

Lance Corporal Jonathan James McKinlay  
Mortar Fire Controller (Bravo) B Company, The First Battalion The Rifles

◆ Lance Corporal Jonathan James McKinlay, of The First Battalion The Rifles deployed to Afghanistan as a battle casualty replacement in June 2011, having recently qualified as a Mortar Fire Controller (Bravo). He was based in Check Point Chaabak in the Nahr-e-Saraj (South) district of Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

He was killed by a burst of small arms fire on 14 September 2011 while on patrol with his team and members of the Afghan Uniformed Police in a village near to his Check Point.

Born on 7 November 1977 and from Darlington, Lance Corporal McKinlay joined the Army in 1996 and racked up a great degree of experience throughout his career, with previous deployments to Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan. He held an impressive array of qualifications on top of this, making him a great asset to his Company and the Battalion.

An outgoing and friendly commander, and very much a 'doer' about his Check Point, he had time for everyone he met. His nature made him a truly outstanding instructor, producing many excellent recruits while at the Infantry Training Centre, Catterick. His forthcoming and happy approach will be sorely missed across the Battalion.

Lance Corporal McKinlay leaves behind a loving family ◆ his wife Lisa, his mother Valerie, sister Becca, daughter Megan, and his step children Ollie and Piper; the thoughts and prayers of the Battlegroup are very much with them at this painful time.

LCpl McKinlay's wife, Lisa, paid the following tribute:

"We are all deeply saddened by the tragic loss of Jonathan, affectionately known as 'JJ', also known as 'Commander Meerkat McKinlay'. He was a loving husband, son, brother, son-in-law and father to Megan, Ollie and Piper. He was a true friend to others and a loving husband, a real joker and my one in a million."

LCpl McKinlay's mother, Valerie, paid the following tribute:

"Rebecca and I are devastated, as are the rest of the family. Jonathan was dearly loved by us all and by his many friends around the world."

Lieutenant Colonel James de Labille ◆ DSO MBE, Commanding Officer, The First Battalion, The Rifles, said:

"Lance Corporal Jon McKinlay deployed to Afghanistan for the second time on 22 June 2011. He was based in Check Point Chaabak where he was responsible for calling in mortar fire to support the patrols he worked with. On the evening of 14 September, whilst patrolling with his Multiple and his Afghan Uniformed Police partners, he was fatally struck by enemy gunfire."

To anyone who met him, Lance Corporal Jon McKinlay made an instant impression. On the one hand a hard professional soldier who demanded the very highest standards from himself and his men and yet on the other a man of great compassion, humour and somebody who had time for others. He had irrepressible energy and was industrious to the core.

Lance Corporal McKinlay had enjoyed a career of great variety in the Army, and was highly qualified as a result. His most recent accomplishment was qualifying as a mortar fire controller, the course for which he had to attend whilst the tour in Afghanistan also started, to his frustration. As was his professional focus he did not let his friends' departure distract him. He passed with a Distinction and an eager appetite to get back onto the front line, which he did, just under two weeks after qualifying. He was a man of great character, agile of mind, and he was not afraid to express a considered opinion when the opportunity arose. I valued his judgement, his energy, his creativeness and his professionalism. He also represented his boys well, as he did the Corporals' Mess when he was President of the Mess Committee.

"And what a tremendous addition he was to the Check Point and to the platoon he worked with. He set the tone of the place: it was immaculately run but enriched by his personal touch. He made a barbeque to improve their quality of life, naming it 'JJ's Bar and Grill', setting himself up as the head chef for the team

which he did enthusiastically. He took delight in doing things for others to make their lives more comfortable. And he was a real grafter, happy to help out in any scenario, no matter how big or small the contribution required.

"1 RIFLES have lost a fantastic Battalion character and a highly accomplished soldier. LCpl Jon McKinlay will never be forgotten. His name joins the list of RIFLES fallen who, through their sacrifice, provide our daily inspiration and motivation for the work we do. But at this time of inconceivable anguish and grief for his family, it is to them our thoughts and prayers go."

Swift and Bold

Major Mike Turnbull, Officer Commanding B Company, The First Battalion, The Rifles, said:

"Lance Corporal McKinlay was one of the Company's most colourful and vibrant characters; a man with a huge personality and irrepressible optimism. He had endured his share of setbacks in a career spanning fifteen years, but he'd met each one head-on and with the same determination to start afresh. Life was all a challenge to him, and where lesser men would have faltered, Lance Corporal McKinlay simply forged ahead."

"He brought that same optimism to B Company when he arrived as one of our Mortar Fire Controllers, newly qualified and bubbling with enthusiasm for his trade. His impact was instantaneous, both within the Fire Team with whom he worked, and the Platoon with whom he lived. His mere presence on a patrol would reassure the men around him: they knew that they were in good hands when Lance Corporal McKinlay was on the ground. He was that sort of man, with a generosity of spirit and a kindness of heart that endeared him to all who met him. He had found a home in B Company, and we weren't ready to say goodbye so soon. One in a million, the finest of Riflemen, he will be remembered with our deep and enduring affection."

Captain Bob Atherden, Second in Command, B Company, The First Battalion, The Rifles, said:

"Lance Corporal Jon McKinlay was a man I knew well; he was one of my Section Commanders in 5 Platoon during the battalion's 2008/9 tour. In fact, he was one of the first men that I met when I arrived in Afghanistan fresh from training. It immediately struck me that under my command was a confident, mature and trustworthy commander. We shared many fun evenings in Check Point Jugrum, and Jon McKinlay was always at the centre of light hearted banter. Once however, before a company operation, he did manage to change all of the water for Gatorade; it tasted good, but wasn't so great when it came to cooking or brushing teeth!"

"It was with great pleasure that I welcomed him back to B Company on the current tour of Afghanistan. I think he had found his calling as a Mortar Fire Controller; he was good at it and blatantly enjoyed his job. I will always remember you Jon, especially how easy it was to get a rise out of you, whether that be desperately trying to get you to put a shirt on to cover up your body when we were in Jugrum, or ribbing you about the rubbish spray job on your helmet! My thoughts go out to his family. He'll never be forgotten."

Swift and Bold.

Captain Dan Davies, Fire Support Team Commander, 29 Commando Regiment Royal Artillery, said:

"Lance Corporal 'JJ' McKinlay joined my Fire Support Team halfway through Operation HERRICK 14 having recently completed his Mortar Fire Controller's 'B' course. I was immediately struck by his drive, determination and enthusiasm. His professionalism was without question and he adapted very quickly to the difficult job of conducting Joint Fires engagements in a counter-insurgency environment, all the more impressive when it is considered that he did not conduct pre-deployment training with the remainder of the Fire Support Team."

"He was deployed to Check Point Chaabak where he was my eyes and ears in the north of our area of operations. Throughout, with his proactive approach to his job, he made my life considerably easier. He was the kind of guy who was not content with merely doing enough; he would lay awake at night thinking about how he could improve and

what else he could do to support his Platoon.<br /><br />As an experienced infantryman, he would often start up a conversation with 'Boss, you've probably already thought of this, but...' and then he would come up with an idea that I hadn't even considered. But he was much more than just a first-class soldier, above all he was a thoroughly nice bloke, always ready to help where he could and consistently putting others before himself. Getting into the Check Point after a long and sweaty patrol he had thrust a bottle of water into my hand before I'd even had a chance to take my body armour off. I shall remember him for his generous nature, quick-fire (and at times ruthless) banter and cheeky smile. He will be sorely missed. Swift and Bold."<br /><br />Second Lieutenant Tom Fitz-Gerald, Platoon Commander, 6 Platoon, B Company, The First Battalion, The Rifles, said:<br /><br />"Lance Corporal McKinlay was not only a key asset to the Platoon but also a real personality around the Check Point. His dedication and enthusiasm for the job was unmatched and the professionalism he showed on the ground was of the highest standard. Lance Corporal McKinlay's humour, ability to knock anything up in the kitchen and general presence around the Check Point will be sorely missed. My thoughts are with his wife, children and all family and friends.<br /><br />Rest in Peace. Swift and Bold."<br /><br />Warrant Officer Class 2 Anthony McCullough, B Company Serjeant Major, The First Battalion, The Rifles, said:<br /><br />"I have known Lance Corporal McKinley since our preparation for a tour to Iraq back in 2006, his enthusiasm and confidence knew no bounds, always the centre of attention, his ability to tell a story about pretty much anything you'd care to imagine and always at a volume no one could miss, meant he was known by all within the Battalion.<br /><br />"His posting to the Company as a Mortar Fire Controller for this tour summed up his ability to turn his hand to anything thrown at him. He served 6 Platoon extremely well ensuring that they were always given the very best assets and support available in theatre. He served with distinction and served as an example to those young Riflemen who followed him.<br /><br />"Today, as the quiet settles and we mourn the loss of a brother Rifleman, our thoughts are with his wife, children and family at home.<br /><br />"Swift and Bold."<br /><br />Serjeant Christopher Wainwright, Platoon Serjeant, 6 Platoon, B Company, The First Battalion, The Rifles, said:<br /><br />"You came to the Platoon as an attachment and quickly became one of the personalities of the Platoon. You were asked to do numerous jobs from Chef to Mortar Fire Controller to Multiple Second in Command and you excelled in them all. I knew when you were on the ground I had a good operator who would make my job easier.<br /><br />"Your humour and stories kept everyone entertained and the banter we had in the Check Point will always be remembered.<br /><br />"Jon spoke about Lisa and the children constantly and my thoughts are with them now. I have lost a good friend who will never be forgotten.<br /><br />"Rest in Peace mate, Swift and Bold."<br /><br />Corporal Chris Hardy, Section Commander, 4 Platoon, B Company, The First Battalion, The Rifles said:<br /><br />"'It's not the critic that counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or how the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena.' (Theodore Roosevelt)<br /><br />"A true hero who I am honoured to have served with over the years; a friend with so many memories that I won't forget: Jon was like an older brother that I could always depend on, Rest in Peace mate.<br /><br />"From 'H'. Swift and Bold."<br /><br />Corporal Wayne Fairnington, Section Commander, 5 Platoon, B Company, The First Battalion, The Rifles, said:<br /><br />"Jon, you were my first Section Commander when I joined the Army, and a really good one at that. You were always so keen and diligent. All I remember thinking was 'this bloke really enjoys being in the Army!' And you really did!<br /><br />"It was only a couple of days ago that we were talking about all the 'old

days' and all the nights out we have had. From the days of Milan Platoon in Ballykinler and Catterick, fancy dress in Bideford, nights out in Leeds and Newcastle and of course Shaz's stag do! Memories that I'll cherish. My thoughts go out to all your friends and especially your family at this sad time."

"Always remembered, never forgotten, sleep tight Jon, your job is done. Rest in Peace, love Fadge."

Corporal Dan Cartwright, Section Commander, 6 Platoon, B Company, The First Battalion The Rifles, said:

"Never a dull moment when you were around. The last 2 months has been like having Jamie Oliver in the Check Point. There was nothing you could not make from a 10 man ration pack. From building J.J's Bar & Grill or smashing you at Tiger Woods, it has been a pleasure. You were more than an asset to this Platoon and Company. My thoughts are with Lisa and the children and to all your family and friends."

"Stand Easy J Mac..."

Corporal Nicholas Fowler, Section Commander, 6 Platoon, B Company, The First Battalion The Rifles, said:

"Going to miss your Jamie Oliver skills in the Check Point and your banter. The two months you were up here went by a lot quicker, even if Fluff did try closing your J.J's Bar & Grill down. You were always involved in some sort of banter, be that giving it or receiving it. I will never forget the look on your face when you thought we had to move the sangar 5 feet. My thoughts are with your wife, daughters, family and friends, Rest in Peace mate."

Lance Corporal Gary Davies, 6 Platoon, B Company, The First Battalion, The Rifles, said:

"When I saw you around the Check Point at any point of the day you would always have something to say. Whether it would be trying to banter or something else, like the part time gym work you would put in and then asking me what would be the best thing you could do in the gym, and then getting the rations out of the store to cook up an awesome meal for the lads. Going to miss seeing you cutting around the Check Point mucka, but not with your top off mind!"

"Rest in Peace mate."

Lance Corporal Tom Chisholm, 6 Platoon, B Company, The First Battalion, The Rifles, said:

"Cheers mate, was always a laugh having you around the Check Point, never a dull moment! Great chef and a great Mortar Fire Controller, your skills are going to be sorely missed. Rest in Peace mate, Swift and Bold."

Rifleman Christopher Sheeky, 6 Platoon, B Company, The First Battalion The Rifles, said:

"Cheers mate for all the laughter and your bad banter; gonna miss your cooking skills and your excuses not to go in the gym. Gonna be sorely missed mate. Swift and Bold."

Rifleman Michael Barrett, 6 Platoon, B Company, The First Battalion The Rifles, said:

"Your terrible banter was always a good laugh, and it'll be too quiet around here. It was always great to have your cooking skills around the Check Point, making great scoff out of 10 man ration packs. Nothing better than getting great scoff on stag."

"You'll be sorely missed around here. Swift and Bold."

Rifleman Jonathon Dunn, 6 Platoon, B Company, The First Battalion The Rifles, said:

"Always a laugh and a good mate, always brought banter to the Check Point, and the food will be missed. I'll keep the grill clean and try to live up to your standards. Going to miss you mate, Rest in Peace. Never forgotten."

Rifleman Mark Parry, 6 Platoon, B Company, The First Battalion The Rifles, said:

"Thank you for your great food, J.J's Bar & Grill, and always making a joke to pass the time. Rest in Peace mate. Swift and Bold."

Leading Medical Assistant Stuart Freeman, Commando Logistic Regiment, said:

"J-Mac and Family, thanks for all your great culinary skills. From now on in, garlic bread will be regularly on the Chaabak menu. You will be sorely missed, may you Rest in Peace. 'Fluff'"

Lance Corporal Christopher Ganley 6 Platoon, B Company, The First Battalion The Rifles, said:

"Lance Corporal McKinlay was one of the characters around the Check Point, always

amongst the jokes, although most of them were towards him! He was very keen about his bikes, as he kept telling me that he was going to take me out to find a good sports bike as I want a Harley. He will be greatly missed."

Rifleman Steven Fox, 6 Platoon, B Company, The First Battalion The Rifles, said:"Jon was a good man, full of banter, who brought a lot of liveliness to the Check Point. Also, his cooking ability was second to none, along with his soldiering ability. He will be sorely missed around the Check Point, but even more missed by the Battalion. Rest in Peace Jon mate. Keep the Stella cold, see ya soon mate!"

Rifleman Alex Ollerenshaw, 6 Platoon, B Company, The First Battalion The Rifles, said:"Jon was a good man, full of banter and full of thoughts, he brought a lot of liveliness to the Check Point. Also his cooking ability was second to none along with his soldiering ability. He will be sorely missed around the Check Point, but even more missed by the Battalion. Rest in Peace Jon mate. Keep the Stella cold, see ya soon mate!"

Marine Ryan Martin, 45 Commando Royal Marines, said:"Over the week that I knew Jon it didn't take long to realise he was a character, with his funny banter and outstanding soldiering. Also an adventurous, amazing cook. The Check Point won't be the same without him."

Rifleman Elliot Niescoir, 6 Platoon, B Company, The First Battalion The Rifles, said:"Lance Corporal McKinlay was an outstanding soldier and a huge character within the Platoon, he will be missed by everyone. Rest in Peace Jon."

Rifleman Paul Enbom, B Company, The First Battalion, The Rifles, said:"The first time I met Jon was when I moved from A Company to Support Company, 1 Devonshire & Dorset. He was Milan Platoon and I was in Mortars. He was keen then, he was always a green soldier, he loved being in the field and always had to have the latest and best kit. You always knew when Jon was coming as you would hear his voice first. Becoming an Mortar Fire Controller in the Mortar Platoon was a new challenge and Jon was good at what he did."

"He will be sadly missed. Swift and Bold."

Rifleman Carl Farley, 9 Platoon, C Company, The First Battalion, The Rifles, said:"So sorry to hear about this sad incident, but I would also like to thank you for the last four years. I was grateful to have you as my Section Commander in training and then in Battalion some time later. I thank you for all you have taught me and hope I have done you proud. You were someone I would never be scared to come to if I had problems that I needed to talk about, and for this I thank you."

"You'll be missed by me a great deal, I cannot thank you enough."

The Riflemen of 9 Platoon, C Company, The First Battalion The Rifles, said:"Top bloke, one of the best, rubbish banter, legend on the drink - Jon McKinlay"

Well, where to start Jon McKinlay... Always the heart and soul of the group, with his rubbish banter he still managed to give back as good as he got. There was never a dull moment when big JM was around."

Jon McKinlay stood out from the rest with his ability to soldier in any condition, he was truly a Chosen Man. Apart from when our poncho fell down on the patrols competition in torrential rain on Dartmoor, and we just pulled it over us and went back to sleep."

Jon was never selfish and would do anything for his fellow riflemen, including lending his car to a Rifleman to go to Tesco, and the said riflemen then hitting his car. Jon's only worry was 'is it a write off?', which it wasn't, Jon's reply being 'oh well!'

Jon McKinlay will always be remembered by his fellow Riflemen of 9 Platoon."

Life in the Battalion will not be the same without him. A Legend amongst legends. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife, family and the Riflemen of 9 Platoon he was serving with on Herrick 14. Rest in Peace John."

"Gone but not forgotten."

"Once a Riflemen always a Riflemen. Swift & Bold."