



**RELEASED BY Col. Greg Hapgood
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RELEASE: IMMEDIATE

CAMP DODGE
JOHNSTON, IOWA
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4:35 P.M.

FUNERAL SERVICES SCHEDULED FOR U.S. ARMY SOLDIER FROM IOWA KILLED IN AFGHANISTAN

Funeral services have been scheduled for Estherville, Iowa native Staff Sgt. Steven P. Blass. Blass, 27, serving on active duty in the U.S. Army, died March 11, near Kandahar, Afghanistan, when his UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crashed during a routine training mission. He was assigned as a helicopter crew chief to the 4th Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment, 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, Hunter Army Airfield, Ga.

Also killed in the crash were Chief Warrant Officer Bryan J. Henderson, 27, of Franklin, La.; Capt. Sara M. Knutson, 27, of Eldersburg, Md.; Staff Sgt. Marc A. Scialdo, 31, of Naples, Fla.; and Spc. Zachary L. Shannon, 21, of Dunedin, Fla.

Visitation for Staff Sgt. Blass will be held from 4-8 p.m., Monday, March 25 at the Estherville Lincoln Central High School, 1520 Central Ave. Estherville. The funeral service will be held at 2 p.m., Tuesday, March 26, also at the Estherville Lincoln Central High School. A graveside service will follow at the North Lawn Cemetery, 2208 Highway Blvd., Spencer, Iowa.

The family requests in lieu of flowers, memorials may be sent to the Steve Blass Memorial Fund, Employees Credit Union, 2714 Central Ave., Estherville, Iowa 51334.

Blass was born on April 1, 1985 in Estherville and graduated from Estherville Lincoln Central High School in 2003. At Lincoln Central High School he participated in golf and football. He then continued his education at Iowa Lakes Community College, before joining the Army. Steve's passion was flying and he took flying lessons as a teen. While Star Wars and paintball activities were two of his favorite things, he enjoyed old cars, Minneapolis-Moline tractors, working and playing at the farm and just being together with his family.

He joined the U.S. Army in March 2006 and was initially stationed at Fort Campbell, Ky. Blass transferred to Hunter Army Airfield, Savannah, Ga. in August 2011 and then deployed with this unit to Afghanistan in December 2012. He was previously deployed to Camp Humphries, Korea.

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His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star, Air Medal, Army Commendation Medal (with one Oak Leaf Cluster), Army Achievement Medal, Army Good Conduct Medal (with one OLC), National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal (with two bronze service stars), Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Korean Defense Service Medal, Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, NATO Medal, Basic Aviation Badge, Basic Parachutist Badge, and Expert Marksmanship Badge (rifle).

Blass is survived by his wife and son, Tricia and Hayden, both of Savannah, Ga.; his parents, Randy and Carol (Erickson) Blass; brother, Matthew Blass, and niece, Jaycee Blass, all of Estherville; mother and fathers-in-law, Patricia and Carl Rogers, and James Stayer, and sister-in-law, Rachel Stayer., all of Tennessee He is also survived by grandmother, Elberta Erickson of Terrill; uncle and aunt, Larry and Karen (Erickson) Stoller of Spirit Lake; uncle, Chris Blass, aunt, Colleen Blass, and close cousins, family and many friends throughout the world. He was preceded in death by his grandparents, Norman and Dorothy Blass; grandfather, C. Don Erickson; uncle, Michael Blass; and cousin, Katie Ridenour.

The family of Staff Sgt. Steven P. Blass issued the following statement:

"Steve left his home to enter basic training and begin his career in the Army. He was so proud, so anxious, and so ready. The Army is where he wanted to work with helicopters – that was his dream.

"While always letting us know how much our support meant to him and how much he loved us, Steve was living his dream, not only within the Army, but with his wife and his young son. He made a difference and touched the lives of many people throughout the world. While we celebrate his life and mourn his future, he will live forever in our hearts. We loved him, miss him terribly and are very proud of him.

"Losing Steve is so unbelievably hard. He has always been an absolutely awesome, respectful, kind, loving, thoughtful, focused, patriotic guy. He loved America and fighting for our freedoms. There's a huge hole in our hearts and lives, and while the pride is huge, the pain is so very deep."

-Media Information for funeral-

The Blass family asks that their privacy and the dignity of Steve's funeral be respected. Media coverage will be allowed at the funeral and graveside service. No interviews will be granted by the Blass family at the funeral or graveside service. Media point of contact at the funeral and graveside services will be Col. Greg Hapgood at cell 515-971-6385.

For questions concerning the operations, training, and activities of the Iowa Army and Air National Guard, please contact Col. Greg Hapgood, Iowa National Guard Public Affairs Officer, at (515) 252-4582 (office), (515) 971-6385 or by email at gregory.o.hapgood.mil@mail.mil . You may also contact Master Sgt. Duff E. McFadden at (515) 252-4666 (office), (515) 480-7647 (cell), or by email at duff.e.mcfadden.mil@mail.mil.

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