

Rifleman Carlo Apolis of 4th Battalion The Rifles (4 RIFLES), serving as part of the 3 RIFLES Battle Group, was killed in Afghanistan on 1 March 2010.

Rifleman Carlo Apolis was a South African who came to the United Kingdom in 2004. He worked in a hotel in Exeter before joining the Army, a little older than most recruits. Rifleman Apolis initially enlisted in 2007 but left the Army for a short while before re-joining six months later.

After attending the demanding Combat Infantryman's Course at the Infantry Training Centre, Catterick, Rifleman Apolis joined 4th Battalion, The Rifles in November 2007. He was posted to A Company, training with them throughout 2008 and then attended Pre-Deployment Training in 2009, prior to deploying on his first Operational tour to Afghanistan on Operation HERRICK 11.

Lieutenant Colonel Rupert Jones, Commanding Officer 4 RIFLES, said:

"Rifleman Carlo Apolis was something of a big brother figure to the younger Riflemen. He was older than most and others naturally looked up to him and sought his guidance. But it was not just his age that stood him apart, but his natural maturity and wisdom. He was generous to his core and was always ready to share his experience and offer a word of guidance to his friends.

"He had fully mastered the soldier's art of lifting morale with an ever ready sceptical comment on the rollercoaster ride of being a Rifleman. He understood the power of a good moan to lift the gloom and was not cowed by anyone in sharing his views on events. He could appear gruff, but his comments never had a side to them and he was nothing if not kind.

"He was very much an individual as well as a keen chess player. This is not normally a hazardous hobby, but earlier in the tour he was injured by a grenade while playing. He recovered from his wounds and returned to the line – a sign of real courage.

"He had travelled a long way from home to be a Rifleman, but remained fiercely proud and loyal of his native South Africa. They, in turn, should be very proud of him for he was a fine ambassador for his nation. His loss is the high price for progress and his brother Riflemen salute him – a courageous young man who has fallen in his prime.

"His family, far from our shores, are very much in our thoughts and prayers. They should take great pride that he fell with his friends at his side and helping to improve the lives of ordinary Afghan people. This is a fine legacy and we will remember him."

Lieutenant Colonel Nick Kitson, Commanding Officer, 3 RIFLES Battle Group, said:

"Rifleman Apolis was an outstanding soldier and a truly dedicated member of this Battle Group. Wounded previously in this tour of duty, it was a mark of his determination and commitment

that he wasted no time returning to his team and continuing with the important work that they are doing here in Sangin. He fell to enemy fire at the forefront of an important move to enlarge our security footprint for the benefit of the local population.

"His loss comes at a time when real progress is being made, largely thanks to the efforts of Riflemen such as him, working tirelessly day and night to bring security and a better future to the locals of Sangin. As a senior Rifleman, his personality and experience was woven tightly into the fabric of his Platoon, Company and as such this whole Battle Group. His loss will be felt most keenly across all ranks.

"At this most difficult of times, we take inspiration from the man that he showed himself to be and from the excellent example that he set in life. The thoughts and prayers of the whole Battle Group go out to his family in South Africa and to his girlfriend Rebecca. We hope that they, like us, may draw some strength and comfort from his memory and all that he had achieved. We shall continue his noble work with renewed steadfastness."

Major Richard Streatfeild, Officer Commanding, A Company 4 RIFLES, said:

"Rifleman Carlo Apolis was a South African and a Rifleman. He has been in the Company for over 2 years and as such was a relatively longstanding member of A Company and very much a senior Rifleman. He was a calm authoritative figure, relatively short in stature but big hearted, very determined and utterly reliable.

"This was no ordinary soldier. He had come a long way to do his job; half way round the world. He was a Rifleman because he wanted to improve himself. He had been trained in specialist weapons. He was doing a part time accounting course.

"Whilst he was a British soldier he never lost his identity as a South African. I first met him when playing for our company cricket team. A lover of cricket and rugby, the highs and lows of various matches have peppered our conversations in the last two years. He was saving hard on this tour so that he could buy a house with his long term partner Rebecca in Cardiff.

"Rifleman Apolis and I travelled home together three weeks ago for our rest and recuperation break, one could tell where his heart was. Ours go out to Rebecca, his parents and sisters, whose grief we share. Yet our loss is not comparable to that of his family. They have every reason to be proud of him.

"He made a considerable and positive impact in Afghanistan. He was amongst the first group in our area to partner the Afghan National Army so that they could develop the skills and professionalism that came naturally to him. He will long be remembered by those who operated alongside him, we will miss his reassuring presence. We shall now muster the gritty determination he showed to see the job through."

Captain Ben Shuttleworth, Second in Command, A Company 4 RIFLES, said:

"The initial impression received from meeting Rifleman Apolis was disarming: quiet, polite and

thoughtful, he did not immediately come across as a typical soldier. He was, however, a steely fighter and made of much stronger stuff than the rest of us. He had already bounced back from countless extraordinary incidents including treating and evacuating close friends and brother Riflemen.

"The enormity of his inner fighting spirit was shown when he fought to return to his front line Patrol Base as quickly as possible after he was himself injured by an insurgent grenade. His Platoon will miss his wise words of advice, his chain of command will miss a future leader but none of us will feel his loss as much as his family and girlfriend Rebecca of whom he often spoke fondly."

"A strong-minded Rifleman who will be sorely missed by all that he ever encountered. Your personality and spirit shone through within the Platoon. We were all privileged to have known and served with you."

Lieutenant Charlie Winstanley, 2 Platoon Commander, A Company 4 RIFLES, said:

"Rifleman Apolis was not your standard Rifleman. He may certainly have had many of the key qualities: an easy going and relaxed approach to life, a great sense of humour and an absolute loyalty to those fighting alongside him. There is no doubt that he was unique.

"As a more mature member of the platoon he brought a thoughtful and more deliberate pace to proceedings. He was known for his considered insights into life – mainly based on a South African heritage which ran through every thing he did. He had a fantastic ability to put things into perspective when everyone else was getting over excited.

"Rifleman Apolis was one of the easiest men to chat to, always good natured, he would happily spend hours talking about bits and pieces, but more often than not it would be about the future and his dreams to settle down to a more sedate life with Becks.

"I always looked forward to seeing Rifleman Apolis. He was always smiling and even when times were tough he would make us laugh. He was the type of person that you would do anything for because you knew he would do the same for you. Rifleman Apolis was a cornerstone of the Platoon. He leaves a void that will never be filled. My thoughts and prayers are with his family and all those who loved him."

Sergeant Graham Henry, 2 Platoon Sergeant, A Company 4 RIFLES, said:

"Rifleman Apolis has been in my platoon for the last 18 months and definitely gave me a run for my money as to whom was the oldest within the platoon; the guys looked up to and respected him, he was always giving out pearls of wisdoms to all who listened. Rifleman Apolis was more focused than most having been there and done that and would give advice to the younger lads.

"From the outset his attitude has been positive towards the deployment and would give 100 per cent to everything he did. For myself it has been a pleasure to have someone of his stature within the platoon. He is, and will always be, in all our thoughts, a true soldier in every sense,

he will be sorely missed by all."

Corporal Lee Johnston, 2 Section Commander, 2 Platoon, A Company 4 RIFLES, said:

"I only knew Carlo for a short time since arriving in 2 Platoon but what struck me straight away was his happy and cheerful nature. I watched him around the lads in our brief time together noticing his grin as he was always having a laugh and a joke. It was a pleasure working with him and having him in my team. His work was always of the highest standard which was what I needed to get the job done effectively. He was a model Rifleman and will be sadly missed by all."

Lance Corporal David Hall, 2 Platoon, A Company 4 RIFLES, said:

"A strong-minded Rifleman who will be sorely missed by all that he ever encountered. Your personality and spirit shone through within the Platoon. We were all privileged to have known and served with you."

Lance Corporal Brett Murphy, 2 Platoon, A Company 4 RIFLES, said:

"Carlo Apolis was a character with too many nicknames to put on paper. Known for his sense of humour and quick talking, he always kept morale high. 'Apollo' was always talking about his Becks and how he loved going home to his flat at weekends to chill out with her. Everyone in the Platoon will miss you badly."

"Carlo was always there if you needed to talk and he always spoke his mind. He will be missed dearly and I feel honoured to have known him."

Rifleman Richard Reading, 2 Platoon, A Company 4 RIFLES, said:

"'Apollo' was, in a word, 'Morale'. There's not one Rifleman, NCO or Officer that didn't love his extremely opinionated sense of humour. As well as being the Platoon's joker, he was a really close friend of mine. His loss is utterly dreadful and has come as a huge shock. Apolis and I shared hundreds of different experiences together, from playing practical jokes on other Riflemen to having a good old scrap with the Taliban.

"No matter what the situation, with him it always ended with a break out of laughter. Apolis was a man full of knowledge and as he liked to say he was "going to drop some knowledge on us young ones". Nine times out of ten he was right. He was such a pleasure to work with, especially when he was the man stood next to me in battle.

"Apolis was a thinking Rifleman through and through and always came up with cunning plans to solve problems. My thoughts are currently with Becks, his girlfriend and with his family. I could talk all day about how Apolis would always crack me up and what a pleasure it was to have him as a pal but it really would take all day. Apolis, you will never be forgotten and will always remain a chosen man. Swift and Bold."

Rifleman Aaron Cox, 2 Platoon, A Company 4 RIFLES, said:

"There was a lot I can say about Apolis. He was a kind and friendly individual who was well respected in the Platoon and within the Company. He always had time to talk to anyone if they were at a loose end. Apolis didn't have a bad bone in his body. He was a good friend. Rest in Peace my friend."

Rifleman Jamie Davis, 2 Platoon, A Company 4 RIFLES, said:

"Like everyone there are so many good things I could say about Apolis but at the end of the day he was a great friend and a brother to me. If ever I was near him he would always say hello and if ever I had a problem he would always offer his opinion, whether I wanted it or not. I have so much respect for him and am so sad to see him go. Rest in peace my brother."

Rifleman Tony Needham, 2 Platoon, A Company 4 RIFLES, said:

"Carlo was the type of bloke who was just pure morale. If anyone was feeling down he would be there and make you laugh and feel better. Carlo was always there if you needed to talk and he always spoke his mind. He will be missed dearly and I feel honoured to have known him."

Rifleman Daniel Spence, 2 Platoon, A Company 4 RIFLES, said:

"Apolis was a character of the platoon who was always laughing and joking and in high spirits. He will be sadly missed but never forgotten."

Lance Corporal Luke Payne and Rifleman Hussain Panchbahaya, 2 Platoon, A Company 4 RIFLES, said:

"Carlo, the man with all the wisdom, knew more about life than any other person in the Platoon. Always telling us how we should invest our money instead of spending it all on socialising. He also taught us to plan for the future. Well, Carlo fought hard, lived a good life and will be missed by everyone, especially Becks. Our heart goes out to her."