

Table of Contents

<u>Friendly fire took soldier's life: report; U.S. army finds special forces unit shot Canadian in Afghan firefight.....</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Soldiers' shooting was an accident: report; Canadian, American killed by gunner from U.S. special forces during intense Afghan battle.....</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Friendly fire killed Canadian; Report: Soldier shot by U.S. from behind.....</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Report: Canadian killed by friendly fire.....</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Canadian soldier killed by friendly fire in 2006 battle: U.S. army report.....</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Friendly fire killed Canadian: U.S. Army; Soldiers hit from behind by machine-gun bursts in 2006, report finds.....</u>	<u>10</u>
<u>U.S. friendly fire killed Canadian.....</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>Friendly fire killed Canadian; Investigators find U.S. Special Forces machine-gunned local soldier....</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>Friendly fire killed Canadian; Investigators find U.S. Special Forces machine-gunned local soldier....</u>	<u>15</u>
<u>Friendly fire killed Canuck: U.S. army.....</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>Friendly fire killed soldiers.....</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>Two soldiers died from friendly fire.....</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>Friendly fire killed Canuck: U.S. report.....</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>Canadian killed by allied fire Army report says bullets from U.S. compound hit troops during battle with insurgents.....</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>Canadian killed by friendly fire, U.S. report says.....</u>	<u>25</u>
<u>U.S. bullet killed Gibsons soldier: report.....</u>	<u>26</u>
<u>Friendly fire killed Canadian soldier: probe; 'He will always be my hero,' gunner's Calgary brother says.....</u>	<u>28</u>
<u>Killed by friendly fire.....</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>U.S. friendly fire killed Canadian: report.....</u>	<u>31</u>
<u>Canadian was killed by friendly fire: report.....</u>	<u>32</u>
<u>U.S. SPECIAL FORCES RESPONSIBLE FOR CANADIAN GUNNER'S DEATH: REPORT.....</u>	<u>33</u>

Table of Contents

<u>THE AFGHAN MISSION Canadian was shot in back, U.S. army confirms Long-awaited report points to friendly fire in Pte. Costall's death.....</u>	<u>34</u>
<u>Canadian killed by friendly fire: U.S. probe.....</u>	<u>36</u>
<u>Canadian was killed by U.S. fire.....</u>	<u>37</u>

Friendly fire took soldier's life: report; U.S. army finds special forces unit shot Canadian in Afghan firefight

IDNUMBER 200707030119
PUBLICATION: The Record (Kitchener, Cambridge And Waterloo)
DATE: 2007.07.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Front
PAGE: A1
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Canadian Pte. Robert Costall died after he was hit by friendly fire during a battle with insurgents last year. ;
DATELINE: MONTPELIER, VT.
SOURCE: Associated Press – Canadian Press
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 511

Canadian Pte. Robert Costall and an American soldier were shot from behind by bursts from a machine-gun fired from a compound manned by U.S. special forces last year in Afghanistan during an insurgent attack, a U.S. army report says.

One account in the report says the gunner shot at two friendly positions in quick succession during the fierce battle early on March 29, 2006.

The friendly fire killed the two soldiers and wounded a number of others at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

The army report was released to The Associated Press yesterday. It contains a collection of witness statements assembled by American investigators.

Costall, a 22-year-old machine-gunner, was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and grew up in Gibson, B.C. The possibility of him being killed by friendly fire was raised earlier by his wounded comrades.

The U.S. army report presents witness statements that support those reports.

It says Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard was shot once in the back and once in the head by machine-gun rounds while crouching behind a wall atop a building where he and other allied troops were repelling a major nighttime attack.

The friendly fire from behind also killed Costall and wounded others defending the base, according to the report.

Earlier Canadian reports said Costall was also felled by two bullets.

His platoon, of the 1st Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, were rushed in as reinforcements to the outpost that had come under a series of attacks by insurgents.

A first sergeant referred to as witness 1 in the report says: "When the majority of the firefight took place (at) approximately 02:15, the (special forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward

Friendly fire took soldier's life: report; U.S. army finds special forces unit shot Canadian in Afghan firefight

the perimeter, I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position."

Witness 1 said he whistled to signal the special forces soldiers to stop firing.

"The S.F. security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American compound," the witness said — referring to the location where Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

Investigators found a string of bullet holes from the gunner's location to the wall that Stone and others were using as cover from enemy fire from outside the base.

The report includes statements from some special forces soldiers at the battle, but, not apparently from the soldier believed to have fired the M240 machine-gun that killed Stone and Costall.

The report does not indicate whether anyone was disciplined.

It did not have any statements from the Canadian soldiers present.

A separate investigation into the incident was ordered by the Canadian Forces National Investigative Service.

A spokesperson for the U.S. Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, N.C., said he was unaware of the report and could not immediately answer questions about it.

The report detailed how Americans and Afghan soldiers at Forward Operating Base Robinson were expecting to be attacked that night in retaliation for a coalition attack on enemy forces in the area.

A group of about 30 Canadian soldiers were brought in that day as reinforcements.

The Canadians were positioned behind a berm at the northeast corner of the compound.

Stone was sleeping when the attack began with mortar rounds just before 2 a.m.

Small-arms fire followed. Stone went to the roof of the building where he was staying when the fighting started.

An army captain was wounded on the roof not far from Stone. Soldiers tending to the captain found Stone slumped against the wall, apparently killed instantly by the bullets that hit him.

Another witness stated Stone's body armour was found underneath his bed.

Stone's comrades were immediately aware that the shots that hit him and wounded the others came from behind them.

The U.S. Central Command in Florida released the report in response to a freedom of information act request.

Other than Stone and Costall, all other names were blacked out in the report.

Soldiers' shooting was an accident: report; Canadian, American killed by gunner from U.S. special forces during intense Afghan battle

IDNUMBER 200707030080

PUBLICATION: Times & Transcript (Moncton)

DATE: 2007.07.03

SECTION: News

PAGE: C1

COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Times & Transcript (Moncton)

WORD COUNT: 366

Canadian Pte. Robert Costall and an American soldier were shot from behind by bursts from a machine-gun fired from a compound manned by U.S. special forces last year in Afghanistan during an insurgent attack, a U.S. army report says.

One account in the report says the gunner shot at the two positions in quick succession during the fierce battle early on March 29, 2006.

The fire killed the two soldiers and wounded a number of others at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

The army report was released to The Associated Press yesterday. It contains a collection of witness statements assembled by American investigators.

Costall, a 22-year-old machine-gunner, was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and grew up in Gibson, B.C. The possibility of him being killed by fire from behind was raised earlier by his wounded comrades.

The U.S. army report presents witness statements that support those reports.

It says Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard was shot once in the back and once in the head by machine-gun rounds while crouching behind a wall atop a building where he and other allied troops were repelling a major night-time attack.

The fire from behind also killed Costall and wounded others defending the base, according to the report.

Earlier Canadian reports said Costall was also felled by two bullets.

His platoon, of 1st Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, was rushed in as reinforcement to the outpost, which had come under a series of attacks by insurgents.

A first sergeant referred to as Witness 1 in the report says: "When the majority of the firefight took place (at) approximately 02:15, the (Special Forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position."

Witness 1 said he whistled to signal the Special Forces soldiers to stop firing.

"The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in

Soldiers' shooting was an accident: report; Canadian, American killed by gunner from U.S. special forces du

the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said — referring to the location where Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

Investigators found a string of bullet holes from the gunner's location to the wall that Stone and others were using as cover from enemy fire from outside the base.

The report includes statements from some Special Forces soldiers at the battle, but not apparently from the soldier believed to have fired the M240 machine-gun that killed Stone and Costall.

The report does not indicate whether anyone was disciplined.

It did not have any statements from the Canadian soldiers present.

A separate investigation into the incident was ordered by the Canadian Forces National Investigative Service.

Friendly fire killed Canadian; Report: Soldier shot by U.S. from behind

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald

DATE: 2007.07.03

SECTION: World

PAGE: A4

SOURCE: The Associated Press

BYLINE: Wilson Ring

WORD COUNT: 353

MONTPELIER, Vt. – Canadian Pte. Robert Costall and an American soldier were shot from behind by bursts from a machine–gun fired from a compound manned by U.S. special forces last year in Afghanistan during an insurgent attack, a U.S. army report says.

One account in the report says the gunner shot at two friendly positions in quick succession during the fierce battle early on March 29, 2006.

The friendly fire killed the two soldiers and wounded a number of others at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

The army report was released to The Associated Press on Monday. It contains a collection of witness statements assembled by American investigators.

Costall, a 22–year–old machine–gunner, was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and grew up in Gibsons, B.C.

The possibility of him being killed by friendly fire was raised earlier by his wounded comrades.

The U.S. army report presents witness statements that support those reports.

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Earlier Canadian reports said Costall was also felled by two bullets.

His platoon, of 1st Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, was rushed in as reinforcement to the outpost that had come under a series of attacks by insurgents.

A first sergeant referred to as Witness 1 in the report says: "When the majority of the firefight took place (at) approximately 02:15, the (Special Forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position."

Witness 1 said he whistled to signal the Special Forces soldiers to stop firing.

"The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said – referring to the location where Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

Investigators found a string of bullet holes from the gunner's location to the wall that Stone and others were using as cover from enemy fire from outside the base.

The report includes statements from some Special Forces soldiers at the battle, but, not apparently from the soldier believed to have fired the M240 machine-gun that killed Stone and Costall.

The report does not indicate whether anyone was disciplined.

Report: Canadian killed by friendly fire

PUBLICATION: The Chronicle–Herald

DATE: 2007.07.03

SECTION: News

PAGE: A3

WORD COUNT: 118

MONTPELIER, Vt. – A U.S. army report says friendly fire was responsible for the death of a Canadian soldier and an American soldier in Afghanistan last year.

The report says friendly fire from behind killed Canadian Forces Pte. Robert Costall and Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard.

The report, released to The Associated Press today, says a number of U.S. and allied soldiers were wounded.

The report is a collection of witness statements assembled by U.S. investigators.

One statement says a gunner opened fire at two allied positions in quick succession on March 29, 2006.

Costall, a 22-year-old machine-gunner, was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and grew up in Gibson, B.C.

The possibility of him being killed by friendly fire was raised earlier by his wounded comrades.

Stone, the American killed, was shot once in the back and once in the head while he and allied soldiers were repelling a major, night-time attack.

Canadian soldier killed by friendly fire in 2006 battle: U.S. army report

DATE: 2007.07.02

KEYWORDS: DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

PUBLICATION: cpw

WORD COUNT: 667

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP-CP) _ Canadian Pte. Robert Costall and an American soldier were shot from behind by bursts from a machine-gun fired from a compound manned by U.S. special forces last year in Afghanistan during an insurgent attack, a U.S. army report says.

One account in the report says the gunner shot at two friendly positions in quick succession during the fierce battle early on March 29, 2006.

The friendly fire killed the two soldiers and wounded a number of others at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

The army report was released to The Associated Press on Monday. It contains a collection of witness statements assembled by American investigators.

Costall, a 22-year-old machine-gunner, was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and grew up in Gibsons, B.C. The possibility of him being killed by friendly fire was raised earlier by his wounded comrades.

The U.S. army report presents witness statements that support those reports.

It says Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard was shot once in the back and once in the head by machine-gun rounds while crouching behind a wall atop a building where he and other allied troops were repelling a major night-time attack.

The friendly fire from behind also killed Costall and wounded others defending the base, according to the report.

Earlier Canadian reports said Costall was also felled by two bullets.

His platoon, of 1st Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, was rushed in as reinforcement to the outpost that had come under a series of attacks by insurgents.

A first sergeant referred to as Witness 1 in the report says: "When the majority of the firefight took place (at) approximately 02:15, the (Special Forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position."

Witness 1 said he whistled to signal the Special Forces soldiers to stop firing.

"The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said _ referring to the location where Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

Investigators found a string of bullet holes from the gunner's location to the wall that Stone and others were using as cover from enemy fire from outside the base.

The report includes statements from some Special Forces soldiers at the battle, but, not apparently from the soldier believed to have fired the M240 machine-gun that killed Stone and Costall.

The report does not indicate whether anyone was disciplined.

It did not have any statements from the Canadian soldiers present.

A separate investigation into the incident was ordered by the Canadian Forces National Investigative Service.

A spokesman for the U.S. Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, N.C., said he was unaware of the report and could not immediately answer questions about it.

The report detailed how Americans and Afghan soldiers at Forward Operating Base Robinson were expecting to be attacked that night in retaliation for a coalition attack on enemy forces in the area.

A group of about 30 Canadian soldiers was brought in that day as reinforcement. The Canadians were positioned behind a berm at the northeast corner of the compound.

Stone was sleeping when the attack began with mortar rounds just before 2 a.m.

Small-arms fire followed. Stone went to the roof of the building where he was staying when the fighting started.

An Army captain was wounded on the roof not far from Stone. Soldiers tending to the captain found Stone slumped against the wall, apparently killed instantly by the bullets that hit him.

Another witness said Stone's body armour was found underneath his bed.

Stone's comrades were immediately aware that the shots that hit him and wounded the others came from behind them.

The U.S. Central Command in Florida released the report in response to a Freedom of Information Act request by the AP.

Other than Stone and Costall, all names were blacked out in the report.

The report also excluded, on grounds of national security, information collected by an unmanned Predator aircraft and certain log entries by the duty officer.

After his death, Stone, 52, was promoted to master sergeant. He was on his third tour in Afghanistan when he was killed.

Several days after Stone's death the National Guard announced that an investigation had begun to determine if he was killed by friendly fire. The report was not completed until April of this year and Stone's family was briefed in early May.

“The preponderance of evidence in the report indicates that Master Sergeant Stone was the victim of friendly fire,” said Guard spokesman Capt. Keith Davio.

“We have met with members of his family and have done everything we possibly could to answer their questions. We hope this provided some measure of closure for them and we ask that their privacy be respected.”

Friendly fire killed Canadian: U.S. Army; Soldiers hit from behind by machine-gun bursts in 2006, report finds

IDNUMBER 200707030055
PUBLICATION: The Toronto Star
DATE: 2007.07.03
EDITION: Met
SECTION: World And Comment
PAGE: AA01
ILLUSTRATION: U.S. Sgt. John Thomas Stone, left, and Canadian Pte. Robert Costall.;
BYLINE: Rosie DiManno
SOURCE: Toronto Star
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 597

While Canadian military authorities continue to drag their heels, the U.S. Army says Pte. Robert Costall was killed by friendly fire – apparently American special forces.

The 22-year-old machine-gunner, born in Thunder Bay and deployed to Afghanistan with Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, was the first Canadian firefight casualty in that country.

He was slain during a fierce battle March 29, 2006, after his rapid-response platoon was sent to a forward operating base in support of Afghan and special forces troops who had come under siege.

The possibility of potential friendly fire arose almost immediately and Canadian Brig.-Gen. David Fraser, then head of Regional Command South, Task Force Afghanistan, promptly requested a board of inquiry investigation.

Canada, the United States and Afghanistan all launched probes.

Yesterday, the U.S. Army released its investigation results to Associated Press, asserting that Costall and an American sergeant, also killed that night, were shot from behind in a burst of machine-gun fire that originated from within the compound at Forward Operating Base Robinson, some 110 kilometres northwest of Kandahar City.

American investigators interviewed U.S. troops at the scene, with several accounts mentioning that the gunner shot at two "friendly positions" in quick succession.

The witness statements said Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard was shot once in the back and once in the head as he crouched behind a wall atop a building where he and other allied troops were repelling the major nighttime attack.

Earlier reports, unconfirmed, said Costall was shot before Stone, an American medic who had possibly gone to Costall's assistance. Autopsy results showed that Costall had been felled by two bullets.

A first sergeant referred to as Witness 1 in the army report is quoted: "When the majority of the firefight took place (at) approximately 02: 15, the (special forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting

Friendly fire killed Canadian: U.S. Army; Soldiers hit from behind by machine-gun bursts in 2006, report finds

out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position." This witness told investigators he whistled to signal the special forces soldiers to stop firing.

"The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," a reference to the location where Stone was hit.

The report, according to Associated Press, includes statements from the special forces soldiers involved in the battle but not, it would appear, the individual believed to have fired the M240 machine gun that killed Stone and Costall. Nor does the report indicate whether that person has been disciplined.

American investigators did not interview Canadian soldiers, although authorities from the three nations have apparently co-operated throughout. The Canadian Forces National Investigative Service interviewed Canadian troops within days of the incident but has repeatedly deferred release of their findings. In May, Gen. Rick Hillier, admitting he was also frustrated by the delay, told the Star the results would be made public shortly but that hasn't happened. This, despite the fact, as sources have told the Star, that the initial board of inquiry results were completed and submitted to the Canadian Forces Expedition Forces command last July. Hillier has final review.

When a handful of embedded reporters, including the Star, arrived at FOB Robinson two days after the firefight, they were immediately choppered out of the base on the orders of Fraser. Members of Costall's platoon, who were eager to speak about the firefight with reporters, were forbidden from doing so.

The U.S. Central Command in Florida released the report yesterday in response to a Freedom of Information Act request by the Associated Press. Other than Stone and Costall, all names were blacked out.

U.S. friendly fire killed Canadian

IDNUMBER 200707030040
PUBLICATION: The Leader-Post (Regina)
DATE: 2007.07.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: B7
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 200

A U.S. Army investigation has concluded that friendly fire from U.S. Special Forces was responsible for the March 2006 death of Canadian Forces Pte. Robert Costall in an Afghanistan firefight with insurgents, the Associated Press reported Monday.

Costall, 22, was a gunner with the First Battalion Princess Patricia's Light Infantry. He was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and raised in Gibsons, B.C.

Also killed in the nighttime battle was Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard. Both were shot from behind.

One witness, a sergeant referred to as Witness 1, reported that a gunner quickly opened fire on the fateful night.

"When the majority of the firefight took place (at) approximately 02:15, the (Special Forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position," AP reported.

Witness 1 said he immediately signalled the Special Forces position to cease fire.

"The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said — referring to the location where Sgt. Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

Other allied soldiers were injured in the friendly fire incident which occurred at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

There is no indication in the report, parts of which were blacked out, whether anyone was disciplined.

Friendly fire killed Canadian; Investigators find U.S. Special Forces machine-gunned local soldier

IDNUMBER 200707030134

PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal

DATE: 2007.07.03

EDITION: Early

SECTION: News

PAGE: A1 / FRONT

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: Supplied / Pte. Robert Costall; Colour Photo: Larry Wong, The Journal, file / Soldiers at Edmonton Garrison attend a memorial service for Pte. Robert Costall on April 22, 2006. ;

KEYWORDS: WAR; WORLD WAR I; PRISONERS OF WAR

SOURCE: CanWest News Service; With files from The Edmonton Journal

WORD COUNT: 292

An Edmonton-based army private who became the first Canadian soldier to lose his life in combat since the Korean War was killed by friendly fire, U.S. investigators have concluded.

Machine-gun fire from U.S. Special Forces was responsible for the March 2006 death of Canadian Forces Pte. Robert Costall in an Afghanistan firefight with insurgents, The Associated Press reported Monday.

Costall, 22, was a gunner with the First Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. He was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and raised in Gibsons, B.C.

Also killed in the nighttime battle was Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard. Both were shot from behind.

One witness, a sergeant referred to as Witness 1, reported that a gunner quickly opened fire on the fateful night.

"When the majority of the firefight took place (at) approximately 02:15, the (Special Forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position," AP reported.

Witness 1 said he immediately signalled the Special Forces position to cease fire.

"The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said — referring to the location where Sgt. Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

Three other Canadian soldiers were among allied troops injured in the firefight, which occurred at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

There is no indication in the report, parts of which were blacked out, whether anyone was disciplined.

In Ottawa, Commander Ken MacKillop said two Canadian Forces investigations into Costall's death are still being reviewed.

"I can't give you any details until they are finalized," said MacKillop, who is assigned to Canadian Expeditionary Force Headquarters. There is no timeline for when the Canadian investigations will be finished, he added.

According to the terms of reference, the Canadian military is expected to consult with American and Afghan forces before releasing its final reports.

He could not say whether Canadian military officials would see an American report before its release.

Friendly fire killed Canadian; Investigators find U.S. Special Forces machine-gunned local soldier

IDNUMBER 200707030132

PUBLICATION: Edmonton Journal

DATE: 2007.07.03

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A1 / FRONT

ILLUSTRATION: Colour Photo: supplied / Pte. Robert Costall; Colour Photo: Larry Wong, The Journal, file / Soldiers at Edmonton Garrison attend a memorial service for Pte. Robert Costall on April 22, 2006. ;

KEYWORDS: COURT MARTIAL; CANADIANS; WAR

SOURCE: CanWest News Service; With files from The Edmonton Journal

WORD COUNT: 330

An Edmonton-based army private who became the first Canadian soldier to lose his life in combat since the Korean War was killed by friendly fire, U.S. investigators have concluded.

Machine-gun fire from U.S. Special Forces was responsible for the March 2006 death of Canadian Forces Pte. Robert Costall in an Afghanistan firefight with insurgents, The Associated Press reported Monday.

Costall, 22, was a gunner with the First Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. He was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and raised in Gibsons, B.C.

Also killed in the nighttime battle was Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard. Both were shot from behind.

One witness, a sergeant referred to as Witness 1, reported that a gunner quickly opened fire on the fateful night.

"When the majority of the firefight took place (at) approximately 02:15, the (Special Forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position," Witness 1 said.

He immediately signalled the Special Forces position to cease fire. "The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said, referring to the location where Sgt. Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

Costall's brother Buddy reacted to the findings by voicing respect for his sibling's work in Afghanistan.

"One never likes to learn that it was in error a loved one dies. But nothing detracts from his accomplishments," he wrote in an e-mail interview from Calgary. "My brother believed that the contribution of his boots on the ground in Afghanistan was a positive thing ... and ultimately gave his life fighting 'the good fight' on a sandy Afghan bank."

Buddy added that since his brother's death, the military has made changes to operational tactics, which he hopes will save soldiers' lives in the future.

Costall was shot once through the side of his chest and once in the back of the head, autopsy results revealed.

There is no indication in the report, parts of which were blacked out, whether anyone was disciplined.

In Ottawa, Commander Ken MacKillop said two Canadian Forces investigations into Costall's death are still being reviewed and no details are available.

sentenced to four years in Dubai jail

Friendly fire killed Canuck: U.S. army

SOURCETAG 0707030477

PUBLICATION: The Winnipeg Sun

DATE: 2007.07.03

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 12

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: MONTPELIER, Vt.

WORD COUNT: 92

A U.S. army report says friendly fire was responsible for the death of a Canadian soldier and an American soldier in Afghanistan last year.

The report says friendly fire from behind killed Canadian Forces Pte. Robert Costall and Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard.

The report, released to Associated Press yesterday, says a number of U.S. and allied soldiers were wounded.

The report is collection of witness statements assembled by U.S. investigators. One statement says a gunner opened fire at two allied positions in quick succession on March 29, 2006.

Costall, a 22-year-old machine-gunner, was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and grew up in Gibson, B.C.

KEYWORDS=WORLD

Friendly fire killed soldiers

SOURCETAG 0707030065

PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Sun

DATE: 2007.07.03

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 2

ILLUSTRATION: file photo Canadian Pte. Robert Costall and Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the National Guard were accidentally shot from behind by an American soldier, a U.S. report has concluded.

BYLINE: WILSON RING, CP

DATELINE: MONTPELIER, VT.

WORD COUNT: 332

Canadian Pte. Robert Costall and an American soldier were shot from behind by bursts from a machine-gun fired from a compound manned by U.S. special forces last year in Afghanistan, a U.S. army report says.

One account in the report says the gunner shot at two friendly positions in quick succession during the fierce battle early on March 29, 2006.

The friendly fire killed the two soldiers and wounded a number of others in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

The army report was released to The Associated Press yesterday. It contains a collection of witness statements assembled by American investigators.

Costall, a 22-year-old machine-gunner, was born in Thunder Bay and grew up in Gibson, B.C.

The U.S. army report says Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard was shot once in the back and once in the head by machine-gun rounds while crouching behind a wall atop a building where he and other allied troops were repelling a major night-time attack.

The friendly fire from behind also killed Costall and wounded others defending the base.

Earlier Canadian reports said Costall was also felled by two bullets.

His platoon, of 1st Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, was rushed in as reinforcement to the outpost that had come under a series of attacks by insurgents.

WHISTLED TO STOP

A first sergeant referred to as Witness 1 in the report says: "When the majority of the firefight took place (at) approximately 02:15, the (Special Forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position."

Witness 1 said he whistled to signal the Special Forces soldiers to stop firing.

"The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said — referring to the location where Stone, an

embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

The report includes statements from some Special Forces soldiers at the battle, but, not apparently from the soldier believed to have fired the M240 machine-gun that killed Stone and Costall.

The report does not indicate whether anyone was disciplined.

A separate investigation into the incident was ordered by the Canadian Forces National Investigative Service.

Stone was sleeping when the attack began with mortar rounds just before 2 a.m.

Small-arms fire followed. Stone, who wasn't wearing his body armour, went to the roof of the building where he was staying.

An Army captain was wounded on the roof not far from Stone. Soldiers tending to the captain found Stone slumped against the wall, apparently killed instantly by the bullets that hit him. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Two soldiers died from friendly fire

SOURCETAG 0707030298

PUBLICATION: The London Free Press

DATE: 2007.07.03

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A6

BYLINE: AP

DATELINE: MONTPELIER, VT.

WORD COUNT: 113

A U.S. army report says friendly fire was responsible for the death of a Canadian soldier and an American soldier in Afghanistan last year.

Friendly fire from behind killed Canadian Forces Pte. Robert Costall and Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard. A number of U.S. and allied soldiers were wounded.

The report is collection of witness statements assembled by U.S. investigators. One statement says a gunner opened fire at two allied positions in quick succession on March 29, 2006.

Costall, 22, was born in Thunder Bay and grew up in Gibson, B.C. The possibility of him being killed by friendly fire was raised by his wounded comrades.

Stone was shot once in the back and once in the head while he and allied soldiers were repelling a major, night-time attack. KEYWORDS=WORLD

Friendly fire killed Canuck: U.S. report

SOURCETAG 0707030699

PUBLICATION: The Edmonton Sun

DATE: 2007.07.03

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 6

ILLUSTRATION: file photo Pallbearers carry the remains of Pte. Robert Costall upon his arrival at Canadian Forces Base Trenton, Ont. on April 1, 2006. after he was killed in a fire fight in Afghanistan. A U.S. army report released yesterday indicates that Pte. Costall was killed by friendly fire.

BYLINE: AP AND CP

DATELINE: MONTPELIER, Vt.

WORD COUNT: 351

Canadian Pte. Robert Costall and an American soldier were shot from behind by bursts from a machine-gun fired from a compound manned by U.S. special forces last year in Afghanistan during an insurgent attack, a U.S. army report says.

One account in the report says the gunner shot at two friendly positions in quick succession during the fierce battle early on March 29, 2006.

TWO KILLED

The friendly fire killed the two soldiers and wounded a number of others at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

The army report was released to The Associated Press yesterday. It contains a collection of witness statements assembled by American investigators.

Costall, a 22-year-old machine-gunner, was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and grew up in Gibsons, B.C. The possibility of him being killed by friendly fire was raised earlier by his wounded comrades.

The U.S. army report presents witness statements that support those reports.

It says Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard was shot once in the back and once in the head by machine-gun rounds while crouching behind a wall atop a building where he and other allied troops were repelling a major nighttime attack.

The friendly fire from behind also killed Costall and wounded others defending the base, according to the report.

Earlier, Canadian reports said Costall was also felled by two bullets.

His platoon, of 1st Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, was rushed in as reinforcement to the outpost that had come under a series of attacks by insurgents.

A first sergeant referred to as Witness 1 in the report says: "When the majority of the firefight took place @

approximately 02:15, the (Special Forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position."

Witness 1 said he whistled to signal the Special Forces soldiers to stop firing.

"The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said – referring to the location where Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

Investigators found a string of bullet holes from the gunner's location to the wall that Stone and others were using as cover from enemy fire from outside the base.

STATEMENTS

The report includes statements from some Special Forces soldiers at the battle, but not, apparently, from the soldier believed to have fired the M240 machine-gun that killed Stone and Costall.

The report does not indicate whether anyone was disciplined.

It did not have any statements from the Canadian soldiers present.

A separate investigation into the incident was ordered by the Canadian Forces National Investigative Service.
KEYWORDS=WORLD

Canadian killed by allied fire Army report says bullets from U.S. compound hit troops during battle with insurgents

SOURCETAG 0707030624

PUBLICATION: The Calgary Sun

DATE: 2007.07.03

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: 7

ILLUSTRATION: photo of ROBERT COSTALL Gunned down

BYLINE: AP AND CP

DATELINE: MONTPELIER, Vt.

WORD COUNT: 329

Canadian Pte. Robert Costall and an American soldier were shot from behind by bursts from a machine-gun fired from a compound manned by U.S. special forces last year in Afghanistan during an insurgent attack, a U.S. army report says.

One account in the report says the gunner shot at two friendly positions in quick succession during the fierce battle on March 29, 2006.

The friendly fire killed the two soldiers and wounded a number of others at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

The army report was released yesterday.

It contains a collection of witness statements assembled by American investigators.

Costall, a 22-year-old machine-gunner, was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and grew up in Gibson, B.C.

The possibility of him being killed by friendly fire was raised earlier by his wounded comrades.

The U.S. army report presents witness statements that support those reports.

It says Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard was shot once in the back and once in the head by machine-gun rounds while crouching behind a wall atop a building where he and other allied troops were repelling a major night-time attack.

The friendly fire from behind also killed Costall and wounded others defending the base, according to the report.

Earlier Canadian reports said Costall was also felled by two bullets.

His platoon, of 1st Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, was rushed in as reinforcement to the outpost that had come under a series of attacks by insurgents.

A first sergeant referred to as Witness 1 in the report says: "When the majority of the firefight took place (at) approximately 02:15, the (Special Forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position."

Witness 1 said he whistled to signal the Special Forces soldiers to stop firing.

"The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said — referring to the location where Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

Investigators found a string of bullet holes from the gunner's location to the wall that Stone and others were using as cover from enemy fire from outside the base.

The report includes statements from some Special Forces soldiers at the battle, but, not apparently from the soldier believed to have fired the M240 machine-gun that killed Stone and Costall.

The report does not indicate whether anyone was disciplined.

It did not have any statements from the Canadian soldiers present.

A separate investigation into the incident was ordered by the Canadian Forces National Investigative Service.
KEYWORDS=WORLD

Canadian killed by friendly fire, U.S. report says

IDNUMBER 200707030102
PUBLICATION: Times Colonist (Victoria)
DATE: 2007.07.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A4
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Pte. Robert Costall: Killed in Afghanistan in 2006;
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 200

A U.S. army investigation has concluded that friendly fire from U.S. Special Forces was responsible for the March 2006 death of Canadian Forces Pte. Robert Costall in an Afghanistan firefight with insurgents, the Associated Press reported yesterday.

Costall, 22, was a gunner with the First Battalion Princess Patricia's Light Infantry. He was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and raised in Gibsons, B.C.

Also killed in the nighttime battle was Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard. Both were shot from behind.

One witness, a sergeant referred to as Witness 1, reported that a gunner quickly opened fire on the fateful night.

"When the majority of the firefight took place [at] approximately 02:15, the [Special Forces] security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position," the AP reported.

Witness 1 said he immediately signalled the Special Forces position to cease fire.

"The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said — referring to the location where Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

Other allied soldiers were injured in the friendly-fire incident, which occurred at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

There is no indication in the report, parts of which were blacked out, whether anyone was disciplined.

U.S. bullet killed Gibsons soldier: report

IDNUMBER 200707030002
PUBLICATION: Vancouver Sun
DATE: 2007.07.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A1 / FRONT
KEYWORDS: WAR; COURT MARTIAL; PRISONERS OF WAR
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 344

A U.S. army investigation has concluded crossfire from a U.S. Special Forces soldier was responsible for the March 2006 death in Afghanistan of a Canadian soldier from Gibsons.

Pte. Robert Costall died in the night-time battle with insurgents, along with Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard. Both were shot from behind, the U.S. report said, according to the Associated Press.

Costall, 22, was a gunner with the First Battalion Princess Patricia's Light Infantry. He was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and raised in Gibsons.

One witness, a sergeant referred to as Witness 1, reported that a gunner quickly opened fire on the fateful night.

"When the majority of the firefight took place [at] approximately 02:15, the [Special Forces] security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position," Witness 1 said.

Witness 1 said he immediately signalled the Special Forces position to cease fire.

"The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said — referring to the location where Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

Other allied soldiers were injured in the friendly fire incident, which occurred at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

There is no indication in the report, parts of which were blacked out, whether anyone was disciplined for the shooting. A similar investigation by a five-person Canadian board of enquiry also remains secret, though their report was submitted to the Canadian Expeditionary Forces Command last year and forwarded to Gen. Rick Hillier, chief of defence staff.

Costall and his platoon were flown by helicopter to reinforce the remote U.S. base near the town of Sangin, in a dangerous poppy-growing valley. He and Stone died during the subsequent clash in pitch-black darkness between Taliban fighters and Canadian, American and Afghan soldiers.

Costall was shot once through the side of his chest and once in the back of the head, autopsy results revealed. Three other Canadian soldiers and one Afghan soldier were wounded in the battle. One Afghan soldier was also killed, along with dozens of Taliban insurgents.

Costall, an avid hockey player, was survived by a wife and infant son.

Friendly fire killed Canadian soldier: probe; 'He will always be my hero,' gunner's Calgary brother says

IDNUMBER 200707030145

PUBLICATION: Calgary Herald

DATE: 2007.07.03

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A2

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: CanWest News Service Archive / Pte. Robert Costall was shot through his chest and in the back of the head. ;

KEYWORDS: WAR

SOURCE: CanWest News Service

WORD COUNT: 460

A U.S. army investigation has concluded friendly fire from a U.S. Special Forces soldier was responsible for the March 2006 death in Afghanistan of a Canadian soldier.

Pte. Robert Costall died in the nighttime battle with insurgents, along with Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard. Both were shot from behind, the U.S. report said, according to The Associated Press.

Costall, 22, was a gunner with the First Battalion Princess Patricia's Light Infantry. He was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and raised in Gibsons, B.C., about 50 kilometres northeast of Vancouver.

Costall's brother Buddy reacted to the findings by voicing respect for his sibling's work in Afghanistan.

"One never likes to learn that it was in error a loved one dies. But nothing detracts from his accomplishments," he wrote in an e-mail interview from Calgary.

"My brother believed that the contribution of his boots on the ground in Afghanistan was a positive thing. He did nothing wrong. He followed orders and ran towards the gunfire and, ultimately, gave his life fighting 'the good fight' on a sandy Afghan bank.

"This makes him in my eyes a humanitarian, and one of the most courageous men I know. Which is why, regardless of any inquiry board's conclusion, he will always be my hero."

Buddy added that, since his brother's death, the military has made changes to operational tactics, which he hopes will save soldiers' lives in the future.

In the report, one witness — a sergeant referred to as Witness 1 — reported a gunner quickly opened fire on the fateful night.

"When the majority of the firefight took place (at) approximately 02:15, the (Special Forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position," Witness 1 said.

The witness said he immediately signalled the Special Forces position to cease fire.

"The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said — referring to the location where Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

Other allied soldiers were injured in the incident, which occurred at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

There is no indication in the report, parts of which were blacked out, whether anyone was disciplined for the shooting.

Two Canadian Forces reports into the incident have also recently been completed, said Cmdr. Ken MacKillop, spokesman for the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command, the agency responsible for deployed Canadian troops.

MacKillop said reports from the Forces' National Investigation Service and Board of Inquiry are both under final review.

"Both of those final reports will be released in the very near future," he said Monday night, declining to offer a more specific timeline.

"It's something that we're moving forward on."

He would not comment on whether the Canadian Forces had been aware of the American findings. Costall and his platoon were flown by helicopter to reinforce the remote U.S. base near the town of Sangin, in a dangerous poppy-growing valley.

He and Stone died during the subsequent clash in pitch-black darkness between Taliban fighters and Canadian, American and Afghan soldiers.

Costall was shot once through the side of his chest and once in the back of the head, autopsy results revealed.

Killed by friendly fire

IDNUMBER 200707030098
PUBLICATION: The Hamilton Spectator
DATE: 2007.07.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: Canada/World
PAGE: A3
ILLUSTRATION: Photo: THE CANADIAN PRESS / Canadian Private Robert Costall;
DATELINE: MONTPELIER, Vt.
SOURCE: Hamilton Spectator wire services
COPYRIGHT: © 2007 Torstar Corporation
WORD COUNT: 208

Canadian Private Robert Costall, pictured above, and a U.S. soldier were mistakenly shot from behind by U.S. Special Forces last year in Afghanistan during an insurgent attack, a U.S. army report says.

One account in the report says the machine-gunner shot at two friendly positions in quick succession during the fierce battle early on March 29, 2006.

The friendly fire killed the two soldiers and wounded a number of others at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

The army report was released to The Associated Press yesterday in response to a Freedom of Information Act request. It contains a collection of witness statements assembled by American investigators.

Other than identifying the soldiers killed, all names were blacked out in the report. The report does not indicate whether anyone was disciplined.

Costall, a 22-year-old machine-gunner, was born in Thunder Bay and grew up in Gibsons, B.C. The possibility of his being killed by friendly fire was raised earlier by his wounded comrades. The U.S. army report presents witness statements that support those reports. It did not have any statements from Canadians present.

A separate investigation into the incident was ordered by the Canadian Forces National Investigative Service.

Costall's platoon, of 1st Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, was rushed in as reinforcement to the outpost that had come under a series of attacks by insurgents.

U.S. friendly fire killed Canadian: report

IDNUMBER 200707030074
PUBLICATION: The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)
DATE: 2007.07.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A1 / FRONT
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 278

A U.S. Army investigation has concluded that friendly fire from U.S. Special Forces was responsible for the March 2006 death of Canadian Forces Pte. Robert Costall in an Afghanistan firefight with insurgents, the Associated Press reported Monday.

Costall, 22, was a gunner with the First Battalion Princess Patricia's Light Infantry. He was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and raised in Gibsons, B.C.

Also killed in the nighttime battle was Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard. Both were shot from behind.

One witness, a sergeant referred to as Witness 1, reported that a gunner quickly opened fire on the fateful night.

"When the majority of the firefight took place (at) approximately 02:15, the (Special Forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter. I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position," AP reported.

Witness 1 said he then signalled the Special Forces position to cease fire.

"The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said, referring to the location where Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

Other allied soldiers were injured in the friendly fire incident that occurred at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

There is no indication in the report, parts of which were blacked out, whether anyone was disciplined.

Two Canadian Forces reports into the incident have also recently been completed, said Cmdr. Ken MacKillop, spokesperson for the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command, the agency responsible for Canadian troops deployed outside the country.

MacKillop said separate reports from the Forces' National Investigation Service and Board of Inquiry are both under final review.

"Both of those final reports will be released in the very near future," he said Monday night, declining to offer a more specific timeline. "It's something that we're moving forward on."

He would not comment on whether the Canadian Forces had been aware of the American findings.

Canadian was killed by friendly fire: report

IDNUMBER 200707030114

PUBLICATION: The Ottawa Citizen

DATE: 2007.07.03

EDITION: Final

SECTION: News

PAGE: A3

ILLUSTRATION: Photo: Pte. Robert Costall, 22, died March 2006 during a firefight in Afghanistan. ;

SOURCE: The Ottawa Citizen

WORD COUNT: 221

A U.S. army investigation has concluded that friendly fire from U.S. special forces was responsible for the March 2006 death of Canadian Forces Pte. Robert Costall in an Afghanistan firefight with insurgents, The Associated Press reported yesterday.

Pte. Costall, 22, was a gunner with the First Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. He was born in Thunder Bay and raised in Gibsons, B.C.

Also killed in the nighttime battle was Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard. Both were shot from behind.

One witness, a sergeant referred to as Witness 1, reported that a gunner quickly opened fire on the fateful night.

"When the majority of the firefight took place (at) approximately 02:15, the (special forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position," AP reported.

Witness 1 said he immediately signalled the special forces position to cease fire.

"The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said — referring to the location where Sgt. Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

Other allied soldiers were injured in the friendly fire incident, which occurred at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

There is no indication in the report, parts of which were blacked out, whether anyone was disciplined.

A separate investigation into the incident, which was ordered by the Canadian Forces National Investigative Service, was completed last year, but has not been released.

U.S. SPECIAL FORCES RESPONSIBLE FOR CANADIAN GUNNER'S DEATH: REPORT

IDNUMBER 200707030093
PUBLICATION: National Post
DATE: 2007.07.03
EDITION: National
SECTION: Canada
PAGE: A4
COLUMN: National Report
ILLUSTRATION: Black & White Photo: / Canadian Forces Private Robert Costall. ;
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 247

A U.S. Army investigation has concluded that friendly fire from U.S. Special Forces was responsible for the March, 2006, death of Canadian Forces Private Robert Costall in an Afghanistan firefight with insurgents, the Associated Press reported yesterday. Pte. Costall, 22, was a gunner with the First Battalion Princess Patricia's Light Infantry. He was born in Thunder Bay and raised in Gibsons, B.C. Also killed in the nighttime battle was Sergeant John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard. Both were shot from behind. One witness, a sergeant referred to as Witness 1, reported that a gunner quickly opened fire on the fateful night. "When the majority of the firefight took place (at) approximately 02:15, the (Special Forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter. I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position," AP reported. Witness 1 said he immediately signalled the Special Forces position to cease fire. "The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said — referring to the location where Sgt. Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit. The report does not say whether anyone was disciplined.

THE AFGHAN MISSION Canadian was shot in back, U.S. army confirms Long-awaited report points to friendly fire in Pte. Costall's death

PUBLICATION: GLOBE AND MAIL

IDN: 071840103

DATE: 2007.07.03

PAGE: A1 (ILLUS)

BYLINE: OMAR EL AKKAD AND UNNATI GANDHI

SECTION: National News

SOURCE: STAFF AP

EDITION: Metro

DATELINE:

WORDS: 568

WORD COUNT: 496

OMAR EL AKKAD AND UNNATI GANDHI With a report from Associated Press Canadian soldier Robert Costall was shot to death from behind in Afghanistan last year by American troops, who opened machine-gun fire on him and then another friendly position during an insurgent attack, a newly released U.S. army report says.

Private Costall, 22, and Vermont National Guard Sergeant Tom Stone were killed during a prolonged and fierce gun battle in southern Afghanistan on March 29, 2006.

Pte. Costall was part of a 38-member Canadian quick-reaction force dispatched to assist a convoy under Taliban attack. During a larger battle that ensued, as Taliban forces attacked a forward operating base, two soldiers lost their lives.

In the weeks following Pte. Costall's death, Canadian and U.S.

forces would not rule out friendly fire as a possible cause. A month after the Afghanistan battle, both forces launched an inquiry into the incident. The newly released U.S. army report, given to the Associated Press yesterday, all but confirms that Pte. Costall was shot and killed from behind by his allies.

However, the report does not include any statements from the Canadian soldiers present at the fight, nor does it say whether anyone has been disciplined as a result of the deaths.

In the version of the report made public, all names other than those of the two dead soldiers are blacked out.

Also apparently missing from the report is a statement from the soldier believed to have fired the M240 machine-gun that killed Pte. Costall and Sgt. Stone.

According to witnesses cited in the report, a unit at the forward operating base began firing on a Canadian position during an early morning firefight with the Taliban.

Warned that it was hitting friendlies, the unit appears to have switched targets, only to hit a group of American soldiers instead.

A first sergeant referred to as "Witness 1" in the report says: "When the majority of the firefight took place [at] approximately 02:15, the [special forces] security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the s.f. was shooting at the Canadian position." Witness 1 said he whistled to signal the special forces soldiers to stop firing.

"The s.f. security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said — referring to the location where Sgt. Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

According to the report, Americans and Afghan soldiers at Forward Operating Base Robinson were expecting to be attacked that night in retaliation for a coalition attack on enemy forces in the area.

The Canadian military has launched a separate investigation into the incident.

That inquiry has not been completed yet, but is expected to address some of the details not covered — likely for reasons of jurisdiction — by the U.S. army report.

Reached at the British Columbia family home last night, Pte. Costall's father, Greg, said he had heard about the U.S. Army report, but that he wanted to wait until the findings from the Canadian inquiry were released before he or his wife, Bonnie, would comment further.

Pte. Costall, himself a machine-gunner, was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., but grew up in Gibson, B.C.

He had been married just a year when he died.

He left behind his wife and a one-year-old son.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME: Afghanistan; Canada; United States

SUBJECT TERM: strife; defence; deaths; Canadians

PERSONAL NAME: Robert Costall; Tom Stone

ORGANIZATION NAME: Armed Forces; Taliban

Canadian killed by friendly fire: U.S. probe

IDNUMBER 200707030119
PUBLICATION: Montreal Gazette
DATE: 2007.07.03
EDITION: Final
SECTION: News
PAGE: A8
KEYWORDS: WAR
SOURCE: CanWest News Service
WORD COUNT: 201

A U.S. Army investigation has concluded that friendly fire from U.S. Special Forces was responsible for the March 2006 death of Canadian Forces Pte. Robert Costall in an Afghanistan firefight with insurgents, the Associated Press reported yesterday.

Costall, 22, was a gunner with the First Battalion Princess Patricia's Light Infantry. He was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and raised in Gibsons, B.C.

Also killed in the nighttime battle was Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard. Both were shot from behind.

One witness, a sergeant referred to as Witness 1, reported that a gunner quickly opened fire on the fateful night.

"When the majority of the firefight took place (at) approximately 02:15, the (Special Forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the SF was shooting at the Canadian position," AP reported.

Witness 1 said he immediately signalled the Special Forces position to cease fire.

"The SF Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said – referring to the location where Sgt. Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

Other allied soldiers were injured in the friendly fire incident which occurred at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

There is no indication in the report, parts of which were blacked out, whether anyone was disciplined.

Civilian losses overshadow Afghan legal summit, Page A14

Canadian was killed by U.S. fire

PUBLICATION: WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

DATE: 2007.07.03

PAGE: A8

SECTION: Canada Wire

WORD COUNT: 206

CNS A U.S. Army investigation has concluded that friendly fire from U.S. Special Forces was responsible for the March 2006 death of Canadian Forces Pte. Robert Costall in an Afghanistan firefight with insurgents, the Associated Press reported Monday.

Costall, 22, was a gunner with the First Battalion Princess Patricia's Light Infantry. He was born in Thunder Bay, Ont., and raised in Gibsons, B.C.

Also shot from behind in the nighttime battle was Sgt. John Thomas Stone of the Vermont National Guard.

One witness, a sergeant referred to as Witness 1, reported that a gunner quickly opened fire on the fateful night.

"When the majority of the firefight took place (at) approximately 02:15, the (Special Forces) security element in the northeast corner began shooting out toward the perimeter, I immediately realized the S.F. was shooting at the Canadian position," AP reported.

Witness 1 said he immediately signalled the Special Forces position to cease fire.

"The S.F. Security then turned his weapon 100 to 140 degrees from its original position and began firing in the direction of the American ETT compound," the witness said — referring to the location where Sgt. Stone, an embedded tactical trainer, was hit.

Other allied soldiers were injured in the friendly fire incident which occurred at Forward Operating Base Robinson in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

There is no indication in the report, parts of which were blacked out, whether anyone was disciplined.

— CanWest News Service