

SOLDIER

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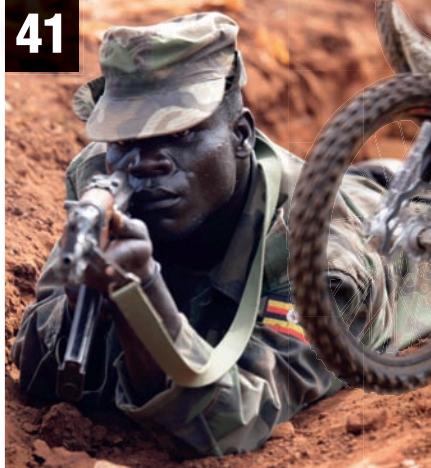
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Cover picture (left): 2nd Lt Jasper Boylan (Para) seeks refuge at a forming-up point ahead of the final attack exercise on the platoon commander's battle course at British Army Training Support Unit Belize

Picture: Steve Dock

Background image: Capt Nick Heppenstall (RLC) makes steady progress during his ascent of peak Shere Khan as part of Exercise Tiger Karakoram

Picture: Capt David Crosbie, RE

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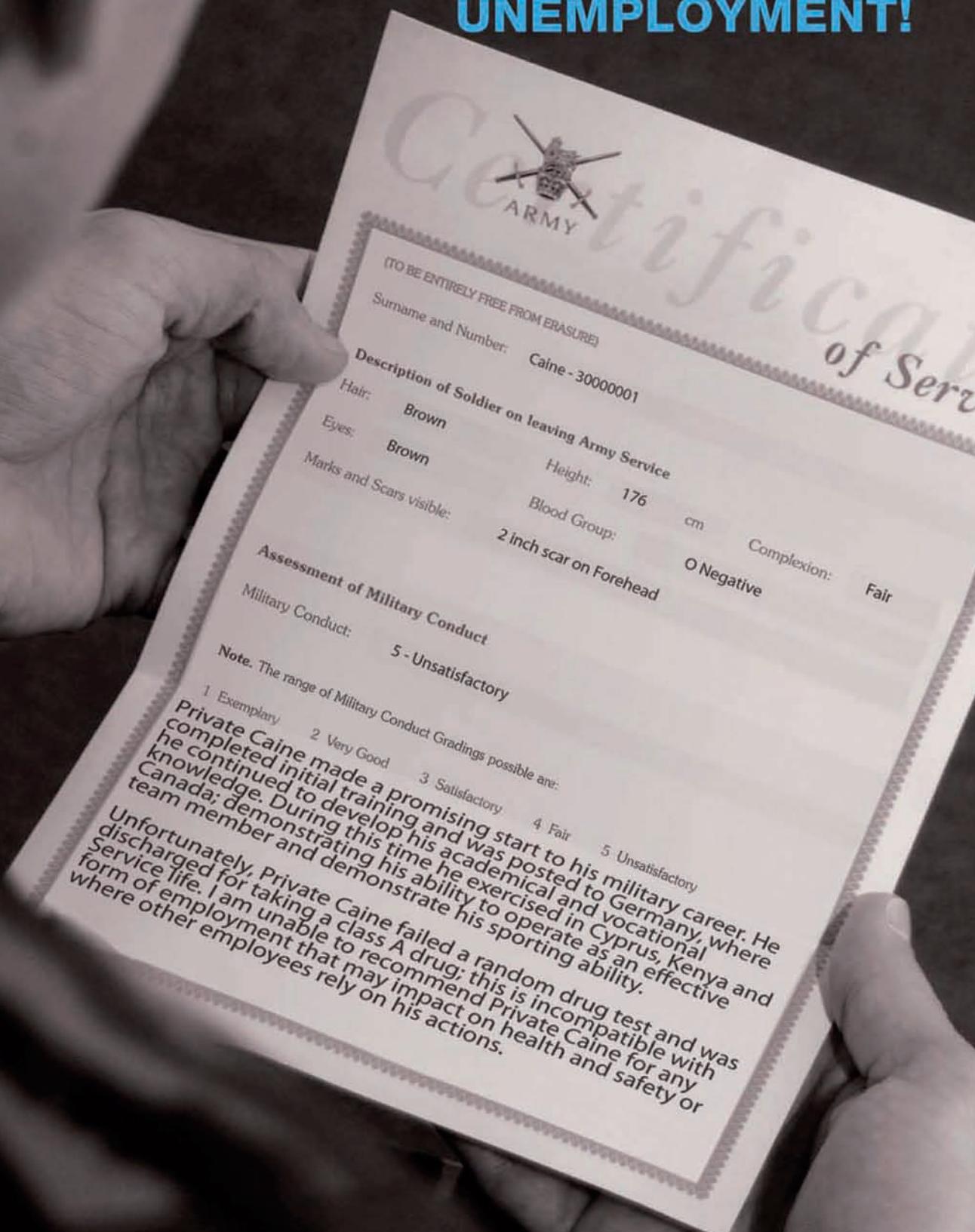
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"Pte Eccles is fine but, try as we did, we couldn't save his detachable armoured modular underwear."

● Plum protection – Pages 26-27

Financial times deliver difficult read

WHEN producing a magazine for a readership as diverse as the Servicemen and women of the British Army, it is usually difficult to second guess which will be the most pored over pages of a particular issue.

Unsurprisingly, 18-year-old privates and generals rarely agree as to what makes for an interesting or entertaining read.

And while it would do my ego wonders to learn that Service personnel – regardless of age, sex and rank – take in every word from here to the back cover, I am acutely aware that is not the case. Like a large family dissecting a Sunday newspaper, some will flick straight to the sports section while others will turn immediately to *Talkback* to take in troops' tales of woe.

However, following the announcement that the annual expenditure on Armed Forces allowances is to be reduced by £250 million in the wake of the Strategic Defence and Security Review, there is little doubt in my mind as to which stories in this magazine will be digested by one and all.

Soldier's summary of the savings measures can be found on Pages 7-9 and I, like those tasked with implementing the changes, will take no pleasure from having your undivided attention.

No words can make the prospect of having less money in your wallet more palatable but, if nothing else, I hope this issue throws up the odd reminder of the many enduring positives of the most venerated of professions.

For the second successive month, the news pages (11-22) are laden with accounts of advancement in Afghanistan – progress which provides a strong indication that delivering peace

and stability to Helmand is not the pipe dream some naysayers in the national press suggest.

Op Herrick also provides another reason for optimism. In this time of tightening purse strings, money continues to be spent in the line of preserving the Army's most valuable assets, its people.

Despite the economic gloom, the MoD has invested heavily – more than £10 million to date – in the research, development and manufacture of "protective pants" to defend Servicemen and women from the effects of improvised explosive device strikes in theatre (Pages 26-27).

I hope this issue throws up the odd reminder of the many enduring positives of the most venerated of professions'

The kit – devised and tested by the brightest minds at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory – is truly cutting edge and is already attracting envious glances from coalition partners.

The "combat codpiece", as it has inevitably been dubbed, joins an arsenal of hi-tech hardware in Helmand – the value of which is not lost on Gnr Carl Jordan (7 Para RHA), who has twice been

saved from serious injury by his Osprey body armour (Page 17).

Elsewhere, the Army Mountaineering Association – fresh from conquering a previously unscaled peak in the Himalayas (Pages 52-55) – and New Zealand-bound rugby team (Pages 96-97) provide an aide memoire to the diversity and exceptional money-can't-buy opportunities a career in camouflage can offer.

Times are undoubtedly tough, but I hope a sense of satisfaction in the wealth of good that you do provides some compensation for any forthcoming fall in your finances. – Andrew Simms, Managing Editor ■

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Picture: Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC

Out of the firing line: Despite the scale of the savings required, British military personnel serving on the front line of Afghanistan will be relieved to hear that the Operational Allowance, which was doubled last May, is not set to be reduced in the wake of the Strategic Defence and Security Review

'Reductions unpopular but necessary'

THE annual expenditure on Armed Forces allowances is to be reduced by £250 million as the full effect of the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) starts to take hold.

Andrew Robathan, Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, has announced a package of measures which are aimed at supporting the Government's programme to reduce the UK deficit. The majority of the changes will be introduced from May 1.

Get You Home (Travel), Disturbance Allowance and Day Subsistence have all been included on the long list of expenses that fall under the spotlight, with Servicemen and women facing the prospect of significant adjustment over the coming months.

It has been widely acknowledged within Defence circles that the changes will be unpopular and that some may lead to alterations in lifestyle, but the move is seen as a vital contribution towards reducing wider debts.

"We all appreciate that these measures will hit hard on certain individuals," Col Fiona Gardner, the Army Pay Colonel told *Soldier*.

"There are some personnel who do

not claim many of these allowances and some do not claim any at all. But there will be a significant number who do, particularly those based overseas.

"We recognise that, over time, there will be a requirement to change lifestyles slightly. Some of the key measures will be introduced over two years to try and soften the impact and give people time to adjust.

"The important thing to remember is that this has been imposed on us. The requirement to find £250 million of savings was set out in the SDSR. It was an incredibly difficult thing to do and all three Services have worked together to try and achieve that requirement in the fairest manner possible."

The Army has insisted that all unavoidable expenses incurred for Service reasons should be compensated but where there is an element of choice in the spending, personnel will make a contribution towards it.

Operations, mobility and separation will be the highest priorities for reimbursement and the lower earners will be protected as much as possible.

The MoD has tried to ensure that no one group is disproportionately affected

and have sought to soften the blow by phasing in some of the alterations over a two-year period.

On a brighter note there will be no cuts to the Operational Allowance, which was doubled in May 2010, and Col Gardner has assured soldiers the situation will be closely monitored.

She said: "For the future we will always examine what the need is. Local Overseas Allowance could go up again if the spend data shows the cost of living in Germany has risen disproportionately to the UK."

"We always look to make sure that available money is targeted at areas that compensate for unavoidable personal expenditure."

Personnel who believe they will be placed in financial difficulty by these measures should inform their unit administration staff and chain of command, who will direct them towards the appropriate advice.

Details of the changes, along with information on the rates not yet published, will be announced via directed letter by February 28.

● **Savings summary – Pages 8-9**



“BELIZE OFFERS AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH IS PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY DEMANDING AND PUSHES YOU TO THE LIMIT”
– SSGT ALAN BLAIR (SASC) SALUTES ARMY OUTPOST, PAGES 33-39

Savings summary: How Army allowances will be affected by rebalancing of Defence books

LOCAL OVERSEAS ALLOWANCE

■ WORLDWIDE changes to the Local Overseas Allowance (LOA) will be introduced from May 1.

The element covering nine nights per year in hotel accommodation known as Bett Nights, which are offered in lieu of long weekends with friends and family in the UK, has been revised to six. This follows the introduction of Get You Home (Overseas) (GYH(O)) in 2007.

The current rank-based 13-level LOA factor plan will be revised to three bands per main station, reflecting the fact the payment is designed to contribute to the additional costs of living overseas, rather than compensating for lifestyle choices.

The allowance will no longer be paid for dependant children over the age of 18 or those who have completed the

A-level stage of education.

From April 1, 2012 additional changes will be made. These include the current 20 minutes of peak-time telephone calls being replaced with an indexed overseas package in all main station areas; the baby-sitting provision being cut by 50 per cent; and the Domestic Assistance element of LOA being removed.

Further alterations will be made in North West Europe (Germany, Belgium, France and Holland) on the same date, when the car buy/sell element will cease. This reduction will be compensated for by the introduction of an entitlement to claim towards duty travel costs on assignments to and from the UK.

The remaining six Bett Nights will be removed from the LOA conventions for personnel in North West Europe. This will be offset by the provision of two additional GYH(O) journeys per year.

INCIDENTAL EXPENSES

■ INCIDENTAL Expenses (IE) in the UK and overseas will be removed, except for Service personnel hospitalised as in-patients.

This payment had been used to reimburse expenditure on laundry and dry cleaning; phone calls home; a newspaper; television and internet access and other costs during periods of temporary absence of up to 30 days. However, it is judged that, on the whole, when such expenditure is incurred it is primarily associated with personal choice, rather than specifically relating to a Service need.



MOTOR MILEAGE ALLOWANCE

■ ALL three Motor Mileage Allowance (MMA) rates are being aligned with the lower HMRC approved mileage scheme, which is currently set at 25p per mile. The MMA Converted Leave Rate (CLR) will also be fixed at this level and the Official Duty Rate will be removed from the regulations. The Get You Home (GYH) allowances generated by MMA CLR will reduce accordingly to 25p per mile.



LIVING OUT RATES

■ THE payment of Living Out Supplemented Rates to LOA (LOSLOA) is to be aligned to the UK Food and Incidental Allowance (FIA) rate and will be adjusted by the indexed LOA shopping basket food element, less that already paid in the single/unaccompanied rate of LOA.

Eligibility criteria will also be altered to ensure that maximum use of Service messing, where appropriate, is made. Personnel living within three miles of their mess facilities will not be paid LOS. This will lead to soldiers, with reasonable access to messing, losing their current entitlement from May 1.

HOME TO DUTY TRAVEL

■ THE personal contribution to Home to Duty Travel (Public) will increase from one to three miles as of May 1. This figure will then rise from three to six miles from April 1, 2012 and from six to nine miles on April 1, 2013.

Army personnel who live in publicly-funded accommodation less than these distances from their duty station will receive no financial support for the commute to and from work. The contribution for Servicemen and women who live

more than these distances will be 89p per day from April 1, £1.78 per day from April 1, 2012 and £2.66 per day from April 1, 2013, and they will receive a payment towards the remainder of their travel costs.

While it is recognised that personnel have very little choice in where they serve and, if they live in Service accommodation, where they are housed, it is considered reasonable that they should expect to bear broadly the same costs as their civilian counterparts and nine miles is the average distance travelled by UK workers.

BOUNTIES AND BONUSES

■ RECOGNISING structures will be changing as a result of the SDSR, schemes such as Golden Hellos, Financial Retention Incentives, Rejoin Bounties and Transfer Bounties are now being reviewed.

Information on changes to any existing schemes will be announced when these studies are complete. Personnel are being advised that while they may be able to demonstrate eligibility to receive such awards, it is for Defence Manning (Army) to determine entitlement based upon suitability and structural requirement.

DISTURBANCE ALLOWANCE

■ RATES for privately-owned and privately-rented families' accommodation are to be brought in line with those for living-in Service Families Accommodation (SFA). All Disturbance Allowance (DA) payments will be reduced by ten per cent to £966 for SFA and £83 for Single Living Accommodation. The child element will also reduce from £153 to £75 per eligible infant. The new rates will apply to all moves that take place on or after May 1, irrespective of when the claim for DA is submitted.



■ THE upper limit for UK **Day Subsistence** (DS) will be reduced from a capped maximum of £26.28 to £25 per day. Overseas DS (which is currently set at different rates depending on the country) will be reduced by 4.9 per cent.

■ THE parental contribution to **School Children's Visits** will be increased from 50 miles to 100 miles per single journey and the allowance will be withdrawn for children who have completed the A-level stage of education.

■ THE **Get You Home (Early Years)** (EY) and GYH (EY) (**Overseas Assistance**) will be removed at the end of Phase One training or at the age of 18, whichever is the later.

This measure will retain the allowance for those young personnel who need it most, while reducing provision for older persons on the trained strength.

■ **RECRUITMENT and Retention Allowances (London)** will be removed for all sergeants and above from April 1, 2012. The continued payments for corporals and below will be subject to AFPRB recommendations.

■ THE **Food and Incidentals Allowance** (FIA) is being reduced from £12.41 to £8.50 per day. The insurance and cleaning elements are to be removed from the formula, the absence factor increased and the food basket priced from outside Central London, resulting in the new rate.

Service personnel accommodated within three miles of their unit's messing facility will be ineligible for FIA.

■ **SPECIAL Messing Allowance** (SMA) will be benchmarked at 75 per cent of the rate of Subsistence Allowance for the relevant country.

■ **PRIVATELY Arranged Passage** claims will be based on pre-booked non-flexible economy class airfares only, with accommodation and subsistence elements removed from the formula.

■ FROM April 1, 2012 the **Specialist Pay Reserve Banding** will be reduced from the current six-year system to a three-year system where a rate of 100 per cent of specialist pay is paid for the first two years, 50 per cent in year three and zero in year four. The **Premature Voluntary Release** rate will be reduced from 50 to zero per cent and all current forms of specialist pay will be reviewed by the AFPRB during 2011.

■ THERE will be no change to the **Enhanced Commitment Bonus** (CB) scheme for personnel who started Phase One training prior to the date of the announcement (January 20, 2011). The CB 2010 scheme will be introduced for those who begin their training on or after this date. This will be set at a maximum value of £7,500 (gross) for eligible personnel.



Significant changes are being made to the allowance structure in light of the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR). How will these be implemented?

In brief

Prime Minister David Cameron has announced there will be cuts to both Service and Civil Service allowances totalling £300 million per year. For the Armed Forces this equates to a reduction of £250 million on an annual allowance spend of around £800 million by April 2014. Nearly £80 million of savings will be achieved through a decrease in military manning as well as measures to reduce the movements of personnel. The remainder will be met by changes to allowance eligibility and rates.

Why have allowances not been protected from the SDSR savings measures?

All areas of departmental spending have been reviewed in order to achieve the stringent savings required in the current economic situation in Defence and for the nation. It is appropriate that allowances are scrutinised to the same degree as all other areas. A number of savings were identified through routine review mechanisms and these would have been implemented in the normal course of events.

But isn't this an assault on a soldier's terms and conditions?

No. Allowance policy is kept under constant review and rates are changed frequently. As a result, allowance policy and/or rates can be varied or cancelled at any time. Indeed, the regulations for allowances (JSP 752) make it quite clear that Service personnel should not make financial plans or an assumption that current policy and rates will continue unchanged.

Will operational allowances be affected by the changes?

These were doubled in May 2010 and will continue to be paid at the new increased rate of £29.02 per day to eligible personnel. Longer Separated Allowance regulations were enhanced in April last year and these new provisions remain unchanged. Unpleasant Living Allowance (Operational) was also introduced in April last year and it remains unaffected by the measures.

What steps have been taken to ensure these measures are fair?

The following principles have been considered when deciding allowance saving measures:

● Where possible, all actual, unavoidable expenses incurred for Service reasons should be reimbursed.

● Where expense is incurred for Service reasons but there is some element of choice in incurring this expense, personnel should make a contribution towards it.

● Lower earners should be protected as much as possible.

● Overseas operations, mobility and separation should be the highest priorities for reimbursement or compensation.

What steps have been taken to protect the lower ranks?

For those serving abroad, the construct of Local Overseas Allowance, known as the factor plan, has been adjusted. Previously at 13 levels based on rank, with higher earners receiving more LOA, it has now been simplified to three bands. This means that all ranks will receive very similar levels of LOA to contribute to the necessary additional costs of living overseas. Within London, if the Armed Forces Pay Review Body considers the retention of Recruitment and Retention Allowance (London) to be appropriate following their review of the scheme, it will be retained for our most junior personnel, with the level being set no higher than corporal. Those senior in rank, including all officers, will lose the allowance from April 1, 2012.

Why is this happening at the same time as a two-year pay freeze for serving soldiers?

Delaying these measures will only ensure greater pain down the line. Service personnel, where appropriate, will still receive annual increments to their salary by way of moving up a level.

When will this take effect?

The majority of alterations will be introduced from May 1, although some will be delayed until April 1, 2012, while the three changes to Home to Duty Travel (Public) will be staggered over two years.

How do I find out more?

Unit administration staff should be consulted in the first instance. Further information in the form of the detailed changes to regulations will be published in directed letters by no later than February 28.

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Picture: Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC

Home front: British-trained Afghan National Army troops search a road for improvised explosive devices during the opening stages of Operation Omid Panj

Partnership clearing path to peace in Helmand

HOME nation-led operations have helped to improve security in Nad-e Ali, Lashkar Gar and Narah-e Saraj and provide clear evidence of the effectiveness of the ever-strengthening partnership between British and Afghan troops, according to Brig James Chiswell.

Speaking alongside the commanding officer of 3rd Brigade, 215 Corps – Gen Sherim Shah – via video link from theatre, the commander of Task Force Helmand told members of the UK press that the nations' militaries were “interlinked” and now shared bases across their area of operations.

“As a partner force we find them to be very exceptional warrior soldiers, hardy and courageous by nature,” the British officer said. “They are instinctive in their approach to the counter-insurgency, and have an empathy and an understanding to this land and to its people, as you would expect.”

Despite only being formed in April 2010, Brig Chiswell said he had seen “genuine and very fast progress” among Gen Shah’s soldiers and that “their fighting skills were absolutely not in doubt”. He drew attention to the success of Omid Panj (Hope Five) – the clearance of insurgents from an area to the south of Gereshk city – as an operational example of the Afghan National Army brigade’s capability.

Endorsing the views of his coalition partner, Gen Shah said his men and British troops were operating “like brothers working shoulder to shoulder” and the effectiveness of the relationship – which extended across the ranks – was winning hearts and minds.

“The elders are happy to sit and talk with Isaf [International Security Assistance Force] and inform us of insurgents who go out at night to plant IEDs,” he explained. “Three years ago this was a very different place. All major roads were blocked, IEDs were in all regions and the people had no freedom to move around.

“Today we are in a different situation. Recently I drove through 26 villages and in each I saw happy smiling faces.

“They said they are happy to have Isaf and Afghan troops working together to provide security.”

Neither commander would be drawn on how long it would be before Helmand troops could assume full responsibility for maintaining the peace but insisted that Afghan National Security Forces had made significant progress during the past three years.

“As a result we can now see that the insurgents are under pressure, not broken, but certainly under pressure,” said Brig Chiswell.

“There is local confidence now to stand up and reject [Taliban]

intimidation and put their trust in the state. We have the initiative and the emphasis has now shifted.”

Gen Shah said his immediate priorities were to improve logistics, build capability and improve the ANA’s cadre of medics.

Both commanders agreed that developing the Afghan National Police represented an important step in the country’s future.

“There has been a lot of ground to clear to get the officers to where they need to be,” said Brig Chiswell, pictured below. “Putting sufficient resources into the police has been some time in coming, but we are now seeing the level of input and energy going in that is required and it is an absolute critical focus for our efforts out here.”

The British officer said it would be “shoulder to the wheel” during 2011, which he anticipated being another hard year in Helmand.

“It is clear that it is not all over. But if the same pace that has endured so far can be maintained for the next four years, transition will be on the correct trajectory,” he concluded.





■ TALIBAN gunmen were driven from a major transport route in a public show of force by British-trained Afghan National Police (ANP) personnel.

The action unfolded after insurgents were spotted gathering in a compound close to Route 601 – the main road that connects Lashkar Gah to the rest of Afghanistan – by local security forces.

Responding to the alarm, Maj Nick Wight-Boycott, OC of Delta Company, 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, mobilised his troops in support of their coalition partners.

A MoD spokesperson said: "A fierce firefight ensued but the ANP clearly had the upper hand and, supported by the British contingent, pushed a kilometre

south of Route 601 in hot pursuit of the fleeing Taliban.

"The prompt action taken by the ANP had caught the insurgents off-guard and resulted in the success of the operation."

Describing the partnership between Afghan forces and British soldiers, Maj Wight-Boycott said: "Delta Company are here to protect the people of Helmand and support the police, reconnecting the ANP with their community and helping them fight a vicious insurgency. Every day these officers demonstrate they are growing in capability and confidence."

Pictured: Lt Luke McDonagh (5 Scots) and Afghan National Police officers prepare to take on the insurgents

Picture: Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC

Workforce content but concerned

DEFENCE staff continue to be interested in their work and feel a sense of accomplishment in what they do, according to the results of the MoD Your Say survey.

More than 32,000 people took part in the study, including some 5,000 Service personnel, and the outcome revealed improved scores on communication and visibility within the organisation.

Despite these positives, there was a clear expression of uncertainty in light of last year's Strategic Defence and Security Review.

In an accompanying letter to staff, Permanent Under Secretary Ursula Brennan said: "The period of working

through the implementation of these reviews will be difficult. In these early months we will not be in a position to clarify what they mean for particular parts of the department or for individual jobs.

"What we do know is that we want to make as many of the civilian job reductions as possible through voluntary departures. We also know that once we have made the reductions and reshaped the department we will have a renewed, reinvigorated and well-regarded organisation that will continue to offer important, challenging and rewarding work that is worth doing, and doing well."



Shura footing: Lt Col James Coates, CO 3 Para, discusses the proposed site of a school with Afghan National Army personnel and residents of Showal at a milestone meeting

■ TROOPS from 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and the Afghan National Army have continued to build on their success in Showal, Helmand province, by providing the security for a high-profile shura.

Chaired by District Governor Habibullah, the meeting was attended by 250 residents and its peaceful passing marked a significant milestone for the once Taliban-plagued town.

Speaking at the shura, one Afghan male said: "Two months ago it was not possible to

go down the streets safely but now people are out, children are playing and people regularly commute on the main roads."

Lt David Donnelly (3 Para) said: "The men have quickly formed a reputation among the locals. The people talk of how they fight the insurgents and 'don't fall back'. They are particularly pleased that their own soldiers and police officers are benefiting from training and mentoring from the 3 Para troops, whose ability they respect."

NEWS IN BRIEF



BILLION POUND POST

■ BERNARD Gray (pictured left) has been appointed as the MoD's Chief of Defence Material, replacing the retiring Gen Sir Kevin O'Donoghue.

The post will see him leading on the delivery of all aspects of the Defence Equipment and Support Plan and he will be responsible for assets worth £104 billion and an annual operating budget of £13 billion.

On announcing the move, Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox (pictured right) said: "Bernard Gray is without question the best man for this hugely demanding post at a uniquely challenging time."

"He brings to it deep knowledge and experience of defence generally, defence procurement specifically, of the Whitehall machine and the commercial world."

MEDICAL SERVICES MAKEOVER

■ A NEW accommodation and training facility for military medics in Whittington has been given the go-ahead by the MoD.

The second phase of development for the Defence Medical Services (DMS) will see the current centre move from Keogh Barracks in Surrey to its new site in 2013.

Building is planned to start this summer on a complex which will become home to approximately 1,400 personnel and feature a theatre and learning hub.

Andrew Robathan, Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, said: "Our Armed Forces deserve the highest standard of medical care and this will be a key component of that will make a real difference to our troops."

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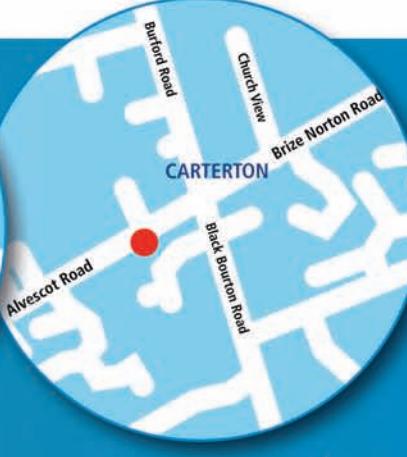
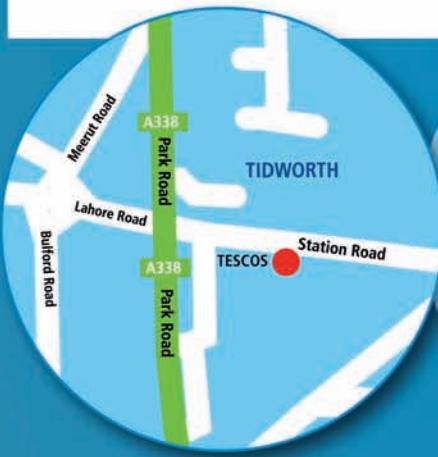
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Picture: Crown copyright

Historic haul: From left to right, WO2 Iain Martin (38), LCpl Damon Dixon (22), LCpl Gareth Todd (25) and Cpl Steven Hunter (29) take a well-deserved break during the operation to clear Bandi Barq Road – in the Gereshk area of Helmand province, Afghanistan – of improvised explosive devices laid by insurgents

Record-breakers neutralise dirty dozen

A GROUP of British bomb disposal specialists have set a new record for the most improvised explosive devices unearthed and rendered safe on a single operation in Afghanistan.

A total of 12 bombs were found by a Royal Engineers search team during a high-risk clearance mission in the Gereshk area of Helmand province.

WO2 Iain Martin (RLC), the ammunition technical officer who defused the dozen devices, said: "There was a huge variety, all within a short distance and they represented a huge challenge for us.

"Our reward came when we had finished and an Afghan family came up on the road with their herd of goats, looking around like they hadn't trodden on the land for years.

"The local people have confidence in us and our work to improve their lives

and that is a great feeling."

The deadly weapons, which ranged in size from 5kg to 15kg and were targeted at both vehicles and troops on foot, were laid within 300 metres of each other on a route known as Bandi Barq Road.

In addition to their record haul, the team also found two separate pressure plates and a main charge packed with 5kg of explosive material.

Lt Col Mark Davis, commanding officer of the Counter-IED Task Force, said: "The commitment, skill and bravery of all my teams never fails to amaze me.

"There is still work to be done but we are hugely satisfied with the advances we have made. The key is to develop a home-grown Afghan capability in the battle against IEDs and great progress is being made in that area too."

While the clearance of Bandi Barq

Road was significant because of the large number of devices discovered, it represents just one of many operations undertaken in the region.

A skirmish in Babaji saw soldiers from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland working alongside the Counter-IED Task Force to secure a route.

Responding to resistance from insurgents, the Scottish troops manoeuvred into a known area of enemy activity to take the fight away from the bomb disposal specialists.

This effort led to the successful removal of three explosive devices, the detainment of two Taliban gunmen and seizure of munitions.

Capt James Collinge (2 Scots) said: "We will capitalise on this by keeping the insurgents away and bringing development and security in."

NEWS IN BRIEF

ON THE JOB TRAINING

■ AFGHAN civilian workers at Camp Bastion have successfully completed a pioneering English language course run by the Joint Theatre Education Centre.

The 12 students underwent a ten-week programme that featured lessons taught by instructors from the Army's Education and Training Service. The graduates are all employed by KBR, the civilian contractor for a range of infrastructure and facilities management at the site.

Maj Ed Rankin, OC of the Joint Theatre Education Centre, said: "The aim is to offer our Afghan workers the opportunity to develop their knowledge of English and boost their employment prospects."

International studies attract army of students

EDUCATION officer Lt Claire Westerman (AGC) has been going above and beyond the call of duty to provide advanced English lessons to Helmand's home-nation troops.

The 24-year-old had been offering basic tutoring to help Afghan National Army (ANA) personnel gain a greater understanding of British-produced operational maps, but the classes became so popular that the soldiers wanted to sit in on her sessions with her own regiment.

Lt Westerman, attached to 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, now holds regular English lessons for her coalition counterparts, some of whom are becoming so

advanced they can understand the jokes and banter between British soldiers.

"This is a fantastic opportunity to involve the ANA soldiers in our day-to-day operations," she explained. "They are really enthusiastic and, as a result, are very quick to pick up English language skills.

"The next phase in the process is to oversee joint lessons, with the soldiers from each nationality teaching each other their languages."

As well as helping both British and Afghan troops in the classroom, Lt Westerman has been proving her worth on the ground.

She has formed part of a female engagement team responsible for building relationships with and getting information from local women.

This has proved to be a crucial role as, in Afghan culture, it is frowned upon for men, particularly foreign nationals, to talk to females they do not know.



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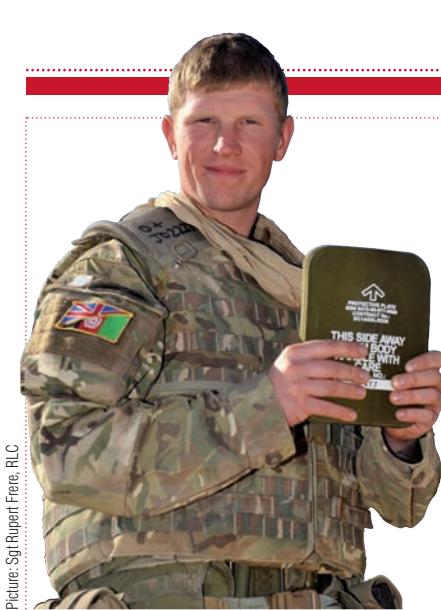
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Picture: Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC

Osprey armour earns its wings

A YOUNG soldier nicknamed the “bullet magnet” has praised the life-saving qualities of the Osprey body armour after he was shot twice in the line of duty.

Gnr Carl Jordan, of 7th Parachute Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery, would almost certainly have been killed by the insurgent rounds had it not been for the latest issue kit.

The 26-year-old, on his third tour of Helmand province, was first targeted as he manned the defensive sangars protecting his patrol base.

While monitoring an on-going firefight he felt a kick to his front as part of his body armour was ripped off.

A medic checked Gnr Jordan over and, found to be unscathed, he was passed fit to continue with his role.

The second incident happened when he was deployed on the ground in support of the opening of a new police station.

Insurgent fighters confronted the soldiers and during the ensuing contact the Coyote vehicle in which Gnr Jordan was travelling was riddled with bullets.

But, despite being hit by a round, he remained unhurt.

“On returning to the patrol base I discovered the gunshot damage to the side plate of my body armour,” he said.

“The situation on the ground meant that there was no time to think about what had happened. I had a quick cigarette, even though I have given up, changed my side plates and deployed out again.

“I felt we needed to get back out there to show presence to the locals and insurgents alike – to show that we were not defeated and faded – and I wanted to be part of that.”

He added: “I’m beginning to get a bit of a reputation; some of the lads call me ‘The Cat’, but say I’ve only seven lives left now. Others have called me James Bond, saying I only live twice. I’m just happy no one was more seriously injured in these incidents. Osprey is a great piece of kit and it’s very likely that I owe my life to it.”

Stricter criteria for schooling support

DEFENCE bosses have announced changes to the Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) paid to Service personnel.

The reorganisation will save more than £20 million a year and while the rates will not be altered, the rules on who qualifies for payments have.

The most significant change is the withdrawal of eligibility for personnel who serve unaccompanied by their families in certain locations, principally MoD London, and in sea-going assignments. Arrangements have been put in place to ensure individuals who are currently drawing CEA under these involuntary separation rules will not be unfairly disadvantaged.

Further alterations include an automatic review of entitlement after

two assignments, rather than three, and the establishment of a team to ensure compliance with CEA regulations.

Armed Forces Minister Nick Harvey is in the process of carrying out a separate review of the scheme which will consider the fundamental rationale for the allowance, the justification for the current set of entitlements and to look at alternatives to the reliance on independent schools.

Mr Harvey said: “Service personnel should not be disadvantaged because of their duty, but we must make sure that all allowances are fair and appropriate.

“We are determined that CEA should go only to those who really need it because of the tough financial situation the country is in. These changes will help to make sure this is the case.”



Picture: Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC

Coaching pays off as cops catch crooks

BRITISH-TRAINED Afghan National Police (ANP) have recovered a large haul of equipment stolen from their UK mentors in the Nad-e Ali district of Helmand province.

A team of 25 officers seized the goods, which ranged from rations to ammunition, during the search of a compound and detained a number of men on suspicion of the thefts.

Some of the patrolmen and commanders involved in the raid were recent graduates of the eight-week intensive course at the Helmand Police Training Centre in Lashkar Gah, which is currently run by troops from 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland in conjunction with the MoD police.

Lt Col Adam Griffiths, commanding officer of 5 Scots, said: “The future is about winning the support of Helmand’s population through the development of Afghanistan’s own security and justice institutions. The police need to be real police, trusted and respected by the locals,

leaving the Afghan National Army to conduct the combat operations.

“Recovering a haul of stolen goods and apprehending those responsible is exactly the type of work that would be expected by a police force in any developed country, and it’s what the Afghan people want of theirs.”

The Chief of Police for Helmand, Gen Abdul Hakim Angar, said the province’s population has increasing faith in the “high quality” personnel being produced under British tutelage.

“It is important that people trust the police and cooperate with them,” the commander explained at a graduation ceremony for 200 recruits.

“These new police officers have volunteered to serve the people and now they have the skills to do that.”

There are currently around 117,000 fully-trained ANP officers in Afghanistan and it is hoped this figure will hit a target of 134,000 by the end of the year.



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IN MEMORIAM



CPL STEVEN DUNN (27)
216 (PARACHUTE) SIGNAL
SQUADRON, ROYAL SIGNALS
KIA DECEMBER 21 – AFGHANISTAN

AN improvised explosive device claimed the life of a courageous and gifted signaller who was in the midst of his third Op Herrick tour.

Cpl Steven Dunn, of 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron, Royal Signals, was part of an operation to target insurgents in the Bowri desert of Helmand province when the vehicle he was travelling in was caught by a bomb blast.

The 27-year-old was attached to 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and had been responsible for the critical radio and satellite links used by patrols and sniper platoons.

Maj Alistair Fawcett, OC 216 Sig Sqn, said: "At every turn he strove to improve the lot of his men. He was always in the thick of it and his time in Afghanistan was no exception; with a spark in his

eye and his devilish Geordie sense of humour, he tackled his work with a sense of purpose and in the pursuit of making a difference."

Cpl Dunn joined the Army in 2004, thrived in the role of providing communication support at battlegroup level and was in his element when deployed on the ground. Lt Col Andrew Harrison, CO of 2 Para, said: "He was a courageous, fit and deeply-professional soldier who knew his duty lay in the van of battle."

Cpl Dunn was born in Gateshead and was a passionate Newcastle United supporter. He leaves behind his wife Cheryl and daughter Emily. In a statement, his family said: "We are immensely proud of all that he achieved in his short life. He died doing a job he loved and excelled at."



WO2 CHARLES WOOD (34)
23 PIONEER REGIMENT,
ROYAL LOGISTIC CORPS
KIA DECEMBER 28 – AFGHANISTAN

THE Counter-IED Task Force is mourning the loss of a truly-inspirational soldier who displayed irrepressible enthusiasm and boundless energy for his Army career.

WO2 Charles Wood, who was operating as an advanced search adviser, was leading a clearance route through the Khushdal Kalay area of the Helmand River Valley when he was killed by a bomb blast as the task neared completion.

The 34-year-old, of 23 Pioneer Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps, started his military career in 1994 and completed deployments to Iraq in 2003 and Bosnia in 2007.

He was posted from the Army Training Regiment Pirbright to 518 Pioneer Squadron as sergeant major in June 2009 and volunteered to

lead his men through their search training and tour of Afghanistan.

Lt Col Mark Davis (RLC), CO of the Counter-IED Task Force, said: "He was a huge character – a man who never rested. He was always on the go, constantly thinking ahead, planning the next stage and working out how best to achieve the mission. And who did he do this for? Certainly not for himself; he did it for his men."

WO2 Wood represented his regimental football team on numerous occasions and was also a successful fund-raiser, donating thousands of pounds to charity. His wife Heather said: "Charlie had an infectious personality and had a positive effect on everyone he met; he had a heart of gold and endeared himself to everyone."



PTE JOSEVA VATUBUA (24)
5TH BATTALION,
THE ROYAL REGIMENT OF SCOTLAND
KIA JANUARY 1 – AFGHANISTAN

A LARGER-THAN-LIFE soldier with a promising career ahead of him died while taking the fight to insurgent forces in Helmand province.

Pte Joseva Vatubua, of 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, was taking part in a company operation targeting enemy firing positions near the village of Saidabad Kalay when he was killed by an improvised explosive device.

The 24-year-old Fijian joined the Army in 2007 and hoped to attend a potential junior non-commissioned officer's course on the completion of his Herrick tour. He was also a fine rugby player and had recently been selected for the Army Sevens team.

Lt Col Adam Griffiths, CO of 5 Scots, said: "The Royal Regiment of Scotland has a tradition

of producing courageous, resilient, tenacious and tough Infantry soldiers of world renown – 'Big Joe' was this and more.

"Fearless in battle, while empathetic to the predicament of Afghanistan and the local nationals living around his patrol base, he was at his best on operations, demonstrating a real awareness and understanding of what he was being asked to do."

Capt Robbie Grieve added: "Joe's cheery personality and sense of mischief made him a joy to be around. He was an excellent soldier, a proud servant of the battalion and a good friend to all. My thoughts are with his family – especially his wife Claudette and the Fijian community in which he was so heavily involved."

Charity helps cement recovery centre's future

THE Royal British Legion (RBL) has donated £5 million to help cover the running costs at the Army's Personnel Recovery Centre (PRC) in Edinburgh.

The pledge forms part of a £50 million grant from the charity that is aimed at providing care for wounded, injured and chronically sick Armed Forces personnel.

Spread over ten years, the money will assist in meeting the operating costs of

four PRCs to be established in the UK as well as covering the capital financing for a bespoke facility in Germany and the creation of The Royal British Legion Battle Back Centre.

Chris Simpkins, the charity's director general, said: "We have more than doubled our grant to the programme in recognition of the significant demand there will sadly be for this kind of care for years to come.

"We are delighted to be providing this

long-term support for the wonderful work that is being done at PRC Edinburgh to help personnel recover – work that is paving the way for the other hubs to follow."

The state-of-the-art, 12-bed Scottish facility is based at Erskine's Mark Wright House and further centres will be created in Colchester, Catterick and Tidworth. They will be built by Help for Heroes and operated jointly by the RBL and Army.



“IT WAS AN EXTREMELY OVERWHELMING EXPERIENCE TO MEET OUR TROOPS AND SEE THE SACRIFICES THESE PEOPLE ARE MAKING ON OUR BEHALF”

— STUART PEARCE REFLECTS ON VISITING BASTION WITH THE FA CUP, PAGES 102-103

NEWS IN BRIEF

END OF ILLUSTRIOS CAREER

■ AIRCRAFT carrier HMS *Illustrious* will be withdrawn from service in 2014 as part of the structural changes announced in the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

The move will also see four smaller Royal Navy frigates phased out over the coming months, while the amphibious support ship RFA *Largs Bay* and two similar craft will be scrapped in April.

The decision to dispense with HMS *Illustrious* means her sister ship HMS *Ocean* will be used to meet the Senior Service's needs over the years to come. Plans are now in place for an extensive refit that will ensure the vessel is in a fully-operational state by 2014, when it will deliver an amphibious intervention force in support of the new Queen Elizabeth-class carrier.

NEW DAY JOB FOR JON

■ EXPERIENCED civil servant Jon Day has been appointed as the new Second Permanent Under Secretary of the Ministry of Defence.

He has been tasked with administering the changes set out in the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) and will also be responsible for a range of cross-departmental business.

Mr Day (pictured above) said: “I hope that my experience will help me contribute to overcoming the challenges we all face as we implement the SDSR, building a coherent defence capability and a sustainable defence programme.”



Picture: SAC Neil Chapman, RAF

Bazaar bustles in Taliban's absence

RECONSTRUCTION work is now well under way in a district centre of Afghanistan that was once recognised as a key stronghold for the Taliban.

A total of 70 new shops are being built along the route of a bazaar in Nawa with Helmand province workers taking a lead role in erecting the units that will allow the surrounding population to trade and sell goods.

Residents were regularly beaten and attacked by insurgent forces just a year ago but they are looking forward to a brighter future thanks to coalition efforts in the area.

More than 140 shops are now located in the bazaar, along with stalls selling

fruit and vegetables, motorcycles, CDs and DVDs. Solar-powered streetlights have also been installed to help locals feel safer at night.

Abdul Qader, a welder based at one of the units in the centre, said: “The Taliban do not come here anymore.

“They used to, but now they do not. We have security with our police and military and the American Marines are here at the moment. Things feel safe. People come and use the bazaar which is a very good thing.”

The management of the investment in the district centre has been overseen by the UK-led Provincial Reconstruction Team and delivered by the Civil Affairs Group.

LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

SWAG	FORCE FOR GOOD	QUIDS IN
1 £20,000	CONSTRUCTIVE CONTRIBUTION A team of 19 employees from Ipswich and Colchester-based building firm R G Carter cycled the 60 miles from Merville Barracks to Wellington Barracks in London	Help for Heroes helpforheroes.org.uk
2 £7,775	SKY BLUE THINKING Capt Natalie Slade, WO1 Sean Featherstone and Sgt Neil Reed from the Admin Support Unit at Kineton Station in Warwickshire raffled off prizes including a signed Coventry City FC shirt	BLESMA www.blesma.org
3 £3,300	CHARITY CHA CHA CHA Anne-Mette Rasmussen, wife of the Nato Secretary General, Alun Morris and Hilary Thorn organised a <i>Strictly Come Dancing</i> -style charity ball	Afghan Appeal Fund afghanappealfund.org.uk
4 £2,200	FRILLY FUND-RAISER 30 Signal Regiment staged a charity fashion show at Gamecock Barracks in Warwickshire	ABF The Soldiers' Charity, Facing Africa and the special care unit at George Eliot Hospital
5 £1,000	RUNNING RESERVISTS Capt Jim Graham, Capt Jules Harris, Capt Nigel Benner, Cpl Perry Smith and SSgt Andy Johnson (all TA members of B Squadron, The Royal Yeomanry) completed the 13-mile Leicester half-marathon	Combat Stress (combatstress.org.uk) and Support Our Soldiers (supportoursoldiers.co.uk)

NEWS IN BRIEF



LECONFIELD GOES LIVE

■ GARRISON FM celebrated its ninth year of broadcasting to the Forces by launching its ninth station at the Defence School of Transport at Leconfield in East Yorkshire. The latest addition to the Army's radio network – 87.7 Garrison FM – kicked-off with a special one-hour show co-hosted by TV presenter Jeremy Kyle and the station's managing director, Mark Page.

The broadcaster has also launched a new iPhone app that will allow audience members to keep up to date with the station's latest programmes. The new service will provide high-quality streaming from centres across the UK as well as a link to the Garrison Radio website.

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“YOU SUDDENLY FIND YOURSELF HANGING ONTO THE END OF A ROPE, NOT KNOWING WHETHER YOU’LL GET TO THE TOP OR NOT”
— ARMY MOUNTAINEERS EXPLORE UNCHARTED TERRITORY, PAGES 52-55

Picture: Crown copyright



Afghan advance: A British soldier surveys the main road into Tor Ghai ahead of the 2 Para-led mission

Paras make their presence felt

BRITISH soldiers and their Afghan colleagues have made a significant advance into the Taliban heartland of Tor Ghai in a bid to establish further Government control in Helmand.

Personnel from 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment led the operation, which saw them progress on foot through ice-cold irrigation ditches and over ten-foot high compound walls to reach the settlement before first light.

The mission was supported by troops from 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland.

All units involved came under fire from insurgent forces but with elements of the Afghan National Army providing further armed support the enemy soon retreated.

British personnel have built a series of patrol bases along Route Trident, which links the cities of Lashkar Gah and Gereshk, but this was the first time they

have driven into Nahr-e Saraj's green zone to establish an enduring presence.

As soon as the village was secured the soldiers engaged in a shura with influential elders, where projects to provide jobs and an improved quality of life were discussed.

Lt Col Andrew Harrison, CO of 2 Para, said: “The extension of our security presence into this area is significant. We have struck a blow right into the heart of the insurgency in Nahr-e Saraj.

“This area was a command and control node for those who subjugated Afghan and British soldiers.

“We patrol together to bring security in order to open the door for further development, education and the rule of law.”

Work is now under way to build checkpoints in the area, to repair the road network and to clear known sites of improvised explosive devices.

Medic saves life of Afghan teen

BRITISH soldiers helped save the life of an Afghan teenager who suffered serious head injuries while operating a water pump in his father's field.

Troops from 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland were called into action when Sadar Mohammed brought his son Payda to their patrol base on Route 601 in Helmand province.

The pump had broken and a piece of metal had become lodged in the 15-year-old's skull.

The personnel ensured the teenager received immediate first aid from LCpl Graham Maloney (RAMC, pictured) and, once stabilised, he was evacuated to Lashkar Gah, where Afghan civilian medics took over his care.

LCpl Maloney said: “It is enormously satisfying to help the locals. They see first hand



and appreciate the benefits of enhanced security provided by us and the Afghan National Police and they trust us to do the right thing.”

NEWS IN BRIEF

ABUSE INQUIRY DISMISSED

■ A COURT judgement has ruled there will not be a single public inquiry into the alleged abuse of Iraqi citizens by UK Armed Forces between 2003 and 2008.

The outcome endorses the arrangements the MoD has put in place for the Iraq Historic Allegations Team (IHAT) to review any cases independently and identify any action that needs to be taken.

On hearing news of the announcement, Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox said: “We must remember that the overwhelming majority of our Armed Forces conducted themselves with decency and honour but there may have been occasional lapses in a very violent conflict.

“We are determined to investigate these allegations fully and this is why we have established the IHAT.”

PROCUREMENT PAPER

■ DEFENCE staff are being invited to submit their views and opinions on a new green paper outlining future proposals for the procurement of equipment, support and technology for the UK.

The document is aimed at directing funds to where they are absolutely necessary for the protection of the country and proposes that defence and security requirements should be met through open competition in the global market.

The consultation period runs until March 31 and full information on the paper can be found at <http://defenceconsultations.org.uk>

BEST OF BRITISH

■ SERVICE charity Tickets for Troops has given Armed Forces personnel the chance to sample the glitz and glamour of this month's Brit Awards.

A total of 100 free tickets have been given away for the event on February 15, which will be hosted by James Corden and features performances from the likes of Rihanna, Take That and Arcade Fire.

For more information on the scheme visit www.ticketsfortroops.org.uk

BUSH TUCKER TRIAL

■ SOLDIER'S reporting assignment to the lecture theatre of trees, the Jungle Warfare Instructors' Course which is held in the depth of Brunei's triple-canopy rainforest, inspired last month's spine line competition.

Each of the names printed on the side of January's cover – Swash, Thatcher, Willis, Blackburn, Solomon – are all previous winners of ITV's hit reality show *I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!*



We have again teamed up with Jelly Belly, [www.jellybelly-uk.com](http://jellybelly-uk.com), to offer up one of the company's selection boxes of gourmet jelly beans. To enter, tell us what links the words adorning the side of this issue. Answers to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by February 28.



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THE BIGGER PICTURE

A HIGH-FIVE signifies the strong bond between British troops and the Afghan citizens they are working to provide security for in Helmand province. Hard work coupled with camaraderie was evident when 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment conducted training and patrolling activities with the latest additions to the Afghan National Army. The home-grown soldiers have been fully integrated with the battalion; living and working alongside UK personnel.

Picture: Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC





PLUM PROTECTION

A GROUND-BREAKING SYSTEM IS ROLLED OUT TO DEFEND THE PELVIC REGION AGAINST IED STRIKES

Report: Joe Clapson

Pictures: Graeme Main

A PIECE of kit that looks similar to the "overpants" adorned by comic book superheroes is set to significantly enhance protection for British soldiers fighting in a very real war.

A first-of-its-kind pelvic guard system has been developed to help mitigate the potentially-devastating effects of IED blasts in Afghanistan, allowing Service personnel to patrol with much greater confidence.

The three-tiered arrangement of clothing and armour consists of scientifically-developed underwear and detachable

modular trousers that have been designed to integrate with the current kit being used on operations.

To date, the MoD has spent £10 million on the garment, which was bought to meet an urgent operational requirement and has been affectionately nicknamed the "combat codpiece" by troops on the ground.

Speaking at the official unveiling of the protective pants, Col Peter Rafferty, personal combat equipment team leader at Defence Equipment and Support, explained the reason for rolling out the ground-breaking attire.

"The evolution of the IED threat over recent times has led to a predominance of the victim-activated bomb and this has changed the nature of the method of injuring our troops," said the senior officer.

"It is the work of the patrolling soldier which has been particularly affected and this is for the dismounted combatant, whatever their cap badge, as they deploy from a safe place to out on the ground."

Although the exact number of soldiers that have sustained pelvic injuries as a result of IED blasts has not been revealed, many have suffered wounds caused by explosions detonating upwards towards the groin and top of the legs.

High-ranking MoD bosses and personnel

out in Helmand province worked with scientific and ballistic experts to create a modular system that would significantly increase protection while integrating with the clothing and equipment currently in use.

Col Rafferty added: "It's a sensitive area in terms of mobility and we had to work out how to wear the garments without in any way affecting the soldier's ability to fight and move.

"One of the key drivers was ensuring that whatever type was selected, it was wearable and comfortable in an extreme environment such as Afghanistan."

The fortification in the "nether regions" balances reinforcement with the necessary

comfort and manoeuvrability for troops to undertake operations, enabling them to wear one or more of the protective layers depending on the task.

Using cutting-edge knowledge and resources within the MoD and Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL), the tier-one underwear is manufactured from a ballistic woven textile that provides an initial level of protection to safeguard against the effects of blasts, including shrapnel.

It is now mandatory for troops to wear the undergarments in Afghanistan and 45,000 pairs were delivered to the conflict zone last September. An extra 15,000 are ready to be issued to personnel due to deploy and a further 60,000 will be manufactured and despatched to troops early this year.

The second tier of the system, which is an over-garment, is currently in the manufacturing process. This item, made of Aramid fibre (Kevlar), will be issued to every soldier who will be "operating outside the wire" and it can be donned as necessary while out on the ground.

The third tier takes the evolution even further to enhance the protection to

the pelvic girdle and down to the knee and can be applied while on the march.

"This [tier three] is for those working at the highest end of the threat spectrum and it will enter final troop trials in the spring and will deploy to theatre as soon as possible," said Col Rafferty.

ONE OF THE KEY DRIVERS WAS ENSURING THAT WHATEVER TYPE WAS SELECTED, IT WAS WEARABLE AND COMFORTABLE IN AN EXTREME ENVIRONMENT,



Alan Hepper, principal engineer at DSTL, explained that in developing the hi-tech protection his team analysed what was already on the market and looked at the work of industry and manufacturers.

Academic research was also taken into consideration and used in discussions with international partners of the UK in order to understand the exact effects of bomb blasts.

"Early in the survey it was quite obvious that there was nothing out there that provided what we needed," said Hepper.

"We knew it had to be a wearable solution otherwise soldiers would not use it – they would modify it and that's not acceptable."

As well as focusing on the material and ergonomics of the products, designers paid close attention to the physiological coverage and psychological effects of the garments.

The top priority for developers was finding a textile that could withstand fire particles travelling at high velocity at the same time as being breathable and easily washable.

During the inception stage, the brains behind the operation carried out thousands of ballistic tests and experimented with

more than 50 types of materials including felt and knitted fabrics.

"The aim was to create a garment which achieved best performance at the lightest weight," said Hepper.

"The way the material chosen is woven makes it very strong, with a very high ballistic efficiency. In protection terms, it is the best we've found."

Once the new kit was given the green light, it took manufacturers Cooneen Watts and Stone, based in Northern Ireland, just four months to produce the required items.

Voicing his overwhelming satisfaction

with the end result, Col Rafferty said: "It's still extremely comfortable to wear and there will be no issue with using it for protracted periods.

"It has generated a large amount of interest from our international friends as there's nothing like this deployed elsewhere in the world."

Whether the pelvic protection system is given mocking names or not, when a roadside bomb detonates directly beneath a soldier the new garments will deflect the overwhelming majority of fragments that would otherwise cause injury. The alternative is no laughing matter. ■



COMBAT CODPIECE IN BRIEF...



THE TIER-ONE UNDERPANTS ARE COATED IN AN ANTI-MICROBIAL AGENT WHICH PROTECTS AGAINST INFECTIONS, AND THEY COME IN A RANGE OF SIZES, WHILE THE TIER-TWO PROTECTION IS A UNISEX ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL



THE TIER-TWO SYSTEM INTEGRATES WITH THE CAMOUFLAGE KIT ALREADY IN USE. IT LOOKS LIKE A BULKY PAIR OF UNDERPANTS AND IS WORN OVER SOLDIERS' COMBAT TROUSERS AND ATTACHED BY VELCRO AND ROBUST CLIPS



HOW TO PUT ON TIER-TWO:

WITH HELMET AND BODY ARMOUR IN PLACE, PERSONNEL CAN DON THE NEXT STAGE. ON THE SOLDIER'S BACK IS A VELCRO STRAP, WHICH WHEN RIPPED AWAY ALLOWS THE SYSTEM TO DROP DOWN AND BE BROUGHT UP BETWEEN THE LEGS AND ATTACHED TO HIS OR HER BELT. A CLIP SYSTEM FURTHER FASTENS THE PROTECTION TO THE LEGS

DREAMS ON THE DRAWING BOARD

NEW TECHNOLOGY
PENCILLED IN FOR
DEVELOPMENT



Report: Joe Clapson

IDEAS that may be mistaken for far-fetched comic book fantasies have been presented to the MoD as scientific fact and could shape the new breed of military vehicles.

Forcing themselves to think outside the conventional box, expert designers at BAE Systems have worked on the Future Protected Vehicle programme to create concepts to boost the effectiveness of lightweight armoured platforms.

One example from hundreds of innovations shown to MoD bosses was a wagon which can "sweat" to reduce its thermal signature, thus improving stealth on operations.

In the course of the wide-ranging programme, which drew inspiration from academic institutions, industry and science-fiction blockbusters, 567 technologies and 244 concepts were investigated following engagement with 35 organisations.

From the in-depth research the team developed seven possible ideas, with each highlighting technologies that could support a particular specialisation and

result in lives being saved on the front line.

To the layman the proposals might have seemed beyond the realms of reality but to the panel of subject matter professionals assembled by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) there was plenty of potential in the facts and figures on the drawing board.

From the concepts brought to the table by BAE Systems, 47 of the technologies were pencilled in as being suitable for immediate exploitation.

Louise Bowman, spokesman for DSTL, said finding fresh ideas and new paths for technology is central to achieving success on operations.

"We work with industry in everything we do from the big boys like BAE Systems and Thales, to university researchers and the man in his shed with what could be a brainwave," she said.

"We're happy to listen to anybody with good ideas that will provide battle-winning technology for the front line."

BAE spokesman Mike Sweeney explained that the aim of the programme was to design vehicles and systems that could actually reach the battlefield and make an impact rather than just remaining at the dream stage.

"It's all about identifying and highlighting technology as early as possible and taking the first step and

de-risking it and making it viable," he said.

"Some of the technology on this DSTL programme could be pushed through onto current operational deployments."

Included in the revolutionary plans was "eCamouflage", which will match a vehicle's appearance to its surroundings by using electronic ink and could be developed for use within five years.

Speaking at a BAE Systems briefing, Hisham Awad, who works on emerging vehicle technologies for the company, revealed that

the far-fetched Batmobile in Hollywood's *The Dark Knight* provided a "lightning bolt" moment and led to the design of the unmanned scout and skirmish machine, Raider.

"We liked the look of what we saw, so we designed something similar," said the innovations guru.

"We decided that we didn't have a monopoly on inspiration and if we saw something in a film that we thought might be a good idea, why not take a look at it and see if there's something practical we can develop for ourselves?"

Sweeney added that according to a recent US survey, 80 per cent of American casualties were related to attacks on convoys, which made enhancements to the protection of soldiers on such deployments a high priority.

"Fuel in Afghanistan is 500 times the cost that is at civilian pumps and we believe that by using a range of technologies such as fuel additives, we can reduce that by up to 60 per cent," he said.

"That would result in saving costs and also saving lives because less time would be spent on convoys refuelling."

Genius scientists working with military experts and industry are building technology beyond the comprehension of the general public to help protect troops on the battlefield.

Creative minds running wild are not just the preserve of designers conjuring up silverscreen superheroes but can also be found among innovators working to protect real-life soldiers. ■

• We're happy to listen to anybody with good ideas that will provide battle-winning technology for the front line,

IDEAS IDENTIFIED FOR EXPLOITATION BY DSTL AND BAE SYSTEMS INCLUDE:

• **"SWEATING" VEHICLE** could use water from a diesel or fuel cell propulsion system to reduce the thermal signature by "sweating" it out through pores in the vehicle skin. That same water could also be reclaimed to enable soldiers to stay in the field for longer.

• **eCAMOUFLAGE** will allow a vehicle to match its appearance to its surroundings by using electronic ink – rather like a squid.



• **INTEGRATED BIOMETRICS** will ease the workload on soldiers in complex crowd situations such as roadblocks and riots by running video surveillance through facial recognition and behaviour modelling software to spot potential troublemakers.

• **ACTIVE PROTECTION** will intercept incoming fire or disrupt targeting mechanisms while actuated spaced armour will allow a platform to deploy in "compact" mode before extending its armour to provide increased stand-off distance. A version of this is envisaged as employing electromagnets to "float" above a vehicle to provide protection from aerial threats.

Enhancements to current vehicles that could be deployed in the near future as "quick wins" using available technology include:

• **ADVANCED OIL FILTRATION** will remove water and tiny particles from engine oil to extend the life of the engine and eliminate refills;



• **HANDHELD TARGET ACQUISITION** devices integrated into the vehicle architecture that will help to improve flexibility and capability;



• **THERMO-ELECTRIC POWER GENERATION**, which uses the temperature difference between the inside and outside of the exhaust pipe, offers better fuel efficiency, more electrical power and improved stealth.



Read on for the inside-scoop on six concept vehicles for the future >>

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WRAITH: Low signature

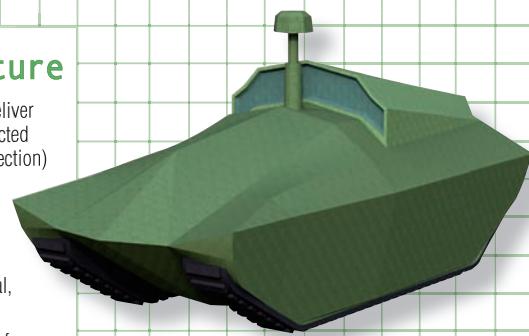
Used to infiltrate behind enemy lines, to deliver an effect or provide surveillance in unexpected places that cannot be reached (without detection) by conventional scout vehicles.

- **SIGNATURE MANAGEMENT**:

WRAITH features an impressive and comprehensive signature control suite with holistic management of visual, thermal, electromagnetic and acoustic signs.

- **STRIKE**:

The solution is capable of mounting a high-powered microwave emitter for disruption of electronic equipment. It can also carry and support a team of personnel undetected deep behind enemy lines.



ATLAS: Convoy system

The ATLAS concept provides the next generation of convoy vehicles. It will incorporate technologies of the Future Protected Vehicle family, such as drive-by-wire, intelligent driver aids and tele-operation, to increase safety, reliability and efficiency.

- **SAFE**: By moving the driver out of very vulnerable convoys.

- **LOW COST**: The ATLAS convoy system can be retro-fitted to legacy vehicles, providing a safe and effective transport capability for minimal investment.



POINTER: Supporting dismounted soldiers

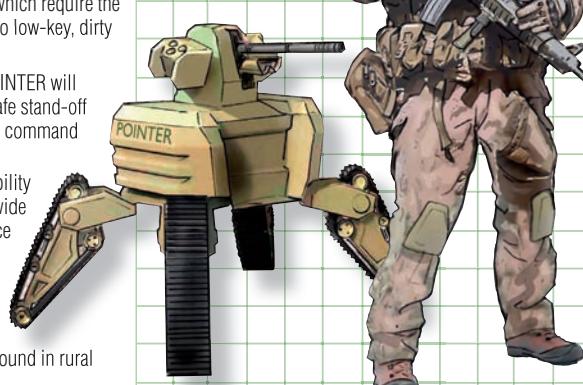
The POINTER unmanned ground vehicle (UGV) is a combat robot for use in situations which require the dismounted soldier to be exposed to low-key, dirty or dangerous situations.

- **TELE-OPERATION**: POINTER will primarily be tele-operated from a safe stand-off distance, utilising the SAFEGUARD command and control systems.

- **VERSATILITY**: The mobility platform is capable of mounting a wide variety of payloads from surveillance equipment to anti-tank weaponry.

- **TACTICAL**

MOBILITY: The UGV can go anywhere the dismounted soldier can go, covering difficult ground in rural and urban environments.



BEARER: Modular Wagons

BEARER offers the force commander a virtual toolbox from which to select the required capabilities for a given mission. To achieve this it has a highly-mobile, multi-directional chassis that can be fitted with various types of payload.

- **SYSTEM OF SYSTEMS**: The platform

capability of the vehicle is determined almost entirely by the mission payload, including protected mobility, checkpoint, air defence, ambulance, command and control etc.

- **SECONDARY**

ROLES: By taking on secondary roles, such as a logistics supply vehicle, the BEARER concept allows the other platforms to maximise their primary defence capabilities.



RAIDER: Replacing the manned armoured fighting vehicle

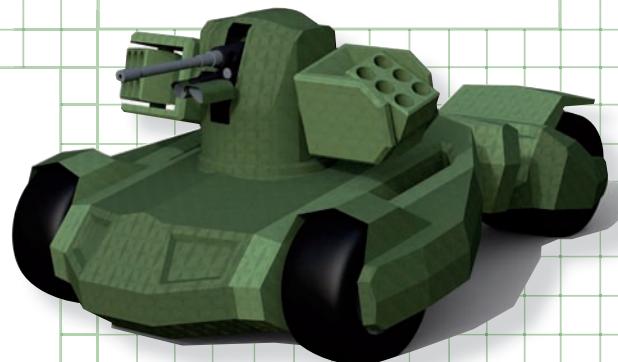
RAIDER is a highly-mobile unmanned military vehicle that can act as an effective scout and skirmisher in the absence of a driver.

- **TELE-OPERATION WITH AUTONOMY**:

It will primarily be tele-operated from a safe stand-off distance, utilising the SAFEGUARD command and control systems. The platform also has significant autonomous capability allowing it to perform structured tasks, such as sentry duty or perimeter patrol, without human intervention.

- **HIGH MOBILITY**: RAIDER will operate

dynamically on a tactical and strategic level; its two-tonne weight allows it to be deployed in significant numbers by air, land or sea.



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Boffins think ahead of the defence game



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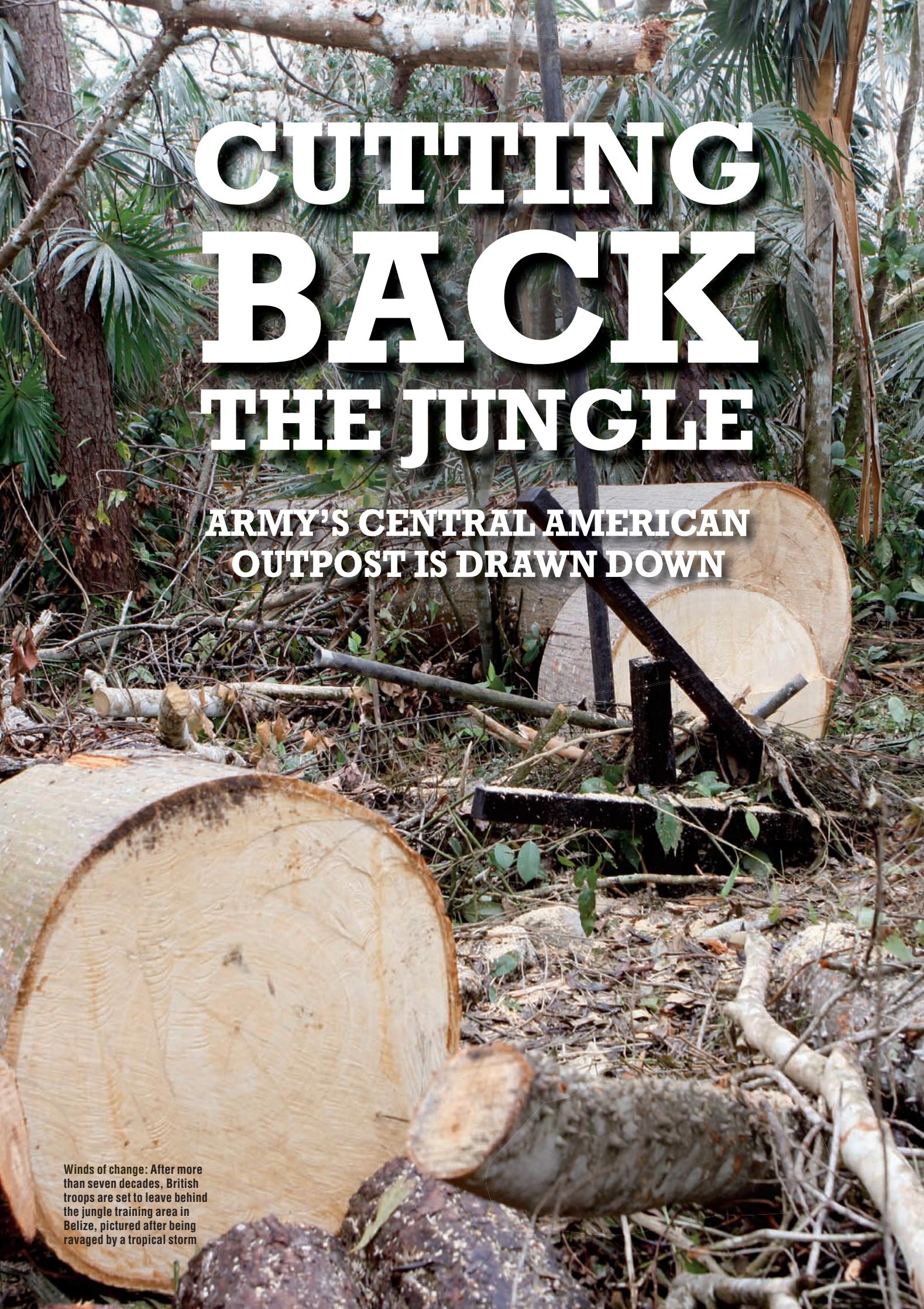
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CUTTING BACK THE JUNGLE



**ARMY'S CENTRAL AMERICAN
OUTPOST IS DRAWN DOWN**

Winds of change: After more than seven decades, British troops are set to leave behind the jungle training area in Belize, pictured after being ravaged by a tropical storm

Report: Sharon Kean
Pictures: Steve Dock

ONE of the many difficult decisions to have already been made in the wake of the Strategic Defence and Security Review has been to scale down the Army's jungle warfare and adventurous training base in Belize.

A feature of the Forces' footprint since 1949, the tiny Central American country – bordered by Mexico, Guatemala and the Caribbean Sea – has played host to some of the Service's toughest pre-deployment courses and earned a reputation as a premier haunt for devotees of scuba diving and watersports.

Lt Col Robert Lindsay, the commanding officer of the British Army Training Support Unit Belize (BATSUB) – the organisation responsible for devising and administering serials for visiting troops, insisted the decision had not been taken lightly and was part of a "robust prioritisation of the training effort".

"We will keep a small team here in order to continue some limited specialist sub-unit jungle training and to retain our base at Price Barracks [the British military camp near Belize City airport], but we are going to be drawing down everything else between now and November 2011," he added.

The move will result in the number of military personnel based in the country falling from around 70 to six and a significant reduction in locally employed civilian staff.

In turn, more than 280 buildings – which were previously used for accommodation, schools, stores and catering facilities – will be vacated and around 150 military vehicles will be taken out of service.

The nearby British Forces Adventurous Training Centre, based on the small island of St George's Caye, will also shut its doors before the end of the year.

Completion of the drawdown will result in the smallest UK presence in the Central American state since British Forces Belize was set up as an operational command unit to deter the threat of invasion from neighbouring Guatemala during the 1940s.

"Many Service personnel will have deployed here on ops, helping to protect the country against the possibility of intervention," explained Lt Col Lindsay.

"Infantry battalions, engineers, gunners, logisticians, support helicopters and even Harriers in the past have made up British Forces in Belize and acted as an active and effective deterrence.

"The risk from across the border has been there since the 1940s and 50s and went through peaks and troughs. Every few years the Guatemalans increased the threat and there were some quite challenging times in the 70s and 80s – it was pretty precarious stuff," he added.

The baton for policing the area was passed to the Belizean Defence Force (BDF) in 1994, a transfer of responsibility which saw British Forces Belize evolve to become BATSUB and the country develop into a hotbed for challenging courses.

"This has been an excellent training location and we aim to keep Price Barracks and most of our facilities alive so that, if required, the British Army can increase its use of the country in the future," said Lt Col Lindsay. "The secondary jungle here is particularly tough to operate in – trees have been cut down so there are low-lying bushes, vegetation and lots of snakes to contend with, making it in many ways tougher than the high

canopy jungle found elsewhere.

"There are also areas such as the Mountain Pine Ridge which is similar to the Brecon Beacons, while the close proximity to the sea allows us to stage effective training in riverine operations.

"Anyone who has trained in Belize will be far more professional as a result of it."

One unit that has benefited from the support of BATSUB in recent years is the Infantry Battle School, which runs courses such as the platoon commanders' battle course (see Pages 37-39).

Lt Col Graham Livingstone, commanding officer of the facility, said: "One of the excellent dimensions we have had in Belize is of course the great support from the BDF. They have graciously provided us with a platoon to play opposing forces, to be the free-thinking adversary, as well as a couple of sections who we embed into the company group.

"This gave us the opportunity to partner with people from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, and that has provided an excellent opportunity to the young British officers to grapple with the challenges that presents. It has also, I hope, been a great learning opportunity for the BDF who have proved to be worth their weight in gold."

When the final curtain does fall on the British Army's seven-decade star turn in Belize it will do so having readied a cast list of thousands for the rigours of front-line roles. Finding a similar stage to rehearse on in the future will be no mean feat. ■

'Anyone who has trained in Belize will be far more professional as a result of it'

POSTCARDS FROM PARADISE...



Conflicting memories: In sharp contrast to the arduous conditions and demanding courses on offer to exercising troops in Belize, the Central American state has also proved a stunning backdrop for countless adventurous training serials and diving expeditions



SOLDIER'S SEVEN-DECADE SCRAPBOOK

Training the jungle fighters

"The jungle can be a killer. Every step can spring a trap for the unwary. But the Army's jungle fighters in Belize must be able to live and work in the densest jungle without any outside help. Like anything else the real secret behind surviving is common sense. And that is precisely what the Jungle Training School was set up to teach."

Extract: Soldier, circa 1977



Irish trade parades for 'pasta'

"No strangers to Belize, the Irish Guards still found it necessary to brush up their jungle skills and a constant stream of them went through the training school set up in the hinterland. Hacking through the tangle of vines was likened by Capt Sebastian Roberts to mountaineering through malignant spaghetti."

Extract: Soldier, circa 1979



Self-sufficient service

"It's OK living off the jungle. It's not as bad as I first thought. It's a bit noisy at night, but you do get plenty of sleep. We get to kip at 1900, just after dark, then we are up again before 0600. Although I must say I don't like it much when we have to do a lot of walking; we all sweat buckets and get dehydrated."

Extract: Soldier, circa 1980



Sun, sea and lots of sport

"The Forces Adventure Training Centre is where the squaddie can escape the oppressive humidity of the Belizean mainland; a place where he can kick off his DMS boots and pad over scorching sands garlanded by lush, rustling palms, the whole caressed by gently-lapping turquoise waters frolicking over coral reefs."

Extract: Soldier, circa 1982



WHERE IN THE WORLD IS IT?

The distinction of being the first British troops to set foot in Belize is claimed by The Gloucestershire Regiment. Two companies of the 1st Battalion were sent to the colony early in 1949 when neighbouring Guatemala, which had long coveted the British territory, threatened to invade it. Despite Guatamalan claims, Belize has been a British possession for more than 300 years. The Glosters' association with the country was later marked by an official alliance between the regiment and the British Honduras Volunteer Guard, a local formation about 200 strong. There have been citizen forces in the colony, which is the size of Wales, since the earliest days of its settlement.





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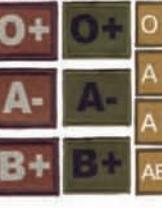
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BATTLE SCHOOL.

FUTURE FRONT-LINE COMMANDERS BRAVE BELIZEAN JUNGLE IN TEST OF MILITARY AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS



Report: Sharon Kean
Pictures: Steve Dock

YOUNG officers taking their first steps towards Infantry command swapped Brecon for Belize as part of an intensive training package designed to ready them for the demands of leading their troops in combat.

With the drawdown of British Army Training Support Unit Belize (BATSUB) confirmed, the latest crop of subalterns on the Platoon Commanders' Battle Course (PCBC) were among the last to negotiate the unique challenges of the Central American facility on their route to the front line.

During the first ten weeks of the programme, soldiers focus on tactical and command elements and have traditionally been sent into the jungle for an "effective shock". >>

"They are put into very demanding climatic circumstances, very different to what they're used to," explained Lt Col Graham Livingstone, commanding officer of the Infantry Battle School (IBS), which is based in Wales and runs the 15-week command and leadership course.

After adapting and conditioning themselves to the heat and humidity of the Belizean rainforest, the troops took part in several rigorous and realistic training missions.

"The first is relatively hard, fast and aggressive," Lt Col Livingstone told *Soldier*.

"We shake them out and encourage them to manoeuvre at platoon level, putting into practice all



Waiting game: A young officer lies in wait at the forming-up point before moving towards the start line for the final attack of the exercise

the skills they've been taught thus far."

Challenging terrain and Belize's "bizarre climate" made it a tough but rewarding experience for 2nd Lt Ed Arnold (2 Lancs).

"It's not the usual Monday to Friday exercise



where you can head home at the weekend," he said.

"Being in Central America for a four-week period forces you to get into the training, which makes it good but very demanding. The terrain is far worse than anything else we've faced."

With the aim of preparing young officers for the challenges they will face in Afghanistan, the second phase of the jungle package involved a serial with troops occupying a forward operating base and platoon-sized patrol base.

"We use a local village where we effectively get the population to take part as the civilian presence," explained Lt Col Livingstone.

"We also supplement that with local tribes, we use Gurkhas from the IBS and we get support from the BATSUB families as well. That produces a real rich mix of culture."

"We spend an eight-night period there and the young officers grapple with trying to make sense of the situation and getting an understanding of what is going on around them."

For many of those fresh out of Sandhurst, such as 2nd Lt James East (Cldm Gds), these exercises are their first hands-on experience of infantry command.

"When you come to Belize you instantly get a section of men and



you really get to learn what an 18-year-old soldier can do for you," he said.

"He's dedicated, but you have to earn his respect first. The guys here have been awesome."

BATSUB instructor SSgt Alan Blair (SASC) rated the course as one of the hardest in the Army.

"Belize offers an environment which is physically and mentally demanding, and pushes you to your limit. The climate is good preparation for Afghanistan," he said.

"From an instructor's point of view, it's a challenging position to be in as it puts you out of your comfort zone, but it's also very good for personal development."

The package culminated with a series of live firing operations during daylight and darkness, a

company group raid and rapid extraction.

The realistic nature of the training stuck with many of the officers on the course, including 2nd Lt Ed Montgomery (Para).

"Back at Sandhurst, and even Brecon, there's only so much realism you can get because of all the safety regulations, but out here you're left to your own devices," he said.

"I'm going to Afghanistan soon so having been able to fire live ammo at a company level and experience the different assets available, such as the air cover, has been one of the highlights."

"Working in Belize exposes you to some tense situations. When everyone is knackered it takes

a very strong personality to be able to motivate your guys."

As training at BATSUB is wound down, work is under way to find a new setting that replicates a strategic deployment into a demanding climatic region.

Brunei, Yakima in the USA and Jordan are all possible contenders.

"We'll be very sad to leave Belize, but a decision has been made and we will go and make the very best of opportunities elsewhere," said Lt Col Livingstone.

"We look forward to firming up Belize's successor in the near future, with the first course [in a new location] planned for the summer." ■

'THE REALISTIC NATURE OF THE TRAINING STUCK WITH MANY OF THE OFFICERS'



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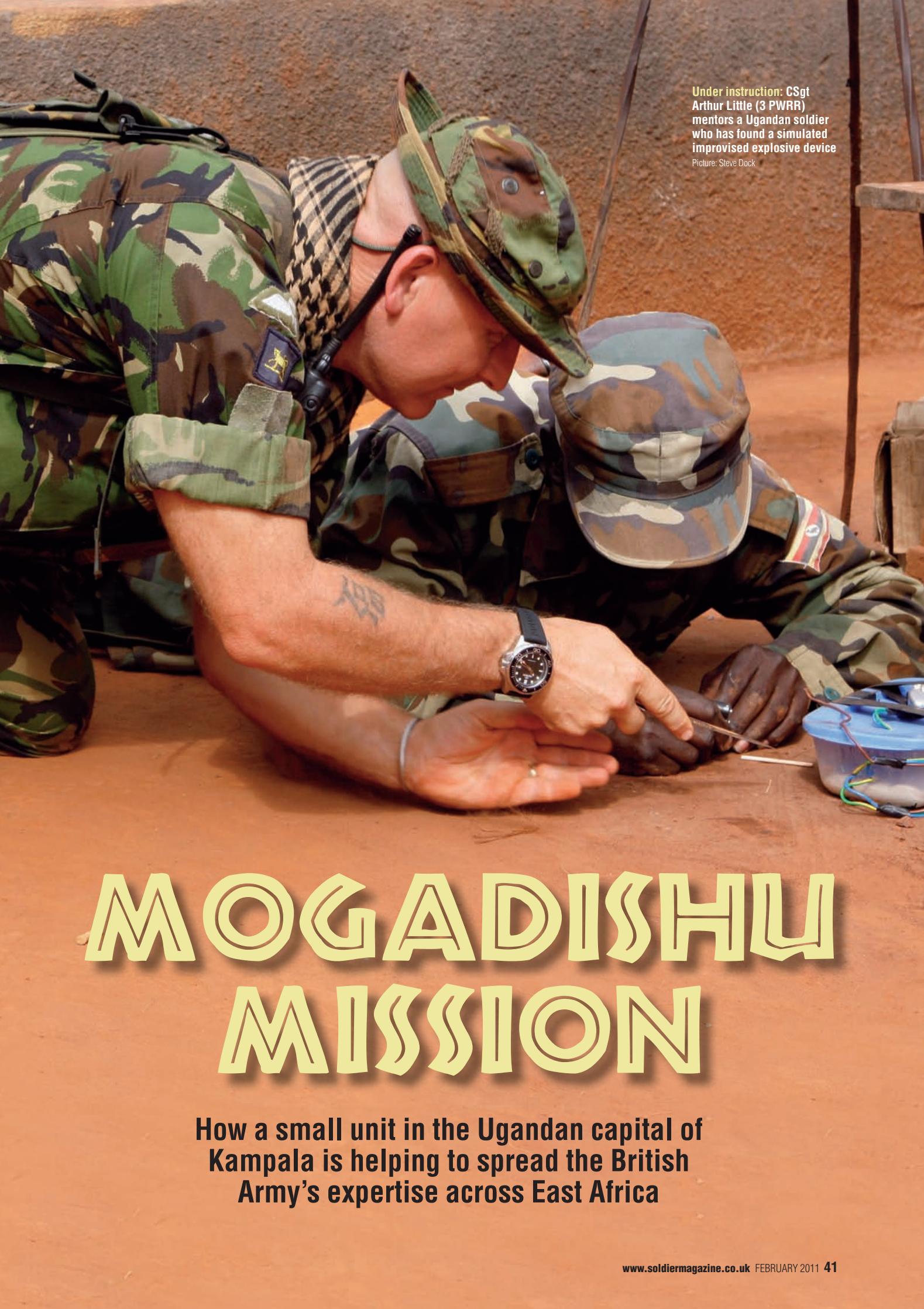
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Under instruction: CSgt Arthur Little (3 PWRR) mentors a Ugandan soldier who has found a simulated improvised explosive device
Picture: Steve Dock

MOGADISHU MISSION

How a small unit in the Ugandan capital of Kampala is helping to spread the British Army's expertise across East Africa

MOST British soldiers bound for Africa find themselves exercising in the jungles around Mount Kenya or basking in the intense heat of Archer's Post.

However, increasing numbers of UK military personnel are joining short-term missions to neighbouring Uganda where they are helping to prepare the nation's army, the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF), for a difficult deployment to nearby Somalia.

After nearly two decades without a functioning government, the troubled country has been plagued by clan warfare and, more recently, Islamist insurgents who are destabilising attempts to introduce law and order and are putting the region at risk of becoming the new front line in the global battle against terrorism.

With UPDF troops leading the charge against extremist fighters in Mogadishu – an operational theatre with direct relevance to wider world security – British personnel are making a key contribution to the fight for peace and stability.

Typically spending up to two weeks in-country, UK training teams are using hard-earned experience from the battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq to train the East African soldiers in areas as diverse as English language, medical care, operational law, combat logistics and media operations.

Over the past 12 months the Defence Section, based at the British High Commission in Kampala, has orchestrated nearly 60 such visits by groups whose work is indirectly assisting the challenging campaign in Mogadishu.

Sharing British military expertise will strengthen the Ugandan troops leading the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which is tasked with providing a secure environment in which a transitional government can enforce law and order.

"In terms of our security priorities and the threat from Africa, what AMISOM is doing is really important," explained Martin Shearman, the British High Commissioner in Kampala.

Uganda currently has 4,400 soldiers deployed in Mogadishu, alongside 3,200 troops from Burundi, fighting what is essentially a counter-insurgency battle bearing striking similarities to the International Security Assistance Force mission in Afghanistan.

"We went in originally under the impression that we were going to conduct peacekeeping support operations but unfortunately that has not been the case,"

the UPDF's current commander of land forces, Lt Gen Katumba Wamala, told *Soldier*. "We are seeing a counter-terrorism environment so we need to prepare our troops for that."

Lt Gen Wamala has been at the helm of the Ugandan-led mission since foreign troops first entered Somalia in March 2007.

In that time AMISOM personnel and the fledgling Somali administration have had to contend with the threat of terrorism from Al-Shabab, an anti-government organisation that has publicly aligned itself with al-Qaeda and carried out numerous violent attacks on troops, civilians and parliamentarians in the troubled country's capital.

"The way they operate is very typical of al-Qaeda," explained Lt Gen Wamala.

"They use the same tactics – IEDs, suicide bombers and foreign fighters.

"It calls for a lot of training which is why we need skills from a lot of people.

"We have had a company from the French, American and British armies and each of those has made its own contribution and added value to the mission," he added.

"We take advantage of their experience and exposure in Afghanistan and Iraq because the theatre we will operate in is more or less the same."

Since taking up a post at the Defence Section in Kampala, Lt Col Simon Etherington has prioritised building capacity within the UPDF.

"I think I've been successful. Last year we had 59 incoming visits to Uganda and I think it's put the nation back on the map – they are very willing partners," he said.

A future goal for the Defence Section is to provide longer courses, designed to generate fully-trained specialists within the Ugandan army who can go on to become tutors themselves.

Lt Col Etherington believes that one of the most important areas for development is media operations and getting the UPDF to embrace technology, such as the internet, as a military tactic.

"It's a big one – at the moment Al-Shabab are winning the media war because they video attacks and put them on YouTube 15 minutes later," he said.

"Getting AMISOM to use this technology is a key enabler. It's cheap and can have an immediate effect. It doesn't have to take millions of pounds and tanks."

Other aspects of Ugandan capacity building employ more traditional military methods.

In the case of a recent visit to the country by 3rd Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (3 PWRR), British soldiers helped run a pre-deployment mission rehearsal exercise for home-based troops (Page 45-47), making use of a newly-

constructed training village at the UPDF's base in Singo.

"Last year they were training in a field for operations in an urban environment so I got 20 shipping crates dumped on the ground, cut some windows and doors out and built something more akin to the two-storey buildings they would encounter," explained Lt Col Etherington.

"It's not Mogadishu but it's much better than what was there before and enables them to practice room and compound clearing drills."

Another project carried out under his watch was the funding and construction of a rapid deployment headquarters for the UPDF – akin to a smaller version of the UK's Joint Force Headquarters.

The three-strong Defence Section also covers sub-Saharan neighbours Rwanda and Burundi and has directed some of its resources to help train and strengthen both nations' armed forces.

As well as ensuring the MoD's objectives for the East African countries are achieved, Lt Col Etherington has a dual role as an in-country military adviser to the British High Commissioner.

"Having defence links here is very important – it's not just about being nice to foreigners," said Shearman.

"There is some return to the UK in terms of training but it's also an important part of the bilateral relationship.

"The Ugandan forces are very influential and input into their government, so being able to access military people through military channels is very important."

Before Lt Col Etherington leaves his post this summer he hopes to sharpen the focus on Burundi's forces and plans are under way to construct a mock training village similar to the one built in Singo.

As with the British work in Uganda, the aim will be to leave a lasting impression that enables the nation to hone its own expertise and in turn assist in bringing improved security to the African continent. ■

WE HAVE HAD A COMPANY FROM THE FRENCH, AMERICAN AND BRITISH ARMIES AND EACH OF THOSE HAS MADE ITS OWN CONTRIBUTION AND ADDED VALUE TO THE MISSION

Lt Gen Wamala





Above, Saving lives: LCpl Anthony McManus (RAMC), a combat medical technician, takes a soldier through first aid procedures during an exercise

Left, Talking tactics: Capt Ollie Thomas (RE) explains after action reviews with soldiers from the UPDF

Far right, Holding your nerve: Capt James Ranger (1 RRF) guides a soldier during the pre-deployment mission rehearsal exercise at Singo





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In position: A UPDF soldier takes cover during a mission rehearsal exercise at Singo Training School

Picture: Steve Dock

HELPING HAND

**British training team put Ugandan
troops through their paces on the eve
of deployment to Somalia**



Report: Sharon Kean
Pictures: Steve Dock

A COMPANY of Ugandan soldiers braved the scorching sub-Saharan sun with a smile and small trickle of sweat as they manoeuvred into position around a bridge captured by enemy forces.

British officers looked on as troops from UGABAG 7 – the latest battalion of the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) to deploy on peacekeeping operations in the war-torn Somali capital of Mogadishu – went through their final mission rehearsal exercise.

Following an intensive training package designed to ready the African soldiers for urban warfare, a small British Army contingent arrived at the Singo Training School to the north of Kampala, to assess how much the students had learned.

"We come up with various scenarios such as vehicle IEDs, suicide bombers, drive-by shootings and genuine visitors to a camp," explained Capt James Titchener (3 PWRR), the officer tasked with project managing the two-week mentoring trip to Uganda.

The UK short-term training team had been brought in to share crucial counter-insurgency experience gained in Iraq and Afghanistan with their African allies.

The British brief was to plan, run and assess a full-scale battlegroup exercise for the deploying troops, testing their basic soldiering skills and ensuring the Ugandans could organise and execute operations.

"They have grasped the process of how ops are put together and when they want to they can be really quite good," said Lt Col Geoff Minton (3 PWRR), commanding officer of the 20-strong mentoring unit.

"They're not so good at self-control – they know the drills for contacts but when they are actually under fire they get carried away and don't do a lot of it. Their main strength is their enthusiasm."

The 1,800 Ugandan troops carried out urban patrols, cordon and search drills, reactive operations and dealt with mass-casualty situations on the military training base.

Lt Gen Katumba Wamala said that making the transition from countryside to urban surroundings had been the key training objective for his men.

"Largely speaking the challenge we have on the military side is a new operational environment – we have not dealt with an insurgency or with counter terrorism for the last 20 years in this country," he said.

"What we are faced with in Mogadishu is urban terrorism operations."

An intensive 16-week pre-deployment package run by the US-funded African Contingency Operation Training and Assistance programme at Singo is designed to prepare for such a mission.

A mock village has been built from shipping containers in a bid to mimic the streets and buildings in which the Ugandan soldiers are likely to find themselves fighting.

On-site mud huts, where personnel and their families live, were incorporated into some of the exercises, giving the troops valuable experience of dealing with civilians, a skill that will be essential when they deploy to the troubled Somali capital.

"We are keen to get Ugandans dealing with the local population as one of the problems in Mogadishu in the past was that they were reacting aggressively to people and that doesn't help when

you're trying to win the hearts and minds," said Lt Col Minton.

"All of my guys have been to Afghanistan and are using their experiences from there and from Telic to help them with this."

During the operation to secure the bridge, soldiers dropped to the ground and adopted fire positions as a surprise enemy ambush took place. Two British officers monitored their performance and offered tactical tips where necessary.

"The Ugandans have a tendency to all run down the road and manoeuvre while shooting," said Capt Ollie Tag (3 PWRR).

"While one guy fires the others should move but they don't always do it that way."

Lcpl Anthony McMunnus (RAMC) joined the exercising group for the casualty serial and was impressed with the level of skill he witnessed.

"They've been applying tourniquets and splints on leg breaks and they know how to do chest seals with three-sided

tape," he said. "The base knowledge is there and once you get them to think about what they are supposed to do they can do it."

Although the primary role of the British team was to assess the Ugandan troops, any advice and information they passed on was invariably gladly received.

"We are helping people who are about to be deployed operationally to enhance their tactics," said Capt Stewart Barker (3 PWRR).

"It's key core soldiering skills and low-level tactics, but also the way they deploy those tactics."

"Command and control is quite difficult here sometimes. They don't have some of the

**IT'S KEY CORE
SOLDIERING
SKILLS AND
LOW-LEVEL
TACTICS, BUT
ALSO THE WAY
THEY DEPLOY
THOSE TACTICS**



Left to right, Show of strength:

Ugandan People's Defence Force recruits on parade during a Presidential visit to Singo training camp
Boots on the ground: Instructors from the British Army short-term training team look on as UPDF soldiers practise their skills

equipment that we have to enable them to manoeuvre units easily around terrain, but there are ways of compensating for that tactically.

"That's what we are here for, to help them reach a good operational standard."

Capt Will Mawby (RA) was responsible for running enemy forces during a cordon and search drill and said he had come up with a few surprises to test the Ugandan soldiers.

"I tried to add some reality by throwing in a few quirks such as local civilians shooting at them and essentially trying to disrupt their operation by creating a bit of confusion. It's quite likely they will have to deal with that in Somalia," he said.

"The stuff we are training them on is taken from experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq. We are trying to put it into a Somali context. The Ugandans are very keen and that's half the battle.

"They don't have the resources, background or the ability to operate as we would. However, the improvement over the past couple of days has been quite significant."

Patrolling through the mock village, WO2 Jim McAllister (R Irish) oversaw an intelligence-led search operation focused on a two-storey building crafted from shipping containers, where soldiers had been briefed that the enemy were making IEDs.

"Their skills are low but the will is high and we can only do so much," he said.

"Workplace training for us is in Afghanistan and you're still learning when you go out there. It will be the same for them in Somalia."

Capt Stephen Tayebwa, the battle captain for UGABAG 7, coordinated the exercise from a makeshift tactical operations centre housed in a tin-roofed barn.

He said the pre-deployment training and UK-led final serial meant his battlegroup are

better prepared for the challenges of Mogadishu than they were last time he deployed two years ago.

"It has been an absolutely successful mission, we've acquired knowledge from the British and they are friendly people," he said.

"Their military tactics are superb and as far as the impending deployment is concerned they have given us the right skills.

"This time we are more prepared for dealing with IEDs and for urban patrolling and fighting. We are looking forward to bringing peace and stability to Somalia."

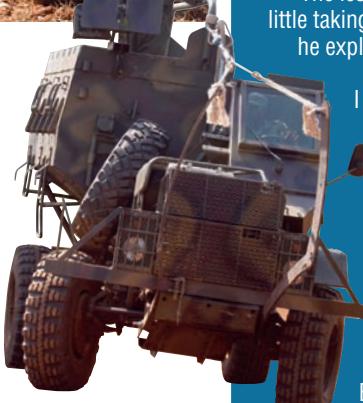
Maj Sam Kuteesa, the commanding officer of the battlegroup, agreed that the British input to the exercise was extremely valuable.

"Their mission in Afghanistan is almost the same as ours in Mogadishu," he said.

"The tactics are the same and the experience of the UK and USA in Helmand has boosted us and I hope this helps us to overcome the challenges in Somalia.

"We have gained a lot from the British troops – staff work, skills and tactics which will be useful to us on the ground."

Having been trained and tested for the streets of Somalia, only time will tell how successful the Ugandan mission to Mogadishu will be. Exposure to the reality of theatre will be the troops' ultimate final exercise. ■



FOREIGN FORCES HELP UGANDAN PEACEKEEPERS

THE 16-week pre-deployment training course in Singo is partly funded and led by the US African Contingency Operation Training and Assistance programme, which provides field and staff training and equipment for peacekeeping forces.

Ex-US Army staff sergeant Matthew Anderson helped coach the latest group of UPDF soldiers destined for Mogadishu, building up their basic soldiering and operational skills.

"The lessons are practical with very little taking place in the classroom," he explained.

"They learn more by practicing, I think we all do. For example, we get them out patrolling in the village so they learn that if they're nice to the civvies they'll get a lot more information. You don't want peacekeeping forces to go in and take advantage."

A unit from the French Legion also visited Singo to help educate staff before the British Army's short-term training team arrived for the final exercise.

"They have come on in leaps and bounds, until the last serial you need to encourage them a little," said Anderson.

"We've dumped a lot of information on them in pre-deployment training and now we're seeing how they put it together. We want them to react to contact and for the first person who sees the enemy to tell people. That's the most simple patrolling task."

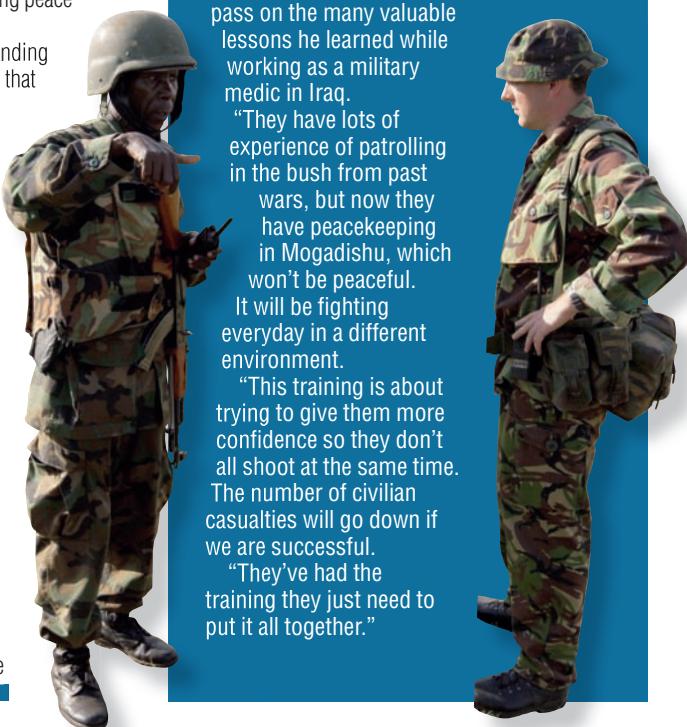
Anderson said he had tried to pass on the many valuable lessons he learned while working as a military medic in Iraq.

"They have lots of experience of patrolling in the bush from past wars, but now they have peacekeeping in Mogadishu, which won't be peaceful.

It will be fighting everyday in a different environment.

"This training is about trying to give them more confidence so they don't all shoot at the same time. The number of civilian casualties will go down if we are successful.

"They've had the training they just need to put it all together."





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Under new management

Data specialists ensure Army information is up-to-date and accurate

Report: Richard Long

WITH Defence budgets coming under increasing scrutiny, it is fair to say that initiatives offering multi-million pound savings would be more than welcome among the upper echelons of the British Armed Forces.

While the Army Personnel Data Management Organisation (APDMO) has produced outstanding economic results, it is the scheme's quest to reverse years of inaccurate personnel information that has really hit the headlines.

The programme was honoured at the 2010 Data Governance Awards and, with a full operating capability due to be reached next month, the success looks set to continue.

The APDMO was launched in 2007 to combat the raft of incorrect information being logged on Service systems.

"This was set up to bring everything in house," explained Brig Richard Nugee, the Army's director of manning.

"It is the organisation's job to make sure data is accurate and to monitor it.

"It is already delivering savings and we are reaping the

benefits of better records.

"We have been a long way behind the other Services but we are now a lot better in certain areas. We have completely turned the system around."

The scheme's success is based on an ethos of tackling the cause of the problems, not just the symptoms.

Under a trial last summer 60,000 errors were identified and were returned to the respective units, where administration staff were tasked with making sure personnel were inputting accurate information.

The mistakes were wide-ranging, from soldiers failing to log new qualifications to wrong National Insurance numbers being entered.

While the APDMO is on hand to highlight the importance of personnel data and to advise on governance and how the Army can make best use of the material, it is up to individuals to ensure that their personal details are correct.

Improvements in information will ensure the right person

with the correct skills will be selected for a job or promotion and that discrepancies in pay will be reduced.

"It is really important for two fundamental reasons. For the individual, it ensures they get paid the right amount and that their qualifications are recorded, therefore making them the right person for the job," Brig Nugee told *Soldier*.

"From my point of view we can properly forecast manpower and how much it costs.

"We take the right amount from the Defence budget rather than taking calculated guesses.

"If the budget is reduced people still need to be paid.

If we get this right the money saved can go towards the front line and training.

"This really is a good news story and is a huge change in the way we have done business in the past, but we are not there yet.

"The individuals have to make sure the information they are giving us is accurate if we are going to make this work." ■

It is the organisation's job to make sure data is accurate and monitor it'

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*When used in conjunction with a high intensity weight training programme

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Sci-MX
NUTRITION

On the way up: OCdt David Jorden (left) and Capt Nick Heppenstall (RLC) approach the "false summit" during the first ascent of the 5,936m peak of Shere Khan

Picture: Capt David Crosbie, RE





UNCHARTED TERRITORY

Army mountaineers step into the unknown during Himalayan exercise

Report: Joe Clapson

A SERVICE climbing team has become the first in history to conquer a daunting Himalayan peak, allowing them the rare honour of choosing a name for the mammoth landmark.

The successful group was working as one of three sections of experienced adventurers on the Army Mountaineering Association's (AMA's) ambitious Exercise Tiger Karakoram.

Capt Nick Heppenstall (RLC) successfully led Capt David Crosbie (RE) and OCdt David Jorden (Oxford UOTC) 5,936 metres to the top of an uncharted summit in northern India.

Having conquered their target, the military explorers chose a title with apt connections to their momentous achievement. >>

» "We named the mountain Shere Khan as that is the tiger in *The Jungle Book*. It fits in well with Exercise Tiger Karakoram and also the novel's author, Rudyard Kipling, spent a large amount of time in the same area we were in," said Capt Heppenstall.

The 33 General Support Squadron operations officer added: "It's an absolute privilege to be able to take a team to the top of a mountain, but we earned the right because it was very hard work.

"I was stretched beyond my comfort zone more than ever before, having to make decisions which involved people's lives while under the stress of operating in such difficult conditions.

"I served on Op Herrick 8 and it's fair to compare the two. We were stepping into the unknown and had to accept a capacity for risk far beyond where it's been before.

"Without a doubt this type of adventurous training is good preparation for operations."

The team of 11 soldiers on the demanding exercise spent 44 days in the Himalayas and a month living and working above 5,000m, where the

temperature inside the tent at base camp reached -13 degrees.

Along with the daily battle to breathe at high altitude while ascending ridges in the little-known area of the Zanskar Range in Karakoram, the pioneering personnel faced drastic changes in the weather and navigating without up-to-date maps or state-of-the-art satellites.

"It was at the cutting edge of military mountaineering, putting a team out into the unknown," said expedition leader Maj Matt Hing (RLC). "We had a map and Google Earth helped, but we really did not know what we were going to face.

"We were learning all the time, without guidebooks and without directions to work from.

"Nobody has ever been up there before so we were the first people to even set foot on those glaciers."

Maj Hing explained the benefit of operating in the treacherous

conditions offered by the state of Himachal Pradesh in northern India.

"We set off with some pretty ambitious objectives and managed to achieve some of those which was fantastic," said the officer, who returned from a tour of Afghanistan in March 2010.

"India is just massive and it's only a very small amount of people who are prepared to do exploratory mountaineering – most people want to know how long an expedition is going to take, what the route is and what the risks are."

He added: "It is the aim of the AMA to gear its overseas expeditions to exploration as that's where we get the maximum benefit for testing people mentally and physically to prepare for live operations."

It was due to the unforgiving weather and changing terrain that only one team managed to reach a previously unclimbed peak, thus securing its place in the history books.

But although the other groups

We were stepping into the unknown and had to accept a capacity for risk far beyond where it's been before



Snow effort: OCdt David Jorden (left) and Capt Nick Heppenstall (RLC) pictured during their ascent to the top of the mountain now known as Shere Khan

Picture: Capt David Crosbie, RE

did not manage to stand on top of untouched zeniths, every member of the exercise attained a new altitude record and set a fresh benchmark on their personal danger spectrum.

"Some of the areas had been climbed before but still presented tough challenges with high peaks such as Hanuman Tibba, which had a 70-degree snow slope to the summit," explained Maj Hing.

"We had to rely on each other to be spot on with foot placements and with ice axes."

He added: "Having a look at a mountain and having an idea of what it might be like and then actually getting on it are very different things.

"You suddenly find yourself contemplating where you are on a glacier or hanging onto the end of a rope, not knowing whether you'll get to the top or not.

"That is the reason why we do adventurous training, you simply cannot get that feeling anywhere else other than on operations – activities such as this are a lot closer to deployments than staged exercises."

The AMA operates at the forefront of exploratory mountaineering, with

its most experienced members routinely volunteering to make life or death decisions.

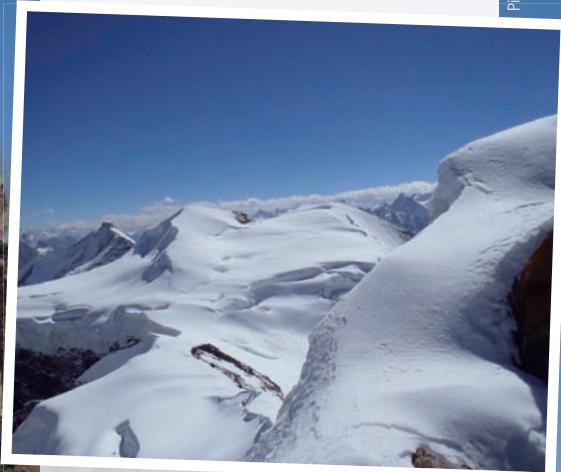
On Exercise Tiger Karakoram, British soldiers constantly assessed the changing situations and stretched their personal risk capacities by entering the unknown and going where no man has gone before. ■

- Service personnel interested in mountaineering and taking part in similar expeditions should contact the AMA on 95581 7964 or visit www.army.net.mod.uk/sports/mountaineering/contents/index.htm for more details.



PEAK PERFORMERS

Picture: Army Mountaineering Association



Army mountaineers travelled to the state of Himachal Pradesh in northern India, which is nestled in the north-west region of western Himalaya, to explore several unclimbed mountains.

A successful summit bid by a team on day 16 gave them the honour of naming a 5,936-metre feature.



1

Cannae

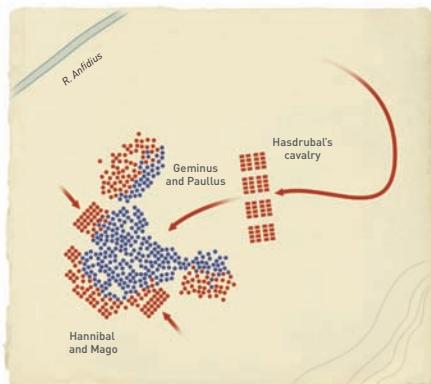
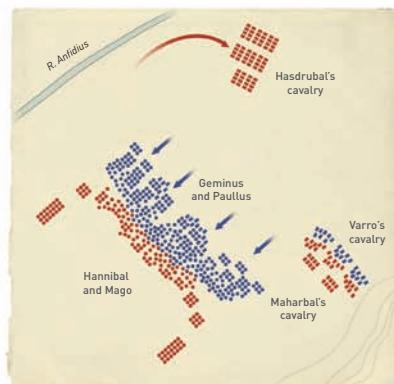
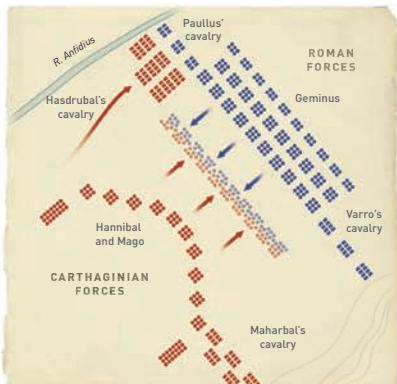
August 2, 216 BC

THE Battle of Cannae in Apulia, where the Carthaginian Hannibal pitched his forces against the Roman Republic, has always been the favourite of military theorists and instructors. By bulging out his centre and strengthening his wings,

Hannibal tricked the Romans, surrounded an army twice the size of his own and completely annihilated it. Nearly 50,000 of his adversaries perished, including a consul, two quaestors and 29 tribunes. Around 20,000 more were taken prisoner. In the



end, however, Cannae was inconsequential because Hannibal did not consider himself strong enough to march on Rome. The decision cost him dearly: the Romans hounded him home and he died an ignominious death by his own hand in exile.



4

Blenheim

August 13, 1704

IN the second half of the 17th century and in much of the 18th, French territorial ambitions threw Europe and its colonies into an almost constant war. In September 1701, Louis XIV advanced his grandson as a candidate for the sovereign of Spain and the fighting started again in earnest. This time Louis thrust out towards Vienna with the aim of putting his Bavarian ally on the Imperial throne. The armies of the rest of Europe united to block his path and were led by the most successful duo in history – the Duke of Marlborough, John Churchill, and Prince Eugene of Savoy. It was a difficult day, but their mastery was never called into question and the French abandoned their advance.

5

Leuthen

December 5, 1757

IN the Seven Years War, the Prussian king Frederick The Great faced the French, Austrians and Russians. The Battle of Leuthen, fought at Silesia in present-day Poland, was arguably his greatest victory. Having truly trounced the French at Rossbach on November 5, it was now the Austrians' turn. After addressing his generals at Parchwitz with the sort of rhetoric made famous by Winston Churchill, he succeeded in baffling his foes with a feint, causing them to turn their front, before performing his favourite oblique order. The Austrian army was finally routed by Frederick's cavalry, commanded by Joachim von Zieten and Wilhelm von Dreesen.

6

Waterloo

June 18, 1815

NAPOLEON had been forced to abdicate on April 6, 1814 and was granted a tiny kingdom in Elba. Less than a year later the fish slipped the net and only an Anglo-German-Dutch army, commanded by the Duke of Wellington, and a Prussian force under Marshal Blucher were ready to engage him. Napoleon gave the latter a bloody nose at Ligny, but the wily Prussian only pretended to go home, while Wellington, bruised at Quatre Bras, carefully chose his site for battle. Once more rain came to the aid of the British-led army, but a determined Napoleon made headway, threatening to break the allied squares. They halted his advance, but at that critical moment Blucher returned and turned a retreat into a rout.

7

Koniggratz

July 3, 1866

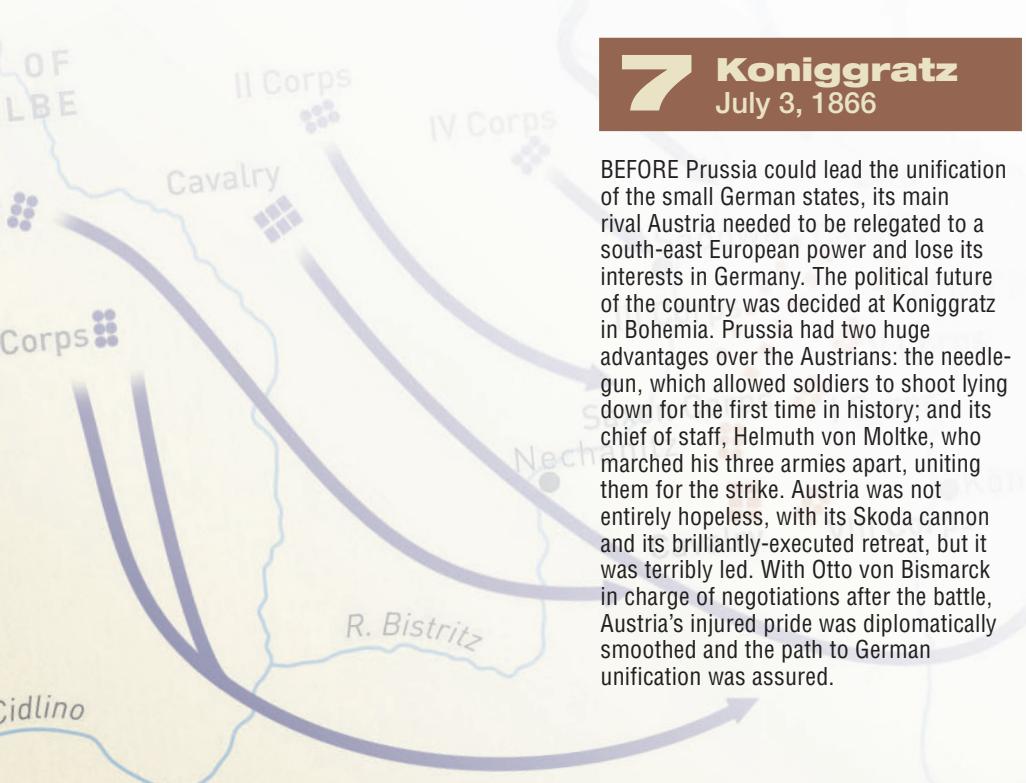
BEFORE Prussia could lead the unification of the small German states, its main rival Austria needed to be relegated to a south-east European power and lose its interests in Germany. The political future of the country was decided at Koniggratz in Bohemia. Prussia had two huge advantages over the Austrians: the needle-gun, which allowed soldiers to shoot lying down for the first time in history; and its chief of staff, Helmuth von Moltke, who marched his three armies apart, uniting them for the strike. Austria was not entirely hopeless, with its Skoda cannon and its brilliantly-executed retreat, but it was terribly led. With Otto von Bismarck in charge of negotiations after the battle, Austria's injured pride was diplomatically smoothed and the path to German unification was assured.

8

Tannenberg

Aug 23 – Sep 2, 1914

WHILE Helmuth von Moltke made a mess of the Schlieffen Plan in the west during the early stages of the First World War, Germany was victorious against Russia in the east. There were hairy moments at the beginning when two Russian armies, amounting to 800,000 men with 1,700 cannons, crossed the River Niemen into Germany. The same Schlieffen had bequeathed a perfect staff plan, but like perfect staff plans, it went awry. In panic, the Germans brought Paul von Hindenburg out of retirement and assigned Erich Ludendorff to him as chief of staff. Together they lured the Russian Second Army into a trap, surrounded it and destroyed it, killing 50,000 and capturing 90,000 men. A month later the Russian menace was eliminated altogether at the Battle of the Masurian Lakes.

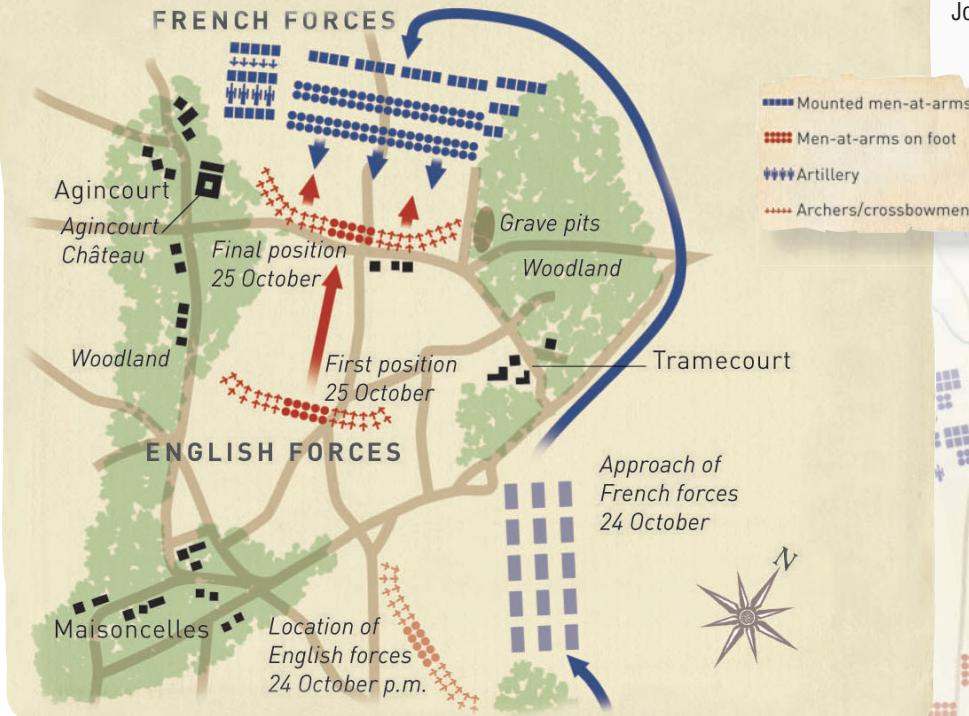


2 Agincourt

October 25, 1415

THE beginning of the Hundred Years War was a golden age for English arms. The Black Prince found a worthy successor in his great-nephew, Henry V, but things did not start well: Henry was actually on his way home at the head of a force of just 6,000 soldiers when he ran into two French

armies numbering around 18,000 men. Wet autumnal weather possibly helped, but so did Henry's choice of position in a narrow valley. The French rode into a bottleneck from which they could not escape the fury of their opponent's archers. It was the greatest English victory of all time with Henry V taking the title of king of France.

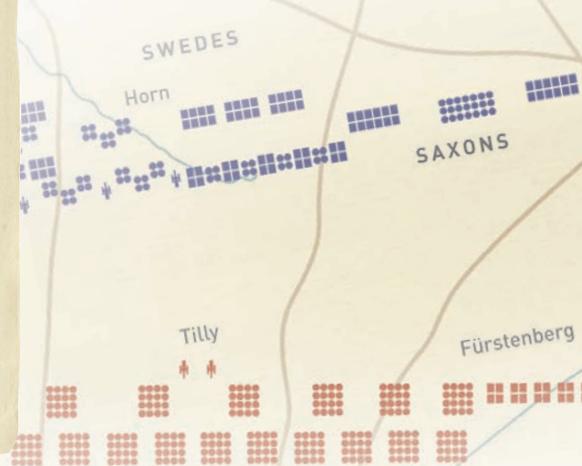


3 Breitenfeld

September 17, 1631

BREITENFELD was the greatest battle of the second phase of the Thirty Years War. The Catholic armies of the Holy Roman Emperor had been in the ascendancy until the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus joined the fray. The supreme strategist introduced new tactics that ran rings round his more traditional opponent

Johannes von Tilly, who was still enamoured of his huge, cumbersome tercios. The Swedish king had more men and more cannons, but it was also his flexibility, ability to regroup and the vital lessons he had learned from the Poles about how to use a cavalry charge to devastating effect that brought him victory.



RANKED TOP TEN RUMBLE

9 Stalingrad

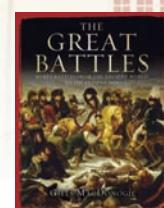
Jul 17, 1942 – Feb 2, 43

STALINGRAD was the turning point of the Second World War. Before it Hitler's Germany could hope for victory, after it they could only stave off defeat. Having failed to take Moscow in 1941, the Germans had pushed south east to secure the Caucasian oil wells, but the Soviets halted their advance on the Volga. Taking the town that bore Stalin's name would be an important propaganda victory, but it was not one that Hitler was going to enjoy for long: the Soviets were massing on the far side of the river. By November 23 advanced units had locked Friedrich Paulus' 6th Army into the town, cutting it off from the relief forces. A bitter battle of attrition followed. Some 90,000 Germans survived to go into captivity. Only 5,000 of them ever returned to Germany.

10 Sinai

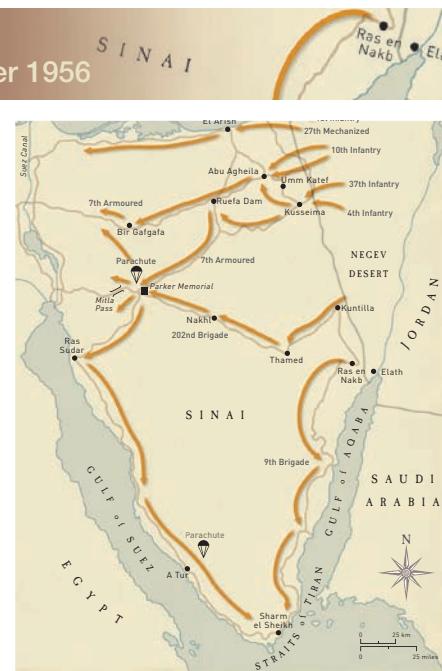
October – November 1956

THE young Israeli state was called in to distract Egyptian forces after the French and British decided to make a strike following Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal. The campaign was planned by the brilliant staff officer Moshe Dayan who had himself been trained by the maverick British commander Orde Wingate. Apart from a skirmish at the Mitla Pass where some bravado by the later prime minister Ariel Sharon led to unnecessary casualties, the campaign went like clockwork. Israel's forces punched their way round the length and breadth of the peninsula, routing their enemy – some of whom threw off their clothes and fled in their underwear! On the other hand, the British and French campaign was not crowned with success: the two superpowers, USA and Soviet Russia, forced them to an ignominious retreat.



Author

Giles MacDonogh is the literary brain behind *The Great Battles: 50 Key Battles from the Ancient World to the Present Day*, which is published by Quercus and priced £20





Report: Sharon Kean

Picture: Graeme Main

FROM the modest beginning of a hand-drawn poster in the window of a Scarborough restaurant, a scheme encouraging local communities to show their gratitude for the Armed Forces has quickly evolved to become a nationwide network.

Hundreds of local councils and companies have now signed up for Heroes Welcome, a campaign urging organisations to display a sticker as a demonstration of their support for the Services, and the number of participating outfits is growing by the day.

In addition to a warm reception, many of those who have enlisted offer troops, veterans and their families deals and discounts, pledging everything from cheap train tickets and cut-price taxi fares to special offers in hotels and spas.

"You can say thanks to a fireman or police officer

at the scene but for Servicemen and women who do their work over the hills and far away, it's harder," explained John Senior, the retired TA major-turned-restaurateur who launched

the scheme in his home town two years ago. "Although we offered discounts in the restaurant we had no way of showing our gratitude for the job they do."

As a means of rolling out Heroes Welcome beyond his own business, Senior developed the idea of a sticker indicating support for the work and sacrifices of the Service community that can be displayed everywhere from shop fronts to the windows of vehicles.

"It's up to each and every business how they choose to get involved and from the soldiers' point of view they are just happy with the recognition, although

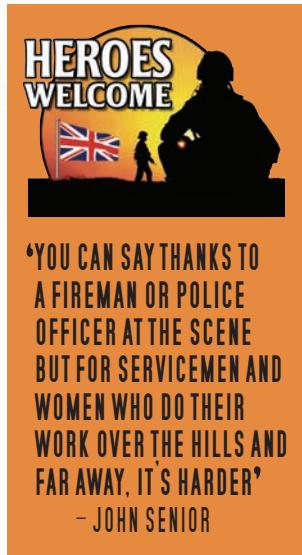
discounts in restaurants and taxis mean a lot," he explained. "It's about subtle support. Imagine a young private soldier on his way home, getting off a train at a cold station late at night and seeing one of these stickers in the window of a taxi – it warms you up."

Lt Col Toby Gray, commanding officer of 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards and an old friend of Senior, has endorsed the scheme since its inception.

"It's about passive support for soldiers and military personnel and it's a good thing," he told *Soldier*.

"It's an opportunity and an outlet for civvies to demonstrate support and a chance for Servicemen and women to know that the sacrifices they see and make in Afghanistan on a daily basis are genuinely appreciated by people who are doing something very different to them."

Following the example set by Scarborough, which boasts more than 200 participating companies, and with some gentle words of



NATIONAL GRID

HOW A HUMBLE STICKER IS HELPING TO SPARK COMMUNITY SUPPORT



encouragement from Senior, towns from as far apart as Stirling in the north and Swanage in the south have adopted the scheme.

WO2 Pete Hall (4 Yorks), a reservist based near the original Heroes Welcome town, said he thought the initiative was "long overdue" and praised communities and businesses for getting involved.

"There's a lot of soldiers who have said they can't believe the amount of support they are getting," he added. "Seeing the stickers everywhere in places like Scarborough is very welcoming. It's an excellent idea."

Lt Col Gray believes the backing and respect shown to Service personnel is more important than any of the discounts on offer.

"It's great for my soldiers because whether they see that sticker in a pub, restaurant or taxi window, they will know that they will be treated kindly and that can only be a good thing," he explained. "It costs nothing to be part of and it spreads a bit of goodwill."

At the time of writing, Heroes Welcome has reached and been embraced by more than 30 towns and cities and Senior is hoping further communities will come on-board as word of the campaign spreads.

"We've got at least 25 towns in the queue right now, all ready to launch their own schemes,"

he said. "I started this off with one homemade poster in a cafe window because I felt we owed them [soldiers] this – it's about asking communities to re-engage with the covenant.

"When I spoke to the Mayor of York just after the city launched Heroes Welcome, she said 'you shouldn't have to be telling us to do this'. They all want to do it but just need to know how and this scheme seems to be able to help with that at a civic level."

● To qualify for discounts and special services, Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force personnel and veterans must show their identification card at participating businesses.

Visit www.heroeswelcome.co.uk to find out which towns and local businesses have signed up for the scheme and details of the offers available. ■



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TALKBACK

YOUR letters provide an insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas . . . but please be brief. Emails (mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk) must include your name and location (although we won't publish them if you ask us not to). We reserve 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.



Picture: Graeme Main

Fitness face off: Last month *Soldier* pitted two amateur athletes against well-trained troops to test the toughness of entry to the Army's 300 Club. Semi-professional cyclist Toby Meadows (right) found the standards demanded of the elite group, that takes its name from the maximum achievable Personal Fitness Assessment score, beyond his reach while Sgt Kevin Richardson (RAPTC, pictured left) reaffirmed his membership with a flawless performance

Time to shape up stance on access to gyms

WRITE in support in support of Sgt P Snow's letter about access to fitness facilities, "Gym fees create unlevel playing field" (*Talkback*, January) and, as a keen triathlete, to express my frustration at the response he received from Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A).

As I see it there are two things that are unacceptable here. Firstly, that the "system" cannot provide gym equipment to its serving soldiers wherever they are, whether in theatre (which actually we seem to manage pretty well) or at an Armed Forces Careers Office.

It should be a given that facilities be provided and, as Sgt Snow highlighted, the other two Services manage to find a way of subsidising membership fees for those in the rather unfortunate position of not having military centres nearby.

Secondly, the argument of not requiring gym equipment to complete the Army's assessments misses the point that these are basic tests and that every soldier should seek to maximise their physical condition – for which the use of a gym is essential.

In the very issue in which the letter appeared there were several articles on the 300 Club and the wonderful incentive

it offers soldiers to achieve more than the minimum standard.

Without getting scientific, I will state for a fact that there is more to physical conditioning than simply the prerequisites of a Personal Fitness Assessment (PFA) and an Annual Fitness Test (AFT) and gym work should be a mainstay for all soldiers, whether in the form of circuits or resistance training, on a weekly basis.

Perhaps if the attitude towards fitness was to provide our troops with nothing other than the best facilities available, or at least the option to use them at public expense, personnel would be more motivated to achieve more than the bare minimum. If it was, we wouldn't be in a position where (as I am now in my current role) we see soldiers attempting promotion courses who are unable to pass an AFT or scrape a pass on a PFA.

There is still significant lip service being paid to fitness in the Army, which is degrading the work that others are doing to improve it with schemes such as the 300 Club.

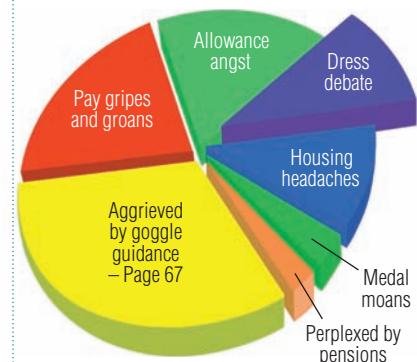
By the nature of our role, the Army should be leading the way for all other Services to follow, and soldiers that are

posted to establishments that cannot deliver decent training facilities should have the option to request subsidies to offset the high cost of personal gym membership.

In this age of obesity, if "the system" cannot deliver perhaps "the system" needs to shape up (excuse the pun), as it should not cost our troops a penny to stay fit, wherever they are. – Capt M Walpole, S03 Trg, Sp Weapons School.

Slice of Service life

This month's ruminations from the ranks...



Protect your Hearing

earplugs or eardrums



Listen to Sense



Picture: Mike Weston

Focus on beards causes irritation

DISGUSTED by two of the letters which appeared in December's *Talkback* section, I am writing to *Soldier* from a small checkpoint in Nad-e Ali.

In reference to the female officer who wrote "Cut back on the beard growing" and has completed four tours of Afghanistan; I would like to know if during these deployments she managed to see what was going on outside of camp.

As a commander who has to interact with Afghans in shuras and during impromptu meetings while on patrol, I am sporting two-months of growth and have found that elders have shown me considerable more respect as a consequence.

■ AS a serving Infantry warrant officer, I feel I have to respond to the naive remarks made by an unnamed female officer about facial hair.

The letter writer made reference to "soldiers looking scruffy with part-grown beards and overgrown locks", but fails to recognise that these personnel may be within the 24-hour "grace" period given to front-line troops by either Bastion's garrison sergeant major or their own regimental sergeant major.

They may also be members of the brigade reconnaissance force on a sharp turnaround, having returned to camp briefly to regroup.

Some of these "scruffy" soldiers might have just been involved in an incident and at Bastion for TRiM [Trauma Risk Management] or having helped bring in an injured brother in arms.

While in Afghanistan, no one in my

As anyone who has been on the ground knows, those with a "voice" in Afghanistan are the aforementioned and all have beards.

Equally, at this location there is no water source and consequently we have to use drinking water to shave – doing so frequently would place a great strain on the already stretched resupply chain.

Secondly, I was annoyed to read the response to a letter from Cpl Woodward, "Sunglasses were Ray-banned" [which, in addition to commenting on the wearing of sunglasses, also bemoaned not being able to dress down within camp]. Anyone who thinks there is a lack of discipline in a forward operating base on the grounds of

company used Muslim religion as an excuse to grow a beard.

Soldiers did so because we were living in makeshift conditions with only enough bottled water for drinking and cooking.

It's not a beard that gets you respect, it's how you conduct yourself in your role or in battle.

I do not want this to end up like a tennis match with comments bouncing back and forth, but I'd like to offer this quote from the Bible: "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgement. Our law does not judge a man, unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing" (John 7:24).

The next time this female officer or others are waiting for their pizza while drinking a latte in Camp Bastion, please don't be too hasty to jump to conclusions based on appearance alone. – WO1 (RSM) D Owens, FTU (UK) TESW01.

personnel wearing sandals and a T-shirt has no understanding of the situation in theatre.

As for Lt Col Gerald Strickland quoting Fd Marshal Slim in his reply, I would be amazed if the viscount moaned to the Chindits about shaving and sloppy dress while on their long-range patrols in Burma.

Instead he would have been concentrating on winning the war, as we should be doing instead of posting lieutenant colonels outside the cookhouse in Bastion to pick people up on their dress.

I doubt very much that this letter will be printed as it will upset people who have nothing better to do than whinge at the fighting troops. – A senior NCO.

■ IN response to the comments she made in December's issue, I can assure "a female officer" that battlegroup commanders, garrison regimental sergeant majors and senior NCOs take the Chief of the General Staff's directive on standards very seriously.

Those observed were probably soldiers recently returned to Bastion from a patrol base, in which facilities such as "free hairdressing" and adequate water are not provided, or members of a group who have just got back from a lengthy mission.

I would also point out that officers are the worst culprits when it comes to long hair and scruffy dress.

The letter was just another pointless gripe by someone who has no idea what it is to soldier. Quite frankly, most people are getting sick to death of petty issues raised by armchair personnel. Let's concentrate on more positive stories. – A senior NCO.



MoD posts decided on merit alone

■ HAVING read the views of the ex-Serviceman bemoaning how difficult it currently is to land a job in the MoD, "Give troops a fair crack at Civil Service Careers" (January), I would like to respond from the perspective of a humble civil servant.

Of a similar age to myself, I can relate to and appreciate the dedication the soldier has shown for the past 34 years in service of Queen and country.

However, the writer berated the decision not to give him a "privileged pass" into the Civil Service workplace, accusing the process of "protectionism". While the individual in question may have an understanding of combat, how and why should that help him in applying for a post within the MoD?

Ask any civilian clerk working in support of a company or regiment how well Regulars get on with Joint Personnel Administration and the answer may become apparent.

I have been a MoD admin officer for 12 years (five of which I was also a TA clerk) and am just as proud of my own career as the soldier is of his.

My skill set is constantly challenged and upgraded – for a level of pay equivalent to that of a three-year REME (V) craftsman. I do not complain about the salary as it is my choice to remain in the job, just as it was for the author of the letter to be a Serviceman.

I have no substantial Army pension, grants or allowances and am now told that a 25 per cent reduction in our workforce is on the way.

Best person for the job means neither age, former rank or perceived self importance; it is experience, adaptability and bringing something to the table that counts.

It is perfectly normal to promote and recruit from within, just as it is in the Armed Forces. How quickly the letter writer has forgotten – it is this precise process that gave him his own progressions over the past 34 years.

Sadly for him, he is not on the inside of that particular fence any more. Welcome to our world, sir. – Name and address supplied.

'Pay freeze is fine but fall in salaries will lead to losses'

WE ALL accept that cuts need to be made to help with the nation's financial situation and that the salary freeze for Service personnel may help reduce the deficit.

However, has any thought been given to those of us who have already reached the top of our respective pay scales?

Does the freeze extend to our accommodation, contribution in lieu of Council Tax and associated charges?

If so, when these rates are increased in April and again next year, will we be expected to earn less simply because of our length of service in rank?

How is this going to help overcome the problem of retaining senior soldiers? – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies:
The hold on salaries announced by the Government in June 2010 affected all personnel within the public sector, not just those in the Armed Forces.

However, unlike other public sector workers, members of the Services have managed to keep the incremental progression mechanism running during the pay freeze period, which for most sees an annual uplift. Perhaps in your case this does not apply.

The Armed Forces Pay Review

Body (AFPRB) set rates for food and accommodation charges which are designed to achieve broad comparability with civilian comparators, but with a discount that reflects the disadvantages of military life.

The AFPRB is very aware of the impact that any disproportionate increases in tariffs would have on the financial well-being and morale of Service personnel.

This point has been made to them at every visit over the last year.

However, there remains a need to ensure that both accommodation and food charges rise broadly in line with the civilian market to ensure that the MoD subsidy levels do not increase disproportionately, and that the quality and quantity of centrally-supplied food remains constant.

Details of this year's rates will be published in March.

Finally, the senior soldier retention problems you refer to do not exist within the Army as a whole.

We have reached full strength for the first time in more than ten years, outflow at all ranks has reduced considerably and the implications of the recent Strategic Defence and Security Review will see us reducing numbers by 7,000 personnel over the next four years.

'I'd be happy to fork out more for food'

I AM curious to know if anyone in the upper echelons of the chain of command has ever considered asking soldiers how much they are willing to pay for food served in barracks?

Personally, I would be happy to fork out a reasonable amount from my wages – perhaps the equivalent of what a single civvy would spend on a month's shopping – if it meant getting a better standard of food and service.

Most of my colleagues would agree as we tend to eat out in local restaurants or order meals in as a result of not being happy with the quality of the Pay As You Dine (PAYD) facility on camp.

Doing so probably costs us in the region of £200-£300 each – losing a third of which from our wages would surely pay for a better standard of food in the cookhouse. – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds:
There have been some surveys that support your suggestion but the contractors have been obliged to cater for the majority view, with meals priced around the core level or at a cost which enables our soldiers to balance their



"Another of your bright ideas, Kevin... tell them we are happy to pay more for better food and service... then discover we can't afford it!"

finances throughout the month.

What you have done is invoke the choice given to you under PAYD by going elsewhere for what you want to eat.

There is no reason why you and your colleagues cannot approach the contractor at your unit to request enhanced quality meals, but there must be regular take-up to warrant them undertaking such a risk.

You are a rare breed in wanting to pay more for your food.

Flick back through previous copies of *Soldier* to see how little other people are willing to pay.



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Crabb Wars: Episode 3 – The Establishment Strikes Back

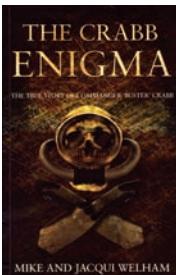
AS a former Territorial Army soldier, serving MoD civil servant and book reviewer for several sources (mainly the National Army Museum), I just wished to applaud your publication of Mike Welham's response to Lt Col Nick Sim's verdict on his book about the Cdr Crabb affair, "Author crabby over criticism" (January).

I am sure *Soldier* will have received comment from writers in the past rather upset at criticisms of their work. I used to call these responses "green crayon letters" as one was indeed penned in this manner.

Another was a rant, taking to task my conclusion that the subject (a biography of an eminent, deceased general) deserved far better and stating that his work was thought excellent by the officer's widow, son, batman and gardener.

I thought that as soon as he mentioned an academic or other senior military figure, I might take note. None were, so I sent a short, polite response but stuck by my review. In return I received an even lengthier letter and felt it was pointless to prolong the correspondence by replying.

I always work from the principle of calling it as you see it – not reviewing the subject matter in the broadest sense (for



example writing an essay on the causes of the American Civil War when what is wanted is a review of a book on the battle of Gettysburg) and not critiquing the author, whatever you may feel about them.

Deal with the book in front of you. Be scrupulous but honest.

I think by giving Mr Welham his right of reply you have rather splendidly given him "enough rope" as the phrase has it.

Some of his self-justifications – reviewed by a magazine sold in 36 countries (why is this relevant?) and "best-seller on Amazon" hardly speak objectively as to the quality of the work. The bluster about the "establishment" tells us all, I think, we need to know.

Lt Col Sim's effort strikes me as passing my honesty test and you've done reviewing a service by publishing the reply. Keep up the good work!

– Phil McCarty, MoD Main Building, London.

The editor, taking a bow, types: If any readers wish to join the dark and murky world of the "establishment", *Soldier* is on the lookout for book, music, movie and game reviewers. Anyone interested in seeing their name in print and getting hold of free copies of the latest releases should email asimms@soldiermagazine.co.uk



"Heroic your actions may be, Barry, but I'm assured there's no such gallantry award as the Distinguished Float-driving Cross."

■ I AM responsible for the early morning delivery of provisions and, having nothing but support for those in the British Army, would like to share with you a couple of my own experiences.

A number of years ago the details of my round were compromised and, being in sole command of the vehicle, I was placed in a position where I had no alternative but to defend the goods on board. This attack and opportunist snatch from the rear was only thwarted by my quick thinking and clever use of the hooter.

In 1985, while employed as a security officer, I had an unpleasant experience at a bird sanctuary when an egg thief grabbed my epaulettes, threw me to the ground and stamped my badge into the mud before making his escape. – Barry Barrovich.

The editor, checking his calendar to make sure it's not April 1, types: Consider your "stories" shared.

Mum must be the word during Minimise

I WOULD like to raise the issue of Op Minimise [the communications freeze imposed in theatre in the event of a critically-injured soldier] and highlight how ineffective it is.

Soon after arriving at Kandahar Airfield, where I am currently based, I quickly became aware of the inconvenience – albeit a necessary one – of the procedure.

In the event of a communications blackout with the rest of the world, we are within a five-minute walk of commercial facilities where we can, if we wish, part with a few dollars to get online and use systems such as Skype, a service denied to us by the MoD.

We all know the importance of Minimise and understand why it is imposed, however, 99 times out of 100 the first we hear of a casualty or death is through Sky News.

In the main we are unaware of what has happened and where, and consequently are unnecessarily being denied the right to communicate with our loved ones.

We can get round this blackout should we wish to, it just costs money to do so and maintaining communication with family and friends while on an operational tour

should not hit the soldier in the pocket.

I have heard this issue being discussed countless times, so I am pretty sure that the chain of command is aware of the situation. That being the case, may I ask why we are still being subjected to Minimise when other forces in the coalition are not?

If the powers that be are aware that we can get round it if we so wish, why is the blackout still being implemented? – Name and address supplied.

Lt Col Hywell Lewis, S01 J1 Herrick, PJHQ, responds: Op Minimise is an essential tool that is used to maintain operational security or to prevent misleading information about deaths or serious injury being passed to a Next of Kin (NoK).

It is used sparingly, and only when necessary, for the minimum period of time. There are occasions when informing the NoK can be difficult or a sensitive operation is protracted so Op Minimise has to be extended.

The inconvenience is regrettable but entirely necessary.

Most Service personnel would recognise that the inconvenience is minimal compared to the damage that can be inflicted on an operation or the unnecessary suffering that can be caused to a soldier's family if they receive misleading information about the death or serious injury of their parent, spouse, son or daughter.

I have no doubt, particularly in a multinational environment, that Op Minimise can be circumvented.

However, I would expect all deployed Service personnel to apply their integrity and professionalism and respect the purpose of the imposition.

More importantly, all troops are expected to comply with the theatre orders; "getting round it" is irresponsible.

While the writer might feel aggrieved that he often hears about a death on Sky News, it is better than a bereaved family hearing the details in the same way, which is why Op Minimise is imposed.

Thankfully we maintain close links with our allies to ensure that sensitive information is not published in other countries' media.

Amber best for Afghanistan ambience

THE Talkback pages in December's edition of *Soldier* featured a letter from Cpl J Woodward asking why he was not allowed to wear sunglasses and comfortable clothing while serving on Op Herrick 12.

I would like to take the opportunity to add to the response from Lt Col Gerald Strickland, CO 1 RGR Battlegroup, in respect of the issued equipment, as the letter raises important safety issues.

The protective eyewear provided to troops in the Black Bag comprises goggles and glasses, both currently supplied by ESS. The glasses are not sunglasses in the civilian sense. They are low-impact ballistic eyewear which will protect eyes from debris and fragments and, as such, are to be worn as a minimum at all times outside the wire.

When the prevailing threat or activity being conducted warrants a higher level of protection, the issued ballistic

goggles should be worn.

It is a matter for PJHQ/theatre policy and Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) to determine when such conditions apply.

There is a choice of three lenses for each of these items: clear, amber and smoked (dark).

All three offer the same level of ballistic protection and it is again a matter of policy and TTPs for local commanders to decide which to wear in the prevailing conditions.

However, from a technical point of view, in most situations the amber lenses are recommended as they offer anti-glare protection against the sun but are clear enough to allow transition from bright sunlight to dark conditions such as the interior of compounds.

The amber lens also enhances contrast and is the best of the three for identifying ground signs when looking for IEDs in bright sunlight.

It can be used in low light conditions, but when the light becomes poor the clear lens is the best option.

I am aware that policy in theatre has directed the avoidance of wearing the smoked lenses when interacting with local civilians for cultural reasons, except where they are required for medical or specific task purposes.

Within locations where these constraints do not apply, the choice of lens is at the discretion of local commanders. From a technical point of view, the dark lens would be best



in this situation as it offers the greatest level of UVA/UVB filtering.

So, to reiterate, troops should not leave any protected location without wearing some form of ballistic eye protection.

Policy and TTPs locally determine the choice of clear, amber or smoked lens for a given situation but it should be informed by the relative technical advantages and disadvantages outlined.

I hope this helps to explain the situation for soldiers serving or due to serve in Afghanistan. – Brig Carew Wilks, head of the Individual Capability Group, Defence Equipment & Support.



PS...

I HAVE just finished reading Cpl J Woodward's letter, "Sunglasses were Ray-banned" (December), and thought that he brought up some fairly interesting points that deserved explanation.

My interest increased when I saw the response was penned by none other than the battlegroup commanding officer.

However, after no more than a couple of lines of the reply, I realised that it was not only a waste of readers' time, but of *Soldier*'s valuable column inches. I saw not one valid explanation for the points raised.

Although a long-serving junior rank, I believe myself to be of above-average intelligence and, having read his letter, assume Cpl Woodward is of the same mould and deserved more than just the stock "that's the way it is so deal with it" answer.

All we ask for is an informed and reasonable response from our chain of command, explaining why things are the way they are.

I notice in the *Talkback* header it states that *Soldier* "reserve the right to edit for length and clarity". The magazine should also edit responses that clearly do not get anyway near

to responding to the questions that were initially raised! – Name and address supplied.

I AM writing in response to Lt Col Gerald Strickland's stance on dress while on operations.

The commanding officer does have a point that we are within an organisation that has standards and rules which may impact on how personnel will behave on the battlefield.

However, surely allowing a soldier to wear issued clothing in a sweltering forward operating base is not beyond the bounds of common sense if it encourages the individual to better perform. Presumably the shorts and T-shirts in question have been approved by a dress committee and if not, why issue them?

It's all very well quoting Fd Marshal Slim but Afghanistan is a different war with different technology and



threats. The world is unrecognisable to the one in which his words were spoken. – Name and address supplied.

BRYAN Milham is correct in stating that the US Army's LEMV [Long Endurance Multi-Intelligence Vehicle] is not a blimp, "A load of hot air" (December). However, his explanation of "Class B, Limp" is a folk etymology.

There was no such class of British airship. While "A" and "B" were US variants, the first written use of the word predates the introduction of the B-Class by one year.

We may never know how blimp was coined, but the most convincing origin comes from the sound made when one taps the skin of the inflated aircraft.

In fact the LEMV [pictured above] featured in your November issue, "Crazy but true... combat concepts being considered for front-line service", is neither a blimp with a gas-bag, nor a traditional rigid airship with an internal frame. Instead it has a semi-rigid outer skin filled with helium. – Jon Ferguson, West Yorkshire.



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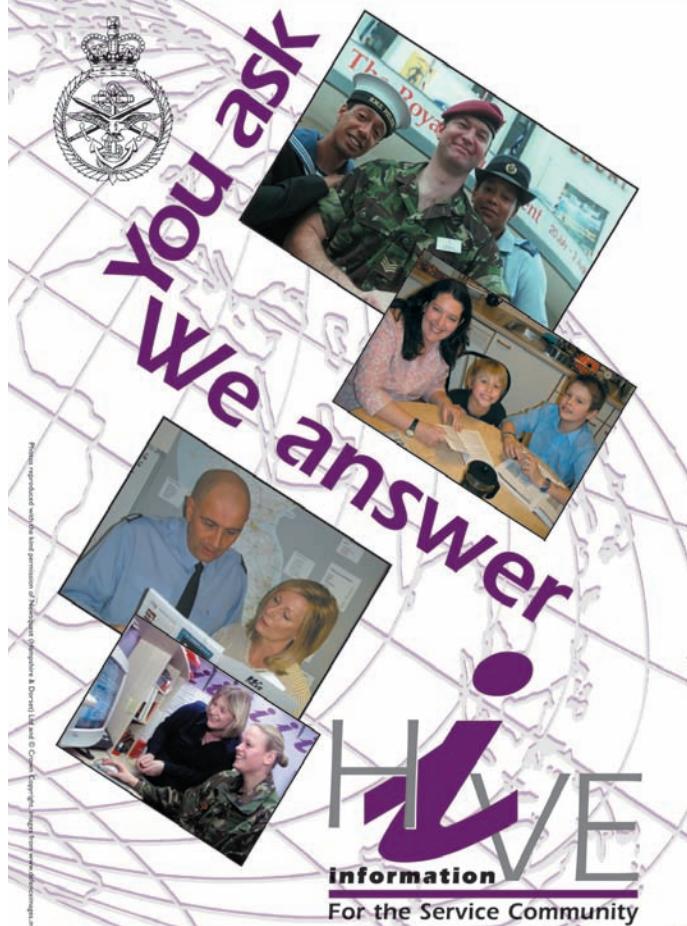
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For the Service Community

■ I AM writing in reply to Cpl S Feeney and his criticism of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), "Heated response to strike threat" (December). As a former warrant officer in the Light Infantry/Rifles who left the Forces in 2007 and is now a crew manager with the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, I can see both sides of the argument.

Can I just put *Soldier's* readership straight, the FBU does not run the Fire Service – this is done by the Local Fire Authority, which is part of Communities and Local Government.

Furthermore, I and any other firefighter will not endanger the public. We are there to protect the community and their property 24/7 and are committed to this service.

We too are subject to a pay freeze (three years) and cuts of our own. The FBU is a voice for our rights on better shift patterns, working conditions, health and safety, protective equipment and, last but not least, pay. The FBU is working with other trade unions in the public sector to secure jobs – this is not all about pay.

In the last line of his letter, Cpl Feeney stated that public service does not mean "I only serve the public if my conditions are met". He should read some of the other letters sent to *Soldier* – half of them are about conditions and pay!

I served my country with pride and now serve my community. It's not all about money, if it was we would not do these jobs. – Rodney Steele.



Stand-in service: Led by Cpl Jon Pratt, members of 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment race to a "Green Goddess" during the firefighting strikes of December 2002

Picture: Graeme Main

Ministers must find funds for Forces' footwear

AS an ex-soldier who served in the late 1950s, I was very concerned to read the response to a physical training instructor's request to be provided with a pair of PT03 trainers, "Limited issue casts shadow of discontent" (November).

The reply accepted that although this footwear would be better for most troops, its issue was a matter of cost.

As a beneficiary of the role provided by our Armed Forces personnel, I believe that providing our Servicemen and women with less than the best available – rather than the best affordable – unacceptable and I am sure any member of the general public would agree.

I intend to bring my disquiet about this to the attention of my MP. – Mr A West, Carshalton, Surrey.



'Claw cash back from camouflage'

HAVING been in the Army for ten years, I have accumulated a large amount of issued equipment and recently visited my quartermaster's department in order to feed some of that kit back into the system.

Most of it is unused and there are items, such as temperate combats, sausage bag and surplus desert gear, that I will never need again.

By returning this haul I thought I would be doing a good deed in support of a cash-strapped Army; some of the kit could be reissued, some could be sold as surplus and it would reduce the burden on the Military Freight Organisation.

However, I was dismayed to hear from the QM (a lieutenant colonel) that I could not hand any of my stuff back.

He cited two reasons. Firstly, that I might need the equipment in the future and it would be expensive to reissue, and secondly, that once handed in the items would simply be burnt.

There must be tens of thousands of soldiers in the same boat, all holding kit which could potentially be used rather than just costing the Army money to move it from post to post.

Surely this policy must be reviewed. I know that in some units partial "de-kits" are allowed. – Name and address supplied.

WO1 Alan Young, Logistic Support Branch, HQ Land Forces, responds: It is encouraging to hear that soldiers are managing their individual kit appropriately and where necessary carrying out a



"Your stall seems to clash with the peace and goodwill nature of our appeal, Sgt Harrison."

housekeeping exercise to ensure that the clothing and equipment they hold is still required and fit for purpose.

The policy for returning clothing can be found in Joint Service Publication (JSP) 886, which clearly states clothing exchanged or withdrawn from individuals is to be surveyed and conditioned by nominated representatives to classify items as serviceable new, serviceable part-worn or unserviceable.

This action should also identify items which require premature replacement due to neglect.

Part-worn personal-issue socks, drawers, vests and towels are to be conditioned as unserviceable. Other items are to be laundered before returning to stock. Where sufficient is being held within the quartermaster's store, instruction is to be sought following the policy laid down in JSP 886, volume 9, part 6.

BULLETIN BOARD

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Armed Forces Christian Union: 01252 311221; www.afcu.org.uk

Armed Forces Humanist Association: www.armedforceshumanists.org.uk

ABF The Soldiers' Charity: 0845 241 4820

Army Welfare Service: 01980 615975; www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/welfare-support.aspx

Army Families Federation: 01980 615525

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association: 0208 590 1124; www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries@ceas.detsa.co.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) 0044 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

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

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group): 07962 023654; www.mutualsupport.org.uk

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

Regular Forces' Employment Association: 0121 236 0058; www.rfea.org.uk

Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725

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

St Dunstan's: 0207 723 5021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk

South Atlantic Medal Association: 01495 227577

Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency: 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas)

DEFENCE DIARY

February 1 onwards: The Lord Ashcroft Gallery: Extraordinary Heroes. The world's largest collection of Victoria Crosses and George Crosses. The new gallery examines the concept

of bravery and the personal stories behind the medals. Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ. Call 0207 416 5000 or visit www.iwm.org.uk

Starting February: Classic War Stories for Children: *Once upon a wartime* delves into the pages of well-loved books, bringing five stories of war dramatically to life. Adults and children can wander through life-size sets, peer into intricate scale models and explore the stories' themes of loyalty, separation, excitement, survival and identity. Imperial War Museum, London. For more information, log on to www.iwm.org.uk

Until March 19: Revised Winter Opening Arrangements: Imperial War Museum, Duxford. Moved to earlier closing time of 1600 daily. Land Warfare and Hanger 3 closed to the public until March, remainder are open as usual. For details visit www.iwm.org.uk/duxford

Starting May: Exhibition of War Correspondents – Reporting under fire since 1914. Featuring some of the people whose words, images, voices and faces bring the story from the front line to us at home, sometimes at considerable risk to themselves. Imperial War Museum North, The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Manchester M17 1TZ. www.iwm.org.uk

May 28: Blues Brothers Tribute Band. In aid of Help for Heroes. Performing live at Hatherley Manor Hotel, Gloucester GL2 9AQ. Tickets cost £30, include a three course meal and are available online at www.peruforh4h.co.uk or by phoning 01452 260063.

Until September: Exhibition – A National Hero of 95 years ago: Capt Charles Fryatt. In-the-spotlight display gives visitors unique access to intriguing items in the controversial story that caused national outcry when Capt Fryatt was arrested and executed during the First World War. Imperial War Museum North, The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Manchester M17 1TZ.

SEARCHLINE

101 FS Battalion REME requires Territorial Army volunteers for Op Herrick 15. The deployment will cover a 12-month mobilisation period with tour dates between September 2011 and April 2012. Anyone interested should contact the ROSO, 101 FS Bn REME via their company PSAO. The next selection weekend will be **March 25-27**.

Do any *Soldier* readers have any interesting colour photographs of **Afghanistan/Iraq/Northern Ireland/Wootton Bassett** that I could use to illustrate a book of poems? *Over the Water* is being published in support of SSAFA Forces Help. I am unable to pay any copyright fees and any images need to be supplied on a donation basis. Contact Christine Rodgers at overthewater76@yahoo.co.uk

Jean Donaldson is trying to locate comrades of her father **1621234 Gnr Thomas Rogers**, who served in 147/43 Light AA Battery RA, Ceylon during 1941. The soldier was also stationed on the Pevensie Marshes in 1940. Contact Jean by email at jean@jigsawresearch.co.uk

A former soldier wishes to make contact with

anyone who served with **8th Railway Squadron, Royal Engineers** from late 1954 to late 1957, or anyone who served at Longmoor during that period. Contact John Barnes by email ernest1234@terra.es

A film company is looking for war veterans who would like to have their stories and memories filmed for posterity. **Legasee** is developing an exciting new social history resource of film interviews featuring ex-campaigners for use by schools, colleges etc. We want to hear from war veterans of any age. It doesn't matter what campaign or country they served in or what role they played. Contact Legasee, 27 Government Row, Enfield Lock, London EN3 6JN, or phone 01992 719363 or email dave@legasee.org.uk

Stuart Beveridge, ex-Sgt served in 18 Command Workshops Bovington, REME Workshop Khartoum, 40 Coy RASC Dhekelia, 91 Coy RASC, Bielefeld and 1 Corps Tp Workshop Kunsebeck, would like to hear from old comrades. Contact Stuart by email stuart-beveridge@web.de or phone 0161 797 0147.

Don Smith, ex-LCpl, would like to hear from old comrades who served in **54 Fd Squadron RE, Hong Kong from 1954-1957** or anyone who served in the New Territories during that period. Contact Don at 2 Garden Terrace, Haltwhistle, Northumberland NE49 0DA or call 01434 322973.

Rhoda Kirkpatrick is seeking information about her cousin, **23917491 LBdr David Edward Tilbury**, who was killed in action on Oct 27, 1971 in a bomb attack on an Army observation post, at Rosemount RUC in N Ireland. If you have any information, contact Mrs Kirkpatrick by email kirkysgirl@yahoo.com

Simon Thomas has recovered a Territorial Army efficiency medal while metal detecting. The decoration was awarded to **622413 Sjt M James RHA**. The medal was found in Bridgend, Wales. Soldier is believed to have lived in the Neath area. Owner or family of Sjt James should contact Simon by email thomas.s31@sky.com

Publishers Tommies Guides are calling for poems linked to operations in Afghanistan. Author **Ryan Gearing** wants to produce an anthology of poetry written by men and women of all three Services, or poetry that has inspired them as they carry out their dangerous duties. The book will be called *Enduring Freedom*. For each copy sold a donation will go to the charity Combat Stress. Poems should be sent to Ryan Gearing, Tommies Guides, Menin House, 13 Hunloke Avenue, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN22 8UL or email sales@tommiesguides.co.uk

A new charity for ex-Service personnel called **SPEAR** is aimed at supporting and helping veterans and their dependents who live, or have links, within Merton, Richmond, Hounslow and Kingston in south-west London. The range of guidance and advice is broad and includes referrals, health, social inclusion, homelessness and family. If you need help and live in the areas mentioned contact Veterans' Support Team, SPEAR, 89 Heath Road, Twickenham TW1 4AW or call 0207 036 9775.

A daughter is attempting to locate former soldiers who served with her father, now 92 years old. Veteran **2040039 Alexander Redgate RE, South London Search Light Battery**, was stationed at Biggin Hill during 1940 to look after the pilots and aircraft during the Battle of Britain. Contact Ann Greenfield by email at annapan2@btinternet.com

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REUNIONS

2 Royal Anglian (Grimsby Poachers): Reunion for retired and serving Poachers and their families, to be held at the Beachcomber Holiday Centre, Cleethorpes on March 26. Tickets are £8 and obtainable from Denis Watson on 07809 727795 or email denis.watson@ntlworld.com also Frank Rimmer on 07879 625338, or email frank.rimmer@ntlworld.com or visit website www.grimsbypoachers.com

Queen's Royal Lancers: North West Branch annual dinner, April 2, in Blackpool. All ex-16/5th Queen's Royal Lancers and 17/21 Lancers welcome. Further details from Ned Kelly on 01772 324795 or email mike.kelly@talktalk.net

49B A Coy AAS Beachley: A reunion is being planned at a mutually-convenient venue and date. Interested or know someone that could be? Contact Stuart Beveridge on 0161 797 0147 or email stuart-beveridge@web.de

Gloucestershire Regiment 28/LXI: Reunion for 2011 will mark the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Imjin, Korea. The all-ranks dinner of Bristol/Gloucestershire RGBW Association Back Badge will take place on April 2 in Gloucestershire. For full details and booking forms visit www.glosters.org/bb2011 or send an SAE to Back Badge and Imjin 60 Reunion Team, 45 Coleridge Gardens, Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset TA8 2QA.

Calday Grange CCF: 60th Anniversary on October 1, with a parade and black-tie dinner. Information from Maj Adcock by email at ccf@calday.wirral.sch.uk

19 Regiment Royal Artillery: Regimental reunion to be held in late 2011/early 2012. Update of the All Ranks Old Comrades database. If you served with the Highland Gunners or wish to register or update full contact details, including length of service with 19 Regt and sub units. Write to Maj LeFeuvre at 19 Regt RA, Bhurtpore Bks, Tidworth, SP7 7AS or email welfare19@hotmail.co.uk

COMPETITIONS

Spine Line winner: Mrs K Mogg, Chilwell, Beeston.

Russell Brand winners: LCpl J Morrison, Dental Centre, BFPO 808; J Dickinson, 217 Tpt Sqn RLC, Leeds; Capt M Claxton, MoD St Athan; D Myatt, Defence Estates, Sutton Coldfield; Mrs L Yates, Academy HQ, RMAS.

Family Guy winners: WO1 (SSM) D Hope, HQ 145 Bde, Aldershot; A Davies, SO2 Performance, HQ Land Forces, Andover; J Milne, Mytchett, Camberley; Mrs J Hawkes, HQ Hereford Garrison; Cpl L Vernazza, APHCS, Tidworth.

ROADSHOW DATES

The Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. The event starts with a drinks reception, is followed by a presentation and questions and culminates with a finger buffet. There will be a range of military personnel on hand to answer any of your questions. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com with the event you are interested in attending.

February: 15, Newquay; 16, Salisbury; 17, Taunton. **March:** Oldham; St Helens; Sale (TBC).



EN details have been changed on this photograph by Steve Dock of a vehicle recovery during an exercise in Batus, Canada. Circle the differences in the upper image and send the panel to **HOAY 831, Soldier, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU** by February 28.

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 April issue.

December competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 was **LCpl Hislop, 212 Sig Sqn, 1 (UK) ADSR**. Runners-up **WO2 (RQMS) K Marlowe, 39 Regt RA, Albemarle Barracks and Ms Kelly Whitlock, AFCO Bournemouth**, each win a £25 gift voucher.



WITH job cuts, cost-savings and tax rises on Prime Minister David Cameron's agenda, it was no surprise that *Soldier*'s political animals decided to bite when given the chance to caption the image above.

With a sackful of satirical suggestions and topics ranging from the coalition, MPs' expenses and Army funding, there was a plethora of comedy gold to pick from.

One particularly contemporary entry came from Ian Goodwin-Reeves of 150 Recovery Company REME who penned: **"Signing on the dole David Cameron regretted the scope of the 25 per cent cuts in the Civil Service."**

A mention also goes to SSgt Marie McChesney at the Army Careers Information Office in Lancaster, who offered: **"Only 3,000 lines to go... 'I will do my best to look after the Services', 2,999: 'I will do my best to look after the Services'..."**



Picture: Cpl Mark Webster, RLC

"Seriously, do these people know who I am? I've never seen so much facial hair in all my life – and I've travelled far and wide."

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo above and send it to us by February 28. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of Alan Allport's extensively researched *Demobbed*.

However, a copy of Robert Kershaw's excellent *Sky Men* goes to first-time entrant Paul Morris of London for his outside-the-box idea for transport in the conflict zone. The Balham resident ventured: **"And you guys will definitely let me out if I get you 'Boris Bikes' in Afghanistan?"**

With politicians on the receiving end of a highbrow ribbing in recent issues, this month we are offering up some Royalty in the shape of Prince Andrew, Duke of York.

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Money talks: The latest MoD finance package equates to £300 million in cuts, including reductions to allowances for living overseas and travelling to work

Picture: Steve Dolk

'MoD – poacher and gamekeeper'

In last month's column I wrote about the proposed changes to the Armed Forces pension schemes which would see an erosion in the value of these benefits if taking a long-term view.

There is further bad news this month as £300 million pounds worth of cuts to the allowances system were announced at the end of January.

From this figure, £50 million must come from the back pocket of the Civil Service, details of which are not yet available.

Why not? Because, of course, they are being examined closely and negotiated by the Civil Service unions.

Who closely examined and negotiated the Service cuts? The MoD. Who proposed the cuts? The MoD. Who agreed the cuts? The Government Treasury.

Is it just me or does this seem a little unfair? Actually, very unfair.

I don't want to criticise the MoD staff that put this package together as they did the absolute best they could given the savings that were being demanded.

However, in any other organisation, even within the Civil Service, an independent body working for the staff would have had a chance to negotiate.

Here the MoD had to play both poacher and gamekeeper and do so while under significant pressure from the Treasury.

I am not advocating a Forces Union – or maybe I am.

A number of key allowances are affected

by the cuts and the reductions will be keenly felt overseas, in London and by those living some distance from their unit.

There will be further significant reductions in the Local Overseas Allowance (LOA) for all those ranked corporal and above. A simplifying of the system to only three bands from the previous 13 does make sense. Where you shop is a personal choice, not something based on your rank.

The bigger issue here is that families living overseas rely on LOA to help pay the bills, it is needed to make up the shortfall in income due to the restricted employment opportunities for spouses based outside the UK.

Giving up a salary to accompany your soldier abroad was easier to accept when LOA went some way to contributing to the loss of income.

The consequence of the reductions may be that the Military Careers Management Division find it even harder to recruit volunteers to go overseas, or that the messes fill up as unaccompanied postings become the norm.

The other changes that will hit a widespread number of people is in Home to Duty Travel (HDT). The science behind the decision to increase the personal contribution from one mile to nine over a three-year period bears some examination and to an extent makes sense.

The average commute for the UK public is nine miles, so arguably it is reasonable to expect a contribution for that distance and the MoD are among only a few employers who pay such an allowance.

However, we are constantly being told of the "special nature" of military service and for the majority of personnel living in Service Families Accommodation (SFA) they do not choose where they live.

With increasing pressure on SFA availability it is not uncommon for families to be living 20 or more miles away from their unit and they accept these houses because of the contribution to their costs from HDT.

For a lance corporal living in Darlington but based in Catterick, will it seem reasonable to him

that he will be up to £81-a-month worse off than his mate living in Catterick, just because of where Defence Estates chose to house him?

It is going to take some intelligent allocating by the Housing Information Centres to avoid this sort of situation.

A recent poll on our website showed that more than 50 per cent of respondents were considering their future in the Army.

This may have been a knee-jerk reaction to the anticipated reductions or it may have been an indicator that there will be a lot of volunteers for the redundancies in April. ■

'Giving up a salary to accompany your soldier was easier to accept before'

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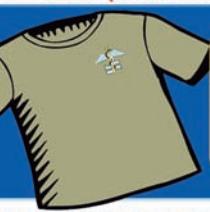
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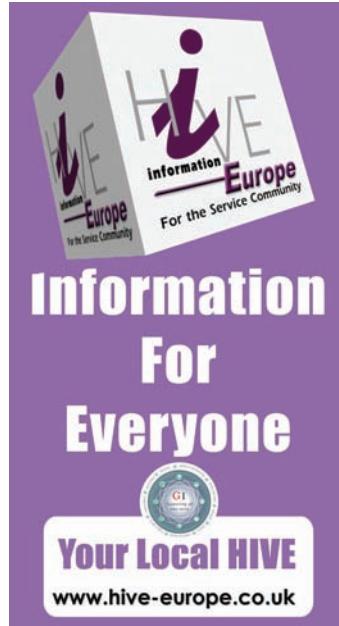
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Fame hungry: *I'm Still Here*
is a cringeworthy mockumentary filmed to highlight the falseness of A-list celebrity culture

Screen Phoen-hoax

Hollywood celebrity fakes turning his back on movies for a life spitting rhymes

Review: Alasdair Baverstock

YOU may or may not have heard that two-time Oscar nominee, star of *Gladiator* and all-round respected thespian Joaquin Phoenix went completely bananas after playing Johnny Cash in *Walk The Line*.

If the news had gone over your head, you would certainly be surprised to see him in *I'm Still Here* – the man is completely unrecognisable.

There was wide discussion in the media as to whether Phoenix was genuinely attempting a career as a rapper or simply playing a long and elaborate trick on Hollywood.

The speculation was that by forcing the world to take him seriously, the actor could simply shed the beard and display an astonishing commitment to his method acting.

If Phoenix's plight interested you, then this is the film to settle your mind once and for all. Yes, it was a set-up, but one that nobody comes out of smelling of roses.

Casey Affleck, married to the protagonist's sister, Summer Phoenix, directed and co-wrote the release with his brother-in-law. The movie

poses as a feature following the newly-bearded Phoenix as he attempts to make the transition from Hollywood to the mean streets of rap music.

Originally released as a documentary, tell-tale signs of the ruse forced Affleck to admit it was a piece of performance art and while this changes the tone of the film, the message stays the same.

Explaining his reason for the secrecy behind the release, Affleck said: "I was reluctant to speak about certain scenes because that would influence people's interpretation of the movie. I sincerely didn't want to do that."

The director, who has seen his older brother Ben suffer abuse at the hands of the press, stated that he wanted to make a film that commented on the perils of modern-day stardom.

"You can't make a movie about a celebrity without it in some way being about celebrity culture," he said.

"We are obsessed with celebrity. We create them and then destroy them."

The narrative is structured around Phoenix's phoney bid to become a hip-hop star, a ploy that takes him to a world he clearly does not belong in.

The most dramatic moments are the nail-bitingly cringing public performances, the last of which witnesses Phoenix stage dive into a crowd

to attack a vocally-belligerent heckler.

Unlike other "mockumentaries", which tend to be light-hearted and gently fun-poking in their approach, this movie takes a far darker look at what drives celebrity culture and intrigues its audience rather than entertains.

As a commentary on the social phenomenon of fame, the film is undeniably an important piece of work, especially when the gossip-hungry world it seeks to mock followed Phoenix's staged plight with tongue-wagging interest.

As an indictment on the celebrity ethos, however, it is paradoxical. Phoenix has furthered his own fame by sending up the very institution he intended to vilify.

The film is *Borat*-esque with its self-ridiculing behaviour and a sense of humour that highlights moral and social iniquities in the wider world. Interviewers become the interviewed and their struggle to understand Phoenix's new persona is toe-curling and at the same time cruel and telling.

The crafty pair of Hollywood bigwigs may have taken us all for a ride, but audiences would have been more appreciative if the film actually explained why they did it. ■

● ***I'm Still Here* is out now on DVD**

From facing death in a wooden box to ill-advised sequels, *Soldier* checks out the latest DVD releases...

Buried out February 14

WOULD there be anything more horrifying than being buried alive? Regularly one of the top answers to the question of the worst way to die, for truck driver Paul Conroy (Ryan Reynolds) the nightmare becomes a reality when he wakes up in a wooden coffin six feet under. Possessing only a lighter and mobile phone with a dwindling battery, Paul must piece together clues as to his location and get the help he so desperately needs before his underground oxygen supply runs out. A tense thriller from the start that builds throughout, right up until a finish that will leave you gasping for air along with the main man.



Alasdair Baverstock, civvy

Pelican Blood out now

A NEW release from the increasingly-successful school of British indie-film, *Pelican Blood* is the movie adaptation of the **Chris Freddi** novel. Similar to **Danny Boyle's** *Trainspotting*, the director takes a nerdy concept – in this case birdwatching – and builds an edgy, contemporary story around it. Although the plot is far-fetched and it is difficult to accept an off-centre, self-harming outsider such as Nikko (Harry Treadaway) as a twitcher, the acting is superb so there aren't too many complaints. Armed with a fantastic soundtrack, this is a bold and passionate look at what makes people tick.



Joe Clapson, Soldier

Black Dynamite out now

A HILARIOUS spoof on 70s street-fighting movies, *Black Dynamite* is a gun-toting, kung fu-kicking ex-CIA commando and certified soul brother. He's also the only bloke willing and/or able to fight his way through the mean streets to the Honky House and show "The Man" who's boss. With laughs from start to finish, over-the-top *Black Dynamite* is a refreshing bit of self-mocking in a genre of spoof humour that has become stale and overdone in recent years. Along with a groovy soundtrack that will have you tapping your foot in time to the ass-kicking, this movie is just the thing to blow away any cobwebs clogging up your system.



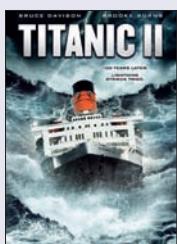
Sharon Kean, Soldier



Off the rails: Celebrated actor Joaquin Phoenix appeared to have lost his sanity by becoming a worse-than-bad rapper – only to reveal it was a sham

Titanic II out now

THE joke of sequels that could never be, like *300* and *1* or *Passion of the Christ 2*, has become a horrifying reality with the release of *Titanic II*. The slogan "They said it couldn't happen twice..." adorns the cover and while "they" have been proved wrong, the phrase "shouldn't have been allowed to happen twice" would be more relevant. Released too late for any joke value in a Christmas stocking and far too early in the new year for it to be easily forgettable, this film is one to avoid, but did you really need confirmation? A terrible idea for a film – you can definitely judge this one by its cover.



Richard Long, *Soldier*

Win... Cyrus

AN edgy and laugh-out-loud comedy, *Cyrus*, is released on February 21 and features an all-star cast that will make you cry and cringe. A comical battle of wits is played out between John (**John C Reilly**), the new boyfriend of the gorgeous Molly (**Marisa Tomei**) and her son Cyrus (**Jonah Hill**), with each of them willing to go to any length to make sure he is the only man in the woman's life. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment is sending copies of the DVD to five readers who can tell us who plays Cyrus. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or send an email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Closing date: February 28



Win... I'm Still Here

IN his directorial debut, **Casey Affleck** portrays the tumultuous, if staged, year in the life of actor **Joaquin Phoenix**. The drama follows the star as he announces his fake retirement from acting to pursue a career in hip-hop. To accompany the DVD release of *I'm Still Here*, Optimum Home Entertainment has teamed up with *Soldier* to give away five copies of the controversial "mockumentary". For your chance to win, tell us the name of the mythical bird that shares a surname with the star of the film? Answers on a postcard to the usual address or send an email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Closing date: February 28





Right attitude: Combining a select-your-own story structure with improved shoot-em-up gameplay, *Mass Effect 2* is a PS3 hit

Choose your weapon

Hotly-anticipated sequel to role-playing shooter finally arrives on PlayStation 3

Review: Alasdair Baverstock

AT LAST *Mass Effect 2* has been released on PlayStation 3, a year after its debut across the Microsoft platforms.

Anyone who played the original will know that the experience takes the guise of a third-person shooter combined with decision-making elements in the cut scenes.

This genre of game has been dubbed "action roleplay", a format that adds a personal element to a straight shoot-em-up, in which the choices you make and reactions to conversation decide the fate of your hero, the handsome if generically-bland John Shepard.

The central character is exactly what you'd imagine the MasterChief to look like were he to remove his helmet, and perhaps this is why the rest of his body armour resembles the garb of the mysterious *Halo* protagonist.

Armed with big guns and your own attitude towards the varied individuals that the massively in-depth storyline throws up, off you set to save the human race from destruction.

Sound appealing? Well just wait until you

discover what's trying to destroy you.

The narrative is as extravagant as you would expect from the premise and relies heavily on having played the original game.

On the XBox 360, personalised data from the first version influences the new episode, but as this is the only *Mass Effect* release on PlayStation, no such luck.

But hold on, *Soldier's* not here to discuss the plot as firstly, this game is primarily about action, and secondly, it's already been out for a year.

So once you've vaguely grasped what's going on, talked to every relevant alien and acquired some weapons you're happy to save the human race with, it's time to kick ass.

This title plays and feels a lot like *Gears of War* and destroying the various enemies that are unleashed is pretty satisfying.

As with all shooters, the controls take time and skill to master, but put in the practice early on and the game will reward your efforts.

The lack of an auto-lock in the aim-screen is a tricky feature that encourages a more stylish termination of bad guys and gives far less of a button-bashing feel.

The cut scenes drag on at times but thankfully there is a skip button, however, this often leads to

missing key decisions along the way. Then again, if you're rushing through the conversations to get to the all-out action, you probably don't care too much about the complex narrative anyway.

Because of the vast storytelling element, gamers find themselves on missions that involve walking around dark space stations telling humans and other nondescript aliens whether or not they trust them completely.

However, many of these side sorties are not essential and simply serve to attain extra power-ups while immersing you deeper in the story.

The visuals of the game are deep, well-designed and the overall feel is of an atmospheric gloominess that lends many of the levels a grittier feel than its predecessor.

The foes are also more varied and come back meaner than ever.

The Blu-Ray format gives sleeker graphics than the XBox 360 version and, due to the added storage space, there's no disc swapping.

If getting into a quality science-fiction story is your thing, then *Mass Effect 2* delivers exactly what you want from a combat role-player.

On the other hand, if you're after a good shoot-em-up, with guns, heroics and bullet-ridden bad guys, then there are better options out there. ■

Blasting aliens, throwing jabs and slamming dunks, we look at the hottest new releases for your consoles...

Dead Space 2 for Xbox 360, PS3 and PC

YOU'VE surely seen the terrifying ad campaign for the sequel to 2008's *Dead Space*. Well the wait is over, the follow-up is here and things have only gotten meaner. Set in Titan Station, a human settlement on Saturn's largest moon, prepare to do battle on your inter-planetary home turf. Unsurprisingly, the necromorph enemies are back, bigger, badder and more disgusting than ever. The atmospheric visuals are both as impressive and imaginative as other games like *Bioshock* and *Gears of War*. If the first title impressed you, the second instalment will haunt your dreams even more.



Out Now

Mario Sports Mix for Wii

EVER wish that there was a game combining the competitive edge of *Wii Sports* with the family-friendly fun of *Mario Party*? No? Well, just in case, Nintendo has done it anyway. Use your own Mii or any of your favourite console characters as you battle your way through various sports and some trademark mini-games. The gameplay is a little more geared towards serious competition than similar family-fun releases on this platform, but far less in-depth than specialist sports titles. If you bought your Wii for the sociable gaming it offers then this is the title for you, if not, you may find yourself bored fairly quickly.



Out now

Modern Combat: Domination for PS3

REMEMBER the times you spent discussing the future possibilities of online shooters over a *Counter Strike* headset? Well obviously Sony were listening in and they've finally made use of their phone tap. *Modern Combat* is a download-only game from the PlayStation Network and, for a few pounds, it utilises the system's *Move* technology to immerse the player. Team up and talk strategy or choose solo mode and rise to the top of the ranks. The 16-player battles make this a whirlwind experience and as the first-ever game of its genre to utilise the *Move*, it's well worth realising those digital fantasies.



Out now



Come out and play: It's time to hit 'em where it hurts as enemies come back bigger, badder and better looking in the PlayStation 3 release of *Mass Effect 2*

Fight Night Champion Xbox 360 and PS3

THE punches just keep on coming as EA Sports release the latest hit in their genre-defining boxing series. *Fight Night Champion* adds new levels to the world outside of the ropes in a game that can be mundane for those not well versed in the noble art. The visuals are stunning but this is not a title for the casual gamer. If you play for the comedy value, there are only so many times low blows are amusing. The controls take time and effort to manage any sort of skill, so think twice if you're a first-timer. However, if you enjoyed the previous titles in the series, then this game is well worth investing in.



Out March 3

Bulletstorm all formats

FROM the developers of *Unreal Tournament* comes a futuristic first-person shooter. The name alone suggests there is little doubt over what *Bulletstorm* is going to be about. This is pure, unadulterated entertainment. Packed with over-the-top combat moves and preposterously-sized weapons, the "skillshot" mode adds an incentive to force some style into what borders on becoming rather mundane in its exaggeration. The storyline is predictable but if you wanted plot-depth you'd be playing *Final Fantasy*. The makers know what their audience wants and nothing gets in the way of you getting a rage on.



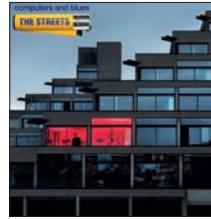
Out February 22

Little Big Planet 2 for PS3

THE stunning variety and inventiveness of the original *Little Big Planet*'s user-generated content marked a changing point in the creative sharing of the online gaming community. The sequel, which has just hit the shelves, only builds on this success. The new and more advanced construction suite, lovingly narrated by Stephen Fry, makes it even simpler to create your own levels. The game offers a great story mode if design isn't your thing and has good replay prospects if unlocking further prizes in multiplayer mode appeals. All this results in a charming, fun and varied title, with something for everyone. Not to be missed.



Out now



Grand finale: Mike Skinner provides a lasting memory of his musical brilliance with the release of new album *Computers and Blues*

The end of the road

UK rap pioneer bows out of the mainstream with technological-inspired farewell

Review: Richard Long

AMUSICAL career spanning nine years and five albums is about to draw to a close for Mike Skinner, an artist universally better known as The Streets.

Since bursting onto the scene in 2002 he has successfully proved that the idea of a British rapper is more than just a contradiction in terms, showing that MCs from this side of the pond actually have something to say and, more importantly, something worth listening to.

Computers and Blues builds on the lessons Skinner has learned on his quest to date and the title hints at a blurring of the contemporary with the more traditional.

"The original idea was that the previous album – *Everything Is Borrowed* – was supposed to be about the past, *Computers and Blues* was going to be about the future, and then The Streets was going to come to an end, but it ended up being a bit more complex than that," Skinner explained.

"There definitely aren't the extremes here that I've played out with the previous records.

"The first album was extremely British – and

quite odd; the second album was an extreme story; the third album was extremely extreme; the fourth album was extremely philosophical; whereas this album is extremely balanced.

"It's got bits of all of the others in and hopefully brings them all together in a satisfying way."

Throughout his journey Skinner has remained truly individual in a way that has allowed him to express his own unique views and reflections on the world.

"I decided right at the start of my career that all those creative decisions musicians traditionally hand over to other people, I was going to make myself," he said.

"As a result of that, all my albums sound like they were made by the same person down to every single level. There's not one of them that you can say is more me than any other.

"Obviously some have been more successful than others – and it's not a consensus of critics who decide that, it's a consensus of the entire population – but I'm happy with that.

"At least I've never made the mistake of choosing the wrong producer."

Computers and Blues started life as a series of demos given away on Twitter, a move that proved to be the first hint to the technological theme of

this much-anticipated final offering.

The interaction between humans and electronics is prevalent throughout, a relationship that is captured in both light-hearted and serious ways as the tracks progress.

Facebook relationships come to the fore on the superb *OMG*, which blends Skinner's observations on the all-encompassing online phenomenon with an upbeat vocal and tempo, while the hypnotic spell that *Call of Duty* can cast over eager gamers is playfully captured on *Without Thinking*.

First single *Going Through Hell* offers an interesting rock-rap hybrid before the extremely poignant *Lock the Locks* brings the curtain down on an album that easily hits the highs of early works *Original Pirate Material* and *A Grand Don't Come For Free*.

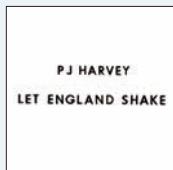
With Skinner now vying to concentrate on other projects, namely writing a book and making a film, while dedicating time to his ever-expanding record label The Beats, *Computers and Blues* provides a sublime sign-off.

This album serves as a welcome reminder of the brilliance of an artist who blazed the way for home-grown hip-hop and one who will be sadly missed by all. ■

From over-dramatic rock opera to a new breed of girl power, we check out the best of the rest...

Let England Shake by PJ Harvey

SINGER-songwriter **PJ Harvey** returns with her ninth studio album *Let England Shake*, a rather Pollyanna-esque view of England as a country filled only with quaint cottages, Womens' Institute meetings and meandering Hugh Grants. From the outset her lyrics are especially challenging and while fans of Polly will be familiar with her frail singing, I was not. This latest offering went from endearingly child-like to bloody annoying in the space of the 40 or so miserable minutes it runs for. Harvey's loyal followers may well have been waiting in eager anticipation for this release, but my advice would be to save your pennies if you're not a true aficionado of her work.



Capt Jim Berry, 1 R Irish

No Boys Allowed by Keri Hilson

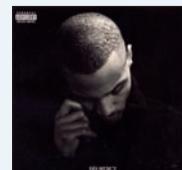
THIS album encompasses the past two years of **Keri Hilson's** life, from writing songs for **Britney Spears**, **Pussy Cat Dolls** and **Usher** to being a Grammy-nominated singer in her own right. Billed as a rallying call for women, *No Boys Allowed* calls on two of the biggest super-producers in the business in the form of **Timbaland** and **Polow Da Don**. The likes of **Kanye West**, **Chris Brown**, **Rick Ross** and **J-Cole** all lend their support but it was all a bit too much "power to the female" for my likes. Each track seemed to blend into the next one and the end result was a kind of droll and lacklustre background music that simply filled a quiet afternoon and nothing more.



Rodge Tapply, ex-RE

No Mercy by T.I.

FOLLOWING recent collaborations with **Jamie Foxx**, **P Diddy** and **B.o.B**, it is no surprise that the latest offering from **T.I.** includes a host of appearances from music's elite. *No Mercy* starts strongly with the **Kanye West** collaboration *Welcome To The World*, while the catchy *Strip* provides a superb blend of singing and rapping that will be a sure-fire hit in the clubs. *That's All She Wrote*, featuring an on-form **Eminem**, is a particular high and will definitely storm the charts this year. All in all this is a decent offering, but having seen T.I. gracing the cover of most major US magazines throughout the summer, I can't help but think it could have been better.



SSgt Mark Roach, RE



Computer talk: The Streets' glittering nine-year chart career comes to a spectacular end this month in Mike Skinner's fifth and final studio album

Ritual by White Lies

THIS follow-up to the 2009 chart-topper *To Lose My Life* points at steady, rather than spectacular, progress by London trio **White Lies**. The influence of producer **Alan Moulder**, famed for his work with the likes of **Depeche Mode**, **Smashing Pumpkins** and **Nine Inch Nails**, is evident from the outset as a distinctly electronic, industrial sound washes over the tracks. Opener *Is Love* is the highlight, despite its turgid start, while the big choruses of *Strangers* and *Bigger Than Us* also prove enjoyable. However, *Ritual* ultimately lacks variety and the band falls short of the true hard-rock edge they hint at. While this is not a bad thing, it creates an average album, rather than a great one.



Richard Long, Soldier

Night Castle by Trans-Siberian Orchestra

MORE than seven million albums sold worldwide for an act I hadn't heard of makes impressive reading, but a listen to this latest release unearths some clues to their success. *Night Castle* is a cross between **The Who's** seminal rock masterpiece *Tommy* and the **Andrew Lloyd-Webber**-penned *Phantom of the Opera*. The symphonic sound of *Mozart and Memories* and the operatic leanings of *Night Enchanted* are tasters to what follows as the group play a sublime mix of fiddles and fenders to weave a rich tapestry of sound. Fragments of opera, rock and Broadway are meshed together by some impressive musicianship and the result is well worth a listen.



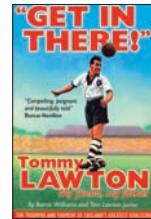
Steve King, Soldier

Stand Still by Emma's Imagination

IN September **Emma's Imagination**, aka 27-year-old Emma Gillespie, was the winner of Sky 1's *Must Be The Music*. The former Scottish street busking singer-songwriter has now released her debut album *Stand Still*. All but two of these songs were written by Gillespie herself and the stripped-back sound of her vocals is warm and evocative, especially on opening track *This Day*. There are no gimmicks here, it's just pure natural talent. Her songwriting has been criticised for leaning towards the whimsical but I disagree, the album is raw and emotional and the only negative is that some may regard her as just another winner of yet another reality TV talent show.



Ray Kalaker, ex-RE



Golden era: *Get in There!*, released by Vision Sports Publishing, recounts a time when footballers pulled on their boots for a few shillings

Forward's flashback

Football legend's life story serves as reminder of halcyon days of the beautiful game

Review: Richard Long

IN AN era of prima donna footballers earning hundreds of thousands of pounds a week, it is fair to say that today's top stars would not react too favourably to the prospect of having to serve their country.

But for England's then-leading striker, the outbreak of the Second World War brought a temporary halt to a flourishing professional career and a swift submersion into the ranks.

In 1939 the goals of Tommy Lawton had fired Everton to the First Division championship title and the young forward was blossoming as an international player.

However, that same year saw him swapping the salubrious surroundings of Goodison Park for a posting to Aldershot with the Royal Army Physical Training Corps. The experiences of the new recruit are vividly captured in *Get In There*, a book charting the triumphs and torment of one of England's greatest goalscorers.

Long-time friend and co-author Barrie Williams told *Soldier*: "He did not enjoy it [the Army] at all to start with, that was a very common experience

in those days. He went from a top soccer star to being a man of war with a Service number and that must have been one hell of a shock to the system.

"However, he adapted very well and rose to the rank of company sergeant major as a physical training instructor."

Instead of fighting on the front line, Lawton – along with scores of other professional footballers – was used as a valuable weapon for morale back home. The normal league programme was abandoned but a regional competition was introduced and Lawton continued to bang in the goals, much to the delight of the expectant crowds.

"For a period it was known as the Phoney War, where nothing really happened and that gave an opportunity to regroup and plan," Williams explained. "The Government thought things like football should carry on as it gave so much enjoyment to so many people."

"They were restricted by travel but top-class football was played throughout the war."

"Early fears that careers were knackered proved to be unfounded."

While Lawton's exploits brought joy to thousands, there was a small minority who resented the wartime role of the footballers.

Williams said: "It was a matter of some hurt.

There were people who gave them a rough time, who felt it was wrong that very fit young men were not out on the front line with the rest.

"When he toured Army bases after VE Day [playing in] exhibition matches, Tommy was given a hard time but he did not feel he had to apologise to anyone. He was doing what the Army told him.

"A dead soccer star would not have done much for morale. But a star still banging in the goals and giving people heart was a much better war weapon."

Lawton's wartime efforts form a small part of a remarkable book that well and truly captures football in its good old days.

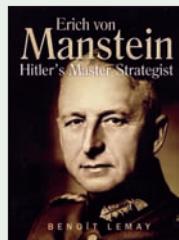
Williams and fellow writer Tom Lawton Junior have brought a forgotten legend hurtling back to life, depicting the star forward as someone who simply loved playing the game and felt privileged to do so.

Although Lawton fell on hard times in later life this does not detract from what was a truly remarkable career.

Get In There comes highly recommended to anyone who is fed up with a contemporary game littered with WAGs, Bentleys and out of control egos and offers a wonderful reminiscence of football's halcyon era. ■

From a misguided military mastermind to ghoulish goings-on, a flick through this month's literary releases...

Erich von Manstein by Benoit Lemay



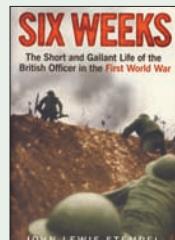
IF Von Manstein had been born in Basingstoke rather than Berlin there would probably be a statue of him in some leafy corner of Horse Guards. Unfortunately for Erich, his success on the battlefield must be set against an unwavering loyalty to a repugnant political ideology, for which he was eventually held to account. **Benoit Lemay** has produced a scholarly work which examines the politico-military relationship in Nazi Germany and the planning and decision-making process at the highest level. Highly recommended for those who prefer their perspective of history to be from the chateau rather than the dugout.

Lt Col (Retd) Nick Sim, ex-PWRR

Six Weeks by John Lewis-Stempel

THIS story of *The Short and Gallant Life of the British Officer in the First World War* highlights the dramatic changes the "Old Boys" from Eton and other public schools had to go through during the fun and games of the Officer Training Corps and the grim responsibilities of being first over the top in the trenches of the Somme. *Six Weeks* mixes the exhaustion, fear and boredom of the front with the often comical life of a subaltern. **Lewis-Stempel** has written a balanced book which uses extracts from diaries to help illustrate the situations encountered. This title struck a chord with me, echoing the triumphs and doubts of an officer's life.

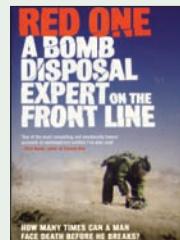
Lt Neil Dickie, 105 Regt RA (V)



Red One by Capt Kevin Ivison

SOLDIER readers are more familiar than most with the deadly nature of the IED. This book is a compelling and brutally-frank account of what it is like to look the threat in the face every day. The author – a George Medal winner – has served as a bomb disposal officer in Northern Ireland, the Balkans and Afghanistan. It is, however, his experiences in Iraq that form the core of this book. I found the account of a major incident in Al Amarah and the resulting casualties both gripping and harrowing. There are a multitude of titles about recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan; few are as honest as this one about the emotional cost to the individual.

Maj Mike Peters, AAC



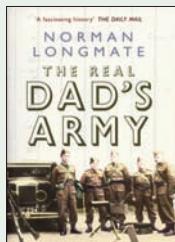


Target man: Lawton, pictured in 1948 finding the net during a 4-0 victory over world champions Italy in Turin, scored 22 goals for England in just 23 appearances

Picture: Keystone/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

The Real Dad's Army by Norman Longmate

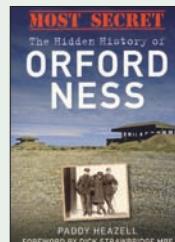
THE Home Guard, originally the Local Defence Volunteers, occupy a much-loved niche in Britain's history of the Second World War. At their peak their strength was nearly 1.8 million and the total who served throughout was probably double that. Among them was my father, a Royal Flying Corps veteran. **Norman Longmate's** finely illustrated and produced volume gives a readable summary of the formation and is full of true stories every bit as entertaining as the hit television series. How would the Home Guard have fared if the German Army's Panzers had got ashore? Best not ask.



Dr Rodney Atwood, military historian

The Hidden History of Orford Ness

A TEN-mile long shingle spit on the Suffolk coast near Aldeburgh, Orford Ness was procured by the Army in 1913 as a site for developing and testing bombs and munitions. The research played a key role in the two World Wars and Cold War. A desolate and untidy landscape littered with debris and abandoned buildings, the spit was acquired by the National Trust in 1993 to become a nature reserve. **Paddy Heazell**, a retired school master-turned-warden of the site, provides a fascinating account of the trials and experiments that went on there, and reveals much of the previously unknown top secret work.



Lt Col (Retd) Dawson Pratt, R Signals

Military Ghosts by Alan Wood

THE result of 60 years of research into the occult and combining the author's personal experiences with other, more familiar tales, *Military Ghosts* covers spirits relating to combat throughout the ages. Cases featured range from Bronze Age horsemen, ghostly Roman legionnaires and English Civil War cavaliers through to apparitions from the First and Second World Wars, both in the UK and overseas. While such a comprehensive listing does not allow much scope for analysis of the hauntings, the sheer volume of stories, told in an absorbing and informative style, make this an excellent addition to any ghost hunter's collection.



Andy Clarkson, Soldier



Preen and performance: The Jaguar XJ Portfolio deserves plaudits for its appearance, opulence and on-road attributes

Roaring redesign

Big cat diary salutes Jaguar's evolution from pompous past to pride of the pack

Review: Andrew Simms

As the owner of a Puma which has long since lost the spring in its step and is more Bagpuss than big cat, the very prospect of taking temporary care of a Jaguar XJ Portfolio had my whiskers bristling with excitement.

And, only too happy to welcome this svelte stray into my life in the name of journalism, I was not to be disappointed.

Since its launch in the summer of 2009, the Coventry Cat – the XJ was conceived at Jaguar's research and development centre in Whitley – has had motoring correspondents purring over its appearance and it is not difficult to see why.

Following the arrival of design director Ian Callum from Aston Martin and in the paw prints of the sporty XK and XF saloon, the pride of the pack is preeened to perfection.

Boasting a sleek, sharp silhouette and panoramic glass roof, the XJ has put considerable distance between it and some of its more cumbersome predecessors.

But this cat's true beauty lies within. Delving inside the Jaguar you find a contemporary design

that is more akin to an expensive hotel suite than the cabin of a car, with chrome and ebony detailing blending with beautifully-crafted leather and veneer surfaces.

Shunning the threadbare seats of Ford's feline in favour of this lap of luxury, I decided to hit the catwalk of fashionable Farnham in Surrey.

This Georgian market town boasts a population seemingly immune to the economic gloom that has enveloped much of Britain and, more relevant to this tale, is where my five-year-old son Harry is being introduced to the national curriculum.

Residing five miles outside of Farnham (well beyond the financial reach of a humble public servant) means that the school run is a necessary evil. Performing this duty in the 1.7-litre Puma – a pimped-up, albeit fun-to-drive, Fiesta – never fails to draw looks of disdain.

Behind the wheel of the Jaguar, my late dash to beat the bell was greeted by an unexpected response – the XJ did not garner a second look.

Rather than being viewed as a slight on the appearance of the Portfolio, this snub represents a firm endorsement of the car's appeal.

In an area of affluence, where the roadsides are lined with Land Rovers, BMW 7-series and Mercedes S-classes, to give the XJ even the

smallest glance of admiration or envy would have been an acknowledgement of social inferiority.

While folk in Farnham were capable of exercising restraint, this reviewer and his son could not help but be impressed and fawn over the Jaguar's finer features (see below).

Cars are of course for driving and the XJ does not disappoint here either.

Soldier tested the 3.0-litre, 765bhp V6D and, once fired into action via the push-button start, the diesel engine delivered a near-silent ride whether crawling through rush-hour traffic or eating up the motorway miles.

The torque provided by the powerplant and its twin sequential turbochargers is capable of propelling the Portfolio from 0-60mph in six seconds and features such as air suspension, variable damping, differential control and quick-ratio power steering deliver a responsive and supple drive.

Once the preserve of corporate fat cats preoccupied with reviewing share prices from the back seat, the Jaguar brand has reinvented itself and done so in some style.

The supreme comfort remains but only a fool would want to enjoy this fine feline from anywhere other than the driver's seat. ■

We take a closer look at the raft of features included in the Jaguar XJ Portfolio...

Little room for improvement

GOOD looks are all well and good, but not if they come at the cost of comfort. With the XJ they don't. Inside you'll find all you would expect of a luxury brand and much more besides. While the glass roof helps to create a feeling of light and spaciousness, this is no illusion. Even in the standard model – the long-wheelbase spec boasts an additional 125mm of legroom for rear passengers – there is plenty of space to stretch out. Throw in four-zone air conditioning, heated/cool front seats, driver and passenger seat memory and a heated steering wheel and you have one cosy cabin. Oh, did I mention those in the front can also enjoy an in-journey massage?



Mark out of ten: Nine

Dashing display

PHYSICAL dials are so last century. In their place, Jaguar's designers have favoured a 12.3-inch high-definition screen which comes alive with virtual instruments. Firing up the XJ prompts three digital dials to flash up before your eyes: a speedometer in the centre flanked on the right by a rev counter and on the left by fuel and temperature gauges. When required – if fuel is running low or the driver is changing radio station – the rev counter fades away to be replaced by the relevant menu or message. Impressive stuff and even more so when the driver selects the XJ's Dynamic mode and the dials take on a red hue.



Mark out of ten: Nine

Travel show

THE hi-tech wizardry in the Jaguar XJ does not end at the digital dash. An eight-inch touch-screen display in the centre console commands many of the saloon's functions, including climate control, audio, communications and navigation. Old hat, I hear you say? Quite the contrary. The system also incorporates "Dual-View" technology that allows the driver and front passenger to look at completely different content on the same screen. In my case, this manifested itself in the wife watching FA Cup highlights while I, at the wheel, had to settle for the satnav map. Headphone compatibility allows the passenger to watch television or a DVD without distracting the driver.



Mark out of ten: Ten



Top cat: The British-made Jaguar XJ Portfolio is more than a match for the German "big three" – Audi, BMW and Mercedes – in the style stakes

Audio appreciation

THE ability to distract children or nagging partners with a movie or episode of *Eastenders* is undoubtedly a bonus, but for the lone driver quality audio is far more important – and in the XJ you get the best that money can buy. A top-of-the-range 1,200W, 20-speaker Bowers & Wilkins set-up delivers sound equal to that of a high-end in-home entertainment system. Such is the clarity of the audio that even JLS sound good in a Jaguar. Further "infotainment" features include a hard-disc-drive, which allows for CDs to be loaded into the car for future listening and artist and track information to be stored, and a media hub with two USB ports and Bluetooth connectivity.



Mean and green

BENEFITTING from technologies pioneered on the XFR and XKR models – such as continuously variable damping, electronically-controlled rear differential and quick-ratio power steering – the Jaguar XJ's performance matches its appearance. With twin sequential turbochargers, the 3.0-litre diesel engine put through its paces by *Soldier* went about its business quietly and with powerful efficiency. A dream to drive, it also boasts impressive fuel economy and CO₂ emissions – credentials hailed by *What Car?* magazine, which named the XJ 3.0 Diesel V6 as the winner of the luxury car category in their 2010 Green Awards.



Mark out of ten: Ten

Mark out of ten: Nine

Service-specific sales

REGARDLESS of rank, pay scale and whether or not you are in receipt of Local Overseas Allowance, there is no denying that, at around the £65,000 mark, buying a Jaguar XJ represents a major investment. But luckily for serving personnel, the company offers hefty discounts on the prices civvies have to pay for their cars. All members of the Armed Forces are eligible to receive 13 per cent off the price of any vehicle in the British car-maker's range. Servicemen and women can find out more by calling Peterborough-based Marshall Military Sales on 01733 213231 or visiting the company's dedicated website.



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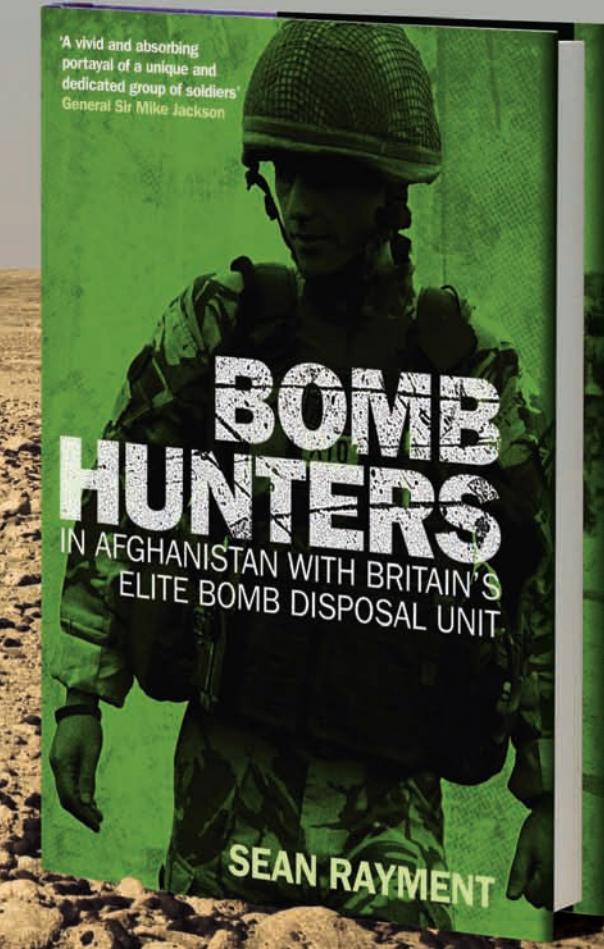
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SOLDIER SPORT

Picture: Graeme Main

ON THEIR BIKES: ENDURO STARS TEST DRIVE NEW KIT AHEAD OF 2011 OFF-ROAD ADVENTURE

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NEW COACH PLOTS
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P99 **SPORTS AWARDS**
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ARMY'S ELITE



P101 **FOOTBALL**
YOUNG GUNS
PREPARE FOR ACTION



P102 **STAR TURN**
ENGLAND HERO'S
HELMAND CUP RUN





Enduring spirit

REME off-roaders continue pursuit of excellence with new machinery for 2011

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

In the fast and furious world of competitive motorsport the results of any racer are invariably decided by the quality of their machinery.

For the stars of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) enduro team it is no exception.

After achieving significant success in their sport – they have won the Service Championships for the past seven years – the riders now hope to push even further ahead after securing new kit and equipment for their 2011 campaign.

The move has seen the personnel switch from Yamaha to leading manufacturer KTM and manager SSgt Tommy Graham is predicting a bright future for his off-road team.

“Yamaha do not make enduro bikes so a lot of modifications were needed for the kit we were using,” the proud Scotsman told *SoldierSport*.

“These bikes come ready to race.

“We are expecting much better results compared to last year purely because these machines are designed for endurance racing.

“It is all about the bike you are on and the KTM is number one.”

The motorcycle specialists offered heavily-discounted machinery to the Army riders and the squad was happy to accept such a generous offer.

The sport was first introduced to the corps in the 1970s and has been a mainstay ever since.

“Enduro is like a rally course, you ride from point to point on a set route,” Graham explained.

“You have to complete special stages throughout, you can cover 80 to 100 miles a day and laps can be up to 20-miles long.

“You can be out on the hills of Wales where it is one man, one machine and the basic tools he needs to fix that bike.

“This sport is what the Army is all about in terms of fitness and endurance. You have to think on your feet and if you get a fault you have to find a way of fixing it.

“It is also about courage and determination. We cover most of the Army standards and values every week in our racing.”

The cost of competing does not come cheap and the REME needs £60,000 per year to keep their bikes rolling, the

bulk of which is generated by staging the Natterjack Enduro event.

The corps runs three teams for riders of varying abilities and also organises a selection weekend aimed at identifying new talent.

Cpl Tony Cotty showed a passion for motorbikes at a young age and the Army has allowed him to continue that early interest.

“I got involved with the corps team, watching and learning,” he explained. “One of the riders got injured at a race, I had a go and I’ve been in ever since.

“I rode with the C team last season and won my championship in the clubman class.

“I have done fairly well but now I want to be in the top ten overall and I hope to move up to expert by the end of the season.

“It is not just about turning up and riding. You have to think about everything; you have to make decisions to ensure the bike completes two days of racing.

“The opportunities within the REME are huge. To have my bike and kit paid for is definitely the way to go.”

Rising star Cfn Gareth Davies started in the sport as a five-year-old and now races at expert level.

The opportunities offered by the REME proved to be a key recruiting carrot for the young soldier, who has set stiff targets for the season ahead.

He said: “I joined the Army in June, it was something I always wanted to do. I was going to join the Royal Signals but when I found out they did not have a team I came to the REME.

“I saw them in a few local events and it just went from there.

“My aim is to be British expert champion and I think that is a realistic target, but I need to carry on with my practise and continue improving.

“The support from the REME has been very good, they have paid for entry fees, tyres and quite a lot of other kit.

“It costs around £500 per event and without that support I would not be able to compete. It is fantastic.”

The British Enduro Championship season runs from February through to September and concludes with the REME-hosted Natterjack event at Longmoor training area.

For more information on the team and their progress this campaign visit www.team-reme.com



Pictured from top, Mean machines: Team REME will be looking for improved performances after switching to KTM bikes for the new enduro campaign; **Wheel of fortune:** The Service squad needs to generate £60,000 to cover the cost of competing in the 2011 season; **In the dirt:** The off-road sport sees riders covering up to 100 miles in a day as they race against the clock



Down but not out: A dejected Capt Mark Lee (AGC (ALS)) and Pte Apo Satala (Scots) leave the Twickenham turf after last year's defeat to the Royal Navy

Rugby's resurrection man

Reds' new supremo targets return to winning ways after the heartbreak of 2010

Interview: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

HAVING inherited a squad that saw its superb run of eight consecutive Inter-Services titles dramatically halted last year, there is one clear objective for the new head coach of the Army Rugby Union team.

Capt Andy Sanger (1 RSME) has vowed to settle for nothing but victory in a competition that has yielded great success for the Reds in recent times, and the hard work to ensure that happens is already well under way.

Operational commitments have claimed a number of key players for the 2011 campaign and their absence

will undoubtedly pave the way for new blood to join the ranks.

Sgt Darrell Ball (RE), Tpr Samesi Rokoduguni (Scots DG), WO2 Stuart Silvester (RAMC) and LCpl Gerhard Wessels (RE) are among the many missing stars, but Sanger is confident he can fill the gap.

"The talent is out there and it is up to the coaches and myself to prepare properly and get revenge for our loss to the Royal Navy last year," he told *SoldierSport* in an exclusive interview.

"Our number one priority is to regain the Inter-Services trophy.

"There has been a slight restructuring in the way we will announce the squad this season.

"We have made a real effort to get round the units so some new faces have an opportunity to play for the full Army team. We have been out to see all the corps sides at least twice and I have been keeping a close eye on the Premiership as well.

"I now have a database of 103 players and that will go down to 28 for the senior squad."

Sanger has vowed to take an experimental approach to the matches against Cambridge and Oxford Universities so his new charges all have a chance to shine.

The A team has also been in action, pictured right against the British Police, giving further opportunities to impress.

The final pieces will then be added to the squad for a training camp in Portugal ahead of the Inter-Services.

Such preparations will be a break from the norm as the team has traditionally travelled to South Africa for its conditioning work.

"Over the last four or five years that has proved to be successful but, like all things, a change of direction and a refreshing of ideas is important," Sanger said.

"The last coach, Andy Price, did a great job but I have a different approach. A new venue will offer a fresh impetus."

Sanger has a clear focus on the Twickenham showdown in May and his players are determined to avenge the heartache of 2010.

"You have to give credit to the Navy," he said. "On the day they were probably a bit better than us in terms of physical preparation and we were slightly complacent.

"Without being too damning of the coaches and players, that is what happened.

"We have just compiled a players charter. They were quite self-critical to the point where I had to rein them back.

"They are talented athletes but they have to be physically and mentally prepared for Twickenham."

Looking further ahead, the Army squad will have the opportunity to make history when the first-ever Defence



● Capt Andy Sanger

World Cup is staged in Australia and New Zealand.

The format of the competition has yet to be finalised but the Reds are preparing themselves for bruising encounters against some of the finest Forces sides on the planet later this year.

"Our aim is to win that tournament but it will take a lot of corroboration from players, coaches and the chain of command.

"The Army has to be behind this if we want to win it," Sanger said.

"This is the inaugural Defence World Cup and it will be a tremendous challenge for us.

"I have reminded the players we are Army first and our main target is to try and regain the Inter-Services trophy.

"This season is about winning that

title and then we can prepare to win the World Cup as well, although it will be a tough task."

Despite being such a busy period for the team, Sanger has been able to reflect on the prestige of his new position and has paid tribute to those who have supported him thus far.

"It is a tremendous honour," he said. "I have represented the Army and Combined Services in Rugby Union and League.

"To now work with this calibre of players in a professional environment is the icing on the cake for me.

"The art will be balancing rugby with my work commitments.

"The support from my commanding officer and the Royal Engineers' chain of command has been excellent.

"They have facilitated this wonderful opportunity for me and I am hugely grateful for that." ■

"WE HAVE MADE A REAL EFFORT TO GET ROUND THE UNITS SO SOME NEW FACES HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY FOR THE FULL ARMY TEAM"

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Sports' elite take top honours

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

THE cream of the Service's athletic crop saw their outstanding efforts over the past year rewarded in the second Army Sports Awards.

International performers led the charge at the ceremony, with stars from the 2010 Winter Olympics and Commonwealth Games in Delhi dominating the nominations.

Marksman Maj Angus McLeod (Scots) was crowned sportsman of the year after a fine 12 months in the field of target rifle shooting.

The officer won the Hopton Trophy at the UK Open Championships and helped Scotland claim their second successive victory in the Home Nations Match Rifle Competition.

However, his undoubted highlight was the silver medal he collected in the full-bore rifle pairs' event at the Commonwealth Games.

Cpl Paula Walker (R Signals) picked up the sportswoman of the year award following her continued improvement on the world bobsleigh circuit.

She finished an agonising 0.05 seconds away from a top-ten finish on her Winter Olympics debut in Vancouver and later won the Baltic Cup event on a new track in Russia.

The highly-dedicated athlete was crowned Inter-Services champion for the third successive time and finished 15th in the overall world ranking.

She has also been named as the GB1 driver for the 2011 campaign.

A stunning debut season in charge of the all-conquering Army boxing team saw Sgt Tony Davis (RAPTC) lift the sports official of the year accolade.

In his first year at the helm, the squad retained its Inter-Services title in style and saw four of its fighters reach the finals of the Amateur Boxing Association (ABA) championships, a new record for the Reds.

Speaking to *SoldierSport* after the ceremony, a delighted Davis, who



Golden glove: Boxing coach Sgt Tony Davis (RAPTC, right) was named sports official of the year for 2010

boxed for England on numerous occasions, said: "I am honoured to have received this award and I would like to dedicate it to the lads who are now out in Afghanistan."

"I would also like to thank the team for being so professional and successful.

"This season we want to carry on that success in the ring."

"I hope to wipe the floor with our Inter-Services competitors and get four champions at the ABAs, rather than four finalists."

Completing the honours was the Army offshore sailing squad, which was named as the Service's best sports team.

During the 2010 campaign the *British Soldier* crew won a number of international racing certificate awards and finished second in the Royal Ocean

Racing Club championship rankings.

The sailors also took the runners-up spot in their class in the Round Britain and Ireland Race.

Team captain Lt Col Tim Hill (Scots) said: "We are deeply honoured to receive this award as there was some really tough competition from some great teams."

"Around 70 personnel raced on *British Soldier* throughout the year and we collect this on their behalf."

"That reflects just how busy we are. We have had people away on operations and others who have been absent due to work commitments."

"But we have a lot of dedicated people who turn up when they can and they really come together as a team, despite not being a full-time crew."

TEAM EFFORT

THE British Army offshore sailing team had a tremendous season in 2010, winning a number of international awards. The crew also completed an epic adventure in the Round Britain and Ireland Race, where they battled 55-knot winds to finish second in their class.



MAIN MAN

MAJ Angus McLeod (Scots) excelled in the sport of target rifle shooting as he sampled success on both the national and international stage. His highlight of 2010 came at the Commonwealth Games in Delhi, where he won a silver medal in the full-bore pairs' competition.



WALKING TALL

BOBSLEIGH driver Cpl Paula Walker (R Signals) was in superb form on the track, finishing 11th at the Winter Olympics and 15th in the overall world rankings. The Army ice queen finished the season by retaining her Inter-Services crown and is now the GB1 driver for 2011.





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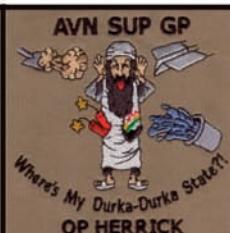


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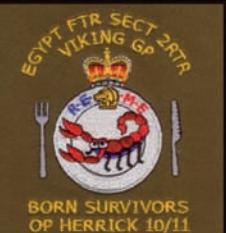
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Reds' new breed take shape

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

THE Army's young guns return to Inter-Services football action this month determined to avenge a miserable 2010 campaign.

A crushing 5-1 defeat to the Royal Air Force put an end to last season's Under-23 title hopes, but preparations for this year's tournament have produced a string of impressive results and the Reds are well placed to reclaim the coveted trophy.

The team has recorded fine wins against Farnborough and the Aldershot youth side and will travel to Germany for a training camp and two challenge matches as their build-up continues.

"We are in a better position than last year, we are more organised and we have greater stability in terms of players," coach SSgt Sean Cochrane (RADC) told *SoldierSport*.

"I think winning that trophy is definitely realistic. Preparations are going really well, we are very happy and there are plenty of positives.

"We will watch the opposition to see what they are up to but my main focus is getting the team ready and making sure we play to our strengths."

The trip to Germany will include a clash with the Borussia Monchengladbach Under-23 side and will give the coaching staff the chance to hold extended training sessions.

"We normally get the Sunday evening and Monday before a game to prepare so time is limited," Cochrane explained.

"This will give us the opportunity to work on patterns of play and the way we structure things."

A number of fresh faces have joined the set-up this term, bringing a new level of consistency with them.

The management has fielded the same back four in all their matches so far, an effort that has clearly paid off.

Central defensive pairing LCpl Adam Norton and Pte Malcolm Oxbrow (both RLC) were immense in the Reds' 2-1 victory over Aldershot.

LCpl Liam Shaw (RLC) showed good composure in midfield and LCpl Jay Hubbard (RE, pictured below) was

the pick of the strikers, tormenting the visitors' rearguard throughout the second period.

"We have worked hard to identify players at corps level and get them released," Cochrane said.

"Last year it was difficult as we had a lot of people on tour, or who were going on tour, and the lead up to deployments is now very intense."

With progress on the pitch continuing there is also a greater fluidity between the senior and development sides, with full Army honours a realistic possibility.

The coach explained: "The link is much stronger this year and players will move from one squad to the other.

"If the seniors have an under-23 player who is not getting much pitch time he will come to me and we will send players to them.

"The boys can see that and they know it is possible to step up."

The Under-23s take on the Navy at Farnborough's Rushmoor Stadium on Tuesday, February 15 at 1400.

They travel to Cosford to play the RAF a week later. ■ week later.





Psycho's cup draw

Interview: Matthew Simms

WITH a left foot which boasts a level of power and accuracy any rifleman would be proud of, former England captain Stuart Pearce discovered a new meaning to the word shooting when he visited British troops in Helmand.

Accompanied by the famous trophy itself, Pearce touched down in Camp Bastion with the aim of spreading the magic of the FA Cup to the war-torn deserts of southern Afghanistan.

The England Under-21 coach flew into theatre last month with troops returning from a period of Christmas rest and recuperation.

"The flight out was a really interesting one," the 48-year-old told *SoldierSport* during an exclusive interview. "All of the boys were coming back from their R and R so it wasn't one of the happiest planes I have ever been on.

"But there was a real intensity and sense of purpose among them. For some it was their first tour to Afghanistan, they all knew they had a job to do and there was a really focused feel to it all."

Having twice been on the losing side in FA Cup finals, first with Nottingham Forest in 1991 and again with Newcastle in 1998, the opportunity for Pearce to finally get his hands on English football's most-coveted prize was just too good to turn down.

"I was delighted to be asked," he said. "My brother used to be in the Territorial Army and I tried to join the Royal Engineers when I left school, so I have always been interested in the military. It really was the trip of a lifetime for someone like me.

"I was asked if I would be interested in going to visit the troops in late November, but it was in December that we had the idea of tying it in with the FA Cup draw.

"We would have liked to have staged the fourth round draw out in Bastion, but due to technical difficulties it wasn't really going to be possible.

"But it was a huge highlight for the boys having the FA Cup with us out there," added Pearce. "They all had photos with the trophy and they just couldn't believe it was the real thing they were holding."

As well as signing autographs, posing for pictures, and hosting a series of question and answer forums, Pearce ran six coaching sessions during his time in camp – despite the region's unfavourable terrain.

"There's no doubt about it, those were the worst conditions I have ever played football in," admitted the former Manchester City boss. "Logistically we were in a dust bowl in the middle of the desert, so putting on a coaching session was very difficult.

"There were helicopters flying in and out, which added to the dusty atmosphere. But it just becomes second nature once you've been there a few days, you become immune to it."

After making his England debut against Brazil in 1987, the ferociously competitive left back went on to earn 78 caps for his country with his never-say-die approach endearing him to the nation and British troops alike.

"There's more people out there [Camp Bastion] with a love for football than for anything else, so compared to other entertainers who visit I was fortunate enough to have a head start," said the former Forest defender.

"It couldn't have gone any better, everyone was so pleased to have us there and we were made to feel so welcome. It is pleasing when you get commanding officers who want to thank you and tell you how much it means to have you visit.

"It was an extremely overwhelming experience to meet our troops and see the sacrifices these people are making on behalf of all of us back home.

"People always say to me, 'you represented your country'. But that is representing your country, being out there, putting yourself on the line for the greater good. That is truly humbling for me." ■



Aerial asset: England Under-21 coach Stuart Pearce is shown the feared firepower of the Apache helicopter during his visit to theatre



On side: Footballers from the Afghan National Army and Irish Guards took to the pitch for the honour of lifting the prestigious FA Cup trophy

SPORT SHORTS

WITH the new motor racing season fast approaching, *SoldierSport* has teamed up with Eventageous PR and Carlton Books to offer three readers the chance to win a copy of *The Complete Encyclopedia of Formula One*.



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SCOTTISH Premier League side Kilmarnock offered free admission to around 600 personnel for their clash with heavyweights Glasgow Rangers.

The generous donation saw troops from 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 6th Battalions, The Royal Regiment of Scotland attend the match, along with two battalions from the Army Cadet Force and veterans from Erskine Hospital and the Combat Stress facility at Hollybush.

The cadets also collected £2,031 for The Royal Regiment of Scotland charity ahead of the game.

MEMBERS of 156 Transport Regiment, Royal Logistics Corps were on hand at Goodison Park for Everton's recent Premier League fixture against Wigan Athletic to officially donate the £20,000 they raised by competing in the Moscow Marathon of Peace.

The troop's hard-earned charity cash was divided between the Disabled Children's Sporting Programme, the Claire Hospice for terminally-ill children and Broughton House, a Service veterans' nursing home.

THE Army shinty team is looking for experienced players to help boost the squad ahead of its commitments for the 2011 campaign.

Operational tempo has once again taken its toll on the side, which is due to compete in the Sutherland and Bullough Cups this season.

Hurling players are also welcome to volunteer as their skills can easily be transferred to the sport.

Plans are also in place for a match with the Irish Defence Force hurling team in the near future.

Anyone interested in joining should contact Capt Robert Stoddart via email at robertstoddart@hotmail.com



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Picture: David Rogers

Main man: John Steele, a star of the Army and Combined Services Rugby Union teams in the 1980s, is directing a new approach to the national game

International man of Steele

Interview: Roger Thompson

FORMER Combined Services Rugby Union captain John Steele has started to make huge waves in his sport following his appointment as the new chief executive at Twickenham.

Despite still being a relative newcomer to the post, the ex-Royal Artillery man has made his presence felt by producing the blueprint for a radical overhaul of the English game.

Steele has applied what could be seen as a classic Forces command structure to the Rugby Football Union to ensure the set-up is better equipped for the challenges ahead, particularly when it hosts the World Cup in 2015.

He has been quick to credit Service life for giving him the leadership skills needed for his new job, rejecting those who claim military organisation is simply based on directives and prescriptive orders.

“It doesn’t come harder than that,” he told *SoldierSport*. “My understanding of leadership in the Army provided a unique life lesson, whether one was involved in sport or business.”

Steele aims to create an environment where players wearing the Red Rose at all levels, together with those in influential rugby and support positions, will feel part of one national ethos.

This thinking is far removed from his time as a Service player, an era when

the Reds stood side-by-side with some of the domestic game’s biggest teams.

“Rugby has changed a lot since I last pulled on an Army jersey,” he said.

“In my day the Army was certainly regarded as a top-class club that had more time to train than the likes of Harlequins and Wasps, who drew their players from civilian occupations.

“We would train during the week to take on the best players in the country on a Saturday. Now the game has changed and you have even greater operational pressures on top of that.”

The former Rapier missile officer has fond memories of his military playing days and feels his time on the rugby pitch was very fulfilling.

“There were international players from top clubs who inspired the youngsters like myself,” Steele said.

“Irish international Brian McCall (REME) was the Army skipper and an outstanding leader on and off the pitch.

“There were many highs, probably none better than the Combined Services and Police tour to New Zealand in 1988.

“I had Graham Morgan (REME) at scrum half, an underrated player with a brilliant pass and great tactical brain. He really looked after me.”

The 2011 team operates in a completely different environment to the one enjoyed by Steele in the 1980s and the ex-Northampton Saints coach was quick to praise the way it has adapted to the modern game.

“I know it must have been a real challenge to confront professionalism in the face of Service traditions and at the same time deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan,” he said.

“These are obviously intense commitments, yet it has been heartening to see how well the boys coped with a war halfway round the globe, returned home and got on with their lives and their rugby.”

And with preparations now well under way for the Defence World Cup – which will run alongside the international tournament later this year – he couldn’t help but pass an envious glance at today’s players.

He said: “Imagine playing the Kiwis, the Australians and the French Armed Forces, not to mention the Royal Navy and Samoa in the glow of the Rugby World Cup at Auckland.

“That would be fantastic. How about a final of the New Zealand Armed Forces versus the British Army the day before the main event? I would want to be at that match.” ■

‘My understanding of leadership in the Army provided a unique life lesson’

final word



We asked members of a British Army training team mentoring Ugandan People's Defence Force personnel headed for Somalia what they thought of their African allies

INTERVIEWS: SHARON KEAN
PICTURES: STEVE DOCK



Capt C Stoffenberg (3 PWRR)

Being South African I've worked with multicultural groups in Africa before and also in mentoring roles with Iraqi forces. I'm using those skills to assist the Ugandan troops, who I think are extremely positive. They know they have a really important role in the deployment to Somalia and their motivation is strong. Their approach to the final exercise was very successful.



Capt James Ranger (1 RRF)

The Ugandans operate in a different way to us. Their tactics and techniques reflect their culture. They've improved a lot over the course of a week. They are willing to learn, very hard working and are interested in how our experience can help prepare them for their deployment. Their basic skills and drills are quite good and they understand the nuts and bolts of planning operations.



Capt Stewart Barker (3 PWRR)

It's an interesting experience when you get to travel and see other armies and the way that they operate. Clearly the theatre of operations the Ugandans are engaged in is relevant to security across the entire world. The best thing is that we are contributing to stability. Their individual skills and command and control are somewhat lacking, but that's what we are here for.



WO2 Sean King (3 PWRR)

The main thing is understanding how other armies operate, getting outside of our own focused and channelled training. I have worked with other nations and knew what to expect, although I didn't know what level of training they would have had. They are very friendly, welcoming and happy to work with us. We even used their RSM's house as part of an exercise.



CSgt Arthur Little (3 PWRR)

The Ugandans score ten out of ten for the effort that they're putting into the training. They just keep asking for information. At first some of them thought holding a couple of branches in front of them was enough to stop an AK round, so we corrected them on that one. They're learning quickly. They're good guys and they'll be really good soldiers when they finish here.



WO2 Dave Simpson (3 PWRR)

It's been fantastic. It's a different way of life. The Ugandans are very willing – they really want to learn. They're asking questions all the time, not just about the training but about us as people – they are very inquisitive. We've passed on all the experience that we've gained. Whatever will help bring them back [from Mogadishu] in one piece they want to learn about.



Capt Ollie Tag (1 R Welsh)

Compared to working with Afghans these guys are very keen to learn because they realise they are off to Mogadishu on their own in four to six weeks to do their job. On the first day they went straight forward for the enemy but as we've stopped them and explained fire and manouevre – things that will keep them alive – they've gradually improved.



Capt Will Mawby (RA)

Uganda is very hot and a lot greener than I thought it would be. We have taken our Afghanistan and Iraq experience and tried to put it into a Somali context. Stuff like engaging with the local community, reassuring them and positive engagement with enemy forces. The Ugandans are very keen and that's half the battle. The difference since we arrived has been quite significant.

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