

CITATION

Australia Army Awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia Corporal Ben Roberts-Smith, VC, MG

Corporal Benjamin Roberts-Smith enlisted in the Australian Regular Army in 1996. After completing the requisite courses, he was posted to the 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment where he saw active service in East Timor. In January 2003, he successfully completed the Australian Special Air Service Regiment Selection Course.

During his tenure with the Regiment, he deployed on Operation VALIANT, SLATE, SLIPPER, CATALYST and SLIPPER II. Corporal Benjamin Roberts-Smith was awarded the Medal for Gallantry for his actions in Afghanistan in 2006

On 11/06/2010, 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.

Australian Army- Awarded the Medal for Gallantry

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 31/05/2006, 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 20/06/2006, 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 2/06/2006, 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.