

From the MoD:

It is with great sorrow that the Ministry of Defence must confirm the deaths of Private Damian Wright and Private Ben Ford who were killed in Helmand province, southern Afghanistan, on Wednesday 5 September 2007.

The soldiers, both from the 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Worcesters and Foresters), were taking part in a routine reassurance patrol 17km north of Lashkar Gah when, shortly after 0915 hours local time, the Land Rover vehicle they were travelling in was caught in an explosion. Sadly they were both pronounced dead at the scene.

Another soldier and an interpreter who were injured in the explosion were flown by helicopter to the ISAF medical facility at Camp Bastion for treatment. The interpreter later died of his injuries.

Private Ben Ford and Private Damian Wright are the first fatalities from the newly formed 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment (Worcesters and Foresters), formerly known as the 1st Battalion the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment (29th/45th of Foot).

Sept 2008 Update : Inquest Statement on the deaths of Private Ford and Private Wright -from the MoD

Our thoughts and sympathies remain with the families and friends of Private Ford and Private Wright at this difficult time. We were immensely saddened at their deaths in Helmand Province, Afghanistan on 5 September 2007. We note the Coroner's comments at today's inquest and his Rule 43 letter; we will reply in due course, once we have had a chance to consider his recommendations fully. There is now sufficient ECM available in theatre for all vehicles to operate outside the wire under its protection; we do not deploy vehicles unless they are covered. Vehicles in operational theatres are now 'fitted for' ECM as matter of routine, and ECM equipment is installed as required by the local tactical situation.

At the time of Privates Ford and Wright's deaths, their Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Simon Banton, Commanding Officer 2nd Battalion the Mercian Regiment (Worcesters & Foresters), said:

"Private Ford was a tremendous young soldier. Fit and enthusiastic, hardworking and committed to his comrades and a career in the Army. He will be sorely missed but never forgotten by all those who had the honour to serve alongside him."

"Private Wright was one of the key characters in our Battalion. Full of life, a natural comedian and a man guaranteed to lift the spirits of the most down hearted. He was devoted to his son, Joshua, and our thoughts are with him at this desperate time. Private Wright will not be

forgotten by anyone who had the pleasure and privilege of meeting him."