

Corporal James Oakland
Royal Military Police

It is with deep regret that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that Corporal James Oakland of the Royal Military Police was killed in Afghanistan yesterday, Thursday 22 October 2009.

Corporal Oakland died after being mortally wounded by an improvised explosive device on a foot patrol in the Gereshk region of Helmand province. He was conducting a route search to clear devices to allow the Battle Group freedom of movement.

Corporal James 'Jim' Oakland deployed two months early as a Battlefield Casualty Replacement, prior to the rest of the Company for Op HERRICK 11. On arrival he was deployed to a Forward Operating Base as the Weapons Intelligence Detachment Commander in the Gereshk area of Helmand Province.

Embedded within the Battlegroup, his duties included direct support to Improvised Explosive Device Disposal teams, scientific exploitation of devices and support to Battle Group patrols.

Corporal Oakland was an outstanding Junior Non-Commissioned Officer with excellent prospects. He joined the Army in January 2002 and passed out into the Intelligence Corps. In 2003 he transferred to the Royal Military Police and attended phase 2 training at the Royal Military Police Training School, Chichester.

His first posting was to 156 Provost Company RMP in Colchester, where he conducted General Policing Duties. From there he deployed with the Spearhead Lead Element to operations in Kosovo and Beirut. Following this Corporal Oakland immersed himself in pre-deployment training for OP HERRICK 8 where he deployed with the Force Protection Company in KABUL.

After this highly successful tour he was posted to Weapons Intelligence Specialist Company and soon sent on his Level 2 Investigational course, qualifying him as a Class 1 RMP Investigator. He passed with a very high standard and a recommendation for the Special Investigation Branch.

On return to his unit he again became involved with pre-deployment training prior to deploying as the Weapons Intelligence Detachment Commander in the Gereshk area of Helmand Province.

Corporal Oakland was a personable, motivated and intelligent individual. He nurtured those under his Command whilst constantly striving to better himself by learning from his superiors. He was enthusiastic and energetic about his work.

Corporal Oakland is survived by his parents Steve and Christine and a brother, Daniel, who is in his final term at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. He had a long term girlfriend, Lauren Bowyer, whom he loved dearly and enjoyed travelling the world with; Corporal Oakland was very close to his family who are from New Moston in Manchester.

Lieutenant Colonel Gareth Bex, Royal Logistic Corps, Commanding Officer Counter IED Task Force said:

"Corporal James Oakland was an excellent soldier, a natural leader and extremely well thought of by all ranks. He was an inspiring character and his loss will be felt keenly across our close knit community.

"When a battle casualty replacement was needed two months ago, his professionalism made him the natural choice to deploy and he excelled in his operational duties.

"He always sought additional responsibility and had a very bright future ahead of him. His personal example and dedication is an inspiration to us all. At this sad time our thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends and loved ones."

Major Andy Lewis Royal Logistic Corps, Company Commander, Weapons Intelligence Specialist Company said:

"Corporal Jimmy Oakland was one of the brightest stars in my Company and it was an honour to serve alongside him. A giant in both mind and body he had a natural flair for his job.

"He was the man you wanted on your side in a difficult situation as he had been there many times before. A soldier's soldier, he was in his element in the field; robust, devoted and utterly professional, he epitomised the RMP soldier in every aspect.

"It was on that basis that he was selected to go out to Afghanistan in advance of the Main Body. Then, as always, he was in the lead, taking the Counter IED fight to the enemy.

"He understood the risks associated with his job in Helmand but he never wavered because he knew that he could make a difference to others.

"He was a central part of company life and he worked hard and played harder; his keen wit brightened many a dark moment. Always cheerful he was the steadfast rock that brought a calm and reassuring air to the Company and to those he worked with.

"Never a man for ceremony, he let his actions speak for him and they did. The Company is understandably shocked by his death and that such a pivotal character has been taken so cruelly. Our thoughts go out to his family and girlfriend at this awful time. He will be missed but never forgotten."

Major Danny Rea Royal Logistic Corps, Company Commander, Weapons Intelligence Company, Afghanistan said:

"Corporal Oakland was an outstanding Junior Non-Commissioned Officer who joined WIS Company on HERRICK 10 mid way through the tour, under difficult circumstances, following injury to one of his colleagues. He immediately stood out as a talented, enthusiastic and totally reliable individual.

"Popular with his peers and highly respected by all who worked with him, Corporal Oakland was a credit to his cap badge and to WIS Coy and will be sorely missed by all who knew him."

Captain Laura Briggs, Second in Command, Weapons Intelligence Company, Afghanistan said:

"On first meeting Corporal Oakland it was clear from the outset that he had, in abundance, every attribute desired of an exemplary soldier. He was highly motivated, intelligent and physically robust.

"Corporal Oakland was an inspiration to his peers and those under his command and earned the greatest respect from his Commanders. His loyalty to his peers, the Company and to the mission was second to none.

"Corporal Oakland's mindset was selfless and professional in every way. He was a thoroughly decent individual who will be sorely missed by everyone in who knew him. My deepest condolences go to Corporal Oakland's family, friends and girlfriend Lauren."

Captain Miles Nettleship, Second in Command, Weapons Intelligence Specialist Company, said:

"Although I did not know Jim well, the overriding impression I have is of a highly professional, dedicated and popular soldier. He was stood up at short notice for this tour and he reacted as I was told he would – with enthusiasm and commitment.

"Our thoughts are with his family, girlfriend and his many friends both in the RMP and the Intelligence Corps.

"No longer will the camp have to suffer the awful sound of Jim trying to get his Lotus Elise over the speed bumps at the front gate; so we will just have to find another car and just keep on doing it!. You will be sorely missed."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Andy Peat, Company Sergeant Major, said:

"Jim was one of the Company's natural leaders, best soldiers and funniest guys. Never shy in coming forward or from speaking his mind, he was always reliable and I trusted him implicitly; he was a fantastic man.

"My thoughts and prayers go out to his family, girlfriend and all that knew him. I for one was proud to serve and drink with him. We will miss him deeply but he will never be forgotten.

'Rest in peace, mate'."

Sergeant Phil Buchan, Platoon Sergeant, said:

"Corporal Oakland was not only a member of my platoon but a close friend. WIS Coy is a small unit and we have all been hit hard by this tragic loss, but our hurt is nothing to the devastation of his family. My thoughts are with Jim's family and his girlfriend Lauren. RIP mate. We will remember you."

Corporal Tom Hempsey, a colleague, said:

"No words can describe this loss to everyone but Jim was one of my closest friends who will be missed dearly not only by me but by all that knew him.

"He could put a smile on anyone's face in any situation. My thoughts and prayers are with his family. The world is a lesser place without him but he will never be forgotten. Soon, mate, we will dance together again and the turkey will be on me! Rest in peace; a man and a legend.

Corporal 'Polar' Morrissey, a colleague, said:

"The loss of Jimmy will leave a huge hole in the hearts of the people who were privileged to know him.

"Not only was he an outstanding soldier but he was also a fantastic friend. He will be sadly missed but never forgotten. The world won't be the same without you, Jimmy, and never will. Wherever you are, mate, have a glass of turkey on me."

Corporal Rick Lacey, a colleague, said:

"Jim was reliable, honest and not afraid to speak his mind. He was one of the funniest people I have ever met. He was loved by all who knew him and will be missed even more.

"Jim has left a hole in our company and our hearts that can never be filled. Our thoughts are with his mum, dad, brother and girlfriend Lauren.

"The memories we have especially the days and nights out, not forgetting the Army Navy weekends dressed as Smurfs in London will never ever leave us. Jim we miss you, gone but not forgotten. Rest in Peace Gypsy King."

Lance Corporal Becky Abbott, a colleague, said:

"Honest, dedicated and a good laugh are just a few words in which I would describe Jim. He was a great all round guy, who was an extremely strong character within a close knit company.

"He will leave a great void within our company that will not be filled. Jim will be deeply missed but never forgotten. The memories that have been made will be held dearly and will stay with us always. Rest in Peace Jim x."