

COLOUR SERJEANT KEVIN CHARLES FORTUNA
MACHINE GUN
PLATOON
A COMPANY
1st BATTALION THE RIFLES
Colour Serjeant Kevin Charles Fortuna deployed to Afghanistan in April 2011 with A Company, 1st Battalion The Rifles, in command of a Multiple of twelve Riflemen. He was based in Check Point Sarhad in the Nahr-e-Saraj (South) district of Helmand Province, Afghanistan.
Colour Serjeant Fortuna was born on 18th June 1974 in Portsmouth, and attended Bourneside Comprehensive in Cheltenham. He joined the Army aged only sixteen, where his potential was recognised at an early stage, joining the Gloucestershire Regiment in 1991 as a junior leader. Over the course of an exceptional career, Colour Serjeant Fortuna went on to deploy to Yugoslavia, Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. His vast experience, intellectual approach and calm manner led him to a position of great esteem within the Battalion.
In the early evening of Monday, 23rd May 2011, Colour Serjeant Fortuna was leading a patrol to disrupt enemy forces when he was killed by an Improvised Explosive Device in the Saidabad Kalay area of the Nahr-e Saraj (South) District of Helmand Province.
Colour Serjeant Fortuna was a phenomenal, irreplaceable individual, who had already been selected for promotion and was very much a star of the future. He cared for those he commanded passionately, and had prepared both his men and himself flawlessly for this deployment. He will be very sorely missed by every man in the Battle Group.
Colour Serjeant Fortuna leaves behind his wife, Nia, Mother Sue and Brother Kris. The thoughts of the Battle Group are very much with them at this tragic time.
Colour Serjeant Fortuna's family paid the following tribute to him:
"Kevin was a true professional who loved his job and lived life to the full. He gave 19 loyal years to the Army and will be sadly missed by his Wife, Mother, Family and friends."
Lieutenant Colonel James de Labilliere DSO MBE, Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, The Rifles said:
"Colour Serjeant Fortuna was an utterly professional commander, Rifleman and a man of irreproachable integrity."
"His presence strengthened the Battalion and the loss with his passing will be acute. He was remarkable for many reasons, not least his complete and unwavering commitment to his Riflemen and their care. He was restless until he had achieved the very best for them and encouraged them to be restless until they achieved the very best for themselves. He was a master-tactician, and a soldier of great experience. He was to be a Company Serjeant Major in just three months time."
"Tonight I saw the impact of his passing on his tight-knit Multiple, brought together under his leadership over the last 8 months of hard training and latterly operations. Their grief-stricken resolve to get back out and continue the work that Colour Serjeant Fortuna had set in motion was awe-inspiring. It is a testament to his legacy, which will, forever, bond that band of Riflemen together."
"I will never forget him and nor will 1 RIFLES. I relied often on his considered and impeccable judgement. And on his humour and sense of fun. His name joins the list of Rifles' heroes from which we will always draw inspiration and courage."
"At this impossibly difficult time our prayers and thoughts rest with his wife, Nia, and his Mother Sue and Brother Kris."
"Swift and Bold."
Major Carl Boswell, Officer Commanding A Company, 1st Battalion, The Rifles said:
"Colour Serjeant Fortuna was the finest of Riflemen and a good friend. His energy and enthusiasm for life were infectious and endless, his modesty humbling, and his resourcefulness inspiring. His core inner strength and confidence enabled an air of invulnerability; nothing was too much for him in both caring and understanding the needs of his Riflemen and ensuring mission success. But whether for his beloved wife Nia or for his fellow Riflemen, his first priority was to care for others. He was easy going, relaxed, yet hard working

and professional, and had a waterproof smile that kept others going when things got tough.

"His wife and friends were all proud of him, as were we, his Brothers in Arms in Afghanistan. Our thoughts here are now with all those who knew him at this unimaginably awful time; we will not forget our Brother."

Major Jason Durup Royal Marines, Officer Commanding K Company, 42 Commando Royal Marines said:

"I liked Colour Serjeant Fortuna instantly, as did everyone who met him. A towering individual he was an unassuming, proud and professional Rifleman who displayed all the qualities one would expect from someone about to be promoted to Warrant Officer: determination, unselfishness, courage, leadership and cheerfulness in adversity. This ethos was recognised and shared by the Royal Marines Commando colleagues with whom he lived and fought side by side. It was obvious his men were devoted to him and that there was a special bond between them; a strong identity that comes from being a small group of Rifleman operating in an isolated check point. This loss will be felt so deeply by Riflemen and Royal Marines alike. Colour Serjeant Fortuna was killed by an insurgent Improvised Explosive Device whilst leading his men; a cynical and cowardly mechanism of death that is unbecoming a man of his courage and stature. He will be missed by the 'Black Knights' of Kilo Company, 42 Commando Royal Marines and our thoughts are with his family, friends and the men he led and leaves behind."

Major Paul Kyte, Officer Commanding Support Company, 1st Battalion, The Rifles said:

"Colour Serjeant Fortuna was simply a pleasure to know. He was everything that I could ask for in a Senior Non-Commissioned Officer, and so much more. He was an utterly committed Rifleman, who had excelled himself time and again tactically in the field, as an instructor in the classroom and as a highly intelligent thinking member of my Command Group. Colour Serjeant Fortuna's potential shone bright, and he was shortly to take over as my Company Serjeant Major on promotion. Despite this huge talent, Colour Serjeant Fortuna's most inspiring quality was his quiet humility, which was the mark of the man.

"Gentle by nature, Colour Serjeant Fortuna cared deeply for each and every one of his Riflemen, in whom he invested so much of his time with both professional and personal interest. Colour Serjeant Fortuna's meticulous knowledge of his profession and his Riflemen made him an outstanding Platoon Commander who was much respected by all who served with him.

"I have no doubt that I, and many others, are better Riflemen for having known this extraordinary man. His tragic death, leading his men in the line of duty, is a loss to the Company of a fine future Company Serjeant Major. It has robbed The Rifles and its Riflemen of a friend and an exemplary role model. Our dearest thoughts are with Colour Serjeant Fortuna's wife and family."

Major Bill Eden, Officer Commanding C Company, 1st Battalion, The Rifles said:

"I knew Colour Serjeant Kev Fortuna well, having served with him on and off for more than a decade. He was once my Second-in-Command on Exercise CAMBRIAN PATROL, a tough patrols exercise in the Brecon Beacons. He came late to the team and shone, despite having missed a month's dedicated training. Such was the quality of this exceptional man. Last year I had the privilege of commanding Support Company, 1 RIFLES, with Colour Serjeant Fortuna as my Machine Gun Platoon Commander. Despite not coming from the Machine Gun world, he threw himself into the job with characteristic zeal, enthusiasm and ability. While attending the Machine Gun Platoon Commanders' Course he would steal into the office of a weekend to update me on his thoughts on how best the Battalion could employ Machine Guns in line with developing Fire Support Group doctrine. One of the most intelligent men in the Battle Group, he was a real thinker, brimming with good ideas. He also gave my other Platoon Commanders - Captains - a run for their money when it came to personnel administration and report writing,

always going the extra mile to do the best by his treasured Riflemen. Kev was one of the best and we will miss him terribly - not least Support Company where he was shortly due to take over as Company Serjeant Major - but our thoughts and prayers are of course with his beloved wife and family. We'll do his memory proud."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Scott Maunders, A Company Serjeant Major, 1st Battalion, The Rifles said:"Kev epitomised exactly what a Rifleman should aspire to be like: a calming influence on his fellow Riflemen who led them with the diligence, professionalism, love and humour; qualities that we all had learned to expect from Kev. In the Mess, Kev was a great source of fun, and this is where his dryness and quick-witted one liners were a constant source of entertainment that we will all miss dearly."

Warrant Officer Class 2 John Greening, Mortar Platoon Second in Command, 1st Battalion, The Rifles said:"Kev '4fish' Fortuna was a friend of more years than I remember. When you think of words like leader, inspiration, professional, they don't do him justice; Kev was one of the very, very best. All those that served alongside him will speak with nothing but admiration for him. There are no words that will ever describe just how good he was. My thoughts go out to his multiple, my prayers and deepest sympathies go to his loving wife Nia, and the rest of Kev's family. God bless, rest in peace. Swift and Bold."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Darren Coney, Intelligence Officer, C Company, 1st Battalion, The Rifles said:"Kev Fortuna, a strong, fit, intelligent man with a very bright future, Kev always greeted you with a smile and intellectual conversation. His immaculate administration and attention to detail are just a couple of attributes that made him an outstanding soldier, a total professional and a good friend. He will be sorely missed by all that knew him."

Colour Serjeant Lee Mason, Buzzard Operations Senior Non Commissioned Officer, 1st Battalion, The Rifles said:"I first had the pleasure of meeting Kev (the Meer Cat) when we were both posted to Lydd as instructors. We got on very well, and I soon learned he was a highly professional, diligent, kind and helpful person. His skills and talents far surpassed a lot of other great soldiers I have known over the years, and he would always be there for you if you ever required a hand with anything. Kev Fortuna was a dear friend who will be greatly missed."

Corporal Matthew Whitehouse and the Riflemen of Multiple 14A, A Company, 1st Battalion, The Rifles said:"Kev took over as our Multiple Commander at the beginning of pre-tour training. Kev was experienced, mainly in the support role as the Machine Gun Platoon Commander, which he enjoyed very dearly, carrying all the pamphlets on his MP3 player. Any question to do with weapons he had the answer in his left pocket."

"What Kev had brought to the party was 19 years of experience, having done operational tours with the Royal Gloucester, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment, 2 RIFLES, 5 RIFLES, and 1 RIFLES."

"During the pre-deployment training and numerous exercises leading up to this Afghanistan Tour, Kev didn't believe in wearing any warm kit, but when back in camp in Chepstow he always seemed to be wearing his Softy Jacket. Inside the Check Point - anything that needed doing or fixing ♦ Kev was all over any job and task. He didn't believe in wasting Tax payers' time."

"Kev met his wife Nia in Colchester and was married for a number of years. His obsession was his BMW Z4 and Meer Cats, of which they had adopted a few."

"He was a very experienced commander and an inspiration to us all. Kev would always set the standards and the professionalism that goes with this. Kev never once cut corners and every Rifleman would always look up to him, willing to fight side by side with such an inspirational commander, a leader of all men. His command ability was second to none, and he would stay until the mission had been completed. Kev Fortuna will be sorely missed by all who knew him."

Corporal Julian Heal,

Commanding Officer's Tactical Group, 1st Battalion, The Rifles said:

"20 years of friendly banter, jolly boys outings and surf trips. Kev was always a loyal, honourable and trustworthy leader and friend, even when I broke his jeep in Cyprus. You will be missed ♦ my deepest sympathies go to Nia."

Corporal John Wheatley, Machine Gun Platoon, 1st Battalion The Rifles said:

"In the time CSjt Fortuna was Officer Commanding the Machine Gun Platoon, the effort and dedication he put into the platoon was more than any other platoon commander before him. His diligence, attention to detail and thorough knowledge of all military matters was second to none. It wasn't unknown for the Riflemen to refer to Kev as 'The Laser' but I have never known a platoon run so well. Whenever I needed advice, work related or personal, he would always be my first port of call; he would always make five minutes for you and a brew. I was proud to call him my boss and my friend."</p>