

Soldier killed in Helmand named

The first British soldier to be killed in action in the Helmand province of Afghanistan has been named as Captain Jim Philippson.



Captain Jim Philippson was killed by Taleban fighters in Afghanistan

The 29-year-old from St Albans, in Hertfordshire, served with 7 Parachute Regiment Royal Horse Artillery.

Two other soldiers were also injured in the incident on Sunday.

Defence Secretary Des Browne, who is in Afghanistan, said morale was "still very high" among troops despite their colleague's death.

Mr Browne also said Afghanistan should not be allowed to return to a "haven for terrorism".

The defence secretary sent his sympathies to Capt Philippson's family, calling it "great sorrow".

Capt Philippson's father, Anthony, paid tribute to his "wonderful and brave" son.

Speaking from his home in Hertfordshire, Mr Philippson said his son had loved being in the Army.

"It's what he lived for. It's our only consolation.

"He was killed doing exactly what he wanted to do. He could never have worked behind a desk."

The Ministry of Defence said: "Our thoughts and sympathies are with families and friends at this difficult time."

Capt Philippson completed his education at Plymouth University, joined the Army in January 2001 and, after his course at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, was commissioned into the Royal Artillery later that year.

'Genuine character'

A Ministry of Defence statement said that following a six-month deployment to the Falkland Islands, he joined his regiment in February 2006 as it prepared for deployment to Afghanistan.

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It described Capt Philippon as a "genuine character who was full of life and humour yet with a highly committed edge".

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"He will be remembered as a gifted, considerate and popular officer who would always go that extra mile for his soldiers and his friends," it said.

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"He will be sadly missed by everyone that that knew him."

“ We're here in Afghanistan determined to make this a safer place for the people of Afghanistan to live in ”

Some 3,300 British troops are in the southern province as part of a Nato-led peacekeeping force.

Des Browne, defence minister

Mr Browne said his thoughts were with the family and friends of those still stationed in Afghanistan.

He said: "Along with about 40 other countries, we're here in Afghanistan determined to make this a safer place for the people of Afghanistan to live in."

'Haven for terrorism'

Mr Browne also said the country should not be allowed to return to being a place of refuge for terrorists.

"We must achieve our objective of making this a better country not only for the Afghan people, but also we mustn't allow it to become a haven for terrorism again," he said.

"There are people out there after three decades of conflict who are determined to stop us doing that; they'll deploy any violence that they can to stop us doing that but they can't be allowed to succeed."

The Ministry of Defence said a mobile patrol was engaged in a fire fight in Sangeen, a small town taken from Taleban control earlier this year by Afghan security forces backed by US air power.

British Apache helicopter gunships were called in to support the troops and Afghan sources said several Taleban soldiers were killed in the fighting.

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