

American Legion Post 201

Telephone: 770-475-9023

americanlegionalpharetta@gmail.com

www.legion201.org

Thursday, Aug. 20, 2026

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## **Kabul 13 Memorial Ceremony At Johns Creek Veterans Walk Scheduled for 9 a.m. Saturday**

A ceremony to remember the Aug. 26, 2021 deaths of the 13 service members who died in a suicide bombing at the Abbey Gate of Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, is scheduled for 9 a.m. Saturday at the Johns Creek Veterans Walk's Afghanistan Monument at Newtown Park. [Click here to see flyer.](#)

Sponsored jointly by the Johns Creek Veterans Association (JCVA) and the St. Brigid Knights of Columbus Assembly, the gathering will Celebrate the Life of the servicemen and women who "gave their final measure" during the U.S. exit from the conflict. The general public is welcome to attend.

In addition to the service members who were killed, the suicide bombing also claimed the lives of at least 170 Afghan civilians during the chaotic final days of the U.S. withdrawal. The attack marked the deadliest day for American forces in Afghanistan in a decade.

*(Editor's Note: the reference to "in a decade" is a carefully-chosen phrase associated with the timing of the deaths of these 13 service members. See the "Extortion 17" story below for more information. - hdh)*

### ***The Fallen Service Members***

The 13 service members, often referred to as the "Kabul 13," consisted of 11 Marines, one Navy sailor, and one Army soldier: They were: Staff Sgt. Darin T. Hoover, 31, of Salt Lake City, Utah (USMC); Sgt. Johanny Rosario Pichardo, 25, of Lawrence, Massachusetts (USMC); Sgt. Nicole L. Gee, 23, of Sacramento, California (USMC); Cpl. Hunter Lopez, 22, of Indio, California (USMC); Cpl. Daegan W. Page, 23, of Omaha, Nebraska (USMC); Cpl. Humberto A. Sanchez, 22, of Logansport, Indiana (USMC); Lance Cpl. David L. Espinoza, 20, of Rio Bravo, Texas (USMC); Lance Cpl. Jared M. Schmitz, 20, of St. Charles, Missouri (USMC); Lance Cpl. Rylee J. McCollum, 20, of Jackson, Wyoming (USMC); Lance Cpl. Dylan R. Merola, 20, of Rancho Cucamonga, California (USMC); Lance Cpl. Kareem M. Nikoui, 20, of Norco, California (USMC); Navy Petty Officer Third Class Maxton W. Soviak, 22, of Berlin Heights, Ohio (Navy Hospital Corpsman); and Staff Sgt. Ryan C. Knauss, 23, of Corryton, Tennessee (U.S. Army).

### ***Legacy and Remembrance***

The service members were stationed at the gates amidst extreme danger. Their job was to screen crowds, maintain order, and rescue stranded American citizens and Afghan allies. Many of them were in their early twenties—some born around the time the war in Afghanistan began following the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

The deaths of the Abbey Gate service members sparked intense scrutiny, focusing heavily on intelligence failures and operational flaws during the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan. Military investigations revealed that commanders knew an attack by ISIS-K was imminent. However, a major point of contention remains whether requests to launch a pre-emptive drone strike on the suspected bomber were denied, a claim families of the fallen have repeatedly raised.

Equipment deficiencies also amplified the tragedy. Troops faced massive, compressed crowds without physical standoff barriers, making them highly vulnerable to suicide blasts. Additionally, medical evacuation and triage capabilities were severely strained by the simultaneous high volume of American and Afghan casualties.

Beyond tactical failures, the tragedy has become a symbol of a poorly executed exit strategy, leading to ongoing congressional hearings, demands for accountability, and severe criticism of top administrative and military leadership. Years later, public debates continue regarding whether the loss of life could have been prevented with a more secure, orderly evacuation plan.

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## **Remembering the Extortion 17 Shootdown; 38 Plus Service Dog Killed in Afghanistan on 8/6/2011**

*(Editor's Note: the use of the term "in a decade" in the Kabul 13 story is carefully chosen as it relates to the following story which took place in Afghanistan exactly 10 years, 20 days earlier. We thank Post 201 member Jay McVinney for bringing this event to our attention. —hdh)*

On August 6, 2011, a U.S. Army CH-47D Chinook helicopter with the call sign "Extortion 17" was shot down by a Taliban rocket-propelled grenade in the Tangi Valley of Maidan Wardak province, Afghanistan. The tragic crash killed all 38 occupants and a military working dog, marking it as the single deadliest loss of life for U.S. forces and special operations in the Afghan war.

### ***The Mission and Crash***

The Chinook was transporting a Quick Reaction Force which was being rushed in to reinforce an engaged unit of the 75th Ranger Regiment fighting insurgents in the valley southwest of Kabul. As the helicopter maneuvered to land during the chaotic twilight operation, a single insurgent round struck the aircraft. The blast caused an immediate, catastrophic crash, giving those on board no chance to survive.

A total of 38 human lives and one multi-purpose canine perished in the wreckage. The manifest included: 17 U.S. Navy SEALs (including members of the elite Naval Special Warfare Development Group); 5 Naval Special Warfare support personnel; 3 U.S. Air Force special tactics airmen (pararescue men and a combat controller); 5 Army National Guard and Army Reserve flight crew members; 7 Afghan National Army commandos; 1 Afghan civilian interpreter; and 1 U.S. military working dog named Bart.

### *Aftermath and Legacy*

The incident sent profound shockwaves through the U. S. military and the wider special operations community. Because many of the fallen SEALs belonged to the same unit which participated in the raid to eliminate Osama bin Laden just months prior, the crash stirred intense public grief and scrutiny. However, formal military investigations confirmed the downing was the result of combat luck and enemy fire rather than foul play or a trap.

Despite these official findings, the incident drew fierce scrutiny. Some family members and military personnel, including an AC-130 gunship officer, publicly questioned the strict rules of engagement. They argued that the air support was denied permission to proactively clear the landing zone with suppressive fire, which could have eliminated the RPG-bearing insurgents.

However, the tragedy did inspire the creation of support networks, like the SEAL Legacy Foundation, to care for Gold Star families. Today, the event remains seared into military history as a solemn reminder of the steep human cost paid during Operation Enduring Freedom.

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## **Upcoming Post 201, Other Veteran Related Activities**

***9-Ball Pool Tournament, 2 p.m.  
Every 3rd Sunday in the Clubroom/Bar***

**VIEW FEATURED  
POST EVENTS**

**Sunday, August 23, 2 p.m. BINGO at the Post. \$1,000 Jackpot.**

**Monday, Aug. 24, 7 p.m. VFW Post 12002 Month-End Meeting.** The VFW's month-end meeting at Post 201 is scheduled for 7 p.m. on the 4th Monday of every month. The mid-month meeting is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at Brimstone Restaurant & Tavern, 10595 Old Alabama Connector Road, Alpharetta.

**Tuesday, Aug. 25, 6:30 p.m. SAL Membership Meeting.**

**Wednesday, Aug. 26. Kabul 13 Remembrance Day.**

**Wednesday, Aug. 26, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. LifeSouth Blood Donation Drive.** [Click here](#) to schedule an appointment, or call 404-329-1994, ext. 61021.

**Tuesday, Sept. 1, 6:30 p.m. Finance Committee Meeting.** Note: this meeting has been moved from its normal Thursday night meeting for the month of September only.

**Monday, Sept. 7, Labor Day.** The Post's Clubroom/Bar will open at 12 noon instead of the normal 3 p.m. Monday opening since Labor Day is a national holiday. Other member-related activities are being considered, but no firm plans are in place as of publication deadline.

**Tuesday, Sept. 8, 6 p.m. Executive Committee Meeting.**

**Friday, Sept. 11, 9 a.m. Patriot Day - 9/11 Remembrance Day Ceremony** to Dedicate the new pod on the Walk of Memories to recognize all conflicts since Vietnam.

**Sunday, Sept. 13, 2 p.m. BINGO in the Ballroom. \$1,000 Jackpot.**

**Tuesday, Sept. 15 5:30 p.m. House and Grounds Committee Meeting.**

**Tuesday, Sept. 15. 7 p.m. General Membership Meeting.** A complimentary buffet dinner will be served starting in the 6 p.m. time frame.

**Friday, Sept. 18. U.S. Air Force Birthday.** Celebrate with a \$1 off regular price (any drink) for the first drink you order at the bar.

**Saturday, Sept. 19. POW/MIA Recognition Day.**

**Sunday, Sept. 27, 2 p.m. BINGO in the Ballroom. \$1,000 Jackpot.**

**Monday, Sept. 28, 7 p.m. VFW Post 12002 Month-End Meeting.** The VFW's month-end meeting at Post 201 is scheduled for 7 p.m. on the 4th Monday of every month. The mid-month meeting is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at Brimstone Restaurant & Tavern, 10595 Old Alabama Connector Road, Alpharetta.

**Wednesday, Oct. 14. 9th Annual Rick Gimpel Memorial Golf Tournament.** The Golf Club at Bradshaw Farm, 3030 Bradshaw Drive, Woodstock. Registration opens at 8 a.m. Shotgun start at 9:30 a.m. Contact Derek Garmon, 770-549-5669, [derekgarmon@yahoo.com](mailto:derekgarmon@yahoo.com), or Bruce Hay, 309-657-8528, [hayville@att.net](mailto:hayville@att.net) for details. Tournament meeting planning dates between now and tournament day are Wednesday, Sept. 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30, and Oct. 7. All meetings are scheduled to start at 6:30 p.m.

**Saturday, Nov. 7, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. 10th Annual Cruz-In “car show”.** Free for members of the general public who want to visit the Post and look at the cars on display. The registration fee for those showing cars: \$10 pre-show; \$20 day of show. To register [click here](#) , or if you need more details or have questions email [al201carshow@gmail.com](mailto:al201carshow@gmail.com). Food and drinks will be available for sale, and children can take advantage of a jump house and other planned activities during the 4-hour event. Also, a “Stars & Stripes” baseball game pitting the Aviator Nation against the Georgia Jackets, is scheduled for 11 a.m.

**Saturday, Nov. 7, 12 noon. 2nd Annual Georgia American Legion Veterans Raffle Drawing.** [Click this link](#) for details. Tickets are now available at the Post. Winning tickets will be drawn Saturday, Nov. 7, 2026. You do not have to be present to win. For every \$20 ticket sold by Post 201, the Post gets to keep \$12 for its treasury.

**Wednesday, Nov.11. Veterans Day.**

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**CLUB 201 DANCE -  
LEARN MORE**

## **VETERANS RESOURCES**

Visit the [Resource Page](#) at Post 201's website, [www.legion201.org](http://www.legion201.org) for a significant amount of information concerning various resources available for veterans. You'll find a Survivor Assistance Checklist, Benefits for Georgia Veterans, Burial at Sea Information, Veteran's License Plates Information, Emergency Housing Information Guide and many other resources.

**Past Issues of the Post's E-newsletter - [Click here.](#)**

### **Veterans Crisis Line**

**Call 988 and Press 1 or Text 838255**

**Visit [www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net)**

**VA Telephone Hotline - 1-877-222-8387**

**Post 201 Service Officer Hotline for Vets-at-Risk - 631-720-6022**

**Legion  
SAL**

**Auxiliary**

**More Veterans Resources**

**Photo Gallery**

***Post 201 - Serving Vets Since 1947***

***"It's not the price you pay to be a member,  
It's the price you paid to be eligible."***