

CPT Bruno De Solenni and two interpreters, dead in an IED blast in Afghanistan

Posted by [Mike Francis](#), [The Oregonian](#) September 23, 2008 00:29AM

Categories: [Afghanistan military operations](#), [Casualties](#), [Oregon National Guard](#)

Bumped to the top of the blog for a while, with updates and tributes pouring in:

Here's something from Oregon National Guard SFC Mark Browning, who was close friends with Bruno:

"He is a hero, a champion, a gift from God. His good nature and genuine care for others was infectious and spread not only to our team but other nations including the Afghans, the British and the Danish. Everybody loved Bruno. He was a force of nature. Bruno and I had a special bond and there was no doubt in my mind that we were going to be life long friends. We looked forward to hunting trips with my family and fishing trips with his. I am so sad.

"I am also so proud. Bruno was not your average officer. His conviction to duty went far beyond rank or title. I think that's why we all just called him "Bruno". He didn't need rank to be a great leader. It just happened naturally. He will be missed but never forgotten and always loved. We will carry on for him. The US commander of Southern Afghanistan stated tonight that the Oregon ETT team was doing the hardest job in Afghanistan. He also said we were doing the best work with the least assets. The job just got much harder without Bruno but we are a great team and will continue to make Bruno proud."



Courtesy of Dom Oto

Bruno coming back from patrol

My friend, CPT Jarrell Southall, who was S-1 with the 2/162 in Baghdad, had Bruno as a platoon leader, wrote a couple of emails, and here's a brief excerpt:

I have many a story to tell about Bruno. The Goat in the TOC and many more... I loved that guy.. Kelby McCrae is the Casualty Officer.. How Ironic.. Kelby was Bruno's first XO and I was his first CO.. Kelby went thru this crap with his little brother getting killed when Bruno and I were in Iraq... Almost full circle. Bruno was there when the Arkansas Nat Guard was blown to pieces and they lost about 5 in one day.

I've also heard from Bruno's sister, and from the sister of one of the other guys in Bruno's unit. (See comments below.) Will add more as we go.

I was leafing through my notes from my conversation with Bruno from a few weeks ago and here's a few more quotes from him:

"We're going in the right direction, but we need a lot more manpower ... We can't control the ground here ... You don't think about it, you can't worry about it, you've got to do your job....I don't want to sound like a negative person, but this is difficult. We've got limited tools ... The guys on the ETT (embedded training team), MAJ McReynolds, have done a great job ... But we could use a brigade of helicopters. We can't go out and ... pick fights ... The coalition forces have been great. The Danish have saved our asses with artillery. (But) you need one coalition, not three coalitions. We need a type of surge. You've got fighters coming up here every day from Pakistan. We've had about 60 KIAs, but they seem to come back like flies ... I support everything we're doing over here, I really do ... except for the plastic bottles and the little scooters, it's like back in Biblical times. It's beautiful here."

Bruno De Solenni, the fine Oregon National Guard captain from Crescent City, Calif., [who was featured here recently](#), was killed by an enormous IED in Afghanistan, just weeks before he was scheduled to rotate home. Also dead are two Afghan interpreters, and injured is MAJ Bill Krei. It is a terrible loss.

[Here is a story from the Crescent City Triplicate](#). [And here's another](#). [And here is a rather amazing letter](#) that Bruno wrote to that paper in response to its republication of my earlier column about he and his comrades.

And here is an excerpt from an email to his friends by CPT Dominic Oto, who somehow survived the same blast.

Come to find out some more interesting facts about our IED Blast. After talking with Jerry Glesmann, my buddy and the guy who dragged me out of the wreckage of our vehicle. The IED that hit us so far as been the biggest one they have seen in the southern part of Afghanistan. It destroyed and flung a 37,000 pound vehicle 20 feet into the air and it slid 70 feet. There is shrapnel in all the vehicles behind mine and the last one was more then 500 feet from our backend when it exploded. Again, I have no idea how I am alive and escaped with only minor injuries.

Wake up everyday and I feel like I got hit with a frieght train, my face is swollen black and blue but as the team likes to remind me I was never a handsome fellow to begin with.

allow to begin with.

I am feeling better, just sad as hell about Bruno and our Terps Hanif and Ramin being killed. Ramin was at Barackzai with me and was a Patriot for his country and truly one of the finest warriors I ever served with. He carried a rifle on patrol and saved my bacon on more than one occasion...he was a friend and I miss him. Him being a Afghan made no difference. The other Terp was a former Command Sergeant Major (highest enlisted rank) from the Aghan Army and was an awesome soldier. He was a native from Helmand whose intimate knowledge of the countryside and language helped the Team be much more effective. I really liked and respected Hanif.

What do you say about Bruno? He was everything in a person I wish I was. Smart, kind and steel core that made him the best Officer on our team. He loved the Afghans and in combat never was there a better Operator or Leader. The man was absolutely fearless. He was the kindest man I had ever known and was something much more intimate. He was a very close friend and his loss has been felt throughout the team. The guilt I feel for both living and hardly being hurt is immeasurable. If he was here I know he would slap me in my face but I feel like shit for living when such a good guy died...hard to explain but I refuse to let it be in vain. I miss terribly and will do my best to go on.

I'm sorry I was out of town and offline for a couple of days, or I would have posted this sooner. My deepest sympathies to the family and friends of a man I wish I could have known better.

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COMMENTS (4) [Post a comment](#)

Posted by **karenpcoop** on [09/23/08 at 10:34AM](#)

My deepest condolences to the family and friends of Capt. De Solenni, as well as the Afghan linguists, Hanif and Ramin. My thoughts and prayers go out to you all and the soldiers they fought with who will miss their Brothers in Arms greatly.

My brother, Capt. Steve Cooper, is a part of this Oregon National Guard team and was at the scene of the incident. He wrote to us that this is a very sad time for the team because they are a small team and have been working closely together since last October. Capt. De Solenni, Steve said, was a dedicated member of the team who believed strongly in the mission in Afghanistan.

May God bless you all and comfort you in your grief.

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Posted by **JCE1960** on [09/24/08 at 9:04AM](#)

I served on active duty with Bruno in Iraq with the 39th Infantry Brigade from 2004 to 2005. Bruno was the aide to General Ron Chastain, our commander. Bruno was an outstanding leader and a great man. We will never get to see what Bruno could have become had he been granted a longer life. But I know he "lived" more in his 32 years than most people I will ever meet. God be with all of his family and friends in this time.

COL John C. Edwards
Arkansas Army National Guard

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Posted by **humblecounty** on [09/24/08 at 10:21AM](#)

Bruno was my good friend and lived in the house across the street from me. His dog, Rufus, lived at my house more than at his own home! This has been a devastating time for everyone who knew and loved him. He will be sorely missed.

Thank you for your kind wishes.

Jennifer

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Posted by **gregoryday** on [09/24/08 at 3:15PM](#)

I was Bruno's first company commander after he was commissioned. I remember how impressed then-LTC Dan Cameron and I were with him that summer of 2001 at Fort Hunter-Liggett, before he'd even gone to his basic course. We just knew he was going to be a great leader, and he

was. He became one of those personalities that helped to define the 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry. I have been receiving grief-stricken calls and messages from a lot of his former comrades over the last few days. It's hard to believe he's not coming back. We're all going to miss him terribly.

Please remember Bruno and his family in your prayers.

LTC Gregory T. Day
Oregon Army National Guard
