

It is with sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm the death of three soldiers this morning from 1st Battalion Royal Gurkha Rifles serving as part of Combined Force Nahr-e Saraj South, on Tuesday 13 July 2010. The soldiers were killed in a suspected premeditated attack by a member of the Afghan National Army (ANA) using a combination of weapons.

Spokesman for Task Force Helmand, Lieutenant Colonel James Carr-Smith, said:

"It is with deep sorrow I must inform you that three soldiers from the 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles Battle Group were killed this morning in southern Nahr-e Saraj, Helmand Province. We believe these were the actions of a lone individual who has betrayed his ISAF and Afghan comrades. His whereabouts are currently unknown but we are making strenuous efforts to find him. He should know that his actions will not deter us from our task and we will continue to work closely with our Afghan friends to bring security to Helmand.

"Three courageous and dedicated soldiers have made the ultimate sacrifice. They will be greatly missed and their actions will not be forgotten. We will remember them."

Commander of ISAF Forces, General David Petraeus, said:

"I echo the condolences and sentiments offered by President Karzai and the other Afghan officials. This is a combined, joint mission, Afghan and Alliance troopers fighting shoulder-to-shoulder against the Taliban and other extremists. We have sacrificed greatly together, and we must ensure that the trust between our forces remains solid in order to defeat our common enemies. On behalf of all the troopers of ISAF, I offer sincere condolences to the families and the fellow service members of our fallen comrades."

Deputy Commander of ISAF Forces, Lieutenant General Nick Parker, said:

"In that patrol base, this will be a traumatic event, what I say to them is, keep on working, you're doing a fantastic job and you must continue to do it and the vast majority of your Afghan partners are real genuine partners and you'll know that because you work together everyday. But more widely across Helmand I think everybody knows, partnering is the key to our future, we have got to transfer security responsibility to the people whose country this is and if we don't do that, we're not going to succeed in our mission."

Afghan Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Sher Mohammad Karimi, said:

"The loss of any of our coalition partners affects us deeply. We extend our thoughts and prayers to the friends and families of our fellow soldiers. Our ongoing, partnered investigation will seek to determine how this event could have occurred and we will prosecute those responsible."