure so she could tell people about her son. "I think I'm internally very upset. But at the same time, I'm so very proud of my son," Newlun said. "I want to make sure that everyone knows that he's a hero. I can fall apart later."

Brown attended John Brown University with plans of becoming a nurse anesthetist but joined the military after seeing a video about special operations units. He was also an athlete, Newlun said. He swam and played basketball.

"He just loved anything physical, anything athletic," she said. "If I wanted to have a conversation with him that was serious, I would have to shoot baskets with him. There's nothing athletic about me, but I realized that you have to get into other people's comfort zone to get information."

An Arkansas state representative and friend of Brown's, Jon Woods, also remembered his athleticism.

"When you think of what the ideal model of a soldier would be, he would be it," Woods told AP. "He could run all day. We lived down the street from each other and spent time together after school and hung out. Even if we had a long day of practice, he would put on his sneakers and run after practice."

Zerbe, 28, grew up in York, Pa., and played for Red Lion Area High School's football and wrestling teams.

His coach, George Shue, told The (Harrisburg) Patriot-News that Zerbe was a team player. He said he saw Zerbe about three years ago, and though he didn't talk a lot about what he did for the Air Force, he was proud of his job saving lives.

"He was proud of what he was doing," Shue told The Patriot-News. "I know he was doing what he wanted to be doing. I hope something we taught him about being a team player carried on to his life's mission."

Zerbe's friends and acquaintances took to Facebook to share memories.

One friend said Zerbe's good attitude was infectious.

"I still remember the days of you goofing around," the friend wrote. "The smile you had that lit up a room and how you always made people laugh. Dan you are a true hero: my hero."

Others wrote about his ability to cheer up friends.

"Dan, you always made me laugh when I wanted to cry," a friend wrote. "That, I'll always remember. You were sweet, kind and absolutely funny."

PJs went through Kirtland during training *The Associated Press*

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — At least two of the 30 military personnel killed in last week's downing of a helicopter in Afghanistan received part of their elite pararescue training at New Mexico's Kirtland Air Force Base. According to an Albuquerque Journal report, Tech Sgts. Daniel L. Zerbe of York, Pa., and John W. Brown of Tallahassee, Fla., attended Pararescue School at Kirtland AFB, NM: the Pararescue Recovery Specialist Course and the Paramedic Course. In the 20-week Pararescue Recovery Specialist Course, PJs obtain paramedic certification, learn field tactics, mountaineering, combat tactics, advanced parachuting and helicopter insertion/extraction.

Both Zerbe and Brown were assigned to the 24th Special Tactics Squadron based at Pope Field, N.C.

Hometown remembers fallen airman *The Associated Press*

RED LION, Pa. — More than 1,000 people attended a memorial service on Aug. 17 to remember one of the victims of this month's Chinook helicopter crash in Afghanistan.

Air Force Tech. Sgt. Daniel Zerbe, 28, was one of 30 U.S. service members killed in the Aug. 6 crash.

Comrades and friends poured into Red Lion Area High School to reminisce about Zerbe. They

recalled him as a seemingly fearless fighting man who became a leader among his peers and a cut up who enjoyed joking with friends and schoolmates. One service member said Zerbe was the kind of person you'd want your children to grow up to be.

Two poster-sized photographs of Zerbe were displayed in the school auditorium, and before the service a video played showing photos of Zerbe throughout his life.

DOD Identifies Service Members Killed In CH-47 Crash in Afghanistan Published August 11, 2011

The Department of Defense announced today the deaths of 30 servicemembers who were supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. They died Aug. 6 in Wardak province, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when their CH-47 Chinook helicopter crashed.

The airmen killed were:

Tech. Sgt. John W. Brown, 33, of Tallahassee, Fla.

Staff Sgt. Andrew W. Harvell, 26, of Long Beach, Calif.

Tech. Sgt. Daniel L. Zerbe, 28, of York, Pa.

The following sailors assigned to an East Coast-based Naval Special Warfare unit were killed:

Lt. Cmdr. (SEAL) Jonas B. Kelsall, 32, of Shreveport, La.

Special Warfare Operator Master Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Louis J. Langlais, 44, of Santa Barbara, Calif.

Special Warfare Operator Senior Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Thomas A. Ratzlaff, 34, of Green Forest, Ark.

Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician Senior Chief Petty Officer (Expeditionary Warfare Specialist/Freefall Parachutist) Kraig M. Vickers 36, of Kokomo, Hawaii

Special Warfare Operator Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Brian R. Bill, 31, of Stamford, Conn.

Special Warfare Operator Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) John W. Faas, 31, of Minneapolis, Minn.

Special Warfare Operator Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Kevin A. Houston, 35, of West Hyannisport, Mass.

Special Warfare Operator Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Matthew D. Mason, 37, of Kansas City, Mo.

Special Warfare Operator Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Stephen M. Mills, 35, of Fort Worth, Texas

Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician Chief Petty Officer (Expeditionary Warfare Specialist/Freefall Parachutist/Diver) Nicholas H. Null, 30, of Washington, W.Va.

Special Warfare Operator Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Robert J. Reeves, 32, of Shreveport, La.

Special Warfare Operator Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) Heath M. Robinson, 34, of Detroit, Mich.

Special Warfare Operator Petty Officer 1st Class (SEAL) Darrik C. Benson, 28, of Angwin, Calif.

Special Warfare Operator Petty Officer 1st Class (SEAL/Parachutist) Christopher G. Campbell, 36, of Jacksonville, N.C.

Information Systems Technician Petty Officer 1st Class (Expeditionary Warfare Specialist/Freefall Parachutist) Jared W. Day, 28, of Taylorsville, Utah

Master-at-Arms Petty Officer 1st Class (Expeditionary Warfare Specialist) John Douangdara, 26, of South Sioux City, Neb.

Cryptologist Technician (Collection) Petty Officer 1st Class (Expeditionary Warfare Specialist) Michael J. Strange, 25, of Philadelphia, Pa.

Special Warfare Operator Petty Officer 1st Class (SEAL/Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist) Jon T. Tumilson, 35, of Rockford, Iowa.

Special Warfare Operator Petty Officer 1st Class (SEAL) Aaron C. Vaughn, 30, of Stuart, Fla.

Special Warfare Operator Petty Officer 1st Class (SEAL) Jason R. Workman, 32, of Blanding, Utah.

The following sailors assigned to a West Coast-based Naval Special Warfare unit were killed:
Special Warfare Operator Petty Officer 1st Class (SEAL) Jesse D. Pittman, 27, of Ukiah, Calif.

Special Warfare Operator Petty Officer 2nd Class (SEAL) Nicholas P. Spehar, 24, of Saint Paul, Minn.

The soldiers killed were:

Chief Warrant Officer David R. Carter, 47, of Centennial, Colo. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment (General Support Aviation Battalion), Aurora, Colo.

Chief Warrant Officer Bryan J. Nichols, 31, of Hays, Kan. He was assigned to the 7th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment (General Support Aviation Battalion), New Century, Kan.

Sgt. Patrick D. Hamburger, 30, of Lincoln, Neb. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment (General Support Aviation Battalion), Grand Island, Neb.

Sgt. Alexander J. Bennett, 24, of Tacoma, Wash. He was assigned to the 7th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment (General Support Aviation Battalion), New Century, Kan.

Spc. Spencer C. Duncan, 21, of Olathe, Kan. He was assigned to the 7th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment (General Support Aviation Battalion), New Century, Kan.