



ANNUAL ENGINEER AND LOGISTIC STAFF CORPS (ELSC) PRIZE 2010
STAFF SERGEANT (MPF) DARREN WINTER (24879151) ROYAL ENGINEERS
64 HEADQUARTERS AND SUPPORT SQUADRON, 28 ENGINEER REGIMENT

Staff Sergeant Winter was the Regimental Military Plant Foreman for 28 Engineer Regimental Group deployed in Afghanistan, on Operatio HERRICK 11, from Sep 2009 to March 2010. On Operations he was responsible for the design and supervision of all route improvements in Central Helmand, including most notably the construction of Route TRIDENT in the Babaji Area of operations.

Completing the Military Plant Foreman (MPF) Course in 2008, SSgt Winter was assigned to 64 Headquarters and Support Squadron in time to conduct the full gambit of pre-deployment training. This included the design and construction of the Headquarters 1 (UK) Division car park, the introduction and training of the Regiment's Plant Operators on the in-theatre protected plant and the construction of a road on Salisbury Plain Training Area as part of the Mission Rehearsal Exercise (MRX). It was at this time that he first used 'Neoweb' and noticed that its properties could be of benefit in Afghanistan. As the only MPF deployed with the Regiment on Op HERRICK 11 he soon became indispensable and his extensive knowledge of plant and horizontal construction were in great demand, especially during the follow up to Operation PANTHER'S CLAW. Hence, he was tasked with the construction of a major road that linked the main patrol bases, thus enabling the Task Force to provide security throughout the Region. He immediately deployed forward to the heart of Babaji with a small team to identify and conduct a reconnaissance by foot of the whole of the 8 km route. With a major Improvised Explosive Device (IED) threat and coming under fire he completed the reconnaissance and returned to Camp Bastion to design the road.

Due to insurgent activity the cost of aggregate in Helmand is disproportionately high and varies from \$250 - \$650/m³, it was therefore crucial that its use should be minimised. SSgt Winter used 'Neoweb' to contain locally won fill material (at zero cost) so that costly aggregate was only required to produce a wearing surface. This allowed for a reduction in the quantity of aggregate required to a quarter of that of a normal unbound aggregate road. On his reconnaissance he had identified that the major obstacle along the route was the crossing of the 300m wide Suf Mandah Wadi, which includes two main irrigation canals feeding the agricultural irrigation system. Again he utilised 'Neoweb' to produce a design for a 'floating road' and conventional box culverts were used to maintain the flow capacity in the major irrigation channels.

The road construction commenced in December 2009 and SSgt Winter was there throughout, tirelessly supervising the Military Construction Force to ensure that the road proceeded on time and within budget. Often under fire from small arms and Rocket Propelled Grenades, he ensured that the road was successfully completed in early March 2010 at a cost of £3.5M, £1.5M under budget. The first resupply convoy drove the route on the 10th March 2010, unhindered by insurgents or IEDs, in just 30 minutes. A similar operation of this scale had been attempted by International Security Assistance Force in October 2009 and had taken over two days and resulted in 2 British Servicemen being killed and 17 injured, when the vehicles they were travelling in hit IEDs.

Throughout Op HERRICK 11, SSgt Winter has consistently worked at a level and tempo above and beyond that that would be expected of a SSgt. His professionalism, diligence and attention to detail have taken military engineering to a new level in Afghanistan, putting the Royal Engineers at the forefront of operational engineering. For his outstanding contribution SSgt Winter is awarded the Engineer and Logistic Staff Corps Prize.