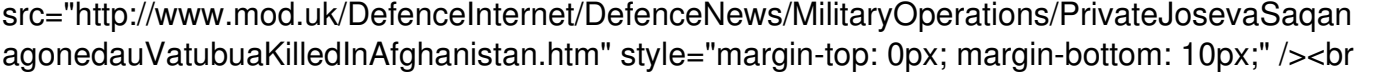


Private Joseva Saqanagonedau Vatubua of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders 5th Battalion the Royal Regiment of Scotland attached to the 2nd Battalion the Parachute Regiment was killed in Afghanistan on 1 January 2011.

Private Vatubua deployed to Afghanistan on 21 October 2010 with B Company, The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 5th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland (5 SCOTS), as part of the 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment (2 PARA) Battle Group. He was based in Check Point Salaam, near Patrol Base 5, in the Nahr-e-Saraj District of Helmand Province.



On 1 January 2011 he was part of a deliberate company operation to target known enemy firing positions to the North of the village of Saidabad Kalay. At 1715hrs an explosion occurred which is assessed to be the result of an improvised explosive device placed in the wall of a compound, which tragically killed Private Vatubua.

Private Vatubua was born on 25 February 1986 in Suva, Fiji where he grew up and attended Laucala Bay Secondary School. He joined the British Army in 2007 and successfully completed the Combat Infantryman's Course at the Infantry Training Centre Catterick in December 2007. He was posted to B Company 5 SCOTS as a rifleman, where he has served since.

Private Vatubua quickly settled into battalion life and relished his role as a combat infantry soldier. He played a key role in all of B Company's Mission Specific Training, including deploying on Exercise GRAND PRIX 7 in Kenya in April and May 2010. A keen rugby player who was one of the stars of the battalion team, he had recently begun representing the Army at Rugby Sevens.

Private Vatubua's future was bright and he had already caught the eye as a young man who would rise through the ranks. He had hoped to attend a Potential Junior Non-Commissioned Officer's Course after completing Operation HERRICK 13, where he would undoubtedly have excelled.

He leaves behind his wife Claudette. The family of Private Joseva Vatubua said:

"As a family we can't put into words how proud we are of Joseva. He loved his job and he loved being in the family of The Royal Regiment of Scotland. Joseva was a keen rugby player and he was proud to play for the Army Sevens team."

Joseva was also a member of the Battalion's Fijian Choir and he has sung in Canterbury Cathedral. Joseva is a hugely loved man who we will always miss but never forget.

"As a family we can't put into words how proud we are of Joseva. He loved his job and he loved being in the family of The Royal Regiment of Scotland."

The family of Private Joseva Vatubua

Lieutenant Colonel Adam Griffiths MBE, Commanding Officer The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 5th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, said:

"The Argylls 5 SCOTS have lost a loyal, well loved and respected young soldier. Pte Joseva Vatubua, known to everyone as "Big Joe", approached everything he did with an infectious sense of humour and a commitment that much of society would do well to emulate. However, his outwardly shy persona belied a real presence both at work and play, and particularly on the rugby field!

"The Royal Regiment of Scotland has a tradition of producing courageous, resilient, tenacious and tough infantry soldiers of world renown ♦ Big Joe was this and more. An operationally experienced soldier, he died serving alongside his fellow Argylls in a role that he relished. Fearless in battle, while empathetic to the predicament of Afghanistan and the local nationals living around his patrol base, he was at his best on operations, demonstrating a real awareness and understanding of what he was being asked to do. It was always a wonderful sight to see this mountain of a man surrounded by children when on patrol.

"Big Joe was an outstanding sportsman and a talented rugby player who had represented the British

Army and his country at the highest of levels. His success did not go to his head. I have fond memories of summer evenings in 2010 throwing a rugby ball around with the "Fijian 10s" and realising very quickly how elusive he was to tackle - and more fool you if you managed to get in the way! He possessed the largest smile I think I have ever seen and this was never more evident than when he purposely kicked the ball high above the CO, knowing that the ball would still be in the air as the CO was tackled. He was mischievous and a delight to be around.

"Pte Joseva Vatubua was a strong and brave young soldier who died doing a job he loved. We have a lost a truly marvellous young man and the thoughts and prayers of the Argylls, and the wider Royal Regiment of Scotland, are with his family and loved ones at this tragic and difficult time."

"Ne Obliviscaris."

Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Harrison MBE, Commanding Officer 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment Battlegroup, said:

"Pte Vatubua was a son of Suva, a Fijian legend, a proud, adopted Jock and a warrior of fearsome repute." "His scale was colossal; he dominated the front row, dwarfed his machine gun and delivered fiery, martial passion in abundance. But for most of the time he was understated, calm and simply kind. Pte Joe Vatubua; the epitome of generosity, a loved and revered husband, father and friend."

"Tonight I heard the mournful voices of his Fijian colleagues lament his passing. I have witnessed the grief-etched faces of a hundred brothers-in-arms bid their farewells. I have seen him depart this Battle Group under an awe-inspiring firmament of winter stars. I know what he meant to his team, his colleagues, his Regiment."

"We will never forget him. At this impossibly difficult time, our enduring love and sympathy goes to Claudette, his family and all those whose lives he touched."

"Moce Mada Taciqu - Goodbye Brother."

"Pte Joseva Vatubua was a strong and brave young soldier who died doing a job he loved. We have a lost a truly marvellous young man..."

Lieutenant Colonel Adam Griffiths

Warrant Officer Class 1 (Regimental Sergeant Major) Derek Park, Regimental Sergeant Major The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 5th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, said:

"Pte Joseva Vatubua was a popular, larger-than-life personality and was known by many across the Battalion. He was the embodiment of the Royal Regiment of Scotland soldier who wore the Green Hackle with upmost pride and he took the fight to the enemy with the traditional Fighting Spirit of the Argylls. A professional operator who loved the Army and the opportunities it gave him; he imparted his knowledge and experience to the junior soldiers within his platoon and they looked up to him as somebody to value and trust."

"Joseva lived life to the full and had a promising career ahead of him and a strong family unit behind him that supported him in all that he did. It was a privilege to have known him."

"He leaves a huge gap amongst the ranks, not only of B Company but the Argylls, 5th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland as a whole. A popular lad, he will be sorely missed by all and will never be forgotten in the Battalion. Words cannot express what his family are going through. My thoughts are with them all and his friends at this tragic time. Rest in Peace."

"Ne Obliviscaris, Sans Peur."

Major Will Horridge, Officer Commanding B Company, The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 5th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, said:

"Private Vatubua was a larger than life character, who loved his mates and his job. My last discussion with him was at 4am on Christmas Day, over the radio, whilst we were both on sentry duty. He was harassing his Company Commander, a Kiwi, about the likely poor outcome for New Zealand in the next Rugby World Cup. This was typical of a soldier who had a cheeky sense of humour and could always be seen with a huge grin on his face. His positive attitude and presence lifted those around him and he will be sorely missed by all. He was a gifted rugby

player who was a stalwart for the Battalion and had recently been selected for the Army Sevens Team.
"B Company has lost a lively and courageous member of our close-knit team and his loss will leave a void that cannot be filled by others. However, we understand that the effect of his loss on us is nothing compared to how this tragic event will be felt by his family. Our thoughts are with them and 'Big Joe' will never be forgotten."
Captain Robbie Grieve, Officer Commanding Javelin Platoon, The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 5th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, said:
"Pte Joe Vatubua was a talented sportsman who excelled on the rugby pitch. A key member of the Battalion team and also a newly installed squad player of the Army Sevens team, he could always be relied upon to turn a game. His energy and enthusiasm on the pitch inspired those around him to raise their game and he played an integral part in the Battalion's success in the Army Community Shield last season. He will always be remembered for his big (late) tackles, his ranging sprints down the length of the pitch and his wild and unpredictable passes.
"Joe's cheery personality and sense of mischief made him a joy to be around and he will be sorely missed by all. He was an excellent soldier, a proud servant of the Battalion and a good friend to all. My thoughts are with his family especially his wife Claudette, and the Fijian community in which he was so heavily involved."
Warrant Officer Class 2 David McGrath, Company Sergeant Major B Company, The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 5th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, said:
"Pte Joseva Vatubua was a large figure of a man who was as strong as an ox. He was nicknamed Joe by his friends and comrades and was employed as a General Purpose Machine Gunner. He handled that weapon system like no other, and furthermore Joe was extremely proud to be in a position where he was relied upon and trusted with such a high priority weapon system. Honesty and integrity, to name but a few, were the personality traits that struck me most with Joe. He had the heart of a lion, was nerveless in the face of enemy action and was always someone you could rely upon to produce that little extra effort when called upon. Joe was a first rate soldier who lived life to the full. He was undoubtedly a professional operator who loved the Army, and an avid sportsman that lived for rugby. He imparted his will on others within his Platoon and many looked up to him as a father figure who would readily give up his time to help others.
"Joe had a promising career ahead of him, there is no doubt of that. A strong character, he would have been a Junior Non-Commissioned Officer in the near future."
"He leaves a huge gap within B Company which will never be filled. A popular man, he will be sorely missed by every member of our Company and will never be far from my thoughts. Words cannot express what his family are going through. Our thoughts are with them and his friends at this difficult time. Rest in Peace Big Man!"
Lieutenant Nigel Drapper, Platoon Commander 4 Platoon, B Company, The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 5th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, said:
"Pte Joe Vatubua was the gentle giant of 4 Platoon. He was dedicated not only on the rugby pitch, where he excelled, but also to the Platoon. His hard work was always evident and he was always punching above his weight, which was considerable. Quiet, enthusiastic and big hearted, he was a friend to everyone in the Platoon and will be missed by all. Joe had all the potential required to have an excellent career in the Army though his passion was always the rugby field and the Army Sevens team."
"He was an excellent soldier, a proud servant of the Battalion and a good friend to all."
Captain Robbie Grieve
Private Michael Duffy, on behalf of 4 Platoon, B Company, The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 5th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, said:
"Big Joe, you are a true Argyll, a great soldier and GPMG gunner and most of all a true friend. You

always had a smile on your face, even when times were bad, and we will always miss that smile.

"You are gone now, our Big Friendly Giant, but you will always be remembered by the boys of 4 Platoon."

Private Veniona Jegesa, B Company, The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 5th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, said:

"I first met Joe at the Fiji U21 Rugby trial, where we instantly became good friends. We attended our military training at Catterick together, before joining B Company, 5 SCOTS. We used to call each other not by our real names, but by the name Tacina which means 'brother' in Fijian.

"Joe was a very quiet guy, although someone not to be crossed. However, he was really a gentle giant who had a very kind heart. He was the first of our group to move onto the married patch and he would always look after us by inviting us to his house. He was planning on renewing his marriage vows in the Fijian way after the tour and had asked me to get him some traditional Fijian clothes. He had also asked me to be his Best Man.

"I am sorry Bro, but don't worry, we will try our best to go and check your family after the tour.

"We miss you Tacina."

The Fijian Soldiers of B Company, The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 5th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, said:

"Pte Joseva Vatubua was larger-than-life and he had a promising career ahead of him, of that there is no doubt. He had a very strong character and we always looked up to him.

"Despite being a very quiet guy, he had a great sense of humour and he will leave a huge gap which will take a long time to fill.</p></div>

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