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SOLDIER

Ordnance Barracks, Government Road,
Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU.

All enquiries: Tel 01252 787107 / 94222 7107
Fax: 01252 787110 / 94222 7110
Email: news@soldiermagazine.co.uk

EDITORIAL

Editor:

Sarah Goldthorpe 01252 787096 (7096)
sgoldthorpe@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Assistant Editor:

Joe Clapson 01252 787097 (7097)
jclapson@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Assistant Editor:

Becky Clark 01252 787099 (7099)
rclark@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Sports Editor:

Richard Long 01252 787098 (7098)
rlong@soldiermagazine.co.uk

DESIGN

Art Editor:

Tudor Morgan 01252 787100 (7100)
tmorgan@soldiermagazine.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographer:

Graeme Main 01252 787103 (7103)
gmain@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Photographer:

Steve Dock 01252 787103 (7103)
sdock@soldiermagazine.co.uk

MARKETING and ADVERTISING

Business Manager:

Andy Clarkson 01252 787105 (7105)
aclarkson@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Advertising:

Heather Sheklyns 01252 787106 (7106)
advertising@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Subscriptions:

subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk

SOLDIER is published by the Ministry of Defence and printed by Wyndeham (Roche) Ltd. Print contract managed by Williams Lea.

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Decorations and demands

WELCOME to our May issue, where we delve into the heart-stopping stories behind the operational honours and awards for Op Herrick 16.

To all those who have lived out similar battlefield encounters, I hope these tales fill you with pride at the outstanding job you continue to do against a backdrop of financial difficulty and organisational uncertainty.

For every soldier who is handed a decoration, there are scores more whose courageous actions go unrewarded – or even unnoticed – by senior colleagues.

Wherever in the world you are reading this magazine, whether you are focused on Afghanistan, Mali or contingency operations, I hope you like what you find.

And for troops too modest to soak up their own achievements, enjoy instead our articles on the Aussie outback (pages 40-43), combat footwear (pages 38-39) and the top ten machine guns of all time (pages 48-49). ■



Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor



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Cover picture: Graeme Main

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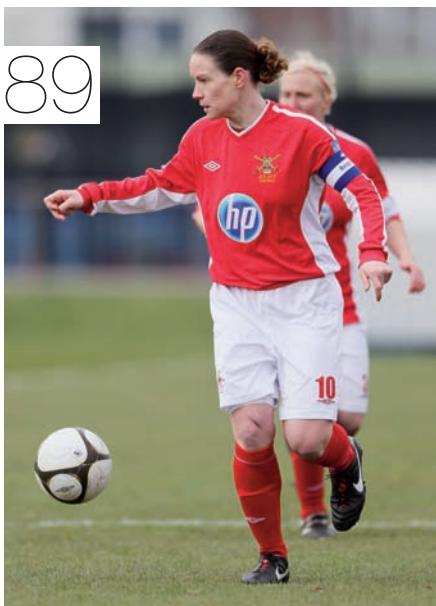


Herrick heroes

Standout soldiers take centre stage in the latest operational awards



Two white outline numbers '4' are positioned on a grassy field. The number on the left is slightly blurred, while the number on the right is sharp. They are oriented vertically, with the top of the '4' pointing upwards.



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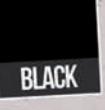
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Picture: Richard Watt

Forces farewell: Hundreds of military personnel played an important role in the funeral of former prime minister Margaret Thatcher

Soldiers support Thatcher funeral

FALKLANDS veterans were among hundreds of Servicemen and women to play a role in the funeral of Baroness Thatcher, who was laid to rest in London with full military honours.

More than 700 troops took part in the occasion, many of them from units linked to the conflict in the South Atlantic and others who had served in the campaign as young soldiers.

The former prime minister's coffin was brought to St Paul's Cathedral by a gun carriage of The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery.

Throughout the procession, The Honourable Artillery Company fired minute guns from the Tower of London as personnel from all three Services lined the route.

As the cortege arrived at St Paul's, soldiers from 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards mounted an honour guard.

On the steps of the cathedral members of The Blues and Royals, Household Cavalry Regiment stood to attention alongside Chelsea Pensioners and colleagues from both the

Royal Navy and Royal Air Force.

Those carrying the coffin included Sgt Jason Buffham (RA), Cpl Carl Spence (RE), LCpl James Steel (Para), LCpl Tej Pun (RGR) and LSgt Paul Quayle (SG), whose father is a holder of the South Atlantic Medal.

Guiding the bearer party was garrison sergeant major WO1 Billy Mott and Maj Nick Mott, both of whom deployed to the Falklands as young Welsh Guardsmen. Together with Col Hugh Boddington, the chief marshal in the escort party, the brothers were on the RFA Sir Galahad when it was attacked by Argentine forces, resulting in the loss of 32 comrades.

Veterans of the conflict were among those invited to the service, including Tony Davies, a former regimental sergeant major of the Welsh Guards, who said he was "humbled" to have been part of the ceremony.

"It was amazing and moving," the ex-soldier explained.

"When you looked around St Paul's and saw all the people who were there it was immense."

"But actually, it didn't feel like a state occasion – more a family funeral."

Commenting on the crucial role of his unit of 35 years, he continued: "I think it meant everything to the regiment to be involved. We took heavy losses in the Falklands and it was a tremendous honour for them to be involved in saying goodbye to such a great lady."

"To see the two Mott brothers there, who were young soldiers at the time, still serving today and playing such a prominent role was fantastic."

Thousands of onlookers turned out to witness Baroness Thatcher's funeral.

Fears that protesters would try and disrupt the high-profile event proved largely unfounded.

"It was an amazing atmosphere," added Mr Davies.

"Obviously we weren't sure if things were going to kick off and there was a great deal of security but thankfully nothing happened to take the edge off the occasion."

"You could hear the clapping and cheering as the coffin arrived at the cathedral and when it left, and that was very moving."

● **Digital dossier – page 59**





“THEY HAVE IMPRESSED ME WITH THEIR TECHNICAL SKILLS AND THEY LIKE TO PASS THE BALL”

- ENGLAND UNDER-21 COACH PRAISES ARMY PLAYERS, PAGE 89

Army apprenticeships praised

THE Army apprenticeship programme has been rated “good” by education inspectors, with a mark of “outstanding” for its hospitality and catering elements.

The scheme, one of the UK’s largest such training initiatives, has at least 15,000 soldiers engaged in 43 different qualifications at any one time.

Its latest evaluation is a significant improvement on the “satisfactory” score it received from the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills back in 2009.

Brig Gary Morris, director of the Army’s Educational and Training Services branch, said: “We are very pleased that the report has recognised the high quality of our programme, which delivers trade-related apprenticeships to more than 95 per cent of troops joining the Service.

“We believe the scheme improves the capability of our soldiers whilst



Picture: Steve Dock

serving and gives them a nationally recognised qualification that is valuable to them on leaving.”

The training focuses on information and communications technology, engineering and logistics. In addition, there is a bespoke package for combat infantrymen and opportunities in catering and animal care.

Each year more than 8,000 troops gain an intermediate apprenticeship, which is equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A-C, or an advanced apprenticeship, which corresponds to an A level.

Personnel profit from yoga

TROOPS who undergo tough mission-specific training packages prior to deploying to the stifling heat of Afghanistan usually put their feet up and relax on a rest day.

But soldiers from 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, spent their well-earned time off in the sweltering environment of a bikram yoga room ahead of deploying on Op Herrick 18.

Around 30 members of the unit took part in the 90-minute class, which was staged at the Hot Bikram Yoga Studio in London.

Organiser Lt Pat O’Hara (1 RRF) said: “Having practised the discipline before, I thought it would be a great

experience for the platoon and would give personnel a mental and physical challenge they would enjoy.”

For most soldiers it was the first time they had tried the technique, which involved moving through 26 postures in 40 degrees Celsius heat.

Explaining the benefits of the high-temperature training, yoga expert Olga Allon said: “The session really stretched the guys both physically and mentally.

“As well as testing their cardiovascular endurance, the experience would have helped strengthen their mental capacity in ways that can be applied to other activities in life.”



Fitness first: The discipline helped to test the fusiliers both physically and mentally

PAY FREEZE FINISHES

■ ARMED Forces personnel have seen their salaries increase by up to 1.45 per cent despite ongoing measures to cut costs in the public sector.

The end of the two-year pay freeze for government employees saw Servicemen and women receive a one per cent pay rise from last month.

In addition, the chancellor’s recent budget revealed that the so-called X factor payment is to go up by 0.5 per cent from this month.

The pensionable premium, which reflects the relative disadvantage of service in the military compared to civilian work, is to grow from 14 to 14.5 per cent for Regular troops.

George Osborne announced a further period of financial restraint that would keep increases in base pay at one per cent until 2015-16.

But unlike other public servants in the UK, the Armed Forces will continue to benefit from annual incremental wage progression during this time.

For further information read Army briefing notes 17-13 and 21-13.

REDUNDANCY REPRIEVE

■ FEWER Army personnel will lose their jobs under tranche three redundancies next month than originally planned.

Developments in the Army 2020 structure and changes in the Service’s manning forecast mean that some fields initially included have been removed, while others have seen adjustments to the overall numbers of troops eligible to be cut.

No new fields have been created and the number of non-applicants has not increased.

Those affected by the change will be notified by their chain of command.

Further information and guidance can be found in Army briefing note 30/13 and the ninth edition of the Army Redundancy and Transition Newsletter.

HELP REDUCE RED TAPE

■ THE MoD is asking its staff to share their cunning plans to cut bureaucracy and simplify everyday work processes.

Open to all civilian and military employees, the Red Tape Challenge will gather bright ideas under three different themes; the digital office, effective communications and best use of resources.

Submissions for the first category close on May 3, the second on May 24 and the third on June 14.

Visit gemsonline.mod.uk for more information about the challenge.

HOME SCHEME SHIFT

■ THE annual waiver premium for the long service advance of pay (LSAP) payment, used to help troops buy a house, is to be increased six-fold.

Personnel claiming must now pay a yearly waiver fee of 30 pence per £100 borrowed. Previously the premium was five pence.

Individual soldiers can receive an advance of up to £8,500, which would result in a total of £25.44 being charged.

The fee rise has been introduced to accommodate the number of LSAP payments being waived, which has increased considerably since the premium was last adjusted in 2007.



Colours first for formation

THE Mercian Regiment will be presented with new colours for the first time at an historic parade next month.

The event at Worcester's Sixways Stadium will see all four battalions of the regiment marching together to receive the revered silk flags.

The Infantry unit was formed in 2007 by merging three single-battalion regiments and creating a Reserve component in addition.

Each formation has served under its previous colours until now, however they

will be marched off for the final time on June 6.

Large contingents from all four Mercian battalions, regimental associations and affiliated cadet forces will be present at the occasion, which will incorporate numerous marches.

A British Army spokesman said: "Colours are only presented every 25 years and this will be the first time that all four battalions of this regiment have been on parade at the same time to receive new ones."



Momentous Mercians: Members of the regiment at work on Herrick 15



MALI MISSION TAKES OFF

BRITISH troops have arrived in Mali and are preparing to advise the country's soldiers on how to defend the north-west African state against extremists.

The 40-strong group was drawn from 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment; 29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery and 45 Commando, Royal Marines as part of a European Union training mission.

The troops will help develop Malian soldiers' infantry and artillery skills.

Defence Secretary Philip Hammond said the operation would counter a violent insurgency that threatens to disrupt the UK.

Snake handling and survival in India

BRITISH troops have been learning jungle survival and snake handling skills alongside the Indian Army.

Some 100 members of D Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh spent last month training in the mountains of Belgaum with the country's 17th Kumaon Regiment.

Aimed at developing both nations' counter-insurgency drills, Exercise Ajeya Warrior saw the two units exchange a platoon of 27 men, with the British formation renaming itself Tipu Company after the famed Asian warrior.

In preparation for the final phase of the visit, a series of joint tasks in the region's forest, host troops

taught their UK colleagues how to live in the jungle and handle potential encounters with wildlife such as vipers and cobras.

Maj Richard Sernberg, officer commanding D Company, said that despite the differences in background, the two forces could share techniques.

"There is much that we can learn from the Indians and hopefully we can offer them the benefit of our recent Afghanistan experience," said the officer.

"D Company is the product of an Army that has been solely focused on operations in Helmand province.

"This exercise is our opportunity to re-learn some of the basic

generic skills we may require on future missions."

Accompanying the Royal Welsh soldiers were four British experts in the fields of counter-IED, media, force protection and stabilisation.



Royal Mail reassures ranks over post

THE government has assured soldiers the British Forces Post Office will remain unaffected by the announcement that Royal Mail could be privatised.

The coalition intends to sell shares in the postal organisation in order to protect its future but insists military mail will remain unchanged.

A spokesman for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills said: "Free post to the Armed Forces does not depend on Royal Mail remaining in public ownership."

"These services are available to personnel who are undertaking operations such as those in Afghanistan and the Ministry of Defence fully reimburses Royal Mail for provision of

these facilities."

Currently the government wholly owns both Royal Mail Group Ltd, which provides the UK mail service, and Post Office Ltd, which runs the country's network of post offices.

A campaign opposing any sale has been launched by the Communication Workers Union, which argues that without public ownership affordable prices, rural services and free post for Servicemen and women will disappear.

The "save our Royal Mail" drive claims that prices will rise, small businesses suffer, the countryside left isolated and

free initiatives for the blind threatened.

A campaign statement said: "A privately owned organisation will not want to maintain this non-profit making freepost scheme for British Forces, neither can it be compelled to."



Rebuffing the claims, Candice Macdonald, head of corporate media relations at Royal Mail Group, commented: "Any change in ownership would not affect the British Forces Post Office. The Queen's head will remain on stamps and our red, and indeed gold, post boxes aren't going anywhere."

For more details visit www.royalmailgroup.com/node/4642

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Army alcohol warning

ALMOST one in four Service personnel are misusing alcohol, according to new research by a serving soldier.

Pte Erasmus Quartey (RLC, pictured below), a former psychology teacher, undertook the study as part of his public health master's degree. It found that many troops are drinking to a detrimental level.

Currently under peer review for publication in medical journals, *The Prevalence of Alcohol Misuse in the United Kingdom Armed Forces* was produced while the soldier was on a six-month tour of Cyprus.

Although its findings broadly reflect the issue of excessive drinking in Britain as a whole, the Serviceman hopes the report will help to tackle the problem among Army colleagues in particular.

"My research concludes that nearly a quarter of UK Armed Forces personnel are drinking in a way that is detrimental to their health, their family's health, their personal safety, the safety of their colleagues and wider group operational effectiveness," explained Pte Quartey.

"Although many studies have been conducted on the prevalence of alcohol misuse in the British military, no systematic review and meta-analysis has ever been conducted on the topic."

The father-of-two said he had been

inspired to undertake the self-funded project after witnessing excessive consumption among others.

"During my six years' service in the British Army I have noticed that the amount of drinking has gone up and I have seen soldiers with serious alcohol problems, so I decided to base my master's research on the issue," he said.

"The findings are not an indictment of the Armed Forces – it's a study to help people out.

"The military has been completely behind my work and I have made the MoD aware of it as well."

With his analysis now in the public domain, the junior soldier's ultimate goal is for people to understand the prevalence of the problem and to take action where necessary.

"I want colleagues and other troops to be aware of the dangers of drinking and I hope my work can be used as a guide for future policy," the laggie added.

"As with the general UK population, alcohol misuse is arguably one of the most worrying issues for the MoD at the moment.

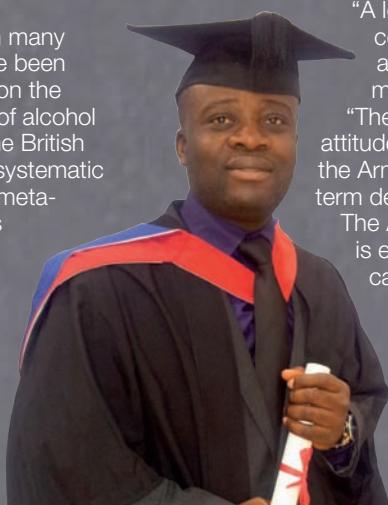
"A lot has been done to combat the problem but I am recommending that even more could happen.

"There is still an indifferent attitude towards the issue across the Armed Forces but it has a long-term detrimental effect."

The Army health promotion team is expected to run a "drink safe" campaign later this year.

● Talkback – page 53

■ The findings are not an indictment of the Armed Forces ■



TRANSFER CHANGES

■ THE Army's policy on transferring between trades has been rewritten to make it easier for personnel to change roles, particularly if they are affected by compulsory redundancy.

Opportunities to move to another trade are now published online on the recently-launched Official Army Vacancies List.

Anyone thinking about transferring should identify an appropriate option and discuss the matter with their chain of command before applying.

For full details and conditions of the transfer process read **DIN201301-16**, which also contains guidance on moving to the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force.

LONG-DESERVED AWARD

■ HEROES of the Second World War who served in Bomber Command and on the Arctic convoys will receive new awards, defence minister Mark Francois has said.

Up to a quarter of a million veterans and the families of those who died could be eligible to receive the Bomber Command clasp and Arctic Star.

The death toll of those serving in Bomber Command during the conflict was 55,000 while more than 3,000 men died in the freezing waters of the Arctic.

Mr Francois said: "All those who served our country deserve nothing but the utmost respect and admiration from us.

"I am delighted that these special individuals will begin to receive the decorations they have so long deserved."

Eligible veterans and next of kin are encouraged to apply for the new awards via www.veterans-uk.info or by calling 08457 800 900.

COMMAND COMMENCES

■ JOINT Forces Command, a new headquarters set up to coordinate a range of military capabilities, is fully operational.

The organisation was established to improve the way the MoD conducts missions by bringing together specialist functions such as medical services, linguists, training and education and intelligence resources.

The establishment is based in Northwood and oversees more than 20,000 military and civilian staff at sites around the world.

Among the formations under its direction is the Permanent Joint Headquarters, which will continue to command current operations.

A key aim of the new group is to create a more direct link between front-line experience and top-level planning.

FREE PASSES PRONTO

■ ARMED Forces personnel who successfully win ballots on the Tickets for Troops website no longer have to wait for two years in order to bid for another event, the charity has announced.

The period between entries has been slashed to one year.

Those who have waited more than 12 months since their last successful attempt will be able to apply to attend the most sought-after events with immediate effect.

Around a quarter of the free passes supplied by the organisation are balloted in order to make it fair for its 120,000 members, while the rest are available on a first-come, first-served basis.



“THIS IS ONE OF MY BEST MOMENTS AND IT HAS BEEN AN HONOUR AND PRIVILEGE TO PLAY WITH THESE BOYS”

— RUGBY STAR TASTES CUP SUCCESS IN LAST REME GAME, PAGE 97

Master chef

AN Army cook has been recognised for his morale-boosting work by the senior military chief in Helmand.

LCpl Kennedy Mutonga Muia (RLC) received a Commander's Coin from Brig Bob Bruce for his culinary efforts while deployed in support of the Scots Guards.

The 28-year-old was handed the award alongside seven other Service chefs.

A citation said LCpl Mutonga Muia showed “selfless dedication to duty” while putting others first.

During Herrick 17 he provided meals at FOB Oulette and various other bases.

He sometimes cooked for more than 100 troops with only a small team to help him.

The soldier has since been promoted to the rank of corporal.



TELEMARK TEST

■ INJURED Servicemen were among a group of veterans to complete a gruelling trek across a frozen mountain plateau in Norway.

The expedition, organised by charity Pilgrim Bandits, retraced the footsteps of the heroes of Telemark, members of the Norwegian resistance who conducted daring raids against Hitler's atomic weapons programme during the Second World War.

Braving 80mph winds and -30 degrees Celsius temperatures, the party travelled 65 miles across the Hardangervidda national park.

The team included Rfn Paul Jacobs, who lost his sight in Afghanistan, and LBdr Ben Parkinson, who sustained severe injuries on Op Herrick.



Picture: Sgt Paul Randall, RLC



All smiles: ‘The Ox’ took time out to visit British troops ahead of the World Cup qualifiers

Footballer’s focus on Forces

A RISING star of the England football team took a break from his training schedule to meet troops preparing for deployment to Afghanistan.

Arsenal's Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain met members of 66 Works Group, Royal Engineers at Chetwynd Barracks in Chilwell to mark the start of a new partnership between the England Footballers Foundation and The British Forces Foundation.

Soldiers kitted the 19-year-old Gunner out in body armour and gave him a

counter-IED demonstration.

At the time of the trip the star had been preparing for World Cup qualifiers against San Marino and Montenegro.

Speaking about his visit, the winger said: “It’s been humbling to come here to meet the people who serve our country and do a difficult and dangerous job in order to keep us all safe.

“On behalf of the entire squad, I wish them well on their tour and our thoughts will be with their friends and families who remain at home.”

LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

SWAG	FORCE FOR GOOD	QUIDS IN
£35,000	COMPANY COOPERATION Following a visit to the Combat Stress treatment centre by Thales UK's vice chairman, the defence firm donated £25,000 from its charity trust to help raise awareness of mental health. The company pledged a further £10,000 to sponsor the organisation's fund-raising Annual Armistice Lecture at the Royal United Services Institute.	Combat Stress
£9,450	RUGBY REPS Five officer cadets from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst cycled 44 miles on static bikes before England's rugby game against South Africa at Twickenham. The event took three-and-a-half hours, during which members of the public donated money.	ABF The Soldiers' Charity
£1,500	MOUNTAIN MISSION Members of 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment braved freezing conditions to scale some of Britain's tallest summits in memory of two comrades who died after being injured in Afghanistan in 2010. A team of 30 soldiers climbed Munro (pictured right), a 3,000ft mountain in Scotland, while another group tackled the Three Peaks Challenge in tribute to Kgn Darren Deady and Capt Andrew Griffiths.	The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment charity and Help for Heroes



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“THE BRAVERY OF EVERYONE ELSE AND THE DESIRE TO HELP KEPT ME GOING. EVERY SINGLE SOLDIER OUT THERE IS DESERVING OF AN AWARD”
- STANDOUT SOLDIERS HONOURED FOR HERRICK HEROICS, PAGES 24-37

KUKRI COMEBACK

■ THE kukri has been formally reintroduced into close-quarter combat training for the Gurkha combat infantryman's course.

Service personnel on the package learn to close with and engage the enemy using personal weapons and tae kwon do techniques.

The drills aim to hone soldiers' initiative, speed and offensive abilities and demand skills in rapid assault and precise application of lethal force.

Maj Rupert Anderson, OC Gurkha Company at the 2nd Infantry Training Battalion, said: "Over the years the close-quarter combat skills had moved away from using the kukri but we've restarted it and it's unique in that other troops in the Army don't do it.

"It's a really good piece of training to teach discipline, aggression, initiative, flexibility, agility and identity."

The intensive skills programme involves approximately 20 hours of tuition and culminates with individual and team demonstrations of patterns and techniques.

GRAB A GRAND

■ MILITARY technicians are being invited to enter a prestigious competition run by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) for a chance to win £1,000.

The inaugural Armed Forces Technician of the Year award is aimed at Service personnel who have made an outstanding contribution to the field.

The prize will be presented annually as part of the IET's Achievement Awards, which will be held this year on November 20.

Nathalie Cameron, Armed Forces development manager for the IET, said: "Anyone who has contributed creatively to the development of a new engineering product, service or process and demonstrated exceptional commitment should apply."

The deadline for applications is May 31. Visit www.theiet.org/apprentice-awards for further details.

LEARNING CREDIT CALL

■ TROOPS who have failed to register for the enhanced learning credits scheme are being urged not to pass up the funding available to them.

Entitled personnel who missed previous chances to sign up during basic training or after eight years' service have until October 1 to submit an application.



Intelligence insight in Italy

RECONNAISANCE troops from the Army's rapid reaction force have been put through their paces alongside their Italian counterparts on a demanding exercise in Monte Romano, near Rome.

Exercise Eagle Eye gave experts in intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (Istar) from 16 Air Assault Brigade a chance to test their full range of capabilities while sharing techniques with the Brigata Paracadutisti Folgore.

The wide-ranging programme included joint training on basic skills, working together behind enemy lines using Istar and securing and marking drop and landing zones for paratroopers and helicopters.

The exercise for soldiers from D Squadron, Household Cavalry Regiment; 5 Regiment, Royal Artillery; 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault); 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and the Pathfinders ended with an assault on a simulated terrorist camp.

All British units that undertook the mock mission provide personnel for the Air Assault Task Force, which is

ready to deploy anywhere in the world at short notice to conduct military operations ranging from non-combatant evacuations to war fighting.

Capt Ben Neary, of 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, said: "The success of any operation is down to the intelligence that the plan is built around and this exercise has been about testing our capabilities to gather and act on that information. It has been a great experience to share our skill set with Italian paratroopers.

"After a long operation in Afghanistan both armies are regenerating the specialist capabilities of their airborne forces to be ready for future operations."

Capt Bruno Ambrosini, of the Italian Savoia Cavalleria Regiment, worked with D Sqn, HCR as his unit evolves to perform the same airborne cavalry role.

"It's been very hard training but an excellent opportunity to learn from the British, who are Nato allies we have served alongside on operations," he said. "It's really good to exchange procedures and knowledge so we can successfully develop our forces and work better with the British in future."



Eagle's Eye-view: The varied training package saw troops secure and mark drop zones

IN MEMORIAM



LCPL JAMIE WEBB (24)
1ST BATTALION,
THE MERCIAN REGIMENT
DIED MARCH 26 – AFGHANISTAN

SOLDIERS from 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment are mourning the loss of a "talented and inspirational" junior non-commissioned officer, who was killed as he approached the end of his second tour in Afghanistan.

LCpl Jamie Webb was wounded in an insurgent attack on his patrol base in the Nad-e Ali district of Helmand province and passed away the following day.

The Serviceman joined B Company, 1st Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment in 2006.

He served in Ballykinler, Northern Ireland on Op Banner and later in Iraq on Op Telic 11.

During 1 Mercian's 2010 deployment to Afghanistan, his hard work and reliability saw LCpl Webb singled out for promotion. He was

awarded his first stripe the following year.

Throughout the latest tour, the 24-year-old worked as a company intelligence collator and section 2iC in the Transition Support Unit Nad-e Ali – a role that cemented his reputation as a highly capable junior leader.

Capt Richard Sawyer, 2iC of C Company, described his colleague as "a fine soldier".

"It was LCpl Webb's unique and loveable personality that makes him unforgettable," said the officer. "It was clear to all how much he enjoyed working with his mates in the Army and how much he loved his family."

The Serviceman leaves behind his parents Sue and Dave. A family statement read: "We are so proud of Jamie being a Mercian soldier."



Partners in progress: Royal Marines worked alongside soldiers for more than a decade

Troops salute efforts of Marines

THE last commando group of Royal Marines to serve on Op Herrick has returned to the UK, marking the end of more than a decade of missions alongside the British Army.

In a parting gesture, troops from 40 Commando lowered the Royal Navy's white ensign, which had flown above their base in Nahr-e Saraj for six months.

Personnel from the unit were the first British troops to deploy to Afghanistan back in 2001.

During their numerous tours of the country, nearly 200 Marines have been awarded honours for bravery and commitment including a George Cross, seven Distinguished Service Orders and ten Conspicuous Gallantry Crosses.

Capt Jamie Edwards was the liaison officer for 1st Battalion, The Rifles while serving with 3 Commando Brigade on Op Herrick 14.

Praising the contribution of his colleagues in the Green Berets, he said: "They have a great work ethic and were clear from the outset that we are all one team and they were there to support the ground units, provide enablers and make sure ground-holding battlegroups wanted for nothing."

"They struck a perfect balance between working hard but at the same time maintaining spirits – making sure their guys and girls rested, exercised and relaxed.

"My last memory of operating with them is one of feeling included, working under an excellent ethos that allowed mission command to be exercised and morale to be maintained."

More than 14,000 Royal Marines have served in Helmand since the start of the conflict, in areas including Sangin, Nahr-e Saraj and Musa Qala.

Defence Secretary Philip Hammond added: "The courage of these personnel and indeed all of our Armed Forces who have served in Afghanistan over the past decade has been outstanding.

"Their commitment has made sure that transition of security to local control is deliverable by the time we end our combat operations in 2014.

"The hard work of 40 Commando, Royal Marines over the winter months has led to impressive progress in the capabilities of Afghan forces as they take on security responsibility with decreasing levels of assistance from UK and Isaf forces."

SURVEYING ATTITUDES

■ PERSONNEL who have received questionnaires as part of this year's Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey are being urged to return their responses this month.

Thousands of forms have been distributed to officers, soldiers and their families in order to get valuable feedback on life in uniform.

The findings will be used to argue the case for making or changing policies that affect military personnel and their loved ones.

In 2012, more than 3,253 troops, together with 2,429 Army families, took part in the exercise.

All replies are treated in the strictest confidence and not seen by the chain of command.

Last year, the survey found that 35 per cent of soldiers were dissatisfied with their basic pay.

Of those quizzed, 39 per cent said they intended to stay in uniform for as long as possible while a tenth said they aspired to leave before the end of their engagement.

The 2012 survey also gauged views on the standard of Service accommodation, with 56 per cent expressing satisfaction.

Paperwork for the latest study should be returned by no later than May 7 – or June 10 for those completing the Families Continuous Attitude Survey.

● **Talkback** takes your views –
pages 53-59



Accommodation assessments: The 2012 survey found that around 56 per cent were satisfied with Service digs



“I HAVE ENJOYED IT AS WE NORMALLY TRAIN IN THE JUNGLE. THIS HAS BEEN VERY DIFFERENT AND WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO COMBINE WHAT WE DO WITH HEAVY MACHINE GUNS AND MORTAR”
— GURKHAS GET TO GRIPS WITH AUSTRALIA’S OUTBACK, PAGES 40-43

Picture: Graeme Main



On side: Army boxers lend their support to the testicular cancer awareness campaign

‘Find the balls to talk,’ troops told

SOLDIERS are being encouraged to examine themselves for the signs of testicular cancer and talk openly about their concerns.

A campaign to raise awareness of the disease was launched by the Checkemlads charity and Army health promotion team at the Service's latest rugby showdown with the Royal Navy in Twickenham using a comical mascot, the appropriately-named Pte Parts (pictured above).

Speaking to *Soldier* about the initiative, WO2 Mick Riley (RLC), charity co-founder and a survivor of testicular cancer, explained: “The main thing that we’re trying to get across is self-diagnosis and the importance of not being afraid to discuss medical issues.

“One of the biggest problems we have is that talking about testicles isn’t a usual topic of conversation.

“But by looking at information [about the symptoms], watching videos on our website and speaking to people, lives can be saved.”

Research shows testicular cancer is a growing problem in men between 20 and 35 – the principal age group of British Army personnel.

The most common symptom is a lump or swelling on a testicle, which can be found with a monthly self-examination using the fingers.

Other signs of the disease can include a dull ache, sharp pain or feeling of heaviness in the scrotum.

Fewer than four per cent of testicular lumps turn out to be cancerous.

However, with more than 20 soldiers diagnosed each year, the Service is on a mission to change attitudes.

“The lads are not educated very well on how to check themselves and that needs to change,” WO2 Riley said.

“I am also trying to inform health professionals, especially across the Army, about the importance of checking and treating testicular cancer.”

Research shows men are 20 per cent less likely to seek medical intervention for health complaints than women, instead opting to “tough out” illness while giving priority to work over treatment and rest.

“By using the Pte Parts mascot we will hopefully get troops talking about the issue,” WO2 Riley added.

For more details on the campaign visit www.checkemlads.com



...Guards for your gadgets

THE answer to last month’s spine lines competition lay in the West African country of Sierra Leone. (Siaka) Stevens, (Joseph Saidu) Momoh, (Ahmad Tejan) Kabbah and (Ernest Bai) Koromo have all held office as president of the developing country.

This month we have teamed up with Diablo Skinz (www.diabloskinz.com) to offer five lucky readers the chance to “pimp up” the smartphones, iPads, Kindles and laptops in their home with these Army-inspired

covers. Made from premium self-adhesive vinyl with a heavy-duty laminate, the skins protect devices from all sorts of small scratches and knocks.

To win a set, tell us what links the words on the side of this issue.

Answers, plus postal address, to the usual place or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by May 31. Good luck!



GOOD DRILLS

BUSINESS SKILL BOOST

A PARTNERSHIP between the Essex business community and The Parachute Regiment is helping to support soldiers leaving the Army.

The Pride-P initiative offers free career guidance, interview training and mentoring from members of the local Institute of Directors.



ENGAGEMENT TEAM TRIUMPH

THE Army engagement team has received one of the communication industry’s top honours for the presentation it delivers to help audiences understand Land Forces. The Award for Communication Effectiveness was handed over by the International Visual Communications Association in London.

ITCHY AND SCRATCHY

TROOPS from 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards have come down with the contagious skin disease scabies. The *Daily Mail* reported that 120 members of the unit contracted the illness after an exercise in Germany. Caused by a mite, the condition leads to severe itching. An MoD spokesman said specialist cleaning was taking place while the department established the source of the outbreak.



DRESS MESS

A ROYAL Marine who dressed in a sergeant’s uniform while still a corporal has been fined £300. Robert Barnett, of 40 Commando, admitted wearing the ensemble adorned with medals he was not entitled to at a family wedding last June. The Serviceman, who has been promoted to sergeant since the incident, was found guilty at a court martial in Portsmouth. During the hearing it was explained that Barnett had wanted to “big it up” in front of his loved ones.

BAD DRILLS



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Picture: Sgt Dan Bardisby, RLC

On side: Reservists in Bolton offered a two-day development course for young Muslims

Soldiers forge new links

YOUNG Muslims have been put through their paces by Reserve troops as part of a leadership event in Bolton.

Soldiers from 103 Regiment, Royal Artillery teamed up with the Bolton Council of Mosques (BCoM) to run a development course for the organisation's youth members.

The two-day project at the Nelson Street Territorial Army centre saw people aged between 13 and 21 take part in a variety of tests aimed improving their leadership and organisation skills.

Under the instruction of part-time soldiers the youngsters put up a tent while blind-folded, were given a fitness test and used teamwork and military communication equipment to complete a treasure hunt.

Capt Hendrik Steutel (103 Regt,

RA) said: "There is a mosque very close to our TA centre and although we are neighbours a lot of the young people who attend had never been here before.

"We wanted to demystify what we do and forge stronger links with Bolton's Islamic community.

"The effort they put in over the two days was superb – they really did give 100 per cent and that attitude made it very enjoyable for the instructors."

Khalid Kadva, a youth worker at the BCoM, added: "The young people got to work as part of a team and discovered some skills they did not know they had.

"The soldiers put together a fantastic programme and we look forward to working with them again in the near future."

Reservists braced for extreme Everest adventure

A TEAM of Reservists from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers are beginning preparations for an expedition to Nepal.

Fourteen personnel from 103 Battalion will travel to Lukla in the east of the country in October to conduct three weeks of adventurous training.

Their route through the Everest region will see them tackle three climbs of more than 5,000 metres.

"It will be very testing," said event organiser Maj Nick Marlow, the unit's regimental admin officer.

"Altitude is the main thing we need to take into account and we'll do that by making gradual ascents and allowing time to acclimatise.

"We will have experienced staff on the team but the majority will be novices.

"The safety and well-being of the whole group is my primary concern."

Although the battalion have already completed a 25-kilometre walk through the South Downs, training will begin in earnest next month.

"We're planning to go to the Brecon Beacons and the Lake District to get

YOUTUBE PROVES A HIT

■ AFTER seeing more than 100,000 hits on the "TA Live" recruitment videos, the deputy commander Land Forces is optimistic the Service can attract 30,000 people to serve with the Reserves.

Maj Gen Ranald Munro believes the groundbreaking campaign, which has seen adverts championing the work of part-time soldiers broadcast live from Helmand province, is proving successful.

"Look at the data: 100,000 hits on YouTube, 7,500 registrations on site and from that, just under 3,500 contacts where people take it a step further and start enquiring about the process of joining the TA," he said.

"I am really optimistic that this will be a success – we have been given a mission and the Army operates very well when it is given a mission."

STANDARDS REVISED

■ THE chain of command has announced details of revised medical standards for personnel wanting to join the Territorial Army.

Regular and ex-Regular officers and soldiers can now enlist into the organisation with the grading of medically limited deployable (permanent).

For more information on the move visit [ABN 03/13](#).

CALL TO TA TWEETERS

■ RESERVISTS are being urged to take to social media channels to show their support for this year's Uniform to Work Day.

The annual initiative sees part-time troops wear military attire to their civilian jobs.

Anyone who chooses to join in with the campaign on Wednesday, June 26 is encouraged to take a photo of themselves in uniform with their colleagues and upload the image to Facebook or tweet it using #UTWD and #ArmedForcesDay.

Established to champion the important role the Reserves play in both the community and defence, the event forms part of Armed Forces Day, which this year falls on Saturday, June 29.



some practice over hillier ground," continued the officer.

"We need to make sure everyone has a good level of fitness and has passed all the mandatory tests before we leave."

Having trekked through the Nepalese mountains himself on three previous occasions, Maj Marlow was in no doubt about what troops would gain from the challenging serial.

"It's all about the importance of teamwork and how people react in different environments, as well as building camaraderie," he said.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

SOLDIERS from 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards mount an honour guard as the coffin of Baroness Thatcher arrives at St Paul's Cathedral on a gun carriage of The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery. Some 700 Service personnel played a role in the funeral of the former prime minister, many from units linked to the Falklands War.

Picture: Sgt Adrian Harlen (RLC)





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Reclaims UK presenting the Winner's Trophy of the 'Reclaims UK Helping Soldiers Novice Hurdle' at the Royal Artillery Gold Cup Day

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We were proud to continue our support for the Royal Artillery Gold Cup Day again in February this year which was another success in our bid to raise awareness of mis-sold PPI throughout the Armed Forces.

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Reclaims UK has visited several UK and Germany based regiments in the last 12 months and our campaign to raise awareness of mis-sold PPI and claim back money for soldiers has been an ever growing success. If you feel that you or someone you may know have paid PPI, please get in touch today. You can call our freephone number, email or fill out an online contact form. It's a hassle-free process that can only benefit you. This is the biggest financial scandal in history and we are here to help.

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BRITISH personnel are rightly celebrated for unrivalled levels of bravery, courage and determination and their efforts on Op Herrick 16 proved to be no exception to the rule.

From a soldier who single-handedly cleared an entire compound of insurgents to a medic who rushed to save colleagues

while under intense enemy fire, those who proudly served in Afghanistan between the spring and autumn of 2012 have been praised in the latest round of operational honours and awards.

On announcing the list of deserving decoration recipients, Defence Secretary Philip Hammond said: "In a changing world the bravery and commitment

of our Servicemen and women remains unwavering.

"Whether fighting for our security on operations abroad or rescuing mountaineers and sailors within the British Isles, they deserve our gratitude and respect.

"I hope these awards go some way to underlining how much this country values the efforts and sacrifices of our Armed Forces."

Medical marvels

For personnel serving in Helmand province there is nothing more reassuring than having the best medical care available, should it be required. Those charged with delivering this capability on the front line take the role very seriously and risk and bravery come with the job...

■ AS a 19-year-old soldier on her first operational tour, Pte Abbie Martin (RAMC) found herself in one of the more active areas of the insurgency while attached to Queen's Company, 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards.

On a number of occasions she treated traumatically-injured colleagues, often putting the need to help patients ahead of her own safety, and those actions have seen her receive a Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service.

Pte Martin was initially called into action when a guardsman was shot in the chest.

"It was my very first operation," she recalled.

"Suddenly, we were under attack from anywhere between six and ten positions.

It was a 360-degree ambush. After a couple of minutes I heard the fateful words 'man down'.

"I just wanted to get to him and had to be held back because the fire coming our way was so intense. After about ten minutes I made it and just focused on my job, doing everything I could before he was evacuated."

Pte Martin remained with the soldier throughout the extraction and selflessly exposed herself to enemy fire. Her assessment and treatment of the casualty were described as excellent.

She later treated personnel injured in a grenade explosion, when her foresight in having pre-positioned medical equipment ensured they received immediate care.

On a third occasion, Pte Martin had to help those suffering with fragmentation wounds following a rocket-propelled grenade attack.

The Servicewoman said: "The bravery of everyone else and the desire to help kept me going. Every single soldier out there is deserving of an award."

'Every single soldier out there is deserving of an award'

Pte Abbie Martin (RAMC)

■ WALKING into a vicious insurgent ambush did not stop Army medic Cpl Daniel Rudge from delivering faultless care to four colleagues who were injured in a hail of enemy rounds.

The 29-year-old was on a joint patrol with the Afghan Uniform Police in the Pupalzay area of Lashkar Gah when the group suddenly came under fire from two positions.

As the soldiers took cover a member of the partnering unit was shot twice. Ignoring the threat of incoming bullets, Cpl Rudge remained with the casualty to give first aid throughout the 70-minute battle before starting an extraction.

As they moved, a third enemy position targeted the patrol and forced them to cross open ground, where the company commander was shot.

The medic put himself in the firing line to offer immediate care and rounds cut through the long grass as he gave life-saving first aid.

"When you are in that type of situation you are pretty aware of the danger," he said. "When my commander was hit the bullets landed two metres in front of me and ricocheted off the ground before striking him."

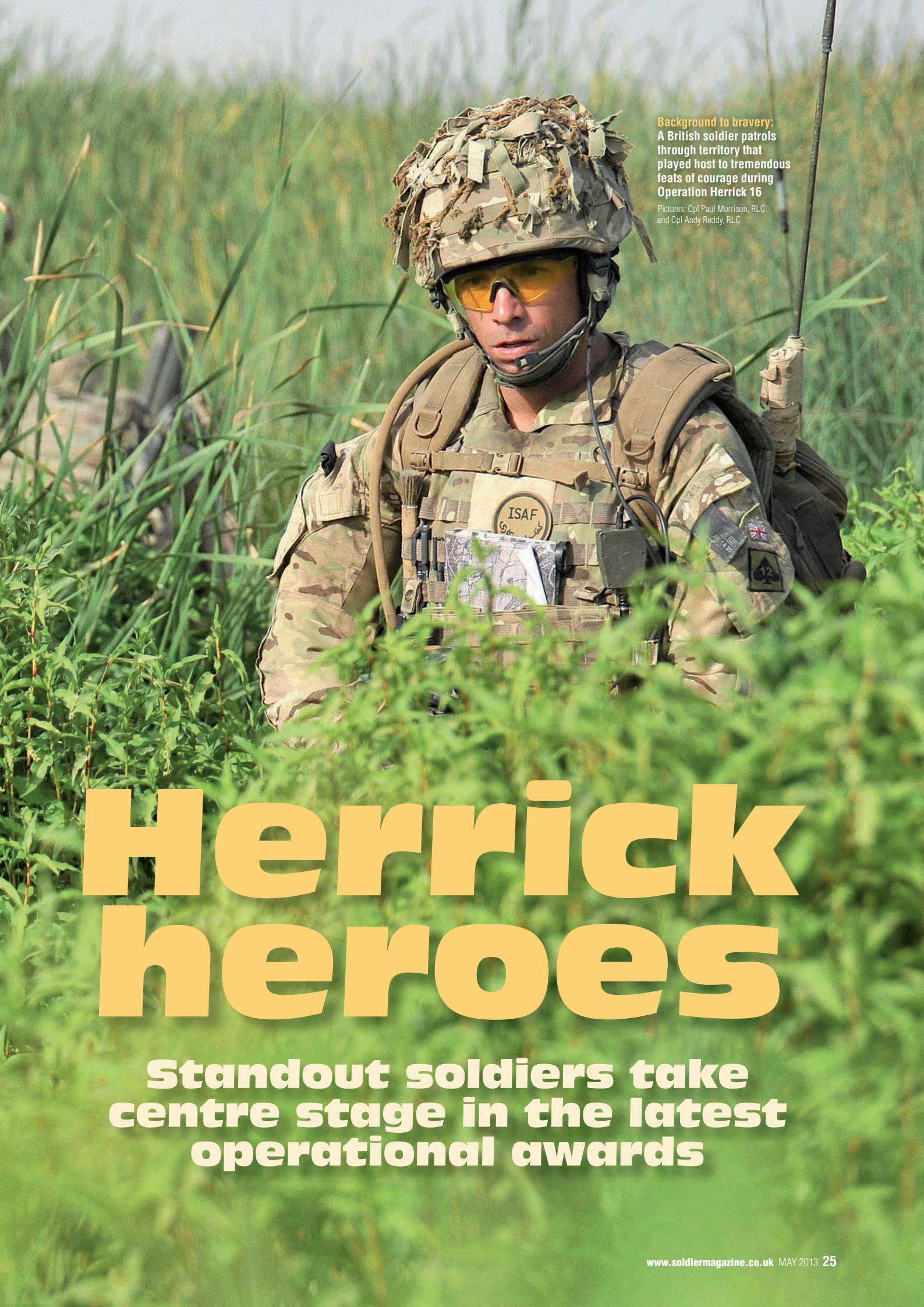
"When it happened my priority was to establish what his injuries were. They were life-threatening as the bullet had hit several internal organs before exiting his body."

"Thankfully he went on to make a full recovery, although I haven't seen him since I handed him over to the evacuation team."

The patrol was soon struck again as an Afghan stepped on an improvised explosive device resulting in three casualties, two of which were serious.

Cpl Rudge took charge of the situation and personally treated the most injured policeman, who had lost his right foot and an eye.

His citation for a Mention in Dispatches states: "His repeated acts of bravery, disregard for his own safety and skilful competence directly contributed to saving the lives of four men on the battlefield."



Background to bravery:
A British soldier patrols
through territory that
played host to tremendous
feats of courage during
Operation Herrick 16

Pictures: Cpl Paul Morrison, RLC
and Cpl Andy Reddy, RLC

Herrick heroes

**Standout soldiers take
centre stage in the latest
operational awards**

■ A DARING Reservist ignored the threat of machine-gun fire and rocket-propelled grenades to rescue a wounded Afghan soldier who was shot during an enemy ambush.

Capt Richard Oakes (4 Mercian) was on his second Herrick tour when his partnered patrol with the Afghan National Army (ANA) came under attack.

As Taliban fighters targeted personnel from four firing points one of the ANA soldiers was hit.

The officer took decisive action and moved his men across 200 metres of dangerous open ground to reach the casualty.

Capt Oakes and the team medic dashed forward in plain sight of the enemy to extract the soldier but in doing so the latter was hit.

Lying in the open and in full view of the insurgents, the 38-year-old – who served as a Regular in Bosnia, Northern Ireland and Iraq – administered first aid to the medic before organising an evacuation from the area.

His actions have been rewarded with the Military Cross.

The Serviceman's citation reads: "His quick thinking, robust leadership, conspicuous personal gallantry under fire and tactical astuteness all undoubtedly prevented further loss of life.

"Capt Oakes demonstrated outstanding bravery, selfless commitment and determination throughout."

"I knew he had been hit and there wasn't any time to spare"



Capt Richard Oakes (Mercian)



Friends in need

One of the greatest attributes of British personnel is their steadfast determination to go to the aid of colleagues who find themselves in the most perilous of situations. These soldiers have received the highest accolades for the extraordinary courage shown when helping their comrades...



Providing support: Tpr Elliot Britton (KRH) on a foot patrol in the Lashkar Gah region of Helmand province during Operation Herrick 16

Pictures: Cpl Paul Morrison, RLC; Cpl Steve Blake, RLC and Cpl Andy Reddy, RLC

■ AN NCO who ran through enemy fire to assist the injured crew of a vehicle hit by a rocket-propelled grenade has received a Mention in Dispatches.

Sgt Antony Holland, of The King's Royal Hussars, was leading a training and advisory team for the Afghan National Army when it, and 20 other soldiers in the patrol under his command, came under attack.

For almost eight hours they were subjected to sporadic gunfire before the RPG struck one of the vehicles, deafening the crew inside and peppering the commander in shrapnel.

The personnel then came under attack from three different angles and the senior NCO's own platform became stuck in a ditch. Mindless of the risk, Sgt Holland and a medic left the relative safety of their position and ran 70 metres through enemy fire to reach their injured comrades.

He said: "Through irrigation channels, knee deep in mud with our kit on it felt like 250 metres.

"We could hear the gunfire cracking above our heads."

Insurgents' rounds rained down around him and the medic as they assessed the



Sgt Antony Holland (KRH)

casualties. Sgt Holland then returned fire, allowing his colleague to work.

"Just 15 inches away there were splashes in the ground where the bullets were striking," he recalled.

"There was no cover, so I was leaning over the medic and using him as a firing platform so we could suppress the enemy."

Eventually they got the injured man to safety but Sgt Holland then had to ensure the stranded vehicle was guarded to stop it falling into Taliban hands.

His citation states: "His composure and bravery recovered an extremely dangerous situation and almost certainly prevented further casualties being inflicted."

■ THE threat of being targeted by enemy rounds failed to deter Sjt Lee Slater (Rifles) in his bid to rescue an injured colleague who had been shot in the leg.

The 31-year-old was leading a patrol in the Bowri desert when personnel came under fire as they spoke with a local farmer.

One soldier was struck in the leg and fell to the ground, while his comrades dived for cover.

Sjt Slater organised his men and, as they returned fire, he ran from safety to help his wounded colleague.

He said: "I could see the rounds landing within 50cm of him in clouds of dust. I knew he had been hit and there wasn't any time to spare.

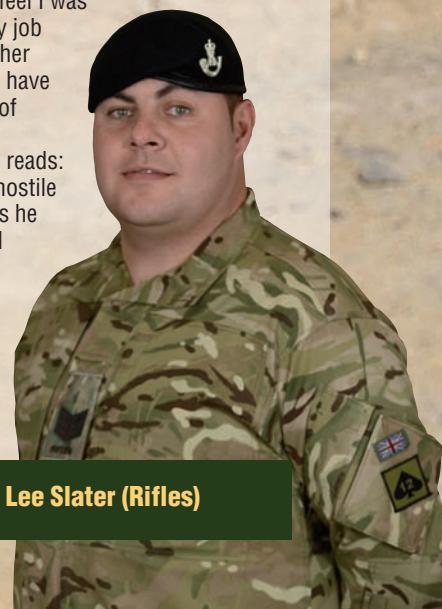
"It was adrenalin that took over. I wanted to get him to safety because I knew if he stayed where he was he might be hit again."

In what was described as a "Herculean effort", the NCO dragged the casualty and his 30kg of kit to cover 20 metres away.

Despite coming under heavy and accurate fire throughout the rescue, Sjt Slater's actions saved the man's life and he has been awarded a Mention in Dispatches.

He said: "I feel I was only doing my job – what any other soldier would have done for one of their own."

His citation reads: "In the most hostile circumstances he demonstrated immense personal courage borne of a remarkable devotion to his men."



Sjt Lee Slater (Rifles)

■ DISPLAYING the highest levels of courage and leadership while under immense danger has seen Pte Lewis Murphy (Yorks) awarded the Queen's Commendation for Bravery.

On a mission to find four insurgents who had abducted an Afghan police officer, the soldier's team found themselves in horrendous terrain comprised of dense vegetation, thick mud and poor visibility as they crossed the Helmand River.

As night fell the enemy opened fire with machine guns that were less than ten metres away. In the hail of bullets one of the soldiers suffered a serious gunshot wound to the neck.

The platoon commander was then hit in the leg and, although he was able to carry on, it increased the pressure on his men.

As the casualty extraction began it was obvious the first injury was critical and a helicopter landing site was cleared.

However, a deep river running above chest height lay in the way and, realising that using a stretcher was not practical, Pte Murphy made an instant and life-threatening decision.

The 24-year-old removed his protective equipment, put the stricken soldier on his back and began to wade and swim across the thick mud and water.

He said: "It was instinctive. I didn't think about the danger of it, I just thought if I leave my equipment on I'll drown."

The physical exertion of carrying his comrade, who was still wearing kit totalling more than 100kgs, was such that Pte Murphy began to falter half-way across.

"I remember being so angry with myself," he recalled. "I screamed out and thrashed the water in a rage, asking myself why I couldn't do it."

Inspired by his selfless act of humanity, others rushed to assist and the team managed to get the casualty to the helicopter.



Pte Lewis Murphy (Yorks)

■ FOR LCpl Adam Jackson, thoughts of personal safety were the last thing on his mind as he ran through enemy fire to rescue a wounded comrade.

The 22-year-old, of 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh, was part of a patrol that was targeted by insurgents when it was no more than 300 metres from its checkpoint in Nahr-e Saraj.

A bullet struck one of the soldiers, leaving him badly injured and unable to move, and the enemy increased its rate of attack using small arms and grenades.

As the multiple returned fire and used smoke bombs to conceal their injured colleague, LCpl Jackson sprinted across an open road to usher a civilian to safety before going to help his friend.

Despite the smoke, the insurgents targeted the duo but the junior NCO began the task of dragging the incapacitated soldier – who weighed in excess of 130kg with his body armour and equipment – out of danger so first aid could be given.

LCpl Jackson has been awarded a Mention in Dispatches for his actions.

■ A CIVILIAN who moved to Spain in search of employment and ended up joining The Royal Gibraltar Regiment has been awarded a Mention in Dispatches.

Pte Liam Downs was on his first operational tour and attached to 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment when he consistently put himself in harm's way to support his comrades under enemy fire.

During a mission to disrupt a notorious Taliban safe haven, a hail of bullets from an isolated compound targeted the 24-year-old's patrol.

Though sheltered, they had minutes before the insurgents would out-flank them and the only escape available was to cross open ground.

Pte Downs volunteered to climb on to the roof of the compound and provide covering fire but he soon became the focus for Taliban fighters.

Undeterred, he pressed on and his actions allowed his platoon to traverse 200 metres of terrain and reach safety before providing



LCpl Adam Jackson (R Welsh)

"This was my mate and my emotions were driving me, it never occurred to me that I was putting myself in danger," he explained. "The only way I can describe why I did it is this; if it was someone in your family who got hurt, you would go out of your way to stop that happening and help them."

"The only way I could do that was going out there to get him."

The junior NCO's citation states: "LCpl Jackson has demonstrated levels of performance and commitment to which we should all aspire."

cover for a withdrawal.

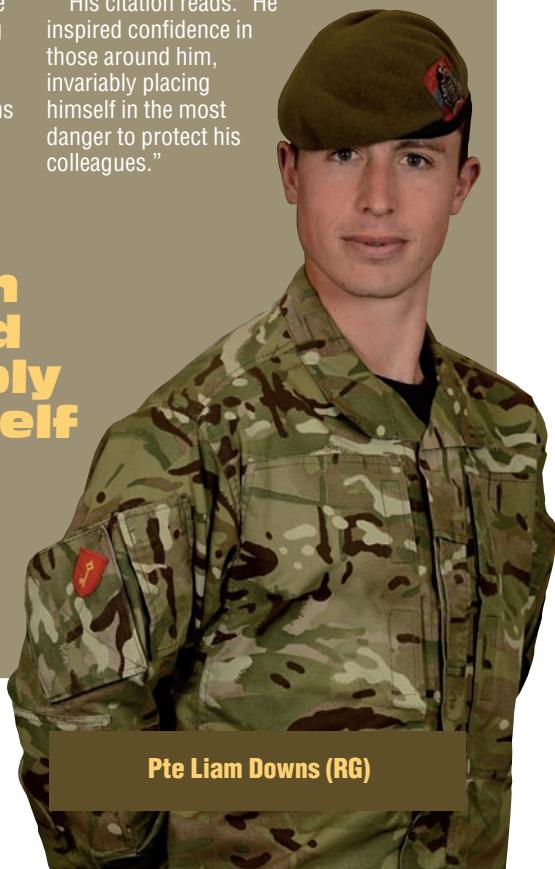
The junior soldier said: "I got on to the roof for a better viewing position and, with a machine gun, I was able to overwhelm the insurgents' four positions.

"When I look back now it seems a stupid thing to do but that's the job and the other gunners were doing the same as me throughout the tour."

Pte Downs again demonstrated his selfless courage later in the deployment when his patrol was targeted in a well-coordinated insurgent attack.

Disregarding his own safety, he positioned himself in the enemy's sights to draw their fire and his actions let his multiple gain the upper hand.

His citation reads: "He inspired confidence in those around him, invariably placing himself in the most danger to protect his colleagues."



Pte Liam Downs (RG)

'He inspired confidence in those around him, invariably placing himself in the most danger to protect his colleagues'

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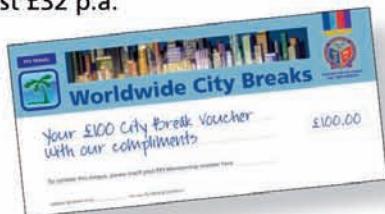
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■ WORKING in the face of extreme danger, bomb disposal expert Sgt David Acarnley risked his life to defuse a series of IEDs in Afghanistan.

The 31-year-old, of 11 EOD Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps, was called to the aid of a Danish armoured vehicle after it hit a roadside device.

A secondary weapon had been located at the back door of the platform, trapping the crew inside, and the Serviceman was tasked with making it safe so his counterparts could make their escape.

However, as he started work another soldier triggered a third IED and immediately became a priority casualty.

Sgt Acarnley switched tasks to clear a route to his injured colleague so medics could reach him and give life-saving first aid.

The NCO then returned to his original objective of rescuing the stricken crew.

He said: "I never really thought about

I searched my way towards the casualty using the detector and visual signs. But there's a different kind of pressure when you know someone is injured!

the danger, I'm too laid back really. I searched my way towards the casualty using the detector and visual signs. But there is a different kind of pressure when you know someone is injured."

Just three months earlier he was tasked with making safe 150kg of explosives discovered concealed in a culvert under Highway 1, the main route through Afghanistan.

Although a robot had disarmed the device, its complex components still remained in a volatile state.

The only way Sgt Acarnley could reach them was to remove some of his protective equipment and crawl into the culvert.

Using a rope, he steadily hauled all of

the explosives to a safe location.

The senior NCO's citation for the Queen's Gallantry Medal states: "He has time and again demonstrated unstinting bravery in the face of multiple, complex and imminent explosive threats."

■ CODEBREAKER Pte Lewis Treloar (1 R Anglian) has been awarded the MBE after his ability to reveal the whereabouts of enemy weapons stashes led to the discovery of at least 40 major stores during his tour.

The former builder volunteered for the role of lead IED searcher within his multiple and, having spent a month familiarising himself with the ground in the eastern Kopak region, cracked the system of warning signs used by insurgents to highlight the location of hidden devices.

"I had a lot of experience from my previous tour and I would think about where I might hide something," the 23-year-old explained.

"Then, if we got a reading on the metal detector, we would dig and we started finding weapons."

Pte Treloar quickly shared his insight with other units in the area and his efforts resulted in a dramatic increase in the rate soldiers discovered IED stashes.

His citation reads: "This denial of lethal aid to the enemy came at an important time and left the insurgents unable to re-establish themselves."

The married father-of-two, who joined the Army in 2009 and was on his second Herrick tour, was shocked to receive news of the award.

He said: "It's one of the biggest things that's ever happened to me and will ever happen to me.

"But the real reward is seeing these weapons off the streets. I knew we were doing good out there and could see what we were achieving."

Bomb beaters

Improvised explosive devices continue to be the scourge of coalition forces in Afghanistan and these British soldiers have been highly commended for their efforts to neutralise such deadly threats...



■ THE passion and vision shown by an Army officer in helping Afghan forces expand their counter-IED capability has been rewarded with the MBE.

During his tour, A/Maj Damian Slaughter (RLC) oversaw the generation of 36 Afghan National Army and ten Afghan National Police specialist explosive ordnance disposal teams, while also establishing route clearance companies.

He led a small unit in the task of filling 138 posts and advocated a lower training threshold that better met the

environment and the ability of home-grown personnel to sustain the asset.

This bought time for EOD specialists to be recruited and trained.

The newly-created explosive hazard reduction teams were endorsed at senior Afghan and coalition officer level and have since formed the blueprint for future ANSF counter-IED plans.

"This award is recognition of the work of everybody involved including the guys on the ground, who were exceptional," explained A/Maj Slaughter.

The officer's award citation states: "His unique achievement has been to employ his experience and intellect to resolve a seemingly intractable problem that will have a profound and lasting effect on the ANSF's ability to take over the campaign."

■ REPEATED displays of exemplary gallantry in the face of a tenacious enemy have earned Capt Michael Dobbin (Gren Gds) the Military Cross.

The officer commanded the battlegroup's reconnaissance platoon and led his men to victory over insurgent forces against the odds on four occasions.

They were first called into action during an ambush deep in Taliban territory, when the formation suffered two casualties.

With the enemy attempting to thwart the evacuation, Capt Dobbin launched an audacious attack and drove his men forward in a relentless pursuit of their rivals, pushing them back more than one kilometre until they were defeated.

Three days later, his platoon launched an air assault to neutralise a potent sniper team.

The soldiers faced heavy fire as they came in to land but the 28-year-old led the charge across 200 metres of open ground.

After early success, the mission stalled when two of his men were killed.

In an attempt to restore the momentum, Capt Dobbin threw himself into an assault with grenades and small arms while braving machine-gun rounds from as close as five metres.

Two soldiers were injured but the mission resulted in the routing of the sniper team.

A further firefight ensued when the platoon faced four armed insurgents during an extraction from an overnight ambush.

After a guardsman had been shot, the officer charged forward and established a baseline that drove the insurgents off.

A day later their temporary checkpoint was subjected to a fierce enemy assault and the attackers came face-to-face with the commander as they probed the front door.

He grabbed his kit and dashed after them and with other soldiers following his lead they were able to secure the perimeter and coordinate the treatment of a wounded colleague.

"The insurgents had the advantage of fighting on their own turf and laying IEDs but the morale was great within our very tight group," explained Capt Dobbin.

"In combat, your brain is going at a million miles an hour and you are trying to predict what the enemy will do as well as assess the position of your soldiers so it is offensive and defensive. The platoon's performance was exceptional."

Capt Michael Dobbin (Gren Gds)



■ FACING a ferocious and determined enemy inspired Gdsm Ratu Soko (WG) to routinely disregard his own safety and help turn firefights in his company's favour.

The Fijian-born Serviceman was involved in a mission to disrupt insurgent activity to the south of Yakchal village, an area that was considered to be a Taliban safe haven.

On the first day the soldiers came under attack while based in a recently-taken compound, receiving highly-accurate fire from multiple locations.

On hearing the extent of the assault, Gdsm Soko placed himself on a wall to identify and suppress the firing positions.

The contact lasted for more than an hour and the soldier expertly talked his comrades onto targets throughout, giving them clear indications of where the insurgents were.

His quick thinking minimised the confusion and helped his commander

■ A RESERVIST soldier proved to be the perfect embodiment of the "one Army" philosophy when he took command of a patrol to fight off insurgent forces.

LCpl Chris Morton (2 R Irish) was attached to 3rd Battalion, The Rifles as part of a police advisory team in Nad-e Ali when an improvised explosive device hit the lead vehicle in his formation.

The 42-year-old moved to provide cover before checking for casualties. He helped the stricken crew, including the gunner who had suffered a leg injury, before the platoon commander was hit by what would prove to be a fatal gunshot.

A further blow followed when the second-in-command was also struck and, with both officers incapacitated, LCpl Morton took control.

control the battle.

Two days later, the company was targeted in a coordinated ambush and Gdsm Soko, who was based on an exposed compound roof, was the only hope of identifying enemy firing points.

With sustained rounds targeting his building he continued to search for and engage the closest Taliban locations to reduce the imminent threat to his colleagues.

A fellow guardsman joined him on the roof but was shot in the head. Seeing his friend had been severely injured, he ignored his own safety to draw enemy fire away from the stricken soldier and allow an

extraction to be completed.

On receiving a Mention in Dispatches he said: "I didn't think about anything. My training kicked in. I was nervous but the adrenalin meant I kept a clear head and did what I was trained to do."

"We went out on patrol with 12 soldiers but with three men injured and people treating those that were wounded, as well as having someone on the radio, it left me effectively with five," he explained.

"This was the worst situation we could have found ourselves in. I was wondering where this was going to end; could this day get any worse?"

By stepping up to assume the role of commander he rallied his men until reinforcements arrived.

His citation for a Mention in Dispatches reads: "LCpl Morton's exemplary actions on this day successfully regained control of a potentially catastrophic situation. Under fire and leaderless, his gallantry saved the day."

■ THE exceptionally-gallant actions of a quick-thinking Serviceman have been rewarded with the Military Cross after he risked his life to single-handedly take the fight to the Taliban.

LCpl Lawrence Kayser (1 R Anglian) was part of a platoon of soldiers who were taken deep into enemy territory to clear a notorious insurgent stronghold.

They became involved in a series of deadly battles over the following ten days that could have ended disastrously if it had not been for the immense courage of the 27-year-old.

The personnel waited for hours to ambush a known Taliban route and as dawn arrived a group of enemy fighters positioned themselves, purely by chance, beyond a wall in the compound just three metres away.

A single insurgent rose above the structure to find 20 soldiers beneath him and a fierce firefight erupted.

LCpl Kayser realised his colleagues were at risk and leapt from his ditch. Sprinting round the wall, he engaged the foe at close quarters.

He said: "I have done a few tours before and have learnt a bit about enemy tactics so I didn't want him to get between the lads and cause a nuisance. I decided to move through a nearby doorway and cut him off.

"I went through and, by fluke, the insurgent came round an inner doorway to the right of me at exactly the same time. I fired from the hip and I knew I'd hit him in the arm. He took cover and I chased after him. I was angry and didn't want him getting away."

As the soldier pursued the man a grenade was thrown into the alleyway, landing just metres from his feet. As he sought cover he was struck on the arm by shrapnel from the blast.

However, he pressed forward but the enemy fled, allowing him to clear the rest of the compound. It

was only when he returned to base five hours later that he discovered the extent of his wounds.

His citation reads: "The decisions LCpl Kayser made that day were in the full knowledge of the extreme danger he would be exposed to.

"At any stage he could have stopped or waited for support but he knew with every second the shock effect of his assault would dissipate, placing his comrades in greater danger."

Courage under fire

Displaying a cool head under pressure, the daring deeds of the following soldiers demonstrated the true fighting spirit of the British Army during Herrick 16...



LCpl Lawrence Kayser (R Anglian)



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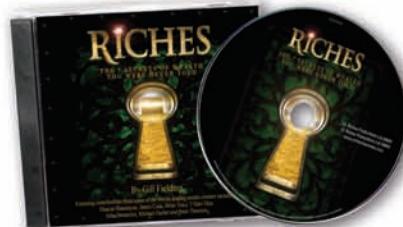
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Double honours

■ A YOUNG officer who led an assault after being seriously wounded in a Taliban ambush and the medic who saved his life have been awarded the Military Cross.

Lt John Scarlett (Coldm Gds) was leading his police advisory team on a visit to an Afghan National Civil Police checkpoint in Helmand's Upper Gereshk Valley when the attack happened.

Leaving members of the group with their vehicles, he took the remainder of his men to the base to wait for the local commander to return.

But when the people he was due to meet did not arrive the 26-year-old gathered his soldiers into a patrol formation and began to leave via the only exit – a confined corridor leading to a pedestrian gate.

Lt Scarlett and his interpreter moved out

from the checkpoint and as they did so they heard machine-gun fire coming from inside, where four colleagues had been waiting to depart the building.

Medic LCpl Stephen Shaw (RAMC) crawled out to tell him an Afghan policeman had shot at them and three soldiers were severely wounded.

After ordering the remaining member of his team to suppress the sangar position, the officer ran into the compound to assist his comrades.

However, he was struck in the leg and body armour by enemy fire and the medic raced inside to drag him clear and tend to his injuries.

"I owe my life to LCpl Shaw, absolutely," Lt Scarlett declared. "I wasn't coming out if he hadn't grabbed me."

"To come into the killing area and pull me clear showed exceptional bravery. He then used his skill to stem the bleeding."

LCpl Shaw said: "Bullets were pinging everywhere. Once I pulled John outside, I strapped him up and asked if he was ready to crack on and he said yes."

"My main focus then was on getting to the casualties inside but it wasn't possible initially. It is the worst feeling having men down and not being able to get to them."



LCpl Stephen Shaw (RAMC)

Lt John Scarlett (Coldm Gds)

'To come into the killing area and pull me clear showed exceptional bravery'



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Save the children

■ A BRITISH soldier who prevented tragedy by ordering a ceasefire when he spotted insurgents using children as human shields has received the MBE.

Maj Martin Hedley, of The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, felt a bullet strike his rucksack during the firefight but ordered his men to stop shooting to protect the lives of youngsters who were in the firing line.

The officer volunteered to serve in Afghanistan with 3rd Battalion, The Rifles and was commanding an eight-man team that was three kilometres away from the nearest UK support.

He then found himself leading an Afghan company of more than 100 men that had just seen its commander killed in battle.

A day after the tragedy he led some of the home-grown soldiers into enemy territory where they came across insurgents firing from behind children.

Despite the danger he and his men were in, Maj Hedley said it was a straightforward decision to cease shooting.

He added: "We are well trained to fire with the protection of the local population in mind; this is key to achieving success in Afghanistan. The benefits of targeting an insurgent are outweighed by the risk of wounding or killing a civilian."

On six other occasions the officer and his men were caught in ambushes and found themselves under fire on almost every patrol they undertook.

However, Maj Hedley was relentless in leading his Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers back to the fight, often sprinting across open ground alone and under fire to inspire them into action.

His citation reads: "Maj Hedley kept the Afghans going in the dark days after their charismatic leader was killed in action; an impressive feat for a non-Afghan officer and a real testament to his sustained courage and leadership."

It added: "He alone made the pivotal difference in persuading the ANA to continue fighting during that crucial period."

Operational Awards and Honours

Afghanistan

Victoria Cross:

LCpl James Thomas Duane ASHWORTH, Gren Gds (killed in action).

Officer of the Order of the British Empire:

Lt Col James Maurice Hannan BOWDER, Gren Gds; Lt Col Zachary Raymond STENNING, Yorks; Lt Col Neil Bryan THORPE, REME; Lt Col Stephen Nicholas WEBB, R Welsh.

Member of the Order of the British Empire:

A/Maj Paul David BLAGBROUGH, Para; Maj Edward Richard Hugh COLVER, Yorks; Maj Alexander Vaughan COOPER, Scots; Maj Martin James Ian HEDLEY, RRF; SSgt Jason William McCONNELL, RLC; Lt Col Matthew QUARE, RE; Maj Christopher Tom SARGENT, WG; Capt Damian Robbie SLAUGHTER, RLC; Pte Lewis James TRELOAR, R Anglian; Maj Adam Piers WOLFE, R Anglian.

Distinguished Service Order:

Maj Piers Lyndon ASHFIELD, Gren Gds; Lt Col Michael Patrick ASTON, R Anglian; Brig Douglas McKenzie CHALMERS, late PWRR.

Conspicuous Gallantry Cross:

Lt Luke Timothy John MASON, Yorks.

Royal Red Cross:

Lt Col Andrea Jane LEWIS, QARANC.

Military Cross:

Cpl Robert BOSWELL, Para; Capt Michael Olaf Chetwynd DOBBIN, Gren Gds; Cpl Alexander William GUY, R Anglian (killed in action); LCpl Lawrence Mark Craig KAYSER, R Anglian; Capt Richard Alexander OAKES, Mercian (V); SSgt Rory O'CONNOR, Para; Capt John Philip Henri SCARLETT, Coldm Gds; LCpl Stephen Andrew SHAW, RAMC; LSgt Markus STRYDOM, Gren Gds.

Queen's Gallantry Medal:

Sgt David Paul ACARNLEY, RLC; LCpl Geoffrey John SALT, REME.

Mention in Dispatches:

Gdsm Danny Lee BENTLEY, Gren Gds; Cpl Christopher Richard BROWN, KRH; Gdsm James Robert CORNISH, Gren Gds; Pte Liam DOWNS, RG; LSgt Ashley John HENDY, Gren Gds; Sgt Antony Craig HOLLAND, KRH; LCpl Adam James JACKSON, R Welsh; Cpl Ashley David KELLY, Rifles; Capt Jonathan William MORTIMER HENDRY, Para; LCpl Christopher MORTON, R Irish (V); Gdsm Michael Joseph OGDEN, Gren Gds; LSgt Robert Anthony POINTON, Gren Gds; Pte Shaun Darren Leigh ROBERTS, R Anglian; Sgt Daniel Stephen RUDGE, RAMC; Sgt Ross SILVEY, R Anglian; Sjt Lee SLATER, Rifles; Gdsm Thomas Jack SLOCOMBE, WG; LCpl David Edward SMITH, Gren Gds; LBdr

Thomas Michael SMITH, RA; Gdsm Ratu Lemeki Toutou SOKO, WG; Pte Emily Jane TOMKINS, RAMC; Capt James Morgan WALTERS, R Anglian; Sjt James Andrew WATSON, Rifles.

Queen's Commendation for Bravery:

LCpl Simon David DENT, Gren Gds; Pte Lewis John MURPHY, Yorks; Pte John Michael RUSHTON, R Welsh.

Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service:

Cpl Kyle ALEXANDERS, Int Corps; SSgt Gary ANDERSON, AGC (SPS); Capt Benjamin Nigel Harrison BARDSLEY, WG; Col John Henry BOWRON, late Rifles; Maj Charles Michael Barnard CARVER, R Welsh; A/Lt Col Andrew David COX, Mercian; Maj Timothy James DALBY-WELSH, LD; Lt Col Andrew Paul Longstone DAWES, RA; Lt Berne Robert Wilson FLOWER, R Anglian; WO1 Andrew John GAME, RAMC; Capt Thomas Edward Frederick GARDNER, R Signals; Sgt Paul Mitchell GREENWOOD, RA; Capt George Henry HARPER, RE; Maj Edward Peter William HAYWARD, RHG/D; Sgt Robert John HEATH, WG; Lt Jonathan Nicholas KUME-DAVY, Yorks; Maj Edwyn Nicholas LAUNDERS, WG; Lt Col Glyn David Cledwyn LLEWELLYN, R Welsh; Lt Col Neil LLEWELLYN, RLC; Capt Christopher Michael Blake LOWER, Rifles; Pte Abbie Georgina MARTIN, RAMC; WO2 Anthony Vincent MILLS, R Welsh; Cpl Edward Thomas O'BRIEN, Int Corps; Lt Col Alexander Thomas Lindsay POTTS, KRH; Maj Simon Philip PUXLEY, Int Corps; Lt Col John Henry RIDGE, RE; Lt Thomas Barton John SIMPSON, R Welsh; CSgt Richard Anthony THOMAS, R Welsh; WO2 David George TIDMAN, RA; WO2 Eric Joseph WHITEHOUSE, Yorks; Sgt Antony Lawrence Arthur WILLS, RA.

Rest of the world

Officer of the Order of the British Empire:

Lt Col Timothy Peter JENKINS, PWRR (V).

Member of the Order of the British Empire:

WO2 Neal Anthony HARRISON, Int Corps.

Queen's Gallantry Medal:

WO2 Malcolm Edward QUIGLEY, RLC.

Queen's Commendation for Bravery:

Sgt Nikki Anaeos DUNNE, Para; WO2 Paul MCCOMB, Para.

Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service:

Cpl Peter Donald DOLAMORE, Int Corps (V); Pte Paul Robert KNAPP, Para; Maj Nicholas Keith SOLOMON, Para.



Inspirational: LCpl Adam Jackson (R Welsh) has been Mentioned in Dispatches for rescuing an injured colleague under fire



Picture: Cpl Mike O'Neill, RLC

FANCY FOOTWORK

Combat boot range takes a big step

Report: Becky Clark



RITISH troops will soon be sporting the very latest Forces footwear.

In the biggest overhaul to combat boots since the 1980s, brown models will start to hit quartermasters' shelves within weeks.

Apart from the obvious change in colour, the new styles will offer soldiers unprecedented personal choice in both fit and function. The kit will also feature female-specific sizes for the first time.

Available in medium and wide fits from sizes three to nine for ladies and five to 15 for gents, the boots come in five types according to the job the wearer will be doing.

Each variety then has two different models available so that personnel can pick the one that suits them best.

Brought about by lessons learnt from operations over the past ten years, the new selection is designed for a range of climates and duties, from cold to hot weather and light patrolling

to intensive combat.

The introduction of the updated kit is part of the personal clothing system, with the colour brown selected to match the Army's current multi-terrain pattern uniforms.

All of the boots were subjected to extensive trials involving some 3,500 Servicemen and women, with any brands found to cause blisters within a short time immediately discounted.

Maj Phil McGregor (RAPTC), from the clothing team at Defence Equipment and Support, said initial feedback from those personnel involved in testing the range had been "very positive."

"The latest combat boots will provide troops with a greater choice, comfort and utility for any future operational geographical location wherever they may be deployed, worldwide," explained the officer.

"What is most important is that the user selects the boot based on the best fit and not the brand name or style," he added. ■

COMBAT

USE: Both highly water-resistant, these boots are primarily for intensive combat, although they can also be worn for lightweight patrolling.

TERRAIN: Field, track, road, rubble and rock.

CLIMATE: Temperatures ranging from -10 to 35 degrees Celsius in combination with warm or cold weather socks and general service gaiters as required.

PATROL

USE: Worn mainly where the combat threat is medium to low and patrol pack weight is light but if the threat level increases they can also be used for heavy combat for limited periods.

TERRAIN: Field, track, road, rubble and rock.

CLIMATE: Temperatures ranging from -10 to 35 degrees Celsius in combination with warm or cold weather socks and general service gaiters as required.

COLD WET WEATHER (COMBAT COLD WET)

USE: Primarily for cold and wet environments, these highly water-resistant boots will be worn by military personnel deployed in the field on training exercises and operations during the winter months.

TERRAIN: Arctic and coastal areas, rough off-road and moorland ground.

CLIMATE: Cold and wet conditions from -19 to 20 degrees Celsius in conjunction with cold weather socks and general service or snow gaiters as required.

DESERT PATROL

USE: Where the combat threat is medium to low and patrol pack weight is light, although if the threat level increases they can also be used for heavy combat for limited periods.

TERRAIN: Desert, sand, field, track, road, rubble and rock.

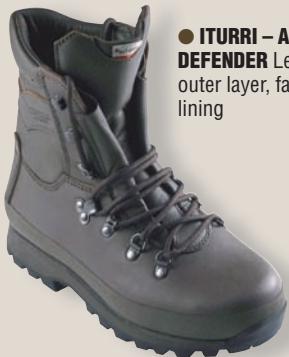
CLIMATE: Temperatures ranging from -10 to 45 degrees Celsius in combination with either warm or cold weather socks as required.

DESERT COMBAT

USE: Primarily for intensive combat roles, although also for lightweight patrolling.

TERRAIN: Desert, sand, field, track, road, rubble and rock.

CLIMATE: Temperatures ranging from -10 to 45 degrees Celsius in combination with warm or cold weather socks as required.



● **ITURRI - ALTBERG DEFENDER**
Leather outer layer, fabric lining



● **HAIX - SCOUT**
Leather and fabric outer layer, breathable Gore-Tex lining



● **ITURRI - BATES ULTRA LIGHT**
Leather and fabric outer layer, fabric lining



● **YDS - KESTREL**
Leather and fabric outer layer, fabric lining



● **HAIX - ALASKA**
Leather outer layer, breathable Gore-Tex lining



● **ITURRI - KARRIMOR SF**
Leather outer layer, breathable Gore-Tex lining



● **ITURRI - MAGNUM SCORPION DESERT**
Suede and fabric outer layer, fabric lining



● **YDS - DESERT FALCON**
Suede and fabric outer layer, fabric lining



● **ITURRI - MEINDL DESERT FOX PRO**
Suede and fabric outer layer, fabric lining



● **HAIX - DESERT SCOUT**
Suede and fabric outer layer, fabric lining

“The latest combat boots will provide troops with a greater choice, comfort and utility for any future operational geographical location wherever they may be deployed, worldwide”

OUTBACK ADVENTURE



Gurkhas head down under on annual training mission

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Steve Dock

WHEN faced with the prospect of training overseas, UK personnel can normally expect to be testing their skills and drills on the Canadian prairies or the plains of Kenya.

However, when troops from B Company, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles recently ventured from their base in Brunei they found themselves in a totally different environment.

Having travelled more than 3,000 miles from their Asian home, the formation arrived in Australia for a month-long package of serials and live firing drills in the searing outback heat.

Set within the Townsville training area in northern Queensland, Exercise Pacific Kukri gave the riflemen an opportunity to train at company level while working with assets such as mortars and fire support in a package that offered a lot more than simply putting rounds down the range.

"The reason we come here is for the real estate, to move around as a big unit," Maj Grenville Chaganis, officer commanding B Company,

told *Soldier* as the training neared its completion.

"In Brunei we are constrained by how much we can do but this exercise allows us to operate at a higher level.

"Often when people run live firing there are so many restrictions.

"Out here the guys have been involved in an ongoing scenario and have operated tactically throughout.

"As soon as we are on the area we are committed. They are living in that mindset throughout the whole package.

"When out on patrols and missions they can suddenly find themselves in an advance to contact, an attack or an ambush scenario.

"This is completely tactical and they have got a lot more out of it compared to being on the ranges."

Around 180 soldiers were involved in the exercise, which saw them progress from live firing on an individual basis to company level.

They had to battle challenging terrain in various tasks and also found themselves involved in a

peace support mission.

"This process was aimed at mirroring operations within a contemporary environment," Maj Chaganis explained.

"Normally training is geared towards Afghanistan but I wanted to steer away from that.

"For example, there was no IED threat and the guys were able to move around as they would in other theatres of operation, rather than performing Vallon drills.

"My main effort was to get soldiers conducting low-level intelligence-gathering tasks and living in a way that we have not done before.

"Usually you go to places where people have been based for a long time and you get everything handed to you. I wanted troops to get that information from nothing in order for them to carry out company strike operations.

"We were working out of a forward operating base so they had to get in to a routine and conduct security patrols. >>

When out on patrols and missions they can suddenly find themselves in an advance to contact, an attack or an ambush



Fire support: Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles fire an 81mm illuminating mortar during Exercise Pacific Kukri in the Townsville training area, Queensland, Australia

>> "We were last in Afghanistan in 2010 and have carried out a lot of jungle training since then."

"Most of my guys have done nothing like this before."

The exercise saw soldiers embroiled in a scenario involving the fictitious nations of Oceana and Duskia, with the Gurkhas helping the former in their mission to stop enemy forces reaching Townsville.

The differences compared with Brunei were particularly evident in a gruelling 27-kilometre trek through the bush, where the rugged terrain took hold.

Maj Chaganis said: "The ground here is not nice; there are logs, massive hills and rocks so going cross-country is hard work but we have got through it pretty much unscathed."

"On the advance party the temperature was up to 40 degrees Celsius. I did not think we could do the exercise in that heat. Luckily it cooled off slightly. It is still pretty hot but it is manageable."

"In Brunei you are in the jungle with a tree canopy. Here, you are in direct sunshine all day."

Company 2iC Capt Badri Rai told *Soldier* the exercise had offered excellent training opportunities and he was delighted to see personnel perform so well.

The troops learnt a number of new skills during their time in Australia, such as how to establish their own forward operating base, and the officer believes this will hold them in good stead for the future.

He said: "The feedback from the range team is that the boys have been working very hard."

"We have 20 new guys who have joined us so it has been really beneficial for us to be here."

"We do not have as much land in Brunei, so in terms of conventional warfare training we cannot do all that much."

"We haven't done any Op Herrick drills. That phase is finishing in a couple of years but the company commander is very forward thinking

and we will be going somewhere else in the future."

"That is why we are moving away from Afghan-style training. So now, if we deploy elsewhere, we will be properly prepared."

"The guys are happy to be here and they are working very hard."

"If we look after the boys they will do their job properly."

While the exercise delivered clear benefits for the company it also gave supporting assets a chance to test their skills in a new environment.

The mortar platoon was able to fire a high concentration of rounds and the Australian bush offered valuable training for those involved.

"Firing on to ground where friendly forces are deployed is a good test for us," said mortars OC, Capt Nick Gross.

"Compared to Brunei, this is a lot more favourable. Salisbury Plain is very easy but here there are lots of trees, which raised questions regarding muzzle fire. There is a lot to consider."

"There are 46 soldiers in the platoon and 14 of those are new to us. We have brought them along to beef up their learning."

"A lot of my guys will go to Warminster for career courses and having four weeks in the field will help them pick up and improve on what they know already."

"One of the advantages of being overseas is that people do not get called away for fatigues or sentry duty. The whole landscape is here for our taking."

"It is hard work but there is no doubt the training is incredible."

While a trip to Australia may conjure images of beautiful beaches and barbecues, it proved to be anything but a holiday for the personnel of B Company.

The rugged outback formed the ideal proving ground for the soldiers and offered a fresh approach to training as the Army moves away from Afghanistan and towards the challenges of the future. ■

● Final word – page 98





Bush rangers: A Gurkha soldier mans a defensive position during Exercise Pacific Kukri while fellow personnel engage in the serial's final attack (below)



The CO says...

EXERCISE Pacific Kukri is an annual tasking for a company from The Royal Gurkha Rifles, who alternate their training between Australia and New Zealand.

Lt Col Fraser Rea, the outgoing commanding officer of 2 RGR (pictured below), joined personnel for the closing stages of the serial and spoke to *Soldier* about the benefits of the package.

■■■ We want them to prepare, deploy and operate overseas, sustain themselves while they are here and then recover.

While in the country the target is to get up to company level operations with as much complexity as possible, working with the Australians and support weapons in a variety of scenarios from different ends of the warfare spectrum.

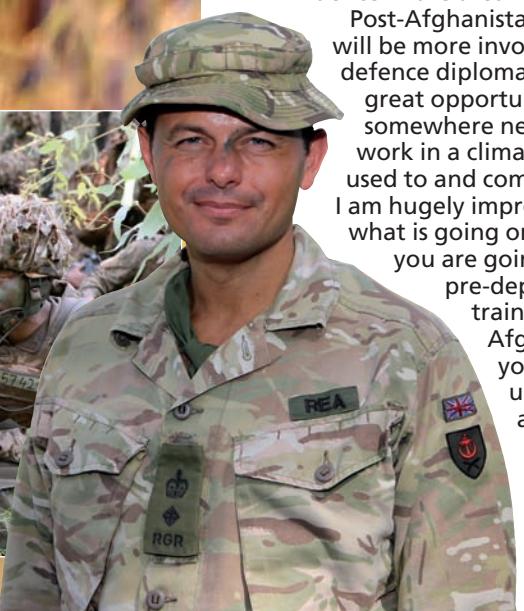
The terrain is difficult and it is very hot, which makes it a testing environment for everyone involved.

There are a lot of benefits to working in New Zealand and Australia.

They are our traditional allies and there is an emerging importance in the Asia Pacific region; it is one of the fastest growing in the world.

There are a lot of potential global flashpoints in the South China Seas and it is extremely important on the economic side that the Gurkha brand exerts UK influence in the area.

Post-Afghanistan we will be more involved in defence diplomacy. This is a great opportunity to go somewhere new, deploy, work in a climate we are not used to and come back. I am hugely impressed with what is going on here. Unless you are going through pre-deployment training for Afghanistan you are unlikely to see anything this demanding in terms of live firing. ■■■



'Ready for anything'

Para Reservists live up to regimental motto as they prepare for reaction force role

Troops tested: Pte John Rainey and LCpl Neal Jones (4 Para) during Exercise Black Jaguar at Warcop training area in Cumbria





“It’s very exciting to be part of the reaction force and be the only Reserve Infantry unit at this high level of readiness”



Report: Becky Clark
Pictures: Graeme Main

AS the future under Army 2020 becomes clearer for Regular units, plans to better integrate the Reserves into the new-look Force are continuing at pace.

This month, 40 soldiers from 4th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment will begin a year-long stint as part of the High Readiness Reserve (HRR).

A component of the Air Manoeuvre Task Force, the vital role will see them placed on five days' notice to deploy anywhere in the world alongside Regular counterparts from 2 Para, the formation's lead unit.

Soldier joined the troops as they prepared for the task during Exercise Black Jaguar at Warcop training area in Cumbria.

“It’s very exciting to be part of the reaction force and be the only Reserve Infantry unit at this high level of readiness,” said Maj Justin Tancrel, training major for 4 Para.

“This is our internal validation exercise to confirm our soldiers are ready to integrate with 2 Para and they’ll then join them for further training serials.

“The guys are really enthusiastic about the new role and you can see that from their levels of attendance.”

Covering live firing as well as section and platoon attacks, the exercise provided a comprehensive test of combat drills.

“Our motto, ‘utrinque paratus’, means ready for anything so we’re covering a broad range of training objectives, including drills on heavy machine guns and underslung grenade launchers as well as medic and signals practice,” added Maj Tancrel.

Sgt James Law of A Company explained that the preparations represented a shift in focus for the unit.

“We’re pulling away from Afghanistan-type training to conventional warfare,” said the 33-year-old.

“It’s great to get back to normal green soldiering; all the bread and butter skills.”

With 12 years in 4 Para and two Herrick tours behind him, the senior NCO said the increasing role of the Reserves made it a good time to join. >>



Regular to Reservist

● FOR Ptes Cameron O'Brian and Mark Cooper, two of the battalion's most recent recruits, joining 4 Para marked a new chapter in their military careers.

Both had several years of full-time service under their belts before signing up as Reservists.

"I'd been out for three years but I missed the camaraderie so I joined 4 Para last year," explained Pte O'Brian, who swapped the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers for a civilian job as a high-voltage cable joiner.

"It's different but I'd definitely recommend it to anyone."

"In the Regular Army there's a lot of down time, but when you're in the TA you only have the weekends so everything is planned and organised."

"You pack in all the training and then you go home."

>> "We've already seen some of the benefits to the battalion with things like gym kit, equipment and getting a lot of good exercises like this live firing one, which is at the very top end of the scale.

"What other TA unit is going to have 50 calibres firing in while they go through section attacks? It doesn't really get any better."

Among those eagerly anticipating the prospect of being at the spearhead of contingency operations was Pte Mark Cooper.

"The HRR is a really good role," said the 26-year-old.

"We could deploy anywhere, any time."

"We don't know what we'll be doing so we're concentrating on getting up to scratch."

"This is only my third weekend with the company so I am looking forward to brushing up on my infantry skills and getting back into it."

Pte Cameron O'Brian agreed that the unpredictable nature of a quick response role was part of its appeal.

"We've been told we'll be on the front line if anything kicks off," he said.

"No one knows what it will involve yet but I think that makes it interesting."

"Being on standby for a year doesn't worry me because I see it as my job, not something I just do as a hobby."

Despite looking forward to the task, the 25-year-old admitted it would be a challenge to balance training and potential deployments with the demands of his civilian role.

"The company I work for is large and a lot of the guys are ex-Army so they're good about it, but my job takes me away a lot so it can be a bit of a struggle."

"Any time I do get off I come to 4 Para

– I took all my leave last year to complete courses. It's hard but it's what I enjoy doing."

Although employers will be compensated financially if members of their workforce deploy, they won't receive money while these personnel remain on standby.

Maj Tancré described how the unit was liaising with bosses to gather support for the new commitment.

"By and large, the bigger companies have been supportive but for smaller firms it does come with an impact when your staff are deployed at short notice over the period of a year. That isn't lost on us," he said.

"Our job is to persuade them it's worth it."

"Employers will undoubtedly get a soldier who is at the peak of their fitness; someone whose infectious can-do attitude will add considerable value to their own organisation."

"If they can stand the gap for the duration their soldier is away, the person they get back will be sharper and more experienced to manage responsibility and everyday fast-balls." ■

JOIN 4 PARA

4th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment is currently recruiting soldiers and officers. The unit has a national footprint with bases in and around London, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Leeds, Liverpool and Newcastle.

● If you are interested in joining visit www.4para.co.uk or call one of the following regional numbers: Scotland, A Company, 01412 245628; London, B Company, 0298 749 5694; North East and North West, C Company, 0191 483 2201

in many respects – and I've learnt a lot about infantry skills."

Pte O'Brian added: "There's a lot of banter between the Regulars and the TA but 4 Para is an elite regiment so the quality of soldiers is high. They don't let you fall behind."



Former Royal Engineer Pte Cooper (pictured right) took voluntary redundancy in December and enlisted in the TA straight away.

"I left because I felt like doing something different but I wanted to keep the connection with the Army," he said.

"The combination of civilian and military life suits me and as a part-time job I've found it's very flexible."

"It's up to the individual, of course, and those who leave might not want anything more to do with the military but I would definitely endorse it for those who wish to maintain the link."

"I'd worked with the TA before and at times there was a bit of a label attached to Reservists but I haven't seen that here."

"Everyone's very professional and there's a positive mentality."

"The training is as good – if not better



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1 BREN

A HEAVY barrel and extensive buffering led to claims that the .303 calibre Bren was too accurate for a machine gun, with insufficient dispersal of rounds on targets. Otherwise, it was superb and remained in service until the early 1990s as the 7.62 Nato L4. The weapon is named after Brno in Czechoslovakia where it was originally designed in the 1930s and the British state arms factory in Enfield.



2 VICKERS

THE British redesign of the Maxim gun, improved and simplified for wartime production. Stamped black steel replaced shiny brass and Maxim's ingenious toggle-lock was flipped upside down to make a more compact receiver. Originally called Vickers-Maxim, it was renamed Vickers after Maxim's death.



3 FN MAG

THE unofficial Nato-standard general-purpose machine gun, originally designed and built by FN Herstal in Belgium as the MAG 58 and developed at the same time as the British L7. This has been in continuous service since 1962, surviving attempted replacement at section level by the L86 Light Support Weapon in the 1980s.



4 PKM

THE standard Soviet GPMG of the Cold War era, still in widespread service and much prized by insurgents in Afghanistan. In common with other Russian designs, it is cheaper to make and has lower maintenance requirements than Nato equivalents. Unlike most belt-fed machine guns which rely upon rimless cartridges for a reliable feed, the PKM successfully chambers the old rimmed 7.62x54R round first fielded in 1891 with the Mosin-Nagant rifle.



5 BROWNING M2HB

INTRODUCED to US service in 1933 and based on the M1918 original, John Browning's .50 calibre "Ma Deuce" is still in service around the world, often in improved Heavy Barrel form. British L111A1s also feature a quick-change barrel, now being adopted by the US in their M2A2. This model will serve Nato for decades to come.



6 MG42

INFAMOUS due to its German service during the Second World War, the general-purpose MG42 and its 7.62 Nato derivatives are still in use in Germany, Italy and Pakistan. The original, chambered for 7.92x57mm Mauser, had an extremely high rate of fire (1,200rpm) and an unusual roller-locked mechanism.

7 ULTIMAX

BUILT in Singapore but created under the supervision of Scottish-born expert Sandy McCormack to a design by former Armalite employee James Sullivan. This weapon was made around the concept of low-felt recoil and can be fired using one hand with its butt touching the firer's nose. It has not been widely adopted but remains technically one of the best machine gun designs ever created. A 7.62x51mm version is currently in development.



AUTOMATIC SELECTION

From historic models to the latest weapons, experts from the National Firearms Centre list the top ten machine guns of all time

9 DShK 1938

THE Soviet 12.7x108mm equivalent of the Browning .50 is designed to be set up on its traversing/elevating tripod by one man. Nicknamed the "Dushka" based on its service designation and the Russian for "sweetheart", which gives an idea of the high regard in which it's held by Russian troops.



8 MAXIM

THE first true machine gun, invented by naturalised Briton Sir Hiram Maxim and the first to be adopted by the British Army in 1890. The military establishment did not initially appreciate the value of the weapon and it was issued in small numbers to the Royal Artillery on wheeled field carriages. Maxim's early prototype lacked a trigger, featuring instead a fire-selector lever running from "safe" through to "slow" rate of fire, and a maximum "fast" setting of 500 rounds per minute.

10 BROWNING Mk2

A CLASSIC American design adapted for British air service just before the Second World War. Though the US itself opted for the Browning .50 to arm its fighter aircraft, the British solution was initially to fit eight .303 Brownsings to the Spitfire and Hurricane. Later supplemented with a 20mm cannon, the Browning served right through the conflict.





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TALKBACK

YOUR letters provide an insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas... but please be brief. Emails (mailto:soldiermagazine.co.uk) must include your name and location (although we won't publish them if you ask us not to). We reserve the right to accept or reject letters, and to edit for length, clarity or style. Before you write to us with a problem, you should first have tried to get an answer via your own chain of command.

Last place in the medal race

CIVIL servants can be considered for the Imperial Service Medal after 25 years' service and Regulars for the Meritorious Service decoration after 20 if they are a holder of the Long Service and Good Conduct honour.

Non-Regular permanent staff (NRPS) cannot qualify for either as they are not civilian or Regular – nor are they eligible for the Queen's Volunteer Reserves Medal (QVRM) even if the holder of the Volunteer Reserves Service Medal (VRSM).

Once again, it seems that NRPS are being treated unfairly, verging on discrimination, in regard to honours and awards.

Given that these staff are a critical element in the life cycle of TA units, it seems their service is undervalued.

As I am approaching retirement after 30 years of NRPS service, my commitment will be recognised by the award of the VRSM – and only then because of a rule change in 1997 that allowed us to qualify as we previously had not.

It is also worth noting that NRPS are eligible for the VRSM at 15 years compared to ten years for their TA counterparts.

KOREAN COMEBACK

■ IN response to last month's letter on the Korean Medal, I wish to point out that as with many principles, there have been occasions when exceptions have been considered advantageous.

Authorisation for British and Commonwealth Forces personnel who had served in Korea to wear both the British Korean Medal and the UN Korean Medal was given because the government at the time wished to demonstrate the strongest support to the newly-created United Nations for its leadership of the military campaign on the Korean Peninsular. – **Brig Matthew Lowe, D Pers Ops**

Slice of Service life

This month's ruminations from the ranks...



Surely as a matter of equality we should be entitled to one of the additional awards, be it the Meritorious Service Medal, Imperial Service Medal or the QVRM? – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Matthew Lowe, D Pers Ops, replies: There are only 13 QVRMs awarded across the entire military each year. The honour is limited to members of the Reserves due to different terms and conditions.

Reserves are liable to be called up for active duty at any time. NRPS are, in general, full-time employees with no liability outside terms of their contract.

Non-managerial members of the civil service qualify for the Imperial Service Medal on retirement after at least 25 years but were ineligible to receive the Queen's Jubilee Medals.

On retirement after 30 years' service since 1997, an NRPS individual can be awarded the VRSM with two clasps as well as two Jubilee Medals.

Exemplary service can also be recognised by the honours detailed in LFSO 3100 and award of the MBE.

PROMOTION PROBLEM

■ MAJ Jim Hawkins is right to point out the importance of retaining the trained manpower of those leaving the colours (*Talkback*, March).

Col Lyanne Maclean's response, however, carries the risk of demoralising those already serving in the TA where promotion depends not only on time and qualification but the random occurrence of vacancies against unit establishments.

Those already serving in that force will see their prospects of advancement harmed by the arrival of ex-Regulars retaining their rank.

At the same time, for those Service personnel to keep existing rates of pay while Reserves are at the lowest point on the incremental scale, and for them to enjoy a smaller training requirement and lower call-out liability for a similar bounty, would be equally divisive.

Possibly the solution would be to organise them into a separate body, from which they could be mobilised when needed. – **Tony Heathcote, late RPC Volunteers.**

Booze rules confused?

WHILE watching the Six Nations match at the Millennium Stadium in March, BBC cameras cut to a shot of a group of Royal Welsh soldiers in multi-terrain pattern fatigues consuming alcohol in the stands.

Correct me if I am wrong, but when I deployed on Op Olympics we were not allowed to drink in a public place in uniform. Has the policy changed since then? – **Maj S Stanley, Scots**.

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), replies: It is a measure of the nation's current affection for its Armed Forces that organisers of sporting and other public events are happy to provide tickets for troops and encourage them to attend in uniform.

However, these soldiers are for all intents and purposes off duty.

This is different from the Olympic Games, when the Ministry of Defence provided troops to serve on duty with responsibility for public safety and security measures.

Although Servicemen were not continually employed

on such tasks, to avoid any confusion by civilians special orders were issued to prohibit the consumption of alcohol in public whilst wearing uniform.

In normal circumstances the situation requires judgement and good leadership.

Queen's Regulations, paragraph 26 of annex B to chapter 3, contains the following guidance: "Excessive alcohol consumption is not to be tolerated; drunkenness is a military offence.

"Commanders are to ensure that social functions take place in a controlled environment, where alcohol is consumed responsibly and that there is no degeneration into excessive drinking.

"They must also set an example through their own moderation."

We do not tolerate public drunkenness – in or out of uniform – but nor should we be shy about showing the Army to be a place where young men and women can have fun and enjoy alcohol in a responsible manner.

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'Halt to housing scheme hurts retention'

I HAVE been keeping a keen eye on the Armed Forces home ownership scheme as it is a great opportunity for Service personnel to afford houses that may otherwise be beyond their means.

There has been a high level of interest in the programme, so much so that the limited funding the MoD provided was exhausted in August with the remainder of applicants placed on a waiting list.

I have just been informed that the department has decided the scheme will be ended in 12 months' time. But why?

The programme not only saves military personnel a significant amount in interest payments but gives the MoD a potentially significant return on their investment by purchasing a percentage of the property.

At a time when Service accommodation is increasing in price and there is an apparent plethora of support for troops to buy their own property, we can once again see that this is not mirrored by the powers that be.

If we can't look after our guys, how can we expect housing firms to do the same?

I understand that there are new-buy schemes available but these aren't always feasible or attractive.

We are now ending something that has been a resounding success for only a short-term gain.

At a time of financial uncertainty, yet another of the Army incentives has been taken away.

The puzzle of poor soldier and officer retention is not that difficult to solve when faced with such ludicrous decisions. – Capt S Clarke, 2 Para.

Nikki Burgess, Pers Trg, Future Accommodation New Employment Model, responds: The pilot study launched in January 2010 to increase the choice of



Picture: Graeme Main

affordable home ownership opportunities for Service personnel is due to end in March 2014 and it is unlikely that it will be extended in its current form.

The benefits of an MoD-specific package are now limited, due in part to the success of the programme in opening up other HomeBuy schemes to the Armed Forces.

When the initiative was launched most others were not open to or practical for serving members of the military.

However, through the development of this pilot HomeBuy and FirstBuy now treat Armed Forces personnel as a priority group and offer more flexibility – for example, by allowing properties to be sub-let if the owner is deployed.

Because of this fact, more than two-and-a-half times as many Servicemen and women have bought through FirstBuy as through the Armed Forces scheme in the past two years.

Applications for HomeBuy have also been high, although completion figures aren't yet available.

In addition, the chancellor has announced new HomeBuy schemes offering greatly increased equity amounts and removing the income limits which previously applied.

The Ministry of Defence will continue to support property purchase by members of the Armed Forces. For example, the long service advance of pay programme remains in place.

Under the new employment model options for a new home purchase incentive are currently being considered – including further equity share arrangements.

It is too early to say what shape the offer will take. However, military personnel will be consulted on the options to ensure that what comes next is both appealing and practical.

Daily food charge leaves sour taste

WITH the inception of pay as you dine (PAYD) imminent across the board, why are personnel within non-converted mess facilities still paying the full daily food charge and having to sign chits for every meal rather than paying the increment per meal signed for?

Under the current system I must submit leave through JPA for every weekend period in order to have these costs excluded.

However, my colleagues and I frequently work through lunch periods



and purchase food from the barracks' Londis store, thereby paying twice for every lunch with no facility to reclaim the costs.

As mess accountants check every chit for audit purposes, it would seem an obvious solution to eliminate the salary-deducted daily food charge altogether and pay the same amounts through mess bills for chits written at the normal rates of entitlement.

This system has been successfully demonstrated by the other two Services for a number of years during

the PAYD transition period. – Name and address supplied.

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), replies: It has to be accepted that the introduction of PAYD requires a transitional period.

Units which are at the end of implementation will retain the old system until full PAYD is introduced.

Several transitional arrangements were considered but changes site-by-site was the selected option.

Full implementation across all Army units is now linked to the future catering, retail and leisure development (Project Hestia), a responsibility of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation.

I note your comment about working through lunch periods. In accordance with JSP 752, if there is a Service need you are entitled to reimbursement of the daily food charge (see chapter three).

'Lack of financial training doesn't stack up'

AFTER more than ten years' Reserve, full-time Reserve and Regular service I am looking to leave the Army.

I have little interest in working in the private sector and have been applying for upper-middle management jobs in the public sector, including the civil service.

What has struck me is the level of financial control and planning that is expected in all these posts.

If this is indicative of the wider job market, the Army is doing our officers, warrant officers and senior NCOs a real disservice.

In a number of assessments I have scored highly in people and project management, but poorly in financial planning.

This is not because I am innumerate but because I lack the necessary experience of overseeing budgets.

In a recent discussion with a civil service manager it was pointed out that it is not uncommon for financial delegations worth tens of thousands of pounds to be made to relatively junior civilian staff (D or C2 grades in Ministry of Defence parlance).



A senior captain or major would never have that much monetary freedom – except, perhaps, on operations.

I am an adjutant and my CO doesn't have that much discretion over his own budget.

Whilst financial controls and probity are essential in any organisation, why does the Armed Forces (and the wider MoD) not empower our more junior commanders with responsibility in this area instead?

It strikes me that behind every budget holder there is a small army from the civil secretariat or J8 to tell him or her what they can and cannot do.

Surely in times of tightened resources we would be better served by training our commanders to properly manage their own budgets and slimming the J8 "tail" to that required to support the audit, control and advice function, rather than holding the purse strings entirely?

This would create an efficiency for defence, but also up-skill our people and prepare them for life after the Service. –

Name and address supplied.

Maj Alex Ward, SO2 Officers, Directorate Training (Army), responds: Currently, budgetary training is only provided to those who need it for their future assignment in a specific role that requires such knowledge to fulfil it.

There is very little generic teaching delivered at the moment as this is not yet deemed a training requirement for all.



Bust-up over biggest battles

I AM writing with reference to your March article on Britain's 20 greatest battles.

I feel the Battle for Cimic House, Iraq, in 2004 should have featured.

The conflict lasted for the duration of the six-month tour but fighting reached a peak between August 5 and 28, when the intensity was such that armoured convoys were unable to reach the base to resupply the British.

However, none of the waves of infantry attacks by the Mahdi Army got within 30 metres of UK lines.

CO Maj Justin Featherstone was given permission to withdraw if he felt events

required it but he refused to have his men leave their posts.

Efforts to repulse the enemy have been described as "the longest continuous action fought by the Army since the Korean War".

It was also the lengthiest defensive stand since the Second World War.

At the end of the siege our casualties were six seriously injured soldiers and one fatality – my good friend Pte Chris Rayment.

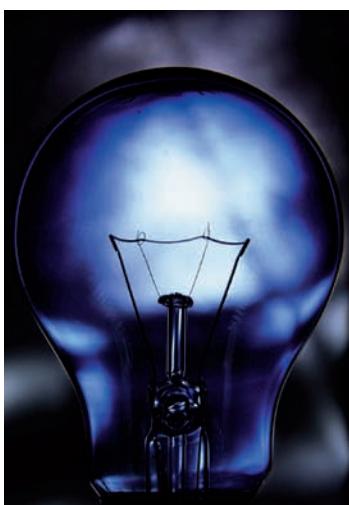
However, on the opposing side the casualties were significantly higher, estimated to be at least 200 dead and leaving a seriously depleted force in Al Amarah (pictured above) that was incapable



of attacking the British in large numbers for the remainder of the coalition's presence.

This conflict is close to my heart having served in the region during this period. –

Sgt Richard Moore.



LIGHT-BULB MOMENT

■ AFTER almost 22 years of service I have finally come up with a cunning plan – one so cunning it's worthy of a knighthood.

This idea would either save the Army money or make for more motivated Servicemen and women, albeit financially.

Like it or not there is a percentage of troops who do not pass their Military Annual Training Test (MATT) 2 and other unit-level required MATTs.

Whether they are then put onto remedial training or downgraded at a later date is by the by at this point.

My cunning plan would be to award the X factor payment based on satisfactory completion of MATT 2.

Surely this would motivate people and make for a fitter, healthier Force?

If a soldier has a medical condition then that is a different matter, of course. – Cpl Baldrick, Blandford Garrison.



Picture: Graeme Main

Yardstick Jape: The prospect of a 'soaring skills' initiative for MPGS personnel – *Soldier's* fictitious rival to The Parachute Regiment's selection process (pictured) – failed to amuse some of our readers

Taking the P Company

IHAVE just read with disbelief your news article in the April edition "Security staff get ahead of the game".

P Company has always been the yardstick for parachute course selection.

If the "soaring skills" initiative is as tough or tougher, which I very much doubt, then why not have paratroopers do this instead of P Company?

For years certain parties have been attempting to do away with this selection process to make access to The Parachute Regiment and support arms easier.

We could very well end up like the US 82nd Airborne Division, where there is no vetting system other than the parachute course itself and there are male and female soldiers who would not have a hope of passing P Company.

As for being costly to send personnel to Catterick, who does Maj Stanley Longdon think he is kidding?

Catterick is in Yorkshire not Ulan Bator.

No, this is the thin end of the proverbial wedge and I guarantee Servicemen arriving via this initiative will be greatly resented by members of The Parachute Regiment. –

Mike Brownridge.

I AM aware that "Security staff get ahead of the game" was an April Fool's Day joke but I and a number of my colleagues have taken offence to this article.

We are all serving members of the Military Provost Guard Service and have a vast wealth of knowledge and experience among us.

Most of the unit's personnel are former

Messy affair for living-in members

WHY do the Army's living-in members pay double the mess subscriptions of their married counterparts?

I have asked numerous regimental sergeant majors for an answer, always receiving the same feedback that "it's in the Queen's Regs".

Since pay as you dine (PAYD) was introduced, every member of the mess has had the option to eat within the cookhouse at the same price as living-in members, therefore we are all equal.

Cleaning is under a service contract, as are white goods, and therefore I can see no justification for this extra fund.

Although only about £6 more per month, I am writing on principle as nobody can seem to explain where this money goes.

Living-in members are being discriminated against and this feeling will remain until I receive a credible answer.

This may seem trivial but many troops I have spoken to feel the same. – *Name and address supplied.*

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), replies: Subscription rates are linked to occupancy rather than messing or food eaten and the term dining-in needs updating to living-in: there is no link to PAYD.

The solution to this question lies with your unit and not Army policy.

Speak to your mess presiding member or committee but in principle it is appropriate that living-in members pay more to reflect the services available.

Whilst all messes are available to livers-out it is not their weekly residence and by extension they do not have the same daily access to facilities.

One solution you could propose at the next mess meeting is the introduction of a livers-out charge equivalent to 50 per cent of mess subscription for livers-in.

This would result in equal amounts being paid into the general purpose fund by all members (if you consider the current subscription level does not match the increased availability of facilities).

senior ranks from across the three Services having served 20 years and upwards, which makes us very diverse and capable of any task or situation we encounter.

We have soldiers who have been on operations including Granby, Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Kosovo, Telic and Herrick to name but a few.

So we have proved ourselves in real life challenging combat scenarios.

Why we would even want to be part of the airborne units is beyond me as I see them as redundant to what we require as an Army, being an ex-Infantry soldier myself and seeing my old regiment amalgamated with others.

The MPGS do possess a high range of skills and capabilities and we are certainly not just a bunch of old farts who check IDs.

We find this article highly insulting towards us as a unit; this may not be a view shared by the whole MPGS but certainly by myself and colleagues at our site.

Maybe if you took the time to visit and do a proper article about us you may discover all of the above.

As with all units, I appreciate there are a few individuals out there who will probably give out the wrong impression about the MPGS. – *Pte Hiram Dunn, MPGS.*

The editor, taking care to avoid eye contact with the guards outside Ordnance Barracks, responds: Rest assured that it was not our intention to offend with our annual April Fool's Day prank.

It is the experience of the *Soldier* team that our readers are usually more than willing to take a joke in this respect.

In reality, we are all too aware of the valuable contribution made by members of the MPGS.

This is evidenced by a number of recent features focusing on the varied duties of the Service's armed security specialists.

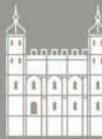
MOVE RULES CONFUSE

IHOW come you must be in your last two years to get your final tour of duty allowance? I have purchased my own house back in the UK because I am coming to the end of my service and want my kids and wife to have stability.

I was originally told I might be able to get this move at public expense if I was to sign a waiver stating that I wouldn't claim from the Army again for removals concerning my family but I have now discovered that this is not true.

If I am entitled to the move, I don't understand why I can't just have it and sign a waiver. – *Cpl Michael Hulme, 3 Mercian.*

Brig John Donnelly, DPS(A), replies: Although there is no provision to fund the final tour of duty allowance for all members of the British Army, any soldier making a qualifying move could be entitled to disturbance allowance and movement of personnel effects if they elect to relocate into a privately-owned or rented property.



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#OP HONOURS (P 24-37)

@PoplarsPenny

Well deserved, proud to be a Brit, they do a hard job and don't get the recognition they deserve

@PoppyLegion

Congratulations to everyone on the #OperationalHonours and Awards List, you make us proud!

#FUNERAL PRIDE (P 7)

@danolbest

Flags at half mast for Thatcher on camp! Shows the Army's opinion of the Falklands War #greatachievement

#CANCER CONCERN (P 16)

@PrivatePartsUK

Big well done to Jeff Saunders @armyboxingteam for not only baring all for @checkemlads campaign but new ABAE champ too!!!

- @soldiermagazine -

Equipment issue proves equivocal

I FELT compelled to reply to the letter "Clothing issue requires clarification" (Talkback, February) based on my personal experience.

During my time on operations recently it was laid down that only Service-issued boots and body armour were to be worn by troops.

The wearing of Crye clothing was banned because this was exclusively for elite units in addition to being the new pattern adopted by both the United States and Danish armed forces.

I, along with my chain of command, were told to enforce this robustly – which we did. As far as I was concerned, this extended to the Army as a whole; we wear our pattern clothing, end of chat.

I was therefore amazed to see the carte blanche comment from Lt Col Matthew Tressider in *Talkback*, which stated that "there are no rules restricting the purchase of non-issued clothing and on-the-man kit by individuals".

I must disagree.



We as an army have gone for years wearing all manner of clothing and equipment from around the world.

The Service spends millions on improving this and developing a new up-to-date

pattern only to put in print an excuse for blokes to wear what they like.

I agree that the clothing is not yet perfect and I for one use a non-issued daysack and off-the-shelf webbing – simply because they are better.

To be honest, this was an acceptable practice that was supported by the procurement of Camelbak daysacks during Operation Herrick 16.

But what implications does the use of non-issued body armour have on an individual's insurance in the event that they are injured?

And how do we clearly identify UK personnel when a complaint is raised against a unit in a joint operational environment and we can't tell who is who?

We are in danger of returning to the scruffy *Borrowers* we were once branded back in the good old days. – Name and address supplied.

Col Charlie Sykes, CD Combat, responds:
It is Army policy that soldiers should be given excellent equipment for operations and training, while providing value for money for taxpayers.

There is absolutely no discretion available for items of personal protective equipment – the issue kit has been exhaustively trialled and tested and its capability is understood.

There is also no discretion on the pattern of equipment in order to ensure combat recognition.

The defence clothing team's personal clothing system offers an outstanding set of kit to the dismounted soldier for most environments and Army HQ strongly encourages the chain of command to direct its use for very good reasons.

These include ease of replacement on exercise or operations, a common understanding of the environmental capability of clothing, minimising the chances of unintended consequences of wearing non-issue equipment, ensuring Service personnel do not waste their money purchasing "fad" items from catalogues, uniformity and integration with other soldier systems.

However, the final decision on what items can be worn lies properly with the chain of command.



COMPETITIONS

Spine line winners: Mrs J Matthews, Dallas, Morayshire; D Clarkson, Chippenham, Wiltshire; K Chapman, Glasgow; K Dickens, Hounslow; L Matthews, Basildon, Essex; 2nd Lt H Joseph, 2 Sig Regt, York; Lt Cdr K Stockton RN, Cosham, Portsmouth; J Palfrey, Farnborough, Hampshire; A Penn, West Molesey, Surrey; Capt D Punshon, 251 Tpt Sqn RLC(V), Irvine.

The Bay DVD: Melanie Gardiner, Freshwater, Isle of Wight; Bohdan Kuczynski, Lower Bourne, Farnham; Elaine Patterson, Southport, Lancashire; G Marshall, High Barnet, Hertfordshire; Dawn Totton, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Boker pen: Michelle Williams, Preston, Lancashire; Angela Francois, 100 Regt RA, Luton.



DIARY

Until May 6: The **I am Strong** exhibition of new work, paintings and prints by Arabella Dorman is on show at The Royal Green Jackets (Rifles) Museum in Winchester from 1000-1600, Mondays-Saturdays. For more details visit www.rjmuseum.co.uk

Until further notice: Chelsea Pensioners' wartime stories are being captured in a new online collaboration between the National Army Museum and the Royal Hospital Chelsea. **The Old and the Bold** is an audio-visual history project, which aims to document the personal accounts of "The Men in Scarlet" from the First World War to the present day. The videos are available to view at www.nam.ac.uk

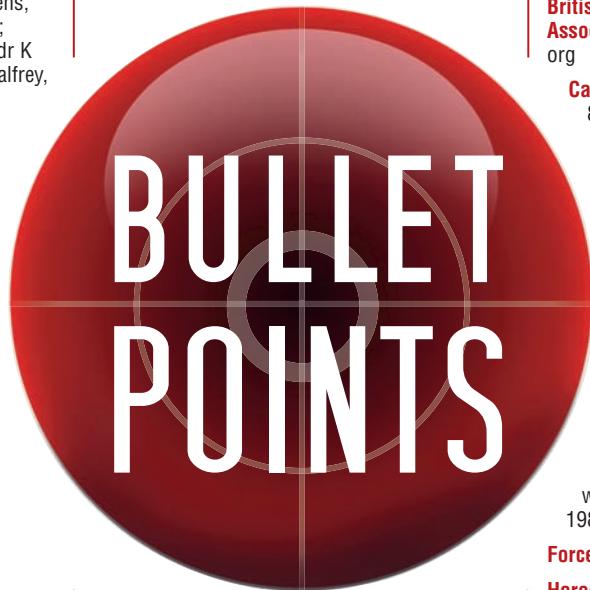
June 6: Mercian Regiment – New Colours. This unique event will be held at Worcester Warriors Rugby Club. Gates open 0900 with the parade taking place from 1100-1215. Tickets are £2 each. After the parade there will be a number of subsidised options for food priced from £4 to £17. This is the first time the regiment has been presented with colours following their amalgamation in 2007. For more information please contact the colours project officer on 01543 434352.

June 11-14: Soldier Technology 2013. The 12th Annual Soldier Modernisation Conference and Exhibition, Olympia Conference Centre, London. For more details visit www.soldiertechnology.com

June 16: Afghan Appeal Fund Day of Cricket. Burton's Court, Royal Hospital Chelsea. 1100-1700. The Army Wanderers, Eton College, Afghan Appeal Fund XI and the sponsors Freshfield Bruckhaus Deringer will be bowling a few overs to raise cash for the AAF. All welcome. Entry £15 including lunch. Under-12s free. For more information log on to www.afghanappealfund.org.uk

June 21: Service personnel are being offered a two-for-one ticket deal on admission to **Royal Ascot**. In addition to world-class horse racing, guests will be able to enjoy

the spectacle of the parade ring, the royal procession and traditional singing around the bandstand, as well as gaining access to the exclusive Armed Forces bar. To book call 01344 878536 or visit www.ascot.co.uk/military using promotional code "Military13". Forces ID will be required on entry.



June 27-28: RUSI Land Warfare Conference – The 2013 Royal United Services Institute LWC will take place at The Institution of Engineering and Technology, Savoy Place, London. The event aims to provide an opportunity to influence thinking and decisions and encourage debate and discussion on key issues facing the British Army. The conference is open to Service and civilian personnel of all ranks, Regular and Reserve. Attendance from junior officers, SNCOs and staff college students is particularly encouraged. Further details on the application process and costs are available in ABN 24/13 or by visiting www.rusi.org/landwarfare

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

June 29: Members of the three Armed Services will march in the **London Community Pride** event. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender personnel and their colleagues are encouraged to boost the Army numbers. Further details in DIN 2013DIN01-042.



DIRECTORY

ABF The Soldiers' Charity: 0845 241 4820

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

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

Army LGBT Forum: www.armylgbt.org.uk; chair@armylgbt.org.uk

Armed Forces Muslim Association: Chaplain 0207 414 3252; www.afma.org.uk

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

Army Ornithological Society: www.armybirding.org.uk

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

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

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

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

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries@ceas.detsa.co.uk

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

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

Forcesline: UK – 0800 731 4880; Germany – 0800 1827 395; Cyprus – 080 91065; Falklands – #6111; from operational theatres – Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) – 0044 1980 630854.

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Heroes Welcome: www.heroeswelcome.co.uk

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

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

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

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

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

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

Remount: 01451 850 341; www.remount.net

Royal British Legion: www.britishlegion.org.uk

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

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

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

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

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



INTELLIGENCE

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

ABN 23/13: Removal of financial incentives

ABN 22/13: PADR – Performance award
ABN 21/13: Budget pay awards
ABN 20/13: Promotion from TA or Regular Reserve into full-time Reserve service full commitment
ABN 19/13: Long service advance of pay waiver premium
ABN 18/13: Future British Forces Broadcasting Service
ABN 17/13: X factor increase final
ABN 16/13: Voluntary early release scheme 2012-14
ABN 15/13: AFPRB pay award final
ABN 14/13: Armed Forces continuous attitude survey
ABN 13/13: Re-subordination of ESG
ABN 12/13: Sports supplements misinformation *Soldier* magazine
ABN 11/13: Civilian RRA recommendations
DIN 2013DIN01-072: Amendment to JSP 477 – community development, youth and play work; and consultation on next revision
DIN 2013DIN01-071: Non-industrial civilian personnel policy meeting, May 30, 2012
DIN 2013DIN01-070: 68th Defence Whitley Council meeting, September 6, 2012
DIN 2013DIN01-069: Pay and non-consolidated performance awards – formal disagreement meeting, December 13, 2012
DIN 2013DIN01-068: Withdrawal of the human resources professional standards
DIN 2013DIN01-067: Advanced command and staff course
DIN 2013DIN01-066: Army career management training – train the trainer package “training in a box”

DIN 2013DIN01-065: Dental treatment rates overseas
DIN 2013DIN01-064: Launch of revised policy and procedures for civilians who are or may like to consider becoming Reservists
DIN 2013DIN01-063: Armed Forces Covenant (Libor) Fund
DIN 2013DIN01-059: Late entry commission in the Corps of Royal Engineers
DIN 2013DIN01-057: Late entry commission in the Royal Artillery and the Royal Army Physical Training Corps
DIN 2013DIN01-056: JHC HQ restructuring
DIN 2013DIN01-055: Increase in the pensions earnings cap 2013-14
DIN 2013DIN01-054: Relationship education courses within the Armed Forces
DIN 2013DIN01-053: Long service advance of pay (LSAP) – review of the LSAP waiver premium
DIN 2013DIN01-052: Annual “Chadri Kala” Sikh moral development course – May 17-19, 2013
DIN 2013DIN01-051: Process for exceptional case funding requests
DIN 2013DIN01-049: Increase in the rate of excess fares allowance from April 6, 2013
DIN 2013DIN01-048: Cleanse of HR qualifications on HRMS
DIN 2013DIN02-002: Transmission of STRAP TK clearances for overseas visits
DIN 2013DIN03-005: Launch of the new Middle East and North Africa strategy and supporting website on DII-Secret
DIN 2013DIN04-046: Defence Equipment Support contractor support arrangements for ESIX
DIN 2013DIN04-045: Weapon equipment –

declaration of obsolete/obsolescent status
DIN 2013DIN04-044: Amendment of the EH operational modules
DIN 2013DIN04-043: Lifejackets – replacement of pre-April 2005 UML Mk 6 operating heads NSN – 0472/4220-99-991-1868
DIN 2013DIN04-042: MoD Sanctuary and Energy Awards 2013 – calling notice for nominations
DIN 2013DIN04-041: Replacement smoke grenades
DIN 2013DIN04-040: The United States-United Kingdom Defence Trade Cooperation Treaty
DIN 2013DIN04-039: Declaration of extension to out of service date – pyrotechnic pistol 1 inch No.1 Mk 5
DIN 2013DIN04-038: Review of mandatory equipment inspection policy
DIN 2013DIN04-037: Declaration of obsolescence – GPS navigation sets and receiver sets
DIN 2013DIN04-035: Equipment tables, scales and schedules
DIN 2013DIN04-034: Minister (DEST) Acquisition Awards 2013 – calling notice for nominations
DIN 2013DIN04-033: Confirmed out of service date director artillery L1A2
DIN 2013DIN04-032: Airworthiness and other domain implications of adhesive, tapes and sealants contract, agreed firm schedule items part 2
DIN 2013DIN05-014: New air finance military capability model
DIN 2013DIN05-013: MoD basic grade messaging (X400) move to SMTP

Continued on page 64

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JUST HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?



TEN details have been changed on Shane Wilkinson's photograph of the Royal Artillery's last surviving Railway Howitzer on its way to form the centrepiece of an exhibition at the Het Spoorwegmuseum in Holland. Circle the differences in the left image and send the panel to **HOAY 858**,

Soldier, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by May 31.

A photocopy is acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted.

First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and

third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The results will be announced in the July issue. Usual rules apply. **March's winners:** First correct entry drawn at random was Sarah Christian, 9 AAC, Thirsk. **Runners up:** Steve Hawkins, AHDSU, Wattisham and Shelly Holness, 3 PWRR, Canterbury.



DIN 2013DIN05-012: Public disclosure of commercial management information

DIN 2013DIN05-011: Re-organisation of combat tracks group to the armoured vehicles programmes

DIN 2013DIN05-010: Formation of the Defence Primary Health Care (DPHC) south region and transfer of regional rehabilitation units to DPHC

DIN 2013DIN05-008: Relocation of HQ tactical medical wing

DIN 2013DIN06-012: Policy for the vaccination of civilian welders and hot-metal cutters against pneumococcal disease

DIN 2013DIN06-011: JSP 403, volume 2, change 6, amendment 2 and range safety notices

DIN 2013DIN06-009: Release of JSP 319 – edition 3 – AL 6 joint Service safety regulations for the storage and handling of gases

DIN 2013DIN06-008: JSP 482 MoD explosives regulations edition January 4, 2013

DIN 2013DIN07-053: Change of responsibility for Mod VBS2 software management

DIN 2013DIN07-051: Qualified weapons instructor intelligence surveillance reconnaissance course

DIN 2013DIN07-050: Officers' petroleum course 2014

DIN 2013DIN07-049: School of Aerospace battle management courses

DIN 2013DIN07-047: Exercise Caribbean Wings 2013-14 – exercise instruction

DIN 2013DIN07-046: Defence instructional techniques and defence instructional techniques (trainer) courses delivered by the AES: 2013-14 and Field Army franchise support

DIN 2013DIN07-044: Joint and single Service security, intelligence, photographic and geo-spatial training courses for training year

DIN 2013DIN07-043: Defence language courses for training year 2013-14

DIN 2013DIN09-003: The Alan Hirst Memorial Prize

DIN 2013DIN09-002: Armed Forces Day, June 29, 2013

DIN 2013DIN10-019: Military equitation courses 2013

DIN 2013DIN10-018: Army triathlon events calendar 2013

DIN 2013DIN10-017: The Army Golf Association – major events 2013

DIN 2013DIN10-016: Army Sport Climbing Championships 2013

DIB 26/13: New arrangements for performance management and managing poor performance

DIB 25/13: Joint Forces Command becomes fully operational

DIB 24/13: The new operating model for defence

DIB 23/13: PUS and VCDS define role of the 3rd chief of defence personnel

DIB 22/13: Chancellor's budget statement – public sector measures

DIB 21/13: Armed Forces Day 2013 – 100 days to go

DIB 20/13: Publication of the Service

complaints commissioner's fifth annual report

DIB 19/13: Chancellor's budget statement – X factor

DIB 18/13: Successor to chief of the defence staff appointed

DIB 17/13: Armed Forces pay award 2013

DIB 16/13: Civil service reform: terms and conditions review – proposed changes for broader banded staff below the SCS

DIB 15/13: Launch of MoneyForce, a new financial website for the Armed Forces



ROADSHOWS

The Army Engagement Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. The event starts with a drinks reception, is followed by a presentation and questions and culminates with refreshments. There will be a range of military personnel on hand to answer any of your questions. Call 01276 412880 or email your name and address to **apt.mod@btconnect.com** with the event you are interested in attending.

May: 8, Kingston-upon-Thames; **June:** 4, Stamford; 5, Aberdeen; 6, Glasgow; 6, Edinburgh; 25, Cardiff.



SEARCHLINE

The producers of a pilot show for **Channel 4** are looking for people to put themselves forward to win a holiday for 12 of their family and friends. If you are interested in having a laugh and possibly winning a luxury break for you, your family or friends, contact **takeoff.uk@talkback.co.uk** by Sunday, May 12.

Firepower: The Royal Artillery Museum needs to hear urgently from serving and ex-Servicemen and women of the Royal Regiment of Artillery for oral history project Fighting Talk. They are recording 50 gunners' personal conflict experiences from post-Second World War to the present, with particular focus on the campaigns in the Falklands, Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan. Interviews will be preserved for future generations in the archives of both Firepower and the Imperial War Museum. Participants receive a CD copy. Contact Annette McCartney via **annettem@firepower.org.uk** or 020 8312 7113.

Wayne Woolley would like to find a friend called Helen Silvers. They served together with **9 Supply Regiment** between 1998 and 2002 but lost contact. If anyone has any information please contact Mr Woolley on 07503 230754.

Lee Yarwood-Ross, a PhD researcher, is looking to collect data from men who have experienced lower-limb amputation in Iraq and Afghanistan to further understand the challenges they have faced. Those interested in taking part can submit their stories at **www.surveymonkey.com/s/LowerLimbAmp** and he is also interested in doing some face-to-face interviews. For more information call 07545 885686 or email via **lee.yarwood-ross@stu.mmu.ac.uk**

2013 marks the **50th Anniversary of the founding of The British Army Golf Club (Sennelager)**. The organisation is looking for information that could help to keep alive the history of 50 years of golf. If you were a member or know a member, all memories are welcome. Please send any letters to British Army Golf Course (Sennelager), Sennelager 1 33175 Bad Lippspringe, Germany or email **james.goff@paderborn.com**. Visit **www.sennelagergolfclub.de**

REUNION

All serving and retired members of the cavalry and yeomanry are invited to muster on Sunday, May 12 in Hyde Park for the 89th annual parade and service of **The Combined Cavalry Old Comrades Association**. The parade steps off at 1055 and the salute will be taken by a senior member of the royal family. Those attending are invited to form up with their regiments on The Broadwalk between 0930 and 1045. Entrance to the service at the bandstand is by ticket only and a limited number of wheelchairs for those unable to march but who wish to participate are also available. Applications for tickets for both the seated and standing enclosures should be made in advance through regimental home headquarters. Application for a wheelchair should be made in the same way. For more details contact Maj D Carter, headquarters squadron leader, Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment on 0207 414 2564.

Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regimental Association. The annual reunion will be held at Worcester Rugby Club from 1200-1800 on Saturday, June 1. Past and present members of the regiment and their families are welcome. Admission £2 each. Further details from C Baines, assistant regimental secretary, on 0115 946 5415.

79th Artillery clerks' reunion and association dinner on June 21-23 at Larkhill. AGM followed by dinner on Saturday, June 22. Full details from the reunion secretary Maj Ian Constantine, 32 Regt RA, Roberts Bks, Larkhill, Salisbury SP4 8QU. Telephone 01980 845253 or email **ian.constantine758@mod.uk**

Royal Hampshire Regiment annual reunion luncheon for all Territorial battalions and successors in 1 and 2 Wessex on Saturday, September 28 at Newburgh House, Winchester, 1200 for 1300. Contact Maj Ian Taylor at 4 Cedar Wood Close, Fair Oak, Eastleigh by telephone 023 8069 4771 or via **ian.p.b.taylor@btinternet.com**

407 Troop RCT will host an informal reunion for members who served between 1980 and 1983 on the weekend of Friday, September 20 to Saturday, September 21 at Cirencester. For further information please contact Colin (Thommo) Thompson on 07887 986 588 or email **colin.thompson103@mod.uk**

A reunion for all former members of the **Army Dog Unit, Northern Ireland** who served in the province between 1973 and 2007 will be held at The Royal British Legion Club Arlewas on Saturday, May 4. For more information email John Tucker via **johnatucker70@yahoo.com**

HOME TRUTHS

A PERSONAL view from Catherine Spencer, chief executive of the Army Families Federation. Log on to www.aff.org.uk for more information



Return to the UK not child's play

GERMANY, once known as the land of milk and honey, is not regarded as the lucrative posting it once was.

Although there are still the significant attractions of tax-free cars and petrol and the country's child benefit which non-serving spouses can claim, many families find their lifestyle is more limited as the cost of living and challenging exchange rates reduce disposable income.

However, those with small children – particularly where the partner is stay-at-home – will find that the additional assistance of the above elements still make this country a great posting.

Additionally, tax-free alcohol and cigarettes are seen as a bonus by some but reduced employment opportunities for partners make it a less appealing option for many families.

The challenge for commanders whilst the Army draws down is to ensure that the provision of schooling, childcare (which has always been an issue) and health facilities is still viable.

As JHQ moves east, the pressure on

housing is also a concern.

So while the UK works towards squeezing everyone in, British Forces Germany (BFG) has the difficult task of ensuring that schools maintain sufficient pupils to be viable as a staged exit is planned.

We are assured by Headquarters BFG that they are adopting a "cliff-edge" approach and having worked in Germany I am well aware of how committed these staff are to getting it right.

Rather than a dwindling of numbers across the whole country, each garrison will be shut abruptly so that all services will be available until withdrawal.

BFG is well versed at closing areas; at its height 67,000 troops were posted there and since the early 1990s locations across northern Germany have been shut so they have the benefit of experience and lessons learnt to ensure drawdown is as pain free as possible for those still serving there.

The Army Families Federation (AFF) will be monitoring the situation.

Our Germany branch and its

coordinators enable Service personnel and their loved ones to feed back on anything they find problematic.

This year's AFF Germany conference will allow attendees to voice their concerns over current issues and the return to the UK.

Senior commanders, including Director General Personnel Maj Gen Richard Nugge, will be available to answer questions and I am delighted that the Minister of State for Defence, Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, Mark Francois, will be on hand to address the high-profile event and we hope take questions as well.

The session, held in Herford's Divisional Conference Centre on June 27, is always a sell-out so book your seat early by registering at www.aff.org.uk/germanyconference/index.htm

All families and personnel are welcome to raise issues and anyone can post a question on our website. ■

Sad goodbye to Germany

WHILST I am a fan of the Army returning to Britain, attracted by a reported £1.8 billion boost to the country's economy and the greater availability of work and training for spouses, there are of course some things that we'll all miss dearly about life in Germany.

Not least, it will be sad to say goodbye to the close proximity and availability of skiing, Christmas markets, Oktoberfest and excellent community spirit.

Families will also pine for the country's excellent facilities for children – from the wonderful play parks to "tiergartens", which made entertaining little ones easy.

Whilst it's time to be UK-based, there is no doubt that overseas postings provide an opportunity to experience life in a different location which many individuals will mourn.

General Officer Commanding Germany, Maj Gen John Henderson, will be introducing a one-stop shop for "BFG-ing" cars and additional measures to simplify administrative processes across the country.





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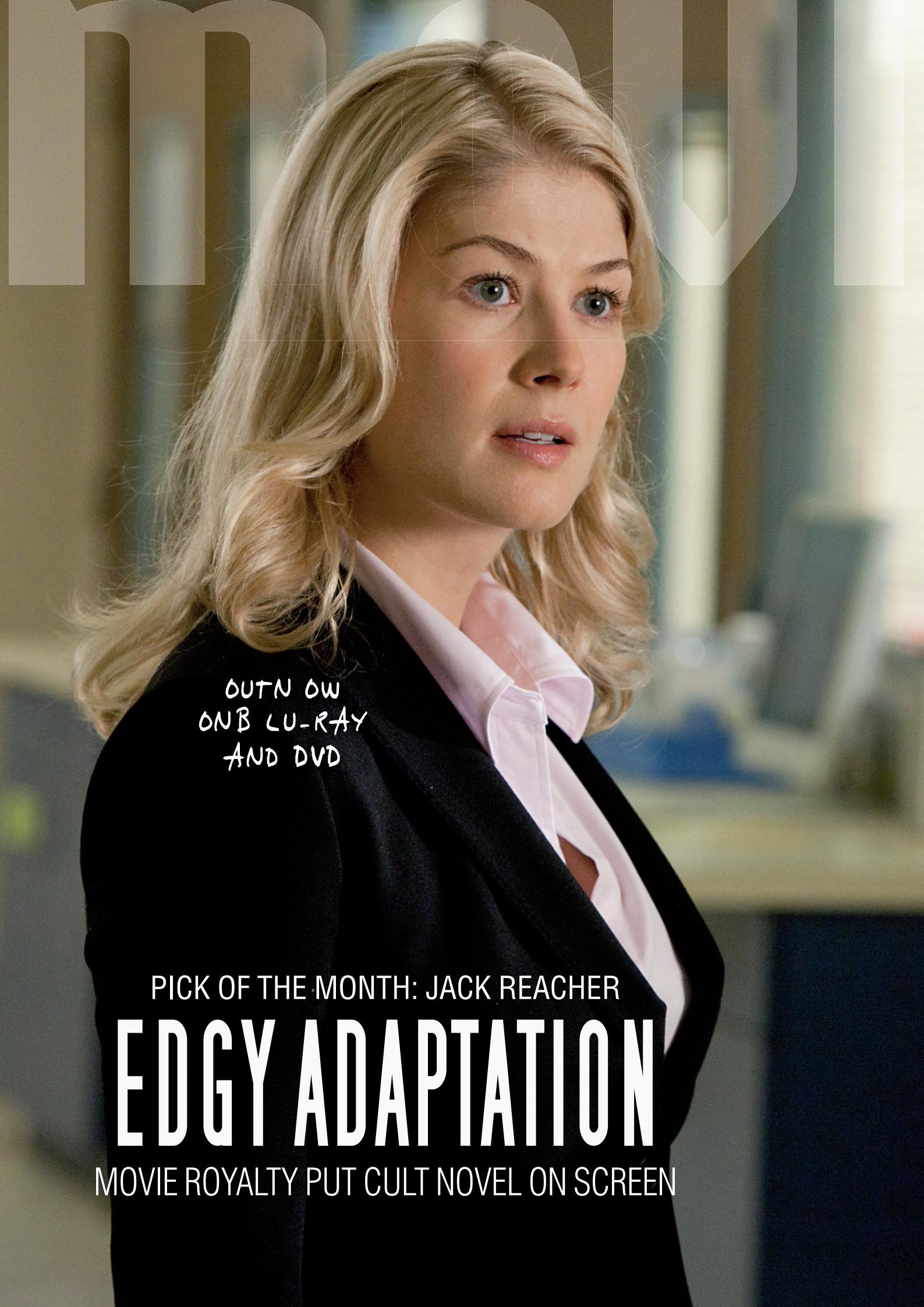
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PICK OF THE MONTH: JACK REACHER

EDGY ADAPTATION

MOVIE ROYALTY PUT CULT NOVEL ON SCREEN

Interview: Joe Clapson

N a brutally violent adaptation of a bestselling Lee Child novel, the writer of *The Usual Suspects* has brought the no-nonsense character of Jack Reacher to the movie screen.

In the knowledge that an army of Reacher fans demand a decent showing, Christopher McQuarrie has written and directed a fast-paced thriller with Tom Cruise as his testosterone-loaded protagonist.

Aficionados of the book series have pointed out that their paperback hero is 6ft 5ins and 18 stone, which differs from Cruise's pint-sized frame, but that is a minor detail and doesn't hold the film back.

Reacher – a former army investigator – is called into action to prove the innocence of a man accused of a multiple sniper attack in Pittsburgh.

Working alongside defence lawyer Helen Rodin (Rosamund Pike), Cruise's character analyses evidence and uses his physical prowess to aggressively dispatch anyone deemed an obstacle.

To satisfy his audience McQuarrie serves up some of the best vehicle pursuits in recent memory.

"The night car chase scene took forever to shoot," the director said.

"I knew there were high expectations. But we also knew we were playing with a rigged deck. We had Tom Cruise, and he knows how to drive – it was pretty edgy stuff."

However, it wasn't multimillion-dollar action sequences that caused concern for McQuarrie but creating perfect chemistry among his stellar team of actors.

"The challenging stuff is always character," added the Oscar winner.

"I was looking for a certain attitude from Helen. Rosamund and I couldn't meet face-to-face for an audition so I met her on Skype.

"She immediately had me laughing and I wanted Helen to have that strength and humour."

On her role as the risk-taking attorney working opposite one of Hollywood's biggest names, Pike (*Made in Dagenham*, *An Education*) said: "We see a lawyer who is being tested emotionally and psychologically. She is very smart and at the same time very understandable."

"Reacher makes Helen think; he's annoying and he touches on her weak points."

"He exposes her where her thinking is flawed – he is a challenge and I like a good challenge."

The film is based purely on Child's novel *One Shot* and with a long list of further material still untouched there is now potential to build a lucrative movie franchise.

Following a head-turning display in this offering Pike said she would be happy to do more.

"I would always be up for another one. I would work with Tom Cruise again in a flash because he is that inspiring," said the Londoner. ■

VIVACIOUS VIEWING

**EVIL DEAD 2** out now

AS soon as I opened this special edition Blu-Ray it went straight in the machine and I watched it four times in one week. I do not believe you will find anyone in the Forces community that doesn't love this film and if such a person exists, they are strange. This is a cult classic – it is that simple. If the *Evil Dead* movies themselves aren't enough then the acting legend that is **Bruce Campbell** surely is. The newly added features on this version completely justify you buying it for a second time. Once you've watched them all you can simply feed on *Evil Dead 3*.

Cpl Adam Jackson, 3 Para

**I DIDN'T COME HERE TO DIE** out now

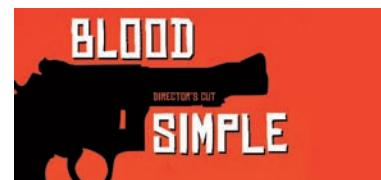
THIS film is for lovers of low-budget horror movies with a touch of humour. Six young Americans on voluntary service go to a wooded area to prepare the site as a community resource. Despite an alcohol ban a drunken party ensues, resulting in the second-in-command poking her eye out on a tree branch and having to be taken to the hospital by the group chief. Without leadership accidents start to happen and the death-count grows until only one person is left. The surreal ending provides a real surprise with a darkly comical twist.

Andy Kay, ex-RS

**WIN... THE MARINE 3: HOMECOMING**

IN the series' most explosive entry yet, Sgt Jake Carter (**Mike Mizanin** of WWE fame) returns home to discover that his sister has been abducted by violent extremists. While on a mission to rescue his sibling he finds himself fighting terrorists bent on mass destruction. *Soldier* has teamed up with Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment to offer a copy of the DVD to five lucky readers. To have a chance of winning, tell us Mizanin's wrestling nickname. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Closing date: May 31

**BLOOD SIMPLE** out now

AT the outset I wondered why you would bother watching this director's cut of the **Coen brothers'** first film. I'm glad I persevered though because after a slow start it became far more than its dated first impressions. A wealthy businessman hires a hitman to kill his cheating wife but the gunman turns out to be dishonest. The movie explores infidelity and abusive relationships with occasional flashes of **Tarantino**-esque irony and the longest buried-alive scene I've endured. Casting is spot on and the macabre ending is genuinely unpleasant.

Maj Neil Johnson, AAC

**PENGUINS** out now

FROM the same people who made *Earthflight* and *Polar Bear: Spy On The Ice*, this documentary uses some pretty off-the-wall methods to film penguins in various environments around the world. From the Antarctic to the South American deserts and the Falkland Islands, various breeds of the black and white bird are followed using spy cameras cunningly disguised as eggs, rocks and even animatronic penguins. I cannot fault the excellent filmmaking in any way but I did find the background music a bit annoying at times.

Rodge Tapply, ex-RE

**WIN... THE NEW TWILIGHT ZONE**

THE breathtaking television series that redefined the fantasy genre with its displays of grandeur and a first-class cast list is coming to DVD. Broadcast from 1985 to 1989, the iconic series continued the legacy of the original and took screen drama to a new level. *Soldier* has teamed up with Shock Entertainment to offer the 13-disc box set to one lucky reader. To have a chance of winning, tell us which year the new series first hit television screens. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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MAY'S
GAMING GREATS

PICK OF THE MONTH:

JUDGEMENT DAY

SUBTERRANEAN SHOOTER HITS TOP GEAR

Review: David McDougall

THE last time we were involved in the defence of Sera – the planet on which *Gears of War* is set – we were fighting hordes of evil locust and Lambent.

But don't worry; we won and all was well in the world.

So it seems odd that Epic Games, the joint developer of this title, would take us back to our old stomping ground.

Once you jump into the campaign you immediately notice subtle differences between *Judgement* and its brethren – and that's a good thing.

The latest instalment takes place in the early days of the conflict, not long after the vile locust emerged and began mercilessly laying waste to everything that wasn't as ugly as they were.

But instead of jumping into the mighty shoes of Marcus Fenix again, you take the reins as Damon Baird and each member of Kilo Squad thereafter.

If fighting a subterranean menace wasn't bad enough, the opening scene sees our new hero and his comrades on trial for an unspecified crime.

For those new to the franchise, fear not. *Judgement* swiftly brings you up to speed, and the basics of surviving and winning the intense firefights are quick to pick up.

And for veteran campaigners there are plenty of exciting additions and inclusions to make this a fresh and challenging experience for everyone.

If the difficulty levels don't cut it you can choose to undertake the mission declassification element.

These are specific modifiers that make a task more demanding, earning you extra stars to unlock additional weapon skins, characters or the aftermath mission that takes place during *Gears of War 3*.

These variations might involve utilising only one type of weapon, reducing visibility, or including a time limit on each section of a particular level.

They also add snippets of fiction that are exclusive to Kilo Squad.

Once you tire of the campaign, *Judgement* provides plenty of other challenges in its multiplayer mode.

Standard online play is as reliable as ever and also features "bots" for those who don't have access to Xbox Live or just fancy honing their skills against AI-controlled rivals.

Overrun is a team-orientated player versus player version of the old horde mode, whereas survival pits a team of gamers against computer opponents.

Though *Judgement* certainly looks and feels like your typical *Gears of War* offering, it's a finely polished and refined version of what came before.

The visuals are a feast to look at and the whole game feels tighter and more fluid yet reassuringly familiar as well.

And the humanity of it all shines through in this iteration far more than the steroid-induced lookalikes of yesteryear.

If you're a fan of the series, this is a sound investment that is worth making. If you're not, it's about time you were. ■

Review: David McDougall

VIRTUAL PLAYGROUND

HOST WARRIOR 2

for Xbox 360/PS3/PC

VISUALLY this release is atrocious and makes very poor use of its graphics system. The game only lasted five hours on the hardest setting and the multiplayer option suffers from having just two maps. The missions are straightforward and very linear but the parts where you actually look down the scope and grasp the ballistics associated with it are quite good. It even requires you to squeeze the trigger as opposed to snatching it. However, the enemy's behaviour is unrealistic and the death animations are quite possibly the worst I have ever seen.

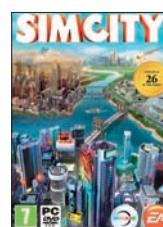


Sgt Graeme Russell, Scottish Tpt Regt

SIM CITY

for PC

THE point of this *Sim City* reboot is the same as it's always been: transform a plot of open land into a hustling, bustling metropolis. As the ultimate mayor and planner, you have the god-like power to construct a small town then elevate it to a thriving city. But the title requires online servers and this is where it falls down. I've been kicked out of sessions and unable to connect at times. Without the ability to save progress it is frustrating to lose hours of work due to a crash. This could be the best-ever *Sim City* game, but only if the support starts firing on all cylinders.



Sgt Lee Gibbs, REME

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 14

for Xbox/PS3

DEVELOPERS EA Sports offer the latest addition to their hugely successful *Tiger Woods* franchise but, despite a few tweaks and a fine polish, it is pretty similar to what has gone before. The control system remains unchanged, which is a good thing and means players can pick up their clubs and head straight to the first tee. The introduction of some of the biggest stars from years gone by, along with their ageing kit and equipment, is a nice touch and there are plenty of courses, tournaments and online options to keep hardened fans entertained.

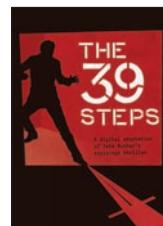


Richard Long, Soldier

THE 39 STEPS

for PC

THIS game is an adaptation of John Buchan's classic espionage novel of the same name. It allows the player to take on the role of protagonist Richard Hannay, who must solve the mystery of *The 39 Steps* before the bad guys catch him. It creates an effective air of mystery and suspense without resorting to high-end graphics or overly complex gameplay. This is not a release for those who love shoot-em ups, it is an engrossing and absorbing narrative that rewards players who like to be drawn into a story and immerse themselves in the world they inhabit.

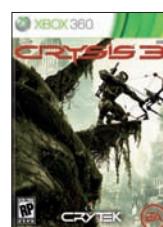


Capt Alex Janaway, RAMC

CRYYSIS 3

for Xbox 360/PS3/PC

THE *Crysis* series is renowned for its stunning visuals and the third instalment is no exception. Your character, Prophet, is waging a war against Ceph and the Cell Corporation in the New York of 2047. He has an arsenal of futuristic guns and weapons at his disposal and these options allow you to adapt your style according to each situation. This is almost worth buying for the graphics alone but when they are complemented by a great campaign and some interesting and innovative multiplayer modes it makes the game a must-have.



Stephen Smith, MoD Corsham

ARMY OF TWO: DEVIL'S CARTEL

for Xbox 360/PS3

THIS title offers a whole new aspect to combat and destruction thanks to its impressive use of the Frostbite 2 engine. Enemies learn as the game evolves and will try to flank and outmanoeuvre you at every opportunity. The graphics are exceptional but the storyline is long and slow. After a while you start to question your resolve but eventually there is a good twist to developments. If you are after a release with a strong plot this may not be for you. But if you are looking to shoot up plenty of bad guys and build scores to purchase additional extras then it is a must-have.



Sgt Craig Backhouse, Coldm Gds

MAY'S
MUSICAL
MASTERCLASS

PICK OF THE MONTH

FEEL-GOOD FACTOR

ROCKERS RETURN WITH PLAYFUL VIBE

Review: Richard Long

AFTER hitting the musical headlines with three Grammy-nominated albums, alternative rockers Yeah Yeah Yeahs have been enjoying some time away from the group dynamic.

Singer Karen O co-created the psycho-opera *Stop The Virgins* before collaborating with Trent Reznor on *Immigrant Song*, which featured on *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.

Guitarist Nick Zinner curated, composed and led an orchestral work entitled *41 Strings* in New York and the Sydney Opera House, while drummer Brian Chase has been focusing on a solo project.

However, the trio have put their distractions to one side to reunite for the release of *Mosquito*, an album that sees the band moving in a distinctly positive direction.

"We would love for this music to make our fans feel something, whatever that may be," O explained.

"So much feeling went into this record, it was the rope ladder thrown down into the ditch for us to climb up and dust ourselves off."

"I hope others can climb up it too; we're excited to share the good vibes."

"We took a more playful, lo-fi approach to songwriting this time round."

"Much of the music we created was demoed in our little basement studio in Manhattan with drum machines, a sample keyboard and tons of delay."

"I think this record has more moodier and tripped-out songs than you've ever heard from us before."

"You might catch some roots reggae and minimalist psychedelic influences in there."

"It is a feel-good, food-for-the-soul, chicken-soup-for-the-ears Yeah Yeah Yeahs album, which doesn't mean easy listening – it means kind of raw, kind of chaotic, kind of dreamy. Kind of us."

Mosquito marks a strong diversion from the band's last offering *It's Blitz*, which hinted at an attempt to break into the mainstream, and returns to the raw and edgy sound they had previously been acclaimed for.

Single *Sacrilege* is easily the standout track thanks to its trippy undertones, *Under the Earth* embraces a reggae vibe, while the fun approach is evident on *Subway*, which includes audio samples from the subway.

Although this may struggle to make the impact of debut offering *Fever To Tell* it does have its merits and should be considered as a welcome addition to the Yeah Yeah Yeahs' mounting back catalogue. ■

TUNES FOR THE TROOPS

THE 20/20 Experience by JT

POP sensation **Justin Timberlake** has been away from the musical scene for a while but the release of *The 20/20 Experience* marks his triumphant return. This fabulous album boasts strong and distinctive vocals and with some tracks stretching beyond six minutes in length there is plenty to enjoy. The focus seems to be on ballads and by listening to this you cannot help but feel relaxed and mellow. *Mirrors* is the standout track and sees beautifully written lyrics backed by a great beat. Overall, this is his best album to date and I thoroughly enjoyed every song.



Kim Cresswell, Army wife

Bloodsports by Suede

OFTEN billed as the poor man's **Oasis**, **Suede** have attempted, like so many other 90s bands, to reform and rekindle lost fame. The first three tunes – *Barriers*, *Snowblind* and *It Starts and Ends With You* – kick off this offering well but it slowly falls away with a descent into deep and moody songs. That is, until final track *Faultlines*, which is an unadulterated popish rock number with a snappy guitar riff – the very essence of what *Bloodsports* is about. Although it fails to hit the highs of the band's defining album *Animal Nitrate*, it is still a very good and distinctively **Suede** release.



LCpl Scott Roberts, Londons

Blood and Chemistry by Arcane Roots

IF Coheed & Cambria and **Mumford & Sons** had a lovechild, the result would be **Arcane Roots**. The trio's first full album is very impressive and with a conglomeration of influences the band deliver rhythmically complex "math rock" with clinical devastation. Compared to the musical voyage that is *Slow, Sacred Shapes* and *Tryptich* are more aggressive. With Andrew Groves' vocals ranging from soaring and soothing to frenzied and furious, you cannot predict what comes next. The standout track is *Held Like Kites*, in which profound lyrics combine with haunting guitar leads to move your insides.



Capt Matt Walpole, PWRR

Reincarnated by Snoop Lion

THE expert cannabis smoker who was a pioneer of the G-funk genre has, for the time being, converted to Rastafarianism with the new name of **Snoop Lion** for this album. Produced by **Diplo's** Major Lazer team it is a well put together creation but isn't a successful change of musical direction for the wannabe reggae artist. Despite a few forays into old school beats with *So Long*, which is decent, this is merely a record featuring famous faces – including the likes of rap star **Busta Rhymes** and pop princess **Miley Cyrus** – who attempt and fail to pull off convincing Jamaican accents.



Joe Clapson, Soldier

Bankrupt by Phoenix

ON the back of the seismic success of *Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix* this French four-piece have, perhaps sensibly, stuck to a formula that proved hugely popular. However, the fifth studio release, which has been four years in the making, was worth the wait and serves up plenty of synth, oodles of keyboards and multilayered vocals. The finely polished record is clearly influenced by sounds of the 80s but also confirms the band as innovators and classic-pop revivalists. *Bankrupt* is a pulse-raiser and consolidates the group's lofty position at the top of the alternative rock genre.



Richard Long, Soldier

#Willpower by Will.i.am

FOR his fourth solo studio release this **Black Eyed Peas** heavyweight has enlisted the "talents" of, among others, **Justin Bieber**, **Miley Cyrus**, **Nicole Scherzinger** and **Britney Spears**. Clearly with that roster of auto-tuned idols, this saccharine pop-fest will fly off the shelves but is one purely for the mass market. **Will.i.am** has become something of a household favourite with his witty interjections on BBC's *The Voice* and he won't lose fans with this offering. However, the tracks are celebrity-fuelled dancefloor fodder and definitely do not mark him out as a musical genius, as some people have suggested.



Joe Clapson, Soldier

BOOKS

MAY'S MEANDERINGS

PICK OF THE MONTH: **CONGO CONQUEST**

EX-ROYAL MARINE RECOUNTS
DEATH-DEFYING AFRICAN ADVENTURE



To boldly go: *Canoeing the Congo* is out in paperback on May 6 priced £9.99

Interview: Becky Clark

WHITE man, white man, give us money," shouted the group of machete-wielding tribesmen as they pursued canoeist Phil Harwood, along the Congo River.

It was 2008 and the former Royal Marine had embarked on a solo quest to paddle the length of the mighty waterway from source to sea.

Throughout the five-month expedition, he would encounter not only death threats but snakes, crocodiles, swamps and treacherous rapids, as well as a serious bout of malaria.

Canoeing the Congo tells the tale of how he survived against the odds to become the first person to complete the 4,700-kilometre odyssey, seeing human nature at its best and worst along the way.

Among the many dangers he faced, Harwood cites the half hour he spent trying to out-paddle his would-be robbers as the most terrifying.

"They eventually caught me up," he told *Soldier*. "I basically morphed into a raging madman and went berserk, shouting threats and abuse at the top of my voice while waving around my machete with my arms splayed like a football hooligan.

"Luckily they bottled it."

Despite such narrow escapes, the 47-year-old said he seriously considered quitting just once.

"The only point where I thought about giving up but chose not to was as I entered the Luvua River section, which is extremely remote," explained the fearless ex-Commando.

"I was warned that there were still Mai-Mai rebels in the area, and told that if they caught me I would be killed and it wouldn't be a quick death.

"Eighteen months earlier two missionaries were captured, tortured, castrated and beheaded.

"Three South African kayakers had also drowned trying to negotiate the area."

Fortunately Harwood made it through the region and the rest of the trip unscathed, a fact he attributes largely to his days in the military.

"Tactical covert campsites at night in the bush, having confidence in myself as a result of arduous Marine training and mostly having the physical assurance to face hostile types without backing down got me through," he said.

"I never wanted any trouble, but I think the look in my eyes told people I wouldn't stand for any s***."

While aggression was not uncommon, Harwood also encountered humbling kindness and hospitality from the people he met on his journey, especially the friendly fishermen who helped him on his way.

The experience left him with a deep sense of how much most of us take for granted.

"We have so much opportunity in this country," he reflected.

"In some ways it has put more pressure on me to achieve my full potential and do something amazing with my life because I know there's never really an excuse with a British passport – it's just a case of working hard at it."

"In the Congo, it doesn't matter how much they graft, they're completely on their own, living with a totally corrupt government. They get nothing."

After five months surviving on little more than rice and his wits, Harwood returned to civilisation, describing the completion of his mission simply as "weird, but with an overwhelming sense of relief".

Although some 140 years have passed since Henry Morton Stanley became the first European to navigate the Congo, Harwood's book is proof that the path less travelled is still out there for those brave enough to seek it out. ■

RECONNOITRING READING

The Brunei Revolt

by Nick Van Der Blij

DESCRIBING a relatively little-known action fought by British forces shortly before the so-called Indonesian Confrontation, the book begins with a history of Brunei and North Borneo and the creation of Malaysia. The account of the revolt itself is researched in great detail but is rather dry and fails to absorb the reader. However, the lack of decent maps was the main drawback. Even to someone familiar with the geography, it proved impossible to follow the tactical or strategic movements, which was a disappointment.

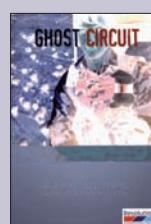


Maj (Retd) Alistair Clark

Ghost Circuit

by Raph Munro

ROOTED in the author's experiences in military intelligence and a multinational tobacco company, this novel sees a team of covert operators unearth a plot linking illegal cigarette sales to a terrorist cell threatening the lives of British troops in Afghanistan. Although a work of fiction, detailed descriptions of surveillance work lend the story authenticity and seem to offer a genuine glimpse into the murky world of private espionage. Taut action and well crafted characters make for a compelling read, while the ending raises hope that a sequel will follow.



Becky Clark, *Soldier*

The Tank War

by Mark Urban

BBC *Newsnight* correspondent **Mark Urban** has compiled a history of the entire Second World War through the eyes of a few men from the 5th Royal Tank Regiment.

Previously unearthed diaries and first-hand accounts from veterans reveal a warts-and-all picture of tank warfare and how Britain rediscovered its ability to conduct a form of conflict that it had pioneered. One regret is had this book been written ten years ago many more ex-tankies may have been able to contribute their stories. Nonetheless, an excellent addition to an ever-growing genre.

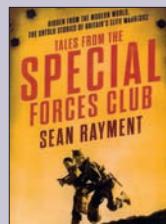


Maj Laurence Roche, AGC (ETS)

Tales from the Special Forces Club

by Sean Rayment

THIS book tells ten stories about the men and women who went behind enemy lines to take the fight to the opposition during the Second World War.



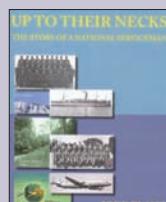
The tales of derring-do range from a very young girl whose job it was to finish training agents prior to their insertion, to the pilot who transported them and others who served in Europe, the desert or the jungle. Recounted in person to the author, their bravery, resourcefulness and modesty shine through. Gently uncovering immense feats of courage, the book is humbling and well worth reading.

Andy Kay, ex-RS

Up to their Necks

by Joe Plant

THIS excellent title is a scrapbook account of 1950s National Service. Appalled to be called up and put through basic training, **Joe Plant** stepped forward



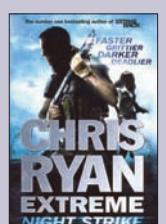
for overseas service to see the world, only to find himself in the Malayan Emergency. The book beautifully describes the paradox of conscription; those drafted would never have volunteered but the ensuing experiences were unique and friendships enduring. In these times of cutbacks, the text recalls the huge footprint of an Army supporting an empire. Highly recommended – not least for former National Servicemen.

Lt Col Andy Gladen, RE

Extreme Night Strike

by Chris Ryan

IN this second offering in the author's "Extreme" series, former SAS hero John Bald is a man at war with himself and fighting a losing battle with the bottle when he is reluctantly thrust back into one final mission. Predictably, the job goes pear-shaped and Bald is the fall guy. Finding himself fighting through the ghettos of Florida and the war-torn streets of Tripoli, he soon discovers the lines between friend and enemy are blurred and he will have to call on all of his skills to survive. You can't really go wrong with a **Chris Ryan** book – another belting read.



Cpl Adam Jackson, 3 Para

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WIN... A PAIR OF MACWET GLOVES

● Soldier has teamed up with MacWet to offer four readers a pair of these durable outdoor gloves. To be in with a chance of winning, tell us how much they cost per pair. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by May 31. Good luck!

TOP 9

Review: LCpl Michael McMurtry, IG

MACWET gloves are being marketed with some pretty big claims.

The breathable, hardwearing sports accessories – priced at an affordable £27.99 – boast an “all grip, no slip” technology that is apparently unrivalled in any type of outdoor environment.

I first used them in the Falkland Islands on exercise – and what better place to test this kit out.

With weather conditions in the field similar to those of the Brecon Beacons, the *MacWets* really had their work cut out.

Designed with both professional sportsmen and women and amateur adventurers in mind, the gloves had a rather more serious undertaking when put to the test in the harsh environment of the South Atlantic.

From the offset of the trial, I thought these gloves were superb.

They are so lightweight and thin that they make tasks such as changing mags and administrating yourself in the field simple.

Being so fine, however, can often pose the danger of damage to material under pressure.

But the *MacWets* do not seem vulnerable to rips and tears, and I found them to be very durable and hardwearing on unforgiving rock and shingle.

Their waterproof material – suitable for the most challenging of watersports – is surely the ultimate selling point for this gear.

Being thin means that even if soaked they dry within minutes when placed on a radiator back in camp or even when left on the user's hands on a windy day.

Most gloves currently on the market are bulky and uncomfortable, causing a negative impact on your movement.

However, the way the *MacWets*' Aquatec fabric responds to both moisture and climate change means users benefit from maximum grip and comfort at the same time.

The breathable palm fabric causes any moisture on the skin to be wicked to the outside as quickly as possible.

The gloves are available in 14 different sizes and a variety of colours – in either Micromesh for the warmer months or a cosy Climatec for more wintery conditions.

All in all, the *MacWets* are an awesome piece of kit for soldiers who mean business.

They come highly recommended. ■

gear

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ARMY CELEBRATES DOUBLE SUCCESS IN INTER-SERVICES OPENER

PICTURE: GRAEME MAIN





Riding high: Army surfing is targeting the upper echelons of Service sport thanks to a new outlook that includes professional coaching in Newquay

Crest of a wave

Report: Richard Long

Pictures: Graeme Main

HAVING seen sports such as rugby union, football and boxing receive top billing in Service circles the Army's surfers are now plotting their path to the big time.

For years the activity has been dismissed as nothing more than a laid back pastime but with a new management structure in place the military's wave riders have adopted a distinctly professional outlook.

Capt Rich Griffiths (RE) and Capt Tom Harrison (R Signals) are the men charged with revolutionising Army surfing and the duo have set clear goals to strive for in the coming years.

"Our aim is to drive the club forward and in a new direction, taking it from a group of mates living in the same area to a nationwide outfit with meets at different locations," Harrison told *SoldierSport* during the organisation's recent training

week in Newquay.

"We had just over 30 guys competing at the Army Championships and we have 150 on our mailing list. But we know there are so many more out there.

"This week gives them time off work; they can come and do the sport they enjoy and take it to the next level.



"The bodyboarders do their own thing while the more experienced surfers can go off and practise. There is something for everyone."

The training camp falls between the Army and tri-Service competitions and offers a challenging schedule that covers every aspect of the discipline.

Soldiers spend morning and afternoon sessions in the water and use video analysis to assess their technique.

The Newquay Activity Centre offers free professional coaching and the charity Surf Action lends its support to beginners and novices.

A number of the sport's leading lights are also on hand to deliver instructor talks to those taking part.

"If you play football this is the equivalent of having Premiership stars coming in; these guys are at the top of their game," Griffiths said.

"We are also providing training for instructors and beach lifeguards and have funding in place for six people to do



that this year.

"It means a junior NCO can set up a unit surf club and send 12 guys out on the water. That will help the sport grow."

A beginners' week is staged every September to encourage newcomers to the fold. They can then train throughout the season with a view to competing in the military competitions held at the end of the campaign.

"Surf culture is rapidly emerging in the UK," Harrison explained. "The Army lads are physically fit, dedicated and mentally robust."

"We want to merge new surfers with our existing talent so we can reach tri-Service level."

"The initial focus will be on expanding the senior set-up but from there we hope to increase our base with developmental and corps teams."

"Our aspiration is to see the Army compete as a club side."

"I am sure there are guys out there who surf every weekend and it would be great to see them doing that under the Service banner."

"YOU WOULD HAVE TO PAY THROUGH THE NOSE TO HAVE OPPORTUNITIES LIKE THIS AS CIVILIANS"

The Army Championships proved to be the perfect showcase for the talent within the ranks but there is still work to be done if the soldiers are to eclipse the achievements of the military's dominant team – the Royal Air Force.

Harrison said: "It was a good competition this year. The guys are able to pull off some pretty decent manoeuvres and the standard out on the water is quite high, which is encouraging to see."

"There are those that have been surfing a lot longer than others but the training week is about helping them improve."

"Everyone can get something from it so they can reach the next step in the sport."

"The RAF are so much more established than us but we want to produce a tri-Service winner."

The change in focus has been welcomed by surfing stalwart Sgt Dave Holden (RAPTC, pictured above), who has been part of the set-up for 14 years.

"It is very much needed," he explained. "We want to drive the sport on and we now have the management structure

and organisation to take things to a new level and compete with the Army's more mainstream pursuits.

"Surfing is something we are all passionate about but it needs to reach the same stage as football or rugby."

"The Newquay Activity Centre has been fantastic and the developmental coaching they offer is a first for us at this level."

"You would have to pay through the nose to have opportunities like this in the civilian world."

Army champion Lt Clyde Bundy (RAMC) grew up in the resort town and was surprised to see the sport included on the Service roster.

"I didn't think there would be any surfing when I joined," the officer said.

"It is getting better and the younger guys coming through are telling their friends about it."

"It is probably the best time to be involved. As long as I'm in the Army I will stay on the team."

"We are looking at overseas trips to Hawaii and Indonesia so there are exciting times ahead."

For more information on the sport and how to get involved search "Army Surfing" on the defence intranet or visit the group's website, www.armysurfing.org ■

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TRIPLE THREAT

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Steve Dock

ARMY coach SSgt Martin Anthony (RLC) is eyeing a hat-trick of titles when his fighters take to the ring for the finals of the Amateur Boxing Association (ABA) championships.

Gnr Ryan Fillingham (29 Cdo Regt RA), Pte Jeff Saunders (2 Para) and Sgt Tony Richardson (LD) will all compete for the top prizes in their sport as they look to cap another superb season for the dominant Reds squad.

Having secured a 30th successive Combined Services title, Anthony saw five of his prized athletes progress to the ABA semi-finals and is hoping for a clean sweep from those who qualified for the tournament's showpiece event.

"Their success has not come as a surprise," he told *SoldierSport* on the eve of the finals.

"All three are new to the team but they have done really well.

"They have got tough fights but I am quietly confident we will come away with three champions."

For lightweight Fillingham, progress at national level comes on the back of an impressive first season with the Army team.

The 18-year-old made his senior debut in a narrow loss to Royal Navy fighter AB Robbie Matthews at the Combined Services but victories over Joe Knight and Jordan Cooke in the ABAs have set him on the path to glory.

"In the final I will be up against a boxer called Isaac Dogboe," the fighter explained. "He represented Ghana at London 2012.

"I have got nothing to lose and as an Olympian he will be the favourite. I'm going to pressure him and work from the inside so he hasn't got any room.

"I am confident I can do the job."

Welterweight Saunders is also enjoying a strong first year with the Army squad and is fully prepared for the challenge of facing opponent Sam McNess in his final.

"Everything has gone to plan so far," he said. "I've fought some experienced athletes in this competition.

"Considering I have been out of the game for around ten months reaching the final is amazing.

"He has won a few titles and has been part of the Great Britain development squad but I am confident ahead of the fight. I'm just going to get in there and see what happens.

"Hopefully I can win a title and do my regiment and the Army proud."

While Fillingham and Saunders have

hit top form in their debut campaigns Richardson has made a triumphant return after a five-year absence.

The 31-year-old was a firm fixture in the squad from 2004 to 2008 and made a spectacular comeback at March's Forces' showdown, when he defeated Mne Dougie Kane in the opening round.

"I joined the set-up in January and my target was to do the Combined Services and then go back to work," he explained.

"But the opportunity to do the ABAs came up and it has gone really well. I did not think I would get the chance to box at this level again."

The ABA finals were being staged as this issue went to press. ■



Top guns: From left, Pte Jeff Saunders (Para), Sgt Tony Richardson (LD) and Gnr Ryan Fillingham (RA)

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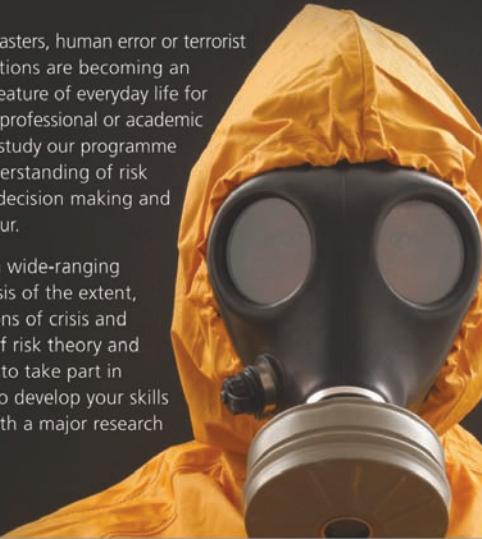
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Main man: Stuart Pearce gets to work with his players ahead of this month's FA Legends game

Pearce praises Army stars

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Steve Dock

ENGLAND under-21s coach Stuart Pearce has taken his first training session with the Army's footballers ahead of their glamour tie against the FA Legends this month.

The former Nottingham Forest star took to the pitch at Aldershot's Military Stadium to lead the Servicemen in some light drills ahead of their clash with the Royal Navy and was pleasantly surprised by the talent on show.

"Before I got here I knew the players would be fully fit and committed; that is the bottom line for Army personnel," he told *SoldierSport*.

"They have impressed me with their technical skills and they like to pass the ball. It should be a great match."

"The lads are still smarting from their defeat to the Royal Air Force but they look to be in good shape."

"I'll be heading down for more training sessions with them ahead of the game."

Pearce will manage the Reds for the match at Reading's Madejski Stadium with England boss Roy Hodgson taking charge of the Legends' side.

"It is a great opportunity to get involved with the Army," the coach added.

"We have had people from the Forces come to visit us at under-21 level and there has always been links with the military. This is another part of that."

The match will be played on Saturday, May 18 and tickets, which cost £12 for adults and £6 for concessions, are available from www.readingfcdirect.co.uk or by calling the Reading box office on 0844 2491871. ■

A FIRST-half goal burst inspired the Army's footballers to a convincing win against the touring Australian Defence Force side in Aldershot.

The visitors found themselves trailing 4-0 at the interval before a spirited showing in the second half saw them restore some respectability in a 5-2 defeat.

Cpl Andrew Cottam (RE) opened the scoring from a simple tap-in before a fumble from the Australian keeper saw him double his tally.

Strike partner Sig Sam Agar (R Signals) extended the lead from a quick free kick and then a cross from Cpl Gerwyn Griffiths (RE) sailed into the net from wide on the right.

Substitute LCpl Jay Hubbard (RE) headed home at the far post shortly after the restart before the tourists grabbed two late consolation goals to reduce the arrears.



INTER-SERVICES CHAMPIONS

THE Army women retained their Inter-Services football title thanks to a hard-fought 1-0 victory over the Royal Navy in Portsmouth.

After beating the Royal Air Force 3-0 in their opening match, the Reds knew a draw would be enough to win the tournament but a solitary strike from LCpl Kellie Cox (RLC) ensured they ended the campaign with a 100 per cent record.

The winger fired home midway through the second half to settle a match that failed to hit top gear as both sides struggled for momentum.

Cfn Jess Moran (REME, pictured left) and Gnr Jade Clarke (RA) both went close for the Army in the first half, while Cfn Bianca Ross (REME) carried the fight to the Navy in the second period.

The result was followed by a 3-3 draw with the Australian Defence Force.



Pictures: Graeme Main



Champions elect: The victorious REME Stallions launch an attack on the RE Sappers' goal during last month's Whittaker Cup showdown in Bracknell

Ice warriors appeal for new blood

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Steve Dock

ARMY ice hockey stars have returned to action as part of their continuing mission to expand the sport within the Service's ranks.

Five teams took to the surface for the annual Whittaker Cup in Bracknell, with the REME Stallions taking the top prize thanks to an impressive 100 per cent record against their rivals.

While the competitive element is welcomed by those involved organisers are hoping to see more squads form in the coming years so the recent progress can continue.

"Ice hockey became recognised as an Army sport in 2011 and since then we have been trying to promote it and get more players interested," said WO1 Tony Higgins, manager of the RE Sappers.

"We are moving in the right direction and two new teams have been established in that time – ourselves and the AGC Lions.

"There is a nucleus of hard core players who have been involved for a number of years. The majority have a background at youth level but we are now slowly developing people from scratch.

"It is good to have this tournament as it brings all the corps together.

"We all have large squads and there are lots of players on the bench so it gives us the chance to change over and get everyone involved.

"It would be nice to see some more corps sides emerge. The REME and RLC are well established; their soldiers are often posted to British Army Training Unit Suffield so they get to play through the winter months.

"Unfortunately the younger teams do

not have that but we have more than 200 guys on the books at the moment.

"A lot of people think ice hockey is about bashing others over the head with a stick; it is not.

"We do not play full contact at this level but it is an exciting activity that gives you an adrenalin rush. Like any team event, once you have a go you are hooked."

Potential players must be competent skaters and training sessions are held on Sunday evenings in Bracknell and Monday evenings in Basingstoke.

"You need to be able to skate forwards and backwards and stop without crashing into the barriers," Higgins said.

"If you can do that there is no reason why you can't become a proficient player within two seasons. It is very addictive."

Soldiers of all cap badges who are interested in taking part should email anthony.higgins788@mod.uk ■



Picture: Steve Dock

Williams progresses to Team GB's ranks

HAVING made a name for himself with the Army boxing squad Pte Ashley Williams (2 R Welsh) is targeting international success after being welcomed into the Team GB set-up.

The 49kg fighter attended his first training camp with the country's elite athletes last month and is eyeing a medal-winning run when he competes in a host of top tournaments.

The Service star will box at the World and European Championships and has already booked his place at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

"I had three trials with Team GB and I'm now on the squad," the Welshman

told *SoldierSport*. "I am training in Sheffield every other week and I spar with the best guys in the country.

"I am getting more experience and being in that environment has allowed me to expand my knowledge as a boxer.

"You get one-to-one coaching and there is expert help with things like nutrition and physiotherapy.

"I'm living, eating and sleeping everything to do with the sport.

"I have a lot to thank Army coach SSgt Martin Anthony (RLC) for.

"If he had not suggested dropping down to the 49kg division I would not be in this position."



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SPORT SHORTS

■ SUPER-fit soldier Capt Mark Davies (1 R Welsh) completed the Brighton Half Marathon wearing full Army kit weighing more than 20kg.

The Serviceman took part in the challenge as a tribute to his friend Capt Stephen Healey (1 R Welsh), who was killed by an IED blast in Afghanistan.

He completed the course in 2hrs 28mins and raised more than £400 for Blind Veterans UK.

■ A TEAM of soldiers from 669 Squadron, 9 Army Air Corps are planning a record attempt at the Three Peaks Challenge to raise money for the charities BLESMA and Candle Lighters.

The personnel hope to climb the highest mountains in England, Scotland and Wales in under 12 hours and will be using Mk 7 Lynx helicopters to fly between locations. The current record has stood since the 1970s and their attempt will begin on June 10.

Donations to the cause can be made at www.justgiving.com/coyote3peaks



■ THE inaugural British Army track day will be held at the Anglesey race circuit on September 7.

Open to riders of all abilities, the event will cater exclusively for personnel and is not open to the public. The day is aimed at helping soldiers improve their skills, which can be transferred to the road and make for safer riding.

Entry costs £130 and bookings can be made by calling 0845 0267272 or via www.focusedevents.co.uk

■ A TEAM of soldiers are planning a unique attempt to ascend Mount Kilimanjaro and raise money for the Forces charity Hire a Hero.

Lt Jamie Brooks (REME) and his colleagues will drive 10,500 miles from Birmingham to Tanzania non-stop in ten days before climbing and descending the peak in just six.

Former Welsh rugby player Garin Jenkins and England footballer James Beattie will join the Servicemen in their summer challenge. For more information and to make donations visit www.hahkili2013.com

■ WOUNDED soldiers at Tedworth House Personnel Recovery Centre have been given a welcome boost in their pursuit of angling after Fishing for Forces donated a range of rods, tackle and equipment.

WO2 Dean Williams, of the facility's sports programme, said: "Interest in fishing has really taken off and I have an event on my calendar every month."



Paddlers make waves

ARMY canoeists gave a strong showing at the annual Devizes to Westminster race.

The pairing of LCpl Chris Lay (RE) and Spr Gaz Irwin (RE) finished as the fastest Service crew in the event, which follows a 125-mile course and ends with a gruelling stretch of tidal water on the River Thames.

They completed the challenge in a time of 20hrs 49mins and their success was a reward for the months of dedication shown by members of the Army and Royal Engineers squads ahead of the race.

"Eight out of 13 crews reached the finish line and it was quite challenging this year," team manager Maj Tim Ives (RE) told *SoldierSport*.

"At least one boat was damaged by guys slipping on the ice and there are sections where you have to get out and run with the canoe before returning to the water – that can be very demanding.

"We started our preparations in January and had a group of 22 soldiers training full-time.

"They were working on the water five days a week and were pushed in a series of build-up races along with night paddles.

"It is our hope that this training camp can now be used as a model for the Army Canoeing Union as a whole and there is no reason why we cannot produce the fastest overall team in this event in the future." ■

Picture: Graeme Main

Olympians hit awards trail

THE Army's Olympic heroes received further recognition for their efforts at London 2012 during the Combined Services Sports Awards.

Soldiers scooped four of the honours on offer at the annual ceremony, with gold medallist Capt Heather Stanning (RA) leading the charge.

The rower stormed the field to take top spot in the women's pair and her success saw her crowned sportswoman of the year.

Judo sensation Tpr Emmanuel Nartey (1 RTR) took the sportsman of the year title after he qualified for the Games following a fifth-place finish at the African Championships.

Fighting in the under-73kg category, the Ghanaian was defeated in the last 32 by Dutch rival Dex Elmont.

The sports official accolade

was presented to Maj Peter Underhill (Rifles) in recognition of his efforts in organising the Olympic shooting competitions at Woolwich Barracks.

He was responsible for planning and delivering all events, including the design and layout of venues, transport and accommodation for athletes and the import and export of arms.

The final Army sportsman to taste success was rower Capt Nick Beighton (RE, pictured), who took the adaptive athlete of the year prize.

The officer lost both legs above the knee in an IED blast in Helmand province and only started competing on the water in 2010.

Rowing alongside Sam Scowen he qualified for the final of the mixed double scull at the Paralympics but narrowly missed out on a medal by finishing fourth. ■



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Clear run: Cpl Dani Phan (Int Corps) outpaces the Royal Air Force defence during the Army's 62-0 win in rugby union's Inter-Services showdown

Phan fires Army to victory

Report: Richard Long

Pictures: Graeme Main

ALATE hat-trick from Cpl Dani Phan (Int Corps) capped a dominant display by the Army women as they crushed the Royal Air Force 62-0 in the opening match of their Inter-Services campaign in Aldershot.

The flying winger helped the Reds run in ten tries against their shell-shocked opponents as the all-conquering squad took a giant step towards retaining rugby union's top prize.

Bdr Katie Garside (RA) started the rout in the seventh minute when she collected a perfectly weighted offload from Phan to touch down in the corner.

The centre turned provider moments later as Gnr Jessica McCauley (RA) opened her account before Capt Rebecca Homer (RLC) cut through the RAF defence to score under the posts.

Fly half Cpl Amy Robinson (AGC (RMP))

joined the party following a neat exchange of passes with Garside and Homer then powered to the line to give the Army a 31-0 advantage at half-time.

The visitors gave a spirited showing at the start of the second period but 2nd Lt Erica Mills (RA) broke their resistance following a strong forward drive.

McCauley added her second of the afternoon after a superb sidestep allowed her to sprint clear of the opposition defence and open a 45-0 lead.

With the clock ticking down the Reds continued on the front foot and Phan profited from some strong running by replacement Capt Alex Coxon (Int Corps) to cross in the corner.

She added a second score just moments later before completing the romp with an outstanding solo try on the left flank.

Phan and McCauley provided a clinical attacking threat throughout the game, while Robinson and Homer also caught

the eye with a series of strong and direct runs in what was a sensational team performance from the Reds.

Speaking at full-time, coach Capt Glyn Barracough (RAMC) praised the efforts of his players and said the focus will now turn to beating the Royal Navy.

"We executed everything we have worked on throughout the season and that is reflected in the final scoreline," he told *SoldierSport*.

"The RAF put up a good challenge but we were well drilled, focused and we stuck to our game plan.

"I thought Erica Mills, who was winning her first cap, was outstanding and LCpl Shellyann Magic (RAMC) was very effective in what was her debut at Inter-Services level.

"The Navy will pose a different challenge. They are stronger up front and will be a threat. But we have real depth in our squad and will put out a side that can execute the plan." ■





Misfiring Reds made to sweat

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

A SCINTILLATING showing from substitute Pte Jack Prasad (Scots) inspired a stuttering Army team to a 33-18 win against the Royal Air Force in the opening match of their Inter-Services campaign.

The mercurial Fijian provided some much-needed attacking impetus for a Reds side that produced a torrid first-half display characterised by a lack of discipline and a host of errors.

LCpl Chris Budgen (2 R Welsh) and LCpl Ricky Reeves (RE) were both sin binned as the visitors dominated the battle of the forwards and the defending champions were lucky to reach the interval with a 10-8 lead.

But Prasad's introduction sparked greater fluidity and the Army secured the victory needed to set up a championship decider against the Royal Navy at Twickenham.

The match started in promising style as Cpl Ceri Cummings (REME) kicked a penalty in the third minute.

But instead of building on the momentum the soldiers found themselves camped inside their own 22 as the RAF piled forward.

The mounting pressure saw the hosts concede a succession of penalties and Budgen was given a yellow card as his personal crime count mounted.

However, the airmen failed to capitalise on their superiority and a

rare advance downfield allowed the Reds to add to their tally.

A high kick from Pte James Read (2 R Welsh) caused hesitation in the opposition defence and Spr Buks Bakosa (RE) pounced on the bouncing ball to set an attacking platform.

With teammates offering quick support the play was spread wide to the right, where scrum half Capt Ian Martin (Yorks) was on hand to touch down for a converted try.

Cpl Dave Hankinson opened the RAF's account with a penalty in the 26th minute before the outstanding SAC

Josh McNally crashed through three would-be tacklers to score.

Reeves then found himself in the sin bin following a scuffle with a front-row rival but some stern words at half-time galvanised the home side and within minutes of the restart LCpl Ledua Jope (RE) powered to the line.

Hankinson kicked a penalty to keep the RAF in touch but the introduction of Prasad (pictured) and LCpl Peceli Nacamavuto (RE) saw the Reds slip into top gear.

Cummings slotted a kick to move the score to 18-11 and LBdr Sam Speight (RA) used his electrifying pace to score the try of the game.

With the airmen threatening deep in Army territory, the winger made a

crucial interception and sprinted to the line.

Speight crossed again ten minutes later as Prasad cut through the defence with ease before the light blues added a deserved second try on the stroke of full-time.

"You have to give a lot of credit to the RAF, they are a good young side," Army coach SSgt Axel Rees (REME) told *SoldierSport*.

"Having seen the Army win the veterans' and women's matches quite comfortably I think people were expecting us to do the same. But

we had five new caps and we are an emerging side.

"I would have taken a 33-18 triumph beforehand. It was our first game in the tournament and there may have been a few nerves, but we got the victory.

"Our first-half performance was poor and our lack of discipline was disappointing – we gave away 12 penalties and had two yellow cards.

"There were a few strong words at half-time but we knew we had the firepower on the bench; that is what Jack Prasad brings.

"There will be no complacency ahead of the Royal Navy game."

The Twickenham match was being played as this issue went to press. ■

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Up for the cup: The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers take the fight to their rivals in the final of rugby union's inter-corps championship

Cummings signs off in style

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

THE Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers regained rugby union's inter-corps championship with a 16-11 win over the Royal Engineers on a freezing night in Aldershot.

Army star Cpl Ceri Cummings scored 11 points for the victors in his last match at corps level and his efforts ensured the team added further silverware to their growing collection.

Having reached the last three finals the REME started their latest showpiece fixture against a strong sappers outfit in confident mood.

A penalty in the opening stages offered an early scoring opportunity but Cummings failed to hit the mark.

The Engineers capitalised on the miss in the 11th minute when Spr Buks Bakoso rounded off a cross-field move to touch down in the corner.

But the champions-elect fired an

immediate response as scrum half Cpl Tom Chennel capitalised on a quick penalty to burst through the defence and create an attacking platform deep in opposition territory.

From the resulting phases the ball was fed wide to Cpl Kuki Tamani and the winger finished in style in the corner.

Spr James Dixon exchanged penalties with Cummings to move the score to 8-8 before the REME struck a decisive blow on the stroke of half-time.

Chennel fired his team forward from another tapped penalty and with Tamani drawing tacklers Cummings was given time and space to score just inches from the touchline.

The second period was characterised by hard running and strong tackling but scoring opportunities were at a premium.

Cummings kicked his second penalty on the hour mark to extend the lead and a late spell of pressure from the sappers could only produce three points from the boot of LCpl Tom Best.

Chennel took the man-of-the-match award following an outstanding attacking display and the REME pack did a superb job in nullifying the threat from the Engineers' forwards.

Speaking at full-time, a delighted Cummings told *SoldierSport*: "That was my last game in a corps shirt. I have played ten years of rugby league and union and it is fantastic to come away with a victory.

"This is one of my best moments and it has been an honour and privilege to play with these boys.

"We felt slightly robbed when we played them during the pool stages; we lost by a single point to a penalty try.

"So we had something to prove. The boys knew this was my last match and they really put the effort in.

"I've got two games left in the Inter-Services and hopefully this will give me confidence for those.

"Representing the Army is fantastic but corps rugby is where it began for me." ■



Coxon shines in corps finale

THE Adjutant General's Corps cruised to a 29-10 victory over the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in the women's rugby union final.

Army star Capt Alex Coxon (pictured) was in superb form at fly half and she crossed on more than one occasion in what proved to be a comfortable win.

LCpl Vicky Lea and Sgt Hayley Cornforth were also among the scorers, while Capt Gemma Stonebridge-Smith kicked two conversions, as the AGC raced to a 29-0 lead.

But a spirited late showing from the REME reduced the arrears as Cpl Rae Metters and Cfn Jazz Isoyama both touched down.

Final word



Cpl Dinesh Rai

"THE fire support group was only formed in 2011 so we are quite new and this is our first experience working with the company. The commander said it has gone very well. This terrain is excellent as we need high features to cover the whole ground. We have long sights and long-range weapons so it has been very good and the missions have been a success."

Rfn Parbin Rai

"HAVING to set up high in the hills and adjust to the conditions has been a great experience for me. I have only been in the Army for two years and this has given me a chance to learn from my senior colleagues. I will also be doing scuba diving during adventurous training; we have been working hard for a long time so that is good for morale."

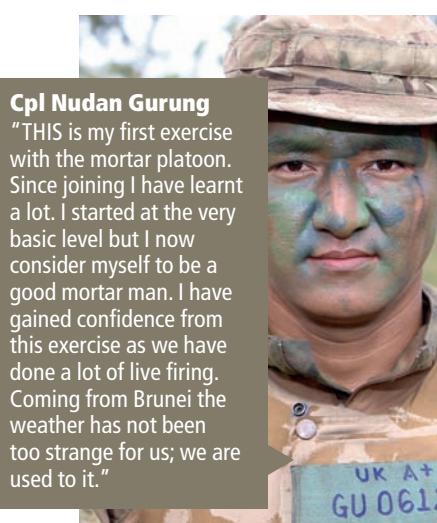


Rfn Bhim Thapa

"WE did an advance to contact on uphill ground and it was very challenging. At section level we marched for 20 kilometres and were not allowed to use roads; we had to walk on difficult terrain at night. During the first two or three kilometres I thought we would do well to make it. There were rocks and some guys suffered twisted ankles. I will always remember that part of the exercise."

Cpl Nudan Gurung

"THIS is my first exercise with the mortar platoon. Since joining I have learnt a lot. I started at the very basic level but I now consider myself to be a good mortar man. I have gained confidence from this exercise as we have done a lot of live firing. Coming from Brunei the weather has not been too strange for us; we are used to it."



LCpl Hangdip Rai

"I AM a company medic and on terrain such as this there is a risk of twisted ankles and other injuries. Since arriving the main enemy has been the weather so everyone has to be properly hydrated. However, the guys have experience of training in climates like this and have adapted well. My individual skills and drills have come together and I have enjoyed working in a different environment."

We asked personnel from B Company, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles about the benefits and challenges of training in Australia

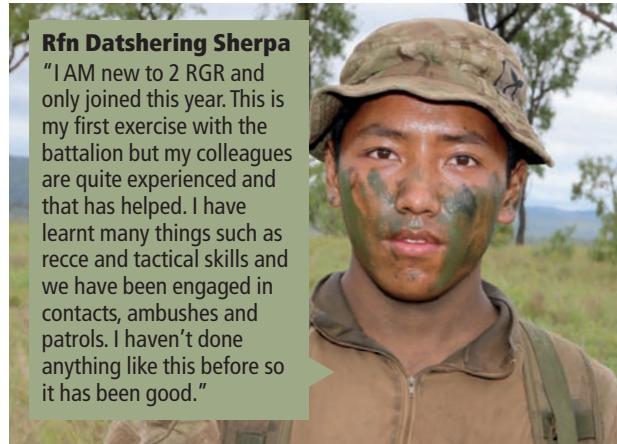
Rfn Dhan Gurung

"WE have been involved in a lot of night shoots and defensive drills. It has been hard work and there is a lot of up and downhill involved. I have enjoyed it as we normally train in the jungle. This has been very different and we have been able to combine what we do with heavy machine guns and mortars. That is an opportunity we do not normally get."



Rfn Datshering Sherpa

"I AM new to 2 RGR and only joined this year. This is my first exercise with the battalion but my colleagues are quite experienced and that has helped. I have learnt many things such as recce and tactical skills and we have been engaged in contacts, ambushes and patrols. I haven't done anything like this before so it has been good."



LCpl Minkaji Gurung

"I DEPLOYED on Ops Herrick 9 and 14 in the rifle company and have been posted to the mortar platoon. This is my first overseas exercise in that role. I have learnt quite a lot and it will help me when I take my standard mortars course in the near future. I now know how to send and formulate fire missions and how to use different equipment such as the fire control application. It is good to come here and experience different things."



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