

The following is a joint statement from a number of family members directly affected by the 4 October 2017 ambush in Niger. Direct participants in writing the statement were Jeremiah Johnson's father, Dustin Wright's father, and Bryan Black's father, mother and widow. Additionally, the statement is supported by Bryan's brother and Jeremiah's widow. This statement is in no way to be considered endorsed by other family members not specifically identified nor to represent their views.

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Two years ago on 4 October 2017 unimaginable grief entered our lives when our sons, brothers, husbands and fathers were killed in action. During an ambush that took place near the village of Tongo Tongo, Niger, Bryan Black, Jeremiah Johnson, LaDavid Johnson and Dustin Wright breathed their last as they gave their all fighting for this country, our safety and security, and our freedom.

Today as we look back and remember those we have lost, we are profoundly grateful for their lives, and for the legacy they have left. As we have journeyed through grief, we have been reminded again and again of the amazing character and strength possessed by these men. These soldiers were the best of our country and humanity. The Army and Special Forces community did not make Bryan, Jeremiah, LaDavid and Dustin into the magnificent soldiers they were. Magnificence does not come from training or association, but from the core of a person. At the core of these men were integrity, courage and commitment, which came to the forefront on 4 Oct 2017 as they gave their last full measure of devotion. We will continue to mourn their loss, the lives cut short when they had so much more to give. However, the measure of a life is not its length, but its impact. The impact of these dedicated, brave men was profound, accomplishing more in their shortened years than many who live long but accomplish little of lasting worth. Our sons, brothers, husbands and fathers live on in our hearts and memories. Always their spirits remain with us, and we know we shall see them again.

After 2 years of scrutiny and disparagements, team members, both those killed in action and survivors, have finally been recognized for valor and performance under fire. However, we are disappointed in the AFRICOM investigation. It downplays the reported pushback by team commander CPT Michael Perozeni against the mission which led to the deaths of our soldiers, and portrays an overall misleading narrative. This narrative resulted in a failure to fully recognize the heroism and leadership displayed by ODA 3212 on 4 Oct 2017, multiplying the tragedy of the ambush. We are therefore disappointed that some of the soldiers were not recognized for the true heroism they displayed on that day, or were recognized at a level significantly below what their actions merited. We are disappointed that the award recommendation for CPT Perozeni, from what we have read, has been downgraded to an award that we believe is profoundly beneath the leadership and valor he displayed during the ambush. And as a related item, we are saddened that the Army career of MAJ Alan Van Saun, the company commander over ODA 3212 at the time of the ambush and who was home on

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Statement by the families

paternity leave, has apparently ended because of what we consider to be an undeserved reprimand related to the ambush.

As we look back on the last 2 years, we recognize that we have not journeyed alone. In the midst of this incredibly challenging time, we are grateful for the support we have received from the Special Forces (SF) community, 1st SF Command and 3rd SF Group. We are also grateful for the significant support and comfort we have received from our communities, members of the other families, and surviving members of ODA 3212. De Oppreso Liber.