

Senior Aircraftsman Marcin Wojtak
34 Squadron Royal Air Force Regiment

Senior Aircraftsman Marcin Wojtak was born on 13 Dec 1984 in Leicester. He joined the Royal Air Force in 2005 as a Gunner in the Royal Air Force Regiment. On completion of his basic training at Royal Air Force Honington, he was posted to 26 Sqn Royal Air Force Regiment, where he served as a Rapier operator. During his time on 26 Sqn Royal Air Force Regiment he completed operational tours in the Falkland Islands and Kandahar.

In May 2008 he was posted to 34 Sqn Royal Air Force Regiment where he served on B Flight as a Rifleman. He deployed to Kabul in August 2008 for 6 weeks to perform Force Protection duties.

Marcin, a Leicester City supporter, was a man who was blessed with a bubbly character and a soft side, so he was known by all of us as 'Big Ted', short for Teddy Bear. It was, perhaps, for this reason that he volunteered to become one of the Squadron's Trauma Risk Managers; anyone could feel comfortable talking to him. In short, he cared about his colleagues and his friends and was always prepared to help them.

During the Squadron's demanding pre-deployment training, Senior Aircraftsman Wojtak rose to all the challenges placed before him. He was a highly skilled soldier who understood his role and executed it with diligence. He earned himself a reputation as a dependable and safe pair of hands.

His career as a leader was just beginning. During training, he had shown his ability to inspire his friends and so was a natural choice to appoint as a Fire Team Commander and Acting Corporal rank. He was proud of his appointment and it was in this role that he deployed to Camp Bastion in Afghanistan with the Squadron in September this year. On his return home, he was due to attend a training course to make this appointment formal.

Senior Aircraftsman Wojtak was killed on 1 October 2009 as a result of an explosion whilst commanding his vehicle in the desert to the south of Bastion Joint Operating Base. The thoughts and prayers of all ranks on 34 Squadron Royal Air Force Regiment are with 'Ted's' family and particularly with his girlfriend Sam, with whom he was looking forward to setting up a home.

Commanding Officer - Wing Commander Shaun Ryles MBE, said:

"Losing a comrade to enemy action is a devastating blow to the Force Protection Wing, especially as it has occurred in the early stages of this Flight's deployment to Helmand. Senior Aircraftsman Wojtak was a man of great strengths; both as a formidable Gunner and as a person

who displayed outstanding leadership potential. He was widely respected by all that had the honour to serve with him. He will leave a void that will never be replaced in our hearts and his memory will be enduring. Our prayers are with his family and loved ones during this heartbreaking time."

Squadron Commander - Squadron Leader 'George' Formby, said:

"The loss of Senior Aircraftman Wojtak at such an early stage in our tour has come as a severe blow to the Squadron. He was one of those steady, competent, reliable men that form the backbone of any unit; the sort that, as a Commander, you rely upon. I relied upon him enough to appoint him as a junior commander for our time in Afghanistan. He was not short of friends in the Squadron and he fitted in well, displaying a soft side that earned him the nickname 'Big Ted' or just 'Ted'. Our thoughts are with his family and girlfriend, Sam, to whom we extend our sincere condolences."

Corporal Dave Hayden MC, said:

"'Ted' worked for me as my second in command, he was essential to the Section and even more so to myself. Whenever I gave him a job to do he did it and if it wasn't done it was in the process of being done. In most cases he did a better job than I could have imagined. He was a big figurehead on the Flight, every lad on the Squadron loved him, especially the B flight lads. He was the big teddy bear who loved to help what ever the problem. He was a kind and considerate mate, never more evident than when he came to the house and played with my son Ethan and got on instantly with him. Mine and the Squadron's thoughts go out to 'Ted's' family and Sam his girlfriend, at this tragic time. Rest in peace mate. "

Senior Aircraftsman Tom Peterson, said:

"I knew 'Teddie' for about 5 ½ years. He wasn't your typical squaddie; he could always be relied upon to step in when there was something someone couldn't do, no matter who you were. He was always thinking about others rather than himself. He enjoyed the more relaxed pace of the Falklands and Kabul but he never shied away from the faster pace that life in the Regiment can bring. During his time on the Squadron he looked towards the Section Commanders, Oli, Paddy and Dave for inspiration on how to lead the section and for advice on furthering his career by becoming a Junior Non-Commissioned Officer, a course which he was selected to do when he got back from this tour. Our thoughts are with his family and his girlfriend Sam. "