



1ST BATTALION THE ROYAL GHURKA RIFLES

Lieutenant Neal Turkington was born in Craigavon in Northern Ireland and was soon to celebrate his 27th birthday.

After graduating from Imperial College London he attended the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst from 2007.

He commissioned into 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles in August 2008 and went on to successfully complete the Platoon Commanders' Battle Course in Brecon, South Wales.

His first appointment at regimental duty took him to the jungles of Brunei where he quickly settled in at the helm of 2 Platoon within A (Delhi) Company.

Having settled in to regimental life in Brunei, Lieutenant Turkington continued his Gurkha education by attending the mandatory three months of language study in Pokhara, Western Nepal. A keen adventurer and traveller he found many similarities between the foothills of the Himalaya and the other parts of the world which he travelled to so frequently, notably South America.

At the end of the language training he conducted a memorable trek through Nepal in support of the Gurkha Welfare Trust and perfected the art of speaking Nepali with an Irish accent.

On returning to Brunei Lieutenant Turkington turned his attention back to a profession that he showed a real zeal for. The demanding jungle of Brunei was the perfect environment for this passionate infanteer.

He had the highest expectations of himself and his platoon, to whom he dedicated himself wholeheartedly.

Lieutenant Turkington relished the intellectual challenges of infantry command as much as the physical.

Ambitious for his platoon, he was constantly challenging accepted practices in order to improve himself and his team, a trait that bore real fruits in the initial three months in Afghanistan.

Lieutenant Turkington was in his element as a junior commander and leader in Afghanistan.

The time and effort that he had dedicated to his soldiers over the previous two years was paying dividends every day in the toughest of environments.

Under his command 2 Platoon had been playing a key role in the complex counter insurgency campaign that A (Delhi) Company are engaged in.

He understood it and he ensured that each of his soldiers did too.

In the early stages of this operational tour he had shown himself to be a decisive leader with a strong will, the boys followed him and would do so again and again through the most testing of situations.

Outside of his military life Neal had dedicated so much time to other people, he was a humanitarian at heart, except in the boxing ring, and this was shown through a charity that he and friends had established in South America.

Both in and out of work he was a professional of the highest standards, a leader of his generation.

Our thoughts are with his family during this tragic time.

Lt Turkington's family said:

"Our family is devastated with the news of Neal's death in Afghanistan on 13th July 2010.

"One of Neal's proudest moments was hearing that he had been commissioned to join the Royal Gurkha Rifle's Regiment.

"He felt honoured and privileged to serve with such distinguished, courageous and loyal men.

"Neal was jovial, kind, considerate and loyal to his family and friends. Our family were inspired by his presence, and generosity.

"He was relentless and steadfast in his pursuit of those causes he believed in with his passion

for making a difference whatever the circumstance.

"We are all so proud of him – we couldn't have asked for a finer son, brother and friend."
Lieutenant Colonel Gerald Strickland MBE, Commanding Officer 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, Combined Forces Nahr-e-Saraj South said:

"Lieutenant Neal Turkington was cruelly taken from us in his prime, gunned down as he took his turn on duty in the Company Operations Room.

"He was a courageous and determined platoon commander who was already known across the battalion as a man who could be trusted.

"All his soldiers will echo that sentiment. He was a true friend to his fellow officers and a leader to whom his soldiers would willingly entrust their lives. These are not hollow words.

"He earned this respect through his integrity and raw ability.

"He always had a twinkle in his eye and managed to bring lightness to the gravest of situations.

"I could not have asked for a better officer. Since arriving in Afghanistan, he had been involved in some of the fiercest fighting in our area, but he took it all in his stride, never daunted by what he faced, but always spreading a quiet confidence amongst his men.

"Having a leader who steers him on a calm and steady path when nerves are on edge and tension is in the air is all that a soldier will ask for, and Neal had the rare gift of being able to do just that.

"We mourn his loss, and we share in the unfathomable grief of his family.

"Neal, we are proud to have had you in our Regimental family and will treasure what you have given us."

Captain John Jeffcoat, Battlegroup J3 Operations Officer, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles said:

"'The Turk', as he was inevitably known, loved his soldiers as much as they loved him.

"His humility and humour endeared them to him from the off, loving every single moment of leading his men through thick and thin.

"Neal's gentle Irish brogue was always full of wit and wisdom whether it be coaxing the very best from his boys, whatever their endeavour, or over a drink or several in the Mess with his brother officers.

"We are a small, tight knit band and his loss makes us all the more determined to persevere and beat the insidious insurgency that is doubtless faltering thanks to the bravery of men like Neal who day in and day out took the fight to the enemy.

"His example humbles us all. Jai Turkington Saheb!"

Captain Emile Simpson, Battlegroup Intelligence Officer, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles said:

"Neal was genuinely courageous, refreshingly argumentative, great fun, and led his men from the front by force of personality.

"The most vivid memories I have of Neal were on walks through Himalayan foothills with the five of us as young officers on the Nepali Language Course.

"They would invariably descend into four of us arguing the most absurd points with Neal as we walked from dawn to dusk.

"You will be sorely missed. Rest in peace mate."

Lieutenant Tom Baker, fellow platoon commander in A (Delhi) Company, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles said:

"Neal, whether it was in training, out on the town, or defending the Company from a Taliban flanking attack in Helmand, you have always been there to get me through a scrape and help your friends. Not only has the Battalion lost its most committed and intellectual subaltern, but we subbies have lost an older brother.

"Our dress sense is bound to slip without you there to control it.

"It is hard to believe that we will not see you in Shorncliffe yelling out support to the boys on route marches in your excellent Nepali with that unique Ulster twang.

"It seems harder to think of 2 Platoon carrying out their jobs without their beloved Platoon Commander.

"Do not worry though, CSgt Hom is nearly as much of a perfectionist as you and the Turkington 'stamp' is well and truly embedded on the Platoon making it amongst the best in the Royal Gurkha Rifles.

"Neal, I will not forget the warm welcome you gave me when I joined A (Delhi) Company nor will I forget the pranks you played on me – like telling me it was Gurkha tradition for new officers to show respect to the Gurkha Major by leaving a live chicken on his desk.

"Do not worry I will be passing on this fine Gurkha prank to the next subbie.

"Neal, you always gave good advice whether asked for or not in soldiering, engineering, boxing and in friendship you always excelled.

"I cannot begin to describe how much you will be missed by Garith and Cathy, by all your family and every single member of the Royal Gurkha Rifles.

"But even though you will be sorely missed, you will never ever be forgotten. Jai PC 2!"
Colour Sergeant Hombahadur Gurung, Platoon Sergeant 2 Platoon, A (Delhi) Company, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles said:

"Lieutenant Neal Turkington was not only a great leader and Platoon Commander but also a good friend.

"He always made time to listen to the concerns of his most junior Rifleman and did everything he could to understand and help them.

"He was an example and led from the front, and will always be remembered.

"Our thoughts and prayers will always be with him and with his family."
Corporal Pritihilal Ghale, Section Commander 2 Platoon, A (Delhi) Company, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles said:

"Lieutenant Turkington was a man of his own.

"He always believed in what he was trained for and applied it practically as well as in real war.

"His command and leadership never faltered and he always did everything he could for 2 Platoon.

"His professionalism towards A Company and our Regiment was exceptional.

"Our thoughts and condolences are always with him and his family.

"We will never forget you Lieutenant 'Turk' Saheb."
Rifleman Praveen Rai, 2 Platoon A (Delhi) Company, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles said:

"Lieutenant Turkington was not only a great officer but also a dear friend to the whole platoon.

"Being a tough man he also had a great sense of humour which made him easy to speak to, even to the most junior rifleman in his platoon.

"At times he was strict but his dedication towards his men was unquestionable.

"His command and leadership in the field was outstanding and he was always concerned about our morale.

"The exceptional part of his personality was being able to smile and look at us even in difficult times and just this was enough to boost our spirit.

"We all shared some really good moments with him and as long as we remain it will always be in our memory."

Rifleman Sanjaya Babu Rokaha, 2 Platoon A (Delhi) Company, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles said:

"Lieutenant Turkington was a man of highest quality and I feel that he was a person born to be a soldier because of his hard work to ensure his skills and military knowledge were the best.

"He used to tell us to read books in our spare time rather than playing games and just hanging around.

"His deep knowledge and experience led us on a better track and his role was like a parent to us.

"I feel like I have lost my beloved friend as well as my commander and we look forward to fulfilling his dream by working our hardest to make sure our skills are the best like his.

"May his soul rest in peace in heaven and we will not forget him. Jai 1 RGR."