

**Awarded the Medal for Gallantry  
Lance Corporal Benjamin Roberts-Smith**

**Wednesday, 22 November 2006**



**Citation**

**For gallantry in action in hazardous circumstances as a patrol sniper in the Special Operations Task Group – Task Force 637, whilst deployed on Operation SLIPPER Rotation Three Afghanistan, May–September 2006.**

On the night of 31st May 2006, Lance Corporal Roberts-Smith was employed as a patrol scout and sniper in a patrol which was tasked with establishing an Observation Post near the Chora Pass in extremely rugged terrain overlooking an Anti-Coalition Militia sanctuary. Early in the patrol, after an arduous ten hour foot infiltration up the side of a mountain, the patrol was required to coordinate offensive air support to assist a combined Special Operations Task Group and other special forces patrol who were in contact with the Anti-Coalition Militia in the valley floor to their north. Following this engagement the patrol remained in the Observation Post to continue providing vital information on the Anti-Coalition Militia in the area. This comprehensive reporting had a significant effect on shaping the local area for the subsequent coalition forces operation.

On the 2nd June, the Observation Post had become the focus of the Anti Coalition Militia force and repeated attempts to locate and surround the position ensued. In one particular incident the Militia attempted to outflank the Observation Post. Lance Corporal Roberts-Smith was part of a two man team tasked to move out of their relatively secure Observation Post in order to locate and neutralise the Militia and regain the initiative. This task was successfully achieved.

In another incident, two Anti-Coalition Militia attempted to attack the Observation Post from a different flank, Lance Corporal Roberts-Smith again moved to support and neutralise one of these Militia. Lance Corporal Roberts-Smith then realised that the forward edge of the Observation Post was not secure and made the decision to split the team and take up an exposed position forward of the patrol so he could effectively employ his sniper weapon. Whilst isolated, and in his precarious position, he observed a group of sixteen Anti-Coalition Militia advancing across open ground towards the Observation Post. Lance Corporal Roberts-Smith effectively employed his sniper rifle to stop their advance whilst receiving very accurate small arms fire from another group of Militia to his flank.

Through his efforts, Lance Corporal Roberts-Smith maintained the initiative and ensured that his patrol remained secure by holding this position without support for twenty minutes. He was eventually reinforced by his original team member and together they continued to hold off the Militia advance for a further twenty minutes until offensive air support arrived.

Lance Corporal Roberts-Smith's actions on the 2nd June 2006, whilst under heavy Anti-Coalition Militia fire and in a precarious position, threatened by a numerically superior force, are testament to his courage, tenacity and sense of duty to his patrol. His display of gallantry in disregarding his own personal safety in maintaining an exposed sniper position under sustained fire with a risk of being surrounded by the Anti-Coalition Militia was outstanding. His actions, in order to safeguard his patrol, were of the highest order and in keeping with the finest traditions of Special Operations Command Australia, the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force.