

THE NEW ZEALAND GALLANTRY MEDAL (N.Z.G.M.)

Denis Joachim WANIHI (D771492)

**Warrant Officer Class Two, Royal New Zealand Army Logistic Regiment
(The Duke of York's Own)**

Date of award: 1 October 2011

Citation

Warrant Officer Class Two Wanihi (then in acting rank) served in Afghanistan during 2010 in a supervisory role with a multi-national team dealing with and responding to incidents involving Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and Explosive Ordnance Devices (EOD) in Khowst and Patika provinces. He received, processed and shipped evidence for over 259 IED incidents that occurred in these provinces and participated in over 30 Focused Targeting Force operations, involving joint ventures with Special Operations Force units. As a site exploitation expert, he was responsible for the recovery of evidence that was used to implicate insurgents detained on operations. Part way through his tour, a United States colleague with whom he had been sharing responsibilities was withdrawn. By working extremely long hours, he managed to continue to provide the same standard of service that was expected. On 28 August 2010, he was with a team that responded to the discovery of a vehicle in which an IED had been placed for use in an attack against Forward Operating Base Salerno. The vehicle was located in a high-density housing area and posed an imminent threat to both Coalition Forces and the local population. He was involved in neutralising the threat. On the same day, he provided assistance to members of two other EOD teams to recover and dismantle 12 suicide vests worn by insurgents. The insurgents had been killed before they were able to detonate their vests. This operation provided useful intelligence on the working components of the vests and how best to deal with them in any future encounters. On 19 September 2010, he was the EOD vehicle gunner on a route clearance patrol to Bak District; this particular patrol often encounters small arms fire and indirect fire, as well as numerous IED finds or detonations. After 14 hours spent patrolling, his vehicle came to a sudden stop when an IED was spotted within two metres of the left rear of the vehicle. He quickly scanned for threat elements and reported the potential danger to the patrol commander, who then made the decision to discontinue the patrol and to return to Forward Operating Base Salerno.

Warrant Officer Class Two Wanihi as a member of the Counter-IED team, 717th EOD Company, carried out his duties in a high threat environment. Many of the IEDs he encountered were notoriously volatile and he was exposed to stressful and dangerous situations on a regular basis.