

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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CONTENTS



Cover picture: Chameleon

COVER STORY

26 Arctic blast
Getting tactical on Ex Dynamic Front

34 The pinnacle of soldiering
Could UKSF be for you?

38 Arabian flights
Rifles swarm in on Kuwait

42 Welcome to the jungle
Honing skills in hot and humid Brunei

48 Nowhere to hide
NCO Academy tackles modern warfare

REGULARS

7 The Informer
Top stories from across the Service

16 The Big Picture
Remembering a *Soldier* great

18 Need to Know
Essential tips for today's personnel

53 Talkback
Ruminations from the ranks

54 Bullet Points
Troops' intelligence asset

59 Reviews
Games, books, podcasts and movies to fill your downtime

74 Final Word
Army athletes share their 2025 goals

SOLDIERSPORT

64 Boxing
Fighters deliver on two fronts

66 Rugby union
Reds' new generation fall short

69 Basketball
Soldiers shine despite UKAF woes

70 Water polo
Loggies mount double charge

71 Swimming
Same again at corps showdown

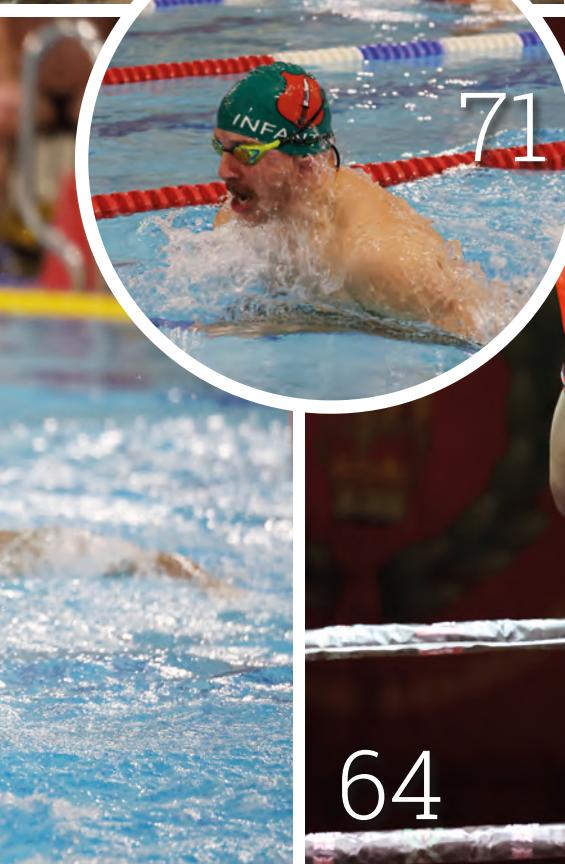
73 Rugby league
Set-up looks ahead after milestone year

26



34





Welcome to 2025...

Happy New Year!

I hope the Christmas period has given you the opportunity to share it in good company whether with family and friends at home or with colleagues and allies on operations.

Thank you for all you have done, and all that you are called upon still to do. As Chief of the General Staff it is humbling to see first-hand.

As we look to the year ahead, I'm confident as British soldiers we can demonstrate our ability to think and act differently. To increasingly define ourselves by what we do for others; alongside allies and partners, through deeper integration with our fellow Services or society as whole. Rising to any and every challenge.

This year delivers challenge and opportunity to our doorstep in equal measure. At home we await the Strategic Defence Review. Abroad we – alongside allies – face evolving threats to international security.

There's plenty of opportunity whether new capabilities to adopt as part of our modernisation or building our readiness through exercises and operations to deploy on.

The harder it is, the better we are. That is cold comfort but a simple truth.

My resolution to you is to prove that the changes I spoke about to date regarding doubling fighting power and improving the professional lived experience start to deliver in real ways for those who have earned it – you, our soldiers.

Gen Sir Roly Walker
Chief of the General Staff

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Picture: Cpl Becky Brown, RLC

Avoiding enemy eyes

Anti-surveillance measures stepped up to protect deploying personnel

INTELLIGENCE Corps specialists have ramped up efforts to shield Army exercises from hostile interference.

Having trialled the initiative for two years, counter-intelligence experts from 2nd Military Intelligence Battalion will now regularly deploy alongside units undergoing training packages both on UK soil and overseas.

Working in teams of between two and 20, they will be providing location-specific expertise on the risk posed by espionage, sabotage, organised crime and personal security lapses such as phishing attempts on troops' mobiles.

The move comes amid a growing number of hostile activities against Nato members, which Western intelligence services have attributed to Russia.

A statement to *Soldier* from 2 MI Bn said personnel would be deploying on a number of serials over the course of 2025, starting with a 1st (UK) Division package – Exercise Steadfast Dart – which kicks off next month across various parts of Europe.

"They will conduct overt anti-surveillance measures and give advice on vulnerabilities to the training area, to the camp or to the personnel when they're off base," it said.

"We will also help adapt the Force posture and protection measures that are in place throughout the exercise.

"If you look in the news, you can see the threats that we're getting from our adversaries, where they're trying to target Nato through sabotage activity or arson – or even reputational damage by bringing its forces into disrepute.

"That's also something that hostile states are very interested in doing. And when you have the movement of a few thousand troops across Europe for an exercise, their opportunity to do that drastically increases – not necessarily by being able to access kit or set something on fire but, for example, by picking a fight in a bar, filming it and putting it out there."

The battalion's deployed teams would be scaled up or down depending on the type and location of the training, the statement added.

Further support would be provided by colleagues back in the UK conducting defensive internet monitoring to identify tagging activity with the potential to cause negative publicity.

But the battalion stressed that individual Servicemen and women must also be mindful of their own personal security by staying alert when out and about in public and adhering to local rules on mobile devices, which often call for smartphones and watches to be disabled for the duration of an exercise.

"We see a huge increase in phishing messages on WhatsApp and Signal outside of the UK, where the senders are trying to start a conversation," its statement continued. "So people need to understand their immediate actions on receiving a text."

"Block the number, screenshot the chat, report it and then delete it."

"That kind of thing is really important because then we can capture the full scale of the problem and have more effect." ■

SOLDIER

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People need
to understand
actions on
receiving a
text
”

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A taste of Army activity across the world

GLOBAL SITREP

Picture: AS1 Tom Cann, RAF

1. FALKLAND ISLANDS PEAK PERFORMANCE



HARDENED infantry from The Royal Gurkha Rifles came top in the Three Peaks Challenge – a physical test covering the summits of former battlefields.

The troops, who were among 251 participants, took gold in the team event across the wilds of Tumbledown, Two Sisters and Mount Longdon, which all saw decisive clashes in the 1982 conflict with Argentina.

They braved snow and freezing temperatures during the arduous 12-mile challenge, which was staged at the peak of the summer season, tabbing from Moody Brook Bridge to the heights around capital Port Stanley.

Other competitors included recruits from the organising Falkland Islands Defence Force, who used the event as a final test to gain their berets.

2. ATLANTIC OCEAN

NEXT STOP, ANTIGUA

THREE Service crews are battling the high seas en route from the Canary Islands to the Caribbean as part of the World's Toughest Row.

Among 38 boats to set off from La Gomera last month were infantry trio Team V3nture, all-female outfit Force Atlantic and the Oarsome Army Educators – four officers from the Educational and Training Services branch of the Adjutant General's Corps.

The personnel have been training for around a year for the 3,000-mile race, which will take them approximately a month to complete, depending on the conditions they encounter.

Speaking to *Soldier* shortly before putting to sea, Maj Declan Lynn (AGC (ETS), pictured above, second from left) said: "The crew is in good spirits and looking forward to what will be the challenge of a lifetime."



Picture: World's Toughest Row



2. ATLANTIC OCEAN



1. FALKLAND ISLANDS



3. GIBRALTAR HOME TEAM TRIUMPH

BRITISH soldiers serving on the southern tip of Europe put in a rock-solid performance as they hosted their own endurance march and tested their mettle against Armed Forces rivals.

The Barbarians were among 11 teams on The Royal Gibraltar Regiment Challenge – a punishing 10km trek from Buffadero to Princess Caroline's Battery.

Carrying 15kg packs plus two-litre water bottles, competitors headed across the heights and pushed

themselves to their limits as they battled for supremacy against the likes of the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy.

A squad from the regiment's HQ Company were ultimately triumphant, delighting RSM WO1 Karon Fortunato.

"The unique setting, with steep inclines and rocky terrain, added an extra layer of challenge and reward," he said.



Picture: Cpl Dave Blackburn, RAF



Picture: Laura Thomson

4. NAMIBIA

THE EAGLE HAS LANDED

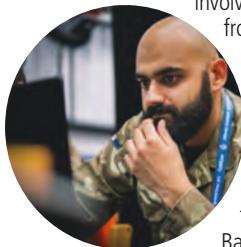
THE harsh terrain of south-west Africa provided a stern test for troops on Ex Eagle's Endurance.

Led by The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards in conjunction with Army Motorised Adventure, the expedition saw 12 soldiers from five different cap badges travel 1,600 kilometres on motorcycles and in safety vehicles. They crossed sand and wet marshes, dried-out riverbeds and mountains in temperatures touching 50 degrees Celsius.

Lt Rob Boylin (Scots DG) said the aim had been to develop core soldiering skills in an arduous environment.

"Our people learnt how to navigate through a desert using nothing but relief and a compass," he added. "They had to handle vehicles over complex terrain and maintain them with minimal equipment.

"Most importantly, they learnt how to operate at reach and as a team."



Picture: Jak Bennett

5. UK

ALL THE RIGHT SIGNALS

MILITARY and security professionals from across the world locked horns with top British Forces tech talent while dealing with mock attacks on computer systems.

Exercise Army Cyber Spartan saw troops face counterparts from Brazil, Kenya and Ukraine during a week of competition. The event, which also

involved participants from the UK Police Service and National Crime Agency, was hosted by 13 Signal Regiment at the Defence BattleLab in Dorchester.

Scenarios tested different ability levels and helped earmark emerging talent, with Reservists from 39 Signal Regiment the overall winners.

Picture: Sgt Murray Kerr RA



6. CYPRUS

PICTURING THE PAST

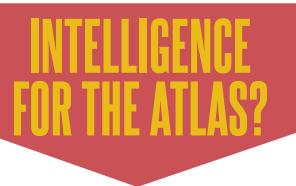
BRITISH peacekeepers on Op Tosca showed international veterans of the UN mission around their former haunts.

Troops serving in Nicosia gave ex-personnel from Sweden a tour of the old airport, which became the scene of fierce fighting between Greek and Cypriot forces in 1974.

LCpl Will Hadden (RL, pictured) began the visit by briefing the group on the history of the island dating back to Richard the Lionheart.

He said the derelict but largely unchanged building had stirred powerful memories for the guests.

"Listening to them talk about their time on Cyprus you can see the years roll back and the strength of their friendship formed through collective adversity," he added.



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7. NEPAL

TIGER ON TOP

RESERVIST Pte Simon Ferrier-May (PWRR) has returned to the UK after scaling one of the most technical peaks in the Himalayas.

The high-altitude mountaineer reached the summit of Ama Dablam via the south-west ridge – after a previous exped had ended in failure in 2022.

Together with co-climber Dawa Sherpa, he fought through poor weather and windchill of -33 degrees Celsius to complete the 6,812m ascent.

Expressing his gratitude for the backing he had received from his unit – B Company, 4th Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment – he said: "I would like to say a huge 'thank you' to everybody involved in giving me the opportunity to take the regimental flag up to the summit of such an iconic Himalayan mountain."



Picture: Pte Simon Ferrier-May, PWRR

MIXED BAG FOR SERVICE SCHOOLKIDS

■ THE scrapping of tax breaks for private schools is having a mixed impact on Service families, the Army Families Federation (AFF) has told *Soldier*.

From this month, private schools must pay 20 per cent VAT which – in some cases but not all – is being passed on to parents.

The higher fees have been taken into account in the MoD's annual calculation of rates for the continuity of education allowance (CEA) it offers personnel.

However, AFF Chief Executive Collette Musgrave said the change was creating a "very mixed" picture.

"Our evidence from families makes clear that some institutions don't yet understand how they are going to be billing to account for this change in future," she said. "There are some people whose fees have not increased by 20 per cent this term, but there are also some for whom the CEA increase will not be enough to cover the rise.

"And of course, all families must still foot a minimum of ten per cent of the fees themselves."

According to the Treasury, the revenue from charging schools VAT is expected to raise £1.7 billion a year.

Any Service family experiencing problems is encouraged to contact the AFF on moneysupport@aff.org.uk

CELLAR SURVIVAL



■ AIRBORNE medics headed underground as they looked to apply lessons from the war in Ukraine to improve their survivability on the battlefield.

With the conflict continuing to highlight the potency of drone capabilities, soldiers from 16 Medical Regiment set about making themselves more difficult to find by establishing treatment stations out of sight in cellars, while those on the ground moved by quad bikes – rather than Land Rovers – to present smaller targets.

Maj Iain MacArthur said: "Drones make it harder to camouflage, conceal and protect troops and facilities."

"In this training we're thinking about what we can do to reduce our footprint and be harder to detect, so that we are better able to survive and continue delivering medical care."



Drone-destroying first

Army uses cutting-edge vehicle-mounted weapon to zap UAS

A N advance in anti-drone capability has been achieved by the British Army after a high-energy laser was fired from one of its vehicles for the first time.

The weapon (circled above) was mounted on a Wolfhound and soldiers from 16th Regiment, Royal Artillery tracked and shot down hovering targets at Radnor Range in mid-Wales.

The device was developed by Defence Equipment and Support and Defence Science and Technology Laboratory together with an industry consortium led by Raytheon UK.

It works by directing an intense beam of infrared light towards its target using advanced sensors and tracking systems.

"This project is a significant step forward in increasing our lethality as an Army," explained WO2 Matthew Anderson (SASC), trials manager for the mounted close combat trials and development group.

"Every engagement we've done has removed a drone from the sky and

while we've been testing a variety of distances, speeds and altitudes, one thing has remained – how quickly the target can be taken out.

"It's definitely a capability that could be added to the arsenal of weapons that we use on the battlefield."

Not only do lasers deliver a deadly effect at light speed, but they are much cheaper to operate compared with using bullets, rockets or missiles to down airborne platforms.

"This represents a more cost-effective solution to protect our troops," added Stephen Waller, directed energy weapons team leader for Defence Equipment and Support.

He continued: "It is still an emerging technology, but the world has changed and we are seeing greater use of drones in the battlespace."

"Having the capability to track and eliminate these platforms will provide an operational advantage – and these successful trials have demonstrated that we are well on our way to achieving this." ■

“This is a step forward in increasing our lethality”



Door open to more cash

Picture: Graeme Main



TROOPS who sign on for another three years after finishing their initial commitment are set for a cash windfall.

Army pay chiefs have confirmed that privates and lance corporals will be eligible for an £8,000 lump sum if they stay in the ranks – plus the prospect of developing themselves as they start to climb the promotion ladder.

Top brass believe the offer will help retain talent – acting as an incentive for soldiers to stay in uniform at a critical point in their career.

Those who joined up between the beginning of 2022 and the end of December last year are eligible.

Maj Josh Harding (RTR), who works in the Armed Forces pay review body, said the scheme would run until the end of 2027 but would be limited to just under 3,000 personnel in each

financial year.

He added: "We have the largest voluntary outflow among those finishing the initial three-year commitment and hope this money will encourage them to stay on.

"The cash is made as a one-off payment and equates to roughly one-third of annual salary for a private soldier. It's a decent sum and we are hoping it will encourage talented individuals to stay – after a further three years the door may be open to other career opportunities."

The move follows a six per cent pay increase for the ranks last year.

Recruits undergoing initial training were also given a £6,500 uplift – meaning starting pay is now £25,000.

The latest payment is taxable and anyone eligible will be notified via Defence Gateway. ■

■ MOVING personnel and hardware abroad by sea is set to become easier and greener, thanks to a new deal struck between the Army and Associated British Ports (ABP).

It means 22 different ports around mainland UK can now be used as loading sites, in addition to Marchwood, home of the Army's Sea Mounting Centre (pictured).

Service chiefs say the move will save cash and emissions because heavy armour, vehicles and kit will no longer need to be transported the length of the country to the MoD's fleet of roll-on/roll-off vessels.

"This also eliminates strategic risk in terms of sea mounting," Lt Col Stuart Keegan (RWxY) from Logistics Branch in Army HQ told *Soldier*.

"The UK is an island nation, so it is vital we have optimised sea lines of communication in order to carry out large-scale military actions abroad."

"Back in 2003 the Greenpeace vessel Rainbow Warrior dropped anchor at

“
£8,000 is a decent sum and we hope it encourages talent to stay
”

80 YEARS OF YOUR STORIES



■ BACK in March 1945, legendary British military leader Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery wrote a letter on the front page of the first ever *Soldier* (right) urging troops to carry on the good fight and defeat the enemy.

Neither he – nor the small team producing the publication – could have envisaged this magazine still being around 80 years later. But it is, and it remains an essential piece of kit for an Army facing new challenges in a changing world.

To mark our epic birthday this March, the National Army Museum will screen a short film about our history.

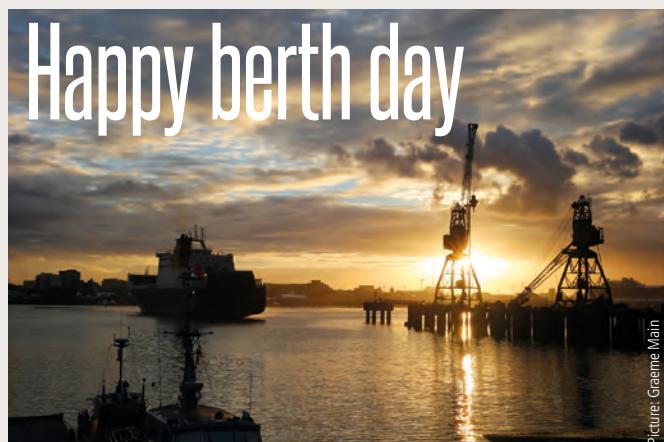
It reveals how much *Soldier* has evolved since those early days, reflecting the changing times and needs of Service personnel across the generations.

"For 80 years *Soldier* has been a source of informative, compelling, and well-produced journalism," commented Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Roly Walker.

"It is a hard ask to be the voice for our soldier community, and a much harder one to capture the voice of our soldier community, but one which this team successfully does every month."

The film will be screened in its own dedicated viewing area at the National Army Museum in Chelsea from February 4.

The site, pictured below, is free to attend and for details visit nam.ac.uk/whats-on



Picture: Graeme Main

Marchwood and, as a result, personnel in Kuwait had an extended wait for certain kit to arrive.

"If someone did that to us now we can simply use another port."

It is thought the deal will save around £1.2 million per year in berthing costs

because the Army can use days already built into its Marchwood contract at any ABP port. The chance to forge the new agreement arose after ABP acquired Solent Gateway, the company that operates Marchwood under a lease from the MoD.



Picture: National Army Museum



“
It was the
experience of
a lifetime
”



Bearskins and bullet trains

British Army musicians turn heads during ‘incredible’ tour of Japan

THE Band of the Coldstream Guards proved a huge crowd pleaser while on tour in Japan – exporting the best of British pomp and ceremony to the Far East.

The talented Royal Corps of Army Music troops were a hit as they drew appreciative audiences while out in the streets and found themselves treated like celebrities.

They took part in joint sessions with Japanese musicians and struck a chord at set-piece concerts in a string of prestigious locations.

Destinations on the packed tour at the end of last year included the Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall and Act City Hamamatsu venue.

The globe-trotting personnel also entertained at the British Embassy in the capital, supporting a reception for defence officials, and alongside students from Takushoku University Koryo High School’s brass band.

Notable performers included CSgt Rachel Smith – principal flautist – who took centre stage as a soloist, and euphonium guru LCpl Lucas Lockley, who is also a familiar face with the Household Division Orchestra.

Percussionist and Royal Northern College of Music graduate Musn Ashley Clegg was another to shine.

LSgt Nick Mott, who plays trumpet and is no stranger to performing in the Far East, said: “This is my fifth tour of Japan with the band and it is always an incredible opportunity to travel here with this iconic red machine.

“Being a soloist in the prestigious Opera City Hall was the experience of a lifetime.”





Ground view

Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Paul Carney, offers his take on Service life...

THE arrival of January always gives us the opportunity to reflect on our lives and think about our aspirations for the months ahead.

For me, 2025 is going to be an important time – March will mark the end of my tour in this role as well as the conclusion of nearly 30 years in uniform.

I became the Army sergeant major in the summer of 2021 and my tenure in this final part of my military career has undoubtedly been one of the most demanding.

When I took up the post, the international stage was dominated by Nato's withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in the following year.

Both have directly impacted us as soldiers, as we continue to train those defending their homeland on Op Interflex while helping to resettle eligible Afghan nationals in the UK on Lazurite.

This period has also seen three different chiefs of the general staff and a change of the defence ministerial team with the election of a new government.

Whatever our personal aspirations, all of us need to start this year as we mean to continue.

With the world remaining unpredictable, it is critical we, too, stay ready to respond to any situation that might arise.

Our new CGS, Gen Sir Roly Walker, has said the Army must double its fighting power over the next two years and has ordered it to be trebled by the end of the decade.

I've already seen real progress towards these goals, so keep up the good work.

There are also a few other initiatives that I'd like to ensure are on a sound footing before I leave – notably the recently created NCO Academy, which will help develop careers.

I want to check that the command sergeant major structure, so critical to supporting our leadership, is well embedded.

Finally, I'd like us all to double down on efforts with our standards of appearance – particularly when out in public.

I'll be making sure that the expectations are made clear – I think greater clarity could help us – but we should be ensuring we are well turned out, on and off base.

I'd like NCOs to check that standards are upheld. Let's maintain excellence on all fronts.

Best foot forward

I DECIDED – at the very beginning of my tenure in this role – that getting out to meet soldiers would be front and centre of all I do.

This might sound obvious, but you soon find that time is pressing, days become dominated by endless meetings and you're forever stuck behind your desk.

Getting out will be just as important as I hit the last lap in post – I'd like to see as many of you as possible and hear your views before I head off in the spring.

Among other places, I'm hoping to visit some of our furthest flung troops on the Falkland Islands, who are doing a great job some 8,000 miles away in the South Atlantic.

It's a place that is personal to me, too, as my father, who was a sapper like me, served there just after the 1982 conflict with Argentina.

Let me know if I can drop by.

● The Big Picture, page 16

THE CIVVY STRETCH



■ FINALLY, I'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has given me guidance on issues such as networking after my call for advice on leaving the Army.

Building relationships has been crucial in

this job – particularly with my counterparts in other nations.

It seems allies are as important in the civvy world as they are in the military.

Now the efforts continue on LinkedIn...

SOLDIER salutes a stalwart

WARM tributes have been paid to a former *Soldier* photographer hailed for taking some of the most memorable images of the 1982 Falklands conflict.

Paul Haley, who was 74, died in November after a battle with cancer. His talent was remembered by loved ones, friends and colleagues during his funeral at Cottingley Crematorium, Leeds, last month.

The snapper achieved recognition for his time in the South Atlantic during fierce fighting to recapture the Falkland Islands, which had been invaded by Argentina in April 1982. Some 255



British and 649 South American personnel were killed during three months of Op Corporate.

Former *Soldier* editor John Elliott, described Haley as "one of the exceptional talents in the MoD".

He added: "Paul was, without doubt, one of the finest photographers I served with – the work he sent back from the Falklands had been exceptional.

"He was one of the few photographers out covering the war, and his portfolio remains a very important record of the conflict. But my overriding memory of him is that he was such a decent bloke as well as being an incredibly professional operator – he will be greatly missed."

Ex-3 Para NCO Tom Herring – chairman of Op Corporate veterans group Sama 82 – shared the same sentiment. He praised reporters who covered the conflict with Argentina.

"The journalists who sailed with soldiers on the task force took just as many risks as us and we were grateful for their presence," Herring said.

Haley joined *Soldier* in 1974 and served for more than a decade, covering Northern Ireland during the Troubles and many exercises.

The event launched back in 2010, when *Soldier* joined participants in Ilfracombe



Picture: Graeme Main

“It brings about a real esprit de corps”

Your marching orders

Troops asked to join historic training tab and support vets

MILITARY personnel are being encouraged to sign-up for the latest staging of The Forces March and follow in the footsteps of an epic 138-mile Second World War training tab.

Organised by The Veterans Charity, the gruelling challenge, which starts in Ilfracombe, North Devon, and finishes in Bulford, Wiltshire five days later, recreates a feat undertaken by personnel from The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry in 1942 – soldiers who would go on to be at the forefront of the D-Day liberation two years later.

It was launched as a fundraising event in 2010 and has raised in the region of £500,000 for a cause that helps former troops in their battle with hardship.

However, it has only happened once since the Covid pandemic and those in charge are bringing it back for 2025 – and they are calling on the Army's support, whether that's as individuals or formed teams.

"It is an opportunity to follow that historic march and also mix

with – and learn from – people from different backgrounds outside of the military community," Danny Greeno, chief executive of The Veterans Charity, told *Soldier*.

"Troops are used to marching with weight, but it is the distance that makes this so challenging."

"You average 27 miles a day over hilly, tough terrain but it is a test that people relish."

"In the past it has become a competition between companies and units, but we never meant it to be that – there are no prizes for coming first."

"However, military teams want to be the best and this brings about a real esprit de corps."

This year's march starts on April 30 and finishes on May 4, with entry costing £150 per person, although there is a 50 per cent discount for serving personnel and veterans.

Campsite facilities are provided along the route, as well as meals, escort vehicles, manned checkpoints and medical teams.

For more details and to enter visit forcesmarch.org.uk



Pictures: Cpl Aaron Stone, RLC

Blood, sweat and scrap

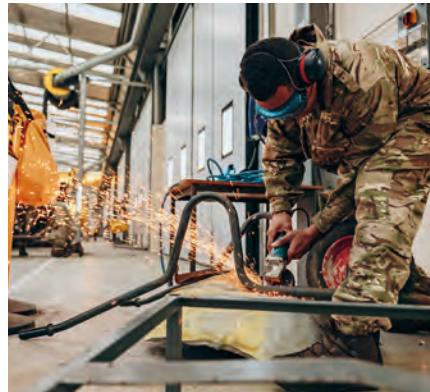
TEAMWORK and determination were tested in a demanding competition involving Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers serving in the British Army's global response force.

The event at Colchester's Merville Barracks saw six squads from the 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team put through their paces in a two-mile march in full kit carrying a 36lb rucksack, followed by a five-mile stretch on rowing machines and then a two-mile run back to the start.

A *Scrapheap Challenge*-style test of engineering skills concluded proceedings as participants had to design and construct a catapult from scrap materials, able to be carried or pushed around a 400-metre circuit.

8 Field Company (Para) were the winners and received the LCpl James McCue Trophy, named in honour of a REME soldier killed while serving in Iraq in 2003.

"It's been an enjoyable event and we're very happy to win and have the bragging rights across the brigade," said vehicle mechanic Cfn Ben Webb.



“
We're very happy to have the bragging rights
”



GENERAL FOR A DAY

How would you use your newfound rank? news@soldiermagazine.co.uk

I WOULD sort out our personal kit. Even though it's improved over the years, there's better stuff available.

I believe some other armies used to give soldiers an allowance and a list of options for approved items so they could decide what suited their role best and offered the comfiest fit.

Obviously, it would all be from recognised companies that meet the required standard, but it would give people more choice in what works for them in the field. For example, recce and sniper kit weighs a tonne, so being able to adapt their plates would benefit them a lot.

All people would have to do is bring back receipts and it would be signed over to them as their issued kit, which they would then be responsible for maintaining.

That would be better than giving civvy companies millions of pounds for stuff that just falls apart.

I do understand that good equipment takes time to come through, but it seems a lot slower now than in the Afghan days, which is frustrating because we could go anywhere at any time, especially with what's happening overseas.

Honestly though, I'd have no interest in being a general permanently – I wouldn't like the responsibility. I didn't even want to be a lance jack



“
I want to be in the fight, next to the boys
”

”

– I'd rather have been a buckshee bod for 22 years but I was made to promote.

I've always been one of those lads that wants to be in the fight, next to the boys, and I don't like the idea of having their lives in my hands.

You always look after each other of course, but as a section commander or higher your decisions matter. If your plan doesn't go right someone could die.

Some people are good leaders and move up the promotion ladder – but I really do not want that on my shoulders.

I've got a year left and I can't wait to retire.

Name: LCpl Scott Bennett
Unit: 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh
Role: Junior NCO, Delta Company stores
Age: 39 **Years in:** 22
Deployments: Op Telic, Iraq in 2003; Op Nibat, Northern Ireland in 2005; three Op Herrick tours in Afghanistan and two Op Cabrits in Estonia

THE BIG PICTURE

Falkland Islands, 1982

Magazine memory

SOME of the most iconic images to come out of the Falklands War were taken by *Soldier* photographer Paul Haley, who died recently aged 74.

After travelling to the South Atlantic with troops from 5th Infantry Brigade, the civvy (pictured on page 14) landed at Blue Beach in San Carlos as the conflict entered its final phase.

His pictures captured troops at work on land and sea – including those from 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards following the decisive battle at Tumbledown.

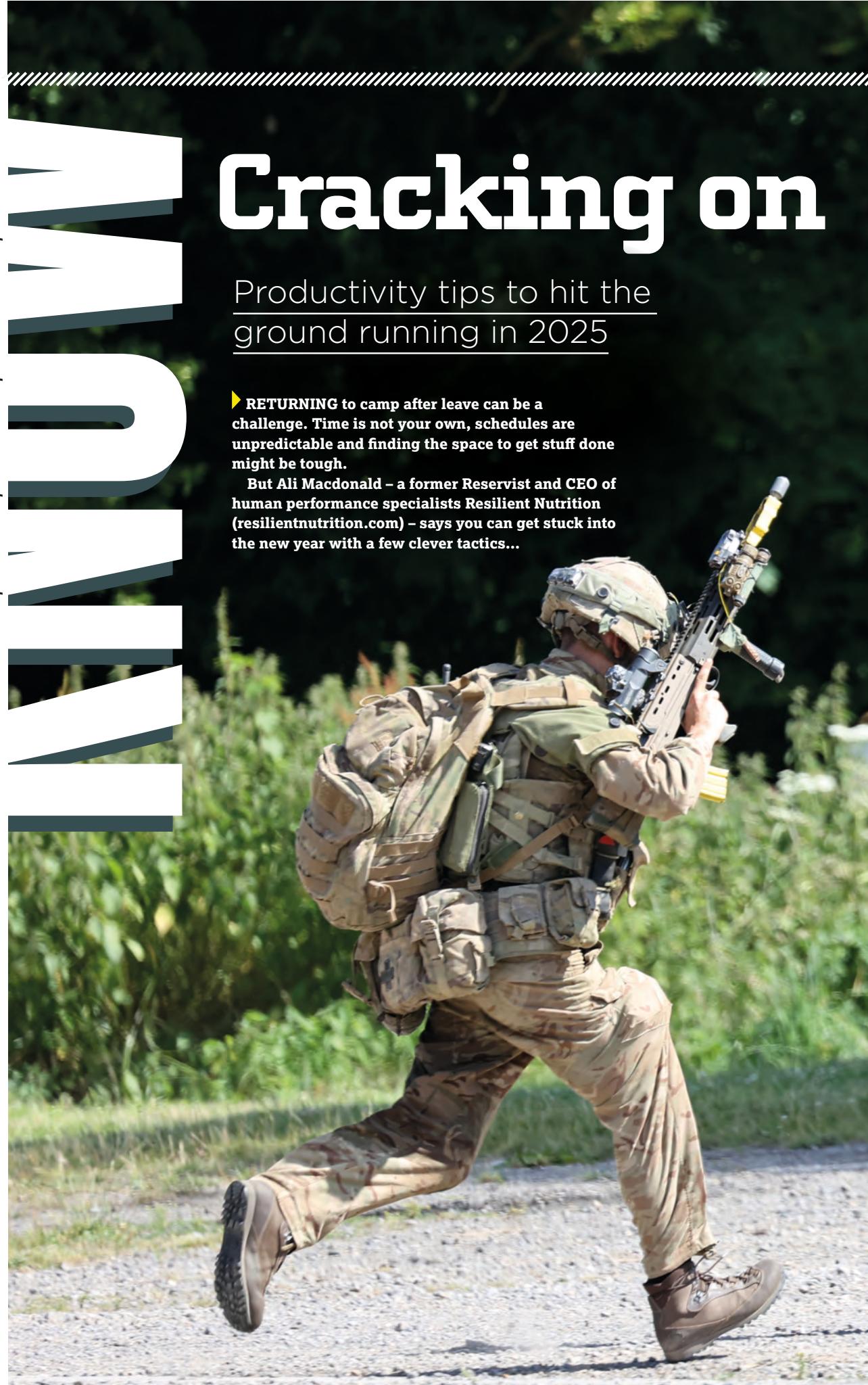
Haley's work went on show at London's Imperial War Museum in 2022 to mark the 40th anniversary of the conflict.





NEED TO

SKILLS & DRILLS / HEALTH / WELFARE / NEXT STEPS / CASH



Cracking on

Productivity tips to hit the ground running in 2025

► RETURNING to camp after leave can be a challenge. Time is not your own, schedules are unpredictable and finding the space to get stuff done might be tough.

But Ali Macdonald – a former Reservist and CEO of human performance specialists Resilient Nutrition (resilientnutrition.com) – says you can get stuck into the new year with a few clever tactics...



CHECKLIST

- 1. Focus on your high-value tasks**
With a packed schedule, it's critical to distinguish between what must be done and what can wait. Start each day by identifying your top three tasks. These might be prepping kit, ensuring admin is squared away, or tackling training goals. Write them down – you'll find it easier to stay focused.
- 2. Guard your best time of day**
There's usually a window — perhaps early in the morning or after PT — when your energy and focus are at their peak. Use this time for jobs that require the most concentration, like revising orders, planning training or preparing for an inspection.
- 3. Work in short, sharp bursts**
Even the most disciplined mind struggles with endless graft. Divide complex or demanding work into 25-60 minute blocks with proper breaks between. Avoid distractions like phones and instead crack some phys or step outside to reset.
- 4. Minimise distractions**
 - Silence your phone or leave it in your locker
 - Avoid unnecessary chatter — whack on some headphones
 - Batch-check emails to prevent constant interruptions
 - Find a quiet spot in which to concentrate, even if it's just a corner of the cookhouse
- 5. Build mental fitness**
Just as you train your body, do the same with your mind. It might take some practice to avoid distractions, but building up periods of focused effort over time will make long stretches of deep work feel much easier.
- 6. Keep workspaces simple**
It could be in the field, a hangar or the back of a Rover. Wherever it is, make it fit for purpose. Keep the tools for the job organised and close at hand.
- 7. Lean into the structure of military life**
Use the predictability of your routine to plan ahead and allocate time to do specific activities. If possible, carve out a space for undistracted thinking time, like a quiet spot in the block.

**TOO TIGHT**

You're not able to take a full breath so you're not getting enough oxygen

The shoulder straps can impinge nerves, leading to finger numbness – as well as migraines and back pain

Quick-fitting tips

- The underband should be adjustable – if you can take the bra over your head and shoulders without undoing it it's never going to be tight enough to support your bust
- You should be able to get one finger comfortably underneath the shoulder straps and they shouldn't leave marks or indents at the end of the day

**80**

percentage of women who don't know their actual bra size or are confused by sizing

Sports bra savvy

Poor support can affect your body in surprising ways, so spend your £50 wisely

► **SERVICEWOMEN** now have a yearly allowance towards sports bras (*Soldier*, December) – but it pays to be choosy when buying.

Inadequate breast support can lead to a host of musculoskeletal injuries, as ex-US Marine Sarah Snyder-Kamen knows all too well.

In 2022, the former staff sergeant was medically discharged due to back, neck and shoulder pain attributed in part to breast issues.

Determined to help other women get the kit they deserve, she joined sports bra brand **Tigers Eye** (tigerseyebra.com), which teamed up with boffins from the University of Portsmouth to develop a garment capable of reducing breast movement by 74 per cent.

As she explains above, it's not just about more comfortable workouts – it's about enabling female soldiers to safely meet the demands of their jobs.

Stick or twist

Thinking of calling time on your relationship? Read this first

► THE first working Monday of January is dubbed "divorce day" by the legal profession – a time of year when people are more likely to break up.

We asked Ammanda Major from relationship support charity Relate why this should be – and what to do if it's on your mind.

Is divorce day a thing at Relate?

We do get a lot of calls in January from people who have often had a disastrous Christmas with their partner. I think there's also something around a new year starting – they might be thinking 'I can't have another year like the one I've just had'.

Why does the holiday season cause tension?

There's a lot of expectation around coming together and having a good time. When that doesn't happen, things can erupt. Or perhaps one partner felt they had to do all the work. For Forces couples, frequent absences over family occasions can lead to resentment and feelings of isolation.

So what do you recommend people do?

Step back and ask themselves why things were so difficult. Did they and their partner communicate as effectively as they could have? Having a bit of reflective time alone to decipher what went on, rather than acting in the moment, is important.



Then what?

If you can, raise it with your partner, but not by saying 'I had a rubbish time and it's all your fault' – that won't invite much conversation. Approach it more along the lines of 'look, I think we both really struggled at Christmas. I want to tell you how I felt, but I'm interested to hear how you feel too'. If we're just on transmit the whole time it stops us hearing what anybody else has got to say.

Where does therapy come in?

If things have gone a long way down the road, getting those conversations going can feel almost impossible, so having a therapist who can be there to construct those discussions in a more helpful light can be really useful. New dialogue, even if it's painful and difficult, can be very worthwhile.

Is the goal to stay together?

Not necessarily. We want them to work on their relationships, however even if a couple separate, they still need to focus on their issues because they might not be partners anymore, but if they have children they will always be parents. And that's a really important thing for people to understand.

Relate offer a variety of in-person, telephone or online therapy services for individuals, couples and families.

Visit relate.org.uk, where you can also access self-help information, relationship toolkits and other downloadable resources

Company commanders

Veteran entrepreneurs share their big breaks

► IF LEAVING the Army is on the cards for you this year, you may have dreams of being your own boss – an appealing but daunting prospect for anyone used to following orders.

According to this ex-military trio, though, making the leap from the ranks to the world of business is a great option for self-starters...



Callum Coombes

Owner, Safepoint and Callie

Age: 33

Cap badge: REME

Years of service: 2009-2013

Operational experience:

Afghanistan

Rank on leaving: Lance corporal

A FORMER avionics technician, who joined up aged 17, Callum Coombes started Safepoint – a line of comms products that allows employers to keep tabs on those working on dangerous jobs in remote locations. More recently he launched Callie, which provides a similar service for the wider public concerned about loved ones.

HOW DID YOU LAND IN BUSINESS?

I left the Army and went to university before going on to work for firms including defence contractor Lockheed Martin. I'd been working on the concept for Safepoint products in my spare time.



WHAT WAS YOUR BIG BREAK?

We actually had a couple – some media coverage was really helpful but a big moment was a contract with ADT then the Labour Party, who wanted to protect their canvassers before the general election last year.

ANY TOP TIPS FOR TROOPS?

Soldiers are used to working hard anyway but you must be prepared to put in the hours. Also, don't be afraid to ask for help – often people will be only too happy to oblige.

Tech entrepreneur

Neil Jurd

Owner, Leader Connect

Age: 55

Cap badge: QOGLR; RLC

Years of service: 1992-2009;

Reserve 2010-2014

Operational experience: Iraq, Bosnia, Sierra Leone

Rank on leaving: Lieutenant colonel

FOLLOWING his retirement, Neil Jurd focused on imparting the command acumen he acquired in uniform to the civvy business sector. Starting out as a consultant, he is now the owner of Leader Connect – an online platform that teaches leadership skills. He is also the author of *The Leadership Book* and hosts in-person courses for his clients.

HOW DID YOU LAND IN BUSINESS?

I had worked for other organisations after leaving the Army, running courses for them, but ultimately ended up thinking that I was well placed to do it myself. Becoming a consultant in the first instance, everything grew from there.



WHAT WAS YOUR BIG BREAK?

After leaving the military, I worked with the Army Cadets. I was doing a leadership course for staff at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and one of the delegates told his company bosses they should consider me for corporate training. During the Covid lockdown I had time to write my book.

ANY TOP TIPS FOR TROOPS?

Firstly, find something you love doing; take it slowly. Finally, don't over-commit yourself and don't get paralysed by overthinking small details. Just get on and do it.

Leadership consultant

Lee Broders
Owner, Business Growth Global and other firms
Age: 54
Cap badge: Royal Signals
Years of service: 1986-1996
Operational experience: The Gulf and Bosnia
Rank on leaving: Corporal

AFTER a decade in uniform, Lee Broders was looking forward to a bright future on civvy street – until the job he had lined up in the MoD fell through. Suddenly forced to rethink – and with a wife and young family to support – it was a remark from a customer while he was working shifts in a pub that set him off as an entrepreneur. Now, having overseen a number of enterprises and with a property portfolio, he acts as a life coach and mentor for those in the corporate world.

HOW DID YOU LAND IN BUSINESS?

I was working a few cash-in-hand jobs when I left the Army after my civvy job fell through with the MoD. A customer in the pub where I was working asked if I could build him a PC – this was



back in 1996 when this was all quite new – which I did. Then, five others he knew wanted the same service. My first business started to grow from there.

WHAT WAS YOUR BIG BREAK?

There have been a few; one was a friend in the Army who said that I should think about running my own business. I never thought I could – but meeting my accountant was a game changer. He really encouraged me.

ANY TOP TIPS FOR TROOPS?

Do something that you love. That way you are not going to think twice about putting in the extra hours you need to get things done.

In the red?

Immediate action drills to defeat post-Christmas debt

► THE new year often starts with a financial hangover. But there are some simple steps you can take to get back on track if you over-indulged during the festive period. Try these tips from MoneySavingExpert Martin Lewis...

1 Make 'pain-free' savings

Things you can do without impacting your lifestyle

DRAW A BUDGET AND REDUCE OUTGOINGS

Check all your direct debits and standing orders and ditch any that you can, such as app subscriptions you'd forgotten about.

CLAIM CLAIM CLAIM! Check your entitlement to state benefits – you might not realise you qualify. Claw back any possible tax rebates and reclaim fees on the likes of missold financial products.

CUT THE COST OF YOUR DEBT BY REPAYING IT AS QUICKLY AS YOU CAN while being charged the lowest possible interest rate. Shop around for a cheaper credit card or balance transfer deal. Check your credit rating to ensure your application won't be scuppered by duff data.



NEED HELP?

For more information on these steps, plus loads more tips, visit MoneySavingExpert's debt help page via this QR code



2 Time for 'painful' measures

These are ones that involve curtailing your lifestyle, like ditching Netflix. Some of our favourite suggestions are:

- 1 Block notifications from shops and takeaway services so you won't be tempted
- 2 Calculate what a purchase would cost you in work time to pay off
- 3 Take cash out and leave credit and debit cards at home
- 4 For everything new you buy, sell one old thing to cover the cost
- 5 Pay yourself pocket money every month (after the bills are paid) which is yours to spend as you like
- 6 Designate one or two days per week as no-spend days

3 Seek help

If you have taken all these steps and are still struggling speak to a debt charity such as Citizen's Advice, Step Change or National Debtline. The Royal British Legion can also help with debt and finance problems.

The Savvy Squaddie says...

Sgt Cameron Eden (RLC), whose social media channels offer financial knowhow with a military spin, recently ran an Instagram poll in which 57 per cent of almost 3,000 respondents said they have debt. Most cited credit cards and car loans as the primary cause, with 67 per cent owing less than £10,000.

"The majority of people manage their debts adequately, but 31 per cent indicated they experience some financial strain, which can impact mental health," commented Sgt Eden. "Despite available resources, only six per cent have sought professional advice."

For insights into Forces money issues follow Sgt Eden via @thesavvysquaddie on YouTube and Instagram.





Welcome to 2025

Wex Photo Video now working with
Unite to provide contracted imaging
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Tail Spend is an e-procurement platform providing the MOD with a tail spend solution

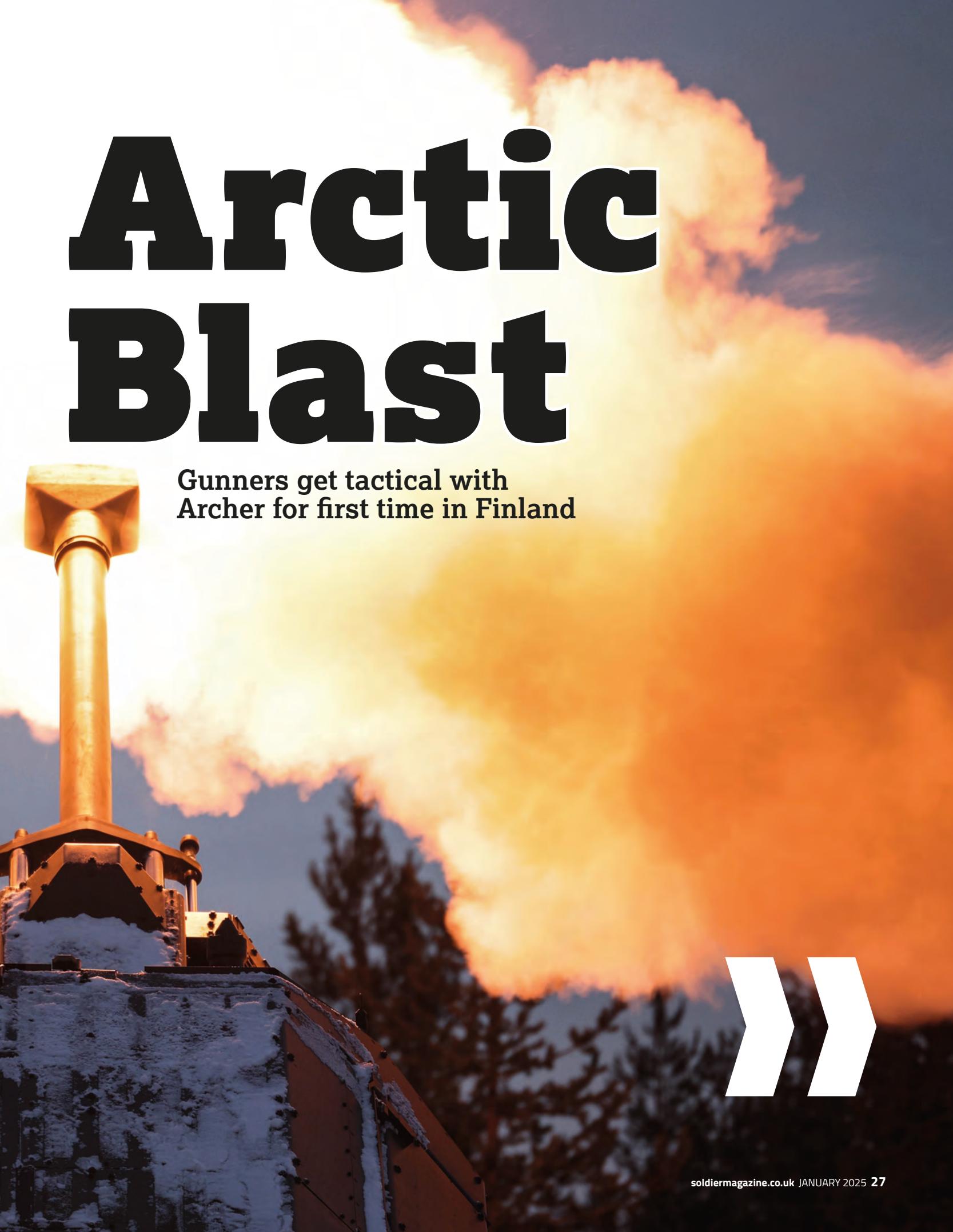
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Arctic Blast



**Gunners get tactical with
Archer for first time in Finland**



“This was a fantastic opportunity to showcase our modernised artillery capability in front of our Nato partners”



THE frozen lakes and snow-dusted Scots pine trees of Rovaniemi formed a memorable backdrop as troops pushed to within the cusp of the Arctic Circle for a deep winter deployment in Finland.

It proved a landmark moment for the host nation's military as Exercise Dynamic Front was the first time it had staged a training exercise on this scale since it joined Nato in 2023.

As has become the norm with such drills, it was a truly multinational affair with more than 5,000 troops from 28 countries collaborating on joint live fires.

Among those braving the sub-zero frontier were the Scottish Gunners of 19th Regiment, Royal Artillery, who were achieving a notable milestone of their own as they fired the Archer 155mm gun in a tactical setting for the first time.

Additionally, soldiers from 5th Regiment, Royal Artillery gave a debut outing to the

new Taipan weapon-locating radar system, which worked in tandem with the platform.

“This was a fantastic opportunity to showcase our modernised artillery capability in front of our Nato partners and alongside guns such as the French Caesar, the Swedish Archer, the Finnish K9 and the American multi-launch rocket systems (MLRS),” said Maj David Mortimer, 2iC of 19 Regt.

“One of the key things we wanted to practise was getting the find and strike elements of Taipan and Archer in sync, which then cuts the time it takes to make an acquisition with the radar and engage with MLRS and Archer.

“This reduces the kill chain, therefore increasing our lethality within our find-and-strike system.”

Following the gifting of 32 AS90 guns to Ukraine in 2023, the Army procured Archer from the Swedish government as an interim replacement, with a long-term successor not expected until the end of the decade. »

Report: Gavin O'Connor and Richard Long Pictures: Cpl Rebecca Brown, RLC









“It was quite a culture shock to a lot of our personnel to be up here in testing conditions”



» Boasting a 6x6 chassis, it can fire eight rounds a minute – compared to the AS90’s six – at a range of 50 kilometres.

Capable of discharging all types of 155mm ammo, including extended range and precision anti-armour shells, it can also be fitted with a remote-controlled weapon station – mounting either a 40mm grenade launcher, a 12.7mm heavy machine gun, or a 7.62mm general purpose machine gun.

And representing the next generation in wheeled artillery vehicles, it can travel some 200km further than its tracked predecessor.

“Archer has been introduced very quickly,” Maj Mortimer continued.

“Our first train-the-trainer instructors were deployed out to Sweden in late 2023 to learn and then cascade their knowledge to our batteries in the first half of last year and it’s incredible that, alongside such training progress, we were ready to put this equipment into use so quickly.

“It represents a switch from a tracked self-propelled gun to a wheeled one and

rather than using what we would call ‘dumb’ high-explosive rounds we are now firing smart munitions – these increase our lethality with anti-armour and extended-range capabilities.

“This has been a fantastic opportunity for our regiment for so many reasons, including being more expeditionary, and it has enabled us to go through the full deployment process, mounting through the air and ship component.

“It was exciting to fire Archer for the first time out in Finland, along with the first Taipan live acquisitions, and it shows that we are a modernising artillery that is continually advancing.”

To complement its three gun batteries, 19 Regt uses fire support teams mounted in Warrior mechanised artillery observation vehicles equipped with man-portable surveillance and target acquisition radar. The majority of the 250 British personnel involved in the manoeuvres hailed from the unit.

»



As well as the Taipan operators of 5 Regt, the gunners of 26 Regt also played a supporting role with their MLRS.

Maj Mortimer added: "We arrived amid a snowstorm with temperatures as low as minus 15 degrees and it was quite a culture shock to a lot of our personnel to be up here in testing conditions.

"Even though it warmed up a bit it was still challenging, but we addressed those challenges beforehand by completing the cold-weather operator course and some snow and ice driver training.

"Arctic warfare instructors, both from the UK and the Finnish Jaeger Brigade, helped us learn some techniques to survive and we had all the usual cold-weather kit."

While Ex Dynamic Front was organised by the United States Army's 56th Artillery Command it proved to be a big tick in the box for Finland – coming in the year after the country formally joined Nato.

The Army's performance impressed Finnish exercise director Col Janne

Makitalo, who said his military had been eager to learn lessons from having such cutting-edge artillery assets on home ground for the first time.

"Archer is impressive and can change firing positions in a fast manner, while the range of the cannon is very good," he said.

"This obviously added much more firepower on the Finnish terrain, which is not very well known to foreign units, and it offered a terrific experience.

"Our personnel enjoyed engaging with their allies and it was not just about using English – every soldier here is an artillery expert and there's a common understanding within that alone.

"There was great interest in comparing skills. The British fire units usually exercise in different surroundings, so the Rovajarvi ranges provided a learning opportunity.

"The shape of the range allowed us to change the firing positions and exercise artillery tactics, and we have lots of target areas. We were very proud to host this." ■

IN NUMBERS **Dynamic Front**

1,200

SIZE OF THE ROVAJARVI RANGES IN
SQUARE KILOMETRES – FINLAND'S BIGGEST
MILITARY TRAINING AREA

130

DIFFERENT WEAPON SYSTEMS USED BY
THE MULTINATIONAL TROOPS

12

LENGTH, IN DAYS, OF THE EXERCISE

70

ARCHER'S TOP SPEED, IN KILOMETRES
PER HOUR, COMPARED TO THE AS90'S 53

4

MAXIMUM NUMBER OF CREW
REQUIRED TO OPERATE ARCHER





IT PAYS TO UNDERSTAND
YOUR PENSION

This New Year, think long term.

Act now.

Join us. Job done.

As New Year Resolutions go, this one couldn't be easier. All it involves is becoming a Member of the Forces Pension Society to find out how to make the best pension choices so you and your family can look forward to a financially secure retirement from the Armed Forces.

There are numerous ways you can influence and enhance your pension. Making the best choices over the course of your career at key pension decision points; considering buying pension top-ups (one of the benefits of AFPS15); understanding how changing tax regimes can impact you; dealing with changing personal circumstances and even choosing the best time to leave - these can all make a significant difference to what you'll receive.

You also need to appreciate the value of your Armed Forces pension - one of the best in the public sector. At today's values, an annual pension of £20k would require funding of at least £400k. From this you can see that your pension represents a serious part of your personal wealth.

As a Member of the Forces Pension Society, you'll have access to our expert team of Forces Pensions Consultants included in your membership fee. They provide guidance on a personalised basis to help you make the best pension choices.

So don't delay. Act now. Join us this New Year.

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As an independent not-for-profit organisation, any surplus revenue helps fund our support for the Veterans' Community, our Roadshows and Webinars, our attendance at CTP Employment Fairs plus our vigilance in challenging governments whenever we spot injustice or unfairness in the system. And importantly, we provide the whole military community with a voice that counts on the representative bodies for Armed Forces and Public Sector Pensions.

Visit: forcespensionsociety.org/join-now/

Annual membership for you and your spouse/partner is just £47. You will have exclusive access to our Forces Pensions Consultants, our informative Members' Webinars and you'll receive our bi-annual enewletters and our magazine, Pennant.

You'll also have access to our wide range of membership benefits from discounts on new cars to insurances, including our latest range of travel policies.



IT PAYS TO UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF YOUR PENSION

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The Confederation
of Service Charities

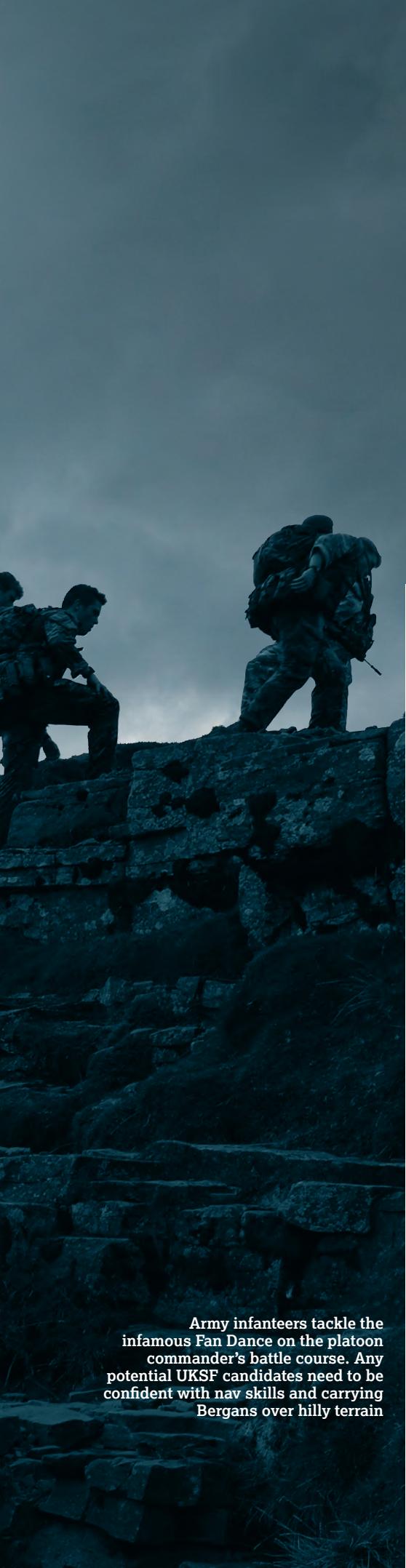


“

If you're still
standing at the
end, there's a
good chance
you'll be
successful

”





THE PINNACLE OF SOLDIERING

What you might not know about joining **UK Special Forces...**

IT OFFERS a career – and host of life experiences – like no other.

But for obvious reasons, the world of elite soldiering remains entirely absent from public view – and not least the pages of this magazine.

As a result, it can be easy for those on the outside to base most of their assumptions on overheard dits or media soundbites.

But as a new year heralds new life goals for many, the chief instructor on the UK Special Forces (UKSF) briefing course has the following message for troops: "There are probably good men and women out there who doubt their own capabilities and think selection is out of reach for them, but if this is a sort of career that interests you do some training and preparation and attend a briefing course," states the NCO, who must remain anonymous.

"You can attempt them as many times as you want, and you'll learn a lot about what UKSF do and the different roles available.

"You will probably learn some things about yourself, too.

"So don't self-select – turn up and let us select you.

"If you're not good enough, you'll be told. But if you're still standing at the end there's a good chance you'll be successful."

The course, which must be passed by anyone wanting to go on for selection, is open to Regulars and Reservists of any gender from across all three Services, so

long as they have completed basic and initial trade training.

It is a six-day package, held eight times per year, which allows participants to learn more about the qualities that are sought in UKSF soldiers.

"Everything is tailored towards giving prospective candidates a decent idea of whether they are likely to make the cut at selection," the instructor explains. "We give them a lot of information."

In order to progress further, those attending are required to pass a 12.8-kilometre assurance march, the UKSF swim test (which includes high water entry from a ten-metre board) and a navigational theory cadre.

And the latter should not be taken lightly by aspiring personnel, as the training boss makes clear.

"All the physical training you do is for nothing if you can't navigate," he says.

"Candidates should take some time to revise basic map-reading theory like how to do a resection.

"We can't send you out onto the hill unless you can prove you know the basics in a theory test, so don't waste all that training just to get sent home on day one."

He adds that the swim test can also catch the unprepared out.

"It's definitely worth practising breaststroke and treading water in the pool as part of your regular training," he explains. »

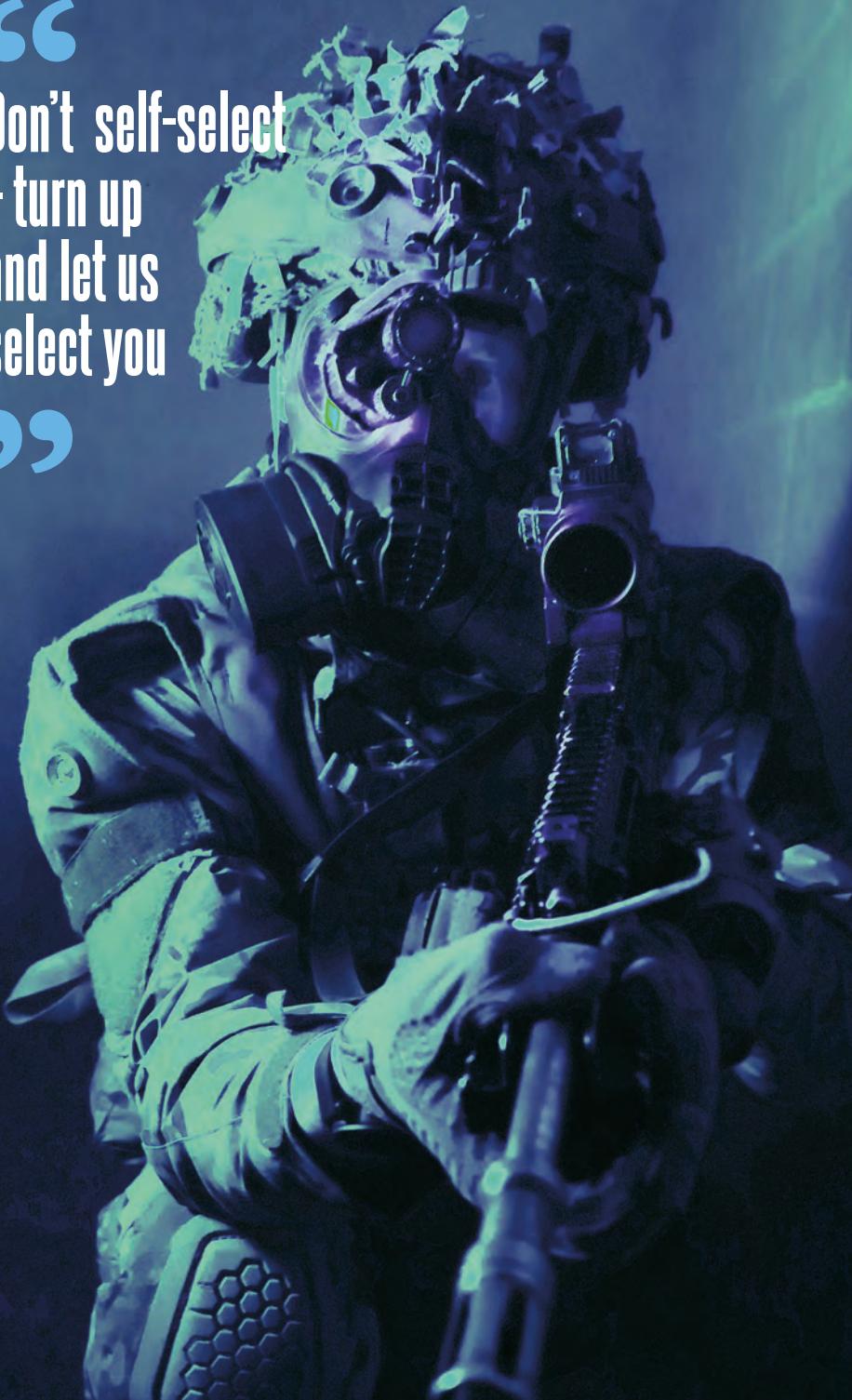
Army infantry tackle the infamous Fan Dance on the platoon commander's battle course. Any potential UKSF candidates need to be confident with nav skills and carrying Bergans over hilly terrain

Report: Sarah Goldthorpe Pictures: Graeme Main and Cpl Aaron Stone, RLC

“

Don't self-select
- turn up
and let us
select you

”



An aspiring corporal on the section commanders' battle course. Troops of any rank are eligible to join the UKSF briefing course

» “Candidates also need to be conditioned to carry a Bergen over hilly terrain.

“This is a basic requirement for all the pathways, and if you're not used to it you open yourself up to injuries.

“Footcare is, obviously, a big part of that as well, so learn what works best for you in training and apply it during the course.”

For those who can clear these first few hurdles, the possibilities are many.

There are five ways to serve in UKSF as a Regular soldier – 22 Special Air Service (SAS), the Special Reconnaissance Regiment (SRR) and the Special Boat Service (SBS) being the most well-known units. However, there are also opportunities to serve in 18 Signal Regiment or as a Special Forces medic.

In addition, there are Reserve options with flexibility within the ranks of 21 SAS, 23 SAS, the SBS Reserve and 18 Signal Regiment Reserve.

All of this is outlined on the course, along with details of the considerable benefits available to personnel.

These include extensive operational experiences, numerous chances to serve overseas, a different pay spine to the rest of defence with additional recruitment and retention payments and – of course – access to the best kit and equipment going.

“If you come away from the briefing course with a good pass then you know what you're doing is working and you've got potential to be successful on selection,” the training boss continues.

“If you fail, then you'll know exactly where you stand, what you need to improve on and the best way to go about it so you can come back stronger next time.”

This pathway is not attainable for everyone but for any Serviceman or woman looking to turbo-boost their career, the message from the UKSF community is clear – come and have a go.

“The briefing course is just a small first step, and a candidate's result here is only a rough indicator of their potential; there is still a long journey to the end of selection for the successful soldiers,” the instructor says.

“But that's fine, because we need highly self-motivated people who are willing to do what it takes.”

This year will see UKSF doing a series of roadshows around the country. Scan the QR code to find out more. ■





A soldier from the Pathfinders. High levels of self-motivation are a must for UKSF candidates as with other covert roles

ASPIRING TO JOIN THE ELITE?

What you need to know about the UKSF briefing course...

WHAT IT IS: The first step for anyone wanting to serve in UKSF, Regular or Reserve. Troops must pass this course before starting selection

WHO IS ELIGIBLE: Volunteers of any gender from all three Services who have completed basic and initial trade training

LENGTH: Six days

DATES IN 2025

COURSE NAME	DATES
BC 25/01	February 2-7
BC 25/02	March 9-14
BC 25/03	April 6-11
BC 25/04	May 11-16
BC 25/05	June 8-13
BC 25/06	September 7-12
BC 25/07	October 19-24
BC 25/08	November 16-21

Search "UKSF" on Modnet or Defence Connect for more info

WHAT'S REQUIRED

UKSF swim test	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10m High entry• 3m Entry with webbing and weapon, remove kit• 3min Tread water (no kit)• 200m Swim in under 10min• Brick retrieval, half width under water, pick up a brick
12.8km Assurance march	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15kg of weight, 12.8km in two hours, PTI-led
Human performance screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical and cognitive screening tests to assess for success on selection
Performance practice march - navigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 12km Navigating arduous and hilly terrain in a group, carrying 15kg
Performance practice march - pace	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 12.5km, 15kg of weight at a 3km or 4km pace, respective of pathway<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4km for 22 SAS, SBS• 3km for 21 SAS, 23 SAS, SBS(R), SFC, SFM
Battlefield PT - SRR specific aptitude assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A combination of physical and cognitive testing. This will include multiple circuits with 900m laps and exercises

On completion, candidates are placed in one of three categories:

- 1:** Suitable to continue to next selection
- 2:** Required to attend another briefing course
- 3:** Unsuitable for UKSF service and not to attend again

WHAT NEXT: The briefing course gives personnel an understanding of the various units which make up UKSF and what they do. If successful, candidates decide which unit is best for them. They must then start their chosen selection pathway within 12 months of attending

ARABIAN FLIGHTS





Riflemen swarm in on Kuwait to offer valuable UAS lessons

SOLDIERS from 3rd Battalion, The Rifles had the Army's goal of doubling lethality by 2027 firmly in their minds on a recent exercise in Kuwait. Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Roly Walker, has declared the ambition be achieved not by deploying extra resources but, among other things, clever use of drone technology.

On Exercise Iron Shield, 60 Riflemen put his words into practice training alongside a mechanised regiment from long-time strategic partner Kuwait (the package marked 125 years of diplomatic relations between the two nations).

The Brits used their time in the Middle Eastern desert to enhance how they use

small unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) in the close-quarter fight.

Building clearances dominated the training agenda, with a focus on how drones could support ground elements during the manoeuvres.

"An urban landscape can be full of hazards, so we used small UAS to look inside buildings and identify if the enemy was inside," CSgt Matt Davies told *Soldier*. "It really helped build the battle picture.

"We practised hard and enjoyed using the set-up they provided, which included lots of little passageways that we couldn't always cover on foot, and small egress points the enemy could exit from.

"We employed some of the tactics honed at Cenub in France a short time ago when I was trolled as a drone pilot for an exercise there involving 4 Scots.

"French units formed our opposing force, and their ploy was to let us bust into a building while they would exit from the rear and then bomb it. But our drones overhead kept spotting this and we'd order our guys to quickly bug out so the French ended up bombing empty buildings.

"We did the same in Kuwait. It's a great example of the real-time picture we now

enjoy through the smart use of small UAS. And it clearly demonstrates why having this kit at sub-unit level is proving such a game changer."

It was a message that 3 Rifles, a unit blessed with some of the most experienced drone operators in the Service (see panel), passed on to the Kuwaiti military, who are still looking at how they should use such assets on the battlefield.

"Our tactics are more developed than theirs," explained OC Maj Stephen Watts. "This region has its problems and upstream defence engagement exercises like this, where you bring their armed forces alongside ours in a realistic context, is important.

"We taught them not only how to fly small UAS but how best to use them in an urban environment. They were really keen to understand how we can increase our find using this kit – and combining that with low-level tactics was a critical part of the package."

Eyes in the sky can undoubtedly offer a huge situational awareness advantage and 3 Rifles are continuing to push the boundaries in this area now they have been moved from a security





Infanteers from 3 Rifles share what they know with the Kuwaiti 94 (Saleh al-Mohammad) Mechanized Brigade on the three-week Ex Iron Shield

■ force assistance role to tactical recce strike as part of 11th Brigade's recent reassignment to the Land Special Operations Force.

"We've learned a lot in recent years and that should certainly bear fruit in our new role," explained CSjt Davies.

"In Estonia last year, for example, we did lots of fighting-in-woods-and-forests drills.

"We were cutting around in Mastiffs, which aren't the most manoeuvrable, so you really don't want to go the wrong way down a narrow track.

"We would regularly send a drone up to look for deads and see if the route ahead was passable.

"When we broke into clearings in the huge wood blocks, we'd send drones out to look for other routes.

"The enemy had to put their vehicles and armour down those tracks too so from above the trees our drones could spot their dust clouds in the distance, then we could identify their route in and if we were in the wrong place we'd quickly move out. It gave us a distinct advantage."

Like many other units, the battalion has also kept a constant eye on Ukraine, where tactics seem to be evolving almost daily.

"When I first started using small UAS

"You need to remember it's a great asset to have, but it shouldn't be the main focus"

we flew them quite low, we didn't consider the backdrops or how to use the wind," continued CSjt Davies. "Now, we tend to approach the enemy against the breeze so the noise from the drone doesn't blow on.

"Also, we've been speaking to trained Ukrainian soldiers on Op Interflex who told us GPS blocking is becoming a regular problem. We've realised that flying the drone upwind of the target also means if the GPS is cut, the device will drift back towards us."

Ironically, this last point highlights another valuable piece of advice 3 Rifles personnel passed on to their Kuwaiti military colleagues – don't become overreliant on UAS.

"You still need the traditional skills and can't afford to be dependent on drones," emphasised CSjt Davies.

The Serviceman listed some of the many scenarios, in addition to GPS denial, where this type of kit is simply not up to

the job. They include the platforms being too loud for a particular mission and being vulnerable, or even inoperable, in high winds, heavy rain and conditions of extreme cold or heat.

"It's why we still must have the lead section sending a sketch back, air photos, patrol reports and a J2 brief," added the senior NCO.

"That intel can become out of date because the situation can change in the hours or even days it sometimes takes for reports to come in and get collated and briefed. That's where having a real-time Istar asset complementing our other data becomes so valuable – and why we now always have a small UAS pilot on the shoulder of our platoon commanders.

"The trick, though, is to not get fixated on the drone and have everyone only looking at the screen.

"You need to remember it's a great asset, but it shouldn't be the main focus." ■

COMMITTED TO DRONES

3 Rifles have been heavily investing in their small UAS capability for some time now...

They currently use the Parrott Anafi and Skydio platforms, which are quadcopters suited to the unit's S1 status – which means they have personnel qualified to fly drones out to two kilometres and beyond the visible line of sight (VLOS).

Units that only have pilots with the lower A3 status have a more limited choice of small UAS available and can only fly out to a range of 500m and within VLOS.

The infantry unit's progressive stance on operating drones is thanks, in part, to the sizeable pool of expertise in its ranks.

CSjt Davies, the battalion's senior UAS operator, was among the first personnel in the Army to explore the potential of drones back in 2019 after graduating from the only MoD course available back then, which was run by the Royal Navy.

He subsequently completed a module set up by the Royal Artillery as well as the small UAS operators' and commanders' courses created by their OC.

"Those classes are now part of junior Brecon and most of the junior curriculums at the Combined Arms Manoeuvre Centre," explained the senior NCO.

"Pretty much every qualifying corporal who comes out of those two establishments is a small UAS commander, which means they can teach those skills to others."

The battalion has been busy training its own personnel, with around a fifth of its troops currently qualified as pilots or commanders.

It is also developing a first-person view drone team in order to be proficient with those platforms if and when they become operational, while every section and company in the battalion now has a drone pilot.



WELCOME TO THE



Troops upskill in the steamy forests of Brunei



HE warfighting skills of British soldiers have undergone a stiff test on a new patrolling competition.

Nearly 150 personnel from six nations formed into teams to conduct ten days of acclimatisation and training run by 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles along with the Royal Brunei Land Force and the UK's Institute of Naval Medicine.

The event, called the Jungle Warfare Skills Meet (JWSM), built on the 2023 UK-only pilot called Exercise Sundar Patrol. But the latest iteration expanded the competition to a wider audience involving soldiers from international partners as well as hosting several observer nations.

The line-up was dominated by British Army units but patrols from Brunei, [»](#)

Report: Steve Muncay Pictures: Cpl Nanda Atherton, RLC





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It highlighted the
Army's soldiering
skills in tough
conditions
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» Australia, USA, Malaysia, and Singapore also competed.

The teams were prepared for the mission with an introductory session under supervision, after which they were transported from their base at Sittang Camp in Brunei to a jungle training area nearby.

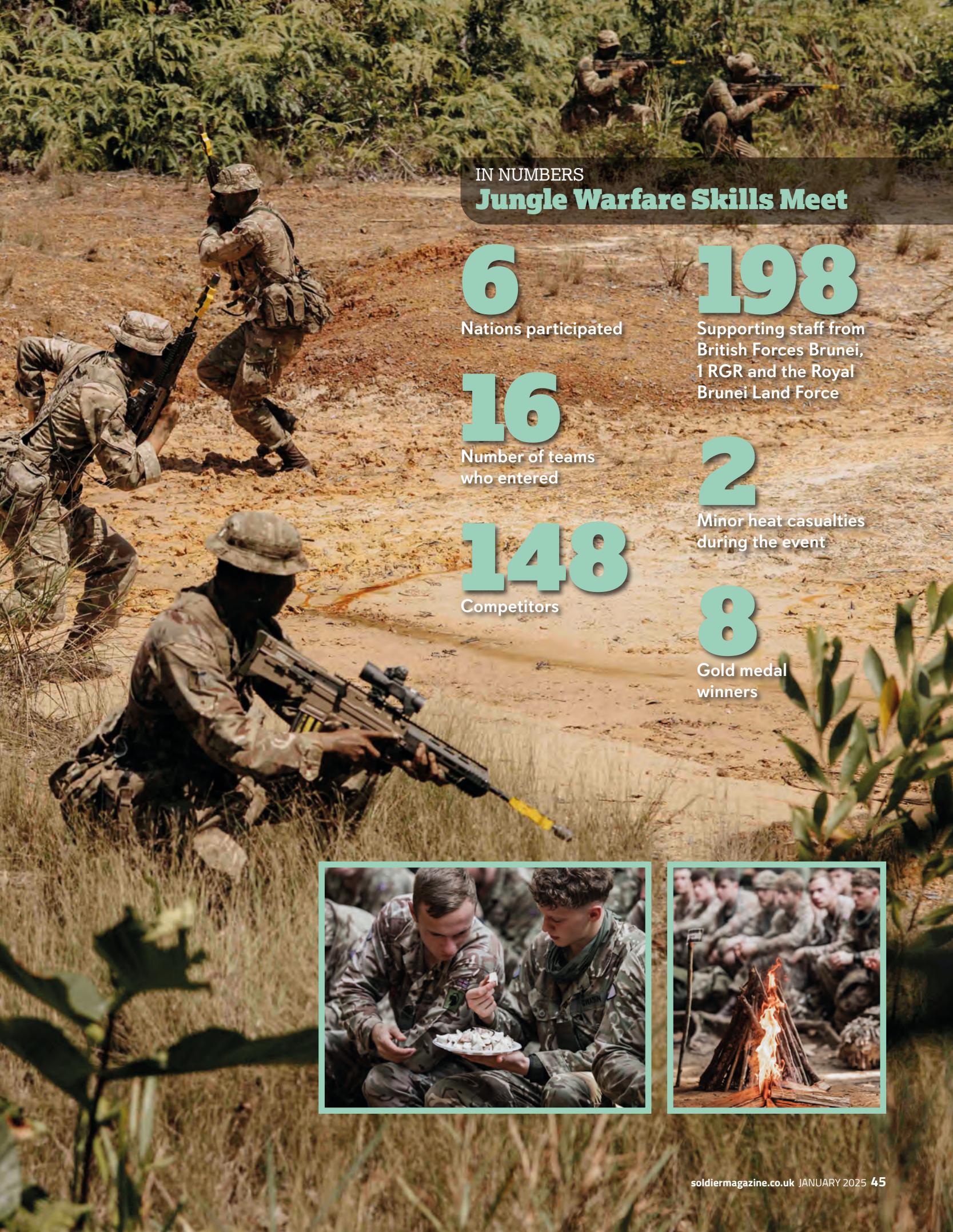
A series of demonstrations by instructors drawn from 1 RGR included trapping and preparing game for cooking, finding sources of fresh water, building temporary and long-term shelters and lighting fires.

Participants were also given the opportunity to sample chicken cooked underground on wood embers, and a variety of bush food ranging from meal worms to jungle bananas.

“The event demonstrated that the British Army can deliver a joint, safe and challenging competition in the close country tropical environment,” Maj Dan Dewick (RGR) said.

“The joint training and acclimatisation package proved a great opportunity for close bonds to be forged between our soldiers and the international teams »

“
It proved a great opportunity for close bonds
”



IN NUMBERS

Jungle Warfare Skills Meet

6

Nations participated

16

Number of teams
who entered

148

Competitors

198

Supporting staff from
British Forces Brunei,
1 RGR and the Royal
Brunei Land Force

2

Minor heat casualties
during the event

8

Gold medal
winners





» involved, sharing best practice.”

The patrols spent 72 hours completing a series of stands across 10km of primary and secondary jungle with the goal of locating and conducting specific reconnaissance tasks against a ruthless mock organised crime group.

British units overwhelmingly occupied the gold medal positions, but the competition was not only a success on that front, the officer explained.

“As with Cambrian Patrol, JWSM 24 highlighted the Army’s soldiering skills in tough environments, as they adapted quickly to the heat and battled through the tropical characteristics that Brunei offers,” he added.

“Just as importantly, it served as a fantastic opportunity for defence engagement with daily interactions between the teams, and the significant international interest in the competition reinforcing our standing in the region.

“It’s the aspiration of the Bruneians and UK defence to expand the competition to more international teams in the future.” ■



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You have every
single insect
trying to eat you
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RESULTS

GOLD

1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles
1st Battalion, The Grenadier Guards
1st Battalion, The Coldstream Guards
3rd Battalion, Royal Brunei Land Force (Brunei)
4th Battalion, The Ranger Regiment
2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland
4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland
1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment

SILVER

US Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha (USA)
2nd Battalion, Royal Brunei Land Force (Brunei)
Royal Brunei Air Force (Brunei)
The Light Dragoons
Army Deployment Force (Singapore)

BRONZE

20th Royal Malaysian Regiment (Malaysia)
2/30th Training Group (Australia)
1st Battalion, Royal Brunei Land Force (Brunei)



SWEAT AND TEARS

Gold winner Cpl Steven Ribbins (Ranger) provides a snapshot of what it takes to reach the top tier...

What was the most challenging aspect of the event?

The 30 degree heat, especially carrying a 40kg Bergan, operating over hilly terrain and then adding 87 per cent humidity. Keeping hold of your pace is more complicated than I thought – counting eight steps, which should equal ten metres, is normally simple but it becomes difficult in that environment.

This can easily lead to miscounting and error, which compounds the challenge of navigating with a map filled with misleading contours without the traditional reference points we are used to in the UK.

How did you prepare?

We had three weeks in camp where we did fitness together: long steady runs, swimming, strength training, complete body hit circuits, tabbing, flexibility and long-distance walking carrying weights from 20-35kg. We

deployed to Salisbury and Sennybridge for three weeks, concentrating on low-level skills and drills including navigation, short halts, tactical pauses, layup points, med, comms, contact drills and admin in the dark.

What was the main lesson you learned?

Do the basics and admin well. Being in an environment where you're wet all the time has a massive impact on the body, especially your feet. It gets to the point where it feels like trench foot.

Give us a flavour of the conditions...

In a word, unforgiving. On top of the heat, humidity, weight of kit and being wet all the time due to sweating, you have every single insect trying to eat you. However, it was one of the best experiences I have had to date, and I would recommend this competition to anyone, regardless of their ability.

What does winning a gold medal mean to you?

I have never been in any environment like the jungle, so winning a gold was an overwhelming feeling. It goes to show that, no matter what level of fitness or experience you have, you can achieve gold standard as long as you are determined and understand the fundamentals.





NOWHERE TO HIDE

NCO Academy confronts realities of modern warfare



Report: Steve Muncy Pictures: Graeme Main; Cpl Aaron Stone, RLC and Cpl Tim Hammond, RAF

IT IS a scene reminiscent of some dystopian sci-fi flick: a soldier has ditched his helmet and rifle in a desperate bid to gain speed and agility and constantly glances skywards as he sprints for cover among trees.

The drone that's targeted him is relentlessly following his every step. He twists and turns, double backs on himself, veers suddenly at right angles and then, clearly panic-stricken, sprints as fast as he can along a rutted track.

But there is no escape. The Russian infantryman looks up for the last time, just as the drone drops the ordnance.

A cloud of dust and smoke clears to reveal him lying dead in the dirt.

It's a sobering piece of classified film from Ukraine that formed part of a development day from one of the Army's latest initiatives to maximise the potential of its soldiers – the NCO Academy.

Lauded by the then Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Patrick Sanders, when it was launched in 2023, its primary mission is to equip NCOs with the skills they need to meet the demands of the modern battlefield.

The idea was partly inspired by the US Army, which introduced its NCO Leadership Center of Excellence in 1972 – an organisation now responsible for a network of academies across the country, along with one in Germany and another in South Korea.

The British version is, unsurprisingly, a less well-funded and more modest affair.

Its handful of staff occupy a few back offices at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst with no other dedicated facilities to call upon.

But typically, the team make the most of what they have by drawing on a substantial pool of expertise and resources from across defence. And they use them liberally to furnish development days for NCOs at sites across the UK, consisting of lectures, briefs and working groups with senior Service personnel and civilian SMEs.

There were half a dozen staged in 2024 and more are planned for this year.

Soldier sat in on one session in Aldershot, which included the Army's lessons exploitation team explaining how the Ukraine war is inspiring innovation across the ranks.

There was also an illuminating talk from a Royal Army Medical Service officer on how sleep affects combat performance, plus a stint on the importance of coaching and mentoring.

Education is a key part of the NCO Academy's role, too, and it is now responsible for administering the chartered manager degree

»



WO1 Matty Howarth, RE

» apprenticeship (CMDA), which provides senior NCOs with the opportunity to acquire an honours degree in professional management.

The academy has delivered its first RSM-designate preparation course at Pirbright for 40 personnel, and launched its Level-up Leadership programme, which aims to develop the skills and knowledge of senior soldiers with a mix of face-to-face and online tutorials.

Some 40 corporals have also been enrolled on a civilian-recognised business studies diploma course.

Soldier talked to the NCO Academy Command Sergeant Major, WO1 Matty Howarth (RE), to find out more...

Why do NCOs need their own academy?

To ensure our people remain our competitive edge, and feel valued and invested in. The original catalyst was the fact the modern battlespace is becoming far more complex, with big decisions being taken at lower levels. These usually need to be made quickly, so all NCOs must be trained, equipped and prepared. It's integral to the Army's current ambition of tripling fighting power by 2030. We're also about reinforcing the fact NCOs are role models. They must lead by example.

How are you achieving your aims?

Through a combination of online and physical activity. We focus on personal, professional and operational development. Education is vital too. Networking and building relationships are crucial and the development days bring together NCOs from across the Army. We had 130 in Aldershot recently from 40 different units. That's so important for spreading good practice, knowledge and experience. We tend to only reach out to our own cap badge, but the development days and fortnightly online Tea and Toast Talks (*Soldier*, November) bring NCOs together. And we arm them with vital information from operations across the world by working closely with the Land Warfare Centre (LWC). CBRN is a great example. During a recent talk one speaker revealed that more than 400 CBRN incidents had taken place in Ukraine during August alone. Not one person in the room knew that stat, but imagine how crucial that could be to any unit deploying in a time of crisis. The LWC's lessons exploitation team has lots

of information of this type and we ensure personnel receive it loud and clear.

Are you open only to NCOs?

We are focused on NCOs but everyone is welcome at our events, Regulars and Reservists alike. We had two development days in Lichfield and Grantham recently and one of them was on a Saturday to encourage Reservists to attend. That will be a regular feature on our schedule in 2025. Our Tea and Toast Talks also focus on NCOs – however, anyone can join and listen in to the conversation. The first one of these was attended by officer cadets to aid their development.

The day we visited revealed a surprising lack of awareness among NCOs about resources such as LWC identification cards, Defence Connect or even the Army Knowledge Exchange. Does this surprise you?

As an organisation we push out a lot of information, especially online, and people sometimes don't know what's relevant to them so they get overwhelmed. The NCO Academy, especially during development days, points NCOs to the resources and tools most relevant to their roles.

What other initiatives have you introduced?

Rank-specific pages on Defence Connect, containing useful information and links. We've also created a champions scheme, where motivated individuals promote the academy back at their unit. When they sign up we also ask them what coaching and mentoring experience or qualifications they have, as no one else across the Army is collecting this data. So we now have a pool of people we can reach out to if one of our members needs advice. Within two weeks of starting this I had about 40 people sign up to be champions.

Is the NCO Academy crucial to the Army's future?

Absolutely. One piece of feedback from our development days indicates that corporals often don't feel well prepared for the jump to sergeant, especially from the management perspective, with the IT systems and people problems they face. We need to ensure our people feel invested in and valued, which helps with retention among other things. Out of 100,000 or so Regular and Reserve personnel, around 54,000 of them are NCOs – the largest single cohort. So why wouldn't we focus on what they need? ■

ACADEMY AWARDS

Two NCOs tell us what they think of the NCO Academy after attending a development day in Aldershot

WO2 James Mulholland, RHG/D

"It has the potential to make a huge impact on NCOs in the Army.

We learnt about new topics many units probably don't have time to deliver, expanded existing knowledge we could pass on, and were given perspectives on how other organisations in the civilian sector work.

It has improved my understanding of leadership as well as some of the current conflicts around the world.

Attending these events should be a part of the Army leadership development programme syllabus."



Sgt Kieran Douglas, RLC

"It's good to see a centralised system with people who have drive and passion, delivering a product that enhances the thinking ability of NCOs.

It's creating a better understanding of the importance of mentoring, coaching and motivating our people. And it's given me more awareness of what we should all be thinking of.



It seems such an obvious thing to have – I'm surprised the Army didn't jump on the idea sooner."

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The modern
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STRONGER TOGETHER

TEAMWORK 25

5 February 2025

TEAMWORK 25 aims to tell a story about creating environments where everybody can thrive and contribute to increasing Fighting Power. The overarching narrative is to build a winning Army by creating thriving environments where we can bring our best selves, strengths and capabilities to the table; make effective use of them; and ensure everyone has a voice.





'I'm leaving with an unjust bill'

WHY is it now I'm about to leave the Army I'm expected to pay for the removals from my Service family accommodation to my new civilian home?

What an absolute kick in the teeth it is, after giving my life and soul to this organisation for 31 years, to be told I have to pay for my final move and that I will not be given anything towards the cost, which will be around £2,000.

It makes me feel the Army doesn't care or want to know me after all this time.

We're told we're one big family and the Service will always be there for us when needed, but there is no "thank you for your contribution" with any financial help.

If I was posted abroad they would fund moving my family and all my furniture, but that's not the case if you're in the UK, it's all down to the soldier.

Some families are not able to afford this and we are not forewarned, so over those last few months some will need to borrow money, putting them nicely in debt as they start their new chapter in life. – **Name and address supplied**

Maj Michelle Hatton, Army RemPol Team, Army HQ, replies: Funded moves are available when you leave if you're serving on what is expected to be the final tour of duty of a

commission or engagement which qualifies for an immediate pension or an early departure payment.

The method for funded moves is through the final tour of duty (FTOD) provision as detailed in **JSP 752, chapter 12, section 5**.

The aim of this is to assist eligible personnel who are about to leave and are not in the geographical area in which they have formally expressed a preference to serve, with meeting the costs of settling themselves and/or their immediate family at a selected place of residence in the UK.

Personnel who have formally expressed a preference for an FTOD location using JPA form F024, are eligible to claim disturbance expenses and movement of personal effects to a place of residence in the UK at any stage during their final tour of duty, up to and including their final day of service.

This is provided that the provisions of JSP 752's para 12.0503 are extant. This specifies that "the preferred location must be within the UK, and must be a unit or establishment in which an assignment exists that the claimant could fill if it were vacant".

'RESERVE RETIREMENT POLICY IS DISCRIMINATORY'

● IN the March issue the then head of Army Reserve personnel stated "the schedule nine exemption for age takes precedence" for retirement policy.

However, the fact Reservist officers may serve to 60 before an over-age extension (OAE) is required, whereas for other ranks that age is 55, is still discriminatory.

Given there have been changes to the

fitness policy to make it equal on the basis of gender, surely it's time the OAE regulations were changed too.

If an individual is able to meet the fitness requirements, and by continuing to serve they are not preventing the career progression of another soldier, they should be able to serve to 60 regardless of rank.

– **Name and address supplied**

“
What a
kick in the
teeth
”

YOUR letters provide an insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas... but please be brief. Emails 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.

✉ mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk
{@} [@soldiermagazine
WHATSAPP us on 07973 614782](https://twitter.com/soldiermagazine)

COMPETITIONS

NOVEMBER 2024

HOAY winner (Majority bookshelf speaker system) Michael Furlong, Wareham Dorset.

RULES: Winners chosen at random from valid entries. Unless stated otherwise, competitions are open to readers aged 16 or over only. We have no responsibility for incorrect, incomplete, lost or delayed entries. Any winner will be bound by our terms and conditions. Where we are unable to contact a winner within one month, or any prize cannot be taken up or is declined or returned undelivered, a substitute winner may be drawn. At that point, the original winner shall cease to be eligible. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. *Soldier* is compliant with the Data Protection Act. We will not pass your details to a third party without your prior consent. Automated entries, bulk entries or third-party entries will be disqualified. Competitions are not open to *Soldier* employees, competition sponsors or anyone else connected with the competition, or the immediate families or agents of the foregoing. We have the right to verify the eligibility and identity of any entrant. Prize winners acknowledge and agree that neither *Soldier* or any competition sponsor(s) or any of their employees, agents or subcontractors shall have any liability whatsoever in connection with the winner's use and/or possession of the prize.

WELFARE

If you have a problem, your **chain of command** and **unit welfare teams** are a good starting point. They may also be able to help you find local support groups not listed below. **Padres** can provide individuals with pastoral care and moral guidance, whatever their faith. Here are some other national organisations that can offer help:

Army HIVE

These centres provide information for the whole military community on a wide variety of topics affecting their everyday life, including relocation, accommodation, health and well-being, finance, non-UK nationals, education, employment, deployment, resettlement, military discounts and local area information.

army.mod.uk/hives

Forcesline

A free and confidential telephone helpline and email service for Regulars, Reserves, ex-Forces and their families.

0800 731 4880

ssafa.org.uk/get-help/forcesline

Army Welfare Service

Contact directly via rc-aws-iat-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk or 01904 882051/2053

ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

If you are concerned about someone else's health or your own you can get confidential, free advice from your medical officer during routine hours, or your unit duty officer.

Drinkline

A free, confidential helpline 0300 123 1110

NHS support

nhs.uk/livewell

BULLYING/HARASSMENT/ DISCRIMINATION

Army Mediation Service

0306 770 7691 or mil 96770 7691 army-mediation-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Army Speak Out Helpline

0306 770 4656 or mil 96770 4656 army-speakout@mod.gov.uk

Defence BHD Helpline

Confidential, freephone and outside the chain of command 0800 014 2381

CHILDCARE/CARING/FAMILIES

Army Families Federation

The independent voice of Army families, offering confidential advice and support 01264 554004 aff.org.uk

The Forces Additional Needs and Disability Forum

is a tri-Service group for Service personnel (including Reservists) and their families who have a child or adult immediate family member with an additional need or disability. Find out more at ssafa.org.uk/get-help/disability-support/additional-needs-and-disability-support

Flexible working has been introduced by the Army to help personnel tailor their work-life balance. This includes arrangements such as remote working, variable finish times and restricted separation. Read more in the *Flexible Working and You* guide on Modnet. Regulars can find out how this impacts pay and benefits at discovermybenefits.mod.gov.uk

DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

These can be a considerable burden,

made worse by dealing with them alone. The following organisations can provide support.

Forces Pension Society

A not-for-profit, independent military pension watchdog and enquiry service 020 7820 9988 forcespensionsociety.org

Joining Forces Credit Union

Saving and affordable loans for the Armed Forces community from not-for-profit financial cooperatives joiningforcescu.co.uk

Money Helper

Government-backed money and pensions guidance with a wealth of in-depth guides, tools and calculators moneyhelper.org.uk

National Debtline

A charity that can talk through your options and help you take back control 0808 808 4000 nationaldebtline.org

StepChange Debt Charity

The UK's leading debt charity offering free, confidential advice 0800 138 1111 stepchange.org.uk

GAMBLING

National Gambling Helpline

Free information, support and counselling for problem gamblers in the UK 0808 8020 133

GRIEF

Cruse Bereavement Support

0808 808 1677

SSAFA support groups

People who have been through a similar tragedy, giving you the opportunity to talk through your emotions with an understanding group supportgroups@ssafa.org.uk

HOUSING

Defence Transition Services team

The MoD's tri-Service focal point to provide Armed Forces personnel and dependants with civilian housing info 0808 1914 218 (UK only) or +44 1253 866 043 (overseas) DBSVets-DTS-Central@mod.gov.uk

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services

01748 833797 spaces.org.uk

Support for veterans and families

A first point of contact for veterans seeking support. Talk to an advisor on 0808 802 1212 or go to:

gov.uk/government/collections/find-support-for-veterans-and-their-families

INJURY/SICKNESS

Personnel Recovery Centres

These centres can be found across the United Kingdom. To find out more about your local service, speak to your unit welfare team, search for Army Recovery Capability on Defence Connect or send an email to rc-pers-arc-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

LONELINESS

Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

A network of clubs to enjoy breakfast and banter, while combating social isolation afvbc.world

Samaritans

Someone to talk to, night or day, for free and without judgement 116 123 samaritans.org

The Royal British Legion

Contact the friendly team for information about local groups and support services 0808 802 8080 britishlegion.org.uk

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

There's always someone you can talk to. Speak to your friends or family, boss or padre, unit welfare staff (details above), medical officer or GP. There are a number of charities and other organisations that can also provide support and they include...

Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline

0800 138 1619

Headspace

All British Army personnel and civil servants can access this mindfulness app for free with an @armymail.mod.uk email address work.headspace.com/britisharmy/member-enroll

Mind – The Mental Health Charity

0300 123 3393 mind.org

NHS

General mental health support nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

Op Courage

A specialist NHS service for Armed Forces leavers, Reservists, veterans and their families. Search for "Op Courage" on nhs.uk to find your local team.

Samaritans

116 123 samaritans.org

The Ripple Pond

A self-help support network for relatives of physically or psychologically injured troops and veterans
0333 900 1028 theripplepond.org

Togetherall

A safe, online community where people support each other anonymously
togetherall.com

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN/ABUSE

Aurora New Dawn

Safety for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking
02394 216 816

aurorand.org.uk

ManKind

Support for male domestic abuse victims
01823 334244
mankind.org.uk

Relate

Support and counselling services for every kind of relationship
relate.org.uk



REUNIONS

The 90th Artillery Clerks' Reunion and Association Dinner for all members and partners is being held at

Larkhill on June 20-22. Visit

artyclerkassn.org for more details and to sign up.



SEARCHLINE

Syd Taylor is trying to track down

Peter Snape, who served in The Staffordshire Regiment in the 1980s. Contact sydtaylor000@gmail.com

Stuart MacDonald is looking

for an old pal from 3rd Royal Tank Regiment, Robert Smart, who served 1964-1978. Email stuartmacdonald4755@gmail.com

Training is available for Forces family members wanting to boost their employability.

Spouses, partners and school-leaving aged children of serving troops are eligible for the four-day courses, which cover CV writing, interview skills and include follow-up support. Delivered by The Royal British Legion Industries Lifeworks programme, the next packages will take place in Tidworth on January 27-30, Edinburgh on March 24-27 and Colchester on May 12-15. To find out more call 0800 319 6844 or email lifeworks@rbl.co.uk

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A photocopy is also acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted. Alternatively, email a photograph of the image highlighting the differences to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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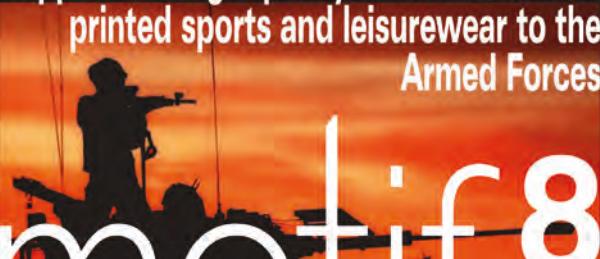


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REVIEWS

PICK OF THE MONTH

Six Days in Fallujah

Squad-based PC outing covers the kinetic – and moral – dimensions of a controversial battle

IRAQ remains a contentious campaign. And while arguments over its politics and strategy are destined to play out ad nauseum, the reality for those who served on Telic in the 2000s is far more personal.

It is their experience that is the focus of one of the first gaming titles on the conflict, based on a battle near Baghdad 20 years ago.

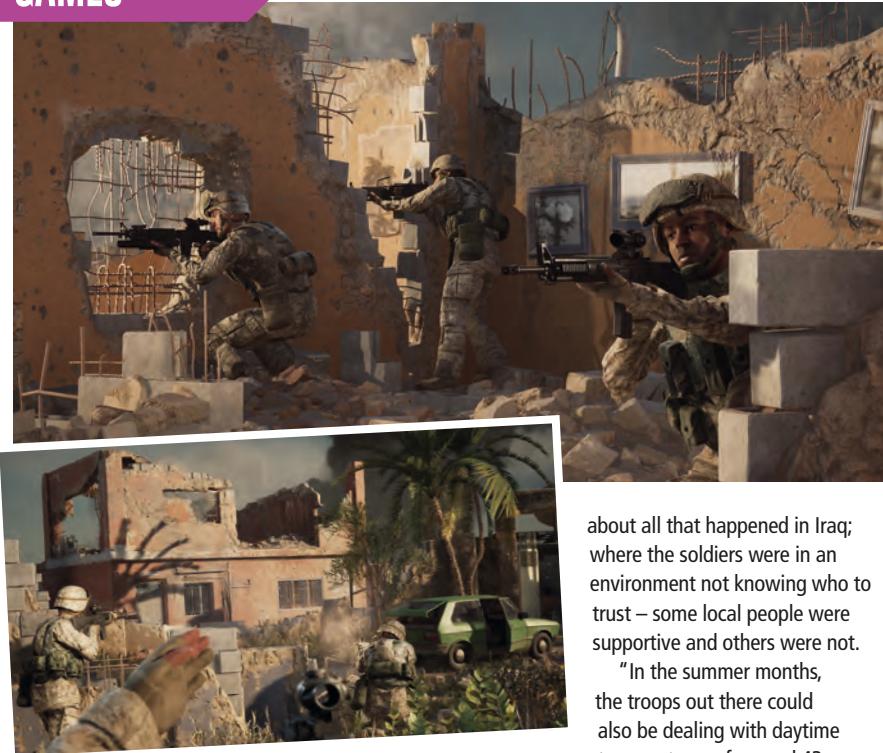
Six Days in Fallujah – which has been beset with its own controversies relating to whether enough time has passed to set a squad-based shooter offering in Iraq – focuses on the US Marine Corps-led action to challenge an urban insurgency.

The battle, in which troops from 1st Battalion, The Black Watch were also deployed to backfill the area around the American forward operating base at Camp Dogwood, was brutal and saw some of the fiercest close-quarter combat for decades.

"This story is about how the United States Marine Corps and Iraqi troops came together to overcome a common enemy, which back in



GAMES



late 2004 was al-Qaeda," Peter Tamte, CEO of the title's publisher Victura, tells *Soldier*.

"In creating the game, we have so far spoken to around 100 people, including residents who lived around the area and former combatants," he adds. "We have reflected different perspectives – players can take on the role of a US marine or Iraqi soldier, as well as a civilian who is caught up in the fighting."

Six Days in Fallujah is, by all accounts, multi-layered and well suited to the approach taken by developers, who have made it available in early access form on the online Steam platform.

Working from user feedback, they have been incrementally enhancing gameplay – most recently bolstering the artificial intelligence of PC-controlled teammates.

Simultaneously, they are continuing to consult closely with eyewitnesses to ensure there is a robust authenticity.

All this is a far cry from the project's conception in 2009, where it went through initial development before being unceremoniously dropped by its then publisher amid controversy around its proximity to real events.

Recently revived, it was released in early access just over a year ago.

"It was actually a former US marine who first suggested this project and it has since become a big part of my life," continues Tamte. "People have trusted me with their stories – and they are tales we do not know well enough."

"There is a generation now that is learning

about all that happened in Iraq; where the soldiers were in an environment not knowing who to trust – some local people were supportive and others were not.

"In the summer months, the troops out there could also be dealing with daytime temperatures of around 43

degrees, then facing weapons such as IEDs – they were doing this day after day."

As well as exposing players to the fire and manoeuvre realities of squad-based combat, Tamte believes video games can be an effective platform to illustrate the life-and-death realities for civilians caught up in war.

"Fallujah was a city of around 300,000 people when the prime minister of Iraq told the population to leave before the fighting began," he says of 2004. "But while most had upped and gone, there were still 30,000 who were either elderly, sick or could not leave."

"We wanted players to understand there were innocent civilians trapped for reasons beyond their control – in the game they can assume the role of a father trying to get their family out."

This is a completely different dimension to playing with the combatants involved.

The early builds certainly show great promise. Having already established a solid community, the latest developments have been well received and the developers are clearly listening to feedback from players.

While titles based on real-life scenarios will inevitably draw criticism – particularly when the war concerned is still fresh in the collective memory – it is clear there has been a serious effort to bring both authenticity and a moral component to the table. ■

Interview: Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

See a full review of the game in a future issue.

MORE TOP PICKS

BOOKS



Oct 7

by Capt Elkana Cohen

THIS book offers a glimpse into the life – and loves – of an Israeli soldier post-October 7, 2023 at the start of the Israel Defence Forces' ground operation against Hamas. Feeling the need to record his experiences for history, the author describes urban warfare drills, tackling drones and the frequent near-misses, as well as his fear of demobilising and returning to the routine of civilian life. In closing, he expresses the hope that he can take the sense of unity he felt with his team on the battlefield and preserve it among the entire nation of Israel. I think the title offers a way of understanding the war from a perspective we don't usually see – no media spin clouding the narrative, just a normal Reservist carrying out an important mission to return the hostages.



Review: SSgt Rosanne Constantine, Int Corps

PODCAST



Great British Battle Commanders

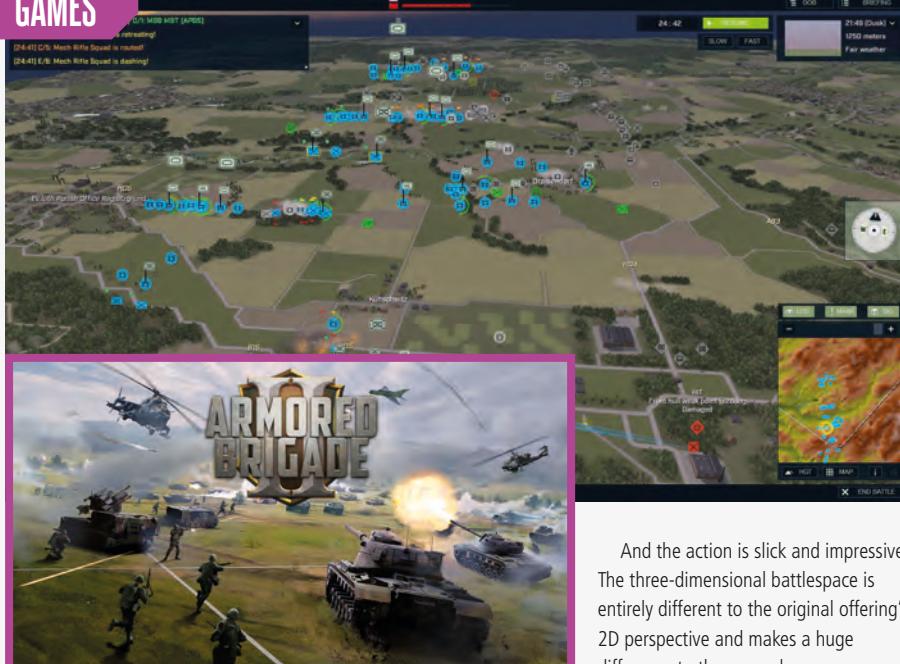
by BFBS

ACCOMPANYING the book of the same name, this BFBS podcast sees Prof Michael Clarke discussing historic leaders with a series of expert guests. *Sharpe* author Bernard Cornwell shares his thoughts on Wellington, while former CGS Lord Richards debates whether Montgomery was both "unbeatable and unbearable". Boudica, Nelson and Battle of Britain commander Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding also feature. The result is an insightful – and at six 30-minute episodes a digestible – offering that's ideal for whiling away the commute or Sunday night ironing session. Check out the filmed versions on the BFBS YouTube channel too.



Review: Becky Clark, *Soldier*

GAMES



Armored Brigade 2

Out now on PC

» A FULL-ON conventional combat outing set during the Cold War, this real-time tactical wargame provides virtual Nato chiefs with a simple overall task – to halt the Soviet-led advance.

Players have the alliance arsenal including troops and air power at their disposal and will need to use all available units, weaponry and environment to full advantage against the mighty Warsaw Pact opposition.

And the action is slick and impressive. The three-dimensional battlespace is entirely different to the original offering's 2D perspective and makes a huge difference to the gameplay.

Those at the sharp end can double-check the line of sight for a unit or see whether taking an objective will expose soldiers to the full wrath of the enemy's retaliation.

The 3D approach also adds a somewhat cinematic experience – providing exhilarating scenes as units duke it out – plus greater situational awareness from additional viewpoints.



Review: David McDougall, MoD civvy



Tetris Forever

Out now on all formats

» IT MIGHT not be a wargame, but this long-established series arguably hones many key soldiering skills. Logic, clarity of thought and good reactions must all be applied to keep afloat in fitting an endless puzzle of different shaped blocks together. *Tetris Forever* provides a fascinating history of this phenomenon, from its creation by Alexey Pajitnov – an ex-mathematician at the Moscow Aviation Institute – to the modern console and VR era. An array of titles accompanies commentaries, videos and interviews charting the legendary release's 40-year journey and its impact on contemporary culture. This is a collection well worth bagging – the handheld version we sampled on Switch being an especially good companion to any off-base excursion.



Review: Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

MOVIES

The Commander

On digital platforms now

» OF ALL the possible roles to serve in during the Second World War, submariner must surely have ranked among the worst, whichever side you were fighting on. In this true story, Italian naval captain Salvatore Todaro finds the rules

of battle put him at odds with the rules of the sea, when his submarine sinks a Belgian cargo ship, leaving survivors in the water. While Edoardo De Angelis's film is no *Das Boot* in terms of tension, good cinematography and a strong cast succeed in conveying the repercussions of the crew's moral dilemma, as well as the claustrophobic conditions aboard their sub. It's refreshing, too, to see a version of the conflict that doesn't feature the usual Allied-heroes-versus-Nazi-villains tropes. All in all, a decent watch – if you can overlook a clunky subtitle here and there.



Review: Capt Mike Owens, RE



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◀ FAMILIAR FEELING

THE Infantry and Royal Army Medical Service dominated proceedings at the Inter-Corps Swimming Championships, claiming the men's and women's crowns respectively. Read more about the event, which saw both teams defend the titles they won last year, on page 71...



FIGHTERS FEEL BENEFIT OF COACH'S FITNESS FOCUS

ROBUSTNESS was at the fore as Army boxers emerged with an impressive winning record from an exhausting showdown in their latest round-robin tournament.

The soldiers welcomed rivals from Merseyside and Cheshire, the Western Counties and Tyne Tees and Wear to their Aldershot base and claimed nine victories from 13 bouts as they fought over three successive days.

Head coach Sgt Chez Nihell (RAPTC) was obviously thrilled with the outcome and said the test came at the perfect time for the squad after an early season focus on boosting fitness levels within the group.

"We have changed the strength and conditioning programme to make it harder and we are reaping the benefits of that," he told *SoldierSport*.

"Our boxers faced some top-class opponents, lots of which are ranked within the top ten in the

country, and they showed a true warrior spirit.

"This format conditions them for the box cups and national championships to come.

"It means that fighting three times in three days will not be an alien concept, they have now boxed with fatigue while carrying a few niggles and injuries and have gone to dark places.

"I think this performance is testament to the programme we have put in place."

Nihell (pictured right) singled out a number of individuals for praise, including Fus Matty Calderwood (RRF), who put defeat in the finals of the National Association of Boys and Girls Clubs Championships two days earlier behind him to claim a victory at his home gym.

LCpl Leon Moulds (REME, pictured above, bottom left) won two of his three bouts, while Spr Marley Devitt (RE, pictured above, top left) triumphed in all



**"THEY
HAVE
GONE
TO DARK
PLACES"**

three of his contests in what were his first outings at middleweight.

"I was a bit nervous going into the opening bout," the 27-year-old explained. "You have the thought that you could get beaten three times in three days, but once I got that first win, I rolled into the next one and was happy to be stepping in the ring.

"On the Friday I was up against a good kid who had won national titles, but I put him under constant pressure, and he couldn't cope.

"The next bout was a bit of a war and I was too strong for him – I didn't expect that. And on the last day I was up against a fighter who was bigger than me, but I used my footwork in and out of range to get the result.

"The move to middleweight has been a good one and this has given me a confidence boost. The strength and conditioning has ramped up and everything came together – if you haven't got the

fitness to last three rounds you can't box.

"Last year I was feeling tired after each round but now I feel like I can do an extra round after every fight."

Pte Kieran Cooper (RLC, pictured below) posted a 100 per cent record from his two bouts, one of which saw him down ex-Royal Air Force star Luke Selby Grace – an opponent who defeated him at last year's UK Armed Forces Championships.

He also stepped up to super heavyweight to overcome Clinton Achusim, who had earlier beaten teammate Sig Tobi Lawal (R Signals, main picture).

"It was a good win against Luke; I felt fit in there and wanted to be professional and get the job done," the 28-year-old said.

"I spoke to Chez about stepping up to super heavyweight and he thought I could win so I said, 'why not'.

"We watched his fight with Tobi and they had a war, with some heavy shots going in.

"I was giving away a bit of weight, but I gained the advantage of being fast and agile.

"I stuck to the gameplan and let him gas out; I knew I could go the full three rounds.

"He caught me with an upper cut and I took the count, but being as fit as I am I recovered after 20 seconds and finished the fight strongly.

"It could not have gone any better really." ■



BOXING IN NUMBERS

BOUTS CONTESTED IN THREE DAYS AT THE ARMY'S ROUND ROBIN

36

WINS FROM THREE FIGHTS AGAINST EX-RAF STAR LUKE SELBY GRACE FOR PTE KIERAN COOPER

2

MEDALS WON BY THE UKAF SQUAD AT THE WOMEN'S WINTER BOX CUP - FIVE OF WHICH WERE GOLD

10

FIGHTERS WHO DEFENDED THEIR TITLES FROM LAST SEASON - CFN NIAMH BROOKES AND CPL CHARLOTTE TASKER

2



WINTER DELIGHT AT BOX CUP

MEDALS mounted at the Women's Winter Box Cup as Army fighters ended 2024 on a high.

Cfn Niamh Brookes (REME, pictured at last year's UK Armed Forces Championships), Cpl Charlotte Tasker (RAMS) and Pte Kasharna Williams (RLC) all topped the podium at the two-day competition in Leigh, with Cpl Felicity Johnstone and Pte Frankie Barnett (both RLC) claiming silvers.

The soldiers were competing as part of a UKAF squad that claimed a host of honours over the course of the weekend.

Victory proved particularly sweet for Tasker, who also won at the event in 2023, given her relative lack of ring time this season.

The 57kg fighter started in style by forcing a first-round stoppage in her semi-final and then triumphed over Islington's Amy Joseph via a unanimous verdict in the final.

"I'm very happy as I haven't been training full-time," she told *SoldierSport*.

"I've lacked that consistent coaching, but I've kept my fitness up and I thought if I'm going to do well it will be because of that, rather than my technical ability."

"I knew I could stop my opponent in the semi and then in the final, I was up against a taller fighter."

"I decided to close the distance and push forward, and that proved decisive."

"I believed I could win. I'd done a mental resilience course the month before and that changed my mindset. It was only six minutes of boxing so I went for it."

Tasker is now eyeing success at the Scottish National Championships later this year.

"I won the development competition last January at the weight above and hopefully I can drop down and add the elite title to that," she added. ■



RISING STARS MADE TO SUFFER IN TITLE DECIDER

THE Army fell short in their winner-takes-all clash with the Royal Navy to relinquish their grip on rugby union's Inter-Services Under-23 Championship.

Having downed the Royal Air Force in their opening match, the defending champions were looking for a repeat performance on home turf but failed to deliver as their rivals went on to complete a 19-6 victory and lift the trophy.

The Reds started positively and were rewarded in the fifth minute as LCpl Kevin Van-Der-Leest (R Signals) guided a penalty between the posts.

But as the momentum dipped the errors started to creep in and the Navy forced a succession of penalties that were eventually capitalised on by AB George Edson, who twice converted from the tee to hand the visitors a 6-3 advantage midway through the first period.

The fly half inflicted further damage in the 33rd minute as he launched a free kick downfield, which the Army then knocked on in their attempt to gather.

The Senior Service shifted the ball wide from the resulting scrum and when AB Ben Callard was held up in the corner, Edson was on hand to touch down.

The setback fired the Reds into life, and they rolled through the phases with strong carries and incisive passing in their first meaningful spell of pressure in opposition territory.

Mne Freddy Elliot was yellow carded for a misdemeanour in the advance but when the hosts kicked for touch from the ensuing penalty, they failed to gather at the lineout and the opportunity was gone.

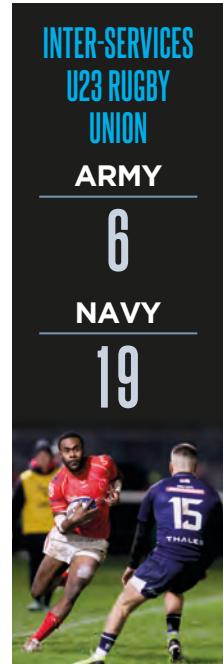
Instead of suffering from the numerical disadvantage, the Navy then stretched their lead as Edson added another penalty on the stroke of half-time.

A second yellow card in the 48th minute – this time awarded to AB Jack Davis for dangerous play – handed a further opportunity to the Army and Van-Der-Leest slotted the penalty to reduce the arrears.

However, his accuracy deserted him around the hour mark as successive kicks drifted just wide of the posts and the misses proved fatal as instead of moving to within two points of the Navy, the soldiers saw the contest slip from their grasp.

Having won the ball at the lineout the visitors launched a swift cross-field move and, spotting space in behind, Edson placed a deft kick down the left which allowed Elliot to cross in the corner and complete a deserved win.

Earlier in the campaign, the Reds ran in four tries – and added 17 points in the last 12 minutes – to defeat the RAF 35-23 in Witney. ■





CANADIAN QUEST

THE finest ice hockey talent in the Canadian military offered a stern test for the Royal Signals as they competed in Ex Comm Player.

Held in Ontario, the event featured teams from across the host nation's armed forces – including 21 Electronic Warfare Regiment and the Canadian Joint Signal Regiment (JSR).

The tourists, who were supported by members of the Royal Navy squad, posted some impressive performances – progressing to the final with a hard-fought 5-4 victory over the JSR. However, the challenge of 21 EW Regt proved a step too far as the signallers lost 3-1.

The ten-day trip offered valuable experience for the players, who enjoyed seven-and-a-half hours of game time along with nine hours of training.

Away from the action, personnel attended matches in the Ontario Hockey League and National Hockey League and explored the Hockey Hall of Fame.

The Royal Signals have already been invited to compete in the next trophy later this year.

Follow @royalsignaloicehockey on Instagram or the Royal Signals Ice Hockey Association Facebook page for more information on how to get involved.



STORMERS STEAL THE SHOW

THE Stormers claimed their second Premiership Cup title in three years to cap a busy day of action at the Army Rugby Union's community finals.

Featuring players from 12 and 16 Regiments, Royal Artillery, the team avenged their loss in last season's showpiece with a 28-20 victory over 17 Port and Maritime Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps – who were playing in their first final since 2016.

The power of the forwards did the damage for the champions-elect as they rumbled over for three tries, while the boot of Bdr Owain Davies (pictured) provided another valuable source of points.

The Army and UK Armed Forces star expertly slotted two conversions and three penalties to help his side establish a winning margin.

Elsewhere, 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment beat the Lyneham Dragons 15-12 to lift the Premiership Shield and there was a big win for 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers in the final of the Knock-out Vase, where they downed 19 Regiment, Royal Artillery 41-10.

The Defence Academy recorded a 46-15 triumph over the Royal Welsh Warriors in the Knock-out Quaich. ■

**"THE
TEAM
WON'T
FORGET
THIS"**



● THE Hungarian National Gallop was a happy hunting ground for a three-strong equestrian team from the Defence Animal Training Regiment.

Staged in Budapest, the event opened with a jumping competition and was followed by a mounted police obstacle course.

WO2 Stephen Heeley (LG) finished in the top 15 of the police test – a result that was followed by a successful showing in the gallop.

A flat race consisting of three-and-a-half laps of a track, it featured an international field with representatives from nine countries.

Heeley (pictured) held off the challenge of Bahrain and Romania to win his heat and progress to the final as the fastest qualifier. There, he made a fantastic start and went on to seal the honours in style.

"It was a memorable experience that the team won't forget," Heeley said. Capt Mathew Chamberlain (RDG) and CoH Tom Alden (LG) completed the line-up.

Pictures: Sgt Murray Kerr RA



GUARD HONOURED

SOLDIERS based in Cyprus took to the football pitch in a tournament celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Greek Cypriot National Guard.

Teams from British Forces Cyprus (BFC) and the Army's UN peacekeeping operation faced off against the Cypriot National Guard and a side comprising international personnel at the Kykkos Stadium in Nicosia, with the latter going on to claim the overall honours.

Featuring players from Australia, Canada and the USA, they beat BFC 3-1 in the final.



SPORT SHORTS

Orienteers on top

THE Army enjoyed a clean sweep of success at the Inter-Services Orienteering Championships.

Held as part of the Southern Navigators regional event, the competition saw some fantastic running over demanding and soggy terrain. The soldiers proved a dominant force as they won the men's and women's team prizes, while Maj Kezia Jukes (RE) and Maj Rob Gardner (RL) claimed the individual honours.



MEDICS REVEL IN SERPENT SUCCESS



**"YOU
HAVE
TO PUSH
OUT"**

KIERS from the Royal Army Medical Service were tested on the Norwegian piste as part of the corps' annual Nordic and Alpine exercises.

Both disciplines saw personnel attend two-week training camps before championship action got under way, although a lack of snow hampered preparations early on.

Lt Alasdair Tutt and 2Lt Megan Brown were victorious in the intermediate pairs sprint at Ex Nordic Serpent, with Maj Conor Turner and Capt Helena Saxton taking the novice honours.

Ex Alpine Serpent featured a variety of categories in the slalom and giant slalom. In the former, Pte Callum Ryland claimed the Regular individual title, with Cpl Ross Martin receiving the Reserve equivalent prize.

Pte Sophie Phillpot-Hall secured novice gold, while Ryland and Martin added the junior and senior honours to their respective hauls.

Sgt Kevin Montague was veteran champion.

Ryland enjoyed further success in the giant slalom, again winning the Regular and junior prizes, and Martin sealed another Reserve gold. Capt Amanda Herring topped the podium in the women's individual event, a feat matched by Maj Matt Dean in the senior competition.

WO2 Eddie Edris, the organisation's Alpine 2iC, said the exercise highlighted the importance of leadership while working in a tough environment. "It is about having the courage and mental resilience to push out the start gate," he added. ■

● INTERNATIONAL opposition awaits the Army women's netball team as they kick-off their 2025 campaign against Malawi on January 29.

Staged at Loughborough University (1900 start), the match will form a stern test for the soldiers as the African outfit are currently ranked seventh in the world. The visitors are using the clash to prepare for February's Vitality Netball Nations Cup, in which they will face England, Uganda and South Africa.





Pictures: AS2 Josh Gorman, RAF

COURT STARS STAND TALL AMID TOUGH ASSIGNMENT

ARMY players emerged with credit in the bank following a difficult outing for the UK Armed Forces at the Shape International Basketball Tournament in Belgium.

With a number of key personnel unavailable, the men's team struggled for momentum against some powerful military opposition at the seven-day competition – losing all four games played.

A 92-42 reverse against Latvia was followed by a 92-78 defeat to Estonia and they completed their campaign with slender losses to France and the hosts.

Despite the disappointing results there were positives to be found in the performances of Tpr Darreo Glasgow (RTR, pictured right) and Sgt Ferris Murray (RLC, main picture), who caught the eye throughout.

"Darreo was voted MVP at the last Inter-Services," UKAF secretary Capt Anyegwai

Tambi Spicely (RAMS) told *SoldierSport*. "In previous years we have struggled for guards, but he really stepped up.

"He has played college basketball in America and can control a game. His passing and distribution is made with the right timing, he's great at rebounds and he even got a dunk in one match.

"Ferris has been involved for a while, but this was the best he has played, and he was our highest scorer in three fixtures.

"We had seven first-team players missing and that makes things difficult. We should be beating teams like Belgium, but the experience was great."

The women's team also faced a tough run of games, although they managed to triumph over the Netherlands 45-33 after losing 54-51 to Latvia first up.

They then slipped to a 61-45 defeat against Lithuania.

Capt Resma Rajbhandari



"HE CAN CONTROL A GAME"

(pictured above, bottom left) and Pte Shannon Purves (both RAMS) were among UKAF's standout performers.

"Resma was one of the hardest working players out there," Tambi Spicely continued. "Nobody could get past her in defence; she was athletic and agile and was the highest rebounder on the team.

"And Shannon was just a scoring machine for us."

Plans for an expanded run of fixtures are now taking place to give personnel a greater taste of the UKAF environment, with matches against the police earmarked for March.

"We had to give some last-minute call-ups to players who have never played at this level before," the officer explained.

"By having games in the build-up to next year's tournament, it means if we make those calls again they will be coming in with greater experience." ■

SPORT SHORTS



Picture: John Shirras

RAF challenge ahead

MISSIONARY opposition awaits the Army men's rugby league team after they were drawn against the Royal Air Force in the opening round of this season's Challenge Cup.

The Reds slipped to a 24-12 defeat to the airmen in last year's Inter-Services clash and will be looking to make the most of home advantage when the sides face off at the Army Rugby Stadium in Aldershot on the weekend of January 11 and 12.

Follow [@ArmyRugbyLeague](#) on X for confirmation of the exact date and kick-off time. Admission is free.



Picture: Alligyn Photography/David Cunningham

Downed in Dubai

MISSING THE UK Armed Forces women suffered a 19-17 defeat to the Savvy Black Panthers to exit the Emirates Dubai Sevens in the plate semi-finals.

SSgt Jade Mullen (AGC (SPS)), LCpl Courtney Pursglove (RLC, pictured), LCpl Isabel Bibby (AGC (RMP)) and Gdsm Manuqualo Komaitai (IG) were all in action for the military outfit, who suffered narrow defeats in their two opening pool fixtures before drawing 12-12 with Arctic Sisu.

A 42-7 victory over Kings College ensured progression from the plate quarter-finals before another slender loss saw them bow out.

LOGGIES' JOY AT POLO DOUBLE



THE Royal Logistic Corps celebrated a famous double at the Inter-Corps Water Polo Championships as their men's and women's teams reigned supreme.

It was the first time the squads had been crowned champions at the same time and capped a superb day of action in the pool that culminated in thrilling wins in the deciding fixtures of the round-robin tournament.

The men downed the Infantry 5-4 to claim their respective title – a scoreline that was repeated in the women's clash with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in which Capt Molly Firth (pictured) scored four times.

Lt Col Laura Ellis matched her personal goal haul for the REME.

"The men's competition was extremely closely fought and was gripping to watch," Maj Lisa Brown, secretary of RLC Aquatics, told *SoldierSport*.

"Maj Si Robertson did a fabulous job as skipper, fielding a team which had both strength, depth and reserve.

"The ladies, led by Sgt Helen Seal, managed to hold their nerve in the final match of the day to come away with a brilliant result and secure the title.

"Winning both trophies was a fabulous team effort, leading to an overall win in the ladies aquatics cup, runners up in the men's equivalent and overall runners up in the combined competition – where we finished just one point behind the Royal Engineers." ■

"THEY HELD THEIR NERVE"

- THE Army men's rugby union squad added another trophy to their haul after they were named UK Armed Forces team of the year. The Reds overcame the Royal Navy men's football team and the Royal Air Force motorcycle road race outfit and will receive their prize at the UKAF Sports Awards in March.



MONTH IN SPORT

January's key dates...

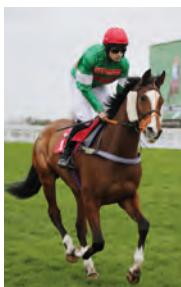


WHAT: Army Judo Championships
WHEN: January 10
WHERE: Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: The competition follows on from a four-day skills course and attracted 56 entries last season. Army coaches will be talent spotting with the Inter-Services in mind

follows on from a four-day skills course and attracted 56 entries last season. Army coaches will be talent spotting with the Inter-Services in mind



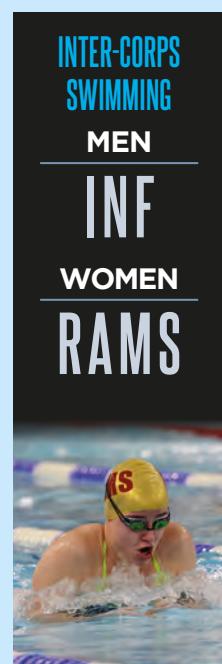
WHAT: Inter-Corps Basketball Championship Finals
WHEN: January 21 to 23
WHERE: Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: Now in its second season, the new-look corps clash reaches its conclusion at the final fours, with semi-finals contested in the men's and women's competitions ahead of the main events



WHAT: Grand Military Gold Cup
WHEN: January 24
WHERE: Sandown Park
NEED TO KNOW: First run in 1841, this is restricted to military amateur jockeys and is one of the venue's oldest events. The day features six races, with the Forces showdown forming the centrepiece



CHAMPIONS DEFEND TITLES IN STYLE



FAMILIAR names were etched onto the Inter-Corps Swimming Championships trophies as the Infantry and Royal Army Medical Service defended their crowns from last season.

In the men's draw, the Infantry sealed the honours in convincing style, posting 141 points to finish 23 clear of the Royal Engineers in second. The result was a far cry from their success 12 months earlier, when they won the final race of the day to seal the silverware by a single point.

However, drama was found in the battle for the runners-up spot as the sappers and Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers both posted 118 points. But with the former winning more heats, they edged ahead.

Rfn Harry Milner (Rifles) was among the standout performers for the champions as he won the 50 metres backstroke and finished second in both the 200 metres

individual medley and 100 metres butterfly. He was also part of the victorious relay squads in the 4x50 metres freestyle and medley.

2Lt Sam Irvine (R Anglian) was another to shine with wins in the 50 and 100 metres freestyle, while starring alongside Milner in the relays.

The RAMS continued their dominance of the women's competition as they finished with a haul of 141 points – an eight-point increase on their effort last year.

Capt Olivia Pollard played a starring role for the medics, topping the standings in the 50 and 100 metres butterfly, as well as the 200 metres freestyle, while 2Lt Hannah Mo claimed the honours in the 50 and 100 metres breaststroke. Both were prominent as the RAMS won all three relays.

The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers – spearheaded by LCpl Tia Ward – were second overall. ■

COMING SOON!

Force Protection (SHEF) Training & Education Delivery through the NEW Army Force Protection Support Tool (Currently in development)

Army Safety Group - Safety Centre is pleased to announce we will be launching a new tool in 2025 called the Force Protection Support Tool (FPST). This is the first of a series of awareness briefs.

This will cohere the totality of the Army requirement for Force Protection (SHEF) mandated training delivered by the Army Force Protection Adviser (AFPA) cohort, on time at the point of need. It will also signpost to external FP (SHEF) courses delivered by STS Halton / DCS Worthy Down & DFTU Moreton in the Marsh.

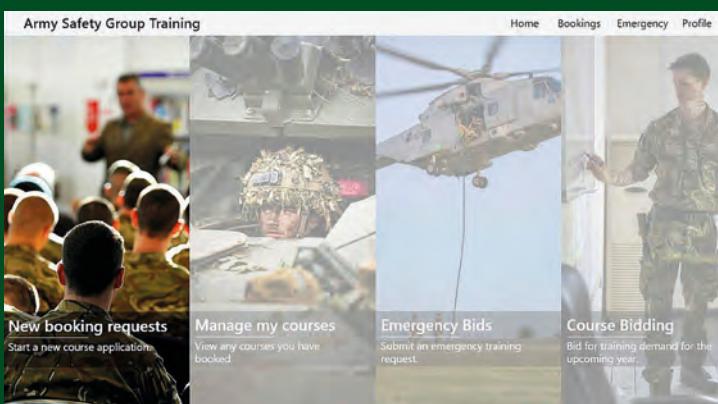
All your FP (SHEF) training requirements will be requested and managed in a single place through three phases, run twice per year.

- **Bidding (Jan and Jul)** - Units/ LMs/ students bid for a course twice per year.
- **Administration (Feb to Mar and July to Aug)** Courses created, released, LMs / Students request and loaded onto courses.
- **Delivery (April to Oct and Nov to Mar)** Courses delivered.

Whilst a spare capacity will be built in for genuine emergencies outside of the bidding windows, the need for short notice courses will be minimised if units consider their requirements on a six-monthly basis.

To follow the progress of this tool and be advised of developments and release date please register for updates.

<https://forms.office.com/e/BnyA0JH27x>



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LEAGUE LOOKS TO FUTURE AFTER MILESTONE YEAR

THE Army Rugby League set-up is on a mission for further growth and expansion after completing its 30th anniversary celebrations.

Having formed in 1994 the organisation has blossomed to the point where the senior Army teams showcase their talents at some of the leading grounds in the country at Inter-Services level, with a flourishing corps scene (main picture) offering a conveyor belt of talent for those representative sides.

The female game has been another success story, with a host of personnel now signed to Women's Super League outfits and one of those, SSgt Carrie Roberts (REME), represented England at the last World Cup.

The Army women's team have won 15 consecutive Forces titles and lifted the Challenge Shield in 2019. They also compete in the Super League South competition and have twice been crowned the

Service's team of the year at the annual sports awards.

"While we have been around since 1994, it is in the last ten years that Army Rugby League has shown its strength," chairman Lt Col Richard Grover (Mercian) told *SoldierSport*. "That is when we really kicked on.

"The challenge now is to make sure people are aware of what is going on. Soldiers should expect to see an extra line in their reports for playing or being part of the organising staff, so it is important we let their chain of command know they are doing great things in their spare time.

"I would not be involved if I did not think this could grow and get better – everyone wants to be part of a winning organisation."

The quest continues on January 29 as the Honourable Artillery Company hosts a fixture between the Royal Artillery and Infantry before the Army men lock horns with St Helens.



**"THIS
CAN
GROW
AND GET
BETTER"**

And in September the soldiers' Inter-Services fixtures will be staged at the home of Hull Kingston Rovers in a signature event for Army sport in the North.

"The games at the HAC are a great chance for us to raise our profile, expose people to the sport and highlight the opportunities there are to play in the Service," Grover continued.

"The Army is predominantly based in the South, but rugby league has its heartland in the North. That is also a heartland of military recruiting.

"We have built great links with the likes of St Helens and Hull KR and have access to the professional game that other sports don't get.

"That helps with engagement and recruiting; people play this for the love of the game, and we can offer them an opportunity to play at a high level, while also joining another great team in the form of the Army." ■

Final Word



My goal is to continue to help grow the sport of Brazilian jiu-jitsu in the Army and there are a few competitions I have my eye on. The Front Line Championships and London International Open would set me up perfectly for the World Masters in Las Vegas in August.

Sgt Josh Gibbs, RAPTC



I'm looking forward to returning to full fitness following a stress fracture. My main goal is a personal best in the Berlin Marathon in September. Alongside that I want to help expand athletics within my corps and promote the benefits of sport to the wider Army.

Lt Kate Olding, Int Corps



Having finished second last year, my entire focus for 2025 is winning the Ironman World Championships, Kona in October.

Capt Kat Matthews, RAMS



I hope to, once again, compete in the Inter-Services at Wimbledon and defend my title at the Army Tennis Championships. I'm also looking forward to an overseas visit to La Manga to prepare for the new season.

Pte Marco Wright, Para

Interviews: Richard Long | Pictures: Graeme Main; Daniela de Jong; D. Herzog; Eric Alonso/Getty

I'm taking a short career intermission in 2025, so to make the most of this I'm hoping to take part in the Transcontinental Race - a 4,500km ultra-distance bike race running from western Spain to Romania. I'll do some time-trialling in the margins, but obsessing over bike luggage, lightweight camping kit and how to deter stray dogs will be my new goals for this year.

Lt Col Christina Murray, Int Corps



NEW YEAR TARGETS

We asked Army athletes for their sporting goals in 2025



This year my focus will be on swapping my sports kits for scrubs as I concentrate on my medical career as a resident doctor in Bath. I also want to prioritise giving back to the Army, who hugely supported my journey to the Paris Olympics. Training won't stop, though, as I'm not quite finished with my dream of winning an Olympic medal in modern pentathlon.

2Lt Kerenza Bryson, RLC

Victory at the UK Armed Forces Boxing Championships is my aim this year. It would mean I progress through to the national championships and hopefully win something there.

Spr Marley Devitt, RE



LEVEL PEAKS



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