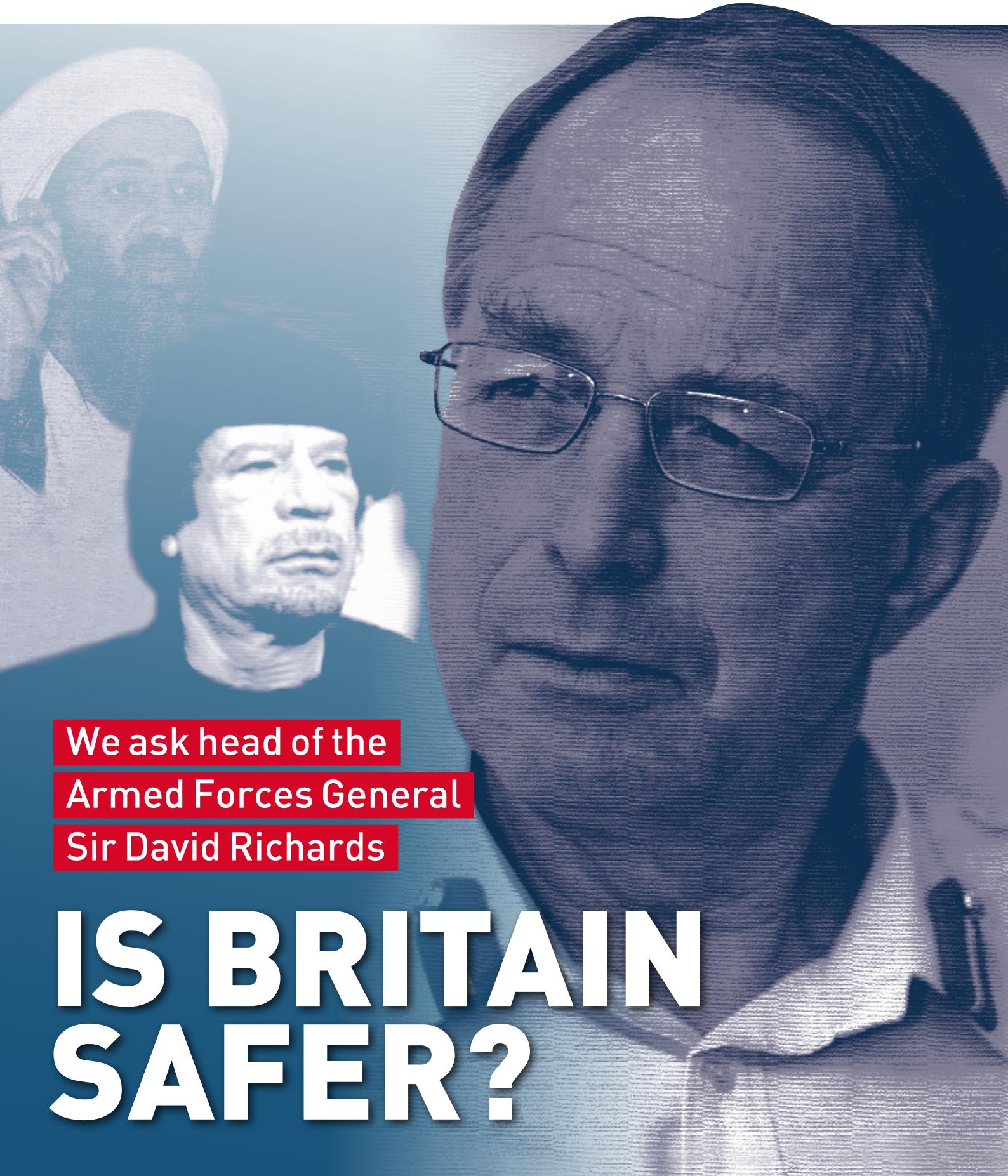


DIGGING IN: ROYAL MARINES KEEP THE PEACE IN HELMAND

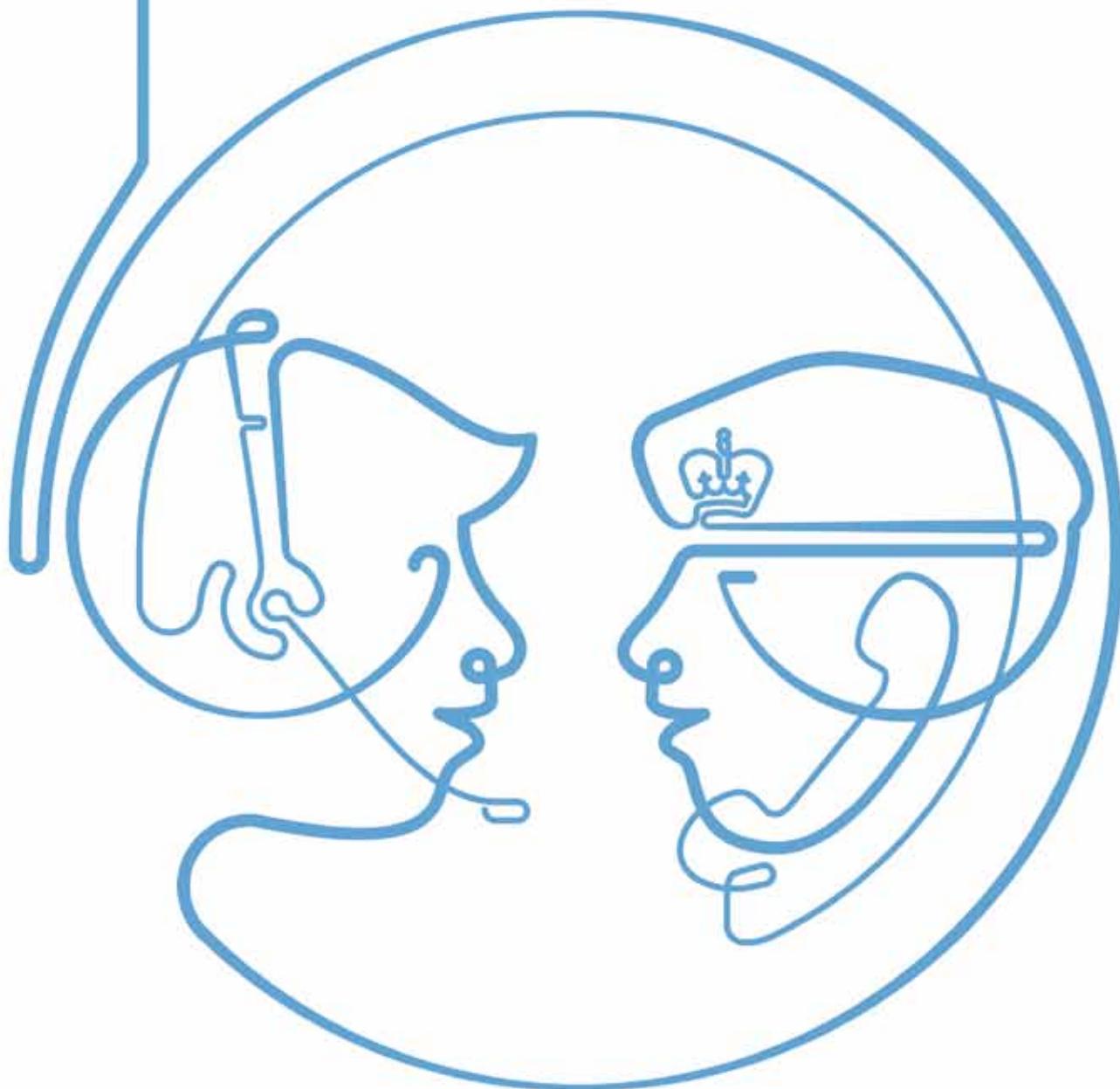
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We ask head of the
Armed Forces General
Sir David Richards

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EDITOR'S NOTE

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DANNY CHAPMAN

Last month I was suggesting things seemed a bit quieter than normal. How things change! It's all going on now and not just at Wimbledon and Glastonbury.

I write this the day before Armed Forces Day (hoping the traditional Glasto and Wimbledon weather brightens up for the forces day of celebration), we're expecting the recommendations of the Defence Reform Unit to be announced next week, Obama has just announced his plans for drawing down significant numbers of US troops from Afghanistan, there is no let up in Libya, and it seems the summer fighting season in Afghanistan is beginning again. Sadly we have more operational deaths on the page opposite than we have had in several months.

I hope that you have all been keeping abreast of the latest news and developments on the MOD's online pages. While here in the magazine this

month I think we have done a pretty good job of bringing together the stories and views of a whole range of folk across Defence.

We have the Major that organised 16 Air Assault Brigade's homecoming parade, a Warrant Officer whose medals tell the tale of a lively career, an MOD science officer (you'll know him when you see his picture) working in Helmand, and the Head of the Armed Forces who spoke to us about all the key issues.

And just as we go to print we're practically up to a full team again. Ian's back from a hectic two-week trip to Afghanistan with three articles in this issue from his visit, including an optimistic report about the situation on the ground from 45 Commando. And Tristan is back from a six-week secondment to No 10.

Maybe this means I can go and watch some tennis now.

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IN MEMORIAM

DEATHS ON OPERATIONS – 20 MAY 2011 TO 24 JUNE 2011



Colour Sergeant Kevin Charles Fortuna

Colour Sergeant Kevin Charles Fortuna, from A Company, 1st Battalion The Rifles, was killed by an improvised explosive device in Nahr-e Saraj (South) district on 23 May.



Marine Samuel Giles William Alexander MC

Marine Samuel Giles William Alexander, from Juliet Company, 42 Commando Royal Marines, was killed by an improvised explosive device in Nad 'Ali district on 27 May.



Lieutenant Oliver Richard Augustin

Lieutenant Oliver Richard Augustin, from Juliet Company, 42 Commando Royal Marines, was killed by an improvised explosive device in Nad 'Ali district on 27 May.



Corporal Michael John Pike

Corporal Michael John Pike, from The Highlanders, 4th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, was killed during a contact with a group of insurgents in the Pupalzay area, along Highway 601, on 3 June.



Lance Corporal Martin Joseph Gill

Lance Corporal Martin Joseph Gill, from Kilo Company, 42 Commando Royal Marines, was killed by small arms fire during a patrol in Nahr-e Saraj (South) district on 5 June.



Rifleman Martin Jon Lamb

Rifleman Martin Jon Lamb, from 1st Battalion The Rifles, was killed by an improvised explosive device while on patrol in the Haji Kareen area of Nahr-e Saraj (South) district, Helmand province, on 5 June.



Craftsman Andrew Found

Craftsman Andrew Found, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, was killed in an explosion while on an operation near Adinza'i in the Gereshk Valley area, in the northern Nahr-e Saraj district, on 16 June.



Corporal Lloyd Newell

Corporal Lloyd Newell, from The Parachute Regiment, was fatally wounded by small arms fire while on operations in Helmand province, Afghanistan, on 16 June.



Private Gareth Leslie William Bellingham

Private Gareth Leslie William Bellingham, from 3rd Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Staffords), was killed by small arms fire in the upper Gereshk Valley on 18 June.

DEFENCE REFORM THE KEY CHANGES

Lord Levene's report on Defence Reform was published on the day this edition went to print. Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox has agreed with all the report's 53 recommendations on how the MOD should be structured and managed and work will now begin on taking them forward.

THE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE REPORT ARE:

- create a new, smaller Defence Board chaired by the Defence Secretary to strengthen top level decision making
- clarify the responsibilities of senior leaders, including the Permanent Secretary and Chief of the Defence Staff, to strengthen individual accountability
- make Head Office smaller and more strategic, to advise on high level balance of investment, set strategic direction and provide a strong corporate framework
- focus the Service Chiefs on running their Services and empower them to perform their roles effectively, with greater freedom to manage, as part of a much clearer framework of financial accountability and control
- strengthen financial and performance management throughout the Department to ensure that future plans are affordable and that everyone owns their share of responsibility
- create a 4-star-led Joint Forces Command, to strengthen the focus on joint enablers and on joint warfare development
- create Defence Infrastructure and Defence Business Services organisations, to ensure enabling services are delivered efficiently, effectively and professionally (already announced and implemented)
- manage and use senior military and civilian personnel more effectively, with people staying in post for longer, and more transparent and joint career management

The full report is available on the Transforming Defence intranet portal and on the MOD's website. Next month *Defence Focus* will look in more detail at the implications of the report for the future of defence.

**REFLECTIONS**

A Merlin helicopter pilot looks on as HMS *Cumberland*'s Lynx helicopter transfers essential stores and ammunition to HMS *Westminster*

THE SECURITY AROUND NAD 'ALI (SOUTH) IS ENDURING, 45 COMMANDO AIM TO KEEP IT THAT WAY REPORTS IAN CARR

BUILDING ON THE PEACE



In the heat of the Nad 'Ali afternoon with doves and mynah birds circling around the ancient mud walls of an old British fortress, now FOB Shawqat, I find myself thinking of the old movie cliché, where the battle-soiled soldier turns to his commanding officer and says, "I don't like it sir, it's quiet, too damned quiet."

So far, as 45 Commando approach the half-way point of their tour, things have been relatively quiet, especially in comparison to the fire fights that have been prevalent until only a few months ago.

And Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver Lee *does* like it, and hopes it will stay like this till the end of the tour, and beyond. He thanks his predecessors for that. "We had an excellent handover from 1st Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment. I can't praise them enough. They, and the battle groups before them, have done all the heavy lifting for us. It is our job to build on their achievements and provide a good springboard for Herrick 15."

The Lieutenant Colonel though, is not complacent. He is well aware that this relative peace is still a fragile one. "It will be clearer at the end of this month, when the wheat has been gathered, what threat we face. We will calibrate our response to deal with it."

But for the time being the peace seems to be enduring, and more importantly it is one that is increasingly being maintained by the ever-improving Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and by the people of Nad 'Ali (S) putting their faith in nascent district government processes. "We are holding our breath to see what the fighting season may bring, but this is a real opportunity for us to prepare and dig in," said Lieutenant Colonel Lee. "We

Hands up for progress: Zulu Coy keep security on track (left)

Taking the plunge: Zulu Coy on patrol around Zaborabad (right and inset)

On target: Skills training with the Afghan National Security Forces (far right)

will be relentless in keeping the pressure up. Working alongside the ANSF our main effort is to prevent summer fighting this year. The longer the enemy is off the field the more difficult it is going to be for them to rejoin the game. I'm keen to point out that it's not just 45 Commando doing this. For example the Royal Gurkha Rifles are doing a fantastic job mentoring the police, and the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards are partnering the Afghan National Army [ANA].

To keep the pressure up the marines have mounted operations including Operation Tor Kanjak (Black Thorn) where, partnering Afghan soldiers from the 3rd Brigade of 215 Corps, 45 Commando swept through an insurgent stronghold near Zaborabad, seizing a bomb-making factory.

Maybe the unusually harsh winter and last year's poor harvest have meant that the insurgents have had to concentrate more effort on this year's crops, so delaying the onset of the traditional fighting season.

Yet many seasoned troops are coming back from patrols reporting a quieter time than they'd expected, even though they are patrolling across fields where the crops have already been harvested. "And when you do

come across insurgents they melt quickly away, and if you track them down they seem to come out of their hideouts looking dejected," said one marine.

With the security around Nad 'Ali seemingly enduring, after 30 years of summer fighting there is now an increasing reluctance among the local inhabitants to allow the insurgents to turn back the clock. Locals are demonstrating their willingness to embrace their own security forces, offering up intelligence about weapons caches and the whereabouts of insurgents.

According to Lieutenant Colonel Lee, the success that the ANA is having in tracking down IED caches now outweighs the number cleared by coalition forces. An example of this was the recent National Directorate of Security-led operation to the south of Shin Kalay which resulted in a big arms find including a PKM belt-fed automatic weapon, several IEDs and grenades, and various other items of the bomb-maker's trade.

All of which shows that the partnering and mentoring support that our Armed Forces have been investing in the ANSF is paying off. Major Nick Jepson, Lieutenant Colonel Lee's Chief of Staff, believes it is and sees the partnering role developing over the tour.

"Our role is very sophisticated now. We have done the 'clear', we are well advanced in the 'hold' and making significant progress in the 'build' phase. Heading up to 2014 we have to be clear about our priorities. The emphasis is changing from could I help to should I help."

Which means thinking about the most effective way to support the ANSF. Support is examined in the light of how it might move the ANSF closer to being able to look after themselves, and help them find their own solutions to their problems.



Take the simplest, but possibly most crucial of needs – water. "We want them to be independent, self sufficient," said Major Jepson, "our troops carry their own bottled water. If a corporal sees that his Afghan colleagues at a checkpoint don't have enough water, does he use his own supply chain to provide them with some? It could be that the Afghan resupply has temporarily failed and just needs a kick-start, or it could be a bigger problem that needs sorting. The same goes for fuel, or ammo, or winter wood for burning. The Afghans face the same threats as us, and the same problems, but their attitudes to them aren't the same. We have say 30 – 40 days' supply, whereas they tend to live almost hand to mouth. They need to be thinking about their logistics now."

But Major Jepson sees the progress that has burgeoned from the security now in place. The number of ISAF-held locations is reducing and the transfer of authority is beginning to happen.

"Schools are opening, markets are beginning to thrive, and the locals are showing that they are less fearful of intimidation," said Lieutenant Colonel Lee. "It is our intention to use every lever we have to the max. That means meeting the people, cajoling them, mentoring them, building their confidence in themselves. After all this is not our popularity contest to win, it is a popularity contest for the people and their government."

And the Government does seem to be winning. The Afghan people respect strength, but they also know the value of strength that endures. The District Governor has shown himself to be resilient and someone who actively gets out among the people. That bolsters the

“ This is not our popularity contest to win ”

communities' self-confidence. The line management that he has appointed to administer the various government activities seems effective enough, and is delivering results.

"Do they work exactly as we would like? No," comments Lieutenant Colonel Lee, "but do they work in a way that is good for Nad 'Ali? Yes. And the locals are hungry for it. It's good to see. The district plan is clearly driven by the District Governor. He is not ventriloquising the voice of someone else in the shadows.

"He delegates, he chairs meetings effectively and he knows how to use all the strings available to him."

But this optimism is balanced by cautious reality. Nad 'Ali (S) has made a lot of progress in a short time, but it is not quite out of the woods yet. "We shouldn't be in any doubt that all of this is reversible, which is why the coming month is so important. To have a no-fighting season would be a good indicator that all our efforts, ours and the Afghans, are bearing fruit," said Lieutenant Colonel Lee. "And for me, that and to be able to take all of my guys home unhurt, would be the measure of a successful tour." DF

Meeting of minds: Local Afghan elders with W Coy and Lieutenant Colonel Oliver Lee at a shura





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CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE STAFF GENERAL SIR DAVID RICHARDS ON LIBYA, AFGHANISTAN, BIN LADEN, AND DEFENCE REFORM. INTERVIEW BY LORRAINE MCBRIDE

DF: Bin Laden's death made headlines around the world. Do you feel that Britain is a safer place now?

DR: My own view is that we are likely to be safer as a result. He clearly had a following and the loss of that leadership is going to be positive to the Afghan Government and to us. Secondly, lots of people like him, not necessarily Al-Qaeda leaders, but people who act in his way and breed a culture of violence, will be much more aware that they do so at some personal risk. In other words, they know that we will catch up with them. I have huge respect for the American force which carried out the operation and for President Obama for ordering what was certainly a very risky operation.

DF: What impact do you think bin Laden's death has on the Afghan mission?

DR: It's positive. Although the links between the Afghan Taliban and Al-Qaeda are a matter of some conjecture, they certainly do exist. The knowledge that he has gone can't help but have a psychological impact on their resolve and confidence, which must be a good thing for us.

DF: After five years in Helmand, we've heard a lot about transition. Are you seeing this on the ground?

DR: Well, I'd love to take you to Helmand because you would undoubtedly see that, even just a year on, things have improved markedly. If you have been going there as I have since 2005, and compared the differences today with the situation that prevailed then, you would see a profound difference. I walked around Nad 'Ali recently without a flak jacket, feeling perfectly safe talking to locals in the bazaar. I even bought some fruit in a local shop. There is a real optimism that I have never experienced before.

DF: And what about the Afghan National Security Forces. Will they be ready?

DR: In terms of quantity and quality, the Afghan Army and Police are improving almost daily. The Army in particular is a great success story. I have no doubt that by the end of 2014, when transition is due to be complete, the Army will be capable of taking over from us in all but the institutional sense. For example, I suspect we will continue to be required help train and give logistics and administrative support – the sort of things that we do for lots of Armed Forces around the world. The Police are less well developed but even they are making big strides. I think a lingering effort will be required post-2014 in the case of the Police, but it is all within our broad plan.

DF: You recently called on NATO to intensify attacks in Libya to prevent Colonel Gaddafi clinging to power. How do you see coalition operations ending?

DR: First of all, let me make clear that I was talking about infrastructure linked to the military effort. Not random targets. That is against the rules of war and I would be the last person to suggest that would be right. But there are certain military infrastructure targets assisting Gaddafi to harm his people, such as military oil infrastructure – he needs fuel to drive his tanks. My own view is that it is no longer tenable for the regime to survive. Gaddafi can't rule his country for the next 20 years by hiding every night in hospitals, so the game is up. People know that and I suspect that Colonel Gaddafi knows that. More and more of his regime are breaking from within and all the omens are pointing in the right direction. I don't



anticipate it going on forever. It is now down to how the politicians decide to end it.

DF: Can the UK cope with operations in both Libya and Afghanistan?

DR: Yes. While things continue with the current levels of commitment, there is no impact on Afghanistan. The Prime Minister made it very clear from the outset that Afghanistan is Defence's main effort. If you look at the preponderance of military effort in Afghanistan, it is largely land forces with some vital support from the air and deploying naval officers and ratings, which I see as a growing trend. Essentially though, they are land forces fighting counter-insurgency operations. In the case of Libya, it is exactly the opposite priority, so we can manage it.

DF: You've been a soldier for 40 years. What is the biggest change that you have seen?

DR: First is the shift from the very predictable world of the Cold War in which the focus was very much on deterring aggression in the Warsaw Pact to the highly unpredictable, unstable world in which we live today. Secondly, the digital age has transformed the ways that wars are fought. Technology means you fight wars differently, maybe through the mind with information operations. At the press of a button, you can liberate, empower or inflame. All that needs to be thought through but it's actually variations on tactical themes.

DF: So is your job harder than your predecessors given the cuts and threat of asymmetrical warfare?

DR: I don't know. That is a very good question. Every CDS that I have spoken to said, "You know it's a very different job to any other," and instinctively I know that is true. A lot of them talk about the very political nature. I briefed many of them a few days ago and received letters from some of them, thanking me. Two said, "There has never been a tougher time to be CDS," so maybe that is right, but I doubt that any of them found it easy. There is a lot on. There is a second major conflict, a post-SDSR era, huge pressure on resources, and Defence Reform has a hell of a lot at stake so there is no doubt that this is a pressure-filled job, but I do enjoy it.

DF: What is the most pressing problem facing the Armed Forces right now?

DR: Making sure all of our Armed Forces are given the investment, focus, reward and incentive that they deserve. The British Armed Forces are unique in that they attract and retain high quality people. We owe those people and the country a huge amount. We've got to make sure we keep things in balance, risk versus reward, that they feel properly looked after, that their families feel looked after. I think we're on track to deliver it over the next five years but when you strip out all of the fighting that is our biggest concern.

DF: Are you confident that Britain can remain a major defence power as the cuts start to bite?

DR: Every nation with whom we work is coming under the same pressure to trim their military sails,

therefore we can be confident that we will remain in a relatively good place. But, the enemy has a vote and if our potential adversary is growing their 'Armed Forces', then one has to keep monitoring that balance and ask, What is happening in the world? Who is growing their military muscle, looking aggressive and likely to exploit an advantage asymmetrically? That is why we have a Defence Intelligence Staff and National Security Council to say, "We've cut too far or we can afford to cut a bit more because all our adversaries are becoming peaceniks so you don't need such a big Armed Forces." Never has the world looked so



Picture: Terry Seward

“ We've got to make sure our people feel looked after and that their families feel looked after ”

unstable as it does at the moment, therefore we are about right but we must always be prepared to see it grow again.

DF: How important is the military and civilian partnership within defence to you?

DR: This job has brought home increasingly how important the role of the civil servant is. I've seen some outstanding work done by civil servants especially in the operations and strategy areas. It's important that we look after civil servants because it's only when you've lost quality people that you realise how dependent you are on quality.

DF: With operations, redundancies and SDSR, times are tough; have you a message for readers?

DR: I want to say that what we do is uniquely good. We are able to bring a dramatic change to people's lives in countries like Afghanistan and Libya. Also, going back through recent history, look what we achieved in Kosovo, Bosnia, Sierra Leone and East Timor. People are critical of Iraq, but history is written over tens of years so let's just see how that pans out. Afghanistan is on the up and that is a result of the effective and appropriate use of armed force. Historically, the British Armed Forces have had their ups and downs in terms of resources. What is happening at the moment will get us in a good position long term. If we can pull this off, for those who stay the course to 2015 and beyond, their career opportunities and satisfaction will be every bit as good as mine. Looking back 40 years, I wouldn't change my career for anything. I've had my ups and downs, but I can look in the mirror and think, I've done a proper job and done it rather well with great people. **DF**



Way ahead: General Sir David Richards planning operations in Afghanistan



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WHERE ARE THE EXIT SIGNS OUT OF AFGHANISTAN?

AS THE US ANNOUNCES A DRAWDOWN OF TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN THE EDITOR OF LONDON'S EVENING STANDARD QUESTIONS HOW NEAR TO LEAVING WE REALLY ARE

By Geordie Greig,
Evening Standard
Editor

President Obama may be hitting reverse gear in Afghanistan, with his announcement that 10,000 US troops will leave this year. And David Cameron may also be pushing Service Chiefs to start withdrawing significant numbers of British troops. Yet, from the gates of Camp Bastion, this still looks like a massive deployment going at full tilt.

It is the sheer scale of the British Army's main base in Helmand province that staggers visitors: it is the size of Aldershot, with a 25-mile perimeter and an airport that would make it the third largest in the UK. Hundreds of aircraft are constantly taking off or landing and lines of khaki tents disappear into the horizon in an oven-hot 45 degrees in the shade.

Now is the start of the Taliban's summer offensive in Helmand, a deadly time that will surely add to the toll of 374 British troops killed and almost 1,700 wounded in action in Afghanistan.

When I visited Helmand last week with Dr Liam Fox, on a lightning trip to the front line, even the

Defence Secretary was obliged to don bomb-blast underpants, a shiny undergarment that dramatically reduces the risk of shrapnel wounds. It is clammy uncomfortable – but safety overrides sartorial comfort.

During Fox's three-day visit, at least one British soldier was killed, while a plane flew back to Birmingham half-full of wounded for medical treatment. Now, 10 years after this war started, the landing of an RAF "ambulance" is barely noticed as wounded heroes hobble out or are carried on stretchers – young men all of them, some barely needing to shave.

The Defence Secretary is confident and comfortable in his role as the Desert Fox in the scorching wilderness of Helmand, and bullish about the mission. The message that he heard loud and clear from the men on the ground is that they want support, not sympathy. Their mood is buoyant. He is the forces' friend – at a time when the political agenda is not "if" but "when" all troops should be pulled out.

That agenda is clearer than ever following President Obama's speech. The President has reaffirmed his commitment to a complete handover to Afghan forces by 2014. US public opinion is firmly in favour of withdrawing the 100,000 American troops now serving there. Meanwhile Fox's boss, David Cameron, wants a full withdrawal of Britain's combat troops – there are around 9,500 there altogether – before the next general election.

But Fox is keeping his counsel on what Britain will do next. He agrees with a time limit on British combat troops staying in the country but is messianic about the international task force's central purpose: keeping Britain safer by stopping Afghanistan ever being a base for Al-Qaeda again. And he emphasises that the US is not yet bringing home its senior men; it is diluting forces on the ground with more of the Afghan Army.

Certainly our forces have achieved some successes against the Taliban. Fox is proud too of the hope that the removal of the Taliban has given the Afghan people, as well as a legacy of schools and roads.

And Al-Qaeda is perceived to be on the ropes for now: it is eight weeks since Fox was awoken at 3.20am, and, as he jolted awake, was told the "good



End in sight: British troops in Afghanistan

news" that Osama bin Laden was dead.

But whether the decline in the Taliban's fortunes survives the US and British troop withdrawal is the \$118.6bn question. That is what the mission will cost the US this year, up from \$14.7bn in 2003. The additional cost of the war to British taxpayers was £4.7bn last financial year alone.

There have been persistent worries over the capabilities of the Afghan Army and Police, now being trained at breakneck pace by the allies. Those worries are not helped by incidents such as the murder of five British soldiers by a rogue Afghan policeman in Helmand in November 2009.

The risk is that with the departure of professional Western armies, the Taliban will creep back. The generals are making it clear to the politicians that any withdrawal must not be too precipitous.

Our aim going into Afghanistan was to protect Britain by denying Al-Qaeda a base and training camps. Ten years, countless dollars and hundreds of British lives will have been wasted if the Taliban return and the economy collapses on our exit – to say nothing of the wretched fate of Afghanistan's women and girls under a fundamentalist regime of

“The quiet heroism of the troops is evident at every turn”

medieval savagery.

Fox is palpably proud of the troops and scornful of such siren voices as that of former British ambassador in Kabul, Sherard Cowper-Coles, who suggest that the military boys might simply be enjoying their toys too much. The meritocratic right-winger clearly likes and is liked by the troops. At 3am on a Hercules heading into Camp Bastion, rather than grab some sleep, he talked through the night to the pilot. His talk turns from patriotic pride in the Armed Forces to vitriol aimed at anyone undermining their achievements.

And the quiet heroism of the troops is evident at every turn. But will that be enough to win a war that politicians and public are keen to end?

Bastion today is an extraordinary desert-city, and one which appears to be growing rather than shrinking. But when the time does come for us to leave, will it all be worn away by the sand just like the works of Ozymandias, once king of kings, leaving nothing to mark our war to change this country? In order to prevent that from happening, our final exit may have to be slower than some would wish.

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in the Evening Standard on 23 June 2011.

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VITAL NUMBERS

THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT THERE READY TO HELP YOU

RN Benevolent Trust: Grants, advice and income supplements for veterans. Call 0239 2690112 or email rnb@rnbt.org.uk.

RN Association: Comradeship for all serving and ex-service members of the RN, RM, QARNNS, WRNS, Reserves, RFA and RNXS. www.royal-naval-association.co.uk

Royal Marines Benevolent Fund: Relieves hardship among serving and former Marines and dependents. www.royalmarinescharities@charity.vfree.com or call 02392 547201.

ABF The Soldiers Charity: Support to soldiers and veterans. www.soldierscharity.org or call 0845 241 4820.

RAF Benevolent Fund: Help for RAF personnel past and present. www.rafbf.org or call 0800 1692942.

Civil Service Benevolent Fund: Helps anyone who has worked for the Civil Service and their dependents. Advice about support and financial help. www.csbf.org.uk or call 0800 056 2424.

Army Welfare Service: HQ AWS has relocated to Upavon. Confidential support for soldiers and families. www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/family/default.aspx or call (UK) 01980 615975.

RAF Association (RAFA): Comradeship and care for current and former RAF members. www.rafa.org.uk/welfare.asp.

HIVE: Tri-Service information covering issues like education and health. 167 offices. www.hive.mod.uk.

Royal British Legion: Charity providing financial, social and emotional support to vets and serving, and dependents. www.britishlegion.org.uk or call 08457 725 725.

SSAFA Forces Help: Supports serving personnel, veterans and the families of both. Practical and financial assistance and emotional support. www.ssafa.org.uk or call 0845 1300 975.

Harassment, bullying or discrimination: JSP 763, The MOD Harassment Complaints Procedures, is a guide for Services and civilians. Royal Navy: 023 9272 7331. Army: 94 391 Ext 7922 (01264 381 922). RAF: 95471 ext 7026. Civilians 0800 345 7772 (+441225 829572 from overseas) or email: PeopleServices@pppa.mod.uk.

Matters of conscience and whistleblowing under the Public Interest Disclosure Act. Call 0800 3457772. Select option four.

Confidential support line: Support for Forces personnel and families. Lines open 10.30 to 22.30 every day. UK, 0800 7314880. Germany, 0800 1827395. Cyprus, 800 91065. Falklands, 6111. Anywhere in world, (call-back) +44 (0)1980 630854.

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency: Pay, pensions and personnel support for the Services and veterans, including pensions, the JPA system, and Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre: 0800 0853600: 0800 1692277 or www.veterans-uk.info

MOD Occupational Welfare Service: Confidential advice on work-related and personal issues. Call 0800 345 7047

Service Complaints Commissioner: To make a complaint or seek advice, contact: SCC@armedforcescomplaints.independent.gov.uk



MARCHING TO THE BEAT OF THE DRUM

IN A RARE GLIMPSE BEHIND THE SCENES, LEIGH HAMILTON REPORTS ON THE HUGELY IMPORTANT TASK OF PLANNING AND EXECUTING A HOMECOMING PARADE



Standing on Colchester's High Street surrounded by local townsfolk, the anticipation of what is to come is palpable. I've jostled for one of the sought after prime positions amid thousands of people who want to welcome home their local lads and lasses from a six-month tour of Afghanistan. The sound of cheers and applause hits me like a gigantic wave and envelopes me with a huge sense of pride.

Hundreds of soldiers marching to the beat of a drum through a British town centre marks the final moment of often very tough and dangerous tours. It also marks the climax of months of hard work behind the scenes to pull together what can be a logistical nightmare.

Homecoming parades are seen by

Armed Forces personnel, as well as the local population, as the ultimate way to honour the troops who have returned home from theatre. And the importance of these parades is evident in the amount of work that is put into ensuring that everything runs according to plan on the day.

The preparations for a homecoming parade can monopolise a lot of hours of a lot of people's time.

I'm watching 16 Air Assault Brigade's (AABs) homecoming parade. They returned from Afghanistan to their base, Merville Barracks, in April, but the planning for this parade began before they had even set off for Helmand.

Station Staff Officer at the barracks, Major David Casey, was the mastermind behind today's scenes of pomp and pride.



Organising around 700 Service personnel to be in the same place at the same time is no mean feat. And to ensure the safety of all involved, including some 10,000 members of the general public, is partly why it's essential to start planning the event so far in advance.

Major Casey explains: "We agree the dates with the Brigade and post a general warning order out to the units – that's normally about six months prior to the event itself. Because of the forward planning, the date will be agreed even before they go away. As we get closer to the date, there's a band practice to make sure that everybody's happy. There are other things we need to deal with as well, such as liaising with the council, dealing with Special Branch and with the Police.

Part of dealing with the council involves road closures, obtaining barriers and even toilets.

"We deal with everything that is required to ensure that it all goes smoothly. We also organise getting the troops from their headquarters into the town and back again, a reception has to be planned and we have to make sure there is some sustenance for the troops as well."

As is the case with planning most events, the relationship between the Brigade and the local authorities is paramount to the success of the parade. Major Casey strives to ensure

control of the streets and make sure that everything's ready for the parade."

When the big day finally arrives, it's all systems go. For the Colchester parade which started at 11.00, troops are moved from the barracks into the town at 09.15 to get into position for 10.15. They start forming up at 10.30 for the parade at 11.00.

And it seems all the hard work and preparations have been worth it. "When you're on tour you don't realise the amount of support you've got back home," says Lance Bombadier Steven Strudwick, 7 Para Royal Horse Artillery 16 AAB. "It's not until you do things such as marching through the town that you realise that people are behind you and it makes your job easier when you're in the Army to know

“ You don’t realise how much support you’ve got back home ”

strong bonds exist between him, Colchester Council and the county police force.

"Our relationship with Essex Police and Colchester Borough Council is exceptional," he says. "We have a great rapport with them, they're very supportive to us. In the town, we have Superintendent Alison Newcombe who is the main chief of police there and she's 101 per cent in support of us. Our dealings with the council involve Amanda Chichi who is the detailed planner, she coordinates the road closures that are required and also the reception for the troops directly after the parade."

Today's parade is doubly important as the troops are not only being welcomed home from an operational tour, they are also exercising their freedom of the town which was awarded to them in 2009. A freedom parade differs from a homecoming parade in that it features musical bands and the personnel march with fixed bayonets.

The night before, the final preparations were in full swing. Major Casey explained:

"The Police Search Advisory Teams will start at 23.00, clearing the streets, making sure drains are clear and cars are moved, and the final search is at 06.00 the next day after which Essex Police take

that you've actually got that support."

Lance Corporal Joanna Brownlow from 16 Medical Regiment 16 AAB concurs: "It's very overwhelming. I keep saying that, but it really is very overwhelming. Sometimes you feel like you're about to come to tears, but there are smiles all around and everyone's praising you and you just have a great time walking up and having the public behind you."

Major Casey adds: "The guys are extremely, extremely proud of doing this, there is no doubt about that. We have this great affiliation with Colchester and the people of Colchester love the troops and the troops love Colchester."

"There's nothing better for them, with their bayonets fixed, marching heads up high with thousands of people cheering them on. There can't be anything better for them when they know that they are appreciated for everything that they've done."

After the marching and cheers have dissipated, the troops head back to their everyday lives safe in the knowledge that the pride of their local town is always with them, spurring them on.

And Major Casey knows that he has done his job just right and the months of planning have paid off. 

THE SCIENCE OF WAR

LASHKAR GAH'S BATTLEFIELD BOFFIN TALKS TO IAN CARR

We read all the time about the fantastic improvements in equipment developed for our Armed Forces.

We watch amazed at the incredible vehicles and weapons, some of which wouldn't look out of place in futuristic computer games, despatched to Afghanistan to keep our troops safe and

the enemy on the back foot.

Usually this techno-wizardry, rather banally described in military-speak as "Capability" or as "assets", is the scientific and engineering solution provided through Urgent Operational Requirements. That process depends on MOD and industry working closely together. But it also depends on the work

of the MOD'S Scientific Advisors (SCIADs).

The battlespace (it's not a battlefield anymore) is a hi-tech environment, and the kit you find there doesn't just get "magicked up" by industry. Understanding the problems, providing solutions and then testing and analysing new kit is where the SCIAD comes in. But the SCIAD must also be on hand to

Appliance of science: Matt Simpson delivering advice from Lashkar Gah

Picture: Captain Charlie Walsh



provide routine scientific advice.

Matt Simpson, a radiochemist from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), is one of those backroom boys. His backroom is at Main Operating Base Lashkar Gah, at what he calls, "the fighting end of the support provision."

However, Matt is not in theatre just because of his Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear background, or because of his master's degree in chemistry. "My specialism is not relevant," he says. "What matters is your grasp of the scientific process and the ability to apply that across a wide range of disciplines."

The selection process that Matt had to undergo to make sure he was right for the job was, in his words, rigorous.

"They test your technical ability and how good you are at following sound scientific thought processes with limited information while under stress."

Having proved that he was made of the right stuff, Matt was put through an intensive briefing programme so that he would know the sort of thing he would be dealing with in theatre. "I attended more than 80 technical briefings and visited 10 different sites across Dstl, Main Building, DE&S and industry."

The work is so critical that Matt has instant access to scientific experts across MOD, Dstl and industry to call on if he needs technical support. "I work 12-14 hour days, seven days a week, there's enough to keep me busy," says Matt.

The call on his services can come at any time, and can be a request that calls for a simple grasp of chemistry. "For example, I get asked about the chemical make-up of fertilisers, and how to test for certain chemicals and their concentrations. Certain fertilisers are banned as you can make explosives out of them. So if guys on patrol come across a store of fertiliser, they need to know if it's OK or suspicious."

Other work could involve him in lengthy detailed analysis and research. SCiADs played a crucial role in collating and assessing feedback from front line soldiers on the newly-introduced pelvic protection systems, or what the tabloids called "bomb-proof underpants".

The three-tiered system of clothing and armour consists of special protective underwear (Tier 1) and detachable armoured modules (Tiers 2 and 3, pictured right). The equipment is designed to prevent the ingress of foreign material in the event of an explosion with the aim of reducing the severity of injuries.



Pump it up: using the water filter means troops need to carry less weight

The scientists had to be sure that the system was effective, that it didn't hinder the troops using it, and that it didn't solve one problem only to create another. "Troops are already significantly burdened. It's my responsibility to look at the effect pelvic protection will have on thermal and physical burden," says Matt.

Part of the work involved the gathering of information from troops operating with Tier 1 pelvic protection by getting them to fill out carefully constructed questionnaires. "The quality of information was reasonably good. The soldiers knew we were trying to solve a problem that affected them directly, so they took it seriously."

As a professional scientist Matt knows to look beyond what may appear irrelevant to a layman and identify what could have a critical influence on how well the kit will work.

"Remember, the guys may have to wear this stuff for hours at a time. We need to balance any discomfort against the perceived value of the kit."

"We had an initial 75 per cent return

saying that the discomfort was worth the protection, which is pretty good."

Another issue examined by SCiADs relates to the burden involved in the carriage of water. Soldiers operating in stressful conditions where temperatures can reach 55 degrees clearly need to drink lots of water, and that means carrying it with them. Water is heavy so having to carry the extra weight only adds to the problem.

"Everyone knew it was an issue, but just how serious it was wasn't known. We broke the problem down and worked out that on a typical foot patrol a soldier could be required to carry up to six litres of water. That's a huge added burden."



To help ease this problem Matt has been working on the newly-introduced water filtration pump that many troops now pack in their day sacks. It means that when on patrol troops can use the pump to provide as much safe and palatable drinking water as they need.

The pump is a little bulky, but the widely held view among the guys is that it is a top piece of kit to have, and the water tastes OK.

Helping to improve life for the troops in this way is why Matt wants to do this work. "I know I can make a difference here, and the difference I make is obvious and often very immediate. That is very satisfying." **DF**

THE ARMY'S WARRIOR

A STAPLE FIGHTING VEHICLE FOR THE ARMY SINCE THE 1980S, WARRIOR, WITH NEW UPGRADES, REMAINS AT THE HEART OF OPERATIONS. PROFILE BY LEIGH HAMILTON



Picture: BAE Systems

As a stalwart of the Army's fleet of armoured vehicles, the Warrior Infantry Fighting Vehicle is still a force to be reckoned with.

The veteran platform entered service in 1988 and over the years has proved a resounding success for armoured infantry battlegroups in the Gulf War, Bosnia and Kosovo as well as in Iraq.

And since its first deployment to Afghanistan in 2007, Warrior has brought firepower, mobility and protection for its crew, enabling them to provide fire support, particularly for dismounted troops going into dangerous places.

The Warrior has the speed and performance to keep up with Challenger 2 Main Battle Tanks over the most difficult terrain, and the firepower and armour to support infantry in the assault.

The vehicle can be fitted with enhanced armour and the Battle-group Thermal Imager, which increases night-fighting capability.

The Warriors also carry a turret mounted 30 mm Rarden cannon that will defeat light armoured vehicles out to 1,500m. An eight times magnification image-intensifying night sight is fitted, and eight 94 mm Light Anti-Armour Weapon HEAT rockets can be stowed inside.

Warrior variants include artillery observation post vehicles, command post vehicles and a REME recovery and repair vehicle. All variants are equipped with a 7.62 mm chain gun. Both chain gun and Rarden cannon have an anti-helicopter capability.

As part of a recent Urgent Operational Requirement, 70 vehicles

have now been modified for the British Army by BAE Systems.

The tracked vehicles have been given around 30 new improvements, under the Warrior Theatre Entry Standard (Herrick) (TES (H)) programme worth around £40million.

The upgrades include; a flexible modular armour system that can be adapted to meet changing threats and reduce vehicle weight; and an enhanced seating design and cushioning to further improve mine protection and comfort.

Additional changes include an improved driver vision system with an increase from one to three periscopes providing a wider field of vision and better night vision capability; and an improved air conditioning system for troop comfort in hot and harsh environments. 



WARRIOR FACTS

- In-Service Date: 1988
- Crew: 3 plus dismounting section of 7
- Engine: 1 x 550 horsepower Rolls-Royce CV8 diesel engine
- Maximum road speed: 47 mph/75 kmph
- Armament: 1 x 30mm Rarden cannon, 1 x 7.62mm Hughes Helicopter Chain Gun, capability for 8 x 94mm Light Anti-Armour Weapon HEAT rockets

BULLETS BERGANS AND BOOKS

DEPLOYMENT NEED NOT DETER LEARNING. IAN CARR REPORTS

Education is often referred to as the three Rs; reading, writing and arithmetic (yes I know). But you can add at least one more R to that, Rifles. Or, the Royal Gurkha Rifles to be more specific.

Famed for their dedication and training, the legendary soldiers from Nepal believe that training is not just about weapons drills and endless phys, but bookwork too.

Yet for them, that does not necessarily mean being in the classroom. A Bergan as a makeshift desk or an improvised education centre in an ISO container will do just fine. And even when they are living in a patrol base in Nad 'Ali they're not tempted to use the excuse, "Sorry Miss, but a camel spider ate my homework."

According to Captain Charlie Walsh, media officer and Unit Education Officer (UEO) for 2nd Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, "The Gurkhas are very keen to develop their education, it's a delight in fact to be their education officer."

The Army's Educational and Training Services (part of the Adjutant General's Corps) provides access to educational advice and support across the world and that includes for those on operations.

Every day in Afghanistan, UEOs (or schoolies as the soldiers call them) travel to forward bases to ensure that even troops in the remotest of locations don't miss out on the opportunity to learn new skills.

The role of the UEO is to promote the educational development of the troops, and encourage a thirst for learning. This includes basic life skills courses in literacy and numeracy level 1 and 2, the equivalent of a GCSE, but sometimes with the chance to progress as far as degree level.

Captain Walsh, as UEO attached to the Gurkhas, finds there is a particular and constant demand for the provision of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses.

Like other UEOs, Captain Walsh's job is also to encourage troops to keep up with their progress

Picture: LA(Phot) Andy Laidlaw



through the necessary courses they need for promotion.

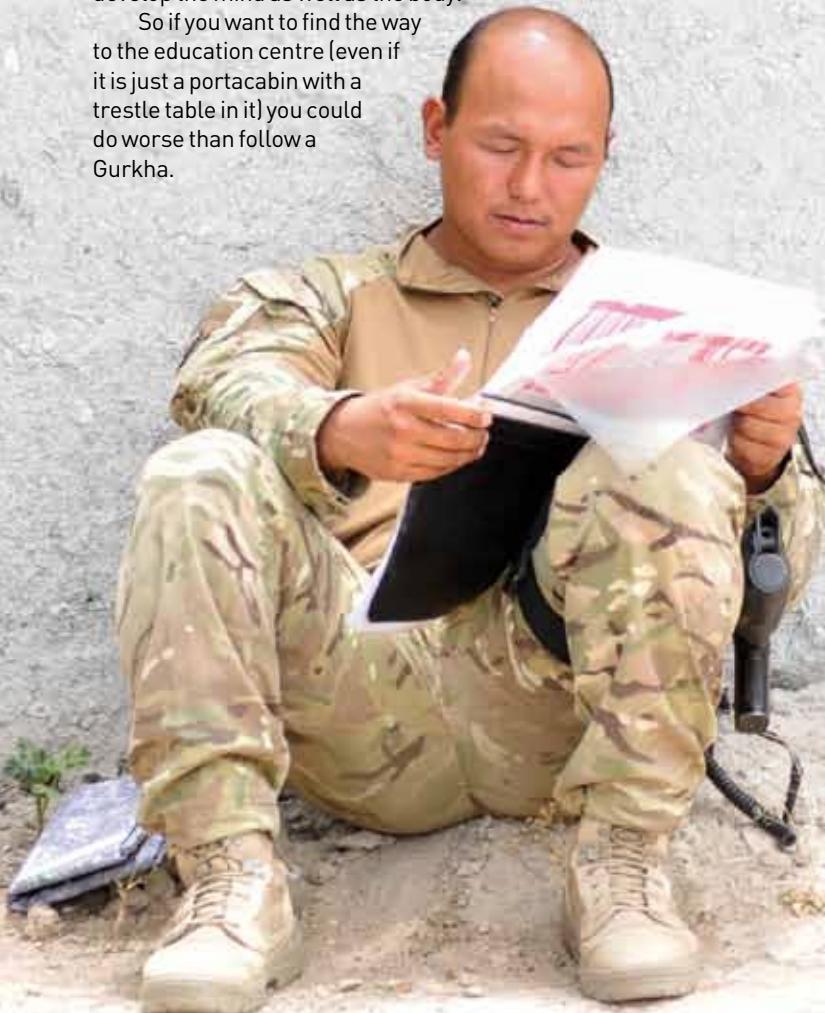
This might include training in skills such as Defence Instructional Techniques, where pupils are taught how to deliver a lesson, such as weapons drills. Soldiers learn about course content, how to engage with a class, and various learning styles.

"It could be teaching leadership and current affairs at warrant officer level, like the effects of the SDSR," said Captain Walsh. "We can give advice about what training to take, and point soldiers in the right direction to put in a bit of effort to find out for themselves what's on offer. We are there to explain about the different levels of qualification and what learning credits people are entitled to and how to make use of them."

It's probably fair to say that some UEOs have an easier time than others, even though, as Captain Walsh points out, "from day one of joining the Services we always say that's when you start training for your second career after you leave the Armed Forces. So it's important to explain why we should all keep developing, not just for promotion but for life too. But you do sometimes come across the attitude from some junior and senior NCOs, 'I've got this far, so why should I bother?'"

Of course, back in the UK, there are plenty of enjoyable ways to burn up spare time other than picking up a course book. How many of us would find ourselves seeking out the way to the learning centre if we didn't have to? On deployment though, soldiers can find themselves with not much to do between duties, and there's only so much time you can dedicate to "Op Massive" (bulking up), so many do see it as a chance to develop the mind as well as the body.

So if you want to find the way to the education centre (even if it is just a portacabin with a trestle table in it) you could do worse than follow a Gurkha.



"In fact, just now as I was walking over here," (here being a portacabin inside FOB Shawqat in Nad 'Ali (South), said Captain Walsh, who is based at Lashkar Gah, but is here with her media officer hat on to set up an interview with a POLAD (Policy Advisor) for *Defence Focus*, "I was stopped by one of my guys who was asking me 'When are you coming over to our patrol base to discuss our training?'"

Maybe not every unit education officer finds themselves pushing on such an open door, but they do like to walk their patch. "That's one of the good things about my dual role, as media officer I do get out and about and it gives me a chance to go and talk to my guys who are further afield," said Captain Walsh, "I was in Gereshk a few days ago hosting some media, and while I was there I was able to fit in a few basic skills lessons. I was there for four days and the Gurkhas sat 10 literacy exams. When they weren't patrolling they would work all the time doing practice papers getting ready to sit their exams."

There's only so much time you can dedicate to "Op Massive"

But what about Captain Walsh's own preparation for the future? Does she practise what she preaches?

"My dual role as UEO and media officer fits together really well. Not only does it give me the chance to get out and see my guys and sort out their training - I've been running a basic skills course every week, but in the two months I've been out here I've met so many different people, like POLADS, and found out what they do. As well as being interesting, and giving me a better sight of the big picture, it all helps with anecdotes for my lessons."

"And yes, I am developing my own learning too. I've always wanted to teach, but I didn't want to stay on after university to do my Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). I tried office work, that wasn't for me.

"I love sport and at university I was keen on going on expeditions, so the Army seemed an obvious career fit. Now as a UEO I've taken my PGCE and I've just started a post grad diploma, so after the Army I'd like to teach."

When that time comes, with her Army experience, and that Gurkha spirit, she will no doubt be a class act. DF

Learning environment: Captain Charlie Walsh (left) and Sergeant Basanta Rai snatch some spare time to catch up on their education

HIP HIP HOORAY, IT'S A



Picture: Mark Owens

Look away now: HRH Prince Charles charms nearly everyone at the Armed Forces Day national event in Edinburgh



Picture: Mark Owens

They're smoking: the world famous Red Arrows both opened and closed the show in Edinburgh



Picture: Tom Lovelock

ARMED FORCES DAY 2011

Mini driver: seven-year-old Callum Gregor enjoys the opening ceremony for the national Armed Forces Day event in Edinburgh with Captain Dougie McCutcheon of 2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland



Picture: Mark Owens



I'm a celebrity, get me in there: actor Ross Kemp shows his support for the troops of 32 Armoured Engineer Squadron during a recent trip to Afghanistan

Picture: Sergeant Alison Baskerville RLC



Boots on the ground: Troops on parade at the Armed Forces Day national event in Edinburgh

Picture: Mark Owens



Leith(ah) weapon: A naval crew from HMS Portland re-enact the famous Cannon Run in front of a 4,000-strong crowd at Leith docks

Picture: Mark Owens



MY MEDALS



WO 2 Shaun Fry joined the Life Guards in 1989, weeks after leaving school. Now with the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, he looks back at some of the nine medals he has been awarded during his career

Interview:
Lorraine McBride

MILITARY CROSS

Being awarded the Military Cross in 2006 for my actions as a forward air controller attached to 3 PARA in Afghanistan was totally unexpected.

When we came under heavy fire, there wasn't any way out so my artillery observation officer allowed the platoon to extract while two of us stayed behind and held position.

To get ourselves out, we bombed the Taliban position right in front of us. A lot of incidents happened during this tour.

I was on leave and half asleep when the Commanding Officer rang me to tell me that I had

been awarded the Military Cross - I was shocked.

At the Palace investiture, the Queen asked me exactly where the incidents happened and she was quite clued up.

Other soldiers always ask questions about it, which I think will never go away, which is cool.

All my medals are important but my Military Cross means the most to me. My medals reflect my career since I joined in 1989 until today, so if someone looked, they could easily map my career. I could never sell them.



GULF WAR

During Gulf War One in 1991, I

was a driver on Challenger 1 main battle tanks.

As a reserve squadron we cut around the desert on transporters, to help squadrons who got pinned down. That was my first tour and I didn't know what it was like to be under any form of contact.

At that age, I was itching to get involved. We spent a bit of time in the desert along the Kuwaiti border holding positions. I was just 17 and it was definitely something to look forward to. A highlight was when we were infested with rats. We popped them in boxes and walked 800 metres to where some other troops were sleeping and dropped them off. Around 3am, the rats would scurry about in the army bivvies or under people's

sleeping bags. Humour helps the days go past. If you're not in contact or fighting, life can get a bit boring so if we couldn't be bothered to write home, we'd play tricks on people.

NORTHERN IRELAND

When the "troubles" escalated, I volunteered for an emergency tour to Northern Ireland in 1992. I was part of the Life Guards platoon attached to the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

There was a lot of IRA action and we patrolled the borders along County Fermanagh and Omagh. We oversaw marches and patrolled in places like Enniskillen, which hadn't been patrolled since the bombing



in 1987. We didn't really see many people. Again, it was quite exciting having seen so much IRA coverage on the news. The locals were fine. The weirdest thing was patrolling somewhere that looked like my hometown, the only difference being that every now and then, we would see "IRA" painted all over the walls.

BOSNIA

As a trooper I served in the former Yugoslavia in 1995. I was young, ambitious and wanted to go "gong hunting" for medals, so I tried to get on any tour I could to get one.

I joined up to go around the world and if that meant deploying to Northern Ireland or Bosnia, then I'd do it.

We carried out village surveys in our recce role. We didn't see any atrocities just lots of burned out buildings.

In 1999, we returned and our tour consisted of "hearts and minds" foot patrols in berets, which was all about showing a presence.

We dropped wheat and clothes off to villagers. The mundane patrols were a bit dull, so by the end I was counting the days to come home. At that point, there was no "two can" rule so we enjoyed a few beers in the evening and it wasn't a major issue but that has all stopped now.

IRAQ

In 2004, I won't forget going to Al Amara as a forward air controller just a year after Saddam was caught. It had really calmed down and the insurgents hadn't really picked up their game.

But by August 2004, Telic 4 saw a real increase in IEDs and the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (PWRR) were in heavy contact in Al Amara. It was a busy tour.

By then, I was a sergeant which was more enjoyable as

I had guys to look after and we maintained our own vehicles. We did everything together so we tried to outdo other troops, as we wanted to be top dogs in the eyes of our Squadron Leader.

The PWRR got mortared every day. There were some heavy contacts in Cimic House, our position in the centre of Al Amara.

I was there on the ground as a forward air controller who brings in fast air which is close air support - American F-16s, British Tornados and Harriers.

I didn't get a great deal of sleep. Every time I went to bed, I got a call from the ops room because things were kicking off.

In August, it went crazy and Cimic House was taking heavy casualties and they realised something needed to be done. We were among the locals and very prone to enemy attacks and getting smacked.



AFGHANISTAN

In 2006, I was attached to 7 Royal Horse Artillery as a forward air controller as part of a fire support team. We would go forward as a company and then bring in mortars, fast air or artillery as needed. I dealt with everything air-based from Lynxes to A130s, which are Spectre gunships, or B1/B2 bombers that I could control on possible targets.

We were on the ground all the time. Obviously the whole Helmand province story erupted, making everyone realise that it wasn't the world's nicest place.

I started off with a team of six and came back with just three. It wasn't hard to crack on, though my role was to support 120 soldiers from A Company, 3 PARA, so we couldn't worry about what had happened the day before or even a couple of hours before - we had to get back out.

When I see my Afghan medal, my outstanding memory is of drama and getting shot at but I can't say too much more.

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 Mullin 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



www.garrisonfm.com

GREEN-FINGERED THERAPY

A NEW GARDENING PROJECT HAS BEEN LAUNCHED TO HELP PROVIDE THERAPY FOR SERVICE PERSONNEL AT HEADLEY COURT. **LEIGH HAMILTON REPORTS.**

Activities such as cooking and swimming have previously been used at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court to help injured troops with their recovery. But now, for the first time, horticulture is being encouraged as a form of psychological and physical therapy.

The idea is that the newly-refurbished greenhouse and allotment at the centre in Surrey will challenge patients with complex polytraumatic injuries and encourage them to overcome the difficulties of working at different heights, standing on varying slopes and surfaces, as well as lifting and moving objects.

The gardening tasks also provide cognitive therapy for troops. Evidence suggests that being in an outdoor environment reduces stress and leads to improved concentration, which encourages people to think through their problems or concerns.

The gardening project is the brainchild of Major Peter Le Feuvre who enlisted the help of the Queen Elizabeth Foundation which provides intensive vocational rehabilitation for unemployed, disabled adults experiencing multiple barriers to work.

Major Le Feuvre said: "If you capture the right patient, it's a meaningful activity that's fulfilling. Our aim was to bring the rehab out from the clinical space



Greenhouse effect: Injured troops like Marine Tristan Sykes have taken up gardening therapy

Pictures: Sergeant Ian Forsyth RLC

and into these grounds, in which you can't help but be inspired."

He added: "The rehab here is very exercise- and gym-based, so for a lot of the guys who come through here time and time again, to have the chance to do something different is a change."

"This isn't just about the garden, it's about the workshop. One guy who doesn't want to pot flowers might like to go to the workshop and build a planter to put the flowers in and therefore still gets all the benefits."

"We're trying to develop this functional rehab as it's meaningful, it's useful for outside life, it gives them a vocation, and outside the clinical stuff there are a load of social benefits as well."

On 18 February 2009, Marine Arron Moon of the Armoured Support Group Royal Marines was on a patrol in Afghanistan when his vehicle was struck by an IED. He suffered a broken right heel bone, broken tibia and fibula in his lower right leg, dislocated knees, broken left femur, broken hip, dislocated pelvis, broken back, ruptured spleen and a broken collarbone.

"I'm feeling pretty good," Marine Moon said. "I subsequently lost my left leg below the knee, but I'm probably better off without it than I would have been when it was in bits. This place is amazing. They've got me back walking and running again. I can play golf again, I can play sports again, so I'm happy."

"As a below-the-knee amputee we can get out in the garden digging and it gets you working outside which makes everybody feel better."

"In this garden, there are loads of different things we can do to help different injuries. It helps with your rehab ten-fold because at the end of the day you're out here, you can do stuff, it makes you feel better and it shows that you've got a future should you want to go into this line of work."

"It helps you realise that your life's not ended because you've lost a limb. You've still got a future and you can still do the things that everyone else does on a daily basis."

Another patient at Headley Court, Private Scott Meenagh from C Company, 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment, was on a cross-mountain patrol in Afghanistan on 25 January 2011 when he stepped on a low-metal IED. He lost both legs below the knee, and sustained wounds to his back and internal injuries.

Despite suffering life-changing injuries, Private Meenagh has an admirable outlook on life:

"I've never been so alive in my life," he said. "I feel so positive. A lot of people went through a lot when I was out there and one of my friends was killed trying to save my life, so I need to take advantage of everything. It's amazing. I've never felt so motivated, everything is such a challenge and everything is so exciting."

"I think my dad will be proud of me as he's a gardener himself. I've never taken an interest in gardening, but now life's at a lot slower pace for me, so I'll be able to help him and develop a new interest. My garden will be looking good when I get home."

As a double amputee, Private Meenagh welcomes the physical challenge the gardening project offers:

"The ramp outside the greenhouse is the most undulating that I've ever walked on. It really is a challenge, but I'm taking it in my stride, literally."

The hanging
gardens:
Private
Scott Meenagh



"Actually standing still is an effort for me as I have to use my core and my hips, so I'm constantly tensed up and always wake up sore. It is hard, but you get used to it and this is an opportunity to do something therapeutic."

"Obviously we've all been through traumatic experiences and you do think about it. I think about it every day and it affects me, so actually coming away and having a new interest is helpful."

While deployed on Op Herrick 13, Guardsman Lamin Manneh, 1st Battalion Irish Guards, was involved in an IED blast and lost both legs and one arm on 31 December 2010.

Guardsman Manneh arrived at Headley Court after a spell at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham where he was prepared for prosthetic limbs:

"At the beginning it was shocking," he said. "My family was there supporting me, so I was taking it day by day. I'm praying that eventually I'll get stronger and now I'm enjoying myself."

Talking about getting involved in gardening at Headley Court, Guardsman Manneh said: "It's a good way to spend some time doing something that you can be part of because everyone's talking about green issues and how can we help if we don't plant it?"

"It's a very good thing to be part of and I'm definitely enjoying it. It's more than satisfying, I'm very happy."

Major Le Feuvre has high hopes for the gardening project and even has aspirations to display the troops' skills at next year's Chelsea Flower Show. 

Sowing the
seeds:
Guardsman
Lamin Manneh





TRAVEL TIPS

ARE YOU PLANNING A SUMMER HOLIDAY? BE PREPARED AND FOLLOW MY TOP FIVE TRAVEL HEALTH TIPS



By Nick Imm, a Naval Surgeon Commander in HM Naval Base, Faslane

1 When travelling in Europe make sure you have an in-date European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). This card allows you to have state-provided healthcare in all European Economic Area countries and Switzerland at a reduced cost or sometimes free of charge.

In the past, we used E111 forms, but these have been invalid since January 2006. If you have an E111 form you should apply immediately for the EHIC to

maintain the level of cover provided by the scheme. It's easy to apply online at www.ehic.org.uk and is free, but the cards do have expiry dates.

2 If you are travelling further afield or you want more comprehensive cover make sure you have travel insurance and keep a photocopy of the policy separate from your travel documents (in case they're stolen). If you're a serviceman or servicewoman ask if your travel insurance covers cancellation for military duties - some policies cover this. If you might be doing adventurous sports like diving check that you're covered. Believe me, uninsured medical bills can be horrendous!

3 Think about safe sex. HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted infections are much more common in some countries than the UK. You might think that HIV/AIDS is mainly an illness that affects gay people. In fact, the percentage of people who have become infected through straight sex is increasing. Most of the new cases among heterosexuals are in people who probably acquired the virus in other countries, particularly those in Africa. So, take some condoms with you - a brand you trust.

4 Check with your medic or GP to see if you need any vaccinations. Although we receive immunisations in the UK against many diseases, you may not have been vaccinated against diseases like cholera or yellow fever. Your medic or GP will have a guide showing which diseases are common in different countries so find out what you need. You might also need malaria tablets - don't forget that each year around 2,000 people return to the UK with malaria and around 12 of these die.

5 Make a simple medical kit. Useful things to take include plasters, insect repellent, suncream, painkillers, anti-diarrhoea tablets and rehydration sachets. You can probably buy all these overseas but it's much better to travel prepared. Have a chat with your medic or GP if you have any queries about what to take.

Stay healthy and I'll see you next month.

■ This is general advice only. If you have any medical concerns please see your medic or GP. **DF**



BEATING IBS

TAKE OUR "TRUE OR FALSE" TEST TO FIND OUT HOW MUCH YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS COMMON DIGESTIVE DISORDER

IBS isn't a real illness.

False. Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) often has no known cause but is the most common reason for visiting a gastroenterologist and affects up to one in five of us. The main symptoms are abdominal pain, bloating, constipation and/or diarrhoea. Some people also experience rumbling noises, excessive wind, rectal pain, backache, fatigue, anxiety and depression.

The condition is most common in young and middle-aged adults, affects twice as many women as men, and is often linked with stress. Although the cause is often unclear, it may be triggered by food poisoning or food intolerance. Surgery and genetics may play a part. IBS isn't life-threatening and won't increase the likelihood of developing other bowel conditions, but it can seriously affect quality of life.

If I think I have IBS, there's no need to see a doctor.

False. It's very important not to self-diagnose if you experience a change in your bowel habits, especially if you're over 50.

"The symptoms of IBS can be very similar to those caused by food allergies or lactose intolerance, as well as other bowel disorders such as coeliac disease, inflammatory bowel disease or even cancer," says Dr Philip Hardo, Consultant Gastroenterologist at Benenden Hospital. "Your doctor will take a thorough history and conduct a clinical examination, and you may also need investigations, such as blood tests, an ultrasound and/or a lower bowel endoscopy."

There's no magic cure.

True. No single treatment can make IBS go away. However, your doctor may prescribe medications to help relieve specific symptoms such



as cramps, bloating and constipation, and give advice on diet and lifestyle. This includes eating healthily and often, not rushing meals, taking regular exercise, and learning to manage stress.

I'll have to cut out wheat and dairy.

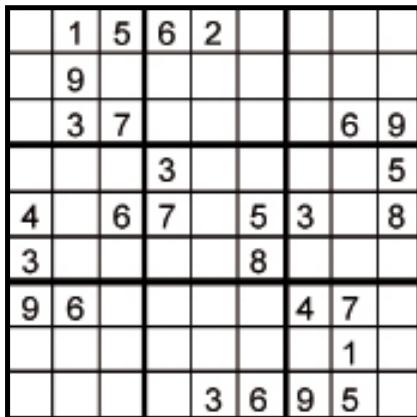
False. What you eat is crucial for managing IBS, but it's important to eat a balanced diet, drinking plenty of fluid and avoiding spicy food. For mild constipation, try increasing your fibre intake; for moderate to severe symptoms, too much fibre can actually make constipation worse so you may need to cut down.

"One of the best things you can do is to keep a food diary and note your food intake and symptoms over a month," says Dr Hardo. "Then discuss it with your doctor or a dietitian to see what changes you can make." Visit www.ibsresearchupdate.org for more about IBS.



This article comes to you from CS Healthcare, the specialist provider of health insurance for civil servants. Telephone 0800 917 4325.
cshealthcare.co.uk

SUDOKU



Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9



Solution to the June 2011 puzzle



Send in your Sudoku solution and you could win a Maglite torch. Our address is on page 4. For more info, visit www.maglite.com, and for nearest stockist details call Burton McCall on 0116 234 4644.

CHESS



Compiled by:
Carl Portman
The Combined Services Chess Championships were a runaway success this year.

Held at Fort Blockhouse at Gosport in May, the participants enjoyed a feast of chess under the watchful eye of the Spinnaker Tower.

I was delighted to meet friends old and new and to enjoy a few days of cognitive lunacy at the chessboard.

The winner and Combined Services Chess Champion for the umpteenth time was Andy Hammond (RAF) – he also won the quickplay tournament.

Thanks to David Ross (RN) for organising the event so cheerily, and to everyone else for making it such a pleasurable experience.

As captain of the MOD team for the forthcoming CSSC games in September I was pleased to meet one of my boys James "Gab" Galloway, who had a good tournament, massaging his chess brain for the next big event. I want to see more people enter the event next year. It's one of those affairs where civilians and military freely mix and rank/grade have no currency - because chess is the language that everyone speaks.



I would like to sincerely thank the good people at Fort Blockhouse for their welcome and support.

Ok, back to over the board matters then. Here's a tester from an unknown composer. Black is threatening to checkmate immediately with 1...Rh8 mate. However it is white to move. How would you proceed? Send your answers to me at carl.portman282@mod.uk

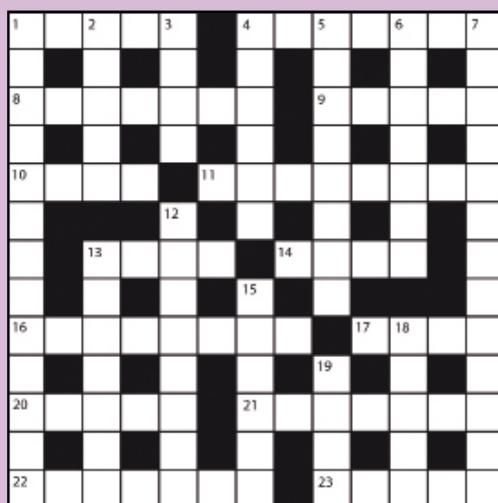
The first correct answer out of the hat wins a chess-related prize.

The answer to June's problem was 1...Qd3+. Forcing the white queen to take it leading to stalemate. Winner to be announced.

TOPICAL CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- Bearlike mammal found in China and Tibet (5)
- Feeling that you are about to fall (7)
- Kiev is the capital city of this country (7)
- Prince William's mother (5)
- _____ The Parents, a Ben Stiller and Robert De Niro movie (4)
- Malignant tumour in the skin (8)
- Fort _____, site of the US Gold Bullion Depository (4)
- State of deep, prolonged unconsciousness (4)
- Restore confidence (8)
- Jack's nursery rhyme partner (4)
- Loud, unpleasant sound (5)
- Attacking player in sport (7)
- Food made from curdled milk (7)
- She made Prince William the Duke of Cambridge on 29 April (5)



DOWN

- He became engaged to Nancy Shevell in May (4,9)
- Key hospital worker (5)
- Opera song (4)
- Person who watches television (6)
- Device for heating a room (8)
- Rearrange Air Soda to find a girl's name! (7)
- He was the most hunted man in the
 - world for many years (5,3,5)
 - Jacques, the famous French marine explorer (8)
 - Ronan, who is lead singer with Boyzone (7)
 - Money made from a business enterprise (6)
 - Close likeness of a person (5)
 - Country which invaded Kuwait in 1990 (4)

SOLUTION (NO PEEKING)

- Across
1. Panda 4. Veritigo 8. Ukraine 9. Diana 10. Meet 11. Melanoma 13. Knox 14. Coma 16. Reassure 17. Jill 20. Noise 21. Forward 22. Yoghurt 23. Queen

- Down
2. Profits 18. Image 19. Ira 5. Radiator 6. Isadora 7. Osama Bin Laden 12. Guestau 13. Keating 15. Profit

WIN A LUXURIOUS OVERNIGHT STAY AT THE LANCASTER LONDON



TO WIN,
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subject line.

The magnificent Lancaster London is renowned for its panoramic views over Hyde Park and London's skyline. The towering 18-floor hotel has 416 beautifully-appointed guestrooms and suites with elegant decor.

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The hotel offers two superb restaurants: Nipa, an award-winning Thai restaurant; and Island Gril, a super-chic restaurant with stunning views over Hyde Park's Italian Gardens.

The hotel's ethos is to "Walk softly on the planet". Holding the Silver Accreditation from Green Tourism for London, the hotel is one of the most environmentally friendly in London.

Lancaster London
Tel: 020 7262 6737
www.lancasterlondon.com

Terms and conditions: The prize is for an overnight stay with breakfast for two guests sharing a double or twin room with dinner in either Nipa or Island Restaurant & Bar. It is valid until 31 January 2012 and is subject to availability. There is no cash alternative. Travel and all extras are not included in the prize. The winner must be over 18 years of age.

WIN AN IA100 SOUND SYSTEM



Win an app-enhanced alarm clock with Bluetooth and FM radio suitable for your iPad/iPhone/iPod. You can play and charge your iPad, iPhone or iPod and wirelessly stream music from your Bluetooth-enabled phone, PDA or computer.

This must-have speakerphone comes with a built-in mic enabling you to answer and make calls using your iPhone (or other Bluetooth-enabled mobile phones). Dual music alarm allows separate wake times

while the sync button aligns the clock to iPhone/iPad time. Although small in stature its 20 watts power with four speakers gives a powerful stereo sound. Wake up and fall asleep to your iPad, iPhone, iPod, Bluetooth-enabled device. Also features FM radio with six-station memory preset and comes with a sleek remote control.

iHome was launched in 2005 and has quickly become the number one brand in iPod electronics, producing a range of portable speakers, headphones, earbuds, home audio systems, clock radios and much more. To view the full range please go to www.ihomeaudio.com



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