

Corporal David O'Connor from 40 Commando Royal Marines was killed on Wednesday 24 October 2012 while on patrol in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand Province.

Corporal O'Connor and Corporal Channing Day from 3 Medical Regiment Day were participating in a patrol with C Company, 40 Commando to conduct low level training with the Afghan Local Police. While en route to conduct that training, the patrol came under small arms fire near the village of Char Kutsa. As a result of the engagement Corporal O'Connor was fatally injured alongside his colleague and patrol medic, Corporal Day.

Corporal David O'Connor deployed to Afghanistan on 29 September 2012 as a Section Commander in the acting rank of Corporal. He served with Charlie Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines as part of Transition Support Unit Nahr-e Saraj. He was based in Patrol Base 1 in the southern part of Nahr-e-Saraj District, Helmand Province.

Corporal O'Connor was born on 16 June 1985 and lived in Havant, Hampshire with his mother. He joined the Royal Marines on 13 May 2002 and after nine months arduous training passed for duty as a Royal Marines Commando on 17 January 2003.

In 2007 Corporal O'Connor deployed to Afghanistan with 40 Commando on Operation Herrick 7 where he worked with Charlie Company in the Kajaki District of Northern Helmand. In 2009, after this brief period away from 40 Commando, he returned to the Commando to prepare to deploy once again to Afghanistan on Operation Herrick 12, this time to the volatile Sangin District of northern Helmand. On this tour Corporal O'Connor was praised for his steadfast dedication and bravery and was awarded a Commander Joint Operations' Commendation.

After attendance on the Royal Marines Junior Command Course in 2011 he immediately rejoined 40 Commando and started Mission Specific Training for what was to be his third operational tour to Afghanistan on Operation Herrick 17.

Corporal O'Connor was an outstanding Royal Marines Commando. He displayed true Commando spirit in all that he did and was ferociously dedicated to his men, his Company and the Royal Marines. He was an inspirational leader and an excellent soldier; his loss will be felt not just at 40 Commando Royal Marines but throughout the Royal Marines Corps.

He leaves behind his mother, Rosemary; brother, Phil; father, Roy (known to all as George) and a loving family. He was 27 years old.

The family of Corporal O'Connor said:

"David's family and friends are greatly saddened by his loss and hope to be left to grieve

privately."

Lieutenant Colonel Matt Jackson Royal Marines, Commanding Officer, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"This is an extremely sad time for 40 Commando Royal Marines, his friends and most of all his family. Corporal Dave O'Connor was one of the best; he was loved and respected by those around him and was relentless in the pursuit of excellence in his duties. Utterly professional, his four operational tours of Iraq and Afghanistan marked him as one of the most devoted individuals in the Commando. Brave, committed and humorous it is difficult to find words that can possibly fill the void which has been left by this truly excellent junior commander; his loss is difficult to comprehend. His career was dedicated to the service of his country and to the lives of the Royal Marines with whom he served.

"The Royal Marines that he leaves behind will continue to thrive on the enthusiasm he showed in every aspect of his role but their lives will always be marred by the sadness which comes with losing a great leader, a great companion and a great friend.

"Corporal O'Connor's loss will be mourned across the Royal Marines by those who he knew and by those who can only aspire to be in some small way like him. He was exceptional and I am immensely proud to have had the privilege of serving alongside him both here and on Op Cougar.

"He lived his life for the things he cherished the most, his friends and his family and my thoughts and prayers are with them at this very difficult time."

Major Chris Hall Royal Marines, Officer Commanding Charlie Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Corporal Dave O'Connor was a fantastic, engaging and professional man who was universally popular and highly capable in all he did. He has been with Charlie Company for many years and was a stalwart of both the professional and social side of Company life. He was a veteran of Telic 4 and Herricks 7 and 12 and was very clear in his motivation for returning to Afghanistan for another tour. He wanted to lead his men and utilise his considerable experience to guide them through the next six months and leave Afghanistan a better country.

"Dave's cutting, self deprecating wit, easy going manner and endearing personality will never be forgotten by all those who had the privilege and pleasure to have met and worked with him. Our thoughts and prayers are with all his family and friends. He fell protecting his men, doing the job he loved, surrounded by those who loved him. He will never be forgotten."

Warrant Officer 2nd Class Mark Burton, Company Sergeant Major, Charlie Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Dave really was a true 'Spartan's Spartan' and will always remain so. If there was a party and fun to be had you would always find him front and centre ensuring the men were enjoying

themselves. A chilled personality belied his professionalism and ability. He was greatly respected by all and as a veteran of previous tours he really was one of the main men in the Company. Dave you will be sorely missed bud, see you at the great bar in the sky mate. Yours aye."

Captain Steve Taylor, Officer Commanding 8 Troop, Charlie Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"More than anyone in the Company, Corporal Dave O'Connor embodied the history and ethos of everything we stand for: utterly professional and exceptionally sharp when it counted and the social epicentre of the Troop. His ability to both inspire and reduce you to tears of laughter within the same conversation was irreplaceable and as we press on we will forever miss that unmistakable smile.

"He was a brother to many in the Troop who he took under his wing and guided through patrols with steadfast bravery and upstanding responsibility. His moral reserves were never drained, even in the worst of situations and his commitment to his brothers in arms was unwavering. For the entire Troop, our actions will be in the memory of Corporal O'Connor. We were privileged to have served alongside him – a true Royal Marines Commando and a true friend. Our thoughts are with his family and friends back home. Rest in peace."

Sergeant Richie Bateman, Troop Sergeant 8 Troop, Charlie Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"I first met Dave about seven years ago at 40 Commando. Dave was genuinely one of life's characters. His easy going nature made it very easy for people to get on with him and he was always at the heart of any fun and humour that was happening. Dave was already a veteran of Afghanistan and Iraq and was one of the most operationally experienced Marines within the Company. In the short time we had been on Herrick 17 Dave had been pivotal in running the patrols that went out and quite literally led from the front. I am devastated at the loss of Dave and the overwhelming loss for all his family and friends and my thoughts will always be with them."

Corporal Chris Harper, 8 Troop, Charlie Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"What can I say about Dave other than he was one of the best blokes I worked with and one of my best mates? He survived Sangin on Herrick 12 with Charlie Coy only to return to Afghanistan a few years later for his third Afghan tour. Motivated mainly by a sense of duty and a sense of responsibility for the younger lads in the Troop, he faced the dangers of the tour with his usual awesome humour and quiet professionalism. Having spent many a long night in his room discussing subjects ranging from life and death to eighties film trivia, I learnt to envy, respect and admire his outlook on life and general 'Bootneck' attitude. His death will be outshone by our memories of him whilst alive, and I feel far richer having known him.

"I will never forget you, Dave. Rest in peace."

Lance Corporal Rich Morgan, 8 Troop, Charlie Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Dave O'Connor was a true Royal Marines Commando, an older brother figure of the 40 Commando family and a Charlie Company Spartan through and through. He was a good friend to many, a professional soldier in the field and on the ground and taught myself and the other lads many things which have helped us in our careers. He was a great 'oppo' and a morale booster, whether it was in the Spartan Bar (his domain), on a night out or on exercise in the middle of Salisbury Plain. His cheeky smile when he had jokingly seen you off, his great wit and banter summed him up and will stay with me and all who knew him forever. He died doing what he loved with his brothers around him and will be sorely missed by all."

Marine Tom Leigh, 8 Troop, Charlie Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Dave O'Connor was a great man. He loved to soldier, loved his friends and family, and kept morale high every step of the way. He was Charlie Coy down to his core, a true Spartan who will live on forever in our memories as he takes up his honorary place in the Spartan Bar. Stand easy, Dangerous Dave O'Connor, see you on the other side. The first round is on you. One of your closest friends, Tom Leigh."

Marine Paul 'Lambert' MacCallaugh, 8 Troop, Charlie Company, 40 Commando Royal Marines said:

"Dave O'Connor was a hoofing bloke and a great leader to everyone who met him. He always had a smile on his face and was always quoting films that he had seen. There were always great laughs when he was around, he was always trying to see me off and take the mickey out of me. But we all knew that was Dave being Dave and we loved him for that. He was a great mate and a hoofing Marine, no one could match him. He will be missed greatly. RIP Dave."