

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

SOLDIER

FEBRUARY 2009

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BIG BANG

Sappers show off explosive assets

SAVING SUDAN

British experts answer crisis country's call

PICTURE PERFECT

Front-line photos capture life at the heart of Helmand

HOME FOR HEROES

Injured soldiers settle in at welfare house

LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIP

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ARMY

OUT OF ACTION man

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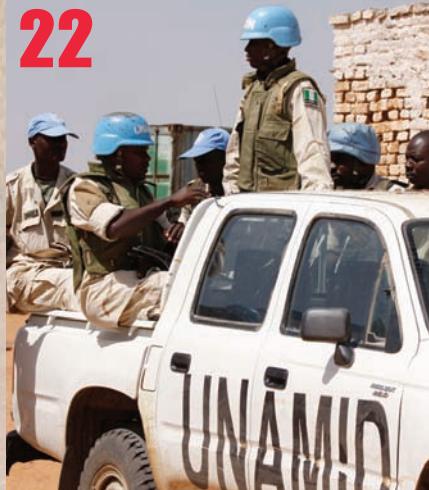
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Cover picture (left): Pte Josh Brown (2 Yorks) gets down and dirty on exercise in the Falkland Islands Picture: Graeme Main

Background image: A lone donkey carries a Sudanese man through the African nation's countryside Picture: Steve Dock



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TOUGH
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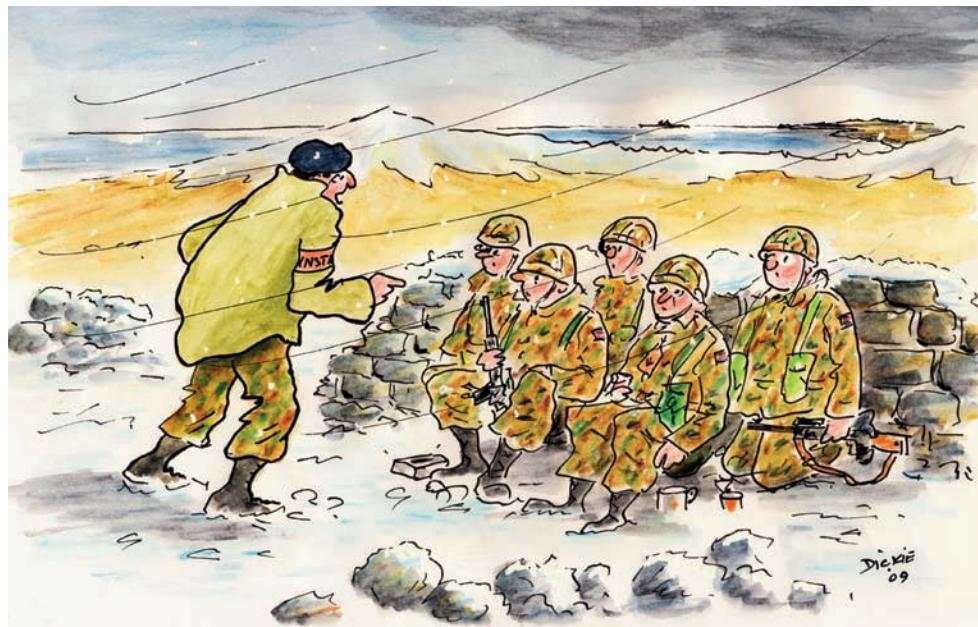
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SOLDIER - Magazine of the British Army



"Get a grip . . . use your imagination . . . it's Helmand, not the Falklands . . . it's over 35C . . . you're hot, hungry, thirsty, exhausted . . . and you're surrounded by Taliban, not penguins . . ."

● The hardy boys – Pages 48-51

Worldwide work

Ever there was a great reason to consider a career in the British Army, the unrivalled opportunity to see the world is it.

While travel in other careers might involve sitting in endless queues on the M25 before trudging to soul-sapping meetings, in the military it means jetting off for adventures in far-flung corners of the globe.

Instead of two weeks in Benidorm, soldiers can look forward to getting stamps in their passports from countries as diverse as Canada, Belize and Brunei.

But for every "sunshine tour", they can also expect to experience an immensely different side of life in some of the world's most deprived countries.

Take Sudan for example. A bloody civil war has claimed more than 300,000 lives and seen millions of people displaced from their homes into the bleak limbo of Darfur's refugee camps.

The sheer scale of the problem facing the east African country is staggering. A United Nations-led mission is trying to deploy 19,555 military personnel into an area the size of France. Roads are often impassable, train services almost non-existent and the area only has one gravel-covered airstrip.

For anyone but the best, this challenge would be insurmountable. Fortunately for the people of Sudan, the best have arrived in the form of a small but gifted team of British Service personnel who have been punching well above their weight.

Col Noddy Stafford (late 9th/12th Royal Lancers) is among the Army contingent and has been using his military training and extensive experience to help set up a series of

forward operating bases to stop the inter-ethnic violence in Darfur spiralling further out of control.

The stakes for Col Stafford are frighteningly high. His success or failure could mean the difference between life and death for 20,000 refugees (Pages 22-25).

Thankfully, the resilience of the Army's best is more than a match for the challenge and the British contingent are slowly but surely helping to ease Sudan's suffering.

On the other side of the world, troops are using the Falkland Islands' unique training opportunities to prepare for the rigours of Afghanistan (Pages 48-51).

The small South Atlantic dependency might be 8,000 miles away from the UK, but it remains a premier place to limber up for operations.

Closer to home, the Army's growing expertise in rehabilitating wounded personnel is being complemented by a military charity.

SSAFA Forces Help has provided a luxurious home-from-home which is proving to be a valuable asset for injured troops and their families who want to spend quality time together (Pages 37-39).

Talking of challenges, *Soldier* is feeling rather smug this month after tasting our first *Media ops* success (Pages 53-55).

It was touch and go, but our very own Samantha Chapman had a last-gasp victory against the Royal Engineers' tricky bomb-making task.

With more challenges flooding into *Soldier* HQ, the stakes have been raised. In "The Spam's" words, bring it on! ■

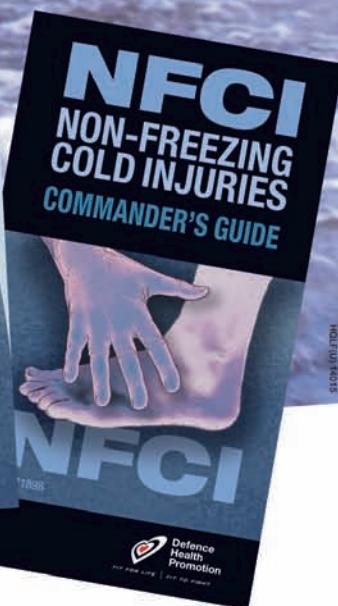
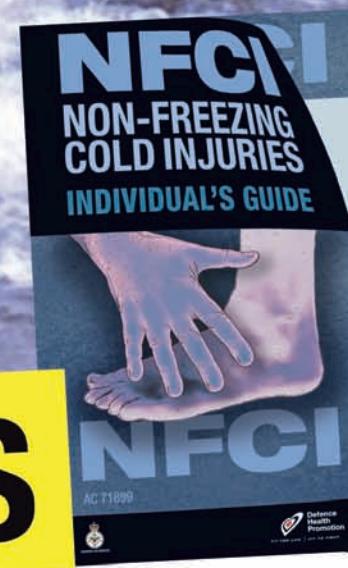
Fortunately for the people of Sudan, the best have arrived'

REMEMBER

COLD HURTS!



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Picture: Graeme Main

Reinforcements required: Estonia already deploys significant numbers of troops to Afghanistan but John Hutton believes others must be more forthcoming

Mission critical

Allies must commit to under-resourced Afghan campaign, says minister

DEFENCE Secretary John Hutton has called on Nato members to reconsider their force levels in Afghanistan after admitting there are currently not enough boots on the ground to win the campaign.

The senior politician insisted that more alliance partners needed to “step up to the plate” and share responsibility for taking the battle to the Taliban, claiming the war had become “one of the defining struggles of our time”.

At a press conference at the MoD in Whitehall, London, Mr Hutton also warned that success in theatre was crucial for UK and world security and made it clear that the credibility of Nato’s International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) was at stake.

He said: “I am not saying that the issues in Afghanistan are going to be solved by military means alone, but it is also naive to think we can prevail in a 21st Century conflict without the right kinetic force in place. We have to defeat the extremists.

“It would not be honest, credible or sustainable for us to expect the United States to do all of the work – that is not an alliance, it is one way traffic.”

Despite successes in Afghanistan, such

as the recent British-led Red Dagger operation (Page 9), Hutton believed that there was still a long way to go.

He declined to be drawn on whether more British troops would be sent to Helmand province, where UK personnel have been fighting the Taliban for the last three years.

But Hutton admitted he agreed with the assessment of the Chief of the Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, who said that soldiers could not be traded “like-for-like” between Iraq

and Afghanistan (*Soldier*, January).

“The Armed Forces have been operating at a tempo that is unsustainable over the long term,” the Defence Secretary said. “The UK is the second highest contributor to Isaf but I am not going to indulge in speculation about future numbers. There are discussions under way across Government and with Nato allies about this issue.”

But he added: “There are not enough of the forces required in Afghanistan and we need greater burden sharing.”

Pakistani backing wins praise

PAKISTAN has a “key role” to play in the battle against Taliban fighters who are using its borders to launch attacks in Afghanistan, the Defence Secretary has said.

Speaking after meeting Pakistani Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza during a visit to the Asian state, John Hutton emphasised that a joint strategy to root out insurgents on both sides of the border was needed.

Hutton said: “Both the UK and Pakistan face the threat of terrorism seeking to coerce our democratically elected governments into changing policies by violence.

“Our countries have suffered, just as India and others have suffered, and this will continue until terrorism is dealt with at its root. That means embracing a strategy that deals with the threats on both sides of the Afghanistan and Pakistan border.”

Hutton added that the problem of terrorism required a “global solution” and nations working together.

He said: “Pakistan has a leading role to play in the struggle against extremism and the UK will remain a constant and supporting friend in the face of this challenge.”

Taliban's winter of violence hits Brits

Three infantrymen killed as battle to evict Taliban from Helmand continues

SOLDIERS serving in southern Afghanistan have been remembering the contributions of three highly respected colleagues from The Rifles after they were killed by enemy action.

Rfn Stuart Nash of the 1st Battalion was shot in Zarghun Kalay, near Lashkar Gar, as he covered troops from a compound rooftop during Op Red Dagger on December 17.

There was further tragedy a month later when A/Cpl Richard Robinson was killed after he was ambushed by insurgents while on patrol north of Sangin District Centre.

Territorial Army volunteer Sjt Chris Reed, of the 6th Battalion, fell victim to a roadside bomb while he was in Garmir District on New Year's Day.

All three men had been serving in 1 Rifles' Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team battlegroup, which has been carrying out vital work with the Afghan National Army.

Rfn Nash, who was from Australia, enlisted in the British Army in March last year. The 21-year-old quickly established himself as a professional operator who was popular with both his soldier peers and superiors.



● Rfn Stuart Nash



● Sjt Chris Reed



● A/Cpl Robinson

young man.

"Highly qualified and richly experienced, he was credible and confident as an acting corporal and was already showing potential well beyond that."

Sjt Reed, who was 25 and from Plymouth, was remembered as being a professional and loyal soldier. He had formed an excellent relationship with his Afghan counterparts and his leadership was second-to-none.

The NCO, who built yachts in civilian life, had been due to marry on his return from Helmand.

Lt Col Tom Merewether, CO of 6 Rifles, admitted that the loss of Sjt Reed had been "a hammer blow" to the battalion. He added: "He was talented, committed and highly professional.

"A natural leader, he relished the opportunity to train and mentor his Afghan Army colleagues. He will be missed and all ranks of the 6th Battalion are mourning the loss of a brother rifleman."

Gunners mourn the loss of gifted officer duo

ACTIONS against the Taliban claimed the lives of two promising Royal Artillery officers in a black month for British Forces in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

Lt Aaron Lewis (26), of 29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery, was shot when the gun position he was commanding came under attack at a Forward Operating Base near Gereshk on December 15.

Capt Tom Sawyer (25), of the Regiment's 7 (Sphinx) Commando Battery, was killed in an explosion on January 14 during a clearance operation in the same area. Cpl Danny Winter of the Royal Marines also died and the MoD has confirmed that the incident is being investigated amid concerns of friendly fire.

Lt Lewis passed out of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst in 2007. He went on to complete the demanding All Arms Commando course despite a knee injury.

Remembered by friends as a keen



● Capt Tom Sawyer



● Lt Aaron Lewis

sportsman, the Loughborough University graduate was also a proud family man who was greatly appreciative of his parents' efforts to give him the best in life.

Capt Sawyer, from Hertfordshire, passed out of Sandhurst in 2002. He had excelled throughout his military career and had already completed a demanding tour of southern Afghanistan.

Lt Col Neil Wilson, CO of 29 Cdo Regt,

said that both men had made a huge contribution to the Afghanistan mission and their deaths had been a heavy blow to everyone in the regiment.

He said of Lt Lewis: "He led his men from the front, his passion and vigour constantly on display, with the welfare of his soldiers constantly on his mind.

"He frequently brought calmness to difficult situations, reassuring people by his presence and showing cheerfulness in adversity – a true commando trait."

Of Capt Sawyer, Lt Col Wilson added: "He died a hero, doing a job he loved and taking the fight to the enemy in the only way he knew.

"He was a first-class officer with a natural flair and was hugely respected. He had aspirations to achieve so much more in the military and, with the determination and strength of character he possessed, would undoubtedly have achieved his goals."



Picture: Cpl John Scott/Rafoss USMC

Sharp shooters: Royal Marine commandos were joined by soldiers in a key operation to oust the Taliban from areas around Helmand's provincial capital

Daggers drawn

Insurgent fighters pounded in land and air assault as Nato troops swoop

RAZOR sharp soldiers serving in Afghanistan started 2009 with plenty of resolution after launching an operation to provide security for forthcoming elections.

Troops from 2nd Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, The Queen's Dragoon Guards, 29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery and 1st Battalion, The Rifles were among 1,500 personnel involved in Op Red Dagger, an action to smash the Taliban around Helmand's capital Lashkar Gar.

Supported by Danish forces in Leopard tanks, Estonian personnel and soldiers from the Afghan National Army, the op began with a helicopter raid in the Nawa area before forces pushed towards enemy positions.

According to reports from theatre, the Taliban attacked the Nato soldiers with 107mm rockets but were hit with mortars and more than 30 tank rounds.

In the main phase of the action, Royal Marine commandos conducted a helicopter and ground assault to the northwest of Lashkar Gar.

The troops established themselves quickly and sappers from 24 Commando

do Engineer Regiment constructed basic patrol bases.

Soldiers from 2 PWRR and Afghan troops took on the key responsibility of assaulting the area west of Lashkar Gar before launching a final push to the south with support from helicopter gunships.

Despite the success of the operation, there was sadness at the deaths of Rfn Stuart Nash of 1 Rifles and LCpl Ben Whatley, Cpl Robert Deering, Mne

Tony Evans and Mne Georgie Sparks of the Royal Marines.

But Task Force Helmand Commander Brig Gordon Messenger pledged that the battle would go on.

He said: "This is just the start – it is up to us to drive the tempo and we will continue to overmatch the Taliban at a time and place of our choosing, not theirs.

"We stand shoulder to shoulder with our Afghan counterparts."

Troops tackle opium scourge

CIVILIAN farmers in southern Afghanistan have been given more than 3,000 tonnes of grain to encourage them to plant wheat instead of opium poppies.

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, The Rifles have been working alongside the Afghan Security Forces to ensure farmers receive the crop as part of Helmand province government's Food Zone Programme.

To date, 30,000 farm owners have collected wheat sacks and a further 2,000 are expected to get them in time for planting.

The riflemen have been clearing roads of

explosives and protecting convoys carrying the seed sacks from Gereshk to distribution centres in Sangin.

Helmand governor Gulab Mangal said: "I am very pleased to see so many supporting this programme. It shows we can make Helmand a more prosperous province."

Farmers taking grain sign a contract preventing them from growing poppies. The £6 million Food Zone programme is financed by the US Agency for International Development, the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team and the UK Government.

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

British to stay in Iraq for new training role

THE Iraqi government wants to continue to receive military education from the UK after British soldiers pull back from Op Telic in the summer, the Defence Secretary has told The Commons.

Responding to a question from MP Nick Harvey, John Hutton said Britain would soon move to "a normal bilateral defence relationship" with its Middle East counterpart. However, it was envisaged that around 400 members of the Armed Forces would be involved in training after the end of the British withdrawal.

He added: "We will shortly begin discussions to establish the precise scope of this training and education."

Helicopter exchange: Crews with the Merlin Battlefield Helicopter Force will have around four months to prepare for Afghanistan after pulling out of Iraq, according to the Defence Secretary. Hutton told MPs that the personnel would remain committed to supporting troops in Iraq until "circumstances allowed" for their withdrawal. He added: "We are already doing all we can to ensure a swift transition of the Merlin Force to Afghanistan."

Healthy options: Former Service personnel with mental health issues are to benefit from priority treatment, Defence minister Kevan Jones has revealed. He said 3,600 therapists are to be trained to deal with psychological issues in the next two years. Jones added: "Five NHS trusts are also piloting a new model of mental health care for veterans."

Metal gear solid: A new type of steel armour for vehicles could help beef up protection for troops, Minister for Defence Equipment and Supply Quentin Davis has said. He added that trials of Super Bainite, which was developed by specialists including scientists at Cambridge University, had been carried out and the Government was talking to industry about the product.

Historic tour for Iron men

Troops from 20 Brigade take last leg of Iraq op

THE commander of the last full brigade to be deployed to Iraq has said his soldiers will witness an important moment in history as the UK begins pulling back from the Gulf in the coming months.

Brig Tom Beckett of 20th Armoured Brigade – The Iron Fist – said his troops remained fully focused on their role despite the forthcoming conclusion of the Op Telic mission in the summer.

The personnel arrived in Basra towards the end of 2008, replacing 7th Armoured Brigade, and have been preparing for the drawdown process during their six-month tour.

"This is a really significant year," said Brig Beckett. "The security situation is dramatically different to what it has been for an awfully long time, so Basra is ready for investment and there is a lot of opportunity."

He said that one of the first tasks the brigade took on was to work with Iraqi security forces as they prepared for crucial provincial elections, which were due to take place in Basra as this issue went to press.

"For the people here it is the next step in their political process," Brig Beckett

added. "With a new Provincial Council there will hopefully be more redevelopment and regeneration.

"We have only got a few months of operational tasking left and 20 Armd Bde is lucky – it's an historic thing.

"We're bringing to an end a six-year campaign which undoubtedly has been through difficult times, but we will certainly leave Basra a better place in 2009 than it was in 2003.

"Our soldiers can be proud of what they've done. They've faced down a violent insurgency, endeavoured to support two divisions of the Iraqi Army and helped with redevelopment."

But Brig Beckett added that the brigade, which is normally based in Paderborn, Germany, is aware that there is still hard work to be done and that everyone will be busy for the full six-months.

He said British troops would leave security in the hands of Iraqi forces when they pulled out in July.

"This will bring to an end the British contribution to this campaign and we must ensure that, as we work to that end, we redeploy all of our kit, personnel and materials in the best condition possible ready for the future challenges."

Give our troops a break, says CGS

SOLDIERS need longer intervals between operations to spend more time with their families and reduce the strain on relationships and marriages, according to the head of the British Army.

Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, the Chief of the General Staff, said that he was committed to ensuring that the minimum time between operational tours is two-and-a-half years rather than the current two.

In a speech outlining his ideas at the Institute for Public Policy Research think-tank in London, he said the welfare of troops needed to be properly considered.

"We have severely stretched our soldiers – both their goodwill and their families," he added.

"This is unacceptable to me and ministers when one considers how much we ask of our soldiers. It is my ambition that they will only be sent on a six-month operational tour once every three years."

Gen Dannatt said he was committed to restructuring the Army within its current manpower limits. With Afghanistan as the only major operation, this would ease the current tour intervals.

But he emphasised that the Army was still around 4,000 troops short of its full 102,000 capacity.

Despite the commitments placed upon them, Gen Dannatt said personnel had risen to the challenge. He singled out those who had served in Iraq on completing a job well done and said they could be proud of what they had achieved.

He added: "Basra is stable, increasing in confidence and beginning to return to normality. I was recently able to walk around the town talking to people without wearing body armour.

"Anyone who has the privilege to wear the Queen's uniform does so with a degree of pride unparalleled in civilian life."



Picture: Xavier Pick

Tour interval: Gurkha soldiers are sketched taking time out of their busy schedule for a card game as the six-year Op Telic mission enters its final phase

Drawing down

Talented illustrator records the final impressions of military life in Basra

AN acclaimed artist has spoken of his delight after being invited to record the final days of the British operation in southern Iraq.

Xavier Pick, who has previously worked in conflict zones including Bosnia and Lebanon, spent a month sketching soldiers from 20th Armoured Brigade in Basra.

During his four weeks in theatre he also spent time with the Iraqi Army and civilians who have witnessed the steady return of peace.

Pick's work will be shown in the UK when he finishes the final drafts of his pictures. It will also be on display in Iraq after the British withdrawal.

Speaking to *Soldier* from Basra, the artist said he had been impressed with the resilience and commitment of the troops, as well as the optimism of the province's residents.

He added: "Obviously those who are on tour are missing their loved ones but there is a definite feeling that they are doing something worthwhile."

"I've been out on patrol with members

of the 5th Battalion, The Rifles, and seen some of the places where indirect fire attacks were launched in the past."

Armed with his sketchbook and camera, Pick has been busy capturing different aspects of the tour, from off-duty troops playing card games to civilian life out on the streets.

He added: "I have found that drawing can break down language barriers and have made some amazing friends."

"Back in the UK you tend to get a negative picture about what is going on in Iraq, but I have not seen anything detrimental. This has been one of the best experiences of my life."

Telic action bridges the gaps

RECONSTRUCTION work in Iraq continued apace as Basra-based sappers used their expertise to repair a bridge over the Shatt-al-Arab waterway.

During an arduous two-night operation, the troops removed broken panels on the road's surface that had been making life difficult for drivers.

Supported by Iraqi Security Forces, who ensured the bridge was kept closed to traffic, soldiers from 29 Armoured Engineer Squadron replaced the huge steel plates.

Squadron spokeswoman Lt Angela Laycock (RE) said: "The troops worked really

hard during the night and there was good interaction with the Iraqi Police and Army who helped to man the outer cordon. They were really positive about the bridge being repaired too."

The work at the crossing, known locally as Cigar Island Bridge, was completed overnight to ensure as little disruption as possible to the local population.

Spr Michael Anderson, who was responsible for preparing the replacement panels, admitted: "It would have been a routine job in a workshop but it was difficult on the bridge."

● THE Chief of the General Staff has described a delay in the arrival of the Saxon armoured vehicle's replacement as "most unwelcome".

Speaking after an equipment review which revealed that the new utility vehicle would now arrive several years late because of budget restraints, Gen Sir Richard Dannatt said he would fight hard for any extra kit.

He said: "The MoD cannot afford all that we would wish to buy."

"Defence's highest priority is success on current operations, for which we are increasingly well equipped, and I will continue to fight hard for any additional equipment improvements."

Despite the Saxon replacement delay, the review made it clear that upgrades to the Warrior fleet and new Lynx helicopter engines would be rolled-out as planned.

● DEFENCE Minister Kevan Jones has unveiled plans for an annual event to commemorate Service personnel past and present.

Armed Forces Day will be held each year on June 27 and replaces the old Veterans Day. The Historic Dockyard at Chatham, Kent, has been selected as the focal point for this year's main commemoration activities.

Jones added: "Armed Forces Day should also be used to say thank you to Forces families because they do a great job in supporting those men and women." For further information visit www.armedforcesday.org.uk

● THE Army Benevolent Fund has received firm backing from one of the equestrian calendar's biggest names.

The Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials officially announced the ABF as its charity of choice for the year in reaction to the operational tempo.

Charity controller Maj Gen Sir Evelyn Webb-Carter said: "We are constantly reminded of the rising casualty rates and the increasing demands on the ABF and our resources in the future."

● MILITARY broadcaster Garrison FM has launched an around-the-clock service over the internet.

Armytalk incorporates news, speech and interviews already generated for Garrison radio stations. There are also regular sport updates and weather forecasts. To listen to the station online visit www.armytalk.co.uk

● NORMALISATION moves following the end of Op Banner have been continuing apace with the final disbandment of HQ Northern Ireland due in April this year.

The post of GOC Northern Ireland has been removed and the commander of HQ 38 (Irish) Brigade, part of 2 Division, is now the senior officer in the province.

Peace team are saluted

Military duo praised for invaluable work in Africa

BRITISH Army personnel are playing a major part in securing lasting peace in the much-troubled country of Sudan, according to a senior officer serving with multinational troops.

Force Commander of United Nations Operations, Maj Gen Paban Thapa, praised the efforts of chief of staff Col Jeremy Drage (late RA) and senior staff for operations Lt Col Maurice Riley (R Irish), who have been on loan with the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS).

"They're doing an excellent job co-ordinating departments. Their input into planning and implementation is very effective," he said.

UNMIS primarily works with the former armies of the Muslim north and Christian-Animist south, who had been bitter foes for more than three decades.

A Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005 saw a truce between the two sides and UNMIS is working to help ensure that continues.

Out of the 70 countries involved in the mission, Britain is the lead nation in organising a 40,000-strong force of government and rebel troops in joint integrated units (JIU).

Maj Gen Thapa said: "The focus is on the JIU, as they deliver workshops to help get the troops trained, as well as supplying equipment.

"Britain has also pledged money to the trust fund of UNMIS, from where we can provide resources to the JIUs to be more functional and effective in the implementation of the CPA."

Nepalese officer Maj Gen Thapa admitted that progress had been slow.

He accepted that peace would be difficult to secure in Sudan, especially with the ongoing fighting and humanitarian crisis in Darfur where the Sudanese military are fighting the Janjaweed Arab militia.

"We have achieved a lot in terms of conflict resolution, redeploying forces from the north and south, getting the parties to sit and talk together, with UNMIS helping them to resolve differences in an amicable manner so they don't fall back into conflict again," he said.

"The trust between the two sides still has to develop and build more strongly. It takes time but it's progressing."

● **Mission impossible – Pages 22-25**

IT boosts Army's training regime

COMMANDERS are being urged to help populate a database designed to make the planning of training a walk in the park.

Designed by staff at the Output Delivery Programme (ODP) at HQ Land Forces, the Blenheim software provides users with a single place to corroboratively plan training and access information about the resources they will require.

The system's ultimate goal of being a one-stop shop for forward planning relies on individual units inputting accurate data into Blenheim and ODP assistant director Col Andrew Carwardine (late RA) insists that updating the software will reap huge benefits for the Army.

"As a commander, the largest frustration for me was the lack of a single view of what's going on and what I could and could not do," he told *Soldier*.

"When you are looking for a unit to do something, you can use Blenheim to find

out what effect that will have on that unit and whether it has the time for the task."

Although Blenheim is up-and-running already, Col Carwardine admits that the software's appearance can make the system hard to get to grips with.

The ODP team are currently overhauling the interface and a more user-friendly version is set to be launched in the summer.

As well as providing a clearer view of each unit's collective training requirements, Blenheim will soon allow units to manage individual training and upload qualifications direct to JPA.

"With it, we will be able to look at soldiers commitments on the ground and identify the best time in the unit calendar to do a certain course," said Col Carwardine.

"We can make sure that all training fits in with operations."

● <http://defenceintranet.diiweb.r.mil.uk>



Picture: Mike Weston

Armour issues: The Snatch Land Rover has attracted criticism for offering its crews insufficient protection against roadside bombs in Iraq and Afghanistan

Driving forward

Army vehicle mainstay is upgraded and will remain a key asset in theatre

THE controversial Snatch Land Rover will play a much reduced role on operations in the future but the Army's transport mainstay will not be withdrawn altogether, commanders have said.

The lightly-armoured vehicle has come under intense criticism over the past year for the lack of protection it offers troops when attacked with IEDs.

To date, 37 Service personnel have been killed in Snatches while on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Yet senior Army officers maintain the vehicle remains essential and that they had to weigh up several points when deciding its future.

Lt Gen Sir Nick Houghton, Chief of Joint Operations, said: "When it comes to counter-insurgency there are a number of factors that come into play.

"These are the physical accessibility of the vehicle in built-up areas, the effect on the local people and the ease of interaction with the local population. We also have to look at the likelihood of it damaging local infrastructure."

He explained that the Snatch met the criteria required to remain in action, adding that the Army was already in the process of introducing a modified version codenamed Vixen.

This has reinforced armour and strengthened under-body protection to shield troops from mine blasts.

Attempting to address soldiers' concerns about the protection levels, Lt Gen Houghton said: "We are not blind or deaf to the moral or morale issue. You will always find individuals who will have their own views due to experience, but it has got to be the aggregate of factors on which we base judgements."

Lighter flak jackets considered

DEVELOPING a new type of body armour to reduce the burden on British soldiers is "a priority", the Minister for Defence Equipment has said.

After trying on the latest Osprey protection during a visit to Afghanistan, Quentin Davis said that UK researchers would look to colleagues in the United States to help design a new type of lightweight vest.

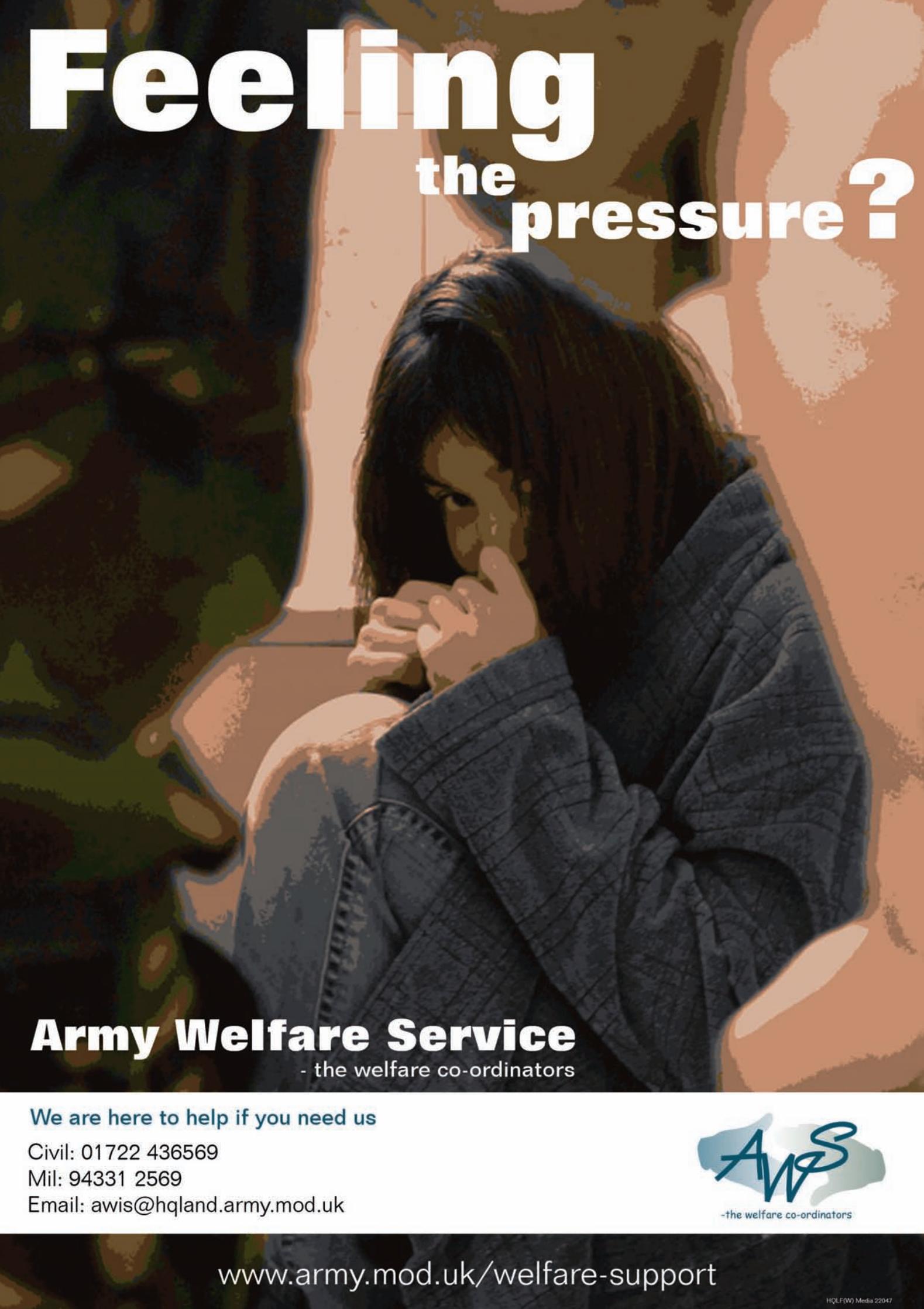
He emphasised that the issue was one of a number he would urgently address on his return home, although he was impressed with the progress being made in the provision of kit.

Davis said: "In addition to informing our own programmes, I'm very keen to make leverage with the Americans so we can make use of their research and development – let's not reinvent the wheel."

"However, the overall message from my visit is that British fighting forces have never been better equipped – there is a constant flow of new equipment."

The Minister also praised the 1st Battalion, The Rifles and 42 Commando, Royal Marines for their efforts in taking the battle to the Taliban during Op Red Dagger (Page 9).

Feeling the pressure?



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Picture: SSgt Mark Langridge (Para)

Double on the rocks: Two soldiers braved sub-zero temperatures to reach the South Pole in Antarctic expeditions. Pictured above is SSgt Mark Langridge

Southern comfort

Shackleton's successors finish family business by reaching world's end

AN ADVENTUROUS Army officer has led a trek to the South Pole, 100 years after one of his ancestors undertook the journey.

Lt Col Henry Worsley (Rifles) followed in the footsteps of his relative Frank Worsley, who was the skipper to Sir Ernest Shackleton during the cutting edge of polar exploration in the early 20th Century.

The officer's attempt to reach the bot-

tom of the world marked the centenary of Shackleton's 1909 Nimrod Expedition to reach the Pole. On that occasion the team were forced to turn around due to bad weather and dwindling rations just 97 miles from their goal, although it was the furthest south anyone had reached at the time.

Undeterred by the history books, Lt Col Worsley was determined to finish the job. Along with colleagues Henry Adams

and Will Gow, who are also descendants of the explorer's team members, the Matrix Shackleton Centenary Expedition reached the Pole in less than 70 days.

It was a particularly special achievement as only two other squads have managed to take on the dangerous route that takes in the Ross Ice Shelf, the treacherous Beardmore Glacier and the High Polar Plateau.

Royal Navy captain Robert Scott completed the feat in 1912, although he and his colleagues were all killed during the return trek. Robert Swan successfully undertook the journey just under 25 years ago.

Speaking via a satellite link just after reaching the Pole, Lt Col Worsley admitted that the 900-mile slog, pulling 300lb sledges in temperatures of -52C, had taken its toll on the three men. But the 47-year-old added: "We are absolutely ecstatic."

"The past 65 days have been mentally gruelling and physically exhausting. But ever since I was a child, completing this journey has been my lifetime ambition."

The expedition was launched to raise awareness of the Shackleton Foundation, a charity promoting leaders who want to make a difference.

Para powers to pole position

AN INTREPID soldier whose nose for extreme adventure led him to trek to the South Pole has become the eighth person to have walked to the earth's southernmost point unsupported.

Taking just 50 days, SSgt Mark Langridge (Para) was greeted at his journey's end by scientists at the Pole's base station who threw an impromptu fancy-dress bash in his honour.

Walking an average speed of 12 nautical miles per day, the 41-year-old paratrooper, who has completed tours of Iraq and Afghanistan, battled blizzards and crossed massive crevasses to achieve his goal.

As reported in last month's *Soldier*, the NCO was left devastated at the beginning of his trip when malfunctions with his chartered aircraft meant that his dream of making the record books by walking to the Pole and back would be impossible.

However, having completed one leg of the arduous journey, the explorer said he was delighted after raising around £24,000 for his chosen charities.

Speaking from Punta Arenas, Chile, SSgt Langridge said he would embark on a new adventure. "I am planning an Antarctic expedition following the route Capt Scott and his men took a century ago," he added.



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Picture: PO Sean Clew

Best of care: Medics from the three Services have been rewarded for their efforts in treating personnel critically wounded on the front line of operations

Medical miracles

Lifesaving work of Army doctors and nursing staff earns royal recognition

THE outstanding role of military health professionals has been recognised from the top after they were singled out for special mention in the 2009 New Year's Honours list.

Leading more than 100 members of the Forces rewarded for their services, Surgeon General Lt Gen Louis Lillywhite was appointed as a Companion in the Military Division of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath.

Surgeon Commodore Timothy Douglas-Riley, Assistant Chief of Staff Medical for the Royal Navy and Col Timothy Hodgetts, a defence professor at the College of Emergency Medicine, both received CBEs.

On the front line of healthcare, Capt Lynne Gibbon (Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service) was awarded an OBE and LCpl Angeline Matley (RAMC) was delighted after hearing

that her work was to be recognised with an MBE.

Medics from all three Services hit the headlines during 2008 for saving the lives of critically injured troops during operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

There were also huge advances in front-line medical technology during the year while the high standards of care at UK centres of excellence such as Headley Court have also been widely praised.

Lt Gen Lillywhite was the first to acknowledge the combined achievements of military medical teams after hearing of his own award. He said: "I congratulate my professional colleagues.

"Looking after our patients is very much a team effort and I pay tribute to everyone who plays a role in the excellent standard of care that we offer to our Armed Forces."

The Surgeon General added: "Drawing from all three Services and working closely with the NHS, supported by the wider welfare community, a pathway of care links our first responders and field hospitals to military and civilian centres of excellence in the UK."

"We should be proud of the dedication and skills this combined team offers to patients – they deserve nothing less."

Puzzling solution to trauma

SENIOR Oxford University researchers have claimed that playing computer puzzle games such as *Tetris* could help reduce flashbacks associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

According to the *PLoS One* journal, which publishes detailed studies from across the UK, 40 volunteers were exposed to harrowing film scenes that featured images of gruesome injuries.

Half-an-hour later some of the volunteers were given a copy of *Tetris* to play and everyone was asked to keep a week-long diary. The gamers reported fewer disturbing recollections from the movie which, the

scientists claim, could be attributed to the Nintendo classic disrupting the recording of memories.

Psychiatrist Dr Emily Holmes, who was closely involved in the project, concluded: "Playing *Tetris* after viewing traumatic material reduces unwanted, involuntary memory flashbacks to that traumatic film, leaving deliberate memory recall of the event intact."

She said the raw images of traumatic events were over-represented in the memories of those who suffer from PTSD and believed games may compete for the same type of brain activity.



Picture: Graeme Main

Secure job: Would-be recruits have been converging on Army development and selection centres for a career offering a good pay and benefits package

Careering forward

Lucrative Army benefits pull in new recruits as credit crunch looms large

THE Armed Forces managed to fight off the new year blues and start 2009 on a high note after latest figures showed the arrival of talented newcomers to the ranks.

According to statistics from the MoD, numbers of would-be soldiers visiting recruiting offices soared to 24,500 in the final ten weeks of last year – double the number from the same period in 2007.

There was a 15 per cent increase in potential applicants clicking on the Army's website, while overall recruiting jumped by around five per cent.

The figures followed revelations that 2,200 more recruits signed up in the 12 months prior to last September – up 15 per cent on the previous year and the highest intake since 2004.

Now Army chiefs are planning a huge recruitment blitz, codenamed Op Solomon, to bolster the ranks, spurred on by a nine per cent increase in personnel successfully completing their training and a dip in the number of soldiers leaving the Service.

Crucially, more Infantry recruits are coming forward – a trend complemented by the Financial Retention Initiative,

which has so far encouraged more than 3,000 serving soldiers to remain in the ranks for an additional two years in return for a cash bonus.

There was further optimism after a survey highlighted that careers advisers are endorsing jobs in the Services.

The research, carried out by training body City and Guilds, found that the

Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy are among the top five recommended career paths.

Col Paul Farrar (HQ Recruiting Group) said there had been more interest in Army careers.

He added: "All the indications are that our recruitment activities are having a good effect."

Show respect, soldiers told

COMMANDERS are being urged to maintain efforts to ensure all soldiers are treated with respect regardless of their religion, ethnic background or sexual orientation.

The Respect for Others Action Plan has been drawn up to help personnel understand the importance of equality and diversity and the effect it has on morale and operational effectiveness.

Those in charge must take immediate action if they receive a complaint and, crucially, have to make sure it is dealt with fairly and impartially.

The scheme also makes it clear that

leaders should ensure personnel treat each other with respect, and that they should never turn a blind eye to poor behaviour.

Since 2002 the British Army has achieved a gold certificate in the Race for Opportunity scheme, which promotes equality in the workplace.

The Service has been commended for setting up the Foreign and Commonwealth taskforce to look after overseas soldiers and praised for its progress in tackling sexual harassment issues. An independent Service Complaints Commissioner has also been appointed.

The new Housing Association offers first time buyers a helping hand onto the housing market



Park Court, Carmyle, Glasgow

The new Housing Association is working with Merchant Homes to provide 24 luxury flats for buyers on low incomes, people in the Armed Forces or veterans and other groups, such as people who have had a significant change in their household circumstances.

All flats are of a high specification, including:

- gas central heating
- stylish fitted kitchens with electric oven, gas hob, canopy hood, integrated washer/dryer and integrated fridge/freezer
- en-suite master bedroom
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- private car parking

Offered under a shared equity scheme, the brand new homes deliver outstanding value for money and allow prospective buyers to own their own home, but significantly pay just a proportion of the sale price.

The scheme is known as "new supply shared equity (NSSE)" which is part of a Scottish Government initiative to help people own their first home.

In challenging economic times such as we are experiencing now, the concept is proving a huge success and contributing greatly to increasing home ownership among first-time buyers on low incomes and a number of other groups.

The remaining equity in the property is owned by the Scottish Government and after two years you can, if you so wish, purchase more of the Government's share up to 100% - which means you can end up owning your home entirely.

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- Caffeine is your friend. Drink a cup of tea or coffee or have a can of cola 90 minutes before you'd normally hit the sack, and another 30 minutes before. Repeat as necessary.
- Occupy your mind. Set yourself tasks, play brain games – anything to keep mentally busy. Go for a walk. Phone a friend on the other side of the world. Watch a DVD (not a boring one!).
- Stimulate your body by turning down the temperature, keeping yourself hungry or seeing how long you can maintain a full bladder. Listen to loud music and keep the lights bright.
- If you feel yourself drifting off, stick a fingernail into your palm – nothing wakes you up like pain.
- Don't relax! Don't sit down or "experiment" by closing your eyes. Next thing you know, it'll be morning...



● Extracted from 'BE THE BEST... at just about everything' by The British Army. Published by Century at £12.99. Crown copyright 2008. Readers can buy the book for the special price of £10.99 incl free UK p&p. To order please call 01206 255 800 and quote the ref 'Soldier'.

Imagine trying to deploy 19,555 military personnel into an area the size of France that is 1,250 miles from the sea, where the main road is no more than a track, one of the principle runways is a gravel strip and the rail network is a single line.

This logistical nightmare is Col Noddy Stafford's . . .

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE





Right, Logistic solutions: Col Noddy Stafford, Chief Plans, discusses the road to peace with Col Xijun Yang, one year after the United Nations relieved the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS)

Main picture, Battle ground: Although this settlement remains untouched, other villages across war-torn Sudan have been host to horrific violence that has left 300,000 people dead



Report: Karen Thomas
Pictures: Steve Dock

In the town of Muhajeria 47,000 survivors of Darfur's violence have hurriedly built makeshift settlements within a hair's breadth of the razor wire surrounding a lone United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) base.

Labelled as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and now close to three million in number across Sudan, these civilians have little to cling to other than the belief that there might be marginally more safety living next to armed, blue-helmeted peacekeepers. The troops wake up each day to extreme deprivation on their doorstep in a volatile and hostile place where there is no rule of law and men rampage and slaughter with impunity.

Just two weeks before *Soldier* visited the Nigerian company occupying the UNAMID base late last year, inter-ethnic attacks erupted near the town. Another 40 people were killed and 12,000 displaced, as 15 villages were destroyed. As the IDP camps swell, so does the need for shelter, food,

water, medical care and protection from the carnage, and an educated generation of Sudanese gets lost among the vast mosaic of tatty, blue tarpaulin.

The lone British military UNAMID representative, Col Noddy Stafford (late 9th/12th Royal Lancers), was accompanying a reconnaissance group of Tanzanian officers. They were assessing the security and facilities of two bases – Muhajeria and Khor Abeche – for an incoming battalion that will replace the Nigerians. The 40-minute helicopter flight between the sites showed little in the way of roads but much of a sparsely populated, barren savannah landscape.

In Sudan, Darfur is unofficially referred to as the Wild West. Random incidents, often involving centuries-old cattle rustling and migration to animal pastures, spark bloody clashes between numerous tribes, splinter rebel factions and government forces. Having taken casualties in ambushes, UNAMID troops escort convoys delivering vital humanitarian aid in armoured vehicles and UN chopper pilots rigorously stick to tactical flying moves to avoid being shot down.

Since taking over from the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS), the UN has deployed 9,800 of the agreed 19,555 peacekeepers to what was

described by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as one of history's worst nightmares. When the mission reaches full strength this year – 26,000, including the UN humanitarian agencies – it will be the largest in the world, covering an operational zone the size of France.

As chief plans based at the HQ in state capital El Fasher, Col Stafford and 11 multi-national officers have just six months to get the remaining troops settled into the equivalent of the forward operating bases

found in Afghanistan. The UN logistics centre filled with armoured personnel carriers, ammunition, tents, food and medicine is almost 1,000 miles away. With no Hercules C-130s, everything gets shoved down the one existing highway.

"It's astonishingly ambitious for any army. The British and Americans would find it challenging but we're asking a composite of 42 nations to do it," Col Stafford told *Soldier*, adding that the "good" road stops 800 miles short of Darfur and supplies can take weeks to arrive.

"You need abundant reserves of humour, patience, tact, diplomacy and perseverance and if you don't have any one of these, you are going to find it intolerable here because there is a huge burden of expectation on you. Leadership is hugely important.

"You have to be committed. You are eating chicken and rice 50 metres from IDPs

'An afternoon's work to escort a convoy to an IDP camp suddenly results in 20,000 being fed'



who can only dream about that. Everyone is anxious to do what they can to help and sometimes you don't have to do too much. For example, an afternoon's work to escort a convoy to an IDP camp suddenly results in 20,000 being fed."

Muhajeria typifies the austere conditions endured by UNAMID and Sudanese alike. The security threat is high. Fresh water is scarce. Threadbare tents erected five years ago by AMIS troops have no air-conditioning to relieve the blistering 50-degree summer heat and are likely to disintegrate under the torrential rains of the next wet season. Many UNAMID bases scattered across the state get cut off when wadis used by transport rapidly flood into rivers.

Even El Fasher's urban streets resemble those of Somalia's capital Mogadishu after its fall into anarchy during the early 1990s. Trigger-happy men from an increasing number of warring rebel factions brazenly hang off the back of stolen pick-up trucks armed with machine guns, as opposing government forces dig in. Well-organised and heavily armed attacks by the militias forced the UN onto an emergency-foothing.

The announcement that Sudanese President, Omar al-Bashir, could soon be indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes against humanity in Darfur stretched the tension to breaking point.

UNAMID is now walking its own tightrope between scaling up the deployment to keep a lid on the humanitarian crisis and battening down the hatches should the conflict implode. "My role, getting people on the ground, is

very clear, but it is set against a backdrop of uncertainty – the effect of an ICC decision that indicts the President. That has the potential to ignite Darfur and UNAMID would become the focus of resentment, as many people confuse the identities of the ICC and the UN," warned Col Stafford.

Out on the ground peacekeepers from countries such as Rwanda push on with daily patrols to isolated villages and vulnerable IDP camps in a bid to achieve durable peace and stability. Previously trained by the British Army for peacekeeping operations in Darfur after Rwanda emerged from the 1994 genocide, they persevere despite inadequate equipment, manpower and logistical support.

But, aside from the Sudanese government, only one of the many rebel factions has signed the Darfur Peace Agreement. UNAMID fatalities continue to rise as local commanders use weapons rather than words in the fight for control over a bleak and broken land. ■

Main picture, Watchkeepers: African troops serving as part of the UNAMID mission in Sudan have moved into a series of forward operating bases throughout Darfur, including this one in the state capital of El Fasher



Darfur Dossier

2003

- Sudanese Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rebels attack Sudanese government forces citing lack of power and wealth-sharing by Khartoum
- The ensuing struggle for control of the region begins with large scale ethnic cleansing of African tribes by Arab militias – Janjaweed – said to be backed by the government
- Then UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, raises the alarm with the permanent members of the Security Council and demands the escalating humanitarian crisis be given top priority

2004

- The UN unsuccessfully pressures Sudan to accept its help to protect the civilians. Then US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, publicly describes the Darfur killings as genocide
- The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) deploys to Darfur but fails to stop the attacks and the conflict spreads, threatening to spill into neighbouring countries

2005

- The UN accuses the Sudanese government and Arab militias of human rights abuses but not genocide, as the Security Council agrees to refer those accused of war crimes to the ICC

2006

- The Darfur Peace Agreement is signed between the government and the SLA/M but emerging smaller rebel groups reject the accord and continue fighting
- The government rebuffs increasing international calls for a UN force to deploy to the region and expels the organisation's top official, Jan Pronk, from the country
- Attacks on civilians and aid workers intensify. The fighting proliferates between splinter rebel groups, warring factions of Arab, non-Arab, tribal ethnicity and government forces

2007

- Faced with international sanctions, Khartoum capitulates to an African-dominant UN presence and UNAMID, which will be the world's largest mission, replaces AMIS on December 31

2008

- In May JEM makes an audacious attack on the capital, fighting within one mile of the presidential palace, further complicating the political situation in Darfur and jeopardising the prospect of peace
- ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo applies for an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir citing genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes
- There are fears that issuing an arrest warrant for the Head of State will plunge the whole of Sudan, Africa's largest country, back into a bloody civil war

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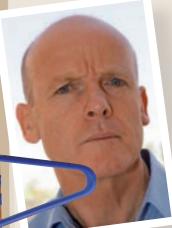


British Army: 1984-1995
Rank: Sgt
UN post: Operations officer, Mine Action Service
Minefields: Chechnya, the Western Sahara, Eritrea, Bosnia, Kosovo and Sri Lanka

FOR the first six months after I left the Army I was nicknamed "Bulldozer", as everything had to be done "now". I learnt over the years that there are different approaches, but when the situation deteriorates I can always switch into military mode. You tend not to put yourself in stupid situations but perhaps sometimes you are too aware of the security threats. I'm able to be more systematic than civilians and in meetings I'm more concise. If you are a control freak then don't work for the UN, as all the systems are not in place. Junior and senior NCOs usually do better in these jobs because officers are too used to being part of a slick organisation.



JON FORAN



British Army: 1976-2006
Rank: A/Maj
UN post: Programme manager, MineTech International
Minefields: Awarded Military Medal for bravery in the Falklands conflict for rescuing 22 comrades from a minefield

I WORKED with the UN mine clearance unit in Cambodia, which was the biggest UN project for this ordnance at the time. It brought home the threat of mines to indigenous people and to the lives of those living in rural areas. The really sad thing about working here is knowing civilians and children walk through minefields. In the town of Malakal, people build their homes on them because it's a case of survival and they have different priorities. My Army skills are handy here because you have to try and continually plan for the unexpected and, on occasions, you've got to take charge of things yourself.



NIGEL FORESTALL



British Army: 1970-2007
Rank: Lt Col (Def Attaché, Lebanon)
UN post: Acting Director, Mine Action Service
Minefields: First contact was in 1976 in Oman. Then moved up to the minefields of Kuwait, Bosnia and Lebanon

THE UN is very structured so it's similar to the British Army. I'm working in different locations with hazardous security and I've got to look after myself. It's bloody hard work out here. You've got to have high standards and the job requires great diplomacy with the Sudanese. I think the discipline and training you get in the British Army are absolutely vital, as you are closer to the worst parts of life than ever before. You see these people in Darfur and you almost cry with sadness. They own nothing and die with nothing and it's mentally distressing to see the humanitarian disaster. I really believe that people working here earn their money.



Sappers reunited

Ex-Engineers mine UN potential among Sudan's unexploded bombs

Interviews: Karen Thomas
Pictures: Steve Dock

THE years of civil war in Sudan have left the usual legacies – plenty of mines, live shells and a littering of ammunition. But who better to clean up the death traps and prevent the maiming of men, women and children than former Royal Engineers? Three ex-sappers now working for the United Nations told *Soldier* how they are using their military expertise to make Sudan safer.

Jumping from the British Army frying pan into the fire of Darfur, the demining clan found you can take the man out of the Army but you can't take the Army out of the man. ■



Outreach programme: Nigerian soldiers based in the village of Muhajeria head out on a mobile patrol to outlying areas

ON SUDAN'S FAULT LINE

British-backed United Nations mission bridges deep divides in destroyed flashpoint town

Report: Karen Thomas

Pictures: Steve Dock

ALARM bells deafened the UN military operations hub in Khartoum as fragmented reports of skirmishes 500 miles away gradually revealed a wide-screen picture of a full-scale battle.

The small town of Abyei, home to 56,000 civilians, had exploded. Rogue Southern People's Liberation Army (SPLA) soldiers had attacked the government's Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the 600-strong Joint Integrated Unit (JIU) rapidly reverted to kind with the combat-ready troops joining their respective sides. Along with the civilians and humanitarian organisations, United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) peacekeepers got caught in the burst of heavy fighting that destroyed 5,000 homes. >>



Sqn Ldr Mark Hainsworth, Royal Air Force, arrived in Sudan in May last year as the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) attacked Khartoum. He had been working in the UNMIS ops room for just two weeks when Abyei kicked off.

"I'd heard snippets of what might be going on but there was nothing conclusive or accurate for me to act on," he told *Soldier*, explaining that frequent but short tribal and ethnic clashes were not an uncommon occurrence across southern Sudan.

"I staggered on and started the painful process of finding correct information and reacting to it. I sent a fellow ops officer to Abyei and although we were being told that it was all peaceful down there, he was on the phone and I could hear gun shots and shells in the background."

UNMIS gave refuge to people fleeing their trashed grass homes and rescued aid workers in armoured personnel carriers. The biggest concern was the almost instantaneous meltdown of the JIU. Integrating the former enemies into one force was at the top of the 2005 peace agenda and seen as vital to bringing

stability to Sudan. About 60 units are deployed to the country's hot spots.

Chief of Staff Col Jeremy Drage (late Royal Artillery) confirmed it took just eight days for UNMIS to install a new JIU and restore calm. After losing the battle, the SPLA beat a hasty retreat south and all parties signed up to an Abyei road map to peace.

"The military aspects, which were the separation and removal of forces from the road map area, were done quite quickly and gave freedom of movement to UNMIS, which we previously didn't have outside of Abyei.

We put a huge amount of effort into the JIU so we've got a reasonably effective unit that is deployed and doing its job," Col Drage told *Soldier*, stressing the need to lower the profile of the military through introducing a higher level of civilian governance.

"That's how we're

going to get progress in the area – the improvement in the administration and the whole rule of law.

"Everything takes time in Sudan and nothing happens overnight so, slowly, progress is being made. The UN is putting a lot of emphasis into the area in terms of improving our presence both from a humanitarian point of view and increasing the military and police presence there."

Getting men to lay down their arms after they have fought in Africa's longest-running civil war is no short order. Sudan collapsed into north-south strife in 1962 and, apart from an 11-year hiatus beginning in the 1970s, the warring parties did not move to the peace-negotiating table until 2005. UNMIS sits between the former adversaries and helps them find their way through the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which aims to prevent Sudan from falling back into a widespread conflict.

Although Britain contributes just

‘The north-south issue is more significant to lasting peace but that’s not belittling what’s happening in Darfur’



Stagger on: A Nigerian soldier serving with C Company, Nigerian Battalion 6 carries out perimeter security duty in Muhajeria

three military personnel to UNMIS, with the chief of staff post rotating with the Norwegians, the diplomatic mission drives the JIUs and is working on the next CPA step towards the referendum in 2011. An ambitious disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of 180,000 troops has just started and is set to be the world's largest programme of its kind.

"We are becoming increasingly involved in the DDR, which is central to finding a permanent solution to the conflict," confirmed current Defence Attaché Col John Rollins (late Royal Irish).

"That cannot happen without the capacity to run that programme or the ability of the wider community and the economy to absorb those who are being reintegrated. The respective armies see the necessity for DDR because of its money-saving potential. They can't afford to run the armies and militias they're paying for at the moment, but they're very reluctant to commit to a future down-sized structure for their own armed forces."

As north and south learn to share power, they must also agree on how to distribute the wealth generated by rich mineral resources

as Sudan's economy booms off the back of increased oil production and export. But the struggle towards lasting peace across Sudan by its people, UNMIS and Britain, is often overshadowed by the human catastrophe in the country's western state of Darfur.

"The north-south issue is more significant to lasting peace and the future of the country but that's not belittling what's happening in Darfur, which is a humanitarian crisis exacerbated by fighting," explained Col Drage. "Very rarely do you see north-south Sudan in the media apart from the story on Abyei, but it's understandable. The slow, steady progress towards implementing the CPA is not newsworthy."

Tragically, the torching of villages, endemic gang rape, wholesale killing and millions of people fleeing the terror in Darfur continue to make front-page headlines. ■





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Fractured peace

British expertise helps African troops contain Sudan's simmering violence



Report: Karen Thomas
Pictures: Steve Dock

DARFUR rebels raced *Mad Max*-style across a thousand miles of desert and launched a surprise strike on Sudan's capital, Khartoum, fighting to within a mile of the city's presidential palace.

The Justice and Equality Movement's (JEM) attack last May got the attention of the Sudanese government, which slammed shut the airport and locked down the city. Despite the ongoing conflict in Sudan's most western state of Darfur, and unpredictable clashes between warring ethnic groups sporadically erupting across the country, the rebels' audacious assault from the west was unexpected.

Watchful eye:
Nigerian soldiers
on perimeter
security duty in the
area of Muhajeria

But the Defence Section of the British Embassy had just finalised plans to cope with emergencies in a country that teeters on the brink of conflict. A tentative peace exists between the north and south after more than three decades of civil war but trouble has a habit of springing from volatile areas. SSgt Lee Traxton (AGC (SPS)), assistant to the Defence Attaché, was on watch as the JEM rebels unsuccessfully tried to battle their way across the River Nile.

"The curfew came down and no movement was allowed. Everyone had to get off the streets and there were checkpoints every hundred metres or so.

The military spread out across the city and all the bridges were secured. We were locked down from 1600 until 1000 the next morning," he told *Soldier*, adding that his family and friends were scattered during the enforced blackout.

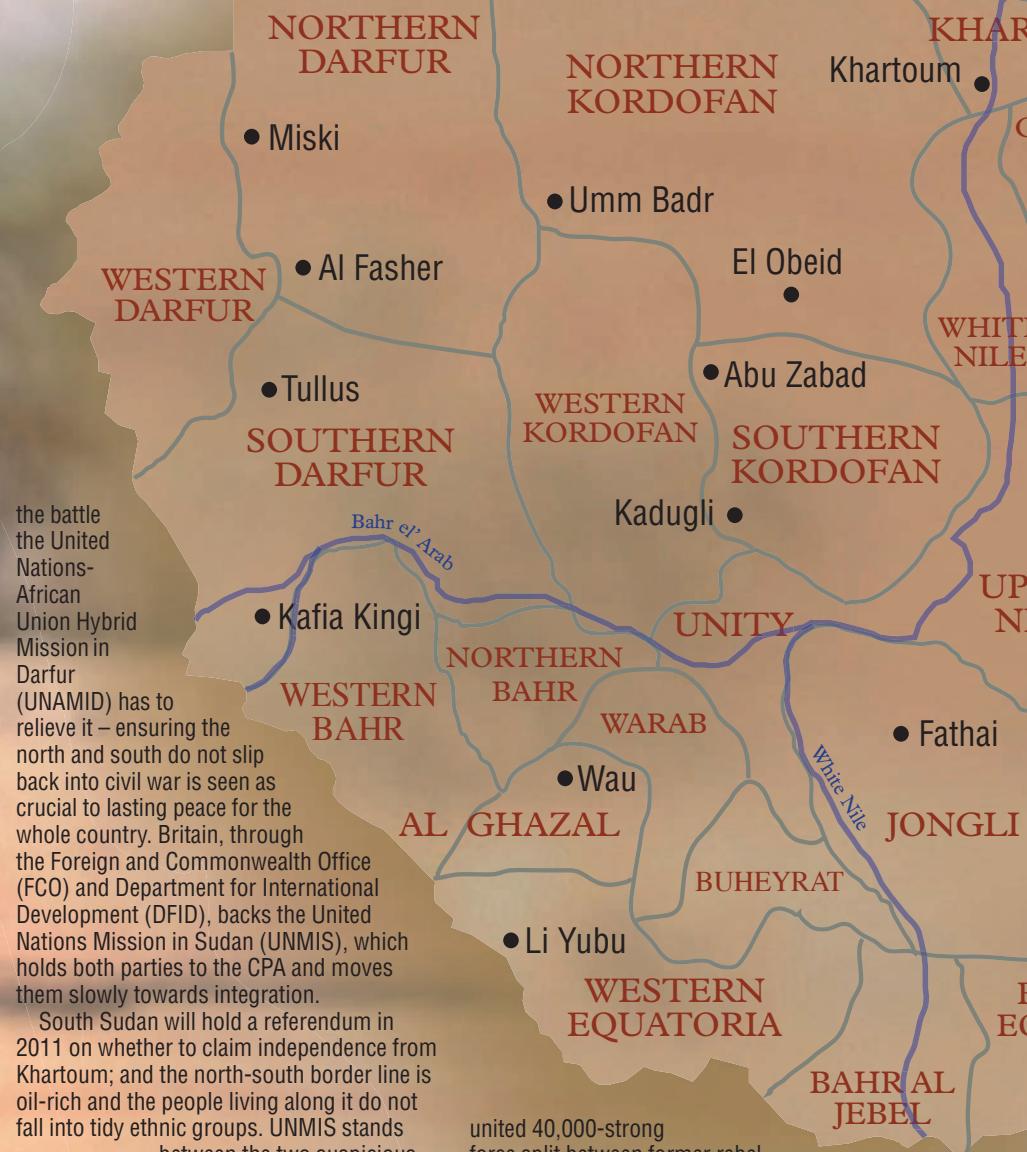
Africa's largest nation is burdened with some of the continent's most complex problems, including war-torn Darfur. Britain has maintained an interest in Sudan since its independence in 1956 but that focus intensified after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) to end the civil war between the Muslim north and Christian-Animist south was negotiated in 2005. Khartoum's Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Juba's Southern People's Liberation Army (SPLA) are trying to work together to stabilise the country.

The biggest UK diplomatic mission in Africa is pouring funds into helping Sudan secure peace across its vast land, which is five times the size of France. Defence Attaché Col John Rollins (late R Irish) draws on "bread and butter military experience" to help deal with arising crises. Plenty are threatening to boil over in a country governed by military administrations in both the north and south, and which hosts the world's second and third largest operational United Nations (UN) missions.

"There are so many ethnic groups and they're not driven by religious differences," Col Rollins explained. "It's complex, but includes marginalisation, failure to share wealth, desertification and less access to water in Darfur in particular, as well as increased access to arms. They have always stolen cattle as a matter of course but now they're armed when they do it. This is against the background of a lack of law and order in many parts of the country."

Britain plays its part in Sudan by sending Military Advisory and Training Teams to prepare African troops for African Union or UN peacekeeping duties around the world. The flagship Kofi Annan Peacekeeping Training Centre in Ghana and the Peace Mission Training Centre in South Africa draw on British funding, Army expertise and experience of serving in operational theatres.

Although headlines are grabbed by the seemingly-endless misery in the west – and



the battle the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) has to relieve it – ensuring the north and south do not slip back into civil war is seen as crucial to lasting peace for the whole country. Britain, through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department for International Development (DFID), backs the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), which holds both parties to the CPA and moves them slowly towards integration.

South Sudan will hold a referendum in 2011 on whether to claim independence from Khartoum; and the north-south border line is oil-rich and the people living along it do not fall into tidy ethnic groups. UNMIS stands

between the two suspicious, and at times trigger-happy, former enemies. Col Rollins juggles multiple British-funded programmes that assist UNAMID and UNMIS in helping to bring peace.

"These conflicts are very complex and involve a wide range of tribal and armed groups. The FCO and DFID programmes cannot operate without the Defence Section's support in analysis and advice. And that takes up a great deal of our time," he said.

"One of my single greatest challenges is having to be in several places at a time across a country not just the size of a continent but where access is extremely difficult. You can't travel by road, we're restricted on the number of flights we can use and we're blocked by travel restrictions and the difficulty in getting permits."

Britain takes the lead on international support of joint integrated units (JIU), a

united 40,000-strong force split between former rebel SPLA and government SAF troops.

The units are deployed to sensitive areas where there is specific inter-ethnic tension. Britain's biggest contribution is providing life support such as access to water, tents, generators and vehicles, but officers from both sides are sent to the UK for courses, including training at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst.

The British Army's unrivalled expertise in diplomacy and restoring peace and order, and the tireless efforts of Col Rollins and his team, are rightly in demand in Sudan.

And the events of the past year, during which the SPLA launched an assault against the SAF in the town of Abyei, fracturing the JIU based there and destroying the border town, suggest that British input will be needed for some time to come. ■

Below, A river runs through it: The River Nile, which flows through the troubled country of Sudan from Egypt in the north to Uganda in the south





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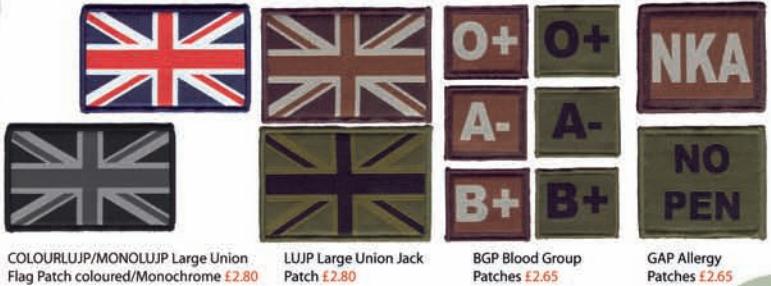
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Weekend away: Rgr Andrew Allen (1 R Irish) with son Carter, fiancee Natalie Keenan and her parents Tom and Mandy in the Norton House lobby

Report: Cliff Caswell
Pictures: Graeme Main

ANDREW Allen's personal nightmare began when a huge explosion tore through his body and left him fighting for his life in southern Afghanistan.

The young ranger, serving with the 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, had his right leg sawn off in the blast and his face was so badly burned that

he was unable to see following the attack in the infamous Musa Qaleh area of Helmand province. Then, as doctors assessed his prospects, his mutilated left leg was found to be in such bad condition that it had to be amputated.

As the 20-year-old lay blind, paralysed and on his way into surgery, there was a further twist to the story. Rgr Allen was told his fiancee Natalie Keenan was about to give birth to their son. It was the last thing he remembered before the anaesthetic took hold and he slipped into unconsciousness.

"I had found out that Natalie

was pregnant just before I left for my first tour of Afghanistan," the Northern Ireland-born soldier recalled. "She went into labour on November 19, just before I was about to have an operation to restore some of my sight."

But having experienced the pain of serious injury and the joy of becoming a father in the space of a few short weeks, the rhythm of normality has slowly been returning to Rgr Allen's life care of a project run by SSAFA Forces Help.

Having adapted a luxurious home a few miles from the Headley Court rehabilitation



centre, the charity has created a retreat where personnel undergoing treatment can spend time with their families outside of an hospital environment.

Based in the quiet village of Ashtead in Surrey, SSAFA Norton House – named after George Cross winner Capt Peter Norton (RLC) – has six bedrooms with 16 beds, a communal kitchen and a TV room fitted with state-of-the art kit. And since last February it has provided nearly 200 military personnel and 60 families with a valuable home-from-home.

For Rgr Allen, who has been facing the battle of learning to walk again on his prosthetic limbs, and with a series of operations under way to fully restore his vision, Norton House has become a haven where he can take the time to relax.

"This place has become a real weekend thing for me now, which is great because I obviously can't just get on an aircraft and go back to Belfast," he admitted.

"The charity is superb and even makes sure there are basics, such

as bread, milk and butter, in the kitchen before you arrive."

Joined by fiancee Natalie Keenan, her parents Tom and Mandy and new son Carter, the house also allows Rgr Allen to settle into his new role as a father, and to enjoy activities such as watching a football match or shopping in town.

"The facilities here are amazing," said Tom Keenan, a former member of The Royal Irish Regiment. "The people are from all walks of life, yet they talk to each other and everybody gets on. The soldiers have seen some unbelievable things."

It is not only the soldiers and their families who enjoy the surroundings of Norton House. For Michael Turner, who manages the property along with deputy Liz Gallacher, the warm atmosphere in the home makes the job worthwhile.

Backed up by a support worker and housekeeper, the team is committed to ensuring that the building provides a welcoming and safe environment for visitors.

"Our job is to play the grey man, to be in the background but to give help and support where needed," said Turner, who served a 25-year career in the REME before entering the charity sector. "The families can do what they choose and our role is to make life as comfortable as possible for them."

Despite now being well accepted in the community, the SSAFA scheme attracted

controversy when, in summer 2007, scores of Ashtead residents objected to the home. But following a public backlash that made national newspaper headlines, councillors found no reason to refuse the application and rubber stamped the plans.

"Since we have been here we have found the whole village to be very supportive," Turner added. "In the first week that we opened, people were arriving at the door with bottles of wine and boxes of chocolates, and wishing everyone here all the best.

"Amazingly, I only found out about my job at the house because of the controversy," he added. "I had been on my way home when I had to pull over at a garage near Ashtead because I was running low on fuel, and there were the headlines in the local paper saying that there had been all of these planning objections."

Having applied for and been given the job, Turner admitted that the role had surpassed all expectations. As SSAFA prepares for the imminent opening of a new home near Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham, he was confident that Norton House had been instrumental in changing lives for the better.

"The charity has a real can-do attitude and is well set up for a project like this," he said. "The fact is that this house makes a huge difference to families and especially to the soldiers because it helps them with their rehabilitation. For all of us who work here, that is very rewarding to see." ■

'The fact is that this house makes a huge difference to families and especially to the soldiers because it helps them with their rehabilitation'



Soldier asked Norton House visitors what the project meant to them

Pte Gary Wakefield (RLC), pictured left, with Graham Williams, Kathleen Wakefield and fiancee Victoria Price, outside the home in Ashtead

I HAVEN'T been at Headley Court very long at all but Norton House is great because you can come here and do what you want.

I was wounded by a bomb in Afghanistan while serving with 13 Air Assault Support Regiment. My left calf was torn and I had broken ankles and broken legs. The rehabilitation is quite testing and I still have to go to have another operation.

The rooms at the house are great and many of them have en-suite facilities. I've been spending a weekend here with my family and my fiancee Victoria Price, who are visiting from Wales.

Rfn Kushal Limbu (2 RGR), pictured right, with his wife at Norton House

THIS is my first time here and it is such a nice place to be. The facilities are very good indeed – there are two rooms with widescreen TVs and a massive kitchen.

I was wounded by an IED in Afghanistan and lost both my legs below the knee. Having arrived at Headley Court in December, I'm now adapting well to my new prosthetic limbs.

As my wife and family are living in Shorncliffe, Norton House is very useful for us because it means we can be together.

It is also great to meet and talk to the other Service personnel who are staying here.



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Portraits of war

Famous footballer's son captures striking reality of life and death on Helmand's front line

Interview: Cliff Caswell

Picture: Robert Wilson

SITTING on the flight deck of a Royal Air Force TriStar as the crew began the descent through Afghan airspace, veteran photographer Robert Wilson could scarcely believe what he was experiencing.

In pitch darkness, the aircraft was heading for Kandahar airfield. With no previous exposure to a war zone, and armed only with his camera, the prospect was as daunting as it was alluring.

"The last time I had flown on a TriStar was as a ten-year-old child, and now I was a passenger alongside 300 British soldiers," the son of legendary Arsenal goalkeeper Bob Wilson recalled. "Everybody was in their full kit and body armour. It was a wake up call to where I was going.

"I flew into Afghanistan sat next to the pilot and it was the start of an adventure. I wanted to get something special from the visit."

Now 39, Wilson certainly achieved his aim. In just two weeks, he had seen the highs and lows of British operations against the Taliban. He had experienced the comradeship of life in theatre and witnessed the repatriation of a British soldier killed in action. And, above all, he had captured a record of the adventure on film.

From extraordinary portraits of war-weary troops to stunning landscapes and the human cost of fighting illustrated by a flag-draped coffin in the back of a C-17 Globemaster, his pictures present a unique and moving account of life in battle. They have now been published in a book called *Helmand, Afghanistan*.

But it was only a chance meeting with a British Army officer who had seen Wilson's work that led to the invitation from Brig Andrew Mackay, the commander of 52 Brigade, to create a lasting record of his troops' tour.

"I had spoken to this captain a few months earlier when he asked me for some advice on photography and we got on well," said Wilson. "He showed his commander my work and the next thing I knew I was boarding a TriStar.

"The whole project excited me, although the first three days after arriving at Kandahar airfield were uncomfortable as I wondered what sort of pictures I was going to get."

But it did not take the married father-of-two long to find his feet after he was taken to the front-line outposts that have been making headline news. His tour included a forward operating base where the enemy lurked just outside the perimeter.

It was to prove a daunting journey and Wilson admitted he admired the immense courage and resilience of the soldiers placing their lives on the line against an enemy that often engaged them at close range. The contrast with the huge main bases and their creature comforts was striking.

"I remember being told by one of the close protection people that I had to leave all my personal items behind, and at that point I called my wife to tell her that she wouldn't hear from me for five days or so but that I was in good hands.

"Those days when I was out and about were such an exciting time – as the soldiers see Helmand every day they are used to the

life and the sights, but I was lucky to see it through the eyes of innocence and was shooting pictures both day and night.

"It really gives you a different perspective of life and there were days when I was almost wishing that we would see action. Then I would stop myself and say 'be careful what you wish for, because you might just get it'."

The sacrifices of those serving in Afghanistan were brought home when Wilson was given unprecedented access to a repatriation ceremony, where he managed to capture the emotion of the troops as a fallen comrade was returned home.

"There were no other photographers there, and when I arrived Brig Mackay told me that he would like the event recorded," he said. "It was an extremely emotional service and I am very grateful that I was invited to be there."

The event, which is the culmination of Wilson's impressive book, provides a rare insight into how the grim reality of death on operations is dealt with by troops. The pictorial account concludes with an extraordinary aerial photo of Helmand.

"Being out there was a rollercoaster for me, and something I shall never forget," Wilson added. "I don't know how the soldiers do what they do. They are living in tough conditions and fighting an enemy that is often just 500 yards away. It was extraordinary and I'm privileged I had the opportunity to see it." ■

• *Helmand, Afghanistan* by Robert Wilson is published by Jonathan Cape (RRP £30). Readers can buy the book for the special price of £26 including free UK p&p. To order please call 01206 255 800 and quote the ref 'Soldier Magazine'.





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Report: Samantha Chapman
Pictures: Mike Weston

TWO Army chefs have cooked up a storm to win a top award at an international food and sherry pairing competition.

Cpl Vicki-Leigh Smith (below) and WO1 Shaun Collins (right), both RLC, are the first British Army team to ever get through to the finals, after winning the national competition last year.

Up against Michelin starred chefs from across the world at the third Copa Jerez competition in Spain, the talented pair won the title of best dish paired with a medium/sweet sherry.

Jerez is the home of sherry and each team was tasked with choosing three courses, which then had to be matched with the perfect fortified wine.

Chef Cpl Smith and sommelier/wine waiter WO1 Collins beat restaurant teams from Denmark, the United States, Spain, Germany and the Netherlands with their chocolate soufflé with glazed raspberries, chilled cream and sloe gin ripple paired with Pedro Ximénez sherry.

Cpl Smith, 24, who is attached to 5 Regiment, Royal Artillery at Catterick, said: "I'm so pleased. It's an achievement in itself just getting here, never mind actually taking the prize for the best dessert in the world.

"I had to watch the judges eat the food and explain the dish to them which was really nerve-racking because I haven't had to do that before, but they seemed to like what I gave them.

"We were the only Army team to have ever got this far. I was also the youngest and the only female chef so I think there was a lot of interest in us because we were very different from all the others."

WO1 Collins, 38, is based in Lisburn, Northern Ireland with 19 Light Brigade, and paired up with Cpl Smith at the 2007 Combined Services Culinary Competition when her sommelier dropped out. The pair went on to win their category, going through to the national finals held at Hotel Olympia, London, last year.

"We have a good working relationship," said WO1 Collins, who had to learn about sherry-matching specifically for his role. "Vicki always strives to do her very best and works constantly to improve and retain her cooking knowledge, and it's the same for myself so we understand each other.

"It wasn't difficult to learn about sherries for my role as a sommelier – as a chef I understand flavours very well so I could match the dishes to the food without too much trouble. It's a fantastic achievement for the two of us, to represent Great Britain is an honour in itself."

For their efforts the pair won a 32-litre barrel of a sherry of their choice and a course as a venenciador – a traditional sherry pourer. ■



Dessert storm

Talented Army cooking duo scoop international award after appealing to judges' sweet tooth



Interview: Cliff Caswell
Picture: Steve Dock

WHEN a huge explosion tore through Brighton's Grand Hotel a quarter of a century ago, it marked a menacing new turn in a battle with a ruthlessly efficient terrorist enemy.

Having already plied their deadly trade in Northern Ireland, fighters from the Provisional IRA were now attacking political targets on the British mainland. And their strikes were proving to be well-planned and executed with lethal precision.

The Brighton bomb was aimed at the then-Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, who had been in the Sussex town with her Cabinet for the annual Conservative Party Conference. While she escaped unscathed, the blast killed five people and seriously injured many others, among them the President of the Board of Trade Norman Tebbit and his wife Margaret, who was left paralysed.

Although the Provisional IRA's campaign is now to many a distant memory, and the British Army's 38-year operation in Northern Ireland is consigned to the history books, an acclaimed weapons expert is warning that lessons of the past are now more relevant than ever before.

Andy Oppenheimer, who charts the complex history of Irish Republican terrorism in his book *The IRA: The Bombs and the Bullets*, argues that there is the potential for Islamic fundamentalists to export their lethal trade from the front lines of Iraq and Afghanistan to the UK. And he is adamant that the threat posed by current extremists is more indiscriminate than any in recent times.

"In a place like Iraq the situation is different to the UK – out there the insurgents have taken advantage of a war situation where weapons are readily available," he said. "Al Qaeda has also moved in and I'm surprised that there have not been more attacks with explosives such as chemical shells.

"There is a fear that it is only a matter of time before you have skilled terrorists here on home soil. They will come from places where there is an insurgency and while they might not bring bomb-making materials with them, they have the expertise."

Oppenheimer, whose areas of expertise include chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) weapons, said the IRA had started from a low base yet had learned a great deal during the successes and defeats of its 100-year history. In its last three decades, having managed to secure equipment from sympathisers in the United States and former Eastern Bloc, its commanders took the battle to the UK mainland.

But while he is convinced that the group had developed the capability to inflict large numbers of casualties in major attacks, he believes the Republican terrorists deliberately restricted their activities to political and military establishments. As has been shown with the London bombings of 2005, however, Islamic extremists are much more indiscriminate in their approach.

'There is a fear that it is only a matter of time before you have skilled terrorists here on home soil'

"The IRA could have launched a major radiological attack and had been experimenting with weapons of mass effect," Oppenheimer said. "These devices included fuel air explosives and napalm that would have claimed thousands of victims."

"The group's leaders also tried to get as much research and development done as possible on weapons such as missiles and mortars, many of which were never used, but they wanted them for propaganda value and to show off their capability."

Although Oppenheimer described the recent wave of domestic attacks from Islamic extremists as being "amateur" in execution, he reckoned that groups in Iraq and Afghanistan were learning lessons and becoming more proficient with time.

"When you look at the IRA, it did not just take them the 30 years of the Troubles to get to where they finished up – they had been building themselves up from the 19th Century onwards," he said. "After the Irish rebellion of 1916 they had virtually nothing, but then they began to grow significantly."

"They started raiding military barracks, got themselves weapons and ultimately mastered a level of ingenuity that allowed them to put together bombs from proper explosives, which they used to attack high-profile targets on the UK mainland. Over time they became an efficient and ruthless group."

With the risks very real, Oppenheimer warned that the UK authorities would have to develop their tactics and skills to stay abreast of emerging new threats, in the same way as their predecessors had managed to keep the IRA in check through sound intelligence, infiltration and experienced counter-explosive experts.

But unlike the Republican insurgents, who were an organised military force and who became politicised to the extent that they, albeit reluctantly, were ultimately satisfied to negotiate to end their campaign, he believed the battle against religious extremists would be far less likely to be solved around the table.

"It has been said that we are now involved in a fourth world war – the third was the Cold War – and it is going to last for a very long time," Oppenheimer concluded. "I am sure that the terrorists are learning, and we have already seen them carry out large scale strikes such as the nightclub attack in Bali in 2002, the Madrid train bombings in 2004, and the Marriott Hotel attack in Islamabad last year."

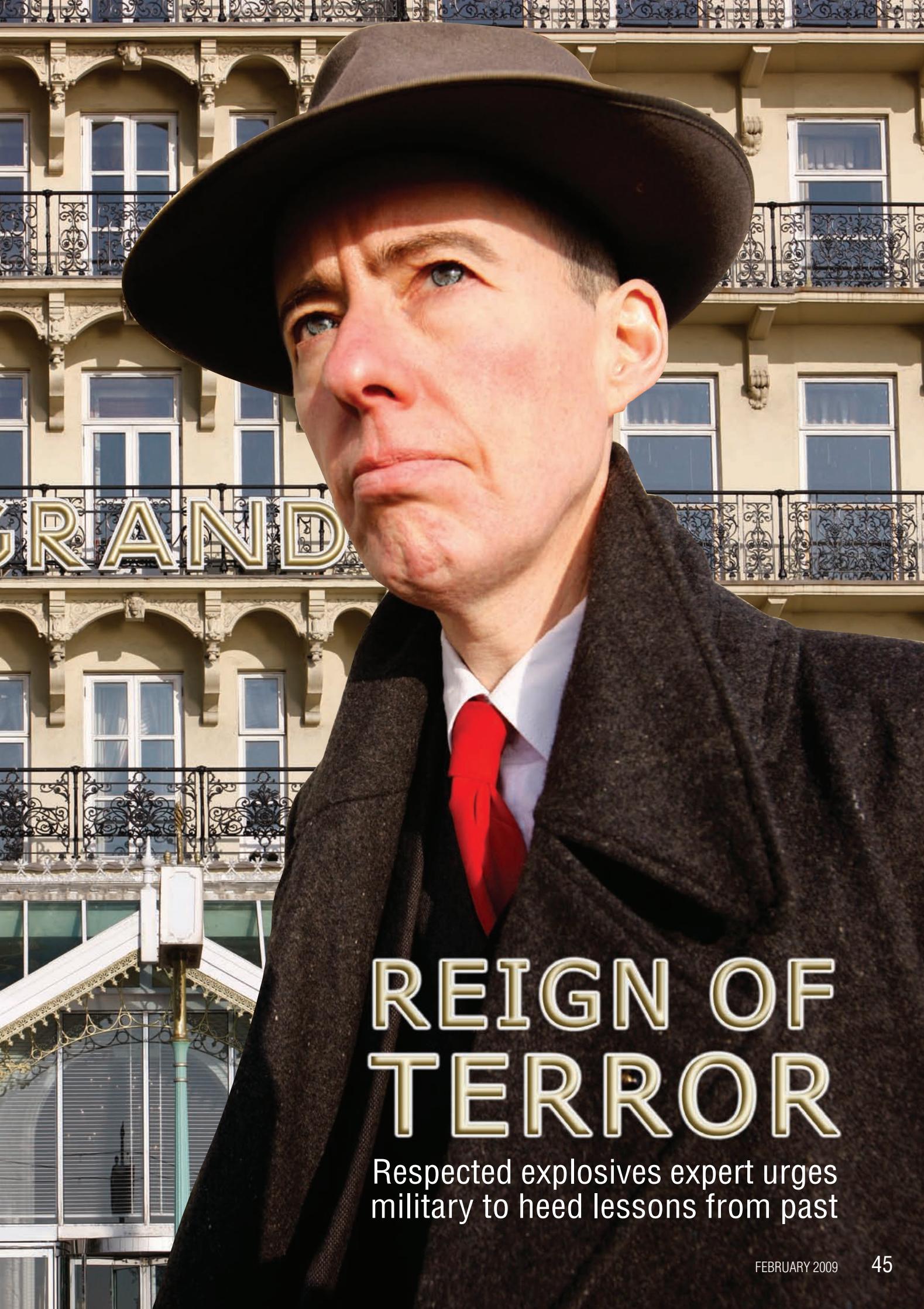
"But there is a further point to make – the British are in an important position in this state of play."

"Unlike countries such as the United States they have had the experience of dealing with the IRA, and that is going to be an important factor when determining how to handle future counter-terrorism operations." ■

● *The IRA: The Bombs and the Bullets – A History of Deadly Ingenuity* is published by Irish Academic Press. See Books, Pages 86-87

Crime scene: Andy Oppenheimer visits Brighton's Grand Hotel, where an IRA bomb killed five people





REIGN OF TERROR

Respected explosives expert urges military to heed lessons from past



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Lock and load

Army attack helicopter crews prepare to hit the enemy harder after the Apache gunship is overhauled with a formidable new sighting system

Report: Cliff Caswell

Picture: Steve Dock

TALIBAN fighters are now firmly in the crosshairs of Apache gunship crews after defence chiefs confirmed the helicopters are being equipped with a sophisticated new avionics package.

The Modernised Target Acquisition Designation Sight (M-TADS) and Pilot Night Vision Sensor (PNVS) will provide airborne soldiers with super-sharp image resolution, further enhancing the lethality of the 70-strong fleet.

Developed by Lockheed Martin and Boeing for the United States Apache Force, the kit is already proven and has shown its capability under fire with American allies.

According to AgustaWestland, which was awarded the £149 million contract to upgrade the British helicopters, the package will incorporate an improved helmet and display sighting system to help crews engage the enemy.

The company, which builds the Apache under licence at its plant in Yeovil, has been working on the upgrade project since May 2005 and has already delivered the first modified aircraft. It is expected that all work will be completed by the end of the year.

A joint trials and testing squad, which includes pilots from the Army Aviation Standards Team and the project's commercial partners, has been busy working to get the latest system up and running ahead of schedule.

As well as the enhanced combat prowess, senior officials at the MoD believe M-TADS will bring a host of cost-saving benefits as it is built around easily-replaceable modules.

The British version of the Apache, which is currently in service with 3 and 4 Regiments Army Air Corps based at Wattisham in Suffolk, was first deployed to Afghanistan in 2006 and has since provided formidable top cover to coalition troops.

While originally designed as a tank killer, the aircraft has proved to be the scourge of the Taliban in Helmand province where its payload of Hellfire missiles, rockets and a 30mm chain gun has punched through bunkers and fortifications. It has also been

flown on surgical strikes against insurgent commanders.

Crews have been impressed with the helicopter's ability to withstand enemy ground fire, and as well as being well-armoured and equipped with a defensive aids suite, it also has the ability to track and prioritise up to 256 targets. Mated to two Rolls-Royce engines, the aircraft can achieve speeds of 200mph.

Apache Force commander Col David Turner was confident that the upgraded aircraft would be even more lethal in battle and said the modifications would be well received by crews on the front lines of Afghanistan.

He added: "The introduction of M-TADS will realise many benefits across the attack helicopter force. Not only will it improve our military capability but it will also remove the logistic and support penalties associated with the current system.

"The Attack Helicopter Force sees this latest system as a major step forward and we now intend to deploy it on operations at the first available opportunity." ■

Target acquisition: The Apache's outstanding electronics suite is currently being upgraded with the M-TADS and PNVS systems

The hardy boys

As the battle cry continues to sound in Afghanistan, soldiers turn to the tough terrain of the Falkland Islands to prepare for the ferocity of the fight ahead

Report: Samantha Chapman

Pictures: Graeme Main

THE lance corporal shouts urgently into his radio, ordering his men to take a right flank around an enemy sangar dug deep into the hillside.

The acrid orange smoke limits visibility for the soldiers lying flat on their stomachs, watching for the burst of rifle fire that will reveal their adversaries.

When the time comes, the men swiftly advance on the position with fixed bayonets to stop the enemy before it stops them. >>





Four seasons: Members of the islands' Roulement Infantry Company (RIC), Pte Martyn Kirk, Pte Gary Scarlett and LCpl Phil Hodgson (C Coy, 2 Yorks) practise their infantry skills on Onion Ranges as they prepare for deployment to Afghanistan

To many this scenario will sound all too familiar, but the action is not taking place in Iraq or Afghanistan – the theatre in question is the Falkland Islands. Surprising though it may sound, the Falklands are still classed as operational, and the exercise just described was being carried out by the islands' Roulement Infantry Company (RIC).

Each company deployed to the South Atlantic takes up the RIC responsibility providing a Quick Reaction Force in case of attack and using the remote hillsides as a training ground to prepare for future operational tours.

Exercise Cape Bayonet takes place towards the end of each company's deployment – in this case it was C Company, 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment who have since been replaced on the islands by the Grenadier Guards.

The 2 Yorks' troops were practising for an Op Herrick tour this September and had drawn up a scenario that involved fighting from a Forward Operating Base on the Afghan/Pakistan border.

"For a lot of the guys who are new to the Army, this is their first chance to put their

skills and knowledge to good use since their basic training," explained the platoon's 2iC Lt Warren Allison.

"As we still have seven months to go before Herrick, we will be very prepared for what we will face. Some of the guys have already been out there and others are new, so it's a good mix of experience and ages."

Cape Bayonet involves a dawn and dusk attack, and with the famously unpredictable – and notoriously dismal – weather, no two simulations are ever the same.

The exercise begins with a 21km tab across uneven hillsides and marshland amid howling 40-mile-an-hour gales before arriving at Onion Ranges – the ground where most of the live firing takes place and one of the bleakest areas on the islands.

"The Falklands doesn't really compare to any of the places I've been to," said LCpl Peter Burnett. "It's in a league of its own. It's worth coming out here though – the training is good and you get all four seasons

in half an hour so we get the chance to exercise in all conditions."

For those in the company who have just come back from Afghanistan, the constant training in such a huge and unwelcoming environment provides crucial experience before they eventually return to theatre.

"It's good for us to stay on top of it, we have to make sure we are always ready," said Pte Karl Watson. "When we were in Afghanistan we went to the Green Zone for two months and that was really busy. We were coming into contact with the Taliban



from about 100 to 200 metres away at the most, so they were very close."

With the tactics employed by insurgents constantly evolving, the opportunity offered by the Falklands has never been more important for the Army. And the RIC's enthusiasm for it is matched by 16 Regiment, Royal Artillery who provide the islands' ground-based air defence.

This is the only place in the world apart from the Hebrides where the gunners can live-fire rapier missiles, a key priority since

taking over the guided weapons system from the Royal Air Force in 2007.

Every week a "Wednesday War" is held between the RAF, who fly Tornadoes towards the rapiers, and the gunners, with both sides scrambling to shoot each other first. The gunners track the incoming jets and fire imaginary missiles, with the landings logged by a computer to determine who comes out on top.

They also fire at dummy aircraft, although the £100,000 cost of each one has seen

restrictions placed on the number that can be blown to smithereens.

"The Falklands gives us the best

opportunity to fire live," said Capt Kevin "Taff" Scoins, gunnery instructor. "We have more freedom of movement here than in the Hebrides. This is the gunners' first opportunity to put a

missile in the air without restriction, which is the same as it would be in theatre. It makes for good military training."

And in just seven months the value of exercising in the Falklands will be put to the test as 2 Yorks prepare themselves for their forthcoming battles. So while the Taliban concentrate their efforts on drawing patrols into firefights in similarly unforgiving terrain, the next wave of brawn is being rigorously trained on a tiny group of islands in the middle of the South Atlantic. Strong, hardy and determined, these boys are sure to be ready for them. ■

'The Falklands doesn't really compare to any of the places I've been to – it's in a league of its own'

Ready and waiting: From left to right, LBdr Ronnie Ramsell, Gnr Kyle Walsh and LBdr David West (20 Bty, 16 Regt RA) prepare to load the rapier for another "Wednesday War"



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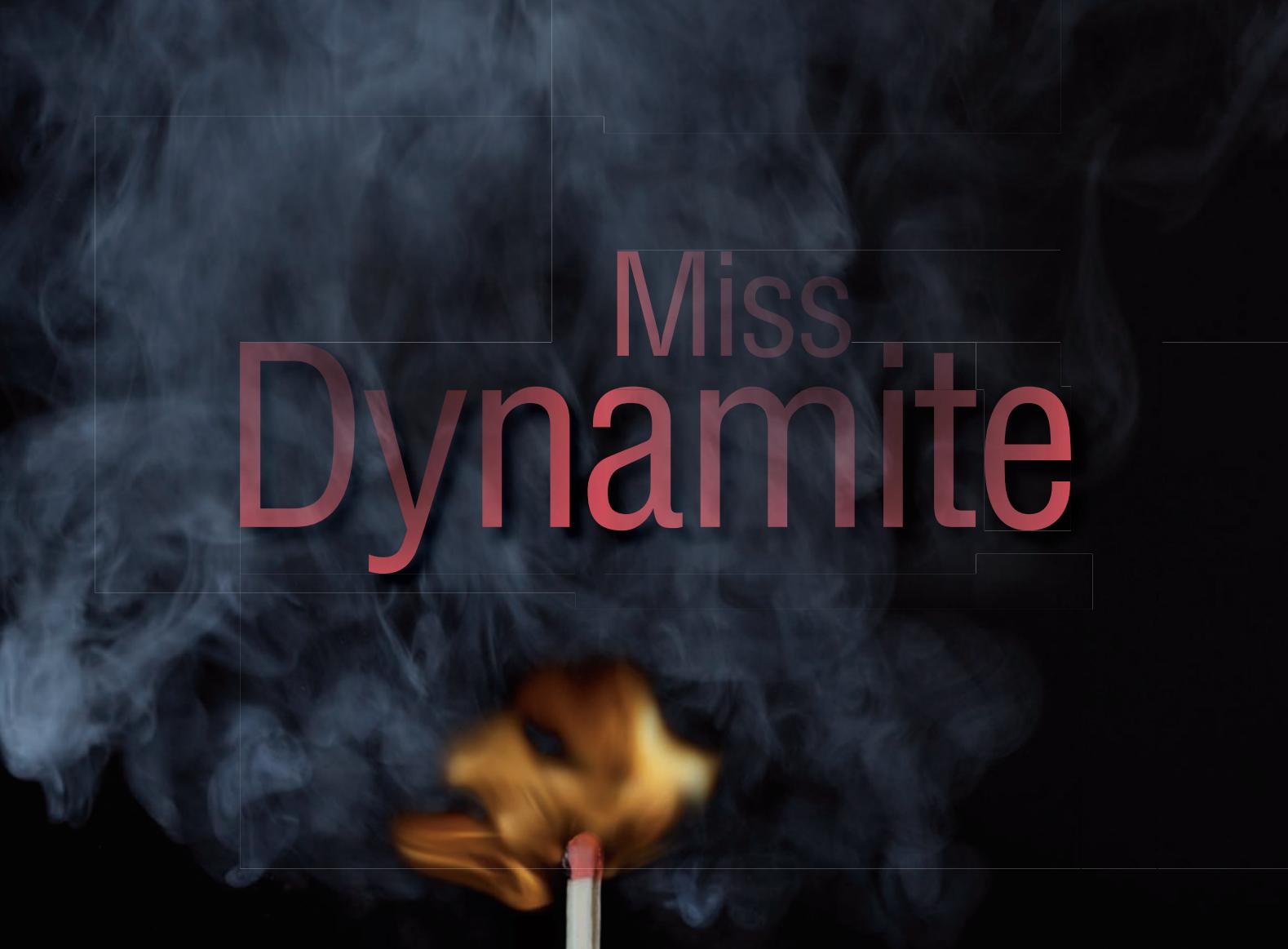
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Miss Dynamite



Explosive end as Sam takes on
sappers' *Media Ops* challenge



Report: Samantha Chapman
Pictures: Graeme Main

TIC-tic-tic boom! The lyrics from the 1993 hit *Boom Shake the Room* are resounding in my head as I handle the explosive putty carefully placed in my hand by the smiling staff sergeant.

"We're going to make a confidence blast," he says as I eye up the rather crude-looking equipment – two wires, a bit of tape and a piece of cylindrical metal. The thought that it should be harder to make a bomb passes through my mind.

"Actually I meant you're making one too," grins SSgt Taff Davies, and any confidence I had dissolves, leaving my brain in a state of near panic. I get nervous plugging in the TV in case I electrocute myself – now that fear might actually turn into reality. I can feel my grin sticking manically to my face. "Okay," I tell him, pushing away the creeping sense of terror, "bring it on."

I'm standing in a quarry halfway up a hillside in the middle of the Falkland Islands surrounded by soldiers from 10 Field Squadron (Air Support) Royal Engineers, who have been busily blowing up trucks, boots and pipes with a variety of improvised devices.

In training for their next Herrick tour in September, the sappers are being taught how to make do with items found in the field. Some are using PE4, which comes wrapped up like a stick of dynamite, and others are using a sheet explosive that comes in handy for blowing holes in supply pipes.

Fascinated by their ingenuity and endless enthusiasm – even when a leg of lamb is annihilated to demonstrate the danger of landmines – the engineers are determined

to hone their skills.

In comparison to their fierce work ethic, when SSgt Davies hands me the white PE4 putty I have to resist the urge to make small creatures out of it,

so strong is its resemblance to PlayDough.

However, I'm soon shaken back into the real world as I start to make my bomb. I begin by pulling the end of the detonating cord into a double knot. His is a nice tight knot, mine is big and messy. I'm thinking no-one will notice. Two milliseconds later, I hear someone snigger. "That's a huge knot," laughs Maj Will Smallwood, the squadron OC.

I then mould my PE4 ball around the knot and leave it hanging there like a strange lollipop as we move onto the detonator – a small metal cylinder.

This needs to be clipped in and attached to the safety fuse. As I reach to clip it, SSgt

Davies takes it from me and adopts a strange position where he holds it at arms' length and faces the opposite way.

"You shouldn't hold it near your face – if it goes off it'll take out your chin," he explains. "I've seen some horrible pictures."

I look to see if he's joking but no-one's laughing and my grin becomes even more fixed. I'm making a bomb. And I'm pretty sure that if my mother knew, she'd be the one doing the killing.

After taping the detonator to the cord, it's time to light it. SSgt Davies ignites his first and it catches, sizzling satisfactorily next to me. Now

You shouldn't hold it near your face – if it goes off it'll take out your chin'



it's my turn. Holding the match I wait, tensely, for my cord to light. The flame catches, then flickers and dies, wiped out by a fierce Falklands gale. Panic prickles my spine.

Calmly SSgt Davies takes it from me and relights the fuse, and I start to breathe again, but not before I've seen the look of horror on the *Soldier* photographer's face, which is just inches from the first bomb waiting to explode.

Finally the cord catches and we walk to a safe distance, despite every sense in my body urging me to run and throw myself to the ground.

Perhaps detecting my turmoil, SSgt Davies explains that if we run we are more likely to trip and fall over in the vicinity of the blast. Not good. However this advice comes too late for the traumatised photographer who races past at the speed of light to get his cameras. A likely excuse.

Tucking ourselves behind a rock pile it's just a few seconds before SSgt Davies's bomb explodes. "Six seconds and it'll be yours," he says, winking at the OC who's probably still laughing about my knot.

Six, eight, 12 seconds later we're still waiting, fingers pressed into our ears. I catch a look between SSgt Davies and Maj Smallwood and it says it all. I've failed myself and the *Soldier* team. I feel horribly deflated.

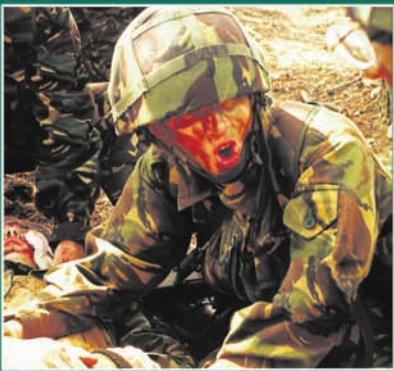
And then... boom! My beautiful bomb blasts into the ground and I am saved, my reputation intact. The smell of victory is chalky, but sweet.

As the first *Soldier* journo to have taken on a task and won I'm not afraid to say I'm feeling smug. Bring on the next I say. ■

Left, Putty in her hands: SSgt Taff Davies watches on as *Soldier* writer Sam fights the urge to use her PE4 as PlayDough

Call to arms: Have you got a challenge for the *Soldier* team? Email details to styler@soldiermagazine.co.uk





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Cob on over cost of COB's wireless internet access

HAVING deployed on Op Telic 13 it was refreshing to find that during our Reception, Staging, Onward-movement and Integration package at Camp Buehring in Kuwait, WiFi internet access was available for use at a very reasonable rate (£8 a week for unlimited access).

This proved a great way to stay in touch with family and loved ones and to keep a check on finances and personal admin. The American military certainly seem to have a handle on keeping their Servicemen and women in touch with home and giving them the opportunity to manage themselves effectively.

However, on arrival at the Contingency Operating Base (COB) the same service came with a gargantuan increase in price – a massive £5 per two hours. Is it just me or does this seem a trifle excessive, bearing in mind that, once set up, WiFi runs at virtually no cost?

To make this an even harder pill to swallow, this service is provided by our very own British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS). I know that we have free access via internet suites – pre-booked 30-minute slots – but in a very busy schedule this is not always possible or convenient.

This issue has sparked many a discussion with colleagues, superiors, differing cap badges and other Services alike. We all, just about, came to the same conclusion: that it's all well and good to be perceived as a caring and supporting body to our

PRIZE LETTER . . .

Servicemen and women, but nothing beats some good old green in the bank when times are hard.

So come on BFBS, the ranks of "rip off Britain" are swollen enough. They don't need any more members. We only want what is fair. – **Name and address supplied.**

Lt Col M R Wardner, SO1 J1 Ops, PJHQ, responds: The good news is that in the five main operating bases in Afghanistan free WiFi is now available to 95 per cent of the accommodation blocks. Phase two will see this taken to 100 per cent and extended to the Kuwait Support Facility at Camp Buehring and Umm Qasr South Port, with phase three looking at a potential WiFi solution for austere locations (tactical situation and logistics permitting).

Unfortunately, until the nature of the future British presence in Basra is determined, the roll-out of free WiFi to the COB has been put on hold. If it is decided that there will be a substantial presence in Basra well into 2009, the COB will be added to phase two of the plan. As a result of this investment, the British soldier will be much better off than his US colleague.

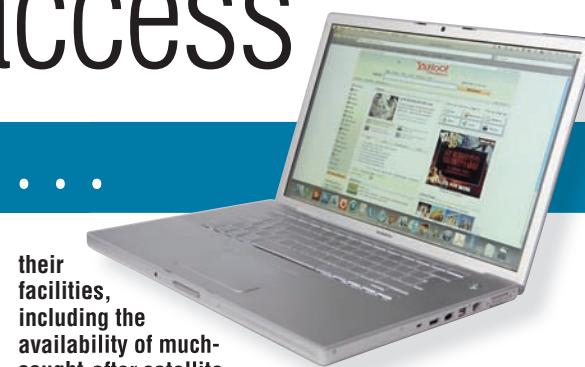
Finally, the scale of the US deployment means that they can massively subsidise

their facilities, including the availability of much-sought-after satellite bandwidth.

Recognising the importance of communications with home, Services Sound and Vision Corporation (SSVC) [the registered charity which runs BFBS] offered to provide the WiFi facility long before any Prime Ministerial announcement and did so entirely at its own risk.

The installation of the hardware is but the tip of the costs iceberg with satellite bandwidth being a much greater issue. Pay-as-you-go commercial WiFi in the UK is approximately £5 per hour from locations such as airports, so the privately financed SSVC venture at £2.50 was considered a reasonable price.

SSVC returns approximately £350,000 per year in the form of grants to units to top up that provided by the Deployed Welfare Package and has supplied the majority of the watersports equipment for decompression in Cyprus free of charge. Further details on how to apply for the grant are available at www.ssvc.com



PS . . .

I WOULD like to comment on the ongoing row over medals (Talkback, recent issues). Like thousands of other British Army veterans I was never awarded a medal, even though I saw active service in North Africa and Egypt from 1947 to 1949.

I didn't know about the Veteran's Badge until recently and am encouraged that at least now I have something to show for my service. – Mr G Coster, Shrewsbury.

● Commemorative clarification
– Page 63

'One Army' way off track

AS a member of the Territorial Army I was mobilised in 2006 and told at Chilwell that I was entitled to a Forces Railcard.

No longer a spring chicken and therefore not entitled to a Young Person's Railcard, I was delighted by the news.

However, after being demobilised and on return to my TA centre, I was told that this was not the case.

Considering the "one Army" concept, this came as something of a surprise. Given the current astronomical rail fares, is there any particular reason for the TA's exclusion from this scheme? – **Lcpl Kerby, 3 MI Bn (V).**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: This may sound strange, but I'm afraid that the MoD has little control over who is entitled to a Forces Railcard, which exists as a result of the goodwill of the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC).

The MoD has regular discussions with ATOC, but any widening of the scheme to include non-mobilised Reserves is a commercial decision, entirely up to the train companies.

You may be able to obtain a different railcard, such as a Family and Friends or Network Railcard.

Combats on the continent

HAVING retired to France, I was recently rather surprised to see many of the local hunting fraternity in my village wearing what looked like new Soldier 95 combat shirts.

It transpired that this is exactly what they were. A local hardware shop had a consignment of 50, all in first-class condition and some complete with the badges of rank of their previous owners.

I would happily have accepted such shirts while I was serving. I bought two and after a trip through the washing machine they are as good as new. We hear stories of a shortage of essential items in combat theatres. Why then is money wasted replacing almost new combat clothing that could serve another wearer for years? –

David Chown, Saumos, France.



Ignore them, Sue. Jack's only in a tiz because Harry's shirt has got sergeant's stripes.

PS . . .

SOLDIERS returning from ops expect life back home to be brilliant, but what they may find is that they return to different problems. On tour there is a culture of trust – we couldn't function as a force without it, but many in the UK will never experience that feeling of fraternity and mutual respect.

I was recently conned by a cold-caller with a hard-luck story. Out of pity I bought some food from him only to then be told that the note I had given him was counterfeit. Naively I handed over another £20.

My message to soldiers is continue to be on your guard. Remember what you did to earn that money and keep hold of it! – Martin Addison-Smith.

Service lost in transfer triangle

AM a Gurkha warrant officer and fear that my decision to transfer military pension schemes has cost me the equivalent of six years of service.

Having already served more than 19 years, and been awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct (LS and GC) medal, I am due to leave the Army in under three years.

But from what I understand from the information provided to me, my service in Hong Kong (pre-1997) will not count towards my pension as it is classified as Hong Kong Service.

My time there qualified towards my LS and GC medal, so why not my pension? – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: Let me reassure you that you have not lost any pension value as a result of transferring.

Indeed, thanks to the benefits of the Gurkha pensions Offer to Transfer (GOTT), your pension when you leave the British Army will be higher than it would otherwise have been.

This is because you are getting one year of Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS) 75 value for every year of Gurkha Pension Scheme (GPS) service since July 1, 1997 and an AFPS 75 year for your rank is worth more in pension terms than a GPS year.

For your service before July 1, 1997 you are given a value in AFPS 75 which

is broadly equivalent to the pension you earned in the GPS.

If you leave the Army in 2011 with 22 years' service, you will be entitled to an immediate pension from AFPS 75 in line with the rules of the scheme.

Your 22 years qualify you for a pension in exactly the same way as every other British soldier. However, your pension will be lower than your British counterpart because of your pre-July 1997 service. The GOTT was challenged in the High Court last summer through judicial review, but was found to be fair, rational and lawful.

● Pension pinch of divorce – Page 61

Penalised for being late?

WHY is the Late Entry (LE) officer incremental pay rise between levels seven and 14 in the region of £600, when all other officers (captain and above) receive pay rises in the region of £1,000? The sum for warrant officers is also around the £600 mark. Is this a coincidence? – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: Yes it is – and you're being selective in the

figures you quote. Direct Entry (DE) captains at levels seven to nine receive an increment of £500 per year.

On commissioning, LE officers get paid significantly more than their DE counterparts and this reflects their extra experience. However, with increasing commissioned service the difference reduces and the DE and LE pay scales converge – LE officers move onto the DE pay scale at major.

PS . . .

MY published reply to a letter concerning fast-tracking in the REME, "Promotion not Academic" (December), incorrectly states that "the REME does not recognise prior education and professional qualifications". We do. – Lt Col David Edmondson, DEME SO1 Rec & Pers.

The editor writes – Apologies for any confusion caused.

Allowance package is par for the course

I AM based in Germany but am currently attending a course, which is just over six months, in the UK. Due to the length of the course I have been informed that I am not entitled to Longer Separation Allowance (LSA), Incidental Expenses (IE) or Local Overseas Allowance (LOA). I know of

soldiers from a different unit who did the course last year and were entitled to claim. – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: I can't give a definite answer without knowing more details. However, if a course is more

than 182 days, you should be assigned from your current unit to that course, and then either back to your unit or on to your next unit. Hence you would not be entitled to LSA, IE or LOA. Irrespective of what you've heard, I'd expect that everyone receives the same allowances package.

Vexed by 'cost' of volunteering

I'M currently serving as a watchkeeper with the Joint Helicopter Force at Kandahar in Afghanistan.

I volunteered for the tour as an individual replacement – a decision which has haunted me ever since.

Four weeks before deploying I received an email telling me to report to the Unit Welfare Officer to request permission to retain my married quarters in Germany.

As well as having to apply to keep hold of the house, I was also told that I would not be entitled to British Forces Germany (BFG) privileges, and that my family would not be entitled to tax-free shopping in my absence.

On completion of the tour I will return

to my parent unit, so surely the application to retain quarters is pointless and unnecessarily time consuming.

And why should my wife/family be penalised financially as a result of my decision to volunteer for a tour?

If my unit was deployed the above would not apply, as soldiers deploying with formed units don't get the administrative (tracking) posting order. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds:
Individual augmentees assigned to operational theatres receive an assignment order to ensure they are

administered for the duration of their tour.

An assignment away from BFG, according to the Status of Forces Agreement, removes BFG entitlement.

To guarantee retention of Service Families Accommodation and BFG facilities for the duration of a tour, individuals are required to make formal application for retention via the Garrison G1 staff to UKSC(G).

This is a necessary process. If you have done this then there should be no problems. The bottom line is that individuals and families are not financially penalised by volunteering for an operational tour.

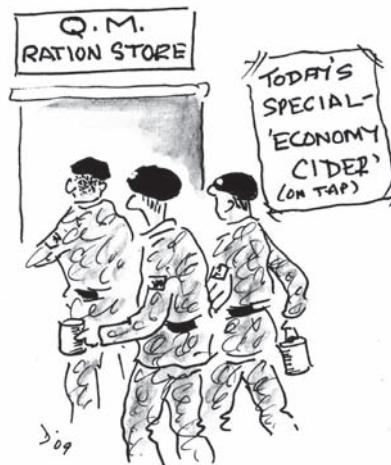
Waste is a core concern

A COLLEAGUE recently acquired about 20 Army haversacks – packed lunches – to cater for a military function.

As the person in charge of recycling on site, I subsequently discovered 20 discarded Golden Delicious apples in the bins. Without exception no-one had eaten the haverpack apples and this unnecessary waste of rations must occur across Britain every day.

To avoid such waste this item of fruit should either be replaced with a better alternative or dispensed with altogether.

The discarded apples were eventually put in a compost bin by myself. Is it time to review the contents of the haverpack? – **Name and address supplied.**



PS . . .

I CAN sympathise with the letter writer locked in a battle with the Child Support Agency over maintenance payments, "Crippled by CSA payment hike" (December).

After the birth of my second child with my second wife, I requested a reassessment of my CSA payment for the two children from my previous marriage. The CSA eventually came back with a figure of £400 (£100 more than I had been paying). I later discovered they had incorrectly calculated my quarter charges. To the financial detriment of my family, it took the CSA 12 months to sort this out. – **Name and address supplied.**

No guarantee of surgery in the sun

ON a recent visit to Cyprus my stepson, who is a serving soldier in the RLC and based in the UK, was taken ill with appendicitis.

Although my wife and I are registered with the local doctor in Cyprus, I assumed my son would qualify for medical care under

the military system. Having been a soldier myself and living close to a military base, we took him to see a doctor at Episkopi.

He was immediately referred to The Princess Mary's Hospital (TPMH) Akrotiri for an operation, where we were told that without evidence of holiday insurance, they could not provide treatment. After much discussion the surgeon did proceed with the surgery and the documentation was delivered to the hospital later that day.

However, it does seem somewhat bizarre that Service personnel could be denied medical treatment in Cyprus if they don't have the necessary insurance.

When I was serving it was my understanding that if I was taken ill I could report to any British military establishment and get medical attention. This is obviously not so in Cyprus. Why? Is it because the odd soldier in need of an operation would overstretch the medical services or budget at TPMH? Or is it that Cyprus is seen as a sunshine posting and those at the top

are imposing sanctions against Service personnel holidaying there?

If that is the case could I remind those that make the rules that they may be breaching equality policies by refusing treatment and that Cyprus is not a sunshine posting, but a posting with sunshine. – **Capt (Retd) W J Brighton, Limassol, Cyprus.**

Lt Col (Retd) Turford, S02 Med TPMH Cyprus, replies: I am delighted that your son took the MoD advice recommending that anyone going on an overseas holiday takes out appropriate insurance. This is essential irrespective of whether there are military bases within that country or not.

The British Forces Cyprus Medical Services is established and manned to provide a service for the entitled population – those based there. This is exactly the same as in Germany and MoD policy is that personnel visiting either command are not entitled to free treatment if they are not on duty.

PS . . .

I CAN well understand WO2 Vickers' sentiment that he would feel aggrieved if he was a Regular on deployment serving alongside Reservists who were being treated in a more favourable way financially (Talkback, December).

On the other side of the coin, many Reservists on operational tours are also being treated far less favourably when you compare the Reserve Forces Pension Scheme with the Regular's Armed Forces Pension Schemes. – **Regular Reservist.**

Pension pinch of divorce

LIKE a growing number of Servicemen I have just gone through the process of getting divorced.

As part of the financial side of the split I applied for the Cash Equivalent Transfer Value (CETV) of my pension from the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA), which duly arrived and was sent off to my solicitor.

Subsequently, my ex-wife's solicitor has raised doubts about the accuracy of this valuation and I have been ordered by the

courts to have an Actuarial Valuation (AV) of my pension – a service which will cost me more than £1,500.

Is it the SPVA's policy to lie about pensions or am I being unfairly penalised by the courts? – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: I cannot comment on the legal order made by the court or on the accuracy of your pension valuation, but before you commit to the AV you should refer the matter back

to SPVA for clarification. Be aware that CETV is based on your reckonable service to date, not on your expectation of future military service.

I can confirm that the CETV is calculated by SPVA using factors provided by the Government Actuary's Department and in accordance with the Occupational Pension Schemes Regulations 1996, which are produced by the Department for Work and Pensions. Your solicitor needs to ensure the court understands this.

'It's not a fashion parade'

SO, Mr R Nixon believes that it is wrong to parade in combats (*Talkback*, December).

In a perfect world, the task of getting a full battalion into Service dress for such an occasion would be easy.

However, most parades of this sort are done shortly after returning from an operational tour, and it is not something that can be done overnight.

Having returned from Op Telic 11 last year, I found that getting members of my company – many of whom had either lost weight or put on extra muscle during the tour – into a tailored set of No 2 dress and fitting this in around decompression and preparation for post-operational tour leave was a full-time task.

Also, parading in combats reflects more accurately the role of the British Army – we spend more time on operations than marching around the drill square.

Therefore I would argue that by parading in desert combats our troops look more like a professional fighting force than, as suggested by Mr Nixon, part of some "Third World dictatorship". – WO2 Neil Barnett, SPSI, HQ Coy, 4 Lancs.



"Me, Army? You must be joking, mate. I buy this working gear at the surplus store."

PS . . .

I RECENTLY had to request a pension statement due to divorce proceedings and was informed that the process would take 20 working days and cost £150 plus VAT.

Why is this service so expensive and why did the MoD agree to such fees when it established the contract? Divorce is an unpleasant and expensive process at best and this type of cost is completely unwarranted. – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: Most occupational pension schemes charge for the administrative costs they incur in providing the statements required for divorce; EDS, who provide the statements for members of the Armed Forces, are no different.

You may feel the costs are too high but in comparison with the charges made by other public sector schemes the Armed Forces are the most reasonable; for example the NHS Pension Scheme charges £300 plus VAT.

PS . . .

I'D like to expand on my response to a letter enquiring about the criteria for the award of the OSM Afghanistan and Nato Non Article 5 medals, "Afghan award ambiguity" (January).

While the advice given on the latter was correct, I failed to explain there is no permission to accept, and therefore wear the medal (see Annex A to Chapter 8, JSP 761). It is perhaps timely to also point out that miniatures reflect honours, decorations and medals earned and authorised to wear. On this basis the Nato ISAF miniature has no place in a miniature collection. – Lt Col (Retd) Peter Lockyer, SO1 Medal Office.

Reservist's double trouble

ON my recent return from a tour of Afghanistan I was informed that I had been paid double the operational allowance.

My unit is under the impression that because I am serving with the Territorial Army all pay will be suspended until the overpayment has been settled and that, if I'm still in arrears, the remainder will be taken when my training bounty is paid. Is this true?

The MoD's policy on this issue has not been made clear. – WO2 P Tazey, 201 (N) Field Hospital (V).

Lt Col D S Watt, SO1 SPVA, writes: You are entitled to object to the recovery of

any overpayment. A Defence Information Notice (2007DIN01-024) outlines the process to be followed should you wish to do so or wish to repay the over-issue at a rate different to that suggested.

However as this DIN, like JSP 754, focuses on Regular and Full Time Reserve Service personnel, DSPS(A) ensured units were aware of how over-issue of pay or allowances are recovered from members of the Reserves.

While your unit is correct in advising you that recovery can be through your pay account or from your annual training bounty, a third option is to make the repayment by cheque.

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FEBRUARY 2009

A LEADING SPECIALIST IN MILITARY LAW

Commemorative clarification

ATTENDED a Remembrance Day service at the British Embassy in Bangkok where the guest of honour, Princess Alexandra, showed a keen and knowledgeable interest in people's medals.

This sparked a number of comments from both members of the Royal British Legion and from Poppy Travel [a battlefield tour group from England] about the UK's medals policy. Among the medals and ideas discussed were:

- What is the latest ruling as to the wearing of the Pingat Jasa Malaysia [PJM – the Malaysian War medal]?
- National Defence medal. The Queen has approved an official medal for the Australians, so why not us? Did somebody forget to ask her?
- British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) medal. Again, the Queen has approved this medal for another nation (Canada), so why doesn't the same reasoning and policy apply to us Brits?
- Accumulated Campaign Service Medal (ACSM). Why does Nato service in the Balkans not count towards this medal? The Queen approved the wearing of Nato Balkan medals so why is the time not recognised? The "risk and rigour" elements of that

era in the Balkans were greater than that experienced in Northern Ireland during the same period.

● Nato Non Article 5 medal. Why is this not allowed to be worn by those who have another Balkans Nato medal (awarded on a different tour)? This medal was struck in recognition of a different phase in the Balkans (as confirmed by the change in operation title from Palatine to Oculus).

● Iraq medal. Why, post 2003, does this medal not have a bar/clasp? The dangers faced since have been just as hazardous as during the invasion of Iraq.

● Finally, how about issuing a Long Service medal without the Good Conduct part? Wishful thinking perhaps, but while many have been far from saints they have still served the country faithfully over a long period of time. – **Markes Iles, Royal British Legion member**

Lt Col (Retd) Peter Lockyer, SO2 Medal Office, responds: I'll tackle your questions in the order in which you asked them.

● The Queen has not authorised the wearing of the PJM. The main issue surrounds the fact that it represents a double award for the same period of

service. Barring the gap between July 1960 and December 1962, all recipients of the PJM were also awarded a General Service Medal.

● There are no plans to institute a National Defence or BAOR medal.

● ACSM. The issue of including Balkan service has been considered on at least two occasions by the Chiefs of Staff, and on both occasions it was turned down. All three Services felt that the quality of records held by Nato was poor, and therefore it would be almost impossible to administer accurately and fairly.

● Nato Non Article 5. The rules governing the award criteria for this medal were set by Nato, as indeed they are for all Nato medals.

● The award criteria of the Iraq Medal was agreed by the three Services. Although minor amendments were made in 2005 (DIN01-009), no changes to the clasp were considered necessary.

● Long Service and Good Conduct medal. This was instituted in the reign of King William IV by Royal Warrant (dated July 30, 1830). The award represents its title – a medal to recognise long service and good conduct.

More than just beer and bratwursts

I'VE been reading with interest and agreeing with the letters from those calling for the issue of a medal for service in the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) during the Cold War years.

PS...

I JOINED up as a 15-year-old in 1953 and, while I harboured no thoughts of glory per se, I was quietly confident that I would cope with whatever I was called on to do.

I wore my uniform with pride and went where sent, mourned my lost career when I was medically downgraded and reluctantly left the Army after 12 years of service.

Having never been sent anywhere which qualified for a medal, all I now have is a small badge to wear, with "instructions" as to where and when.

A National Defence Medal would recognise those who were there if needed. The UK is fast becoming the only country in the world that refuses to adorn its veterans with a dignified and worthy sign of appreciation. It is time to bring all of us in from the cold.

– Ex-soldier, Gerry Peck.

There seems to be some confusion on behalf of younger soldiers that the Germany of the past was like the Germany of today.

I served in the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment (sadly no longer with us) for a total of six years prior to transferring to the Royal Air Force. Four-and-a-half of those years were spent in Germany and, as the Cold War was in full swing, a minimum of eight months a year were spent preparing for war with the Warsaw Pact.

The regiment also had to help guard supplies of munitions – stockpiled in case of conflict – and conduct security duties along the Berlin Wall.

The threat of invasion also meant that there were restrictions placed on block leave with a minimum of 50 per cent manning required at all time.

I know soldiers who spent 12 years in Germany and have nothing to show for their service, even though they worked hard for their country and were separated from friends and family.

While soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan endure extreme and exhausting conditions and face danger on a daily basis, life in



"Mr Eccles, in 1960 the then-PM may well have said you BAOR chaps 'deserved a medal', but I'm sure he didn't actually mean you'd get one."

Germany during the 1980s was certainly no Oktoberfest, so why shouldn't service there be recognised with a medal?

Does the MoD consider the years spent protecting the interests of the UK in Germany a waste of time and not worthy of mention? – **Sgt John Anstee, MPGS, Poole.**

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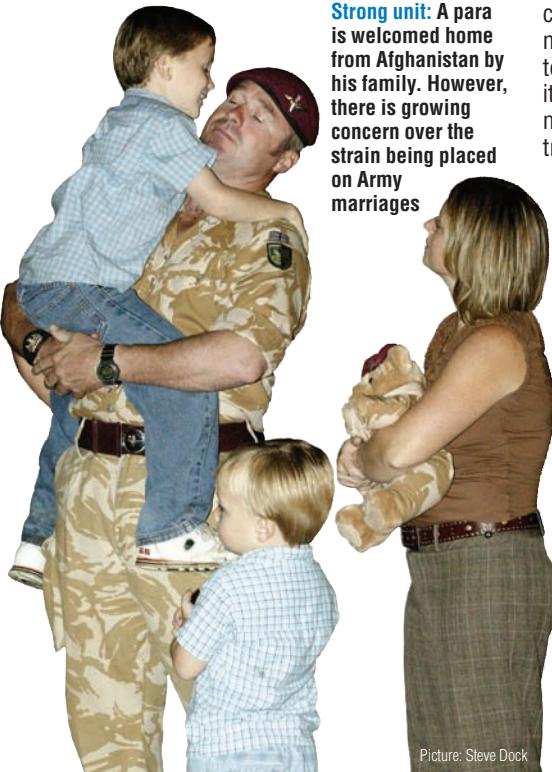


Restoring marital harmony

In a recent speech the Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, said: "We have seriously stretched our soldiers – both their goodwill and their families, to the very limit."

He suggested that "many families and marriages have fallen victim to the relentless pace of time away from home", words which will strike a chord with many Army households, and a sentiment backed up by the information fed into AFF Central

Strong unit: A para is welcomed home from Afghanistan by his family. However, there is growing concern over the strain being placed on Army marriages



Picture: Steve Docks

Office by our coordinators around the world.

For some time now we have been raising the issue of harmony guideline breaches with the MoD, but we have not been supported by statistics from Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) and so our worries have fallen on rather unsympathetic ears. People knew there was a problem but were reluctant to do anything about it.

Families don't just complain to us about the number of operational tours. More than anything it's the "stuff in between" – months of pre-deployment training and guard duties, and the need to cram in career courses and other training in the little time left.

This particular problem has been recognised by the chain of command for some time, but so far measures to assist have not reaped a visible reward. Is this what has prompted the rather outspoken (but very welcome) comments from CGS?

The most recent Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey report found that while 66 per cent of Army personnel were at least satisfied with the amount of leave they were entitled to, a staggering 70 per cent were dissatisfied with their ability to actually take it. Across the board the most pressing reason for a soldier leaving the Army was the impact of military life on their family and personal life.

This is the key point for those of us left at home – anyone who marries

a soldier would be naive to think their partner will be doing a nine to five job – but in the face of increasing operational commitments, which are both bloody and demanding, many families are facing a difficult choice.

At AFF we haven't seen a noticeable rise in marriage breakdowns and that's because we are not the best agency trained to deal with them. But as both Relate and the Citizens Advice Bureau are reporting more cases of Army families splitting up, maybe CGS has a point.

While there are no official statistics to show an increasing number of divorces, (in fact JPA can not tell us how many soldiers are divorced nor how many wives or children there are in the dependant community) we should not rest on our laurels but ensure that there is the best support possible to those experiencing any difficulties because of Army life.

Changing the structure of the fighting brigades may increase the gaps between operational deployments for the majority of our soldiers and so ease some of the pressure on them and their families.

But if this positive step is to give British Army families a fighting chance of having long and happy marriages, there are other areas that will also need attention – housing, pay and access to welfare provision for families living "off patch" to name just a few. ■

● **Give troops a break – Page 10.**

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

MANAGE YOUR MONEY

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



Is any debt good?

HISTORICALLY mortgage debt used to be perceived as sensible because houses were seen as an asset and as property prices rose, inflation kicked in and wages increased. But in

the years building up to the current financial crisis, lenders were willing to offer borrowers 125 per cent of a property's value and five-to-six times their salary. This saw a huge rise in house prices and has resulted in people struggling to repay mortgages.

Recently though we have seen a sharp fall in both house prices and interest rates, meaning that those entering the housing market now can again boast of "good" debt.

Credit cards can be seen as both good or bad debt depending on how you use them. If you always pay them off in full you gain several weeks of interest free credit and can often benefit from perks such as cashback or air miles. But by only repaying the minimum amount your debt can increase rapidly. This

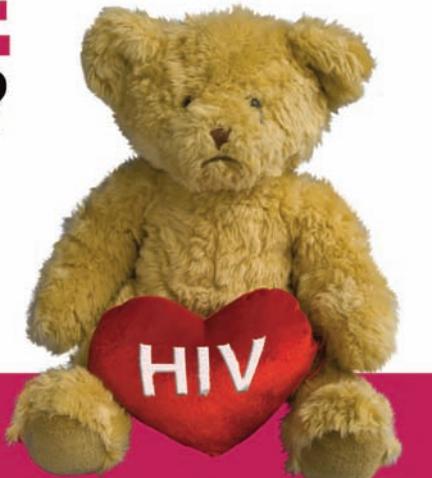
is because you are charged interest on the full amount borrowed. For example, if you borrowed £600 and paid off £400 you would still be charged interest on the full £600.

Whenever you are thinking of borrowing ask yourself: Do I need this item? Can I buy it cheaper? Do I need it now? If I need it now am I borrowing at the best rate? Can I easily afford the repayments? Is what I am buying likely to increase or decrease in value?

If all the answers indicate that you should still borrow then it is likely that this debt is good for you.

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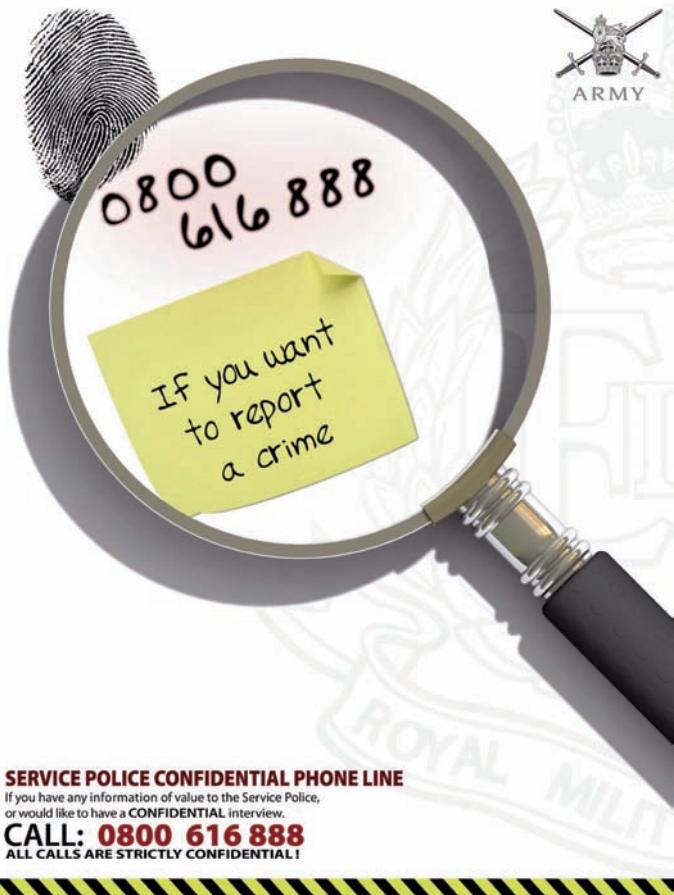
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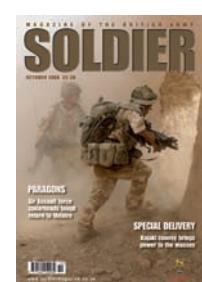
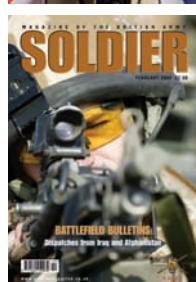
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NO. 807

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TEN details have been changed on this shot of the British Army's Coyote tactical support vehicle. Circle the differences in the left-hand image and send the whole panel to **HOAY 807, Soldier, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU** by February 27.

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 March issue.

Name: (Give initials and rank or title)

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December competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 prize was **WO2 Morris**, Defence Estates, Dehekelia Station, Cyprus. Runners-up **Mr G Massey**, Solihull and **Mr S Smith**, DFN IPT, Copenacre, each win a £25 gift voucher.

The ten differences were: offside indicator; silver car in background; side light; nearside indicator; ring on bonnet; door handle; machine gun barrel; yellow warning label; antennae; number plate.



SOLDIER'S next meeting with Defence Secretary John Hutton could prove a little frosty after readers quite literally gave him both barrels in their offerings for December's Freeze Frame (picture below right).

Taking our expression of surprise that Twuggy [former Veterans' Minister Derek Twigg] and Basra Bob [Ainsworth] had escaped relatively unscathed from their own caption competition debuts as a call to arms, *Soldier*'s satirists were far less charitable with The Hutch.

Colin Shaw's effort, "The Defence Secretary took a moment to commend the firing party for all their stirring efforts before taking up his position against the wall", was typical of the entries received and wins him a copy of Justin Pollard's *Charge!*

Others putting The Hutch in harm's way included LCpl Tate (MPGS), who suggested



Picture: Cpl Ian Forsyth RLC

It dawned on Billy soon after arriving at The Queen's Royal Lancers' Op Herrick medal parade that, like power during his days as Tory leader, the microphone was just out of reach

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo above and send it to us by February 27. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of *The Good Soldier*, Gary Mead's biography of Douglas Haig.

"Ok Starsky, I'll put the bag down and back away . . . call your boys off" and Simon Harrison, who offered "Joking that 'I've got a bomb in my bag' didn't seem like such a clever idea all of a sudden".

Only two – Mr M Burgess and Mrs Kerry Harvey – came out in support of the MP, respectively penning "Ok, tough guys! One at a time behind the Naafi" and "Having lost his own luggage, The Hutch thought a swift left hook would stun the soldier long enough to steal his bergen".



Picture: PO Dave Husbands

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

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

WRVS: 02920 739016, 02920 739016

DEFENCE DIARY

Until further notice: Helmand: The Soldiers' Story – 16 Air Assault Brigade exhibition. National Army Museum, London. Tel: 0207 730 0717.

Until March 2009: Stranger in the House, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester. Go to www.iwm.org.uk/north for details.

February – April 19, 2009: Women War Artists, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester. www.iwm.org.uk/north

Until end March 2009: Women's Royal Army Corps Exhibition. Guildford Museum, Quarry St, Guildford GU1 3SX. Tel: 01483 444750.

SEARCHLINE

The **WRAC** Association will be 90 years old in 2009. Did you ever wear an **ATS** or **WRAC** cap badge? Come and join us. Details from WRAC Association, AGC Centre, Worthy Down, Winchester SO21 2RG or by email from wracassociation@googlemail.com

Sgt Stu Derbyshire from **BOWTAG (S)** is seeking a member of the permanent staff at RMA Sandhurst who purchased two shotguns from him in 2004/5. The guns are a Mossberg 12-bore pump action (ser no: UM183169) and a Harrington & Richardson single barrel 12-bore (ser no: A40330). Contact stuart.derbyshire@yahoo.co.uk

Richard "Snowy" Weekes is trying to locate members of the **1st Bn Queen's Own Buffs** and **2nd Bn The Queen's Regt** (1962-68). **Ron Scott**, **Clive "Fussy" Homan**, **Frank Carrington**, **Jimmy Burr** or any others from **Mortar Platoon, B Coy**. Contact Richard at 71 Yeats Close, Neasden, London NW10 0BW.

The **Army Dog Unit Northern Ireland** (1973-2007) is searching for ex-Red Paw badge members. If you were a dog handler in NI please contact Robert Shevill, 99 Carnarc Crescent, Inverness, Scotland or visit the association's website at www.armydogunit-ni.co.uk

Italy Star Association 1943-45. Veterans come and join us. Phone our National Secretary on 0208 241 0275.

Derek Lee is trying to trace an aunt, born **Ruth Hillard Lee** in Southampton (circa 1921). In 1953 she married **Cpl John Brian Sharpe (RE)** and in 1955 had a son, **Christopher**. Contact Derek at 9 Main Street, Lyddington, Rutland LE15 9LR or 01572 822790.

Rita Carter is trying to trace her father **Vincent McGrail**, with whom she lost contact at the age of two following the divorce of her parents. Vincent was serving in 1945 and based in Wuppertal, Germany. Mother's name was Hannelore Helena Maria (nee Bergner). Contact jwyllie@yahoo.com

COMPETITIONS

CD Giveaway: Gillian Thompson, Springhead, Oldham; WO1 (RSM) Dave Smith, Brunei Garrison. **Answer:** *Only Men Aloud*.

ROADSHOW DATES

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

February: 17, Richmond; 18, Scunthorpe; 19, Castleford. **March:** No presentations. **April:** 21, Weymouth; 22, Bristol; 23, Warminster.

REUNIONS

ECM(FP) Sqn formerly known as Romeo Tp: Renaming parade February 21 at Thiepval Barracks, Lisburn. Families, friends and all past members of the squadron are welcome to attend. Contact SSgt Brian McLean by phone 02892 263590 or email 10sr-ecmfp-sqms@mod.uk

RAMC Operating Theatre Technicians: Reunion February 27-March 1 at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry. All serving and retired OTTs/ODAs/ODPs, their partners and guests welcome. Contact Ken Hannah on 01733 453462 or email ken.hannah@peterborough.gov.uk

2 Royal Anglian (Poachers): Reunion March 7 at Casablanca Club, Grimsby. All serving and ex-Poachers welcome. For infomation call Steve Chew on 07849 755871, Tim Smith on 07946 029549, Frank Rimmer on 07879 625338 or email frank.rimmer@ntlworld.com

Women's Royal Army Corps: Grand reunion will take place in Blackpool, March 20-23. Details from WRAC Association, AGC Centre, Worthy Down, Winchester SO21 2RG or by email at wracassociation@googlemail.com

Glosters: WOs and Sgts reunion April 4 at TA Centre, Eastern Avenue, Gloucester. Details from Tim Godden on 01453 835019 or timmy.godden@virgin.net

Mareth Troop, C Squadron, Junior Leaders Regiment, Royal Engineers: 50th reunion for the 1959-1961 intake. April 17-18 at Old Park Barracks, Dover, Kent. Contact Douglas Hamilton-Cox on 01647 252259.

75th Artillery Clerks: Reunion April 24-25 at Larkhill. AGM followed by dinner. Details from Capt Ian Constantine, 19 Regt RA, Bhurtpore Bks, Tidworth, Hants SP9 7AS, 01980 656506, or by email at ian.constantine758@mod.uk

1st RHA 5th Aden Veterans: Reunion will take place May 15-16 at The Paragon Hotel, 145 Alcester Street, Birmingham B12 0PJ. Phone 0121 6270267 using booking reference **RHA 150509** or call Dave Rogers on 01159 637073/07956 344357 or email drogers229@aol.com

Royal Engineers: 60th Anniversary of the Freedom of Ripon. May 15-17 inclusive. The REA will be holding their annual weekend. Details from Kenn Hart by email shortwalker@tiscali.co.uk

Infantry Boys Bn and Infantry Junior Leaders Bn Association: Memorial dedication weekend June 6-7. Meet at Rugby Club, Park Hill Camp, Oswestry. Contact Ken Nichol, 44 Cefn Road, Wrexham LL13 9NH, email KnthNic@aol.com

Gunnery Career Course 25th anniversary: Reunion June 13-14. Previous attendees of GCC are invited to attend. Service of Remembrance in Larkhill Garrison Church. Partners welcome. Contact WO2 Reed Smitheman on 01980 845594; WO2 Carl Williams on 01980 845944; or WO2 Al Clark on 01980 845025.

52 Niagara Battery: Reunion in South Shields on September 5. All serving and ex-members welcome. Contact Dean Branscombe on 07841 128643 or email handymanserv6745@btinternet.com

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

www.army.mod.uk

The information provided contains practical advice on health-related topics and guidance on how to adopt healthy lifestyles.

www.armywivesunited.co.uk

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

www2.army.mod.uk/army_health

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www.aff.org.uk

The Army Families Federation (AFF) is the independent voice of Army families and works hard to improve the quality of life for Army families around the world - on any aspect that is affected by the Army lifestyle.



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www.blesma.org

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www.erskine.org.uk

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www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/family/default.aspx

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www.armyrugbyunion.mod.uk

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Jennifer 5'7", 40s with fair hair and green eyes. A teacher who enjoys history, reading, walking, music, ICT and the theatre. Seeking pen pals who are kind, honest and genuine, 45-55. P012

Tina 4'11", (42), blonde hair and hazel eyes. Enjoys going out with her mates and says 'I am what I am'. She has an attitude problem that needs taming. Seeking pen pals, any age group. P013

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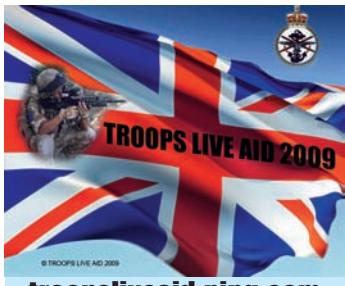

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A man with a shaved head, wearing a blue bullet-proof vest over a tan long-sleeved shirt, and tan cargo pants, sits on a dark bench. He is looking off to the left. He is wearing a dark wristwatch. In front of him on the ground is a dark, circular object, possibly a helmet or a lid. The background is a brick wall.

ROSS'S RETURN

Kemp hits
Helmand
for second
series

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Helmand heat: Former *Eastenders* actor Ross Kemp during filming for his no-holds-barred Afghanistan series (right) and relaxing during an interview with *Soldier* at Camp Bastion (above)



Operational Kempo

Award-winning documentary maker returns to theatre for second series

Interview: Karen Thomas

THREE hard man Ross Kemp was ready to return to southern Afghanistan last summer and face more bullets and bombs, but he met his match in a virulent dose of diarrhoea and vomiting.

Ambushed within half an hour of arriving in Green Zone hot spot Musa Qala, the former *Eastenders* star hooked up with soldiers from the 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, on a four-day op. They soon felt the wrath of the Taliban, who pinned them down on a roof for a couple of hours during a fierce firefight.

Kemp toughed it out on the front line for three weeks, filming Delta Company, 5 Scots and The Royal Irish Regiment in plenty of action against an enemy whose tenacity had not diminished since his previous visit. Full of praise for the infantrymen, he expressed his unending gratitude to the medics that pulled him through the bad bout of sickness.

"We were drinking well water most

of the time and there's a lot of larvae and straw on top of it, which wasn't too conducive to my civilian stomach. We had a pretty bad outbreak of 'D&V' while we were there," Kemp told *Soldier* at Camp Bastion.

In just three days the bug had wiped out 43 people. Despite falling victim to the infection, the doctors and medics worked round the clock to get the former actor and soldiers back on their feet. They also tended to sick and injured Afghans living in the war-torn town, a story that Kemp was keen to capture on film.

"I think it will bring home to a lot of people that this isn't just about what the International Security Assistance Force is doing here. The reason why the troops are here is to make a better life for the people of Afghanistan."

"I'm incredibly impressed with our Service personnel and their tenacity, courage and professionalism."

The award-winning filmmaker braved Taliban RPG and rocket fire with his father's old regiment, the 1st Battalion,

The Royal Anglian Regiment, for his first milestone documentary, *Ross Kemp in Afghanistan*, screened last year. Many families of serving soldiers had their first insight into the dangers and deprivation that their loved ones endure while fighting for their country.

The viewers' response prompted him to venture back to Op Herrick's searing temperatures and ferocious fighting, especially as the documentary was a massive hit with the troops. They picked his "no-holds-barred reporting" as a *Soldier* vox pop winner when we quizzed them about the coverage of operations in Afghanistan (October 2008).

As Kemp queued for scoff in Camp Bastion, he was inundated with requests for autographs, photos or just a shake of the hand. Despite being knackered from the physical and mental demands of being under fire for almost a month, his laughter never faded and he was one of the biggest morale boosts of the tour.

"I wanted to find out how much, if anything, had changed for the British soldier in terms of the ground,



redevelopment and if they were still fighting," he explained.

"Because of the casualty and injury figures, we knew that the Taliban was still fighting in the manner in which they had been. I wanted to see if the tactics had changed, which I believe they had in areas and provinces around Afghanistan. That's why we came back. We wanted to see what had really changed, if anything."

Yet even Kemp remained sceptical about how successful his series are in portraying the realities of life on Helmand's front line.

"I just hope through the films we make that we're bringing more awareness to the civilian population, because understanding all of this is very hard."

"I don't care how good a journalist or filmmaker you are, there is nothing that will ever explain what it is really like to be there unless you've been there. I think we have to be pretty sympathetic, particularly in the future, to some of the young men who have experienced things that no young man should really experience in this day and age."

● **Ross Kemp: Return to Afghanistan.** February 1 at 2200, only on Sky1 HD and Sky1; www.sky.com/rosskemp ■



Film Noir, out to own on DVD from February 16

A MAN with amnesia gets involved with strippers, junkies and gangsters while trying to piece together his memories. All of which sounds like a million other films you've seen before – but not like this you haven't. The major difference with this film is that it is a very adult-orientated feature. While the plot may be unoriginal it is nevertheless very gripping and the unusual style of monochrome animation suits this kind of tale perfectly. If you are familiar with *Sin City* then you'll find this to be in a similar vein.

Daniel King, MoD



The Fall, out to own on DVD now

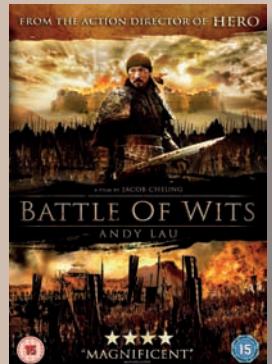
DIRECTOR Tarsem's epic picture took more than 16 years to make, and was filmed in more than 20 countries worldwide. The self-financed feature explores morality through two hospital-bound patients who escape their current problems through fanciful tales about heroes fighting injustice. What follows is a world-hopping friendship between a girl and a stuntman with a spinal injury. Effects are second to none and some powerful acting draws you in.

LCpl Paul Thomas, Int Corps



Flash of Genius, in cinemas from March

A FILM depicting a long, bitter battle about the design ownership of intermittent window-wipers may not sell itself on paper, but this is one to watch. Directed by **Mark Abraham**, *Flash of Genius* is based on the true story of college professor and part-time inventor Robert Kearns (**Greg Kinnear**) who battles powerful car manufacturer Ford for the recognition of his ingenuity. Best known for his performance in *Little Miss Sunshine*, Kinnear captivates the audience with his excellent portrayal of a family man who is unable to stand injustice.



The Battle of Wits, out to own on DVD now

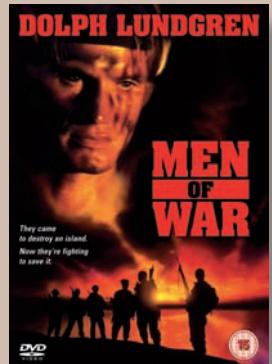
THE Dynasties period of Chinese history provides the backdrop for yet another feudal adventure as thousands of extras in colourful costumes clash in the defence of a remote city under siege. Despite the occasional scene, realism wins out over flying sword play, making it more appealing to western audiences. A human touch is added by Ge Li, a mysterious warrior monk. The authorities soon become jealous of his success, adding a darker, unpredictable side story to the main plot.

LCpl Paul Thomas, Int Corps



Che – Part Two, in cinemas February 20

SET ten years after the Cuban revolution, *Che – Part Two* follows Guevara's efforts to spread the spirit of revolution to Bolivia. The film is one of devotion, struggle, frustration and fear, but ultimately also one of failure as Che's tactics, that fared so well in Cuba, result in the deaths of all those involved in Bolivia. With hand-held camera work, gun shots in lieu of a soundtrack, little action and a running time of 131 minutes, this movie is a gritty and historically accurate, if lengthy, piece of subtitled cinema.



Men of War, out to own on DVD from February 24

BEFORE Thailand became a tourist mecca and changed its identity forever, it was exotic and remote. For much of what critics say is **Dolph Lundgren's** best film, this special atmosphere is prevalent. The actor leads a band of mercenaries in a fight to stop a beautiful island and its traditional communities from being exploited by a mining corporation. Made in 1995, it could have easily been the 1980s, but look beyond the dated effects, wooden acting and *Rambo* clichés and you may be rewarded.

LCpl Paul Thomas, Int Corps



Games

FEBRUARY REVIEW



Pulp position: *Overkill* pits players against a legion of the dead and is destined to become a classic shooter



Waking the dead

Zombie hordes invade Nintendo Wii as arcade legend makes hit return

Preview: Cliff Caswell

ANYONE who has been on holiday in an English seaside resort will probably have fed a few quid into a *House of the Dead* machine.

Whether you love or loathe the slightly tacky feel to the promenade amusement arcade and the ritual of stumbling through the crowds of half-dazed teenagers, there is something curiously magnetic about a machine with a gun attached to it. And it is even more alluring when it gives you an opportunity to blast through an army of flesh-eating zombies.

Replete with an appalling curse-of-the-undead storyline, so popular in Japan, *The House of the Dead* featured dreadful dubbing, screaming women, crazed professors and a legion of slightly camp monsters. It was like playing the lead role in an awful late-night B-movie.

Yet the game was also enormous fun, particularly if you had an equally

enthusiastic partner to blast away alongside you. And it is in the fine tradition of this arcade classic that Sega has commissioned the first title in the series to be written especially for the Nintendo Wii console.

Matched with the Zapper gun attachment, *The House of the Dead: Overkill* provides more distinctly tongue-in-cheek zombie action, over-the-top gore and a thumping funk soundtrack that will take you back to the era of the 1980s video nasty.

"This is the first time *The House of the Dead* franchise has been developed outside of Japan and we wanted to do something a bit different with it," said Neil McEwan, producer with London-based Headstrong Games, which developed the title.

"We decided that we wanted to give the game the feel of a pulp fiction and grindhouse picture, so we worked along those lines and watched loads of B-movie trailers.

"Writer and director Quentin

Tarantino also inspired us, particularly with the dialogue and music that are such an important part of his films."

The homage to low-budget movies is certainly evident. The genuinely dreadful plot features two characters – Agent G, a mainstay in the previous games, and newcomer Officer Washington, a bad mouthed, ill-tempered cop whose verbal exchanges with his colleague are as corny as they are hilarious – who have teamed up to chase down a zombie army general.

As players battle through locations including a hospital, fairground and a creepy mansion, the action takes on a curiously grainy quality that gives it the feel of a seedy VHS rental. And with bonus items that include the ability to slow down the action to dispatch more zombies, the feel of playing a dodgy video is complete.

"It took us a little while to get the grainy feel to the action. Obviously we had to get the balance right and make sure that it didn't detract from the



Batman, Xbox 360 & PS3

FOLLOWING hot on the heels of last year's hit movie *The Dark Knight*, the Caped Crusader makes his return in video game form in a new offering from Eidos. *Batman: Arkham Asylum* features a host of well-known voice talent including TV and stage actor Kevin Conroy as the superhero and Mark Hamill, of *Star Wars* fame, as the Joker. The developers are promising top graphics and a moody setting for the adventure. From the early screenshots sent to *Soldier* the game holds promise and should be well received by fans when it is released in the summer.

gameplay, but we are pleased with the effect," said McEwan. "We also wanted to create a hardcore game mode for people who want more of a challenge, so when you have completed the story you can try our director's cut, which is longer, harder and has more explicit material in it."

Soldier was given an exclusive preview of *The House of the Dead: Overkill* ahead of its release this month and was suitably impressed with the efforts of the team at Headstrong Games.

While this is a simple and unashamed shoot 'em up, the level of polish and creative depth that has gone into the game makes it one of the best titles available on the Wii.

With two full-length modes, the ability to play cooperatively with friends, a music player and a host of mini games, there is plenty of longevity too.

Graphics are top notch and the soundtrack, which features grunge guitar licks matched with super-cool 1970s-style funk, provides the perfect accompaniment to the on-screen action.

With its 18 Certificate, the title is unsuitable for youngsters. But consenting adults who enjoy a spot of video game gore will not find this done better elsewhere. ■



Battlestations: Pacific, Xbox 360

THE Second World War is set to be replayed again on consoles with the brutal struggle between the American and Japanese navies the subject of choice for this title. In a blend of action and strategy, players take control of air and shipping movements, fighting in battles from Pearl Harbour to Okinawa. *Battlestations: Pacific* features 30 story missions with units including early jet aircraft and the kamikaze pilots that terrorised US crews in the latter stages of the conflict. The game offers multiplayer options in addition to a solo campaign.



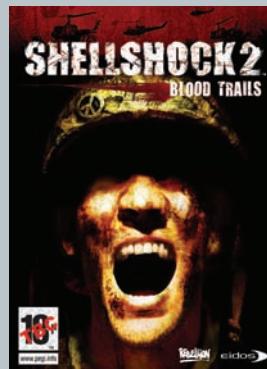
Fallout 3: Downloadable content launch

BETHESDA has announced three new serials for its hit open world title for release on Xbox Live. *Operation Anchorage* allows players to fight in a battle raging in Alaska that is set just before the era of the main game, while *Broken Steel* and *The Pitt* present an alternative ending to the title and an all-new location to explore. *Fallout 3* was *Soldier*'s game of the year for 2008 and we believe it is firmly destined to be remembered as an all-time classic. The new content has the potential to further cement the title's already awesome standing.



Empire Total War, PC

THE latest in Sega's acclaimed series of strategy games, this PC-only offering gives would-be commanders the opportunity to oversee large scale engagements among land and sea forces. Departing from the ancient civilisations that have been a feature of the previous games, this forthcoming instalment focuses on the 18th Century and the clashes that took place between the great imperial powers of the era. With the deployment of gunpowder, players now have firearms and cannon at their disposal and the arrival of heavily armed gunboats promises to add to the action. Out in March.



WIN Shellshock 2: Blood Trails, PS3

SOLDIER has teamed up with Eidos to offer five copies of this shooter set during the Vietnam War. The game follows the tale of a group of US soldiers sent to retrieve a secret cargo from a crashed aircraft. When a sole survivor reappears, there is an unsettling turn of events. To stand a chance of winning, answer this question. In what year did the US withdraw from Vietnam? Answers by postcard to the address at the front of the magazine or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) to reach us by February 27. Usual rules apply.



Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party, Wii

THE party season may seem like a distant memory but *Soldier* was delighted that at least one highlight of our Christmas festivities has lasted well into the new year. *Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party* is essentially a collection of bizarre Wii mini games that involve activities such as flying, dancing and sledging. Best played with a group of well-refreshed friends, players have the opportunity to use the Wii-Mote, Nunchuck and even the balance board to make fools of themselves. Anyone on the sidelines can attempt sabotage. All good fun.

Music

FEBRUARY REVIEW



Plane Sailing: Indie five-piece People in Planes hope to bring their Supergrass influenced sound to the UK having won critical acclaim Stateside www.peopleinplanes.com



Ready for take-off

Welsh rockers prepare to launch into the heart of the British music scene

Interview: Samantha Chapman

HAVING grabbed the US music market firmly round the throat with their searching lyrics, Cardiff rockers People in Planes are back on their home turf and ready to roll.

Signed by New York-based label *Wind-up Records*, the alternative-rock five-piece are fresh from a year of supporting fellow countrymen Stereophonics around America and are now keen to show us Brits what we've been missing out on.

Their debut US album *As Far As The Eye Can See* has already firmly established itself as a critics' favourite and saw the group build a huge profile across the pond. The quintet, who prior to 2003 went by the name of Tetra Splendour, even had a cameo appearance in Hollywood teen flick *John Tucker Must Die*.

Their much-anticipated second album *Beyond the Horizon* is due out in the UK later this year and with a single

release imminent, the band is hoping to make it big back home.

Charismatic guitarist Pete Roberts said they were looking forward to testing their mettle against an already well-established Brit-indie scene.

"We've been touring non-stop since March 2008," he said. "The Stereophonics tour was just amazing – it was an absolute dream for us being from Wales as well."

"They're such nice guys, I think we were all a bit starstruck at first, but they were easygoing and happy for us to hang out which we did a few times."

"We were signed up three years ago and the label's been really great, it's a close-knit organisation."

"They always said to us that they wanted to open an office in London and now they've done it we can go home and start touring the UK – we're really looking forward to it."

Pete, who says the two things he misses most about Britain are *Crunchy Nut Cornflakes* and baked beans,

founded People in Planes with best mate Gareth Jones when they were still at school.

Mesmerised by the first Supergrass album *I Should Coco*, the pair decided to form a band and later recruited drummer John Maloney, bassist Kris Blight and Ian Russell on keyboards.

"We were a bit unsure of ourselves and then Supergrass came along," recalls Pete. "They gave us direction, we thought they were really cool. It was the mid-nineties and the beginning of really putting things into context for us."

"We ended up working with Sam Williams who worked with Supergrass on that album and it was a dream come true – it was a fantastic time for us. He was such a cool guy and he convinced us to become a five-piece and got Gaz to move away from keyboards and onto vocals. He transformed us into what we are today and helped us to see where we wanted to go."

The band got its name after a brainstorming session turned into a



discussion on the fear of flying.

"It comes from the thought about whether people should really be in planes," he explains. "Should we really be that far above the ground? We had done so much travelling around that we were thinking that it's not quite right.

"I mean you always get on planes and pretend you feel okay, but deep down there's always a slight feeling that perhaps it isn't quite right and you might not make it."

Their latest offering, *Beyond the Horizon*, is an indie-rock guru's fantasy record with soul-tearing guitar riffs. The majority of the work comes from Doves/Massive Attack producer Dan Austin, but other contributors include Our Lady Peace frontman Raine Maida, Queens of the Stone Age collaborators Eleven and Panic at the Disco producer Matt Squire.

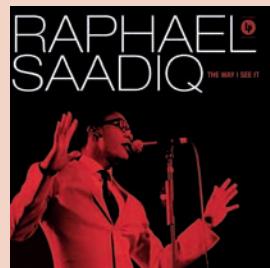
With a sound not too dissimilar from Super Furry Animals, People in Planes look set to be heading straight into a deep-seated UK genre. So are they intimidated by the hype?

"Nah," laughed Pete. "We're looking forward to getting stuck in. The people we've worked with have been so inspiring and it's been such a great journey that we're hoping it will continue for a while yet. It's a record we are really proud of." ■



The Fame (Lady GaGa)

PVC-wearing **Lady GaGa** has stormed the charts with her much talked about album *The Fame*. But this sexy American singer has an added edge in that she is already an established songwriter with the **Pussycat Dolls** and **Britney Spears** queuing up to sing her songs. The 22-year-old protege of **Akon** got her name from **Queen's** hit song *Radio Gaga* and her first single, *Just Dance*, has dominated the airwaves. Not bad for a newcomer. *The Fame* is filled with electro dancefloor tracks guaranteed to get you moving. Listen out for forthcoming collaborations with rappers **Flo Rida** and **Space Cowboy**.



The Way I See It (Raphael Saadiq)

MAYBE it's just a sign of my age, but I seem to like all things retro these days. Which is a good thing for **Raphael Saadiq**, because he sounds like he's just stepped out of the soulful sixties. Nominated for three Grammy Awards, he is hotly tipped for 2009. Seconds into the first song on his album *The Way I See It*, the artists most important to Saadiq are apparent. **Sam Cooke**, **The Temptations** and **The Four Tops** all have their part to play in this collection. **Stevie Wonder** even puts in a guest appearance. Lovers of old soul should definitely get a copy of this album.

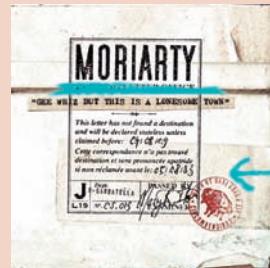
Capt David Greaves, REME



Happy in Galoshes (Scott Weiland)

FORMER **Stone Temple Pilots** and **Velvet Revolver** frontman **Scott Weiland** is back with his second album *Happy in Galoshes*. This double disc CD is a collective explosion of songs, demonstrating how diverse his vocal style is. To describe it as eclectic would be an understatement as no two tracks sound the same. There are obvious influences from the likes of **Dylan** and **Bowie** with a cover of his classic song *Fame*. *Happy in Galoshes* deserves to be listened to a good number of times before it can really be appreciated, as it contains a number of hidden gems.

Cpl Ray Kalaker, RETDU(B)



Gee Whiz but this is a Lonesome Town (Moriarty)

MORIARTY are four brothers and a soulful frontwoman, whose style is as diverse as it is clever. Folk, jazz, soul and blues shine throughout this album. With a penchant for playing different venues (prisons, mental institutions and Dublin docks), the French-based band have been a huge hit. Whether their style will be able to stand out from a lot of the latest chart dross is debatable, however they should certainly be given a chance. This is definitely worth more than one listen. Think **Seasick Steve** with a bit less oomph and you have Moriarty.

SSgt Mo Morris, RLC



Human (Brandy)

AFTER four years of trying her hand at acting, R&B star **Brandy** is back on the music scene. Teaming up once again with songwriting pal **Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins**, who aided her biggest seller to date, 1998's *Never Say Never*. It's all very polished, her voice is as smooth as ever and the music non-intrusive but it does suffer from blandness. There are no songs that raise the ante or hit the emotional content she probably desired. Although this is by no means a disaster there are newer and more vibrant R&B singers at present. At least she's got the acting to fall back on.

Sgt Charlie Lloyd, RLC



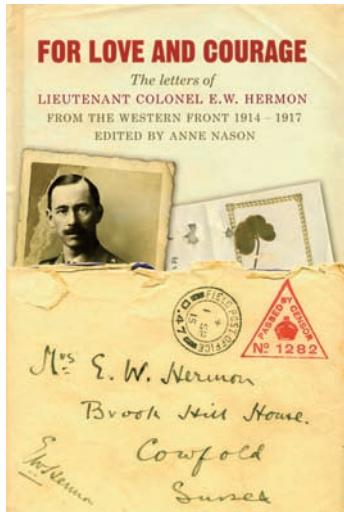
The Whole Fam Damnily (The Reverend Peyton's Big Damn Band)

YEE-HAW and welcome to the world of rockabilly country blues-rock. The genuine **Reverend Peyton**, his wife **Breezy** and brother **Jayme** make up this Indiana-based family band. They give it their all in this rowdy and rancorous collection of 12 songs which would serve as an ideal accompaniment to your average shin-dig or barn dance. The washboard and drums are among this hillbilly trio's tools of the trade. Imagine the 1990's **Rednex** hit *Cotton Eye Joe* but without the dance beat, and you have the essence of this quirky album.

Cpl Tom Robinson, RLC

Books

FEBRUARY REVIEW



Heart attack: The letters Lt Col Edward Hermon penned his wife during the Great War will resonate with all those personnel, past and present, who have been separated from loved ones by ops



Heroes with heart

Colonel's war letters highlight personal sacrifices of those who serve

For Love and Courage edited by Anne Nason (Preface/Random House, hardback, £20).

Review: Maj Neil Powell AGC

THERE is a single photograph in *For Love and Courage* that epitomises the human cost of war.

The image of a four-leaf clover – a memento sent to Lt Col Edward William Hermon, CO of the 24th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers, by his wife Ethel – depicts the love of a woman for her soldier husband.

The clearly visible bullet hole from the round that passed through the letter and into Hermon's heart as he led the battalion in a charge during the Battle of Arras on April 9, 1917 shows how normal, loving family men have to endure dreadful violent experiences in a time of war.

It is rare for historians to be able to find such a well-presented set of personal letters, which clearly and articulately chart the development of a

campaign while detailing the personal thoughts of one of its participants; yet that is exactly what *For Love and Courage* provides.

The book consists of chapters made up entirely of the personal letters of Lt Col Hermon from the time he was mobilised through the period of his training and the Battle of Loos, his taking command of the battalion before the final spring offensive of 1917 and the Battle of Arras – an operation that heralded the colonel's untimely death.

Illustrated with personal photographs, pictures of the carnage of the First World War and sketches drawn by Hermon and included in his letters, this is a book that will appeal to a wide range of readers.

Romanticists will love its prose and poignancy, written in a manner and in a time when honour, fidelity and selflessness defined romance and romantic experience.

Historians will be drawn to the personal accounts of war and the picture

Hermon paints of conflict a century ago; and the general reader will be moved by the sheer simplicity, readability and moving account of a man corresponding with his wife in the most awful of times.

Some of the colonel's later letters are likely to have been uncensored due to his position as the Battalion Commander and so give a wonderful insight into life on the front as a soldier in the Great War. And unlike other titles centred on personal accounts, the commanding officer's thoughts are recorded almost contemporaneously rather than decades later.

The letters' late author did however have a part to play in the book as it was edited by his granddaughter Anne Nason, who was helped by historian James Holland. Where necessary there are short footnotes and linking passages that help place the letters in context and although vital to the reader as an aid to understanding they are neither obtrusive nor burdensome.

In a time when bookshelves are filled

Left, Embrace: LBdr Martin Cartwright (7 Para RHA) is reunited with his wife Laura after an arduous six-month tour in southern Afghanistan

Picture: Cpl Rupert Frere RLC

Below, Fallen: A bullet through the heart during the Battle of Arras denied Lt Col Edward Hermon his homecoming hug



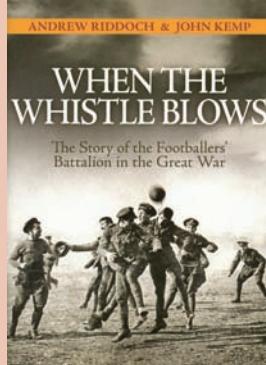
with heavy and in-depth histories, *For Love and Courage* provides readers with a different way to experience the past and it does not disappoint. The letter where Hermon describes watching Baron von Richthofen's antics in the air over Arras will draw a smile and his ability to praise the skill of one of his enemies will puff many a chest with a feeling of British pride. Yet only a page away the reader will be moved to tears with the sort of selflessness that the officer shows as he tries to shield his family from what we now know to be the horrors of the Great War.

Finally there is a great deal to be learned in this book about the human character, leadership and other values that we as soldiers hold as important.

As such I think the endorsement of this book and of Hermon himself should go to one of his officers, Capt MacKinnon, who closed a letter of sympathy to Hermon's wife by stating: "And then the greatest of all he helped everyone he had under him to avoid spiteful things and mean things. And this, his spirit, will never leave me I know, nor the rest of us." ■

To join the ranks of our reviews team (books, movies, games, music) email styler@soldiermagazine.co.uk

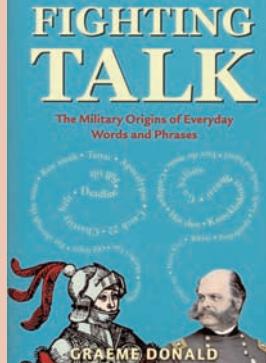
Below, Fallen: A bullet through the heart during the Battle of Arras denied Lt Col Edward Hermon his homecoming hug



When the Whistle Blows by A Riddoch and J Kemp

A FINELY researched record of the 17th Battalion, The Middlesex Regiment, *When the Whistle Blows* champions those footballers who enlisted in response to claims that professional players were "not doing their bit". Raised in 1914, "the Footballers' Battalion" – brought up to strength by amateur players, officials and fans eager to serve with their heroes – went on to prove as combative in the field as on it. The book documents their progress from training to the trenches and the inter-unit matches that cemented comradeship.

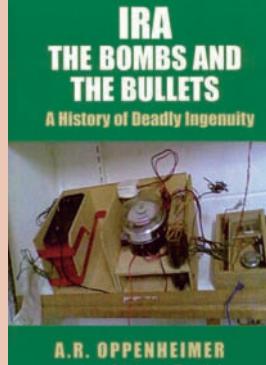
Lt Col Andy Gladen, RE



Fighting Talk by Graeme Donald

THIS is a fascinating little book that explores hundreds of words and phrases commonly used today that have a military ancestry, such as "black box" [of an aircraft] – a term which originally described pieces of Second World War experimental equipment (painted black to reduce the enemy's chances of finding it). Many of the expressions have surprising origins; not least "Tory", which heralds from an Irish word meaning bandit. A quirky offering that will appeal to those fond of trivia.

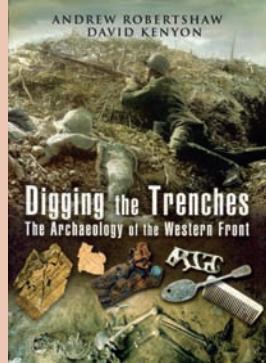
**LCpl Chris MacCallum,
Int Corps**



IRA: The Bombs and the Bullets by A R Oppenheimer

MOST books written about the IRA have centred on their complex political motivation. **Oppenheimer** chooses instead to focus on the aggressive tactics of the "Provos" and the chaos wreaked by their weapon of choice – the IED. He wastes no time in comparing the development of the IRA's tactics to those of Al Qaeda and predicts the almost inevitable transition to the IED when faced by superior force. A sobering book which serves as a timely reminder that, when it comes to IEDs, we've been there before.

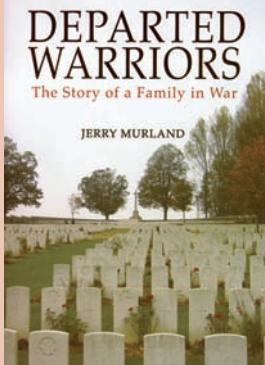
Capt David Greaves, REME



Digging the Trenches by A Robertshaw and D Kenyon

I COULD not put this book down. Presenting an entirely different approach to other First World War titles, the authors detail a number of projects in which they have been responsible for advancing the historical understanding of the Great War. Detailing trench locations, they then use a number of archaeological techniques to help readers understand what it was like to live and fight on the Western Front and help to identify the remains of a number of dead soldiers. My only criticism is that at £25 it is overpriced.

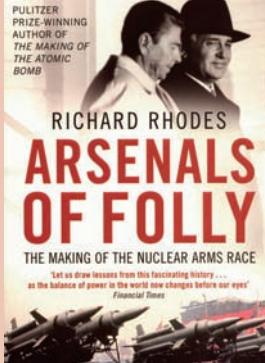
Maj Neil Powell, AGC



Departed Warriors by Jerry Murland

IF you're interested in military history in general, Irish history in particular or are toying with the idea of researching your family tree, this book could be for you. It traces the men of the Murland family, who fought for their country across two centuries. The author's research takes him and the reader from the Boer War, through the trenches of the Western Front and Mesopotamia and into the air battles of the Second World War. The result is an intimate look at three successive generations of warriors from a single family.

Maj Mike Peters, AAC



Arsenals of Folly by Richard Rhodes

WRITTEN by a Pulitzer Prize winner, this new look at the Cold War explores the many ups and downs of the arms race between superpowers, ranging from the Cuban missile crisis to the Reagan-era strategic arms proposals. The title excels where similar books have been distinctly average, largely due to its inclusion of previously unseen historical accounts and documents. Many of the facts surrounding the end of the stand-off are conflicted and *Arsenals of Folly* delves deeply to give its excellent account.

**LCpl Chris MacCallum,
Int Corps**

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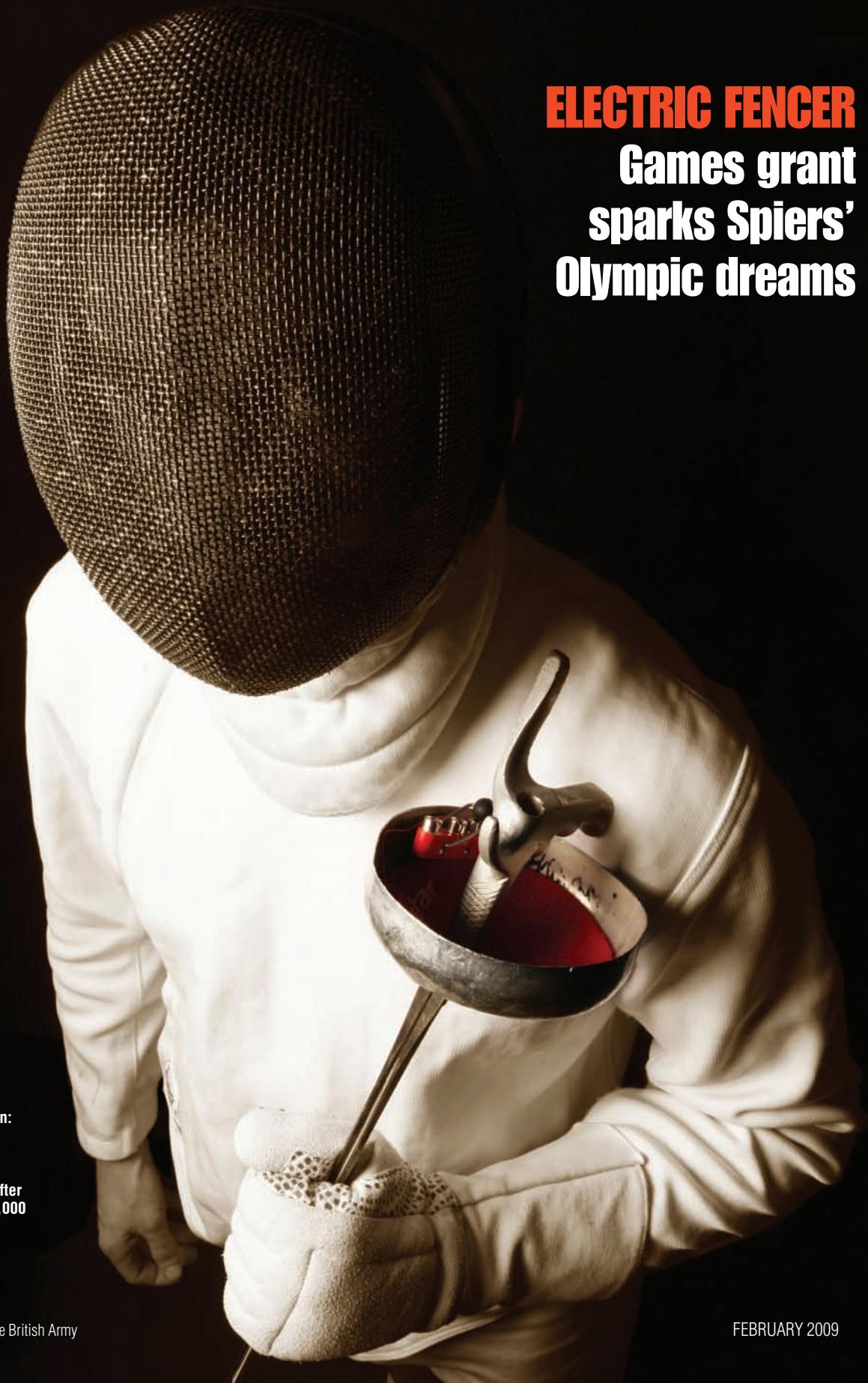
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SOLDIER SPORT

ELECTRIC FENCER
Games grant
sparks Spiers'
Olympic dreams



Steely determination:
LBdr Lee Spiers
(RA) has taken the
first step towards
Olympic selection after
qualifying for an £8,000
training scheme

Picture: Graeme Main

Swords and Spiers

Ambitious fencing prodigy plots Olympic assault after earning 2012 funding boost

Interview: Cliff Caswell

Picture: Graeme Main

FROM the moment LBdr Lee Spiers first donned a mask to cross swords with his opponent, he knew fencing would become his sport of choice.

Armed with a winning combination of speed, agility and fitness, the young gunner quickly proved to be a formidable match in any duel. And it did not take the junior NCO long to battle his way through the ranks of champions.

Now the 28-year-old, who took up the classic military discipline because he wanted to "try something different", is on the threshold of the ultimate achievement after being selected for funding to train for the 2012 London Olympic Games.

Having passed selection for the Olympic Pathway Scheme, Spiers, who is currently serving with Plymouth-based 29th Commando Regiment Royal Artillery, said he was focused on upholding expectations of a winning British performance at the Games.

"It is absolutely awesome to have been chosen for funding especially after so many experienced people applied," Spiers told *SoldierSport*. "I have four years to make the grade and my aim now is to compete against the world's best."

"As my record currently stands, I have represented Devon four times; the Army

twice and I have fenced for the Combined Services on five occasions."

Despite his successful string of performances, however, Spiers is well aware that he will face a different breed of competition in the Olympics and that the public will be looking for winners in the wake of Team GB's medal haul in Beijing last year.

Spiers believed that he could repay the strong confidence of selectors in the pathway scheme after becoming one of only a handful of fencers to receive the cash backing, which is worth around £8,000 over the coming four years.

Spiers said: "The initiative is designed to support those who have the potential of a medal at the 2012 Games and the selection process was very challenging.

"The panel included physiotherapists and nutritionists and there were reaction and bleep tests. Sports scientists even drew up graphs on us.

"While there were many people who were more experienced than me, they were not deemed to have the attitude and determination the selectors were looking for, which is probably where being in the Army did me a few favours."

Spiers, who has only been fencing for the past three years and competes in the epee class, recently completed the demanding ten-week Army Physical

Training course at Aldershot.

"I'd love to teach sport and to coach," he admitted. "Training is my life, and I don't see being a PTI so much as a job, just something that I really enjoy doing.

"Fencing also really appeals to me because there is absolutely no ambiguity about it – you are either good enough to hit your opponent or to stop them hitting you. And for the nine minutes you are competing, it is 100 per cent effort.

"To be successful you must have lots of explosive power in your legs and strong fitness levels. Competitions last for a day, so you have to be able to work in bursts.

"I became involved in fencing because it seemed something different when I saw it in the gym. Six months later I was going to competitions and had become both an Inter Service Master Swordsman and Army Master at Arms."

As well as focusing on his Olympic ambitions, Spiers, who was born into a military family in Germany and whose father is a serving lieutenant colonel, is hoping that his sporting abilities will help raise cash for less fortunate soldiers.

This year he is competing in the Plymouth Half Marathon in full fencing kit, and is confident his unusual adventure will attract sponsorship for Help for Heroes.

Spiers concluded: "I'm really looking forward to the coming four years – fencing is a great sport with a great social side and I've met some superb people through it. Now it is time to get ready to take myself to the next level." ■



SPORT SHORTS

PREMIERSHIP contenders Liverpool FC welcomed soldiers from the 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment home from Afghanistan with a tour of its famous Anfield stadium.

Merseyside legends including John Barnes and Alan Kennedy took the time to meet the soldiers, who returned from Operation Herrick in October, and show them around the ground.

The trip came about after Denise McGann wrote to the club to ask if her son-in-law, Royal Irish senior NCO and Liverpool fan Sgt Paul Harrison, could pay a visit to Anfield.

Harrison said: "We are very grateful to Liverpool for organising this."

ARMY fencers took on the cream of civilian talent at the annual Aldershot Open tournament.

More than 180 competitors from across the country took part in the tournament, which forms part of the national circuit.

Lt Naveen Rahmen, a former Army and Inter-Services champion, was the highest-placed military fencer, finishing joint-third after losing to the eventual champion in the epee semi-final.

Territorial Army athlete Pte Max Weedon (RLC) was the top-ranked male from the Services after achieving 18th place in a field of 56.

"I'm quite pleased with the result considering that I haven't done as much fencing as I would have liked in the past year due to work commitments," said Rahmen. For more information about Army fencing, contact Maj Stu Brown on 94211 8527 or 01483 798527.

THE sport of kings is showing its appreciation for the Armed Forces by offering discounted entry to a host of Britain's racecourses.

Members of the Services can buy two Premier Enclosure tickets for the price of one at any of Northern Racing's nine tracks.

The company introduced the offer after signing up to Value for Valour, a scheme dreamt up by Capt Nicola Rush (RAMC) and run in partnership with the Army Benevolent Fund.

Northern Racing group managing director Tony Kelly said: "We want to show our appreciation to the Servicemen and women of the country. Britain has much to be proud of when it comes to our Armed Forces who show such dedication, hard work and commitment. Value for Valour is a superb initiative."

To take advantage of the offer, book tickets by calling any of Northern Racing's courses or purchase them online at www.northernracing.co.uk. Personnel can collect the tickets at the racecourse by showing their valid Service identification.



Steady hands: Pte Martin Stead (RLC) has earned a regular place in the England boxing team set-up

ENGLAND

OLYMPIANS BACK SERVICE BOXERS TO STRIKE GOLD

Interviews: Stephen Tyler

Pictures: Graeme Main

BRITAIN'S Olympic boxers have given their backing to the Army athletes looking to follow in their footsteps at 2010's Commonwealth Games in India.

James DeGale, Billy Joe Saunders and Frankie Gavin's success on the amateur circuit in 2008, which saw DeGale claim Olympic gold in Beijing and Gavin win a world title, has earned the trio professional contracts with promoter Frank Warren.

But despite the scale of their own achievements, the Olympians were quick to heap praise on their Army counterparts who are making a similarly big impression on the amateur circuit.

"I have fought two guys from the Army, most recently Steve Turner in the ABAs," said Gavin, who was tipped as a gold-medal prospect in China until sensationaly failing to make his weight at the eleventh hour. "They were both really solid fighters and good lads as well."

"I had thought about joining the Army because the opportunities you get to box are really good, but I was always involved in the sport and I have ended

up focusing on a career in the ring.

"Boxing is hard, but I have enormous respect for the soldiers who are willing to go and risk their lives."

Gavin's faith in LCpl Steve Turner (R Signals) is based on first-hand experience. The two boxers have previously contested an ABA bout which was won by Gavin, who was in the crowd to watch Turner continue his England career by beating David Muller in an international against Germany in December.

In a match-up that was more one-sided than the 3-2 scoreline suggests, Turner's quick feet and superior tactics helped him overcome his opponent and play his part in England's 5-4 victory.

"The team Germany brought over was the same as us in that it was full of the up-and-coming guys who will make up their next generation of fighters," Turner told *SoldierSport*.

"The scoring was quite close and to be honest I was surprised that there was only a point in it. I had the right mindset and kept it tight throughout and I was happy to get the result."

With Army coach Sgt Darren Dugan's (2 PWRR) training regime pushing up fitness and skill levels, it is no surprise that the Service's boxers

National treasures: From left, Sgt Darren Dugan, Spr Adam Whitfield, LCpl Steve Turner, Sig Niki Gittus and Cpl James Allen



EXPECTS

‘THESE BOYS TRAIN LIKE PROFESSIONAL BOXERS AND I DEMAND A LOT OF THEM’

are making a name for themselves on the international stage.

Turner was joined in the England squad for the showdown against Germany by the Army's light-footed and quick-fisted Pte Martin Stead (RLC), who was unlucky to lose his 60kg encounter against Eugen Burhard on countback.

Cpl James Allen (RA) represented the country in a match against home nation rivals Wales in 2008, while ABA champion Spr Adam Whitfield (RE) capped a fine year by earning a call-up to the European amateur boxing championships in Liverpool in November.

Sig Niki Gittus (R Signals) has also flown the Army flag for England, winning two bouts before losing in the final of an international tournament in Jordan.

With the Army offering the talented team the opportunity to train full-time, the international boxers are setting their sights on earning a place in the England set-up for the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi.

And so confident is Turner in his ability that he is planning on stepping up from the 64kg weight division he has excelled in to fight at 69kg.

Although the change in category will pit the junior NCO against greater competition both at Army and international level, Turner feels it will benefit him in the long run.

“I don't feel like I have achieved everything at 64kg because I could have won the ABA title and obviously being left out [of the England team] last summer was a disappointment,” he explained.

“When I was called up for the Wales fight it took a lot out of me because I had to get down to the right weight and in the ring I could sense that I wasn't myself.

“I stepped up over the Christmas period and I will be working at that level now.”

With an unprecedented 26th Inter-Services championship title up for grabs against the Royal Navy later this year, Dugan and his team have a lot to do before entertaining any notions of Commonwealth Games qualification.

But the coach believes his boxers' dedication and fitness will see them continue to play a key role at the sport's highest amateur level.

“These boys train like professional boxers and I demand a lot of them, but the results speak for themselves,” he said.

“I push them so that the only thing they have to worry about is their mental fitness.

“Rather than being a bunch of individuals, we have a strong team and that is helping each of them to reach the next level.

“We look after one another 100 per cent and I'm really pleased with the way the lads conduct themselves.” ■



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SPORT SHORTS

A REVIVED Army shinty team are on the hunt for new recruits after announcing their entry into this year's Sutherland and Bullough Cups.

A special coaching day has been announced to promote the sport within the military in the hope that new blood will be found to spur the soldiers on to victory.

The coaching foundation course and tournament will be held at Howe Barracks in Canterbury, Kent, over the weekend of March 28-29 – and anyone can put themselves forward.

Army team secretary Capt Robert Stoddart (5 Scots) said his troops had taken a two-year break from shinty due to operational commitments but were now back with a vengeance.

"No previous playing experience is required to attend the coaching course and it is open to all military and civilian personnel who wish to gain the qualification."

For further information email robertstoddart@hotmail.com

FORMER British and world champion Kevin Lueshing was the guest of honour as Sierra Leonean soldiers took part in an Army-organised charity boxing evening.

Billed as Thunder in Lagoonda, the event was the brainchild of International Military Assistance Training Team (IMATT) chief clerk WO2 John Steggles (AGC) and was held to raise money to form a Republic of Sierra Leone (RSLAF) benevolent fund.

Steggles, a keen boxer who used to compete at welterweight, arranged for everything from tickets and posters to sponsorship and lighting for the glamorous evening of entertainment, which was staged at Lagoonda's casino.

Money from ticket sales was bolstered by the proceeds from a sports memorabilia auction and raffle and the event raised in excess of 100 million Leones – equivalent to more than £24,000 – which will be administered by RSLAF and IMATT.

"The evening was a huge success and well received by the audience, few of whom had attended a boxing event before," said Steggles.

THE Army women's football team will have a hectic February as they complete their build-up to the 2009 Inter-Services competition.

The side continues its defence of the South West Counties Championship with away fixtures at Devon and Guernsey, and must also fit in a rearranged match against Cornwall Football Association.

See next month's *SoldierSport* for a round-up of the team's results.



Smash hit: Cpl Rene Regis (AGC) clears; Inset, Super sub: Two-goal hero Cpl Dave Gill (AFC Harrogate)

Fire fighters

Army extinguish emergency service challenge

Report: Stephen Tyler

Pictures: Graeme Main

ARMY footballers cranked up their preparations for this year's Inter-Services championships with victory over the Fire Service at Aldershot's Military Stadium.

Just one week after losing out on the Southern Counties title with a 2-1 defeat at Sussex, the Reds beat the emergency service's representative side 2-0, although the winning margin should have been more convincing.

In a first half of few chances, the Army dominated possession and Cpl Rene Regis (AGC) frequently found himself in space on the left wing.

Little-and-large front pairing Cpl Colin Thomas (RA) and LCpl Dean Walker (2 Lancs) combined well, but a well-marshalled Fire Service defence worked the offside trap to good effect.

After a goalless first-half, the Army looked odds-on to take the lead when a perfectly-weighted Regis cross fell to the waiting Walker, but the front man volleyed over from close range.

The Fire Service continued to struggle to hold onto the ball and it was their uncertainty in possession that led to the Reds' opening goal.

Visiting keeper Martin Peters tried to dribble the ball clear of his area, but Army substitute Cpl Dave Gill (AFC Harrogate) made an excellent challenge and kept his cool to lob the ball into the back of the empty net.

Sgt James Lavelle (APTC), who had an excellent match, started a clever move that Gill finished by drilling the ball into the bottom corner of the net to double the Reds' lead.

Hard-working Walker missed another good opportunity, but the home team held on to record a welcome victory. ■

ARMY 2 - 0 FIRE SERVICE

Army: Smythe; Reed; Regis; Jordan (c); Culbertson; Lavelle; Bemrose; Rizza; Walker; Thomas; Etale.

Subs: Jardine; Collington; Kirkbright; Gill; Cooper-Tomkins; Smith.

Goals: Gill (2).

SoldierSport man of the match: Sgt James Lavelle (APTC, right)



FIXTURES

ATHLETICS

February 4 – Army cross country finals (Sandhurst); 25 – Inter-services cross country finals (Tweseldown).

BADMINTON

February 9-11 – Inter-corps championships (Aldershot).

BOXING

February 6 – Army v London Select (London).

CANOEING

February 3-6 – Wild water training camp (Sanquhar); 7-8 – Inter-Services wild water racing championships (Sanquhar).

FOOTBALL

February 2 – Army U23 v Ashford (Aldershot); 7 – Army women v Guernsey (Aldershot); 9 – Crusaders v ICSC(L) (Aldershot); 10 – Army v Met Police (Aldershot); 15 – Army veterans v Hon Artillery Company (Sandhurst); 16 – Army U23 v Royal Marines (tbc); 18 – Army v Sussex (Sussex); Army women v Barnet (Aldershot); 23 – Crusaders v Int Corps (Aldershot); 28 – Crusaders v Barclays Bank Eagles (Ealing).

HOCKEY

February 1 – Army women v Southampton (Aldershot); 5 – Army v London University (Aldershot); 12 – Army veterans v Haslemere (Haslemere); 17-18 – Army U23 outdoor league fixture (Aldershot); 23 – Army veterans v NORDICS (Aldershot).

March 1 – Army women v Woking (Aldershot).

LAWN TENNIS

February 20-22 – Army indoor championships (Aldershot); 28 – Army veterans v Winchester (Aldershot).

MODERN PENTATHLON

February 14-15 – British Modern Pentathlon championships selection (Bath).

NETBALL

February 1 – Army v SR League Team (tbc); 8 – Army v SR League Team (tbc).

RACKETS

February 4-5 – Combined-Services championships (Queen's Club).

ROWING

February 7 – Henley Fours Head (Henley).

RUGBY UNION

February 7 – Army v Scotland Development (Edinburgh); 9 – Army A v Worcester Development (Worcester); 25 – Army v Worcester (Worcester).

SHOOTING

February 12-14 – British airgun championships (Bisley).

SQUASH

February 3-5 – Inter-Services championships (Aldershot); 25 – Army v Millfield School (Millfield).

TRIATHLON

February 28-March 1 – Army Triathlon Association training weekend (Aldershot).

WINTER SPORTS

February 16-21 – Army luge championships (Austria); 23-28 – Inter-Services luge championships (Germany).

Hydrotherapy

Wounded troops climb aboard sailing scheme

INJURED Servicemen and women will be competing in prestigious sailing races thanks to an innovative sporting initiative.

Not-for-profit organisation Toe in the Water, which was co-founded by Headley Court physiotherapist Capt Holly King (RAMC) and Tanya Brookfield, will be entering yachts into seven events, including Cowes Week and the JP Morgan Round the Island Race.

Each boat is crewed by able-bodied and disabled sailors and the opportunities provided by the scheme have proved to be inspirational for injured Service personnel.

“I grew up in Barnsley and had never sailed before,” explained LCpl Chris Herbert, who lost his right leg in an explosion in Basra in 2007 and took part in last year’s Toe in the Water. “It was awesome to be competing against

able-bodied, competitive teams.”

To ensure that as many people as possible get to experience the programme, crews are rotated with each participant taking part in a maximum of two races per year.

Fifteen Servicemen took part in Toe in the Water last year and clinical physiotherapist Jayne McLenaghan hopes to see an increase on that number this season.

“The point is to inspire them enough to feel it is OK to go and achieve again, whether they get the sailing bug or not,” she added.

The Toe in the Water team is holding a selection weekend for able-bodied crew members over the weekend of March 14 and 15. Anyone interested in attending should email holly@toeinthewater.org by February 20.

● For more details about the scheme, visit www.toeinthewater.org ■



Up for the cup

WEST London were brushed aside as the Army’s Rugby League team made a successful start to their 2009 Carnegie Challenge Cup campaign.

The Service side eased past their capital city opponents with a comfortable 22-10 victory as it began the task of emulating last year’s record-equalling foray into the competition’s third round.

Despite falling behind early on, stand-off LCpl Eugene Viljoen (RE) brought the Reds back into contention. Another West London try failed to knock the Army out of their stride and Cpl Neville Boyd (RE) crossed for the Service side on half-an-hour.

The Reds upped the tempo in the second period and Spr Ryan Taylor (RE) registered the Army’s third try. Cpl Andre Zwijnen (Rifles) wrapped up the win with a final score late on.

“It was a difficult game in hard conditions,” explained team manager Capt Rich “Nav” Naivalurua (REME). “We’re going to have 50 per cent of the guys deployed on ops at some point during this season so it will be a chance to show our squad depth.”

Both sides held a minute’s silence before kick-off in honour of A/Cpl

Richard “Robbo” Robinson (1 Rifles), who was killed in Afghanistan the day before the fixture.

The Army were due to play Northumbria University in the Challenge Cup’s first round as this issue went to press, with a place in the second round on the weekend of February 14 awaiting the winners.

“Northumbria won’t have had much preparation time,” added Naivalurua. “But they have to be a decent side to get to this stage, so we won’t be taking them lightly.” ■

MARTIAL MATTERS

THE Army’s top judo players were set to face off on the mat at the Service’s team and individual championships as this issue went to press.

Aldershot’s Army School of Physical Training headquarters were due to host the annual competition, which begins with the three-man team event before competitors square off in the closed and novice individual category.

See March’s *SoldierSport* for results from the tournament.



Clockwise from main picture: Capt Mark Lee (AGC) on the rampage; Spr Gus Qasevakatani (RE) charges forward; the Army pack holds Plymouth at bay

Warning signs

Early victory sends statement of intent to Army's Inter-Service rivals

Report: Stephen Tyler
Pictures: Graeme Main

HEAD coach Andy Price insists his current Army Rugby Union squad is stronger than ever before after watching the Reds open their season with a battling win against national league opposition.

Last year's first XV has been bolstered by exciting new talent from the Army's academy and Price was delighted to see the newcomers – including dual-code Rugby League star Cpl Ceri Cummings (REME) – make an immediate impression in a 22-14 win against Plymouth Albion.

And with a packed schedule ahead of the Inter-Services competition, the Reds' formidable start to the new campaign will have the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force fearing the worst.

"We have been bold with our selection and we have a good mix of youngsters and experienced heads," said Price. "It's too early to tell just how good this group can be, but at the moment we are at the same level that it took us until March to reach last year."

With operational demands robbing the Reds of 2008 Inter-Services back row LCpl Ledua Jope (RE) and Pte Joe Kava (RLC), extra pressure has been placed on established stars including skipper Capt Mark Lee (AGC).

The officer played a key role in the opening exchanges against Plymouth

at Aldershot as his burst through the middle opened up space for Capt Rob Scouthern (AGC), whose pass nearly set LCpl Gerrard Wessels (RE) free.

As industrious as the Army's play was, the fact that the match was the new squad's first competitive game was evident in the occasional piece of poor handling or decision making.

The rustiness led to Plymouth winning and converting two penalties, and a third successful kick opened up a nine-point lead after half-an-hour.

Not to be outdone, the Service side cranked up the pressure and Cummings darted towards the line, held the ball up excellently and released LCpl Malakai Magnus (RLC) to cross in the corner. WO2 Mal Roberts (RA) brought the score to 7-9 at half-time.

Price made three changes for the second period and the alterations had an immediate impact as Roberts sent a penalty between the posts before being replaced by Gdsm Rob Sweeney (WG).

Plymouth retook the lead with a fourth kick, but the home team made the game safe five minutes from time thanks to five points from prop ATpr Warren Ross-Allen (AAC). A superb solo try from Spr Gus Qasevakatani (RE) – again converted by Sweeney – in the closing minutes completed the win.

"It was our first game together and we did make a few mistakes, but that happens early in the season," Lee told *SoldierSport*. "It's testament to the boys that they picked their heads up and got the win. With the players we now have, it's an exciting time for the Army." ■

ARMY RUGBY UNION 22 - 14 PLYMOUTH ALBION

Army: Ross-Allen; Scouthern; Lewis; Scarf; Ball; Easton; Lee (c); Bates; Gill; Roberts; Magnus; Wessels; Gittings; Qasevakatani; Cummings. **Subs:** Dwyer; Budgen; Libbey; Satala; Chennell; Sweeney.

Tries: Magnus; Ross-Allen; Qasevakatani.

Conversions: Sweeney (2); Roberts.

Penalty: Roberts.

SoldierSport man of the match: Cpl Ceri Cummings (REME, right)



Civvy school

We asked soldiers serving in the Falkland Islands how their training and qualifications prepare them for life outside the British Army

Pte Josh Brown, 2 Yorks

The Army push you through training and offer qualifications that can give you the chance to be in the police or fire service when you leave the Forces. You can also get £1,000 a year towards a course you want to do, so it's not something we have to pay for ourselves.



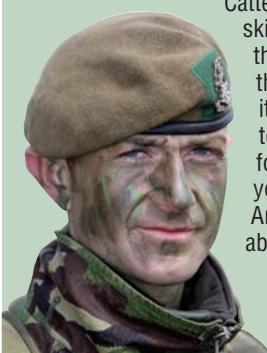
Spr Keith Fenwick, 39 Engr Regt

I've just finished a welders course. My qualifications are very good but there are plenty of other NVQ courses that don't give you good qualifications when you get out. They are only the equivalent of City and Guilds awards. That was a factor for me when I was deciding what to take.



Pte Sean Quinn, 2 Yorks

I haven't been on many courses yet – there hasn't been time. I did NVQs at Catterick in life skills and things like that. I think it's important to have that for when you leave the Army to be able to get on.



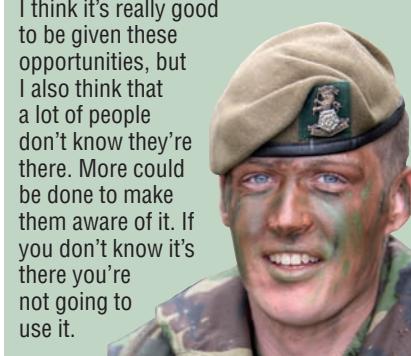
LCpl Sam Fisher, 39 Engr Regt

I have been on an intensive six-month electricians course. I am now fully qualified to be an electrician and in a managerial position, so from my point of view it's definitely a good idea to get qualifications for when you leave the Army.



Cpl John Cavanagh, 2 Yorks

I've taken maths, English and computer courses since I've been in the Army. I think it's really good to be given these opportunities, but I also think that a lot of people don't know they're there. More could be done to make them aware of it. If you don't know it's there you're not going to use it.



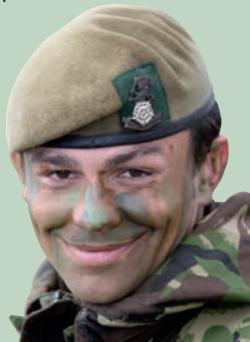
Gnr Gary Price, 16 Regt RA

You can do any type of course you want to in the Army. They have driving courses, CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) training, motorcycle riding – it's really varied. If you have the time to go on a course then it's a good opportunity.



LCpl Peter Burnett, 2 Yorks

There are lots of education courses that are meant to be good – some soldiers come in without their GCSEs and other exams so it definitely helps them. They'll have some civilian qualifications to fall back on when they get out.



Gnr Ollie Denby, 16 Regt RA

The training has its upsides and downsides. Overall we get really good training from the Army, but we have to make sure we don't miss out, because we go away so much. But if you want to get a good job in civilian life then I think it provides a good start.



Pte Walter Tikoisua, 2 Yorks

I have heard that there are some really good courses that you can get on. I've only been in the Army for six months so I haven't done any myself, but would like to. I think it's great that they offer me the chance to train for when I get out and hopefully I can do some of the courses when I get back.



Interviews: Samantha Chapman Pictures: Graeme Main

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