

## Slain Canadian medic 'was eager to serve'

**GRAEME SMITH**

GLOBE AND MAIL UPDATE

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KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — The Canadian medic killed by a bomb at an undisclosed location on Sunday had eagerly volunteered for a spot in the Afghan mission, his commander says.

Private Colin William Wilmot was serving with a field ambulance unit in Edmonton and was not originally scheduled to deploy to the battlefield, but he lobbied for the job and eventually got attached to the Canadian battle group.

“He quickly marched in to see his Regimental Sergeant Major to indicate he was eager to serve in Afghanistan,” said Brigadier-General Denis Thompson, the top Canadian commander in Kandahar. “He was selected to fill a vacancy soon after, because he was motivated, he was skilled, and because he was eager to make a difference in the lives of ordinary Afghan people.”

Gen. Thompson said he has discontinued the practice of giving the location of soldiers' deaths, saying only that Private Wilmot was killed somewhere in Panjwai district, a vast expanse of farmland and desert southwest of Kandahar city.



Private Colin William Wilmot, a medic, died during a foot patrol in Panjwai district on Sunday.

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The commander also gave few details about what the medic was doing at the time of his death.

“It was a foot patrol at night,” Gen. Thompson said. “We’re trying to dominate the area and to do that we have to do foot patrols.”

So far, 87 soldiers and one diplomat have died in the Afghan mission.

Fewer Canadians have died this year than last, with 13 so far in 2008 as compared with 22 as of July 6, 2007. The rate remains higher than in 2006, however, when eight had died as of the same date.

The Canadians have been the exception to the trend across the country, however, as foreign troops suffered more deaths in Afghanistan last month than in Iraq. In part, the lower casualty rates among Canadian forces are likely a result of their conservative deployment; over the last 12 months they have pulled back from dangerous outlying districts and focused on guarding a few rural areas near Kandahar city. Many of the riskiest operations in the province have been led by British, American, Nepalese or Afghan forces in recent months.

The blast happened around 1 a.m. local time on Sunday and did not immediately kill the medic. He suffered critical injuries and his comrades gave him emergency first-aid, lifting him onto a stretcher and moving him in an armoured vehicle to the nearest Canadian outpost.

A helicopter later took him to a military hospital at Kandahar Airfield but he was pronounced dead on arrival.

“Throughout the evacuation process, our soldiers and medical personnel fought hard, just as Private Wilmot often did, to save the life of their patient. Sadly, his injuries were too extensive to save him,”

Gen. Thompson said.

Private Wilmot leaves behind a fiancée, Laura. He had recently returned to Afghanistan after a short vacation.

“I am told he had a permanent smile on his face, and would brag to anyone within earshot that he was now engaged,” Gen. Thompson said.

“He personally gave medical assistance to many soldiers,” the commander said. “He was also quick to help Afghan soldiers, members of the police, and local civilians who required emergency treatment.

“Colin took great pride in his role and abilities when providing needed medical support.”

He continued: "The Canadian Task Force routinely counts on our medics during life-and-death situations, and Private Wilmot was always ready to answer the call."

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