

## Troops' withdrawal brings relief & sadness

Posted by Lucy Aldridge - 2010/09/24 16:18

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Troops' withdrawal brings both relief and sadness

11:50am Friday 24th September 2010

BRITISH troops withdrew from Afghanistan's most deadly district this week provoking both relief and anger from a mother whose son died fighting to secure the area.

The Union Flag at Sangin, Helmand Province, was lowered and replaced with the Stars and Stripes on Monday (September 20) as US Marines formally took control after four hard years and the deaths of more than 100 British soldiers in the region.

The youngest of these, William Aldridge from Bredenbury, was killed by an improvised explosive device (IED) as he tended comrades maimed by an earlier blast, in July 2009.

William, serving with the 2nd Battalion the Rifles from a forward operating base in the town of Wishtan, was just 43 days past his 18th birthday and was one of five soldiers killed that day.

His mother, Lucy Aldridge, wanted to know why lessons had not been learnt from previous incidents that might have saved her son's life.

She said: "I think there was not a large enough presence of British troops in that area. They were pretty much left out on a limb and did not have an awful lot of back-up.

"I would question the usefulness of foot patrols. They did not have bomb disposal experts attached to them so if they did find an IED they could not diffuse it themselves.

"There were so many more lessons that should have been learnt and so many safety measures that should have been put in place to protect our forces on the ground."

Mrs Aldridge, who still lives in Bredenbury with her remaining two sons, has been in regular contact with the parents and families of serving and fallen soldiers since her son's death 14-months ago.

She described the British hand-over to the US as "double-edged" - provoking emotions of both sadness and relief.

"I'm grateful that one of the most dangerous areas will no longer have a large quantity of British troops because we have taken very heavy losses in that area.

"It also causes great sadness to me. They fought extremely hard to protect, essentially as I understand it, very low level occupancy areas. Especially Wishtan, it was pretty much a ghost town."

Mrs Aldridge, who will take part in a charity skydive this weekend in aid of a foundation set up in William's name, said she did not regret that her son had chosen to serve in the armed forces.

"I'm still extremely proud of him, his achievements and the fact that he chose to be a soldier," she added. "I do regret that he was not given the best level of security and protection that could have been provided for him."

[http://www.williamaldridgefoundation.org.uk/images/fbfiles/images/ledbury\\_reporter.gif](http://www.williamaldridgefoundation.org.uk/images/fbfiles/images/ledbury_reporter.gif)

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**Re: Troops' withdrawal brings relief & sadness**

Posted by Steve Heather - 2010/09/24 16:37

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Respect Mrs Aldridge

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