

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2010/05/04/canadian-soldier-killed.html>

# Canadian killed by IED in Afghanistan

**'Bittersweet day' for Canadian navy: Natynczyk**

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*Petty Officer 2nd Class Craig Blake, 37, of Simcoe, Ont., was killed by a roadside bomb Monday near Kandahar city. (DND)*

A member of the Canadian navy was killed by an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan Monday, the first sailor to die in action since October 2004.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Craig Blake, 37, was killed while working in the Panjwai district, approximately 25 kilometres southwest of Kandahar city.

Brig.-Gen. Dan Ménard, the commander of Canadian troops in Afghanistan, said the Simcoe, Ont., native was returning to camp Monday afternoon after successfully disposing of another IED when the blast went off.

Blake, a married father of two, was serving his first tour of duty in Afghanistan. He had only been in the country for a few weeks when he was killed.

Blake served with the Fleet Diving Unit Atlantic, based in Nova Scotia.

"A navy clearance diver, Craig was most comfortable working under water, yet he effortlessly adapted to the rigours of land operations," Ménard said in a statement.

"Incredibly fit, with a backbone of steel, Craig put 100 per cent into everything he did."

## **'Bittersweet' day for navy**

According to navy officials, Blake is the first sailor to die in action since October 2004, when Lt. Chris Saunders was killed aboard a submarine en route to Halifax.

Gen. Walter Natynczyk, Canada's top military commander, told CBC News it was a "bittersweet day" for the navy, which is marking 100 years of service to Canada on Tuesday.

"Our divers are highly trained professionals who are able to go underwater and defuse bombs and explosives," Natynczyk said.

"So they proved their mettle in Afghanistan and have for a number of years."

Natynczyk said more than 100 sailors have been rotating through Afghanistan.

Speaking in Ottawa Tuesday, Prime Minister Stephen Harper praised the navy's tradition of "service and heroism."

Harper said he joined with members of the Canadian Forces in "grieving the loss of Petty Officer 2nd Class Craig Blake — killed in active service, hundreds of miles from the sea, while on service to his country in Afghanistan."

## **N.S. remembers Blake**

Friends from Nova Scotia praised Blake, a local hockey coach and triathlete, in comments posted on CBCNews.ca.

"I sailed with Craig. My son played hockey with his son," a reader using the name Leftees\_Bcst\_Co said. "He was a good, kind and cheerful man."

Another reader, who goes by the name Cambee from Dartmouth, said Blake was her son's hockey coach, adding that he was an "amazing man" who loved his family.

His death brings to 143 the number of Canadian Forces members who have died in the Afghan mission since it began in 2002.

## **Corrections and Clarifications**

- Petty Officer 2nd Class Craig Blake was a sailor, not a soldier as was reported in an earlier version of this story. *May 4, 2010 | 7:22 a.m. ET*

*With files from The Canadian Press*