

MILITARY CROSS

WARRANT OFFICER CLASS 2 GAVIN CHARLES KIMBERLIN THE MERCIAN REGIMENT

Warrant Officer Class 2 Kimberlin deployed on Op HERRICK 6 as the Liaison Officer (LO) to the Czech Special Operations Group (SOG) who were operating under command 2 MERCIAN, Battle Group (Centre) (BG(C) in Helmand Province. The SOG is a Czech Special Forces platoon-sized unit providing 2 strike teams specializing in raids and strike operations, sniper fires and long range reconnaissance. His duties involved co-ordinating SOG support for battle-group offensive operations, and synchronizing SOG independent strike operations that supported BG(C)'s scheme of manoeuvre. Importantly, Kimberlain deployed on all their missions, long or short, often into areas held in strength by the enemy, and many miles away from the support of other coalition forces.

During the period 6 – 24 July 2007, the SOG was in reserve as the battle-group conducted Operation LEG TUFAAN, a deliberate battle-group attack on the villages of Rahim Kalay and Adin Zai. These villages lie at the heart of enemy territory in the Upper Gereshk Valley (UGV). The UGV is an exceptionally challenging operating environment characterized by dense vegetation, limited mobility and fierce combat against a deadly enemy at very short distances. Kimberlin was at the very centre of the intense fighting that followed. The SOG deployed frequently to raid compounds and seize key terrain in daring strikes in and among Taliban infested positions. Time and again, Kimberlain was at the front of the charge. He led the SOG forward, killing many enemy and completing the mission. He set a personal example and established an unbreakable bond of trust between himself and the Czech Special Forces soldiers; they hold him in especially high regard.

On 2 July, the Czech snipers moved into an over-watch position above Shurakain, a Taliban dominated village in the UGV. Almost immediately they came under sustained, heavy and accurate fire from 107mm rockets, mortars, Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs) and Heavy Machine Guns (HMGs). The SOG returned fire and attempted to co-ordinate Close Air Support to engage the enemy in depth. Again Kimberlin was at the fore and killed 3 enemy fighters with his rifle. As he co-ordinated SOG manoeuvre, an RPG exploded by his side. He was unhurt, but a Czech was seriously wounded. Simultaneously the SOG HMG stopped firing and the enemy were attempting to encircle the SOG with flanking parties. The initiative was now firmly with the enemy, but Kimberlin recognized and seized the moment. He ran forward, alone, drawing the enemy fire, engaging enemy fire points as he ran and killed another 2 enemy fighters. While continuing to fire his weapon at another 2 enemy positions, he called forward a support vehicle to screen the casualty. Only when the casualty had been stabilised and moved out of the killing area did Kimberlin break contact with the enemy. He withdrew, throwing grenades as he moved, and killed 2 enemy machine gunners. He was the last man off the position.

Kimberlin's unswerving and sustained courage throughout his attachment to the SOG was an inspiration not only to the SOG but to the entire battle-group; stories of his bravery are legion. The SOG personnel revered him and responded readily to his leadership. His performance was beyond reproach. For his outstanding bravery and leadership, he deserves the highest recognition.

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