

## Australian Defence Force Personnel Wounded and Killed In Action

Defence defines *battle casualties* as those personnel who are killed, wounded, missing or captured as a consequence of action against the enemy.

### **Definition of “wounded”**

By definition, a Defence member that is serving in warlike circumstances and is involved in contact with the adversary, either through direct engagement, or indirectly (eg. road-side bombing), and is hurt, is said to have been “wounded”. A Defence member hurt in an incident that has not been the result of adversarial action in warlike circumstances is said to have been “injured”.

### **Treatment of Battle Casualties**

Service personnel who are superficially wounded on operations, are treated locally and, once fit, are usually returned to service.

If, however, the impairment is serious, they are provided with appropriate treatment at the nearest hospital. On occasions, their wounds may require additional treatment at a specialist facility in another country, usually Germany or the United Arab Emirates, before their return to Australia.

For the more seriously wounded, once the impairment has been stabilised, the member is returned to Australia for additional treatment and rehabilitation. Within five to 10 days of returning to Australia, the member is placed in the ADF rehabilitation program which manages all their health and rehabilitation requirements. The aim of this program is to provide the best health care while reducing any confusion for the member and their family in dealing with multiple agencies as they recover.

For more information on rehabilitation: <http://www.dva.gov.au/rehabilitation/Pages/index.aspx>

### **ADF Personnel Wounded In Action**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Afghanistan</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
2002-2004	4	2	6
2005	2	13	15
2006	10	5	15
2007	21	6	27
2008	26	2	28
2009	37	0	37
2010	20	0	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>147</b>

The type of wounds sustained can be broadly categorized as:

- Amputations,
- Fractures,
- Gun shot wounds,
- Hearing loss,
- Lacerations/contusions,
- Concussion/traumatic brain wounds,
- Penetrating fragments, and
- Multiple severe wounds.

Defence is continuing to review and consolidate a number of databases and as such, this figure could be subject to adjustment in the future. This review process is being undertaken to ensure that all Defence personnel wounded in operations are accurately recorded.

## **Public information during incidents**

Defence aims to provide public information on every operational incident involving battle casualties (wounded and killed in action). Operational tempo, ongoing operations and special operations are three factors which may lead to occasional inconsistency in reporting. However, media enquiries about casualty figures are updated as appropriate when operational circumstances permit.

Defence guidance on the release of public information during incidents includes:

- The ADF will not release the names of casualties until Next of Kin (NOK) procedures have been completed.
- The ADF will not comment on the circumstances or causes of an incident until any investigation has been completed and if it is likely to be subjected to disciplinary proceedings.

In order to align with the civilian practice for reporting patient medical condition without compromising the medical-in-confidence nature of the wounds and injuries, Defence has adopted a nomenclature for public information relating to battle casualties:

### **Life Threatening**

Wounds that will likely lead to death if not immediately treated (e.g. fragmentation and gunshot wounds involving vital organs, head).

### **Serious**

Wounds requiring immediate medical care and hospitalisation but not considered life threatening (e.g. fragmentation and gunshot wounds to torso).

### **Slight/Minor**

Wounds requiring medical care and hospitalisation (e.g. fragmentation and gunshot wounds to the extremities).

### **Superficial**

Wounds not requiring hospitalisation.

## **Public Release of Names**

Names of ADF members (not afforded protected identity status) remaining in an operational area following an announced wounding or injury will not be released.

Names of ADF members (not afforded protected identity status) returning to Australia for treatment will remain protected until authorised for release by the individual member concerned. Names of ADF deceased will be released in consultation with the member's family.

Only Special Forces soldiers, who have protected identity status, may have their names withheld when they are admitted into non-military hospitals. There is no policy to hide the identity of other Australian soldiers undergoing medical treatment and rehabilitation in private or public hospitals.

<http://www.defence.gov.au/op/afghanistan/info/personnel.htm>