

Clearlake Marine dies in Afghanistan

Contributed by Elizabeth Larson
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THIS STORY HAS BEEN UPDATED

CLEARLAKE – A young Clearlake Marine died Monday after being wounded in combat in Afghanistan, becoming Lake County's first military casualty of the war in the Middle East.

PFC Ivan Wilson, 22, was fatally wounded by an improvised explosive device while serving in combat operations as part of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

Ginny Craven, founder of Operation Tango Mike and a friend of the family, confirmed Wilson's death. She said the US Marine Corps notified Wilson's mother, Denise Wilson of Clearlake, shortly after 5 a.m. Monday.

Military officials did not release additional details to Lake County News on Monday about the circumstances surrounding Wilson's death.

However, he may have been the same unnamed soldier who the Associated Press reported died Monday after being wounded over the weekend by a roadside bomb in the Helmand provide.

Located in southern Afghanistan, Helmand province is where the Taliban insurgency has proved the strongest, according to the Associated Press.

Lake County Veterans Services Officer Jim Brown said Wilson has the tragic distinction of being the first soldier from Lake County to die in the current Middle Eastern military operations.

However, Wilson's isn't the first death associated with the war to strike close to home. In April 2005, peace activist and Lakeport native Marla Ruzicka and her Iraqi translator, Faiz Ali Alim, were killed by a suicide car bomber in Baghdad.

Wilson was on his second tour of duty in the Middle East. He had served in Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom from Jan. 29 to Aug. 25, 2007.

“This is definitely close to the heart of all of us,” said Craven, explaining that Wilson had had a chance to visit with community members during visits home, so he had become well-known.

A 2004 graduate of Clearlake Community School, Wilson enlisted in the US Marine Corps on Sept. 11, 2005. He was a rifleman with the Third Platoon, Second Battalion, Seventh Marine Division, Fox Company.

Wilson's death comes at a time of escalating violence in Afghanistan, where 559 US soldiers have died in the past seven years and thousands more Afghan civilians have perished.

The Web site icasualties.org, which tracks deaths in war zones, reported Monday that June was the deadliest month for coalition military personnel since military operations began in Afghanistan in 2001, with 45 deaths, compared to 31 in Iraq.

So far this month there have been 24 deaths in Afghanistan, and 22 in Iraq, according to the group's statistics.

Last September, at an Operation Tango Mike packing party, Supervisor Rob Brown presented Denise Wilson with a proclamation congratulating and thanking the Marine for his service in Iraq.

Brown said that the Board of Supervisors will hold a moment of silence in memory of Ivan Wilson at the Tuesday board meeting.

In addition to his mother, father and grandparents, Wilson is survived by siblings Nathan and Jackie, and members of the local veterans community, Craven said.

The family said through Craven that they'll have more information about services shortly.

Craven said the family needs time to cope with the tragedy and asks that their privacy be respected at this time.

Community members and friends may send cards and letters to Denise Wilson, PO Box 1624, Lower Lake, CA 95457.

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