

NCO killed in Afghanistan posthumously promoted, awarded Bronze Star

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NCO Journal staff report

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Sgt. John Perry, 30, was posthumously promoted to staff sergeant and awarded the Bronze Star after being killed in a suicide bombing in Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan.

Perry, 30, of Stockton, California, and Pfc. Tyler R. Lubelt, 20, of Tamaroa, Illinois, who also died in the Veterans Day attack, served with the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Sustainment Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, at Fort Hood, Texas, which has been deployed to Afghanistan since late summer.

Two military contractors were also killed in the bombing.

“I want to express my sincere condolences to the families of the fallen, and I want to reassure the loved ones of those injured that they are getting the best possible care,” Secretary of Defense Ash Carter said in a news release. “Force protection is always a top priority for us in Afghanistan, and we will investigate this tragedy to determine any steps we can take to improve it. For those who carried out this attack, my message is simple. We will not be deterred in our mission to protect our homeland and help Afghanistan secure its own future.”

Sixteen other U.S. service members and one Polish soldier were wounded in the Bagram blast by a suicide bomber with an explosive vest, the Pentagon said. The Taliban claimed responsibility. The attacker struck as people were gathering for a Veterans Day fun run.

Days earlier, six people were killed and more than 100 were wounded at the German Consulate in Mazar-i-Sharif, the Associated Press reported.

Perry joined the Army in 2008 and was a test, measurement and diagnostic equipment maintenance support specialist who had been at Bagram about two months, the San Antonio (Texas) Express-News reported. He was on his second deployment to Afghanistan, having served there from August 2010 to July 2011. Lubelt joined the Army last year and was a motor transport operator. He was on his first deployment, arriving in Afghanistan in September.

Perry's father, Stewart Perry, told California television station Fox 40 that before the bombing, Perry had changed a training location, moving a group of Soldiers away from the larger crowd gathered for the run.

"He made a decision that saved a lot of people's lives," Stewart Perry said.

Perry's father and other members of his family traveled to Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, to meet Staff Sgt. Perry's remains. That trip made headlines after first-class passengers reportedly booed when Stewart Perry and his family were let off a plane early to catch a connecting flight.

Stewart Perry, though, commended the Army and the government for its treatment of his son and his family to Fox 40. Vice President Joe Biden was among the dignitaries who met the family at Dover Air Force Base.

"We really appreciate what Vice President Biden did and his care," Stewart Perry said. "He stood on that flight line and saluted with his hand across his chest."