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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Marine Sgt. Lucas T. Pyeatt was posthumously awarded the National Intelligence Medal for Valor today for his leadership and technical expertise as a signals intelligence team leader.

Pyeatt died Feb. 5 when an improvised explosive device struck his vehicle during a patrol to locate enemy communications in Afghanistan's Helmand Province.

Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper presented the award to Pyeatt's parents at a ceremony at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

Noting that the Marine Corps had already recognized Pyeatt and publicly lauded his honor, courage and commitment, Clapper said, "It's the great privilege of the Intelligence Community in which he also served, to recognize the quiet professionalism, valor and sacrifice of this brave young leader.

"Even though he knew he couldn't be on every patrol, he insisted on conducting the very first one, in a heavily contested area to be certain he understood what his team would be going through every time they left the base, and his Marines loved him for it," Clapper said. "This brave and selfless leader paid the ultimate price. No one could give more for their country or for his fellow Marines."

Pyeatt was assigned to the 2nd Radio Battalion, II Marine Expeditionary Force. "What we found when we lost him was that he was the heart of the battalion," said his commanding officer, Lt. Col. Matthew Rau. "He was a great young leader."

Marine Corps Director of Intelligence Brig. Gen. Vincent R. Stewart said Pyeatt epitomized what a Marine is all about.

"He knew who he was," Stewart said. "He made peace with his life and his future, and he was just a great kid."

"He was doing really important things, and we're proud of him," said Pyeatt's father, Lon Scott Pyeatt, a retired Air Force chief master sergeant.

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The elder Pyeatt also expressed his admiration for all the young men and women in uniform. “They’re all dedicated to what they do,” he said. “It’s an extraordinary sacrifice, and it baffles me how they can go back and do it again and again and again.”

Sgt. Pyeatt’s mother, Cindy Pyeatt, said her son absolutely loved the United States, the Constitution, and strongly believed in national service. “He really felt that young people have to step up,” she said. “Not everybody can be in the Marine Corps or the military, but you can better your community and you can better the world you live in.”

The ODNI established the Medal for Valor in 2008 to acknowledge the extraordinary accomplishments of Intelligence Community (IC) professionals. It is second only to the Intelligence Cross in IC awards for bravery.

The Director of National Intelligence oversees 16 federal organizations that make up the U.S. Intelligence Community.

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Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper presents the National Intelligence Medal for Valor to the parents of Marine Sgt. Lucas T. Pyeatt in a ceremony at ODNI headquarters June 29, 2011. Sergeant Pyeatt died Feb. 5 while on patrol in Afghanistan’s Helmand Province. *Photo by Brad Kimberly/ODNI* (Download High-Resolution)