

Lance Corporal Gajbahadur Gurung of 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, who was killed in Afghanistan on Friday 27 January 2012, was serving as part of Combined Force Nahr-e Saraj (North). He was a member of an International Security Assistance Force foot patrol to disrupt insurgent activity in the Khar Nikah region of Nahr-e Saraj district, Helmand province, when he received a fatal gunshot wound.

Lance Corporal Gurung was born in Majthana, Nepal, on 16 October 1985, and was brought up and educated in Pokhara. Before being selected for the Brigade of Gurkhas, he was a full time student, studying Maths and English in Pokhara.

He joined the Brigade of Gurkhas on 18 December 2004 at British Gurkhas Pokhara, Nepal. He completed recruit training in Gurkha Company, 3rd Battalion, Infantry Training Centre Catterick in October 2005. On completion of his basic training he joined 2nd Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles and served both in Brunei and the UK.

Known as 'Gaj' to his friends in the Army, LCpl Gurung served three times in Afghanistan during his military career. He previously deployed there in 2006 on Operation HERRICK 4 as part of D Company (Gurkha Reinforcement Company) with 7 Royal Horse Artillery. He deployed again in October 2008 on Operation HERRICK 9.

On 14 July 2009, he was posted to C Company, 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment in Münster, Germany. Over the summer of 2010 he deployed to the British Army Training Unit in Suffield, Canada, and spent time on exercise with both the 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards and 1st Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment Battle Groups. Upon his return to Germany he became immersed in preparation for Operation HERRICK15, during which he completed the basic Pashto language course.

On deploying to Afghanistan C Company was renamed D (Delhi) Company. After completing his in-theatre training, he moved forward to Forward Operating Base Khar Nikah where his Company, under command of Combined Force Nahr-e-Saraj (North), were to be based for the duration of Operation Herrick 15. His Company were tasked with holding the contested and critically influential area north east of Helmand's second city, Gereshk. On the afternoon of Friday 27 January 2012, Lance Corporal Gurung's patrol came under small arms fire. During the short exchange of gunfire that ensued, he was fatally wounded.

He leaves behind his wife Manisha, father Gum Bahadur, mother Lekh Maya, his brother Buddha and sister Junu.

Lieutenant Colonel Dan Bradbury, Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, said:

"Lance Corporal Gurung was serving in the northern part of Nahr-e-Saraj District - one of the toughest areas in Helmand and one of the very few areas remaining where control is contested daily with the insurgents - when he was killed. He touched so many lives for

the better; his peers in Delhi Company and all of us in the chain of command knew him as an intelligent, charismatic and inquisitive natural leader of men.

"Never one to let an opportunity go, he was constantly striving to know more, learn more and his ability to get on so well with the local people made him the natural choice to train the Afghan Local Police. He died as he lived - at the heart of the action, taking the fight to the enemy and resolute in the face of danger. He was a true Gurkha in body and spirit in everything he did.

"We will miss him immensely, and our thoughts are with his wife Manisha in Münster, and his parents Gum Bahadur and Lekh, and brother and sister Bhudda and Junu in Nepal. We pray he will rest in peace."

Major Spiro Christopher Marcandonatos, Officer Commanding, D (Delhi) Company, 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, said:

"I have known Lance Corporal Gurung for nearly three years. An extraordinary individual he made an impression from the very first time I met him. Bright and well-educated, he was most definitely a "people person" who abided by all the right values; a true Gurkha at heart, with a Western twist.

"Much respected across all ranks, he offered much in every way and was a born leader of men. He consistently maintained that he wanted to be at the forefront of a Rifle Platoon and 9 Platoon were the beneficiaries of this wish. His dedication has been second to none and his immediate aspiration after this tour was to attend the Section Commander's Battle Course, in Brecon, to lead a section of soldiers.

"Such is the mark of the individual to me that as his Officer Commanding, I consider that I have lost a brother and a friend. As a rising star in the Brigade of Gurkhas we will be the worse for his passing and he will be sorely missed by one and all.

"Our thoughts are with his wife, Manisha, his family and friends."

Captain Hemkumar Tamang, Second in Command, D (Delhi) Company, 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, said:

"Lance Corporal Gurung was a very well known and talented man in the Company. Very good at all sports he especially loved playing football and basketball. He was always cheerful, charming and approachable to his mates and commanders. He was an outstanding character.

"He was one of my best soldiers and proved this since his arrival in Germany. His diligent and hard work was second to none, he was always eager to help his mates and support his commanders. His smile and humble character remains in my heart. He was

an excellent friend and a brother to all those around him. Now we miss him.

"My thoughts are with his family, especially his wife Manisha, at this difficult time."

Captain Euan Waters, Platoon Commander, 9 Platoon, D (Delhi) Company, 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, said:

"I met Lance Corporal Gurung in 2009 when I joined the Company as his Platoon Commander. I immediately singled him out as someone who was going places. Although a Rifleman at the time, he stepped up on numerous occasions as a section commander and, as with everything, he did it with ease and an assured confidence.

"Lance Corporal Gurung was one of the most gifted soldiers I have ever seen. He took a huge pride in his job. I was so proud of him when he promoted to Lance Corporal and we joked that I would bump into him in years to come in the Officers' Mess, once he had commissioned. In my heart I knew he would get there.

"I am so proud to have been able to serve with Lance Corporal Gurung, privileged to have known him and to count him as a friend. His thirst for life and energy was contagious. He touched all those that met him. I am a better soldier and person for having known him.

"A true Gurkha and one of the bravest men I have ever met. My thoughts and love go out to his family at this sad time."

Warrant Officer Class Two Sanjipkumar Rai, Company Sergeant Major, D (Delhi) Company, The 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment said:

"I have known Lance Corporal Gurung, known as Gaj, for the last four years. I first met him while we were training for Operation Herrick 9, he was a young Rifleman and I was a Colour Sergeant. Even in those early stages of his Army career he proved himself to be the best amongst his peers.

"I know you are not with us, instead you are embedded in our hearts and minds. We may not be able to see you again and feel your warmth, but the priceless work and sacrifices that you have made will always be remembered.

"For me you are the true hero of HERRICK 15. You are second to none in my heart.

"I'll pray to God, may your soul rest in peace forever and ever. At this difficult time, my deepest and sincerest condolences go to his wife Manisha and his extended family."

Corporal Ishwor Sunuwar, Company Combat Human Resources Administrator, D (Delhi) Company, 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, said:

"I first met Gaj in Oxford Barracks in Germany on my assignment to the Company. Gaj was an ambitious soldier and a true gentleman, brother and a good friend. It was his selfless nature that brought me close to him. I remember him coming to my office and offering to help me with my work when he hadn't much to do in the Platoon. I have always seen him happy, smiling and helpful to all those around him.

"I had been out on patrols with him several times. I remember him giving situational awareness to the troops on the radio, sharing all the information he saw en-route and sometimes cracking jokes.

"At this difficult time, my deepest and sincerest condolences go to his wife, parents and relatives.

"A true friend and brother. You will never be forgotten and will always be in my heart. Rest in peace, dear brother."

Lance Bombardier Ware, K Battery, 5th Regiment Royal Artillery, said:

"It is impossible to summarise a person in words alone, and I probably won't do him justice - I hope he forgives me.

"Gaj was as proud as any Gurkha I have met and as good an infantryman as the British Army could produce. Humble and determined he was an inspiration to us all. These are just a few of the qualities that made him a respected Lance Corporal and a trustworthy friend.

"I will always remember Gaj."