AFGHANISTAN, 21 May 2010 - A British soldier was killed in an explosion while on foot patrol in southern Afghanistan on Friday, the Ministry of Defence said.

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The Royal Marine was conducting "reassurance operations" with the Afghan army when he was hit by an explosion near the Almas patrol base in Sangin in Helmand province, an area of farmland and poppy and wheat fields. The soldier's next of kin have been informed. The death brings the number of British casualties in Afghanistan since international forces arrived in 2001 to 286, of which 252 were killed in hostile action. NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said earlier Friday a soldier was killed by an IED, or improvised explosive device, the Taliban insurgency's weapon of choice.

NATO did not disclose the soldier's nationality, in keeping with its policy of leaving the identification to the victim's country.

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