

25 February - MoD announces death of three soldiers in Afghanistan
The Ministry of Defence has announced the deaths of three soldiers from 1st Battalion The Rifles. They died from wounds sustained as a result of an enemy explosion during an escort operation in the Gereshk district, central Helmand Province, at approximately 0700 this morning (Wednesday 25 February 2009).
The Medical Emergency Response Team helicopter was called, but sadly the soldiers were all pronounced dead by the doctor in the helicopter.
Subsequently they were named as:
Rifleman Jamie Gunn, aged 21 from Monmouth, Monmouthshire.
Lance Corporal Paul Upton, aged 31 from Looe in Cornwall.
Corporal Tom Gaden, aged 24 from Taunton in Somerset.
ACTING LANCE CORPORAL PAUL 'UPPERS' UPTON OMLT 9, E COMPANY, FIRST BATTALION THE RIFLES
Acting Lance Corporal Paul Upton was killed in action when the vehicle in which he and two other Riflemen of his Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) were travelling was struck by an IED the highway East of Gereshk on Wednesday 25th February 2009. He was on patrol with his OMLT with whom he had been operating since April 2008.
Acting Lance Corporal Upton was born in Paderborn on 17th March 1977. He originally enlisted into the Army in Salisbury in August 1986, on completion of his Combat Infantryman's course at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick he was posted to A Company, First Battalion The Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment (1 RGBW) on 24th February 1997. He served in the Anti-Tank Platoon with a tour to Northern Ireland and exercises in Canada. Lance Corporal Upton left the army in 2000 to pursue other interests, although he was deployed as a reservist to Kosovo with the First Battalion the Princess's of Wales Royal Regiment. He re-enlisted in December 2007 and was posted to E Company, First Battalion The Rifles (1 RIFLES) in April 2008, in time to commence Pre-Deployment Training for their operational tour in Afghanistan, alongside his brother Leon, a Serjeant in C Company of the same Battalion. Lance Corporal Upton was thirty one years old.
Mature and experienced, lance Corporal Upton immediately settled back into Regimental life. It was as if he had never been away and he clearly relished being back in the Battalion environment and back with many of his friends from his former Regiment. His determined and friendly manner was evident in his energetic approach to all he did, and he took many of the younger Riflemen under his wing, offering advice, but never forcing it, and 'digging out blind' at all tasks. He led by example and encouraged others with boundless enthusiasm and a ready smile. He was a clear candidate for the forthcoming Non-Commissioned Officer cadre and had already shown his ability and potential as an Acting Lance Corporal during the tour.
As a Mentor to the Afghan National Army, his patience and maturity shone through and he was a vital part of the mentoring effort.
This tragic loss will be felt sorely by all who knew him in the Battalion, and particularly by his team-mates. He was a constant presence and a rock for the team, bearing adversity and hardship with consummate ease and a constantly bright outlook on life, which was a bonus to all who knew him. However, we feel most for the sorrow and grief of Paul's parents Peter and Christine, his brother Leon, and his much loved son Jake. Our sense of loss is nothing compared to their grief and we are thinking and praying for them at this time.
"Once a Rifleman, always a Rifleman"
SWIFT AND BOLD
Lieutenant Colonel Joe Cavanagh, Commanding Officer, 1 RIFLES, said:

It has been very difficult to come to terms with the death of Lance Corporal Paul Upton, killed yesterday by an Improvised Explosive Device while patrolling with his fellow Riflemen. While the Battalion has rallied round - most of all to support his proud and immensely popular and talented brother Serjeant Leon Upton, of C Company - it has been devastating. Paul was a slightly unusual Rifleman, in that he had only recently re-joined after a long spell in 'civvy street'. I remember as if it was yesterday his first day back in the Battalion as we bantered in the corridor; his sense of excitement was palpable and inspiring, and it was quite clear to all of us that he knew that he was back where he belonged. We are proud of this young man - and the decisions he has taken - and will miss him terribly.

Major Jonathan (Jonny) Kitson, Officer Commanding E Company, 1 RIFLES said: Acting Lance Corporal Upton was an ideal Rifleman: constantly upbeat, diligent and a grafter who worked hard for others before himself. His determination to get back into the swing of things having re-joined the army was evident from the start of the pre-deployment package and he was recognised instantly as a future Junior Non-Commissioned Officer. He clearly loved his profession and he cared deeply for his fellow Riflemen. Polite and well mannered, his tidiness and attention to administrative detail were legendary, to the point of obsession. However, this made him a perfect vehicle 2IC (second in command) and he was never to be found without all his kit and equipment in perfect readiness for any task. The Company has lost a dear friend and a great character who will be remembered as the quintessential Rifleman.

Captain Rich Camp, Team Commander OMLT 9 said: Acting Lance Corporal Paul Upton ('Uppers') joined my team at the very start of pre-deployment training and brought far more than his rank would suggest. He was mature and caring, treating everyone he met with kindness and respect. In terms of professionalism, he was consummate. His years of experience were of significant benefit to us all, and counted for a great deal on the ground. He always had time to chat to the lads and was the centre of a lot of morale in the team. Uppers was a keen and talented artist who spent a lot of his spare time with his sketch book. The results were outstanding. He designed all manner of things, and indeed had a waiting list for tattoo designs across the Forward Operating Base in which we worked. Uppers was one of the most organised men I have ever met, and this combined with his enduring patience, made him an outstanding asset and hugely valuable when dealing with the Afghan National Army. Uppers was a genuinely kind person with time for anyone who needed it - one of life's true gentlemen. His talk was often of his boy and brother, and my thoughts and prayers go out to his whole family who will be feeling this terrible loss the most. It was a true honour to serve with him, and he is sorely missed as a close friend by the whole team.

A/Cpl Woolley, A/Cpl Southwick, A/Cpl O'Neill, Rfn Diamond, OMLT 9 team mates, said: LCpl Upton was better known as 'Uppers'. For soldier who had been out of the forces for eight years to re-enlist in time for pre-deployment to Afghanistan, Uppers rolled back into the way of life as if he had not been out. He was an excellent Rifleman to work alongside, as all of the team would tell you. He will be best remembered for his obsession for cleaning and his artistic drawings and being an outstanding and well loved Rifleman.

CORPORAL TOM GADEN OMLT 9, E COMPANY, FIRST BATTALION THE RIFLES
Corporal Tom GADEN was killed in action on Wednesday 25th

February 2009 when the vehicle in which he and two other Riflemen of his Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) were travelling was struck by an IED on the highway East of Gereshk. He was on patrol with his OMLT with whom he had been operating since January 2009. Corporal Gaden was born on 23rd November 1984 in Taunton, attending Bishop Fox's Community School. He took part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and had been a member of the Blackbrook Scout Troop. He enlisted into the Army in Taunton and on completion of the Combat Infantryman's Course at the Infantry Training Centre Catterick, he was posted to the Second Battalion, the Light Infantry (2 LI) on 25th November 2002 (later to become 3 RIFLES). He was promoted to Lance Corporal in 2005 and attended the Section Commanders' Battle course in the summer of 2006. His performance was remarked upon as the 'best of the 2 LI batch'. He served on Op TELIC 2 (Iraq) and on peace keeping operations in Cyprus, joining the 2 LI Recce (Reconnaissance) Platoon where he was 'zealous and enthusiastic' by nature, earning the respect of his peers and becoming one of the most popular members of his platoon. Corporal Gaden was posted to the First Battalion The Rifles (1 RIFLES) in February 2008, moving to E Company that April, and was immediately selected to attend the Close Quarter Battle Skills Course with a view to passing on these skills to the Company for the tour to Afghanistan. However, he was almost immediately selected to deploy as a Section Commander to Um Qasr, Iraq, as part of the Battalion's commitment to that operational theatre. He spent four months working with the Naval Transition Team before redeploying just after Christmas 2008 to rejoin his original team in a remote Forward Operating Base (FOB) in Helmand, Southern Afghanistan. Corporal Gaden was a competent and assuredly professional operator, selected for the technically complex skills of Close Quarter Battle, then selected again to carry out a discrete and independent task for the Battalion. He took these rapid changes in his stride, remaining resourceful and flexible to the operational requirements and always relishing the challenge. He thrived in Iraq and led his Section with skill and determination throughout that short tour. On arrival in Afghanistan, he immediately involved himself in the small team environment in an isolated and austere FOB, as team 3ic (third in command), stepping up where necessary as second in command of the team. Corporal Gaden was a Rifleman of the calibre that has shaped the Regiment's reputation and the Battalion's character and ethos. He was well known for his strong faith and deep sense of duty, which was reflected in his qualities as a commander and friend to those around him. He was part of the future of this great organisation and his sacrifice will be felt by all Riflemen. Our sense of loss cannot match the sorrow and grief that is being felt by Corporal Gaden's family, and his fiancée. Our prayers are with them at this time.

"Once a Rifleman, always a Rifleman" SWIFT AND BOLD

Lieutenant Colonel Joe Cavanagh, Commanding Officer, 1 RIFLES, said: The news that Corporal Tom Gaden had been killed by an Improvised Explosive Device was devastating for the Battalion and heart-breaking for his family and friends. It has been a bitter blow. Of all of the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams, Tom's was one of the tightest knit, as a result of its relative isolation and the challenges the team has overcome in the course of this tour; of consolation to Tom and his fellow heroic Riflemen will be the fact that they fell together. I remember

Tom from my 2 LI days in Edinburgh; there he was already showing great potential and the signs that he would develop into an outstanding Non-Commissioned Officer. He was already a popular and respected leader. In addition he had amassed rich, impressive achievements and experiences from outside Army life - most of all his beloved young family - and as a result he will be very badly and widely missed.

Major Jonathan (Jonny) Kitson, Officer Commanding E Company, 1 RIFLES: I had the uncomfortable duty of welcoming Corporal Gaden into the Company on the same day as I had to task him for a four month tour of Iraq. He took the news in a manner befitting his calm and professional reputation. His only concern was that he should be able to get back to E Company as quickly as possible, which he did in January of this year. He had an immediate impact on his team, galvanising the Riflemen's efforts and surging forward with a passion for the task at hand. He showed a significant degree of care and compassion for his Rifleman, no doubt emanating from the strong faith that he held at the centre of his life. The Company mourns a great leader and a firm friend.

Captain Rich Camp, Team Commander OMLT 9 said : Corporal Tom Gaden joined OMLT 9 at the start of the year having served the four previous months in Iraq. Initially the team 3i/c, he had recently stepped up as my Second in Command and it was in that role he was serving on the 25th February 2009 as a vehicle commander. His professional competence and diligence were clear for all to see - he saw the Riflemen who worked for him as being a great responsibility which he served tirelessly. His love of the Army was an inspirational driving force for everyone, and his experience and professional knowledge were of great benefit to us all. Much of his time was spent with the lads training in the gym and he was a physically strong man. It would not be unusual to see him with a group of willing volunteers running phys after a patrol; a testament to his nature and the admiration the team had for him. An exceptional NCO and natural leader, the loss of Tom is a crushing blow to the OMLT, professionally and personally. He was a close friend to us all and held in high regard across the Regiment. I know however, this will be felt most keenly by his parents and young family in Taunton, of whom he talked a great deal - my thoughts and prayers go out to them.

A/Cpl Woolley, A/Cpl Southwick, A/Cpl O'Neill, Rfn Diamond, OMLT 9 team-mates, said : Cpl Gaden, 'Tomo', as he was known to us, was a very keen soldier who took the role of 2IC when he came to Afghanistan. He was a much loved and respected Rifleman to us all. Tomo will be missed for his keenness and his passion for the job, and his love and loyalty to his friends and family.

'Reveille, Tom' RIFLEMAN JAMIE GUNN OMLT 9, E COMPANY, FIRST BATTALION THE RIFLES (E Coy 1 RIFLES) Rifleman Jamie Gunn was killed in action when the vehicle in which he and two other Riflemen of his Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) were travelling was struck by an IED on the highway East of Gereshk on Wednesday 25th February 2009. He was on patrol with his Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team with whom he had been operating since April 2008. Rifleman Gunn was born on 4th August 1987 in Leamington Spa and grew up in Monmouth, Wales. He was selected as an apprentice for Land Rover before deciding that his future lay in the armed forces. Soon after turning twenty, he enlisted into the Army in Hereford on 20th November 2007. Whilst waiting to start his basic training he worked long hours to get to the peak of physical fitness. He

successfully completed his Combat Infantryman's course at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick in May 2008 triumphing over an injury to reach the required standard. On passing out from the Centre he was posted to 'E' Company (E Coy), First Battalion The Rifles (1 RIFLES), in Beachley, Gloucestershire. He was twenty one years old. As a new Rifleman in the newly formed Company, Rifleman Gunn settled in quickly to the hectic pace of Pre-Deployment Training, where his previous experience as a Land Rover mechanic was put to good use. Practical with his hands and always keen to help, he was an asset to the team in making their life more comfortable when in the rough conditions of exercise and later on operations in Helmand, southern Afghanistan. Careful in his choice of friends, he was a loyal and conscientious young man who was enthusiastic about his expectant career. Predictably, he came out of his shell once the tour started in earnest, quickly establishing himself as a core member of his team and earning the respect of his commanders and fellow Riflemen alike. Humorous, and at the centre of every banter session, he was clearly relishing his chosen profession, taking pride in his work and totally at ease in the harsh and austere working environment of these eight-man teams. His valuable work with the soldiers of the Afghan National Army saw them develop noticeably over the months he acted as a Mentor. He was an integral part of a small and tight knit team, forged by common experience and communal struggle. His loss drives a deep sadness into this team and he will be sorely missed by those who will continue the struggle. Our pain does not compare to the grief of his parents, Janet and Mervyn, and his sister Jess; our thoughts and prayers are with them at this time. "Once a Rifleman, always a Rifleman" SWIFT AND BOLD Lieutenant Colonel Joe Cavanagh, Commanding Officer, 1 RIFLES said : I was shocked and stunned by the news early yesterday morning that Rifleman Jamie Gunn had been killed with two fellow Riflemen by an Improvised Explosive Device. This was a terrible shock for us and will be heart-rending for his family and friends. For one so young and inexperienced at the start of this operation, he had been performing superbly, and had grown into a very impressive, mature and confident Rifleman. He was showing as much potential as anyone and would no doubt have 'smashed' through the Junior Non-Commissioned Officer training later this year as he pressed on to even bigger and better things. We will remember his enviably calm, cool attitude under pressure - and his smile when the going was better. He will be very deeply missed. Major Jonathan (Jonny) Kitson, Officer Commanding E Company, 1 RIFLES said: Rifleman Gunn was a typical example of the calibre of young men in this Battle Group, and showed all the characteristics and grit that have helped to make the mentoring mission here in Helmand so successful. As a junior member of the Company during the pre-deployment training package, he was relatively quiet and unassuming, but he listened intently, took on board the lessons being taught, and worked hard to establish himself in his Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team. His skills as a former apprentice mechanic were quickly pressed into service. When I saw him in January, I did not recognise the fresh faced young Rifleman I had met in May last year. He was confident, assured, clearly at the top of his game as a soldier - a professional in all aspects. Despite his relative lack of experience, his Team Commander had already identified him as a potential Junior Non-Commissioned Officer.

We have lost a fine Rifleman and a dear friend. Captain Rich Camp, Team Commander OMLT 9: Rifleman Jamie Gunn ('Gunny') joined my team fresh out of training and quickly established himself as a key member of it, deploying with OMLT 9 to Afghanistan in September 2008. Working in a difficult environment where maturity is critical, he impressed all who had the pleasure to work with him. He was immensely popular; ever smiling and always willing to laugh whatever the situation. Physically and mentally strong, Gunny worked tirelessly alongside his team-mates - no job was ever too big and he was never too tired to 'crack on' and get something sorted if it needed doing. He was often to be found at the centre of the banter, giving easily as good as he got, passing the time with the many close friends he had around him. He retained a cool head regardless of the situation throughout the tour, something of great credit to a man of his age. He learned and understood his core business remarkably quickly and had clear aspirations for life in the Regiment after Afghanistan; I have no doubt that he would have thrived in the Rifles. Working in the teams we do, fellow Riflemen stop being colleagues and start being friends in the first few days - it is an honour to say he was a good friend of mine; a feeling echoed by every man in the team. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his parents and sister of whom he talked a great deal, and who will be feeling this tragic loss more than anyone. A/Cpl Woolley, A/Cpl Southwick, A/Cpl O'Neill, Rfn Diamond, OMLT 9 team mates: Rifleman Gunn, also known as Gunny, or Gumbo, was a fairly new and young Rifleman, but that did not stop him from being outstanding at his job and having a brilliant sense of humour. He was loved by all that worked with him. He will best be remembered for being the only Welshman who was scared of sheep and for being a brilliant friend to us all.

25 February

The Ministry of Defence has announced that Marine Michael 'Mick' Laski Royal Marines passed away peacefully at Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham on the 25th February 2009 with his family beside him. Despite displaying true Commando qualities to the very end, he died of the wounds he sustained in action on the 23rd February 2009 to the north of Sangin, Helmand Province, Afghanistan. On the morning of Monday 23rd February 2008, Yankee Company was conducting a foot patrol to provide security to the local Afghan community, when they were engaged by heavy and accurate enemy fire. Caught in open ground during this initial exchange, Marine Laski was struck by an enemy bullet whilst the patrol fought back to regain the initiative. In spite of every effort by his colleagues, and his own trademark determination, he never regained consciousness.

MARINE MICHAEL 'MICK' LASKI

Marine Laski, 21, was born in Liverpool on the 11 May 1987. After completing Royal Marines Commando Recruit training in September 2006, he joined 45 Commando Royal Marines and immediately deployed with the Unit on Operation HERRICK 5 to Afghanistan. Returning to the Unit in early 2008 after successfully completing his Royal Marines Signals Specialisation course, his dedication, enthusiasm and professionalism ensured that he immediately stood out from his peers. The epitome of a Royal Marine, his desire to be right at the heart of Commando Unit life manifested itself in his single minded determination and desire to return to a close combat company. Confident in his abilities, his relentless drive and tenacity and the continual pestering of the Signal Troop Sergeant Major, saw him joining Yankee Company in time for operations in the Upper Sangin Valley in Afghanistan on Operation HERRICK 9. Marine Laski was a dependable, brave and selfless man. He loved his job, and was exceptionally good at it. His spirit and tenacity in the

face of adversity and danger was unswerving and his sense of humour and love for life was apparent in everything he did. He was an exceptional Commando, and he was blessed with a truly engaging personality that endeared him to all. Hugely popular within the Company, his natural and infectious sense of humour always meant that he was at the centre of Company banter. Marine Laski was a ferociously loyal Royal Marine, dedicated to his friends and to the Corps and that is how he will best be remembered. His loss will be felt deeply by all.

Lieutenant Colonel Jim Morris Royal Marines, Commanding Officer, 45 Commando Group said: "Marine Mick Laski was a Royal Marine Commando through and through. Bright, quick witted, incredibly determined and extremely brave he always sought out every opportunity to operate as close to the front line as possible. As a signaller in Yankee Company he was invariably on the shoulder of his Company Commander in the thick of the fighting ensuring communications whatever the circumstance. This was his second operational deployment to Afghanistan, and his commitment and bravery in the face of the enemy has been a continual example to us all. His loss is a heavy blow to Signal's Troop and 45 Commando, and we will all miss his loyalty, humour and friendship. The whole of 45 Commando Group joins me in sending my deepest condolences to his Father and Brothers as they begin to come to terms with these devastating events."

Major Rich Parvin Royal Marines, Officer Commanding Y Company, 45 Commando Group said: "Marine Mick Laski was a signaller with Yankee Company Headquarters and as such I spent a great deal of time with him, both on patrol and in the Operations Room at FOB (Forward Operating Base) Inkerman. He was a sharp witted and thoughtful individual with an active mind. His 'Scouse' wit was always well timed and he would often break the tension at moments of pressure with his dry sense of humour. Brave in combat and always ready to assist others in any task, he was all that a Royal Marine should be. Whether he was providing covering fire to get his comrades out of danger or maintaining communications for the Company in his role as a signaller, he was always exactly where he was needed and getting things done. He was a professional in every sense and a Commando in the very best of traditions; a thinking man's soldier. He was mortally wounded whilst fighting alongside his comrades, doing the job that he loved and thrived in, and set the standards for all around him to follow. His loss is a tragedy, but his life was a gift to all who knew him. He lived his life with a determination to always succeed against adversity, but he did this with humility, dignity and humanity. He will be an example for those of us that remain and his memory will galvanise our spirits in difficult times ahead. It was a privilege to serve alongside him. He is missed, but never forgotten."

Captain Mick Trafford Royal Marines, Signals Troop Commander, 45 Commando Group said: "Marine Mick Laski made an enormous contribution to the Corps; his loss will leave a gaping hole in Yankee Coy, and the Commando's Signals Troop. Hugely popular and deeply respected, Marine Mick Laski was mature well beyond his years, offering compassion and understanding to his friends. He was extremely quick-witted, and always looked for any opportunity for some banter, especially with his 'oppos' (friends) in Yankee Company, where his enthusiasm was renowned as second to none. Our thoughts are with Marine Laski's family at this difficult time. He will never be forgotten in 45 Commando."

Captain Ralph Cottrell Royal Marine, 2IC Yankee Company, 45 Commando Group said: "Marine Mick Laski was an excellent soldier and signaller who was a popular member of Yankee Company and will be sorely missed. He was completely reliable both on the ground and in the Operations room. On previous Company patrols he had been my signaller, on my shoulder, covering my back and making sure all my messages were passed as I commanded the patrol. I recall wading chest deep in an irrigation ditch with him to

my front. Moments before we had been in contact with the enemy and I remember him calling to Corporal Moore 'this is hoofing, you've gotta get a phot of this!' with a big grin on his face. It was good Commando soldiering and was what he loved to do. I will miss his humour, the conversations we had, often late at night or early morning when we were on watch, and his drive and energy to excel in what ever he did."

Warrant Officer 2nd Class Dave Irons Royal Marines, Signals Troop Sergeant Major said: "When Marine Mick Laski joined 45 Commando from his signals course, he took every opportunity he could to remind me how much he wanted to be in a Company detachment, to the point were he knew where the gaps were before I did. Just before Pre-Deployment Training he got his wish and joined Yankee Company; the smile on his face said it all. Since then I didn't get to see him much as he was fully embedded within Yankee Company, however last time I spoke to him he was 'loving it' at Inkerman and was always keen to go out with Company Tactical Headquarters and be amongst it with the rest of the lads. Marine Mick Laski was an exceptional person overflowing with the qualities you would expect of a Royal Marine, dedicated to his friends, 45 Commando and the Corps. His loss will be deeply felt by us all."

Corporal Dan Moore Royal Marines, Yankee Company Signals Detachment, 45 Commando Group said: "Mick was a massive part of Yankee Company Signals Detachment, always ready to help me whenever I needed it. He was the most professional bloke I ever knew, never cutting a corner in any aspect of his work. If he wasn't working or sorting out his kit, which he never stopped fiddling with and then testing it, he was entertaining the lads with his 'chad' motorbike stories or his embarrassing dancing when he was listening to his music. He will be greatly missed by me and everyone who had the pleasure of knowing him. Mick, you were a top friend and an outstanding Marine. I'll never forget you mate."

Marine Mark Goldsbury Royal Marines, Yankee Company Signals Detachment, 45 Commando Group said: "I worked with Mick day in day out for the last one and a half years; it was a pleasure to have known him, and he was a true inspiration to work with. He was the most professional man I've worked with and there was never a dull moment, whether it be him spinning his run-ashore dits (stories), or giving advice on what car or motorbike to buy. Mick was an asset to the Corps and the Signals Detachment, but also a great friend who I will sorely miss and never forget. My thoughts go out to his family at this difficult time. Rest in Peace mate; see you in the Big Man's Bar."

Marine Karl Neave Royal Marine, Signals Troop, a close friend, said:
"It was with great sadness and shock that I heard the news of Marine Laski's tragic death on returning from R&R (rest and recuperation). The first thing that came to mind was the time we was on our S3s (Signal Course) and just before going on exercise one of the S2s gave Laski the name of 'Cow Head', just because of the sheer size of his head compared to his body! He took it quite well which summed him up, he never took things too seriously always ensuring the lads morale was high whether down at Signals lines (where it was needed) or whilst out for a drink. He was always reminding me how elite all 'Scousers' are compared to the rest of the world! He was a true professional when on the ground getting amongst it with the lads, a job he was proud of and loved doing. Laski was a great friend, a great colleague and a great bootneck! He will be sorely missed but never forgotten."

17 February

The MOD has confirmed that Lance Corporal Stephen Kingscott died from wounds sustained as a result of enemy fire during a joint UK and Afghan National Army foot patrol to dominate ground in the district of Nawa, south of Lashkar Gah, Helmand province.

Lance Corporal Stephen Michael Kingscott
Lance Corporal Stephen "Schnoz" Kingscott died during the assault of an enemy position during a deliberate operation against

insurgents in the Nawa District of Helmand Province. He was born on 10th July 1986 in his home town of Plymouth at the Freedom Fields Hospital. Lance Corporal Kingscott joined the British Army after gaining 7 GCSEs from the John Kitto Community College; he trained at the Army Foundation College, Harrogate and the Infantry Training Centre, Catterick before he joined his regiment, 1st Battalion The Devonshire and Dorset Regiment, in Ballykinler, Northern Ireland. In summer 2006 Lance Corporal Kingscott served in Iraq with 1st Battalion The Devon and Dorset Light Infantry before they were amalgamated into 1st Battalion The Rifles, in which he served in Belize, the Falkland Islands and Afghanistan. During pre-deployment training for Operation Herrick 9, he was selected for special language training, passing an intensive 10 week Dari course. In Afghanistan he was employed in the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team Battle Group, working in one of the small, tight-knit teams that train and fight alongside the Afghan National Army. Lance Corporal Kingscott was a physically fit individual who enjoyed many sports and represented the battalion in the 1st XI Football and Cricket teams. When in Afghanistan he could also be found teaching and playing Volleyball with the Afghan National Army in the Patrol Base. Lance Corporal Kingscott was an intelligent, competent, friendly and popular Rifleman who was dedicated to his work, selflessly placing himself in harm's way before his comrades. He was larger than life and would always be the first to raise the morale of his team when the going was tough in Southern Helmand. Once, out patrolling in the Green Zone, his balance failed him whilst tip toeing over a precarious log bridge, tumbling into one of the many irrigation ditches. Right behind him, his Company Commander, Major Andy Watkins, asked after his well-being. As a team mate gave him a helping hand out of the water, his reply was simply "I wanted to try out my backstroke, it's getting a little rusty", and with a wry smile continued on with the patrol; testimony to his irrepressible sense of humour and cheerfulness in adversity. His commitment to those around him was a constant theme noted by his fellow Riflemen, who always found themselves behind Lance Corporal Kingscott when advancing on the enemy. Stephen's parents, Wendy and Michael, his sister, Laura, and his Fiancée, Gemma, said: "Stephen is our loving son, brother, grandson and fiancée, who died for his country. He will always be our hero and always in our thoughts." Lance Corporal "Deaks" Matthews, C Company, 1 RIFLES comments: "Schnoz was a good bloke. He had a great sense of humour and was a fun guy to be around. He always knew how to make people laugh. He was a great soldier and did everything to the best. He was a good friend of mine and he had good friends across the Battalion; he will be greatly missed". As a Non-Commissioned Officer he held the respect of his Company across all ranks and his high standards were a shining example to those around him and in particular, to his Afghan colleagues. His Team Commander, Captain Dan Holloway, commented on Lance Corporal Kingscott's "fearless nature in battle, always pushing on towards the enemy objective to take the fight to them" after one of the many examples of his physical and mental courage during an operation. Lieutenant Colonel Joe Cavanagh, Commanding Officer, 1 RIFLES said: "Lance Corporal Steve Kingscott died from wounds sustained in combat, despite the very best efforts of his fellow Riflemen on the spot - who had to fight to extract him - and the outstanding attempts to save his

life by medical staff all the way back from battlefield to Field Hospital. When Steve was hit he and his OMLT company colleagues, together with their Afghan National Army counterparts, were taking the fight to the enemy yet again in the latest of a series of brave and successful missions. "The depth of Steve's previous experience and the speed with which he picked up new skills made him a model Rifleman, no more so than on operations; that he was also a battalion 1st XI footballer and cricketer gives some idea of the breadth of his talent. We are so sorry for Steve's parents and family, his beloved girlfriend, and his friends; they will miss him terribly, as we will. He was a splendid representative of the Battalion and The Rifles. We are all very proud to have served alongside him." Lance Corporal Kingscott will be sorely missed by all the members of 1st Battalion The Rifles, C Company in which he served and the Afghan National Army soldiers he taught and fought alongside whilst deployed in Afghanistan. Steve is survived by his parents Michael and Wendy Kingscott, his sister Laura and his girlfriend Gemma; the thoughts of his wider 'family' are with them at this difficult time. Once a Rifleman, always a Rifleman. Swift and Bold. The Ministry of Defence has announced the death of three soldiers serving with 14th Signal Regiment (Electronic Warfare) in a road traffic accident at Roch in Pembrokeshire on Saturday 14 February 2009. MARINE DARREN JAMES SMITH 5 TROOP, X-COMPANY, 45 COMMANDO ROYAL MARINES Marine Darren SMITH was killed in action on operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan on the 14th February 2009. He was a member of X-ray Company, 45 Commando Royal Marines and was based in Forward Operating Base Nalay, in southern Sangin. Marine SMITH, known as 'Daz', was born on the 6th December 1981 and lived in Fleetwood, Lancashire. He joined X-ray Company in July 2008 immediately after completing Royal Marines Commando Recruit Training. He was the epitome of a young Royal Marine; enthusiastic, hardworking, fiercely loyal to his friends and very brave. He carried the light machine gun, and was always at the front of his Troop, leading the patrol on operations against the Taliban. He was killed in an ambush by Taliban fire. Despite the efforts of his colleagues, he tragically died of his wounds en route to the medical facilities at Camp BASTION. Daz was enormously popular with all of the other members of X-ray Company. He was a young man at the start of his career in the Royal Marines, but he already had a reputation for hard work and high professional standards. He was intelligent and trustworthy and had a natural talent that promised much for the future. He was a keen footballer and had trialled for Everton, Manchester City and Blackpool, but Liverpool was the team he supported. Even when he was deployed on operations he tried hard never to miss a game. During the quieter times of the deployment when relaxed and amongst his mates, Daz would always speak of his 2 year old daughter, Keira, of whom he was immensely proud. He was a devoted and loyal father and his thoughts would quickly turn to his loving girlfriend, who he had been with since childhood. Daz was immensely proud to be a Royal Marine and died as he lived, leading from the front. He was brave to the last and he leaves a gap in X-ray Company that is irreplaceable. Lieutenant Colonel Jim Morris Royal Marines, Commanding Officer, 45 Commando Group said : The loss of Marine Daz Smith has reverberated with great sadness around 45 Commando Group.

Brave, determined, modest yet fun-loving and full of life, he was always in the thick of the action whether on patrol or in his off-duty moments. He had an extremely bright future ahead of him and was viewed as one of the great talents in his Company. He was killed in the midst of a small arms engagement with the Taliban whilst providing essential fire support to his colleagues during a patrol that had discovered a large cache of Taliban ammunition. His tragic death has been felt very deeply across the Commando and the ultimate sacrifice that he has made will be remembered by us all. I send my deepest condolences to his friends and close family and in particular to Kelly, his girlfriend, and his daughter Keira of whom he was so proud. Major Richard Maltby Royal Marines, Officer Commanding X Company Gp said : Marine 'Daz' Smith was the embodiment of a Royal Marine Commando. Cheerful, courageous, determined and utterly professional, he died suppressing the enemy in a significant fire fight. Immensely popular, he was dedicated to his family, 5 Troop, the Company and the Royal Marines. It has been my absolute privilege to serve with such a loyal, fearless and good natured man. His loss will be deeply felt within the Troop and Company as a whole. However, at this difficult and tragic time, my thoughts are with his partner, Kelly, and their young daughter. Second Lieutenant Toby Jones, Officer Commanding 5 Troop, X Company, said : Marine 'Daz' SMITH was a hugely popular and likeable member of 5 Troop. In my short time as Officer Commanding 5 Troop on OP HERRICK 9, what struck me the most was that he always had a smile on his face. He displayed in abundance that valued tenant of the Commando Spirit above all other - cheerfulness in the face of adversity. He was determined and whenever anything needed doing, you could rely on 'Daz' being the first man to get the job done, always giving his very best. Unselfishness is another valued tenant of the Commando Spirit and this he displayed by his boundless devotion to his fellow Marines, girlfriend Kelly and young daughter Keira. Up until the very end he showed remarkable courage and I was immensely proud to be his Troop Commander. He was everything that could be expected in a Royal Marines Commando and more. He will be sorely missed by all. Sergeant 'Snatch' McKeown, Troop Sergeant, 5 Troop, said : Like everyone else in 5 Troop, I also took an instant shine to Daz, having joined the Troop near the end of our pre-deployment training. I appointed Daz as a Light Machine Gunner, a role which he relished. Always with a smile on his face, always willing to go that bit further and always helping myself and his 'oppos' (mates), Daz was in my eyes, what every Marine should be: a true Royal Marines Commando with the highest of standards and a sense of humour to match. My thoughts are with Kelly, Keira and the rest of his family. Daz has left a gap in 5 Troop that will never be filled. Always your true friend and Stripey, Snatch. Corporal Pete Laurence, Section Commander, 5 Troop, said : Daz was an excellent Marine. I knew when he was in my section that he was trustworthy, always ready to do his job and without fail always smiling. Daz was keen to volunteer for any job that came his way and always suggested ideas to make things better. Daz was always up for a laugh and mischief whilst also being able to take his fair share of his own medicine, always with that happy go lucky smile on his face. He will be truly missed and his persona around the Troop will not be forgotten. Truly a great loss, Daz was the nicest guy and I will never forget his smile. Corporal John Ballance, Section Commander, 5 Troop, said : When I was told Daz was going to join my section I had a

feeling of satisfaction. Always first to volunteer for any task, both the 'Gucci' ones and the mundane, he'd get it cracked with the minimum of fuss, never seeking any recognition for his efforts. Always there with a cheeky smile even when everyone else was feeling down he never failed to lift the section's spirits. His fishing stories became legendary within the Troop and a source of constant amusement. How one man could be so enthusiastic about the world's most boring sport we'll never know! Devoted to his girlfriend, Kelly, and his little girl Keira he would speak of them with great love during quieter times; everyone's thoughts go out to them. A truly genuine guy, Daz will never be forgotten by those who had the pleasure of knowing him. Marines John Smith and David Middlemas, 5 Troop. said : Marine 'Daz' Smith was many things to many people, but to everyone who knew him it was obvious that the most important thing in his life was his little girl Keira, together with his childhood sweetheart Kelly. He doted on them both and was always speaking of them. To us he was our very own Captain Jack Sparrow (a fisherman from Fleetwood before he joined the Corps); he brought an almost constant cheeky grin to 5 Troop. He was always there to lift the mood of the lads, by sharing out his parcels of sweets whilst coming up with outrageous forfeits for those who lost to him at cards. If there was work to be done he was the first to offer a hand and if it could be done listening to 'happy hardcore, dance or trance', all the better. Daz could flash (lose his temper) like ten men, but that was only in keeping with such a colourful character. Daz was simply a lovely, lovely bloke and words just aren't enough to describe how 5 Troop feel about him. As a massive Liverpool fan, Daz mate, 'You'll never walk alone'. Marine Gregory Burns, 5 Troop, said : Marine 'Daz' Smith always had a cheesy grin on his face and was always up for a laugh. He was always helping the lads out and could be relied upon to cheer you up. He was constantly telling us how hoofing (good) a fisherman he was and how much he missed it. He was a great man within the Troop and never a grey man; a brilliant soldier and a great Dad. Daz will be always in our thoughts. Love you mate.

12 February
PRIVATE RYAN WRATHALL PWRR 1ST BATTALION THE PRINCESS OF WALES'S ROYAL REGIMENT (1PWRR)
The Ministry of Defence has confirmed the death of Private Ryan Wrathall on Thursday 12 February 2009, while serving on operations in Basra, southern Iraq. Private Wrathall, 21, was serving with The 1st Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (1PWRR) as part of the 5th Battalion The Rifles (5 RIFLES) Strike Battle Group. He was found at Basra's Contingency Operating Base having suffered a gunshot wound. Immediate medical assistance was provided, but sadly he died from his wounds. The incident, which occurred at approximately 0630 hours local time, will be subject to a full investigation. No enemy forces were involved and there is no evidence to suggest that anyone else was involved. Private Ryan Wrathall, 21 from Surbiton, Surrey, was serving in 1 Platoon, A Company, 1st Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (1 PWRR) known as 'The Armoured Tigers'. Pte Wrathall enlisted into the Army in November 2007 at the Infantry Training Centre Catterick, prior to joining 1PWRR in Paderborn Germany in June 2008. On arrival in the Battalion he joined his Company in their preparations for BATUS and subsequently deployed on Exercise Medicine Man 2. While in Canada he also took part in Exercise Fast Air (freefall Parachuting) which he thoroughly enjoyed. The remainder of 2008 was spent preparing for Operation Telic 13 in which he played a full and active part. He deployed to southern Iraq in November and was about halfway through a six month tour of the country as member of the 5 RIFLES (Strike)

Battle Group.</p>