



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Main Committee**

**ROBERTS-SMITH, CORPORAL  
BENJAMIN, VC, MG**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 21 February 2011**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

---

## SPEECH

**Date** Monday, 21 February 2011  
**Page** 781  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Marino, Nola, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Ms MARINO** (Forrest) (4.00 pm)—I rise to congratulate Corporal Ben Roberts-Smith on receiving our highest military honour, the Victoria Cross. This is Ben's second award. He received a Medal for Gallantry in May 2006 while serving as a patrol sniper during one of his three tours of duty in Afghanistan. I understand that these two awards now make Corporal Roberts-Smith the most highly decorated member currently serving in the Australian Defence Force.

As we all know, the SAS is based in Western Australia, something we are particularly proud of, and I know that Ben unquestionably is a very proud Western Australian. The Department of Defence records his citation this way, and I want to read this into the *Hansard* record:

For the most conspicuous gallantry in action in circumstances of extreme peril as Patrol Second-in-Command, Special Operations Task Group on Operation SLIPPER.

... ..

On the 11th June 2010, a troop of the Special Operations Task Group conducted a helicopter assault into Tizak, Kandahar Province, in order to capture or kill a senior Taliban commander.

Immediately upon the helicopter insertion, the troop was engaged by machine gun and rocket propelled grenade fire from multiple, dominating positions. Two soldiers were wounded in action and the troop was pinned down by fire from three machine guns in an elevated fortified position to the south of the village. Under the cover of close air support, suppressive small arms and machine gun fire, Corporal Roberts-Smith and his patrol manoeuvred to within 70 metres of the enemy position in order to neutralise the enemy machine gun positions and regain the initiative.

Upon commencement of the assault, the patrol drew very heavy, intense, effective and sustained fire from the enemy position. Corporal Roberts-Smith and his patrol members fought towards the enemy position until, at a range of 40 metres, the weight of fire prevented further movement forward. At this point, he identified the opportunity to exploit some cover provided by a small structure.

As he approached the structure, Corporal Roberts-Smith identified an insurgent grenadier in the throes of engaging his patrol. Corporal Roberts-Smith instinctively engaged the insurgent at point-blank range resulting in the death of the insurgent. With the members of his patrol still pinned down by the three enemy machine gun positions, he exposed his own position in order to draw fire away from his patrol, which enabled them to bring fire to bear against the enemy. His actions enabled his Patrol Commander to throw a grenade and silence one of the machine guns. Seizing the advantage, and demonstrating extreme devotion to duty and the most conspicuous gallantry, Corporal Roberts-Smith, with a total disregard for his own safety, stormed the enemy position killing the two remaining machine gunners.

His act of valour enabled his patrol to break-in to the enemy position and to lift the weight of fire from the remainder of the troop who had been pinned down by the machine gun fire. On seizing the fortified gun position, Corporal Roberts-Smith then took the initiative again and continued to assault enemy positions in depth during which he and another patrol member engaged and killed further enemy. His acts of selfless valour directly enabled his troop to go on and clear the village of Tizak of Taliban. This decisive engagement subsequently caused the remainder of the Taliban in Shah Wali Kot District to retreat from the area.

Corporal Roberts-Smith's most conspicuous gallantry in a circumstance of extreme peril was instrumental to the seizure of the initiative and the success of the troop against a numerically superior enemy force. His valour was an inspiration to the soldiers with whom he fought alongside and is in keeping with the finest traditions of the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force.

And in Ben's own words:

I just looked across and saw my mates getting ripped up. I just decided to move forward because I wasn't going to sit there and do nothing. I thought I'd have a crack, not to let my mates down.

In so many ways Ben epitomises the many ADF men and women that I meet and I am sure all members of this parliament meet. He epitomises, like they do, the traditional Anzac spirit.

Ben also said, and I think this is particularly relevant:

I do what I do because I believe in the country that we live in ...

He said:

I believe that we are making a difference in stemming the flow of terrorism into Australia, and I want my children to be able to live as everyone does now without the fear of getting onto a bus and having it blow up.

I congratulate Ben and offer my very best wishes to his wife, Emma, and their twins, Elizabeth and Eve, his family and friends and particularly his mates in the Australian Defence Force.