

LEADING LADY: URSULA BRENNAN ON THE FUTURE OF MOD

DefenceFocus

Royal Navy | Army | Royal Air Force | Ministry of Defence | ISSUE #258 DECEMBER 11/JAN 12



**OVER
TO YOU**

As transition to Afghan control continues we
report from Nad 'Ali on improved security

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BY: STEVE DOCK

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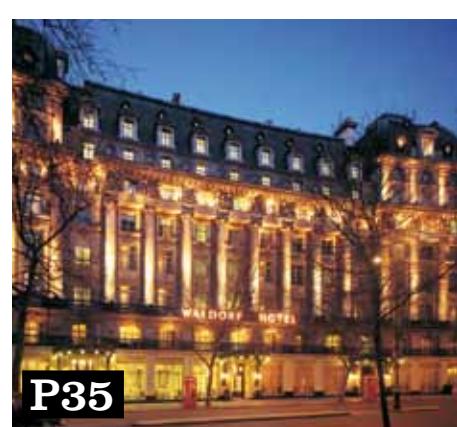
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EDITOR'S NOTE

DefenceFocus

For everyone in defence Published by the Ministry of Defence

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Advertising
Advertising sales are handled by Shun Tamura at Ten Alps Media. Tel: 0207 657 1810
email: shun.tamura@tenalps.com

Distribution
The magazine is distributed through major military bases, depots and MOD offices.

Printed by Corporate Document Services Ltd on 100 per cent recycled paper



DANNY CHAPMAN

So it's the silly season again. A time for manic shopping and doing our bit to reinvigorate the economy and help save Europe from financial meltdown, a time for bonding with our colleagues at office parties and hopefully not making too much of a fool of ourselves, and of family reunions and, probably, family fall-outs.

But as most of us prepare for the festivities, let us not forget that many families have lost a loved one this year serving their country and spare a special thought for them at this poignant time.

Of course, Christmas for most of us means a nice break away from work. But many in Defence will not get a break at all. Ships, barracks and stations still need to be manned, and thousands will still be deployed overseas - undertaking patrols and other tasks in Afghanistan, the Falklands and elsewhere. So let's spare an extra Christmas wish for them too.

Even many "pen-pushing" civilians working in MOD will not succeed in getting

a total break. In my section alone members of the press office and my own online news team will be providing 24-hour cover over the whole Christmas period. And so while we reach the end of the year and may feel the call for reflection, in reality, the wheels of Defence are carrying on into the New Year oblivious to, well, the need for a rest!

This edition of Defence Focus, you may notice, covers December and January. It's because it will be on the shelves for almost two months that we have avoided making it seasonal (except these musings you are now reading). We know that the distribution to some of our readers takes so long that many will not see a copy till after Christmas [the efficiency of distribution is something we are looking into as a priority in 2012].

So hopefully, whenever and wherever you read this, you will appreciate reading about the two main operations of 2011 – the wrapping up of one, the beginning of the next stage in the other, and the thoughts of our top civil servant on the changes for the future. And that you have or have had a Merry Christmas.

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IN MEMORIAM

DEATHS ON OPERATIONS – 27 OCTOBER TO 5 DECEMBER 2011



Private Matthew James Sean Haseldin

Private Matthew Haseldin, from 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment, was killed

in Afghanistan on Thursday 3 November 2011 by a gunshot wound when his patrol came under attack from insurgents while on an operation to maintain freedom of movement

along Route 611 for the locals in Nahr-e Saraj district, Helmand province.

Aged 21, from Settle, he leaves behind his parents Alan and Jill.



Private Matthew Thornton

Private Matthew Thornton, from 4th Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment, was

killed in Afghanistan on Wednesday 9 November 2011 by an improvised explosive device while on patrol around Checkpoint Loy Mandeh, near Babaji, to engage with the

locals and to develop a better understanding of the area.

Aged 28, from Barnsley, he leaves behind his father Michael, mother Susan, sister Sarah and brother Nathan.



Lance Corporal Peter Eustace

Lance Corporal Peter Eustace, from 2nd Battalion The Rifles, was killed in Afghanistan on

Wednesday 16 November 2011 by an improvised explosive device while conducting a patrol with the Afghan National Army around Nahr-e Saraj district. He was deployed as a

mortar fire controller with the Yorkshire Regiment.

Aged 25, from Liverpool, he leaves behind his mother Carol, sister Kirsty, brother Ryan and girlfriend Aimi.



Lieutenant David Boyce

Lieutenant David Alexander Grant Boyce, from 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards,

was killed in Afghanistan on Thursday 17 November 2011 when, on a security patrol in Nahr-e Saraj district, the armoured vehicle he was travelling in was struck by an

improvised explosive device. Aged 25, from Welwyn Garden City, he leaves behind his father Martin, mother Andrea, sister Charlotte and girlfriend Jodie.



Lance Corporal Richard Scanlon

Lance Corporal Richard Scanlon, from 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, was killed

in Afghanistan on Thursday 17 November 2011, alongside Lieutenant David Boyce, while travelling in an armoured vehicle which was struck by an improvised explosive device

during a security patrol. Aged 31, from Rhymney, Gwent, he leaves behind his mother Cherry, stepfather Robert, father Raymond and sisters Lisa and Emma.



Private Thomas Christopher Lake

Private Thomas Lake, from 1st Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, was

killed in Afghanistan on Sunday 20 November 2011 by an explosion while on a patrol to reassure the local population of the Jamal Kowti area of Nahr-e Saraj district.

Based in a remote and rudimentary checkpoint in Helmand, he was an 'indispensable part of his team'. Aged 29, from Watford, he leaves behind his mother Carol.



Rifleman Sheldon Lee Jordan Steel

Rifleman Sheldon Steel, from 5th Battalion The Rifles, was killed in Afghanistan on

Sunday 27 November 2011 by an improvised explosive device during a foot patrol to disrupt insurgent freedom of movement in the Babaji area of Lashkar Gah district in the

Nahr-e Saraj (South) area of operations. Aged 20, from Leeds, he leaves behind his mother Victoria, sisters Cody and Carys, and brother Kameron.

YEAR IN PICTURES

Picture: Steve Dock



A civilian vehicle mechanic repairs a Mastiff in Camp Bastion, Afghanistan

Picture: Mark Owens



Armed Forces Day in Leith, Scotland

Picture: Sgt Steve Blake RLC



HMS Liverpool's operations room during patrols off the coast of Libya

Picture: Sgt Rupert Frere RLC



A soldier from 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment on patrol in Helmand



A military working dog handler with his arms and explosives search dog Charlie in Helmand province

Picture: LA(Phot) Burke



British troops in Task Force Helmand HQ, Lashkar Gah, Afghanistan, celebrate the Royal Wedding

Picture: Sgt Chris Hargreaves RLC



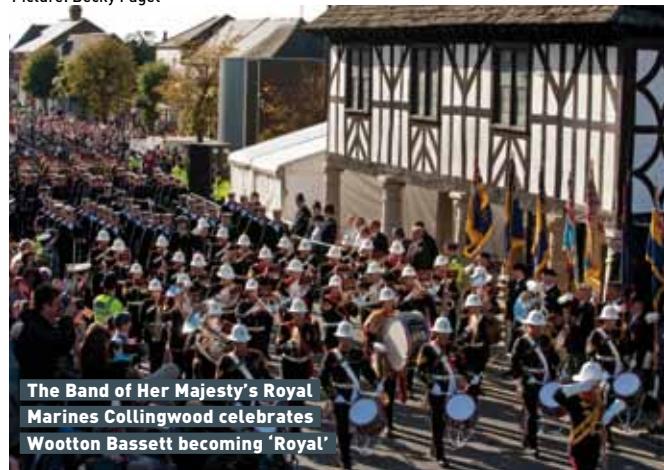
A British RAF officer trains one of Afghanistan's first female Air Force helicopter pilots

Picture: PO (PHOT) Hamish Burke



An RAF Merlin's descent fills the air with debris during Operation Omid Haft in Helmand

Picture: Becky Paget



The Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines Collingwood celebrates Wootton Bassett becoming 'Royal'

Picture: Sgt Ian Forsyth RLC



An injured soldier takes up gardening therapy at Headley Court

Picture: Andrew Linnell



HMS Ambush, the second Astute Class submarine, is launched



New directions: troops from
B Company, 2nd Battalion The
Royal Gurkha Rifles, stop to chat
with some locals from Shin Kalay

THE ROAD AHEAD

AS NAD 'ALI LOOKS TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE, TRISTAN KELLY REPORTS FROM THE FORMER TALIBAN STRONGHOLD

With a reduction in violence of 86 per cent compared to 2010, the people who live in Nad 'Ali district, an area once renowned for being a hotbed of the Taliban insurgency, are enjoying unprecedented levels of security.

And now, Afghan President Hamid Karzai has announced that the area, which is to the west of Lashkar Gah in Helmand province and within the British area of operations, will be among the second tranche of areas across the country to begin formal transfer to Afghan security control.

However, today's relative security has been hard fought and some years in the making. British and other ISAF forces first entered the region in 2006. Work soon began to disrupt and dislodge the Taliban from the region and in December 2008 a major operation – named Sond Chara – was launched by British, Danish, Estonian and Afghan forces to clear insurgents from the district centre.

With two patrol bases quickly established, the operation was hailed a success and allowed ISAF and Afghan forces to move out from pockets of security to reassure the local population and offer a platform for stabilisation.

This foothold was expanded over time and culminated in Operation Moshtarak in February 2010. Meaning "together" in Dari, Op Moshtarak was the largest counter-insurgency operation launched by ISAF forces since entering Afghanistan in 2001. It involved some 15,000 ISAF troops from the UK, US, Denmark, Estonia and Canada as well as large numbers of Afghan troops.

The word moshtarak underlined the key feature of the operation – the unprecedented and successful involvement of Afghan forces, including members of the Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, Afghan Border Police and Afghan National Civil Order Police.

Speaking on the eve of the operation, Brigadier

James Cowan, the then Commander of Task Force Helmand said: "I can think of no better name to describe this venture. For we are in this together: we have planned it together, we will fight it together, we will see it through together."

Another key feature of the operational plan was "seeing it through" and the Provincial Reconstruction Team and Afghan government departments were involved from the very beginning in bringing governance to the region as soon as the insurgents had been driven out. "We've got a government in a box, ready to roll in," said US General Stanley McChrystal, ISAF commander at the time.

Jumping ahead 18 months and progress in Nad 'Ali has been stark, with the reduction in violence taking some by surprise. This is particularly true in the southern half of the district, around the district centre.

Speaking at Patrol Base Chili in southern Nad 'Ali, towards the end of his tour in September 2011, Major Jamie Murray, Officer Commanding B Company, 2nd Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles (2 RGR), whose area of operations covered approximately 25,000 of Nad 'Ali's population of 75,000-100,000, tells me just how quiet this tour has been. "The summer fighting season has been very much suppressed and the conditions are set for an informal transition," he said, adding that significant events, such as IED finds and contacts with the Taliban, were down 40 per cent on the previous Herrick.

And the Taliban, according to the Major, were becoming "desperate", and with that the quality of the enemy had reduced. He cited a recent incident where a suicide bomber had self-detонated in a field a long way from his target in the district centre, as a key example.

Major Murray adds that the focus of this tour has been much more on interaction with local Afghans and showing them the benefits of Afghan government control. He also says that there has been a dramatic shift in the attitude of local Afghans since 2 RGR's previous tour in 2009.

"We have conducted 75 shuras so far and each one is convivial," Major Murray says. "The locals are willing to provide us with information not just about security but about their lives in general – a year ago that shura would have been entirely about security and things to



Picture: Steve Dock

Top man: Lieutenant Colonel Shahdi Khan, the District Chief of Police for Nad 'Ali

do with life and death. Now Afghan locals are telling us where bad things are happening, where IEDs are being laid. We now have well over 25,000 counter insurgents in this area, and that is the local people who are countering the insurgency."

The next day I join a routine joint 2 RGR and Afghan National Civil Order Police patrol into the nearby village of Shin Kalay, whose streets and recently-restored mosque are buzzing with activity.

The Gurkhas speak freely in Hindi with the villagers and platoon commander Lieutenant Nick Gross is quick to strike up conversation with those in the busy alleyways separating the many compounds.

After a few quick handshakes and nods of recognition, Lieutenant Gross meets with one man he knows well, who explains how his brother has recently returned from the US and is keen to fund the reopening of the school in the town. It is a small example of how life is returning to the area as confidence in security takes hold. Major Murray also tells me that local farmers are managing to coax four crops a year out of their fertile soils for the first time in decades.

Not far away in Nad 'Ali district centre the bazaar has increased from the two or three shops of a year ago to over 100 today and the newly-metalled roads

Tea time: A Company, 3 SCOTS, during a patrol into the Kalang bazaar



Picture: Sergeant Steve Blake RLC



are allowing farmers to take their goods to market.

Asked how such a transformation has been achieved Major Murray says that sustained interaction and living amongst the locals, understanding them and what makes them tick, has been crucial. He is keen to stress though that his men are simply building on the achievements of UK and Afghan troops on previous Herricks and the hard work invested in the area over several years.

Carrying the baton into the future will be the sole responsibility of the Afghans. Much of that responsibility will rest with the Afghan National Police (ANP) as the Afghan National Army (ANA) move to more outlying areas to take on the insurgency in the hinterland.

Leading the police from the newly-built District Police Headquarters in Nad 'Ali is District Chief of Police Lieutenant Colonel Shahdi Khan, who said that he had ever-increasing confidence in his force. "We have enough men now and more importantly we have the trust of the people. When the people trust the ANP we can do anything," he said.

Despite Lieutenant Colonel Khan's optimism the quality and quantity of the Afghan security forces will determine the speed of transition and its eventual success or failure. The issue is being tackled on several fronts, not least in the Lashkar Gah provincial police training centre. Here hundreds of new recruits – and importantly junior officers – are undergoing instruction.

Sergeant Glynn Ross of the Ministry of Defence Police, who has been training junior ANP officers in Helmand, said that while the police in Afghanistan have to know how to fight the insurgency, he is trying to focus heavily on traditional policing skills. "It is part of their mission here to gain the hearts and

Picture: Steve Dock



Passing times: the Police Mentoring and Advisory Group from 2nd Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, operating in a Husky protected support vehicle, transit around the Nad 'Ali area

"Now there are shops, businesses and construction projects happening. Children can go to school"

minds of the people, and if they do that they will be halfway there," he said. "They are certainly going to be a good police service at the end of the day. Compared with 18 months ago we are now turning out a much, much higher standard of recruit."

Progress at all levels – from the police to delivering infrastructure projects – has been lauded, and the formal process for transferring security control in Nad 'Ali is another step on the road to full transition across the country by 2015 when ISAF combat operations will end.

This of course is not the end of the story. UK and other NATO troops will likely continue to offer training assistance to the Afghans after 2014 and Foreign Secretary William Hague has made clear that transition does not mean the end of international support.

"The UK remains committed to a strong, long-term partnership with Afghanistan based on diplomacy, trade and development and support for Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) development," he said.

General Sherin Shah, the commander of the 6,000 ANA troops that form 3rd Brigade 215 Corps, which cover the key Helmand districts of Lashkar Gah, Nahr-e Saraj, Nad 'Ali and Gereshk, is bullish in his view of the future.

"In Nad 'Ali the ANSF will take over responsibility for security. The process of transition will take time, and it is not something that will happen overnight, but ISAF troops are not leaving us and will support us if we need it," he said. "I have seen big changes in Nad 'Ali in the past few years. Now there are shops, businesses and construction projects happening. Children can go to school to learn. The peace process will continue and nothing will stop us." **DF**

Sea and air: HMS Ocean with its helicopters on deck. USAF HH-60, Lynx Mk7, Sea King from 857 NAS, and Apaches from 656 Squadron AAC can be seen



RETURN OF TROOPS FROM LIBYA

AS OPERATION UNIFIED PROTECTOR ENDS IAN CARR LOOKS AT UK ARMED FORCES' INVOLVEMENT IN FREEING LIBYA

With the end of NATO's Operation Unified Protector, most of the UK Service personnel who played their part in helping the Libyan people oust Gaddafi's regime have returned to embrace from their families and plaudits from the politicians.

At RAF Waddington, the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, welcomed home the servicemen and women who were the UK's air component.

Mr Clegg praised them saying that they had played a vital role in the

mission. "There can be no doubt that without your efforts thousands would have been killed. Because of you, the guardians of freedom, the Libyan people have hope for their future. I am here to pay tribute to you. My thanks, the nation's thanks and the thanks of the people of Libya go with you."

At its peak the UK had around 4,000 personnel, 37 aircraft and four ships committed to the operation. The UK flew more than 3,000 sorties and more than 2,100 of these were strike sorties, hitting around 640 targets.

FROM THE SKY

As part of that, RAF Tornados and Typhoons notched up a hit rate in excess of 90 per cent with their Brimstone precision guided missiles.

The RAF Typhoon attracted many plaudits for its performance, first enforcing the no-fly zone then moving smoothly into a ground attack role. Squadron Leader Sid Sidney, in charge of the Typhoon ground crew, said: "The threat was real. Gaddafi had good air defences that had to be dealt with. But with the Typhoons and Tornados working together, people soon got the idea

OPERATION ELLAMY

that it wasn't a great idea to take us on."

Operation Ellamy, the name for the UK mission to enforce the United Nations resolution to protect Libyan citizens, showcased the UK's military capability and the professionalism of all Service personnel working together.

For example, to complete the 3,000-mile round trips from the UK, Tornado GR4s needed to be refuelled three or four times in mid-air by TriStars and VC10s.

Thanks to surveillance air crews flying thousands of hours in Sentinels, E-3D Sentry aircraft and Nimrods, up-to-the-minute information was provided for mission planning and to make sure that ground attacks struck key targets with

clinical precision.

The logistics for the operation were on a major scale. C-17s and C-130 Hercules established a daily airbridge between the UK and Italy to get supplies and people to where they needed to be. On one occasion that even included delivering 40 tons of currency to Benghazi. "It filled the aircraft," said Flight Lieutenant Chris Powell.

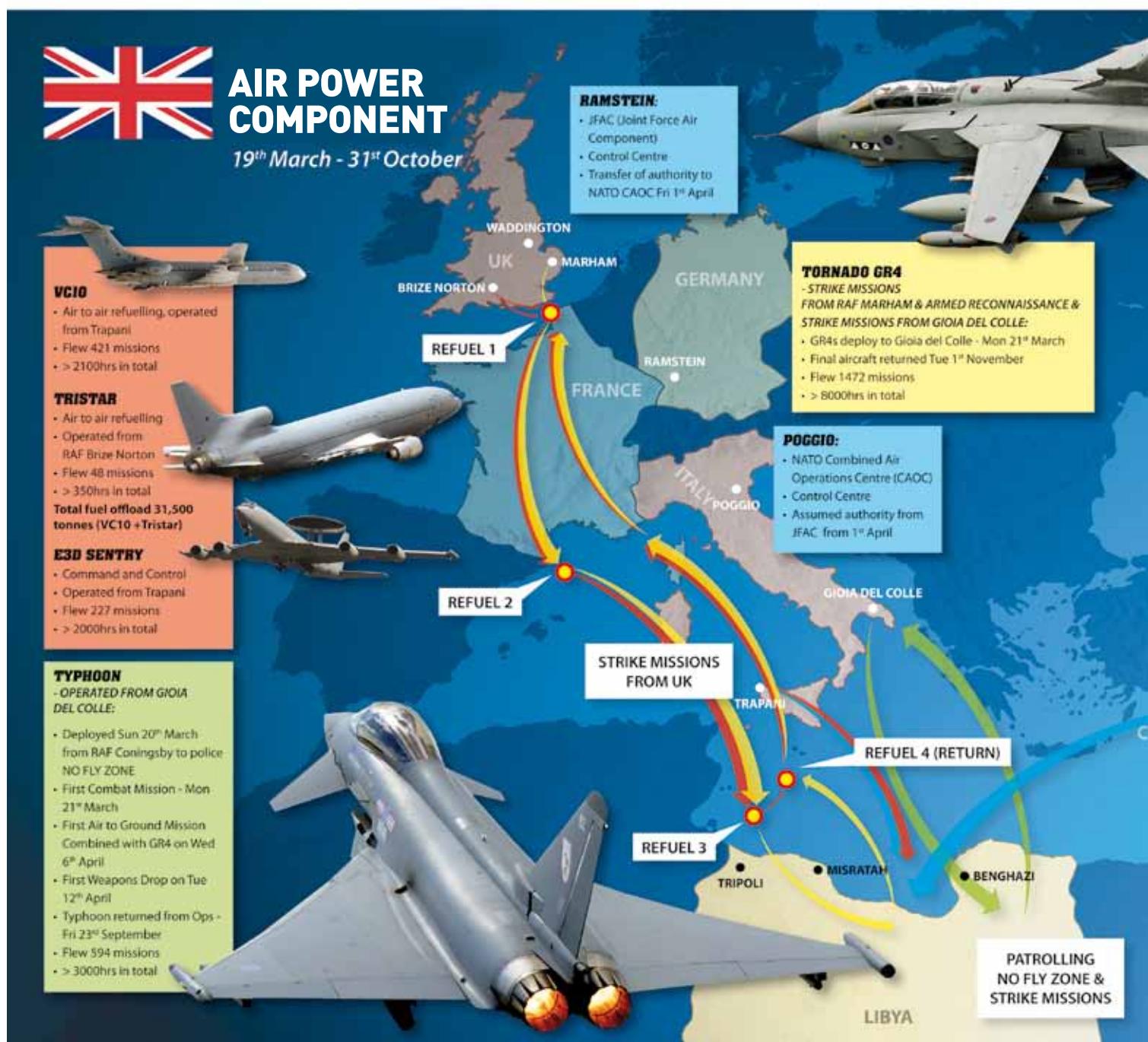
Keeping the aircraft safe and looking after associated equipment and personnel was the job of the RAF Police. Sergeant Mark Robson said: "Some of the VIPs we had to look after included the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State. We also had to repatriate two journalists who had been killed."

GROUND SUPPORT

Weapons technicians sweating their way through 14-hour shifts, often in 40-degree heat, toiled round the clock to keep the aircraft working and loaded up with the right bullets and bombs for each mission.

Because the Typhoon is so versatile, the way that it needed to be configured would vary depending on what task it had to do. Sergeant Darren Bumby, who worked on it, said: "A full four-bomb refit would take an hour to an hour-and-a-half and another twenty minutes to make sure the weapons were talking to the aircraft."

Although the crews would receive day-to-day updates about how the aircraft should be configured, the requirement



could change up to two hours before take-off. "But that was OK. It was good for our morale and great for our esteem for the squadron to see what we can do, at our full potential," said Sergeant Bumby.

Keeping everyone fed at the UK's main operating base in Gioia del Colle, Italy, initially fell to 3 Mobile Catering Squadron. Warrant Officer Willie Dixon helped operate the 500-man tented kitchens. "The first meal was cottage pie. It went down really well. We were providing 24-hour messing for 650 people," he said. "We did the laundry too, the first time we had on operations."

OCEANS OF HELICOPTERS

Five Apache helicopters of 656 Squadron,



4 Regiment, Army Air Corps, along with 90 soldiers embarked on HMS *Ocean*, conducted missions from the Royal Navy's biggest warship.

Major Mick Neville, Officer Commanding 4 Regiment said: "In Afghanistan we are used in a reactionary way, giving support to guys on the ground, so it was nice to be involved in deliberate targeted operations."

The Apache teams fired off 99 Hellfire missiles and 4,800 cannon rounds, hitting more than 100 targets in 22 missions. "That's demanding flying," said Major Neville. "The threat from Gaddafi's air defence systems was significant and professional. In places, Gaddafi's troops were very well equipped and trained and well-motivated. It was very kinetic and professionally challenging."

Major Neville added that all of the Apache's £50 million capability was put to the test. And it proved to be worth it. After every sortie, post-mission reconnaissance proved their efforts had directly affected the front line, sometimes pushing it back five kilometres in a single night. Captain Matt Sandbach said: "People even found the sound of us coming menacing. Anyone who shot at us soon learned that we could avoid and reply within seconds."

Working alongside the Apaches were the Royal Navy Sea King helicopter crews who helped to refresh the Army pilots' skills flying off and returning to warships and provided them with eye-in-the-sky surveillance.

Lieutenant Commander Colin McGannity said: "We fly higher than the Apaches so we could tell them where it was safe to route in without being detected. It was a similar job to the surveillance we do in Afghanistan, pointing other assets at potential targets and bringing back data for the intelligence guys."

Operating from HMS *Ocean*, the two Royal Navy Sea Kings notched up 99 operational missions, and thanks to the engineering team they had a serviceability of 96 per cent. "After Afghanistan it was nice to get back to some maritime flying," said Lieutenant Commander McGannity, a sentiment observer Lieutenant Cheryl Gilbertson agreed with. "I liked working from a ship, it's what I joined the Navy to do."

There was a great team spirit aboard *Ocean*, Lieutenant Gilbertson said, and she paid tribute to the Army pilots flying the attack helicopters. "We would find the targets for them, and check the comms, but you wouldn't want to take anything away from them flying the combat missions. They had a massive job to do, so we were happy to help in any way we could. We were all flying those missions really."

ROYAL NAVY POWER

Sixteen vessels of the fleet, both surface and submarine as well as Navy helicopters, helped maintain the no-fly zone and choke off the supply of arms to pro-Gaddafi forces from the sea.

HMS *Liverpool*, *Cumberland*, *Iron Duke* and *Sutherland* gained and held control of Libyan waters and bombarded military checkpoints and rocket batteries ashore. HMS *Liverpool*'s ship's company spent more than 80 hours at action stations across 28 separate occasions. During her stint the Type 42 destroyer was fired on and returned fire 10 times and launched 211 rounds of high explosive shells, lighting up targets for NATO aircraft to destroy.

Leading Steward Andrew Barnes recalls: "The first time we went to action stations was quite disconcerting for some of the lads, but after a while it became second nature. You rely on your training and just get on with your job."

HMS *Liverpool* also distinguished herself in the air with her fighter controllers directing aircraft and taking responsibility for the entire battlespace management area on no less than 13 occasions.

Meanwhile Navy submarine HMS *Triumph* undertook 80 days of patrols and demonstrated the precision effect of her Tomahawk cruise missiles.

As part of their mission to enforce the UN arms embargo, the Navy frigates while patrolling the Libyan coast boarded and inspected 123 merchant vessels, as well as undertaking surveillance operations.

Key to the maintenance of sea supremacy were the warships' Lynx helicopters. Flying at night and using their own radar, so that the ships could maintain radar silence, the aircraft identified ships and small boats and attacked them when called on to do so.

Minehunters HMS *Brocklesby* and HMS *Bangor* also played their part in finding and destroying mines which had been laid, often from small rigid inflatables, and threatened the flow of humanitarian supplies. "You could hear the shells landing in Misurata and the NATO aircraft flying overhead - but it was a great feeling to know we had made a meaningful contribution," said *Brocklesby*'s Able Seaman Phillip Perkins.

All the UK assets were supported by RFA *Fort Rosalie*, which provided vital stores and fuel. HMS *Liverpool* alone conducted 40 replenishment at sea operations.

Welcoming HMS *Liverpool* home in Portsmouth, Defence Secretary Philip Hammond said: "We are grateful to you and proud of you. You have demonstrated the power of the Royal Navy." DR

BEACHHEAD REVISITED

AS PART OF AN ACTION-PACKED DISPLAY OF ROYAL NAVY CAPABILITIES, IAN CARR SPENT A DAY ABOARD HMS BULWARK

This wasn't just a chance for the Royal Marines to make the most of a calm Solent sea to swarm up and capture Browndown Beach – again.

And it was a lot more than a day enjoying the cheery hospitality of HMS Bulwark, the Royal Navy's new flagship. This was day two of a four-day display of maritime combat power, with the Devonport-based assault ship taking centre stage.

Captain Alex Burton, *Bulwark's* Commanding Officer, said: "I describe the ship as the country's Swiss Army knife: very versatile and totally indispensable. Being the Royal Navy's flagship means that we will be at high readiness for the next four years to go wherever in the world the politicians want us to be, doing whatever job they require of us."

The floating HQ for Joint Forces, *HMS Bulwark* can host high-level diplomatic meetings and provide command and control capability not just at sea but in the air and on land as well. And, in its amphibious role, shuttle kit and personnel to where it's needed. "*HMS Bulwark* defines expeditionary capability and global

reach. We can control the maritime areas that are owned by no-one, but which are exploited by many," said Captain Burton.

The ship has repeatedly proved its versatility in a number of roles. In response to the war in Lebanon, as part of the humanitarian effort, she helped to evacuate qualified personnel. *Bulwark* has also been involved in counter-piracy operations and provided security in the seas around Iraqi oil platforms.

The joblist for today's capability display includes

Pictures: LAFPHOT Martin Carney

The craft of landing:
HMS Bulwark puts
ashore Royal Marines
Commandos and their
kit and vehicles
including Vikings
and fuel tankers



repelling an ill-advised attempt by bogus bad guys (looking suspiciously like Royal Marines on a rigid inflatable boat) intent on boarding the assault ship. Then a Sea King helicopter hovered, its rotor blades seemingly inches away from the communications mast, while Fleet Protection Group Royal Marines fast-rope down onto the deck to mop up make-believe pirates. Next, fast rigid inflatables skipped over the surf working with Type 23 frigate HMS *Sutherland* to intercept and search a suspicious vessel.

Then it was over to Browndown Beach for the big finish. *Bulwark*'s landing craft embarked Viking armoured patrol vehicles, fuel tankers, equipment and members of 40 Commando, with more arriving by Sea King, to make the beach safe for Royal Navy personnel to set up a station to process evacuees fleeing from a hostile situation. The dot up in the sky was an Apache helicopter keeping the commanders fed with surveillance information.

The hardware is world class, but it's the personnel who use it that really make the big impression. And that's not just the front of house fighting power of the commandos, nor the pilots with ice-cold nerves. This was a show involving all the family, from Rear Admiral Peter Hudson hosting the VIPs, down to the likes of Midshipmen James Duff and Michael Milton, the would-be pirates for the day, fresh out of Dartmouth and now soaking up the training that is getting them used to being on board a warship and turning them into officers of the future. "This is about putting the skills we've learned into practice," said Midshipman Duff, "things like navigation and leadership." Sadly the training clearly didn't include acting lessons judging by the way they hammed it up for the cameras.

Yet maybe nothing demonstrated the qualities of

the Navy and the value of the training better than the sailors who manned the evacuee-handling centre set up on the beach. In times of danger, when frightened civilians are desperate to escape a situation that has gone bad, these young servicemen must be ready to calm things down, go through the necessary Foreign and Commonwealth Office clearance, and then maybe even face the task of breaking it to someone that they won't be getting a ride aboard *Bulwark* that day.

Although all this interoperability across a range of scenarios made for an impressive display, the talents of the Navy didn't stop there. During the day the ship's company smoothly hosted a variety of groups, each with a different agenda. The media contingent, from the world of print, radio and telly were eager for pictures, quotes and interviews. Then there were politicians who needed briefing as part of a select committee. Foreign VIPs, including Canadian Navy chiefs who were using the experience to help them decide whether it is time for them to develop an amphibious capability, were calmly chaperoned from place to place. All of these disparate interests were catered for with quiet professionalism.

"Today has given you a glimpse of what the Navy will be like for the next 30 years," said Rear Admiral Hudson, winding things up. "With lots of assets working together with *HMS Bulwark* at the centre. So I hope you can understand that when I'm asked 'What does *Bulwark* do?', I answer 'What do you want it to do?'"

There is one final job to do, getting the politicians to Portsmouth for a train back to London to vote in the House. And so it was that ferry passengers staring out of the windows may just have seen a group of politicians dressed in body suits, some of them clutching handbags, skimming past them over the surf. An unusual sight, but all in a day's work for *Bulwark*. DP

Board meeting: (right)
A boarding team saves
Bulwark from "pirates"

Shore footed: (below)
Royal Marines disembark
on Browndown Beach



TOP TEAM'S TASKS

PERMANENT SECRETARY URSULA BRENNAN TALKS TO IAN CARR ABOUT DECIDING WHAT REALLY MATTERS TO DEFENCE



DF: After the Strategic Defence and Security Review you said we would have to do things differently. Has that happened?

UB: There are some things where we have made serious progress. The most obvious of those are in relation to decisions made about equipment and basing. There have been some really tough decisions taken about things we will be doing differently around our corporate services. The creation of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) is an example of us doing things differently, more effectively and efficiently.

DF: How is the creation of DIO an example of doing things differently?

UB: Many people may have felt that we had centralised estates work, but we hadn't really. We had left significant sums of money to be managed within the front line commands and other budget holders. If you want to use your assets more strategically to deliver defence outputs then go for it, don't go half way then build resource back in elsewhere. In DIO we now have a chief executive chairing a body which brings together everyone who has requirements for infrastructure investment, and you have a single place where all that asset management is done together. Sometimes that is going to be difficult for individual units. It's a way of thinking about Defence assets, not Single Service assets, and asking what are the real defence priorities – let's make sure we are delivering against them.

DF: What are the organisational issues for MOD?

UB: Lord Levene's report on the structure and management of the MOD said there were places where we need to do less centrally and push more out to the front line commands. He pointed out that when you have a strategic function in the centre it does strategy, and it doesn't push its nose into delivery. Being strategic means determining outcomes, and the choices open to us for achieving them. Once you have decided where you want to go, you leave it to the individual Services to propose how we are going to get there.

DF: Has the centre become too big?

UB: Across the public sector, where you don't have a profit bottom line driving how much you can afford to invest in your overheads and your central strategic functions, you have to impose the restriction to keep your head office as small as possible. Occasionally you need some kind of intervention to force you to do that. History shows that when government departments do slim down, they soon start to grow again. Obviously the current squeeze on public spending is a very strong driver for us to think about what really matters to us.

DF: Are too many people involved in decision making?

UB: Levene made the point, rather sharply, that we have too many layers and that there were too many people overlapping at the top. He said that with clearer accountabilities you don't need so many people in the chain. We have made some painful decisions about that. For example, in the future we won't have Commanders in Chief in addition to Chiefs of Staff. More generally, in terms of slimming down the top structure, the defence transformation team are making progress and will be making proposals soon. Once you have the top structure clear you can say to senior people: 'Now you know what your role is, you can start redesigning how you are going to deliver your responsibilities with the slimmed down resources you're going to be given.'

DF: Why has there been another invitation for civilian staff to volunteer for early release (VERS)?

UB: We always thought we were likely to have two stages. We could have waited until all the transformation had been completed, when we would have had a more targeted regime for reductions, but most civil servants have generic skills. There are some real specialists, and some who work in particular geographic areas who are not mobile, but the majority can move between roles. So if we cut a job it doesn't follow necessarily that the civil servant doing that job needs to be the person that goes. We knew there were some who would be happy to go now, so if that suits both parties, that's great. With the second round of VERS we are a lot clearer about where the business will be getting smaller. We want to achieve as many of our exits by voluntary means as possible, but unfortunately at the end we will probably have to have some redundancies. But even then people will have the choice to volunteer.

DF: The criteria for VERS 2 look more geared to letting people go than last time.

UB: We have tried to learn from the last time and be sharper about the very specific skills that we do need to keep. Some business units felt that they needed to let anybody go that applied, whereas some took a tougher line. This time we are much clearer, it is about the people we have to keep. So if you want to go but have skills that we really need or if you are a really top performer who we want to develop, we will want to keep you. Most civil servants have a mix of skills, so I hope that people who want to go and who don't have the skills that we urgently need to retain will be able to. Last time there were some who wanted to go but who we needed to help us through transition; once that work is completed, we may be able to release them. The basis for selection is spread out over a number of months.

DF: But if you select an earlier date your score goes up

UB: It seems to make sense. If someone has decided that they want to go then the sooner the better. It's like when you are changing jobs, your mind switches to the future, and you just want to get on with it.

DF: What are the ramifications for those left behind?

UB: Defence remains a big employer with a really diverse range of things to do which are important, and

valued. For those still in MOD you will be working in a smaller department but one which is clearer about what it is doing. Yes, things are tough in the public sector, but frankly things won't be easy anywhere. Bearing that in mind, Defence is still going to be an absolutely fascinating place to work.

DF: The media recently criticised MOD for spending £600m on consultants. Was that money well spent?

UB: The first thing to say is that it wasn't spent on consultancy. We have a separate budget for that and we have been seriously reducing it. What they were referring to was the Framework Agreement for Technical Support which was set up to centralise spending on technical services. It includes advice on things like nuclear engineering and aviation safety where we need, for a short period of time, really specialist expertise that we don't have ourselves. It makes more sense to buy in that expertise than it does to try and grow people with those skills when we are not going to have a continuing role for them. The audit said we hadn't been managing that business well, and that's true I'm afraid. It's an example of something where we set up the rules but didn't follow them properly. Application of the rules is much tighter now.

DF: The National Audit Office (NAO) report on major projects also said we were overspending.

UB: Well, that report was interesting. The Financial Times wrote a piece about it saying it was a much more positive report than the NAO usually gives us, they recognised that we are improving. The NAO said we have a legacy of cost overruns and delay but that over the last 12 months we have been getting better. OK, we need to get better at risk management, but we are in a risky business. We are dealing with very difficult technical problems and we also have to deal with fuel price rises and foreign exchange variations when they don't go in our favour. But we are not complacent.

DF: The results of the Your Say survey must be disappointing.

UB: The results are bad and we need to be honest and acknowledge that. People are telling us they want to see more visible leadership. They want a stronger sense that their concerns are recognised. I can understand why people are not happy given the difficult period we have been through, but I'm determined not to hide behind that as an excuse. I'm sure the detailed results will show that some areas of MOD will score better than others, because good leaders keep talking to their staff even in hard times. And that's why we've been holding Engaging Leaders workshops - if you are a good leader, even in bad times, you will bring your people with you.

DF: So feedback from Your Say is valuable?

UB: Your Say, Virtual Town Halls and Ask the Board are really important places where people can express their views and get responses to their questions. Sometimes concerns are due to people not being properly informed, and in those cases that's our fault because we have failed to get the message across. In the coming months it will be the top team's task to explain about the big changes that are happening. 

IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

RECENT POLLS SHOW THAT AFGHANS HAVE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE © 2011 THE NEW YORK TIMES

Afghanistan is now in transition mode as the United States and its NATO allies turn responsibility for the country's security over to the Afghans, with the goal of completing the process by the end of 2014. During this period, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton says a strategy of "fight, talk, build" will be pursued. How do Afghans feel about the elements of that strategy?

A recent survey directed by the Asia Foundation provides some answers (the complete survey is available at the foundation's website). In July, close to 6,500 Afghans were surveyed across the 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The demographics are important: 78 per cent were from rural areas and 22 per cent from urban areas; 57 per cent were men and 43 per cent women. The margin of error is 4.1 per cent.

Looking forward to transition: Afghan National Police at the Regional Training Centre, Lashkar Gah

This was the seventh poll conducted by the Foundation since 2004, providing a valuable perspective of the national mood of Afghans over time. Despite the daunting security, economic and political challenges facing Afghanistan, close to half of those polled (46 per cent) say the country is moving in the right direction.

Now to Clinton's three-pronged strategy. "Fight": ordinary Afghans are clearly tired of the fighting. They've been at it for over 30 years. Insecurity is identified as the biggest problem by one third of those polled. More than half say they fear for their personal safety in their local area.

At the same time, those surveyed believe that their own security forces, the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police, are showing signs of improvement, with the Army receiving the most positive



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

Royal Marines Benevolent Fund: Relieves hardship among serving and former Marines and dependents. royalmarines.charities@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. 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. csbf.org.uk or call 0800 056 2424.

Army Welfare Service: HQ AWS has relocated to Upavon. Confidential support for soldiers and families. 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. rafa.org.uk/welfare.asp.

HIVE: Tri-Service information covering issues like education and health. 167 offices. 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. 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. 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 em: PeopleServices@pppa.mod.uk.

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

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

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

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

Naval Personal & Family Service and Royal Marines Welfare

For out-of-hours' emergencies call the NPFS duty worker in the relevant next-of-kin area or RM unit. NPFS East and Overseas - 02392 726 159 (via Officer-of-the-Watch). NPFS North - 01436 674 321 - (via duty naval base officer Ex. 4005) NPFS West and Eire - 01752 555 220 - (via Officer-of-the-Watch). RM Welfare - 01752 836 395 - (via duty officer, guardroom RM Stonehouse).

assessment: 87 per cent say the Army is helping to improve the security situation in the country.

Two other indicators are also positive. In 2007, 62 per cent said the Afghan Army was "unprofessional and poorly trained". That number dropped to 44 per cent this year. Likewise, there was a decline among those who said the Army needed the support of foreign troops and could not operate by itself: from 77 per cent in 2007 to 60 per cent today.

"Talk": Afghans are overwhelmingly in favour of talking. Eighty-two per cent of respondents support their government's efforts to address the security situation through negotiation and reconciliation with the Taliban and other armed opposition groups. But since the survey was conducted, that effort has run aground, called off by President Karzai after the assassination of Afghan peace envoy and former president Burhanuddin Rabbani by a suicide bomber posing as a Taliban peace emissary. The future of the Afghan reconciliation process – the "talking" – is at best uncertain.

What is certain is that the Taliban's use of high-profile killings and civilian attacks is significantly impacting on public opinion. The percentage of Afghans who have some level of sympathy for the insurgents fell to its lowest level (29 per cent) in the history of this survey: in 2009, it was 56 per cent; last year, 40 per cent.

"Build": Afghans are most encouraged by the rebuilding of their country. Of those seeing their country moving in the right direction, the primary reason given was reconstruction (40 per cent). More than half say they are aware of development projects in their local area, including the building of roads and bridges (59 per cent) and education (57 per cent).

Afghans are also aware of which countries have provided the most aid for projects in their localities, citing the United States, Germany, Japan, India and Britain, in that order.

As with the future of the reconciliation process, however, the future of US and international development aid has come into question since the survey was conducted. Earlier this month, the US State Department announced that civilian aid to Afghanistan had reached its "high water" mark, declaring that America would spend less on development assistance as it withdraws troops from the country. US aid fell from \$4.1 billion in 2010 to \$2.5 billion this year.

Whether the Afghan people have reached their high water mark for their expectations for the future will be shown in future surveys.

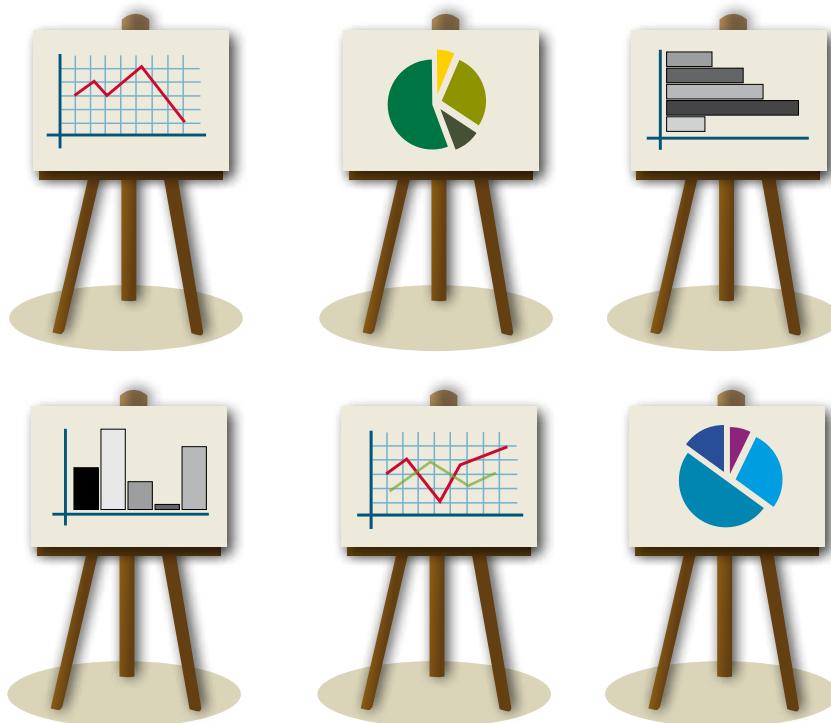
Today the survey shows that most Afghans see progress in the quality of their lives, appreciate the services they receive from their government, and continue to support equal rights regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion. Eighty-five per cent support educational opportunities for women.

One hopes none of these advances will be lost in the current Afghan transition.

First published in the International Herald Tribune, this article is by Karl F. Inderfurth, US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs from 1997-2001 and Senior Adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Theodore L. Eliot, Jr, US Ambassador to Afghanistan from 1973 to 1978 and Dean Emeritus of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

A QUESTION OF ATTITUDE?

EVERY YEAR THE ARMED FORCES AND THEIR FAMILIES ARE ASKED HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT LIFE IN THE SERVICES. WHAT THEY SAY MAKES A DIFFERENCE WRITES IAN CARR.



Each year, for the last five years, Service personnel are encouraged to say how they are feeling about things like commitment to the job, living accommodation, morale and pay. This is done via the Armed Forces' Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS).

And since 2010 the Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS) has collected information on the attitudes and circumstances of the spouses of Service personnel on welfare issues such as housing, health and childcare.

Gathering this information is important for the policy makers when making the decisions that will affect the Armed Forces and their families in the future.

Just one of the bodies who rely on, and greatly value, the AFCAS information is the Armed Forces Pay Review Body (AFPRB). Tony Symmonds, secretary to this independent body, said: "We hold the AFCAS survey in high regard and use it to inform our deliberations when making our recommendations."

MOD's AFPRB liaison officer, Wing Commander Mark Puzey, coordinates the evidence that the Body needs: "This

year there were 30 pages of evidence from various areas submitted to AFPRB and several referred extensively to data from the AFCAS," he said.

In recommending levels of pay and charges the AFPRB seeks to enhance the recruitment, retention and motivation of Service personnel, but to do that members need a broad view of Service life in general.

"The AFPRB provides evidence-based recommendations to the Prime Minister across a broad spectrum of pay and charges, and AFCAS is a primary reference point to substantiate any observations or assertions made within the evidence that MOD provides," said Wing Commander Puzey.

Having specific data about a number of areas helps the AFPRB to concentrate on the right issues at the right time. "For example, people's views on basic pay may vary considerably from their views on other aspects of remuneration, such as allowances or pensions. It is also important to understand what our personnel consider to be the most significant push and pull factors associated with serving in the Armed

Forces," said Wing Commander Puzey.

Building up a reliable source of data year-on-year means that trends can be spotted and the effects of policy changes understood.

Wing Commander Puzey adds: "AFCAS is a continuous look at the views of our personnel, so it is not necessarily a case of taking action on a single year's results. For example, a 45 per cent satisfaction result could be viewed as negative in isolation, but the broader view may show an increasing trend of satisfaction over a period of years. So, while still not where we would want to be, we at least know we are moving in the right direction.

"So the AFCAS information is very important to us, and the more people fill in the surveys the better."

Louise Rolland of the Armed Forces Covenant Team is another person who relies on the information gleaned from AFCAS and FAMCAS.

The Armed Forces Covenant, which was published in May, set out the key relationships between the Armed Forces, the Government and the Nation. It provides a framework for policy making and delivery across government to improve the support available for the Armed Forces community.

Louise says: "It is important that we have a way of measuring progress and AFCAS and FAMCAS have a key role to play as they provide us with attitudinal data about a range of issues relevant to Service personnel and their families. In fact, the surveys touch on most of the 15 themes of the Armed Forces Covenant."

The Armed Forces Act means that every year there must be an Armed Forces Covenant report to Parliament detailing how the Government is supporting military personnel, their families and veterans.

"We have quoted AFCAS and FAMCAS data throughout the interim report, and the surveys will continue to be a valuable source of information for future statutory reports," said Louise.

AFCAS will soon be underway again. Those selected to take part will receive a form between January and April.

FAMCAS will be issued between March and May. If you are chosen, remember, your views do count. 

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Picture: Steve Dock

Data man: Operational Analyst Charlie Corlett at work in Helmand

DATA-DAY JOB

ANALYSTS IN HELMAND ARE HELPING COMMANDERS SEE THROUGH THE FOG OF WAR. TRISTAN KELLY REPORTS

Modern war is fought with information as well as bullets and few in Afghanistan are in possession of as much statistical firepower as Charlie Corlett.

An operational analyst with the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) it is Charlie's job to crunch the numbers to help make some sense of the information overload that often constitutes the fog of war.

Explaining his job Charlie says that "the definition of operational analysis is the application of scientific analysis techniques to help people make

decisions. And that is what we do." Put in layman's terms it is Charlie's job to conduct analysis of operational data and inform commanders of any apparent trends from the battlefield. Such analysis can be used to inform decisions such as where to deploy medical assets, identify areas for transition to Afghan National Security Forces control and support overall operational planning.

"A lot of what we do is kinetically-focused, so we look at events that have happened. For example, IEDs, where they happen, when they happen and what sort of IEDs they are," Charlie

explains. "We try and look for trends and patterns." This can assist with military decision-making.

"For example," Charlie adds, "a commander might say 'we think we have noticed a change in our AO (area of operations) such that we encounter IEDs in a particular scenario and ask what's going on. Is it that we are setting patterns with our own activity'." Operational analysis can help to answer that question.

There are over a dozen Dstl civilians deployed to Afghanistan in a variety of scientific and analytical roles, and as

part of a team of three based at Task Force Helmand's HQ in Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province, Charlie and his colleagues use their scientific training (Charlie is a trained physicist) to find such trends.

He explains that a recent task was to look at possible patterns regarding attacks on helicopters. "There had been a few cases of helicopters being attacked, so again we looked to see whether our helicopter activity was becoming predictable. The military don't necessarily have to change anything they are doing as a result of this analysis but it can help them make a more informed decision."

Despite being a small team the Operational Analysts are just the forward component of a huge resource available to commanders back in the UK. "We are very much the tip of the iceberg," Charlie says. "There are 3,500 people back at home at Dstl for whom support to operations is the main priority, so if we have a guy that has a particular skill set they will pretty much drop everything and work to help us."

So where does all the information come from? "We get things called SitReps (situation reports) from commanders on the ground which detail every significant incident," Charlie says. "So if a shot is fired at a patrol or an IED is found, a base attacked, or a medevac happens, a short report gets written. What we do is suck all those up and we extract all the information in them and put them in our own database."

This information is then digested and analysed and usually presented graphically to the military 'customer', such as HQ commanders or commanders out in bases. "At the moment we are helping the med team decide what the best medical laydown will be for the next Herrick deployment and where they should put medical assets," Charlie says. "You base that on where the most events happen that will cause casualties and how long it takes people to get to hospital, that kind of information."

With all minds focused on the end of combat operations in 2015, much of Charlie's time is spent looking at the issue of transition and what factors signify that a district is ready for the Afghan forces to take over the lead responsibility for providing security in it.

Charlie describes a situation where he is 'swimming in information' and that one of the hardest tasks is deciding what to measure in the first place. "One of the things we are doing at the moment is deciding what we want to measure to



“ We are very much the tip of the iceberg ”

see if areas are ready for transition," he says. "There are lots of people interested in it and lots of people measuring lots of stuff, so we are looking at what is already measured. It is things like school attendance, traffic on roads, the average price of goods in markets as well as the number of security incidents."

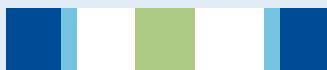
However, as the old adage goes 'lies, damned lies, and statistics', and Charlie is aware of what statistical analysis can't tell you. "With things like IEDs you can only report them when you find them," he says. "So we are affecting the statistical information we have and it is

very difficult to unpick that."

He also makes clear that, while undeniably useful, his analyses can only ever be one tool among many that commanders can draw on during the decision-making process. "Obviously we are only advice," he says. "At the end of the day it comes down to military judgement and we let them come to their own conclusions and just suggest possible reasons behind the trends." DF

Find out more about working as a civilian in theatre at Support to Operations through DII People Services > Moving Jobs > S20





SOUTH ATLANTIC

I'm very proud of my Falklands medal, which I class as probably the Navy's finest hour.

At just 18, I served on HMS *Antelope*, the third ship to get sunk after HMS *Sheffield* and *Ardent*. I vividly remember standing in the ops room listening to *Ardent* sinking and we heard the whole air battle.

We were a very close-knit community. They lost 22 men of whom I knew a couple, though at the time we just hoped for the best. It was much harder listening to a raid than being in one.

We replaced *Ardent* two days later and were kept busy. When we sailed down, we thought 'we're the Royal Navy, we're with the Royal Marines and Paras so we'll do our job, in and out, and then come home.'

My mother was driving home when she heard *Antelope* had been sunk but she didn't find out that I was alive until 36 hours later when a policeman knocked on her door and told her 'your son is fine!'

We sailed home on the QE2 with survivors from *Coventry* and *Ardent*, days before the surrender in June.

I was a young sailor, back home in Bury St Edmunds the bunting was out. I was a small town war hero, my mates all made a huge fuss.

There aren't many of



Picture: LAI/Photo: Jason Ballard

MY MEDALS

Warrant Officer Class 1 Bill Parry who joined the Royal Navy in 1979 aged just 16 looks back on his career. Interview: Lorraine McBride

us left who served in the Falklands but in 1982 every corner you turned there was someone who had been.

IRAQ
In 2007, I was the Executive Warrant Officer of HMS *Manchester* on Gulf deployment with an American carrier battle group.

We spent seven months providing air defence and accurate radar pictures

for the USS *Harry S Truman* carrier. We also provided an oil platform defence in the Gulf under constant threat from the insurgency.

We did boardings, but if we had any trouble it was comforting knowing that we had a massive American carrier to call on to keep trouble at bay.

When you're away for seven months, it seems a bit easier for the younger guys and girls, as they bounce back with the resilience of youth. For older guys with wives and children, time can drag, but if you're occupied time flies. The professionalism of those boys and girls was remarkable.

On Christmas Day, we had to do boardings so we grabbed a quick Christmas meal in the evening and then cracked on. Going to bed, I thought, this wasn't much of a Christmas, so we postponed it until January. If you approach it with the right attitude, it's just another day in the calendar.

LONG SERVICE

This medal is amazing, because like everyone else, I see it as a medal for undetected crime. Even so, mine was awarded for 17 years' service rather than the norm of 15 years because I was 'detected' coming back from a run ashore and playing the idiot (the least said the better). I didn't think I'd ever get it!

Actually, I've just found out that I have been awarded another clasp for my Long Service and Good Conduct.

When I joined up at just 16, nobody made any allowances for age. We all mucked in and that's how I liked it. In 1979, Britain was in the doldrums so youngsters joined up to get a good job and get out of town.

I'm proud of this and when I look at it, I think 'crikey, where has time gone?' In 2014 I retire and then I'll have to go and 'work' for a living because I love what I do. I joined up to see a bit of the world and if you love the job you stay, and before you know it you're an old fart.



QUEEN'S JUBILEE

You serve your country and sign on the dotted line because it's a good life, so when someone gives you a medal for no particular reason, it is nice.

My medals are very important. They mean recognition. It shows that in 30 years I have seen some action. In a way, I'm grateful that I haven't seen it too often. But when I finish my career, I'll frame them as a memento of serving my country.

I only wear them when I'm required to with my best bib and tucker for all to see. But when I look at them, only my memories count – of the Falklands, HMS *Manchester*'s company in Iraq... I can't explain them to my wife, you or anybody, so if I lost them, some of my memories would go with them.



Picture: IWM Gordon McLeod

Struck: HMS Antelope sinks during the Falklands conflict in 1982

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DEFENCE THROUGH A LENS

The appetite of the media in reporting world events is stronger than it has ever been, with online newspapers, 24-hour TV and social media available at our fingertips. But without images these stories have much less impact and are arguably less credible. Take the death of former Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi. It was the photos of his body, sent across the globe within minutes of his death, which confirmed his demise.

This is why photography within the Armed Forces is of such paramount importance, it is to help communicate

UK's defence messages to the masses.

MOD employs civilian and military photographers from all three Services who capture stills and video of the full range of activities undertaken by defence personnel; from operations overseas and training exercises to homecoming parades and ceremonial events.

One of the 39 professionally-trained Army photographers is Sergeant Steve Hughes who is currently posted to Headquarters London District. Having taken stills in Kosovo, Iraq, Northern Ireland and Afghanistan, he is now responsible for capturing images in London of visiting dignitaries and ceremonial events involving the Royal Family, which, as he explained, is a completely different take on the job than he had experienced previously.

"Within a month of being here I've photographed most of the Royal Family, a lot of MPs and celebrities and I hadn't done any of that in the previous six years of being a photographer."

But with the glamour of being based in London also comes a lot of hard graft. "A lot of people say 'oh, you're a photographer, that's a cushy job isn't it?' but you really do work hard," he said.

"For instance during the remembrance weekend, I worked long hours and would be in the office until midnight sometimes in order to sort through all the images. Having said that, I really enjoy being a photographer. It has got to be the best job in the Army, without a doubt."

The trade of combat photographer has a rich history, beginning with Surgeon



ARMY PHOTOGRAPHERS

HAVE AN IMPORTANT JOB
IN COMMUNICATING AND
RECORDING MILITARY
ACTIVITY. BUT THEY
ARE VERY MUCH
SOLDIERS FIRST.

REPORT BY LEIGH HAMILTON

John McCosh who was the official photographer to the Army of the East India Company in 1848. To this day, the role of photography in reporting operations in Afghanistan remains paramount in keeping not just the public, but key personnel, government ministers and advisers up to date.

For those of us not on the front line, seeing images of our UK Service personnel in Afghanistan can help to bring us closer to the action from the safety of our homes. We hear about operations, Afghan villages, shuras, Camp Bastion and many other terms which, without photographs of them, would be much harder to visualise.

But it takes a certain type of person to be a combat photographer and put themselves on the front line to capture the images that will bring the truth of an operational theatre back home. When deployed on operations for example, a combat photographer carries the same kit as a regular soldier would, as well as additional camera equipment and supplies which can physically take its toll.

"The body armour and a bag weighing 60 pounds can put a lot of pressure on your knees and as a photographer you have to be on your knees a lot more often than other soldiers," Sergeant Hughes said. "You don't want to be shooting pictures at head height all the time and you need to get low angles or lie down on the floor and it really takes it out of you, getting up and down all day long. You also have a weapon with you in case you need to return fire which I had to do on Operation Panther's Claw. I had to put the camera down and get a few rounds in, pick the camera back up and carry on taking images."

There clearly is a very real risk of coming under attack when on patrol in Afghanistan, but when your focus is on capturing images to illustrate what is happening, your priorities have to change in a second.

Sergeant Rupert Frere has recently returned from Afghanistan as media operations photographer for 16 Air Assault Brigade. He explained that although his trade is photography, he is still a soldier first:

"As a general rule, depending on what's happening, first and foremost your job is as a soldier," he said. "If you're getting fired at then we fire back. If the guy in front of me gets injured, the last thing I'm going to do is pick up my camera and

"Combat camera teams, comprising a photographer, cameraman and commanding officer, work with the latest electronic news gathering equipment in every conceivable situation. Their work is preserved by the museum alongside that of preceding generations of Army photographers and cameramen where it forms a vital record of conflicts past and present."

Sergeant Frere, who was crowned Army Professional Photographer of the Year at a recent ceremony, concurs that maintaining a historical record for future generations is one of the main reasons that military photography is so important.

"Personally, I think it's so important

“I had to put the camera down and get a few rounds in”

start taking pictures of him. I'd be the first one there helping him. But as soon as I get kicked out of the way by the medic and I'm back in a situation where it's safe to do so, I'll start taking pictures again."

As well as communicating military progress and being sent out to the media, for use in newspapers and TV broadcasts, the images and video captured by Service personnel fulfil an important role in officially documenting military events and progress, and all footage is stored at the Imperial War Museum (IWM) as a historical record.

Head Curator at the IWM's Photograph Archive, Hilary Roberts, said:

to have images down the line for historical reasons," he said. "And the pictures that you don't necessarily see now because of Op Sec [Operational Security], still get stored. So in 50 years' time my grandchildren might be looking at my pictures that no one can see now."

According to Sergeant Frere, capturing the right image at the right time is not the only bonus of being an Army photographer.

"In this job you learn a lot about people, you learn that regiments don't make up the Army; it's the people that make up the Army and I find that fascinating." 



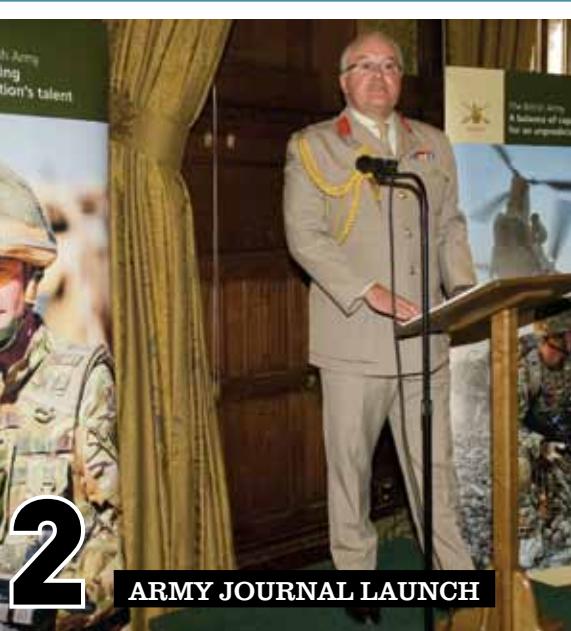
Picture: Sergeant Steve Hughes RLC

Picture: Sergeant Rupert Frere RLC

1

AFGHANISTAN

I try to visit our Brigades in Helmand twice a year. Here I am being briefed by Brigadier James Chiswell, the Commander of 16 Air Assault Brigade, during their deployment on Operation Herrick earlier this year. Visits to theatre allow me to get a first-hand feel for the operational and strategic issues while gauging the morale of soldiers and taking the key issues back to London.

**2**

ARMY JOURNAL LAUNCH

The Army Journal was launched at a media facility in the House of Commons. The book is a collection of short essays that look at the challenges the Army face, both in security terms and fiscally. The event was attended by MPs and academics. I made a short speech to thank those who have contributed to the book, and the various sponsors who have made the Army Journal such a success.

NINE MOMENTS

CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF GENERAL SIR PETER WALL
ON VISITS TO AFGHANISTAN, THE ARMY BOARD, MEETING
TROOPS, AND ARMY SPORT. REPORT: LORRAINE MCBRIDE

3

ARMY BOARD WHITEHALL

The highest decision-making body in the Army is the Executive Committee of the Army Board. We are dealing with the key issues that drive the Army's transformation over the next decade. This is fascinating work, made easier by the Levene reforms.

**4**

VISITING REGIMENTS AND UNITS

Not enough of my time is spent on the road visiting units and meeting soldiers. I need to do this to get a real grass roots feel for the key issues and challenges our officers and soldiers are facing. This is particularly important at the moment to ensure the transformational changes that are taking place in the Army are being communicated effectively from the top, and that we get proper feedback.



**5****MEDALS PARADE**

This was the medals parade for the 300 or so soldiers of the Counter-IED Task Force following their recent deployment to Afghanistan. I am talking to Lieutenant Dave Henson who was injured in an IED strike and is in the early stages of rehabilitation. Medals parades are a key tribute to our soldiers' commitment and courage. The CIED Task Force is playing a critical role in Helmand.

6**PREVENTING EXTREMISM IN PAKISTAN**

On a trip to Pakistan I visited a deradicalisation programme in the Swat Valley run by their Army. This takes potential Islamic extremists and tries to integrate them back into society. Village elders were the inspiration behind the course and they run it with the military. Up to 50 students attend, varying from teenagers up to middle-aged men. Some had been sent by their parents as they were showing signs of unruliness and errant behaviour. It proved a fascinating insight into how Pakistan deals with its internal version of Islamic extremism.

**7****SAILING/ARMY SPORT**

In the Army sport is vital for keeping young people fit and developing teamwork, a will-to-win and decision-making under pressure. As such, it is a core activity. I am president of Army modern pentathlon, winter sports, rugby, football and sport parachuting. I am pictured here on the Army Sailing Association's racing yacht – British Soldier – on the Solent. In addition to sailing I also play cricket.

8**THANKSGIVING SERVICE,
YORK MINSTER**

Thanksgiving services are important to the spirit of the Army. I try to go to them all to pay the Army's respects to the fallen, to meet their families while celebrating our achievements and give thanks for those who make it back safely.

**9****UNIFORM TO
WORK DAY**

Reservists play a key role within the Army and their contribution on Operation Herrick in Afghanistan and elsewhere is vital to us. Reservists were encouraged to wear their uniform to work on 22 June 2011. Here I am chatting to soldiers from the London Regiment. Lance Corporal Vergotinni, a TA soldier, is a tube driver and he showed me round his cab which was a great experience.





BEAT CAMP

THE ROYAL MILITARY SCHOOL OF MUSIC AT KNELLER HALL IS WHERE MUSICIANS LEARN ABOUT LIFE IN AN ARMY BAND
WRITES IAN CARR

The Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall (RMSM) owes its creation to an unintentional, yet highly embarrassing public affront to Queen Victoria.

To round off a Grand Review celebrating the much loved monarch's birthday, a score of army bands were brought together to perform, in rousing unison, "God Save the Queen."

But because at that time the trend was for each regimental band to engage an independent civilian conductor, who organised their bands and the arrangements of music they played, just as they saw fit, what the ensemble of

musicians delivered was not a harmonious and uplifting anthem, but the uncoordinated blowing of a brass raspberry.

As Commander of the First Division during the Crimean War, the host of the Review was the Queen's cousin, the Duke of Cambridge. He vowed that such chaos would not happen again, and so the school was established in Twickenham in 1857. Ever since then the RMSM has been the home of Army music earning a worldwide reputation as the benchmark of excellence in military music.

Today the British Army has 23 professional bands spread across the UK who depend on the school to provide them

with the 800 or so top quality musicians needed to satisfy the 13 skills sets that make up a military band. They are not easy people to find.

"The students we recruit are already highly accomplished musicians," explained Colonel Mark Cuthbert-Brown, who is both the Director of the Corps of Army Music, and the Commandant of the school. "Not only are they proficient musicians they are people who want a career in the Army. We are looking for an unusual combination of skills."

Before passing through Kneller Hall's ornate gates to start their training, the intake of roughly 65 students each year



Power play : Royal Military School of Music Concert in the Park this summer

Picture: Peter Davies (MOD) Photographer

must first pass a rigorous audition and complete Phase 1 Basic Recruit Training, usually at Pirbright.

With that squared away the students are welcomed back and allowed to spend a week or two to "re-find their embouchures" before embarking on the Phase 2 training which will turn them into military musicians, and qualify them for assignment to a band. There's a lot to learn, including music theory and history, which, depending on the attributes of the individuals can take anything from 11 to 44 weeks to complete.

"Playing an instrument at the same time as marching and reading music is a skill you have to learn," says Captain Stewart Halliday, one of the school's Operations and Deployment Officers, "You need to be constantly aware of what is going on around you as well, and that isn't easy if you are wearing a bearskin limiting your forward and peripheral vision. There is the

physical aspect too, especially if you are a tuba player."

Each musician must also learn how to combine two contradictory mindsets, "They are marching, so of course everything has to be precise and disciplined. But at the same time the music must have artistry, it must flow," said Captain Halliday.

Due to the particular qualities required, the age-range of the recruits can be quite broad, "We often have eighteen year olds rubbing shoulders with people in their mid to late thirties," said Colonel Cuthbert-Brown.

For those with particular talent, the school provides a two-year course for potential Bandmasters from which graduates emerge to join bands of the Regular Army in the rank of Warrant Officer Class. "They learn about leadership, how to prepare an event, choose an appropriate programme, in fact they have to acquire the same skills that any other WO would need to command a sub unit. Here it is possible to rise from Private to Warrant Officer in just three years," said Colonel Cuthbert-Brown, "There can't be many opportunities in the army to do that. And of course the pay is better than they could achieve unless they were in one of the very top orchestras in London."

We are all familiar with the sight and sounds of military bands accompanying state occasions. Perhaps so much so that we tend to take it for granted.

But of course it takes a lot of hard work to make something look effortless. "It has to be nicely judged, the pace, the programme of music, there has to be balance," said Major Simon Haw, SO2 Organisation and Deployment. "You aim for pride and heritage without it looking arrogant or jingoistic. It's something we are very good at."

Major Haw has drafted what might be the first doctrinal paper on the use of military music, and its value extends far beyond the ceremonial.

"Music is a way of influencing people," he said. "It distils people's thoughts and is easy to understand. It brings coherence, whether that's in corralling troops, strengthening the sinews, raising morale or bringing people together to express and deal with their emotions. It is a civilising force as well. There was a good reason why General Rose asked the Band of the Coldstream Guards to play in the stadium in Sarajevo during the Balkans war. It was a subtle form of defence influence and reminded people of their humanity."

The musicians often put down their cornets and tubas, plug in keyboards and strap on electric guitars to entertain

the troops in forward operating bases in Helmand province, sometimes even with mortar teams providing the mother of all percussion sections. "It is a boost to morale, and if we can mentally take soldiers out of their environment for an hour or two, that's a good thing," said Major Haw.

Celebrity conductor Gareth Malone met with Major Haw before the making of his hit TV series, *The Choir*, where he brought military wives together to find purpose through singing. "I think Gareth is bang on the money," said Major Haw. "What he is doing is exactly right, looking at the whole package of support. I think that is an area we need to think about, using music to keep the soldier motivated in theatre and happy, knowing that his family is being looked after while he is away."

That is what the RMSM teaches its students, that music is the common glue, binding people together expressing things that cannot easily be put into words.

Captain Halliday perhaps sums it up best. "I've conducted or played at all the state occasions, but it's playing during a homecoming parade that gives you, as a musician, the biggest sense of pride. You can see the affect it has, the marching soldiers hear the music and they seem to grow a foot taller, and their families are full of emotion – that and watching the families during a passing out concert at the school. You know that you are an important part of it, and that what you are doing is making a big difference." **DF**



Nice: Phase 2 students rehearsing an improvised jazz combo for an end of term Christmas concert



Lip service: Musician Aedan Mollen getting his embouchure sorted out during rehearsals

Pictures: Ian Carr

DON'T DRINK TO EXCESS

CHRISTMAS IS THE SEASON TO BE MERRY BUT NICK IMM WARNS OF THE DANGERS OF OVERDOING CELEBRATIONS



By Nick Imm, a Naval Surgeon Commander at HM Naval Base Clyde.

Hello from the Medical Centre at HM Naval Base Clyde.

Over the next few festive weeks a substantial proportion of us will drink alcohol – many of us to excess. It's said that alcohol can be good for us but it can certainly cause us harm. So what are the pros and cons of a drink and just what are "safe limits"?

All alcoholic drinks contain ethanol (pure alcohol) together with other ingredients such as grains, hops or grapes. The percentage strength of the drink is shown on the label but it can be tricky to work out just how much alcohol you're drinking.

To measure how much alcohol you drink, count up the units. It takes a healthy liver about one hour to clear one unit of alcohol from the body.

All of the following drinks contain about one unit of alcohol:

- half-pint of ordinary strength beer, lager or cider
- quarter-pint of extra strength beer
- one small glass of wine
- one pub shot of spirits
- one small glass of sherry

It's reckoned that men can safely drink between three and four units a day or less, while women can drink between two and three units a day or less. Women tend to have smaller bodies so the same amount of alcohol affects them faster. It's recommended to have at least a couple of alcohol-free days in a week. If you think that you regularly drink more than this you might want to have a think about changing your drinking habits. Also, some

strong brands of beer and wine contain more alcohol than you might think.

Drinking alcohol can be very enjoyable and a positive part of



Easy does it: alcohol consumption should be in moderation all year

socialising. It makes us feel relaxed and confident. Furthermore, studies have shown that people who regularly drink small amounts of alcohol tend to live longer than people who don't drink at all. This is because it can lower the risk of coronary heart disease. If you drink more than this, you don't get any extra health benefits!

These studies only relate to men over the age of 40 and women after the menopause (i.e. the time of life when heart attacks are more likely). Of course, if you don't drink alcohol you can reduce your risk of a heart attack anyway by quitting smoking, eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly.

How can alcohol harm us? Well, apart from unpleasant hangovers the morning after, prolonged excess alcohol consumption can have drastic effects on the body – and not just the liver:

Alcoholic drinks contain a lot of calories without many nutrients and are a pretty efficient way of putting on unwanted weight. Drinking too much tends to raise your blood pressure which in turn increases your risk of heart disease and a stroke.

Of course, accidents are much more common with people who are drunk. People often don't realise just how long alcohol stays in the blood – it's so easy to be over the driving limit the morning after.

If you drink, try to keep it in moderation and have a happy, safe Christmas and a healthy New Year. **DF**

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



HYDRATE TO STAY HEALTHY

WATER MAKES UP MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS OF A HEALTHY HUMAN BODY. IT IS VITAL FOR LUBRICATING JOINTS AND EYES, FLUSHING OUT TOXINS AND KEEPING SKIN HEALTHY



Dehydration occurs when the normal water content of the body is reduced, upsetting the balance of minerals in the body fluid. It has been shown that if you lose just 2.5 per cent of your weight from water loss, you lose 25 per cent of efficiency.

TWO TYPES OF DEHYDRATION:

- Isotonic dehydration is when you lose water and salt in the same proportion as the water and salt in the fluid surrounding your cells. It is most often caused by diarrhoea.
- Hypertonic dehydration usually happens in infants or children when a child loses relatively more water than salt, when they have watery stools or excess vomiting.

Research suggests that 70 to 80 per cent of us walk around in a state of mild to moderate dehydration. This can happen when you stop drinking water or lose large amounts of fluid through diarrhoea, vomiting, sweating, or exercise. Usually your body can reabsorb fluid from your blood and other body tissues, but if you become severely dehydrated there is no longer enough fluid in your body to get blood to your organs and you may go into shock.

Dehydration can occur at any age, but it is most dangerous for babies, children

and older adults. Stress is also an aggravating factor which puts your body in overdrive and burns up vital resources including water.

Just breathing uses up lots of water which is why we awaken dehydrated. Also, the average person loses approx 1.2 litres of water in urine each day, and about one litre a day through sweat and respiration.

In the UK, you should, on average, drink six to eight glasses of fluid every day to prevent dehydration or more in hotter climates.

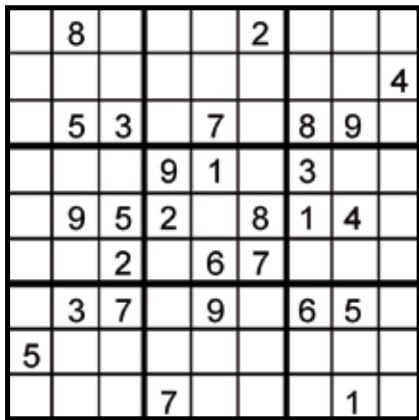
The Health and Safety Executive recommends that you drink about 250ml (half-a-pint) of water every 15 minutes or 500ml (a pint) every 30 minutes.

Do not use thirst as a way of knowing whether you need to drink, because by then you are already dehydrated.



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

2	6	1	5	8	9	3	7	4
8	4	3	7	2	1	6	9	5
5	7	9	3	4	6	8	1	2
9	5	2	4	7	8	1	3	6
7	8	6	1	5	3	4	2	9
3	1	4	6	9	2	7	5	8
6	2	7	9	3	4	5	8	1
1	9	5	8	6	7	2	4	3
4	3	8	2	1	5	9	6	7

Solution to the November 2011 puzzle

Send in your Sudoku solution by 31 January 2012 and you could win a Victorinox SwissFlash Laser 8GB Knife.

Our address is on page 4. For more info, visit www.victorinox.com



CHESS



Compiled by:
Carl Portman

This is it – my last column as a civil servant. I gave much consideration to what I would write and I thought I would talk about a young chap who I am coaching. He is eight years of age and loves chess.

His name is Seb and he wants to improve as a player and beat his best friend who plays against his father who is a strong player.

But Rome was not built in a day and Seb is only starting out on this journey to achieve his goal. He is bright, motivated and he can be very profound. I asked him what the middlegame was and in a flash he said 'it's where the pawns begin to realise their strength'. Wow, I didn't expect that.

It was in stark contrast to the elderly gentleman I am also coaching who wanted to give me a pawn for nothing in a game. When I asked him why he was doing this he said 'well it's only a pawn'. Both are right of course but as with life it is all a question of perspective. I hope that I am able to help my pupils to improve, and to make a positive difference in someone's life, no matter how small.

Last thought – FRITZ 13 is now on



sale so you need to drop subtle hints for Christmas if you want a gift that will make a big difference to your own chess game.

Study the following position from the game Felgaer – Sengupta (Gibraltar 2011). Black's queen is attacked but where's he going to put it?

Send your answers to me at carl.portman@hotmail.co.uk please. The brilliant prize is a copy of the DVD Tricks and Traps Vol. 1 (1.e4 openings) by GM Nigel Davies, kindly donated by Chessbase. Please visit www.chessbase.com

The answer to November's problem is 1.Bc6! and if bxc6 2.dxc6 Ne8 3.b5! and a pawn will promote. This and October's winner will be announced.

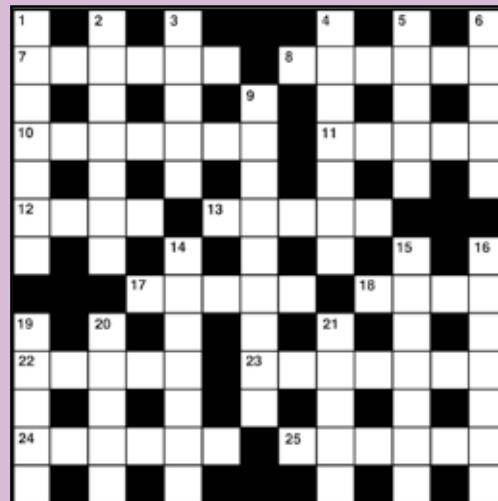
TOPICAL CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 7. Country hit by a deadly earthquake in October (6)
- 8. Another name for the rook in chess (6)
- 10. African country which held a free general election in October (7)
- 11. In the USA, the capital of Delaware (5)
- 12. Norse god of thunder (4)
- 13. The Duke of Edinburgh was born on this Greek island (5)
- 17. Actor who was sacked from the hit comedy series 'Two And A Half Men' (5)
- 18. See 5 Down
- 22. Room at the top of a house (5)
- 23. Republic of western Africa on the Atlantic (7)
- 24. Blue-violet colour (6)
- 25. New Zealand defeated this country in the final of the 2011 rugby union World Cup (6)

DOWN

- 1. Act passed by a legislative body (7)



SOLUTION (NO PEEKING)

Across
1. Statute 2. Castle 10. Tunisia 7. Turkey 8. Castile 11. Dover 2. Thore 13. Cofru 14. Balotelli 14. Chicago 15. Torrent 16. Escapes 16. David 20. Study 21. Abort 17. Shieen 18. Jobs 22. Arctic 23. Liberia 24. Indigo 25. France

Down
1. Room at the top of a house (5)
2. Actor who was sacked from the hit comedy series 'Two And A Half Men' (5)
3. Republic of western Africa on the Atlantic (7)
4. Blue-violet colour (6)
5. New Zealand defeated this country in the final of the 2011 rugby union World Cup (6)
6. Norse god of thunder (4)
7. Capital of Delaware (5)
8. Another name for the rook in chess (6)
9. Country hit by a deadly earthquake in October (6)
10. In the USA, the capital of Delaware (5)
11. Room for reading and working in (5)
12. African country which held a free general election in October (7)
13. See 10 Down
14. And 6 Down. American Football team which defeated the Tampa Bay Buccaneers at Wembley in October (7,5)
15. Turbulent, swift-flowing stream (7)
16. Breaks free from prison (7)
17. Manchester United (9)
18. See 14 Down
19. Cameron, the politician who recently had a backbench revolt over Europe (5)
20. Striker who scored Manchester City's first two goals in their 6-1 thrashing of

A TOUCH OF HOTEL HEAVEN



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WIN A PS3 AND GAME

their power, and you live the life to show for it.

The latest game sees the Saints as the kings of Stilwater, but their celebrity status has not gone unnoticed. The Syndicate, a legendary criminal fraternity with pawns in play all over the globe, has turned its eye on the Saints and demands tribute.

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Saints Row®: The Third™ is now available to buy for the PlayStation®3 computer entertainment system, Xbox 360® video game and entertainment system from Microsoft, and Windows PC. For more information visit www.thq.com

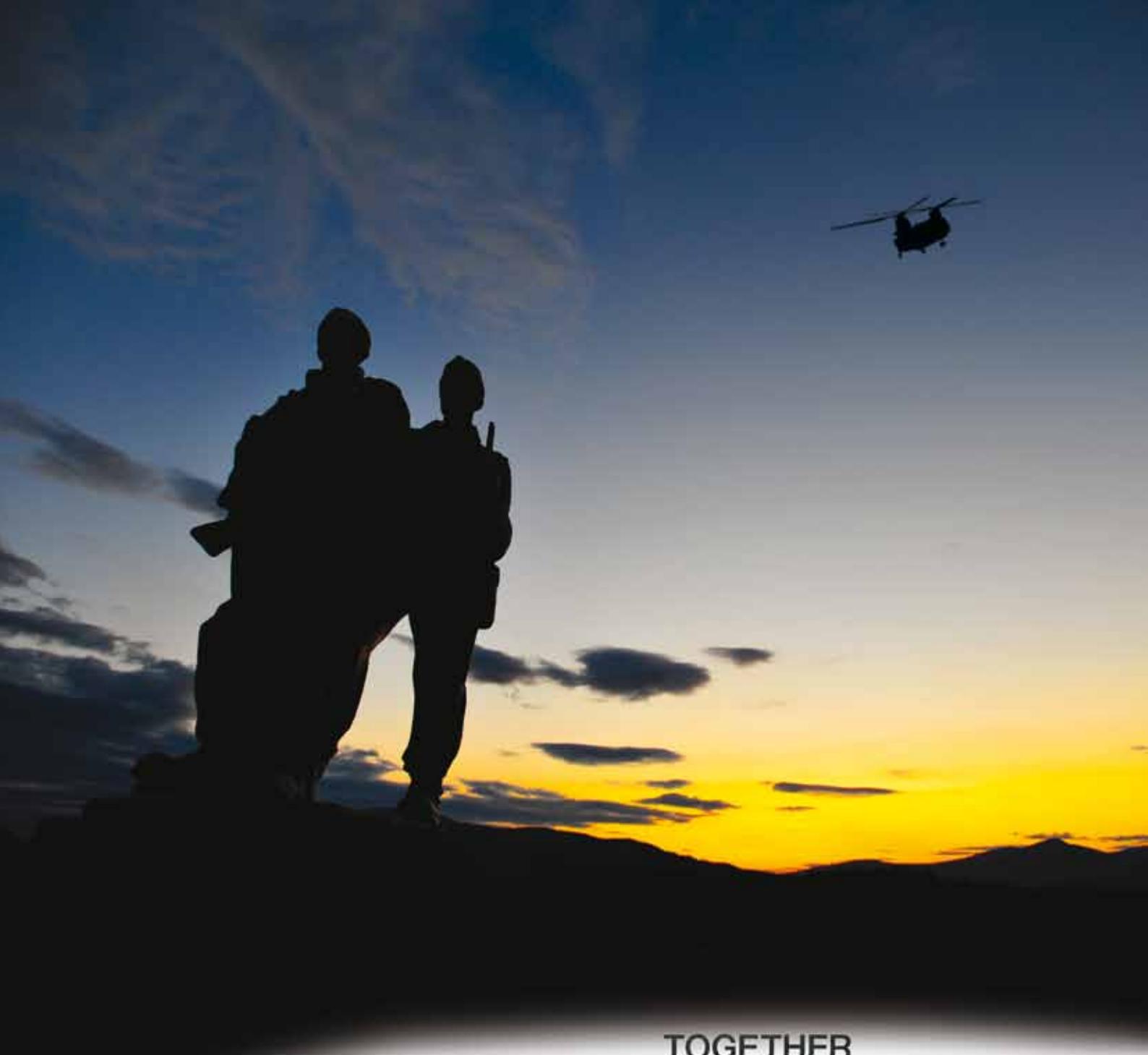
One lucky reader can now win a PlayStation®3 console and a copy of Saints Row®: The Third™.

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