



A final honor for fallen Marine from Arlington

by GARY REAVES

WFAA

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D/FW AIRPORT — More than 1,800 planes brought passengers in and out of Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport on Tuesday, but only one rated a special welcome, featuring water cannons and a full police motorcycle escort.

The small military aircraft was carrying a special cargo — the remains of U.S. Marines Staff Sgt. Jeremy Smith of Arlington.

"This man was killed in action. He was killed defending this country," said retired Marine Jim Blaze. "He gave everything."

Smith, a 26-year-old Arlington Martin High School graduate, was on his fourth tour of duty in the Middle East when he became what investigators suspect is one of the first two Americans accidentally killed by fire from an unmanned U.S. military drone plane in Afghanistan.

But on this day, the large and loving family assembled at D/FW to welcome Smith asked that the focus not be on how he died, but rather on how he lived and what he died for.

It was an emotion shared by the many Marines who came to honor him.

"Whether it was enemy fire, hostile fire, or friendly fire, he gave his life for this country," said Jim Anderson, one of the Patriot Guard Riders. He has brought his

motorcycle out to escort fallen soldiers 37 times; fewer than 10 were Marines, and they all share a special bond.

"Marines have a special attachment for each other," added John Blaze. "Its hard to see a fellow Marine go... under any circumstances."

It is a special attachment to the service that his family came to understand as Smith repeatedly volunteered to return to the war zone.

"Jeremy was over there doing what he believed firmly in," said his father, Kerry Smith. "I can't overemphasize how firmly he believed in what he was doing. His focus was take out the enemy, and defend his country, and — above all — protect his guys."

As the procession arrived at the funeral home, there were more Marines there to greet the casket. They didn't know Sgt. Smith, but they say they know his heart — the heart of a Marine.

Funeral services for Sgt. Smith are scheduled for 11 a.m. Friday at Grace Community Church in Arlington.

E-mail [**greaves@wfaa.com**](mailto:greaves@wfaa.com)

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