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**Press Release 10-068, 4 December 2010**

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## **For Immediate Release**

### **Utah National Guard Soldier Killed in Afghanistan**

DRAPER, Utah – Sergeant First Class James E. Thode, 118<sup>th</sup> Engineer (Sapper) Company, 1457<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, Utah National Guard, died Dec. 2 in Sabari District, Khowst Province, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his unit using an improvised explosive device.

A resident of Kirtland, N.M., Thode deployed to Afghanistan in July 2010 with the 118<sup>th</sup>. The unit's mission is to provide route-clearance support to Coalition forces in Afghanistan.

Thode, 45, enlisted in the military in 1984 and joined the Utah National Guard as a 12B combat engineer in 2002. He deployed to Iraq as a member of the Utah Guard's 1457<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion in 2003-2004 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"We're deeply saddened by the death of Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class James Thode in Afghanistan," said Maj. Gen. Brian Tarbet, the Adjutant General of the Utah National Guard. "It's a terrible loss for his family, the Soldiers of the 118<sup>th</sup> Sapper Company and the Utah National Guard."

"Our condolences go out to Mrs. Thode, her two children, and to Sgt. Thode's parents," Tarbet continued. "Sergeant 1<sup>st</sup> Class Thode deployed once before to Iraq and served with distinction. He was killed this week while leading his Soldiers in combat, doing what great NCOs of our military have done for generations. We'll be privileged to participate to the full extent the family requests in rendering military honors at the funeral in New Mexico. The citizens of Utah should know that one of their finest has fallen."

Utah Governor Gary Herbert also extended his condolences to Thode's family.

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"Jeanette and I wish to express our most heartfelt sympathies to the family of Sgt. 1st Class James Thode," said Herbert. "He gave the ultimate sacrifice in the fight for freedom. We pray that his loved ones and friends will be comforted at this difficult time and especially during the holiday season. As commander in chief of the Utah National Guard, I join with all Utahns in extending my personal appreciation for the sacrifices of this selfless Soldier and his fellow troops in Afghanistan."

Thode is the sixth Utah National Guard Soldier that has died since 9/11 while serving in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Others who have paid the ultimate price are as follows:

- Specialist Ryan Stark, a member of the 1-145<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, died May 27, 2003, in a military-vehicle accident at Tooele Army Depot.
- Staff Sgt. Alan Rogers, a member of the 1-211<sup>th</sup> Aviation, died Sept. 29, 2004, in Afghanistan.
- Sergeant Brandon Thomas, 19<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group (Airborne), died May 7, 2005, in Iraq while working as a civilian contractor.
- Sergeant 1<sup>st</sup> Class Ronald T. Wood, a member of the 1-148<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, died July 16, 2005, when the humvee in which he was riding was struck by a roadside bomb.
- Second Lt. Scott B. Lundell, a member of I Corps Artillery (Forward), died Nov. 25, 2006, in Afghanistan when his dismounted patrol was engaged by enemy forces.

A memorial fund has been set up for Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Thode's family. Those who wish to donate may do so at any Wells Fargo branch.

**Media Notes:** The Utah National Guard will make public comment on the death of Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Thode at a news conference at 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 4, at its Draper headquarters, 12953 S. Minuteman Drive in Draper, Utah. Please contact Lt. Col. Hank McIntire at (801) 420-4778 for more information.