

# MHS graduate Fritsche dies while serving in Middle East

BY NATASHA KIDWELL

The reality of war struck Martinsville once again at the end of this summer. On July 27, Sgt. William Ryan Fritsche was killed while on patrol in Kamu, Afghanistan. The soldier was leading eight other men on patrol when they came under heavy attack from small-arms fire and rocket propelled grenades. Fritsche and his commander were killed while seven others survived.

Ryan Fritsche was the son of Volitta Fritsche, a detective with the Morgan County sheriff's department, and the late William W. Fritsche. He was a graduate of Martinsville High School, Class of 2002, and played

varsity basketball. Fritsche was a "good athlete...with a bright future" according to a local media with the *Reporter Times* interview with Deputy Scott Hamilton.



Photo courtesy of Reporteamericanflags.com

The response to Fritsche's death was overwhelming. American flags lined the beginning of the State Road 39 bypass to Morgan Street, and supporters stood on the side of the

road in the more than ninety degree weather. The funeral was held at the Martinsville High School auditorium due to the large number of people expected to attend. Even so, there was a ten-minute delay in the service due to the hundreds wishing to pay their respects. At the funeral, widow Brandi Fritsche and mother, Volitta Fritsche, were presented with the Bronze star, Purple Heart, a NATO citation, Afghanistan Campaign Ribbon and the Combat Infantry Badge.

Fritsche was part of Operation Enduring Freedom, the name given to the United States response to the September 11, 2001, attacks. This operation has been taking place in Afghanistan, the Philippines, and Africa for six years.



Photo Courtesy of Reporter Times

*Army Staff Sgt. William Ryan Fritsche died on July 27 in Kamu, Afghanistan, while serving in Operation Enduring Freedom.*

American troops have been in Afghanistan, where Fritsche was stationed, since October 7, 2001. Since then, troops have successfully overthrown the Taliban's rule, though the conflict is ongoing.

Fritsche was also stationed in Africa, where troops have been since Oct. 2002. The military's goal in Africa is to break up terrorist activity and work with leaders to prevent terrorist cells from reemerging in the countries.

While Martinsville High School mourns Fritsche's death, one is reminded of the others not

only lost in Operation Enduring Freedom, but also in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Fritsche joins Sgt. Cory Drake, the another graduate whose life was lost serving in the military. Drake was killed in 2003 while serving as a part of Operation Iraqi Freedom in Baghdad. He joined the National Guard after in 1998 after graduation and was in the 1-152 Infantry, Company Bravo. In honor of his sacrifice, a flag and plaque was given to the high school and hangs on the right wall in the front office. with aalso a flag commemorating Operation Enduring Freedom.



Dawn Larrison photo

Two sets of flags and their plaques hang on the wall to the right as one enters the front office. The flag and plaque on the left honor Sgt. Cory Drake and was sent from Iraq. The flag on the right is a flag sent by Operation Enduring Freedom to Martinsville High School.

**Since the war began...**

**the U.S. has suffered 4149 casualties**

**92 of them from Indiana.**