

The two troops that lost their life over the weekend of 12-14th September have been named as Lance Corp Nicky Mason and Private Jason Lee Rawstron.

Lance Corporal Mason, 26, a soldier from 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment, died on Saturday 13 September 2008 whilst on a routine patrol near Kajaki, in Helmand province as a result of an explosion, the cause of which is being investigated.

Lance Corporal Nicky Mason was born on 20 December 1981 and hailed from Aveley in Essex. He joined the Army in December 2001 and completed his training at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick, North Yorkshire. He was posted to 2 PARA in July 2002 and joined 12 Platoon, D Company. Within a year of joining the Battalion he applied to join the battalion's specialist reconnaissance platoon, the Patrols Platoon, and performed extremely well on the selection cadre successfully joining the Platoon in October 2003 ahead of his peer group. He completed the Regimental junior non-commissioned officers course in the summer of 2005 and was promoted to Lance Corporal shortly after in recognition of his qualities as a junior leader and an outstanding soldier. He had completed an operational tour of Northern Ireland as well as two tours of Iraq, this was his first operational tour of Afghanistan and he revelled in it; in the heat and hills surrounding Kajaki he excelled.

Exceptionally fit and a boxer of note, he represented both his Company and the Battalion in the Army semi finals earlier this year. He had a passion for Martial Arts and had successfully competed to a high standard in a range of disciplines. On returning from Operation HERRICK he had his sights set on attempting the Selection course to join the Special Reconnaissance Regiment, a natural progression for a man who was always seeking to test himself professionally and to excel. He was the archetypal paratrooper: tough, resilient and confident in his ability whilst remaining humble and an example to all with whom he worked. Lance Corporal Nicky Mason was universally well known and enjoyed the friendship and respect of all who knew him, he will be sorely missed.

PRIVATE JASON LEE RAWSTRON, 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, 12th September 2008

Private Jason Rawstron was 23 years old and was born in Clayton-Le-Moors, Lancashire and attended Morehead High School. He joined the Army in October 2005 and completed his training at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick North Yorkshire in July 2006. Upon completion of his training he moved directly to C (Bruneval) Company, 2 PARA where he was employed as a rifleman. He quickly stood out as a soldier of note and within a year of joining the Battalion he was put forward for and completed the Battalion Infantry Assault Engineer cadre in the summer of 2007. It is a mark of his professionalism and maturity that he passed

this course, usually reserved for more experienced soldiers, within such a short space of time. Once qualified as an Infantry Assault Engineer he rejoined C Company and his section was attached to 7 Platoon during pre deployment training and for his first operational tour in Afghanistan on Operation HERRICK 8.

He is remembered as a quiet man but a tower of strength and someone to whom the others in his platoon looked up to, with a quiet but authoritative air and a hint of mischief about him earning him the nickname 'Suspect'. His friends will remember him for his steadfast reliability, his broad smile and his magic daysack which always seemed to contain exactly what was needed in any situation. He leaves behind his mother, father, brother Graham and his girlfriend Michaela to whom he was devoted.

The soldier killed on Wednesday 10th September has been named as Warrant Officer Class 2 Gary O'Donnell GM of the Royal Logistics Corps.

From the MoD:

After almost 17 years of military service, WO2 O'Donnell, 40, died from injuries sustained from an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in Musa Qal'eh, Helmand province. At the time, he was commanding an Improvised Explosive Device Disposal (IEDD) team within the Joint Force EOD Group who were dealing with a confirmed IED that had been detected by a high risk search team. Their task was to clear a route in a vulnerable area for 5 SCOTS Battlegroup, in and around the Western side of Musa Qal'eh. Sadly, WO2 O'Donnell died as a result of the explosion.

WO2 Gary 'Gaz' O'Donnell GM

WO2 Gary 'Gaz' O'Donnell, from Edinburgh, began his career in 1992 in the Ammunition Technical Trade and was posted to 3 Base Ammunition Depot Bracht in the British Army of the Rhine. He then undertook a further 3 tours at Ammunition Depots before being posted to 11 EOD Regiment RLC as a Joint Service IEDD No 1 Operator. Upon entering 11 EOD Regiment RLC as a Sergeant, he was quickly identified as a technician with significant ability and an abundance of potential. Thereafter he proved his value as an outstanding technician and soldier, undertaking tours in Sierra Leone, Iraq, as well as two tours of both Northern Ireland and Afghanistan, in both the IEDD and Weapons Intelligence Specialist roles. He was the epitome of what the Ammunition Technician Trade stands for with his exemplary service, exceptional high standards and a humbling degree of courage and bravery. This was demonstrated by his award for bravery and courage in Iraq where he was awarded the George Medal for his work as an IEDD operator with the Joint Force EOD Group in 2006.

WO2 O'Donnell had spent the last 8 years in the RLC EOD community. The Ammunition Technician trade and the Joint Force EOD Group is an extremely select and intimate group of individuals who have, as in most small units, an exceptionally close bond. Given the calibre of WO2 O'Donnell his loss will be significantly felt by all who knew him.

WO2 O'Donnell leaves behind his wife, Toni, their children, Aiden, 8, and Ben, 9 weeks, as well as his children from a previous marriage, Dylan, 16, and Kayleigh, 14.

Toni, wife of WO2 O'Donnell, said:

"Gary was living the dream and we are all very proud of who he was and he will be missed greatly."

Defence Secretary Des Brown said:

"I was deeply saddened to hear of the untimely death of Warrant Officer Class 2 Gary O'Donnell. For more than 16 years he worked as an Ammunition Technical Officer, selflessly putting his own life at risk to save the lives of others. I have no doubt that in his extraordinary career he was personally responsible for saving thousands of the family, friends and comrades of others from the anguish that is currently being felt by his own. My thoughts are with them at this extremely difficult time."

The Ministry of Defence has confirmed that a soldier from 1st Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment has been killed today, Thursday 4th September 2008, in southern Afghanistan.

Early this morning whilst conducting a routine foot patrol near Sangin District Centre, a soldier was involved in an explosion which is believed to be caused by an Improvised Explosive Device. Despite the best medical efforts at the scene, the soldier died as a result of his wounds.

Further information will be posted when released by the MoD

This comes just a day after the news broke that Corporal Tomos Stringer, 23, from Gwynedd, was visiting a wounded friend in Woking, Surrey when he was turned away by the Metro Hotel under a "no soldiers" policy, and had to spend the night in his car. The hotel has now apologised, but reports a number of abusive phone calls.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/7598523.stm>