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FREE STUFF . . . win a year's supply of beer (Page 17), Dan Collins's anthology of heroism, *In Foreign Fields* (Page 65) and a copy of *Dog The Bounty Hunter: The Best of Season One* DVD (Page 78)



Cover picture (left): Genetic blueprint of Army life – Deploying troops are urged to provide a DNA sample. See Pages 26-27 Artwork: Chris Sell

Background image: Hi-tech healthcare – Maj Nick Carr, OC of 201 Field Hospital's Emergency Department at Camp Bastion, Helmand province. See Pages 19-21 Picture: Graeme Main





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SOLDIER - Magazine of the British Army



"I note your disappointment in failing to spot the suspect concerned, Frauleins . . . however our DNA matching system does not extend to identifying the father of your child."

● A bit in the bank – Pages 26-27

Medical miracles on multiple fronts

THE final act of my footballing career came six weeks ago and was as humiliating as it was painful.

The score was locked at 0-0 in a tense cup tie when I lunged to block a shot and my knee cap journeyed eastwards, tearing collateral ligaments and cartilage before coming to an unsightly rest on the side of my leg.

Despite the involuntary retching of some players, my dispatch to hospital and our empty subs' bench, the referee refused to abandon the match and my teammates were forced to battle on. They did so valiantly, scoring four unanswered goals to prove beyond all doubt that the beautiful game (and the shins of strikers everywhere) will not mourn my loss.

I, however, was not allowed to wallow in self-pity. On arrival at the Royal Surrey County Hospital in Guildford, the familiar sight of a Combat 95 uniform materialised from a gas and air-induced haze to engage in some typically robust military banter.

As well as lifting my spirits, that verbal sparring session served as a personal reminder that the Army's ranks of doctors, nurses, surgeons and physiotherapists do not only perform their medical miracles in the dust and heat of Iraq and Afghanistan.

As well as delivering the cutting-edge care that has ensured the survival rate of UK

FIRST SIGHT

forces is better than in any previous conflict (see Page 11), RAMC and QARANC personnel are also working wonders on the home front.

Although they patrol the operating theatres and wards of NHS hospitals to keep their skills scalpel sharp in readiness for front line action (see Pages 19-23), their expertise has an immeasurable impact on the lives of those they treat on civvy street.

A close friend recently required major surgery to combat the Crohn's disease which had laid siege to his bowel and the man called in to command the operation befittingly spends most of his time dressed for battle. The "good colonel" removed a 10½-inch section of the patient's small bowel, his appendix and – much to my amusement – his belly button (where's he going to keep his fluff now?), and in doing so gifted a quality of life he had long given up on.

Pain-free for the first time in seven years, my friend is just one of many members of the British public who can vouch for the professionalism and precision of the Army's field hospital heroes. – *Editor* ■

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Picture: Cpl Jon Bevan RLC

Heat of battle: The head of the British Army, Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, acknowledged that the tempo of overseas operations demands a lot of his soldiers

We're running hot

Military covenant is out of balance, not broken – Chief of the General Staff

THE nation's unwritten covenant with its military is out of kilter but not broken, according to the Chief of the General Staff.

In an exclusive interview with *Soldier*, Gen Sir Richard Dannatt spoke of the operational pressure under which the Army was operating and likened the covenant to the lubricants which kept an engine working smoothly.

"Our ability to conduct operations and do them really well are all on the demand side of the equation. We've been asking an awful lot of our people.

"What we have to ensure also is that we are able to meet fully the legitimate needs of individuals in terms of pay, housing, accommodation for single soldiers and families, medical support and trying to balance off the demands of the organisation, the intensity of operations and our ability to look after individuals in the ongoing campaign," he said.

Progress was being made in trying to balance the military covenant, he emphasised, "but we've got a long way to go". He cited last year's operational al-



Gen Sir Richard Dannatt

lowance and the 9.3 per cent pay rise for the most junior ranks, and this year's 2.6 per cent average rise across the Service and one per cent rise in the X-factor, progress at Selly Oak in caring for the most seriously wounded and the impressive standards of rehabilitation at Headley Court as "good steps" in the right direction.

"I would like to see greater progress in single living accommodation and in families' housing. Some additional money went into those programmes in the Comprehensive Spending Review, but I'd like to see more."

Describing the military covenant as an informal understanding, Gen Dannatt said that those who joined the Army accepted the potential sacrifices and hardship of serving their nation and expected, in return, to be properly cared for, with proper terms and conditions of

service, and the expectation that their families would be well looked after.

He said it was a two-way covenant between the nation and the Services and their families. "We give on the one hand but we have a reasonable expectation to receive on the other.

"Keeping it in balance is what matters. I've said that we are running hot. I think that analogy is a fair one. An engine can run fast provided it's got sufficient oil but I'm desperate to make sure our engine doesn't seize."

CGS said he thought the Government understood the need to rebalance the covenant. "The recent Service Command Paper the Prime Minister has initiated, which is looking right across Government at how various departments can do more for Servicemen and veterans, is an indication of that."

Gen Dannatt spoke of his admiration for the men and women under his command and addressed a range of topics, including the need for more equipment, public and Government support, prisoner abuse and his gratitude to families.

● **Full interview – Pages 43-45**

What the Press has been saying

● TROOPS should be sent into schools to tame classroom rowdies, claims Britain's former top soldier. Lord Guthrie believes Armed Forces personnel would be great role models and help to raise standards. The ex-Chief of the Defence Staff is backing a plan to retain Servicemen and women as teachers when they retire. — *The Sun*

● SOLDIERS should be encouraged to wear their uniforms on the streets to improve the public recognition of their efforts on the battlefield, an influential report is expected to find. The National Recognition Study for the Armed Forces, set to report this month, is to highlight the lack of visibility of military uniforms as one factor to blame for lack of support from the public. Forces personnel were told not to wear uniform while off duty in the 1970s when it was feared they would become targets for the IRA. — *Daily Telegraph*

● ALL but one of the 18 British soldiers at risk from tainted American blood supplies have been given clean bills of health. They tested negative for Aids, hepatitis, and syphilis following emergency transfusions of US blood that had not been properly certified. But one soldier, who had a transfusion within the past three months, must wait several more agonising weeks before his results come through. — *The Sun*

● NATO has begun an investigation into British findings that wind farms make overflying planes invisible to radar as military chiefs fear a security threat from the rapid spread of the turbines. The US has been attending tests by Britain's Air Warfare Centre after it discovered that the energy plants create blind spots in air defences. Renewable energy campaigners have been stung by a spate of last-minute objections from the MoD to proposed new wind farms. — *The Times*

● BRITAIN'S most expensive home property deal was struck last month as the MoD sold London's Chelsea Barracks for £959 million. — *The Sun*

● THERE are more than 7,000 foreign citizens serving in the British military. Britain's growing "foreign legion" — equal to almost a dozen Army regiments — has led to warnings that the Forces are struggling to recruit British citizens. — *Daily Telegraph*

Above-inflation rise for troops

Soldiers' salaries to climb by 2.6 per cent in April

ARMED Forces personnel are set to notice the difference in their pockets in the months ahead after the Government announced an inflation-busting pay increase.

All Servicemen and women will see their basic salary climb by 2.6 per cent while the X-factor — the adjustment to pay to reflect the difference between military and civilian life — is also being increased from 13 to 14 per cent.

The salary changes, which come into force on April 1, mean the most junior soldier will get an extra £550 in their current £15,677 basic pay. Officers will also receive generous rises. A captain at the bottom of the pay scale can now expect £1,225 more a year in their basic pay, taking their salary to £36,160.

The amount of X-factor paid to senior officers has also been restructured for the first time since the 1970s. The change recognises that lieutenant colonels, colonels and brigadiers are experiencing a frequency of operational tours and conditions similar to their junior colleagues. The high tempo of operations is also reflected in a 2.6 per cent hike in the Longer Separation Allowance (LSA), which will give troops a minimum of an extra £1,100 in the bank over the duration of a six month-tour (based on Level 1 rates of LSA).

Pay for specialists such as pilots and divers is being increased at the same rate, while a new form of specialist pay band is being created for some bomb disposal personnel.

The adjustments come after the Government accepted in full the recommendations of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body. More than £280 million is now being spent on military salaries.

Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, Chief of the General Staff, said: "This pay award to the Army, especially the increase in the X-factor, recognises the professionalism, commitment and sacrifice that our soldiers continue to make on operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and across the world. It also recognises the busy programme that our soldiers undertake between operations with little slackening in their pace of life, and it goes some way to acknowledge the pressures that Service families face through long periods of separation and concern."

● All British troops deployed on overseas operations are to be relieved of their council tax burdens following the widening of a Government initiative.

It means any soldier on ops who has to pay the charge for a UK property — or meet contributions in lieu for Service family accommodation — can get a special relief payment of up to £140 for a six-month tour. Previously open only to those in Iraq and Afghanistan, the scheme has been extended to 4,500 more serving on ops in theatres including Kosovo, Qatar, Kuwait and the Falklands. Defence Secretary Des Browne said: "This rebate is another example of our commitment to provide the best welfare support we can."

● Cash for courage — Pages 47-51

Conflict cover goes online

SOLDIERS who want to protect the financial futures of their families by insuring their lives through the Government-guaranteed Service Life Insurance scheme (SLI) can now do so online.

Monthly premiums start at just £5, while £8.06 will buy £100,000 cover for 12 years for a male non-smoker under 30. The policy includes all trades, including Special Forces, worldwide operations and hazardous pursuits such as skydiving.

No medical is required and the benefits — the maximum is £200,000 — are tax free.

The scheme is provided for the MoD by Sterling Life and has been made very simple to access. There are no lengthy ap-

plication forms to fill in and no expensive cancellation or exclusion clauses.

Unit admin offices and HIVEs have brochures and application forms or you can join online at www.servicelifeinsurance.co.uk

A similar scheme in the USA, run on an opt-out basis, is used by 99 per cent of Service personnel. In the UK, where SLI has been available since May last year, fewer than one per cent are members.

Troops who already have Pax personal accident insurance can more than double their cover in the event of death by signing up for SLI. As reported last month, Pax premiums are rising by 30 per cent due to a sharp increase in injuries and deaths on operations.



Flying doctors: A team of medics stabilise a battlefield casualty during a Chinook flight to Camp Bastion's state-of-the-art field hospital Picture: Cpl Jon Bevan RLC

In excellent health

Survival rate of those injured in battle is best ever, says Surgeon General

ADVANCED medical equipment and changes to evacuation procedures are helping to save scores of soldiers' lives in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to the military's top doctor.

Lt Gen Louis Lillywhite, Surgeon General, revealed that procedures such as the latest blood-clotting techniques and sophisticated in-theatre trauma centres are offering wounded troops the very best treatment available.

He said soldiers were in safe hands if the worst happened and was confident that standards of care for personnel in the UK had improved.

On the battlefield, Lt Gen Lillywhite revealed that expert teams deployed on adapted Chinook helicopters could now carry out medical procedures en route to field hospitals.

He said: "These consultant-led teams appear to have had a significant impact. What we have done is allowed specialist care normally only found in major trauma centres to be delivered to multiple casualties during the evacuation phase."

The Surgeon General added that clotting agents are now being produced in Afghanistan from blood donated by troops in theatre.

The new procedure involves platelets – the human body's natural coagulants – being taken from volunteers, who then have their red blood cells returned to ensure their own fitness levels are not adversely affected.

Platelets have a lifespan of five days, and the ability to produce them in war zones allays concern of a shortage in the event of a large number of casualties.

Lt Gen Lillywhite said he would always strive to improve the standard of care, particularly the all-important process of treating and evacuating the wounded.

"The average evacuation time in Afghanistan is two hours and 57 minutes from time of injury to touchdown back at the hospital," he said. "During the Israeli campaign in the Lebanon, their evacuation times were four minutes shorter than ours but we are covering significantly longer distances."

Lt Gen Lillywhite explained that wounded soldier survival rates assessed over the past 18 months revealed robust standards of care both at the front line and in field hospitals.

As well as the teams of medics deployed to treat the casualty in flight on helicopters, specialists, such as

neurosurgeons, were now instantly available in Afghanistan.

He added: "We are seeing a lot more complex casualties surviving to the UK and thereafter." He said the available data from Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrated that the survival rate on operations achieved by the UK forces was better than in any previous conflict.

However Lt Gen Lillywhite said he would keep procedures and equipment under constant review, both for soldiers on ops and those being treated at home.

He believed that Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham was now offering high standards of care and welfare, adding that the medical staff there are fully committed to soldiers.

He concluded: "I think we should all recognise some of the problems experienced in Birmingham's early days and the problems created by the military withdrawing its nurses because we needed them for Iraq and Afghanistan."

"However part of our commitment in future is that we will maintain the military manning on the ward regardless of the levels deployed on operations."

● **Theatre of war – Pages 19-23**

UNDER Big Ben

A digest of what is being said on Army matters in Parliament

Browne announces PC data theft probe

DEFENCE Secretary Des Browne has ordered a far-reaching review into the theft of laptops from MoD properties and vehicles.

Mr Browne said he had invited Sir Edmund Burton to probe the issue, and his conclusions will be made available before the end of April.

The Burton report will establish the circumstances and events that led to the loss of data and establish whether steps taken to prevent it happening again had proved adequate. Recommendations will also be made to prevent future losses.

As reported in last month's *Soldier*, concerns over data theft were raised when a laptop containing the details of 600,000 serving personnel and potential recruits was stolen in Birmingham.

PR machine: Media awareness training is among the topics taught on courses before deploying to operational areas, Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth said. The MP was responding to a question from fellow member Ann Winterton, who asked how much of the pre-deployment training syllabus was taken up with public relations exercises. Mr Ainsworth added: "The precise content is left to commanders."

Disappearing act: Thousands of soldiers have gone Absent Without Leave (AWOL) from the Army in the last few years, Veterans' Minister Derek Twigg has revealed. Figures provided in a written answer show that 2,255 soldiers went absent last year – slightly fewer than in 2006. Figures have been falling steadily since a spike four years ago when some 3,000 troops went AWOL.

Winter sale: The MoD is set to retain the £959 million from the sale of Chelsea Barracks following an agreement with the Treasury, according to Mr Twigg. He added that the first instalments towards the purchase of the site had already been paid, with the final balance due in 2011.

Return fire

16 Air Assault Brigade heads back to Helmand

ELITE troops from Colchester-based 16 Air Assault Brigade have been undergoing the final stages of their training before returning to the front line in southern Afghanistan.

As this issue went to press, the soldiers were being put through their paces on Salisbury Plain in a series of manoeuvres as they prepared to head back to Helmand province next month.

The deployment will be the brigade's second tour of the region – in the summer of 2006 its units fought a series of high-profile battles to wrest territory from Taliban fighters after British Forces moved into the region for the first time.

They were contacted by the enemy on a daily basis and fought in major engagements including Op Snakebite, an action to drive insurgents from the town of Musa Qaleh.

Many members of the brigade received gallantry medals, with the most high profile presented to the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment.

Cpl Bryan Budd was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross for his actions in a firefight and there was a George Cross for Cpl Mark Wright, who died helping comrades in a minefield.

The battalion, alongside 1 and 2 Para, is expected to again play a key role on operations and will be ably assisted by the 2nd and 5th Battalions of The Royal Regiment of Scotland.

Troops from the 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, 7th Parachute Regiment Royal Horse Artillery and the

AT A GLANCE: DEPLOYING UNITS

Brigade HQ and 216 Signal Squadron
7th Parachute Regiment Royal Horse Artillery
23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault)
2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland
5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland
1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment
2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment
3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment
The Pathfinder Platoon
6 Supply Regiment, RLC
13 Air Assault Support Regiment RLC
16 Close Support Medical Regiment
7 Air Assault Battalion, REME
156 Independent Provost Company RMP

Brigade Pathfinder Platoon are also en route to Helmand.

The soldiers will replace units from 52 Infantry Brigade as Nato's International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) consolidates its presence in Afghanistan.

In a written statement to the Commons, Defence Secretary Des Browne said that overall force levels in Afghanistan would remain "broadly unchanged". He added that the next roulement, scheduled for October, will see 3 Commando Brigade, Royal Marines, deploying to Helmand to relieve 16 Air Assault Brigade.

Dragoons' op exit

THE commanding officer of The Royal Dragoon Guards has spoken of his satisfaction after successes in Basra enabled his troops to return from their tour early.

Speaking as soldiers arrived back at their bases in Germany three months ahead of schedule, Lt Col Tim Hyams told reporters his soldiers had played a key role in helping the Iraqi Security Forces take responsibility for their own affairs.

Lt Col Hyams said: "Those of us coming home early can do so secure in the knowledge that we have played our full part and played it extremely well."

"It is evident that the courage and determination of the Iraqi Security Forces, the training we have delivered to enhance their capability and the success of operations has

resulted in increasing stability in the area."

During their three months in theatre, RDG troops were involved in counter-smuggling operations on the border with Iran and patrols in Basra.

They also helped the Iraqi Security Forces get to grips with skills including unarmed combat, surveillance, first aid and vehicle maintenance.

The return of the RDG to barracks in Münster and Osnabrück is an indication of the changing role of the British in Basra. With Iraqi troops responsible for security, soldiers are now in an overwatch role, ready to re-intervene if needed. There are currently 4,500 personnel in southern Iraq, with numbers expected to be slashed by a further 2,000 in the coming months.



Killing fields: Poppies – the natural source of opium, which is used in the production of heroin – are a familiar feature of the landscape in Afghanistan

Picture: Cpl Jon Bevan RLC

Chemical brothers

British and Afghan Forces combine to smash Sangin drug production plant

BATTLE-hardened soldiers dealt a major blow to southern Afghanistan's drug lords after they moved to smash a narcotics factory in a daring dawn swoop.

Troops from The King's Royal Hussars and the 1st Battalion, Scots Guards seized a tonne of raw opium and 20kg of pure heroin during the raid near Sangin, Helmand province.

They braved a hail of bullets and rocket-propelled grenades to blast their way into the "death lab", which was discovered 15km north of the town.

The soldiers, operating alongside Afghan National Army units, were supported by Dutch F-16 jets and US Apache attack helicopters, which pounded the insurgents from above.

Commanders were delighted with the outcome of the action and praised the professionalism of the soldiers involved in storming the enemy stronghold.

Task Force Helmand spokesman Lt Col Simon Millar said: "This is an excellent example of the collaborative efforts of British and Afghan Forces.

"We know that drug production is closely linked to insurgent activity; not only does it hold people down under oppression but it funds the violence that, together with the government of Afghanistan, we are determined to stop."

Op Mar Kheshta, which means "snake brick" in Pashtu, began under cover of darkness when Warriors from 1 SG and B Squadron KRH's heavily armoured

Mastiff troop carriers – ferrying Afghan assault forces – moved into position for the first-light strike.

As the dawn attack unfolded, the Scots Guards hit back hard after coming under attack from insurgents while the fast jets and helicopters provided top cover.

With the defenders suppressed, Afghan troops swarmed over the factory compounds, uncovering a processing plant and chemicals used in drug production. The lab was secured after what was described by commanders

as "a serious engagement with a large number of insurgents". There were no reports of British or Afghan casualties.

Lt Col Millar added: "Using the excellent mobility and firepower offered by our vehicles, we were able to move quickly and safely into position, laying down effective fire to suppress their efforts to stop the operation. This enabled Afghan Security Forces to search the compounds, leading to a significant seizure of drugs as well as chemicals and facilities used to manufacture them."

Back to Blighty

SOLDIERS from two Germany-based units are poised to head to a new home in Shropshire, Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth has confirmed.

The 2,600 troops and their families from 1 Signal Brigade and 102 Logistics Brigade will complete the move to home soil in Cosford, Shropshire, in 2014 – if the switch is given final financial approval next year.

The news follows last September's recommendation that the Defence College of Aeronautical Engineering be earmarked as the base for the two brigades. It was also recommended that Nato's HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Corps should move back from Germany to the RAF Innsworth site in Gloucestershire, but there was no clarifica-

tion on this as *Soldier* went to press.

Mr Ainsworth told the Commons: "I am delighted to announce that Cosford has been chosen as our preferred site for both 1 Sig Bde and 102 Log Bde. We will now draw up detailed plans and undertake consultation with all of Cosford's stakeholders, including local authorities, health, education and welfare providers as well as trade unions and our own Service personnel."

Military chiefs are planning to pull 3,060 troops back from British Forces Germany in a move to improve operational capability and make best use of the Defence estate, but a significant presence will remain in BFG, with nearly 20,000 troops centred around garrisons at Paderborn, Hohne and Gütersloh.



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Just booty-ful: 60 contraband cars, being smuggled in to southern Iraq from Iran aboard armed barges, were seized during Operation Sea Lion



Picture: Capt Ric Cole

Coastal contact

Iraqi Security Forces-led operation smashes Shatt al-Arab smuggling ring

COMBINED British and Iraqi fire-power sunk a criminal gang's bid to smuggle illegal cargo across the Iranian border and into southern Iraq aboard heavily-armed barges.

Soldiers from Spearhead Platoon, 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment and 14th Iraqi Army Division troops seized 60 contraband cars after a fierce firefight with smugglers on the Shatt al-Arab waterway.

Taking part in Op Sea Lion, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and their British mentors intercepted four barges, escorted by a gunboat equipped with heavy machine guns, entering Iraqi waters.

Holding defensive positions on the island of Al Rusus, the troops were raked by intense machine-gun fire from the shore as the boats made their run. Spearhead Platoon used snipers against the smugglers on the riverbank as the Iraqi Army returned machine-gun and RPG fire on the three leading barges.

Under concentrated attack from the gunboat and with the risk of taking casualties mounting, a British soldier launched a Javelin anti-tank missile at the craft. It silenced the smugglers and concluded the successful op to break the contraband route from Iran to Iraq.

Lt Col Gary Deakin, battle-group commander, praised the work of the ISF unit and emphasised that the British had stood back until their help was called upon. "It is their success, not ours," he said. "They have fought a tough fight and just needed a little extra support,

both moral and physical, to finish the job. Lt Col Haydar, the commanding officer of the Iraqi army battalion, personally thanked me for our support. They are a very capable lot. That is our job now and we are glad to be there to help."

Iraqi soldiers have been engaged in

frequent firefights against well-armed smugglers trying to move illegal goods, including weapons and explosives, into southern Iraq. Insurgents then use the cached munitions – or lethal aid – against Iraqi and coalition forces, as they try to destabilise the region.

Kajaki blast kills NCO

TROOPS in southern Afghanistan have been mourning the loss of an "outstanding" NCO killed in an explosion which also injured a second soldier.

Cpl Damian Lawrence, of the 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, was fatally wounded when a device detonated during a joint British and Afghan patrol to clear a number of compounds in Kajaki on February 17. Medical treatment was administered on the scene before both men were evacuated to Camp Bastion where Cpl Lawrence was pronounced dead on arrival.

Lt Col Simon Downey, 2 Yorcs commanding officer, remembered the 25-year-old as a great comrade and accomplished soldier with a bright career ahead of him. "Every way you consider him, Cpl Lawrence was outstanding," he added. "He flourished in the dangerous challenges of mentoring the Afghan National Army on operations and it is absolutely typical that



● Cpl Damian Lawrence

he died leading from the front, paying the ultimate price for the leadership and courage that came so naturally to him."

After enlisting in the Army in 1999, the Scarborough-born soldier joined the 1st Battalion, The Green Howards and spent his first year as a rifleman before being singled out to move into a reconnaissance platoon. He went on to complete a junior NCO cadre in 2005 and recently achieved a high pass in a section commanders' battle course. He was on his second tour of Afghanistan and had also served with distinction in Northern Ireland and Kosovo.

Cpl Lawrence, who leaves behind partner Eve and three-year-old daughter Jessica, was described by mum Alison as a special son and amazing father who "lived and breathed Army life".

Cpl Lawrence's death brings the number of British Service personnel killed on operations in Afghanistan since 2001 to 88.



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IN BRIEF

● SOLDIERS who believe they are owed money under the Army's recruit bounty scheme (RBS) initiative or are due a "golden hello" payment for signing up a recruit have been advised to take action. They should first ask their unit admin office to confirm the status of their application and then ring Recruiting Group HQ G3 Applications on 01980 615367 to ask for the claim to be investigated. See "My recruiting bounty went missing" – Page 59.

● A NEW charity aiming to ease the transition between Service life and civvy street is looking for volunteers to take part in residential courses at its Lake District retreat.

Remount is offering a free three-day personal development course to Service leavers and their partners at the secluded Brathay Hall in Cumbria. The programme aims to give individuals or couples the time and space to examine difficult issues under the guidance of trained group leaders.

Participants will be encouraged to explore a range of topics including the challenges of starting a second career and the possible consequences of having undergone operational deployments. Sponsored by family trusts and leading companies, the courses are private and confidential.

Remount needs people who have just left, or are about to leave, the Services to evaluate the programme on pilot courses scheduled for April. For more information contact 01539 439722 or go to www.remount.net

● VETERANS' Minister Derek Twigg has pledged that the Government will continue to take the issue of mild traumatic brain injury seriously despite research suggesting the condition is not impacting on the Armed Forces' effectiveness. Mr Twigg said that every member of the Services undergoing treatment at military medical facilities was "routinely scanned" whatever the nature of their injuries.

Lt Gen Louis Lillywhite, Surgeon General, announced the study into mild traumatic brain injury last year. The condition can be triggered by minor head injuries or exposure to blasts.

● THE secure ArmyNet portal is undergoing a significant overhaul and will host a range of advanced features including an upgraded SMS text service and instant messaging when the new version is launched in the coming weeks.

The site, which has gone from strength-to-strength in recent years and has more than 150,000 users, also boasts sections on entertainment and forums where personnel can express their views on the issues of the day.



Remote reading: SSgt Dean Smith records a bedtime story for his daughter Gypsie

Picture: Andy Cargill

Faraway fables

Deploying soldiers' chance to tell tales on tour

THEATRE-BOUND troops can still be involved in their children's bedtime from thousands of miles away by taking part in an innovative story recording scheme.

Under the Storybook Soldiers programme, deploying parents can record a CD of themselves reading a tale for their children to play during their absence.

Coordinator Bev Jackson, of 18 Army Education Centre, which hosts the recording sessions in Colchester every Thursday, said the idea had been dreamt up to help families cope at what can be a difficult time.

"Soldiers come in and read a story of their choosing which we record and then send it away to be turned into a CD for them to give to their children," she said.

"We have a selection of books for them to choose from if they don't have their own."

One of the first people to take advantage of the scheme was father-of-two Sgt Adie Summerscales, REME, who is due to deploy to Afghanistan this month.

Although one-year-old Joe is still too young to appreciate his father's storytelling, Sgt Summerscales reads to Owen (4) every night and hopes the recording will comfort his elder son as

well as help ease the pressure on wife Lucy. "I know he misses me when I'm away and I will miss him. I personally think anything like this scheme can help," said Sgt Summerscales.

"It also helps my wife that on a particularly hard day when the children have been difficult she has this up her sleeve to use as a bargaining tool."

Also signed up to Storybook Soldiers is 37-year-old SSgt Dean Smith, an APTC instructor attached to 7 Para RHA.

SSgt Smith will be leaving behind a CD of himself reading *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* for 18-month-old daughter Gypsie when he deploys.

"I haven't been away on tour before but I have been away a lot over the past few weeks and Gypsie now knows when I'm away and when I'm back."

"When she saw me last week after I had been away she recognised me and was smiling."

● The sessions run from 1330 until 1930 every Thursday at 18 AEC, Colchester and are open to soldiers based in Colchester, Wattisham, Wimbish, Honington and Woodbridge. For more information or to book a session, telephone 94660 5987 (01206 815987) or 94660 5994 (01206 815994).

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Beer for a year

Brewery buys round in salute to Britain's brave

BRITAIN'S oldest brewer has created a limited edition of its Spitfire Ale to provide a welcome tonic for injured members of the Armed Forces.

Shepherd Neame is donating profits from the sale of its Help for Heroes-branded tipple to assist the charity in its aim of raising £5m to fund a new swimming pool complex at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre, Headley Court, Surrey.

The special edition beer is available in selected branches of Majestic Wine Warehouses, Booths, Nisa and Marko.

Jonathan Neame, chief executive of the Kent-based brewery, said: "We're hoping that everyone will raise their glasses to those who risk their lives on our behalf and give a helping hand to those who are rebuilding their lives following injuries."

Shepherd Neame is even offering to provide one lucky reader with enough beer to toast our brave soldiers for the rest of the year (or for one very good night in with the lads). We have 288 bottles (12 x 24 pack) of Help for Heroes Spitfire Ale to give away.

To have a chance of winning, tell us which former Royal Green Jacket is now chairman of the Help for Heroes appeal.

Answers by postcard or email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) to reach us by March 31. Entrants must be over the age of 18. Usual rules apply.

● Help for Heroes has raised a staggering £3 million in a little under five months. Bryn Parry, who founded the fund, said: "I'm proud that the general public have been so generous with their donations and their time."

Open for business

A LEADING Armed Forces charity has named a new "home from home" for family members visiting wounded loved ones at Headley Court after an EOD hero.

The Surrey property, funded by SSAFA Forces Help, will be called Norton House in recognition of Capt Peter Norton, RLC, and his wife Sue who championed the project.

The converted home in Ashtead, near Leatherhead, is now providing a crucial base for families of troops recovering at the world-class rehabilitation centre.

Capt Norton was awarded the George Cross for his selfless conduct in an incident involving an improvised explosive device near Baghdad in 2005. Norton, who was seriously injured in the resulting blast and subsequently treated at Headley Court, has been a keen supporter of the SSAFA project.

The charity is now looking at buying a home near Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham. A property has been identified and

£3 million of a £5 million target has been raised towards funding the scheme.

As reported in *Soldier* (September 2007), SSAFA courted controversy when it announced plans to convert the Ashtead property. Some 80 local residents objected on grounds including a possible increase in traffic, harm to the character of the area and the potential risk of terrorist attacks.

But members of Mole Valley District Council rubber-stamped the proposals after deciding that there were no valid reasons to turn down the application.

Maj Gen Andrew Cumming, chief executive of SSAFA, said: "It is incredibly important that we support the families of injured Servicemen and women while they face what will probably be the most difficult time in their lives. We are delighted that the SSAFA Norton House will now be able to provide them with the practical help and emotional support they deserve."

IN BRIEF

● SOLDIERS' annual confidential reports are entering the electronic era.

Under the new Service Person's Joint Appraisal Report (SJAR) – which uses the same format for both officers and soldiers – reports will be written online using the Joint Personnel Administration system and used by career managers for promotion boards and selection for appointments. The roll-out of the scheme for the Army began last October with lieutenant colonels. Warrant officers will be the first NCO rank to receive the SJAR in June and private soldiers the last in May 2009. Further information is available on MSWeb.

● SALES of a calendar chronicling the lives of those left at home during an operational tour of Afghanistan have raised more than £1,200 for soldiers being treated at Headley Court and Selly Oak Hospital. Grenadier Guards' wives Lara Beardshaw and Deborah Poxton hit upon the money-spinning idea of producing a charity year-planner, which featured 12 photos depicting their daily chores, during their husbands' tough tour of Helmand last summer.

● CHARLES Golder, who campaigned long, hard and successfully for official recognition of veterans of operations in the Suez Canal Zone from 1951-54, has died in Bolton. He was 80 and had recently contracted pneumonia.

He served with the Royal Engineers in the Suez Zone, the Far East and with the UN in the Congo during the brutal civil war of the late 1950s, leaving the Army with the rank of warrant officer. Charles crusaded tirelessly, not least through the pages of *Soldier*, for a Suez Medal, writing prodigious numbers of letters to the great and the influential to keep the issue alive. After years of rejection, he and other campaigners saw the medal finally approved by the Government in 2003.

He was a fervent opponent of the wearing of paid-for commemorative medals on veterans' parades, dismissing them as "bling". Despite his advanced years and ill health, he showed almost up to his death on January 31 the same energy in writing on that topic as he had on the subject of Canal Zone service.

Charles, who was widowed a year ago, is survived by a son and two daughters.

● THE National Memorial Arboretum near Lichfield has published a full colour guide book which details every aspect of the 150 acres of wooded parkland and its numerous memorials, including the striking Armed Forces Memorial. Copies are available at £7 from the Arboretum gift shop or at £10 (to include p&p) by phone on 01283 792333 or by email at info@thenma.org.uk



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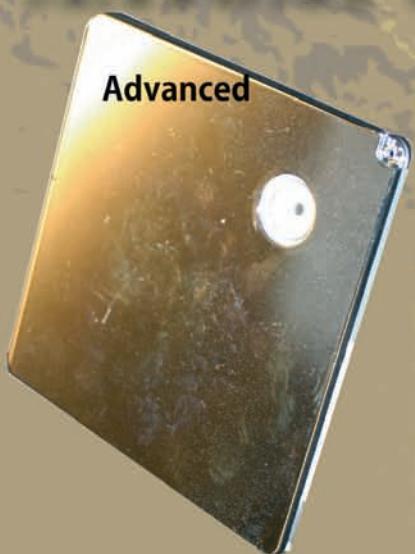
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Theatre of war

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Clinical excellence: Maj Mark Saunders, QARANC, managed complex operations from Bastion Field Hospital's two-bed theatre

IN the heat of a contact in Afghanistan's volatile Helmand province, a soldier falls victim to enemy fire.

As the battle rages, a medic arrives on the scene, puts well-rehearsed emergency battlefield first aid drills into action and calls for a casevac to fly the stricken soldier to a dedicated helipad yards away from the front door of Bastion's field hospital.

What follows is a military medical response envied and admired the world over and one which has been responsible for saving the lives of scores of soldiers and civilians injured in the field.

Immediately after being brought to the hospital, patients are whisked into a four-bed emergency room where a team of up to nine specialists assesses their injuries, applies initial treatment and coolly and quickly prepares the patient for surgery, often in less than 20 minutes.

Officer in command of the emergency room, Maj Mick Carr, QARANC, a Territorial Army volunteer who works as a resuscitation officer in civvy street, is understandably proud of his team's efficiency.

"When we get a warning we sometimes use a little bit of guesswork and experience to set the team up and make sure we have enough staff," said Maj Carr, emphasising that every member of the unit is given a specific role to concentrate on.

"In a way we don't worry about waste here. If we hear someone is coming in, we get the drugs out and don't worry if they aren't used for whatever reason because we would sooner have the drugs ready to go.

"In Europe you have the golden hour between being injured and getting on the treatment table and although that's what we aim for, it isn't always possible. To combat that we throw resources at the treatment to try and catch up.

"We work in quite a tight area and I manage the team so that everyone is concentrating on doing their job and their job only."

Before progressing to surgery, a patient requiring an X-ray can have the scan done without being moved from the treatment bay thanks to two high-tech Dragon direct digital scanners.

The technology in the £10,000 machines is so new that they are rarely found even in NHS hospitals, but Bastion's radiographers have immediate access to two. Fully portable and touch screen-operated, the scanners provide emergency room staff with on-screen X-rays in a matter of seconds – a

potentially life-saving improvement on the several minutes traditional scans take to produce.

Radiographer Cpl Catherine Lee, an RAMC volunteer who carries out the same role in her day job at a hospital in Exeter, demonstrated the machine's ability to zoom in and out, change focus and even look at saved X-rays with just a few touches of the display screen.

"It means that the doctors can look at the scans there and then alongside the patient," she said. "We are the only people who employ it in this sort of role and it makes a massive amount of difference. I hope that I can use everything I'm learning here when I go back home."

Anyone requiring surgery for their injuries can take comfort in the fact that Bastion's two fully-functional operating theatres are staffed by expert general, vascular and orthopaedic surgeons and contain the same equipment found in UK hospitals. Support for neurological surgery is based a short flight away in Kandahar and the entire streamlined process makes OC theatres Maj Mark Saunders, QARANC, very proud.

"I think coming here has been a tick in the box for all of us," he told *Soldier*. "The guys throughout the process deserve to get the praise they are due."

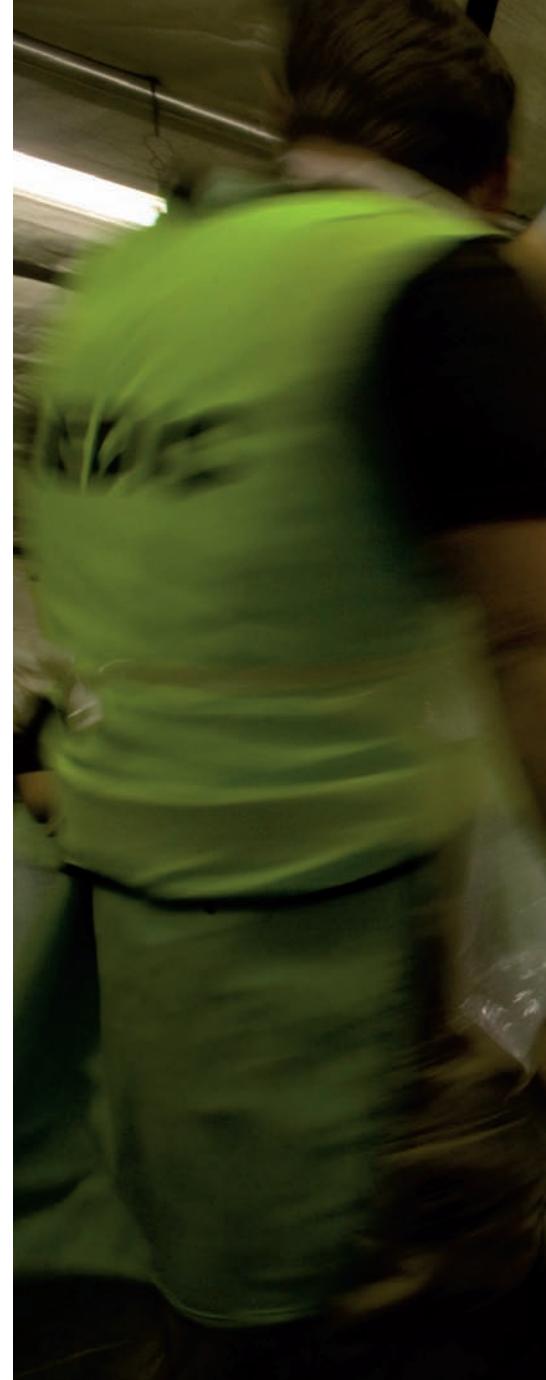
Maj Saunders' second in command, Maj Jack Hornby, QARANC, added that despite the desert setting of the two theatres, Bastion's surgical staff are always confident of performing operations just as expertly as they would in the UK.

"The kit and equipment is pretty much the same," he said. "When we have finished in theatre and everyone is clean and dry, we hope the outcome is also the same."

The next link in Bastion's well-oiled medical chain is moving patients into one of the four intensive care ward beds or one of the 23 bays in the two regular wards. The human touch provided by the expert nursing staff on the wards makes recuperation an easier pill to swallow for any of the multinational troops or Afghan civilians who find themselves treated there.

Maj Shaun Jones, QARANC, explained: "We have had a lot of busy times, but when it quietens down it is nice because we can spend a bit more time with the local children.

"It is quite hard for them because they don't speak the language, but we try to make it easier by spending as long as possible with them while they are recovering. This is superior to the NHS because on rounds we have the surgeons and the rest of the staff all standing around the bed and making



important decisions there and then."

Cpl Tracy Bazzard, a registered nurse serving with QARANC, added: "Working in theatre gives me the chance to treat patients I would never get to treat in the UK. Here you get to overcome the communication barrier and make sure that they receive the best care we can give them."

Despite the number of injuries recorded on the current Operation Herrick being higher than on any previous deployments, it is worth noting the slightly less dramatic truth behind the headlines. For every serious battlefield injury treated at Bastion field hospital there are dozens more minor complaints, ranging from pulls and strains picked up at the gym to cuts and grazes that are an occupational hazard for some of the Army's tradesmen. Maj Carr concluded: "The majority of work we do is on minor injuries and illnesses, things like ankles and wrists."

"There are also trade-specific injuries – cooks get burnt, locally employed civilians might cut their hands and



mechanics get oil in their eyes. It isn't always major trauma. Having said that, the amount of penetrating trauma we see is far above what civilian teams deal with so people are going to want to listen to what we have learned out here."

Whether patients end up being released to carry on with their duties or are returned home to continue their recovery, they can rest assured that their care is managed by seasoned professionals.

In a conflict where casualties from both military and civilian backgrounds are an unfortunate inevitability, it is comforting to know that no expense has been spared in making their return to good health a priority. ■

Main picture, Ready to roll: Cpl Craig Hilton RAMC, Maj Mick Carr RAMC, Cpl John Boyd RAMC, Sgt Ivan Doherty RAMC and Capt Gill Downey QARANC assess and rapidly prepare a simulated casualty for further treatment

Right, Digital photos: Cpl Catherine Lee, an RAMC volunteer, demonstrates the Dragon X-ray scanner at Camp Bastion's field hospital





All sewn up

Medics on red alert to give troops in Basra expert top-to-toe care



Report: Karen Thomas
Pictures: Steve Dock

NOBODY wants to think about being seriously injured on an Op Telic tour but dedicated medical teams want soldiers to know they have the casualty response system sewn up should the unthinkable happen.

Specially adapted Bulldog vehicles, the latest battlefield injury treatments and a state-of-the-art hospital with hi-tech diagnostic equipment are at the disposal of wounded troops. The support offered by UK Medical Group inside and outside the Contingency Operating Base (COB) allows for the worst-case scenario, so no matter how bad things get, they can start life-saving procedures as quickly as possible.

Strapped to a stretcher, Soldier got the premier class treatment tour of the best medical care on offer in Basra ...



Main picture, Carry on doctor: Maj Timothy Stansfield, left, and Lt Col Graham Rushforth, RAMC, at work in the operating theatre

Above right, Clinical training: Pte Jamie Detheridge, RAMC, on Exercise Man Down

Below right, Tools of the trade: LCpl Leona Derby, RAMC, restocks a medical bergen

Below left, Hi-tech treatment: Cpl Rebecca Hitchcock operates the hospital's CT scanner

From ER to OR

WHISKED from the back of the Bulldog – or ambulance if the casualty is on the COB – the patient is calmly but rapidly passed into the emergency room of the hospital. The priority is keeping the casualty stable as their wounds and injuries are assessed and the best course of treatment is decided.

A top-notch team of experienced trauma surgeons are on hand for serious and penetrating wounds. Medics in the intensive therapy unit (ITU) watch over the acutely ill and injured to see them out of danger and set them firmly on the road to recovery. The hospital is also equipped with a CT scanner, a 24-hour service that sends images via satellite phone to a diagnostic centre for a rapid assessment of the extent and nature of the injury.

Cpl Christina Hall, QARANC, ITU nurse, told *Soldier*: "This is my second tour but it's much the same as Telic 5 when I was at Shaibah Logistic Base. It can be quite demanding with the patients in a bad way, which is why we do specialist training – we're ready for anything. I enjoy being here with a lot of people and looking after the patients but I hope I won't be dealing with too many."

The consultant-led teams have brought advanced and focused treatment

very close to the point at which the soldier gets wounded or hurt.

Maj Tess Grieves, QARANC and OC of the hospital, described her team, led by 1 Close Support Medical Regiment, as a "robust, joined-up organisation".

"It's great to know you've got fantastic staff working for you. And it's also a morale boost for the guys out on the ground to know we are looking after their comrades and giving them the best care that we can."

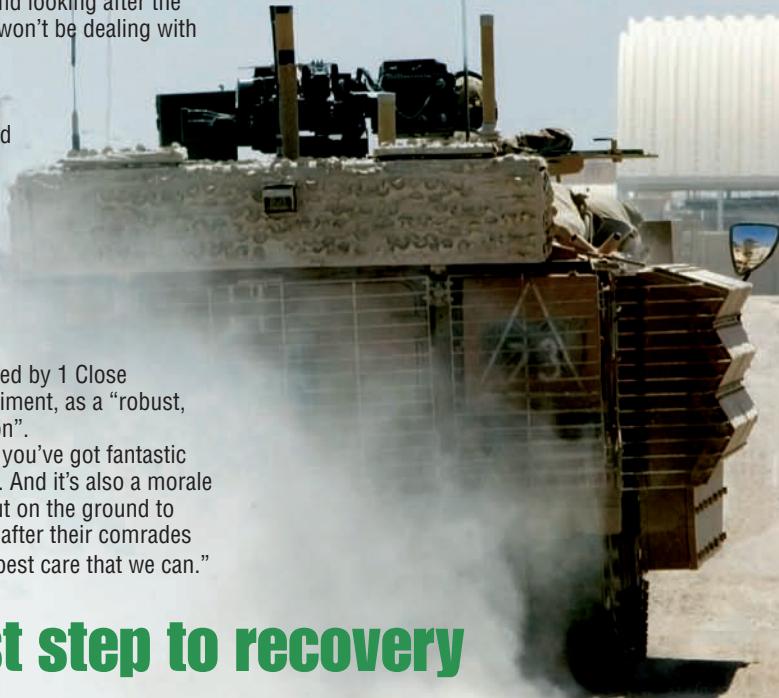
Staying sharp



A BLACKED-OUT tent simulates a night time rocket attack on the COB's accommodation. Casualties lie buried under the rubble – they might have minor injuries or they may be in a critical condition.

The first medic on the scene must carefully grope through darkness across the debris, find the casualties and assess the injuries.

Exercise Man Down ensures that the clinical skills of the team medics are kept scalpel-sharp. Officers and SNCOS have to undertake the monthly exercise – also known as medical moulage – which highlights any competencies that are lacking. Any gaps, and the skills can be re-taught before being tested again.



Emergency first aid – first step to recovery

COMBAT medical technicians Ptes "Shaggy" Ronson and Dexter Brown, RAMC, travel outside the COB in the back of a Bulldog vehicle modified as an ambulance in direct support of soldiers on ops. They are ready to take medical charge of an emergency, deal with the injury, stabilise the casualty and get them back to the hospital and into the hands of the specialists. They put their own lives at risk to save those of the troops.

Pte "Shaggy" Ronson, RAMC

I was out with 5 Rifles at the Shatt Al-Arab Hotel on Telic 8, which was my first tour. I was attached to the infantry so I got a lot of experience as an infantryman as well as medically. There were so many casualties

and LCpl Dennis Brady, RAMC, was killed.

I also treated Cpl Mark Sutcliffe, 2 R Anglian [who lost his leg in an RPG attack], whose recovery was featured in *Soldier* (March 2007), so it was good to see him having gone through rehabilitation and now doing things.

Pte Dexter Brown, RAMC

It's my first tour. It's enlightening and I was shaking at first to see someone hurt. At the time I got on with the job but afterwards it dawns on you that people die out here. It becomes real to you. It does build your confidence but you do learn every time you are called out. For example, I have been called to a road traffic accident and seen something new – but we have the training to deal with it.



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— WO2 British infantry serving with US Forces



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— D.C. Special Operations Command (not pictured)



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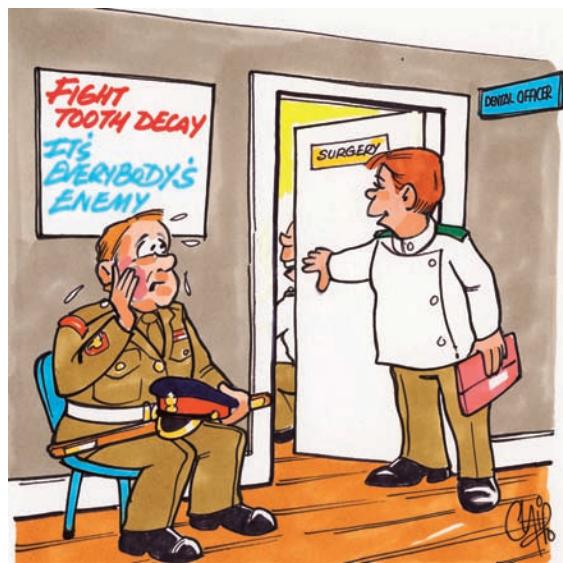


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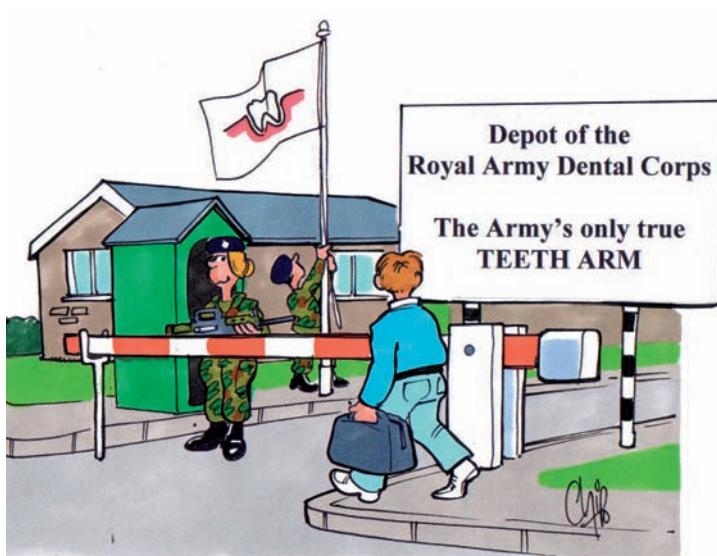


"Since we're so keen on fault-finding at the moment, I couldn't help noticing that your dental hygiene is below standard too."

Chuckle with Chip

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Crown service



"Well THOSE should keep him quiet for a while!"

Putting a little

Troops urged to provide DNA sample for casualty identification process

Report: Cliff Caswell

Picture: Graeme Main

ARMY chiefs are urging soldiers deploying on operations to provide a voluntary DNA sample to speed up casualty identification should the worst happen in the field.

Senior officers are convinced that the new scheme, under which troops can leave their unique genetic blueprint on record, will cut down the need to intrude on traumatised family members to collect a specimen if their loved one is killed in action.

But there is concern at the findings of a poll carried out by ArmyNet, which revealed that around a quarter of soldiers would not be willing to provide a DNA sample.

Of around 3,000 soldiers who responded, just over 23 per cent said they would not put themselves forward for sampling, which is being made available to Servicemen and women this month. The online poll was conducted before full details of the initiative were announced.

The findings prompted medical professionals to reassure personnel that the testing process is painless and that they could have full confidence that all samples would be stored securely.

While pilots and aircrew have been able to provide a DNA sample for some time, all recruits and soldiers deploying on ops will now be given the choice.

Personnel have the final say on what happens to their sample, which will be destroyed on written request or when they leave the Army. The cells are held for a maximum of 45 years.

Wg Cdr Katie Geary, Royal Air Force, who is responsible for public health issues at the MoD in London, said the 2006 Nimrod crash in Afghanistan, in which 14 Service personnel lost their lives, had proved to be a defining moment in the roll-out of the scheme.

It was hoped that a Service DNA

bank of voluntary samples could speed up the process of military inquests and reduce the pain and distress caused to loved ones of soldiers.

The officer stressed that all specimens would be kept under lock and key at the RAF Centre of Aviation Medicine and would only be used for identification. The samples could be taken during routine pre-deployment checks by a swab in the cheek.

Wg Cdr Geary said: "For the 23 per cent who were concerned in the ArmyNet poll, I would say the process of taking and storing the sample is entirely safe.

"The samples are not open to external tampering and an individual can withdraw their consent for having them stored at any time. Personnel have absolute control.

"My husband, who is a Chinook helicopter pilot, provided a DNA

bit in the bank

sample as soon as the scheme started for aircrew, and I would do the same if I was deploying."

Wg Cdr Geary also pointed out that no DNA specimens would be analysed and they would only be used to help with the identification process in the event of a fatality.

Although the police could technically gain access to the samples by applying to a coroner for a court order, it was more likely that detectives investigating a crime would go directly to the suspect for a current specimen. There was no question of civil liberties being infringed by the scheme.

Wg Cdr Geary said: "The sample is effectively like giving a drop of blood and not doing anything with it – it is stored in a plastic sheath and sealed in a tamper-proof bag.

"The information from the sample is not held on a computer database.

"Essentially it is your way of putting a small piece of yourself into storage in case something happens to you. Nothing will be done unless there is a suspicion that you have been killed, and

then it avoids the MoD Police knocking on your family's door for a sample."

Armed Forces Minister

Bob Ainsworth welcomed the full roll-out of the DNA sample scheme. He was confident that it would speed up identification and make the process more bearable for families at a very difficult and traumatic time.

"Although the risk of death is small for personnel deployed on operations, the possibility is a sad fact of life," Mr Ainsworth added.

"In some cases, such as the loss of an aircraft, traditional techniques for identification are not sufficient.

"DNA matching is a failsafe method but collecting samples from personal effects or family members can be prolonged and traumatic. Our aim is to minimise pain and distress by taking

precautionary measures in advance to enable deceased personnel to be identified quickly," the Armed Forces Minister concluded. ■

Open wide: DNA sampling is a quick and pain-free process that involves collecting cheek cells by rolling the tip of the sample collection swab firmly on the inside of both cheeks. Volunteers' samples will not be analysed and will only be used in the event of their owner's suspected death. The DNA cells, which will be held for a maximum of 45 years, will be stored securely at the RAF Centre of Aviation Medicine and will be destroyed on written request or when an individual leaves the Armed Forces.



Main picture, Cash injection: The British Military Advisory and Training Team (West Africa) provided funding for the building of a malaria-testing laboratory at the Ghana Armed Forces Command and Staff College (GAFSC)

Below right, Firm foundations: The GAFSC is considered the best staff college in sub-Saharan Africa

Shot in the arm

Brit booster helps Ghanaian command college deliver region's future leaders

Report: Karen Thomas
Pictures: Steve Dock

DESPITE Africa's turbulent history of bloody conflicts, it is the bite of an insect and not bullets, bombs or machetes that has the dubious honour of being the continent's most proficient killer.

The mosquito – or more accurately malaria, the disease transmitted to humans through its bite – annually kills almost one million people in Africa.

Those lucky enough to escape death can still expect to be bed-ridden by two or three attacks every year – a statistic which costs the armies of some of the poorest countries in the world time, productivity and money.

Fortunately for members of Ghana's Armed Forces, the African assassin is not without an adversary.

The British Military Advisory and Training Team (BMATT) West Africa has funded the building and equipping of a malaria-testing laboratory.

Soldiers and their families used to have a four-day wait for treatment while

their blood samples were sent to a local hospital for parasite screening.

The new laboratory will make a diagnosis within 45 minutes – the earlier the drugs are taken, the quicker the recovery and return to work.

Attending to what might be considered a small detail reaps wider benefits across the West Africa region, which is not without its hot spots. Having itself endured a series of military coups after it became the first African state to gain independence from the UK in 1957, Ghana has learnt the importance of maintaining professional and contented Armed Forces.

The boom in tourism now being enjoyed by the hosts of the 2008 Africa Cup of Nations underlines the peace, stability and democracy it has worked hard to achieve.

Along with its well-trained military, Ghana sets a trend that other West African nations emerging from turmoil, such as Sierra Leone, can follow.

'It's the most forward-looking staff college in the region, if not Africa'

Lt Col Will Mellows, British Defence Adviser in the Ghanaian capital Accra, keeps his finger on the region's security pulse. He carefully watches the troubles of neighbours such as the Ivory Coast while providing support for Ghanaian peace support operations elsewhere in Africa.

"The Ghanaian Armed Forces are a non-political organisation that have gone full circle and are very highly respected by everyone for their international peacekeeping roles," he told *Soldier*.

"I've got a lot of time for the Ghanaians. They are very professional and have a wicked sense of humour."

The former British colony, once known as the Gold Coast, is an excellent investment for spreading stability across the region. BMATT (WA) has plugged into the main Ghanaian military training centres, including the equivalent of Sandhurst, working with their local partners to produce a high-quality officer product.



for new Africa

The reputation of the Ghana Armed Forces Command and Staff College (GAFSC) has grown so much that international students now account for more than 50 per cent of the annual intake. Col Huw Lawford, BMATT commander and the college's Director of Studies, confirmed GAFSC was "the best staff college in sub-Saharan Africa".

"I am trying to reduce the embedded nature of BMATT so we can have greater liaison with other staff colleges and help introduce a standardised doctrine for the African Union.

"Then everyone will be singing from the same song sheet when they are deployed on international operations," he said, adding that he wanted the GAFSC to take more ownership of the academic courses, which it could then deliver to the rest of the West African region.

"We are here to empower GAFSC to allow it to produce an officer comfortable in a multi-national environment, as well as influencing future leaders."

Established in 1977, the college continues to take the best from its UK counterparts and now delivers contemporary courses on civil-military

relationships and analyses global issues. At the end of the academic year, students graduate with a military qualification and either a postgraduate diploma or Master of Arts certificate.

The UK sponsors 12 students and British Army instructors still take a hands-on role in the tuition of Africa's future military leaders, especially as the college has adopted much of the UK's military doctrine.

Lt Col Stuart Cattermull, GAFSC Directing Staff (DS), was "privileged to be one of the Brits" at the academy. One of two British DS, he mentors a syndicate of about 13 students each year. "We draw on our experience of operations, which for me includes Afghanistan, Iraq, Northern Ireland and

Sierra Leone. So we get the students to look outside Africa," he explained.

"The students are as good as you're going to get anywhere. They come here because they get training in operations and the course is more rounded, as we deliver the academic as well as the military aspects of soldiering."

Developing the welfare system and project management skills, while fostering accountability and transparency, remain essential principles in BMATT's plan.

"It's the most forward-looking staff college in the region, if not Africa," concluded Lt Col Cattermull. "What they lack in resources, they make up for in spirit." ■



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Good eggs

Troop trainer: OMLT officer Capt Duncan Turner, 2 R Anglian, shows ANA soldier Pte Baz Mahammad the way forward

Picture: Graeme Main

Binational mentoring teams tackle Helmand's Taliban threat »



Clockwise from main picture, Drug bust: ANA troops burn 200 sacks of opium found after the raid on Musa Qaleh; Take a break: 2 Yorks soldiers from B Coy, OMLT 2 rest after moving into the centre of the town; Fire power: An OMLT trainer provides ANA soldiers with expert weapons-handling advice; Winter warriors: ANA and British soldiers conduct a foot patrol outside Musa Qaleh last December

Report: Stephen Tyler
Pictures: Cpl Phillip French

WELL turned out and standing proudly to attention, the company of troops lined up on a muddy parade square a few hundred yards away from Camp Bastion represent a huge chunk of hope for the future of Afghanistan.

The national flag emblazoned on the sleeves of the men's jackets identifies them as soldiers of the Afghan National Army (ANA), a fighting force steadily growing in stature since it rose from the ashes of its Taliban-destroyed

predecessor in 2001. Although the ANA remains rougher around the edges than its coalition counterparts, training from British Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) is helping the indigenous troops play a more active role in driving the Taliban from their country.

Speaking from the army's base at Camp Shorabak, near Bastion, senior officer Col Sarwar told *Soldier* that although the ANA is not yet realistically ready to branch out on its own, its partnership with the British is already bearing fruit.

"The British support is helping us in every single section," he said. "We still

need some training, we still need some support and we still need some heavy weapons. There are a lot of things we still don't have, but when we have all that we can do our thing on our own.

"We hope day by day to improve ourselves to be able to continue this job on our own. Before we didn't have any armoured vehicles, but now we have. Before we didn't have any modern weapons, but now we have. These things will allow us to continue our jobs in the future. This is not just the work of one year or one month. This will take a long time."

The ANA companies are representative of the diverse nature of Afghan society, with poor migrant farmers working with the well-off sons of middle-class families.

Also serving side-by-side in the Afghan ranks are hardened senior soldiers who fought alongside the Soviet Army in the 1980s as well as others with no previous military experience.

Working with professional British trainers gives the seasoned soldiers a chance to renew their military careers, while the regular pay and welfare package afforded to Afghan troops makes joining the ANA a route out of poverty for





others. Regardless of the fringe benefits of signing up, the one thing that unites every member of the force is the chance to play a role in resurrecting peace and security in Helmand.

"The people who joined the army and are right now attacking the Taliban know that we are Afghan whereas the Taliban are not," continued Col Sarwar. "They want to fight for their country. The Taliban are against improvement and the Government. Our people fight against them for Afghanistan."

Overseeing the ANA's training during the current Op Herrick deployment is a role taken



on with enthusiasm by the 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment. Although the OMLT programmes start from Camp Shorabak, ANA detachments have joined troops from 2 Yorks on operations across Helmand, including the hot spots of Musa Qaleh and Sangin.

Maj Marc Steventon, 2 Yorks' quartermaster, explained that one of the ANA's key strengths is its soldiers' unrivalled knowledge of the geographical and social lie of the land.

"The ANA know the terrain here because it's the terrain they have been fighting over for years," he said.

"In the recent bad weather they knew how to cross the wadis and they also know the local people and when something is going to happen. Their intelligence-gathering network is second to none and they bring an expertise to fighting in Helmand. They are an Afghan solution to an Afghan problem. Any political differences are put to one side because the goal is security and stability for the country."

The potential problem area of communication has been solved by a team of interpreters attached to each ANA company. British and Afghan

troops have also learnt key phrases in each others' languages.

Company Sergeant Major Mike Scott, 2 Yorks, is undertaking his second mentoring mission after previously working with

the Sierra Leonean Army in 2003 and is confident that the Afghan troops will improve with each future deployment.

"Out here we have to get things right in a short period of time and continuity is the problem," he said. "Personally I wasn't expecting to come here and change the world, but if we scratch the surface and leave things better for the next group to come in then that will be mission accomplished."

The ANA's continued improvement is yielding palpable results on the ground, not least during the successful coalition attack on Musa Qaleh in December.

The people working with the Afghans on a daily basis are pragmatic and admit that moulding their charges into a self-sufficient force is going to take considerably longer than the six months afforded to each OMLT deployment.

But the motivation and enthusiasm of the native soldiers to help bring peace to their troubled country is plain to see and Maj Steventon is very optimistic about the ANA's prospects.

"They are a competent military force and all we are doing is making sure that the stability is there," he concluded.

"I would say they would be able to cope on their own in the not too distant future." ■



Last Bastion

Troops keep final stop before Helmand's front line running like clockwork

Report: Stephen Tyler
Pictures: Graeme Main

SINCE Camp Bastion was crafted in the middle of the nothingness of southern Helmand's desert by Royal Engineers in 2006, its award-winning design and layout has undergone a gradual evolution with each and every deployment.

Permanent housing blocks, modern workshops rivalling those found in Britain and even a new hospital have helped in the transformation of the eight-square mile base that at some point serves as home for each of the 7,700 British troops in Afghanistan.

The ever-improving infrastructure has made living and working on Bastion a much more endurable experience, as *Soldier* discovered when it paid a visit to some of the many units based there.

● Handling everything from soldiers' pay to large-scale construction project budgets has become second nature for Bastion's busy administration cell.

Under the leadership of Capt Andy Thomson, AGC (SPS), the seven-strong team is responsible for distributing up to £150,000 each and every week.



Cash in hand: SSgt Louis Cowdroy with the £150,000 he is responsible for distributing

As well as managing the purse strings, the cell also handles flights and arrangements for R&R and has an extensive library of DVDs, books and video games for soldiers wanting some entertainment during their downtime.

SSgt Louis Cowdroy, AGC (SPS), the banker of Bastion, who takes responsibility for the money, told *Soldier*: "I enjoy doing the job because I think it helps to keep motivation and morale high.

"When the guys have been out in adverse conditions on operations and they come through here looking like hell, we like them to leave feeling like they have had any problems sorted."

● Bastion's REME contingent plays a vital role in keeping the Army's operational vehicles on the road.

Working out of a recently upgraded hub at the heart of the camp, the mechanics carry out day-to-day maintenance and post-operational inspections on Warriors, WMIKs, Mastiffs and the Royal Marines' amphibious Vikings.

Also on site is a dedicated metal smiths responsible for repairing and upgrading vehicle components ranging in size from seat belt brackets to Mastiff bar armour, and an RLC element managing stores of nearly 10,000 items every month.

● In excess of 2,000 people both in camp and at forward observation bases (FOBs) rely on Bastion's cookhouse to keep their stomachs full.

Running the kitchen is a 24-hour operation managed over three shifts as chefs transform incoming rations into nutritional meals, with as many as eight choices available at dinner times.

Kitchen manager Cpl Bruce Anderson, RLC attached to RE, said that his staff occasionally have to contend with ingredients that have been blasted by enemy fire on route to Bastion from Kabul.

"Sometimes it arrives and you can





Left, Cooking up a storm:
Chef LCpl Ilaitia Ravuway,
RLC attached RA, prepares
lunch at Camp Bastion's
main cookhouse

Right, Helmand hounds:
LCpl Joe Jones, RAVC, on
patrol with vehicle search
dog Sam

Below, Pizza the action:
Bastion-based soldiers
make the most of their
downtime by visiting the
camp's Naafi and Pizza Hut

see where a rocket has gone straight through the top of the transport, but we always get the food out.

"We provide a good choice and we also send food out to the hospitals."

● A regular supply convoy between Bastion and Kandahar is a crucial task that keeps the camp's RLC personnel busy.

Working alongside a force protection element provided by a platoon from 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, troops involved in the resupply operations encounter frequent contacts as they drive tank transporters, Drops vehicles and Mastiffs on and off-road around Helmand.

The improved armour and extra space afforded to troops inside the convoy's Mastiffs is a big hit. Trainee driver Pte Darren Barnes, RLC, described it as "the Lamborghini of military vehicles", while instructor LCpl Jai McClare, RLC, added "it's 100 per cent armoured and there is no doubt in anyone's mind that it is saving lives out here".

● Anyone who has searched online for aerial images of Afghanistan can attest to how scarce they are in cyberspace.

With detailed maps a necessity for troops on the ground, Camp Bastion's geographical

cell produces more than 1,000 images each week, ranging in scale from town plans all the way up to country and continent-level data.

"We have enough to do to work 24/7 if we could," said Royal Engineer Sgt Jason Fife. "Whatever the battle-group is doing in Helmand, we can supply the images."

● The Royal Signals' management of Bastion's copious communications networks has been such a success that SSgt Charlie Henson believes it has improved the camp's capabilities by more than 100 per cent.

Different groups within the signal cell are responsible for maintaining technology including the phone and internet connections, and managing and distributing signals between the relevant units. A new computer system, which makes dealing with welfare information much easier, has also ensured that communicating with the outside world is better than ever before.

"We set our sights on improving the



systems we inherited by 100 per cent," explained SSgt Henson. "I have no doubt in my mind that when we hand over to the next unit we will have done even better than that."

● In line with the experience of handlers in Iraq, members of Camp Bastion's 102 Military Working Dog Support Unit have proved an invaluable asset on and off base.

The unit's 19 staff have access to 17 dogs which act as search or attack animals in and around Bastion as well as at FOBs on the front line.

Unit OC Maj Richard Pope, RAVC, said: "Almost everything that's going on in theatre has working dogs involved and the difference I have noticed compared with theatres like Iraq is that our guys are going a lot further forward.

"Commanders on the ground are getting a huge amount of confidence in having dogs with them out on patrol." ■



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Femme fatales

The fairer sex closes gender gap on the front line of operations

ONCE a female soldier is described as "one of the lads", they know they've been accepted into the masculine world of the British Army. But *Soldier* asked what were the rewards for making it in a male-dominated environment and what did it take to get there . . .

Capt Rachel Emmerson, RLC Operations officer

THE higher you go up the ranks, the less there is of your peer group and in theatre there's only me and about 12 medical officers. Being female has never been an issue but I'm quite loud and happy to speak up and have confidence in myself. Everything is equal – the pay is the same and the girls are doing exactly the same on the front line as the lads. In theatre we have brought our little 'girly' touches and, if anything, being in the Army has made me more feminine. Because I'm in uniform most of the time, I like to wear skirts and dress up when I'm in my civvies.

LBdr Lindsay Butterree, 5 Regt RA Mamba operator

I JOINED the RA because they are the next to go to the front line after the infantry and it sounded more exciting. Out here I'm with an all-male team but it's good. Although they look after me, they don't treat me any differently and expect me to do the same as any lad. Serving on Op Telic is not great for your femininity but it's something I chose to do and something I have to live with. I would recommend the Army to other women, but to succeed you must just crack on with the job and prove to anyone who disagrees with women being in the Army that you can do it.

Cpl Jo Girvan, REME Vehicle mechanic

I'VE always wanted to join the Army, but I didn't know it offered such a variety of careers and I'm really glad I trained as a mechanic. I served on Telic 1 and was

out and about with 16 Air Assault Brigade in the fitter section. On this tour I've been on one op outside the Contingency Operating Base to provide vehicle cover if there's a breakdown. I'm working with all blokes but it's dead on. I've only been in one place with other girls but I prefer working with boys because if I give them a dressing down they take it.

Pte Karen John, RLC Tank transporter driver

I joined up after going to an Army open evening and thought I'd give it a whirl. Now I've served on Telic 2, 10 and 11. Telic 10 was the worst, as I was casevac'd out with a dislocated shoulder after an IED incident. I've had loads of opportunities and I've worked with many teams. Tours give you more experience as a soldier rather than being classed as the Home Guard. As a woman you've got to have a certain personality and mentality, especially in tank transport as there are not many of us.

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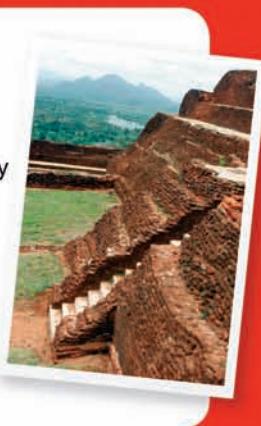
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Playing for real

Cutting-edge simulator teaches valuable lessons before deployment

Report: Cliff Caswell

WITH military campaigns being fought at the forefront of technology, a commander's mastery of information can mean the difference between life and death.

Making decisions based on a mind-boggling array of data is tough enough, but working against an enemy intent on killing soldiers and civilians adds considerably to the burden that comes with directing a battle.

It was concerns about info overload that prompted bosses at defence firm Thales to give Afghanistan-bound troops access to the company's Istar (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance) simulator.

The company opened the doors of its Theatre Battle Lab in Crawley, West Sussex, to soldiers from 12 Mechanized Brigade, who spent three days locked in battle with a mock Taliban force.

Working with a network of computers, and photo-mapped scenery of Helmand, a specialist brigade Istar cell was charged with directing the Exercise Ace Fox campaign. At the same time a commander from B Squadron, The Light Dragoons, was deploying reconnaissance forces in another room and a senior NCO from the Intelligence Corps took charge of the enemy.

Brigade military planners were able to command assets including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and air support as the action unfolded on a huge cinematic screen.

Peter Wright, a senior executive overseeing information superiority in the Thales Aerospace Division,

maintained that getting commanders up to speed with new kit, and making sure they understood its advantages and limitations, was key. He added that the training package at the lab had proved extremely popular with the soldiers and had helped them learn valuable lessons before deployment.

The simulator also enabled troops to get to grips with data from UAVs in simulated conditions – a key opportunity as airspace restrictions means kit cannot routinely be used on live exercises.

Wright said: "There were three different scenarios in our exercise, which culminated in the defence of a forward operating base that had come under attack. The Istar team had to decide how to best use their assets to defend it."

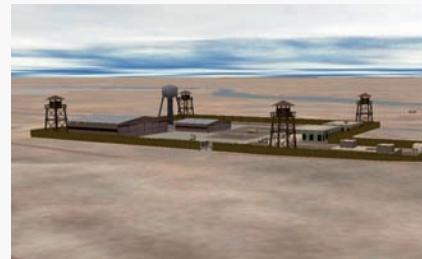
As well as using specialist mapping technology of the area around Garmsir to create the exercise's virtual environment, weapons and vehicles were also modelled on their real-life counterparts. The Istar team could call for assets including a Nimrod surveillance aircraft or summon strikes from helicopter gunships to attack Taliban positions.

"We pretty much gave the soldiers everything but the heat, so when they arrived in Afghanistan the terrain would not look unfamiliar to them," Wright told *Soldier*.

Michael Rowe, an Istar technical executive with Thales and former Royal Logistic Corps soldier, was impressed with the way troops had adapted to the new technologies.

He said: "It was a very real experience for them – we had 20 or 30 guys here doing shift work and having a geographically accurate environment was a huge asset." ■

'We pretty much gave the soldiers everything but the heat'



Digital deployment: Troops from 12 Mechanized Brigade's Istar cell honed their command skills at Thales' Theatre Battle Lab in readiness for the reality of operating in Afghanistan, below





Flight of fancy

Top Gear journalist falls for Army 'bird' during Op Herrick pit stop

Interview: Cliff Caswell
Picture: BBC

FOR a presenter of the ultimate laddish TV show, it was an exciting spectacle – the rotor blades of a menacing Apache helicopter whirring into action and heralding another regular sortie into the badlands of southern Afghanistan.

Top Gear journalist James May has always been fascinated by all things mechanical and was immediately struck by the British Army's most advanced weapon of war in flight.

When the helicopter returned a short time later with all of its ammunition expended, however, the reality that he was in a theatre of war quickly hit home.

"It had clearly fired off an awful lot of ordnance, and that did remind me that I wasn't watching some sort of exercise," recalled the presenter, who, alongside colleagues Jeremy Clarkson and Richard Hammond, spent time with British troops on Op Herrick late last year.

"We were based in a safe area, but still saw troops going around in military vehicles and with loaded weapons. It was my first visit to an operational theatre but the men and women we met were fantastic and really welcoming."

While Afghanistan certainly proved a huge eye-opener for May, he admitted that, having made a career out of life in the fast lane, he had relished the military adventure.

He got the job of co-presenting *Top Gear* for the BBC after fronting Channel 4 car show *Driven*. He has also held senior positions on magazines and writes a column for *The Daily Telegraph*. But the motoring correspondent, who studied for a degree in music at Lancaster and whose first car was a Vauxhall Cavalier Mark I, confessed that the road that led him to a successful career in the media had been far from conventional.

"I got into journalism by accident really – I was working on a magazine in a production role and had a go at writing a few things," he said. "That's how I ended up in the industry. I couldn't think of anything else that I could do."

'I liked the way all the troops got on and the sense of community'

May recently presented a BBC show about the technology of the 20th century in which he sampled some of the most amazing machines of the past 100 years, including the Royal Air Force's Eurofighter, and he admitted that he was a huge enthusiast of the advanced equipment used by British forces.

Exhilarated by his experience in the fast jet, May is now hoping for an excursion in a restored Vulcan bomber and said he would jump at the chance to climb into the cockpit of the Apache he had seen in Afghanistan.

"I would love to fly in that attack helicopter – fortunately I don't get airsick at all," the 45-year-old boasted, adding that he had first become fascinated by British military history as a youngster growing up during the 1960s and 70s.

"My great grandfather fought in the trenches of Belgium during the First World War. I have also spent most of my life reading books about conflict, and have picked up something of an idea of the mentality of the British soldier."

But Bristol-born May confided: "I'm not really very tough. I'm actually a bit of a wimp and going out to southern Afghanistan made me realise how real the fighting is."

The *Top Gear* team were invited out to theatre because of their enthusiastic support for wounded troops and the Help for Heroes charity, which is campaigning to raise funds for the Defence Military Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court, Surrey.

After boarding the RAF TriStar to Kandahar, May was struck by the reception of the soldiers and the professionalism they showed in austere conditions. Despite having to do without home comforts, they made the best of their job.

"I liked the way all the troops got on and the sense of community,"

said May, who went on to list American Hard Gums, Scalextric and beer among his own favourite luxuries.

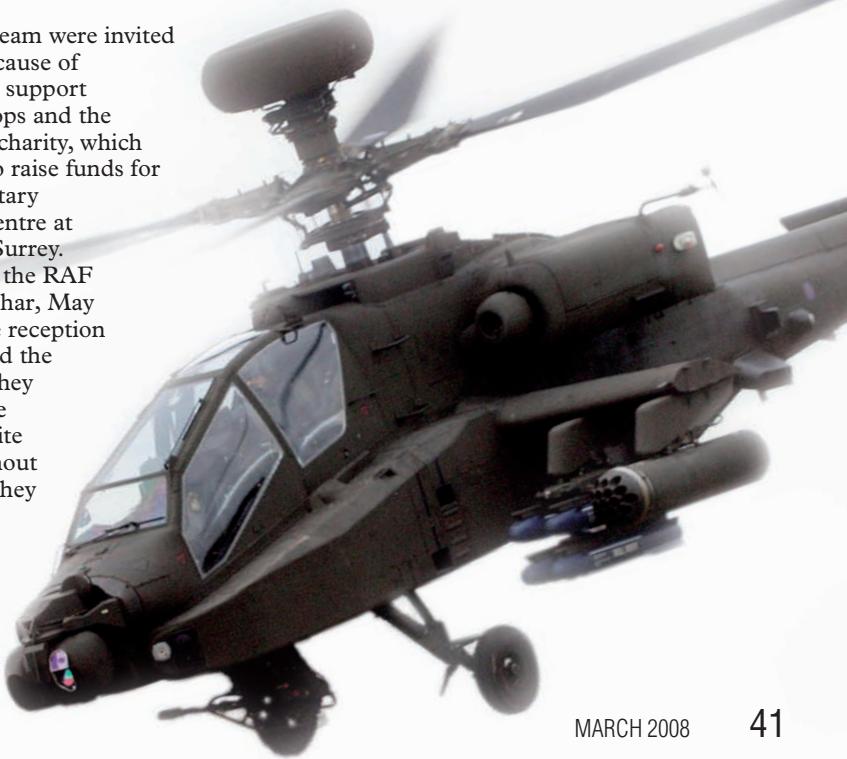
"But what I would like to know is how all of them remain so clean out in theatre. It took me no more than two hours to become completely plastered in crap. Even though the soldiers were working that was something that didn't seem to happen to them."

Having seen the troops carry out a demanding job with such professionalism, May said the *Top Gear* team were considering a return visit to Afghanistan this year and hinted that he had a hankering to go out on ops.

"Several people we met told us that we could perhaps get back there in the spring and it would be interesting to get in a Land Rover on patrols," said May, who took time out from the test track to visit injured soldiers at Headley Court over Christmas.

"In the meantime, I'd like to thank the troops out there for all their hospitality and looking after us in the way they did."

"My message to British soldiers around the world is keep up the work you are doing and we in the media will do anything we can to make more people appreciate what your job is like." ■





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From the top

Head of the British Army gives *Soldier* a wide-ranging, exclusive interview »



The man in charge: Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, Chief of the General Staff

Picture: Graeme Main

Interview: John Elliott

GEN Sir Richard Dannatt is fiercely proud of the men and women he commands and of their amazing work in Iraq and Afghanistan.

On a table in his office on the fifth floor of the Ministry of Defence stand framed photographs of soldiers killed in action, sent to him by their families.

He wears the distinctive wristband of the Help for Heroes charity.

"I think one has to say, first and foremost, that success on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan is really our top line and our bottom line," said the Chief of the General Staff.

"I believe that in both theatres we have been enormously successful and it's almost entirely down to the tremendous efforts of our soldiers and all our people in both those operational theatres."

His admiration for those he commands is never far from the surface, whatever topic he touches: combat equipment, Government and public support, care for Service personnel and their families, prisoner abuse, bullying.

Public support

THE astonishing upturn in public support for the Army came after CGS made what he described as a "pretty boring" and uncontroversial speech to the International Institute for Strategic Studies last October.

He dropped in the thought to his audience that there was a disconnect between the nation and its military and suggested that perhaps, a bit like the Americans, there should be a greater demonstration of support by people at large for soldiers. The remark was picked up by the media and ricocheted around the news bulletins for a day or two.

"Yes, I am a little surprised by the way people up and down the country have picked it up but on thinking about it I shouldn't be because the Army and the Armed Forces have always been held in fairly high regard."

His words had helped people "connect their latent support for the Army" by separating the reasons "behind why we are in Iraq and Afghanistan to focus much more on the fact that soldiers are doing their duty in difficult circumstances.

"That is something that can be celebrated and supported. I think once people understood that, it unlocked this wall of support, which has been really quite fantastic."

As a direct result, 10,000 people crowded on to the streets of Norwich when the 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment marched through, many thousands turned out in Cardiff to acclaim The Royal Welsh and the pavements of Salisbury and Winchester were lined for the return of The Rifles from their operational tour. The story was the same throughout the Midlands, where there was a heartfelt welcome for the men of the Mercians.

"Having started this campaign, my tactics now are that whenever I hear that a particular town or organisation has done something I just write and say thank you. It's hugely appreciated by me and I know it makes our people feel good. People like to be shown respect and feel valued for what they are doing."

"To do the job well we've got to have the right equipment and the right training in our hands, and I think a couple of years ago we weren't as well placed as we are now."

But, he said, a lot of people at the MoD, the Procurement Agency and elsewhere had "worked jolly hard" to make sure the Army had the weapons, the vehicles, access to intelligence gathering technology, unmanned aerial vehicles and the personal kit it needed.

"If you line up a dismounted close combat unit today with the equivalent unit two years ago, they hardly bear comparison in terms of the equipment they have got.

"I think through a lot of people's efforts we have made a lot of progress," he added.

"We've got to keep the movement going. We need more volume of equipment in our hands so we've got more equipment for pre-deployment training so our people are familiar with the kit before they deploy, so that on operations they hit the ground running to give

themselves the best chance of doing what they've got to do."

Gen Dannatt linked the improvement in equipment to when insurgents began to use sophisticated explosive devices against the Army in mid-2005, which "exposed some of the equipment we had".

He said the whole campaign had moved to a higher level and the Army had had to respond very quickly.

"We made the argument [to the Government] and the new equipments have started to come through."

CGS singled out the procurement of Mastiff, the heavily armoured and weaponed troop carrier now in service in Iraq and Afghanistan and in which soldiers had great confidence, as a good example of the process.

"You can't click your fingers to produce a vehicle like that, but we effectively went from not even knowing the name Mastiff to having it in service in less than a year, and I think that's really agile." ■

Above right, Public acclaim:
The amazing welcome given to troops in Winchester has been repeated across the UK as people have responded to CGS's appeal for more support

Picture: Cpl Adrian Harlen RLC





Respect for others

THE abuse of prisoners in Iraq had been completely unacceptable, said Gen Dannatt. He pointed out that the proven cases had taken place in the second half of 2003 and early 2004, when, as the Aitken Report had concluded, waves of troops were prepared for warfighting but actually found themselves in an aggravated peace support situation.

"The training we gave them was probably not entirely appropriate to the circumstances they found themselves in. Most were able to adjust their behaviour but, as with any large group, there were some who found it difficult to make the change or were prone to behave poorly. I think it was a relatively time-constrained period.

"We've looked at it very closely, we've analysed what went wrong and I believe in terms of training, doctrinal changes and education we have put that right.

"It was inexcusable. Be in no doubt that those who do carry out such things will be exposed and punished. I won't flinch from doing so and I don't think right-minded people in the Army will disagree with me.

"We need, bearing in mind that one of our core values is respect for others, to properly put value on this.

"Whether you are recruiting, training or an instructor giving training, or you are in a unit – whatever your position, be it senior or junior – you need to act in such a way that you respect other people's rights.

"That doesn't mean that our systems of discipline become in any way watered down or ineffective, but everybody has a right to be treated as an individual and respected.

"Wherever you are in the chain of command, wherever you are in the training process, it is absolutely incumbent on each and every one of us that we do respect other people for who they are.

"It gets down to racial recognition, it gets down to getting away from sexual harassment, which I think is still a problem for us.

"I think we all need to be very conscious of that and bear down on it because it is another dimension of respecting others."

Being a dad

ASKED whether the fact that he was the father of a soldier had made his job as head of the Army more or less difficult, CGS responded: "I am very grateful for the constant support of our families and because I am the Chief of the General Staff and a dad, I think I can see both ends of that.

"I'm concerned about all and every one of our Servicemen who are in harm's way. Inevitably it's sharpened for oneself when a member of one's own family is away, and my son has done two tours in Iraq and a tour in Afghanistan.

"Like any father, I am relieved when he comes home safe and sound, and therefore on that basis I share that emotion with all our families.

"I have huge pride in not just what my son does but what everyone's sons and daughters and loved ones do because it is an important job. It is important work and I think the nation has now found a way of showing its appreciation and gratitude."

Service charities

CGS said he was hugely grateful to the Service charities for the support they provided. "I'm talking particularly about the Royal British Legion, SSAFA Forces Help, the Army Benevolent Fund, and the new charity Help for Heroes.

"Yes, the Government must do its part,

but I think the charitable side of it can channel people's enthusiasm, channel people's desire to support their troops into practical projects.

"For example, the project SSAFA is running to provide a home-from-home for families of wounded soldiers visiting them

at Selly Oak and also the rehabilitation centre at Headley Court is really good. It's a £5 million project and they're about £3.5 million into that. And I think the Help for Heroes project for a swimming pool and refurbished gym at Headley Court again is also very good."

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Government approves inflation-busting 2.6 per cent pay rise and first increase to X-factor since 2000 »

OTHER RANKS

HIGHER BAND

	Annual Rate 2007	Annual Rate 2008	Annual Increase
Level 7	£43,077	£44,588	£1,511
Level 6	£42,428	£43,916	£1,488
Level 5	£41,685	£43,147	£1,462
Level 4	£40,953	£42,389	£1,436
Level 3	£40,213	£41,624	£1,411
Level 2	£39,534	£40,921	£1,387
Level 1	£38,772	£40,132	£1,360

LOWER BAND

	Annual Rate 2007	Annual Rate 2008	Annual Increase
Level 7	£40,651	£42,077	£1,426
Level 6	£39,534	£40,921	£1,387
Level 5	£38,455	£39,804	£1,349
Level 4	£37,719	£39,042	£1,323
Level 3	£36,987	£38,284	£1,297
Level 2	£36,255	£37,527	£1,272
Level 1	£35,565	£36,812	£1,247

RANGE 5

WO1

SSgt-WO2

Sgt

Cpl

Pte-ICPL

Level 9	£39,851	£41,249	£1,398	£36,512	£37,792	£1,280
Level 8	£39,289	£40,667	£1,378	£35,704	£36,957	£1,253
Level 7	£38,738	£40,097	£1,359	£35,248	£36,484	£1,236
Level 6	£38,187	£39,526	£1,339	£34,716	£35,934	£1,218
Level 5	£37,361	£38,671	£1,310	£33,214	£34,379	£1,165
Level 4	£36,530	£37,812	£1,282	£32,769	£33,918	£1,149
Level 3	£35,704	£36,957	£1,253	£32,018	£33,141	£1,123
Level 2	£34,870	£36,094	£1,224	£31,010	£32,098	£1,088
Level 1	£34,048	£35,242	£1,194	£30,611	£31,684	£1,073

RANGE 4

WO2 levels 5-9; Ssgt levels 1-7

RANGE 3

Level 7	£34,025	£35,219	£1,194	£31,429	£32,532	£1,103
Level 6	£33,339	£34,570	£1,171	£31,192	£32,286	£1,094
Level 5	£32,773	£33,922	£1,149	£30,150	£31,208	£1,058
Level 4	£32,146	£33,274	£1,128	£29,384	£30,415	£1,031
Level 3	£31,746	£32,860	£1,114	£29,090	£30,110	£1,020
Level 2	£30,961	£32,048	£1,087	£28,377	£29,372	£995
Level 1	£30,180	£31,239	£1,059	£27,653	£28,623	£970

RANGE 2

Level 7	£30,573	£31,645	£1,072	£27,494	£28,459	£965
Level 6	£29,920	£30,970	£1,050	£27,294	£28,252	£958
Level 5	£29,313	£30,341	£1,028	£27,079	£28,029	£950
Level 4	£28,622	£29,626	£1,004	£26,868	£27,810	£942
Level 3	£27,970	£28,951	£981	£26,664	£27,599	£935
Level 2	£26,664	£27,599	£935	£25,423	£26,315	£892
Level 1	£25,423	£26,315	£892	£24,328	£25,182	£854

RANGE 1

Lcpl levels 5-9; Pte levels 1-7

NEW ENTRANT RATE OF PAY

£12,572	£13,031	£441	£12,572	£13,013	£441
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Report: John Elliott

KEY recommendations in the 2008 report of the Armed Forces' Pay Review Body (AFPRB) included targeted measures and financial retention incentives (FRIs) aimed at the Royal Artillery and REME vehicle mechanics, a new category of specialist pay for senior NCO and officer EOD operators, and an increase of one per cent in the X-factor, the first since 2000.

The independent body, whose plea for a 2.6 per cent rise in military salaries was accepted in full, also focused on a 2.6 per cent increase in specialist pay, compensatory allowances and Reserves' bounties.

It also recommended a 3.7 per cent increase in rental charges for Grade 1 Service families' accommodation (SFA), with a highest increase of 2.2 per cent for single living accommodation (SLA), and with lower graduated rises below the top grade for both SFA and SLA.

There will be no increase to Grade 4 housing, the worst available, which has been frozen since the late 1990s. Garage rents are to be increased and a daily food charge introduced to facilitate the move to Pay As You Dine.

The AFPRB visited units and families in the UK, Germany and Gibraltar, and troops on operations in Afghanistan, to glean evidence against a background of slightly improved recruiting figures but an "upward trend" in the voluntary outflow of both officers and other ranks (OR). It found that while OR base pay, excluding the X-factor, was broadly in line with civilians, the pay of senior officers had fallen further behind the market.

The Army's full-time trained strength on April 1, 2007 was 99,350, a 3.2 per cent shortfall which, the AFPRB noted, had widened to 3.6 per cent by October. The report commented that the picture masked significant shortfalls among junior soldiers in the Infantry and Royal Artillery, and among specialists such as REME vehicle mechanics. However, the Army carried an overall surplus of officers.

Bombardiers and below who reach their five-year point in the Royal Artillery between April 1 this year and March 31, 2012 will qualify for the FRI of £4,500 for a three-year return of service while lance corporal mechanics in the REME with between four and six years' service will be offered a £7,000 incentive for a three-year return. This scheme will run for three years until March 31, 2011.

The new EOD operators' pay for SNCOs and officers reflects a 30 per cent manning shortage among officers, WOs and SNCOs in the RE, RLC and the RAF, which has led to breaches of harmony guidelines with Army tour intervals averaging just 12 months.

Research on whether junior ranks



pay was likely to fall below the National Minimum Wage (NMW) showed that following the rise in NMW last October, any soldiers aged 22 and over who worked more than 55 hours a week could potentially fall below the line, as could those aged 18 to 21 who worked more than 65 hours.

With Reserve forces now crucial to operational capability, the AFPRB made a case for increases in bounties and the call-out gratuity, which rises to £485. It noted that the Territorial Army was operating at 85 per cent strength.

Among issues included in an analysis of the X-factor were an increase in danger (addressed in part in 2006 by the introduction of the theatre-specific operational allowance), turbulence to families and social life, separation, job satisfaction (which, on balance, the MoD considered to have declined) and working hours, which had risen in 2006-07.

Those on operations and exercises can expect to work on average up to 73 hours a week and the MoD believes there is a significant risk that this will increase further in the future. ■

● Officers, late entry officers, TA and specialist pay – Pages 50-51

Above, Blast deflectors: EOD operators' pay has been introduced to combat a 30 per cent manning shortage among officers, WOs and SNCos in the RE, RLC and the RAF

Picture: WO2 Giles Penfound

ALLOWANCES

	£ per day	£ per day
Longer Separation Allowance		
Level 1 (up to 400 days)	6.38	
Level 2 (401-700 days)	9.97	
Level 3 (701-1000 days)	13.58	
Level 4 (1001-1300 days)	14.90	
Level 5 (1301-1600 days)	16.05	
Level 6 (1601-1900 days)	17.20	
Level 7 (1901-2200 days)	18.33	
Level 8 (2201-2500 days)	20.06	
Level 9 (2501-2800 days)	21.21	
Level 10 (2801-3100 days)	22.36	
Level 11 (3101-3400 days)	23.50	
Level 12 (3401-3700 days)	24.65	
Level 13 (3701-4000 days)	25.79	
Level 14 (4001+ days)	26.94	
Unpleasant Work Allowance		
Level 1	2.38	
Level 2	5.87	
Level 3	17.32	
Unpleasant Living Allowance	3.18	
Northern Ireland Resident's Supplement	6.11	
London Rcrmnt and Retention Allowance	3.66	
Experimental Test Allowance (per test)	2.57	
Experimental Diving Allowance		
(Lump sum per test)		
Grade 5	286.21	
Grade 4	143.11	
Grade 3	107.33	
Grade 2	71.54	
Grade 1	14.31	
Additional hourly rates		
Grade 5	57.24	
Grade 4	14.31	
Grade 3	10.72	
Grade 2	7.15	
Grade 1	0.00	

OFFICERS

		Annual Rate 07	Annual Rate 08	Annual Increase
Brig	Level 5	£89,444	£96,288	£6,844
	Level 4	£88,523	£95,343	£6,820
	Level 3	£87,614	£94,410	£6,796
	Level 2	£86,701	£93,473	£6,772
	Level 1	£85,787	£92,537	£6,750
Col	Level 9	£79,049	£85,268	£6,219
	Level 8	£78,105	£84,300	£6,195
	Level 7	£77,162	£83,332	£6,170
	Level 6	£76,223	£82,368	£6,145
	Level 5	£75,283	£81,404	£6,121
	Level 4	£74,344	£80,440	£6,096
	Level 3	£73,404	£79,477	£6,073
	Level 2	£72,461	£78,509	£6,048
	Level 1	£71,552	£77,545	£6,023
Lt Col	Level 9	£68,273	£74,023	£5,750
	Level 8	£67,454	£73,065	£5,611
	Level 7	£66,636	£72,107	£5,471
	Level 6	£65,824	£71,159	£5,335
	Level 5	£65,013	£67,294	£2,281
	Level 4	£64,202	£66,454	£2,252
	Level 3	£63,391	£65,614	£2,223
	Level 2	£62,580	£64,775	£2,195
	Level 1	£61,761	£63,927	£2,166
Maj	Level 9	£52,702	£54,550	£1,848
	Level 8	£51,611	£53,422	£1,811
	Level 7	£50,528	£52,301	£1,773
	Level 6	£49,442	£51,176	£1,734
	Level 5	£48,348	£50,044	£1,696
	Level 4	£47,265	£48,923	£1,658
	Level 3	£46,171	£47,790	£1,619
	Level 2	£45,092	£46,673	£1,581
	Level 1	£44,005	£45,549	£1,544
Capt	Level 9	£41,545	£43,002	£1,457
	Level 8	£41,073	£42,514	£1,441
	Level 7	£40,594	£42,018	£1,424
	Level 6	£39,655	£41,046	£1,391
	Level 5	£38,708	£40,065	£1,357
	Level 4	£37,768	£39,093	£1,325
	Level 3	£36,817	£38,109	£1,292
	Level 2	£35,870	£37,129	£1,259
	Level 1	£34,935	£36,160	£1,225
Lt	Level 10	£30,131	£31,188	£1,057
	Level 9	£29,411	£30,443	£1,032
	Level 8	£28,698	£29,704	£1,006
	Level 7	£27,981	£28,962	£981
2Lt	Level 6	£27,260	£28,216	£956
	Level 5	£22,680	£23,475	£795
SSLC	Level 4	Not applicable to the Army		
	Level 3	£17,111	£17,711	£600
Offr Cdt	Level 2	£15,681	£16,231	£550
	Level 1	£14,349	£14,852	£503
U Cdt	Level 4	£16,492	£17,070	£578
	Level 3	£15,108	£15,638	£530
	Level 2	£13,455	£13,927	£472
	Level 1	£11,719	£12,130	£411



SHORT-SERVICE (LATE ENTRY) COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

	Annual Rate 07	Annual Rate 08	Annual Increase
Level 15	£46,695	£48,333	£1,638
Level 14	£46,390	£48,017	£1,627
Level 13	£46,069	£47,685	£1,616
Level 12	£45,446	£47,040	£1,594
Level 11	£44,827	£46,400	£1,573
Level 10	£44,201	£45,752	£1,551
Level 9	£43,578	£45,107	£1,529
Level 8	£42,956	£44,463	£1,507
Level 7 ^a	£42,179	£43,658	£1,479
Level 6	£41,700	£43,162	£1,462
Level 5	£41,213	£42,659	£1,446
Level 4 ^b	£40,251	£41,663	£1,412
Level 3	£39,772	£41,167	£1,395
Level 2	£39,281	£40,659	£1,378
Level 1 ^c	£38,323	£39,667	£1,344

a: Minimum entry point for LE Officers with more than 15 years' service.

b: Minimum entry point for LE Officers with between 12 and 15 years' service.

c: Minimum entry point for LE Officers with less than 12 years' service.

SEPARATE pay tables are available for the groups listed below and are published in the AFPRB report and also available on the Army website (www.army.mod.uk) on the MoD Internet and Intranet websites.

- Pilot Employment Stream (Army) • Medical and Dental officers
- Veterinary officers • Chaplains • MPGS



SPECIALIST PAY

	Rate	£ per day		
		75%	50%	25%
SP(Flying)^a				
Initial rate	13.29	9.97	6.65	3.32
Middle rate ^c	22.54	16.91	11.27	5.64
Top rate ^c	35.84	26.88	17.92	8.96
Enhanced rate ^d	42.19	31.64	21.10	10.55
Enhanced rate ^e	39.88	29.91	19.94	9.97
Lieutenant Colonel^b				
On appointment	37.00	27.75	18.50	9.25
After 6 years	34.68	26.01	17.34	8.67
After 8 years	32.36	24.27	16.18	8.09
Colonel^b				
On appointment	28.33	21.25	14.17	7.08
After 2 years	26.58	19.94	13.29	6.65
After 4 years	24.84	18.63	12.42	6.21
After 6 years	21.96	16.47	10.98	5.49
After 8 years	19.06	14.30	9.53	4.77
Brigadier^b	11.56	8.67	5.78	2.89

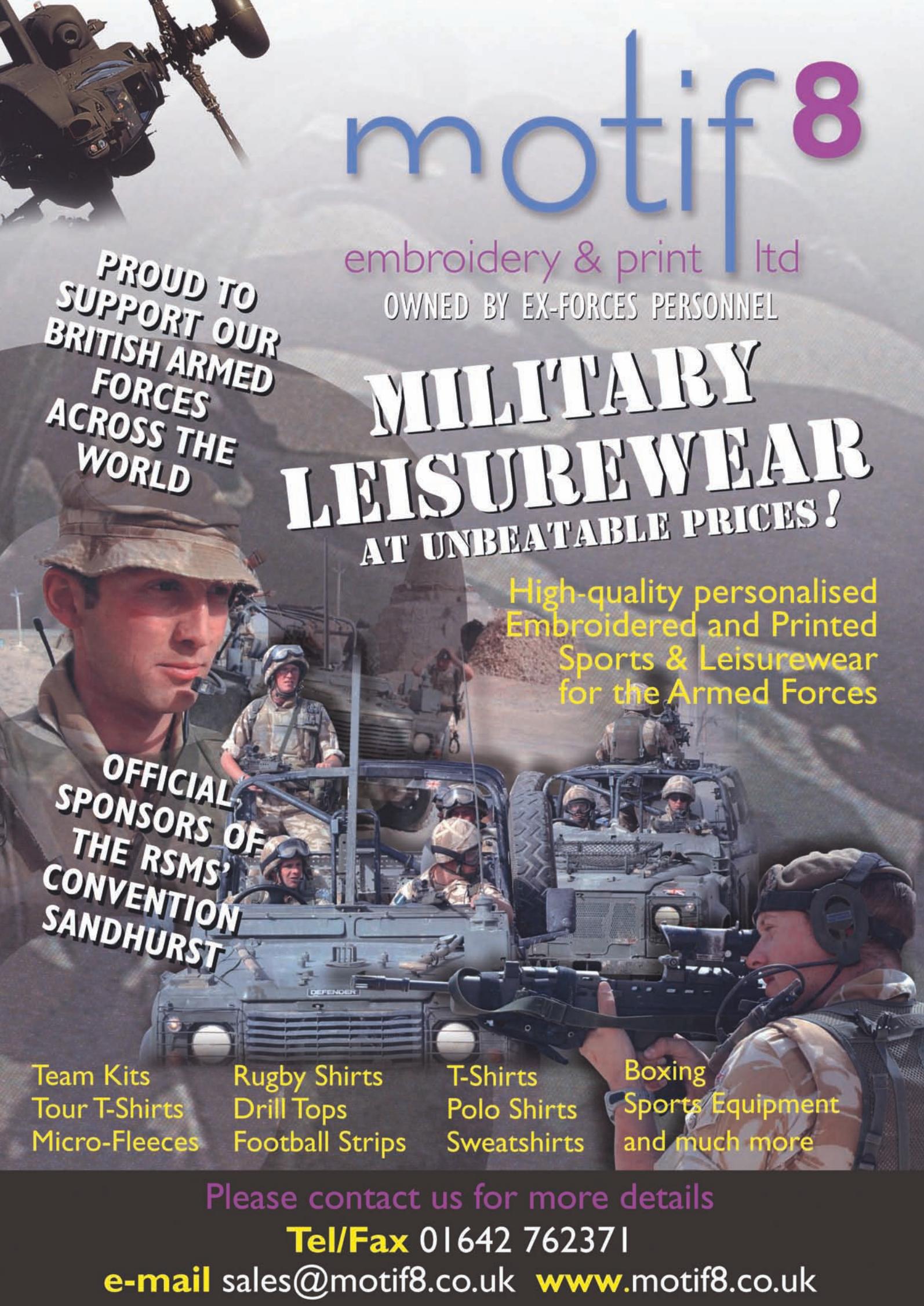


	Rate	Reserve Band Rate			
		75%	50%	25%	
Non-Commissioned aircrew (trained)					
Qualified as Army aircraft commanders					
Initial rate	13.29	9.97	6.65	3.32	
Middle rate ^f	22.54	16.91	11.27	5.64	
Top rate ^f	35.84	26.88	17.92	8.96	
Enhanced rate ^g	42.19	31.64	21.10	10.55	
Army pilots^h					
Initial rate	6.95	5.21	3.48	1.74	
Middle rate ⁱ	15.02	11.22	7.51	3.76	
Top rate ⁱ	17.91	13.43	8.96	4.48	
Army aircrew					
Initial rate	6.95	5.21	3.48	1.74	
Middle rate ⁱ	14.46	10.85	7.23	3.62	
Top rate ⁱ	19.06	14.30	9.53	4.77	

	Rate	Reserve Band Rate			
		75%	50%	25%	
Diving Pay					
Army compressed air diver (Cat 2)					
Army diver Class 1 (Cat 3)	8.10	6.08	4.05	2.03	
Army diving supervisor and Instructor (Cat 4)	10.98	8.24	5.49	2.75	
RLC air despatch pay^k					
Lower rate	4.62		2.31		
Higher rate ^f	7.51		3.76		
JHSU crew pay	4.62		2.31		
SP(Para Jump Instructor)					
Less than 8 years' experience	7.51	5.63	3.76	1.88	
8 or more years' experience	10.98	8.24	5.49	2.75	
SP(Para)	5.20	3.90	2.60	1.30	
SP(High Alt Para)^l	9.83		4.92		
SP (EOD Operators)					
Level 1	6.95		3.48		
Level 2	14.46		7.23		
Level 3	19.06		9.53		



a: Flying Pay is not payable to personnel on the Professional Aviator Pay Spine.
b: Army pilots who are not qualified as aircraft commanders do not receive the officer rate of Flying Pay but receive the Army pilot rate of Flying Pay.
c: After 4 years on the preceding rate.
d: Payable only to pilots in the ranks of Squadron Leader and below who have received the top rate of Flying Pay for 4 years.
e: Payable only to Weapon Systems Officers and observers in the ranks of Squadron Leader and below who have received the top rate of Flying Pay for 4 years.
f: After 4 years on the preceding rate.
g: Payable only to pilots who have received the top rate of Flying Pay for 4 years.
h: Army pilots not qualified as aircraft commanders.
i: After 9 years' total service, subject to a minimum of 3 years' aircrew service.
j: After 18 years' reckonable service.
k: Also payable while under training.
l: Rate applies to members of the Pathfinder Platoon.



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TALKBACK

Insurance quote is a joke

MY son is in his last two weeks of training at Vimy Barracks, ITC Catterick and was taken aback by his car insurance renewal quote for £1,750, so I said I would look for a better deal.

He is 19 and we expected it to be high.

I was drawn to a quote for £1,195 from Endsleigh Insurance but noticed that my son's occupation had been entered as "Royal Marine Commando, HM Forces". When I told the agent my son was in the Infantry he revised his quote to more than £1,700.

I asked what the difference was between a Royal Marine and an infantryman and was told the company deemed the Infantry not to be an acceptable occupation. How can that be? – **Mrs Michaela Turner, Penwortham, Preston.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), comments: I am as frustrated and irritated as you. My

advice is to shop around for the best deals available and also to take the advice of the various organisations and individuals within the Service community.

PRIZE LETTER

Keith Frampton, Services Insurance and Investment Advisory Panel, responds:

Unfortunately, many insurance companies unfamiliar with the Forces have a jaundiced view of Service personnel, especially the young and of junior rank.

They believe that the image profiled by TV programmes such as *Bad Lads Army* is typical. And while the young and inexperienced driver will always represent a high risk to motor insurance companies, the lager-fuelled, high testosterone individuals portrayed by these programmes do not endear companies to treat them favourably.

The problem is not limited to the price, with some imposing restrictions such as airside, quayside and military base exclusion clauses. These policies severely impact on Service personnel who

just need to use their vehicles to and from work. The restrictions could affect Forces motorists regardless of age and rank.

This is not the view of all insurance companies and SIIAP member firms work hard to achieve a better response from those they represent. A number of problems have been highlighted in the latest edition of *The Importance of SIIAP* (A guide to buying the right insurance and investment for the Defence community).

For example the Forces insurance policy arranged by TF Insurance Services not only provides cover with no additional loading for Service personnel, but also offers additional discounts for cars kept overnight behind the wire, free business use to cover any duty trips and unlimited cover throughout Europe whether on holiday, business or posting.

In addition it allows motorists to suspend cover while on deployment, thus avoiding the need to maintain expensive cover without sacrificing valuable protection for the vehicle.

■ Are soldiers getting a fair deal on car insurance? Have your say in a special poll on www.armynet.mod.uk

What about our UN allowance?

I AM serving with 39 Regiment RA Workshops and in April 2007 finished an Op Tosca tour of Cyprus, but I have not yet received my United Nations pay of about £150, and nor has anyone else at my unit. I was told that UN pay is £15 a day, although British soldiers only get around 74p. Where does the rest go? – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: There is

no such thing as United Nations pay. National governments are paid by the UN to offset the cost of deploying personnel on UN operations.

The UN also pays various allowances to UN staff where appropriate. Most of these do not affect you because the UK provides for your needs.

However, you do get a daily allowance for incidental expenditure and an additional allowance for days on rest and

recuperation. This is the £150 you refer to.

Money is received by your regiment from the UN every month, based on the number in theatre, and it is held in the regiment's accounts for payment.

You are paid once the tour is completed so that an average daily rate can be calculated, ensuring no one is unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged by changes in the exchange rates during the deployment. I understand you were paid on October 14.

Brief is best

YOUR letters provide a real insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas . . . but please keep them brief. Emails (mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk) MUST include your name and location (although we won't publish them if you ask us not to). Anonymous letters go in the bin. The Editor reserves the right to accept or reject letters, and to edit for length, clarity or style.

Before you write to us with a problem, you should first have tried to get an answer via your own chain of command. Our postal address is on Page 5.

Six pages of your letters and emails on issues of the day

Valid point ridiculed

I HAVE been an admirer of *Soldier* for a considerable number of years, however your recently published response to the letter "Give girls clothes that fit" (Jan) has left me astonished and disappointed.

The point that the female SNCO was making is valid and was sensibly expressed. Over the past 23 years I have, on successive operational deployments and in training appointments, been issued kit that was far too big and this includes not only clothing but also associated equipment.

Often smaller sizes have just not been available and indeed, not procured by the system.

I do not contend that this is a major issue but I believe that the response was both patronising and dismissive in that I cannot believe that anyone can fail to have noticed the marked differences in the male and female physiological structures.

Furthermore, the cartoon that you chose to publish alongside the letter further ridiculed and effectively negated the reasonable point that was being made in the letter.

At a time when recruitment and retention are such key issues it is



Spot the difference: Male and female soldiers are the butt of cartoons on the topic of ill-fitting uniforms



Dog

And we thought Brig Martin's offer to meet her to discuss the issue was both generous and appropriate.

Our cartoon, on the other hand, was entirely flippant, designed as much to amuse as to draw attention to the letter.

It is interesting that the *Chip* cartoon (from the February issue) taking the mickey out of badly-dressed male soldiers, has provoked not a single accusation that it impacted negatively on men.

For other letters on the topic of women's uniform log on to www.soldiermagazine.co.uk.

● AS a dinosauress with 31 years of service in today's Army, I can assure the female members of the AGC

Detachment of 1 Scots that the needs of the female form were identified more than a decade ago (and as we often seem to re-invent the wheel, probably a decade before that too).

● CLOTHES that fit girls properly – oh really? I must have forgotten that with all the special treatment that the good females in the forces get we must also hire Armani to cater for individual needs. In case the young ladies of 1 Scots have forgotten, our military uniforms are designed for utility, not a fashion parade.

extremely disappointing to see these attitudes within the pages of such a respected publication. – **Col Alison Forster-Knight, Col Individual Training, Training Division, HQ Land.**

The Editor responds: Our motives for publishing the letter appear to have been misunderstood. We chose it – and sent the writer a prize – not to ridicule her but precisely because we thought she was making a valid and well-argued point on behalf of all female soldiers.

Army should pay these fees

PS...

A NEWSPAPER column headlined "Madness to join the Army" on the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust report on Army recruiting left me speechless.

Our youngsters are well aware of the risks involved.

The Army was the making of me. It taught me discipline, self-respect, tolerance and a sense of belonging to something bigger – all things scorned by some journalists. I disagreed with everything he wrote, but would fight to the death for his right to say it. – A D Levy, Wolverhampton.

PLEASE clarify further the issue of the payment of professional body fees. I am a chartered civil engineer, having completed the two-year Professional Engineer Training Course at the Royal School of Military Engineering.

One of its main aims is to ensure that officers completing the course achieve chartered status.

Once you are chartered with the Engineering Council and a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers, you have to pay an annual membership fee of £235. If this is not paid you lose the right to practise as a chartered civil engineer and have to go through the whole accreditation process again if you need to be chartered in the future.

I tried to claim a refund of these professional fees through my unit admin office but was told I am unable to do so as JSP 752, Ch 10, Sect 10, is

under review awaiting guidance from Service Planning Policy.

The Army needs chartered engineers to fill specialist jobs. If an officer moves out of these jobs to attend career courses or work in a non-specialist job, I believe their fees should still be paid.

If an officer does not remain current, how can the Army expect to use a qualification that it is not prepared to fund? – **Name and address supplied**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: You raise an issue that is not new and I refer you to my letter to WO2 Donaldson regarding the matter of PBF in *Soldier*, October 2007. I am afraid we still do not have a resolution on this matter, although I believe we can expect an answer in the not too distant future. Once a way forward is agreed, appropriate internal correspondence will be distributed through the chain of command.

I haven't had my tax-free bonus

APOLOGIES for writing to you like this but I have come to a dead end in trying to find out what I am entitled to.

I began last year in the rear party as our unit was deploying on Op Telic 10. After a month they realised they needed someone in Kuwait to provide liaison and life support for Force Protection Teams when they arrived in Camp Virginia (Kuwait), so I deployed in July to provide just that.

It was great for me as a Med Cat P7 HONNI. I worked 20-hour days a lot of the time and ensured the teams were looked after and catered for, from accommodation and air-con units to ensuring they always left our location fed and watered for the trip north.

I qualified for Longer Service Separation Allowance (LSSA) that I received at a rate of £9.41 a day. I know some who are also getting the full entitlement to a tax-free bonus and operational allowance (OA) even though they spent a fair bit of time in Kuwait, whereas I am not getting a penny. Why is there one rule for one and one rule for the other?

I was classed as a member of Telic 10 and left there on October 26 to fly to Cyprus where I was then employed as part of the decompression team.

I'm getting nowhere with this so please explain what the criteria for OA is and for the tax-free bonus. – **Name and address supplied.**

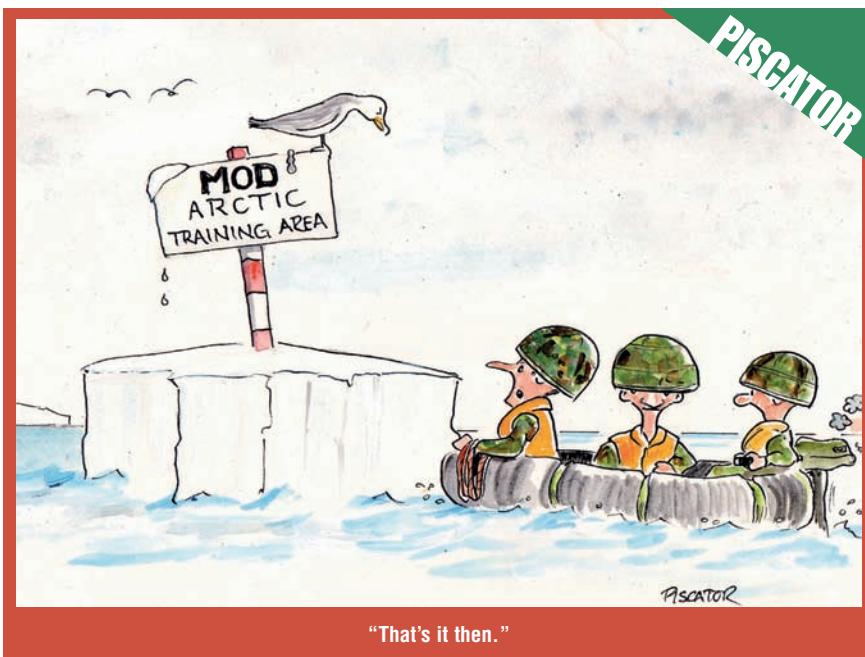
Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: *I quite understand why you are commuting daily, I think I would do the same.*

We have re-examined the way the MMA rates are set. In my earlier response I was in error in quoting that we drew data from the RAC site; it should have been the AA site at www.theaa.com/allaboutcars/advice/advice_rcosts_petrol_table.jsp

A complex algorithm is involved using data not only from this site but also Glass' Guide to take account of depreciation, and the calculation results in 25p from both.

MMA and HDT are meant to contribute to your costs, not cover them completely. They take into account the other costs such as insurance, road tax or breakdown recovery.

Since November 1, soldiers based at Beuhring in Kuwait have received the allowance as they are directly supporting operations in Iraq. Other soldiers in Kuwait, although also supporting operations, but not so directly, will not be eligible. I agree this can be difficult to understand but that is how it is.



"That's it then."



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We only get half RAC mileage rate

In your October issue, SSgt Gorton said motor mileage allowance (MMA) was laughable.

On my return from Afghanistan I was detached (not posted) from my unit and now commute 102 miles a day.

I could have had accommodation at my new unit but did not want to leave my family during the week. Having just been away for six months, I chose to live in Service Families Accommodation to be with them.

The response from DPS(A) to SSgt Gorton's letter suggested that the costs of motoring were taken from the RAC website yet, when I looked, the average cost of motoring (latest available was 2006, when petrol was cheaper) was 46p/mile.

I get only 25p (I think), about half what the RAC reckons it costs. On that basis I am more than £100 down a week. The reason, and there always

seems to be one, for this discrepancy would be interesting. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), responds: *I quite understand why you are commuting daily, I think I would do the same.*

We have re-examined the way the MMA rates are set. In my earlier response I was in error in quoting that we drew data from the RAC site; it should have been the AA site at www.theaa.com/allaboutcars/advice/advice_rcosts_petrol_table.jsp

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Where was Welfare?

I CONTACTED my local Army Welfare Service office to seek advice on two issues, relationship counselling and legal advice.

The counselling was for my marriage, which has become strained as a result of operational commitments (my wife, also in the Army, is about to return from a six-month deployment); and the legal advice was regarding access to my child from a former marriage.

The only practical help offered were referrals to Relate (long waiting list and £40 a session) and the Citizens Advice Bureau to identify an appropriate solicitor specialising in family law.

In short, no more help than is available to a civilian. While I accept that Relate offers discounted rates, and that Army welfare workers can and do conduct counselling, provided you are able to travel during the working day to one of their ever-diminishing number of

offices, this is not good enough.

The tempo of operations has seen welfare issues for Service families rise markedly and this trend will continue.

Why should Service personnel have to pay Relate? Why isn't free counselling available in every camp, garrison and station outside the working day? Soldiers are proud and often unwilling or unable to take time off work to address private and emotional issues. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: The Army provides free welfare support to its soldiers and families from public funds. This includes the confidential support line, unit welfare staff, pastoral and medical care and the Army Welfare Service (AWS), whose welfare workers are trained to support those with relationship difficulties.

Relate receives a small annual grant from the Army Central Fund (an Army

charity) to cover the cost of the single access session for Army personnel based in GB who feel they need support outside the Army framework.

As a result of increased operational tempo, AWS are recruiting additional staff. Col AWS has confirmed AWS will accommodate with out of office hours appointments or visits, but is unable to offer a sequence of visits outside normal office hours. If this happens alternative sources of support are suggested.

As to seeking legal advice regarding access to your child from a former marriage, this is very much a private matter and the advice given by the AWS to seek qualified legal advice from a solicitor is correct. The Army takes its responsibilities to its people seriously. Counselling works for some but it is not a universal panacea so using a private relationship counsellor is a personal decision and Relate is one of a number of providers.

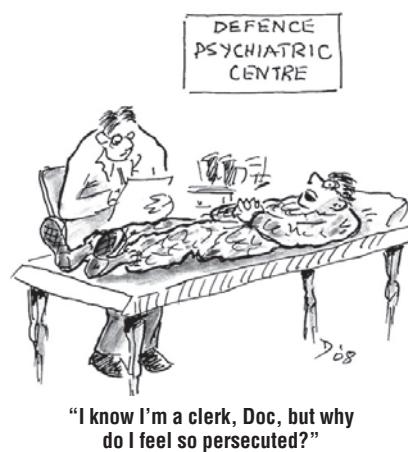
Please don't blame the clerks

I REFER to the letter "Posting put me in debt" (Jan) and to the remark about the incompetence of clerks.

Cpl McMahon obviously had a bad experience with his move and married quarter charges, however, as Col McCulloch stated, the K1325 responsibility now lies with Defence Estates (DE).

The AGC (SPS) is no longer responsible for inputting this information onto JPA.

While I'm sure Cpl McMahon gives 100 per cent, there are many times when RAO detachments and human resources staff work beyond normal hours. We also give 100 per cent to provide a service. I write in support of



all clerks, Navy, Army or RAF. – **Sgt Wigglesworth, 1 LSR, Germany.**

UNIT human resources staff are not responsible for the removal of the soldier's furniture nor are they responsible for filling in the paperwork.

They work their backsides off – they are the first in each day and last out at night, and on the lower pay band.

I cannot speak for every unit in the British Army but as an HR administrator myself it gets my back up when individuals take the easy option and blame everyone else apart from themselves for their own personal admin. – **Sgt Brooksbank, HQ 3 (UK) Div, Bulford.**

I'm still waiting to be put on the right pay

I DEPLOYED on Op Telic 10 and was promoted to lance bombardier on December 10, 2006 but am still waiting to receive the correct pay.

My trade entitles me to the higher rate. I have contacted JPA to resolve the problem but had no luck and, to be honest, found them unhelpful. – **LBdr N Gaff, Op Telic 10.**

Col Jeremy Taylor, SPVA, Assist Dir Mil Svcs, replies: A Service Request was raised on April 30, 2007 which detailed the problem of LBdr Gaff occupying the incorrect pay

level. On May 8 a response was issued by the JPAC back office stating that LBdr Gaff should ask his unit HR for guidance as he was being paid correctly for the trade recorded on JPA.

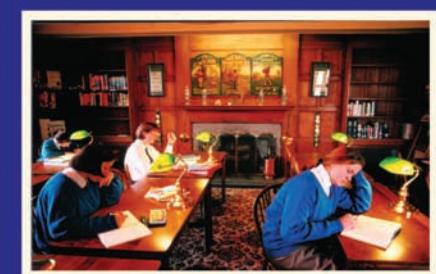
At the time it was believed that the career manager and unit HR were the only areas with the responsibility to make changes to an individual's trade on JPA.

LBdr Gaff's problems are the result of his employment trade changing, which entitled him to a higher rate. This is a process unique to Army other ranks and was not fully built into JPAC at the time

it went live last April. A revised process is in place, units are aware of the correct procedure and the JPAC is now processing all such applications.

His unit was contacted twice to place him in the correct trade and was asked to action payment from the date of promotion. It is not clear why it did not publish the change. Had it done so, this situation would not have arisen. On behalf of the department, I would like to apologise to LBdr Gaff for the obvious inconvenience.

The JPAC has contacted his unit and been assured that his pay is now correct.



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TA pay doesn't add up

TERRITORIAL Army salaries are equivalent to those of Regulars, except for a lower X-factor. The bounty compensates for the lack of a pension. However, annual pay is divided by 365 to achieve a daily rate, despite the fact that a Regular should receive 30 days' leave and weekends except on ops.

So for each day's actual work a TA soldier gets only two-thirds or so of the reward. Surely this is illegal, since it treats part-time workers differently from full-time colleagues. Can you explain?

I am not suggesting Regulars deserve less for the arduous job they undertake. I am aware that they are often at work at weekends and may not be able to take all of their leave each year, which in civvy street would be unacceptable.

My second question is, can you please say why the MoD should escape payment in lieu under such circumstances?

I enjoy what I do and do it with a happy heart to the best of my ability. But soldiers are professionals and should be paid properly and in accordance with the law. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: Members of the TA are an essential part of the British Army, but they are not legally part-time workers. They are volunteers who are able to decide when, or indeed if, they will work and it is this which affects their remuneration package.

Every effort is made to enable soldiers to

take their full leave entitlement, but there are situations where duty comes first. Leave may be denied or cancelled; it is part of our terms of service that we may be called for duty at any time, and reflected in X-factor.

When this occurs soldiers can carry leave forward into the next year and the chain of command is required to facilitate the additional leave being taken in that year where at all possible.

The TA military salary is paid at the same annual rate as for Regular personnel, the only difference being the X-factor addition (five per cent rather than 13) which reflects the differing terms of service.

If, as you seem to suggest, the TA pay was based on 335 days a year not 365, they in fact would be receiving a higher rate of pay than their Regular counterparts.

Out of pocket for doing my duty

I AM married accompanied and living in Service families accommodation in London. I recently helped with a technical inspection and stayed overnight in a mess. I had all my meals in Pay As You Dine (PAYD) facilities and kept the receipts so I could claim daily subsistence (DS).

Due to the time of travel I also bought food while travelling.

I submitted a claim for incidental expenditure and daily subsistence, which was rejected, to be resubmitted without the DS element on the grounds that you cannot claim DS while staying in Service accommodation where a

core meal is available. Although this is clearly stated in JSP 752, I believe it should be challenged on the grounds that, if Service accommodation was not available and I had stayed in a B&B, I would have been entitled to claim for at least my evening meal.

I will pursue the non-PAYD meals as a separate claim. Your help in raising this issue would be appreciated. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: Food charges and allowances have changed recently, through a combination of JPA harmonisation and the effect of Pay As You

Dine. One of the fundamental principles of the changes is that soldiers are expected to pay for what they eat.

I agree that from your perspective there appears to be an anomaly as if you had stayed in a hotel, you effectively would have lived free (providing you kept within the capped limits).

The rules are written around the fact that had you been in your normal place of duty you would have paid for any meal taken in your mess. However, if you had to stay in a hotel because no Service accommodation was available, with commensurate higher costs for a meal, it is right that you should not be out of pocket.

My recruiting bounty went missing

I AM writing with reference to the recruiting bounty introduced in 2005 for certain corps.

In December 2005, three potential recruits visited my regiment before going on to an Army Careers Information Office (ACIO). After a good day with us all three expressed an interest in joining the Army.

At the time the Soldier Recruiting Bounty Card Scheme was active, so I and two of my soldiers filled in our details on the cards and asked the potential recruits to take them to the ACIO, which they all did before the cut-off date of January 31, 2006.

A female who had my details on her card enlisted on January 29, 2006 and joined my regiment in June 2006 before deploying on Op Telic 9. So why am I

still waiting for the bounty after all this time? My unit has made many calls to the office dealing with this, to be told I will be paid the money soon.

Many soldiers grumbled about this scheme, and no wonder when it does not reward those who bothered to help the recruiting process. – **Name and address supplied.**

Lt Col Doug Wren RE, COS Recruiting Group, replies: HQ RG has looked into this case and has found the details for the soldier and your submission of the recruiting bonus scheme (RBS) card. I am happy to report that we have asked APC Glasgow to pay your bounty. I regret the time it has taken for your case to be processed and have instigated a review of all outstanding RBS cards still in the system.

More letters at **TALKBACK** online
www.soldiermagazine.co.uk

- My final pay packet was a bit light.
- This soldier should have sorted his bounty with his unit.

Give PAYD a chance

I READ with interest the letter "PAYD doesn't tick my box" (Jan) although I am depressed by listening to people wingeing about the system. It is the individual's own fault that the system does not work for them. If you want the correct meal, on time and value for money, pick up a pen and book in. – **Name and address supplied.**



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Price of courses has gone through ceiling

AM writing to pose a question to the Director of Resettlement on an emotive issue for those leaving the Service. It affects three individuals in my building alone.

Having started my last two years of resettlement, I booked a number of courses at the Resettlement Training Centre (RTC) at Aldershot through the Career Transition Partnership (CTP). I will attend them later this year.

They cost me £1,000, which I planned to offset by using the Individual and Resettlement Training Costs (IRTC) allowance of £534 (which is totally inadequate, but that's another issue).

A colleague wanting to do some of the same courses told me the RTC booklet has been amended to show



price increases for all of the courses I had booked. They had risen in February by a whopping 90 per cent (my £1,000 now becomes £1,895). How can such a massive increase be justified?

Personnel will be priced out of quality courses and I will be forced to cancel some, if not all, of mine. Will IRTC be increased to offset the rise and, if so, when? Why, having had booking confirmation from the RTC, was I not informed of the rise? And why was the rise not published in advance in one of the many resettlement publications, nor highlighted on the CTP website?

I hope the reply will not quote the availability of Enhanced Learning Credits (ELCs), which is a separate issue. — **WO1 (ASM) M Briggs, MoD Boscombe Down.**

Yes they have, but they still represent good value

Lt Col R H Jolleys, S01 Resettlement, Directorate of Resettlement, replies: You raise important points about resettlement provision and specifically about the cost of courses at the RTC in Aldershot.

There has been an extensive price review by Right Management, which has seen a significant increase in some while others reflect a minimal change and a few have even reduced.

The new prices better reflect the cost of the training delivered. In a comparison exercise with commercial providers of similar training, RTC courses continue to represent good value for money. They are tailored specifically to meet the needs of Service leavers and are delivered in a quality-controlled environment.

The external examination pass rate at the RTC is in general much higher than the national average. In some cases, the price increases appear greater than they are because previously they were presented exclusive of VAT, which should have been charged to Service leavers but was not.

The unpalatable fact is that had the MoD not agreed to the rises, which are fair and reasonable, it is highly likely that Right Management would have concluded

that some of the courses were no longer financially viable and ceased to run them.

This was a major one-off house-keeping exercise for the company and we do not anticipate rises of such magnitude in the future and have sought assurances on this.

It would not be in Right Management's interest to do so as, for many of their IRTC grant-funded courses, the company has to compete with other training providers.

Right Management accepts that it could have handled the dissemination of information on the price rises (with effect from February 1) better and has agreed that old course prices will be honoured for any training booked before the rises were posted on the website on December 7.

It is writing to everyone who booked courses before the increase, but who have since been billed at the new prices, to inform them of this. A notice has also been placed on the CTP website www.ctp.org.uk

I agree that the current value (£534) of the IRTC grant, which hasn't changed since it was introduced in 1993, is inadequate. Work is underway to double its value and inflation-proof it to increase its purchasing power.

This has to be completed on a cost

neutral basis by maximising local training provision and saving on travel and subsistence costs. So yes, the aim is to increase the IRTC grant, but no promises can be made regarding whether this will happen or when.

Some 94 per cent of Service leavers who wish to work are in jobs within six months of discharge. In a 2007 report into Leaving the Services, the National Audit Office compared UK resettlement arrangements to those in other countries, including France, the USA, Canada and Australia, and concluded that the UK system is, in many respects, at the forefront of international best practice. Notwithstanding the pricing issues, resettlement works and Service leavers should have confidence in the package provided for them.

Although you asked us not to mention Enhanced Learning Credits, I think it is relevant. We are currently working with the Directorate of Training and Education to see if it would be possible to use ELCs and the IRTC grant to fund the same resettlement course where the outcome of the training (level 3 or above), meets the criteria of both schemes. The devil will be in the detail.

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TLAs leave us ITD

Attitude survey suggests all that Army-speak leaves families In The Dark

THE US Army has a great motto that I keep going back to: "Recruit the Soldier, retain the Family".

When you look at the results of the last Families' Continuous Attitude Survey (CAS), which shows a significant increase from the previous year in the percentage of spouses saying that they would feel happier if their soldier left the Army, it would be interesting to know if this is reflected in the number of people who jumped the fence to civvy street last year.

So what makes a wife or husband want their soldier to leave the Army? Speaking from a personal point of view, it's not something that I've ever done, even in the heat of the moment when packing for our ninth move in 13 years, with three children, two rabbits and one dog to sort out and the husband skiing ("It's work, darling, I have to go . . .").

So what does prompt it? The state of much of Service families housing is of course a factor, but another significant result from the families' CAS was, in my humble opinion, the one that stated 53 per cent of soldiers' spouses were not satisfied with the communication from the Army about things that affected them and their family.

I don't know if it's just me but I'm inundated with the stuff. It's sometimes a struggle to find the information I need out of that mass but it can be really hard work – especially the TLA



A personal view from Julie McCarthy, Chief Executive of the Army Families Federation

(Three Letter Abbreviations). JPA, JSP, DIN, DIB, GOC and BFG. Then there are the equally confusing AGAI and DILFOR*. I can never remember what many of them stand for.

My husband promises me that JSP 101(?) makes Army writing simple and removes ambiguity, but if you ask me no Army letter I've ever read would win a plain English award.

So what do we as families want? The information we need has to be timely, relevant, easy to access and most importantly easy to read – no TLAs please.

ArmyNet is a great resource which ticks (on most occasions) all the boxes.

Has your partner ever accessed it? I suspect not and you may be part of the problem.

Every Service person has access to an ArmyNet account and five guest accounts they can use to give access to their partner or extended family and friends.

If you do nothing else, especially if you're about to go on deployment, sort out your guest accounts and get your wife/husband/partner to log in. There really is a load of information on there.

Now, if only my husband would read this and bring my log-in home . . .

As I said earlier we're moving but it

never gets any easier. You would think after the ninth time I'd be a dab hand at it by now. The pictures have come down, the flat pack is flat-packed and the veg box has been cancelled.

So why do I have a niggling feeling that I've forgotten to do something?

T'other half reckons I'm nervous about number one son going off to school. It's something as a new wife I swore I would never do; I got good GCSEs from a plain old comp so why wouldn't my children?

Well, moving to school number three at the age of eight is a pretty good reason and with no stability on the

horizon for us, boarding school was an option we had to consider.

I don't think that is what's niggling me though; I know we've made the right choice. Let's just hope I figure it out before the packers arrive. ■

'53 per cent of soldiers' spouses were not satisfied with the communication from the Army about things that affected them and their family'

* If you didn't know already, here's a guide to what those TLAs mean. AFF – Army Families Federation; JPA – Joint

Personnel Administration; JSP – Joint Service Publications; DIN – Defence Instructions and Notices; DIB – Defence Information Briefing; AGAI – Army General Administrative Instruction; GOC – General Officer Commanding; BFG – British Forces Germany; DILFOR – Dangerously Ill Forwarding of Relatives.

Want to know more about the Army Families Federation? Log on to www.aff.org.uk

The column that offers you a confidential way to tackle debt – and it won't cost you a penny

MANAGE YOUR MONEY



Credit Action President Keith Tondeur will be pleased to answer, in confidence, specific questions addressed to the Editor.

Spring clean time

IT is clear that economic conditions are getting tougher and it is likely that with rising food and energy prices there will be less spare cash around.

These are just the conditions that can allow us to drift into debt without realising it, which is why now could be the right time to spring-clean our finances. Just as we regularly service our car, so an overhaul of our money situation makes sense.

List your assets. With falling house prices and volatile stock markets (which affect pensions) things may not look as rosy as they were a few months ago.

Draw up a budget. You can do this online at www.moneybasics.co.uk

Look at your budget carefully and ask yourself: Is your income exceeding your spending? Do you have any major spends coming up – holiday or car? Does anything stand out as being too much or too little?

Look at the price comparison site www.uswitch.co.uk to see if you can make savings with your utilities.

List what you owe. If you are not paying off most of your credit and store card debt each month you are drifting into debt and need to seek free debt counselling help from www.cccs.co.uk

Carry out a similar review in six months. Some work on your finances now will bring positive and refreshing benefits. During these nervous times it really will pay us all to stay in control. ■

**0800 1381111 or
www.creditaction.org.uk**

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NO. 796

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

WIN £100



TEN details have been changed in the latest in the series of drawings by our cartoonist, Chip. Circle the differences in the left-hand image and send the whole panel to **HOAY 796, Soldier, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU** by March 31.

A photocopy is acceptable, but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The results will be announced in the May issue.

Name: (Give initials and rank or title)

Address:

January competition (No 794): First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 prize was **Sgt A J Williams, 9 Regiment AAC, Dishforth Airfield, N Yorks.** Runners-up **Mrs B Cook, Tidworth** and **Sgt K J Parkes, RGQ, 262 Sig Sqn, 102 Log Bde, BFPO 47**, each win a £25 gift voucher.

The ten differences were: (clockwise from left) tent peg; petrol tank; palm tree; steel helmet; box handle; row of medals; boot laces; gear stick; vent grille; insignia on arm.



Winner of our January competition (Inset)

A COPY of *Soldier, Poet, Rebel*, the extraordinary life story of Charles Hudson VC, is on its way to Maj (Retd) R A James, APA(G), Bielefeld, for his caption: "Just one decent shot and sole custody was in the bag".

Among the many excellent entries were "Nelly, tired of having her hair pulled by Little Billy, decides to take matters into her own hands" from SSgt P Collinson, HQ Dulmen Station, and "Sorry, Daddy, I can't tell if it's got bird flu at this range" from G P Karran of Rhyl, Denbighshire.

We also liked "Stay focused girl. You'll get your Easter bunny soon" from LCpl G Jones, MPGS, RAF Linton-on-Ouse and



"Hey Chalkie, did you know that if you keep rubbing it here with your little finger it makes a rather nice, high-pitched singing noise."

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo, above, from our October 1949 issue and send it to us by March 31. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of Dan Collins's *In Foreign Fields*, the amazing stories, in their own words, of soldiers decorated for heroism in Iraq and Afghanistan (Monday, £17.99).

"Right Dad, that's the one Mum calls Uncle John. Let him have it" from Lt Col (Retd) Joe Adkins, Home HQ QRL.

There were honourable mentions for Graham Paull of North Hinksey, Oxford,

with "I spy with my little eye . . . Daddy, what letter does 'gamekeeper' begin with" and "When that naughty Teddy pops his 'ead up, just watch me 'it 'im" sent in by P D Hodgson, DE & S Andover.

Web watch

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<http://jobs.forcesreunited.org.uk>

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SERVICES

www.sftf.mod.uk

The Service Families Task Force website contains useful tri-service information.

www.armywivesunited.co.uk

Free community site with message boards on a vast array of subjects that affect Army wives. Offering advice, friendship and support. Army Wives United has been online for three years and has around 1,000 active members.

www.recoverypnp.niceboard.com

A site where REME recovery mechanics and friends, both serving and retired, meet for chat and banter.

www.baff.org.uk

British Armed Forces Federation, an association aimed at representing staff in the three Services.

www.baor-locations.com

Website of the British Army of the Rhine and its locations.

www.forcesresources.co.uk

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www.erskine.org.uk

Erskine, caring for ex-Servicemen and women. The charity is currently caring for more than 1,000 veterans, young and old, throughout Scotland.

www.tnauk.org.uk

National talking newspapers and magazines. Difficulty reading the printed word? *Soldier* can still be enjoyed in audio format. To receive a free audio sample of *Soldier* contact the National Talking Newspaper Service on 01435 866102 or info@tnauk.org.uk

www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/supportagencies/aws/

The Army Welfare Service provides confidential, comprehensive and professional support to Service personnel and their families.

www.blesma.org

National charity for limbless ex-Servicemen and women, their dependants and widows

www.ngvfa.org.uk

The National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association website.

www.ssafa.org.uk

Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association Forces Help.

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www.armyaviation.co.uk

A privately-run forum dedicated to Army aviation. The forum is for ALL cap badges associated with Army aviation and all are welcome. Membership is comprised of mainly AAC personnel but we would like to see more REME faces on the site.

www.armysafety.mod.uk

Website of HQ Land Command's chief environment and safety officer.



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www.rememuseum.org.uk

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The Army Museums Ogilby Trust website, approved by the MoD as the definitive guide to regimental and corps museums.

www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com

King's Own Royal Regiment Museum, Lancaster

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Army Benevolent Fund: 0845 241 4820

Army Welfare Information Service: 01722 436569; www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/supportagencies/aws

Army Families Federation: 01980 615525

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association: 020 8590 1124. www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries.ceas@gtinet.gov.uk

Confidential support lines: UK 0800 731 4880; Germany 0800 1827 395; Cyprus 080 91065; Falklands #6111; from operational theatres Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) +44 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society: 01372 841600; www.combatstress.com

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Forces Pension Society: 020 78209988

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

MoD Medal Office: Medal queries to JPAC Enquiry Centre on 94560 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Forces Multiple Sclerosis support group): 07962 023654, 01803 311527; www.mutualsupport.org.uk email welfaresupport@mutualsupport.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office: (0900-1700); 24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853; www.ngvfa.org.uk; fax 01482 808731

Regular Forces' Employment Association: 0121 2360058; www.rfea.org.uk

Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre: 01622 795900; www.rbli.co.uk

St Dunstan's charity for blind ex-Servicemen and women: 0207 7235021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk

SAMA 82 (South Atlantic Medal Association)

Falklands conflict veterans: 01495 227577

Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

SSAFA Forces Help: 020 7403 8783; Western Europe 02161 472 3392

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA): 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas) Medical Assessment Programme: 0800 169 5401

Victim Support: Germany 02161 472 2272; UK 0845 3030900, www.victimsupport.org

WRVS (24-hr answer service): 02920 739016; general enquiries 02920 739016

Reunions

Coldstream Guards Association: Liverpool branch annual dinner, Litherland Masonic Hall, Mar 29. Ring WO1 A C Dunn on 01772 260261 or email opswo.nw@recruitinggroup.mod.uk

Glosters: Reunion of WOs and Sgts, TA Centre, Eastern Avenue, Gloucester, April 5. Ring Tim Godden on 01453 835019 or email timmy.godden@virgin.net

74th Artillery clerks: AGM, reunion and association dinner, April 18-20, at the Royal School of Artillery, Larkhill, Wilts. Details from Capt Ian Constantine, 19 Regt RA, Horne Bks, Larkhill, Wilts SP4 8RD, or ring 01890 634215 or email ian.constantine758@mod.uk

11th Hussars OCA: dedication of memorial at National Memorial Arboretum during annual reunion, May 17. Ring 01282 839773 for details.

10th Royal Hussars (PWO): Reunions at Crown Inn, Swindon, May 18 (ring Liz Bentley on 01793 336136) and Acton Court Hotel, Stockport on Oct 18 (ring Ron Fletcher on 01405 763235 or email ronxrh3873@aol.com).

Airborne Ordnance: Reunion will take place at The Princess Royal Barracks, Deepcut on May 30-31. Ring WO1 (RSM) Hutch Hutcheon on (mil) 94214 5360 or (civ) 01252 833360 or email hutchabco@btinternet.com

Sandhurst instructors 1975-79: Reunion at Sandhurst, May 31. For details, email Jane Butler at butlers.shrewton@btinternet.com or Tom Fairclough at tomefairclough@fsmail.net

Warwick/Worcester Yeomanry: Reunion to be held in June. Ring R Hartill on 01789 205031.

669 Squadron AAC: Coyote dinner at Dishforth Airfield, June 14 for past and present members. Ring Sgt Ben Wildblood on 01423 321729 or email coyotetinner08@hotmail.co.uk

Royal Berkshire Regiment: Reunion at Brock Barracks, July 26-27. Meals, B&B can be arranged. Ring Stan Knipe on 01452 728823 or email stanknipe@tiscali.co.uk

Apprentice College Chepstow: Group 48B, 60th anniversary reunion, Chepstow, Sept 19-21, in conjunction with BOBA reunion. Ring Jim Cahill on 02392 732903 or email jjcahill@ntlworld.com or call John Blount on 01903 721810.

Competitions

Medal of Honour game and signed Keeley

Hazell poster: WO2 B Law, Chatham, Kent; Sgt J Kilbride, Edinburgh; Sgt Barnett, ARRC Sp Bn, BFPO 40; Sgt G Williams, 39 Sig Regt (V); D Foster, Ipswich, Suffolk. **Answer: 1941.**

To Be A Military Sniper book: Cpl J Park, Harrow, Essex; Maj R Hare, 1 (UK) Div, BFPO 15; P Gregory, London; Mrs J Matthews, Dallas, Scotland. **Answer: L96.**

Searchline

Former RMP corporal seeks **RMPs** of 11 Provost Company, Minden, Germany, 1970-1975. Email Bill Potter, living in Minden, at gamzock@aol.com

News sought of **John Whickham REME**, attached to 1 Glosters in Cyprus and Germany, 1956-1959 by ex-LCpl Lawrence Whittle of 53 Withymead Road, Marshfield, Gloucestershire SN14 8PB.

Connie Bertsch seeks news of **Lynne Sheperdson**, who she met in England in 1980. They shared a flat in Warndon, Worcs. Lynne was born in Stockport (1961) and joined the Army in 1981 as a cook. Email cornelia.bertsch@web.de

Closure of Corporals' Mess on disbandment of 115 Provost Coy, 1 Regt RMP: Mess to close on Jun 30. Any person who has made a presentation and wishes to have it returned is asked to contact WO1 Stephen Judge, on Osnabrück mil 2571 or by email at judge564@rmp.mod.uk

The **One O'Clock Gun Association** has launched a website detailing the history of Edinburgh Castle's famous daily salute and seeks photos of the time gun. Log on to www.1oclockgun.com

Sandhurst instructors **Alan Dawes, SASC, Chris Slater, LG, Ted Lowe, IG, and Dave Ridley, Gren Gds**, 1975-79, sought for reunion. Email Jane Butler at butlers.shrewton@btinternet.com or Tom Fairclough at tomefairclough@fsmail.net

Appointments

Lt Gen: J Cooper, late KOSB, to be Deputy Commander General Multi-National Force Iraq and Senior British Military Representative (Iraq), Mar.

Maj Gen: N J Caplin, late AAC, to be Kosovo Protection Corps Coordinator, Mar; J H Gordon, late RGJ, to be Commander British Forces Cyprus and Administrator of Sovereign Base Areas Akrotiri and Dhekelia, Oct; B Brealey, late RA, to be GOC Theatre Troops, Nov; Ven S Robbins to be Chaplain General, June.

Brig: Rev J Woodhouse to be Deputy Chaplain-General, May.

Roadshows

THE Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to attend its dynamic roadshow, which begins with a reception, is followed by a presentation and questions-and-answers session and finishes with a finger buffet. Military personnel answer all your questions about the British Army. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com with the event you are interested in attending.

Apr: 8, Swindon; 9, Cheltenham; 10, Salisbury; 22 Dunfermline; 23, Aberdeen; 24, Hawick. **May:** 13, Llandudno; 14, Newport; 15, Merthyr; 27, Aylesbury; 28, Reading; 19, Southampton.



Afghan allies: A new exhibition of photographs by Capt Alexander Allan, Gren Gds, focuses on the close relationship between British and Afghan National Army soldiers fighting the Taliban in Helmand province

Show of unity

PHOTOGRAPHS taken by an Army officer and showing the reality of day-to-day life on the front line in Afghanistan will go on show at The Pensioners' Museum, Royal Hospital Chelsea, later this month.

The exhibition, Armed with Afghans, features images captured by Capt Alexander Allan, Grenadier Guards, during his tour of Helmand province last year and is being held to help raise funds for injured Grenadiers and the families of those killed in action. Capt Allan, who commanded a mixed platoon of British and Afghan soldiers, describes his pictures as a "look into the eyes of our men and boys as they face horrific circumstances alongside their Afghan comrades".

Defence diary

March 1-until further notice: Helmand: The Soldiers' Story – A free exhibition built, written and contributed to by soldiers of 16 Air Assault Brigade to tell the story of their experiences fighting in Afghanistan. National Army Museum, London. Tel: 0207 7300717.

March 13: Chelsea Pensioners' Appeal concert – The Chamber Ensemble (made up of 18 musicians from the Corps of Army Music and conducted by Lt Col Stephen Smith) are playing a one-off concert to help raise funds towards the building of a new infirmary and the modernising of the long wards at Royal Hospital Chelsea. Tickets for the concert, which begins at 1900 and will be staged in the hospital's chapel, are £15 each (which includes an interval drink) and can be booked by calling the box office on 0207 8815305 or by emailing eventtickets@chelseapensioners.org.uk

March 15: Poppyscotland Back to the Blitz Swing Dance, Glasgow Barrowland Ballroom, 1930-midnight. Tickets (£30) from 0131 5501542 or swingdance@poppyscotland.org.uk

March 27: A memorial made of Loch Fyne stone will be unveiled by the Duke of Argyll at the Argyll Caravan Park, Inveraray – the former site of HMS Quebec, where 250,000 Allied troops were trained in amphibious warfare during the Second World War. Contact James Jepson on

"This was a different experience for us as it was fighting alongside soldiers of the nation that we were fighting for," Capt Allan told *Soldier*. "I wanted to make sure I documented the deployment so that people will always remember."

Admitting to only buying his first "big camera" just before his deployment, the amateur photographer added: "Of course there were difficult moments, most poignantly when one of my platoon lost his leg, but I felt that people needed to see what life is really like [in Helmand]."

● Armed with Afghans will be open to the public from March 26-30. Entry is £5 with profits going to The Colonel's Fund, Grenadier Guards (www.grenade.org.uk/colonelfund.asp).

01499 500218 for more information.

May 8-10: Windsor Castle Royal Tattoo – Featuring troops from regiments recently returned from ops and entitled A Heroes Welcome, this not-for-profit event is being held in recognition of the selfless service of soldiers and the support of their families. Tickets for the two-hour tattoo, which begins at 2030, are priced at £15, £25, £35 and £45, and are available online at www.windsortattoo.co.uk or by telephoning 0871 2305570.

May 22: Commemorative service to honour the 55 personnel who lost their lives in Bosnia, those injured and the many thousands who served there throughout the 15-year deployment. National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire. Tickets are available for veterans of the conflict, and the families and friends of those who lost their lives. Application forms can be downloaded from www.veterans-info.uk or by calling the free ticket line on 0800 169 2277.

June 7-8: The Chelsea Pageant – This spectacular show chronicling the early years of the Royal Hospital Chelsea, from its founding by King Charles II through to the entry of the first pensioners after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, is being held to raise funds for the Chelsea Pensioners' Appeal. Tickets can be purchased from Ticketmaster on 0844 847 2309 or online at www.ticketmaster.co.uk

■ Got a date for the diary? Email details to diary@soldiermagazine.co.uk

British Army Badges

By Lt Col (Retd) Robin Hodges

Cap badge

The Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment was formed in 2001 by redesignating The Queen's Own Gurkha Transport Regiment, which had originally been formed as the Gurkha Army Service Corps in 1958. The QOGLR badges follow the pattern of those designed for the Gurkha ASC and later the GTR and the QOGLR, crossed kukris mounted on a star plate similar to that of the RLC.



Formation sign

1st (UK) Armoured Division has used the symbol of the charging rhino, the strongest and best protected animal, since just before the Battle of El Alamein, 1942. The original design of a docile rhino was changed by a signwriter from the Cheshire Field Squadron RE to an aggressive rhino more in keeping with the division's offensive spirit. The present badge was introduced in 1995 and a sand coloured version in 2007, worn on the right sleeve in order that the rhino always appears to be charging to the front.



Specialist badge

In 2003, 831 EOD Squadron RLC deployed to the Middle East and adopted the nickname the Desert Cats. WO2 Georgie Dunville designed the Desert Cat arm badge which is worn by the Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group, and is now known as the Telic Felix.



Tactical recognition flash

The Parachute Regiment retains drop zone (DZ) flashes for each unit of the regiment rather than wearing a single TRF. The traditional Depot Para DZ flash is worn by those serving with recruit training units.



THESE excerpts appear in **British Army Badges** by Lt Col (Retd) Robin Hodges, available from Court Hill Farm, Potterne, Devizes, SN10 5PN, tel 01380 723371. Email robinhodges@armymail.mod.uk



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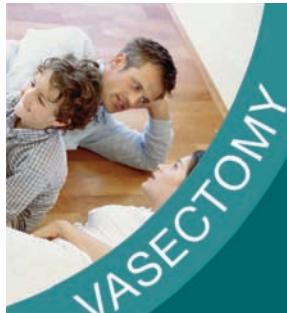
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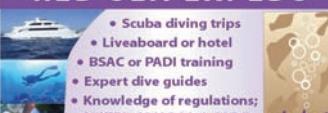
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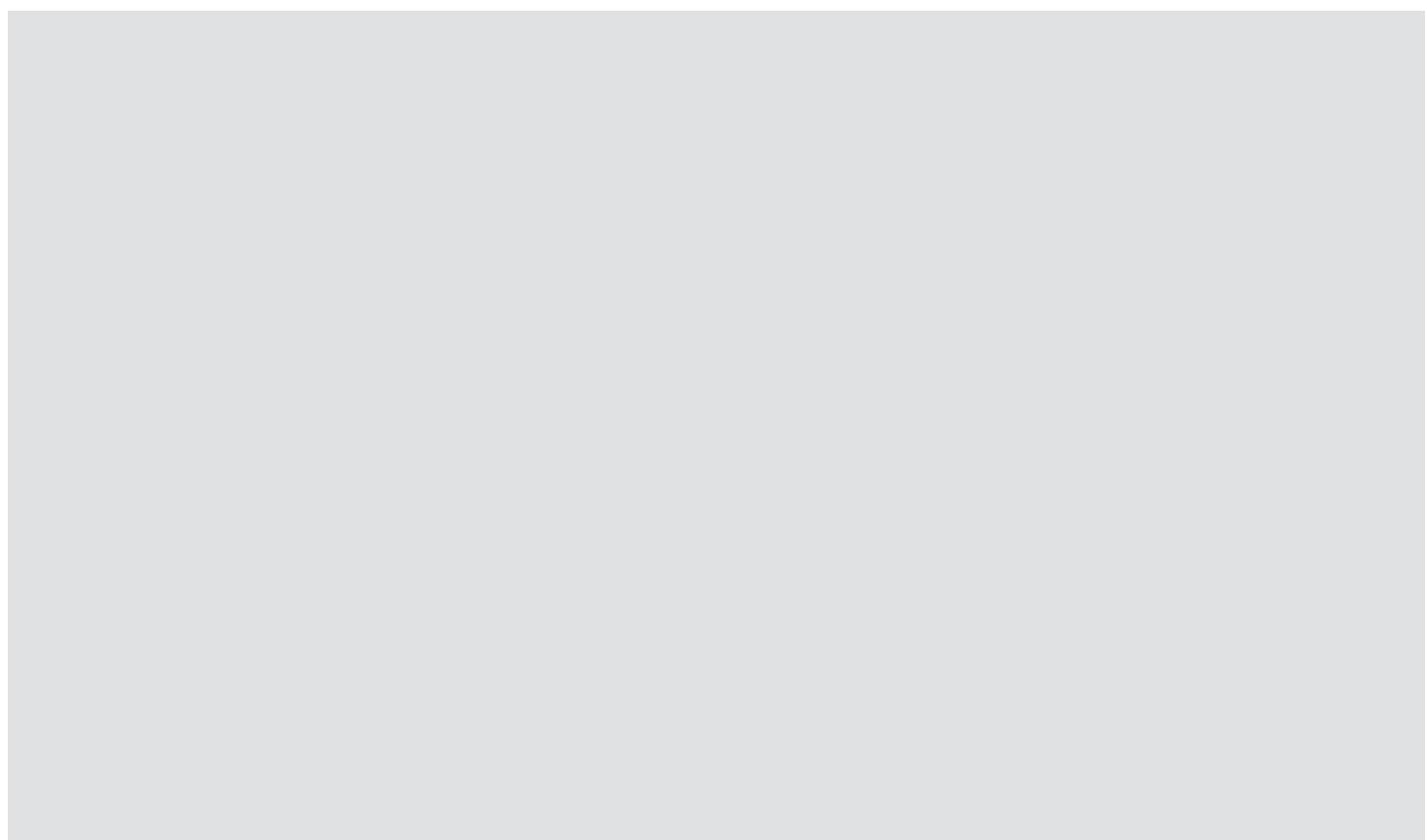
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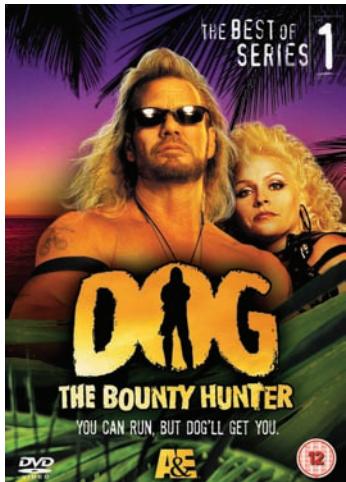
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Unleashed: *Dog The Bounty Hunter: The Best of Season One* is out on DVD now and we have five copies to give away. To have a chance of winning one of them, tell us the name of Dog's wife. Answers by postcard or email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) to reach us by March 31. Usual rules apply.



Nose for trouble

Soldier's Stephen Tyler goes walkies with bounty hunting's top dog

It is either a very brave or a very foolish criminal who decides to go on the run in America.

Not only do fugitives across the pond have to escape the combined forces of the police and FBI, they also have to contend with a growing army of private bounty hunters intent on ending their illegal freedom. But of all the people hot on their trail, there is one man who sends a bigger shiver down the spines of the USA's runaways than any other – Duane "Dog" Chapman.

Menacingly attired in a black leather waistcoat and black shades, Dog the bounty hunter is a depressingly familiar sight to the scores of bail jumpers tracked down and captured on camera for his eponymous reality television show. It may not be the most conventional of career choices, but Dog told *Soldier* that tracking wayward lawbreakers and bringing them to justice is something he has wanted to do since he was a teenager.

"Bounty hunting is my calling," he

said. "I realised at a very young age that this is what I was made to do."

"I do it because I am probably the best there is at it and because it gives me the gratification of not only cleaning up the streets but also helping several people, whether they are victims of crime or victims of drug abuse."

On top of seeing bounty hunting as his destiny, Dog's desire to "clean up the streets" has been further enhanced by his own life experiences.

The Colorado native was arrested numerous times as a young man and eventually found himself serving five years behind bars for a murder conviction he strongly denies. It was after successfully collaring a prison thief during his incarceration that he discovered his innate talent and decided to use his ability at finding fugitives to make America a safer place.

"I think the ability to track someone down is in my blood. I think you inherit it because sometimes I will walk past a big apartment building and get a

physical dizziness if I walk too far. I will just know the guy I'm looking for is in there. I do track people using prints, tracks and messages, but the big difference is that I trap them also. I am the predator's predator because I give these guys some kind of bait and then reel them in."

Regular viewers of Dog's TV series, which airs on Bravo and Virgin1, will be familiar with the complete change in character he undergoes after catching his target. Rather than the foul-mouthed action man on show during the hunt, the post-capture Dog is a soft-spoken man of reason who always tries to make the fugitive see the error of their ways. Dog is a committed Christian, but insists that he only ever attempts to redeem the criminals on a spiritual rather than religious level.

"It doesn't matter that I believe in Jesus and I try not to push religion down their throat," he said. "In this world there is a good and there is an evil. Those forces are real and I try to

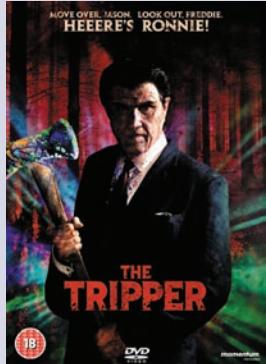
SOLDIER is on the lookout for movie reviewers. If you fancy yourself as the next Barry Norman, Jonathan Ross or Mark Kermode (or just want to get your hands on some free DVDs) we want to hear from you.

Just send an 80-word review of your favourite flick so we can judge if you have what it takes. Write or email: Movie Reviews, *Soldier*, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hants GU11 2DU; asimms@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Kokoda: 39th Battalion, available from March 10

ONE to avoid before going on exercise in Belize, **Alister Grierson's** *Kokoda* is inspired by the true story of a small band of untrained recruits whose outstanding bravery proved to be pivotal in saving Australia from an imminent Japanese invasion during the Second World War. The film follows the fate of a patrol of "chocos" – men expected to melt in the heat of battle – as they experience the horrors of jungle warfare against a merciless enemy. A fitting tribute to the men who fought in the campaign that resulted in the Allies' first victory over the Japanese.



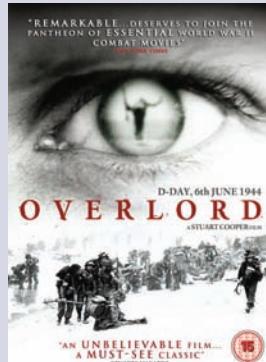
The Tripper, available on DVD from March 31

BILLED as a "hilariously crazed" horror homage to B-movies, this offering quickly becomes wearisome. *The Tripper* tells the story of a group of hippies who find themselves pursued by an axe-wielding maniac wearing a Ronald Reagan mask. You can guess the rest. Blood, gore, cringing dialogue and dead bodies everywhere. The predictability of the plot deprives the movie of its horror element while the dire stab at humour roundly fails it as a comedy. Like axe-wielding Ronald Reagan lookalikes, *The Tripper* is best avoided.



Redacted, in cinemas March 21

BRIAN De Palma's nightmare-inducing "fictional documentary" is far more disturbing than any offering from **Stephen King**. Inspired by true events and featuring the beheading of a US soldier and rape of a 14-year-old girl, the film centres around an American platoon stationed at a checkpoint in Iraq. And true to his anti-war pedigree, De Palma makes no excuses for the uncomfortable viewing. "If we're going to cause such disorder then we must face the horrendous images that are the consequences of these actions." Shock and gore – not one for the weak stomachs.



Overlord, available on DVD from March 3

ORIGINALLY released in the mid-70s, this little known gem of a war film from **Stuart Cooper** snuck under the radar of most. *Overlord* follows the fortunes of a young conscript from his call-up, through training and arrival on the Normandy beaches on D-Day. There is little dialogue in the film, which relies heavily on archive footage from the Imperial War Museum and period music to tell the story. But *Overlord* undoubtedly makes a powerful statement and is on a par with the likes of *The Longest Day* and *Saving Private Ryan*.



Bloody Sunday, available on DVD from March 3

DON'T let the controversial subject matter put you off this excellent drama, in which **Paul Greengrass** (*Bourne Ultimatum*) directs individuals who were involved in the 1972 civil rights march and British soldiers who served in Northern Ireland. The use of amateur actors lends the screenplay a fly-on-the-wall edge, but it's the DVD's extras that almost steal the show. Greengrass states he made the film as an act of reconciliation and **James Nesbitt** admits he knew little of the events that took place just 30 miles away from where he grew up.



Omagh, available on DVD from March 3

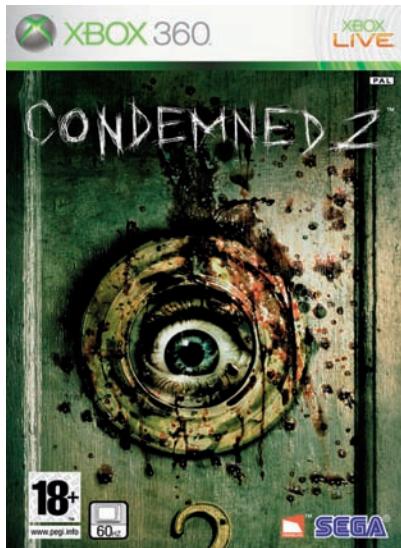
IF you want to watch life at its most unfair, then the events that unfolded after an IRA bomb killed 29 shoppers in 1998 make compelling viewing. The victims' families push the authorities to arrest those responsible but believe their loved ones are being sacrificed to keep the Northern Ireland peace process on track. **Gerard McSorley** brilliantly takes centre stage as a father searching for his son's murderers. Sometimes a little slow because of the real-time pace, this **Paul Greengrass** feature is a chilling warning of the struggles people face when confronting political power.

explain that it is your decision which way you turn. Even if they don't make that change right away, it plants the seed and makes them think about where they are heading."

Given his all-action appearance and lifestyle, it is little surprise to learn that Dog has a rich military history in his blood. His grandfather was a Second World War veteran and his father served in the US Navy. He vividly remembers the negative reaction American troops got on their return from fighting in Vietnam, but says the current crop of troops serving alongside the British Army in theatres such as Iraq and Afghanistan is guaranteed a much warmer welcome home.

"I have met a lot of kids who are going over there and they are brave people," said Dog. "When the soldiers came back from Vietnam people were throwing pies at them, they were booing and hissing and they were calling them murderers. Nowadays America is completely behind its troops. The problem we are facing now is that we have to get to the enemy before they get to us. Never before have we faced an enemy that thinks they are guaranteed to go to heaven if they kill someone. I do a lot of work with the military and I have nothing but love for the brothers."

Watch Season Four of Dog the Bounty Hunter on Virgin1, Tuesdays at 2200.



Killer thriller: *Condemned 2* puts players back on the front line of grubby detective work



Grime time action

Gruesome serial murder probe resumes in terrifying console horror actioner

Preview: Cliff Caswell

WHEN Sega's original *Condemned* title was launched as one of the early games for the Xbox 360 in 2006, it failed to achieve the chart standing it deserved.

Despite receiving plenty of critical acclaim, the 18-rated crime thriller was lost in the hype surrounding the debut of the Microsoft machine. For those who bought the game, however, the experience of tracking and taking down a deadly serial killer proved to be engaging, gripping and, above all, unfailingly disturbing.

Condemned, reflected one reviewer, was not a game that you played; it was one that you endured. And in the sequel, which is launched this month, US studio Monolith Productions has upped the ante to produce a spectacular interactive horror movie.

As before, players step into the shoes of detective Ethan Thomas who, after his harrowing last assignment, has been

left tormented by his experiences, has been kicked out of the police force and is living rough on the streets.

But after a disturbing encounter with a gang of thugs, the detective-turned-tramp has a call on his mobile from his former boss, who clearly sounds in desperate trouble.

Rushing to the aid of his old colleague, Thomas is forced to fight off an increasingly gruesome array of enemies through some dank and dingy locations. And so the scene is set for a dark and uncomfortable journey into the seedy underbelly of the city.

Soldier was given an exclusive preview of *Condemned 2* before its Xbox 360 and PS3 release and was impressed.

The game features a raft of enhancements over its predecessor. Players once again assume the first-person perspective of Thomas – fists at the ready – as he works through the urban decay around him.

But unlike the plot of the previous title, which began in plodding fashion

at the scene of a murder, you are immediately thrust into the action in some of the most brutal video game fist-fighting *Soldier* has ever seen. The left and right buttons on the Xbox controller act as your fists, while your feet are controlled by the thumbsticks.

Players can also seize items they find around them, such as lead piping, wrenches and even TVs, as weapons to take down the mobsters, while the action is fast, furious and gruesome.

But it is not all about frantic, first-person mayhem. Crime scene investigation (CSI) also takes up a sizeable chunk of the game, and you will frequently be called on to use your powers of detection to gather info or determine causes of death.

As well as their fists, players are also armed with a variety of equipment to progress their crime-solving, including a crucial digital camera and an ultra-violet scanner to detect clues invisible to the naked eye.

The CSI elements of the title are



a significant improvement over the first game, drawing the player deeper into the unfolding plot.

Despite being destined to attract controversy – *Condemned 2* fully deserves its 18 certificate and is as gruesome as most recent Hollywood horror movies – the title is a winner, conveying the message with chilling effect.

Providing players with a deeply creepy and, at times, downright disturbing experience, Monolith has created a world in which Thomas rediscovers himself.

Graphics and sound are first class, as anyone who has played the game in the dark and with headphones on will testify.

The environments, too, are rich in detail with some outstanding lighting effects and plenty of interactive involvement. From seedy theatres to abandoned toy factories, players can use the environment around them fully to their advantage against their enemies.

The multiplayer options of *Condemned 2* are particularly promising, with the combat system lending itself to some fairly frantic online action.

All in all, the game has plenty to offer its adult audience. This is a polished and original offering and fans of console horror action will not be disappointed. ■



Destroy all Humans: Big Willy Unleashed, Wii

A POPULAR series on the previous generation of consoles, *Destroy all Humans* makes a welcome debut on the Wii in a game that makes excellent use of the Nintendo machine's motion-sensitive controller. Players take on the part of an alien who, under the cover of the Big Willy fast food chain, is zapping the human race and feeding them back to the masses in burgers. Gameplay is simple – there are huge cities to explore and the tongue-in-cheek humour works well. Set in the 1970s, the game's funky soundtrack is the icing on the cake.



Rainbow Six Vegas 2, PC

THE sequel to the acclaimed 2006 counter-terrorism actioner, *Rainbow Six Vegas 2* will put players back in the Sin City shooting match when it is released later this month. Set at the same time as the original game, you are placed in the boots of a senior commander called Bishop and tasked with closing down the threat that has caused chaos in the casinos on The Strip. The original *Rainbow Six Vegas* was one of the best first-person shooters we've seen and this latest adventure shows plenty of promise. See next month's *Soldier* for the full review.



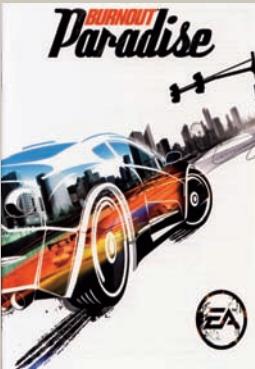
Turok, Xbox 360 & PS3

AFTER a patchy record in previous games, the Native American warrior makes a spectacular return to form on the latest consoles in this polished first-person shooter. Set in the future, *Turok* is on a routine mission with his military buddies when his ship is hit by a missile and is forced to crash land on a dinosaur-infested planet. Players get to arm themselves to the teeth with an arsenal of traditional and modern weapons and square up to a legion of enemies, which include giant reptiles looking for an easy meal. Unpretentious and action-packed, *Turok* is a winner.



Medieval II: Total War, PC

GAMERS with expansionist ambitions can fulfil their fantasies thanks to this double pack featuring the huge original game and the four-campaign *Kingdoms* expansion pack. Whether you want to take the helm of a Christian nation and launch a crusade on the Islamic Empire or take on the might of Europe, *Medieval II: Total War* obliges in style. Most of the turn-based game is played on a giant map, but the real-time battles are breathtaking in their scale – if your PC is powerful enough to run them. A must-buy title for strategy game fans.



Burnout Paradise, Xbox 360 & PS3

THIS high-octane arcade driving game sits in the thrill-a-minute market and fans of more subtle titles such as *Gran Turismo* should not apply. Graphically the game is up there with the best of the current Xbox 360 and PS3 offerings and the playing environment is huge. The soundtrack includes tunes from *Guns n' Roses*, which adds to the overall experience. If thrill-rich games flick your switch, *Burnout Paradise* offers hours of fun. Otherwise do not expect more than a short-lived distraction with this one.



WIN – Frontlines: Fuel of War, Xbox 360 & PC

THE bleak prospect of fighting over the world's remaining natural resources becomes a reality in THQ's latest actioner, released this month. *Frontlines: Fuel of War* is a first-person shooter in a world ravaged by environmental decay and economic depression. *Soldier* has teamed up with THQ to offer five copies of the game. To stand a chance of winning, answer this question. For what fossil fuel is the Middle East best known? Answers by postcard or email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk). Closing date is March 31. Usual rules apply.



Having it: Above, Basshunter basks in the five-week top spot success of *Now You're Gone*, as Alyar (right) grabbed the music video limelight



Cyber Swede

Basshunter parties up to Europe's electronic dance number one

Interview: Karen Thomas

AS ABBA fades into the twilight of a West End musical, a new funk-drenched Swede has been larging it up on Europe's dance floors with a number one club tune.

Now You're Gone dispatched digital composer Jonas Altberg – aka Basshunter – to the top chart spot in eight countries before stubbornly refusing to shift from the UK number one slot.

The Scandinavian's raid on our club scene is equally devastating, with his electronic explosion ricocheting from Glasgow to Torquay.

Sweden was the first country to put their hands in the air for the fastest-selling debut single since the phenomenal 1974 Eurovision song contest winners ABBA launched their career. Then the rest of Europe got infected with the monster dance hit and the UK's resistance quickly

crumbled. But Basshunter was still shocked by the success.

"Two years ago I didn't even expect to be touring around outside Sweden. And then all the other countries happened but when I thought that everything had come to an end and I couldn't tour any more, I get the number one in the UK," the DJ told *Soldier* during a break in his club tour, during which fans have screamed so loud he couldn't hear his own voice.

"That's the biggest thing that could ever happen. I'm totally surprised and overwhelmed and it's almost like every cell in my body is getting an orgasm."

No stranger to these shores – his guardians live in Cardiff – Basshunter described his first shows here last month as "wicked". Despite having played in 400 different clubs in nine European countries, the Eurodance DJ is relatively unknown to his UK audience. Even the origins of his alias had not been revealed.

"I wanted to name myself Asshunter but that was already taken so I had to choose something similar. I just put a 'B' in front of it. And the thing is that I'm also a very good fisherman so I can use my name in a lot of different ways. In the evening when I'm out partying I'm the Ass . . . you know without the 'B', when I'm out fishing I'm the bass hunter, and when I'm just sitting at home producing music I'm Basshunter."

Fishing is the escape for Jonas from his alter ego, the touring and the myriad of computers that adorn his Swedish home studio, which have earned him the label cyber geek. The idyllic surroundings of lakes and forests with his family close-by let the musician shut down and refresh his thoughts for his music.

"It doesn't really get too much but you need to refresh your mind a little bit and just leave the pressure and the stress, as well as the fun and alcohol and chicks," Basshunter explained, adding that all technology is excluded

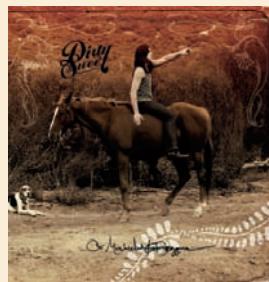


from these interludes. "We belong to nature somehow, so really being a cyber geek means I get the mix of everything. I think that's the best way to do it because sitting in front of the computer, I mean, seriously, you'll go nuts."

Basshunter has three laptops and four computers on the local area network in his apartment. He makes music on one in front of him, plays computer games on a left-hand laptop while "shouting on Msn, Skype, or checking my email" on a right-hand computer. Firmly grounded in a virtual world, the DJ aspiring to a world tour this year also remains firmly grounded in reality.

"I'm a normal guy just doing what he loves to do. I've never gone to a celebrity party or hung out with celebrities, I hang out with my friends from before. People expect me to be in all the big places and partying but actually I prefer to sit at home producing new music, playing computer games, eating crap food and drinking Coca-Cola. That's my thing and that's what I do. When I stop doing that is when I will probably lose it all because if you lose yourself, you lose everything."

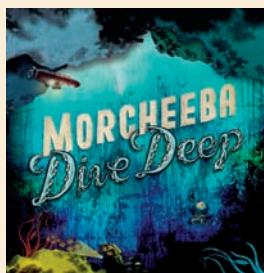
Although not yet released in the UK, Basshunter's debut album, *LOL*, is available as an imported CD. Otherwise, get yourself down to Ibiza to see the cyber DJ in club action. ■



... Of Monarchs And Beggars (Dirty Sweet)

... Of Monarchs And Beggars is a good, honest rock album with just the right mix of ballad, blues and folk-esque country music combined with great rock. The band formed in 2003 in their hometown, San Diego, and their album opens with the impressive *Baby Come Home*. The track is testament to the musical spectrum **Dirty Sweet** are capable of going through in an hour. ... Of Monarchs And Beggars showcases the group superbly and has everything you might want from a rock album. I found myself hooked by the constantly changing sound of the band and I suspect you will too.

Lt Jim Berry, 1 R Irish



Dive Deep (Morcheeba)

THE sixth album from this world-renowned group showcases the period of self-reflection that they went through prior to its studio production. This is quite apparent from beginning to end. There are no really lively tracks – they are all mellow and soulful. The vocals are strong and clear with meaningful lyrics. This, combined with the easy-listening melodies and rhythms, makes a very chilled album. Well-produced tracks for a top CD but *Dive Deep* is unlikely to attract new listeners. One for those who are already fans.

Bdr Luke Stevens-Burt, 5 Regt, RA



Meet The Eels / Useless Trinkets (Eels)

THIS is a greatest hits package covering much of the band's 12-year career. Front man **Mark Everett** "E" turned his own personal pain – losing his father, mother and sister in separate incidents – into something passionate, emotional and beautifully melancholic. This album has much to offer and is a good introduction for the virgin listener. More seasoned fans should try *Useless Trinkets*, an album of B-sides, soundtracks, rarities and previously unreleased tunes, which has been released alongside the supreme *Meet The Eels*.

Cpl Ray Kalaker, RETDU(B)

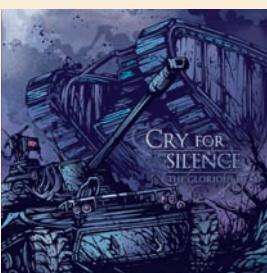


Started A Fire (One Night Only)

IF you were a fan of the **Kooks** debut album, *Inside In Inside Out* but thought it needed a harder edge, then *Started A Fire* is the album for you. This teenage North Yorkshire-based five-piece have delivered a rocky but melodic debut with a punchy **U2**-esque rhythm section, inventive, hook-laced guitar work and colloquially delivered dual harmony vocals.

One Night Only is a band already hotly tipped as being a big name this year by the UK's leading radio stations, so watch this space.

Cpl Tom Robinson, 151 Tpt Regt, RLC



Istanbul's Secrets (Up, Bustle and Out)

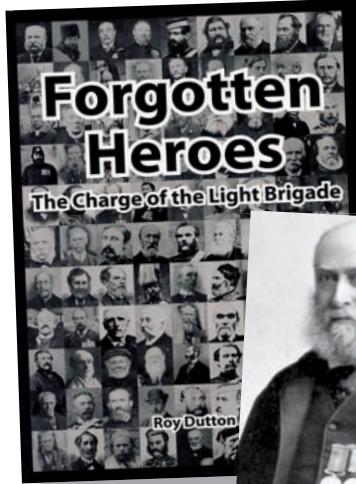
HERALDING from Bristol, this duo has delivered nine previous albums with varying success. They produced great songs but on erratic albums – until this one, which is their strongest yet. They are augmented by an array of additional musicians contributing double bass, Spanish guitar, violin, percussion and vocals for a potent mix of world influences and chilled down tempo rhythms. It's a winning formula of lush soundscapes that takes the listener on an intercontinental journey. After many attempts, **Up, Bustle and Out** have realised their rich potential.

Cpl Charlie Lloyd, RLC

The Glorious Dead (Cry For Silence)

THIS hardcore metal band's album is sure to delight fans of this genre. The music blasts along at an unrelenting pace and ear-splitting volume, yet still manages to offer some robust melodies and well-crafted songs. Despite some strong backing harmonies, the vocal style is very intense – it's this that puts the band firmly in the hardcore category. A more melodic vocal style would probably broaden the band's commercial appeal and make them accessible to a wider audience. The album's appeal is likely to be limited to the dedicated niche.

Patrick Jordan



Heroic:
Pte Robert Martin, right, of the 11th Hussars, who saved a fellow Charger despite losing an arm. The painting, "The Relief of the Light Brigade" by Richard Caton Woodville (1897), is on display in the National Army Museum and depicts the moment the Light Brigade reached the Russian guns.



The Immortals

Researchers trace 'six hundred' who galloped into the Valley of Death

Forgotten Heroes: The Charge of the Light Brigade by Roy Dutton (InfoDial, 417pp, signed edition, £25.99, available from InfoDial Ltd, Maritime House, 14-16 Balls Road, Oxton, Wirral CH43 5RE. Also available from amazon.co.uk).

Review: John Elliott

THEY were the George Clooneys and David Beckhams of their day, celebrated by an adoring public... those who lived to tell the tale, anyway.

They were the Chargers, the survivors of perhaps the most famous 25 minutes of military action in history, a moment which echoes down the ages as audibly as that of the 300 Spartans who held the pass at Thermopylae.

Now the names of every one of the

"noble six hundred" – a more accurate count is 673 – who rode onto the muzzles of the Russian cannon at Balaclava are listed and detailed in this new book.

The Charge of the Light Brigade was witnessed by William Howard Russell of *The Times*, whose report inspired Alfred Lord Tennyson to bestow poetic immortality on the ill-conceived action:

*Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die;
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.*

Roy Dutton's interest was ignited by the fact that the Birkenhead hospital in which he was born had once been a Victorian workhouse run by Thomas Williams, who rode in the charge.

Dutton spent six years tracking down the long-forgotten trails of the final 100 or so of the Balaclava cavalrymen, building on several decades of careful research by, among others, Christopher J Poole.

The result is an extraordinary record of every one of the officers and men of the 4th Light Dragoons, the 8th Hussars, the 11th Hussars, the 13th Light Dragoons and the 17th Lancers who, according to *The Times* of November 14, 1854, "advanced in two lines, quickening their pace as they closed towards the enemy. A more fearful spectacle was never witnessed than by those who, without the power to aid, beheld their heroic countrymen rushing to the arms of death".

Finding – and confirming – their details was no easy task: many of the once celebrated Chargers had died in poverty; eight ended their days in Australia after taking jobs as warders, escorting convicts to the penal colony.

Behind every name is a story worthy of a book in its own right. Dutton's favourite is Pte Robert Martin of the 11th Hussars, whose grave he found in Birkenhead's Rock Ferry Cemetery.

"He's my hero," said the author. "I took a trowel to the cemetery and

Soldier ordering service

BOOKS mentioned on these pages are available from Helion & Company, who can also supply 14,500 in-print military books and operate a free book search; p&p is extra. Major credit/switch cards taken. Allow 28 days for delivery. Helion & Company, 26 Willow Road, Solihull, West Midlands B91 1UE, England (tel 0121 705 3393; fax 0121 711 4075). Email books@helion.co.uk Website www.helion.co.uk



eventually found his grave after first clearing away the wrong plot."

As the Russian cannon "blew streets" through the Chargers, Martin's right arm was "shattered to pieces". He gathered it up "as well I could and laid it across my knees".

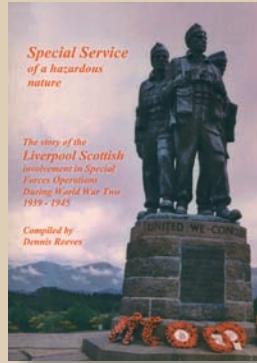
While the Chargers fought among the guns the "order to retire was given by Lord George Paget, and on turning I perceived a Cossack close to us. He immediately levelled his pistol and fired at [Pte James] Glanister and myself. The bullet whizzed by my face and struck Glanister, shattering his lower jaw and causing him to fall forward . . ."

It was now every man for himself, but Martin calmly placed his own reins between his clenched teeth, grabbed those of Glanister's mount with his good hand and galloped him back up the valley to safety.

Pte Martin, faint from loss of blood, was revived by a shot of rum before his arm was amputated and he was shipped home to Chatham suffering from Crimean fever. This remarkable man died on July 28, 1900 at the age of 72.

Glanister also survived his terrible wound and died, aged 68, a few months after the man who had rescued him at Balaclava. ■

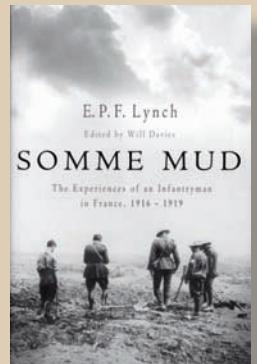
For more reviews, go to
www.soldiermagazine.co.uk



Special Service of a hazardous nature compiled by Dennis Reeves

DATA was gathered over 30 years for this comprehensive paperback detailing the involvement of the Liverpool Scottish on Special Forces ops during the Second World War. It includes input from ex-commandos who took part in covert missions. Available from the author, 15 Rydal Bank, Lower Bebington, Wirral CH63 7LI (£10 plus £2.50 p&p, payable to Liverpool Scottish Museum Trust). Proceeds to museum funds.

**Liverpool Scottish
Museum Trust, 370pp, £10**



Somme Mud by E P F Lynch, edited by Will Davies

THE author served as an infantryman in the Anzac Corps from the Somme campaign onwards, recording the realities of his war in a series of notebooks, writes **Maj Mike Peters AAC**. His observations on an Australian battalion fighting in the Ypres Salient and on the Somme, of life in the line and of his emotions in battle strike a chord. Difficult to put down – it has the feel of being written by a soldier for soldiers.

**Doubleday,
345pp, £17.99**

WEARSIDE BATTALION

The 20th (Service) Battalion of
The Durham Light Infantry
in The Great War

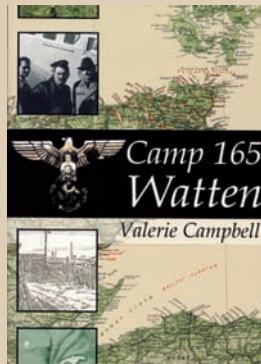
JOHN SHEEN



Wearside Battalion by John Sheen

A PICTURE-rich tribute to the officers and men who volunteered to serve in the 20th (Service) Battalion, The Durham Light Infantry during the First World War. Most of them came from Sunderland, hence their inclusion in the honourable list of Pals battalions. Drawing on personal testimonies and war diaries, the author traces their progress from Armentieres to the Somme, from Ypres to the Italian Front. Nominal rolls of officers and other ranks complete the picture.

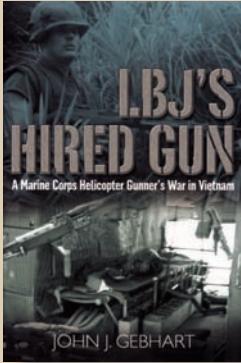
**Pen & Sword,
192pp, £19.99**



Camp 165 Watten by Valerie Campbell

WATTEN in Caithness was Scotland's most secretive prisoner-of-war camp during the Second World War. Not that it could be anything but secretive, tucked away as it was on commandeered farming land near Loch Watten on the lonely, windswept road between Wick and Thurso. Valerie Campbell has unearthed many interesting facts about Britain's most northerly PoW camp, not least that it housed members of the Waffen-SS, a one-time adjutant of Hitler and a U-boat hero.

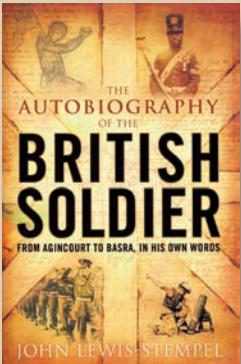
Whittles, 133pp, £14.99



LBJ's Hired Gun by John J Gebhart

A LATE entry to the mass of books written by those who fought in the Vietnam War. These are the matter-of-fact memories of a Marine Corps helicopter gunner. His well-told story rattles along with a seam of Marine humour. "You got all the free ammunition you wanted, endless cold beers to drink, and boom boom girls to party with. Who could ask for more? Of course, there were some minor problems, like all the VCs and VNAs who wanted to kill us."

Casemate, 260pp, £20



The Autobiography of the British Soldier by John Lewis Stempel

EXTRAORDINARY stories from soldiers throughout the ages. These are the personal descriptions, letters and memories of officers and other ranks present at Agincourt, imprisoned in the Black Hole of Calcutta, and involved in every battle from Waterloo to Basra. The 200 first-hand accounts are a reminder of just how much of themselves Service personnel give for their country.

Review, 486pp, £8.99



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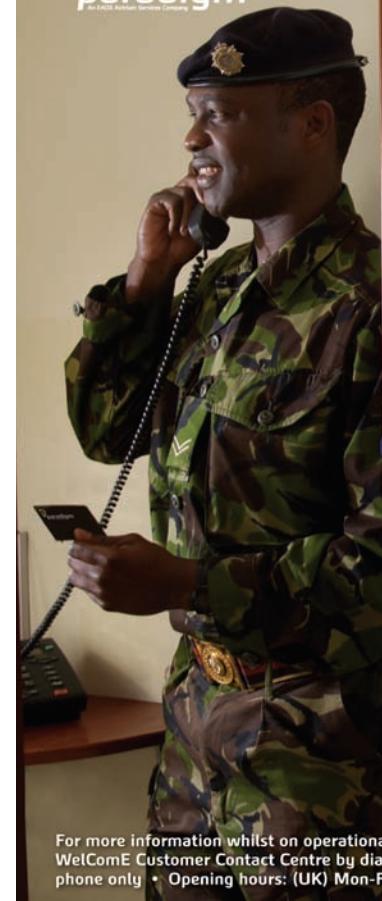
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SOLDIER SPORT

Up for the cup

Reds progress in top competition



Breakthrough: WO2 "Pud" Cowburn (RE) on the charge during the Army's Challenge Cup win against Thatto Heath

Picture: Graeme Main

Wolves on the prowl

Cream of the Armed Forces' racing drivers cut their competitive teeth at Great Britain's premier rally contest

Beast unleashed: One of the Armed Forces Rally Team's six white military Land Rover Wolves hurtles around the 4.2km gravel track at Aldershot during the selection day for the 2008 team

Report: Stephen Tyler
Picture: Graeme Main

In a sport dominated by purpose-built powerhouses, the sight of six white military Land Rover Wolves at last year's Wales Rally GB certainly raised some eyebrows among the ranks of motorsport enthusiasts.

As the bulky vehicles took their place on the start line in Swansea, the general feeling among the crowd was that the Wolves were more a novelty entry than a serious competitor.

The mood soon changed when the tri-Service Armed Forces Rally Team (AFRT) drivers unleashed the Wolves' power and overtook several more agile competitors as they thundered around the demanding course.

It was the first time that AFRT personnel had competed on British rallying's grandest stage and director

Maj Alan Paramore (RLC) insisted the team's showing proved they were not there to make up the numbers.

"It's amazing that the fastest of our vehicles were actually mixing it with the back end of the rest of the cars in Wales," Paramore told *SoldierSport* at the Aldershot track where the 2008 crews were being picked. "Our lead driver was overtaking cars one, two and three places ahead on the long stages.

"They are also so strong compared with some of the cars and they come into their own on rough events."

Despite zipping over the same tracks as supercharged rally cars, the six AFRT Land Rover Wolf vehicles are mechanically untouched from the ones used for more routine military activities.

Important safety kit, including a fire extinguisher system and anti-roll bars, are the only changes made to the 113BHP, 1.6-tonne monsters.

Each of the crews has a service team responsible for maintaining the Land Rovers before, during and after races and for checking the vehicles to make sure that no performance-enhancing modifications have been made. But despite their image as reliable workhorses, the Wolves pack a ferocious bite and can easily reach three-figure top speeds.

"The experienced drivers can drive them like rally cars and they regularly touch 100mph downhill," continued Paramore. "We amaze some people with our speed and I say that very proudly.

"The vehicles are standard with no mechanical changes. They run with perfectly standard tyres, brakes and pads because we want it to be about the crews rather than the vehicles."

The skill of the crews in each of the AFRT vehicles is in no small part down to the rigorous training that every driver



and navigator must complete before earning a berth in the squad.

Rather than being a sport, military rallying is classed as driver training and aspiring racers have to prove their worth on standard British Armed Forces Motoring Association (BAFMA) navigational exercises before getting a shot at rallying. Personnel get a maximum of three years behind the wheel if they make it on to the team, so an annual selection day in Aldershot ensures a constant stream of qualified racers is available to renew the cycle.

Self-confessed petrolhead WO2 Andy "Tids" Tidbury (REME), an experienced driver acting as a reserve for the 2008 season, said that Services' racing is constantly improving. "I have had some great experiences with

the team, but racing in Wales was the pinnacle," added Tidbury, whose parents competed in the event in 1983. "A lot of people scoffed when we turned up in our Land Rovers because they didn't think we would be able to compete, but once we overtook two or three cars they

knew that they had to start taking us seriously."

The team's history can be traced back to 1963 when organisers of the Scottish Rally allowed military drivers to tag along at the back of the

race to help recover crashed cars from ditches. By the mid-70s, 15 vehicles were competing north of the border as well as at international events in Germany.

Rallying carries a financial burden and it was the arrival of the team's first sponsor, Lex, in the 1980s that allowed drivers to enter races as far afield

as Holland and Iceland. Continued improvement in the ensuing years has attracted a host of new sponsors and the increased backing helped pay the fees to compete at Wales Rally GB.

As the team gains more exposure on the sport's biggest stages, its drivers are benefiting as much professionally as they are in improving their racing.

Each event the AFRT enters takes place over markedly different terrain and the lessons learnt keeping a Land Rover upright while sliding round an off-road course at 100mph have had an important impact thousands of miles away from the track.

"When I deployed on Op Telic I found I was using my experience to do advanced driving in the sand," concluded Tidbury. "Being in the team has been one of the highlights of my Army career, but it does have a practical benefit as well." ■

'We amaze some people with our speed and I say that very proudly'

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Picture: Graeme Main

Up for the Challenge: Army star Cpl Ben Taylor (REME) leads the assault on Thatto Heath Crusaders as the Army storm to a convincing Challenge Cup win

Reds on a roll

Army make giant stride on road to Wembley with resounding cup victory

JUST one match separates the Army's rugby league side from emulating its best ever Challenge Cup performance after the Reds cruised to a 34-12 first-round victory against Thatto Heath Crusaders.

Playing their first game of the new season, the military team looked anything but rusty as they put their National Conference opponents to the sword with a strong and disciplined performance at Aldershot.

The win set up a second round tie against Ince Rose Bridge, which was due to be played as this issue went to press, and victory there would put the Army into the hat for the third round draw for the first time since losing to Rochdale Hornets in 1999.

"We went into the match hoping that we would beat them, but we are

always slightly cautious and especially so because it was our first meet of the year," explained Army Rugby League secretary Maj Mick Scholes (RE), who was in charge of the team when it last made the third round.

"We looked quite nervy for the first 20 minutes and it was a bit frustrating, but it was just a case of waiting for it all to click into place."

Heath's enterprising start saw them bully their way to within inches of the try line on three separate occasions, but each time they were repelled by the physical power of the Reds.

The Army 13 stood firm and began to impose themselves on the game after 25 minutes. WO2 "Pud" Cowburn (RE) burst through the middle and some undisciplined Heath defending allowed Pte Gareth Lodge (Para) the time

and space to open the scoring with a converted try.

Cpl Lee Innes (RE) was next to test his attacking mettle as he broke through a three-man tackle to score under the posts. He converted his own try and a late first-half penalty left the score at 14-0 going into the second period.

With Heath on the ropes and a place in the second round tantalisingly close, the Army showed renewed purpose after the break and stretched their lead with two quick penalties.

Visiting player Paul Gauchwin was yellow-carded for a high tackle and Sgt Paul Riley (RA), who formed a bruising partnership with SSgt Stewart Sylvester (RAMC) throughout, smashed through for a try.

Trailing by 24 unanswered points, Heath finally got onto the scoresheet with a converted try from Martin Shea, but moments later had to rely on a last-ditch tackle from captain Mike Woods to keep out Spr Ben Seru (RE).

Any thoughts of a comeback were finally extinguished when Army skipper Innes snapped the ball from a scrum within his own half and swallowed up the ground to score his second converted try of the match.

A second Heath score and a resultant conversion brought the visitors up to 14 points, but Cpl Ben Taylor (REME) registered the game's final points with a try three minutes from time.

Given the style of this victory, the Army had every reason to be confident going into the cup's second round. ■

Sound backing

FINALISTS at this month's Army Rugby Union cup finals day can count on top-class musical support thanks to the involvement of one of the country's best-respected school bands.

Musicians from The Duke of York's Royal Military School band will play throughout the finals, which are being held at Aldershot on Thursday, March 13.

Comprising children whose parents are serving in the British Forces, the band

has provided the pre-match entertainment at the Army v Royal Navy Inter-Services match at Twickenham for several seasons.

John Dickens, ARU secretary, said: "It is great news that the school can provide the band at our cup finals this year and we hope that they will be able to play at more of our events in the future."

Entry to the finals day, which includes the culmination of the Community Cup and Premiership competitions, is free.

Olympic ambitions

Soldiersport's guide to Team GB's preparation camp

BRITAIN'S top athletes will converge on Aldershot ahead of the 2012 Olympics after the town's garrison beat the universities of Loughborough and Bath to host Team GB's preparation camp.

SoldierSport takes a look at the existing and planned venues where our Olympians will put the finishing touches to their training . . .

2 Wand Tetley Gym – Fencing and volleyball

Wand Tetley Gymnasium, situated at the home of the Army School of Physical Training, provides the required space, height, lighting, sprung wood non-slip flooring and electronic scoring apparatus required for international fencing training.

The gym can also be set up to provide an International Volleyball Federation-specification court.

4 Tennis centre – Tennis and table tennis

Comprising four indoor and ten outdoor courts, Aldershot Garrison Tennis Centre is the perfect place for Britain's players to put the finishing touches to their preparations.

The indoor hall meets International Table

Tennis Federation standards for space, light, temperature, ventilation and backdrop and additional facilities include changing areas, catering, treatment rooms and offices.



1 Rugby Stadium – Rugby and football

Featuring one permanent 500-seat stand, the capacity of the home of the Army's first XV can be brought up to 1,300 with 800 temporary additional seats.

The playing surface was relaid at the same time as the football pitch and meets Premier League standards.

The stadium is floodlit, includes changing and support areas and is complemented by the adjacent Wavell Ground.

3 Controlled roads – Mountain biking and road cycling

With 9km of roads within Aldershot Garrison's security perimeter, cyclists will have access to safe, good quality training surfaces.

As well as covering a range of terrain and topography, the roads can also be closed to traffic by prior arrangement.

The construction of a new mountain bike course meeting the standards set by the British and International Cycling Federations has also been proposed.

5 Aldershot Military Stadium – Athletics and football

The existing 1,130-seat stadium is in line for a major overhaul ahead of the camp. The eight-lane, 400m track will be resurfaced in 2009 to meet stringent international specifications. Areas for field events will also be renovated.

The pitch at the stadium was relaid in July 2007 and meets the standards set by the Institute of Groundsmanship.

Other facilities include a treatment area, meeting rooms and a clubhouse.



6 Boxing and combat sports centre

Due to be built next door to Aldershot Garrison Hockey Centre in 2010, the Aspire Defence-built and maintained boxing and martial arts arena will contain sport-specific equipment, international-standard treatment facilities and audio visual analysis areas to allow athletes and coaches to analyse performances.

A free weights area, sauna and ice baths are also planned for the centre, which will meet international regulations.



Going for gold: Col Nigel Josling, Aldershot Garrison Colonel, right, receives a presentation from Simon Clegg, Chief Executive of the British Olympic Association

Other Team GB venues

The large size and surrounding shelter of **Aldershot Garrison's cricket ground** provides the 150m of flat, wind-protected grass required by Olympic archers.

Britain's Olympic shooters will have access to rifle ranges at **Deepcut**, **Sandhurst** and **Pirbright** capable of hosting disciplines from 100m to 1,200m. Pistol and air pistol ranges from 10m to 25m and clay pigeon shooting facilities are also available.

7 Maida Gymnasium – Boxing

Already well-versed in hosting major fights, the Army boxing team's gym is purpose-equipped with platform, ring and training areas meeting International Boxing Federation standards.



8 Hockey centre – Hockey

The home of the Army's hockey teams will play an integral role in the camp.

Two sand-based artificial pitches at the centrally-located centre will be relaid by August 2010 and complemented by a third pitch, which is expected to be installed by 2009 at the latest.

A modern pavilion serves the pitches and contains changing rooms, catering facilities, treatment areas and media and office space.

9 Sports centre – Badminton, judo, squash and swimming

Aquatic athletes will have the use of an Olympic-standard 50m, eight-lane pool with hydraulic floor, movable boom, Omega timing and scoring systems and a full set of diving boards and platforms.

The centre has six glass-backed squash courts and its two sports halls can be set up for eight badminton courts, two basketball courts or a judo area.



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Hot shot: Star striker Pte Kim Holden (RLC), who finished the South West Counties season as top scorer, attacks the goal during the win against Cornwall

Perfect return

Holden recovers from leg injury to fire youthful Reds to first league title

Report: Stephen Tyler
Picture: Graeme Main

TWO wins in two weeks rounded off a perfect South West Counties League season as the Army's women footballers clinched the title with a 100 per cent record.

A backs-to-the-wall 2-1 win over perennial rivals Cornwall at Aldershot put the Reds in the driving seat and the team hammered home its advantage with a 4-2 win away to Guernsey.

The Service side's dominance was helped by playing Cornwall at home rather than having to travel to the South West, but assistant coach Cpl Margaret McAteer (AAC) said the team's strength in depth had been the biggest difference over previous seasons.

"The team we have coming through now is quite young and the new players who have come in have all performed well," she said. "Having that mix of young and seasoned players has worked well for us.

"It's the first time we have won it and to do it so comfortably is very satisfying,

but we will be trying to consolidate and build on it.

"In past seasons the game against Cornwall has been our stumbling block and every year they have beaten us, so it was definitely a bonus for us to get to play them on our own ground."

Integral to the women's success was the blistering form of striker Pte Kim Holden (RLC).

The pacy forward's record of seven goals in three games – including a hat-trick in the title decider in Guernsey – is even more remarkable given the fact that Holden has only just recovered from a fractured leg suffered in a Combined Services game last year.

"Kim Holden was under a lot of pressure against Cornwall," continued McAteer. "But she upped her game incredibly in the second half and did her job really well."

Speaking after smashing home a long-range injury-time winner against Cornwall, Holden told *SoldierSport*: "This was only my second game back so I'm obviously happy to have scored two goals."

With the young Reds on a hot streak of form, the potential for them to play at a higher level is plain to see.

But while McAteer is confident the side could hold its own against more illustrious opposition, she insists that her players will be continuing their development in the South West Counties League.

"I think that when you see how well we have played this season, the potential for us to move into a higher division and still be able to compete is there," she said. "But we are happy with staying where we are and continuing to build on our strengths."

The triumphant women's side will now be concentrating its efforts on successfully retaining the Inter-Services' championship title which they wrapped up with a perfect record last season.

● **The Army's defence of the Inter-Services' title begins on Thursday, March 6 against the Royal Air Force, at Uxbridge, and ends on Thursday, March 13 against the Royal Navy, at Aldershot. ■**

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Picture: SAC Dominic King RAF

Board walk: Inter-Services women's snowboard champion Cpl Sarah Marriott (AMS) takes flight on her way to a second-place finish in the slopestyle event

Made of the white stuff

Reds turn up the heat with series of successes at winter sports contest

ARMY skiers capped a memorable season by claiming all but one title at the Inter-Services ski and snowboard championships in the dramatic setting of the French Alps.

Fresh from competing in the single Service event in Serre Chevalier, France, the Army's men finished on top of the downhill, slalom, giant slalom and super G events, while the women won everything except the slalom.

Not to be outdone, the Army snowboard teams also put their Service rivals to the sword by sweeping to victories in the parallel slalom, boarder cross and slopestyle disciplines.

Men's team skipper Capt Nick Binnington (LD), who added the individual title to his medal haul, was full of praise for his squad, which included new caps Capt Rich Ham (1 Rifles) and LCpl Matt Roberts (RLC).

"We have got a good mix of experience and new talent," he said. "That way we can develop people and field the best team for each race."

There was similar individual success for women's team captain Maj Nikki Porter (RADC) after she was the fastest Services' skier in the downhill, giant slalom and super G races.

Porter, who went into the

championships on the back of a winning performance at the Army competition that earned her the overall women's title, said: "They are a superb team and the captaincy has been the highlight of my skiing career."

On the snowboard slopes, SSgt Andy Moore (AMS) continued the Army's dominance by winning the parallel slalom, while 2nd Lt Si Nicholson (REME) was awarded the overall title thanks to a deserved slopestyle victory.

"We have had some professional coaching this season and it has paid off," explained Moore. "The team has done superbly." ■

● THE all-conquering Army women's cricket side is on the lookout for fresh talent to help with their defence of the Inter-Services title.

The team is holding trials for new players at Dummer Cricket Centre, near Basingstoke, and Aldershot on Thursday, May 1 and Friday, May 2. Previous playing experience is desirable, but newcomers to the sport are also welcome. Anyone interested in attending should contact team manager Maj Ruth MacGill (AAC) on 94329 4138 or cgtw-dcgc@saavn.mod.uk

● SERVICES personnel can take advantage of a first-class sporting

SPORT SHORTS

opportunity by volunteering as stewards at Lord's Cricket Ground this summer.

The MCC needs seating stewards for England's Test matches against the West Indies, from May 14 to 18, and India, from July 9 to 13.

Volunteers must be from the non-commissioned ranks and be on annual or terminal leave on the dates of the matches. Anyone interested should write to WO2 (AQMS) Lee Murrell (REME), 3 Regt AAC Wksp, Wattisham Airfield, Ipswich, Suffolk IP7 7SD, or telephone

01449 728363 or 94674 8363. Closing date is April 14.

● THE Royal Scots Dragoon Guards snatched a dramatic last-ditch victory in the super G at the Army alpine ski championships to end the long-running domination of favourites 1 LSR.

Speaking after guiding his team to first place in the competition, which took in downhill, slalom, giant slalom and super G races, Scots DG skipper Capt Alex Sibony said: "We're chuffed to bits and the phone hasn't stopped ringing with people congratulating us. It was great to beat such a strong 1 LSR team."

Clinical notes

The regular feature in which we ask soldiers for their views on a hot topic

We asked patients being treated at Headley Court and Selly Oak Hospital what they thought of the standard of care they were receiving

LCpl Stephen White, R Signals

I was shot in my left hand in Basra last year. The casevac chain worked really well from the moment I was injured. I was in surgery at 1100 and on a flight back to the UK that evening. I've heard negative reports about Selly Oak mixing military and civilian patients, but I don't see the difference. For me, the standard of care has been awesome.



Rfn James Fardell, 2 Rifles

I was in a car crash in Northern Ireland along with one of my friends. I didn't have my seat belt on and went out through the window. My injuries included a broken shoulder, broken ribs and damage to my back. The standard of care at Headley Court is really good. I'm with 2 Rifles and want to get fit again so that I can go on tour.



LCpl Ryan Fulton, RDG

I picked up a knee injury while playing football and after visiting the medical centre was sent to have a couple of X-rays. I had keyhole surgery and physiotherapy to build the damaged muscle back up but eight weeks later the same thing happened again. I'm now having surgery to reconstruct my knee. The people at Selly Oak have been very friendly.



LCpl Ian Kent, REME

I've only been at Headley Court for a short time and think the standard of care here is pretty good. I was involved in a motorbike accident in Paderborn, Germany, but I don't remember much. I broke three ribs, my shoulder and suffered a bleed to the brain. Bielefeld Hospital treated me before I went to Selly Oak. The accident was more than two months ago.



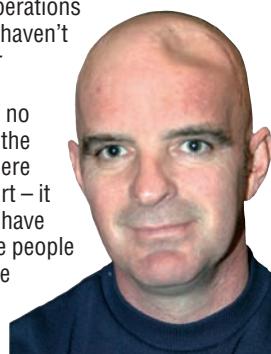
LCpl Paul Gillespie, RE

I was injured in Afghanistan by an anti-personnel mine and lost a leg at the knee. Unfortunately I was the team medic, so the lads had to treat me. The rehab at Headley Court is intense and it has already made such a difference. Initially I was at Selly Oak and the standard of treatment was really good there too. I'm making good progress and am keen to get back to my unit.



Sgt Kenny Jack, RLC

I'd had pains on and off in my head, went to get them treated and, within an hour of seeing the doctor, I was undergoing the first of three operations for a tumour. I haven't left hospital for the past seven months. I have no problems with the rehabilitation here at Headley Court – it is wonderful. I have got to know the people and made some good friends.



Cpl Lesley Baldwin, RMP

My injury followed a Combat Fitness Test. I had dystonia in my ankle, my foot was buckled and I had to have an amputation at the knee. Once I arrived at Headley Court, life was immediately better. The staff and facilities are amazing. It is a first-class centre. I'm hoping to be one of the first female amputees to stay in the British Army.



Sgt Mick Brennan, R Signals

I lost my legs following a suicide attack in Baghdad in 2004, and am expecting to leave Headley Court soon. The care has been absolutely outstanding. I've become close to other amputees – if we need help, we are there for each other. I'm going back to 30 Signal Regiment and am looking forward to spending time with my family.



Capt Peter Norton GC, RLC

I was injured in 2005 by an explosive device south-west of Baghdad. The Headley Court team are great; they give 100 per cent every day. Life here will also improve with the opening of the SSAFA Forces Help house for relatives. The charity is also looking at a second house near Selly Oak Hospital, which is good news.



Interviews: Cliff Caswell Pictures: Steve Dock

Coming up . . . in SOLDIER

Going green: Soldiers from 1 Rifles join gunners from 29 Commando Regiment, RA, and sappers from 59 Independent Commando Squadron, RE, in the "hoofing" world of the Royal Marines



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