

# Afghanistan Crisis Response Unit and NZSAS involvement in attack on British Council Building, Kabul

19 August 2011

**Suicide bombers and gunmen attacked the offices of the British Council – a British cultural organisation – in Kabul, Afghanistan, on 19 August.**

At least two suicide bombers blew themselves up at about 5.30am local time to gain access for their compatriots to the fortified compound.

The explosions – at least one of which was a car-borne bomb – shattered windows hundreds of metres from the scene.

The few people inside the compound at the time secured themselves in a safe-room and rode out the attack until they were rescued, shaken but unhurt, several hours later.

Afghan and ISAF forces were already on alert in the city because 19 August was the 92<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Afghanistan's independence from British rule – and so they were ready to react quickly to the attack.

Fierce gunfights lasted more than eight hours before the compound was eventually secured and those trapped inside were accounted for.

Corporal Doug Grant, NZSAS, was among those who first reacted to the incident.

However, the Afghan Crisis Response Unit was tasked with the actual assault on the compound.

Quite some time later, when it became obvious how fortified and hardened the compound was, the NZSAS was tasked with a mission to rescue the civilians known to be still inside the main building, while the CSU concentrated on seeking out and destroying the insurgents.

This decision fell to the local commander on site, which, because of the Kiwi's mentoring relationship with the CSU, was an Afghan.

The Kiwis were split into two groups. The first was the strike team that was to enter the building to affect the actual rescue and the other was an overwatch group that was tasked to maintain situational awareness and to lay down covering fire as required.

Corporal Grant was initially a member of the strike team tasked with the rescue.

The strike team gathered close to the front of the building – as indicated by the blue square on the aerial photograph – in preparation for their entry.

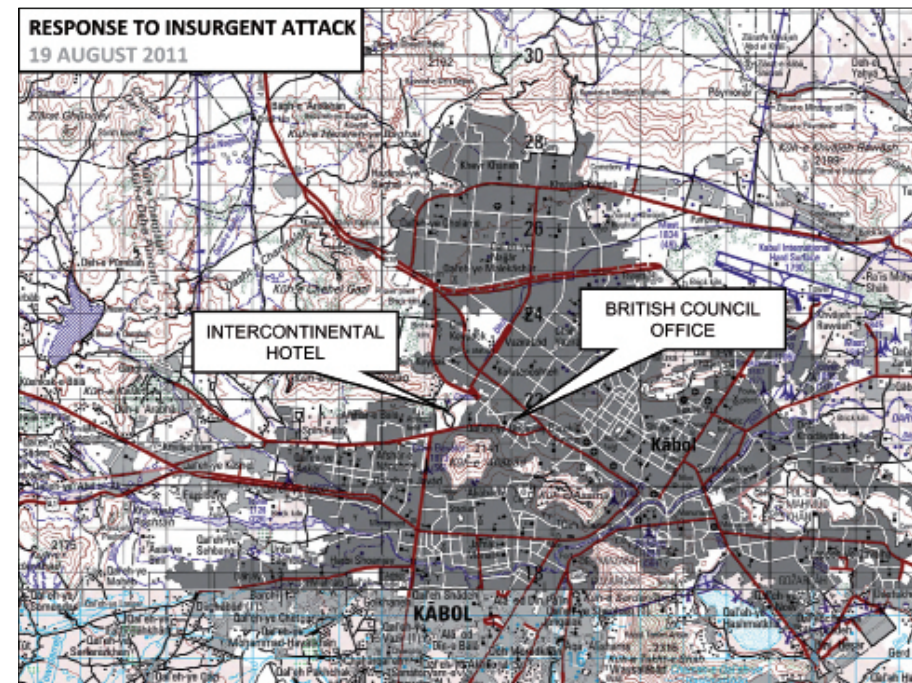
The overwatch group were in elevated positions in the rear corner of the compound – indicated in the first picture below.

Corporal Grant, initially located with the strike group at the front of the building, moved to an elevated overwatch position at the rear by climbing a ladder (seen in the second image below) to a first-floor balcony, where he was eventually fired upon and hit.

He was struck by, what New Zealand's Chief of Defence Force Lieutenant General Rhys Jones says was a 7.62mm round from either a rifle or a light machinegun (and not a .50cal as had been speculated about in New Zealand media).

"The bullet went through the arm hole of his body armour, pierced his heart and exited through the other side of his body," Lieutenant General Jones said.

"He probably never would have recovered from the injuries. We know now they were terminal."



Despite the severity of his wounds however, every effort was made to save Corporal Grant's life. It is believed he still had a pulse when evacuated from the scene (via the hole in the wall indicated in the photo). He lost his pulse at some stage between the shooting scene and the helicopter, but was resuscitated. The Kiwi medics working to save him reported being certain he had a pulse when they put him on the evacuation helicopter.

However, AME personnel on the helicopter discontinued resuscitation efforts in transit, declaring that the Kiwi warrior was indeed dead before reaching hospital.

One of the first medics to assist Corporal Grant was Lance Corporal Leon Smith, a highly qualified and experienced Advanced Medic – who was himself tragically killed in action on another operation just over a month later.

All four gunmen involved in the attack (plus at least two suicide bombers) were eventually killed and all those trapped inside (three British civilians and two Gurka security guards) were rescued unharmed.

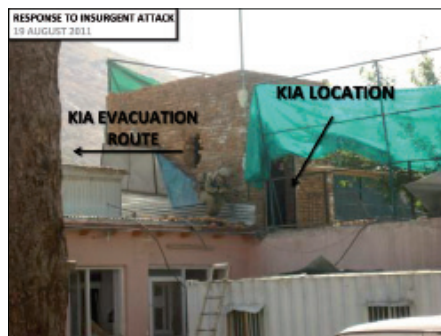
One CSU officer was killed and another seriously wounded.

## About the British Council

The British Council is an international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations, partially funded by the British government. It works in more than 100 countries in arts, education and English language training and in 2010/11 engaged face-to-face with more than 30 million people.

The council has 6800 staff worldwide and an annual turnover in the last financial year of £693million, of which £190million was delivered by British tax-payers through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The balance was generated through trading activities such as fees for English language teaching.

For more information, visit [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)



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# Afghanistan Crisis Response Unit Search and Arrest Operation, Wardak Province, Afghanistan

28 September 2011

**Task:** High-risk arrest in order to disrupt an insurgent operation targeting Kabul.

**Intent:** Pre-empt key insurgent leadership through the disruption of insurgent movement and supply within Kabul and its surrounding provinces.

**Purpose:** Execute a judicially authorised search and arrest warrant on compounds of interest that are suspected to host suicide bombers. Additionally, to arrest a named individual who is suspected of being a suicide bomber preparing to target Kabul.

**Intelligence:** Time-sensitive reporting indicating that as well as the named individual, weapons and suicide vests are located within the compound.

**Location:** Wardak Province approx 35km south-west of Kabul

- This operation was directed by the Counter Terrorism Police (CTP) branch of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and executed by the Crisis Response Unit (CRU). The operation was authorised by an Afghan search and arrest warrant and then planned and executed by the CRU with mentorship and support from the NZSAS. The operation was carried out in response to time-sensitive information being obtained about a compound housing a suicide bomber. It was Afghan led and an Afghan legal team accompanied the assault force onto the target. Preparation for the operation occurred over several days.
- During the emplacement of the cordon force, Lance Corporal Leon Smith, NZSAS, whilst assisting in the co-ordination of the cordon being placed, climbed up a ladder

and into a position to observe the compound. At this point he was involved in an exchange of fire with an insurgent firing from inside the compound and he received a gunshot wound to the head. The insurgent was a fighting-aged male. At this point, NZ forces moved to extract Lance Corporal Smith while the CRU made entry into and cleared the compound. They conducted a search and found the male insurgent involved in the shooting also with gunshot wounds to the head, and a young girl who was injured with a fragmentation wound to the stomach. Both casualties received immediate medical treatment. The CRU then moved to clear and search an adjoining compound.

- Simultaneously, the NZ forces in support conducted the evacuation of Lance Corporal Smith and continued to provide assistance to the CRU completing the assault, where required, although the clearance and search of the compounds was carried out by Afghan forces. Lance Corporal Smith was evacuated by helicopter to a nearby US base as quickly as possible. A second helicopter was used, once the compounds were secured, to evacuate the male insurgent and the young girl. The male insurgent died of his wounds, however, the young girl sustained only minor injuries and was expected to be released from hospital the same day.
- The deceased insurgent has since been confirmed as a person of interest in the warrant. In addition, a further insurgent who fired upon NZ forces was unharmed and arrested. He was also confirmed as a person of interest in the search and arrest warrant.

## Key timings:

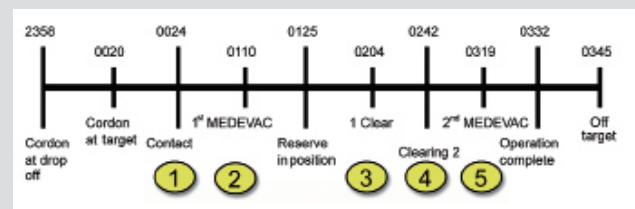
00:24 – Small-arms fire from within the compound – Lance Corporal Smith wounded

01:10 – NZSAS move to extract Lance Corporal Smith

02:04 – CRU use alternate entry point, and clear and secure the first compound

02:42 – Second compound cleared – insurgent casualty and young girl evacuated

03:19 – Casualty extraction route to helicopter landing zone



The detailed briefings and illustrations in regards to both NZSAS fatal operations were presented to media by Chief of Defence Lieutenant General Rhys Jones within days of the operations and long before the slain warriors were repatriated. CONTACT wishes Australian reports were nearly as forthcoming and detailed. That said, however, it appears that General Jones' hand was forced in Lance Corporal Smith's case when at least one NZ media outlet learned his identity and broadcast his name before Defence announced it and against the express wishes of the family. CONTACT condemns this insensitivity.

