

Corporal Jake Hartley, 20, from Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, was one of six soldiers on a patrol to dominate the area and maintain freedom of movement in Lashkar Gah Durai region in an operational area on the border of Helmand and Kandahar provinces when their Warrior Armoured Fighting Vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device. He joined the Battalion in December 2008 and his potential was immediately recognised. Corporal Hartley had a very bright future in the Army and he was already promoting well ahead of his years, which is testament to his soldiering ability. Perhaps more importantly, Corporal Hartley had an innate ability to inspire those around him and make them achieve more than they ever imagined was possible.

Corporal Hartley was very popular within the Platoon and the Company at large. He will be remembered as the life and soul of the party, a generous outgoing young man with an exceptionally bright future. He will be sorely missed.

He leaves behind him his mother and stepfather, Nathalie and Mark, brother Ethan and uncle and best friend, Luke. The thoughts and prayers of all those in his Battalion and Combined Force Lashkar Gah are very much with them at this most difficult time.

Corporal Hartley's family have paid the following tribute:

"We are devastated at the loss of our son and best friend. Jake was always in the limelight and a larger than life character. He loved Army life and was very determined to do well and achieve his goals. He was kind and generous, a heart of gold with a wicked sense of humour. Above all, he loved his family and friends. We ask that our family's privacy is respected at this difficult time."

Lieutenant Colonel Zac Stenning MBE, Commanding Officer, 3rd Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment (Duke of Wellington's), said:

"Corporal Jake Hartley was the ultimate infantry soldier and naturally stood out from his peers. Fit, motivated, yet always understated, he was one of the best. His rise through the ranks had been swift and rightly so; he was a natural leader as exemplified by his top position on the gruelling Infantry Section Commanders Battle Course.

"Corporal Hartley was immensely popular with officers and soldiers alike. He was a future star; Regimental Sergeant Major material for sure. We have lost today a selfless, dedicated leader. But our loss is nothing compared to that of his family and friends who have lost one of the most likeable men you could ever meet. Our thoughts and prayers are with them today."

Lieutenant Colonel Ian Mortimer, Commanding Officer, Combined Force Lashkar Gah (The Queen's Royal Hussars Battle Group) said:

"We in Combined Force Lashkar Gah are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of Corporal Hartley. For those who knew him he was one of the leading lights of his generation. For one so young, such was his ability, he was already a full Corporal. Yet he was utterly inspirational to his soldiers who looked to him for leadership and guidance.

"Professional to the end, he was brilliant at his job and a renowned sportsman. Both on and off the sports field he excelled. We have lost an exemplary soldier and an inspirational young leader. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family at this most difficult and tragic time. We will remember him."

Major Edward Colver, Officer Commanding Corunna Company, 3rd Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment (Duke of Wellington's), said:

"Corporal Hartley was quite simply one of the best Non-Commissioned Officers I have ever had the privilege of working with. From the moment I met him on exercise on the prairies of Canada I knew he was a star of the future. His knowledge of his profession, application and enthusiasm were first class. Corporal Hartley did not only excel as a soldier, he also won Army Cup medals in both Football and Rugby League. He was the Company's Physical Training Instructor, as well as being an active member of the Corporals' Mess. He was a true all rounder.

"Corporal Hartley was flying. At only 20 years of age he had completed his Section Commanders' Battle Course, and was earmarked for Platoon Sergeants course shortly after his tour. Nothing was too difficult for him. Even at this early stage of his career he was a Regimental Sergeant Major in the making. Corporal Hartley went to great lengths to ensure his men were trained and prepared for any task given. He was meticulous in his preparation and expected the same from all of his subordinates. Corporal Hartley went about his work with precision and confidence. I never once heard him complain and could always rely on him to carry out any task with complete confidence.

"He will be sorely missed as a commander, leader and friend. He loved his job, he loved his sport, and he loved his mates. We will never forget him and our thoughts and condolences are with his family at this very difficult time. The Yorkshire Regiment has lost one of its best."

Lieutenant Daniel Brennan, 7 Platoon Commander, Corunna Company, 3rd Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment (Duke of Wellington's), said:

"Corporal Hartley was a unique and charismatic personality who had the ability to inspire those around him. His passion for life and professional attitude were an example to all."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Eric Whitehouse, Company Sergeant Major, Corunna Company, 3rd Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment (Duke of Wellington's), said:

"Corporal Hartley was the best Junior Non-Commissioned Officer in Corunna Company. He exuded a raw talent and an easy natural leadership. There is no doubt about the fact that he was going to continue his fast rise through the ranks, and was likely to be an Regimental Sergeant Major someday. Having recently gained a very strong pass at the Section

Commanders' Battle Course, he proved that he could compete not only against his peers in the Battalion, but across the wider infantry.

"Corporal Hartley had an infectious enthusiasm and boundless energy to match. He was a man that only knew how to put in 100% all of the time. This personality was primed to get the best out of his subordinates and maintain his position as the ultimate role model. Put simply, he was what all young soldiers should aspire to be."

Sergeant Stewart Watts, 7 Platoon Sergeant, Corunna Company, 3rd Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment (Duke of Wellington's), said:

"To write this about one of my soldiers is and will be the hardest thing I have ever done in my life. Since I joined Corunna as Platoon Sergeant, 'JJ' was my Section Commander. After just finishing Section Commanders' Battle Course he was the biggest asset I had in my Platoon. Strong, reliable, smart and robust, the list could fill this page of how good a soldier he was.

"He wasn't just a soldier to me, he was a good mate, someone I could trust with anything. He was just one of those lads that brought morale anywhere he went. He was one of the lads that made that impression as soon as he came to the Platoon. He was my gym buddy while we were here and he helped me train.

"I will never forget what happened, but I know Jake will want us to be strong, and I will be for the lads. He was an absolutely fantastic young man in all areas of life, and is irreplaceable. My best ever Section Commander by far, we will always, and I mean always, remember 'JJ'. He was just simply one of a kind. All my love, God bless buddy. We all love you buddy."

Lance Corporal Lee Marshall, Section Commander 7 Platoon, Corunna Company, 3rd Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment (Duke of Wellington's), said:

"You were a great commander, friend and brother. No words can describe how much you meant to all of us. You were loved and are going to be missed but never forgotten. Once a Blue, always a Blue."

Lance Corporal Jonasa Sikivou, 7 Platoon, Corunna Company, 3rd Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment (Duke of Wellington's), said:

"JJ mate, buddy, brother in arms. You said "See you later buddy" I didn't know you were saying goodbye, for we will not meet again in this world. You were a source of inspiration and I will miss and always remember you.

"Forever in our hearts.

"Dukes for life.

"Once a Blue always a Blue."

Private Dean Johnston, 7 Platoon, Corunna Company, 3rd Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment (Duke of Wellington's), said:

"I can't believe this has happened, it just doesn't seem true. Corporal Hartley was a very professional Section Commander and a very good friend. He gave us all morale when we were down. We will remember him."

Private Lewis Dixon, 7 Platoon, Corunna Company, 3rd Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment (Duke of Wellington's Regiment), said:

"I just want to say thanks for all the laughs and great times we had. You were a proper top lad. We go back 12 years, all the way back to Earlsheaton High School playing push penny for our dinner money.

"I can't believe it was just yesterday that we were talking, laughing and acting like kids. Then just like that you're taken away from me and the boys. Jake 'Alley' Hartley, I'll never forget you and you will always be in my heart, bro. I love you like my own brother and I always will. Rest well best friend."