

300 Death Toll now exceeded!

Posted by Lucy Aldridge - 2010/06/22 23:41

The death toll in Afghanistan now stands at 302, reached within less than 24hrs of the following news report

A mother's tale, as Britain marks grim Afghan milestone

An AFP news report 22.06.10

Sitting in the sun in her garden in this town in central England, Lucy Aldridge seems a long way from the dust of Sangin.

Yet, as Britain passed the grim milestone of its 300th military death in Afghanistan this week, the memories of the young son she calls her hero are always with her.

Killed last summer just six weeks after he turned 18, Rifleman William Aldridge was the youngest British soldier to have died in the conflict since the US-led invasion in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

"He deployed three days after his eighteenth birthday and was actually fiercely proud of being one of the youngest serving in Helmand, if not the youngest," she told AFP.

"He was a career soldier -- he knew where he wanted to go. He had aspirations to join the SAS (Special Air Service) and was determined to get there and I believe he would have done.

"I was at home with my youngest child who was four when two people dressed in plain clothes -- a gentleman and a lady -- knocked at the door.

"Before they even showed their military ID I knew why they'd come."

Aldridge died near Sangin in a series of Taliban bombs that killed four other soldiers from 2nd Battalion The Rifles as he tried to save his colleagues.

Nearly a year on, his mother wonders just how much longer the conflict can go on.

"I'm just absolutely devastated that there is now this 300 milestone and that another young man has earned himself a label. My thoughts are completely with his family and his comrades," she said.

Aldridge, from the village of Bromyard in Herefordshire in the English Midlands, had wanted to be in the army from a very young age.

As the eldest of three brothers, he helped his mother with family life as a single parent.

Before he left for Afghanistan, he reassured her, telling her not to worry if she ever heard on the news that a soldier had died.

"He was an extremely selfless young man. He said he didn't want me sitting at home watching the television and worrying about him," she said.

Lucy Aldridge's story is, unfortunately, an increasingly familiar one for British military families.

On Tuesday the Ministry of Defence (MoD) announced the 301st military death in Afghanistan since the conflict began in 2001, a day after the grim milestone of 300 was reached.

The death toll in Afghanistan has risen steadily since 2006 and the number of fatalities surged in 2009, when 108 troops died, many killed by makeshift bombs. The death toll reached 200 on August 15 last year.

Britain has around 9,500 troops in Afghanistan, making it the second largest contributor after the United States to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force.

Its troops are based in the troubled southern Helmand province, battling Taliban insurgents and training local security forces.

Aldridge's mother has set up a foundation in her son's name, with a website, www.williamaldridgefoundation.org.uk.

The aim is to provide information and support for other military families whose loved ones are injured or killed.

"Like many families who lose their loved ones, you need something positive to grasp hold of.

"I felt compelled to do more so we've set up the foundation which assists serving armed forces, veterans, injured service personnel and bereaved families.

"Sadly, we bereaved families are now becoming one big family of our own."

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Please take the time to view the link below:

<http://youtu.be/S-arjhg3iek>

http://www.williamaldridgefoundation.org.uk/images/fbfiles/images/afp_logo_1.jpg

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