

Sad news over the weekend that one of Columbus' own, Sgt. Jeremy R. McQueary, USMC, was killed in action in Afghanistan. The *Columbus Republic* reported throughout the weekend. Congressman Pence's statement, calling Sgt. McQueary an "American hero" is

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[War claims local soldier](#)

Killed in Afghanistan by IED, McQueary wanted to help others

A Columbus native serving in Afghanistan was killed Thursday by an explosive device, his family said. U.S. Marine Sgt. Jeremy McQueary, 27, was the son of Deborah Kleinschmidt and the late Dallas McQueary and the brother of Rebecca Willison. He was married to Rae McQueary, of Brown County, and had a 5-month-old son, Hadley. McQueary's mother and stepfather, David Kleinschmidt, were traveling Friday to Dover, Del., for a dignified transfer ceremony for McQueary's body. Funeral arrangements were not available Friday. "I'm numb," said a tearful Deborah Kleinschmidt.

David Kleinschmidt said the family had limited information about McQueary's death.

He said McQueary was outside of his vehicle when he was hit by an improvised explosive device.

The last time McQueary spoke to his mother and stepfather, he told them he was serving in the Helmand Province, in south-central Afghanistan. "Jeremy has been a good kid, and he was

always straight and level," Deborah Kleinschmidt said. "He was kind of a private person, and he didn't talk about the military too much." Helmand Province includes the town of Marja, the site of recent fierce fighting between U.S. and Taliban forces. Information from the U.S. Department of Defense was unavailable Friday night. McQueary, whose unit was based at Camp Lejeune, N.C., was serving his first tour in Afghanistan. He previously had served two tours in Iraq, his family said. He enlisted with the Marines in January 2002, following his early graduation from Columbus East High School. Deborah Kleinschmidt said the family has a strong heritage of military veterans, and her son always expressed an interest in becoming a Marine. Willison said her brother felt a strong desire to help people, inspired by his father's work as a Bartholomew County Sheriff's reserve deputy.

The death of McQueary's father in 1992, when McQueary was 9, amplified his desire to serve others, she said. McQueary considered a new career, including law enforcement, before re-enlisting with the Marines, and he decided to stay in the military because it was the right fit, Willison said. McQueary received a Combat Action Ribbon and other service decorations. The family has been told McQueary will receive a Purple Heart, Willison said. McQueary survived a roadside bomb in June 2008 when his Humvee was hit in Iraq. He chose to go back to Iraq after the incident. "He's a leader," Willison said. "He always volunteered to help others." She said her brother had a soft spot for children and often talked about working with children in Iraq. Willison recalled Mc-Queary's beaming smile in a photo of him holding his niece. McQueary's young son took after his dad, David Kleinschmidt said. "He looks a lot like him," Kleinschmidt said.

The Columbus Republic also reported on Sgt. McQueary's body returning to the States:



[Family reunited with fallen Marine](#)

Fallen Marine and Columbus native Sgt. Jeremy McQueary was reunited with his family on Saturday.

The 27-year-old was killed Thursday by an improvised explosive device while serving in Afghanistan's south-central Helmand Province.

McQueary's stepfather and mother, David and Deborah Kleinschmidt, attended a dignified transfer ceremony Saturday to retrieve the soldier's remains.

Held at the Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, the ceremony was for the unloading of several American flag-draped transfer cases, according to David Kleinschmidt.

Among the cases were four Marines, including McQueary. McQueary was carried off the plane first because he was the highest-ranking soldier of the group, Kleinschmidt reported Saturday afternoon before boarding a plane bound for home.

"It was extremely moving and emotional," he said of the ceremony.

McQueary's family waited with the families of other fallen soldiers for the ceremony to begin at the base's Center for Families of the Fallen.

"It is a very nice and comfortable place where the families can gather and comfort each other or be alone with their thoughts," Kleinschmidt explained.

"The staff is very caring and compassionate and several chaplains were available," he added.

Funeral arrangements for Mc-Queary have yet to be set.

McQueary, a graduate of Columbus East High School, also is survived by his wife, Rae

McQueary and their 5-month-old son, Hadley.

He received a Combat Action Ribbon and other service decorations and is due to receive a Purple Heart, according to his sister, Rebecca Willison.

U.S. Rep. Mike Pence, R- Ind., paid tribute Saturday to McQueary. "Sergeant Jeremy R. McQueary is an American hero and his passing is a profound loss for his family, this community and this nation," Pence said. "The people of the United States and Afghanistan will never be able to pay the debt of honor and respect owed to Sergeant Jeremy McQueary, who gave his life in defense of our freedom. Our prayers and condolences are with his family, friends and loved ones as they mourn the loss of this American hero."

In June 2008, McQueary survived a roadside bomb that detonated near his Humvee while serving in Iraq.

As of Friday, 907 members of the U.S. military had died in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan as a result of the 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, according to U.S. Department of Defense.

Of that number, at least 703 have died as a result of hostile action in the Afghan region.