One funeral too many for drill team to attend colleague's burial

Robbins soldier's funeral detail comrades can't attend her service because they are committed to another soldier funeral

March 6, 2009

BY LAUREN FITZPATRICK Staff writer

Though Simone Robinson served four years on a Crestwood Armory funeral detail with the Illinois National Guard, her colleagues won't be able to lay her to rest with full military honors Saturday.

By Sunday, when Robinson died of injuries from a suicide bomb attack in Afghanistan, her team already had committed to serve at the burial of another Illinois guardsman, one of five killed in the past two and a half weeks.

"All of them wanted to do both funerals," said 1st Lt. Beth Roxworthy, Robinson's commander.

The men and women Robinson served alongside instead will preside at the ceremony and burial of Sgt. Schuyler Patch. Patch, 25, of Galva, was killed in Kandahar, Afghanistan, with Sgt. Scott Stream, 39, of Mattoon. Their vehicle struck a roadside bomb on Feb. 24.

An active-duty Army team from Fort Leonard Wood will come in from Missouri to honor Robinson, Roxworthy said.

And the Patriot Guard Riders, veterans and supporters who help shield grieving families from protesters, will escort her body today from Midway Airport to W.W. Holt Funeral Home in Harvey.

Robinson, a 21-year-old single mother of Nyzia Wilson, 2, presided over ceremonies and burials of the fallen.

"It's tough," said Sgt. April Hawes, a Guard spokeswoman. "We've had eight (fatalities) since 33rd has been deployed, since late last year."

Thursday, Robinson was posthumously promoted to sergeant and awarded a Bronze Star, Hawes said.

The Bronze Star was given because "she showed personal courage and commitment to her mission in a combat zone," Hawes said, reading the citation that accompanied the medal.

Robinson received a Purple Heart immediately after the Jan. 17 explosion in Kabul that trapped her between a burning vehicle and a wall, injured four
people and killed a soldier and four Afghan citizens.

Her other awards include a Combat Action Badge, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with M-device, Army Service Ribbon and NATO Medal, according to the Guard.

Her body is being flown to Midway Airport from Texas, where she was being treated for burns and a skull fracture. A guardsman from her unit already has flown to Texas to escort her, Roxworthy said. According to military tradition, the body of a fallen soldier is not left alone until burial with full military honors, Roxworthy said.

Funeral services are set for Saturday at Great Hope Church in Robbins, said Roxworthy. Visitation today is private.

Lauren FitzPatrick can be reached at fitzpatrick@southtownstar.com or (708) 802-8832.

The parents of Simone Robinson, posthumously promoted to sergeant, issued a written statement Thursday through the Illinois National Guard.

"Nothing compares to what our family is experiencing at this time, with the loss of Simone. She was devoted to her friends, her family, her country and most importantly to her daughter, Nyzia." She wanted nothing more than to be a good role model for Nyzia and was dedicated to working hard to provide for her. Simone had a smile that could easily light up a room and an angelic voice heard by so many. Simone sang her way through life, getting her through so much. She is truly our hero and will always be in our hearts."

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