



Twenty years in Afghanistan

NZDF's deployment in Afghanistan was one of New Zealand's longest-lasting.

Over 3,500 New Zealanders took part in military operations and training of local army personnel and local police, but also rebuilt infrastructure, new schools, developed the local agriculture, contributed to renewable energy projects as well as community health projects. They enhanced the lives of many Afghans.

The final New Zealand forces withdrew from Afghanistan earlier this year, however those personnel and many before them may not have anticipated the rapid developments that have unfolded in Afghanistan.

For veterans of Afghanistan there will be frustration and sadness about the situation in Afghanistan, many wondering about the value of their contribution.

Tony Spice (<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/news-events/articles/twenty-years-in-afghanistan/#tony-spice>), an Afghanistan Veteran and Case Manager at Veterans' Affairs remembers the people, "One memory that stands out for me was a school teacher who was not being paid. I asked him why he works if he's not being paid, he replied, "The only way to save this country's future is to educate the children as they will one day lead us.""

Tony is now concerned about his former comrades, "As an Afghanistan veteran myself, I feel for all our Afghanistan veterans who might be struggling with the recent developments in Afghanistan, especially those who lost friends and comrades on their tour, "lest we forget"."

Unfortunately ten New Zealanders died whilst on deployment in Afghanistan. For the families and former comrades of the fallen, the events and ongoing media coverage evoke strong memories and feelings of those losses.

In August 2012 three New Zealanders died while driving to the Romero base in Bamiyan province. Their vehicle was destroyed by an improvised explosive device. All three died instantly. They were deployed with the Provincial Reconstruction Team.

Wayne Nepia, RSM 2/1 RNZIR remembers that time well, "The tragic death of Jacinda, Luke and Richard occurred at a time when Kiwi Coy was just starting to pick ourselves up and refocus. The battle of Baghak was just two weeks earlier. Kiwi Coy secured the site and recovered our comrades. We wanted to ensure that our fallen were recovered respectfully. It had a sombre impact on many of Kiwi Coy, the Crib 20 contingent and also our loyal Afghan contractors."

Wayne is also thinking of their service, "The service men and women in Afghanistan allowed a generation of Afghani people to live in a secure environment, with hope, opportunities and freedom. I pray and hope for the best outcome for our Afghan friends who served loyally alongside us."

Brett Te Wheoro (<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/news-events/articles/twenty-years-in-afghanistan/#brett-te-wheoro>) was also in Afghanistan (now also at Veterans' Affairs) and shares Tony's concern for Afghanistan veterans and

wineoro) was also in Afghanistan (now also at Veterans Affairs) and shares Tony's concern for Afghanistan veterans and the Afghans that they worked with, "We had close relationships with our interpreters and our Afghani Army colleagues. Together we trained hundreds of soldiers and were very proud of our work. It's a very sad outcome over there and can only hope for the best for the Afghani people."

He wants to ensure that Afghanistan veterans are getting all the support that they can, "Reach out and talk about it. Unfortunately, the situation in Afghanistan isn't what we wanted to see, so connect with your comrades - they'll know where you're coming from. You can also call us at Veterans' Affairs or another support agency. Have that conversation. You are not alone."

If any veteran would like support immediately they can txt 1737 to begin a conversation with a counsellor. Other support can be provided by:

- Veterans' Affairs, **0800 483 8372**
- NZDF4U, **0800 693 348**
- Lifeline Aotearoa, **0800 543 354**
- Samaritans, **0800 726 666**
- Contact RSA's District Support Managers.

Tony Spice



Tony Spice by a lake in Afghanistan

Tony enlisted into the Army in 1990 as a regular force Cadet (Burrows class) graduating into the Royal New Zealand Medical corps. Posted to a number of medical roles and units including 2/1 RNZIR Regimental Aid post RAP, Queen Alexanders Mounted Rifles RAP as well as a number of out of trade posts.

Deployed to Afghanistan on Crib 4 in 2002, Tony was there during Afghanistan's first democratic elections.

Having served for 30 years as a medic Tony took a role at Veterans' Affairs to keep serving NZDF, and to help current and former members of NZDF.

Back to top (<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/news-events/articles/twenty-years-in-afghanistan/#twenty-years-top>)

Brett Te Wheoro



Brett Te Wheoro standing with Afghani children

Brett enlisted into the Army in 1988 on All Arms Recruit Course 248 and graduated after completion of Infantry Corp Training into 2nd/1st Battalion, Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment.

Brett deployed to Afghanistan on TG RUA in 2007, as part of the NZ two man training team attached to the UK Training Team in Kabul. Due to the high risk of travelling into Kabul role changed to a mobile teams that was inserted all over Afghanistan to train the Afghani soldiers.

Having served for 30 plus years as an Infantryman, Brett took a role at Veterans' Affairs to keep serving NZDF, and help current and former members of NZDF.

Back to top (<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/news-events/articles/twenty-years-in-afghanistan/#twenty-years-top>)

Date

30 September 2021

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