

British soldier killed in helicopter crash

By Natalie Paris and agencies

A British soldier was among seven people killed when a Chinook helicopter crashed last night in southern Afghanistan, Nato said.

The helicopter was apparently shot down in Afghanistan's most volatile province, with the Taliban claiming responsibility for the attack.

The crash killed five crew members and two military passengers, five of whom were Americans and one Canadian.

Nato's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said other troops rushing to the scene were ambushed and were forced to call in air support.

It said the cause of the crash was "being determined by military officials".

The twin-rotored CH-47 Chinook helicopter crashed yesterday evening in the Kajaki district of Helmand, ISAF said.

Initial reports suggested the helicopter was hit with a rocket-propelled grenade.

Today's news follows the death of another British, Corporal Darren Bonner, who was killed in the Helmand Province on Monday when an explosion hit a British convoy in the Gereshk region.

Violence has surged in recent months in Afghanistan after the traditional winter lull. Last year's fighting was the bloodiest since the US-led overthrow of the Taliban in 2001 and the militants have vowed to step up their campaign against foreign forces.

The guerrillas are largely active in southern and eastern areas where more than 5,000 people have been killed in the past 16 months.

The violence is rising despite the presence of nearly 50,000 foreign troops led by Nato and the US military as well as about 100,000 Afghan security forces.



Chinooks are used to transport troops and supplies

Missing girl kidnapped in Portugal

05/05/2007

By Vasco Celio

PORTIMAO, Portugal (Reuters) - A British girl who disappeared from her bed in a Portuguese beach resort while her parents dined nearby was kidnapped, police said on Saturday.

Police believe three-year-old Madeleine McCann is still alive and have a drawing of a suspect based on evidence from witnesses, said Guilhermino Encarnacao, head of the judicial police in the Faro area of the Algarve.

He would give no further information about the suspect other than saying there was "all the evidence to show it was a kidnapping" and other possibilities had been ruled out.



He said up to 150 officers were searching for the girl, who was reported missing on Thursday. Friends of the McCann family had insisted she was abducted because there was evidence of a forced entry into the villa where the family was staying.

Madeleine McCann's parents, who were on holiday in the Algarve with friends, made an emotional appeal late on Friday for their daughter to be let go.

"Words cannot describe the anguish and despair that we are feeling," Gerry McCann said in a televised statement from the Algarve resort, flanked by his wife Kate.

"Please, if you have Madeleine, let her come home to her Mummy, Daddy, brother and sister."

The McCanns had put her to bed and were dining 50 metres (yards) away with friends when she vanished on Thursday night from the apartment where they were staying.

She was with her twin brother and sister, who were asleep when the parents returned and found her missing.

Police with sniffer dogs are searching the resort village with a population of about 1,000. They have also alerted all airports in Portugal and neighbouring Spain. Britain's ambassador to Portugal has travelled there to help the family.

Shannon Matthews found alive 'inside divan bed'

- guardian.co.uk, Friday 14 March 2008

Shannon Matthews, the schoolgirl who disappeared more than three weeks ago, was found alive today in a flat about a mile from her home in West Yorkshire.

Police found Shannon "concealed in the base of a divan bed" after they broke into the flat in Batley Carr, an area of Dewsbury, at about 12.30pm.

A 39-year-old man was arrested at the scene on suspicion of abduction and is currently in custody, a West Yorkshire police statement



Shannon Matthews. Photograph: West Yorkshire police/Reuters

said. Guardian.co.uk understands that the man is a member of Shannon's extended family.

The discovery of Shannon, who disappeared on her way home from a school swimming trip in Dewsbury on February 19, followed increasing fears for her safety by both police and Shannon's family.

It is extremely rare for abducted children to be recovered alive if they are not found very soon after they are snatched.

Shannon was found after police broke into the flat in Lidgate Gardens, a neighbour who witnessed the operation told the Press Association.

Earlier this week, Shannon's mother said she believed her daughter was snatched by someone close to the family. Asked if she thought someone she knew was responsible, she told the BBC: "It seems that way because there's no trace of her at all. There's no trace of her swimming costume, her towel or anything."

As well as 300 local officers, the hunt included more than half of the UK's specialist body search dogs. Among addresses searched by the dogs were those of registered sex offenders living in the local area.

Stolen car crash tragedy kills two

By ALASTAIR TAYLOR
Published: 28 Aug 2009
The Sun

TWO women were killed when their car was hit by a stolen Mercedes being chased by cops.

Janet Herd, 48, and Linda Tansley, 46, were on their way home after a meal out.

The red Merc CLK 200 hurtled over a hill and slammed into the back of their blue Ford Fiesta near traffic lights.

Two 22-year-old men and three girls - two aged 15 and one of 19 - escaped from the wreckage of the Mercedes with cuts and bruises.

They were arrested and quizzed by cops yesterday after hospital treatment.

Police are understood to have been alerted to the stolen Mercedes when it triggered an alarm after passing a number plate recognition camera.

A cop in a patrol car spotted the distinctive plate - R3V UP - as the nicked motor sped through Apperley Bridge, Bradford, West Yorks.

The police car followed it for 75 seconds and was about 100 yards behind when the

Merc is believed to have swerved the wrong side of a traffic island and crashed into the Fiesta as it emerged from a side road at 11.15pm on Wednesday.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission said it would not investigate the accident.

A relative of one victim said at the scene: "It's always the same. Joyriders get away scot-free while innocent people are killed."

Tragic Linda was married with twins

who turned 15 on August 24. Janet leaves two daughters.



Distinctive ... car licence plate. Ross Parry



Smashed ... front of Merc. Ross Parry

Expert dies on last day in war zone

2/11/2009

A senior British explosives expert has been killed while trying to defuse a bomb on the last day of his tour in Afghanistan.

Staff Sergeant Olaf Schmid, 30, of the Royal Logistic Corps, died near Sangin in central Helmand Province on Saturday.

His wife, Christina Schmid, described him as her "best friend and soulmate" and said she took comfort knowing he had saved "countless lives".

Sgt Schmid, who was known as Oz, made 64 improvised explosive devices (IEDs) safe during his five months in Afghanistan as an ammunition technician.

As well as taking part in Operation Panther's Claw, a major assault on a Taliban stronghold, he found 31 IEDs during a single operation to clear a road near Sangin in August.

One of his senior officers described him as a "legendary figure" while another said he was "better than the best of the best".

Lieutenant Colonel Rob Thomson, commanding officer of 2 Rifles Battle Group, which was based around Sangin this summer, said: "Sgt Oz Schmid was simply the bravest and most courageous man I have ever met. Under relentless IED and small arms attacks he stood taller than the tallest."

He added: "He saved lives in 2 Rifles time after time and for that he will retain a very special place in every heart of every rifleman in our extraordinary battle group. Superlatives do not do the man justice."

Paying emotional tribute, Sgt Schmid's wife said: "Oz was a phenomenal husband and loving father who was cruelly murdered on his last day of a relentless five-month tour. "He was my best friend and soulmate. The pain of losing him is overwhelming. I take comfort knowing he saved countless lives with his hard work. I am so proud of him."

Sgt Schmid was born in Truro, Cornwall, and lived with his wife and five-year-old stepson Laird in Winchester, Hampshire.

Swine flu: Mum dies after operation to save her baby

By Emily Cook 3/11/2009

A young mum suffering from swine flu has died 18 days after an op to save her baby.

Susan Ford, 31, was 35 weeks pregnant when admitted to hospital with severe flu-like symptoms.

She had an emergency caesarean section and daughter Poppy was born healthy – but Susan was put on a ventilator in intensive care.

Doctors confirmed she had swine flu and gave her Tamiflu, but she developed severe pneumonia. She died in Salford Royal Hospital, Greater Manchester, at 4.30am on Saturday.

Yesterday, mum Wynne said: “The staff did everything they could. I can’t fault them.” But the family called for more specialist machines in hospitals to help swine flu victims.

Extra-Corporeal Membrane Oxygenation units, which circulate blood outside the body and add oxygen, have already saved lives.

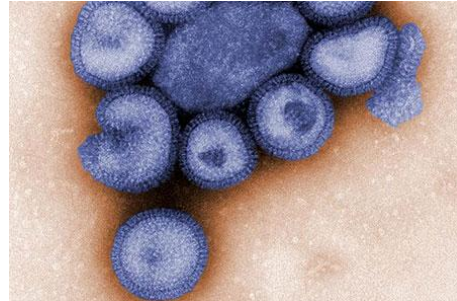
A study found most swine flu victims with respiratory failure survive if they get ECMO treatment. But there is only one adult unit in England – at the Glenfield Hospital in Leicester. Wynne said: “We don’t know if Susan would have survived if she had access, but she would’ve had a better chance. Those machines should be in every big city hospital.”

Susan’s uncle Robin Donnelly-Gallagher, 53, said: “It’s a scandal no ECMO machines are available.”

John Freeman, 26, was engaged to Susan, of Leigh, Lancs. He added: “I don’t know if one of the machines would have helped but the question about them needs to be answered.”

Dr Julie Higgins, NHS Salford’s director of public health, said: “Our experience is that pregnant women who are getting swine flu are only developing mild symptoms.”

There were an estimated 78,000 new cases of swine flu in the UK last week, up from 53,000. The death toll last week stood at 137.



Thief makes his escape in electric wheelchair

In Daily Mirror
By Stephen White
30/09/2009

A wheelchair-user who stole¹ some clothes yesterday tried to flee² shop staff³ in an electric invalid buggy.

Steven Ribchester, 40, refused to stop when he was challenged yesterday morning by Marks & Spencer staff after rolling up clothing and leaving without paying.

They called police at about 10.30 a.m. who caught up with⁴ him "speeding" along the pavement at 8mph in his electric wheelchair with M&S security running at his side.

An officer had to lift⁵ it off the ground for another to switch it off to stop him.

Ribchester, 40, of no fixed address, pleaded⁶ guilty to stealing clothes worth £39.

Blackburn magistrates fined⁷ him £90, which was set against time spent in custody.

Eddie Harrison, prosecuting, said Ribchester was caught on CCTV stealing the goods from the Marks & Spencer shop in Preston Road, near the Corporation Park in Blackburn.

He added: "When staff tried to detain him he refused to stop and they said he 'made off⁸ at speed' in his wheelchair.

"They contacted police through the town centre radio link and officers in a marked police car caught up."

Clare Knight, defending, said Ribchester had been involved in an accident riding his bike 20 years ago. He was in a coma for three months and his mobility and memory were affected. "He is a heavy drinker and has been ever since the accident," she said. "He has been homeless for two months and the clothes he stole were to wear."



¹ To steal → to rob

² To flee → to run away

³ Staff → employees; personnel; workers

⁴ To catch up with → go faster in order to get to someone or something, at the same time or at the same place

⁵ To lift → raise; elevate

⁶ To plead → declare; consider

⁷ To fine → to make someone pay a certain amount of money

⁸ To make off → to depart