

Boneca's LSSR mates will stand vigil

BY SARAH ELIZABETH BROWN
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Cpl. Anthony Boneca doesn't make the long trip home alone.

After a bullet caught the infantry soldier just above his body armour on Sunday morning west of Kandahar City, 1,000 coalition soldiers saw him off at the airfield base outside that city.

Two fellow soldiers watched over his flag-covered casket during the flight back to Canada.

Met last evening at CFB Trenton by his family, military officials and the governor general, Boneca's remains will be flown to Thunder Bay later this week.

Accompanying him on that flight will be Mark Singleton,

warrant officer for Boneca's Lake Superior Scottish Regiment platoon.

Back in the city where he was born and raised, eight LSSR pallbearers will carry Boneca's casket from the aircraft onto an open army truck, which will take him to Harbourview Funeral Centre.

As he lies in state during the weekend, Boneca's mates will stand vigil until Monday morning.

Again in an army truck, with police escort, the same eight pallbearers in the LSSR's full Highland dress uniforms with MacGillivray tartan kilts will make the ride with the reservist to St. Patrick's Cathedral on the city's south side.

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Fitting sendoff for T-Bone

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The cathedral holds about 1,100 and the public is welcome to attend. Family and military personnel alone will number well over 250 people, said chief warrant officer Dave Coffey, sergeant major for 38 Canadian Brigade Group, the all-reserve brigade of which the LSSR is a part.

"You never go into battle by yourself," Coffey said Wednesday.

Even a full battalion of 700 soldiers never fights alone, but is supported by aircraft and artillery, he said.

"It's significant that you're never left alone."

Once guests are seated by 11 a.m. on Monday, the pallbearers will march Boneca's casket into the cathedral.

During the ceremony, Boneca's balmoral, the jaunty LSSR-issue hat topped with a pom-pom, will rest on his casket along with his service medals.

Leading the funeral mass will be Rev. Gerald McDougall, a Jesuit priest and pastor at St. Peter's Church in the East End, a neighbourhood to which the Boneca family has connections.

On hand will be Brig.-Gen. Denis Tabbenor, the highest ranking officer in the army reserve, Brig.-Gen. Tim Grant, commander of Land Forces West Area, and Col. Kelly Woiden, commander of 38 Canadian Brigade Group.

Once his casket is piped out of the cathedral by a military bagpiper, it will be re-loaded onto the army truck and taken to a family-only ceremony at Mountainview Cemetery.

Sailors and soldiers from HMCS Griffon and other units based at the Park Avenue Armoury will make up the firing party conducting a 21-gun salute with standard-issue C7 rifles.

Boneca's parents will be presented with their son's balmoral, the Canadian flag that's accompanied his casket from Kandahar and his service medals from his two tours overseas.

Shirley Boneca, the young soldier's mother, will be presented with the Silver Cross, a medal is given to every mother of a soldier killed in action.

LSSR chief, Lt.-Col. Brent Faulkner, accompanied the families of Boneca and his girlfriend to CFB Trenton for Wednesday's repatriation ceremony.

Chief warrant officer George Romick, LSSR regimental sergeant major, and Capt. David Ratz, commander of the LSSR's A Company, also accompanied the families.

Called Tony by friends, T-Bone by military buddies and Anthony by family so as to not mix him up with his father Antonio, Boneca was a member of the LSSR — or a Lake Sup, pronounced "soup" — for about four years, signing up after high school.

When he wasn't overseas on either of his two tours, Boneca worked at the Armoury on Park Avenue.

Between his two tours, from February to June 2005, he was among a handful of LSSR staff who trained high-school students in a co-op program that saw mostly Grade 12 students undergo 40 weeks of paid army reserve training.

In that program, which saw the high school recruits finish as full members of the reserves, he helped teach both the basic military qualification and the soldier's qualification course.

Books of condolences can be signed at city hall and the Armoury.