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ARMY

The value of valour

THE announcement that the Victoria Cross has been awarded to LCpl James Ashworth did, I am sure, stop most of us in our tracks.

In a decade punctuated with endless stories of front-line courage and grit, the late Grenadier Guardsman is only the second Serviceman to be singled out for demonstrating the most supreme kind of bravery in Afghanistan.

Next month's issue will reveal the gripping stories behind many other Service personnel who have shown extreme gallantry on Operation Herrick.

However, it seems entirely appropriate that this particular edition be dedicated to the very rarest of honours, and to the very rarest of men.

"I never in my life expected this," Kerry Ashworth commented after hearing about the valiant actions of her son when storming an insurgent stronghold.

Her poignant words resonate on so many levels.

And while nothing can be done to bring her child back, one can only hope that in the years ahead she and her family can take some comfort from knowing that LCpl Ashworth's deeds will never be forgotten, and will forever inspire generations of British soldiers. ■



Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

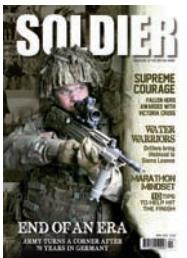
"You don't get training opportunities like this very often"

Spotlight on skills in Sierra Leone (pages 44-47)



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THE **informer...**

BRITISH TROOPS' GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE ASSET news@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Picture Steve Dolk

Pastures new: Troops returning from Germany will be stationed at various sites around the UK including Scotland and Salisbury Plain

UK troops back on home turf

An overhaul of Army basing will see all British troops returned from Germany and the disposal of seven UK sites, the defence secretary has announced.

Philip Hammond's plan for the future laydown of the organisation will see almost 30,000 soldiers moved to new locations across the country.

In addition, the MoD will invest nearly £2 billion in Service housing and bases.

Around half of that will go towards creating 1,900 family homes and dwellings for 7,800 single personnel.

The other £800 million will be spent on infrastructure and refurbishment of existing military buildings.

"This plan will provide investment around the country, crucial jobs for local economies and the best possible accommodation for our soldiers and their families," said Mr Hammond.

The work also supports and enables the Army 2020 structure announced last year, which will ensure that the Service remains the most capable in its class, adaptable and ready to meet the security challenges of the next decade and beyond."

Sites to go include Claro Barracks in

Ripon, Howe Barracks in Canterbury, Craigiehall Barracks in Edinburgh and Cawdor Barracks in Brawdy.

Parts of Redford Barracks in Edinburgh, Forthside Barracks in Stirling and Cophorhne Barracks in Shrewsbury will also be disposed of.

Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Peter Wall, described the overhaul as "very welcome news".

He explained: "This plan provides an excellent springboard for operations overseas and affords welcome certainty over where people will live.

"It is going to stabilise the Army's presence in the UK and therefore, for the first time in a long time, the ability of our units to forge close relationships with local communities."

Approximately 70 per cent of the 15,000 Service personnel currently based in Germany will move to the UK before the end of 2015, with the final 4,300 returned by 2020.

Relocating units will mainly be stationed around Salisbury Plain, Edinburgh and Leuchars, Catterick, Aldershot, Colchester, Stafford and the East Midlands.

According to defence chiefs, the

restructure will save the Service £240 million per year in running costs as soldiers are clustered around key sites.

Gen Wall added: "It is the end of an era for the Army in Germany, where it has been based since 1945.

"But this in no way detracts from our training plans for the future, which I am confident will provide what we need."

As well as a strategy to reduce operating costs for the MoD, the restructure forms part of the government's so-called new employment model, which aims to give soldiers greater stability by enabling them to integrate into local areas.

However, Mr Hammond acknowledged that regions where military sites are being closed could be adversely affected.

"Of course, we are very sensitive to the fact that many of our units have very close connections with the communities in which they have often been embedded for long periods of time," the politician admitted.

"There will be significant regret at the loss of those links."

● **On the move – pages 25-34**



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Highest honour for Helmand hero

A "SUPREMELY courageous" soldier who was killed while attempting to launch his last grenade at a Taliban sharpshooter has been awarded the Victoria Cross.

LCpl James Ashworth of 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards was singled out for the highest award for gallantry for his heroic actions when storming an insurgent stronghold in Afghanistan.

The 23-year-old's mother Kerryn, father Duane – himself a former Grenadier Guard – and brother Coran, a serving soldier, were present at Buller Barracks in Aldershot to hear the citation for the posthumous honour read out.

It stated: "Despite the ferocity of the enemy's resistance, LCpl Ashworth refused to be beaten.

"His total disregard for his own safety in ensuring that the last grenade was posted accurately was the gallant final action of a soldier who had placed himself in the line of fire on numerous occasions earlier in the attack.

"This supremely courageous and inspiring action deserves the highest possible recognition."

The prestigious decoration is just the second to be handed out from the 12-year conflict in Afghanistan.

The 6' 8" soldier from Corby, Northamptonshire, had been airlifted with his reconnaissance platoon to Nahr-e Saraj to engage an enemy sharpshooter team when they came under fire on landing.

This prompted LCpl Ashworth's platoon to advance 300 metres into the heart of a Taliban-dominated village.

With the insurgent sharpshooter pushed back into an outbuilding and the settlement under attack from numerous directions, the soldier acted decisively.

Explaining the actions of the fearless Serviceman, deputy chief of staff for 12th Mechanized Brigade Maj Andy Parker (Gren Gds) said: "LCpl Ashworth realised that the stalemate needed to be broken and broken quickly.

"He identified a low wall that ran parallel to the front of the outbuilding from which the insurgent was firing.

"He judged that it could provide him with enough cover to get sufficiently close to the position to accurately post his final grenade.

"As he started to crawl behind the wall and towards the enemy a fierce firefight broke out just above him.

"Undaunted by the extraordinary danger he faced, he continued his advance. After three minutes of slow crawling under exceptionally fierce automatic fire he had edged forward 15 metres and was now within five metres of the insurgent's position.

"Desperate to ensure that he



Supreme soldier: LCpl James Ashworth's bravery in battle earned him the Victoria Cross

succeeded he deliberately moved out of cover and into full view of the enemy to get a better angle for the throw.

"By now Taliban rounds were tearing into the ground mere centimetres from him, yet he did not shrink back.

"Despite the ferocity of the insurgents' resistance LCpl Ashworth refused to be beaten. His conspicuous gallantry galvanized the platoon to complete the clearance of the compound."

After hearing about the valiant exploits Mrs Ashworth spoke of her surprise at her son's award but not of his actions.

"I knew a bit about what happened and I know when we came to meet the

soldiers they were saying how wonderful he was, but I never in my life expected this," she said.

"If anyone was in trouble he would go and help them. He was like that from a young age.

"This honour doesn't make it easier but it does make it feel that it wasn't for nothing. We never in our wildest dreams expected this."

Fighting back tears the proud mother added: "We just miss him so much, but this award is not just for James it's for everybody who fights and who has been injured and the whole town is so proud of him."



● Maj Andy Parker



● The Ashworth family



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Cap badge transfers commence

ROUND 1,600 combat troops have been given the news that they must move over to a new cap badge before the end of 2015.

Service personnel whose units are being merged, amalgamated or deleted under Army 2020 plans – including 1,200 Infantry soldiers and 450 from the Household Cavalry and Royal Armoured Corps – have been issued with posting preference forms detailing alternative locations and roles.

They must now register their favoured options before the Army Personnel Centre begins the complex task of trying to match personal choice with the future needs of the Service.

Director of Personnel Operations, Brig Matthew Lowe, told *Soldier* that although the process would be a sad one for troops, those overseeing it were determined to make it work.

“It would be crass to underestimate the regimental loyalty that every British soldier feels,” the officer said.

“These things are absolutely core to our understanding of ourselves as combat troops.

“Relocations will be complex and there is a lot of information out there.

“However, personnel must ensure they talk to their families about the options.”

The change comes as Servicemen and women await the outcome of the latest round of manning reductions.

Although assignment orders will not be published until after redundancy notification on June 18, some individuals may be required to join their new units ahead of this date in readiness for mission-specific training.

There is also a small risk of some being made redundant after transferring.

“This is uncomfortable for individuals but receiving units understand that it is not a process anyone would wish to go through and they will do their best to make every addition welcome,” Brig Lowe continued.

“There is no probationary period so once a soldier puts on his new beret,

“It would be crass to underestimate the regimental loyalty that every soldier feels”

stable belt and tactical recognition flash he will immediately become part of that new regiment.

“The big balancing act for the Army is the needs of the Service on one hand, and recognising that our people have their own aspirations on the other.

“We are trying to match the two but inevitably there will be some who don’t get their first posting choice.



Regimental pride: Deep-rooted loyalties will make cap badge transfers uncomfortable for combat troops but support is available to assist with changes

Pictures: Steve Dock and Mark Owens

“However, as soldiers we all know we must serve where the Queen tells us.”

Almost every unit in the combat arms will be affected in the shake-up, through either losing or receiving troops.

And in contrast to recent redundancy announcements, soldiers deployed on operations will learn the outcome while in theatre.

“The Army Command Group thought really hard about this aspect,” the brigadier revealed.

“Regiments are fairly small communities and troops are not cut off from the outside world on Op Herrick so if we didn’t tell them in Afghanistan we could end up with a situation whereby other members of the unit know where a soldier is going before they do.

“That makes for really bad dynamics on missions.”

He added: “This is not the perfect scenario but troops can now start to have a conversation with their families.”

When making decisions about new locations, the first priority for Service chiefs will be any shortfalls in units deploying to Helmand province.

Assignment orders will be published four to six months before soldiers move

to their new formations.

“These postings will never be down to one man’s judgement,” Brig Lowe said.

“Each move will be the result of a consensus view of four or five people.

“We are a battle-hardened Army that has seen a lot of combat in recent years and is used to dealing with difficult circumstances,” the officer continued.

“I am confident every soldier will use the strength they have taken from being out on operations and bring that back to this process.”

Over the coming months, outreach teams from units where there is a manning deficit will visit those containing surplus troops in order to discuss potential cap badge changes.

Final move dates will be kept as flexible as possible to coincide with the summer posting cycle and to assist Service families with accessing new schools and accommodation.

Further details will be issued in an ABN later this month.

Any Service personnel requiring further advice should contact their company commander or unit welfare officer for support.



“YOU ARE IN A VERY RISKY ENVIRONMENT WITH THE THREAT OF AVALANCHES – IT IS THE MOST SERIOUS TERRAIN IN THE WORLD”
- THE DICEY DOMAIN OF SKI TOURING, PAGES 48-49

Money lessons for military personnel

BRITISH troops are being offered free advice on money matters courtesy of a new scheme aimed at improving personal finance.

The Money Force website and training programme will provide an array of impartial guidance and includes a budget planner, car cost calculator and credit card forecaster to help Service personnel and their families make informed decisions about the future.

The initiative, which is being delivered by The Royal British Legion in partnership with the Ministry of Defence and support from the Standard Life Charitable Trust, will also introduce structured financial education into all Armed Forces basic training so troops receive comprehensive advice at the start of their careers.

Speaking at the launch of the project, Minister of State for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans Mark Francois said: “We know that military life often presents specific challenges for our people which can sometimes affect their

financial management.

“Money Force is an excellent example of the Armed Forces Covenant in action. It demonstrates how we can all work together to help tackle some of the disadvantages of Forces life.”

The scheme highlights a number of considerations that Servicemen and women should be making at different stages of their career, with pages relating to assignments and deployments as well as managing crises and family life.

Sue Freeth, director of operations at The Royal British Legion, said: “The unique nature of military service brings with it a number of challenges, from a new recruit understanding their benefits and expenses to a recent leaver having to pay bills and budget a household for the first time.

“Money Force is one of a number of new programmes which we are providing through the web and face-to-face briefings in the classroom will provide personnel with practical tools to equip the Armed Forces community to

independently manage their finances.”

To access the programme visit www.moneyforce.org.uk



Training unit takes off

THE future of bomb search and disposal instruction is secure thanks to the creation of a new specialist training unit.

Based at a state-of-the-art facility at St George's Barracks, Bicester, the Defence Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Munitions and Search Training Regiment will see 4,000 personnel from all three Services pass through its gates each year.

Built to replace the previous establishment at Lodge Hill in Kent, the complex was developed over eight years at a cost of £100 million and includes 32 separate training

spaces including a cave complex and dive pool.

Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Peter Wall, visited the new formation for its launch.

Speaking at the event, he said: “Our explosive search and disposal teams do one of the most dangerous roles in the Armed Forces, often in the most hostile of environments.

“This facility will for the first time bring their training under one roof and will secure it into the future.”

Lt Col Chris Henson, commanding officer of DEMS Trg Regt, described the site as a “major milestone”.



Major milestone: Soldiers show off the various capabilities of the new formation



CONFRONTING BIAS

■ SOLDIERS from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community have met with the chain of command to learn about their “unconscious biases”.

More than 100 troops attended the Service's third annual LGBT conference with the aim of identifying ways in which LGBT staff can be better supported at work.



During the event at St Hugh's College in Oxford, career management officers and training experts learnt about the impact that preconceptions can have on employees and their promotion prospects.

Maj Damian Jenkins (RAMC), chairman of the Army LGBT Forum, explained: “We each harbour subtle prejudices, ones we may not realise we have, and these can influence the decisions we make.”

“By understanding how this happens, it is hoped line managers can seek out their own biases and eliminate them – especially when writing reports and dealing with careers.”

“This type of inclusive leadership is crucial to improving the diversity of the Army.”

Last year the Armed Forces gathered statistics on the gender identity and sexual orientation of phase one and two recruits.

The results found that 1.5 per cent of men and 15 per cent of females leaving phase two training identified as either lesbian, gay or bisexual.

“WHEN TROOPS GET DOWN THE REMOTE ROADS IN SIERRA LEONE THEY KNOW THEY'RE NOT RETURNING FOR DAYS AND THAT'S EXACTLY THE SORT OF TRAINING WE ARE LOOKING FOR”

– ROYAL ENGINEERS EMBARK ON THIRSTY WORK IN THE WEST AFRICAN WILDS, PAGES 44-47



Hotting up: Members of 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment put their soldiering skills to the test in 50-degree heat

Troops swap Sennelager for savannah

PERSONNEL renowned for their work in armoured vehicles have taken to the sweeping plains of East Africa to operate as light role infantrymen.

Members of 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment deployed to Kenya for Exercise Askari Thunder 6 to put their soldiering skills to the test in 50-degree Celsius heat.

Historically, the formation has operated the Warrior armoured fighting vehicle but took to the country to prepare for a potential deployment on Op Herrick in 2014.

Describing the demanding serial, battlegroup commander Lt Col Andy

Flay said: “This is the culmination of our foundation training year and we have been preparing for the deployment since September.

“It is our main exercise opportunity and provides me with a chance to confirm that the battalion is at the required standard and ready for any future operational tours.”

The formation was joined on the package by Servicemen and women from 2nd Battalion, The Rifles and received attachments from the Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers and other enabling arms in order to form the 1 PWRR Battlegroup.

Under testing conditions, personnel honed their skills on live-

firing ranges and through a series of defensive and enabling operations.

Missions also took place against a live enemy.

In addition to their efforts on Askari Thunder, troops from all cap badges used their time in Africa to help paint and refurbish the Wasso Nursery School on the outskirts of the village Archer's Post.

The soldiers handed over a donation from the Germany-based families of the battalion, which will be used to restock the learning establishment with books, stationary and clothes.

● **Water warriors – pages 44-47**

Service complaints process criticised

THE Services complaints commissioner has urged the government to replace her with an ombudsman.

In her annual report to Parliament, Dr Susan Atkins highlighted, for the fifth year in a row, how poorly the system currently deals with military personnel who have lodged grievances.

Commenting on the inefficiency of the procedure, Dr Atkins told *Soldier* that “too much focus on process” and “not enough on resolution and justice” was triggering unacceptable delays.

“In the last year I have become concerned that a growing number of people are losing confidence in the system and don't believe they will be dealt with fairly,” the commissioner said.

“Military life is dependent on trust and

if things continue as they are that faith will be eroded.”

The report found that by the end of 2012 there were 582 complaints awaiting decision at commanding officer level, while the backlog of cases at Army Board stage would take three years to clear at the present rate.

While Royal Air Force figures had also worsened since 2011, statistics showed the Royal Navy fared better, resolving complaints more quickly and clearing the backlog at board level.

Reiterating her plea, Dr Atkins said: “It's frustrating because I see that things could be done so much better if a brave decision could be made to simplify matters. There are grievances about housing that have been going on for two

years and that is just not on.

“If a civilian has a problem with such issues or health services there is an ombudsman they can go to, so why is it that soldiers can't do that when the Armed Forces Covenant states they shouldn't be disadvantaged?”

Reacting to the findings as this magazine went to press, Minister of State for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, Mark Francois, said: “The commissioner has contributed greatly to the changes and improvements we have made to the Services complaints system since its introduction.

“The MoD will consider fully the findings and recommendations made and I will respond formally to Dr Atkins in due course.”



“IT’S GREAT THAT WE ARE SEEING EVIDENCE OF REAL FIGHT FROM THE VERY TOP OF THE ARMY TREE”
- HOUSING AND THE HIERARCHY, PAGE 65

Army runners gear up

MILITARY and civilian runners are gearing up to take part in this month's Virgin London Marathon in aid of Service charities and other good causes.

Among them is a six-strong team of soldiers and civvies who will tackle the gruelling event on behalf of SSAFA after witnessing first hand the work the organisation does for Forces families.

Sgt Tom Robinson (RLC) chose to support the charity after his grandfather, a D-Day veteran, received money to make urgent repairs to his house.

“He served over 60 years ago but it didn’t matter how old he was,” explained the 34-year-old.

“SSAFA rolled up their sleeves and got involved and really helped improve his quality of living.”

For SSAFA public relations officer Sarah Viner, training for the event became a way of keeping herself busy while her fiance, Capt Alexander Bowie (QRL) was deployed on Op Herrick.

The couple decided they would take part together to give themselves something to focus on other than being apart.

“When I really couldn’t be bothered or started to panic about how far the actual race is, I just thought to myself, if Alex and I can get through six months apart we can get through anything,” the 28-year-old commented.

“I also see the importance of SSAFA’s work on a daily basis and knowing that all the money we raise will go to assisting the military



community really helps when you have to go out for a long run on a cold winter’s evening.”

Among other civilians preparing to pound the streets is BFBS radio presenter Charlene Guy, who is running for Blind Veterans UK.

The DJ was inspired to get involved after featuring a story on her show about a young soldier who had lost his sight in Iraq.

“His life came to a shuddering halt and my heart went out to him as I was amazed by his courage,” she said. “A year or so later I was watching the London Marathon and there he was running it.

“I can’t imagine the pain, frustration and anger of not being able to see family, the places I love, just the small things we take for granted every day.”

The London Marathon is just one of several challenging races that LCpl Liam Grimmer (AGC (SPS)) will tackle in support of The Children’s Society.

He also plans to run the Boston, Chicago and New York marathons and eventually the Marathon-des-Sables desert race.

“This is going to be one of the toughest things I’ve faced but I won’t give up and I’m prepared to strain every sinew to do it,” the super-fit soldier said.

“I’ll go through a lot of pain but it will be nothing compared to what some of the kids I’m raising money for have experienced.”

● Top training tips – pages 50-51



Picture: Sgt Ian Houlding, RLC

BRIGADE BOWS OUT

■ CHANGES brought about under the Strategic Defence and Security Review have continued with the formal removal of 19 Light Brigade from the British Army’s order of battle.

The Northern Ireland-based formation, which marked its disbandment with a drumhead service last year, officially ceased to exist at the end March.

Created out of 19 Mechanized Brigade in 2005, the force completed two tough tours of Iraq and two of Afghanistan (Op Panchai Palang pictured below).

While several units have been resubordinated to other brigades, 40 Regiment, Royal Artillery, 38 Engineer Regiment, 19 Combat Service Support Battalion and 209 Signal Squadron have been disbanded.

Brig Edward Chamberlain, Commander 19 Light Brigade, said staff had maintained a “strong sense of purpose” throughout the drawdown.

“We have faced a number of challenges, not least the redistribution of a significant amount of equipment,” commented the officer.

Lessons learnt and observations relating to the brigade’s disbandment are available to read on the Army Knowledge Exchange portal.



Picture: Cpl Dan Bardsley, RLC

Memorial push for fallen heroes of Gulf War

EFFORTS to fund a memorial for the 47 Service personnel who died as a result of the first Gulf War are going from strength to strength.

Kevin Doughty, a former combat medical technician in the Royal Army Medical Corps, is helping to run the campaign for a permanent monument in the grounds of the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire.

“Things really took off on Facebook, Twitter and our own website and we raised nearly £2,500 in the first three months,” said the ex-soldier.

“We have planned drawings ready to go in front of the memorial advisory



Honouring heroes: The memorial will pay tribute to Op Granby’s fallen personnel

committee in June and, subject to these being approved, we are hoping to have the commemoration constructed and ready for unveiling and dedication on February 28, 2016 – the 25th anniversary of the conflict.”

To realise the project, the group needs to raise enough cash for a deposit and to cover the expense of the memorial’s upkeep over the next 20 years.

For further information on the memorial mission, or to pledge a donation, visit the group’s website at <http://gulfwarmemorial.webs.com>



Picture: BBC Pictures



Mixed response to TV comedy

A CONTROVERSIAL new comedy series about life in a bomb disposal unit has received mixed reviews from television audiences.

Some 900,000 people tuned into the first episode of *Bluestone 42* when it aired on BBC Three at the start of last month.

Visitors to a Facebook site dedicated to the show called it “an up-to-date British *M*A*S*H*” and “modern *Blackadder*”.

However, the eight-part series divided opinion ahead of its launch, with some claiming that a sitcom about Afghanistan was in poor taste while military operations in the country are ongoing.

Defending the decision to make the programme, Mark Freeland, the BBC’s UK controller of comedy

production, said the broadcaster was “fully aware” of the delicate nature of the subject matter.

“We have talked to many, many people who live the *Bluestone 42* life for real,” he explained.

“Every care has been taken in the delivery of the material in order that we don’t offend any of the courageous people who serve in the Armed Forces or their families.”

Written by Richard Hurst (*Secret Diary Of A Call Girl*) and James Cary (*Miranda*), the

show was filmed in South Africa and informed by consultations with both serving and former members of the Armed Forces.

To view the series, which concludes on April 23, tune into BBC Three on Tuesdays at 2200 or visit www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer



Two of a kind? Fans of *Bluestone 42* have likened the show to the classic British comedy series *Blackadder*

New mess dress allowance

A PAYMENT to help with the purchase of mess dress has been introduced for those directed to transfer across to new regiments and corps.

The allowance – called the transfer grant – has been created to recompense the growing number of officers and senior non-commissioned officers required to



relocate under the current Army 2020 restructuring programme.

It is available to Regular personnel who have already received an initial outfit grant provided that they have at least three years of military service remaining.

The cash does not apply to those moving into newly-created regiments as a result of amalgamation or to anyone who elects to move voluntarily.

Read ABN 06-13 for more.

JPA HELP AT HAND

■ TROOPS struggling to make entries on the Joint Personnel Administration system are being reminded to download a recently-developed help programme.

The JPA app is available on Android and iPhone handsets as well as iPads and offers guidance on completing basic tasks such as amending emergency contacts, submitting leave applications or expenses claims and checking annual reports.

The aid was created in response to the difficulties faced by troops accessing online guides to the system while simultaneously trying to make entries.

Maj Andy Lowe (AGC (SPS)) of the Directorate Personnel Administration said that while initial uptake had been slow, those who downloaded the app from the Defence Gateway portal would find it useful.

“It is designed to be opened up on soldiers’ phones when they log onto JPA at a DII terminal,” explained the officer.

“Although they can’t physically access the system with the application it gives them simple guidance.”

The programme is one of several measures being implemented in response to complaints about the accessibility of JPA.



Picture: Andy Roberts

CONTROVERSIAL CASH

■ THE Forces community is to receive a welcome cash boost from an unlikely source, the government has announced.

Around £35 million has been set aside for military charities from fines levied on banks following the recent Libor rate-fixing scandal.

Among the first to benefit from the cash are SSAFA Forces Help, Tickets for Troops, the Felix Fund and the Fisher House Project in Birmingham.

SSAFA’s allocation of £1.1 million will be used to build on support networks for Service families coping with tragedy.

Welcoming the news, its chief executive David Murray, said: “This money will enable us to continue to provide vital assistance.”

ONLINE UPGRADE

■ A WEBSITE supporting the British Forces community in Germany has been given a makeover as part of ongoing improvements to the service.

The www.BFGnet.eu portal provides up-to-date information on schools, jobs, fuel coupons, garrison events and now allows visitors to offer feedback.

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Security staff get ahead of the game

MEMBERS of the Military Provost Guard Service are to be given the opportunity to undertake a new fast-track training package – the first of its kind in the British Army.

The Soaring Skills initiative will see selected personnel put through a gruelling three-day course at Fareham's Defence College of Policing and Guardroom in a bid to diversify their skills and open up new opportunities elsewhere in the Service.

As well as giving troops the chance to prove themselves in a series of challenging combat scenarios, the programme will allow participants to apply for accelerated transfer to the Army's airborne units.

Individuals who pass the course and wish to join the ranks of these formations will be assessed for their suitability to bypass P Company selection in Catterick.

Those who succeed will then be given the chance to move directly onto the Military Jumps Course with a view to earning the coveted wings.

Maj Stanley Longdon (AGC (MPGS)), the officer overseeing the Soaring Skills initiative, told *Soldier* that the training would give MPGS personnel a “second bite of the cherry” when it comes to

progressing their careers elsewhere in the military.

“The Army is currently undergoing a period of enormous change,” the Serviceman explained.

“Although P Company has certainly stood the test of time in terms of the quality of soldiers it produces, there has long been a feeling among

senior members of the airborne forces that not enough is being done to try and integrate crucial talent from other parts of the organisation.

“This new course will be a great first attempt at trying to do that.

“We also hope it will be far more cost effective than sending personnel up to Catterick when they can instead prove themselves at their own training centre.”

Commenting on recent *Talkback* debate over the role of the Army's airborne forces, the officer added: “We want this scheme to send out the unequivocal message that those joining the Military Provost Guard

Service possess a wide range of skills and capabilities, and are not simply there to check drivers' ID and documentation as some have suggested.

“As well as proving to be a second wind for experienced personnel, the course could help to address any potential manning shortages in our airborne units.”

Paratrooper Cpl Norman Arnhem has spent the last four months working alongside the MPGS in order to design the Soaring Skills course.

“I have been really surprised by how similar some elements of armed security and parachute training can actually be,” the soldier admitted.

“I am working in a team that's trying to ensure this new package proves just as tough – if not tougher – than P Company and I honestly think it will.”

Soaring Skills will run its first sessions from April next year. More details will be published in an Army briefing note soon.



LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

SWAG	FORCE FOR GOOD	QUIDS IN
£6,650	MEMORIAL MARATHONS Thea Davies – partner of the late Capt Stephen Healey (1 R Welsh, pictured) – is running 415 miles over the course of a year by entering marathons and half marathons. The Serviceman was the 415th soldier to die during combat operations in Afghanistan.	Blind Veterans UK 
£2,750	HIGHLAND HELP Soldiers from 32 Signal Regiment (Volunteers) and civilians from a Scottish building firm braved treacherous conditions to walk the 96 miles of the West Highland Way in aid of wounded Servicemen and women. The team completed the Fort William to Glasgow route in four days, raising money through donations from local companies and collection boxes.	Help for Heroes 
£225	FOODIE FUND-RAISER Staff at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine took part in a <i>Come Dine With Me</i> -themed dinner to raise money for personnel recovering at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham. Flt Lt Heidi Gibbs hosted the gourmet evening, serving up a tasty menu that culminated in a dessert of Belgian waffles, salted caramel and vanilla ice cream.	Royal Centre for Defence Medicine Patient Welfare Fund 

... A KARRIMOR SNACK SACK



LAST month's spine lines competition was inspired by our interview with *EastEnders* star Lacey Turner. (Leslie) Grantham, (Adam) Woodyatt, (June) Brown and (Patsy) Palmer have all played well known characters in the BBC's hit soap.

This month we have teamed up with snack food company Deli 24 (www.deli24.co.uk) to give away two Karrimor Kodiak 30 rucksacks filled with a selection of tasty treats – worth £130 each.

To be in with a chance of winning the hunger-busting backpack, tell us what links the words on the side of this magazine.

Send your answers, plus postal address, to the usual place or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by April 30.



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Taking aim: Units such as 4th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment have been offered greater clarity according to Maj Gen Ranald Munro

Picture: Graeme Main

Rebasing sharpens Reserves' focus

THE deputy commander Land Forces believes last month's rebasing announcement is good news for the Territorial Army as it continues to forge a closer working relationship with the Regulars.

Maj Gen Ranald Munro told *Soldier* the plans have given the organisation greater clarity over the future locations of full-time regiments, which in turn has provided clear direction on where to site TA units and capabilities to fully support integration between the two bodies.

While the changes may be seen as causing some uncertainty, the senior officer has been quick to reassure personnel who are concerned about how potential military moves could impact on civilian careers.

● **A NEW financial incentive is being offered to direct entrant junior officers, their ex-Regular counterparts and other ranks who transfer to the Reserve forces.**

The TA commitment bonus (early years) will offer an initial sum of £2,000 and three staged annual payments of £1,000 for eligible personnel who complete certain training requirements.

"I think it is a great idea and one that shows our commitment to retaining our people at the outset of their careers in the TA, which often coincides with the busiest time in their civilian careers," said Deputy Commander Land Forces Maj Gen Ranald Munro.

"Some re-rolling will be required, but we are working very hard to minimise it and in the end only a few will be affected," he explained.

"The vast majority will stay as the same cap badge in the same TA centre.

"It really depends on individual cases. If a soldier wants to transfer to a new unit closer to home, maybe in the same base, that should not be a problem, depending on their skill sets.

"A home to duty travel allowance is available to individuals covering up to 50 miles and that should offer a member of the TA a fair amount of choice."

The Reserves basing plan is due to go before the House of Commons ahead of the summer recess and will include details of future structures, pairing and

command and control arrangements.

With so many changes and alterations in the pipeline, Maj Gen Munro has also been keen to push the ongoing recruitment drive and believes recent announcements will not throw the Army 2020 vision into doubt.

"We need to hit our target figure of 30,000 personnel by 2018, not tomorrow," he said.

"The introduction of the TA Live recruiting campaign has really kicked our plans into gear.

"In addition, Op Fortify will soon be launched, headed up by the adjutant general, which will allocate some hefty resources to the Reserves recruitment issue and we are also clamping down on wastage in the training pipeline."

Fusiliers find front-line fame

TWO Reservist soldiers have been offering a fascinating insight into life on the front lines of Afghanistan in a new television blog.

Rfn Matthew Bishop and Fus Owen Pringle, of 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, are currently deployed on Op Herrick and have been filming all aspects of their tour, from patrols to daily activities in their forward operating base.

Their footage helped create a documentary that was aired on BBC *Look North* and attracted more than 500,000 viewers. The format is similar to the *Our War* series and a second



instalment is already being planned.

Speaking ahead of his tour Rfn Bishop, who is attached to 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, said: "I'm excited and nervous about the deployment and pleased that I am lucky enough to make a film about this life experience."



“EVERY RACE IS DIFFERENT BUT ONE THING REMAINS THE SAME: THE FINE PEOPLE THAT PUT THEMSELVES THROUGH BLOOD, SWEAT AND OFTEN TEARS TO CROSS A FINISH LINE”
- WORDS OF WORKOUT WISDOM FOR THE LONDON MARATHON’S MILITARY RUNNERS, PAGES 50-51



Picture: Sgt Brian Gamble, RLC

Soaring skills: Bdr Sam Fletcher (RA) operates the Desert Hawk UAV on Ex Steel Sabre

Artillery units aim high

BRITISH and French troops have been preparing for future operations in a large-scale live-firing serial in Northumberland.

Exercise Steel Sabre tested around 1,600 soldiers from Regular and Reservist Royal Artillery units plus members of the 35 (French) Regiment Air Parachutiste.

Held on Otterburn ranges, the two-week event was designed to prepare personnel for becoming part of contingency formations such as the Airborne Task Force or Commando-led groups.

Director of the exercise, Brig Simon Humphrey, said the aim was to bring together all the components of an effective artillery mission.

“This package includes soldiers from different nations and parts of the British Army employing guns, rockets, mortars, radars and unmanned aerial vehicles,” the officer explained during the challenging drills.

“It has been a huge success and I’ve been impressed by the French troops working alongside the Brits.

“Judging by the smiles on their faces, they are happy to be taking part in this demanding and exciting training with us.”

With the emphasis on operations under Army 2020, the serial focused on international cooperation and closer working between Regulars and their counterparts in the Territorial Army.

Bdr Sam Fletcher, a part-time Serviceman, said it had been useful to train alongside colleagues from across the cap badge.

“I operate the Desert Hawk, a hand-launched unmanned aerial vehicle that can fly forward of the guns for unarmed surveillance,” the soldier explained.

“I enjoy working with the Regular Army; everyone puts in an equal amount of effort and we all get the same out of it.”



Feel the Otterburn: Members of 3rd Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery push their kit up a steep climb while Reservists from 105 Regiment, Royal Artillery (Volunteers) direct fire

GOOD DRILLS

TRANSPLANT TRIUMPH

AN American soldier who lost all four limbs in a roadside bombing in 2009 has undergone a double arm transplant. Brendan Marrocco (pictured) was the first serviceman to survive losing both arms and legs in the Iraq War. He endured a complex 13-hour operation to receive the new body parts in what was the seventh such procedure conducted in the United States.



Picture: Reuters

WEB WIN

A GENEROUS internet supplier has agreed to provide free web access for wounded troops at every UK personnel recovery centre. Media Force, a telecommunications company made up of former soldiers and industry experts, launched the initiative as part of its support for Help for Heroes.

DRAIN PAIN

THE Duchess of Cambridge suffered an embarrassing moment at Mons Barracks in Aldershot when the heel of her shoe got stuck in a drain. The royal visitor attended a St Patrick’s Day parade with her husband where she met members of the Irish Guards.



OFFENDER TREND

YOUNGER members of the Armed Forces returning from war are more likely to commit violent crime than the rest of the population, a study has found. Research published in the *Lancet* medical journal showed just over 20 per cent of the 2,728 young men followed had committed a violent offence, compared with 6.7 per cent of those from outside the military. The data was taken from the analysis of UK military personnel who had served in Iraq or Afghanistan.

BAD DRILLS



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THE BIGGER PICTURE

JUNIOR soldiers from 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 5th Battalions, The Rifles were put through their paces on the final exercise of a gruelling month-long potential junior non-commissioned officers' cadre on Scotland's Garelochhead training area. The aim of the course was to prepare riflemen for promotion to the rank of lance corporal. Picture: Cpl Paul Morrison (RLC)

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ON THE MOVE

**Army announces
future base
locations**

THE DETAIL P26-27

GERMANY: END OF AN ERA P28-29

BOOST TO BRITAIN P30-31

HOUSING Q&A P33

COMMENT AND COUNT-UPS P34

THIS WAY UP

Picture: Shutterstock

EAGERLY anticipated details of where the British Army will be based have been announced to Service personnel.

The plan, which also reveals the new names for divisions and brigades, will be implemented over the next seven years.

The restructure will see a period of major upheaval for troops, including the return of all Germany-based personnel and concentration of military communities in fewer areas of the country. Some 74 units will relocate. The key changes are listed opposite. For further details, including approximate timescales for the moves, read **DIB 14/13**.

KEY CLUSTERS

ON return to the UK, the Army will largely form around the following seven sites:

- Salisbury Plain
- The North East, centred on Catterick
- Aldershot
- Scotland (Edinburgh and Leuchars)
- Colchester
- Stafford
- The East Midlands, centred on Cottesmore and North Luffenham

NORTH WEST

Arrivals – 2 Mercian, 3 Med Regt
Departures – 1 R Welsh
TOTAL TROOPS – 1,400

SOUTH WEST AND SOUTHERN

Arrivals – 1 AAC, 2 x PC & Mov Sqns
Departures – 42 Engr Regt (Geo)
TOTAL TROOPS – 8,100

SALISBURY PLAIN

Arrivals – HQ 20 Armd Inf Bde, QRH, 1 PWRR, 1 Mercian, 5 Rifles, 35 Engr Regt, 47 Regt RA, 26 Regt RA, 1 Armd Med Regt, 5 Armd Med Regt, 3 Armd CS Bn REME
Departures – 1 R Anglian, 4 Rifles, 5 FS Bn REME, LIFC
TOTAL TROOPS – 15,000

SCOTLAND

Arrivals – Scots DG, 2 Bn REME, 5 Scots (1 x Coy)
Departures – 1 Scots
TOTAL TROOPS – 4,000

NORTHERN IRELAND

Arrivals – 1 Scots
Departures – 2 Mercian
TOTAL TROOPS – 2,100

ALDERSHOT

Arrivals – 1 SG, 4 Rifles, 3 CSLR
Departures – 1 IG, 27 TLR
TOTAL TROOPS – 4,100

New foundations

Bases and brigades revealed to ranks

NORTH EAST

Arrivals – 1 (UK) Div, 4 Scots, 2 Yorks, 3 RHA, 32 Engr Regt, 6 FLR, 1 RMP, 1 MI Bn, LD

Departures – 1 SG, 1 Lancs, 1 Mercian, 3 Med Regt, 5 Armd Med Regt

TOTAL TROOPS – 7,500

WEST MIDLANDS

Arrivals – 1 Sig Regt, 16 Sig Regt

TOTAL TROOPS – 3,200

EAST MIDLANDS

Arrivals – HQ 102 Log Bde, 2 PWRR, 42 Engr Regt (Geo), 7 FLR, 2 Med Regt, 5 FS Bn REME, 1 MWD

Departures – 2 R Anglian, 16 Regt RA, DCSU, 15 POG

TOTAL TROOPS – 5,800

EASTERN ENGLAND

Arrivals – QDG

Departures – LD

TOTAL TROOPS – 3,500

LONDON AND SOUTH EAST

Arrivals – 1 IG, 1 R Anglian, 16 Regt RA

Departures – 1 PWRR, 5 Scots, 47 Regt RA

TOTAL TROOPS – 4,600

FOND FAREWELL

Sites to be disposed of by the Ministry of Defence by 2020 are:

Craigiehall, Edinburgh
Claro Barracks, Ripon
Howe Barracks, Canterbury
Cawdor Barracks, Brawdy
Plus elements of:
Redford Barracks, Edinburgh
Forthside Barracks, Stirling
Copthorne Barracks, Shrewsbury

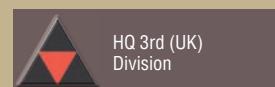


TAKING SHAPE

Base changes are being carried out to transform the Service into the new Army 2020 structure. Following all moves, the organisation will take this shape:

REACTION FORCE

Comprising mostly Regulars, and ready for the most demanding of scenarios, including short-notice contingency missions, and supported by a logistic brigade.



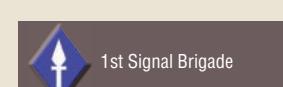
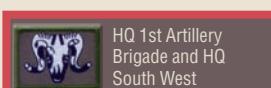
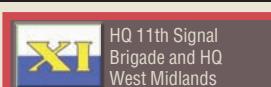
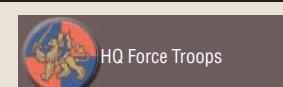
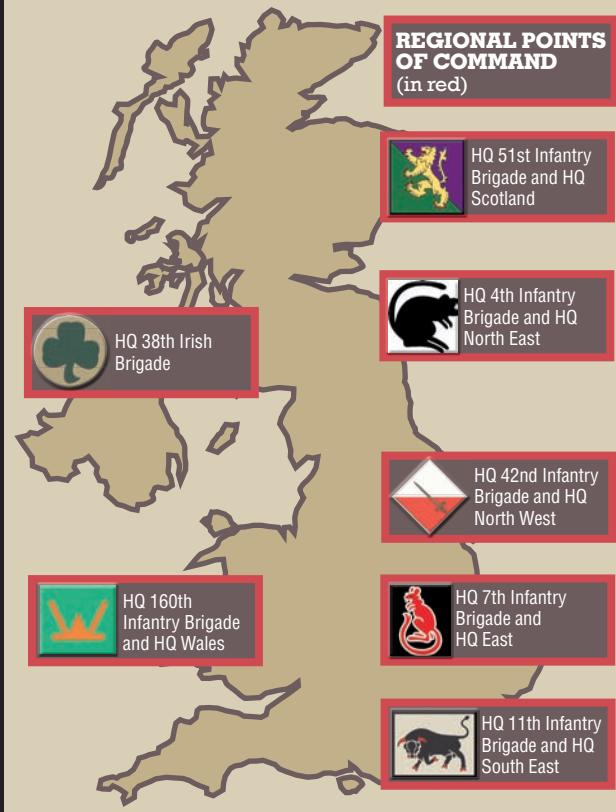
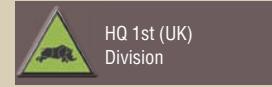
FORCE TROOP BRIGADES

Bringing together a range of Regular and Reserve capabilities including engineer, artillery and medical support and responsible for coordinating key tasks such as overseas capacity building.



ADAPTABLE FORCE

Made up of both Regulars and Reserves, and comprising a divisional HQ, seven infantry brigades with a regional point of command role and a logistic brigade. Formations will undertake overseas engagement homeland support, ceremonial duties and commitments in Cyprus, Brunei and the Falklands.



No change to:
● HQ Support Command
● HQ Londist ● JHC
● 16 Air Assault Brigade

Report: Becky Clark

TO generations of soldiers, the idea of an Army career without a posting to Germany will be almost inconceivable.

For nearly 70 years the country has played host to the single largest concentration of British personnel outside the UK and small towns such as Fallingbostel, Sennelager and Paderborn have become as familiar to troops as Tidworth or Catterick.

All of this will be consigned to the history books in 2019, however, when the last units move back to Britain.

Among the first locations to close will be Niederkruchten-Elmpt, currently home to 16th Signal Regiment and 1st Military Intelligence Battalion.

Some 600 soldiers and 700 family members will leave the station by the end of 2015, including Sig Rhys Williams (R Signals), who explained that he had mixed emotions about the return to the UK.

"This is my very first posting and I chose to come to Germany because I knew it was closing and wanted to get out here while I still could," said the 24-year-old.

"I miss my girlfriend in Kent so I'll be glad to get back to her and my friends but I'll miss the different way of life.

"The German people are good to us and I like them.

"I'm going to try and pack in as much as possible before we go."

LCpl Shane Powell (R Signals) agreed it was important to make the most of the time left.

"Some people don't socialise much and lock themselves in their rooms at the weekend but I think that's a big mistake," he said. "You have to put effort in if you want to get something out of it.

"As well as the travelling there are so many other benefits, like local overseas allowance, tax-free shopping and fuel and we won't get that back home."

For other soldiers, however, the links to Germany are more enduring than good memories and extra cash.

Over the years, thousands of British personnel met and married German partners, among them LCpl Dean El-Behnaihy (R Signals).

The 27-year-old explained why the rebasing announcement brought extra concerns for him and his spouse.

"My wife is a bit apprehensive," he said.

"She's worried about getting a job and being away from relatives and close friends but she'll have support from my family and I'm sure she'll embrace it.

"We've planned ahead and we'll just have to tighten our belts.

"I'm posted to Sennelager in June so we're staying out here for as long as possible but going back is inevitable.

"I'm used to Germany and I see it as my home."

2 Million – number of soldiers, civil servants and dependents estimated to have been part of the Forces community in Germany since 1945

"I've actually never had a posting in the UK so I can't imagine what it's like being in the Army and based in Britain."

Although the final closures are still some years away, the process is well underway in some parts of Germany such as the Rhine Garrison, which is due to shut later this year.

Maj Gen John Henderson, General Officer Commanding British Forces Germany, explained how the lessons learnt during the first phases of the drawdown would ensure that quality of life would be maintained for those personnel who are last in line to move.

"My primary focus is to keep support services going at the highest level right until the very end," said the officer.

"That's non-negotiable.

"We're using the 'cliff edge' approach, the idea being that you keep going in a garrison until the very last day and then you shut everything, as opposed to what has happened in Rheindahlen, where things have stuttered to a halt somewhat."

Despite the withdrawal, Maj Gen Henderson was clear that troops should still regard a posting to Germany as appealing.

"The country has to remain an attractive place for people to stay and there are things we've identified to make life better," he said.

"We're improving the way we do tax-free shopping so there's less paperwork, we're making further changes to BFG vehicle licensing and other things too so that the privileges of being in Germany, apart from living in an exciting country, become simpler.

"Germany is still open, it's still fun and I want people to come out here and say 'isn't this great'."

As well as maintaining the British infrastructure, those in charge of managing the drawdown will coordinate the handover of some 11,000 quarters and 28 barracks to the country's authorities.

In addition, efforts are being made to soften the blow for the 3,500 locally employed civilians set to be made redundant when British Forces leave.

Staff will be given 12 months' notice that their jobs are to go and many have already made use of retraining packages on offer.

Reflecting on a process that many will regard with regret, Maj Gen Henderson said: "It's the right answer to leave, sad though it is.

"Thirty years ago I arrived in Paderborn as a second lieutenant and since then I've served in Germany at every rank, so it is a very sad thing to oversee."

"But my message to people is 'come and get it while you can'."

"In a few years' time there will be no opportunity to serve here and if you want an interesting posting somewhere a bit different, now is the time to put your hand up because the average soldier won't get that after we leave."

END OF AN ERA:

WHEN the last UK troops leave Germany in 2019 it will mark the end of almost 75 years of unbroken British military presence in the country.

The story is one of reconstruction, reconciliation and integration.

Established in 1945, the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) controlled the military government of the British zone of occupied Germany, with the primary role of preventing the resurgence of National Socialism and assisting in the nation's rebuilding programme.

As the post-war period gave way to the Cold War, the force's function shifted to defending West Germany from the Soviet Union, with up to 58,000 personnel on standby to stem a Russian invasion.

After the fall of communism, a round of defence cuts known as "options for change" saw troop levels halved and the BAOR renamed British Forces Germany in 1994.

Subsequent station closures saw the military contingent shrink to its current size of just over 15,000 soldiers.

In 2010, the government announced its plans under the Strategic Defence and Security Review to relocate all Germany-based units to the UK by 2020.

“MY parents opened Figaro's hair salon in JHQ in 1954 and I took it over in 1988. I've worked here since I was 17 – I'll be 60 this year. At one time we had 12 staff and probably 100 customers every day but now we are closing. I loved having British clients and speaking English. What can I say now that they are leaving? It will change my whole life and I feel very sad.”



Ute Bertels,
Salon owner

“THE local community regrets it hugely that the British are leaving and not just for economic reasons. International integration is very important politically and we had that here at Elmpt Golf Club through sport. We enjoyed good cooperation with the military over the years and we hope to continue their legacy through the club.”



Dr Helmut Kuester,
golf club president

Fond farewell

British troops prepare to say auf wiedersehen to Germany



Main picture, Final salute: A Chieftain tank from 4th Armoured Division, one of nearly 600 armoured vehicles, dips its barrel to the Queen during Jubilee celebrations in Sennelager in 1977

Picture: Soldier archive

REMEMBERING LIFE IN GERMANY

● A COFFEE table book is being produced to commemorate the history of the British Army of the Rhine and successor British Forces Germany. If you or your family were stationed in the country and have interesting pictures of military life there send them to Book Project, Media & Comms Branch, HQ BFG, BFPO 140 or email bfgphotographer@yahoo.com

Images can be in digital, negative or slide format but must be of good quality.

Please include as much relevant information on the picture as possible.



Picture: Mike Weston



Picture: Cpl Ross Ferrie, RLC

HOME SOIL SURGE

COMMUNITIES BRACED FOR TROOP NUMBERS

Report: Joe Clapson

Picture: Graeme Main

In a bid to become more efficient and create a better life for soldiers, the Army is set to forge closer ties with civilian communities across Great Britain.

The significant shake-up will see Salisbury Plain become home to an extra 4,000 troops by 2020, while Aldershot and Leuchars in Scotland will receive around 700 and 800 respectively.

To accommodate this increased green presence at seven cluster sites across the UK, the MoD is working

with councils, government departments and other stakeholders to develop infrastructure, houses and schools and get further feedback on the potential economic and social impact of the moves.

Brig Piers Hankinson, Commander 43 (Wessex) Brigade, is one of those tasked with overseeing the changes.

"This is really good news for the south," the officer told *Soldier*.

"It is a one-off opportunity to create a sustainable community around Salisbury Plain.

"We need to work together with Wiltshire Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership to design

the future Army base, which must be a garrison inside a city, not a city inside a garrison."

Around £850 million will be spent on developing sites in the region surrounding Salisbury – where the training area measures 25 by 10 miles – as part of plans to house troops returning from Germany.

All three of the Service's Reaction Force armoured infantry brigades will be located there, taking its total soldier population to approximately 14,800 by 2020.

Those overseeing the changes must not only ensure this process is undertaken smoothly, but that any impact on the World Heritage site and its nature conservation areas are mitigated.

To that end, discussions are underway between



the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, local authority and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to gauge opinion on the population increase and how best to balance this with the need to preserve the area.

Alistair Cunningham, director of economy and regeneration at Wiltshire Council, said: "If this is planned properly with Service families accommodation distributed across the plain then it is doable.

"It's the strength of the partnership and having transparency from all sides that will be important."

Elsewhere, more than £50 million has been earmarked for development of bases in Aldershot and the wider Hampshire region to reinforce the town's position as the "home of the British Army".

Reacting to the plan, SSgt Steve Whitehead (AGC (SPS) of 145 Brigade said: "The increase in troop numbers in the town can only be positive.

"As a school governor, I would be very happy to see more investment in local education to handle the increase in pupils.

"It's bound to make the area more prosperous and hopefully bring back some of the shops to the Wellington Centre."

Catterick has also been confirmed as another of the Service's cluster sites and will accommodate five units returning from Germany as well as The Light Dragoons, who will move there from Swanton Morley in Norfolk.

Reflecting on the relocation, LCpl Matt Littlewood (LD) said: "I'm more than happy with the change; it means I'm closer to my family.

"We recruit from the north, so being closer to home may encourage more people to join and stay in for a long career.

"Going to Catterick means our relatives will be on our doorstep so it will make a big difference both in

terms of time spent with loved ones and financially as well.

LCpl Richard Sime (LD) added: "It's been great being based in Swanton Morley – it's a fantastic place to live but the move should benefit us and I think most of us are happy to be going."

Revealing the arrangements for Scotland, Defence Secretary Philip Hammond said the number of Armed Forces personnel based north of the border would rise by around 600, with an investment of more than £50 million in the country.

However, the headquarters at Craigiehall in Edinburgh will be disposed of, Redford Barracks will be partially closed and the Stirling Forthside estate will also be released.

"The Army presence and overall Armed Forces presence will increase," Mr Hammond said. "So Scotland is getting its fair share, or perhaps a little bit more than its fair share."

Maj Gen Nick Eeles, general officer commanding Scotland, added: "Given the reductions across the whole Service, I think that's a pretty good result."

Reflecting on the news that the Army will take over Leuchars from the Royal Air Force, the senior officer added: "This is a very attractive base and there are good facilities there.

"It will enable us to bring more military personnel to Scotland."

However, the announcement was not received well by Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, who described the plans as "a breach of trust".

In a statement on the Scottish Government's website, she said: "This announcement falls far, far short of the commitments given to Scotland by Liam Fox in 2011.

"Almost two years ago, the UK Ministry of Defence announced that RAF Kinloss and RAF Leuchars would become Army bases and while the RAF presence in Scotland would fall, a rise of up to 7,000 Army personnel would mean a net gain of at least 2,000 in the military footprint."

As public debate continues over the pros and cons of military moves, soldiers begin readjusting to the prospect of a new home and a closer relationship to surrounding communities. ■

FACING THE CHANGES



ALDERSHOT



CATTERICK



SALISBURY CENTRE



LEUCHARS, SCOTLAND



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You've got nothing to lose and perhaps a lot to gain

The road to rebasing

Some key dates on the journey to drawdown in Germany

• June 18, 2013

TROOPS highlighted in the third round of Army redundancies learn whether they are to leave the Service.

• Summer 2013

FIRST Army base moves begin.

• 2013

1 REGIMENT, Army Air Corps cease flying at Guetersloh.

RHEINDAHL military complex closes.

2015

• HQ 1 (UK) Division move from Herford to York.

1 AND 16 Signal Regiment to move from Herford and Elmpt in Germany to Stafford.

ROYAL Armoured Corps formations 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards and The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards move to Swanton Morley and Leuchars respectively.

32 ENGINEER Regiment to move from Hohne to Catterick.

• 2015

BERGEN-Hohne Garrison (including Fallingbostel), Herford Station and Niederkruechten-Elmpt Station all vacated by this time.

50 PER cent of British military personnel back in the UK.

• 2016

GUETERSLOH Princess Royal Barracks vacated.

• 2017

HQ 20 Armoured Infantry Brigade relocate from Sennelager to Bulford.

PADERBORN Garrison (including Sennelager), Bielefeld Station and Guetersloh Mansergh Barracks vacated.

• 2020

THE vision for a UK-based, streamlined Army (pages 26-27) is met with all troops back on home turf.

Q&A: HOUSING HEAVE

In order for the Army's sweeping base changes to succeed, the MoD has announced that it will invest £1 billion in growing and improving Service housing on home soil.

Here, *Soldier* quizzes Air Cdre Alan Opie, head of operations accommodation at the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, about how the body will go about this crucial work

SOLDIER: What has been done so far to pave the way for these base changes?

DIO: Over the past 18 months, we have been refining the plans to reflect the full requirements of Army 2020. We have worked with stakeholders across the MoD and beyond to develop the current scheme, carrying out a series of studies to determine the potential capacity of the estate and to maximise its use.

SOLDIER: What is the most significant challenge your organisation faces in meeting this vision?

DIO: To ensure that we create as smooth an experience as possible for Service personnel and their families. This plan represents a complex series of interdependent moves, most of which will take place on operational sites.

SOLDIER: Which specific base will present the biggest task?

DIO: Salisbury Plain. Bringing around 4,000 personnel to the training area, plus dependants across a number of nearby sites, is likely to be our biggest yet most rewarding challenge.

SOLDIER: How many troops are going to experience a drop in the standard of their accommodation as a result of the base changes? How long for?

DIO: While there may be a small number of cases where soldiers experience a difference in the standard of housing, we won't go back on our commitment in the Armed Forces Covenant not to allocate Service families accommodation in the lower two (of four) standards of condition.

SOLDIER: Is the money for 1,900 new houses being ring-fenced? What if these dwellings end up costing more than you have budgeted for?

DIO: The funding has been allocated

to us as part of a fully costed £1.8 billion package of work. It is too early to designate expenses to any specific elements, this will only be confirmed once the next stage of due diligence is completed. The exact spend at each location is yet to be finalised and will remain commercially in confidence.

SOLDIER: Service families accommodation is already in short supply in some areas such as Salisbury Plain so how will you deal with an even bigger demand in future?

DIO: Last year we bought 128 houses. This year we are purchasing another 700, including a number in the Salisbury Plain area. This will help significantly to reduce our dependence on costly substitute accommodation and increase choice for Army families.

SOLDIER: Does DIO have adequate time to action all the necessary changes ahead of troops' moving dates?

DIO: Yes. Our commitment is to bring the Army home from Germany by 2020. We are already on track to return the majority of soldiers by 2015 and, whilst we cannot confirm the programme until the relevant planning and approvals have been secured, we are confident we will bring the third brigade home by 2020.



Homes sweet homes: Moving several thousand soldiers into new accommodation will be DIO's biggest yet most rewarding challenge, it says

Picture: Steve Dolk and Shutterstock

REBASING REFLECTIONS

Local views on the widespread changes to British Army unit locations

THE NORTH EAST



“I AM saddened by the decision to move 21 Engineer Regiment out of Claro Barracks and I know there will be many people who will share my sentiment.

However, I am delighted by the news that there will continue to be a very strong presence of Regular forces in Yorkshire and the North East. **”**

Brig Greville Bibby,
Commander 15 (North East) Brigade

SCOTLAND



“SCOTLAND has already seen disproportionate cuts in our defence footprint.

In July 2011 a promise was made to our military community: although bases would be reduced in number, British Army personnel would be increased by between 6,500 and 7,000.

Failure to fulfil that promise is not acceptable. **”**

Nicola Sturgeon,
Deputy First Minister of Scotland

NORTHERN IRELAND



“THE basing plans confirm the future for Ballykinler, Palace, Lisburn and Aldergrove and we are looking forward to welcoming 1st Battalion, The Royal Scots and their families to what will be their new home in North Down. **”**

Brig Rob Thomson,
Commander 38 (Irish) Brigade

THE WEST MIDLANDS



“IT is sad news that 143 Brigade Headquarters will be leaving Shrewsbury after such a long association with the town but the Army's priority must be to focus its resources on the front-line troops. **”**

Brig Gerhard Wheeler,
Commander 143 (West Midlands) Brigade

WALES



“THE facilities at Brawdy are not fit for purpose any longer – that is the reality.

It has the highest level of unaccompanied service of any Army location in the UK, reflecting the fact that people are reluctant to move their families to a site that remote.

Around St Athan there is significant infrastructure and a very positive plan from the Welsh Assembly. **”**

Philip Hammond,
Secretary of State for Defence

SALISBURY



“OVERALL, having more soldiers here can only be a positive thing for Salisbury but we do need to manage it carefully to ensure it works.

We must assess the strain it might put on schools and the health service, and we are currently looking at a road management strategy to cope with the extra civilian and military vehicles that will come in. **”**

Jo Broom,
Leader of Salisbury City Council

ALDERSHOT



“THIS plan brings increased investment to the area by the MoD. Learning where units and families will be based in the coming years will give troops the certainty they need to plan their futures. **”**

Brig Neil Baverstock,
Commander 145 (South) Brigade

IN NUMBERS:

THE STATS BEHIND THE STRATEGY

1 BILLION

Amount, in pounds, to be spent on brand new accommodation

600 MILLION

Annual boost, in pounds, the British economy will receive as a result of the return from Germany

240 MILLION

Cash the Army says it will eventually save by locating in the UK

15,000

Troops to be based at Salisbury Plain by 2020

11,000

Quarters to be handed back to the German authorities

800

Rooms to be upgraded for single soldiers in the UK

400

Service personnel to leave both Wales and Northern Ireland

74

Separate moves to be undertaken over the next six years

70

Percentage of Germany-based troops who will be back on home soil by the end of 2015

22

Schools to close as a result of British drawdown in the European country



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Tosca tasking: Cdns
Michael Ward and
Jonny Jones patrol
the UN buffer zone

DIPLOMATIC DETERRENT

British troops keep the peace on first ever blue beret mission for the REME

Report: Becky Clark
Pictures: Steve Dock

EVERY year, thousands of holidaymakers travel to Cyprus to enjoy its sunny climate and buzzing nightlife.

But troops deployed on Operation Tosca, the UK's contribution to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, see a side to the island that is rarely glimpsed by tourists.

Away from the sand and surf is the buffer zone separating the Greek and Turkish sides of the country; an eerie landscape of crumbling buildings and quiet rural terrain.

Since 1974, when a Greek-backed coup and subsequent Turkish invasion led to bitter fighting, the two opposing forces have eyed each other suspiciously

across a demilitarised area with unarmed international soldiers maintaining the truce.

This month, the latest British troops to serve as the Sector 2 UN Roulement Regiment will return from the mission.

Some 260 personnel from 101 Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Group have been overseeing security in the Nicosia region since last October and are the first ever REME contingent to undertake the role.

Charged with deterring any military or civilian activities that would undermine the status quo, the formation's operations squadron mounted daily patrols of the British area of responsibility within the disputed zone.

"We watch the Cypriot National Guard and the Turkish force to see whether they're over-manning any of their posts, as well as looking out for fly-tipping, dog walkers, loggers, all sorts really,"

Pte Calum Arthur (1 Scots) told *Soldier* during the mission.

"Some people have

permits to be there, mostly farmers.

"Hunters know they're not supposed to enter the buffer zone but they come anyway because it's one of the greenest places in Cyprus with lots of birds and other wildlife.

"We go over and ask them how they are and check whether they have a permit."

However, with limited powers to arrest those lacking the correct paperwork, UN soldiers must ask trespassers to leave or else call in support from their police colleagues where necessary.

"It does get frustrating," conceded Cfn Shelton Soza (REME).

"We can't detain anyone so it's up to them whether they go and even if they do, they can just come back once we leave. >>



>> "You get some who believe in the United Nations and will comply and be polite and others who don't care and don't respect you because they say 'this is my country – you can't tell me what to do'.

"They don't see that you're really just trying to do your job."

Signs of the violence that erupted between the two communities almost 40 years ago are all too evident where the UN-controlled area cuts through Nicosia.

Abandoned homes, shops and cars stand frozen in time, testament to the speed at which the population fled.

Elsewhere in the buffer zone life continues almost as normal.

Six control points allow Cypriots to cross from side to side and some 10,000 people live or work in the area.

Despite the uneasy stalemate, feelings run high on both sides and the complexity of the situation presents some unusual demands on those deployed on Op Tosca.

Maj Dan Anders-Brown, deputy commander of 101 Battalion, explained how important it was for every soldier to understand that their reactions to seemingly innocuous incidents could have far-reaching effects.

"People are lulled into a belief that nothing would happen if we pulled out because they look at the nature of what we're dealing with – stone throwing, name calling, laser pointing – and they think it's trivial. But that could very quickly become abusive language or cocking of weapons and escalate from there," the officer pointed out.

"We had a demonstration on Ledra Street against the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' and within about an hour it went from a small group to 400 protestors armed with batons and knuckledusters.

"It happens that fast, so we made sure we did a lot of mediation training with the troops so that they understood what might occur if they were not diligent."

Among the unit's Reservists was Cfn Jonny Jones of 119 Recovery Company, REME.

The 22-year-old described how the training he received before deploying helped

him to understand his role.

"You're here as an observation force, not to impose anything," the Serviceman said.

"I think the history is really interesting, especially when you look back to when it was under British control in the 1950s.

"Something may not seem like a big incident to us but out here it's very political and sensitive.

"You can understand both sides and why they take it seriously but I keep thinking to myself 'what if there was a buffer zone between Wales and England?' and you can't really comprehend it at all."

As a hybrid formation, 101 Battalion comprises Regular and Reserve units from across the UK and Germany, as well as infantry troops from 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment and 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, who had been earmarked to deploy on Op Herrick when

they were reassigned to the Cyprus mission.

"We'd spent nearly six months training for Afghanistan and were in that operational mindset but we quickly realised this is much more of a relaxed situation," explained Pte Arthur.

"It might be a different kind of tour but at least we get some experience out of it because we can expect to be doing more of these peacekeeping-type tasks in the future under Army 2020."

During the deployment the battalion also contributed 105 soldiers to the Mobile Force Reserve, the UN's quick-response team which reacts to any incidents of unrest.

Made up of multinational personnel, the unit is specially trained to deal with public disorder at a moment's notice.

As if to underline the volatility of the situation, by the time 101 Battalion had approached the end of their tour the force had been called out on four separate occasions.

"It's phenomenal how quickly tensions build up," admitted Maj Anders-Brown.

"Looking at the circumstances strategically, I can quite firmly state if we weren't here there wouldn't be the necessary environment for our political masters to do the negotiation and mediation." ■

SOMETHING MAY NOT SEEM LIKE A BIG INCIDENT BUT OUT HERE IT'S POLITICAL AND SENSITIVE



1878
Cyprus becomes protectorate of the British Empire

1914
The island is formally annexed by Britain when Turkey joins the side of Germany during the First World War

1925
Cyprus becomes a crown colony



1955
Greek Cypriots demanding unification with Greece begin guerrilla war against British rule. Great Britain arms a paramilitary force of Turkish Cypriots

1959
Head of the campaign to politically unite Cyprus and Greece, Archbishop Makarios, is deported



1960
Makarios returns and is elected president



1963
United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus established. The "green line" is drawn between the two sides

1964
Inter-communal violence breaks out



Peace talks begin, stagnate and restart intermittently with little progress towards a formal peace agreement

The military junta in Greece backs a coup against the Cypriot government. Turkish troops then invade the north of the island, forcing Greek Cypriots to flee their homes.

The coup later collapses and the partition between north and south is enforced, approximately along the "green line"

Turkish Cypriots proclaim the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" – unrecognised internationally except by Turkey

Violence along the buffer zone leads to the death of two protestors



UN Secretary General Kofi Annan presents a comprehensive peace plan for Cyprus but its deadline passes without agreement



Above, Multinational mission: Soldiers from 1 Lancs were trained to deal with public disorder as part of the Mobile Force Reserve. **Left:** Ptes Calum Arthur and Scott Kemp inspect a derelict building in the Nicosia region. **Below:** Staff in the Joint Operations Centre gather and assess information relayed by UN personnel



Border restrictions ease for the first time in 30 years



Cyprus joins the European Union as a divided island



The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus reduces the number of troops from 1,300 to 860



Cyprus adopts the euro. The symbolic Ledra Street crossing between the Turkish and Greek sectors of Nicosia is reopened for first time since 1964

1974

1975 onwards

1983

1996

2002

2003

2004

2005

2008

THE GREEN LINE IN NUMBERS

3.3

Narrowest stretch of the zone in metres

7.4

Widest part in kilometres

180

Length of the buffer zone in kilometres

929

Number of military and police personnel in the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

1,619

Number of Greek Cypriots still listed as missing after the conflict in 1974

CYPRUS SITREP

“POLITICALLY, the situation here is stagnant but the issue is never far from people's minds.

The buffer zone is not a dead area; it's vibrant, with lots of farming and other activities so it's about balancing the competing demands of civilian access and increased normality with the security requirements.

It needs a patient and considered approach.

No one is in a hurry and if you push things too hard you can do more harm than good.

Our role is allowing the two sides the political space to talk and to prevent the outbreak of fighting, which we have done for the last 40 years – so in those terms this is a military success story.”



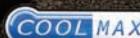
Col Angus Loudon, Chief of Staff, United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus



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TOSCA TIMEOUT

SERVICE PERSONNEL GET STUCK INTO
ADVENTUROUS SPORTS IN CYPRUS

Report: Becky Clark
Pictures: Steve Dock

In addition to their crucial role maintaining the peace in northern Cyprus, troops serving on Op Tosca can take advantage of a plethora of outdoor activities and pursuits while on tour.

The island's rugged coastline and mountainous landscape provide an ideal environment for Servicemen and women to escape the sometimes monotonous job of patrolling the United Nations buffer zone.

WO2 Billy Biggar, a member of the Tosca adventurous training team for 101 Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Group, explained how different rules had allowed the formation to put together a comprehensive package.

"The UN insists that all their troops get three weeks' rest and recuperation so after our guys have their usual fortnight, there are seven days left over for adventurous training," said the 37-year-old.

"By the end of our tour we'll have put 270 personnel through a week-long multi-activity course and run three expeditions.

"It's an important part of the welfare system. Tosca is a non-kinetic operation and the soldiers are on guard all the time so they arrive on the package looking a bit grumpy but by the time they leave they've got smiles on their faces again."

Among those enjoying a week of outdoor pursuits was Cfn Michael Cullen (REME), who agreed the experience had provided welcome respite from the routine duties of a blue beret.

"It breaks up the tour and makes the monotony of the day-to-day patrolling more bearable," said the 22-year-old Reservist.

"You don't get all these opportunities anywhere else."

Climbing, kayaking, quad biking and sailing were just some of the sports delivered by the team, along with mountain biking in the Troodos Mountains and Macheras forest.

"We get a good reaction from the biking because of the terrain," admitted instructor LCpl Dave Stoneman (REME).

"Some of the tracks are quite challenging and technical so there's something for the

more proficient guys as well as the novices.

"We're also running instructor courses, which give people a civilian qualification they might be able to make use of in the future."

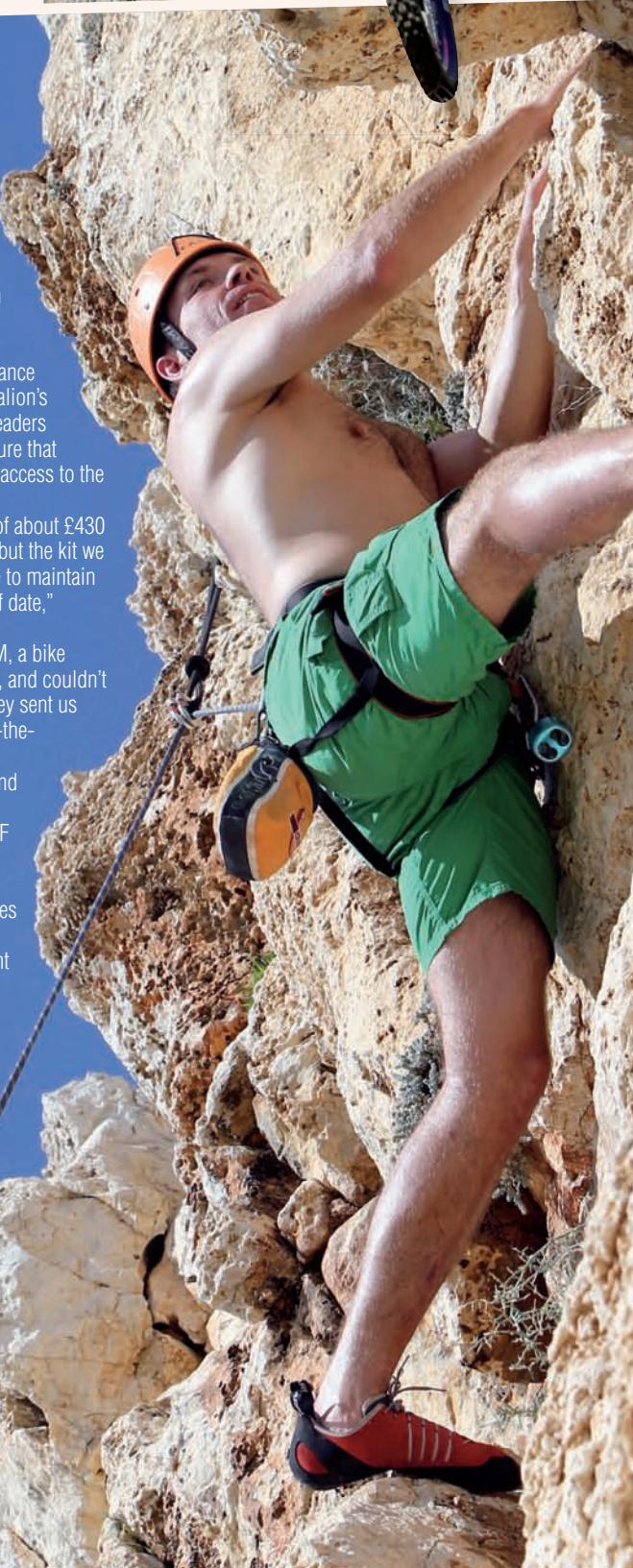
In addition to giving deployed soldiers the chance to let off steam, 101 Battalion's ten-strong group of AT leaders have worked hard to ensure that units following them get access to the best equipment.

"We received a grant of about £430 from the United Nations but the kit we require is very expensive to maintain and was becoming out of date," explained WO2 Biggar.

"We wrote off to SRAM, a bike manufacturer in America, and couldn't believe our luck when they sent us £36,000-worth of top-of-the-range stuff.

"The Service Sound and Vision Corporation contributed 15 bikes, ABF The Soldier's Charity donated £3,800 and 3M and Chain Reaction Cycles both gave us some kit.

"All of this has brought the gear into the 21st century. It is a legacy for the next guys that come here so they can continue to enjoy adventurous training." ■



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All images are courtesy of Gavin James, GJ Multimedia



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Reclaims UK
YOUR CLAIM IN THE SAFEST HANDS

Report: Sarah Goldthorpe
Pictures: Graeme Main

WHEN it comes to worthwhile missions, helping to introduce clean drinking water in one of the world's poorest countries must surely rank high.

But for members of 521 Specialist Team, Royal Engineers (Water Development) the benefits of a three-month task in Sierra Leone run even deeper than humanitarian support.

After spending the first weeks of 2013 creating and repairing boreholes at several military sites across the country, 19 UK water engineers are basking in the success of bringing greater robustness to the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) as a result.

Roaming over thousands of kilometres with little logistical support or medical backup, the group honed their technical skills by drilling to depths of around 60 metres in the scorching 40-degree Celsius sun.

Working alongside their foreign counterparts, British troops installed maintenance-free pumps that could be unaffordable to the poverty-stricken country on the commercial market.

Maj Andy Green, officer commanding 521 STRE (WD), told *Soldier* that West Africa had been a unique proving ground for his personnel.

"You don't get training opportunities like this very often," he said.

"Much of this work would look the same wherever we do it, but the difference here is the

WATER WARRIOR WARRIORS

ENGINEERS BRING NEW LIFE BLOOD TO WEST AFRICA DURING ONE-OF-A-KIND SERIAL

complete absence of a logistics chain.

"There's no Camp Bastion, no forward operating base and the austerity of the environment and spread of the country means this team has had many challenges to overcome.

"When troops get down remote roads in Sierra Leone they know they're not returning for another two or three days and that's exactly the sort of contingency training we are looking for."

For many of those undertaking the so-called Exercise Salone Range, its demands had proved



quite different to other Service serials.

Soldiers traversed the fertile landscape to establish new water sources for local military personnel and their families, from barracks near Makeni to the Joru Force Protection Base towards the Liberian border.

"There is so much variation in the terrain out here and because of the state the country's in, we have no geological information available," said driller Cpl Stuw Duffus (RE).

"Since I got back from Afghanistan in 2011 I haven't been on a drilling site and obviously that means a bit of skill fade."

"But out here everything is coming back to us."

"These are the sorts of tasks we need to be doing in this job; even though it just looks like metal going in a hole it can be quite technical."

Sgt Craig Hinds (RE) added: "Working with Sierra Leone's army engineers has been absolutely brilliant. They are so keen."

"We are learning from them and they are learning from us."

"Whilst here I have developed basic concreting skills. I'm a mechanic by trade but this is about coming back to artisan techniques."

"Local troops are also teaching us how to live out in the wilds."

"We came out with mosquito nets and various other bits of kit but these guys can survive with just a bottle of water."

Comparing the assignment to the unit's recent canal-building tasks on Op Herrick, the senior NCO added: "We don't have the same enemy threat

INSTALLATION OF THE WELLS WILL MEAN BETTER SANITATION AND HYGIENE,

here but in Sierra Leone the danger is nature itself.

"In Helmand province there's a huge logistics chain behind us but if something happens here there is no support beyond our medic."

"If we get bitten by a snake, that's it."

Spr Ben Seaton (RE) added: "The people are very nice."

"I was expecting more animosity but they seem very friendly and want to speak to us."

"One of our trailers had a bit of a problem but I'm surprised by how well our kit has done."

Capt Geoff Hill, the officer leading the contingent, said the soldiers had been briefed about the need to nurse their equipment through the experience before they left Chilwell in the UK.

"They knew their vehicles had to see them from Nottingham to Daru," the officer said.

"Out here it takes four-and-a-half hours to travel just 25 kilometres. Personnel must deal with some very narrow bridges and lots of people watching."

"The reception from soldiers and their communities is fantastic, though."

"The RSLAF guys have nothing – we give them everything – but you cannot fault their skill."

"Installation of the wells will mean better sanitation and hygiene for the country's military and surrounding communities which will reduce their reliance on village supplies and cut the number of people who become ill through waterborne diseases."

According to LCpl Lee Craig, attached to the mission from 530 Specialist Team, the >>

African aside: Sierra Leone's military engineers on working with UK troops

"This project is very good for the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces because we needed that water supply."

"The new pumps should last for 20 years."

"We are working well together and the tasks are very good."

"The British lads have mosquito bites all over them!"

Pte Joseph Blima, Engineer Regiment, RSLAF.



"The British Army are masters and very good at their job. I respect them a lot."

"They taught us how to drill but we knew how to do the construction of the pumps ourselves."

"The guys on the military bases currently collect water in their villages so this will make a huge difference and they are very happy to have the help."

Cpl Ali Mamy, section commander, Engineer Regiment, RSLAF.





« legacy of the trip will be felt for years to come on both sides.

"This has been awesome," he said. "I have to admit that initially I was dubious about how well we would all get along with local troops and what the RSLAF capabilities were.

"But when we were struggling to put brickwork together they said they could do it, and the result was outstanding.

"They asked if my boys would let them use the floor to make concrete and in the end they were mixing the correct ratios faster than we were

on a machine!

"Their standard of English is better than any service I have worked with and they have a lot of respect for rank and play by the rules of that.

"I think we have lost that a bit in certain places in Britain's military."

One senior officer with a keen interest in the project was the outgoing commander of the International Military Assistance Training Team (IMATT), Col Jamie Martin.

"From my perspective this has gone really well," he told *Soldier*.

After 11 years helping to develop the country's armed forces into an accountable and capable organisation, the final members of his team have now left.

But Col Martin said Royal Engineers were helping to create a lasting impact.

"This has been a terrific project to give RSLAF as part of our drawdown," he added.

"Our role out here has been to mentor, advise and influence the country's military.

"In order to do that we need incentives and being able to offer a project that would cost around £20,000 per borehole commercially is great.

"Supplying fresh water to military bases has given a considerable offer to the armed forces



“WATASOLJAZ” - WORD YELLED BY KRIOL-SPEAKING CHILDREN AS MEMBERS OF 521 SPECIALIST TEAM, ROYAL ENGINEERS (WATER DEVELOPMENT) TRAVELED THROUGH THEIR VILLAGES IN SIERRA LEONE. IT MEANS ‘WATER SOLDIERS’.



which keeps IMATT relevant and enables the UK to maintain our influence after we leave."

With the job complete, Maj Green said his team is exploring the possibility of running similar packages in the months to come.

"There's a huge appetite for us to come back here next year," the officer revealed.

"It is a tremendous training opportunity for our personnel and feasibly we could do it again but, as with everything, it will come down to money."

With 783 million people in the world still denied access to safe water, there will surely be no shortage of overseas opportunities for these drillers should they ever wish to perfect their skills in the developing world again. ■

EXERCISE SALONE RANGE IN NUMBERS:

2 – boreholes refurbished by the Royal Engineers during the three-month serial

30 – new wells created by UK and RSLAF troops at military sites across Sierra Leone

12 – diameter in inches of the holes drilled to reach clean water

18 – date this month when the serial concludes

20 – depth in metres of the well created at Joru Force Protection Base

2002 – year that Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war ended

5 MILLION – amount in dollars that a Korean oil company quoted for creating 46 wells at military sites across the country. Although UK troops established just 11 pumps, they charged nothing

EXHAUSTED EXPOSED EXHILARATED

SKI TOURING OPENS UP UNTouched CANADIAN TERRAIN TO TROOPS

Report: Joe Clapson
Picture: Graeme Main

POWERING across rough ground with only the sound of crunching snow and fatigued panting to interrupt the silence of the wilderness.

This is the other side to skiing, where the adrenalin rush is not all about a slide downhill following a leisurely lift to a mountain's top.

Ski touring, an adventurous training activity offered to British soldiers in Canada, requires its brave participants to ascend the snowy elevations with supplies and safety equipment on their backs.

Only occasional descents provide exhilarating respite for tired legs.

The discipline is undeniably tough but as an opportunity to discover untouched routes in the backcountry of the world's most stunning landscape, it is unmatched.

Soldier ventured into the deep snow of Lake Louise in Banff National Park to find WO1 Paul Chiddle (RAPTC), chief instructor at Trails End Camp (TEC), on the hunt for ungroomed powder.

"Ski touring isn't all about walking uphill and being thrashed and you don't have to go very far to access some really good slopes," said the winter sport enthusiast.

"It gives you access to the best off-piste

skiing with very little effort and enables you to travel through impressive locations."

However, the fact this land is neither monitored, patrolled nor maintained does present dangers.

These mean troops must be acutely aware of their surroundings and ready to react to nature's challenges at any time.

"Here, Servicemen and women are in a very risky environment with the threat of avalanches – it is the most serious terrain in the world," explained WO1 Chiddle.

"The admin side of the activity is massively important for Army personnel because it highlights how essential it is to have your things in order, ready for use on the next job.

"It's all very relevant to soldiering because if you can't look after your kit you can't get anywhere and hence you become a liability."

The expeditions are available to any soldier visiting TEC, with routes through the white stuff tailored to suit the abilities of each individual group.

After a 20-minute sweat-inducing walk from the road, novices find themselves alone, away from civilisation and exploring breathtaking countryside.

Maj Rab Black (RAPTC), officer commanding TEC, is in no doubt as to the merits of ski touring as an adventurous training discipline.

"The Army requires its soldiers to operate effectively in challenging environments

which contain a high level of uncertainty and often a real threat to life and limb," the Serviceman said.

"By exposing troops to danger through ski touring and other winter activities, it enables them to develop physical and psychological coping strategies that will assist them under the stresses of combat."

Dealing with the threat of avalanches and the very real prospect of becoming delirious with exhaustion is an important part of this pursuit but, nevertheless, the main objective is enjoyment.

"When people begin ski touring they might find it difficult because it's new and physically challenging but with practise it becomes easy," added Maj Black.

"We don't get soldiers out here just to beat them; it's about getting them to learn additional skills."

"The last thing Service personnel need after spending weeks on the prairies at the British Army Training Unit Suffield is someone shouting at them with orders – we always get smiles on faces."

As with all adventurous training packages offered to exercising troops in this region, there is no charge for the activity or its equipment – both incredibly expensive options for civilian visitors.

Instead, soldiers pay to access Canada's stunning snowscape with physical exertion, mental strain and a willingness to learn new skills. It seems a decent deal. ■





1 LOOK AFTER YOUR FEET

JUST one blister late on in training can ruin your chances of finishing due to infection and pain – especially if aggravated by further running. As soon as you feel a hot spot, treat it. It is easy to injure yourself when operating on a sore foot by stressing other areas in an attempt to compensate.

3 AVOID PLAYING CATCH-UP

THERE are millions of training plans that tell you how far you should be running at what point. If you fall behind in your preparations it isn't the end of the world. Adding catch-up mileage could be disastrous, though. Remember, add no more than ten per cent each week to your distance.

2 DON'T LET SMALL INJURIES BECOME BIG PROBLEMS

IT'S normal to suffer increased niggles during marathon training. Keep an eye on them and if they are getting worse over three consecutive runs or there is swelling then seek help early to reduce the risk of losing training time. Getting prompt treatment often means that you can "run with the injury" instead of having to stop altogether.

4 TRAIN YOUR TUMMY TO SUCCEED

LIKE your legs, your stomach needs to get used to the task you are asking it to do. Have a practice race breakfast before your long run several times. Get up, eat the same food, drink the same drinks and wear the same clothes that you will on race day. Many participants fall foul of tummy troubles on the day and you don't want to be the one thousandth person to empty their bowels in a red-hot portaloo.

5 RUN LIKE A KENYAN, NOT A JAMAICAN

SO it's race day, the crowds are out in force and you are feeling and looking good. This is the time to relax and remember it is a marathon, not a sprint. So many people go too fast and implode before the finish line. If you fall behind your target time, don't try and recoup the seconds over the next mile. Gradual increases in pace are far easier for your body to deal with.

6 FRANKIE SAYS RELAX

IN the days before the race try to remain as relaxed as possible. Don't run if you can walk, don't walk if you can stand, don't stand if you can sit and don't sit if you can lie down: try to keep all that energy stored. Ask yourself, do I really need to go sightseeing or walk around the shops for three hours on the day before a marathon?

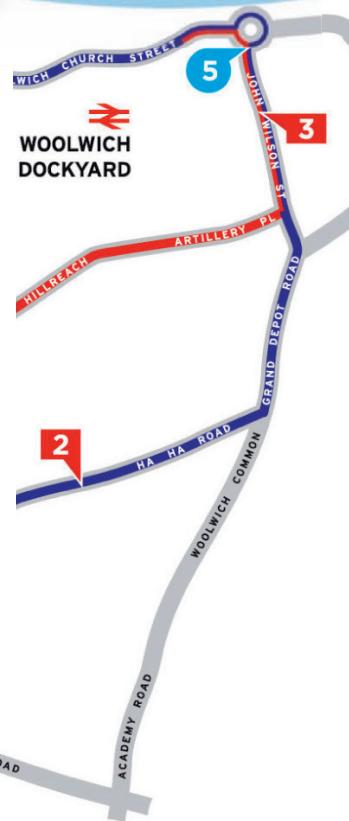
7 MIND OVER MATTER

MARATHONS hurt, whether you are Paula Radcliffe or a regular fun-runner. You will feel pain and want to stop. This is where a positive mentality will need to kick in. Remain focused and keep moving. Every step is a pace closer to that medal and marathon glory.



10 MARATHON TRAINING TIPS

As military runners gear up to this month's Virgin London Marathon, former Army physical training instructor and SSAFA Forces Help fundraising manager Steve King shares his advice for making it to the finishing line...



8 DIVIDE AND CONQUER

THIS works. Split the race into manageable chunks and set targets. For instance, you could try and reach the ten-kilometre marker in a certain time, then ten miles, half way, 20 miles and finally the finish line. Doing this helps you to get over the mental image of the gruelling 26.2-mile route that lies ahead.

9 FAIL TO PREPARE, PREPARE TO FAIL

WHEN you are not training, prepare your kit, mind and body. The more things you can get right before the day, the more likely it is you will have a smooth race. List the equipment you will need, your food for the 48 hours before the race and what time you will get up, eat, and catch the train. Leave nothing to chance. It always amazes me to hear people on a start line say they have forgotten their stopwatch or didn't expect it to be sunny. You have months to prepare!

10 REMEMBER TO SMILE

THE marathon is going to be hard. And yes, it will make you sweat. But look around, talk to others and enjoy the occasion. Every race is different but one thing remains the same: the wonderful people that put themselves through blood, sweat and often tears to cross a finish line. Enjoy the journey.



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TALKBACK



TRANSFORMED BY TREATMENT

■ I HAVE just read Joe Clapson's article ("Mind's eye", January) on the experiences of Sgt Steve Johnson who went through eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR) treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder.

Having just completed a combined cognitive behavioural therapy and EMDR package at the Department of Community Mental Health, RAF Brize Norton, I can absolutely second the comments made by this Serviceman.

I too have no real idea how EMDR "flushed out" my symptoms following Op Herrick 14-15, but it has worked miracles.

The support from staff, the Army Welfare Service and my operational support warrant officer, WO2 Andy Powney, at 160 Transport Regiment literally gave me my life back, gave my daughters their dad back and helped me to put my seven months in Afghanistan and the three locally employed civilians I lost from my team into some sort of perspective.

Post-traumatic stress disorder is the "black dog", the "silent enemy" and the "enemy within".

However, with the right help it can be beaten, and when you come out the other side of the tunnel life really does become better for the injured Service person, their family, friends and employer.

I encourage anyone with symptoms of this illness to get the help they deserve.

After all, they are emotionally injured and it's nothing to be ashamed of. — **Capt James Bolter, RLC (V).**

Slice of Service life

This month's ruminations from the ranks...



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.

Narked by prices

As a deployed soldier at Kandahar Air Field I find it absolutely disgusting that the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes (NAAFI) feel it is acceptable to sell the faster internet connection cards, which one must buy in order to Skype loved ones, at a marked-up price.

The said items are supposed to be sold at three dollars each, but are instead retailed at five.

Whilst I appreciate that the difference per card is minimal, I expect it soon adds up and would like to know the reason behind it.

It is the principal that irks me. NAAFI are aware that deployed soldiers are a captive audience, who are away for extended periods of time and will want to stay in contact with children, partners and parents.

Skype is an excellent way to do this and has certainly made my tour more bearable.

For them to use this as a profiteering exercise is revolting.

They already sell overpriced bits of kit, which is fine as it is up to the individual whether or not they buy it.

However, to effectively steal an extra two dollars every time somebody wants to see their children is horrendous.

This has been going on for some time now. I first complained to NAAFI staff when they began selling the cards.

I was informed by one worker that his manager had insisted that they sell them for five dollars but I could buy them for three dollars next door in the coffee shop.

Fast-forward three weeks and I go to buy some more at the same outlet only to find that all NAAFI establishments are now selling the Skype cards for five dollars.

As this organisation is now run for profit and sees fit to rip-off the emotional vulnerability of deployed troops, I feel it is high time they disassociated themselves with their name as this conjures up a false belief that they are there for soldiers, sailors and airmen.

In this modern era, perks such as a fast enough connection to Skype ought to be free anyway — as should at least an hour's

■ SINCE Australia and New Zealand withdrew from the Imperial Honours system, one New Zealander and three Australians have been decorated with the Victoria Cross, but I have seen no publicity given to these decorations in the UK media.

I note that these awards are now named Victoria Cross for New Zealand and the Victoria Cross for Australia.

The Australian government is currently investigating at least 12 more unresolved cases to determine the eligibility of actions

worth of phone calls per week.

I'd be interested to compare the rights that prisoners get in their "punishments" to what we get as our "welfare" package whilst deployed on operations.

I'll be going back and paying the five dollars soon as my wife, four- and two-year-old sons are missing me and I them.

The NAAFI knows this and will continue to act in this way until they are told not to. — **Name and address supplied.**

Lt Col Kevin Pembroke, CO Expeditionary Forces Institute, responds: Service provider Ifone Neda recently raised their prices and, as a result, some 90 vouchers were still in circulation at three dollars alongside new ones for five.

This meant customers were able to buy at either price depending on the outlet.

Two customers at Kandahar Air Field highlighted this unacceptable situation to us — both received an apology and explanation, whilst one obtained a refund and free voucher.

We returned the three dollar coupons to Ifone Neda so that only the correct ones remained in circulation.

NAAFI is extremely proud of what it does for the Armed Forces, be it in Germany, on-board Royal Navy frigates in the Gulf or in Afghanistan, where it also funds memorial plaques in Lashkar Gah and on the Bastion memorial for Service personnel killed in action.

I can only apologise for the clear confusion caused by the price changes imposed upon us.

Please call in to see our manager and we will give you a free voucher.

Skype is currently not provided through the deployed welfare package and its provision is not an entitlement in accordance with JSP 770.

However, all main operating base and forward operating base locations have both telephone and internet access which is provided to Servicemen and women at public expense.

that are deemed worthy of this very prestigious decoration.

With so many under investigation, does this mean that the extreme level of personal sacrifice under intense enemy fire required to be considered for the British honour, is of a somewhat lower standard in the Australian and New Zealand armed forces?

I sincerely hope not. — **Jim Jacobs, Hampshire.**





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Polish allowance problem

HAVE been unable to claim the get you home (overseas) allowance as it only applies to trips back to the UK.

I am serving in Germany and my wife is from Poland, where we have opted to establish a home.

We spend our holidays there and always drive, so do not need to claim for flights or ferry tickets. In essence our roots are there; it's where my kids call home.

We know JSP 752 is very clear that the above entitlement is for trips back to the United Kingdom.

Had I been a non-British passport holder I could claim different allowances – as can our foreign and Commonwealth colleagues – back to remote parts of the world.

However, a trip within Europe is not admissible due to the technicality around my nationality.

Essentially, I am being discriminated against for being British.

We have exhausted our regimental admin office looking for appropriate ways to claim what is a considerable entitlement loss of some three round trips per year.

It seems that we are being punished for being a mixed

nationality family who have chosen not to keep a home in the UK.

If we lived in Scotland a claim wouldn't be a problem. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), responds:
The get you home (overseas) allowance assists with the cost of a return journey to Britain to reduce the separation of eligible personnel from close family, friends and UK lifestyle that results from a permanent overseas assignment.

It has previously been extended to assist non-British passport holders (who may not have a UK lifestyle) with a return journey to their country of domicile in lieu of the UK.

However, there is no intent to extend the provision further for British nationals.

Recently much work has taken place to improve the flexibility of allowances including making them more accessible to non-British families.

Army briefing note 2/13 published in February explains amendments to policy, which include entitling non-UK spouses of British personnel to set their element of a standard claim against the costs of returning to the country of their domicile.



Service snipers fail to make the cap fit

SNIPERS throughout the Army are struggling to adopt a correct fire position whilst wearing a Mk 6, 6A or 7 helmet – especially when combined with Osprey.

Firing from low-profile positions such as the prone and Hawkins are near impossible.

Most Service personnel go as far as to remove their helmets, especially when a more difficult shot is required, causing obvious safety concerns.

Some units – such as 4th Battalion, The Rifles – have at times been issued with various helmets from the GenTex range.

Having trialled this with a privately bought GenTex *Mich*, it isn't perfect but considerably better than our current line of issued headwear.

Our QMS department has tried tirelessly to order this equipment but has been met by many obstacles resulting in us being told they are only given to elite units.

Why is it near-impossible to be issued with the potentially life-saving equipment required for us to carry out our jobs properly and safely? – **Name and address supplied.**



Picture: Steve Dock

Maj Alex Mills, SO2 Dismounted Close Combat, Capability Directorate Combat, responds: The current Mk 7 helmet is the accepted best protective headwear in the MoD inventory.

It represents a crucial component of the personal protection equipment (PPE) and is designed to give life-saving, critical and vital organ coverage.

The Mk 7 offers the highest level of safety available to our soldiers and significantly more than is present in the GenTex models.

The specific issues you refer to are

concerned with integration between the helmet and Osprey ballistic plates, and we are aware that friction between the two can affect your specific role as a sniper.

This issue has been looked into by the ballistics project team in Defence Equipment and Support and the problem relates to form, fit and function of the headwear.

Basically, the difficulty can largely be solved by ensuring a correct fit of the Mk 7.

A new DVD will soon be issued, which will detail how the user is to correctly size and fit the helmet.

A subject matter expert will also be available to conduct one-to-one fittings for individuals in 1 Mechanized Brigade who are deploying on Op Herrick 18.

The current operational waivers in place for Service personnel in specialist roles such as snipers should also help to address the problem.

Longer-term, Project Virtus will deliver a fully integrated PPE system from March 2015 onwards.

It will specifically focus on head and torso sub-system integration for all troops, including snipers.

DIGITAL DOSSIER

THIS MONTH'S ELITE TWEETS

#VICTORIA CROSS (P 4)

@VCTrust

It is encouraging to see such great respect for James Ashworth and his pending Victoria Cross. We now need people to show the same respect for all VCs

#BLUESTONE 42 (P 15)

@LyndseyMcDermot

I'm not sure people realise how close to real parts of #Bluestone42 were lol. I've definitely dated a captain just like that haha.

@matdicko

#Bluestone42 is class, the mission brief by #CaptSoftly in last night's episode was pure genius and will likely pop up in presentations

@Chelski_Nick

Liking the gallows humour. #BBC3

@Tonygardner

We're as nervous about the Armed Services seeing this show as we are anyone. Hope we get it right for them. #Bluestone42

@soldiermagazine

Lessons in redundancy

FOLLOWING the announcement of further redundancies I felt it pertinent to report my own experience as an applicant during tranche two.

This may assist the next groups in June when they find out the results.

Firstly, even though there was much promise of support from the unit I was serving in, myself and others found it frustrating that key personnel were not checking their JPA terminals in order to authorise resettlement activities that were important, therefore they constantly timed out and often needed chasing up.

While I was eventually allowed to get on with what I needed to do, initially there was pressure put on those selected to waste their time on Service activities such as preparations for military annual training tests or tasks.

These undertakings would ultimately benefit the regiment long after the departure of the individual but were of little or no relevance to their new sole focus which, of course, was leaving.

Let's clear up some issues for the next soldiers to leave right now.

Individuals, especially if they are an applicant, need to immediately break away from all military taskings if they are not on ops and concentrate on retraining.

Their unit and line managers need to accept this fact.

If they can't, they may have to take themselves to one side and ask "how would I feel in that position?"

It would be helpful if formations established one person to manage outgoing personnel and administer them.

This individual needs to be available and in their chair every single day – or at least for an allocated period every week – to assist on and approve all JPA matters.

My advice to anyone having issues is to make full use of the excellent support provided by the regional resettlement officers and their very competent staff members as well as the regional resettlement centre teams.

There may be serving line managers out there who will disagree with me or challenge what I have said but they are not, and possibly will not be, the ones to go.

I should add that I am now fully employed. There is plenty of work out there, especially for former Service personnel.

Just remember that the rank falls off when you exit the gates, though.

Good luck to you all. – Sean Sullivan, ex-RLC.

Col Andy King, AD Ops, DETS(A), responds: This letter raises

some valid points about administrative practices, particularly JPA, and guidance on improving the service has been incorporated into tranche three planning.

During the military secretary's redundancy roadshow briefings at Herford, Glasgow, Chilwell, Tidworth and Andover, units were briefed on the importance of activating and monitoring JPA workflows.

It is an individual and his or her line manager who must act promptly in this regard and that message will be reinforced through the chain of command as the June notification date approaches.

As regards concentrating on transition to civilian life, there has to be a balance here – particularly if units are preparing for operations.

However, it is in nobody's interest to engage soldiers in meaningless tasks when their focus should be on transition.

Once notified of redundancy, the needs of the Army must be carefully balanced with an individual's requirement to engage with their resettlement.



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MEDDLESOME MATTER

I WOULD like to take issue with Brig Matthew Lowe, who says that since 1919 there has been a ruling that British troops cannot wear two medals for the same campaign (*Talkback*, March).

If that is so, why do Korean veterans wear the Korea Medal (a British decoration with blue and gold stripes, pictured above) and the Korea UN medal (also with blue and white stripes, known as the "butcher's apron")? – Maj Gen (Retd) Julian Thompson.

DISAGREE?

Contact **Talkback**
mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk
Tweet: @soldiermagazine

'KICK OUT CLAIM COMPANIES'

I AM disappointed to see that *Soldier* feels it is acceptable to carry sizeable adverts from firms trying to secure themselves a proportion of troops'



payment protection repayments.

Such companies seek to take thousands of pounds from Servicemen and women for merely handling paperwork.

Given that Money Force – an officially supported advice website (page 12) – recommends that personnel avoid claims management companies, one wonders why you feel it right to carry such advertising.

As I understand it, *Soldier* is run at public expense for the good of the Army.

Therefore, taking cash from those who seek to exploit this community seems a curious way of doing business.

One suspects 39 Regiment, Royal Artillery would do well to scrutinise how they subsidise their horse racing in future. – Capt Bell, Yorks.

The editor replies: Thank you for raising this. You may recall a feature run with Martin Lewis back in October, which publicised the fact that troops are easily able to make their own PPI claims.

However, such firms are legal and it would be wrong to enforce any personal moral stance without wider consensus.

The Army is currently seeking an MoD review of general advertising policy.

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'Reserves require rail discounts too'

HAVING completed my 22 years of service as a Regular soldier and made good use of the benefits of the HM Forces railcard for the majority of that time, the facility was sorely missed when I became a civilian.

I have recently joined the Territorial Army and applied for the card to assist with the train fare on our annual pilgrimage from North Wales to

Twickenham for



the Army v Navy rugby match.

However, I was informed by the admin office that part-time personnel are not entitled to this benefit.

Surely by definition of the card's title, this should not be the case? Maybe it should be renamed the "HM Forces (but not TA) railcard".

This raises a number of concerns, and not only to my wallet!

The use of public transport is encouraged and therefore I do not understand why Forces personnel, both Regular and Reserve, are not assisted by receiving the substantial discount that the railcard offers.

Why are Reservists being excluded from this entitlement when there is no disparity with other discounts?

For example, there is no differentiation between full- or part-time troops in relation to the MoD 90.

With Reserve forces being relied upon

more and more, this issue should be addressed. – WO2 N Hesleton, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), replies:
The HM Forces railcard is granted by the Association of Train Operating Companies and entitlement is governed by a contract between rail firms and the MoD. Following requests by the department, the companies recently stated the discount will not be extended to TA troops. However, the card can be applied for by mobilised Reservists.



Annoyed by 'inept' hearing protection

AM writing to express my displeasure at the personal interfaced hearing protection (PIHP) system currently on general issue to troops on operations.

It's all well and good having hearing defence that is personal to you but in my experience they are particularly uncomfortable to wear over extended periods of time.

Furthermore, in theatre I found that they were useless given that the radio connections for them were unavailable.

This kit was obtainable during mission-specific training but even there I along with others found that the systems were incredibly flimsy and easily broken – particularly the mounts that the earpieces screw on to.

Why has the MoD insisted upon this woefully inadequate kit when there are more robust options available?

Versions like Peltor's ComTac headsets don't need to be injection-moulded and connections for the personal role radios surely wouldn't be too hard to source.

In the entire time that PIHPs have been on issue, I have not met one person who has anything good to say about them.

If the British Army is making such a massive deal about soldiers protecting their hearing, why have they elected to issue some joke of a system? – Name and address supplied.

Col Charlie Sykes, Capability Directorate Combat, replies: PIHP equipment was purchased as an urgent operational requirement (UOR) to offer an immediate improvement to soldiers' hearing

protection while the long-term solution, the tactical hearing protection system (THPS), is developed.

After extensive consultation we selected an active hearing system which cuts out battlefield noise but uses a radio connection to maintain soldiers' situational awareness.

The option we chose was the best available within the UOR time constraints.

Mouldable ear units should make it more comfortable, although comfort for any piece of kit is subjective to each individual soldier.

Prior to fielding, the system underwent extensive user trials before being declared fit for purpose as a UOR.

The protection is issued to units deploying to theatre, and is available in theatre, as a full set including the radio connector.

We are aware of issues with the radio connector breaking and so spares should be available if needed.

While we cannot comment on this individual's experience, we are not aware of any supply problems in Afghanistan. There are enough full sets and spares for all troops who need them to have the complete working kit.

THPS seeks to improve what is provided for future missions and key

requirements include hearing protection whilst maintaining situational awareness, comfort and useability.

The lessons learnt through feedback on PIHP have been incorporated into the THPS requirement and equipment will be rigorously evaluated by the Infantry Trials and Development Unit, supported by experienced Field Army troops, prior to its procurement and issue.



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Paralysis by airborne analysis

AM astounded at the lack of understanding the author of "Drop The Parachute Regiment" (January) has regarding this capability, especially in the context of the reduced footprint in Afghanistan as the British Army returns to contingency.

The fact that the formation is a relatively youthful organisation at just 72 years old should not be one of the factors in deciding whether or not to disband or reduce it; indeed The Parachute Regiment is now one of the oldest regiments in the order of battle.

I find this approach extremely naive and indicative of the author's genuine lack of comprehension of the

capabilities of this unit and the nature of contingency in the round.

The French para strategic insert into a blocking position north of Timbuktu in Mali earlier this year not only proves the utility of this asset but the appetite for allied nations to deliver a large footprint at short notice in a far from certain environment.

Another issue that I would like to highlight is the author's incorrect understanding of the nature and purpose of the drop zone.

A landing zone requires a smaller area for planning.

However, the amount of troops that come out of the back of a Chinook

cannot replicate the para insert.

The biggest issue with the original article is the fact that the specialist training that these soldiers undergo from day one is superb.

All recruits are trained extremely robustly, whether physically or by conducting numerous map, compass and weapon handling lessons.

P Company selection identifies Service personnel based not only on their fitness levels but their ability to handle more and more pressure.

Our non-commissioned officers routinely perform superbly on the career courses they undertake. — WO1 Tidmarsh, 3 Para.

Picture: Steve Dolk

Minded to resign over pension pains

HAVING read much over the last few months on pension changes, I have concerns yet to be addressed.

On enlisting I agreed to terms and conditions of service (TACOS) which included a minimum period of service and a substantial notice period.

The military is unique in such respects; no other British employer makes such demands or exposes their staff to such a high level of risk.

I accepted these conditions on the basis that I would have the opportunity to serve a full career and get a full pension at the end.

As an officer commissioned from the ranks, I have served this long on the basis that I will be eligible to leave after 16 years' reckonable service with an immediate pension and gratuity.

It now appears that the value and age at which I can receive my pension and gratuity are altering for the worse.

If my pension conditions change, why am I and other Service personnel expected to honour the TACOS that were imposed

when we enlisted? Surely this is a breech of employment contract?

If I do not agree to the changes the only recourse I currently have is to resign — sacrificing all the immediate pension benefits I have accrued.

Otherwise I am forced to serve under a brand new set of TACOS.

I find this reprehensible.

Why has there been no option for troops to serve out their current terms or at the very least to leave with a representative portion of their accrued pension at the point where pension changes are introduced? — Name and address supplied.

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), responds: While transitional protection has been funded by the government for those closest to retirement, most Servicemen and women will be automatically transferred to the new pension scheme during 2015.

While this is a change in your TACOS, it is also legal and if one considers that

there will be some personnel serving for up to 40 years after the establishment of the new format, it is also reasonable.

To introduce this for new joiners only would not deliver the affordability that is critical to the long-term sustainability of Armed Forces pension arrangements.

Under the fresh scheme, Service personnel will retain their accrued rights to pension benefits earned under the current system and will see no change in when they are entitled to draw them.

The military has secured a good deal on the new arrangements.

The Forces Pension Society stated in a recent magazine article that it is "100 per cent sure" the scheme on offer is as good as the Armed Forces could have hoped for.

Ultimately, it is a personal choice to remain in service or leave.

However, I urge you to do proper research before arriving at your decision.

The new pension will be better than almost any other you can find outside the British Army.



APPOINTMENTS

Gen Sir Nicholas Houghton to be appointed Chief of the Defence Staff in succession to Gen Sir David Richards in July.



COMPETITIONS

Spine line winner: Maj Mathieson, JSCSC, Shrivenham, Wilts.

Sinister DVD: Anna Coyle, Wolverhampton, West Midlands; Anne McCutcheon, Livingston, West Lothian; Kayleigh Bates, Merthyr Vale, Merthyr Tydfil; Catherine Parkin, Leeds; Shaun Needham, London.



DIARY

April 23: The Roar of the Lion: The Making of Churchill's World War Speeches from 1900 at the Churchill War Rooms. Author and historian Richard Toye shows that Churchill's speeches were much more controversial, and much more criticised, than popular myth suggests. Tickets £16.50 adults, £13.20 concessions. Visit www.iwm.org.uk for more details.

Until June 2: Britain's Greatest Battles at the White Space Gallery, National Army Museum. Visit www.nam.ac.uk for more.

June 6: Mercian Regiment – New Colours. This is the first time the regiment has been presented with colours following their amalgamation. The unique event will be held at Worcester Warriors Rugby Club. Gates open 0900 with the parade taking place from 1100-1215. Tickets £2. After the parade there will be a number of subsidised options for food. For more information contact the colours project officer on 01543 434352.

June 28: Quad-Service LGBT conference at MoD Main Building, London.

June 29: Members of the Armed Services will march in the London Community Pride event.

Until July: The Imperial War Museum, London, will be closed for redevelopment in preparation for the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War in 2014. Visit www.iwm.org.uk for more information.

July 6: The Royal British Legion Surrey will hold a fund-raising walk at Dunsfold Race Park, Cranleigh from 1300-1700. Civilians and military personnel are invited to enter teams to walk, dance or cycle around the one-mile circuit as many times as they can. Minimum sponsorship is £50 per team and fancy dress is welcome. Some 500 motorcyclists from the RBL Riders Branch will also complete 11 honour laps. For

further information visit www.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/surrey/news-events

Until further notice: Chelsea Pensioners' wartime stories are being captured in a new online collaboration between the National Army Museum and the Royal Hospital Chelsea. The Old and the Bold is an audiovisual history project and videos are available to view at www.nam.ac.uk

Help for Heroes: 0845 673 1760 or 01980 846 459; www.helpforheroes.org.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

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

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

Poppyscotland: 0131 557 2782; www.poppyScotland.org.uk

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

Remount: 01451 850 341; www.remount.net

Royal British Legion: www.britishlegion.org.uk

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

Scottish Veterans' Residences: 0131 556 0091; www.svronline.org

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

SSAFA Forces Help: 0845 1300 975; www.ssafa.org.uk

The Not Forgotten Association: 020 7730 2400; www.nfassociation.org

uk4u Thanks: 01798 812081; www.uk4u.org



DIRECTORY

ABF The Soldiers' Charity: 0845 241 4820

Armed Forces' Buddhist Society: Chaplain 020 7414 3411; www.afbs-uk.org

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

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

Army Ornithological Society: www.armybirding.org.uk

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

Army Families Federation: 01264 382324; mil 94391 2324; www.aff.org.uk

Blind Veterans UK: (formerly St Dunstan's) www.blindveterans.org.uk; 0207 7235021

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

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

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

Forcesline: 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.

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Heroes Welcome: www.heroeswelcome.co.uk

The following Army Briefing Notes, Defence Internal Briefs and Defence Information Notices can be found online at www.armynet.mod.uk

ABN 10/13: Voluntary transfer of Army personnel

ABN 09/13: Transfer grants

ABN 08/13: Civilian HR process changes

ABN 07/13: Introduction of Armed Forces independence payment

ABN 06/13: Transfer grant replaced with ABN 09/13

ABN 05/13: Army Photographic Competition

ABN 04/13: Transition to Civilian Life film

ABN 03/13: Revised medical standards

DIN 2013DIN01-047: Officer service with the Pathfinders, 16 Air Assault Brigade

DIN 2013DIN01-046: Support to operations (S20) kit and equipment

DIN 2013DIN01-045: BR3 – Issue of February 2013 edition

DIN 2013DIN01-044: Equality and Diversity Combined Whitley Council meeting – October 9, 2012

DIN 2013DIN01-043: Guidance for Service personnel and their families when applying for mortgages and unsecured credit



DIN 2013DIN01-042: London Pride Event – Saturday June 29, 2013

DIN 2013DIN01-041: Late entry commissions in the Adjutant General's Corps

DIN 2013DIN01-040: 2013 and 2014 pilgrimages by the Armed Forces region of HCPT – The Pilgrimage Trust

DIN 2013DIN01-039: The In-Service Fast Stream Competition 2013

DIN 2013DIN01-038: Relocation allowances – additional housing costs allowance for renters

DIN 2013DIN01-037: Additional employee pension contributions

DIN 2013DIN01-036: Streamlined route to professional registration for Royal Navy weapon engineers and technicians

DIN 2013DIN01-034: Late entry commissions in the Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

DIN 2013DIN01-033: Employment and careers support for wounded, injured and sick Service personnel

DIN 2013DIN01-031: Service with the Pathfinders, 16 Air Assault Brigade, selection course

DIN 2013DIN01-030: Regulations governing the payment of ISODET nursery allowance

DIN 2013DIN01-029: Electoral registration – members of the Armed Forces and their spouses or civil partners

DIN 2013DIN01-028: Late entry commissions in the Army Air Corps

DIN 2013DIN01-027: Late entry commissions in the Royal Corps of Signals

DIN 2013DIN01-025: Members of the classic, classic plus, premium or Nuvos sections of the civil service pension scheme

DIN 2013DIN01-024: Paying my civil service

pensions for additional (non-core) services

DIN 2013DIN01-023: Healthcare provision in British Forces Gibraltar – directory of local health services and medical screening advice

DIN 2013DIN01-022: Referrals to the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre Headley Court

DIN 2013DIN01-021: 55th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes

DIN 2013DIN01-020: Publication of Cyber Skills Functional Competence Framework

DIN 2013DIN01-019: Service with the Pathfinders, 16 Air Assault Brigade, selection course details

DIN 2013DIN01-018: The Sir Colin Terry Award for Excellence in Airworthiness 2012

DIN 2013DIN01-017: Sikh Support Network Conference

DIN 2013DIN01-016: Voluntary transfer of Army personnel

DIN 2013DIN01-015: Sharing basic patient details with the NHS

DIN 2013DIN02-001: Procedures for defence visitors to Canada

DIN 2013DIN03-003: MoD special access programme management

DIN 2013DIN04-031: Amendment of the CBRN operational medical modules

DIN 2013DIN04-030: Movement and disposal of United States international traffic in arms regulations controlled materiel in theatre

DIN 2013DIN04-028: Updates to carried on-board allowance, provisioning schedule and OBD (on-board documentation) to show supersession and remove obsolete items

DIN 2013DIN04-027: Declaration of BIDC/1490 (also known as KIPLING) as being obsolete by Crypto Services for Defence

DIN 2013DIN04-025: Launch of two-way match payment process on products purchased via P2P

DIN 2013DIN04-024: Joint CBRN laptop support procedures

DIN 2013DIN04-023: Declaration of obsolete – inventory class DMC Z75 Army Tactical Computer System

DIN 2013DIN04-022: Declaration of obsolete – Bowman HF Mk 1 lithium-ion rechargeable battery

DIN 2013DIN04-021: Defence Equipment and Support contractor support arrangements for Submarine Command and Control system

DIN 2013DIN04-020: Introduction of new pest control consumables

DIN 2013DIN04-019: Declaration of obsolescence – BCIP urgent operational requirement equipment

DIN 2013DIN04-018: New contract notice for the disposal of fire extinguishers

DIN 2013DIN04-017: Equipment tables, scales and schedules

DIN 2013DIN04-016: Defence Equipment and Support change of contract arrangements for support of UHF Satcom

DIN 2013DIN04-015: Legal review of newly acquired or developed weapons and associated equipment

DIN 2013DIN04-013: Weapon equipment – declaration of obsolete/obsolescent status

DIN 2013DIN04-012: Airworthiness and other domain implications of adhesive, tapes and sealants contract, agreed firm schedule items

DIN 2013DIN04-011: Aircrew corrective vision service – new arrangements

Continued on page 64

NO. 857

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TEN details have been changed on this photograph of the presentation of the Grand Military Gold Cup to horse owner Brig Julian Browne by Princess Anne at Sandown Park race course. Circle the differences in the left image and send the panel to **HOAY 857**, *Soldier*, Ordnance

Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by April 30. 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 June issue. Usual rules apply. **February's winners:** First correct entry drawn at random was Mrs J Orr, Guetersloh, BFPO 47. Runners up: WO2 Malone, Tayforth UOTC, Dundee and K Adams, RHQ RAEC/ETS, Worthy Down.



DIN 2013DIN04-010: Lifejackets – replacement of pre-April 2005 UML Mk 6 operating heads
NSN – 0472/4220-99-991-1868

DIN 2013DIN04-009: Publication of Land equipment engineering standards to replace DEME(A) engineering standards

DIN 2013DIN05-007: A structured review of Joint Service Publications policy and guidance

DIN 2013DIN05-005: Reorganisation of the General Support Group to operational support programmes

DIN 2013DIN05-004: Departmental instructions on handling parliamentary business including parliamentary questions, ministerial correspondence and defence select committee business

DIN 2013DIN06-007: Defence Annual Road Safety Awards 2012-13

DIN 2013DIN06-006: Infection prevention control – sharps injuries prevention: European Union Council directive 2010/32/EU

DIN 2013DIN06-005: Infection prevention control: new National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence guidelines

DIN 2013DIN06-004: Incorrect servicing of 90 ltr foam trolley, fire extinguishers NSN 4210 99 701 9379

DIN 2013DIN06-003: Battery storage and recycling

DIN 2013DIN06-002: Cessation of pulmonary function testing at the Institute of Naval Medicine

DIN 2013DIN07-041: Chief of Air Staff's Fellowships

DIN 2013DIN07-040: Defence chemical biological radiological and nuclear centre course information and support for 2013-14

DIN 2013DIN07-039: Exercise Canary Gold 2013-14

DIN 2013DIN07-038: Urban operations courses: urban operations instructors course

DIN 2013DIN07-037: Applications for courses at the Empire Test Pilots' School

DIN 2013DIN07-036: Joint Services Expeditions Trust

DIN 2013DIN07-035: Joint Services adventurous training course programme 2013-14

DIN 2013DIN07-034: Maritime Warfare School tri-Service sky siren courses for 2013-14

DIN 2013DIN07-033: Helicopter load slinging equipment inspector course

DIN 2013DIN07-032: ARTD Staff Leadership School course programme and policy: April 2013 to March 2014

DIN 2013DIN07-031: Exercise Cambrian Patrol 2013, October 11-20

DIN 2013DIN07-029: All arms unit fire safety managers, warden, extinguisher maintenance, awareness trainer

DIN 2013DIN07-028: Qualified helicopter tactics instructor course

DIN 2013DIN07-027: Joining instructions for personnel attending Maritime Warfare School courses at Phoenix Training Group

DIN 2013DIN07-026: Junior officers hydrography, meteorology and oceanography acquaint courses 2013-14

DIN 2013DIN07-025: JSAT Gliding Foundation gliding courses

DIN 2013DIN07-024: Joint Service adventurous training sub-aqua diving on Ascension Island – risk assessment and emergency assistance plan

DIN 2013DIN07-023: Safeguarding children and young people level 1 and 2 training

DIN 2013DIN07-022: Diversity and inclusion training: implementation of unit-led core and advanced level training for naval Service personnel

DIN 2013DIN07-021: Joint Service sail training – Exercise Scotwest 2013

DIN 2013DIN07-020: Adventurous training planning expeditions in 2014 to Nepal

DIN 2013DIN07-019: ETS support to the officer career development programme: 2013-14

DIN 2013DIN07-018: Army Educational Services support to NCO and WO command, leadership and management

DIN 2013DIN07-017: Joint Service alpine meet 2013

DIN 2013DIN07-016: Defence Centre of Training Support course schedule April 2013 to March 2014

DIN 2013DIN07-015: Tactical Medical Wing schedule of courses 2013-14

DIN 2013DIN07-014: Training – Defence College of Policing and Guarding courses to be held April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014

DIN 2013DIN07-011: Mandatory fraud awareness training

DIN 2013DIN07-010: SG Med op cap – training requirements authority

DIN 2013DIN07-009: Joint operations planning course 2013-14

DIN 2013DIN08-001: 2012-13 Annual report and accounts – closure of feeders

DIN 2013DIN09-001: New Year Honours list 2013 – MoD civilian recipients

DIN 2013DIN10-015: Army Inter-Unit Cricket Cup Competition 2013

DIN 2013DIN10-014: Travel at public expense for Army sport

DIN 2013DIN10-013: Army Offshore Regatta 2013

DIN 2013DIN10-010: Services Offshore Regatta 2013 – notice of race

DIN 2013DIN10-008: Cheviot 2000 Fell Race June 22, 2013

DIN 2013DIN10-007: Welsh 1,000 Metre Peaks Race June 1, 2013

DIB 14/13: Army Regular basing plan – enabling the delivery of Army 2020

DIB 13/13: Improving leadership and managing change – PUS and VCDS write to all staff

DIB 12/13: PUS and Commander JFC agree to establish a 3 star Defence Chief Information Officer

DIB 11/13: Operation Newcombe (Mali) MoD involvement

DIB 10/13: Introduction of the Armed Forces independence payment (AFIP)

DIB 09/13: International defence engagement strategy – maximising the Defence effort to achieve the greatest effect



ROADSHOWS

The Army Engagement 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, questions and culminates with refreshments. 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@btconnect.com with the event you are interested in attending.

April: 24, Merton; 25, Southwark. **May:** 8, Kingston-upon-Thames; 14, Stamford. **June:** 4, Aberdeen; 5, Edinburgh; 6, Glasgow.



REUNION

Queen's Royal Lancers north west branch annual dinner on April 6, 2013 at Blackpool. All ex-16/5 QRL, 17/21 L, QRL and attached personnel welcome. Further details from Ned Kelly via 01772 324795 or mike.kelly@talktalk.net

The Reconnaissance Intelligence and Geographic Centre Northern Ireland marks its 40th anniversary. A weekend of celebrations will be held at Aldergrove, May 3-5. Open to current and former personnel. Ticket only. For details call Cpl Cooke on 028 944 21463 or Cpl Denton on 028 944 21202.

A reunion for all former members of the **Army Dog Unit, Northern Ireland** who served in the province between 1973 and 2007 will be held at The Royal British Legion Club Arlewas on Saturday, May 4 followed by a service of remembrance at the National Memorial Arboretum the following day. For further information contact John Tucker via johnatucker70@yahoo.com

25 Regiment, Royal Artillery reunion on the weekend of June 28-30 at the warrant officers' and sergeants' mess, Larkhill. Further information from Steve Russell on 01985 214376 or email stevenrussell771@btinternet.com



SEARCHLINE

Author **Lee Tweedy** is writing a book about the experiences of Servicemen and women after their return from current operations and is looking for personal accounts. All tales are welcome. Stories will be treated with respect and only published with the subject's permission. Please email tellmeyourside1@gmail.com with your account.

The Rotary Club of Upper Eden is inviting Service personnel to take part in the **Yomp Mountain Challenge** on June 2, 2013. The charity fund-raising event features a choice of three courses (6.5 miles, 11.5 miles or 23 miles) across the fells of Kirkby Stephen in Cumbria. Visit www.yomp.org for more information.

HOME TRUTHS

A PERSONAL view from Catherine Spencer, chief executive of the Army Families Federation. Log on to www.aff.org.uk for more information



Positive steps towards future force

IFIND myself adrift – I'm normally far more agitated after a major policy announcement these days.

Whilst there will be devil in the detail of last month's rebasing announcement it is, at this early stage, far better than I had hoped for.

The locations that we are to be centred around are generally good and I feel confident that the significant lobbying the Army Families Federation conducted to stress that if we want to encourage soldiers to buy their own homes we need to be in locations where two incomes can be accessed has been taken on-board.

We seem to have concentrations in areas where meaningful employment for Service family members is a real possibility.

Of course, until we see investment in social infrastructure to match the increased size of these communities and understand the full detail of what else the new employment model will demand of us, we will not rest or become complacent.

However, it appears that after many years of difficult decisions and bad news this is a positive step forward into the future.

If you are reading this and disagree then do get in touch with us – we need as many varied responses as possible to ensure our views are representative of the Force's community.

The announcement of £1.8 billion in investment (page 7), including 1,900 houses, is really welcome.

But I can't entirely endorse the party line that suggests housing shortages will end.

Anyone who has tried to get hold of Service families accommodation on Salisbury Plain will remain concerned that demand may continue to outstrip supply, but rumours do abound of mass purchases from local developers.

When I met with the adjutant

general just after the announcement he assured me that the Defence Infrastructure Organisation has already been purchasing dwellings and that, coupled with the planned reduction in manpower, housing will be available in the right locations.

There will be no overnight solutions to the problem but the proposal at least appears workable.

As my soldier says, "no plan survives contact", so we again have our specialists ready to take your call to document the all-important evidence.

Yet more surprising but extremely welcome news was the statement from the Secretary of State for Defence, Philip Hammond, publicly calling for a halt to any further budget cuts.

Afterwards, I wrote to the minister stating: "Families are drained by the implementation of the Strategic Defence and Security Review; they are weary of redundancy and pay restraint.

"Morale is low and belief that the MoD offers a decent future and potential career path has been damaged by the

erosion of the 'offer'.

"Your comments will do much to regain trust from families and Service personnel who are enduring a significant drop in standard of living, continued operational deployment, employment uncertainty and the ongoing trauma of rebasing and restructuring in an environment of punishingly long working days.

"It is heartening to hear that as a government minister you are fighting our corner – bravo."

Following swiftly on from Mr Hammond, Chief of the General Staff Gen Sir Peter Wall spoke out to explain the Army cannot do its job if it is smaller than currently planned.

Uncertainty remains over whether

this very public campaigning will have the desired impact – the lack of growth across the country's economy leaves everyone short of money – and what it will mean for further redundancies.

However, it's great that we are seeing evidence of real fight from the very top of the Army tree. ■

Best foot forward: The British Army's new basing arrangements have been received far more positively than first expected

Picture: Graeme Main

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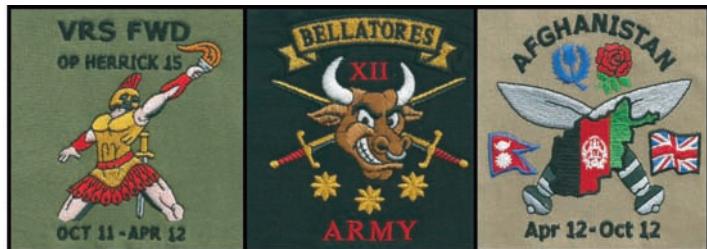
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P78 BOOKS **OPERATION NO RETURN**

P80 TOP GEAR **HANDSET HELPERS**

reviews@soldiermagazine.co.uk



VIVACIOUS VIEWING



THE PACKAGE out now

MAKE no bones about it, this is a B movie, but who doesn't love one of those every now and then? Tommy (**Steve Austin**) has an easy task; all he has to do is deliver a package to a man named The German (**Dolph Lundgren**) and his brother's debts will be wiped, giving him freedom. What starts as a simple mission takes a deadly turn when he finds out what he is carrying and is followed by a gang who want to get their hands on it. It's an easy watch with huge amounts of action played out by cult heroes. For uncomplicated entertainment, it does an excellent job.

Cpl Adam Jackson, 3 Para



LAKE PLACID 4 out now

WE are told this fourth offering in the *Lake Placid* series is the last – let's hope so. In this formulaic feature directed by **Don Michael Paul** we see a rogue game warden (**Yancy Butler**) hunt for a giant crocodile. Horror icon **Robert Englund** and **Elisabeth Rohm** also star, which is promising but they can't save this. The filmmakers promise crocs that are "badder and more brutal than ever" but after watching 86 minutes of budget special effects showing teens being chased by reptiles, the same can be said for the movie. It is terrible.

Richard Long, Soldier



COMPANY OF HEROES out now

FOR a low-budget film trying its luck in the packed Second World War genre, this title acquires itself pretty well. Although it certainly isn't in the same league as *Band of Brothers*, the adaptation of the highest rated strategy game of all time is certainly worth a watch for its authentic uniforms alone. **Tom Sizemore** (*Saving Private Ryan*) and **Chad Collins** (*Sniper Reloaded*) star in what is a lively, if historically inaccurate, look at comradeship during the Battle of the Bulge as troops bid to stop Hitler attaining the atomic bomb.

Dan Mays, civvy



PREMIUM RUSH out now

THIS is about a crooked cop and a parcel that just has to be delivered on time, which is perhaps not the most original storyline but the content is at least entertaining. The film manages to bring together varying relationships and rivalries within a bike courier team as individuals battle their way past good and bad police officers to make their drops. This is an enjoyable watch but doesn't really do the Blu-ray format justice, which is no surprise as it isn't a special-effects packed movie. If you like biking, though, this might be the film for you.

Capt Nick Mazzei, AGC (ETS)



247°F out now

THE idea of being trapped in a sauna is one that would petrify most, which is probably why a film has been made about the concept. Unfortunately, what has potential to be a decent feature, directed by **Levan Bakhia** and **Beqa Jguburia**, turns out to be overly long, without the sensational climax it seems to promise. With a weak storyline and dreary acting this is far from the sweltering horror-fest fans of the genre might have hoped for given a cast that includes **Scout Taylor-Compton** and **Travis Van Winkle**.

Kieran Rafter, civvy



FRANKENWEENIE out now

THIS stop-motion offering from creative genius **Tim Burton** appears at the outset to be a kids' movie. However, although it is essentially a heartwarming tale about a boy and his dog there is a dark edge to it that will appeal to older generations, with monochrome visuals and a plot about reanimating the dead. Children digging up their deceased pets and giving them a new "leash on life" via electrocution show Burton on top form, ably assisted by an all-star vocal cast that includes **Catherine O'Hara**, **Martin Short** and **Martin Landau**.

Joe Clapson, Soldier

Interview: Joe Clapson

ALTHOUGH it is set on the much-visited streets of south central Los Angeles, *End of Watch*, the latest cop thriller from David Ayer, is a refreshing take on the genre.

The director behind *Training Day* and *Dark Blue* is something of an expert in showcasing police work on the big screen.

However, rather than portraying the boys in blue as more corrupt than the criminals they cuff, this time he makes them the good guys.

In what is gritty and seemingly-authentic viewing, Los Angeles Police Department officers Brian Taylor (Jake Gyllenhaal) and Mike Zavala (Michael Pena) forge a close bond over their mutual crusade to create a safer city.

Every day the pair's mission is to survive until they are off-duty, hence the film's title, but during one job they stumble upon a drugs cartel and a case that falls way above their pay grade.

Despite his seeming change of tack with this movie, Ayer does not avoid predictable car chases and high-action drug busts altogether.

However, his chief focus is the tight – almost brotherly – bond that develops between the patrol car partners.

The duo's obvious camaraderie steals the show while drama unfolds around the edges.

Speaking about his preparations for the challenging role, Gyllenhaal explained: "Without a doubt this film has had more of an impact on me than anything I've done before.

"I was with Michael for five months on the streets followed by an extended period of fight and tactical training with ammunition and live fire."

The A-lister added: "For me, the genre is less important than the central relationship in the film.

"We've all seen a lot of cop movies and this to me was not about that.

"That is why police officers respond to this title: they know that half their life is that car and the guy sitting next to them."

In order to fully understand his character, Gyllenhaal worked alongside real law enforcers on live chases.

"On my first ride-along someone got murdered. I was in the second car at the scene," the *Brokeback Mountain* star revealed.

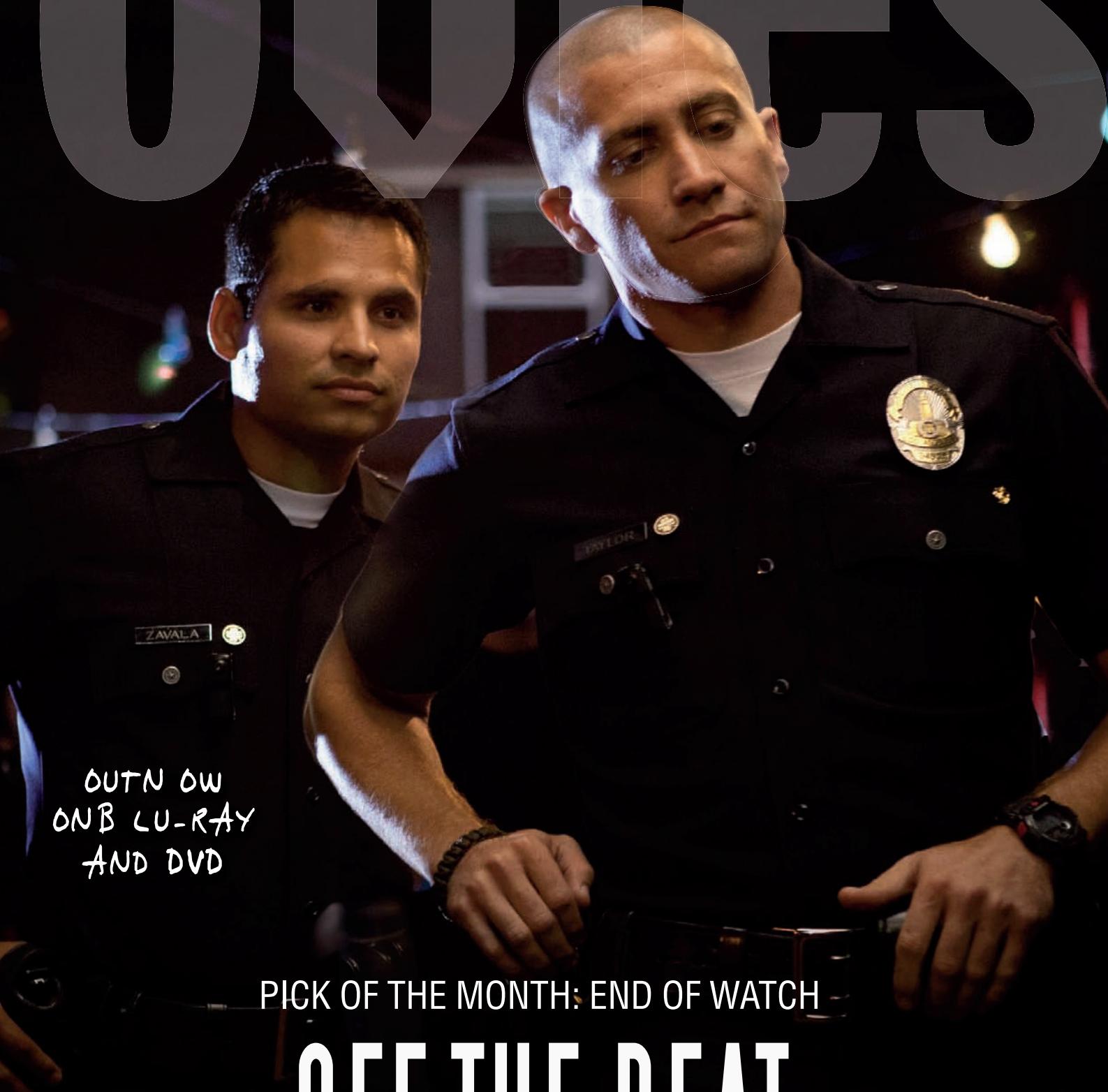
"That incident was six months out from filming and I remember driving home that night and asking myself, 'What am I getting involved in?'.

"That was a turning point."

Gyllenhaal continued: "We are trying to bust some of the romanticism around the LAPD, south central Los Angeles and the cop genre movie.

"In many ways we didn't make *End of Watch* for its audiences, we made it for the police – for the guys who do this job every day." ■

ON SCREEN

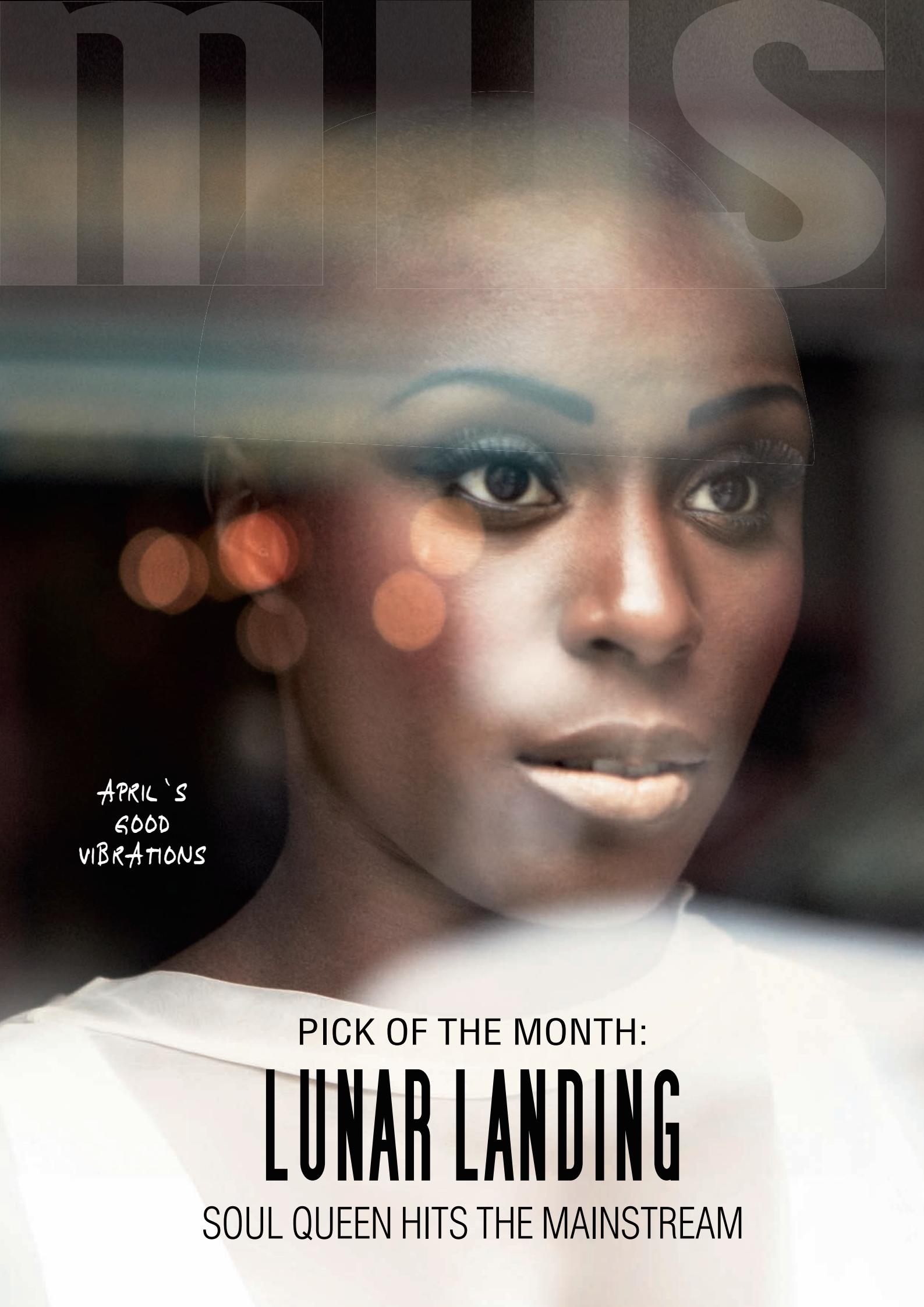


OUT NOW
ON BLU-RAY
AND DVD

PICK OF THE MONTH: END OF WATCH

OFF THE BEAT

POLICE DRAMA SHOOTS DOWN SOUTH
CENTRAL MYTHS



APRIL'S
GOOD
VIBRATIONS

PICK OF THE MONTH:
LUNAR LANDING

SOUL QUEEN HITS THE MAINSTREAM

Review: Richard Long

HAVING been nominated for this year's Brits Critics' Choice Award and included on the BBC Sound of 2013 longlist, it is safe to assume that big things are expected of Laura Mvula.

The classically trained singer-songwriter received mass acclaim on the back of debut single *She* and the artist is hoping to repeat the trick with the release of her first album, *Sing To The Moon*.

Mvula's path to the top is vastly different to that of her pop contemporaries.

The 26-year-old started writing songs on her laptop while working as a supply teacher at a Birmingham secondary school but a string of stunning live shows saw her catapulted into the spotlight.

However, this springboard to success has not come easy and those early performances proved problematic for the rising star.

"The shows were a nightmare but at the same time were the most incredible things ever, I can't explain it," she told the BBC after being named among the broadcaster's top tips for 2013.

"I feel like I'm going to pass out before I go out and when I'm on stage I'll think 'this is going to be over in a little bit, when are we going to do the next one?'

"It feels so new to me and sometimes I'm a bit embarrassed because I'm so new and I don't know which way the microphone should go up and I'm rubbish at talking between the songs. There's so much to learn.

"But at the same time, this is music I care so much about and to have the opportunity to perform it live with fantastic musicians scares me, but I love it."

Mvula's style and vocals have already drawn comparisons with the likes of Nina Simone and the retro feel to her songs makes this understandable.

On the one hand, *Sing To The Moon* boasts vast, sweeping, radio-friendly numbers such as *Green Garden*, *She* and *That's Alright* but the album also offers a series of more sombre but equally enjoyable tracks.

It is also somewhat surprising to hear a prominent orchestral sound, with strings and brass sections leading the musical flow on much of the material.

While the compositions vary throughout there is no escaping the fact that Mvula's unique voice is the star of the show.

All in all, this is a highly promising debut that points at an exciting future for this teacher-turned-performer. ■

TUNES FOR THE TROOPS

Bad Blood by Bastille

ON first listening to this offering I was left with a sense of unease but I soon became amazed by the clarity and perfect volume of the acoustics and lyrics on this roller coaster album. Opening track *Pompeii* marks a triumphant start and then *Bad Blood* just gets better thanks to anthems such as *Things We Lost in the Fire* and the spine-tingling *Oblivion*. In an age of synthesised music and computer generated beats, **Dan Smith** should be seen as a genius for releasing his record at the right time to provide some welcome fresh air. I dare you to give it a try; you will not be disappointed.



Sgt Craig Backhouse, Coldm Gds

Tell Where I Lie by Fossil Collective

THE debut album from **Fossil Collective** didn't blow me away on the first run through, however, as I listened to the songs, instead of just playing them, I began to enjoy it. The group has gone the way of many recent British acts by embracing folk music and fusing it with a small amount of psychedelic writing. *When Frank Became An Orb* is the standout track with its simple but melodic acoustic guitar complimenting the vocal harmonies. However, there isn't much else that jumps out as being memorable. It is not the greatest but I would rather listen to this than anything **Will.i.am** has to offer.



LCpl Scott Roberts, Londons

House of Gold and Bones (Part II) by STONESOUR

emerge with part two of their double album *House of Gold and Bones*. This is not just a haphazard collection of songs but a musical sequel to the story of a character conceptualised by singer **Corey Taylor**. The band has woven a darker magic here but their trademark blend of ferocious riffs and tear-jerking emotion are constant throughout. This hits you immediately in *Red City*, while *Sadist* continues to bear our star's soul making you wonder how much of the lyrical content has been lived by Taylor for real. This is another great record from a group that knows how to deliver.



Capt Matt Walpole, PWRR

Graffiti on the Train by Stereophonics

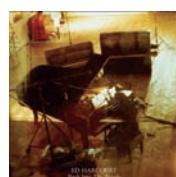
WELSH rockers the **Stereophonics** are known for producing consistently excellent albums while also reinventing themselves on a regular basis to keep their sound fresh. *Graffiti on the Train* is no exception to this pattern and for me it is one of their best offerings to date, with the tracks *Indian Summer*, *Catacomb* and *Been Caught Cheating* particularly superb. The fact the band has been successful enough to have an eighth studio album is a testament to their mission to avoid playing it safe. There is sincerity to their music and that is what makes them one of the greats.



Cpl Adam Jackson, 3 Para

Back Into The Woods by Ed Harcourt

RECORDED in one night at the legendary Abbey Road studios, *Back Into The Woods* sees **Ed Harcourt** take a simplistic approach to his latest album. Each track took just one or two takes and with a handful of instruments used throughout, it feels vastly different to the exuberance of previous offering *Lustre*. This style allows the artist's songwriting talents to come to the fore and his skill is particularly evident on *Wandering Eye* and *Brothers and Sisters*. The simple style and well-crafted melodies make this a surprising delight that will only enhance Harcourt's simmering reputation.



Richard Long, Soldier

Exile by Hurts

A SEEMINGLY endless tour schedule and promotional campaign has ensured that electro-pop duo **Hurts** have been placed firmly in the public's consciousness. New release *Exile* builds impressively on the foundations of previous offering *Happiness* and provides a nostalgic glance at the triumph of the 1980s synth sound. However, the use of heavy guitar on tracks such as *The Road* and *Cupid* breathes some much-welcomed variation into proceedings and shows the group in a new and versatile light. Strong choruses and clever lyrics prevail throughout to counter any notions of a difficult second album. Worth checking out.



Richard Long, Soldier

BOOKS

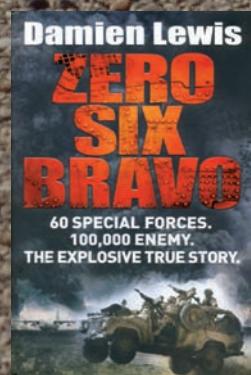
APRIL'S MUST-READS



PICK OF THE MONTH:

BEHIND ENEMY LINES

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON
EPIC ESCAPE FROM IRAQ



Great escape: *Zero Six Bravo*
is out now in hardback priced
£18.99 Picture: Andy Chittock

Interview: Becky Clark

EN years on from the start of the Iraq War the conflict is remembered not only for its cost in military and civilian lives but for serious intelligence failings ahead of the allied invasion.

Deep in the desert in March 2003, away from the US-led "shock and awe" campaign, a British Special Forces unit fell victim to a combination of bad luck and inaccurate information about their enemy.

Charged with taking the surrender of Saddam's 5th Corps, the 60 members of M Squadron instead found themselves forced to abandon their vehicles and caught up in a desperate bid to evade capture.

Subsequent media reports accused the men of cowardice, but now after a decade of silence, a new book is lifting the veil of secrecy surrounding the ill-fated mission.

Zero Six Bravo, by former war reporter Damien Lewis, aims to set the record straight and clear the names of those involved.

"I read about the operation at the time in the press, when the men were accused of running away from the Iraqis and knowing some of the guys in M Squadron, I was sure this could not be true," the author told *Soldier*.

"It has taken years of painstaking research to discover the full, extraordinary story – one that reveals this team of elite soldiers not as cowards but as true heroes.

"It feels great to have the book out and I know from the reactions of many of the men that the relief in doing so is heartfelt.

"This has dogged them for the last ten years.

"One told me he was working in Afghanistan recently and his boss, a guy who had never been in the Special Forces and had seen little if any combat, started to sound off about 'operation cluster f***' as it was nicknamed and this infuriates those who were there but couldn't speak out about what happened."

Running low on fuel and ammunition, lacking heavy weaponry and outnumbered by Saddam's troops by some 1,700 to one, M Squadron's escape is a remarkable tail of endurance in the face of overwhelming odds.

Lewis felt the public needed to discover the truth about one of the most desperate battles fought behind enemy lines since the Second World War.

"The guys knew in their bones that it was a 'mission impossible', " said the 45-year-old.

"As it transpired, the Iraqis proved less than ripe for surrender – in fact, they were well up for a scrap.

"This was a galactic intelligence failing but the men pressed on to the very best of their abilities.

"It's an epic story and an epic achievement – snatching, if not victory then at least survival, from the very jaws of defeat."

One of the UK's best-selling military authors, Lewis reflected on his enduring interest in bringing gripping accounts of modern warfare to life.

"It can be draining hearing such traumatic true stories and often I have soldiers in tears as they're telling me the worst bits, especially those suffering from PTSD, but the end product makes it worthwhile," he said.

"If you're proud of the book, and the soldiers whose story it is are equally proud, that's the best you can hope for." ■

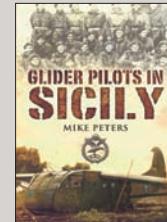
● *Soldier* has five copies of *Zero Six Bravo* to give away. To be in with a chance of winning one, tell us what year M Squadron's mission took place in. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by April 30.

RECONNOITRING READING

Glider Pilots in Sicily

by Mike Peters

THIS book, the author's second on the Glider Pilot Regiment, is another superb account of the role of a lesser-known unit, raised in the Second World War for the insertion

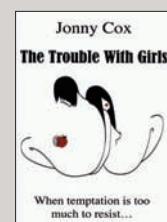


of men and equipment by towed fabricated wooden craft. In this extensively researched text **Mike Peters** has produced another lively and memorable title. Readers' eyes will be opened with his detailed descriptions of glider landings and the ensuing battles where the crews deployed as infantry. The courage and sacrifices of the men of the GPR are faithfully portrayed.

Lt Col (Retd) Dawson Pratt

The Trouble with Girls

by Jonny Cox



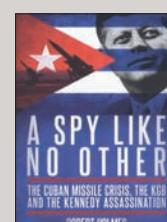
BEST described as "50 shades of green", this funny yet insightful tale follows protagonist Billy Hanson as he charts his professional and amorous existence from Belize and Northern Ireland to Op Telic. Written from the perspective of someone growing up in the Army, Billy dispels popular myths surrounding an officer's life and that of the military overall. The roller coaster of career and relationships depicts the strengths and weaknesses of any human being. A markedly different yet enjoyable take on soldiering and life in the Service.

Lt Col Geraint Evans, Int Corps

A Spy Like no Other

by Robert Holmes

FORMER diplomat **Robert Holmes** has carried out a lot of research to produce a story that is half fact, half conjecture, linking America's success during the Cuban missile crisis to **JFK's** assassination. The plot moves swiftly between Europe, the USSR and the US, drawing on details of **Lee Harvey Oswald's** communist past and Soviet secrets leaked by a man deemed to be the West's best intelligence asset in Russia. The author stops short of stating that the assassination plot is fact. A page-turner, but best not taken at face value.



Sgt Wallace Simpson, Int Corps

Exit Plan

by Mike Sixsmith

IN this novel, **Mike Sixsmith** combines many years of practical experience in security, politics and commerce to produce a book on Middle East tensions against the backdrop

of 9/11. The problem with the story is that it incorporates everything and anything to do with contemporary Middle East issues, which actually turns out to be too much. Shady businessmen, sheikhs, hostages and rescuers all combine to produce plenty of action but the book is full of clichés and stereotypes. However, this is a work of fiction, so take it or leave it.

Lt Col Andy Gladon, RE

The Lords of War

by Correlli Barnett

HISTORIANS are noted for their strong opinions and the subjectivity of their work. **Correlli Barnett's** offering meets both of these criteria. Having said that, each of the 20 leaders is presented in a balanced and insightful way. While necessity demands that individual write-ups are short, the chapters do provide enough thought-provoking information to spur additional interest. The book does not present definitive evaluations of the subjects but it is a great starting point. Strongly recommended to both the aspiring military historian and the casual reader.

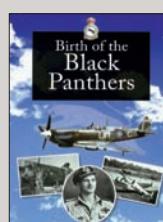


Maj Chris Buckham, RCAF

Birth of the Black Panthers

by William S Smith

CHARTING the journey of 152 Hyderabad Squadron through the tumult of the Second World War, this account is based entirely on the recollections of veterans who served with the unit and provides an intimate insight into life as an RAF airman. It is fairly well written but the quantity of seemingly unconnected anecdotes can be overwhelming. Furthermore, the author's close interest in the squadron, while enthusiastic, prevents objective analysis. Nonetheless, this is an honest piece of work that adds a certain colour to the personal experience of conflict.



Simon Moody, civvy

PHONE FRIENDS:



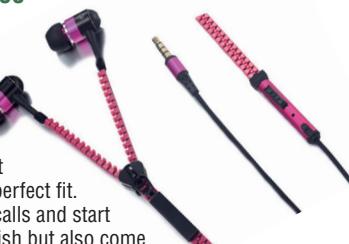
EASE-FIT ARMBAND FOR IPHONE 5

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www.accessorise mymobile.co.uk £24.99

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IF you are in the market for a minimalist case that provides ultimate protection for your iPhone 5, this revolutionary design is up there with the best of them. On the back of years of research and development the shell comes with 100 per cent Impactology approval and features the groundbreaking D30 impact material. The polycarbonate case simply clips onto the back of your phone making it virtually indestructible while retaining access to all ports and functions.



www.tech21.uk.com £24.99

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THIS ingenious piece of kit serves as a portable dock and podium for your phone and pretty much any compact handheld device. With a skeleton made from premium grade British steel underneath a soft touch rubber coat, the universal grip gadget is strong enough to safely support your beloved iPhone (or satnav, camcorder, camera etc) wherever you go. It also folds flat, so you can pack it for all occasions.



www.breffo.com £14.95

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A RUGGED and splash-proof design with a rubberised exterior makes this system ideal for outdoor activities. The *MobiOut* from iLuv uses bluetooth wireless technology to connect to and play audio from your smartphone, delivering clear sound and a deep, resonant bass. It runs on an internal rechargeable lithium-ion battery and features jump start technology that can serve as a handy backup battery for your phone.

www.argos.uk.com £59.99



WIN... AN EASE-FIT ARMBAND

● Soldier has teamed up with Belkin to offer ten readers an *Ease-Fit Armband* for the iPhone 5. To be in with a chance of winning, just tell us what material the accessory is made from. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by April 30.

TOP 10

Review: SSgt Lee Cox, AGC (SPS)

WHILE the iPhone forges ahead of its rivals thanks to its almost endless array of features and capabilities it suffers from one major flaw that prevents it becoming one of the truly great gadgets – its battery life.

Frustrated owners have all experienced the need to charge their prized possessions on a daily basis amid concerns the power will simply ebb away during the demands of a regular routine.

However, help is at hand courtesy of the latest battery case from Mophie – the *Juice Pack Pro*.

This clever kit extends the power of your device by 150 per cent and features a polycarbonate silicone protective wrap, waterproof speaker cover and a USB cable for charging and synchronisation.

The casing gives you the confidence to push your iPhone in the most demanding conditions and the incredible lifespan boost is complimented by a belt clip and rugged good looks, making it the perfect adventure companion.

On the downside it takes a couple of minutes just to get into the case; it is ridiculously finicky and time consuming. Obviously you don't have to put it on more than once, but it shouldn't be this tough.

The belt attachment is chunky and poorly designed, coming across more as an afterthought instead of being part of the original design.

It takes two hands to remove the case from the clip and I found it a struggle to correctly position my fingers so I could safely bring out the phone.

There is no satisfying click to let you know it is attached and that provokes a fear of losing the device. All in all, the belt feature is useless.

When making a call with the casing in place the speaker develops an echo, leaving you talking to yourself and not the other person. However, all other functions can be accessed through the touch screen with no problem.

The extra battery is a very good idea as phones can now last more than three days without charging and the kit exceeds military specifications – which test products across a range of conditions including rain, altitude, humidity, dust and even gunfire.

It is heavy duty, making it ideally suited for police officers or those in the Forces, but for the average Joe it depends on lifestyle and whether you have an obsessive need to protect your phone.

Ideal for a weekend camping trip, mountain biking or chucking into a daysack while out and about, but it comes with a hefty price tag.

I enjoyed the protection offered but the negatives far outweigh the positives and this case is not worth paying £105 for. ■

cool

PUTTING
CHARGERS
ON HOLD



PICK OF THE MONTH:

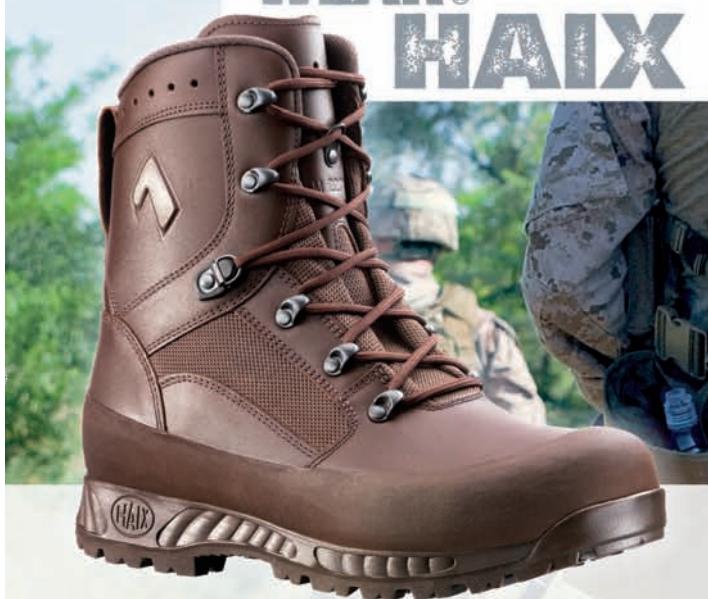
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Sgt Chris Skerritt, 18 Squadron

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SOLDIER SPORT

WELSH GUARDS CELEBRATE TITLE NUMBER 13 IN PREMIERSHIP FINAL

PICTURE: GRAEME MAIN



KINGS OF THE RING

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

ARMY fighters wiped the floor with their Forces rivals to claim an historic 30th successive Combined Services boxing title with an emphatic display at HMS *Nelson*.

The all-conquering Reds won five out of seven bouts on the night and with six walkovers to their name the outcome was never in doubt.

With the Royal Navy struggling to fill the weight categories and the Royal Air Force only fielding one boxer, the defending champions saw a number of their big guns relegated to the sidelines.

The likes of Spr Adam Whitfield (26 Engr Regt), Pte Ashley Williams (2 R Welsh) and Cpl James Allen (HCR LAD) were all given a watching brief and looked on as the hosts made the perfect start with AB Robbie Matthews triumphing over Grnr Ryan Fillingham (29 Cdo Regt RA) in the opening contest.

Both fighters looked tentative early on but Matthews took the initiative towards the end of the first round when he landed a number of scoring shots.

The assault continued in the second but Fillingham made an impressive comeback and went on to force a standing count – much to the dismay of the home crowd.

Both athletes battled hard in the final round but Matthews held firm to triumph via majority decision.

Reds star performer LCpl Martin Stead (13 Regt RLC, pictured right) set about restoring parity in his light

"WE HAVE WORKED SO HARD FOR THIS TROPHY AND HAVEN'T TAKEN WINNING FOR GRANTED"

welterweight clash with Mne Ricky Rose and celebrated victory after a hard-fought bout in which he failed to hit top gear.

Pte Jeff Saunders (2 Para) excelled in his fight with Mne Brad Smith and a strong showing in the second period laid the foundations for an impressive victory.

The Senior Service ace launched a brave counter attack in the closing stages but Saunders maintained his form to give the Army a 2-1 lead.

Light middleweight Pte Tom Barry (3 Para) became the second boxer to taste

defeat as he fell to the RAF's sole representative, SAC Adam Watson.

There was little to choose between the two in the early exchanges but Watson landed a flurry of blows in the second round to force a standing count.

Barry failed to recover from the setback and his opponent maintained the tempo to secure the win by a unanimous decision from the judges.

Having seen their lead reduced the Army produced a storming end to proceedings and claimed victories in the final three bouts.

LCpl Trev Littler (26 Engr Regt, pictured below) started the run with a powerhouse display against a determined Mne Ben Jones.

The middleweight outclassed his rival throughout and a particularly strong second round saw him take the contest via unanimous decision.

The onslaught continued as Pte Chez Nihell (1 PWRR) dominated Lt Kyle De-Banks in the heavyweight division before Sgt Anthony Richardson (LD) completed the rout with an emphatic victory over

Mne Dougie Kane.

The super heavyweight looked in sublime form and with his opponent struggling to match him in the ring the Navy coach called a halt to proceedings in the opening round.

Speaking after the final bell, Army coach SSgt Martin Anthony (RLC) said: "I'm pretty pleased with the result.

"We had one bad performance at light middleweight with Tom Barry but hopefully he will learn from that.

"We have worked hard for this trophy and we haven't taken anything for granted; winning was not a given.

"I'm delighted to walk away with the title in what is my last season in charge."

Martin conceded that seeing so many of his fighters miss out on time in the ring was a disappointment but praised those who were called into action.

"To have six walkovers was very frustrating," he told *SoldierSport*. "I do feel for the Navy and they can only work with what they have got.

"We originally had ten bouts scheduled so it was unfortunate to see so many fall away.

"I would have preferred to box all 13 fights. We are stronger in the lighter weight categories but I think we now have real quality and depth across the whole squad.

"For guts alone Trev Littler deserves a great deal of credit. He really stepped up to the mark and pulled it out of the bag. Jeff Saunders, on his first fight for the Army, was also excellent." ■





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Reds plot positive path

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

ALACKLUSTRE first-half showing scuppered Army hopes of victory in rugby union's annual Mobbs Memorial Match.

The Reds found themselves trailing a rampant Bedford Blues side 26-0 at the break before a stirring second-half fightback restored some pride and highlighted the team's attacking threat ahead of this month's Inter-Services campaign.

After a tight opening period the hosts suddenly raised their game as Luke Baldwin and Sam Stanley crossed for converted tries in a devastating three-minute burst.

The soldiers worked hard to stem the tide and having established a foothold they were dealt a further blow as the interval loomed.

A clearance from deep in Army territory failed to find touch and the ball was returned with interest by Ollie Marchon, whose pace and direct running sparked a cross-field move that was rounded off by Mark Kohler.

Bedford cashed in again moments later as wing Josh Wilson made the most of his side's numerical advantage out wide to score in the right corner.

Flanker Tom Armes piled on the misery shortly after half-time before the visitors finally sprang to life.

A well worked line-out routine allowed Lt Luke Bellinger (RA) to crash over before LBdr Sam Speight (RA, pictured above) scored the first of three tries after a reply from forward Joe Vandermolem.

The outstanding LSgt Matt Dwyer (WG) produced some great handling to create Speight's second and the hooker then provided the perfect offload for fly half Pte James Read (2 R Welsh) to burst through the Blues' defence and sprint to the line.

Replacement Mike Stanway ended any hopes of an Army comeback as he

touched down under the posts in the 70th minute but there was still time for Speight to complete his hat-trick following some superb skill from LCpl Peceli Nacamavuto (RE, pictured below) as the game finished 43-29 in favour of the hosts.

"At half-time I was very disappointed but after a good talking to I got the reaction I was hoping for," Army coach SSgt Axel Rees (REME) told *SoldierSport*.

"We were out-muscled up front and the backs couldn't get any ball. We knew that at this level we would get punished for any mistakes."

"Defeats like this will pull us closer together and we have definitely got rid of any complacency there might have been ahead of the Inter-Services."

"We now have a training camp in Portugal where we face the prospect of two really hard fixtures."

"There are lots of positives we can take from this. Sam Speight scored three really good tries and the back players looked threatening, we just could not get the foundations we needed in the first half."

The Reds start their Inter-Services challenge against the Royal Air Force at the Army Rugby Stadium in Aldershot on Wednesday, April 17.

They face the Royal Navy at Twickenham on Saturday, April 27. Tickets for the game are available via www.arutickets.com ■





Battle lines: The Welsh Guards forwards lock horns with their rivals from 39 Engineer Regiment during last month's Premiership Cup final in Aldershot

Guards grab win in showpiece final

Report: Richard Long

Picture: Graeme Main

ADOGGED defensive display steered 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards to a hard-fought victory in rugby union's Premiership Cup final.

The 2011 champions battled their way to an 11-3 win against 39 Engineer Regiment in a game that was characterised by a lack of try-scoring chances and a series of missed opportunities with the boot.

Wales' Six Nations skipper Ryan Jones was cheering his compatriots on from the sidelines but it was the sappers who made the stronger start as they forced a penalty inside the first minute.

LCpl Tom Best took aim from wide on the left but the fly half saw his kick crash into the upright and fall wide.

However, he made amends in the 12th minute as a long range effort hit the target before opposite number Gdsm Blaine Groves struck the post with his first attempt of the afternoon.

The dynamic runner saw a second strike rattle the woodwork minutes later but the ball rebounded into play, creating time and space for Gdsm Mala Buretini to score the only try of the game.

Best hit the post with another penalty six minutes into the second half but Groves found his accuracy to slot two further kicks to open a decisive lead.

With time running out the sappers launched a late onslaught in opposition territory but the Welsh held firm to claim their 13th Premiership crown.

Army star LSgt Matt Dwyer spearheaded their defensive display with some crucial tackles while fellow Reds

LCpl Peceli Nacamavuto, Spr Buks Bakoso and LCpl Ben Seru all threatened for the engineers without finding the line.

Speaking after the final whistle, a relieved Welsh Guards head coach WO1 Brian Baldwin told *SoldierSport*: "It was a gritty first half and we allowed them to have too much ball. We didn't set our patterns of play whatsoever."

"However, we got going in the second period and we forced our ascendancy at the scrum. Our game picked up and the defence was fantastic throughout."

"We played them earlier this year so we knew we were in for a hard match. They brought their big guns back for the final and that made them even stronger."

"But our patterns prevailed in the end. We spent a lot of time at a training camp ahead of this fixture and that really paid off on the pitch." ■



Army athletes meet Nordic challenge

THE Services winter sports stars have been testing themselves to the limit at the annual Nordic Ski Championships in Bavaria.

The race calendar started with the biathlon, where SSgt Marc Walker (1 LSR) triumphed ahead of LBdr Lee-Steve Jackson (16 Regt RA) in the ten-kilometre sprint.

In the women's event, SSgt Adele Walker (RLC) matched her husband's shooting accuracy to beat Cpl Amanda Lightfoot (AGC).

The Nordic disciplines proved to be particularly challenging and Cpl Nerys

Jones (AGC) followed her success in the biathlon 12.5-kilometre contest with victory in the classic race.

Walker claimed his second win of the competition with another triumph in men's 15-kilometre event.

Personnel from 29 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps tasted success in the military patrol race, while 1 Logistic Support Regiment were crowned champion Nordic unit.

The Adjutant General's Corp completed a clean sweep of the team races and were awarded the coveted ladies trophy.



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Picture: Graeme Main

Force for good: Roy Hodgson and Stuart Pearce will go head-to-head at next month's match in Reading

Legends face Army's finest

SOME of the biggest names in recent Premier League history will lock horns with the Service's finest footballers in a special match to celebrate the Army FA's 125th anniversary.

Gary Neville, Jens Lehmann, Graeme Le Saux and Matt Le Tissier have all signed up for the clash on Saturday, May 18 and with more famous names to be added to the squad the landmark occasion will offer an afternoon to remember.

Former Nottingham Forest star Stuart Pearce will manage the military team at Reading's Madejski Stadium with current England boss Roy Hodgson assuming coaching responsibilities for the FA Legends side.

"These guys will be pleased to get their boots on again and it is a great opportunity for the Army's footballers to take on the players they have seen represent England in the past," Hodgson

said at the game's launch last month.

The match also forms part of the Football Association's 150th anniversary celebrations and will be raising money for The Royal British Legion and Team Army Sports Foundation.

Pearce said: "When the chairman offered me a chance to get involved I jumped at it.

"The links between the military and FA go back a number of years and when the two organisations come together it is always a great occasion."

The coach joked: "I'm very unimpressed by the list of legends and I'm sure the Army players will be relishing the opportunity of taking them on."

Tickets for the game cost £12 for adults and £6 for concessions and bookings can be made via the Reading box office on 0844 2491871 or online at www.readingfcdirect.co.uk ■



THE Army under-23s had to settle for a share of the spoils in the Inter-Services championship after a 3-3 draw with the Royal Navy ended their hopes of a clean sweep. Having defeated the Royal Air Force 2-0 in their opening match, the Reds knew success against the Senior Service would seal the title. But the young guns failed to register the result they needed and had to rely on an injury-time goal to snatch a draw. Victory by more than two goals against the RAF would be enough for the Navy to lift the cup but they could only manage a 2-0 win, meaning the trophy was shared.

SPORT SHORTS

■ FORMER Welsh international rugby player Colin Charvis will join military and police personnel on an epic 1,200-mile journey across the UK to raise funds for Help for Heroes.

The 12-man team will cycle from John O'Groats to Land's End on a quest that will also see them scaling the highest peaks in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and rowing across the Irish Sea twice.

Their attempt begins on May 22 and will reach its finale with a mass skydive over Swansea nine days later.

To donate money to the cause visit www.heroeschallenge.co.uk



Picture: Neil G Paterson Photography

■ THE Armed Forces shinty-hurling team returns to action this month when they lock horns with Colglen in the Sutherland Cup.

The fixture will be played at Colintraive, in Argyllshire, on April 20.

Army star LCpl James Dunn (R Signals) made a strong impression in the sport last season and was selected in the Scotland under-21 side for a match against their Irish rivals.

However, he is unavailable for the upcoming fixture due to his commitments on Op Herrick.

The team is always looking for new blood to join the ranks and anyone interested in taking part should email robertstoddart@hotmail.com

■ A NEW military equestrian and canine show will be held at Wellington Riding on May 4 and 5.

The Forces Equine Games will feature eight arenas staging traditional disciplines such as dressage, jumping and in-hand showing along with a British Tentpegging Association competition.

Forces riders of all abilities are welcome to take part and the Hampshire venue will be hosting classes from grassroots to advanced levels.

For more information on the event visit www.forcesequineevents.co.uk

■ DALLAS Burston Polo Club has appointed ex-soldier Richard Carney as general manager of its 600-acre equestrian sports and leisure facility in Warwickshire.

The former major, who served with the Household Cavalry, retired from military life in 2012 and started work in his new post last month.



Missed opportunities spark early exit

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

THE Army fell at the first hurdle in their bid to reclaim football's Inter-Services crown after the Royal Air Force snatched an undeserved 2-1 win at Aldershot.

Having recorded a 3-1 victory over the Royal Navy in their opening match the result meant the airmen were able to celebrate their sixth successive title as the Reds were left to reflect on another missed opportunity.

The hosts dominated for long periods but with chances falling by the wayside and refereeing decisions going against them, they were ruthlessly punished by their opponents.

In a close first half the soldiers took the lead when LCpl Calum Wilkinson (RLC) raced clear from a flick on and

fired past RAF keeper Cpl Ben Mears from just inside the area.

However, the Army could only maintain their advantage for nine minutes as Cpl Steve Norton drew the sides level from an overhead kick.

Home keeper Spr Luke Cairney (RE) thwarted the midfielder with a smart save early in the second half before Sig Sam Agar (R Signals) brought the best out of Mears moments later.

The Army were then denied the first of two clear penalty shouts.

Wilkinson was being pulled back as he burst into the area but the referee allowed play to continue and the winger saw his shot slide agonisingly wide.

Agar was then bundled to the ground in the box following a neat turn but his appeal for a spot kick fell on deaf ears.

The Reds were made to suffer soon after as Cairney fumbled a free kick

from the right, which allowed defender Cpl Carl Evans to fire home at the far post and win the game.

"Our congratulations go to the RAF but it is difficult to take," Army coach Capt Joe Collins (R Signals) told *SoldierSport* at full time.

"In the second half we played really well and created some great opportunities. Without sounding too critical we should have had at least two spot kicks from our penalty shouts.

"But if you don't take your chances you are not going to win games.

"On the plus side we have used five or six guys who have never been involved in the Inter-Services before but that does not take the disappointment off this defeat."

The Army were in action against the Royal Navy in Waterlooville as this issue went to press. ■



Reds open account in style

A COMPREHENSIVE 3-0 win over the Royal Air Force gave the Army women a perfect start to their Inter-Services football campaign.

A penalty from SSgt Juliette Brown (RLC) and further strikes from Cfn Bianca Ross (REME, pictured left) and SSgt Krissy Wright (AGC (RMP)) settled the contest, meaning the Reds need just a point from their clash with the Royal Navy to retain the trophy.

"The first-half was difficult as we were trying a new formation," coach Capt Sandra Hodgson (RLC) told *SoldierSport*.

"It was a bit of a scrap and both teams

were unlucky. We went back to our usual style in the second period and dominated from there.

"We got the penalty just before the break and that took the pressure off but we knew they would come back at us.

"Juliette Brown had her best game ever in what is her 12th or 13th season of Army football, while Gnr Jade Clarke (RA) really opened the RAF up with some fantastic deliveries.

"But on the whole it was a brilliant performance from the team."

The Reds were playing the Senior Service as this issue went to press.



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Sights set on Sochi

Interviews: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

WITH the winter sports season now at a close the Army's elite bobsleigh stars are turning their attention to the biggest challenge of their fledgling careers – the 2014 Olympics.

Cpl Paula Walker (21 Sig Regt) will be leading the charge as pilot of Great Britain's premier two-woman crew and after a year of highs and lows she hopes a summer of hard training and preparation will stand her in good stead for what lies in wait.

After making encouraging progress at the beginning of her latest campaign the full-time athlete suffered knee troubles which prevented her from building on some impressive foundations.

"The season started really brightly with a couple of podium finishes and everything was going well up until Christmas," she told *SoldierSport*.

"But then I picked up an injury. We carried on with the World Cup tour but I had a bad crash in Altenberg.

"We were in the bronze medal position at the time and if it had not been for that setback I'm sure we could have gone on to push for a silver, or even win it.

"My brakewoman Gillian Cooke was also hurt and after that the races got harder and harder."

Walker went on to achieve a below-par 14th place finish at the World Championships in the Swiss resort of St Moritz, while injury also affected her performance at an Olympic test event in Sochi, Russia.

She added: "The World Championships were a disappointment; we were nowhere near where we wanted to be. In Sochi our start times were just not there.

"So it was a mixed campaign. The first half was brilliant but the second was blighted by injury.

"I'm now going to have an operation on my knee and once it is done it will be a case of getting fit and up for the job.

"The off-season will be mainly made up of sprints and weights. We will go for tests to make sure the training is going in the right direction but will not be back on the ice until October.

"In a strange way having a rubbish season before the Olympics is good for us. We can go away, recover from our injuries and come back better."

Walker is refusing to get carried away with any Olympic expectations, instead she is focusing on smaller goals – the first of which is this summer's testing.

"The hope is to go out and win," she said. "I have had a target since the last Olympics and that is for us to be in the medals. It is not going to be easy. We are in and around the top six but we will have to see where we are come the Games.

"However, I would not be where I am if it was not for the Army. They introduced me to bobsleigh and I could not reach this level without their support.

"If you want to do well as an Olympian you have to give everything and the Service has allowed me to do that."

While the 2012-13 season saw Walker fail to fully hit top form it proved to be a successful campaign for fellow soldier LSgt Lamin Deen (Gren Gds).

Having started his bobsleigh career as a brakeman he changed roles to become a pilot and this year cemented his place as the lead in Great Britain's second ranked two- and four-man crews.

"It started off as head-to-head between myself and another driver as to who would get that spot," he explained.

"I had four podium finishes in the Europa Cup and was in the top 20 at two World Cup events.

"Two-and-a-half years ago I was just a brakeman who fancied a chance at driving. I have outdone myself this season and hopefully I haven't peaked too early.

"This summer I will have a new crew selected for me. We will work hard on our pushing and loading, and hopefully we will be in good shape."

Deen revealed Olympic qualification is not guaranteed and he needs to achieve a top 20 ranking by January 19, 2014 if he is to make it to Russia.

"I was about 26th this season but I will have extra World Cup races next year which will make it more doable," he said.

"There has been a lot of chopping and changing but I now have a settled line-up. I have a lot of responsibility but I am getting so much more out of the sport since I became a pilot.

"The Grenadier Guards have backed me and allowed me to progress to full-time training. They have not had anyone go to the Olympics since 1964, when Robin Dixon won bobsleigh gold.

"They are there for me if there is anything I want or need. As a soldier it is a great place to be." ■



Picture: Leon Neal/AFP/Getty Images

Army's elite bobsleigh stars in numbers

140

THE SPEED IN KILOMETRES PER HOUR THAT CAN BE REACHED BY BOBSLEIGH PILOTS AS THEY DESCEND ALONG RACE TRACKS

14

THE PLACE ACHIEVED BY CPL PAULA WALKER IN THE 2013 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS WITH A TIME OF 4 MINUTES 34 SECONDS

20

THE WORLD RANKING LSgt LAMIN DEEN NEEDS TO REACH IF HE IS TO QUALIFY FOR THE WINTER OLYMPICS IN SOCHI



Reds survive court scare

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

THE Army's netballers had to rely on points difference to retain their Inter-Services crown after a hard-fought battle against their military rivals at RAF Cranwell.

After hitting top form to secure a 48-31 victory over the Royal Navy in their opening match the defending champions knew a repeat performance against the hosts would be enough to lift another title.

However, the script failed to go to plan as the players found themselves embroiled in an end-to-end encounter with a determined Royal Air Force outfit who pushed their opponents all the way.

The match appeared to be slipping away from the visitors in the early exchanges but they fought back strongly in the final quarter before settling for a 28-28 draw.

With the light blues also downing the Senior Service the Reds were handed the trophy courtesy of the superior points tally achieved against the same opposition.

While the full team celebrated title success, the development squad missed out on glory by the narrowest of margins.

Having beaten the Navy 41-22 in their opening fixture they lost to eventual champions the RAF by a single point on the second day.

Speaking to *SoldierSport* at the end of the tournament senior captain Maj Laura White (REME) said her side should have completed back-to-

back victories but believes the future of the game is in safe hands.

"We definitely could have won both matches," she explained.

"The RAF came out and started better than us but we really pulled it back in the third quarter and in the fourth we outplayed them.

"We were nine points down at one stage and then found ourselves two clear; in the last couple of minutes it was all going on.

"We rotated the bench in both squads so everyone played a part. The other teams pretty much stuck with the same seven throughout so that shows the strength in depth we now have.

"This season we had one girl who was completely new to Army netball and three others were brought into the development squad. There is a lot of new talent involved, some of which has been selected for the Combined Services.

"We have been fortunate to have high level training throughout the year and that held us in really good stead for this tournament." ■

Shining star: Army ace Cpl Laura Roberts (R Signals) lifts the Inter-Services netball trophy



INTER-SERVICES HOCKEY

THE Army were left to ponder what might have been after a disappointing end to the Inter-Services hockey championships in Aldershot.

Having defeated the Royal Navy 5-0 in their opening match the women looked set to retain their title before a 2-2 draw with the Royal Air Force ended their hopes.

The Reds led the contest 2-0 midway through the second half but a late collapse saw the contest end in a draw, which handed the tournament to the RAF on goal difference.

An equaliser in the closing stages from the Senior Service ensured the Army men began their campaign with a 3-3 draw, which was followed by a 2-1 success against the airmen.

But goal difference again proved decisive as the Navy lifted the cup after defeating the light blues 6-4.



Pictures: Graeme Main



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final word



We asked the soldiers of the Mobile Force Reserve on Operation Tosca about working in a multinational UN environment

INTERVIEWS: BECKY CLARK
PICTURES: STEVE DOCK



SSgt "Chuck" Berry (RLC)

It's difficult but rewarding. We're used to our ways of working so it was tricky to start with but we got there. Things take a bit longer to achieve because of the language barrier and that's fine in this environment, although it would be different in somewhere like Afghanistan. You work out who's the best commander or the best linguist and you go through them to interpret the orders.



Cpl Cristian Marclay (EA)

This is my first time on a UN tour and I like the environment. You get a different perspective from each nationality and find out how their forces work. My English is okay but some of the others find it a bit more difficult to communicate. The British soldiers are very friendly though and always happy to help and I've made good friends.



Cpl Paul Cridge (RLC)

This is my second deployment on Op Tosca – I was out here in 2006. It's been a good, enjoyable tour. I take every person as they come. The nationalities get on well and interact with each other. One nation will have a barbecue and invite the others, especially over the weekends. We banter with the Argentinians about football and Maradona's "hand of god".



Cpl Lourdes Chelaliche (EA)

There are two Argentinian women here and we're the first to ever be part of the Mobile Force Reserve from our country. It's good to get to know different cultures and their different ways of giving orders. The British and other nationalities do try and speak a few words in Spanish. It has been a positive experience, but I'm looking forward to going home as it was too far to travel during our time off.



Maj Steve Mellor (RLC)

We're being exposed to the international nature of a UN tour. This is the kind of multinational work that we can expect more of under Army 2020. It involves small teams, working in remote places and dealing with different cultures. That's a useful training experience for future operations so from that perspective I feel fortunate to be doing this job.



MSgt Bela Czimbalmos (HAF)

It's a very interesting experience being part of the Mobile Force Reserve and I enjoy the work. It's not always easy but it makes a change. I like sport and we do a lot of these activities together, which is good. It's also important to practise English. The British have been welcoming and helpful. I've got to know some of them and I hope we will stay in touch in the future.



Lt Gabor Miklosi (HAF)

This is my first UN appointment and I particularly enjoy working with other nations. It's a good challenge, especially as a troop commander to give orders and treat everyone the same. I haven't worked with army personnel before, even in Hungary. All nations try to follow their procedures but we belong to the UN so we have to find a balance.



LCpl Marian Kovacik (AFSR)

I like this job and being able to improve my English. The British make an effort to slow down when they speak so that we understand what is being said. We talk about lots of different things – families, hobbies, the army. We are all soldiers after all. We're doing the same job and every one is in a similar position so there is a sense of togetherness and of being a group.

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