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Honours and Awards

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

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18th March 2005

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the Victoria Cross to the under-mentioned:

ARMY

Victoria Cross

25136865 Private Johnson Gideon BEHARRY,
The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment

Private Beharry carried out two individual acts of great heroism by which he saved the lives of his comrades. Both were in direct face of the enemy, under intense fire, at great personal risk to himself (one leading to him sustaining very serious injuries). His valour is worthy of the highest recognition.

In the early hours of the 1st May 2004 Beharry's company was ordered to replenish an isolated Coalition Forces outpost located in the centre of the troubled city of Al Amarah. He was the driver of a platoon commander's Warrior armoured fighting vehicle. His platoon was the company's reserve force and was placed on immediate notice to move. As the main elements of his company were moving into the city to carry out the replenishment, they were re-tasked to fight through a series of enemy ambushes in order to extract a foot patrol that had become pinned down under sustained small arms and heavy machine gun fire and improvised explosive device and rocket-propelled grenade attack.

Beharry's platoon was tasked over the radio to come to the assistance of the remainder of the company, who were attempting to extract the isolated foot patrol. As his

platoon passed a roundabout, en route to the pinned-down patrol, they became aware that the road to the front was empty of all civilians and traffic—an indicator of a potential ambush ahead. The platoon commander ordered the vehicle to halt, so that he could assess the situation. The vehicle was then immediately hit by multiple rocket-propelled grenades. Eyewitnesses report that the vehicle was engulfed in a number of violent explosions, which physically rocked the 30-tonne Warrior.

As a result of this ferocious initial volley of fire, both the platoon commander and the vehicle's gunner were incapacitated by concussion and other wounds, and a number of the soldiers in the rear of the vehicle were also wounded. Due to damage sustained in the blast to the vehicle's radio systems, Beharry had no means of communication with either his turret crew or any of the other Warrior vehicles deployed around him. He did not know if his commander or crewmen were still alive, or how serious their injuries might be. In this confusing and dangerous situation, on his own initiative, he closed his driver's hatch and moved forward through the ambush position to try to establish some form of communications, halting just short of a barricade placed across the road.

The vehicle was hit again by sustained rocket-propelled grenade attack from insurgent fighters in the alleyways and on rooftops around his vehicle. Further damage to the Warrior from these explosions caused it to catch fire and fill rapidly with thick, noxious smoke. Beharry opened up his armoured hatch cover to clear his view and orientate himself to the situation. He still had no radio communications and was now acting on his own initiative, as the lead vehicle of a six Warrior convoy in an enemy-controlled area of the city at night. He assessed that his best course of action to save the lives of his crew was to push through, out of the ambush. He drove his Warrior directly through the barricade, not knowing if there were mines or improvised explosive devices placed