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MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY



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JULY 2011
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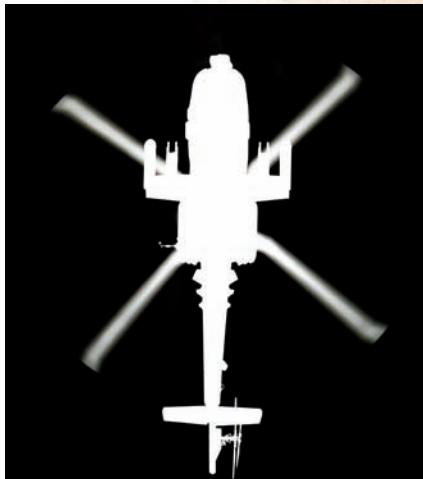
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Cover picture (left): The Apache attack helicopter is a worthy emblem of the British Army's ongoing success Picture: Steve Dock

Background image: Cpl Robin Ardis (RAVC) and arms explosive search dog Travis are guaranteed a warm reception from troops thanks to their life-saving skills (pages 45-47)

Picture: Graeme Main





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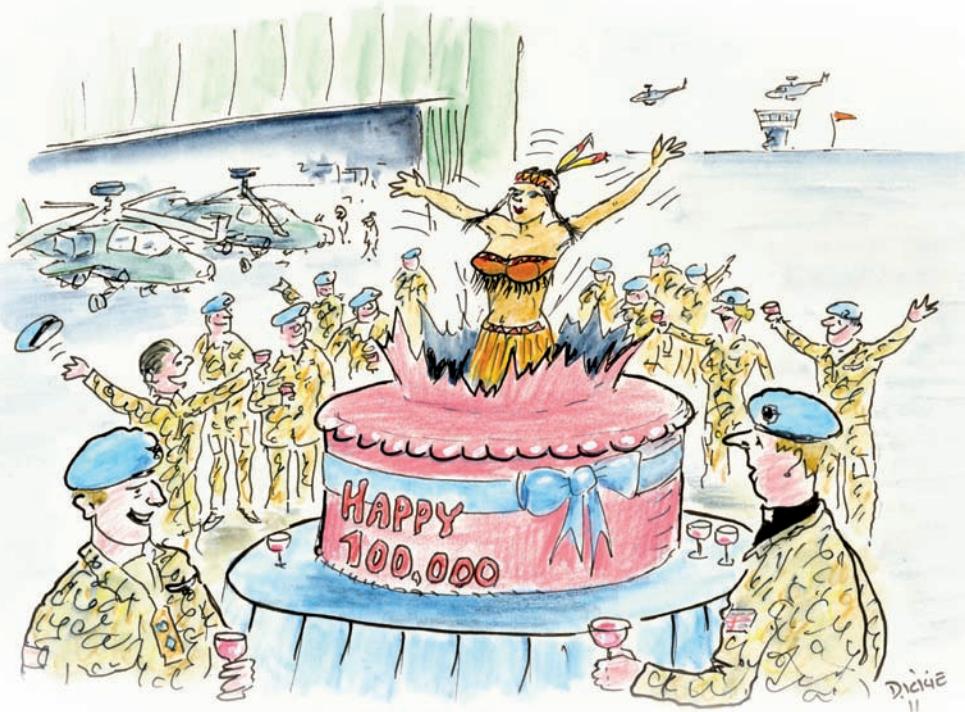
ARMY



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"Bit late for your blessing, Padre... save it for the 200,000!"

● Elite equipment – pages 28-31

Beyond the world of deadlines

AS government ministers stake their political careers on emphasising withdrawal deadlines to the UK's media, it can be easy for those of us outside Afghanistan to forget the nature of daily life there.

So it's a welcome relief to offer you a magazine packed with exciting detail about what will truly determine a successful Helmand handover – quality equipment and, even more crucially, the right brains operating it.

One British Army team who can already quantify their success in this area is the Army Air Corps, who have marked 100,000 hours of Apache flying time (pages 28-31). Proudly chosen to front July's edition, this remarkable gunship stands at the forefront of the Service's war-winning arsenal of equipment.

Training advances in the world of virtual combat (pages 33-35) show furthermore that no stone is being left unturned when it comes to deploying troops to an operational theatre in the most effective way possible. By its very nature, the Army is a quick-paced organisation: departing Herrick-bound flights quickly give way to drills within the landscapes of Otterburn (pages 48-49), Bovington (pages 50-51) and further afield.

But amid the haze of pre-deployment training and forward-planning it is also important to pause and reflect on what is happening in theatre right now.

To this end, BBC Three's documentary series *Our War* has given important insight to myself and countless other civilians who admittedly struggle to comprehend the nature of southern Afghanistan's daily challenges.

This programme's makers – and with all due

respect to producers I refer to troops here – can feel proud. Your personal on-screen reflections have undoubtedly won you respect from those who were watching – a respect based on empathy rather than awe.

Our War's real-time, heat-of-the-moment helmet footage captured a world that even the best of magazines would struggle to portray.

At which point (ahem) it would seem timely for the *Soldier* gang to indulge in a brief moment of self-congratulation.

We are truly delighted to have again been awarded the crown of "best internal magazine" in Britain – both from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations and the Institute of Internal Communication (page 9).

On scooping the accolade, our team received a letter from the Chief of General Staff, Gen Sir Peter Wall.

"Your ability, not only to pass important information down to the front line but to reflect opinions and concerns back up, is testament to the honest credibility of the publication," he told us.

Please get in touch and tell us how we can continue to serve you all in this way.

In the meantime, I will leave readers to decide the shape of our Service's collective success from the articles in this issue.

"You do the fighting and I'll do the talking," were the Prime Minister's words about military leaders last month.

Although daily pressure certainly mounts on Mr Cameron to ensure our Force meets his departure date, to say he has the simpler job in realising this task would be the understatement of the century. – **Sarah Goldthorpe, Editor**

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Picture: LA (Phot) Bernie Heresy, Royal Navy

Apache joins alliance assault on Gaddafi's forces

BRITISH attack helicopters have been deployed to support operations over Libya.

Days after their use was approved by the Prime Minister, the Apache gunships destroyed two military installations, a radar site and an armed checkpoint near Brega.

The MoD said the aircraft, flown by Army Air Corps personnel and supported by the Royal Navy's response force task group, offered Nato commanders greater intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance capabilities.

The deployment follows an agreement by the alliance to extend military action against forces loyal to Col Muammar Gaddafi for another 90 days from the end of June.

Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox said: "This was the first operational mission flown by British Army Apaches at sea."

The minister explained that the decision to use the helicopters in

support of Operation Ellamy reflected their "flexibility" and "very high readiness" for contingency operations around the world.

"The additional capabilities now being employed by Nato further reinforce the UK's enduring commitment to ensure that the people of Libya are free to determine their own future," Dr Fox added.

The state-of-the-art aircrafts, which reached the milestone of 100,000 flying hours in May (pages 28–31), were tasked to the troubled North African country from HMS *Ocean*.

It is hoped the move will send the message that the UK is determined to keep up pressure on the Libyan leader's military forces.

Dr Fox said: "With the extension of Nato's operation plan agreed, it is right to reflect on the progress we've made and what we should do next.

"Now is not the time to reduce the pressure on Col Gaddafi."

Prime Minister David Cameron told a news conference that "time is on our side, not on Gaddafi's side," and added that enthusiasm for the job was "extremely high" among British airmen.

■ **A KEY Nato control centre in the UK will remain operational after discussions by ministers about how to reform allied missions.**

The maritime command hub at Northwood, Hertfordshire, is responsible for directing various international deployments, including counter-piracy missions in the waters around Somalia.

Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox said that keeping the headquarters was a fundamental objective for the coalition government.

"As one of the leading contributors to allied operations it is only right that Nato retains a command presence on British soil," he said.



“APPROXIMATELY £50 MILLION WORTH OF EQUIPMENT HAS PASSED THROUGH OUR HANDS AS WELL AS £210,000 WORTH OF SPARES”

- CAPT GUY THEWLIS (RLC) REFLECTS ON HIS TEAM'S TASKING, PAGES 37-39

‘Army must advance from Afghan-centric stance’

THE British Army is facing a “transformational opportunity”, a summit of senior military staff has been told.

Generals from Britain, the US, China and other countries spoke about what the future holds at the Royal United Services Institute’s Land Warfare Conference in London.

The high-level discussion focused on how the Army should prepare for the mid-term target of 2020 and the best way to work with international partners in an unpredictable global environment.

In his opening address, the Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Peter Wall, said: “We are approaching in the British Army a transformational opportunity that will allow us to shape Land Forces fit for the demands of the 2020s.

“But in the decade ahead we do have to surmount a number of hurdles and challenges. We have to take the Afghan campaign to a militarily successful conclusion, succeed in coping with whatever the unexpected throws at us and implement the design of Future Forces 2020 as laid out in the recent Defence Review but, of course, tempered by the financial realities of successive programming rounds into the future.”

The head of the Service added that Afghanistan remains the UK’s main defence effort and the Army’s overriding preoccupation.

“The 2014 timeline [...] for transition of the combat role to the Afghan security forces now gives us a very clear programming mark against which to work out what has to happen successfully between now and then,” he added.

Gen Wall explained that new bilateral relationships such as the France-UK treaty are being forged, but emphasised that threats remain unpredictable.

“Wars pick us, we don’t pick them,” the senior officer said.

“Just look at the Arab spring; look at the global impacts of things that we would rather were more localised. And the national response to these things. The promotion of our values – the aversion to humanitarian crisis, oppression and potential genocide – means that to a greater or lesser extent we tend to get involved.

“[The conflict in] Libya is the latest reminder of the need for balanced capability at readiness.”

The Chief of the General Staff, pictured above, was clear on the Force’s need to work in different environments simultaneously. He said: “We do over this decade in the Army have to transform ourselves from our current focus, which is very much Afghan-



CGS explained. “If we look at our core equipment programme, it’s rather a different story.”

Closing his speech, a determined Gen Wall said: “We need to shape ourselves for a world that has recently been demonstrated, notwithstanding the way others would wish it to be, to be fundamentally unpredictable.

“We need to grow a contingency capability that we can be proud of.”

In Gen Sir Nick Parker’s keynote speech, the Commander-In-Chief also spoke about the need to transform.

The former Deputy Commander of the International Security Assistance Force is working to ensure the British Army will be out of combat operations in Helmand by the end of 2014.

“We need to think very carefully about what the core elements of our capability are – both those which we need to transfer from our Afghan experience and others which we need to regenerate because we have not been practising them over the past few years,” he said.

The commander added that personnel needed to be taught basic soldiering to a high level: fitness of mind and body must be inherent.

“If we have people who are concerned, who are troubled, who don’t believe in their chain of command, then we are not going to have the level of commitment that we need to bind together the battlegroup, brigade or whatever it is.”

Gen Parker insisted more work needed to be done on internet and cyber warfare.

“We do not understand how to exploit the social networks and the extraordinary levels of connectivity that exist out there,” he said.

INTERNATIONAL INSIGHT

**GEN MARTIN DEMPSEY,
CHIEF OF STAFF, US ARMY**

“The killing of Osama Bin Laden was a great moment in terms of taking out the leadership of al-Qaeda and creating difficulties for their organisation.

“But there is the undertone that these types of organisations are in some ways leaderless, so I don’t know that we have yet come to understand what his demise might mean and what it could spell for the future.

“The world is not safer; it certainly feels more complex and unpredictable now.”



NEWS IN BRIEF

X-RAY REVOLUTION

■ MEDICAL teams on the front line in Afghanistan will be equipped with mobile whole-body scanning technology within months, the MoD has said.

The cutting-edge kit will give doctors access to high quality three-dimensional images and allow them to rapidly x-ray patients and investigate trauma injuries more thoroughly.

The senior Army officer responsible for bringing the hi-tech equipment into service said the clinical asset could be introduced to theatre within seven months.

Col John Abbott added: "Lives will be saved by the addition of this mobile CT scanner as part of the UK's deployable hospital capability.

"This project illustrates how state-of-the-art medical technology can be sent on operations and how future field hospitals may well develop with properly engineered and integrated complex treatment systems."

SOLDIER SHINES

■ THIS publication has cemented its standing as "best internal magazine" in Britain for a third successive year.

Experts from the Chartered Institute of Public Relations crowned the British Army's title at an awards ceremony last month, praising the "good writing, striking imagery and attractive design".

Hot on the heels of this success – and for the second year running – the Institute of Internal Communication also awarded the same accolade.

"*Soldier* is excellent in every regard and so superior to other Service and MoD publications," the judges said. Who are we to argue?

CASH COUNTDOWN

A TIME limit has been set for those claiming bounty payments after rejoining the Army.

Personnel qualify for the cash sums if they apply no less than six months and no more than six years after discharging or transferring to Reserve. They must also have less than 15 years' Service and submit their claim within nine months of reporting for duty.

Trained re-enlisters need to have served for six months after completing Phase 2 training in order to be eligible.

Qualification for a rejoining bounty is subject to medical grading, character assessment and the existence of an employment vacancy.

Those who have already returned to the Army and think they are entitled to money have until the end of March 2012 to submit a claim.

Former Service personnel interested in rejoining can apply online at <https://applicationform.armyjobs.mod.uk>

Alternatively call 0845 600 8080 or visit your local Army careers office.



Picture: Sgt Alison Baskerville, RLC

A TEAM of Royal Engineers has built a major bridge in Helmand province in less than three hours. Members of 39 Armoured Engineer Squadron erected the structure in an area being cleared of insurgents during Op Omid Haft.

"I'm extremely proud of what the boys have managed to achieve," said commanding officer Maj Simon Bradley. "This bridge will enable our troops to move north of the [Nahr-e Bugrah] canal to disrupt enemy activity up there."



Portraits from the province

WORKS by a prominent war artist embedded with British troops in southern Afghanistan go on show at Bonhams auction house in London this month.

Suffolk-based painter and printmaker Jules George was stationed with soldiers from 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment for two months at the start of last year.

He was based at Shorabak, the Afghan National Army training site near Camp Bastion, and visited smaller bases in the Nad-e Ali district, in a trip sponsored by the MoD.

"All my preconceptions of Afghanistan were based on what I had seen in the media, but the reality was completely different," George said.

"The beauty of the landscape overcast with the shadow of war; the contrast is simply incredible."

The artist, who filled five sketchbooks during the placement, lived with troops in Helmand. He

accompanied them on foot patrols and experienced first-hand the threat of IEDs. While out on the ground with the Household Cavalry Regiment in Musa Qaleh he was caught up in a firefight with insurgents, who had been laying explosives in the area.

A roadside bomb narrowly missed the vehicle he was travelling in but hit two others in the same convoy. There were no serious casualties.

"I tried to convey what it is like to be on the front line; the fear and the energy, the camaraderie and determination of the troops," George added. "It was a huge challenge but one that has served to sharpen my skills."

"I have huge respect for these men and women."

The exhibition will run from July 22 to August 5. A percentage of the profits from sold artwork – which ranges in price from £180 to thousands of pounds – will be donated to Combat Stress and matched by the auction house.



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■ ASPIRING REFEREES WITH THE ARMY FA HAVE A VERY GOOD PROFILE BECAUSE OF THEIR BACKGROUND, DISCIPLINE AND TRAINING ■

— PREMIER LEAGUE OFFICIAL WAVES THE FLAG FOR THE FORCES, PAGE 95

IN MEMORIAM



CPL LLOYD NEWELL
THE PARACHUTE REGIMENT
KIA JUNE 16 – AFGHANISTAN

A DEVOTED husband has been killed, nine weeks after the birth of his daughter.

Paratrooper Cpl Lloyd Newell was fatally wounded by small-arms fire during operations in Helmand province.

A statement from the MoD described the Serviceman as "a man of integrity and principle". It said: "He was a natural and talented soldier who loved his work and the military lifestyle.

"Cpl Newell personified the great British paratrooper – selfless, humble, cheerful and utterly reliable. He did his duty, relishing discomfort as a personal test and always acting in the greater interests of the team."

The statement added that he had "attracted friends easily" and cared deeply for those around him.

Cpl Newell leaves behind his wife and young daughter.



Picture: Sgt Alison Baskerville, RLC

Success for Helmand's highwaymen

BRITISH troops have been helping to keep one of Afghanistan's busiest roads open.

Soldiers from the 9th/12th Royal Lancers are working alongside the Afghan National Army (ANA) on Highway One – a crucial route that covers more than 2,000 kilometres – and are advising their counterparts on checkpoint control and accompanied patrols.

"Security of Highway One is critical," said Maj Simon Doherty, officer commanding the unit's C Squadron.

"It's like the M1 in the UK; it carries a lot of traffic."

In the past, insurgents have targeted the

key transport route but regular patrolling and use of counter-IED units is starting to have an impact.

"The situation has seen a significant amount of progress, even in the short time we've been here," said Maj Doherty.

He added that Afghan soldiers were helping to prevent incidents by carrying out in-depth patrols among communities living along the road.

"Every kind of patrol needs an Afghan face," explained Sgt Christopher Liburd, also from C Squadron. "The local population are more inclined to talk to the ANA than to us."

School system must try harder

IMPROVEMENTS are needed to the education system for military children, Ofsted has said.

In a report, the watchdog found problems with school admissions, slow support for youngsters with special needs and a lack of awareness of Forces families' requirements.

"Inspectors found that many schools visited had difficulty in setting accurate academic targets for those Service children who were mobile, to ensure that they could achieve to their full potential," the document said.

"However, by the end of all key stages inspectors found that Service children's progress was broadly in line with other pupils whether educated in English schools or overseas."

The report – requested by the MoD – identified that military children were "generally susceptible to social and emotional disturbance" while parents were on active deployment.

Other shortcomings identified in the paper included:

- siblings in the same key stage being sent to different schools because places were unavailable;

- youngsters missing parts of, or repeating, the curriculum;
- poor transfer of records between schools, especially for children with special educational needs;
- a general lack of awareness of Armed Forces families and their additional needs.

The report, *Children in Service families: the quality and impact of partnership provision for children in Service families*, said the MoD should allow greater flexibility in family movement dates to minimise the impact on children's education.

Inspectors visited more than 40 schools across England, Germany and Cyprus, interviewing children, their parents, school staff and governors.

According to the Department for Education, Service children make up about 0.5 per cent of the total school population in England.

NEWS IN BRIEF

COMBAT CAMEO CALL

■ A CASTING company is looking for extras with a military background for a feature film called *World War Z*. The agency wants men aged between 18 and 55 for the movie, which will be shot in Glasgow in August. Visit www.castingcollective.co.uk for details.

HERRICK HUMOUR

■ THE BBC plans to air a new sitcom about bomb disposal units in Afghanistan.

The programme, called *IED*, will be shown on BBC Three – a channel aimed at younger audiences. A statement from the broadcaster said: "It's about what people forget; soldiers really enjoy being soldiers."

ATTITUDES ANALYSED

■ SOLDIERS and officers are being invited to complete an e-survey to identify changing attitudes in the Army.

Around 1,500 individuals from across the Service have been asked to fill out 15-minute online questionnaires every three months.



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Picture: Dorset Echo

Service son tackles Prime Minister

AN EIGHT-year-old boy has received a letter from David Cameron after writing to demand higher wages for his soldier dad.

Marcus Kipling felt strongly that his father Sgt Tony Kipling, currently with The Yorkshire Regiment, deserved better after spending 21 years in the Service and fighting for his country.

The youngster put pen to paper to challenge the Prime Minister on the issue during an extra tuition class at Lulworth and Winfrith School in Dorset.

He wrote: "I am writing this letter because I am angry about the wages of a soldier. I think soldiers who go to war should get more money in their wages; they risk their lives for their country."

"I get cross when I hear how much footballers and politicians get paid – do they risk their lives for their country?"

Marcus asked the PM why troops buy their own equipment. He ended by stating that if Mr Cameron was a good leader he would answer his questions.

Two months later, Marcus and his teacher were shocked to receive a personal reply.

The Prime Minister's letter said: "I

agree that soldiers like your dad are incredibly brave and I am very proud of all they do for our country to keep us safe. I also think that it is important that our soldiers, and their families like you and your dad, are properly taken care of.

"I agree that we should give them the equipment and support we can – we are always looking at ways we can get better at this."

Mr Cameron explained that he has already doubled the amount of operational allowance given to troops.

His letter concluded: "I would not be happy if I thought we were not providing your dad with the best equipment he needs – but I do know that sometimes soldiers like to buy their own equipment."

Sgt Kipling said he had no knowledge his son had written the letter, but that he was "extremely proud" of Marcus for having the confidence to do it.

South Dorset MP Richard Drax said: "It is fantastic that a boy of this age should take such an interest – good on him. Sometimes going to war is hardest on the families left behind who live in dread of bad news."

NEWS IN BRIEF

SHORTCOMINGS SHARED

■ MOD programmes that fail to live up to expectations will be named and shamed, Dr Liam Fox has said. The Defence Secretary's Major Projects Review Board met for the first time last month. It will aim to stop reckless spending by highlighting initiatives running over-budget or behind schedule.

SAPPERS' BANK JOB

■ ARMY bomb-disposal experts were called into action when a man walked into a bank in Watford town centre and threatened to blow himself up.

Soldiers from 11 EOD Regiment arrived at the scene but the suspect device was declared a hoax and no further action taken.

After a three-and-a-half hour stand-off, a 23-year-old suspect was arrested.



HERRICK HERO HONOURED

■ A BOMB disposal expert who defused a record number of devices during a single operation has been honoured at the *Scottish Daily Record's* annual Our Hero awards.

WO2 Iain Martin (RLC) from Edinburgh made safe 12 pressure plate-initiated improvised explosive devices in the Gereshk area of Helmand province, Afghanistan, earlier this year.

The 39-year-old Serviceman was presented with the Forces Hero prize by the president of The Royal British Legion Scotland, Lt Gen Sir Alistair Irwin, and Ultimo bra creator Michelle Mone.

Lt Gen Irwin said the honour recognised the warrant officer's commitment, skill and bravery.

"We weren't just impressed, we were amazed," he added.

WO2 Martin dedicated the award to his military colleagues, saying: "I don't do anything unless I am backed up with a team. This award goes to them too."

MARITAL MEDICINE

■ HAPPILY married soldiers can protect themselves against post-traumatic stress disorder by writing to their spouses regularly during deployment, according to a US study.

The *Journal of Traumatic Stress* found that regular communication through "delayed" means such as letters, care packages or emails was linked with less symptoms – but only for those content with their relationships.

"When you receive letters they can be read again and again and when you write them it can be therapeutic," said the study's co-author Ben Loew.



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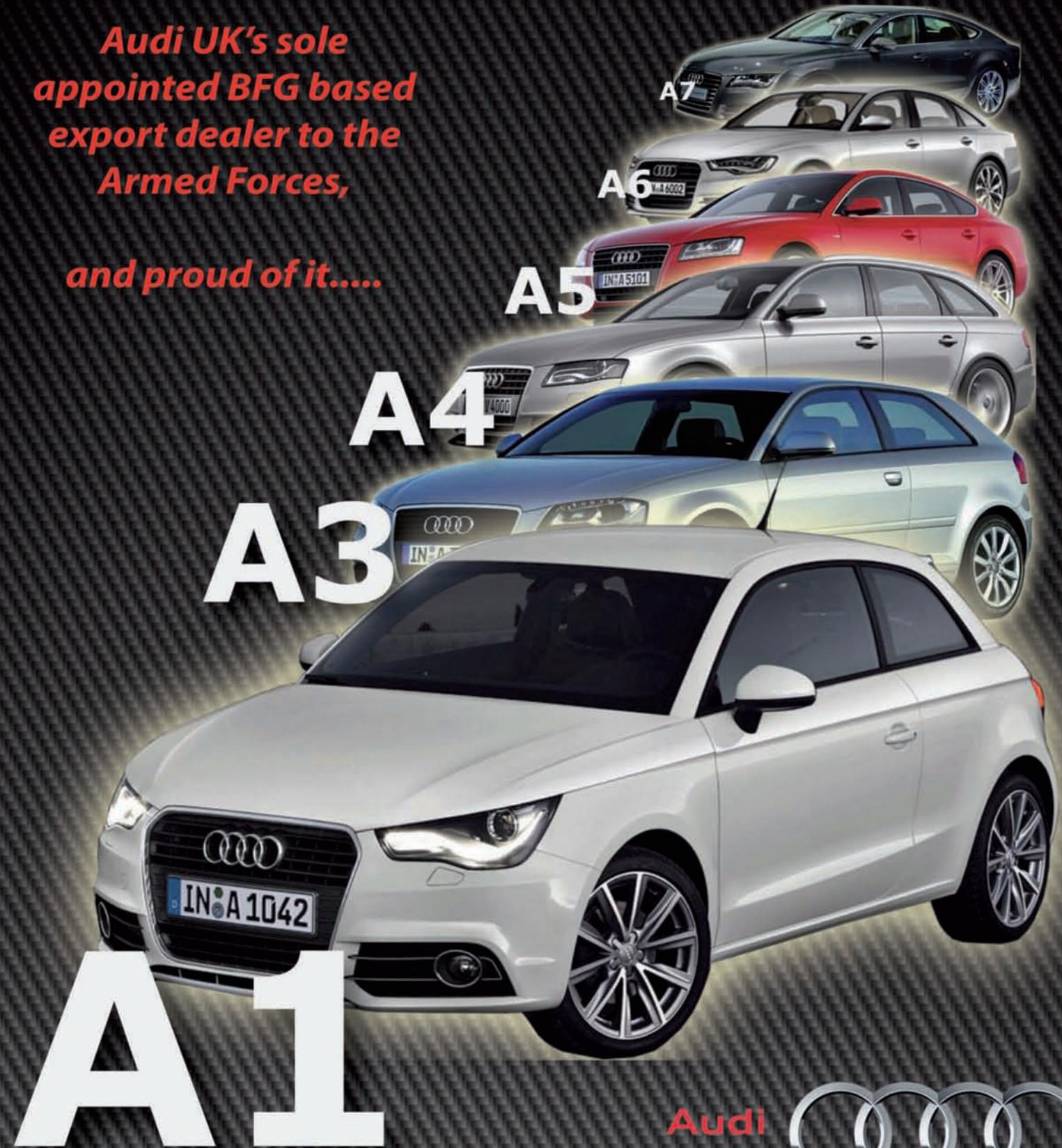
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Protective pants win plaudits in theatre

THE ground-breaking pelvic protection issued to troops on Op Herrick has become an instant hit in Helmand province and is playing a key part in tackling the threat posed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

Initial reports from staff at Camp Bastion's field hospital suggest the scientifically-developed underpants and detachable outer padding are helping to prevent serious injuries.

Maj Gen Bill Moore, Master General of the Ordnance, told *Soldier* that the feedback he received from Servicemen and women during a recent visit to theatre was equally positive.

“I was talking to the EOD [explosive ordnance disposal] people who were all wearing it and they told me it was very comfortable, allowed them to get on with their work and gave them much more confidence about their protection,” he said.

The senior officer responsible for delivering urgent operational requirement equipment to the Army added that the pelvic guard had served as a morale boost to personnel by addressing a sensitive issue.

“Because of the deep psychological scars that come with losing your genitals, it’s vital that we now have something that is a cracking piece of kit,” he said. “It’s been very well received by troops but also by the doctors and surgeons who were saying that it is the piece of protective clothing that has made the most significant change to injury patterns from IED blasts.”

The clothing – known as the combat nappy and



Picture: Graeme Main

Armoured underwear: The pelvic protection worn by British Service personnel deployed on Op Herrick

combat codpiece among soldiers – is just one part of a growing suite of state-of-the-art equipment that is helping to combat the menace of roadside bombs in Afghanistan.

Maj Gen Moore revealed that further new technology was on its way to theatre that will enhance the ability of troops to detect where explosives have been hidden.

“It’s a continual process of trying to improve the capability soldiers have and they’ll see a big difference in counter-IED this summer,” he explained.

“As well as the new detectors we are putting out on Herrick there will be

more use of dogs to find things that have been buried [pages 45-47].”

While a “whole system” approach is in place, the major general warned that there was no single “silver bullet” capable of defeating the IED threat.

“Counter insurgency underpins everything we do because we want to try to stop the bomb being put in the ground in the first place,” he said.

“That goes back to the operation of persuading the people that they shouldn’t be harbouring the terrorists and cutting off the supply of bomb-making kit to the insurgents.”

Maj Gen Moore added that intelligent surveillance and the passage of information to the right people are key objectives. He said: “We are absolutely doing our very best to keep those on the ground safe because our soldiers, sailors and airmen deserve the best possible protection.”



“**IT IS THE PIECE OF PROTECTIVE CLOTHING THAT HAS MADE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE TO INJURY PATTERNS FROM IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES**”

– MAJ GEN BILL MOORE, MASTER GENERAL OF THE ORDNANCE

Balloons help beat bombs

SECOND World War-style blimps packed with cutting-edge surveillance kit are helping to preserve the lives of soldiers in Afghanistan.

Air balloons hovering over patrol bases stationed along the region's main carriageway – Route One – are giving troops on the ground a bird's eye view of Helmand province and improving freedom of movement.

Maj Gen Bill Moore, Master General of the Ordnance, told *Soldier* that the assets were making it easier for international forces to dominate their areas of operation.

“They are a deterrent to insurgents and allow

us to catch people before they put bombs in the ground, as well as letting us know if the population is under threat,” he said.

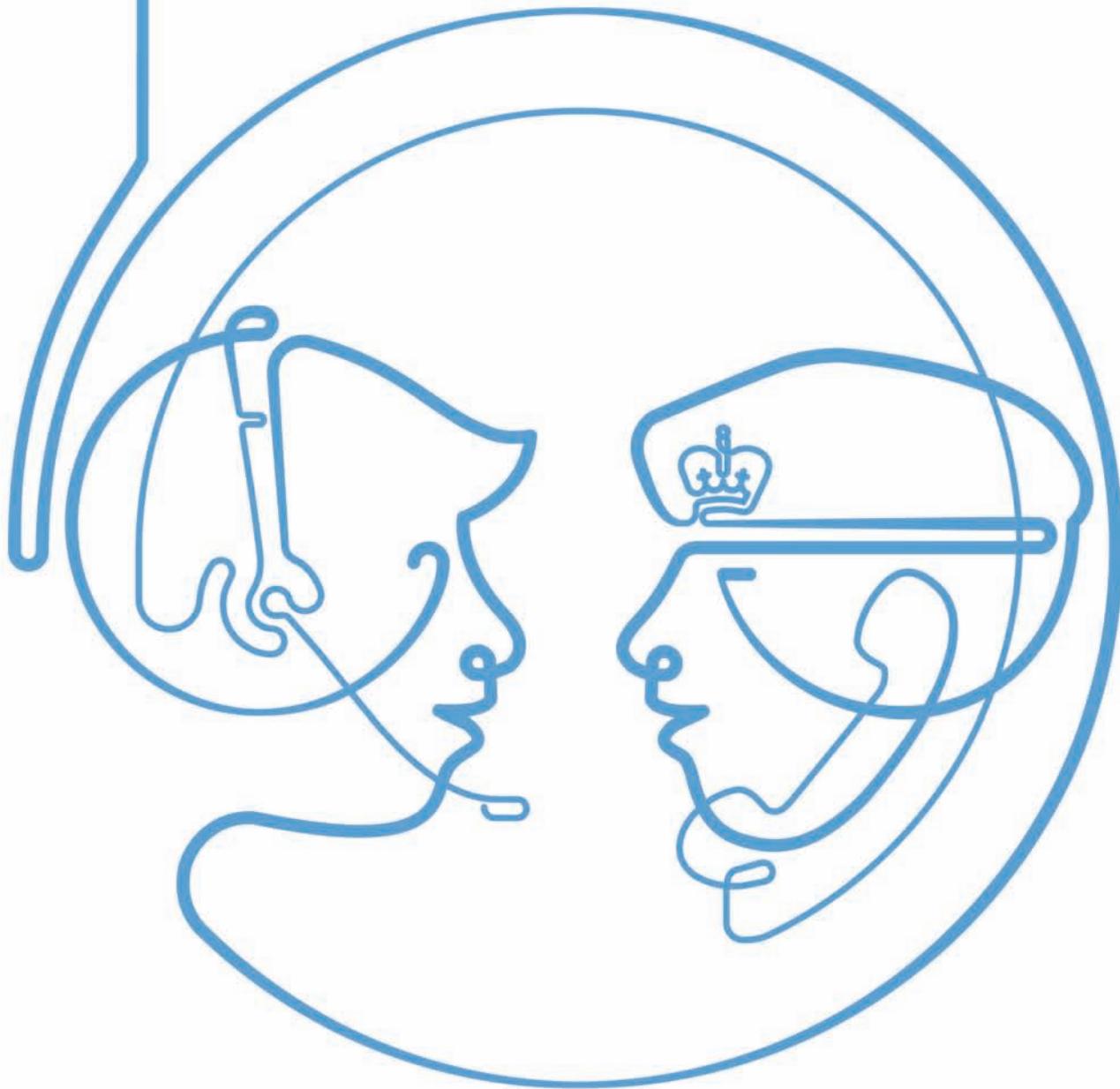
“The resulting freedom of movement means that guys can get out and do their job without being hit straight away.”

Tens of the huge airborne surveillance ships were put up by the Americans around a year ago and are transmitting vital intelligence to international troops across Helmand province.

Maj Gen Moore said: “It’s a success story. We used them to good effect in southern Iraq and now they are working brilliantly in Afghanistan.”



Picture: Sgt Russ Nolan, RLC



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IN MEMORIAM



CSjt KEVIN FORTUNA (36)
1ST BATTALION,
THE RIFLES
KIA MAY 23 – AFGHANISTAN

PERSONNEL from 1st Battalion, The Rifles are mourning the loss of an esteemed colleague and professional commander who was killed while on patrol in Helmand province.

CSjt Kevin Fortuna was engaged in a mission to disrupt enemy forces in the Saidabad Kalay area of Nahr-e Saraj District when he was fatally wounded by an improvised explosive device.

The 36-year-old joined the Army in 1991 and deployed to Yugoslavia, Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan in what was an exceptional Service career.

His vast experience, intellectual approach and calm manner ensured he was held in a position of high regard within his battalion.

Lt Col James de la Billiere, CO of 1 Rifles,

said: "He was remarkable for many reasons, not least his complete and unwavering commitment to his riflemen and their care. He was restless until he had achieved the very best for them and encouraged them to be restless until they achieved the very best for themselves."

Maj Paul Kyte said: "He excelled himself time and again tactically in the field, as an instructor in the classroom and as a highly intelligent, thinking member of my command group."

CSjt Fortuna leaves behind his wife Nia, mother Sue and brother Kris.

In a statement, the family said: "Kevin was a true professional who loved his job and lived life to the full. He gave 19 loyal years to the Army and will be sadly missed."



Mne SAM ALEXANDER (28)
42 COMMANDO,
ROYAL MARINES
KIA MAY 27 – AFGHANISTAN

A MISSION to expand local government influence in the Nad-e Ali district claimed the lives of two Royal Marines who showed selfless commitment to the campaign in Afghanistan.

Mne Sam Alexander and Lt Ollie Augustin, both 42 Commando, were on patrol in the Loy Mandeh area when they were fatally wounded by an improvised explosive device.

The duo had been tasked with disrupting insurgent activity as part of the effort to support a clear, hold and build operation to the north of the settlement.

Mne Alexander joined the Marines in 2006 and later deployed on Op Herrick 9. His actions during the tour led to him being decorated with the Military Cross.

The 28-year-old excelled during his Service career and his professional attitude and courage ensured he was held in high regard.

Lt Col Ewen Murchison, CO of 42 Cdo, said: "He embodied all the finest attributes of a Royal Marines commando: he was courageous, selfless, resolute, loyal and cheerful in the face of adversity.

"He inspired those around him to reach the highest possible standards and, in doing so, was an exemplary role model for those younger and less experienced than himself."

LCpl Adam Perkins added: "Sam was a character who never dropped his smile or charms, either on camp, in the accommodation or in the field. He was a lad who would never say no and would do anything for anyone."

Mne Alexander was married to Claire and had

a son Leo, who was born in 2010.

In a statement, his wife said: "He was the gentlest of men but tough when he needed to be. He risked his safety for his friends but never batted an eyelid.

"It was his job and a job he did well."

Lt Augustin began officer training in 2009 and passed fit for duty a year later. His first appointment was in command of Fire Support Group, Juliet Company, where he made a considerable impact within a short space of time.

Lt Col Murchison said: "A charismatic young man with a keen sense of humour, he was the life and soul of any gathering and he touched all those who had dealings with him.

"As a leader he was inspirational, passionate and selfless, putting the welfare of his men above all else. They adored him and looked to him for direction but looked on him as a brother in arms."

Lt Lloyd Fallesen added: "His ability to make all around him smile, even in the most adverse circumstances, meant that he was always someone you could turn to if you needed cheering up."

"A loyal friend, Ollie was someone you could count on regardless of the circumstances."

The 23-year-old leaves behind father Sean, mother Jane and sister Sarah. In a statement, his parents said: "His warmth and humour lit a room and infected all around him. He dealt with people in a thoughtful and compassionate way. His independence and sense of adventure meant that he embraced life and his chosen path."



Lt OLLIE AUGUSTIN (23)
42 COMMANDO,
ROYAL MARINES
KIA MAY 27 – AFGHANISTAN

SOLDIERS from 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland are mourning the loss of a charismatic and respected colleague who died while on patrol in Helmand province.

Cpl Michael Pike deployed with his multiple to Pupalzay, on Highway 601, in a mission to prevent insurgents from intimidating locals and attacking an Afghan National Police checkpoint. The 26-year-old was leading the patrol in a contact with the enemy when he was killed in action.

Cpl Pike joined the Army in 2002 and, after a tour of Iraq, served with 4 Scots in Afghanistan in 2008. A qualified physical training instructor, he used his experience to the full as he put his company through a demanding period of

conditioning prior to their latest operational tour.

Lt Col A J Aitken, CO of 4 Scots, said: "As a junior commander he was entirely dedicated to his soldiers, leading from the front with every step. They would follow him anywhere.

"He was the perfect role model."

WO1 Euan Philbin added: "He was a true professional and a great character who had a wicked sense of humour. He was the heart and soul of his platoon, a good friend and dedicated leader."

Cpl Pike leaves behind his children Joshua and Evelyn along with wife Ida, who said: "My husband would want everyone to know that he died doing a job he loved and that he loved our children with all his heart and soul."



CPL MICHAEL PIKE (26)
4TH BATTALION,
THE ROYAL REGIMENT OF SCOTLAND
KIA JUNE 3 – AFGHANISTAN

IN MEMORIAM



LCPL MARTIN GILL (22)
42 COMMANDO,
ROYAL MARINES
KIA JUNE 5 – AFGHANISTAN

A ROYAL Marine who lost his mother just weeks before deploying to Afghanistan was killed by small-arms fire while on patrol in Helmand.

Lcpl Martin Gill, of 42 Commando, had been tasked with meeting the Afghan people and disrupting insurgent activity in Adensee when his multiple was attacked. The 22-year-old was hit and, despite receiving immediate first aid, died of his wounds.

Lcpl Gill joined the Marines in 2008 and was promoted within a year, taking responsibility of a four-man team guarding the UK's nuclear deterrent. He later moved to 42 Cdo and during his tenure he regularly stepped up to take the role of section commander. His professionalism and enthusiasm earned the respect of his peers.

Lt Col Ewen Murchison, CO of 42 Cdo, said: "Despite his mum dying only weeks before the start of the tour, he was exceptionally keen to deploy. This was the mark of the man: passionate and dedicated to his profession and utterly loyal to his friends and fellow Marines."

Csgt Scott Ferguson added: "He was always willing others to smile with his cheeky grin. The butt of many a joke and maker of more, he maintained a type of morale that hopefully we can sustain throughout the remainder of our tour."

He leaves behind his brother John, sister Rebecca and girlfriend Lauren, who said: "Martin was proud to be a Marine. He was always up for a challenge and unfortunately died doing what he always wanted to do."



RFN MARTIN LAMB (27)
1ST BATTALION,
THE RIFLES
KIA JUNE 5 – AFGHANISTAN

A TALENTED, capable and naturally-gifted soldier whose passion for Service life never wavered was killed by an improvised explosive device while on patrol in Helmand province.

Rfn Martin Lamb, of 1st Battalion, The Rifles, was supporting people from the Nahr-e Saraj district in their fight against insurgent forces when he was caught in the blast.

The 27-year-old joined the Army in 2003 and excelled on the combat infantryman's course at Catterick, where he won an award for his exceptional fitness levels.

He completed a challenging tour of Iraq in 2008 and, having recently completed his junior non-commissioned officer's cadre, was due to be promoted to the rank of lance corporal.

Lt Col James de la Billiere, CO of 1 Rifles, said: "Rfn Lamb was one of my very best. As a reconnaissance operator he made it to the elite of the elite within the battalion.

"He will be remembered for his energy, zeal and commitment."

Maj Carl Boswell added: "Outstandingly brave, if there was a fight to be had he was always at the front. But he was not only a warrior, he also had a unique ability to force a laugh from anyone with his dry and wicked sense of humour."

Rfn Lamb was born in Gloucester and leaves behind his wife Melissa and two-year-old daughter Rosie. Capt Mike Tattersal said: "While at work he could not stop talking about his daughter and how proud he was to be a father."



CFN ANDREW FOUND (27)
CORPS OF ROYAL ELECTRICAL AND
MECHANICAL ENGINEERS
KIA JUNE 16 – AFGHANISTAN

A PROUD Yorkshireman affectionately known as "Foundy" by his colleagues has been killed in an explosion in Afghanistan.

Cfn Andrew Found, from Whitby, was serving with The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards in the Gereshk Valley area of Helmand province when he was fatally wounded.

Lt Col Jonathan Biggart, CO of Scots DG, said: "Cfn Andrew Found was an intelligent, selfless and brave soldier as well as a devoted family man."

"It was for others that [he] gave his young life and his memory will live on, both within The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards and the Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, whom he served so loyally and with such pride.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Samantha, their young son Jaxson and his elder son Michael."

Capt Jamie Irwin, second in command of D (Warthog) Squadron, Scots DG, added: "The loss of [our] 'gentle giant' has been felt acutely by all ranks."

"He was an inspiration not just to his colleagues in the fitter section but to all he worked with."

"Never complaining and always taking on any task with relish and enthusiasm, he applied himself fully to the job in hand, whether he was elbows-deep in an engine or working out of role as a troop dismount."

"We have lost a true hero."



PTE GARETH BELLINGHAM (22)
3RD BATTALION,
THE MERCIAN REGIMENT
KIA JUNE 18 – AFGHANISTAN

A TOUGH, mature and dedicated soldier who was committed to helping the people of Afghanistan was killed as he carried out a patrol in the Upper Gereshk Valley of Helmand.

Pte Gareth Bellingham, of 3rd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment, was deployed to Khar Nikar, where his company had been tasked with assessing the ground situation and meeting people who had recently returned to their compounds.

During the patrol, an improvised explosive device injured an Afghan citizen and when the 22-year-old moved to provide security for the area he was fatally wounded by enemy fire.

Pte Bellingham joined the Army in 2007 and quickly emerged as a soldier with considerable

driving experience. However, it was his personality and determination that saw him excel in a light infantry role.

Lt Col Giles Woodhouse, CO of 3 Mercian, said: "He was an extremely hardworking and committed warrior who was wholly respected by his peers and chain of command alike."

"Pte Bellingham was one of those soldiers that you had to have in your section; fearless, utterly professional, a prankster and a loyal friend who never let you down. Quite simply he was a force for good."

Pte Bellingham's parents Leslie and Suzanne said he would be sorely missed by his family, friends and all who knew him. They added: "We are all proud of the job he did."

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Picture: Cpl Rupert Fere, RLC

● PERSONNEL from 16 Air Assault Brigade attended a special remembrance service at St Edmundsbury Cathedral to mark the sacrifice of colleagues killed in action.

Armed Forces Minister Nick Harvey, Chief of the General Staff Gen Sir Peter Wall and relatives of the 22 soldiers killed during the deployment to Afghanistan were also among the congregation in Bury St Edmunds.

Brig James Chiswell, who commanded the brigade on operations in Helmand province, said: “It was a very moving and poignant service that was a fitting tribute to the remarkable people we lost.

“It is important to give our soldiers a chance to pause and pay tribute to the lives of their friends and join with their families.”

Sennelager sermon for Afghan-bound troops

OLDIERS from 20th Armoured Brigade have been involved in a spiritual outreach programme as part of their pre-deployment training for Op Herrick 15.

Jamie Kidd, who served with 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment for eight years, visited the troops in Sennelager to talk about his experiences in the field and highlight the important role faith can play during troubled times.

“I have been on tours of duty in Iraq and know what it is like to stare death in the face,” he told *Soldier*. “I understand the stresses that go with that.

“I always considered myself to be a Christian and a lot of soldiers will say the same. But it was not until I almost lost my life that I started thinking

about what it meant. I was caught in an explosion while on ops in Iraq and then had a parachute malfunction on one of my jumps.

“I was living my life recklessly. I was drinking and was involved in a fighting culture but realised I should start listening to the claims of the Bible.

“I took the message to heart and it made me see my life was a mess.

“I now have peace and it is that hope which I have been trying to transmit to the soldiers.”

Kidd was accompanied on his visit by the brigade’s senior chaplain.

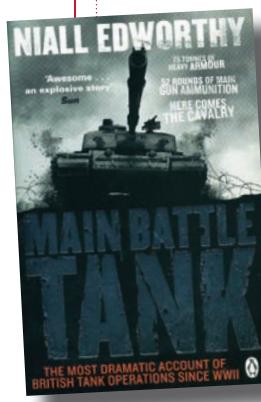
“Hopefully we have been able to sow the seeds so that when they find themselves in difficult times they know God is there for them,” he added.

NEWS IN BRIEF

SIZING-UP CYPRUS

THE MoD is to conduct a study of the sovereign base areas in Cyprus as part of the follow-on work from the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

The assessment will consider wider developments within the Armed Forces such as the end of combat operations in southern Afghanistan in 2014, the Gulf initiative and the withdrawal of British Army personnel and assets from Germany. A full report is expected to be completed by December.



■ THE release of British Army-themed toys to the high street brought the child out in everyone at *Soldier* last month.

And for similarly young-at-heart readers who enjoyed *Toy Story* 3 last year, the names printed on the side of June’s cover may have seemed familiar.

(Tim) Allen, (Don) Rickles, (Jim) Varney and (John) Ratzenberger all lent their voices to the

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

KCB: Lt Gen B W B White-Spunner, late Blues & Royals.

CB: Lt Gen A J N Graham, late A&SH; Maj Gen R A M S Melvin, late RE; Maj Gen M J Rutledge, late 9/12 L.

CBE: Brig A D C Clacher, late RLC; Brig S D Hutchinson, late Lancs; Brig J T Jackson, late RGJ; Maj Gen A D Macklin, late RE; Brig T R Urch, late RE; Brig D G Wilson, late AGC (ETS).

OBE: Col A Alderson, late Hldrs; A/Col D I Fuller, ACF; Col T D Hyams, late RDG; Lt Col M H W Joy, REME; Lt Col G A MacIntosh, WG; Col D J McArthur, late QARANC (TA); Lt Col J R Mead, RA; A/Col J W Nicholl, ACF; Lt Col D R Orr Ewing, Scots; Lt Col M C Proctor, Int Corps; Col M G Redmond, late RA; Lt Col J M Ryan, RAMC (TA); Maj W J Strickland, QRH; Col J M Woodham, late R Anglian.

MBE: Maj G J Boxall, RE; Maj N P Brady, RLC; Maj G H Briscoe, Lancs; Lt Col J A J Calder, Scots; Maj C W Carter, RRF (TA); Maj R J Christopher, RA; Maj N R Coatsworth, R Signals; Maj N J Cowey, RTR; Lt Col E A Dallyn, R Signals; WO1 C L Davies, Int Corps; WO2 A R C Faupel, R Anglian; Maj J C Fisher, Blues & Royals; Maj J S Fotheringham, ACF; Maj F J Gargan, Para; Capt D J Gregory, RLC (TA); WO2 L I Hamilton, RE; Capt P J Hatton, R Signals; Maj S N Haw, CAMUS; Lt Col N R Holmes, Rifles; Maj E R James, RE; Maj D O W Jarvis, Para; Maj P A Keetley, Scots; LCpl A Khadka, RGR; Maj J J S Lane, RDG; Capt A R Lepage, RLC (TA); Maj A D Lightfoot, RA; WO2 J M McConnell, IG; Pdre P J McCormack, RACD; Maj R L Parr, RLC; Capt T G Persse, RA (TA); Capt M A Pledger, Int Corps; Maj B P N Ramsay, WG; Lt Col H J Singh, QARANC (TA); Maj M S J Steventon, Lancs; WO1 P D Symns, Rifles; Maj S J Taylor, PWRR; Maj C A Waterworth, AGC (RMP).

ARRC: Sgt L Devonport, QARANC.

QVRM: WO2 D A Holley, PWRR (TA); Maj R G Rogers, R Anglian (TA); Lt Col A M G Smyth, RE (TA); Col R K Wilkinson, late R Signals (TA); Maj C Woodrow, AGC (SPS) (TA).

animated box office hit that had adults sobbing.

This month we have five copies of *Main Battle Tank*, Niall Edworthy’s explosive account of British armour on Op Telic 1, to give away.

To stand a chance of winning, simply tell us what links the words adorning the side of this issue.

Answers to Spine Lines, *Soldier*, Parsons House, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by July 29. Winners will be drawn at random. Usual rules apply.

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— PTE SCOTT MEENAGH (2 PARA) ON LIFE AT HEADLEY COURT, PAGES 54-55



Picture: Graeme Main

Rapid renovation: Maj Peter Smith (Mercian), OC at Tedworth House, believes the former officers' mess will play a key role in the recovery of wounded troops

Tedworth House set to open doors to troops

THE Army has taken a giant stride towards offering improved care and support to injured soldiers by opening a state-of-the-art Personnel Recovery Centre at Tedworth House.

Wounded troops will start arriving at the Wiltshire site on July 4, when they will have access to a host of medical,

welfare, education and rehabilitation facilities aimed at preparing them for a return to Service life or a new career on civvy street.

Help for Heroes has covered the cost of converting the historic building, located near Tidworth Garrison, and the charity's co-founder Bryn Parry told *Soldier* it will be a first-class centre for future residents.

He said: "When you go to Headley Court you see it is set in stunning grounds. We have got the same thing here at Tedworth. It is the most beautiful building in this area and I think that is appropriate for people who have served their country."

"It overlooks the polo fields and grounds and is close to the garrison, which will help the transition process.

"This is a fantastic house with a lovely atmosphere and I hope the guys and their families appreciate what their country has done for them."

A total of 29 residents will be accommodated at the centre in the first phase of the project, with the capacity rising to 50 when work on a new north wing is completed next year.

Personnel will undergo a two-week assessment course before beginning individual recovery programmes. These will include help and guidance with education and job opportunities along

with access to a gym and other sporting facilities.

Plans are also in place to create an all-encompassing support hub that will have links to key charities and organisations such as the British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association, Combat Stress and SSAFA.

Maj Peter Smith (Mercian), the centre's OC, has been delighted with the rapid progress of the project since work began in February and is looking forward to welcoming the first residents.

He said: "We will be able to run courses enabling soldiers to take part in an individual recovery plan and provide facilities for guys who would otherwise be stuck at home."

"We are here to look after wounded, injured or sick troops and we will work very hard to meet their needs."

"I am delighted to be involved in a project that will prove to be really important for all Service personnel."

Once complete, Tedworth House will be jointly run by the Army and The Royal British Legion.

It forms part of the Defence Recovery Capability, which will include facilities in Edinburgh, Colchester, Catterick and Plymouth.



“IT IS BEAUTIFUL AND I THINK THAT'S APPROPRIATE FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE SERVED THEIR COUNTRY”

— BRYN PARRY, CO-FOUNDER OF HELP FOR HEROES

NEWS IN BRIEF

SCOTTISH CENTRE

■ VETERANS who have lost their sight will receive help from a new facility in Scotland.

The Duke of Gloucester opened the £3 million Linburn Centre, which will be run by the charity Scottish War Blinded.

The facility in Wilkieson, West Lothian, includes a gym, training kitchen, IT centre and sensory garden.

LCpl Rob Reid (1 Scots) was among those present at the opening ceremony. The 27-year-old from Jedburgh has been helped by the charity since losing his right eye when a roadside bomb exploded in Iraq in 2008.

"I think it's really important there are people who can help and understand what has happened and what you are going through," he said.

"You've got people here who can assist with anything people need."

EAST ANGLIAN ASSISTANCE

■ A WALK-in unit offering care and emotional support to soldiers has opened in King's Lynn.

Run by The Bridge For Heroes charity, the Contact Centre offers advice to troops and veterans on issues including pensions and healthcare.

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THE BIGGER PICTURE

IN time-honoured tradition, troops from the Household Division marked the Queen's birthday by Trooping the Colour in London. The ceremony included 25 Royal Air Force aircraft performing a fly-past over Buckingham Palace. More than 1,300 soldiers took part in this year's parade along with 241 horses and 321 musicians, who provided a colourful backdrop to the day.

Picture: Sgt Andy Malthouse, RAF





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Ugly but devastating: The multi-faceted Apache attack helicopter is dominating the skies over Afghanistan and Libya
Picture: Graeme Main

ELITE EQUIPMENT

APACHE CLOCKS UP 100,000 FLYING HOURS

Report: Joe Clapson

THE CREAM of the British Army's equipment crop recently reached a symbolic landmark in its career as an all-round asset.

A stalwart of operations in Afghanistan, the Apache attack helicopter now has more than 100,000 flying hours to its name – a third of which were accrued in the skies over Helmand.

To mark the milestone, *Soldier* was given a rare look behind the scenes of the

machine that is recognisable by its unsightly appearance – something that does not correlate to its handsome capability.

“The phrase ‘don’t judge a book by its cover’ could have been invented for Apache because although it might be ugly, it’s awesome,” said one proud member of the Army Air Corps.

With the ability to stay in the air for up to seven hours at a time and a flying range of 475 kilometres, it is no surprise this aircraft is in high demand by Regional Command South West on Op Herrick. >>



theatre since first deploying in 2006.

"We have got aircrew here now that have completed five tours of Afghanistan," said Col Moss.

"At any one time I would expect 150 of our men to be out there."

Now, with the airborne gunship surpassing what is equivalent to 4,166 days in the sky, Nato has employed its services over Libya on Op Unified Protector.

The fighting machine started its new mission on June 4 by destroying two military installations, a radar site and an armed checkpoint near Brega.

The four-blade twin Rolls-Royce engine helicopter's sophisticated avionics mean it can operate in all weathers – day or night – and detect and prioritise up to 256 potential targets in seconds.

However, because of the complex nature of the airframe, a rigorous training programme is required for anyone selected to operate onboard.

After learning to fly and being taught other core skills at RAF Middle Wallop for

>> Of the prized piece of eight-tonne kit, Col Neale Moss, attack helicopter force commander, said: "It's a big stick in the sky and gives a deterrent capability that Mr Taliban does not like."

"They call it 'the mosquito' and it makes them run away and hide in a bush."

In some ways the Apache's crews have become victims of this success, with insurgents viewing them as prize scalps. As a result, many wish to be known only by their first name.

As well as pinpoint air strikes, the gunship is proving invaluable for its intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance capabilities and as an escort to sister helicopters and land convoys.

It has been an ever-present feature in

six months, Apache personnel head to RAF Wattisham in Suffolk for instruction in fighting with the aircraft.

Explaining the difficult nature of this training, Andy (3 AAC) said: "This course is like being fed volumes of water from a fire hydrant. Any other instruction is like having a relaxed drink."

"The Apache is an extremely complicated platform and it's a long conveyer belt for people to get trained."

"The machine does anything a normal helicopter does and on top of that it has numerous sensors and systems."

Personnel loaded on to the training – which has an 88 per cent pass rate – are drilled to operate in both the front and back of the platform. Once at Wattisham, they enter the "conversion to role" phase where it is decided whether they will work in the front as co-pilot and gunner or in the rear as pilot.

"You can fire weapons from any seat but the guy in front operates the sights and sensors," added Andy.

"Both crew have the ability to fly, so if one



did 'get the good news' the other would be okay to carry on flying."

Once through training, the Apache crew are considered elite soldiers with skills that are envied across the military world.

The two-man team dominates the air, responding to orders from the ground, providing intelligence and making life-or-death decisions.

"In the event that the ground commander does not want a certain target to be damaged I have a choice of weapons," said Andy.

"If someone runs into a structure and we're told 'destroy building' we put a Hellfire missile in, but if we want the construction to

remain we wait for the person to come out and use guns."

Cpl Graham Carr (3 AAC) added: "Sometimes the ground commander might say 'for this situation I need this weapon system' but they let us decide what is best."

"The main focus now is hearts and minds so we have to look out for civilians and local properties."

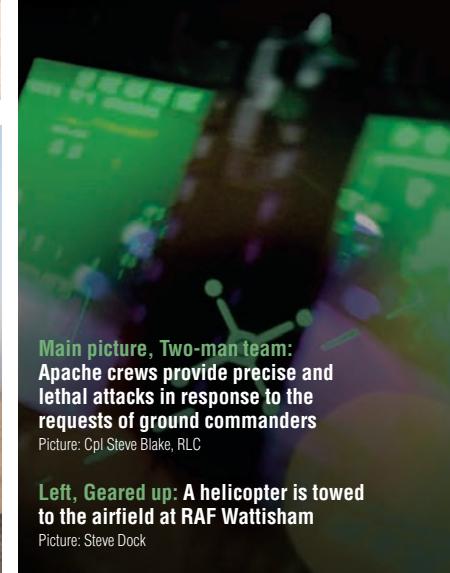
As well as being devastatingly accurate in attack, the Apache acts as a protective force when escorting Chinook helicopters carrying the highly-skilled Medical Emergency Response Teams.

Flight commander Simon (3 AAC) explained that insurgents often attempt to attack medics while they are evacuating

'IT GIVES A DETERRENT CAPABILITY THAT MR TALIBAN DOES NOT LIKE'

APACHE VITAL STATISTICS

- **IN SERVICE DATE:** 2001
- **CREW:** 2
- **MAXIMUM ALL-UP MASS:** 7,746KG
- **ENGINES:** 2 x 850 SHAFT HP ROLLS-ROYCE RTM-322
- **HEIGHT:** 4.9M
- **LENGTH:** 17.57M
- **MAX SPEED:** 330KPM
- **RANGE:** 475KM
- **MAIN ROTOR DIAMETER:** 14.63M
- **ARMAMENT:**
 - MODERNISED TARGET ACQUISITION DESIGNATION SIGHT/PILOT NIGHT-VISION SENSOR
 - LONGBOW FIRE CONTROL RADAR
 - 16 x HELLFIRE MISSILES
 - 76 x 70MM CRV-7 ROCKETS
 - M230 E1 GUN WITH 1,200 x 30MM CANNON ROUNDS
 - 4 x AIR-TO-AIR MISSILES



Main picture, Two-man team:
Apache crews provide precise and lethal attacks in response to the requests of ground commanders

Picture: Cpl Steve Blake, RLC

Left, Geared up: A helicopter is towed to the airfield at RAF Wattisham

Picture: Steve Dock

casualties on the ground.

"I've been out with the team many times when it's become pretty sticky and the enemy are doing anything they can to pick them off. It's our job to stop that threat," he said.

Cpl Carr added: "If the helicopter landing site is hot the Apache can react but on hearing that we're around, the insurgents will stop firing anyway."

"The Taliban are fully aware of our capability and of those that have tried to attack us, there aren't many still alive."

In an era when equipment is under constant scrutiny and the MoD is required to balance the financial books, there are no complaints about the Apache.

"We are an extension of the Infantry's role – all we are is support to those guys," said Andy.

"We've got the right bit of kit in the right place at the right time."

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'IT'S NOT QUITE CALL OF DUTY BUT IT'S GETTING THERE'

Report: Sharon Kean
Pictures: Steve Dock

PLAYSTATION-style war games helped 5th Battalion, The Rifles get ready for their tour of Iraq two years ago.

Before departing for theatre, troops spent hours in simulators and replica operations rooms at the Sennelager Training Centre in Germany, driving virtual vehicles and commanding computer-generated ground patrols.

Many of those soldiers are now gearing up for Op Herrick 15 and once again the early stages of their pre-deployment preparation took place in cyber space.

Maj Jim Faux (Rifles), the officer who oversees mission-specific training at the Sennelager facility, said the aim was to give personnel a full picture of southern Afghanistan.

"We replicate Helmand as closely as we can without getting the real people – it's not immersion, it's teaching theatre tactics, techniques and procedures as well as command and staff drills," he said.

"The simulation is absolutely critical to what we do because there is nowhere else we can exercise like this without putting hundreds of soldiers and vehicles out on the ground."

He added: "It's not quite *Call of Duty* but it's getting there, we're seeing the guys go out the door and do very similar missions.

"On Herrick 12, 1 Royal Irish carried



out an air strike they had rehearsed here and it was a huge success. 42 Commando have also just undertaken an aviation insert with a ground link-up in Nar-e Saraj district that was similar to one they practised."

Two different training units use the cutting-edge video game technology.

The Combined Arms Staff Trainer allows headquarters personnel to fight on-screen battles during a week-long exercise which tests commanders' plans and the performance of operations room staff.

A separate five-day course at the Combined Arms Tactical Trainer (CATT) sees drivers and ground forces drafted in to digital missions, using vehicle simulators to increase the level of tactical complexity.

Life-like imagery from theatre is beamed onto flatscreens and backed up by real Afghan actors who are on hand to role-play situations with the exercising troops.

Vehicle commander LCpl Saul Brunt (5 Rifles) said he was impressed with the futuristic CATT facility.

"I will be working in Mastiff and Husky armoured vehicles in Helmand and these exercises are exactly what we will be doing on operations," he said.

"It's good being able to look in-depth on the ground and the zoom is amazing



– I can see details such as groups of civilians and herds of goats, and also where IEDs have been laid."

He added: "It's a bit odd when someone knocks on the simulator door and I have to pull out my best Pashtu but it's good because it's another thing to think about."

Mastering close-quarter weapons and new vehicles such as the Sharpshooter rifle and Mastiff remains a key part of pre-deployment training, but modern warfare skills such as language and cultural awareness are playing an increasingly important role.

"We are checking that these young boys – corporals and riflemen – have the ability to talk to someone through an interpreter and show themselves to be professional and in command of a situation," said WO2 James Byrne (4 Scots), who oversees the simulator-based learning in the tactical trainer.

"The Afghans will not speak to him if he doesn't appear confident and starts asking them stupid questions.

"I look to see whether they are using the language they have learnt correctly and how they interact with people because that's a big part of being a vehicle commander."

He added: "In the Army today you need to be able to communicate as well as fire a weapon."

Every effort is made to ensure the simulated experience is as close to reality as possible so troops get maximum benefit from the real-life mission rehearsal exercises that follow.

"We had the Close Support Logistics Regiment in here a few weeks ago replicating their communication kit, weapons systems and spacing drills for vehicles," said WO2 Byrne.

"They were all sorted out before they got behind the wheel. It's excellent preparation for them."

Perfecting their drills in Helmand-themed simulations will stand personnel from 5 Rifles in good stead for their battlegroup role.

The next lesson for the Infantry unit will be in using their cyber-honed skills on the proving grounds of Stanta and Salisbury Plain.

But they will have to wait until the autumn to see the true benefit of the virtual training, when it is put to the test in southern Afghanistan. ■

Clockwise from above, Eyes on target: A soldier gets a virtual taste of Op Herrick from a simulator cab at the Combined Arms Tactical Trainer (CATT)

Operations desk: Headquarters staff hone their skills in the staff trainer

Simulation shed: Air-conditioned units containing vehicle simulators fill the floor in the CATT

On-screen mission: Soldiers assess the progress of a virtual objective on computers set up to represent a forward operating base operations room

TACTICAL TECHNOLOGY

THE Combined Arms Tactical Trainer (CATT) is one of the largest simulation systems in the world, allowing hundreds of soldiers at a time to take part in battles based in virtual reality.

More than 140 mock vehicle cabs, turrets and firing points are housed in metal containers in a huge warehouse-like space that is roughly the same size as a football pitch.

Troops under training fight digital foes, with on-screen operations viewed through a simulator's periscopes or weapon sites.

An adjacent room contains a headquarters from where commanders and intelligence officers can plan and view missions as they unfold.

Entire battlegroups can be connected in cyberspace through a local area network that hooks up hundreds of control stations and allows their actions to interact and contribute to synthetic serials.

Personnel are routinely immersed in virtual wars for hours – and the level of reality is such that some will experience "simulation sickness" similar to the effect of a roller coaster.

As well as life-like graphics, realistic terrain and sound effects, small details such as engines overheating if left idle for too long are played out.

"The level of detail is fantastic," said Maj Edward Whishaw (RE), the officer in charge of the £330 million facility, which boasts one of the largest air-conditioning units in the world to prevent the mass of computer equipment from overheating.

"We used to have stick men running around on screen but now we have game-quality features with 3D life-like human figures," he added.

"It's a modern gaming environment that hopefully a young 18- or 19-year-old soldier will appreciate, replicating theatre with a carbon copy of reality and getting vehicle crews and multiples to come together and train.

"It doesn't replace the real thing but it complements it by making sure troops are prepared to get the most out of field exercises that follow."

HEADQUARTERS HOOK-UP



HERRICK-bound headquarters personnel get a taste of computerised conflict during a week-long course at the impressive Combined Arms Staff Trainer (CAST).

The focus is on taking a problem and turning it into a set of military orders, with soldiers working in a brigade or company command setting.

Operations rooms are set up to replicate those found in the forward operating bases in theatre, which instruct combined forces responsible for specific areas such as Lashkar Gah or Nad-e Ali.

All major units deploying to Afghanistan will pass through the CAST at either Sennelager in Germany or Catterick and Warminster in the UK.

The trainers see between 100 and 120 personnel coming together for the first time to form a mission control hub.

"We start them off with the basic stuff for day-to-day living on operations, such as patrols, leader engagement and moving food, water and ammo," said Lt Col Nick Channer (Scots), the officer responsible for running the course at the Sennelager site.

"Then we build up the complexity by giving them a number of intelligence feeds that lead them to an objective, which they will plan to strike."

Intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance detail from Afghanistan has been added to simulations and those deploying on Op Herrick 15 will be the first to benefit.

"It's as realistic as it can be," Lt Col Channer told *Soldier*.

"A commander will come in and sit with an Xbox controller and take his patrol out on the ground, and headquarters will see their men moving around on the screens."



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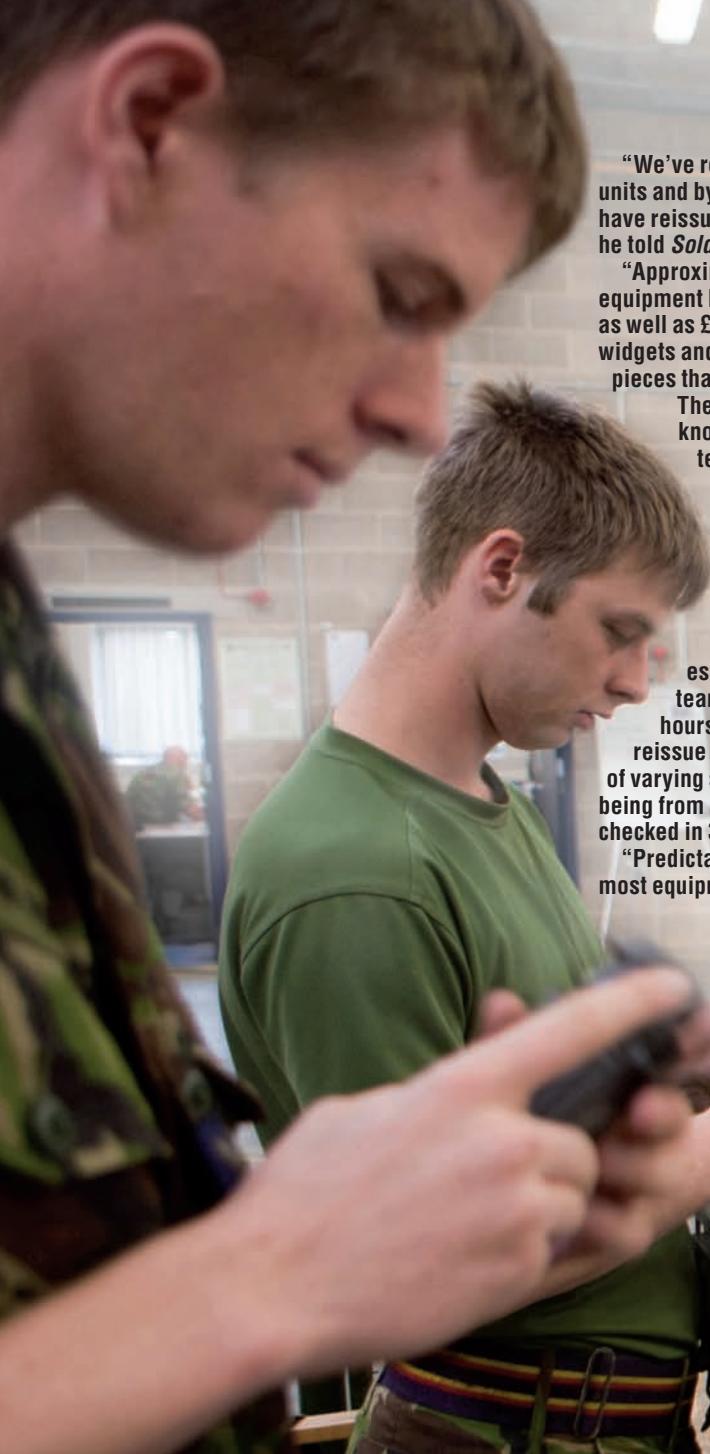
Report: Sharon Kean
Pictures: Mike Weston

BRITISH soldiers stepping outside the wire in Helmand province are equipped with a suite of specialist kit tailored to their role.

The expanding range of weapons, optics and communications technology used by ground troops includes Sharpshooter rifles, state-of-the-art laser sight systems, night vision goggles and personal radios.

When personnel from 16 Air Assault Brigade deployed to Afghanistan last winter they took with them nearly 25,000 pieces of dismounted close combat "on the man" equipment, all of which have since been passed to units preparing for Op Herrick 15 in the autumn.

Capt Guy Thewlis (RLC) was the officer tasked with overseeing this mammoth logistical challenge, which was carried out by a specially-formed team – the Return Stores Group – at the brigade's base in Colchester. >>



"We've received 24,500 items from 26 units and by the end of this process we will have reissued about 25,000 components," he told *Soldier*.

"Approximately £50 million worth of equipment has passed through our hands as well as £210,000 of spares – that's little widgets and lens caps and other bits and pieces that we've needed to replace."

The ten-week handover process – known as Op Silverstone – saw a team from 13 Air Assault Support Regiment tasked with booking in, inspecting and repairing (where possible) every item before delivering it to the soldiers of 20th Armoured Brigade.

The logistics officer estimates that his 62-strong team put in some 22,500 man-hours dealing with the return and reissue of kit, which arrived in batches of varying sizes – the largest receipt being from 1 Royal Irish Battlegroup who checked in 3,836 items.

"Predictably the infantry units take the most equipment, while combat service



support units – the medics, loggies and engineers – have less," Capt Thewlis explained. "And some people carry a lot more than others. For instance, the Sharpshooter man would have his rifle, his advanced combat optical gunsight attached to it, a Magnum night sight and laser range finder and light marker on the side of the weapon – that's around £15,000 worth of kit.

"Even in my unit [13 Regiment RLC] we had light machine guns, helmet-mounted night vision systems, laser light markers and personal role radios – a



RAPID REDEPLOYMENT

Combat kit such as night vision goggles and laser markers used by 16 Air Assault Brigade during Op Herrick 13 were passed to logisticians who checked it and handed it over to units deploying on Op Herrick 15 within the space of four to five days

1. RECEIPT

Personal combat equipment was passed to the Return Stores Group by units at the end of Op Herrick 13

2. ACCOUNT

Logisticians booked in every item, recorded serial numbers and input details of each piece of kit onto a database

3. INSPECT

A team of technical experts checked for superficial signs of damage and either passed equipment as fit for use, repaired it where possible or sent it away for servicing

4. REISSUE

Items were packaged and picked up by units due to deploy on Herrick 15

ARSENAL AUDIT

25,000 – items of dismounted close combat kit heading on Op Herrick 15

22,500 – man-hours involved in Op Silverstone

62 – different components handled by the Return Stores Group

3,836 – number of items returned by 1 Royal Irish

943 – number of items per unit (on average)

62 – personnel in the Return Stores Group team

4,438 – value in pounds of the helmet-mounted night vision system



broad spectrum of items."

Weapon engineers, electrical technicians and optronics experts were drafted in to support the RLC troops as they set about completing the gargantuan administrative task.

"We took basic tradesmen from the brigade and trained them up for specific items so they could do a 12- or 20-point check on a piece of kit," said Capt Thewlis.

Cfn Dominic Lewis (7 Para RHA) lent his expertise as an armourer to Op Silverstone

£50 MILLION WORTH OF KIT HAS PASSED THROUGH OUR HANDS'

to inspect the underslung grenade launchers used with SA80 rifles.

"I've been looking for cracks in the plastic, damage to the top cover springs and checking the barrel and chamber for dents," he explained.

"I'm looking for superficial damage – making sure the trigger mechanism works and

the safety catch functions."

Roughly four per cent of items passing through the Return Stores Group had to be "backloaded" and sent to the Joint Supply Chain Services team at Donnington for repairs or modifications.

The rest of the kit was quickly passed as fit for action, labelled and boxed up ready for its next user.

Soldier's visit to the Return Stores Group coincided with the final day of Op Silverstone and a team from 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment were on site to pick up equipment ahead of their deployment to Afghanistan later this year.

"We brought it in here and turned it round in approximately five days," said Capt Thewlis. "The most important thing is to get this kit in and out again as soon as possible."

He concluded: "Troops from 20th Brigade now have everything they need to start training for Op Herrick 15 and that's our reason for being here." ■



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INSIDE STORY

HERRICK INTELLIGENCE EXPERTS TIP OFF HELMAND-BOUND TROOPS



Afghan advice: The first-hand experience of troops who have served in Helmand is helping those preparing to deploy

Picture: Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC

Report: Sharon Kean

PRIOR knowledge of a foreign country's culture and customs can be reassuring for anyone travelling to a strange land for the first time.

But for those embarking on vital and potentially dangerous missions to southern Afghanistan, knowing what to expect is essential.

To ensure troops hit the ground running in Helmand, a team of experts has been set up to pool the experience of personnel returning from theatre and pass it on to those preparing to deploy.

The Land Forces Intelligence Fusion Centre (Afghanistan) (LIFC(A)) was established little more than 18 months ago to coordinate information on everything from religious festivals and Afghan cultural customs to insurgent tactics and Taliban leaders.

Lt Col Ben Kite (Int Corps) is the officer in charge of the forward-thinking facility, which has significantly raised the game of knowledge gathering on Op Herrick.

"It's about understanding the environment [in Afghanistan], not about whether someone's body armour worked or not," he told *Soldier*.

"We are immersing people in the understanding of Helmand – this is not just about reading books in Colchester, it's about sitting next to someone who has done the job."

The centre of expertise at 4 Military Intelligence Battalion's base in Bulford, near Salisbury Plain, is ensuring the British Army has "long-term eyes on target".

A 40-strong group of Service and civilian personnel focus on small sections of Afghan territory, making sense of events as they happen and, crucially, retaining knowledge as it is gathered by troops on the ground.

"Before the LIFC(A) existed, battlegroups that were deploying to theatre didn't really know their patch, how the insurgency fought in the area, what the villages were like, who was the Mullah and whether he was a good or bad guy," explained Lt Col Kite.

"Our process training was strong but we needed a deeper insight into Afghanistan to understand the context of tribes and religion, the culture and pattern of life."

With that in mind, staff from the centre now routinely debrief International Security Assistance Force personnel at the end of their tours, heading out to interview them at Camp Bastion before they fly back to the UK.

"We speak to platoon and company commanders and intelligence officers of all ranks, anywhere between 80 and 120 people on each rotation, for between three to six hours at a time so they can effectively download six months' worth of information," said the commanding officer.

The unit's remit is restricted to Task Force Helmand – within which the majority of British forces operate – and gathering facts at the tactical battlegroup level.

"Our focus is on the ground although some details will be used at a higher level," explained the senior officer.

"If you've got a sniper operating around Sangin and the casualty rate goes up then it becomes a strategic issue that London will want to be briefed on as well."

Many of those staffing the intelligence hub have returned from postings in theatre.

An information analyst who deployed to

Lashkar Gah during Op Herrick 12 is one of those now advising troops as they go through training.

"Having been out on the ground we can give a good steer on what they will see so it's not just pointing at maps," the corporal told *Soldier*. "We have lots of photos and we can talk about what it is like to work with the Afghans, our own experience with elders, the army and police, who to trust and who not to trust."

He added: "We establish personal contact with guys who have trained here and they continue to get up-to-the-minute information because we email them and speak on the telephone after they leave."

As well as British troops, Danish and American military personnel are stationed at the LIFC(A) along with civilian anthropologists, political scientists, economists and an Afghan expatriate.

Groups of between 30 and 50 troops



WO2 Paul Breisford (Int Corps) is responsible for managing the digital resource, much of which can be accessed via Armynet or the MoD's restricted Defence Information Infrastructure system.

"It includes significant events which can be used to predict things such as changes in power dynamics, tactics and whether there might be more attacks in an area," he said.

"For example, making people aware if a known IED facilitator moves into an area or of the position of insurgent commanders."

Resources are roughly categorised into four areas: the Taliban's governmental and military structures; criminals, insurgency and drug activity; tribal structures and the legitimate Afghan government and security forces.

"It's a one-stop shop for intelligence," WO2 Breisford told *Soldier*.

"Prior to the centre there wasn't anywhere you could get these assets in one place."

With the future transition of security to Afghan forces rapidly becoming a reality, efforts are already under way to translate some of these products into Pashto and Dari.

Briefing troops on the areas of Helmand in which they will work is giving them a battle-winning advantage.

The LIFC(A) is proving to be a key contributor to operational success in Afghanistan and as homegrown forces begin to take responsibility for the security of their country, the UK-based centre of expertise will continue to play a crucial role in preparing their coalition mentors. ■

One stop shop: Troops from The Queen's Royal Hussars Battlegroup visit the Land Forces Intelligence Fusion Centre (Afghanistan) to learn about the areas where they will deploy

Pictures: Steve Dock, Graeme Main and Mike Weston



HELMAND HEADS-UP

MONTHS ahead of Op Herrick 15, soldiers from 20th Armoured Brigade have been at the LIFC(A) getting the lowdown on areas where they will be based.

"This was our first real look at Lashkar Gah and my guys can dive in and see what the issues are and get a feel for it at an early date," said company intelligence officer Capt Matthew Paterson (QRH).

"We are finding out about land problems, where the police are doing well, where new roads have appeared and where we have troops, so that when we go to theatre it won't be a shock to the system."

He added: "At this stage we don't have to know where every police officer lives but we should be aware of the force laydown in our area."

"The deploying troops need to know where they are going and why – it's enormously valuable."

Tpr Jonathan Carline (QRH) will be collating information ahead of pre-patrol briefings and told *Soldier* the one-week immersion at LIFC(A) had helped him put a face to the name Lashkar Gah.

"It's the first time I've had an in-depth look at our area of operations, important land features, where the threats are located, the key figures in the Afghan police and army and where they are situated," he said.

One of his roles ahead of deploying in the autumn will be to share that knowledge with the rest of his company, in particular the soldiers who will be working with the Afghan security forces.

Capt Paterson said he was confident that his men would be heading to Helmand fully equipped with the knowledge to cope with Operation Herrick's challenges.

"If we arrived without that, we could potentially make mistakes which could create unnecessary risk but might also waste effort by duplicating things that have already been done," he added.

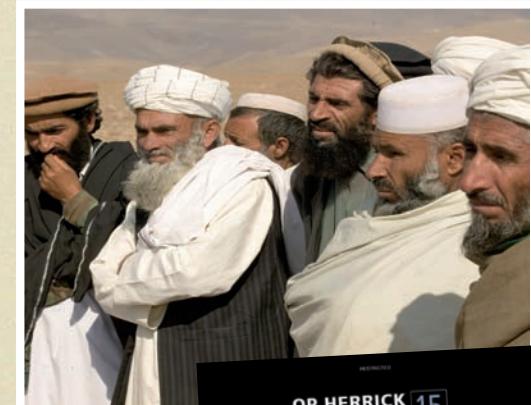
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ROUGH GUIDES

BRITISH troops bound for Helmand province are being issued with *Lonely Planet*-style guidebooks packed with vital information about the company or sub-unit locations they will be operating in.

Nearly 30 different versions of the Forces' fact-file exist, covering specific areas of Afghanistan and compiled by Intelligence Corps experts.

"They discuss the terrain, friendly forces,



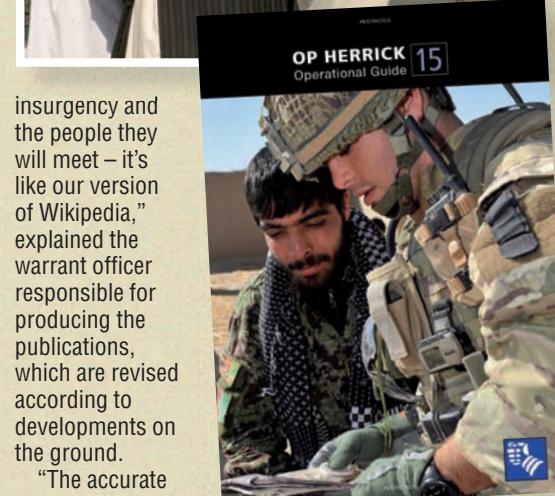
insurgency and the people they will meet – it's like our version of Wikipedia," explained the warrant officer responsible for producing the publications, which are revised according to developments on the ground.

"The accurate and up-to-date information comes directly from the experiences of those on Op Herrick – all their knowledge is regurgitated and we ensure it is given to the right people at the right time."

He added: "I went out to Afghanistan on Op Herrick 8 and would have loved something like this. It's the stuff I would want to know if I was going out there."

A former company intelligence officer who served in Sangin on Op Herrick 12 said that the pamphlets – given to British troops up to a year before they deploy – are getting personnel up to speed before they arrive in theatre.

"They have seen pictures and profiles of influencers and the lie of the land. They also know who they will be working with from the Afghan National Security Forces, where they have trained and their level of experience," he said. "As soon as they are told where they are going they get this 'rough guide' for their patrol base area. People are saying it is saving lives."





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Canine colleague:
Arms and explosive
search dog, Travis

DOGGED PURSUIT

Popular pooches hound-out threats in Helmand

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

TREADING the deadly paths of Afghanistan to uncover bombs that would otherwise kill their human colleagues, dogs have become an essential asset in conflict.

But unlike troops, the military animals in Helmand province are blissfully unaware of what is being hunted or the daily risk they face. All they know is that a ball or treat follows a successful find.

Soldier visited 103 Military Working Dogs Squadron at Camp Bastion to see the sought-after canines in their living quarters.

Pte Patrick Medhurst-Feeney, a veterinary technician in the Royal Army Veterinary Corps, explained that Infantry personnel on patrol are happy to see the animals because of their ability to detect IEDs.

"The lads always give these dogs a good reception because they inspire confidence due to their proven track record," he said. "We get out and go from compound to compound with them, looking for weapons and IED-making factories and searching for devices. We recently had a find where we uncovered an ammunition cache."

Each handler usually works with a single dog an entire operational tour, allowing the animals to learn their companion's traits and forge a strong relationship built on instinct.

Cpl Robert Webb (RAF Police) works with a search dog as part of the counter-IED task force on route clearances.

Together, they step out with patrols.

"We do a lot of planned operations but if there are Infantry units that need us then we'll be called – we're here and ready to be used," he said.

"It's my third time out as a handler and the demand has increased ten-fold because the insurgents have become more

sneaky in planting their devices."

Regardless of the dynamic nature of the threats, one thing that does not change is the ability of the canines.

"If something is not supposed to be in the ground, a dog will find it," said Cpl Robin Ardis (RAVC), an arms and explosive search handler.

"They don't know when they've found something dangerous – to them it's just a game – but it just so happens that their discovery could be life-saving."

Cpl Ardis' companion is a black labrador called Travis, named after the Scottish indie band. He has a growing reputation as a cool customer in his field.

"The dogs here have been selected because they can work while bullets are being fired and they don't get frightened when explosions happen," said the former member of 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment.

"Call signs are always glad we've arrived because we bring another detector to the party."

As well as the valuable searchers, more vicious

"attack dogs" are used as protective assets in theatre.

Pte Medhurst-Feeney's Belgian malinois named Vinko is one such creature, who will bring down a suspected enemy as soon as he is instructed to do so.

Once unleashed, the highly-trained animal will take hold of a target's arm and persist until ordered to stop.

"We patrol around the camp to ensure people are not where they shouldn't be," said the technician.

"If we found someone, we would be obliged to release the dog in accordance with the rules of engagement. Again, it's a game to them and the dog will bite the arm until the suspect has been taken down."

As a single unit, 103 Squadron's primary operational role is to provide protection and specialist skills to commanders on the battlefield.

Far from acting as pets, the talented four-legged soldiers are proving a menace to the insurgency and a symbol of morale for British troops in theatre.

"To them they could be anywhere and they just work for a reward," said Cpl Ardis.

A bouncing ball is all the dogs expect in return for saving hundreds of lives. ■

Pooch on patrol: Cpl Robin Ardis (RAVC) with his search dog Travis



**THEY DON'T
KNOW WHEN
THEY'VE FOUND
SOMETHING
DANGEROUS –
IT'S JUST A
GAME TO THEM!**





TOP DOG GALLERY



Pedigree chums: Cpl Robert Webb (RAF Police) with search dog Oslo, pictured above, during an exercise to look for hidden IEDs and Pte Pat Medhurst-Feeney (RAVC) with protection dog Vinko, pictured below, practising attack skills at Camp Bastion, southern Afghanistan



READY TO FIRE

Gunners perfect skills needed for Herrick deployment

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Steve Dock

FOR ground forces operating in the heart of Helmand province there is nothing more reassuring than knowing considerable support is at hand should a mission go wrong.

Guns, mortars, attack helicopters and fast air jets can all be called upon to offer a rapid and ferocious response in the event of enemy fighters launching an attack on UK personnel.

While this impressive arsenal offers undoubted firepower for those who need it, coordinating these prized assets is no easy feat.

Responsibility for such a crucial task rests with the Royal Artillery's fire support teams, close-knit units that work on the front line to deliver immediate assistance in times of trouble.

These soldiers will be called into action once again on Op Herrick 15 as part of 20th Armoured Brigade and to prepare for this role the gunners have been put through their paces on Exercise Pashtun Sabre.

"This is a crucial two-week period for us," explained Brig Dickie Haldenby, the commander of Royal Artillery, 1st Armoured Division.

"All the attachments will be rotated through a challenging series of stands and by the time they leave they will be ready to bring those weapon systems to bear in Afghanistan.

"This is probably the most complex joint-fire exercise we run. We understand the flexibility fire support teams require when they are engaging targets.

"But they have to consider the impact on locals while training heavily on counter-IED and medical drills."

The Otterburn-based course saw soldiers coached on contemporary rules of engagement and how to coordinate multiple assets in a counter-insurgency environment.





Close support: A Royal Artillery soldier defends his FOB



Friendly fire: Multi-launch rocket system takes aim



Battery power: Gunners prepare to open fire

A practical simulator featuring input from fast jet pilots, attack helicopter crews and US Marine Corps personnel offered further learning opportunities, while live-firing serials provided valuable experience in the field.

These tasks featured a range of assets that included mortars, guns, Apache helicopters and fixed-wing air support.

"This is the development of an exercise that has been running for about five years," Lt Col Tim Law, commanding officer of 26 Regiment, Royal Artillery, told *Soldier*.

"It has been altered incrementally as things in theatre have changed. On this occasion we have placed a greater emphasis on fire support teams and their progression.

"The lay down is now very different. We have gone through a period of kinetic engagement with targets to a stage where we do not mind if we leave Afghanistan having not fired a single round.

"To say we might not be needed is a good thing. We are

not going to win the war by destroying large parts of the country."

The opening stand saw teams aiding a clearing patrol that had encountered enemy forces.

The serial ended with danger-close firing which involved coordinating an array of weaponry and ensuring clear, precise communication between unit members.

"In Helmand province they might not get all these assets but it is typical of the missions they will be doing," explained instructor Maj Charlie Holland (RA).

"It is very complicated. Target sites may involve collateral damage and it is not just about what they shoot at.

"You now have to think in 3D and consider where everything is.

"There is a lot of pressure on young guys. Before, you would have junior soldiers doing signals and taking down missions. Now, they are going out and using these skills the ground.

"They are all qualified, but to pass the course and do it for real is a huge responsibility."

Fire support team commanders were also given a taste of running missions from a forward operating base.

This scenario saw troops working with ground forces to detect improvised explosive devices and clear them from a designated area.

But when insurgent forces targeted the position in retaliation, the mission swiftly changed from a hearts and minds clearance exercise to a full attack on the enemy's location.

Capt Axel Bolin (RA), the operations officer for the task, said: "For a fire support team commander deployed with a ground-holding company, this will give them their first taste of working in an ops room with live feeds coming in.

"He will get a lot of information to filter.

"The forward operating base is a facility to work from. The fact they have got guns firing over them at the enemy adds to the confusion. That creates the fog of war they will face."

Elements of 5 Regiment, Royal Artillery were also involved in a serial to help locate enemy positions, mortars and gun batteries using a range of equipment found in theatre.

"We are doing training for our soldiers but are also giving injects to the fire support team commander," said Lt Rik Karadia (RA).

"Most of this kit is quite familiar – particularly the Cobra, Mamba and Asp – so the guys are very competent with it.

"But the base ISTAR [Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance] is relatively new and is proving to be very useful.

"We are helping the commanders and giving them more realism, but it is also very worthwhile training for us."

While the blustery Northumberland countryside is far removed from the conditions troops will face when they deploy, it is playing a crucial role in the Op Herrick campaign.

Not only are Royal Artillery soldiers gaining experience that only comes with firing live rounds and coordinating assets, they are also learning valuable lessons about the all-important hearts and minds philosophy. ■

‘This is probably the most complex joint-fire exercise we run’



Report: Sarah Goldthorpe
Pictures: Mike Weston

VITAL teamwork skills are being passed on to armoured vehicle personnel at a new centre in Dorset.

The Crew Training School in Bovington has been running for little longer than a month but has already turned out some 500 troops in preparation for Op Herrick 16 next year.

The site, currently manned by staff from 12th Mechanized Brigade, boasts a fleet of 106 vehicles including the Jackal, Husky, Ridgback, Mastiff and Wolfhound.

Crews comprising a gunner, commander and driver spend five days training as a group, testing the machines' capabilities in various scenarios including over a cross-country range.

Maj Charles Valdes-Scott (KRH), officer commanding the school, said the centre's mission was to produce units with increased confidence on urgent operational requirement platforms. The teams later move on to combined arms live-fire

exercises after leaving the school.

"Until very recently we didn't have the ability to do crew training like this because all the vehicles were being sent straight to Afghanistan," Maj Valdes-Scott told *Soldier*.

"Now, though, I am happy to say we have our own fleet.

"Guys get the chance to put the vehicles through their paces and get confidence to operate by day and night.

"Then when it comes to the real thing in theatre, they know what the vehicles can do."

Maj Valdes-Scott runs the school with the support of 150 personnel from 12 Mech Bde. Each unit of this formation will go through the training package over the coming months. The facility will then be handed over to Bovington's Armour Centre until a new brigade steps into the breach.

Courses cover driving, maintenance and tactics and it is hoped the proving ground will become well-established at the site.

"Making a crew training school permanent is a big progression," Maj Valdes-Scott said.

"It would mean we could invest in accommodation and infrastructure and create continuity in training for each unit at an all-singing, all-dancing facility."

Behind the scenes at the centre, a team from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers work hard to ensure the fleet is in full working order for students.

"These vehicles are there every day for blokes to train on and that in itself justifies the expense and inconvenience of them coming down to Dorset," Maj Valdes-Scott added.

Among the facilities is a Roll Over Drills Egress Trainer – a simulator kitted-out like a real vehicle which rotates, allowing crews to practise all important escape methods.

"This is a fantastic piece of equipment," said Capt Garry Bartholomew, second in command at the school.

DRIVING AMBITION

Troops test wagons at top UK facility

BOVINGTON CREW TRAINING SCHOOL IN NUMBERS:

2,556 – personnel predicted to move through the centre during its first four months

153 – staff from 12 Mechanized Brigade currently operating the school

15 – different courses on offer

106 – armoured vehicles on the site

"All the crews that come through have to do it, experimenting with different exit strategies and also in the dark."

Further drills take place across eight kilometres of all-weather track on Wool Heath, where teams can operate in wet, dry and sandy conditions that mimic those of Afghanistan. Groups of four vehicles work together on the ranges.

Maj Valdes-Scott said it had been a "massive challenge" setting the school up – but one that was already paying dividends.

"This all had to be done with austerity in mind," he explained.

"So it made perfect sense to come here and slot into the Armour Centre."

Pte Howard Dix, a gunner with 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, said his time at the school had been valuable.

"I had never fired from a vehicle before, which meant standing up rather than crouching down. We've also been driving round the circuits, which is good experience for Helmand. It has given really great insight into the machines."



Roll-over: Simulators allow vehicle crews to practise escape methods that could be used in theatre

At the end of the courses, students work their way through a scenario set up by their instructors, such as an IED or human casualty removal.

"This is about figuring out how we would react in different situations and different formations,"

explained LCpl Barney Scrivener (R Anglian), a crew commander.

"Everything seems to be running well here considering the school has only just started up."

At the end of their course, personnel are asked for feedback on what could be improved.

"As a result, the quality of instruction is already getting better each week," Maj Valdes-Scott added.

"I'm very confident we have got the right package here." ■





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GROUND FORCE

WOUNDED SOLDIERS GO GREEN ON ROAD TO RECOVERY



Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

FOR injured personnel at Headley Court it seems as though no stone is left unturned when it comes to planning exciting activities to aid the recovery process.

Whether it is taking to the ice in the high-octane sport of sledge hockey or horse riding in the salubrious surroundings of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, soldiers rightly enjoy tremendous variety in their rehabilitation programmes.

With this mantra in mind, an innovative new gardening project has been launched to deliver occupational therapy to those who need it.

Medical evidence suggests that horticulture can provide physical, neurological, cognitive and psychological benefits as well as testing patients' motor skills, strength and endurance.

To put this theory to the test, staff at Headley Court have opened a newly-refurbished greenhouse and allotment area to challenge patients with complex

poly-traumatic injuries. During their green-fingered duty they will have to overcome the difficulties of working at different heights and standing on slopes while moving and lifting various objects.

Physiotherapist Maj Peter Le Feuvre told *Soldier* the scheme will deliver positive outcomes on a number of levels and is hoping to see Service gardeners blossom over the coming months.

"A lot of rehabilitation work is carried out indoors," he explained. "We were looking for a way to bring the guys outside and also contribute towards the conservation of the grounds.

"It is a way of helping those who need to learn how to walk again and it can also assist with things like balance and mobility.

"There are psychological benefits as well: working outdoors reduces anxiety levels and

improves wellbeing.

"If we lower their stress levels it allows them to concentrate and work through different processes systematically.

"We are working with soldiers who have physical and psychological trauma and this is one form of treatment that applies to everyone.

"It is also about tapping into personal interests. Some soldiers will gravitate towards this type of project, others will not.

"I have had no problems in getting people down here. The odd one may say they want to work with wood instead, but we need trellis and planters building so we give them a nail gun and off they go.

"Occupational therapists will often take patients into a kitchen, give them a budget and tell them to cook a meal. The process is all about them going out and getting the

Working outdoors reduces anxiety levels and improves wellbeing

– Maj Peter Le Feuvre





Green fingers: Gardeners Gdsm Lamin Manneh (1 IG, far left) and Pte Scott Meenagh (2 Para) get to work on their hanging baskets

ingredients they need.

"We can do the same within a garden structure. The injured personnel have to build it up and plant it out.

"Some of the guys may also be looking to leave for civvy street and this project will give them the chance to experiment with a few ideas for the future."

During *Soldier's* visit wounded personnel were planting hanging baskets and strawberries as the first seeds of the project were sown.

Double amputee Pte Scott Meenagh (2 Para) suffered severe injuries when he stepped on an improvised explosive device (IED) in Afghanistan and has been determined to take full advantage of the initiatives on offer at Headley Court.

"Being a soldier is the only thing I've ever known," he explained. "With no legs I cannot really be a soldier any more so when I get the opportunity to try new activities I take it."



"This project is quite therapeutic; it takes your mind off the things you think about a lot. It also helps with physical rehabilitation as you have to get up and move around. It is very beneficial.

"My father is a gardener and I've worked with him before but that was more on the landscape side. When I first arrived here I saw the greenhouses and pond and they seemed run-down and neglected.

"It is great to see it being revamped and to say I contributed to these fantastic grounds would be amazing."

Pte Meenagh has already mastered the basics of planting hanging baskets and has added his name to the horticultural rota so his time in the greenhouse can continue.

"I would love to stay involved and see how the project evolves," he added. "I have never worked on anything like this before and it is a great opportunity."

"Headley Court is the best facility in the

world. The staff here are amazing and if you want to work hard they will let you do exactly that."

Gdsm Lamin Manneh (1 IG), who lost two legs and an arm in an IED blast in December, echoed his colleague's comments.

He said: "I think it is important for everyone to get involved.

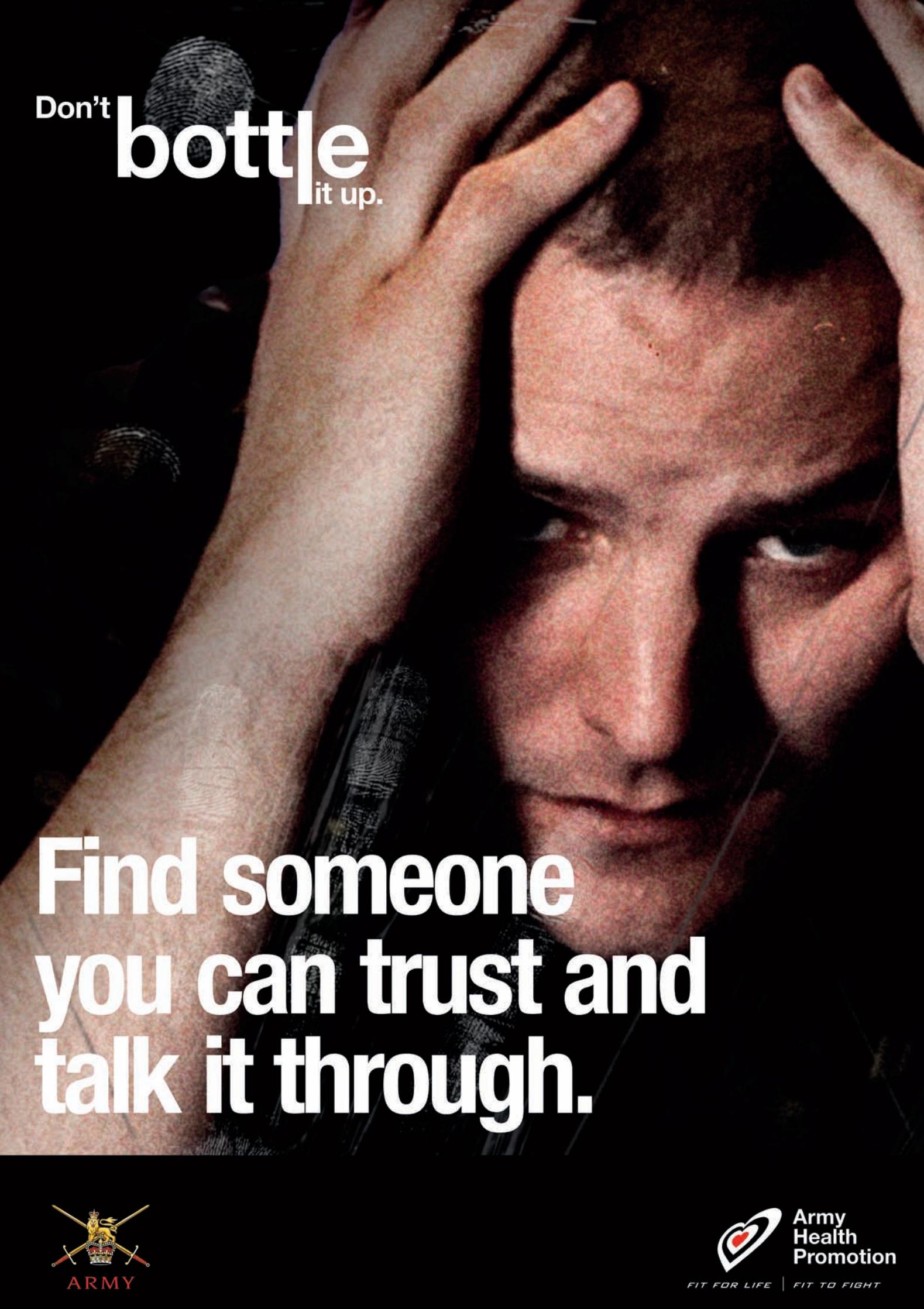
"I have got a horticultural background. My father was involved in agriculture and we used to work together in Gambia. When I came to Headley Court and heard about this project I wanted to be part of it.

"Rehabilitation is all about taking you back to where you were before you got injured.

"We do most of our work indoors so it is good to be engaged in an outdoor project. People talk about climate change so it is nice to know we are helping the environment as well."

Although the scheme is still very much in its infancy, the early signs suggest it will provide a full bloom.

And with the strength and determination of British soldiers behind them, the Headley Court gardens can look forward to a bright and colourful future. ■



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TALKBACK

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



Picture: © BAA Airports Limited

Warm welcome: British Army personnel returning to the UK from overseas operations have been greeted by applause from travellers at Edinburgh Airport

Service salute to Scottish show of support

I WOULD like to bring to *Soldier's* attention a phenomenon which I had never experienced prior to working in Scotland. In my current job as a movement controller, I escort the troops returning from operations from their aircraft to the terminal building at Edinburgh Airport to ensure they transit smoothly prior to despatch back to unit lines.

Almost every time that uniformed troops have emerged from the arrivals hall en masse, members of the public have responded by spontaneously applauding.

As other travellers turn to see what is going on, they too join in – creating quite a noise. Sometimes the returning unit has a piper positioned close to the exit which adds to the occasion.

Seeing such a reaction always brings a lump to my throat and I'm sure that it makes the returning soldiers realise that their efforts and dedication have not gone unnoticed or unappreciated.

This experience is completely different to the reception, or lack of one, when Service personnel return from Afghanistan to RAF

Brize Norton in Oxfordshire.

I write not to make a big deal about this but simply to raise awareness of the support that exists for the British Army and to thank members of the general public for their appreciation – regardless of their political views – of what soldiers do.

I would be surprised if this greeting doesn't aid the Jocks in their reintegration and rehabilitation following what will probably have been a traumatic operational tour. – WO1 (SSM) L Earnshaw, Ops WO, DMOC, HQ 2 Div.

Moving north would be costly option

LOCATIONS for units returning from Germany are currently under discussion.

While the canny Scots will make a great deal of noise as to the importance of utilising Royal Air Force bases there and the need to support the Scottish economy, I would like to know if the interests of the soldier will be taken into account rather than just political expediency.

For many Service personnel, Scotland is a significant distance from their home and a potentially more expensive option with longer journey times than from Germany.

While the addition of an Army brigade may add favourably to the Scottish

economy it will not provide good employment opportunities for spouses and will ensure that families face crippling travelling costs. In addition, if Scotland is to seek independence a whole host of other issues will arise.

May I suggest that Lincolnshire and central England offer a much more favourable base for most soldiers and their dependants. Before any hasty decisions are made to please the Scots, we should look at the bigger picture of the expense to our people and the associated travel costs of being based too far north. – Name and address supplied.

JUST a quick note reference the review of *Moving Pictures* in June's issue.

I am a huge Rush fan and have been since hearing *Permanent Waves* for the first time in 1980.

Steve King, who reviewed the album in question last month,

needs to do a bit more homework.

The LP was not recorded "40 years ago" as he claims but originally released on February 12, 1981 – making it 30 years old. It is with this anniversary in mind that the band are playing *Moving Pictures* in track order on their

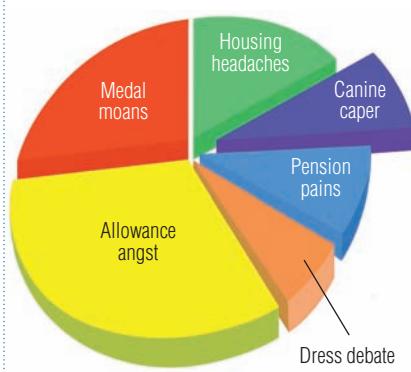
current live *Time Machine* tour.

I was at the Birmingham gig in May and yes, yet again, Rush were superb.

Steve – tut, tut. Maybe a look at the date on the back of the album cover would have given you a clue. – SSgt Dave King, QRH.

Slice of Service life

This month's ruminations from the ranks...



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Celebrating ten years of bespoke radio for the forces



Woodbridge: The rear party of 23 Engineer Regiment and the Woodbridge welfare team mark the tenth birthday with Garrison Radio staff at the launch of the station's latest location.

Employed by the Army to provide a radio service closely tailored to the needs of soldiers and their dependants at UK bases, by the end of this year Garrison Radio will be serving 22 sites on FM and AM radio with a dedicated staff based in each of the major UK garrison areas. The station can also be heard anywhere via the internet and a new iPhone app.

In 2001 Garrison Radio became

the UK's first new military broadcaster since the second world war when we launched permanent AM radio services at Catterick, Colchester and Salisbury Plain. In following years further stations were launched at Aldershot and Edinburgh.

As part of the Trafalgar 200 celebrations in 2005 we ran Navy Radio, as a trial of a dedicated radio station for the senior service.



Afghanistan: Garrison Radio's Liz Mullen with soldiers of 16 Air Assault Brigade, Christmas 2010

Over the next few years the Garrison Radio stations at Colchester, Edinburgh, Salisbury Plain, Aldershot and Catterick were upgraded to FM and new transmitters were launched at Glencorse, Bassingbourn, Wattisham, Leconfield and Woodbridge. By 2009 we had

launched the Army's first all-speech station - armytalk.co.uk - via AM radio in Catterick and online worldwide.

Recent independently conducted research found that an impressive 46% of serving soldiers at Aldershot and Catterick regularly listen to Garrison Radio.



Portsmouth: Garrison Radio founder Mark Page in the Navy radio studio

The world of broadcasting has changed a lot in these ten years with digital devices, laptops, smart phones, iPads etc., but our success has always been built on our close relationship with our audience. We've always specialised in talking about news and events where you are

- relating to individual units and bases - and we think that's the way forward. So tell Mark Page what you need now. What do you miss in the media when you are serving away from home? What could we do better? Email him: mark@garrisonfm.com



Edinburgh: Mark McKenzie speaks to CGS General Sir David Richards at Armed Forces Day 2010



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THREE-PRONGED ATTACK

I WISH to comment on recent letters featured in *Soldier*.

Firstly, in response to "T-shirt troubles" (June), if a commanding officer wishes non-uniform items of clothing to be worn they should be provided free of charge.

Secondly, I – as do no doubt many others – agree with Mr De Landah's comments regarding pets at work ["Writer in the doghouse" (June)]. Dogs owned by officers and soldiers have been an integral part of Army life for many years and the silly comments made by "name and address supplied" in the original letter ["Hound 'em out", April] beggar belief.

Thirdly, why are there so many anonymous letters featured in *Talkback*? Could it be that there is a latent fear of open or underhand retribution from the chain of command for being honest?

If so then those from warrant officers upwards should ask themselves some serious questions.

It is incumbent on the individual to ensure he or she states irrefutable fact in *Talkback*.

Why? Because from this stems the ability to have the courage to append one's name to a justifiable letter of enquiry, complaint or interest.

I spent 27 years in the sergeants' mess and in my last five appointments it was impressed upon subordinates that I didn't want them to tell me what they believed I wanted to hear.

I preferred them to be honest with me, and more importantly, honest with themselves and feel free to say what they thought.

Finally, thanks for a great magazine.

– Peter Padley, ex-WO1 (GSM),
Alicante, Spain.



Canine conflict continues

FOR

I HAVE read with great interest the ongoing discussion about dogs and the Army and whether pets should be excluded from Service sites.

If you could permit me to relate a story, I will tell you exactly why I feel man's four-legged friends do have a place in the military workplace.

When I attended an Army officer selection board at Westbury I was somewhat downhearted to receive a category 2.12.

As I sat alone outside the briefing office waiting for the minibus to arrive and take me down the hill to the train station, a little dog appeared, followed by a lead and a sergeant from The Royal Welsh.

After a few paces the animal stopped in front of me and started barking.

The senior NCO looked down at the dog, up at me, smiled and said "Oh, you must have passed, sir. He only barks at officers," and then went on his way.

This budding commander, sad at not getting a full pass, ended up leaving Westbury with a massive grin on his face. And this is why I think dogs are important – they have a role in military affairs. – Robert Evans, potential officer, London.

AGAINST

I WRITE in response to the "Hound 'em out" letter in April's issue and the subsequent replies.

Like the original correspondent, I am a dog hater – especially when it comes to canines in the workplace.

Buying a pet is a personal choice and, as such, animal owners should make alternative provisions for their companions while they are at work.

I can't imagine British Telecom allowing labradors in their offices or McDonalds being happy with a member of staff's Staffordshire bull terrier sitting behind the service counter.

I am allergic to dogs and having them running around while I try to go about my job causes me serious discomfort.

Why can't owners be just a little more considerate and acknowledge there are those who feel differently about man's best friend?

A pet is for your family to experience, not to inflict on others. – Name and address supplied.

Move meant I missed out on money

CAN someone explain why my Local Overseas Allowance (LOA) was stopped when I took relocation leave?

I was posted from one German unit to another and moved quarters to be nearer my new place of work.

On arrival I was told to use part of my annual leave allocation rather than relocation due to a glitch on the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system.

As advised, I took five days of my entitlement and consequently had my LOA stopped for that period. – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds:
The policy in Joint Service Publication 752 is clear and worth quoting in full: "LOA is not payable during periods of relocation leave taken overseas either before the commencement of the overseas assignment or after its completion."

It is not a JPA glitch; the allowance is not paid for relocation leave.

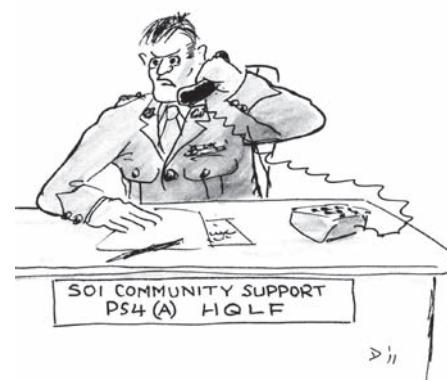
However, it is during periods of annual leave so if your time off was classified accordingly then you are entitled to payment of LOA.

You letter raises a valid point. As many serving personnel in your circumstances elect to take their relocation leave locally, they continue to incur the additional day-to-day costs of living in theatre.

My staff are fully aware of this anomaly and have pressed the MoD to recognise the situation by ensuring that those undertaking an intra-theatre move receive LOA during their relocation leave.

This will require both a policy change and, perhaps more fundamentally, the reprogramming of JPA.

Due to major work already under way, such a revision could not be introduced before 2013.



"Dammit Jenkins, you're the 20th caller this morning... I didn't mean the drinks are on me."

GOOD grief! A pay freeze, allowance cuts, redundancies, VAT increase, food and fuel inflation and a summer without any meaningful football tournament.

Anyone for a pint? – Lt Col Steve Szalay, SOI Community Support, PS4 (A), HQ Land Forces.

FALLEN COMRADE

I WOULD like to add a name to the roll of honour featured in *Soldier's* salute to those members of the British Army who fell during the Gulf War [The Bigger Picture, March]. I served with 39 Squadron RCT during the conflict and we sadly lost a colleague – LCpl Lee Wellington – in a traffic accident days before coming home. – Ex-WO2 Wayne Fury.

NO FOLLICLE FAIRNESS

I HAVE closely followed the ongoing debate regarding haircuts within the Army and, while I despise having such short locks, am resigned to the fact that regulations are unlikely to change.

However, I believe there is a lack of guidance or enforcement when it comes to Servicewomen's hair.

I acknowledge that those with longer styles must wear a bun, but what about females with slightly shorter hair? It seems as though women can have their locks at whatever length they wish. The fairer sex also appear to be able to change the colour of their hair as they see fit.

On another note, a high volume of officers clearly believe that the Queen's Regulations on this matter don't apply to them. – A young lance corporal.

GIVE MEDAL TO MASSES

THE powers that be could easily risk much of the affection felt for Her Majesty if they do not arrive at the only logical way of establishing eligibility of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal.

I believe the decoration should be awarded to all serving and retired members of the Armed Forces, police, fire brigade, emergency services and any other "eiusdem generis" whose contribution to the nation through their period of service (of at least five years) has been during the Queen's reign.

The cost will be insignificant when measured against the groundswell of sentiment and goodwill generated.

– Nick Johnson, ex-Metropolitan Police.

PICTURE PARADOX

WHILE I enjoyed your "Gingerbread clause prompts changing of the guard" article [April fool joke], I assume that the "Fiscal fairness" report which appeared in the same issue and detailed the first of two years of our zero per cent pay rise, was not in the same vein.

I found it rather ironic that you chose to print a picture of the Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Peter Wall, opposite an article which was billed with the line "Army's lowest earners set to benefit from Armed Forces' Pay Review Body". – WO2 Graeme Winning, British Embassy, Beijing.



Juggling jurisdictions: The National Lottery Commission has refined its rules in light of laws overseas

Commission's take on tour tickets

I WOULD like to take the opportunity to respond to a letter featured in April's issue, "Are my lottery playing days numbered?", and clarify the rules on where and when you can play.

It has always been the case that to enter the National Lottery online by direct debit or text, participants must be a resident of the UK or Isle of Man.

However, since December 2010 the rules have changed to state that those playing must be physically located in either location.

This regulation was introduced following an investigation which found that most overseas territories have laws which make it illegal to play the UK National Lottery.

Given the complexity and in some cases ambiguity of legislation in other jurisdictions, it was not always possible for players to know whether or not the purchase of a UK ticket was permitted.

In addition, as local laws are a matter for the authorities in those countries and subject to change, it is not practicable for Camelot (or the National Lottery Commission) to publish and maintain a list of which international regions do allow entry.

Players are reminded they should only play in the UK or Isle of Man when they sign in to their account or buy tickets online, as well as when they initially set up their direct debit.

Additionally, Camelot uses positional software which displays a warning

message to any players who attempt to access the website from outside the UK, Isle of Man or from an unknown location.

Members of the Armed Forces who are residents of the UK can continue to play the National Lottery by direct debit, as long as they are physically located in the country or Isle of Man when they set up or amend the arrangement – including buying additional tickets or changing their numbers or payment details.

As long as they continue to meet these eligibility requirements, their tickets will be valid while they are posted overseas.

Alternatively, deployed members of the Services can join a syndicate set up and managed by a friend or family member in the UK.

We would advise anyone forming a syndicate to follow the advice on the National Lottery website and to sign a syndicate agreement.

And finally, if personnel are travelling abroad on a short posting they can buy tickets up to eight weeks in advance.

It is one of the main duties of the National Lottery Commission to make sure that players are properly protected but we appreciate the current arrangements may not suit all members of the Armed Forces.

We are therefore seeking to meet with the Ministry of Defence to discuss how we could support the Services without putting players or Camelot at risk of breaking any laws which might result in an individual missing out on a prize. – Jonathan Blay, National Lottery Commission.

Reservists denied regular gym sessions

AM a Territorial Army Intelligence Corps soldier currently attached to various departments within MoD Main Building and working in direct support of operations for extended periods of time.

I went to join the gym within the headquarters and was informed that as a Reservist, I am not entitled to free use of the facilities and would have to pay quite a considerable amount to do so.

To be fair to the duty physical training instructor, he seemed quite embarrassed by the situation – especially when I explained that I was working in Main Building by dint of being a Reservist (as opposed to being a Reservist and employed there in another capacity).

However, I was told that as my unit identification number was not associated with the centre I was officially classified as a contractor.

I enquired as to whether this applied to Regular Service personnel visiting the site for limited periods and was informed that it didn't. I was particularly surprised, then, that it did not seem to make a difference when I was mobilised and returned to Main Building for a short stint prior to an operational deployment.

I do not wish access to facilities that I am not entitled to and certainly do not expect free gym membership per se. I willingly already subscribe to a fitness centre which,

ironically, offers a Forces discount, making it cheaper than Main Building. I can also (and do) go for a run and even use the facilities at Wellington Barracks.

That said, I feel this state of affairs belies the so-called "One Army" concept and penalises serving Reservists. – Name and address supplied.

Lt N Bassett (Royal Navy), Joint Service Administration Unit (London), responds:

Thank you for highlighting that Reservists from all three Services have this problem accessing the gym in MoD Main Building.

The reason for the issue is that the facility is provided by the Civil Service Sports Club (CSSC). It is not military or publicly-funded and is classed as privately/commercially-run. Consequently, the owners charge for the gym's use.

When Main Building was reoccupied there was a requirement, under the Armed Forces Physical Development Policy, to provide access for Regular personnel to appropriate facilities that meet their responsibilities to remain physically fit.

It was calculated that Servicemen and women accounted for about a third of those

working at the centre and the Old War Office Building. Therefore, in order to allow military personnel free access, public funds meet a third of the cost that the CSSC estimates is required to run the facility.

The gymnasium contract is currently under review and the issue of funding will be considered.

While it is unlikely that visitors or those working temporarily in Main Building will be able to use the facilities, we will now work with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation to allow Reservists assigned full-time to the headquarters the same access as Regular personnel.



Ferry fury prompts sea change in Province procedures

MY unit is based in Northern Ireland and I would like to bring to *Soldier's* attention an issue I believe could easily have been avoided.

Although married, I am currently serving unaccompanied because my wife – also in the military – is waiting for an assignment order to join me. Due to my marital status, I am only entitled to three travel warrants a year and not the 12 afforded to single soldiers. Consequently, it costs my partner and I around £700 to see each other twice a month.

My gripe, however, concerns my last leave period. I had been given a warrant in order to return to the mainland to see my wife, and made arrangements to visit my parents. My partner's return from duty in the Middle East was delayed by 24 hours and this, coupled with bad weather and a car in need of a trip to the garage, prompted a change of plans.

Rather than a visit to my parents, my wife and I decided to attempt to return to our new home in the Province. As the crossing had been pre-booked I contacted the ferry company to bring it forward. "No," was the answer "not without authority from the movements clerk".

I managed to make contact with the aforementioned who told me that unless I was returning for operational or compassionate reasons then the booking could not be amended.

My offer to cover any cost of the ticket change – usually a small administration fee and significantly cheaper than booking another crossing – was

greeted with a further "no". So too was my request to cancel the original fare which was no longer necessary in light of my early return.

This stance resulted in the MoD wasting almost £200 (the cost of the ferry ticket) and myself having to pay out a similar amount.

Can anyone point out the sense in this policy? At what age/rank is someone deemed mature enough to make and amend their own travel arrangements? – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies:

Your letter concerns me and while I can understand the need for processes to prevent administrative chaos, what you have described sounds overly bureaucratic.

In attempting to answer your question, my staff have consulted HQ 38 (Irish) Brigade who have reviewed their practices.

The decision to prevent individuals from contacting ferry operators and airlines directly has been made as a result of years of experience and is designed to be cost-effective.

Personnel frequently approach travel companies demanding changes to their arrangements at varying cost. However, all changes to MoD bookings carry an extra charge to the department's budget and must therefore be accounted for and authorised at the right level.

The ferry company need to know that

the change has been properly authorised by the MoD before allowing the extra cost to be incurred. Additionally, Northern Ireland-based units need to maintain awareness of alterations to soldiers' travel plans for security reasons.

That said, there is a system for revisions that is applicable to all, irrespective of rank or experience. This appears to have broken down in your case.

The route followed on this occasion seems to have been through the duty mover, which is applicable only to changes for duty or compassionate reasons. In such circumstances, the MoD will pay the relevant fee.

Where a change is made for personal reasons the individual must bear the cost.

But alterations can be made through the unit movements clerk and there should be procedures in place to ensure all Service personnel are aware of the process to follow.

Your letter has usefully highlighted the requirement for robust rear party procedures during leave periods to ensure that all personnel can make sensible changes to travel plans. HQ 38 (Irish) Brigade are reissuing direction to units on the process to be followed and I would advise staff to ensure they have the details before departing the Province.

Continuity of Education Allowance Important Announcement - CEA



At present the current Continuity of Education Allowance is as follows:

Junior School Year Groups 3 to 6 - £4,482 per child per term

Senior School Year Groups 7 to 13 - £5,833 per child per term

This year Independent Schools Fees will increase between 3% and 5%.

Your basic pay is only likely to go up by around 1%. Therefore of importance to you, as a parent considering whether to opt for a Boarding Education for your child, is how much will you be expected to have to contribute per term.

The graph on the left shows what % of Forces parents contribute personally each term, per child, towards their child's boarding education termly fees.

So you can see 10% contribute over £3,000 per term! At present our parents, on average, this year, contribute £1,013 per child per term. **BUT that's going to change.** We don't know what the CEA amount changes will be. Will it go up at all? Will it go up by just 1% or will it go up in line with likely school fees? We are proud that we have over 200 Forces children currently boarding with us. We don't want that number to fall but to increase! We have the answer...

With our Charitable Foundation's backing, we are able to guarantee for the coming Academic Year, starting in September 2011, that whatever our boarding fees become and whatever the CEA Allowance becomes, your parental contribution per term, per child will be reduced and will be no more than £795.

Use the MOD's ChildCare Voucher Scheme ~ your termly contribution could fall to under £500 per term

Register your child with us and do not get CEA entitlement ~ we will refund our Registration Fee in full

We aim to only increase the £795 maximum personal contribution per child, per term, in following years, in line with the % Forces pay increases. This reduced contribution now means we rank as one of the most competitively priced boarding schools for Forces in the UK and you get a school that is increasing in size, has spent over £45m in recent years on improvements and upgrades, where the Academic results are brilliant and where children are happy, confident and successful. We have 800 boarders and 400 day pupils.

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For Academic Year 2011 to 2012 we guarantee your
contribution per child per term will be a maximum
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"Our son read your prospectus. Wonders will never cease. He soon found the piece about all the things you put in a boarding bedroom. Now he is all smiles!"

"Great prospectus and at last one, in fact the only one, we really believe. My wife said you 'hit the nail on the head' and address the issues that matter to parents and children."

"Thanks for sending your prospectus with details of your Forces discounts. We have not found any independent school which can match you. You say it for real. We loved it."

Quartermaster's 'bin parades' prompt trash talk

MY unit has recently received a collection of bins and with them has come a new recycling policy.

While I support such environmental initiatives wholeheartedly, as I'm sure the majority of soldiers do, occasionally a cardboard box, glass bottle or other recyclable item can find its way into the general waste.

In the wake of the discovery of such a piece of rubbish, the quartermaster has ordered a compulsory, non-exempt "bin parade" every Thursday afternoon for the foreseeable future.

This process involves emptying all the general waste bins and sifting through the contents in search of recyclable items.

On a few occasions I have narrowly missed being cut by razor blades and had to dispose of the odd ladies' sanitary product and used contraceptive.

Surely there must be a more hygienic and less hazardous way of educating the regiment on the importance of recycling.

— Name and address supplied.

The unit's quartermaster responds: The MoD produces a large amount of waste (around 170,000 tonnes per annum) and 42 per cent of this currently goes to landfill sites.

This means of disposal has a significant environmental impact, including ecosystem degradation and increased greenhouse gas emissions.

In order to address this, the MoD has set a target of reducing the total



"Look what I've found... one of the QM's 'special interest' magazines in the wrong bin."

amount of waste generated by 20 per cent (relative to 2010/11) by 2016/17 and to increase waste recovery (recycling, reuse, composting and energy from waste) to 80 per cent.

Studies suggest that 90 per cent of rubbish is recyclable, so the only thing preventing us achieving this figure is our lack of effort.

The local county council currently spends around £23 million each year on waste management services. A significant element of this goes on landfill tax incurred by burying waste in the ground.

Recycling and diversion of waste from landfill are essential so that scarce

resources can be preserved for essential public services.

As part of its drive to reduce the use of landfill, the local council will not remove contaminated bins – whether they are for general rubbish or recyclable materials. Under the Hazardous Waste Regulations 2007, it also has the power to fine units for such containers.

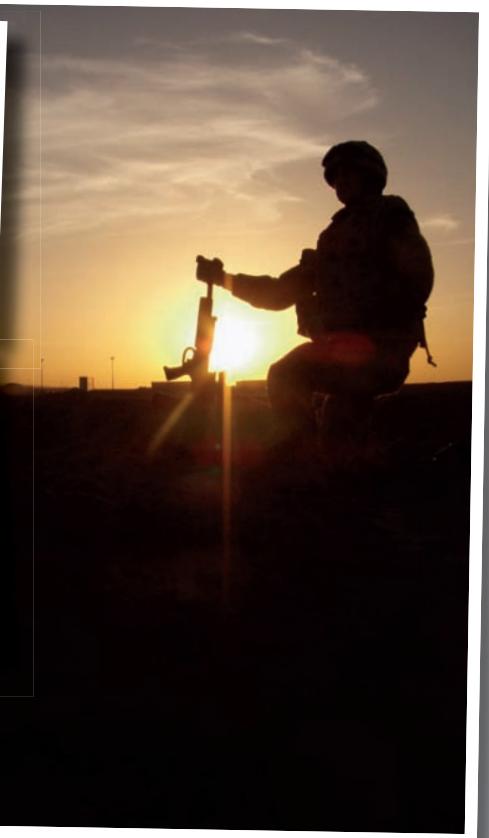
It is very good to hear that the correspondent wholeheartedly supports green initiatives but unfortunately, despite the fact that all personnel posted into the regiment complete waste management and recycling training as part of their induction, our record as a unit is not good.

There have been several occasions when the council has refused to remove rubbish. This was not because of the occasional item in the wrong place, but as a consequence of whole general waste bins being full of recyclable materials.

Clearly the non-removal of waste has serious implications from an environmental health perspective and the unit is bound to resolve the problem. Bin parades are the practical solution.

These sessions are not intended as educational exercises or collective punishment but are simply the regiment fulfilling its responsibility to dispose of waste correctly.

I agree entirely that this is not a pleasant job but the risks are mitigated as far as possible through safety briefings and the provision of full personal protective equipment.



PIONEERS AT PLAY

I READ the article on the HM Armed Forces range of toys in June's issue of *Soldier* ["Brand leaders"] and thought I'd share with you some of the pictures Cpl Jason Booth and myself have been working on while out in Afghanistan.

— Cpl Anthony Bysouth, 522 Squadron, 23 Pioneer Regiment.

'Sharing your emotions is healthy and human nature'

IT was welcoming to see the articles on mental health issues in last month's *Soldier* and the publication of a DIN (2011DIN06-002) advising Service personnel on how to seek advice, support and help.

Reading the above made me wonder why there is stigma attached to admitting such problems. Surely it is normal and natural that we should become low in spirit when having to live in stressful conditions, whether in the UK, Northern Ireland or on the front line in Helmand province.

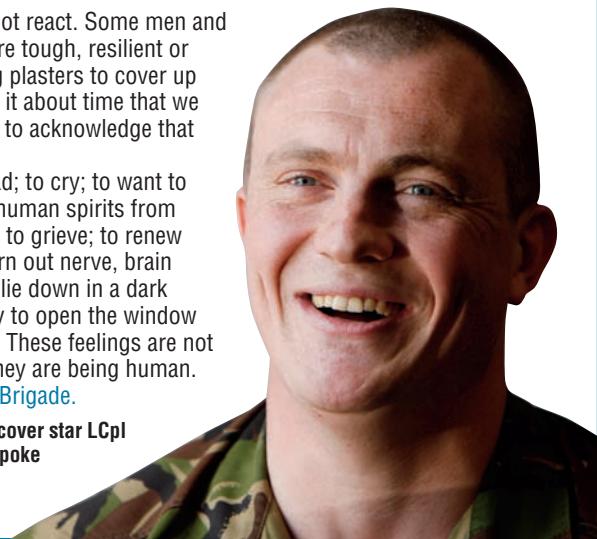
Add to this the sudden shock to the system of combat and/or the killing of a colleague and it is no surprise that individuals feel anxiety, depression and all the other labels attached to normal emotions that reject violence, are sensitive to the brutal destruction of flesh and bone and the extinguishing of a human spirit.

Only a robot would not react. Some men and women may say they are tough, resilient or professional as sticking plasters to cover up these feelings, but isn't it about time that we all had the compassion to acknowledge that we are not robots?

It is human to feel sad; to cry; to want to withdraw our battered human spirits from the field of war; to rest; to grieve; to renew the worn down and worn out nerve, brain and blood cells; and to lie down in a dark room until we are ready to open the window and let the sunshine in. These feelings are not mental health issues, they are being human.

– Christine Rogers, 38 Brigade.

Un-robotic: Last month's cover star LCpl James Dean (Gren Gds) spoke candidly about his own suffering and recovery



● I MUST respond to the short note by SSgt Barnett in April's issue bemoaning a civil servant reading *Soldier*.

While not the subject of his ire, I speak on behalf of us mere civvies – of which the letter writer in question is one, albeit in military uniform.

I may not have a beret but I do have a brain. You ask what a civilian is doing looking at a magazine of (not for) the British Army.

Personally speaking, I find it broadening to read and learn about what is going on in the organisation, not least because I work alongside many of its fine staff.

Do not forget also, when you spout forth your invective about civvies, just how much is done by us in support of Help for Heroes and the like. You may have the beret and the gun but beware treading on the tail of a tiger.

Finally, the magazine is actually sold in outlets such as WH Smith. Am I to infer from your letter that you would not read any title that is not directly related to the military?

– Carl Portman, Kineton Station.

'Why am I being denied the chance to deploy?'

AM a non-Regular permanent staff (NRPS) warrant officer serving as a regimental quartermaster sergeant with a Territorial Army Infantry battalion.

Having previously volunteered for two tours of Iraq, I am keen to complete a third operational deployment in Afghanistan before I become too old.

However, when I made enquiries about doing so I was informed that I would be in breach of my contract, lose my job as a consequence and that my existing post would be advertised.

Even if I was to then reapply for my current position and be selected as the preferred candidate, I would have to enlist on full-time Reserve service (FTRS) terms and conditions.

I find it hard to accept that the Army would penalise me for serving overseas. The Service has spent a lot of time and effort to train me so it seems daft not to use my talents. – WO2 D Fisher, 3 PWRR.

Maj Kris Beauman, DM(A), responds:
NRPS personnel are recruited and selected to fill particular appointments in a single rank and unit.

The purpose of the permanent staff (including NRPS) is to deliver continuity

and efficiency through administrative and logistical support that would otherwise fail with a part-time staff.

NRPS personnel have no liability for call out (mobilisation) outside the UK, although you can elect to be eligible for worldwide service.

This is registered as a preference (JSP 753, Part 3 and TA Regulations, Chapter 6 refer) but does not imply a greater probability of deployment.

THE SERVICE HAS SPENT A LOT OF TIME AND EFFORT TO TRAIN ME SO IT SEEMS DAFT NOT TO USE MY TALENTS

Your previous mobilised service in Iraq and willingness to deploy are commendable, but the former is not the primary purpose of NRPS employment.

It is not clear when you hoped to go on tour but despite operational commitments, the majority of your unit will be in UK for the next 24 months and your deployment would deprive the immediate chain of command of your skills in a key part of the battalion.

Reservists are generally deployed

as part of a TA cohort for programmed operations or as individuals where there are no suitably skilled or available Regular personnel.

Furthermore, Reservists are generally employed on operations within the same constraints as a Regular.

As a NRPS soldier and at 54 years of age, the probability of you being considered for mobilisation is very low. Your commanding officer would also need to justify your deployment, with approval at formation level and confirm the backfill of your appointment.

While the terminology used in your letter is not strictly accurate, NRPS is now a legacy term of service and any vacant post is duly considered for conversion to FTRS liability.

In accordance with the regulations, if voluntarily leaving your post there is every likelihood it would be converted to FTRS and potentially filled in your absence.

The critical nature of appointments such as yours does not support the mobilisation of NRPS personnel.

Your desire to deploy is a personal matter and by retaining you in a key appointment, the Army is making best use of your experience, knowledge and talent.

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*Department of Sport & Exercise Science, University of Chichester, 2010.



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COMPETITIONS

Spine line winners: D Walker, Defence Clothing, Bath; J Mill, Dundee; SSgt J Clothier, DSL, Beaconsfield.

Laputa winners: Pte J Dickinson, 217 Tpt Sqn, Leeds; Michelle Dryden, MoD Abbeywood; L Newport, Oxford; D Keeble, HQ 4 Div, Aldershot; Pte P Sutton, 1 PWRR, BFPO 22.

The Ward winners: Cpl L Vernazza, APHCS Tidworth; C Long, Grimsby; J Collins, BBTM, Abbeywood; Sharon Jackson, 201 Tpt Sqn, Kempston; Mrs J Avis, 100 Regt RA, Luton.



DIARY

July 3: Haileybury Military Tournament. Gates open 1215, events from 1400. Family fun featuring military bands, a light gun competition, parachute displays, tent pegging and sword jousting competitions. For tickets and information call 0207 9077000 or visit the event's website, www.haileyburymilitarystournament.com

July 6: Concert in the Park at Kneller Hall. The Band of the Royal Engineers and the Parachute Regiment Band. Concert starts at 1950 and finishes at 2140. Tickets available by calling 0208 744 8633 or by post from the Concert Secretary, RMSM, Kneller Hall, Twickenham, Middlesex TW2 7DU.

July 9: Wimbish Station Support Unit Open Day. Raising money for the Injured Soldiers Fund. 33 (EOD) Engineer Regiment and 101 (EOD) Regiment will be giving demonstrations, plus bridge building, static displays and events for all the family. Carver Barracks, gates open at 1130.

July 13: Big Band. New season of Kneller Hall summer concerts. Gates open at 1800, tickets £10 (adults), £8 (concessions: under 16s, OAPs), £5 (MoD personnel), £40 (season ticket with chair), £30 (family ticket). Free tickets are available for injured and ex-Service personnel plus one carer. Payment in advance by credit or debit card or on the gate. By post with cheques payable to The Accounting Officer MoD, Concert Secretary, Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall, Twickenham, Middlesex TW2 7DU or order tickets by email from e1coord@rmsm.mod.uk

July 16: Anthems in the Park. Concert at RAF Cranwell, Sleaford, Lincolnshire. Kerry Ellis, Brian May and the band of the Royal Air Force, plus fireworks and an air display. Ticket sales on 0844 888 9991. Gates open at 1630.

July 16-17: Paintballing for Heroes. Fund raising in support for Help for Heroes at Holmbush Paintball, Holmbush Farm, Faygate, Horsham RH12 5SE. £10 for a full day. All equipment included plus 100 paintballs and insurance. For further information and to book tickets phone 0800 279 2525 or visit www.holmbushpaintball.co.uk

July 20: A celebration of Army Music. Band of the Irish Guards and The Heavy Cavalry and Cambrai Band. Tickets as for June 15.

July 22-August 5: Scenes of an Afghan

conflict by Jules George. Works by artist embedded with the British Army in Afghanistan displayed at Bonhams, 101 New Bond Street, London W1A 1ASR.

July 23: ABF The Soldiers' Charity are holding an open-air theatrical performance of **Pirates of Penzance** at Wintershill Hall, Durley SO32 3AL. Bring your own picnic suppers, rugs and chairs. Tickets are £15 per person, £20 extra for a gazebo. Apply for tickets by writing to JMJ



DIRECTORY

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

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

ABF The Soldiers' Charity: 0845 241 4820

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

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

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

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries@ceas.detsa.co.uk

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

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

Forcesline: UK – 0800 731 4880; Germany – 0800 1827 395; Cyprus – 080 91065; Falklands – #6111; from operational theatres – Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) – 0044 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988
Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600
Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group): www.mutualsupport.org.uk

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

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

Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725
RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre: 01622 795900; www.rbli.co.uk

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

South Atlantic Medal Association: 01495 227577
Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

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



INTELLIGENCE

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

DIB 39/11: Publication of the Armed Forces Covenant

DIB 40/11: Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme

DIB 41/11: Withdrawal of around 400 UK

military personnel from Afghanistan

DIB 42/11: End of Op Telic: completion of Royal Navy training mission in Iraq

DIB 43/11: Message from Permanent Secretary – ongoing work to balance Defence priorities and the budget

DIB 44/11: MoD sets out plans for successor nuclear deterrent submarines

DIB 45/11: Review of British sovereign base areas in Cyprus

DIB 46/11: Countdown to Armed Forces Day 2011 begins

DIB 47/11: Operation Ellamy: Prime Minister announces the deployment of Apache attack helicopters

DIB 48/11: The Materiel Strategy Programme – transformation of Defence Equipment and Support

DIB 49/11: Voluntary Early Release Scheme update

DIB 50/11: First maritime operational use of Apache attack helicopters

DIB 51/11: Defence Secretary highlights progress in Afghanistan and Libya and announces Nato HQ decision

ABN 30/11: Uniform to Work Day

ABN 31/11: Mental health stigma campaign

DIN 2011DIN01-127: Guide to world faith festivals

DIN 2011DIN01-128: Tri-Service policy for training Return of Service

DIN 2011DIN01-129: Introduction of Civil Service learning

DIN 2011DIN01-130: Army additional duties commitments arrangements

DIN 2011DIN01-131: Army rejoining bounty

DIN 2011DIN01-132: Armed Forces

Bereavement Scholarship Scheme

DIN 2011DIN01-133: Civil Service Compensation Scheme – dismissal on grounds of inefficiency

DIN 2011DIN01-134: Online security awareness campaign

DIN 2011DIN01-135: Minutes of the 65th Defence Whitley council meeting, March

DIN 2011DIN01-136: Joint non-industrial civilian personnel policy meeting

DIN 2011DIN01-137: Changes to the redeployment pool process

DIN 2011DIN01-138: Revision of equality and diversity policy and legislation documents

DIN 2011DIN01-139: BR3 – issue of April 2011 edition, superseding BR 60A and BR 63A

DIN 2011DIN01-141: Utilisation of Defence Travel

DIN 2011DIN01-142: Publication of revised JSP 893 – policy on safeguarding vulnerable groups

DIN 2011DIN01-143: Band D long-term temporary promotion and reversion

DIN 2011DIN01-145: Procedures for Defence visitors to New Zealand

DIN 2011DIN02-008: Correct use of the user sanction release mechanism for users of the Enterprise Gateway Service

DIN 2011DIN03-020: Requesting support from the Joint Helicopter Command

DIN 2011DIN04-071: Local purchase of the revised Roman Missal

DIN 2011DIN04-073: Declaration of obsolescence – specified equipment as used in the command post of the advanced sound-ranging programme

DIN 2011DIN04-074: Termination of use – 8m mast as used in the command post of the advanced sound-ranging programme

DIN 2011DIN04-075: Weapon equipment –

declaration of obsolete/obsolescent status

DIN 2011DIN04-076: Salvage, marine operations and emergency towing

DIN 2011DIN04-077: Minister (DEST) Acquisition Awards 2011 – calling notice for nominations

DIN 2011DIN04-078: Weapon equipment – Declaration of obsolete/obsolescent status

DIN 2011DIN04-079: First-time demands via deployed management of joint deployed inventory systems

DIN 2011DIN04-080: Technical documentation in the urgent operational requirement environment

DIN 2011DIN04-081: Declaration of obsolescent for pyrotechnic nature – signal kit pistol No 1 Mk 3 (all colours)

DIN 2011DIN04-082: AF G932(B) B vehicle inspection form

DIN 2011DIN04-083: Defence support solutions framework

DIN 2011DIN04-085: Non-destructive testing support – changes to parenting for search and rescue helicopters and other minor changes

DIN 2011DIN04-086: Overarching vehicle standardisation

DIN 2011DIN05-024: Use and development of smartphone applications

DIN 2011DIN05-025: Defence unit identity number – policy and management

DIN 2011DIN05-028: Defence information infrastructure exemption policy for networks, standalone computers and applications

DIN 2011DIN05-029: Guidelines for the provision of information infrastructure by public/private partnerships and public finance initiatives

Continued on page 68.



NO. 836

JUST HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

TEN details have been changed on this photograph of soldiers from 7th Armoured Brigade taking part in an offshore sailing training week and regatta at Kiel, Germany.

Circle the differences in the left image and send the panel to **HOAY 836, Soldier, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire**

GU11 2DU by July 29.

A photocopy is acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers.

The results will be announced in the

September issue.

May's competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 was **Lt Col D R Munro, RG Scotland, Stirling**. Runners-up **Martha Tukagabeci, 3 RHA, Caen Barracks** and **Cpl Mika, RSME, Chatham** win a £25 gift voucher.



DIN 2011DIN05-030: 1710 Naval Air Squadron change of email addresses

DIN 2011DIN07-093: Exercise Medsail 2012

DIN 2011DIN07-096: Merger of Defence Food Services School into Defence Logistics School

DIN 2011DIN07-097: The SO1/SO2 engineering and logistics forward commanders pre-employment training course

DIN 2011DIN07-098: Authority for Army orienteering 2011-12

DIN 2011DIN07-099: Joining instructions for personnel attending the military training unit, HMS Heron

DIN 2011DIN07-100: MK concentration programme: 2011-2012

DIN 2011DIN07-101: UK Special Forces Group volunteers selection course dates

DIN 2011DIN07-103: Managing MoD civilian staff – relaunch

DIN 2011DIN07-105: Tri-Service university short course programme – academic year 2011/2012

DIN 2011DIN07-107: Calling notification for dental hygienist training

DIN 2011DIN07-108: Establishment of P Squadron – opportunities available to personnel

DIN 2011DIN07-109: Project management development programme

DIN 2011DIN07-110: Defence Centre of Training Support specialist training course schedule – September 2011 to March 2012

DIN 2011DIN08-008: JSP 891 – Charge for returned cheques

DIN 2011DIN08-009: Revision of JSP 507 – MoD guide to investment appraisal and evaluation

DIN 2011DIN09-005: The George Beeching Prize for Compassion

DIN 2011DIN09-006: Birthday Honours list

WEB WATCH

www.soldiermagazine.co.uk

REUNIONS

2011 – MoD civilian recipients

DIN 2011DIN10-028: Armed Forces parachuting competition – July 16-22

DIN 2011DIN10-029: Army lawn tennis championships 2011



REUNIONS

43 Royal Pioneer Company, 1 CSB: Reunion in Neiheim, Germany from July 1-3. Come and have a beer and catch up on old times. For further details contact Alan Liddle on 0208 773 1834 or 07800 543491.

Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters: Pre-Crich supper will take place at Foresters House, Chilwell on July 2. Admission by ticket only, priced £12.50. For details contact 0115 9465415.

The Mercian Regiment: Pilgrimage to the war memorial at Crich on July 3. Service starts at 1500. Details from Maj M Green, RHQ Mercian, Foresters House, Chetwynd Bks, Chilwell, Nottingham NG9 5HA.

Royal Green Jackets Regimental Association: The annual veterans day will take place at ATFC(W), Sir John Moore Barracks, Winchester on July 9. Attendance open to all past and present riflemen. Ladies encouraged to attend. Contact Maj (Retd) Roy Stanger, TSU Worthy Down on 01962 887916 or email Trg_Sp_Unit_spsvcs-gso@dclpa-wd.mod.uk

Operation Lecturer-Cambodia: Reunion at Commando Forces Sergeants' Mess, RM Barracks, Stone House, Plymouth on July 22. Any serving or former RM/RN/Army or attached civilian personnel who served in Cambodia 1991/1992 as part of the UNAMIC/UNTAC mission and is interested in meeting, email Tony Jacka for details anthony.jacka219@mod.uk

Army Environmental Health Past and Present Club: Reunion for all members and civilian staff on July 30 at the WOs' & Sgts' Mess at Copthorne Barracks, Shrewsbury. Spouses/partners are welcome to attend. Cost is £20

per person. Max attendance is 150 and all applications will be processed on a first come, first served basis. Email Capt John Wood ehreunion2001@hotmail.co.uk

144 Para Medical Sqn/144 Field Ambulance/23 Para Field Ambulance OCA:

Past and present reunion dinner will be held at the TA Centre, Hornsey, London N8 7QT on August 13. Further information from WO2 Bill Hounsome on 07762 490583/01732 743807 or email bill_hounsome@hotmail.com

45 Field Support Squadron, RE: Reunion on September 3 at the Chiltern Hotel, Luton. Tickets are £36 each and cover a meal, disco and memento. Room rates at the hotel are £49 inclusive of breakfast. Former members of the squadron should contact Gordon Brady, 51 Whippiley Ring, Luton, Beds LU1 5QS or phone 07929 167451.

Army Musicians Association: All ex-Army musicians are invited to rally at Kneller Hall for a march past with serving CAMUS personnel and a reunion lunch on September 16. Details from Maj John Carter on 0208 744 8652 or email corpssec@hq.dcamus.mod.uk



ROADSHOWS

The Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. The event starts with a drinks reception, is followed by a presentation and questions and culminates with a finger buffet. There will be a range of military personnel on hand to answer any of your questions. Call 01276 417000 or email apt.mod@btinternet.com with the event you are interested in attending.

July: 5, Ipswich; 6, Luton; 7, Northampton; 19, Burnley; 20, Warrington; 21, Stockport; 25, Hull; 26, York; 28, Newcastle. **September:** Guildford, Crawley, Rochester (tbc).



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Picture: Graeme Main

Finding employment is tough job in Germany

My organisation's mission is to beat the drum for Army families. These people need to have a consistent and authoritative voice representing them – even more so in these uncertain times.

In the last two months we have held conferences in both Northern Ireland and Germany. These events gave people the chance to air their concerns, not only to the local chain of command but also the Adjutant General, Lt Gen Mark Manns.

Whenever I visit personnel in Germany I am struck by the sense of village community that I find there. Perhaps because they are so far away from home they are always willing to lend a hand with a neighbour. There are certainly lots of volunteers for community groups such as Brownies and Scouts.

Welfare support – especially during deployment – is generally very good and made much easier by the close geographic location of the families who have accompanied their soldier overseas.

Of course, those living back in the UK understandably feel at a disadvantage but that is one of the realities of choosing to live in your own home and something that the AFF and Army are still grappling with.

Housing is the most reported issue in the UK and although waiting lists are a concern in some areas of British Forces Germany (BFG), the standard and size of properties are good and the repairs and maintenance services thrive due to German efficiency.

The personal attention offered to occupants by estate managers and the local housing offices cannot be underestimated either, and I urge the Defence Infrastructure Organisation to think very carefully before

tampering with the set-up in this country and potentially breaking it in the name of saving money.

That said, our organisation would not need to hold a conference if life in BFG was not without its challenges.

The Strategic Defence and Security Review included the announcement that troops (and therefore their families) would withdraw from Germany by 2020 and that half would be gone by 2015.

This was a surprise to many – even senior members of the chain of command. It has thrown a number of planned projects into disarray and we are still waiting for the announcement on where people will be based in as little as three years' time.

The uncertainty has caused many to question not only their future in Germany but whether to accompany their Service person on assignment in the first place.

Overseas employment for spouses and older dependants is a significant issue: more than 70 per cent who answered our recent survey on life in BFG expressed dissatisfaction at the availability of jobs in their garrison. Some 60 per cent of respondents were unhappy with the number of opportunities that meet their skills, experience and training.

While families do not expect the Army to create jobs for them, it can be frustrating when spouses see people being employed at great expense from the UK into roles they are both qualified and keen to fill.

The employment of more spouses and less civil servants overseas would save money –

a compelling argument in today's economy.

I am often reminded that the Living Overseas Allowance is not designed to compensate for the loss of a spouse's salary. But given that so many partners give up a career when moving abroad, the MoD must surely soon acknowledge this sacrifice.

If the department is to continue to support accompanied service and wants good people to voluntarily take overseas postings then, like our colleagues in the Foreign Office, Forces spouses should receive a compensatory allowance.

A perpetual headache – the inability of personnel and their families to vote

from foreign climes – is another problem that could be solved rather easily. Registration is not the issue and postal voting is not the solution. There needs to be a comprehensive review of the system for the thousands living worldwide.

The exclusion of overseas Army families from the census earlier this year was also concerning, not least because it means that details of thousands will be lost to history.

In the autumn we will be visiting Edinburgh, Catterick and Aldershot to hear from dependants in those areas.

For their part, the Army and MoD do take notice of the issues being brought to the table. But following a month where it was revealed that there are more volunteers for redundancy than needed, they would do well to achieve solutions or provide explanations as soon as possible in order to preserve the morale of those left. ■

'The employment of more spouses and less civil servants overseas would save money'

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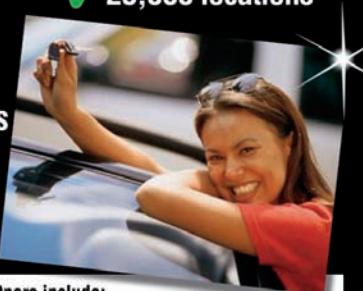
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Dark art: Generator Entertainment is set to start production on *The Federation*, a controversial spy movie, later this year

Silver screen secrets

Director Sven Hughes highlights the murky world of special ops in debut feature

Interview: Joe Clapson

A FORMER special forces Reservist is set to lift the lid on a hidden war between British and Russian security operatives in his first feature film.

Sven Hughes, who has also worked on "black ops" as a high-risk freelancer and adviser to governments, has penned *The Federation* – a contemporary spy thriller that shines a light on a modern-day Cold War.

In order to create a credible movie about the murky world in which people vanish without trace and slayings are framed as suicides, Hughes has drafted in consultants from both sides of the story – Kremlin bosses and SAS personnel.

"We are getting enormous support from the military and political community," said the 37-year-old filmmaker.

"I think we have got something different and quite special as it's not your average *Bond* or *Bourne* film."

One of the movie's experts is Alexander Nekrasov, a former adviser to Boris Yeltsin, who said: "It is a fascinating depiction of the covert

game of chess that is currently being played between East and West.

"The film is written by someone who knows what they are talking about. I think *The Federation* will cause quite a sensation when it is released."

Hughes taps in to his experiences in uniform and private security to create a realistic plot, without giving away any sensitive secrets.

"We are treading a very careful line with the subject matter and recognise that we must talk responsibly on the special forces issue," he said.

"At the moment the Russians are angry that they are always portrayed as the 'baddies' and the film industry is not taking it seriously."

"In real life it's not as black and white as 'good and bad'."

The controversial movie is being developed by the London and Belfast-based production company Generator Entertainment, which is calling in big names to ensure a screen hit.

With the production experience of Mark Huffam (*Saving Private Ryan*), Simon Bosanquet (*Ripley's Game*) and Aidan Elliot (*Killing Bono*) on board, there are high hopes for cinema success.

Charlie Cox (*Stardust*), Luke Goss (*Hellboy 2*, *Blade 2*) and Julian Sands (*A Room With a View*, *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*) are lining up to

take centre stage in the high-octane drama.

The Federation has also enlisted one of the SAS's most celebrated former members – Soldier I – to act as a "dark arts" consultant.

On meeting Hughes, the veteran of several secret missions said: "He's not messing around.

"He has a good story and a clear vision of what he wants to achieve with this project – it's going to be a white-knuckle ride."

With an insistence on giving a real account of life in the shadows, Hughes has vivid ambitions for his film.

However, he is adamant that UK security comes before a good story.

"I have given service to Queen and country and am not about to shaft the nation with my film – this is not a kiss-and-tell memoir," he said.

The Territorial Army veteran added that he hopes to raise the profile of the British Services in mainstream cinema.

"I want to make films that celebrate our soldiers and pay homage to the heroes," he said.

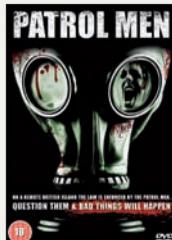
"I'm not seeing enough British war films being made and if I can play one small part in rectifying that I will be happy." ■

● ***The Federation* is due out in 2012**

From low-budget acting to rampaging surveillance robots, *Soldier* checks out the latest DVD releases...

Patrol Men out now

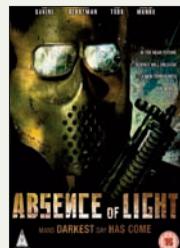
THIS horror film has to rank as the worst motion picture I have ever had the displeasure of watching. It is obvious that this had a budget smaller than your typical party political broadcast. Added to that, the actors have less charisma and on-screen presence than a dull-as-dishwater politician. The acting is wooden and the script about people terrorised by "patrol men" on a remote island would appear to have been written by a ten-year-old. The only saving grace for the film is that it is so bad it actually has comedic value and engenders a morbid need to see the ending. One to avoid unless you are a gas mask enthusiast.



Capt Marc Claxton, R Signals

Absence of Light out now

OH my life, what a dud. This waste of a movie has a spectacularly loose plot about the re-election campaign of a corrupt politician. The acting is reminiscent of a first rehearsal for a school play and the special effects are from the 1980s. The complete lack of style – if that is the right word – made me cringe more than the belt-fed clichés. This D-movie disaster hopefully sped up the inevitability of the cast and crew finding a new career in the fast food industry. Zero audio-visual continuity and only two cameras employed throughout. I would not use this DVD to protect my desk from tea stains.



Capt Neil Johnson, AAC

5150 Elm's Way out now

A GROTTY student called Yannick falls off his bike while doing a recce of the area that he has just moved to and wrecks himself by sliding along the tarmac. He knocks on the door of a house to seek help and the owner just happens to be the local religious psychopath and provincial chess champion who has vowed to save the world. Yannick ends up taking a beating and is locked away in the guest room for "processing". He is then regularly beaten up by the loony's gorgeous daughter. This subtitled French film is not as bad as I thought it was going to be. Predictable and low-budget but actually fairly watchable.



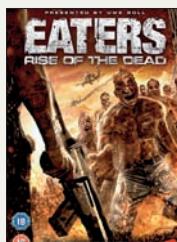
Pte Gary Parker, RLC



Reserve Judgement: Former TA soldier Sven Hughes (middle) is working with Kremlin chiefs and SAS operatives to ensure *The Federation* is accurate

Eaters: Rise of the Dead out now

THE birth rate is at zero per cent and a virus is turning the human race into zombies. In order to find a cure and produce life, a doctor needs fresh specimens on which to conduct tests and uses two hunters to collect the dead bodies. The film's low budget is reflected in the poor acting and special effects. The whole thing looks washed out and at times this can make the subtitles difficult to read. This foreign-language effort lacks action and the dialogue is very slow. The one redeeming feature of this horror flick is the interaction between the hunters as they trawl the area for corpses and virus-free humans.



Sgt Wallace Stephenson, Int Corps

Eyeborgs out now

SURVEILLANCE cameras to aid law-enforcement turn into killing machines provoking suspicion and paranoia in this action sci-fi thriller. The eponymous eyeborgs are deployed by the US Government in the wake of a terrorist attack to monitor all communications in the name of national security. But after a series of murders, a cop serving with the Department of Homeland Security fears that bad guys have infiltrated the robots and are planning to assassinate the president. If you're a sci-fi fan then this film may be worth a look, but if not the stilted performances and ridiculous plot make this one to miss.



Tracey Phillips, Army wife

Win... Resurrected

WITH *Resurrected*, director **Paul Greengrass** (*The Bourne Ultimatum* and *Green Zone*) brings us a powerful and provocative feature. Pte Deakin, played by **David Thewlis**, goes missing presumed dead during the Falklands conflict and a memorial service is held in his honour. Weeks later he is found alive suffering from exhaustion and amnesia. *Soldier* has teamed up with Second Sight Films to offer five readers a chance to win a copy of the DVD, released on July 25. To have a chance of winning tell us who plays the lead role. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or send an email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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Shady stuff: Publishers Activision attempt yet another gaming spin-off in *Transformers: Dark of the Moon*, which is out now

Robots in decline

Console convert fails to deliver in disappointing transition from movie franchise

Review: Richard Long

WITH major movie titles taking months – even years – to script, develop, cast, shoot and release, it has always been somewhat surprising that the inevitable gaming spin-off is nothing more than an afterthought.

This well-trodden path has been littered with hordes of notable disasters and one cannot help but think that with a little more time and care the transition from big screen to console could ultimately prove successful.

However, publishers Activision have stood firmly by this conversion strategy and their latest effort coincides with the release of one of the summer's biggest blockbusters.

Transformers: Dark of the Moon is the third instalment in an increasingly-irksome movie franchise, so it is fair to say that hopes for the customary gaming tie-in were not particularly high among those who have seen it all before.

This sense of underwhelming has done little to dampen the spirits of Activision's executive vice president David Oxford, who has predictably pedalled the company line with an air of positivity.

"The *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* game lets fans experience the gripping battles and original prologue story that precedes the film," he said.

"The team at High Moon Studios has created an amazing narrative that unfolds through an epic single-player campaign and allows fans to play as their favourite characters in head-to-head multiplayer action."

This is all well and good, but this title fails to break the mould of its flawed forebears.

But instead of being completely negative there are a few highlights to mention as a number of successful features from its predecessor, *War for Cybertron*, have been retained.

Players experience a mix of third-person shooter and vehicle combat and the game offers an easy link between the two.

Each character has its own unique blend of strengths and abilities and this is a welcome addition to the options available, as is the array of weaponry on offer.

However, these are only a glimmer of hope and they, along with wise words from Oxford, fail to gloss over the feeling of disappointment that stems from playing this game.

As someone old enough to remember the original *Transformers* cartoons, the robots' recent

resurgence was always going to have to be something special to win my affection.

Unfortunately, *Dark of the Moon* treats a similarly clumsy path to the series' 2007 and 2009 films.

Players engage in battle as both the Decepticons and Autobots in a plot that makes little sense other than to set the scene for the recently-released movie.

The chance to control different Transformers is appealing, but the action lacks variety and resorts to the repetitive formula of explore and shoot other robots, and then repeat.

The drawn-out levels mean there is little reason to stay in robot form as you progress through the story. This creates a somewhat strange gaming experience as you remain as a vehicle until faced with an enemy.

When this happens a quick transformation ensues to help mount an attack, which is followed by a prompt shift back to the character's previous guise and off you go.

This is pretty aimless fare and the lack of inspired and detailed design only adds to the boredom created.

In conclusion, this is a lacklustre title that offers nothing more than meets the eye. ■

From fantastic fun in the fast lane to puzzling panda punch-ups, we check out the best and the rest of the new releases...

Dirt 3 for all formats

Codemasters have created a racing title that petrolheads will love and the more casual gamer will learn to love. *Dirt 3* features cars from the past 50 years of rally, from the Mini Cooper to the Ford Focus RS WRC, with buggies and trucks thrown in for good measure. The graphics are stunning and the gameplay is very smooth, while a laid back setting allows beginners to ease their way into the action. The multiplayer options are fantastic and locations such as Finland, America, Kenya and Monaco provide hours of fun. On the whole this is very impressive and it's hard to find any faults – as quite simply there are none.



Pte Robert Owens, 168 Pioneer Regt RLC

Duke Nukem Forever for all formats

JUST like *Star Wars* fans whose patience was "rewarded" with the Jar Jar Binks-inspired monstrosity that was *The Phantom Menace*, gamers who waited a full 15 years for the new *Duke Nukem* game have been served a similar car crash of a title. Putting aside the fact that the misogynistic, foul-mouthed Duke's toilet humour hasn't aged well, the game itself is a confused mess. Boring level design and long load times are coupled with repetitive gameplay that lacks any form of subtlety or finesse. You would be much better digging out an old copy of the original *Duke Nukem 3D* and reminiscing about the good old days.



Stephen Tyler, ex-Soldier

LA Noire for PS3 and Xbox 360

THIS latest instalment from Rockstar Games brings a whole new level to single-player entertainment. The action centres on a post-war LAPD detective who finds himself embroiled in Hollywood's golden era, which is quite fitting as the title takes a big-screen feel thanks to a plethora of cut scenes and flashbacks. This will keep users entertained for weeks as they search for clues, chase suspects and interrogate witnesses. The only negative is the driving, which can be over-responsive, and you'll find yourself crashing into a tram or fire hydrant as the bad guys get away. Overall, this is a great game that would be even better with a multiplayer option.



Neil Rodgers, civvy



Lunar lunacy: *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* follows the well-trodden path of movie-to-game disasters thanks to its lack of variety and repetitive formula

Green Lantern for all formats

IT is a cliche among the gaming community that film tie-ins are predictable, rushed attempts to extract more money from fans of a particular franchise. That is true of this *Green Lantern* release, but it's not a reason to write this mildly-entertaining action title off completely. Yes, the large-scale battles with wave after wave of manhunter robots has been done before, but the variety of unlockable weaponry provides a reason to fight through and the chance to unleash deadly combination moves is a welcome addition. Flying levels add further fun to a release that goes some way to breaking game-of-the-movie conventions.



Richard Long, Soldier

IL-2 Sturmovik: Cliffs of Dover for PC

AS a regular user of flight simulators, I felt somewhat let down by *IL-2 Sturmovik: Cliffs of Dover*. The game initially took some time to load and once I got started it became apparent this title requires the use of a top-of-the-range gaming machine, which is not clearly specified. As a result, the action was rather jittery and the missions were constantly stopping and starting, which is never good when you are flying an aircraft. On the positive side, the graphics are clear and detailed, while the machines handle very well. This game has undoubtedly potential, just make sure your hardware has the power to handle it.

Steven Jessup, ex-1 Gloskers



Kung Fu Panda 2 for all formats

SURELY a game that uses *Kinect* to allow you to inhabit the body of Kung-fu Panda Po to dish out beat-downs to a gang of crocodiles is a recipe for success? Sadly not for the second of this month's cinema-inspired turkeys. This broken beat 'em up's turn-based, prompt-driven system means that rather than kicking and punching as fast as your panda limbs allow you, gamers have to follow on-screen prompts to perform combinations. This tedious control device is further hampered by a delay between your physical movement being translated into attacks. Save your money by watching the infinitely better film.

Stephen Tyler, ex-Soldier





Band apart: *From Helmand to Horse Guards*, the new album from the Pipes and Drums of 1st Battalion, Scots Guards is on sale now

Heroes remembered

Scots Guards pay tribute to fallen comrades on new selection of stirring anthems

Interview: Richard Long

It is fair to say that 2011 has marked another busy period in the proud history of the Pipes and Drums of 1st Battalion, Scots Guards. The famed musicians had the honour of being included in The Queen's Birthday Parade last month and also performed to US president Barack Obama during his state visit to the UK at the start of the summer.

In between these commitments the band found time to release their new album *From Helmand to Horse Guards*, a selection of tracks dedicated to their colleagues who died while serving in southern Afghanistan.

"This is a culmination of my four years in charge," Pipe Major Brian Heriot told *Soldier* during a welcome break in his hectic schedule.

"We chose a lot of songs from our regimental parades. I think they are a good portrayal of us and what we do as a battalion."

"*From Helmand to Horse Guards* represents our journey to The Queen's Birthday Parade and is also a commemoration for the guys who lost their lives on our last tour."

"It is all encompassing and will appeal to a wide range of people, rather than just those associated with the Pipes and Drums."

"A lot of hard work went into producing the album. We were only in the studio for five days so we had to get everything right but I am really pleased with the outcome."

The pomp and circumstance of their ceremonial duties, along with the release of a new album, has not disguised the fact that the Scots Guards are soldiers first and foremost.

They deployed to Afghanistan in 2010 and were based in Lashkar Gah, where they carried out a ground-holding and mentoring role for the Afghan National Police and Army.

They are now preparing for performances at next month's Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo and will then look ahead to training for their next round of operational commitments.

But music is still a prominent part of their make-up and the key theme of this album is poignantly illustrated on the song *We Will Remember Them*, which features a performance from renowned folk singer Isla St Clair.

"She's such a great vocalist and it's an honour to have her on the record," P/M Heriot explained.

"Isla was with us on our American trip in 2009.

We would perform this song every evening right across the country and the crowds all loved it. We thought it would create a fitting tribute to our fallen comrades."

The album also boasts a contribution from another established folk star, Kate Rusby, on *Fare Thee Well* and showcases the surprising vocal talents of Sgt John Norwood, who takes the lead on two stirring arrangements.

All in all, this is an eclectic mix from one of the British Army's finest military bands and will certainly give other releases, such as the *Spirit of the Glen* and *The Journey*, a run for their money.

The record boasts a healthy selection of good, traditional tracks – of which *MSR*, *The Rose of Kelvingrove*, *Solo Piper* and *The Medley* are easily the standout offerings.

Unfortunately, the arrangements of *Wild Mountain Thyme* and *Caledonia* fail to hit the right note and are a bit rough around the edges, meaning they do not sit comfortably with the remaining compositions on this otherwise excellent album.

If you're a budding collector then this is certainly one for your archive and, given the chance, should be listened to through a quality set of headphones to maximise the enjoyment. ■

From stunning sibling songwriting to watered-down angst rock, we check out what's hot and what's not...

You and I by The Pierces

THE fourth album from sisters, singers and songwriters **Allison** and **Catherine Pierce** has been described as "heart-stopping and extraordinary" with "honeyed harmonies and huge pop hooks". I agree wholeheartedly. *You and I* is a well-produced mix of dark, almost sinister, tunes but when you overlay the extraordinarily harmonised voices of the girls, it turns each song into a stunning and surprisingly enjoyable experience. **The Pierces** are fresh and exciting and have been declared as one of pop's hottest hopes for 2011. If this offering is anything to go by I can see why. This record is definitely worth adding to your collection.

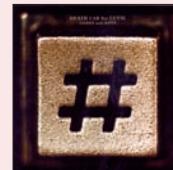
Rodge Tapply, ex-RE



Codes and Keys by Death Cab for Cutie

THIS new release from **Death Cab for Cutie** has largely slipped under the radar and on hearing this it's easy to see why. An accomplished album it may be, but it fails to inspire emotion and plods along with little thought for those who may be listening. *Codes and Keys* fits nicely into its own little niche, but think **My Bloody Valentine** and you have Death Cab for Cutie, albeit a cheaper version. I have no doubt that hardcore supporters will disagree, however, on this evidence I would be surprised if they gain many more fans. A summer support slot for the **Foo Fighters** offers the chance to win some new followers. Do they have the nous to do so? Only time will tell, but I won't be holding my breath.

WO2 Mo Morris, RLC



Suck It And See by Arctic Monkeys

THE UK's premier guitar band confirm their status as summer festival headliners with a new album that builds on the foundations of their breakthrough material. While the 2009 release *Humbug* drew some negative reactions for its laid back change of direction, *Suck It and See* provides the hard-edge sound that **Arctic Monkeys** fans have become accustomed to. *Reckless Serenade* and *The Hellcat Shalala* are lively and exciting rock anthems while *Don't Sit Down 'Cause I've Moved Your Chair* provides both a light-hearted title and a decent lead single. On the whole this is a definite move in the right direction that gives a knowing glance to those early glory days.

Richard Long, Soldier





Musical masters: The Pipes and Drums of 1st Battalion, Scots Guards have released their new album amidst a busy summer of ceremonial duties

Progressed by Take That

KINGS of pop **Take That** look to capitalise on their ever-expanding mass appeal with *Progressed*, a reissue of the 2010 full reunion album that comes with the added bonus of eight new tracks. One could be forgiven for thinking this new material was simply the leftovers from their earlier release, but these songs are far stronger than that and are worthy of their place in the mainstream. The surprising electro-pop sound heard on *Progress* continues on the impressive *Love Love*, while the boys return to familiar ballad territory on *Don't Say Goodbye* and *Wonderful World*. Ardent fans will lap this up, but casual listeners would be advised to stick with the original and move on.



Joe Clapson, Soldier

Back and Forth by Foo Fighters

FROM **Dave Grohl's** cassette demos that became **Foo Fighters'** self-titled 1995 debut to their new number one album *Wasting Light*, this DVD sheds light on the chronological history of the band. This is not just another "rockumentary" but an intimate and comprehensive portrayal of the four-piece that gives an honest insight courtesy of interviews with past and present members. These discussions chart the rapid rise of the Foos, which culminated in two record-breaking shows at Wembley Stadium in 2008, where they played to more than 170,000 fans. If you ever wondered what makes a great rock band, or indeed what makes a great band rock, then this is for you.

Ray Kalaker, ex-RE

2 by Black Country Communion

THE supergroup that is **Black Country Communion** make a highly anticipated return with their second release and they certainly do not disappoint. 2 is jam-packed full of hard-hitting guitar riffs and soaring vocals. Ex-**Deep Purple** singer **Glen Hughes** hasn't mellowed with age, axeman extraordinaire **Joe Bonamassa** pushes the envelope in his own inimitable style while **Jason Bonham** is definitely his father's son on drums. 2 picks up where their self-titled debut left off, hard charging throughout and grabbing the listener by the proverbials, demanding that you take notice. If you're a rocker then you have to buy this album, you'll regret it forever if you don't.

WO2 Mo Morris, RLC





Model soldier: *Combat to Catwalk*, published by John Blake and available now for £16.99, charts Cpl Katrina Hodge's dual career

Kat's crown service

Autobiography throws a spotlight on soldier's bid to juggle parades and pageants

Interview: Sharon Kean

OVER-exposed Premier League footballers aside, most of those with a story worth telling wait until they are in the autumn of their lives before writing an autobiography.

But 24-year-old Cpl Katrina Hodge is not one to conform to stereotypes, having set out on a dual career that has seen her progress through the ranks of the Adjutant General's Corps and represent her country at the 2010 Miss World pageant in South Africa.

Accustomed to being in a minority, whether as a female in the military or beauty queen unafraid of getting her nails dirty, the NCO had little concern for what the critics might think when she was approached to pen *Combat to Catwalk*.

"They [John Blake Publishing] said I had an interesting story and wanted to turn it into a book to inspire young girls to do things, so I thought I'd have a go," Cpl Hodge told *Soldier*.

"For those maybe interested in joining the Forces it gives an insight into the selection and basic training process. But it's for anyone really because it shows that if you set your mind to

something, nothing is impossible."

The soldier, nicknamed Combat Barbie by tabloid newspapers, added: "People laughed at me when I said I'd sign up for the Army and again when I said I'd enter Miss England, but I really wanted to do both so I did."

Cpl Hodge's first-person account juxtaposes military life and modelling shoots, in one chapter discussing her tour of duty in Iraq and in the next her brushes with the national media, which included fielding press calls from an office broom cupboard.

A strong theme running throughout is the pride she clearly takes in being a serving soldier, demonstrated by the NCO's desire to use her moment in the spotlight to promote Forces charities and Service careers.

"I still enjoy my job in the Army but I also like the modelling side of things and I will keep doing them both for as long as I can," she said.

"I try to keep them separate but at the same time I don't see why the two worlds can't mix."

"There are guys in the British Army who are really proud to be boxers, so why can't I be really proud of what I do?"

Cpl Hodge's autobiographical tale also touches on her experiences of managing the

preconceptions that come with serving in a male-dominated environment.

It is a challenge she appears to have relished throughout her military career and during her time on the catwalk.

In a DVD submitted to the Miss England judges she filmed herself in combat attire demonstrating Army skills such as rifle drills and physical training exercises.

"I still feel like I have to prove myself because I'm back in uniform now after a year of unpaid leave and have to show that I'm not a dumb, ditzy girl for taking part in Miss England," she said.

"Everyone has opinions of celebrities but they've never met them. People have preconceptions of me because of what I've done but when they meet me they usually change their views."

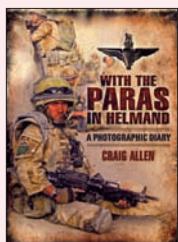
Cpl Hodge hopes that by revealing the person beneath the beauty queen crown and combat helmet to a wider audience, she will challenge stereotypes associated with the type of women that sign up for Service life.

And while *Combat to Catwalk* is no Pulitzer prize winner, it may do just that. The success of this junior author should not be judged on the best-sellers chart but on the number of young women inspired to join the ranks. ■

From paratroopers in Afghanistan to prodigals in Vietnam, a flick through this month's literary releases...

With the Paras in Helmand by C Allen

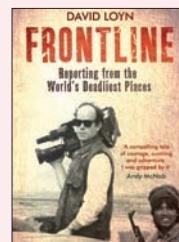
SHOOTING with his camera rather than his rifle, former Regular paratrooper **Craig Allen** returned to his regimental family to deploy to Helmand in the summer of 2008 and recorded 2 Para Battlegroup's tour in images. However, this is much more than a coffee table book of dramatic pictures. The author's factual and straight-talking diary of his time in theatre, brought to life by his photographs, creates an accessible account of the daily challenges faced by troops on operations. A percentage of each sale of the title is being donated to The Afghan Trust, which assists the wounded soldiers and families of The Parachute Regiment.



Maj Toby Hamnett, AGC

Frontline by David Loyn

AN ENJOYABLE read on the flip side of war reporting. The true tale of how a collection of maverick, courageous and almost-certainly mad freelance journalists joined forces to cover conflicts ranging from the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan to the second Gulf War. This book features a series of stories rich in *Fear and Loathing* in Las Vegas-like absurdity and outright danger. With cavalier attitude and sheer guts aplenty, I thoroughly enjoyed **David Loyn's** latest offering. *Frontline: Reporting from the World's Deadliest Places* is a fantastic book that is required reading for any journalist or media ops officer.



Lt Neil Dickie, 105 Regt RA (V)

Gulf War One by Hugh McManners

A FANTASTIC account of the conflict from the mouths of those who were there. In compiling this book, **McManners** interviewed an extensive range of personnel, both military and civilian, and with the exception of a short introduction at the start of each chapter it is these individuals who provide the narration. While a large number of the accounts are those of commanding officers and brigade and divisional commanders, there are troop commanders, regimental sergeant majors and junior NCOs featured. The logistics of the mission and post-operation defence cuts are also covered, providing an interesting parallel to today.



Capt Douglas Searle, RLC

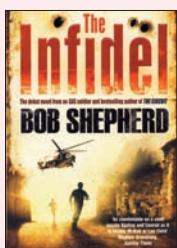


Combat Barbie: Cpl Katrina Hodge (AGC) has served her nation on two fronts – on operations with the British Army and as a beauty queen

Picture: Steve Dock

The Infidel by Bob Shepherd

THIS novel tells the story of two ex-SAS soldiers who cross a corrupt Afghan general while working as private security contractors. Forced to retreat to the hills, the pair become embroiled in tribal conflict, combating insurgents and over-eager



American forces. A former special forces soldier himself, the author is suitably qualified to tackle such a topic and *The Infidel* is strong on technical detail and tactics. However, it lacks any real depth despite love interests, human tragedy and conflicts of conscience being thrown into the boiling pot. A light and easy offering – one to add to your summer holiday reading list.

WO2 Ian Barracough, REME

Gubbins & SOE by P Wilkinson & J Astley

IF ever there was a book that analysed the complexities of organising resistance and irregular forces into effective fighting units, this is it. Authors **Peter Wilkinson** and **Joan Bright Astley** provide a fascinating insight into how the British

engaged the Nazis using the Special Operations Executive and how Maj Gen Sir Colin Gubbins drove that force against many political and military obstacles. The senior officer was a man of immense vision who learnt from his experiences fighting paramilitary units such as the IRA in the inter-war period. A must read for all those with an interest in supporting irregular forces.

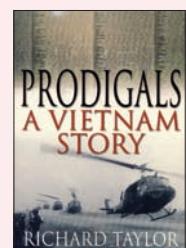
Capt Neil Higgins, AGC



Prodigals by Richard Taylor

THE author completed two tours of duty in Vietnam and in this very well-written book he places the reader in the midst of the action as he relives every bullet fired. While reading *Prodigals* I was drawn to a couple of parallels with the current conflict in Afghanistan – chiefly an enemy who knows the terrain and can blend in with the general population. **Taylor** began his first tour with no ribbons but left Vietnam with two rows and several badges. The US penchant for handing out honours reminded me of a friend serving in Helmand who commented that he was still six gongs shy of the Camp Bastion average.

Sgt Wallace Stephenson, Int Corps





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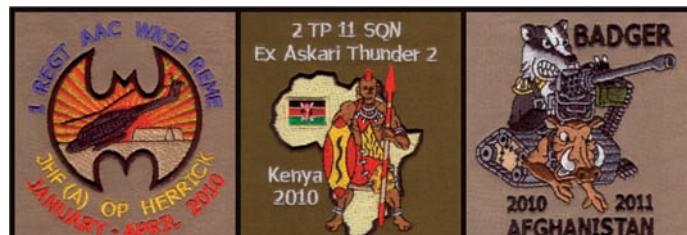
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SOLDIER SPORT

Picture: Graeme Main



CHOSEN MAN: FORMER RIFLEMAN
TARGETS HEAVYWEIGHT GLORY AFTER
JOINING BOXING'S PROFESSIONAL RANKS

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Warren's heavy hitter

Boxing prospect leaves Service life behind to sign professional deal with famed promoter

Report: Richard Long

Picture: Graeme Main

HAVING seen fierce front-line action during a seven-year Army career, heavyweight boxer John Loveday will be anything but daunted when he makes his professional debut later this month.

The 24-year-old fighter will take to the ring at Liverpool's Echo Arena on July 16 in the first bout of a three-year deal with promoter Frank Warren.

His elevation to the big time will see him compete on the same bill as world super-featherweight champion Ricky Burns in an event that will be beamed live to households across the country.

"It is a 10,000-capacity arena and the fight will be shown on Sky television and in America," the ex-Serviceman told *SoldierSport* in an exclusive interview at the Wednesbury Amateur Boxing Club in Birmingham.

"I have a lot of friends and family coming, along with lads I served with in the Army. To get such a big venue for my first fight is brilliant.

"My game plan is to out box him in the first round and show my speed and accuracy before taking him out in the second. The knockout is the most exciting part of being a heavyweight."

Loveday, whose ring name is The Chosen Man, is no stranger to the fight game. He started out at the Birmingham Irish Amateur Boxing Club and won a schoolboy Amateur Boxing Association title before competing at the Junior Olympics.

He signed a professional contract with promoter Barry Hearn in 2007 but deployed to Afghanistan before he could make his debut.

Now, with Service life behind him, Loveday is confident of making a name

for himself in the heavyweight ranks.

"It is very rare for a boxer without a professional fight to sign with Frank Warren," he explained.

"It is a massive opportunity for me. The domestic heavyweight division is so open and I feel my speed, style and work rate is better than most fighters out there.

"I am 17 stone but I carry it well and can still produce some big shots. A lot of heavyweights are slow, cumbersome and predictable.

"My Army training has always been there, it allows me to carry the weight and remain fit.

"After a year I should be knocking on the door for a British title – that is how quickly I see things developing. My biggest dream as an amateur

was to turn professional and win a Lonsdale belt. Anything after that is a real bonus."

Loveday joined the Army in 2003 and served with 2nd Battalion, The Rifles. He completed two tours of Kosovo, along with deployments to Iraq and Helmand province, and left the Service having achieved the rank of lance corporal.

"I was in the Green Zone during my tour of Afghanistan," he said. "I was in some intense firefights and got caught in an IED blast. A colleague lost both legs and an arm while I had intracranial bleeding and blast injuries to my ear.

"It was a challenging tour but I enjoyed it. I faced every situation an Infantry soldier could expect.

"Afghanistan was the turning point; it was quite hair-raising at times. I had a little girl and had achieved everything

I could within the Army. I wanted to see what it was like on the other side."

Loveday has now started his own business offering security and health and safety advice but trains regularly each week to ensure he is fit for action.

He added: "At the end of three years I want to have a British title and be in contention for a European or Commonwealth crown.

"The domestic heavyweight division is pretty poor at the moment and opportunities are there for the taking."

Warren, a patron of military charity Tickets for Troops, has high hopes

for the newest addition to his ranks and believes the Army connection will stand Loveday in good stead.

"It is a good story and highlights what the guys are going through in Afghanistan," he told *SoldierSport*.

"He has been talking quite openly about his experiences and I think it is excellent for people to hear first-hand accounts about the superb work our troops do.

"He is really up for it and he has got a great chance as a heavyweight."

"I signed Matt Skelton, a fighter with no amateur experience, and he went on to win a British title in no time. He then challenged for world honours.

"John comes from a strong background and has really got the bit between his teeth. Within three years I hope he will be boxing for British and Commonwealth championships."

"He is not a 17-year-old about to turn pro. He has a good pedigree. We are investing a lot of time and money in him and we hope he can go far." ■

'My Army training has always been there, it allows me to carry the weight and remain fit'

John 'Chosen Man' Loveday in numbers

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AMATEUR BOUTS BY LOVEDAY, WHO ENJOYED A FINE RECORD OF EIGHT WINS ALONG WITH THREE VICTORIES FOR ENGLAND

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THE DATE IN JULY WHEN THE FORMER SOLDIER MAKES HIS PROFESSIONAL BOXING DEBUT AT THE ECHO ARENA IN LIVERPOOL

10

THE OP HERRICK TOUR OF THE 24-YEAR-OLD FIGHTER, WHO ALSO DEPLOYED TO BOTH IRAQ AND KOSOVO WITH 2 RIFLES





Full steam ahead: Lt Heather Stanning (32 Regt, Royal Artillery, right) has excelled on the water in recent years and is targeting a place at the 2012 Games

Stanning's Olympic dream

Interview: Richard Long

WITH the London Olympics and Paralympics looming brightly on the horizon, elite athletes across the country are in full preparation for what will undoubtedly be the showpiece event of their careers.

For Army personnel with aspirations of competing at the 2012 Games this is no different.

Over the next few months *SoldierSport* will be profiling some of the Service's leading contenders to chart their progress ahead of the most eagerly-anticipated event in the country.

Our initial spotlight falls on Army rowing sensation Lt Heather Stanning (32 Regt, RA).

The officer has made giant strides in her sport over the past 12 months and is now reaping the benefit of full-time training with the British squad.

Competing alongside civilian Helen

Glover in the women's pair, the 26-year-old produced a breakthrough performance at the 2010 World Championships, where the duo won an unexpected silver medal.

"Since coming back from that competition in November I have had a full winter of training, which has been fantastic," a delighted Stanning explained.

"I am still rowing in the pair with Helen Glover. We took part in our first World Cup series event in Munich in May, which we won and we are now looking ahead to the next round in Lucerne.

"Last year we were the fifth pair in the country, now we are top. Team GB has kept us together, rather than going to the eights, and it has been going really well.

"We won the British trials in April and have continued on our steep learning curve.

"We are very hopeful for the Games. We still have to qualify as a boat and we are looking to do that at the World Championships later this year.

"But that does not mean we will be there as athletes.

"We want to make sure the pair and eight both qualify and next year we can concentrate on the Olympics and booking our place.

"I am trying not to get too carried away. You have to plan ahead to a certain extent but right now our biggest aim is making sure the boat qualifies.

"If the Olympics were held next month I would say I was in the right place to go, but I have to keep working

If the Olympics were next month I would say I was in the right place to go, but I have to keep working hard'



hard. However, I am in a good position to be there."

While Stanning is refusing to look too far ahead on a personal level, she believes the Games coming to the UK will have huge benefits for the country.

"I'm really excited and it will be a fantastic occasion," she explained.

"Lots of people who are not normally interested in sport will suddenly find themselves getting involved, even at grass roots level and in schools.

"It is especially exciting for the children. They will be part of

history and it will give them an idea about competing and taking part in something, rather than just going all-out for the win."

Despite being in the middle of an energy-sapping training programme, Stanning has not forgotten her proud Service background and has praised the assistance she has received while pursuing her sporting dream.

She said: "The Army has been fantastic. My regiment has helped me train full time. I'm still on their books and I could not have asked for better

support from them.

"My next posting is not until August 2012 and I will see what happens then. I would definitely consider coming back to the Army and building a proper Service career."

The prestigious Olympic Rowing Regatta will be held on the world-class waters at Eton Dorney from July 28 to August 4, 2012.

Stanning hopes to be among a field of more than 500 athletes who will compete in 14 different medal events during the week-long competition. ■

OAR-SOME ACHIEVEMENTS

2007: Stanning wins gold with Olivia Whitlam in the women's pair at the 2007 World Under-23 Championships, having joined Team GB's Start Programme the previous year.

2008: Competes at the Women's Henley Remenham Challenge Cup and becomes a winner in the eight.

2009: Finishes seventh at the European Championships in the eight and dominates the Inter-Services competition, winning the women's open single skulls, fours and open eights.

2010: Joins the World Cup series with partner Helen Glover, finishing ninth in Bled and fifth in Munich. The duo travel to New Zealand for the World Championships and produce a breakthrough performance to win an unexpected silver medal.

2011: Stanning and Glover triumph at the Team GB senior trials and take gold in the season's opening World Cup fixture in Munich. The pair will compete again in Lucerne this month before rowing at the World Championships in Slovenia later this year.



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Mans' magnetic mission

Interview: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

POLAR expeditions have traditionally been characterised by gruelling treks in unforgiving temperatures that push the boundaries of human endurance.

But with climate change having a definite impact on these spectacular regions, the way in which explorers tackle journeys through such inhospitable lands has also changed.

This month marks the launch of a new polar adventure as a crew of six ultra athletes attempt to become the first people to row to the magnetic North Pole.

Included among the ranks of this vastly experienced team is Capt David Mans (PWRR), an Army rower who triumphed in a field of almost 50 international contenders to secure the final place in the boat.

"I really didn't think I would get it," the Serviceman told *SoldierSport* during an interview on the eve of departure.

"I was up against a strong field, including rowers from the USA. So to be told I had won was fantastic news.

"This journey has never been done before, it is a world first, and to be part of it is amazing.

"I've always thought about doing an ocean row but with

postings to Northern Ireland, Cyprus and Afghanistan I have never had the opportunity until now."

Mans was in action as part of the Combined Services team at the Henley Royal Regatta as this issue went to press, but with his commitments now complete he can concentrate fully on the expedition.

He said: "Rowing for the Army has given me a solid base for this adventure. I'm in a good position but being at sea for a long period of time is going to be quite interesting.

"We have got our flights home booked for September 5 but we hope to complete the route in four to six weeks.

"It all depends on the ice and conditions so we haven't really set any targets, our aim is to just get there."

The crew hope to start the 450-mile challenge – which has been named The Old Pulteney Row To The Pole – at the end of this month. They will work on rotational basis with three rowers

'This has never been done before, it is a world first, and to be part of it is amazing'

spending three hours on the oars before changing position.

The team will set off from Resolute Bay in northern Canada and expect to encounter a host of wildlife along the way, including the narwhal whale, polar bears and Arctic foxes.

"It will be 24-hour daylight and it can go from being very warm to very cold," the officer explained.

"In terms of the ice it will be quite open but there may be a few difficulties.

"For whatever reason the climate is changing, this expedition will highlight what is happening and this is the type of thing you can do now."

The Army rower will form part of a strong crew that also includes leading adventurer Jock Wishart, who was a member of the first team to walk unsupported to the geometric North Pole, and Mark Delstanche, an experienced yachtsman who has climbed Mount Everest.

Mans will be raising money for the Force Select Foundation by competing in the challenge. To sponsor him visit www.justgiving.com/DaveMans

For more information on The Old Pulteney Row To The Pole and to chart the crew's progress on the water log on to www.rowtothepole.com ■



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I should be grateful for all creditors who have not returned the proof of debt enclosed with my report to all known creditors dated 22 March 2011, to do so by 31 July 2011, to the following address:- 43/45 Butts Green Road, Hornchurch, Essex, RM11 2JX.

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Picture: Cpl Andy Reddy, RLC

SERVICE swimmers took to the water off the coast of Gibraltar as part of their preparations for this month's round-Jersey challenge. The training camp included pool and ocean swims and was aimed at building speed and endurance ahead of the gruelling 41-mile race, which is raising money for the Forces charity Holidays for Heroes. A seven-man Army team will compete against athletes from the Jersey Long Distance Swimming Club in the event, with injured personnel from the Battle Back programme also taking part. The aquatics squad, which includes water polo players and swimmers, trained under the watchful eye of national-level coaches, who were on-hand to give expert advice ahead of a busy month. As well as competing in the Channel Islands, the swimmers will go head-to-head with their Forces rivals at the Inter-Services championships in Aldershot from July 12. The Royal Navy have already secured the early bragging rights by triumphing in the open water competition at Lake Bala in North Wales. Fine efforts from Spr Dave Allcock (35 Engr Regt), Capt Ian Coles (QDG) and Maj Hamish McCarthy (42 Engr Regt) ensured the Service finished in second place. North Wales was also the setting for the Army championships, where Allcock celebrated a double in the men's five- and three-kilometre events. Lt Alexandra Hardy (39 Engr Regt) was victorious in the women's five kilometre, while Cdt Sophie Kenny (Welbeck Cadets) won the three-kilometre contest. Sgt Fergusson (19 CCS Bn) and Maj Sian Edwards (RADC) won the respective one-kilometre races and the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst team were crowned inter-unit champions.



Halliday bows out

Report: Richard Long

Picture: Cpl Paul Morrison, RLC

PREMIER League official WO1 Andy Halliday (RAPTC) has been presented with one of the highest accolades in Service football to mark the end of his 26-year military career.

The 45-year-old was presented with The Dobson Trophy at an Army referees' dinner in Aldershot just days after running the line in the clash between Newcastle United and West Bromwich Albion at St James' Park.

On accepting his award, Halliday paid tribute to the support he received from the Army Football Association as he progressed through the game's professional ranks.

He said: "Aspiring referees with the Army FA have a very good profile because of their background, discipline and training, which stands them in good stead.

"It is looked upon as a positive because you have the tools to deal with pressure and decision making.

"There's no question I'll miss the camaraderie of being in the Army. That's very special.

"In many ways though you get the same kind of thing as a linesman – the banter when meeting up for games is similar and you bounce off one another.

"There's also that level of trust

you have to have in your comrades – whether it be on the field of play in football or in the military field of operational deployments or exercises."

Halliday, who has a new career as a tutor at Craven College in Skipton, perfected his skills in the lower tiers of the Scottish Highland League, the Welsh top flight and the West Yorkshire pyramid system before progressing to the upper echelons of the sport.

He joined the Premier League list in 2005 and officiated in 30 matches in the 2010/11 season, including Manchester United's title-winning 1-1 draw against Blackburn Rovers.

As well as operating within the professional game he has been on the Army Football Referees Executive Committee for 12 years.

In 2006 he was awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, which was followed by the Meritorious Service Medal in 2010.

Despite retiring from the military, Halliday has vowed to continue his work with Service football.

"There's always a transition to life beyond the Army that soldiers who leave have to deal with," he added.

"But being involved in football is great because you're still part of a special team every week and you make lots of friends by meeting so many new people along the way." ■



Wave riders: Sailors from 7th Parachute Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery are plotting a voyage to New York on-board the Challenger yacht HMSTV *Endeavour*

Gunners on target for Atlantic crossing

PERSONNEL from 7th Parachute Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery have swapped the searing temperatures of Afghanistan for the cold waters of the Atlantic.

Having recently completed a six-month tour of Helmand province, the gunners have set sail on a daunting ocean crossing to raise money for Help for Heroes and the Royal Artillery Charitable Fund.

A crew of 14 soldiers, ranging from keen sailors to novices, signed up for the challenge, which is being led by an experienced civilian skipper on-board HMSTV *Endeavour*.

They left the Isle of Wight on June 19

and hope to arrive in New York at the end of the 3,200-nautical mile voyage later this month.

Expedition leader Capt John O'Keeffe said: "Crossing the Atlantic is still one of the hardest challenges available and something we are not taking lightly."

"Many of the crew have never sailed before and, despite starting in June, we are expecting to face rough conditions which will test the leadership and skills of the experienced sailors and resolve of the novices."

"However, I am confident that the rigorous training we have had will ensure our success."

"A huge force driving us to succeed at such an arduous challenge is raising as much money as we can for two charities that are doing excellent work to support the military."

"Sailing the Atlantic has always been a personal ambition of mine and I'm thrilled by the enthusiasm of all my crew, especially considering that half have never sailed before and we have all recently returned from operations."

HMSTV *Endeavour* is a Challenger 67 yacht used by the military for large offshore-sailing expeditions.

To find out more about the ocean crossing and to make a donation visit www.exerciseatlanticchallenge.com

Hamilton's Royal recognition

A FOUNDING member of the Toe in the Water sailing programme has been awarded an MBE for his work with the military charity.

WO2 Lloyd Hamilton (RE) received the prestigious accolade in the Queen's Birthday Honours last month (page 20) and said the decoration came as a total surprise.

He added: "I was absolutely shocked when my commanding officer phoned me to tell me the news. I just never expected it."

Toe in the Water was established in 2008 and is a tri-Service initiative that uses competitive sailing as a way of inspiring injured personnel to realise their potential.

They work closely with the clinical teams at Headley Court to identify individuals who would benefit from the scheme.

The charity enters eight competitions a year during the racing season and their next challenge

starts on July 5, when they take to the water as part of Plymouth Race Week.

"The Servicemen and women join us for a few days beforehand to get to know one another and learn more about the yacht and their role," Hamilton explained.

"They are then straight into the competition. It gives them an opportunity to test themselves and helps them get their motivation back when they see what they can achieve."

"Sailing remains one of the few sports where injured soldiers can compete against their contemporaries on a level playing field."

"We work as a team, there are no passengers and everyone has a job to do. We are simply helping wounded personnel realise what they are capable of."

For more information and to donate to the cause visit www.toeinthewater.org



Reds' winning volley

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

ARMY volleyball players enjoyed a successful showing at the Crown Services Tournament, with the women's team making the competition final for the first time.

The Reds tasted victory against the Royal Air Force, Fire Service and Prison Service during their winning run in Aberdeen, before slipping to a 2-0 defeat against the Police in the event's showpiece fixture.

Coach Sgt Nicola Mead (AGC (SPS)) was delighted with her team's performance, which included an emphatic win against the current Inter-Services champions.

"Our aim for the competition was to beat the RAF," she told *SoldierSport*. "They were our opponents in the first match and we absolutely nailed them, winning 2-0 on sets.

"We fought very hard against the Police and the second set was a very close encounter.

"But they were able to up their game and call upon the experience of their GB players.

"It was still an amazing result for six devoted ladies and we are now going to train together every couple of months to make sure this progress continues.

"The Police team is ageing and the RAF do not have the players coming through anymore.

"We are a young squad and if we can keep everyone together we will have a real chance of progressing."

The Army could only field a squad

of six players, which included Sgt Ali Sabiston (R Signals, pictured right), and the lack of numbers meant each member had to take to the court for a full match throughout the tournament.

Player/manager Capt Karen Tait (AGC (RMP)) echoed the comments of the coach and said victory over the RAF was the springboard for a fantastic weekend in Scotland.

She added: "It had been 11 years since we managed to beat their team. They didn't have the heart of the Army side and we went on to enjoy a convincing win.

"The other sides could see there was an atmosphere developing within what was a new and talented squad.

"This was the first time we had made it to the final in the 35-year history of the Crown Services.

"Unfortunately the Police showed their experience by exploiting our weaknesses and targeting our injured players in what was a tough match.

"We put up a great fight in the final but we just fell short and they proved to be worthy champions for the fifth consecutive year.

"But overall it was a fantastic effort from our players and we should be very proud of finishing as runners-up."

The Reds also took second place in a hard-fought mixed team competition, while the men secured fourth position in their event.

The Army volleyball team is looking for new players to join its ranks. Anyone interested in taking part should contact Sgt Mead via email on AldershotGar-AGPDO-Sys-Sgt@mod.uk ■



SPORT SHORTS



■ BRITISH soldiers learned about the tranquil pleasures of fly-fishing during a special day of tuition and mentoring at the Avon Springs trout lakes in Wiltshire.

The event was organised by Fishing for Forces and coach Sgt John Wright (R Signals) highlighted the benefits on offer.

He said: "I always come back from a day's fishing feeling refreshed and chilled out. There are now so many pressures on soldiers so this is the perfect sport."

For more information on the charity visit www.fishingforforces.org

■ CYCLIST LCpl Andrew James (MPGS) is hoping to boost the coffers of Help for Heroes by completing a 3,300-mile charity ride from Europe's northern tip to its southern-most point.

The 28-year-old started his challenge in Tromso, Norway on May 15 and was due to reach the finish line in Gibraltar as this issue went to press.

More than £1,300 has already been pledged and James plans to divide the money between the military charity and the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Donations can still be made by visiting www.justgiving.com/Andrew-James2

■ ENDURANCE athlete Sgt Simon Lash (1 LSR) has raised more than £600 for St Dunstan's by running a half-marathon while blindfolded.

The 34-year-old completed the 13-mile race in Guttersloh and had to rely on instructions from colleague WO2 Lee McAnespie to guide him round the route.



■ ARMY sailing sensation Lt Emma Clarke (RAMC) has continued her success on the water by lifting the Zhik SB3 World Championship title.

The officer was part of Geoff Carveth's four-man team that triumphed in the event, which featured a challenging series of qualifying and finals races off the coast of Torquay.

Clarke had been earmarked for a place on the women's match-racing team at the 2012 London Olympics but narrowly missed the cut.

final word



We asked 20th Armoured Brigade soldiers training at the Land Intelligence Fusion Centre how the facility was helping them to prepare for Op Herrick 15

INTERVIEWS: SHARON KEAN
PICTURES: STEVE DOCK



SSgt Michael Hirst (QRH)

We've been briefed on the current picture in Afghanistan and we're processing that and rebriefing it, putting principles into practice. I didn't realise how quiet it was in Lashkar Gah – there's been a few indirect-fire attacks but that's quite rare for the area. I also didn't appreciate how heavily marshalled it is by the Afghan National Police. That's obviously why it's so calm there.



Capt Mathew Paterson (QRH)

We are focusing on the specific areas that we are going to in Afghanistan at an early date and are getting a feel for it before we deploy. An interim municipal council has been elected in Lashkar Gah and the security situation has got a lot better. We are still four to five months off actually deploying, so to have the opportunity to learn the key themes, problems and issues is hugely valuable.



2nd Lt Yvette Stephens (Int Corps)

I've learnt about the dynamics of working with the Afghan government and the security situation in the district centre compared with outlying areas. This is just the start. We will now get weekly updates with real-time information coming out of theatre about what's been happening on the ground and how the population is interacting with our forces and the enemy.



Rfn Jordy Barber (5 Rifles)

We were given a lot of information on the pattern of life and routine in Afghanistan, so when we're out there walking around we'll know what to expect. The extent of my knowledge previously was that Lashkar Gah was a city with a couple of surrounding villages, but I've found out about areas that aren't interacting with us and what systems we have in place to work with the Afghan security forces.



Sgt Richie Cunningham (RE)

We've been looking at the ground in detail, how vehicles can move around in the area of operations and how it's going to affect troops on foot to make sure we don't send them into places where they'll get stuck. I've also been looking at infrastructure so that when we enter new areas we can make sure there is room to house people and that they have facilities there.



Cpl Chris Jenkins (REME)

We've been briefed on the nature of the people, how the government works or how it doesn't and our goals, to try and help the Afghan people in Lashkar Gah. My knowledge on the area has gone from near enough zero and what you read in the papers at home to quite in-depth. It has stood me in good stead. I'll be passing that on to the people who need it – those going on patrols.



Cpl Paul Penfold (1 PWRR)

It's about understanding the human terrain in Afghanistan – what the people are like – and it helps big time. I didn't know that you need to speak to landowners living in Lashkar Gah if farmers in the villages seem unhappy. You can't just go in and start doing stuff – you need permission first. It's good for hearts and minds too, so it's helpful to know this in advance.



Cpl Paul Smith (1 Yorks)

Everything I've learnt is brand new to me because it's not my usual job. It's good to get some prior knowledge via word of mouth. We've been briefed from previous reports about the dynamics of how the insurgents work and how Afghans live within their communities. It's not everyday life for us because the way they are and everything they do is completely different. It's another culture.

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