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HAMILTON LIFE

# Private Mark Graham killed tragically in 'preventable' friendly fire incident

The Hamilton native and former Olympian was killed in Afghanistan, Sept. 4, 2006.



The repatriation ceremony at C.F.B. Trenton for five Canadians killed in Afghanistan. Kneeling as Pte. Mark Graham's casket passes in front of the family are his daughter Shae-Lynn Marie Graham 7, and Traci Luther, mother of Shae-Lynn.

Gary Yokoyama / The Hamilton Spectator

Private Mark Anthony Graham of Hamilton, a former Olympic athlete from the west Mountain, was killed in a friendly fire attack in Afghanistan on Sept. 4, 2006.

Graham and his company were making breakfast and packing up their gear before heading back into a battle zone in the Panjwahi district when two U.S.A.-10 Thunderbolts strafed the Canadian troops. In addition to Graham's death, 30 other Canadians were wounded, five seriously.

A report from Canada's Department of National Defence said the Americans "mistook a garbage fire at the Canadian location for his target without verifying the target through his targeting pod and heads-up display."







Mark Graham's framed portrait inside the front door of MacNab Secondary School. Mark was a track and field star at MacNab, and represented Canada at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona.

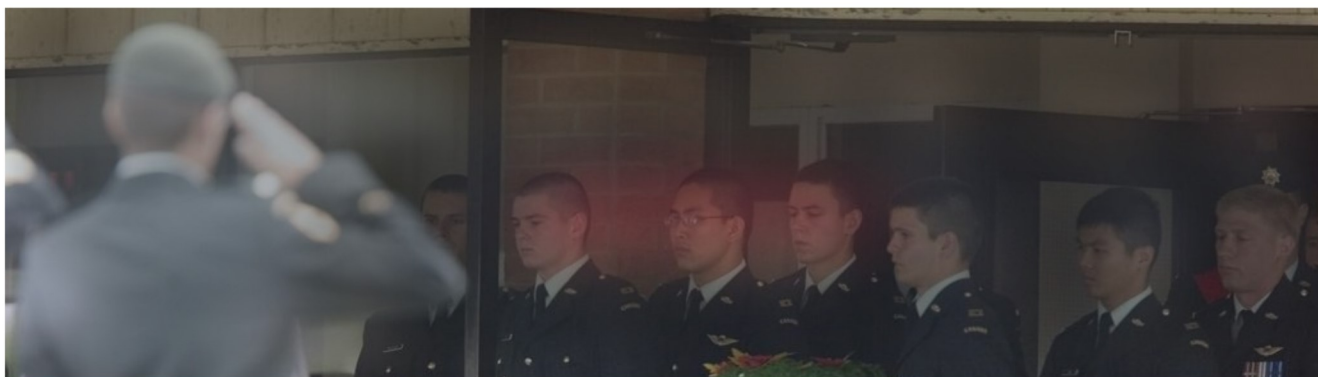
Cathie Coward/The Hamilton Spectator file photo

“The incident was preventable,” the report concluded.

The 33-year-old of the Royal Canadian Regiment was the first Hamilton native to die in the war against Taliban insurgents. His death brought the number of Canadians killed in Panjwahi fighting to five.

The five deaths were the most suffered by Canada in a 24-hour period since Canadian troops first arrived in Afghanistan in early 2002. Graham attended Sir Allan MacNab Secondary School where he distinguished himself in track and field.

A memorial track and field meet is held in Graham's honour every year, and Olympic Park was renamed in his honour.





Mark Graham's casket is carried out of West Highland Baptist Church on the Mountain on Sept. 13, 2006.

Hamilton Spectator file photo

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