

AFGHANISTAN'S TRANSITION: READ P8 FOR THE NEXT STEPS

# DefenceFocus

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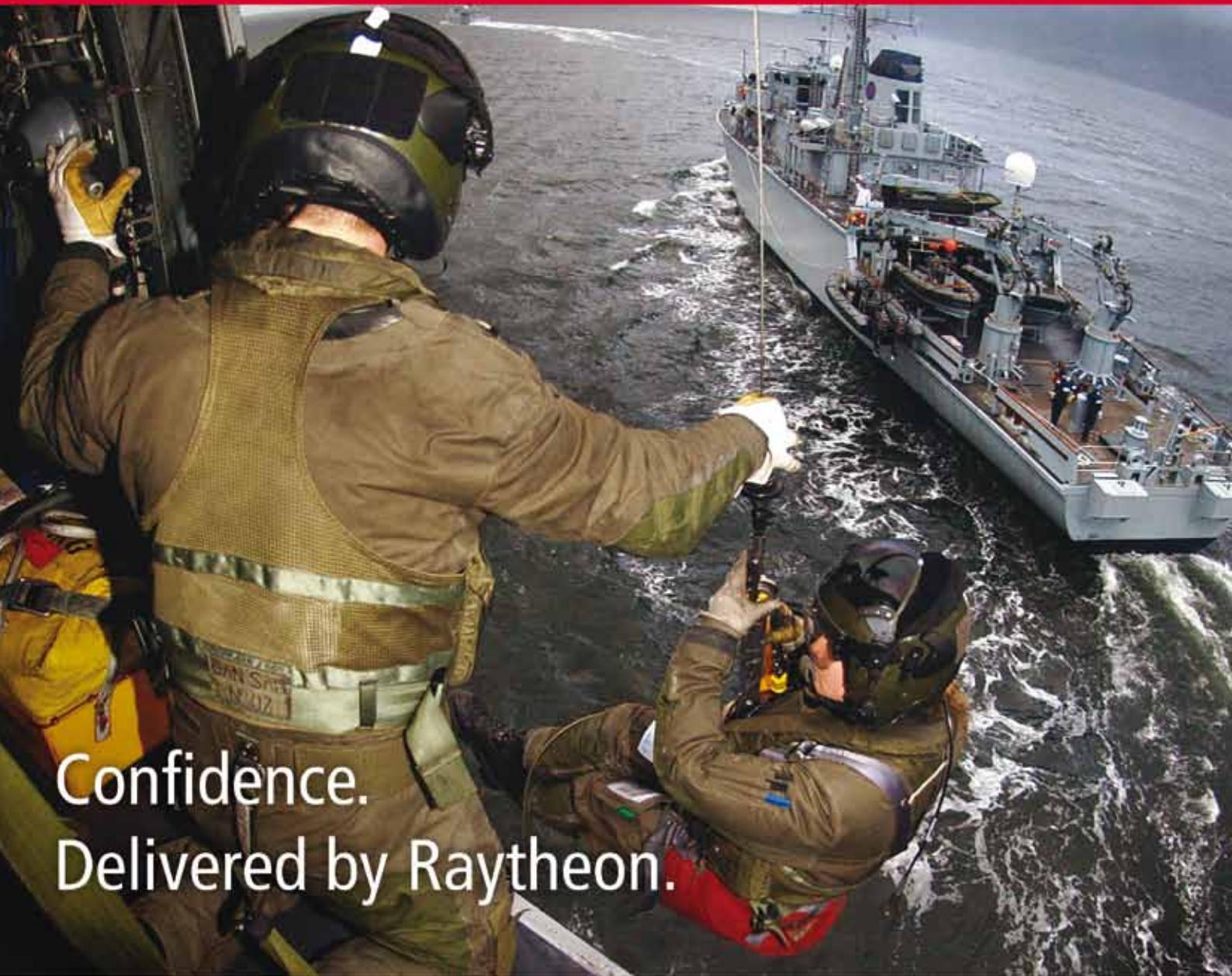


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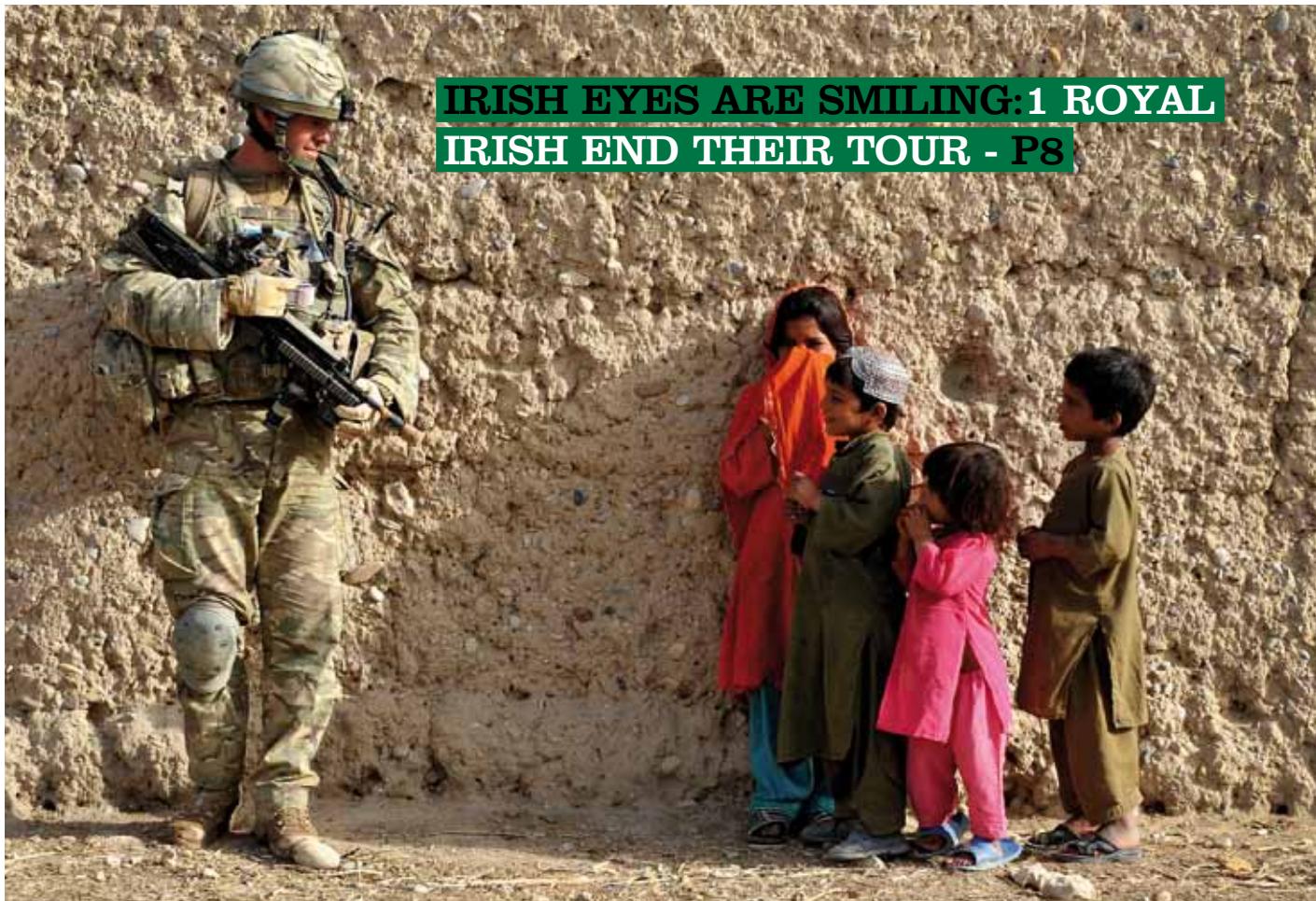
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**MANDY REYNOLDS**  
**AND DAN HARMER**

# EDITOR'S NOTE

## DefenceFocus

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Level 1 Zone C  
MOD, Main Building  
Whitehall  
London SW1A 2HB  
General enquiries: 02072181320

**EDITOR:** Danny Chapman  
Tel: 02072183949  
email: danny.chapman709@mod.uk

**ASSISTANT EDITOR:** Ian Carr  
Tel: 02072182825  
email: carr\_ian@btconnect.com

**ASSISTANT EDITOR:** Leigh Hamilton  
Tel: 02072185988  
email: leigh.hamilton933@mod.uk

**ASSISTANT EDITOR:** Lorraine McBride  
Tel: 02072182341  
email: lorraine\_mcbride@btconnect.com

**ASSISTANT EDITOR:** Tristan Kelly  
Tel: 02072184252  
email: tristan.kelly569@mod.uk

**ART EDITOR:** Mark Eagle  
Tel: 02072183658  
email: designer\_defencefocus@btconnect.com

**DISTRIBUTION AND SUPPORT:** Shell Daruwala  
Tel: 02072181320  
email: shell.daruwala932@mod.uk

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## IAN CARR

I particularly enjoyed Brigadier James Chiswell's answer during a Q+A session recently. After his media briefing on the successes of 16 Air Assault's six-month tour in Nad 'Ali (read more on p 8 - 9) he was asked by... well, let's just say a reporter: "How are your soldiers feeling now that all the news seems to be about Libya? Are they demoralised that Afghanistan seems to have been forgotten about?"

The Brigadier's swift reply was enjoyed by all: "Well, I can tell you that as far as

we in the Armed Forces are concerned, Afghanistan is still our main effort, and morale is high. I would just say that if there seems to have been a dip in interest that's just among the media."

A fair point, and one which is addressed on our Podium page (p 14) by The Sun's new Defence Editor, Virginia Wheeler.

Getting the MOD's message across is a challenge, and on pages 16 and 17 our outgoing Director of Media and Comms explains how we try to balance what's happening in Afghanistan with announcements about defence reviews and organisational changes.

This month we go to France to see UK troops trying out our European colleague's training facilities (p 12), and to Wootton Bassett (p 22) for a fond farewell to the town that cares.

And how could we miss the event of a lifetime, the Royal Wedding? Well I'll be missing it by going on holiday to Transylvania, but for the rest, we take a look at how the Armed Forces prepare for their part in the pageant (p 25).

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# IN MEMORIAM

DEATHS ON OPERATIONS – 17 MARCH TO 14 APRIL 2011



## Private Daniel Prior

**Private Daniel Steven Prior, from 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment, was wounded by an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan on 16 March and died of his wounds in the UK on Friday 18 March 2011. He was in Afghanistan with D Company,**

2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment, based at Patrol Base 1 in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand province. He was injured on patrol and despite medical care in theatre and in the UK, he died on 18 March 2011 in the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine, Queen Elizabeth NHS Hospital, Birmingham. Born in Brighton

on 31 December 1983, he went to Tideway school in Newhaven. His hometown was Peacehaven, but he lived in Colchester with his wife Emily and their newborn son Logan. The Army said Private Prior had a very bright future ahead of him. He had been identified as one of the next tranche of Non-Commissioned Officers to be trained.



## Major Matthew James Collins

**Major Matthew James Collins died alongside Lance Sergeant Mark Terence Burgan, both from the 1st Battalion Irish Guards, on Wednesday 23 March 2011. They were killed by an improvised explosive device**

after an operation in support of an Afghan National Army Company to disrupt insurgent activity in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand province. Major Collins, aged 38, was from Backwell in Somerset. He was commissioned into the 1st Battalion Irish Guards in August 1996 and took part in operations all over the world

with the Battalion. Major Collins was passionate about his family. He spoke often of his wife, Lucy, his daughter, Freya, and his son, Charlie. The Army said his professional excellence and natural intelligence made a significant improvement to the operational capability of the soldiers and officers he advised.



## Lance Sergeant Mark Terence Burgan

**Lance Sergeant Mark Terence Burgan died alongside Major Matthew Collins on Wednesday 23 March 2011. They were killed by an improvised explosive device after an operation in support of an Afghan National Army**

Company to disrupt insurgent activity in Helmand province. Lance Sergeant Burgan, aged 28, came from Liverpool, and joined the 1st Battalion Irish Guards in 1999. He served on Operations in Northern Ireland, Iraq, and Afghanistan. He rose to the rank of Lance Sergeant, joined the Battalion Signals Platoon, becoming

a Signals Detachment Commander. He was described as an extremely talented junior commander who genuinely loved his job. His commanding officers said he was a man his subordinates strove to emulate. He leaves behind his wife, Leanne, as well as his parents, Terry and Rita, and sisters, Laura, Kate and Jayne.



## Colour Sergeant Alan Cameron

**Colour Sergeant Alan Cameron from 1st Battalion Scots Guards died on 31 March 2011 as a result of wounds he received in Afghanistan on 13 April 2010. Colour Sergeant Cameron received serious head injuries when he**

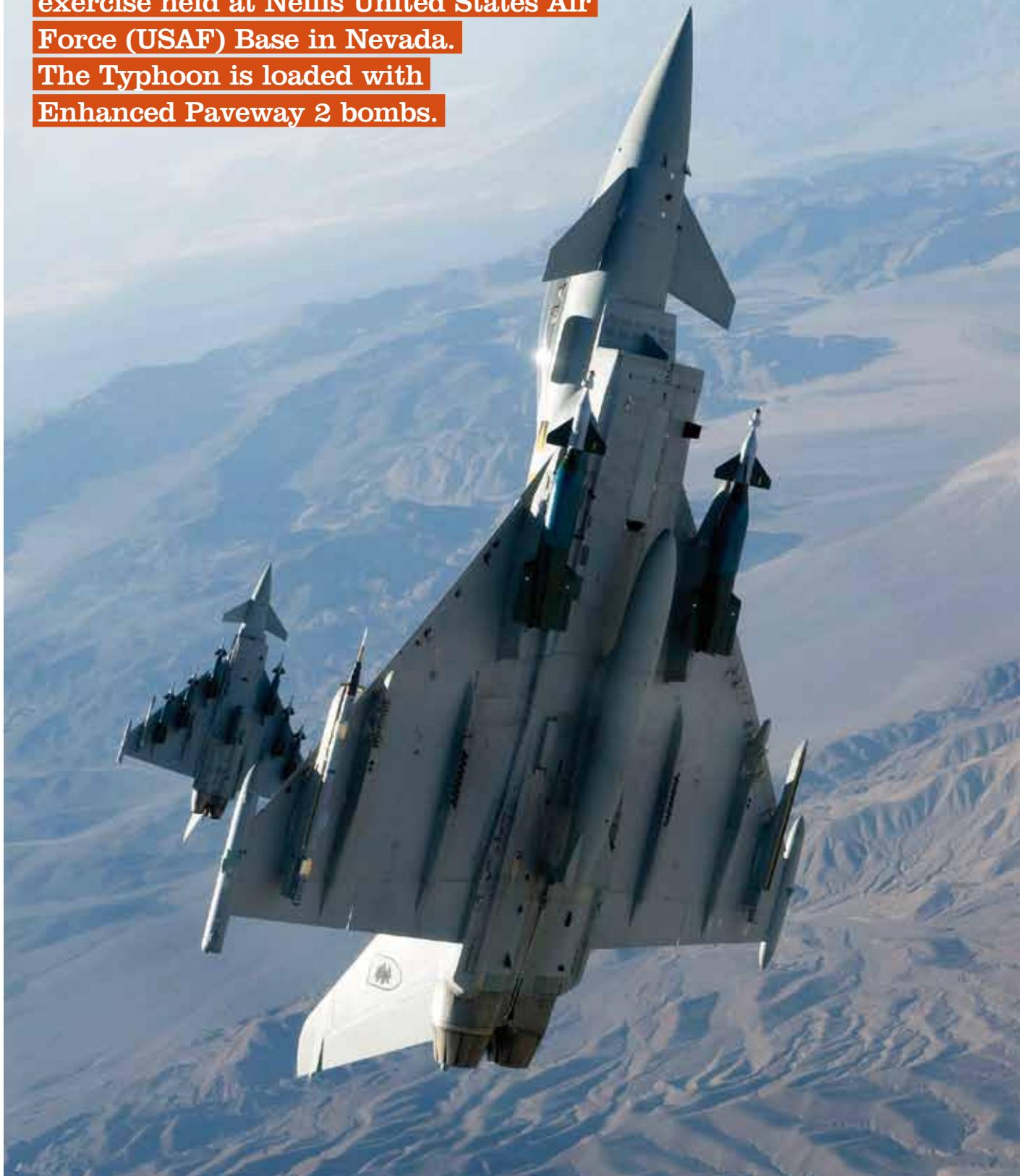
was struck by an improvised explosive device while on foot patrol north of Lashkar Gah on 13 April 2010. He succumbed to his wounds and died suddenly at home in Livingston, Scotland, on 31 March 2011. He was 42. Colour Sergeant Cameron, or 'Cammy' as he was known, had been making a good recovery from his wounds

after undergoing a number of difficult operations. The post-mortem found that his death was directly attributable to the injuries he suffered last year. His family said he was passionate about Army life and as a very experienced, professional soldier, he loved the challenges that come with an operational environment.

**TYPHOON TRAJECTORY**

Picture: Geoffrey Lee, Planefocus Ltd

**RAF XI Squadron Typhoon  
on detachment at Green Flag, a major  
exercise held at Nellis United States Air  
Force (USAF) Base in Nevada.  
The Typhoon is loaded with  
Enhanced Paveway 2 bombs.**





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# ROYAL IRISH RETURN

**HOME FROM THEIR TOUR IN NAD 'ALI (SOUTH), 1ST BATTALION THE ROYAL IRISH REGIMENT PRAISE THEIR PARTNERS, THE AFGHAN SECURITY FORCES WRITES IAN CARR**

In a husky voice, raw not from celebratory pints of Guinness, but from recent homecoming parades, Lieutenant Colonel Colin Weir, Commanding Officer of 1st Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment, briefed members of the media. As part of 16 Air Assault Brigade, 1 ROYAL IRISH had just returned from their deployment to Nad 'Ali South, and the Colonel was keen to talk about their successes.

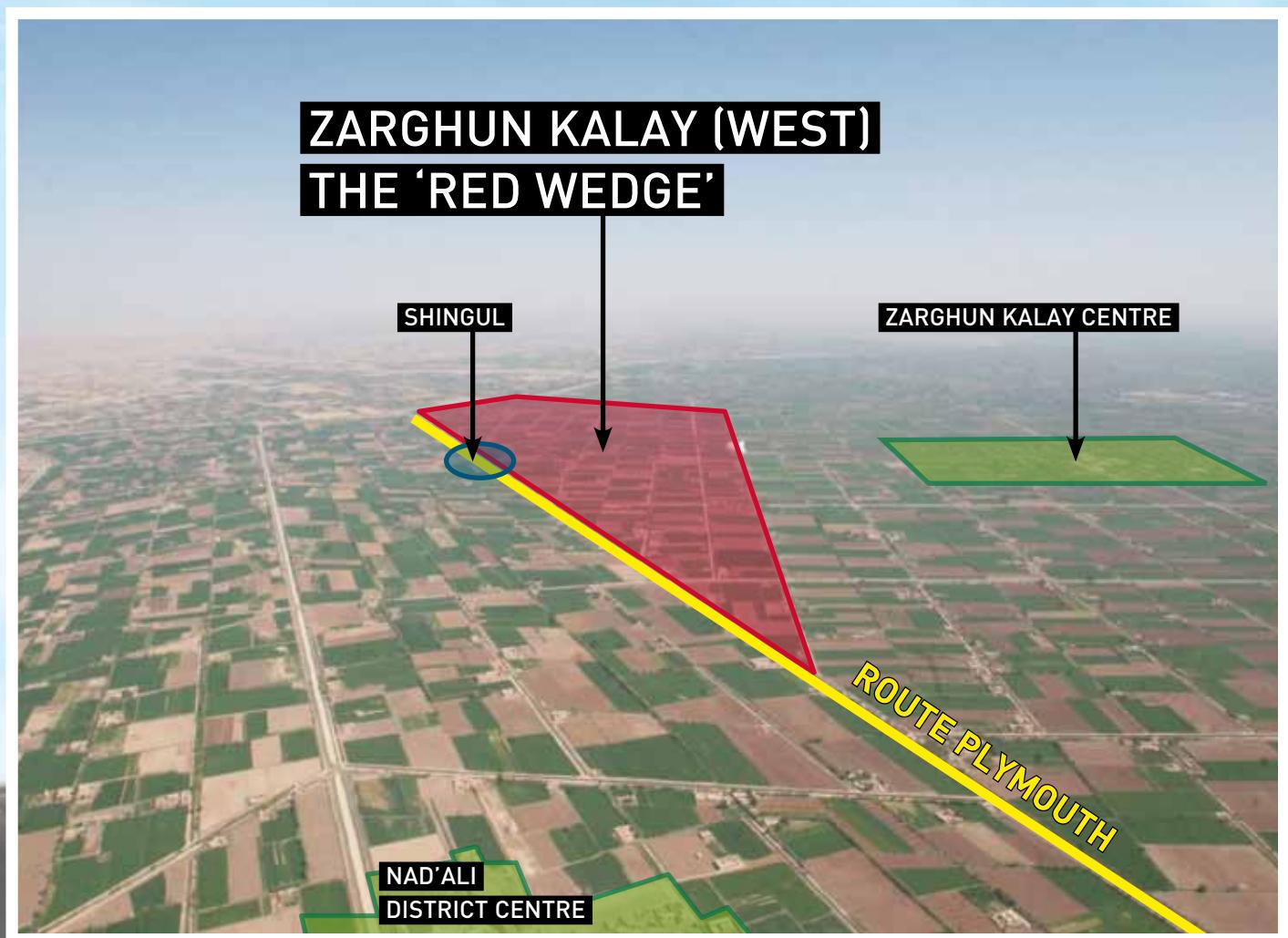
When the 1,000 men and women under his command arrived to form the core of Combined Force Nad 'Ali for Herrick 13, with a squadron of 2 Royal Tank Regiment to transport them around in the formidable Mastiff fighting vehicles, they and their coalition partners had one aim: "Whether we were British, American



or Afghan, we all wanted one thing," said Lieutenant Colonel Weir, "to help develop the people's confidence by providing them a secure enough space that their government could help them achieve a better life."

Although the efforts of preceding battle groups, such as the Grenadier Guards and the 1st Battalion Duke of Lancasters' Regiment, had forced the Taliban out of the northern part of Zarghun Kalay, there was still a thorn in the side of the district – a Taliban sanctuary known as the Red Wedge. It was a thorn 1 R IRISH were determined to remove. "When we arrived, thanks to ISAF and the Afghan Security Forces there was a bustling bazaar, a clinic, and a strong police presence.

## ZARGHUN KALAY (WEST) THE 'RED WEDGE'



"The constant refrain from adults was that they wanted the roads opened so they could take their produce to other bazaars and so that they could reach the district centre. And the refrain from the children was that they wanted schools."

However, some of the outlying areas were not yet secure, and worst of all was the Red Wedge, a triangle driven into the north of 1 ROYAL IRISH's operational area. "Check Point Shingul is barely 2.5 kms from the centre of Zarghun Kalay, and it was under attack every day. The fighting was intense, the enemy were capable; hard core out-of-area fighters who demonstrated that they were adept at command and control and small unit tactics," said Colonel Weir. That no soldiers were killed, Weir puts down to the quality of the training and kit: "In particular the new Osprey body armour."

In effect, Shingul was cut off from Zarghun Kalay and the enemy had the local population in its grip. Insurgents were using the wedge as a staging post from which to launch attacks into the district centre and to plant IEDs, especially along the main route, Route Plymouth.

"Until we removed that threat, the government could not move forward in any real way. The ultimate aim was to connect the people physically and psychologically to their government," said Weir.

The District Governor wanted the Red Wedge cleared and 1 ROYAL IRISH were happy to oblige. It was their first major operation and would take a month. On two occasions with the Afghan National Army (ANA) taking the lead, 100 British and ANA troops were inserted at night by helicopter into the heartland of the enemy. Although it was the first of their aerial operations, it was by no means their last. The largest took

place at the end of their tour in an area to the south of Nad'Ali on the boundary of Marjah and involved the insertion of huge numbers of troops using 15 helicopters in a combined air and land manoeuvre operation.

Having cleared the area, the enemy were held off while a check point was established.

"Our partners the ANA unit took on this most difficult task securing the western edge of the Red Wedge, forcing open the route and employing its newly trained CIED experts," said Colonel Weir.

The newly constructed police check point meant that Route Plymouth could be kept open, and access to the district government maintained.

"The District Governor and members of his ministry came to meet the people rather than waiting for the people to come to them. They listened to the issues and things began to happen." Almost immediately shops began to spring up everywhere with agricultural equipment distributed and irrigation ditches cleared.

"It also served to introduce the people to their new police force," said Colonel Weir. "People had been sceptical at first, believing they would be the same as the old police force, but the output of the Helmand Police Training Centre showed them that the new police force was markedly different."

Keen to give his ANA partners their full due, Colonel Weir said, "Afghans did all of this work. Afghans secured this area. We assisted them, but by the time we established the check point we were very much in the background. Since the op finished there have been no direct fire engagements in the area Zarghun Kalay (W), and only a handful of IEDs have been laid."

In February Zarghun Kalay was handed over to Afghans to take the security lead thus releasing ISAF soldiers to operate in higher risk areas and to concentrate on mentoring the Afghan Army and Police.

In a voice now even huskier, Colonel Weir said, "The ANA and the ANP are more than capable of looking after themselves now. And, they are more than capable of looking after their people." **DF**

**Safety area: 1 R IRISH's mission was to chase the Taliban out of the Red Wedge**

**"The check point was under attack every day"**

# COMBATING CYBER ATTACKS

AFTER LAST YEAR'S SDSR, MOD'S CONTRIBUTION TO CYBER SECURITY IS PROGRESSING APACE. TRISTAN KELLY REPORTS



**A**s part of last year's Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) the Prime Minister announced that our ability to detect and defend against cyber attacks would be crucial to our national security, so important in fact that it was elevated to a 'Tier 1' threat alongside issues such as terrorism and international military crises.

Since then, work to embed the culture of operating in cyberspace across the Defence community has been taking place in earnest with the Defence Cyber Security Programme set up to drive the necessary changes. Now, under the leadership of Major General Jonathon Shaw, Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (Global Issues), work on the programme is moving apace and the Cyber Security Policy team was stood up in Main Building on 1 April 2011 to develop unified and integrated response to the threat of cyber attack.

The timeliness of the initiative is not lost on David Ferbrache, the senior civil servant heading the policy team, "We were seeing a major increase in the threats to our national security through cyber space," he said. He cited cyber crime, cyber espionage, and growing concerns about broader issues like dependency on information systems, terrorist use or cyber attack downstream, as the main drivers for increased focus on the area. Indeed, in a speech last year Armed Forces Minister Nick Harvey observed that the cyber threat is not only a risk area emanating from traditional state organised forces, but also lends itself perfectly to the 'asymmetric' methods of warfare favoured by terrorist groups and insurgencies.

The question of particular resonance to Defence is how would these developments in cyber space shape the nature of future defence operations – both the opportunities and also potential threats of disruption?

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However, countering this relatively new threat also entails new resources and £650m was allocated for the national strategy with some £90m of that earmarked for Defence. This will be used for the mainstreaming of cyber into Defence business; improved cyber education and awareness in the department; and the development of aspects of cyber capability for Defence purposes.

"What CDS is driving for is to get cyber into the mainstream of how we do operations and planning for the future," said Ferbrache. "So in the past you would have had air, land and maritime but what he is trying to get to is a point where commanders actually think about cyber space as an operating domain in a similar way. For example, they may say, 'what might people be doing to us through cyberspace as this military action unfolds and what are the opportunities for us to also influence and in some cases disrupt their systems and capabilities as well?'"

That is seen as quite a fundamental shift as in the past, for example, contingency planning would be focused mostly around one particular joint operational area and those contingency plans would emphasise on the use of physical forces - aircraft, ships etc. Increasingly commanders must now assume people will do things to us through cyber space as that operation unfolds.

Of course, the MOD does not have sole responsibility for national security. There is a desire to further link up with other agencies such as GCHQ so their capabilities are fed into military operational planning, both in the defence of our own systems and sometimes to be able to influence external systems through cyber space in future as well.

"The intent is not to grow a large cyber capability inside the MOD, but is to make a Defence contribution to the national capability," Ferbrache explains.

However, MOD does have a critical part to play and the funding announced in the SDSR will see the creation of a large number of new posts in Defence, drawn from all three services as well as civilians.

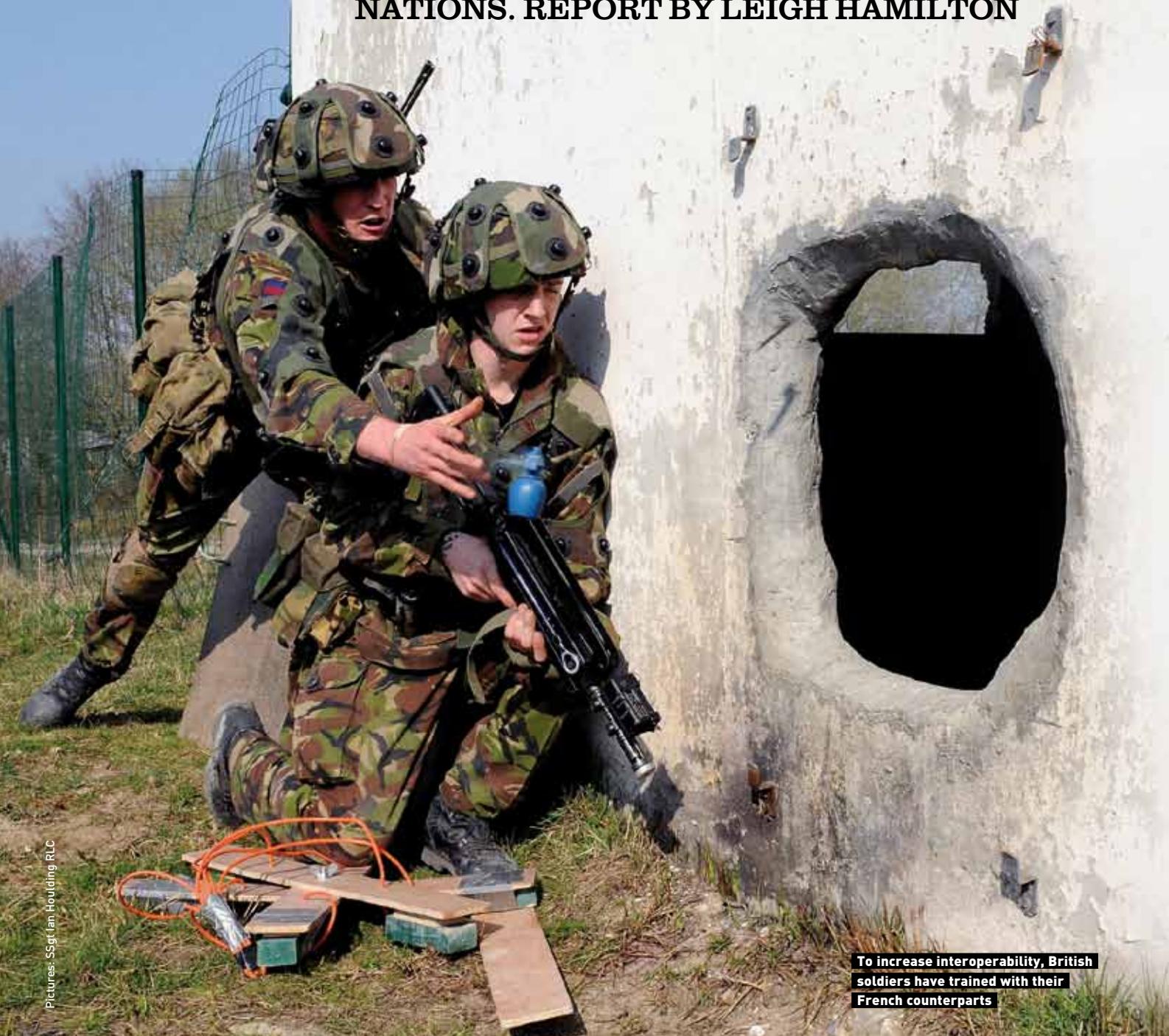
"It's a national effort so what we are not doing is replicating posts with skills we can get elsewhere," Ferbrache said. Surprisingly there will be relatively few technical specialists in the total number, rather what recruiters are looking to find people who can link cyber capabilities to Defence systems and problems.

"You will find people who are good planners, people who understand military systems and their operation, including the ways in which they can be degraded and what we might do to counter that. You will find people who can act as the translators between technical specialists and operational commanders in Defence."

The locations of these posts will be geographically dispersed, with many of them embedded directly into GCHQ's headquarters in Cheltenham, while some will be in the Global Operations Security and Control centre in Corsham. Others will be embedded in the operational headquarters themselves; PJHQ and downstream in deployed headquarters, with individuals here acting as the commander's cyber expert or advisor on the ground. Over the next four years it is envisaged that whole new career structures in Defence will be developed to support this work, and to recognise the growing importance of cyberspace to the future of defence and security.

# TRADING

TO INCREASE INTEROPERABILITY BETWEEN FRENCH AND UK TROOPS, RECIPROCAL TRAINING HAS BEGUN BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS. REPORT BY LEIGH HAMILTON



To increase interoperability, British soldiers have trained with their French counterparts

# PLACES

**N**estled in the northern French countryside is CENZUB, one of the French Army's training camps which specialises in fighting in a built up area (FIBUA), which comes complete with tailor-made mock-residential areas to provide as realistic an experience as possible.

The camp, on the outskirts of Sissonne, played host to 106 soldiers from No 1 Company Coldstream Guards in March 2011, as the British troops made history by becoming the first to train with the French Army since the defence co-operation treaty between the two nations was announced in November 2010.

Exercise Gaulish saw the Coldstream Guards undertake two weeks of intensive training which encompassed counter-IED skills as well as offensive and defensive missions, and took place in the camp's two purpose-built training residential areas.

Beausejour, the smaller of the residential areas, comprises three roads and several small houses, whereas the larger - Jeoffrecourt - has been developed to imitate a much bigger city and features a river as well as different districts.

As well as the life-like towns, CENZUB boasts Municourt - an area used specifically for counter-IED training. In addition, there is another area for crowd control training and an urban firing range which is currently undergoing an experimental phase before being used as a full training area.

During the First World War, the camp housed 50,000 French military personnel and morphed into a training facility in 2004 to encourage visits from foreign troops, with the aim of sharing experiences.

Since the defence co-operation announcement last year, the Guardsmen are the first UK troops to capitalise on the partnership by sharing knowledge in a bid to increase interoperability and according to CENZUB's Colonel Legrand, the Coldstream Guards are extremely welcome:

"I am very pleased to welcome the

British troops here," he said. "What is very interesting is that we can share interoperability, although between the two cultures there are often limitations so it's interesting to discover what those limits are.

"I told the French and British company commanders when they arrived that they should share what they can. The French unit here should be committed to Afghanistan within the next year, and so they are very interested in the experience of the British unit in Afghanistan."

The first part of the two-week training programme saw the British troops being taught lessons by French Army instructors to outline their approach to FIBUA. To overcome language differences, an English speaking French instructor interpreted during the lessons.

During the second week of the training, the soldiers took to Jeoffrecourt to carry out a full Field Training Exercise and implement the French instructions they learned during the previous days.

The language barrier wasn't the only obstacle the troops had to negotiate, with differing Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) also proving challenging.

Colonel Legrand said:

"Around 75 per cent of our TTPs are the same, which is quite logical. 25 per cent are different and that is the most interesting thing for us, being able to share experiences to develop more

interoperability, it means that we will be ready to work together and be ready to use British support for French units or French support for British units.

"We're impressed with the aggressiveness of the British troops. One of our goals is to develop aggressiveness with our French soldiers, so it is good to see the British doing it."

But, what was the experience really like for the soldiers taking part?

Lance Corporal Andrew Ryder No 1 Coy Coldstream Guards said:

"It's been quite hard learning their skills because although they're similar to ours, they are different in some ways. We're just trying to put their skills into practice and not do the ones that have been drilled into us."

Guardsman Nathan Idonga, Coldstream Guards, said:

"There are slight differences. Us soldiers, we always believe in what we do and we always believe that what we're doing is right. The French Army has their methods of doing things but the objective is the same, so if it works for them that's good. Fair play to them."

"I actually expected more of a difference between the two ways of working than I've found."

The focus on improving interoperability between the two nations seemed to reign supreme in the list of priorities for both countries.

Major Oliver Biggs, Company Commander of No 1 Coy Coldstream Guards said:

"We're in France, we're using French weapons, we're being taught by French instructors and working alongside French troops gives us an international aspect."

"We've got the opportunity to practice in a new training environment, so there's the novelty factor and there's nothing quite like this in the UK."

"It also offers something that we're keen to develop, which is a step away from Afghan specific training: we're not in mission specific training for Afghanistan, so it gives us a chance to broaden our perspective on the character of conflict, particularly in an urban environment."

As part of the co-operation agreement last year, this relationship between the French and British armies is a reciprocal one, so we should very soon be welcoming troops from France into one of our own training establishments. Let's hope we can impress them as much as it seems they've impressed us. **DP**



French Army instructors gave lessons to the British soldiers



Roving reporter: The Sun's Defence editor in Haiti

# LIBYA IN THE LIMELIGHT

## OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN REMAINS TOP PRIORITY BUT IT'S NO SURPRISE THAT LIBYA HAS HIJACKED THE HEADLINES

By Virginia Wheeler,  
Defence Editor,  
The Sun

It has been just over a month since the United Nations passed a resolution to impose a no-fly zone in Libyan airspace.

Heightening international outrage to Colonel Gaddafi's violent suppression of his people culminated in the first ground-rattling air attacks by British jets on a new country in almost a decade.

As a backdrop, the sudden eruption of civil war, the defiance of dictator-at-large Gaddafi, NATO members' political positioning, and musical-chairs fortunes of the rebel army have seemingly swallowed the reporting of other global events in their path. Added to this, a growing humanitarian crisis bangs at the gates. As I write, Gaddafi's troops pound the besieged city of Misrata, with doctors

in the hospital reporting more than 1,000 civilian deaths in the past few weeks alone.

Unsurprisingly, the British media have apportioned vast swathes of column inches to events in Libya.

Commentators vie and hold forth on whether coalition bombing will protract and entrench the conflict; whether regime change is possible within the guidelines set down by the UN resolution.

Despite initial surface similarities between Afghanistan and Libya - both campaigns were seemingly rushed into after being triggered by unforeseen events: 9/11 for the former, Gaddafi's violent crackdowns and the surrounding of Benghazi in the latter - military action in Libya is

highly unlikely to resemble Afghanistan in scope or scale. Still, in early April, David Miliband spoke out on the fear of our Armed Forces' main focus – that of Afghanistan – becoming a "forgotten conflict" as the spotlight shifts to the uprisings and political change of Africa and the Middle East.

But this inevitable attention – although appearing to push Afghanistan off the news agenda – cannot be attributed solely to the substitution of one military-based "story" for another.

It is undeniable that, by their very nature, newspapers and broadcasters have a multilateral approach to events dominating the global and domestic interest.

Therefore, from a news standpoint, Libya and Afghanistan must fall within this framework alongside recent events in Japan, the Ivory Coast, Royal weddings and the bite of austerity measures. But this doesn't tell the whole story.

A perceived spring lull in column inches and television news bulletin-minutes with regards to Afghanistan is, in many ways, seasonally typical and furthermore, a positive sign that the generals' stance of "cautious optimism" is an accurate viewpoint.

## **The absence of front page stories on disasters in Afghanistan should be a good thing**

So often the fulcrum around which reporting of Afghanistan pivots is that of Allied lives lost and mistakes made. Since allied jets launched operations in Libya, four British lives have been lost in Afghanistan.

All have been reported and will continue to be. But the absence of front page stories on disasters in Afghanistan should be a good thing.

The current phase of the conflict is that of steadfast and diligent training of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police.

Real gains in this endeavour – and of the counter-insurgency strategy adopted by NATO two years ago – are expected to be seen this summer.

Generals are right to be cautious – but this can be reflected by cautious press.

If tangible signs show that we have turned a corner in the conflict – with transition in areas like Lashkar Gar an emerging success – then Afghanistan will once again dominate the headlines. And this time it will be as a good news story. 

# VITAL NUMBERS

## THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT THERE READY TO HELP YOU

**RN Benevolent Trust:** Grants, advice and income supplements for veterans. Call 0239 2690112 or email [rnb@rnbt.org.uk](mailto:rnb@rnbt.org.uk).

**RN Association:** Comradeship for all serving and ex-service members of the RN, RM, QARNNS, WRNS, Reserves, RFA and RNNS. [www.royal-naval-association.co.uk](http://www.royal-naval-association.co.uk)

**Royal Marines Benevolent Fund:** Relieves hardship among serving and former Marines and dependents. [www.royalmarinescharities@charity.vfree.com](http://www.royalmarinescharities@charity.vfree.com) or call 02392 547201.

**ABF The Soldiers Charity:** Support to soldiers and veterans. [www.soldierscharity.org](http://www.soldierscharity.org) or call 0845 241 4820.

**RAF Benevolent Fund:** Help for RAF personnel past and present. [www.rafbf.org](http://www.rafbf.org) or call 0800 1692942.

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

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

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

**HIVE:** Tri-Service information covering issues like education and health. 167 offices. [www.hive.mod.uk](http://www.hive.mod.uk).

**Royal British Legion:** Charity providing financial, social and emotional support to vets and serving, and dependents. [www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk) or call 08457 725 725.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Service Complaints Commissioner:** To make a complaint or seek advice, contact: [SCC@armedforcescomplaints.independent.gov.uk](mailto:SCC@armedforcescomplaints.independent.gov.uk)



# TOP STORY

## HOW DOES MOD GET ITS MESSAGE OUT? IAN CARR SPOKE TO OUTGOING DIRECTOR OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS, NICK GURR

**I**T'S NOT every day you get to quiz your boss and ask, "what do you do all day?" I was going to do just that. About to move on, having just completed his second stint in the Directorate Media and Communications (DMC), the last three-and-a-half years as director, Nick Gurr (pictured above) was game to go on the record. So what should be my opening gambit?

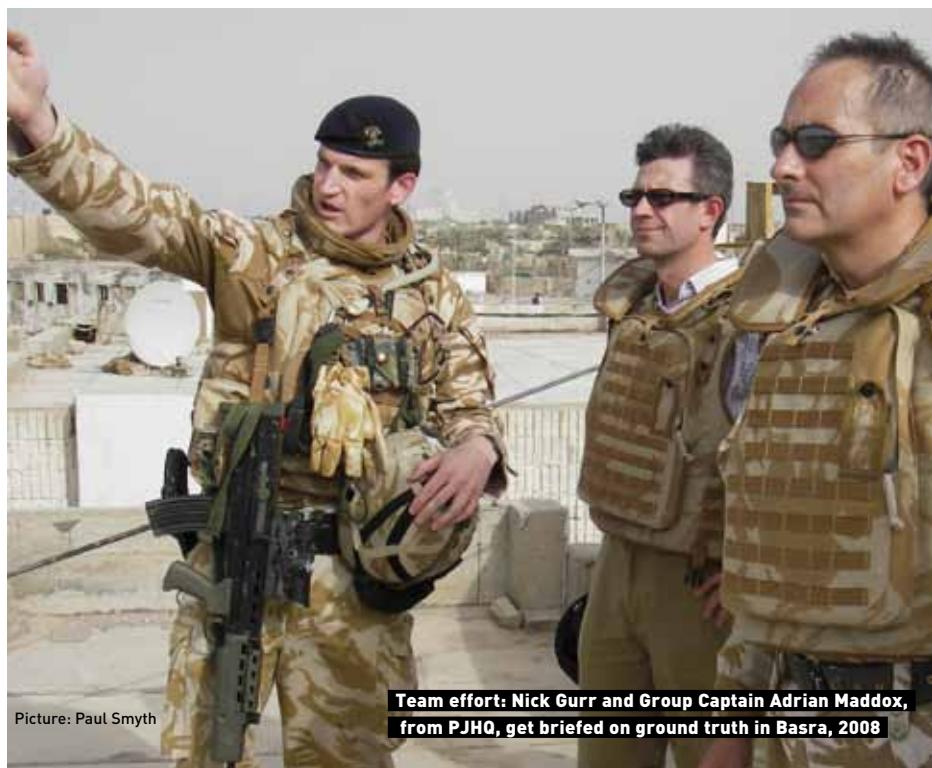
"I'm keen to get across three things Ian," he says straight away. "The breadth of things we do here, that it's a civil / military effort from top to bottom and that it's about the Armed Forces AND ministers."

It's perhaps no surprise that as MOD's outgoing head of profession for communications, Gurr knows what message he wants to get across. So let's start there then.

"I think when you mention DMC to people in defence they think press office. But that only accounts for around 20 people out of a team of 170," he says. I can feel a list coming on.

"We do internal comms so *Defence Focus* and the web news have important roles. There are also the single Service websites, the speechwriters writing for the ministers, Service public relations, and we do research so we know what the public are thinking about what we are doing. And of course there's the Defence Media Operations Centre, a truly joint civil – military capability training people in media and comms that can rapidly deploy that expertise when needed."

Of course, a major part of the work nowadays is handling the comms directly in support of operations, particularly Afghanistan. It's not easy doing that justice while penetrating the bombs and bullets with all the other important things that are going on in defence. "We have significant announcements to make about how we are organised, or maybe a base closure or a new piece of equipment for example. Things that impact upon people up and down the country. We've got to make sure all that sort of thing is given due weight, in just the same way as news stories that might be



Picture: Paul Smyth

**Team effort:** Nick Gurr and Group Captain Adrian Maddox, from PJHQ, get briefed on ground truth in Basra, 2008

dominating the agenda," says Gurr.

Sitting at the apex of a profession of defence communicators, most of whom do not work directly for him, the Director of DMC must try and ensure that defence communicators across the board are moving in the right direction. Which means having to constantly prioritise and set the agenda about where the organisation needs to put its effort and that the internal and external channels are joined up.

The role of a government department's comms team is to explain government policy, issues and events to the public says the Government Communications Network. Gurr's last 12 months as director included the formation of a coalition government, a strategic defence review, defence cuts and the 10th anniversary of being in Afghanistan. How have we done explaining the issues surrounding that?

"One of the things we have done

over the last two to three years is bring a much sharper focus to the way we communicate and organise our comms in support of operations. The way the conflict in Afghanistan is perceived at home and abroad is as important in achieving success in that mission as people firing guns," answers Gurr. He accepts that explaining to the public about why we are there has been tough. "It's our job to communicate the truth. One of the struggles you have if you are a communicator is if people are sceptical about what you have to say."

Gurr believes that as the mission became properly resourced and real progress was made, so communicating the issues became easier. "Is it all now plain sailing? No it's still going to be a hard struggle to explain to people why Afghanistan matters. But we are in a much better place than we were," he says.

Drawing on research carried out by

DMC Gurr backs up this claim with facts. The favourability rating of the Armed Forces among the public is more than 80 per cent, "as high if not higher than any other institution in the land." The last poll showed that MOD's favourability rating was at about 56 per cent, much higher than that achieved by most government departments. Gurr believes that reflects how MOD benefits from its association with the Armed Forces. "I think the public realises that the Armed Forces couldn't achieve all that they have if they were part of an organisation that was as useless as the media sometimes would like to have you believe." That's quite an achievement if you feel, as Gurr does, that just a couple of years ago MOD was in real danger of losing public support for the mission in Afghanistan.

Keeping the communication process going during the elections within the constraints of Cabinet rules of purdah was challenging says Gurr. "We were at a very busy and critical time in Afghanistan, and we had to continue to tell the story in a way that wouldn't interfere with the election campaign. But we couldn't have a six-week gap where we were off air."

## "People are quick at times to criticise the media"

Maintaining the Armed Forces' reputation and using it to promote the work of MOD has been a central plank of Gurr's directorship.

The Sun's military awards, the Millies, have proved to be a valuable way of raising our profile. But not everyone was convinced to start with. "There was a degree of scepticism about it. People were worried it would impact on the gallantry awards system, and others felt it was inappropriate to get involved with an event sponsored by a tabloid newspaper." Gurr's view was simple, that this was a great opportunity to bring alive some of the amazing things we do through the pages of one of the UK's biggest selling newspapers. "Though we had to do a bit of walking the MOD corridors evangelising to make it happen," he says.



**Prince Harry on patrol in Helmand**

The Department's relationship with the press was once likened to two scorpions dancing round each other inside a ring of fire, but Gurr fervently believes that's outdated thinking. "When I came back to DMC in 2006 it struck me that there was no conversation going on with the media other than over individual stories. There was no debate about how we worked together, how we might provide a service for them, which might make things better for us."

Within six months he arranged a meeting with the press to sort it out. "It was a pretty brutal experience. There was a lot that both sides needed to get off their chests. But we've done this annually for the last four years and each time is better and more constructive than the last."

Maybe this healing process helped the brokering of an unprecedented deal between MOD and the media when Prince Harry deployed to Afghanistan. "People are quick at times to criticise the media, but they behaved incredibly responsibly throughout all of that. It was an extremely successful piece of cooperation." The deal was that in exchange for a media blackout, press embeds and embargoed interviews

## STORY SO FAR



■ Nick Gurr came to DMC as the air campaign in Kosovo was starting



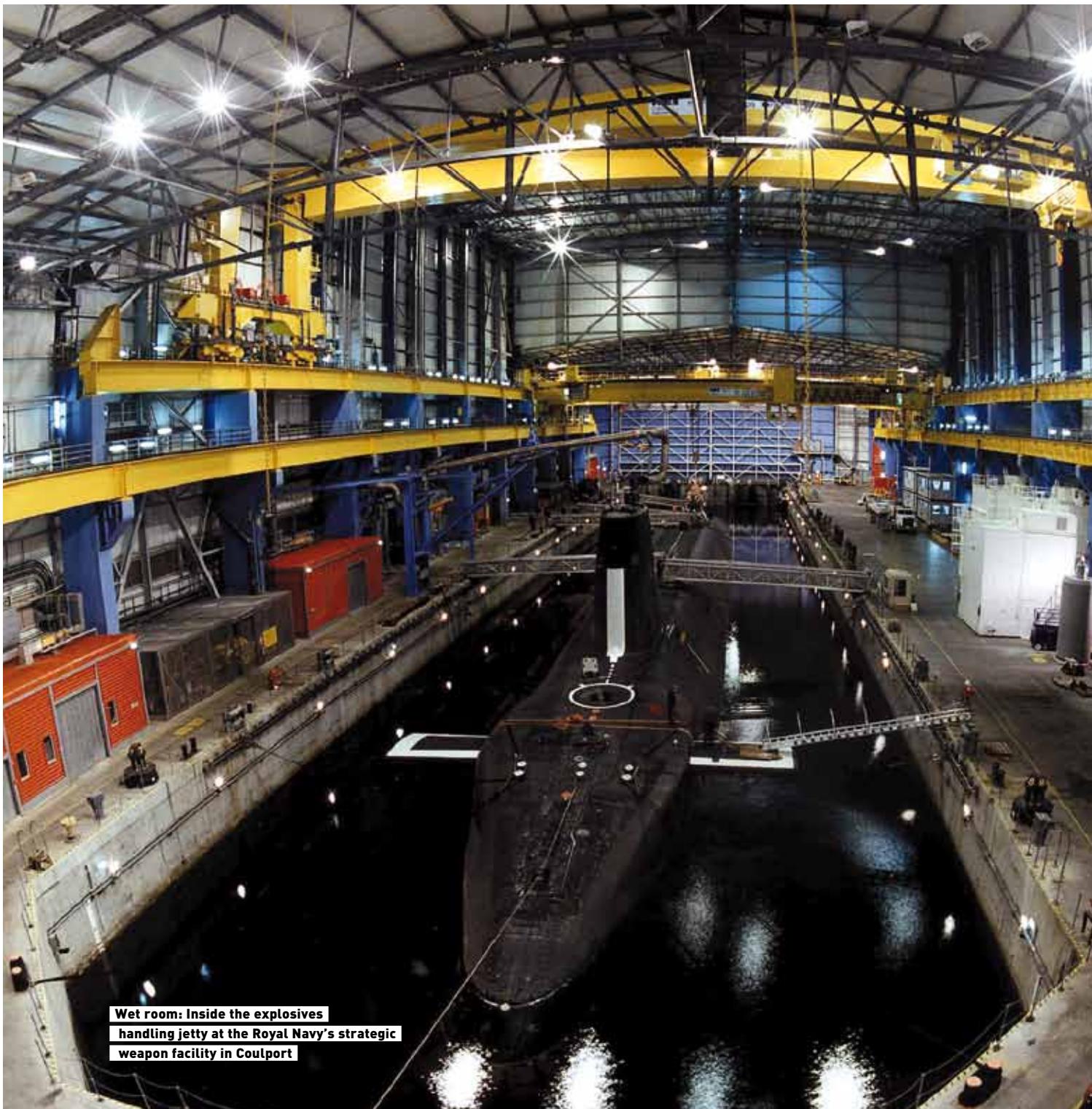
■ The end of operations in Iraq and in Northern Ireland are announced



■ Op Herrick, the campaign in Afghanistan enters its tenth year



■ Just as Nick Gurr finishes his stint as director, the Libya operation begins



Wet room: Inside the explosives handling jetty at the Royal Navy's strategic weapon facility in Coulport

# DIO RISES TO CHALLENGE OF TURBULENT WORLD

# AS OUR ARMED FORCES ADJUST TO CHANGE, SO MUST THE WAY MOD MANAGES ITS ESTATE. REPORT BY TONY MORAN

THE STRATEGIC Defence and Security Review (SDSR), published in October 2010, examined how Britain must organise our military capability to respond to global threats posed in the coming decades.

Whether that danger comes from nuclear proliferation, revolution and civil war or terrorism, Britain must have the right military resources to deal with emerging threats.

As our Armed Forces change the ways in which they operate to meet the challenges of the future, so the support they receive must also evolve. The new Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) came into being on 1 April 2011 with a clear goal to deliver better strategic management of the Defence estate.

Acting Chief Executive DIO Andrew Manley explained: "The creation of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation marks a major step towards ensuring we have an affordable and sustainable military estate that gives our Armed Forces the best possible facilities in which to live, work and train."

"DIO brings a radical new approach to how the MOD manages infrastructure and estates services, but change will not happen overnight. We expect our journey towards full operating capability to take two years, during which time a number of key strategic milestones must be met."

The new organisation must achieve significant running cost reductions, improve estate utilisation and drive further estate rationalisation and commercialisation opportunities. Through the sale of surplus land and buildings and other efficiency measures, DIO aims to deliver savings of some £1.2 billion over the next four years.

In this context, 'infrastructure' describes the acquisition, development, management and disposal of all fixed, permanent buildings and structures, land, utilities and facility management services, with the exception of IT infrastructure.

DIO pulls together a number of roles and functions, as well as staff from the former Defence Estates (DE) organisation and infrastructure personnel from organisations across Defence such as the Royal Navy, Army, Royal Air Force and Defence Equipment & Support.

"This new organisation has already brought together a broad range of property and infrastructure knowledge," Mr Manley added.

DIO has taken on the estate management responsibilities of its predecessor DE in spending some £2 billion every year, managing around 240,000 hectares of land on behalf of MOD. At around one per cent of the UK's landmass, this vast swathe of land and property makes the Department one of the country's largest landowners

The military estate comprises three main areas. The Built Estate, which is made up of barracks, naval bases, depots and airfields. The Housing Estate requires management of over 48,000 Service family homes, while the Defence Training Estate comprises 16 major armed forces training areas and 104 other training areas and ranges in the UK alone.

DIO has also taken on the challenge of supporting vital military tasks on an overseas estate that spans Germany, Cyprus, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar and remote overseas stations, including operational theatres such as Afghanistan. This diverse portfolio also includes maintenance of overseas Service family housing and provision of estate services to the United States Visiting Forces (USVF) in the UK.

"The model of Defence infrastructure has some basic principles: streamlining and consistency of processes, economies of scale and improved communications with customers and suppliers, including industry," DIO Deputy Chief Executive Officer David Olney explained.

"However, the key to our success will centre on getting things right in four key areas: embedding the right business processes and supporting these with robust information systems to deliver our outputs; getting the appropriate organisational structure and governance;

appropriate business processes; and lastly exhibiting the right behaviours leading to trust between the organisation and its users."

Mr Olney added that this change in approach enables DIO to take a defence-wide view in strategically managing the military estate – both in the balance of investment and enabling military capability. It centralises MOD management of infrastructure, reduced costs, improves estate use and drives further rationalisation.

A new Strategic Asset-Management Programme Team will translate Defence infrastructure requirements into a strategic programme to deliver what the Armed Forces require to continue defending the United Kingdom. Crucially it will aim to improve the utilisation of the estate.

A lot of work has gone into merging all MOD infrastructure funding and posts into the new organisation. Subsequent phases will transform this organisation into a new leaner structure. This is likely to significantly reduce the number of MOD non-industrial and military posts involved in managing Defence infrastructure over the next three years.

The transformation strategy should provide better value for money by using resources differently. For example, the Next Generation Estate Contracts (NGEC) programme will develop regional frameworks for MOD construction projects.

And Defence infrastructure staff had already been working on rationalising 'soft' facilities management (FM) contracts, for support services such as cleaning and catering. This was the first step towards DIO taking responsibility for 'Total FM'.

Yet for all its major investment and expenditure, the new organisation does not exist in a vacuum. It is immune to neither the outcomes of the SDSR nor the hardened economic times in which we currently live.

As Britain reassesses the military capability needed to keep the nation safe in the coming decades, the new organisation must focus on getting the right estate at the right quality for the right price.

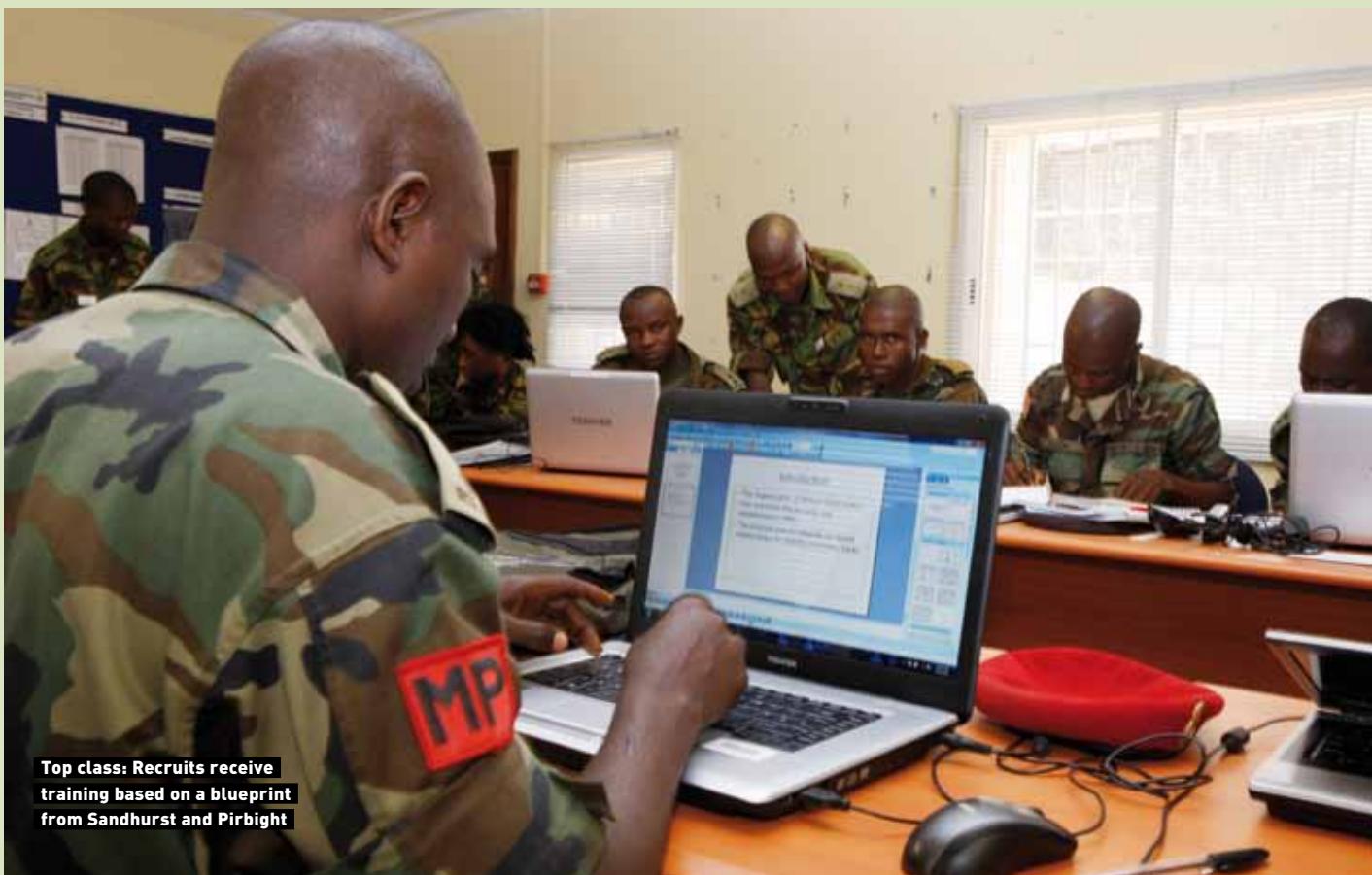
"Our Armed Forces deserve the best we can give them. There is a lot of hard work ahead, but DIO will help to ensure that we deliver an affordable and sustainable military estate which will help our military personnel to do the difficult jobs we ask them to do," said Andrew Manley. 



Sitting pretty: Corporal Karl Jackson with wife Lucy and son Jake at home in Colchester Barracks

# ADVICE TO AFRICA

## BRITISH FORCES PROVIDE SUPPORT TO SIERRA LEONE



**D**espite the impoverished conditions and visible scars of an 11-year civil war, Sierra Leone is hopeful of a secure and prosperous future.

A United Nations mission led by British troops brought an end to the vicious conflict in 2002 and since then, the International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT) has worked tirelessly to rebuild key elements of the West African country.

Soldiers travelled to the nation's bustling capital, Freetown, to witness the progress made by the multinational group over the past decade.

Colonel Jamie Martin, commander of IMATT, explained that his staff's mission is wide-reaching and includes advising the Sierra Leone Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces (RSLAF) to ensure stability is brought to the coastal state.

"We firmly believe a secure Sierra Leone will have a stabilising effect on the whole of West Africa," he asserted.

"The third set of democratic elections since the civil war are expected to take place in 2012 and everyone is confident the process will be peaceful, fair and open."

In the early days of IMATT there were more than

115 personnel overseeing RSLAF training but now only 45 staff – drawn from Britain, Canada, the USA, Ghana, Jamaica and Nigeria – remain.

Explaining the changing nature of his organisation's approach, Colonel Martin added: "When the team was first set up we really had to do everything for the Sierra Leonean forces.

"But over the past two to three years, we have looked to hand over the training to them, with our personnel stepping back into more advisory roles – otherwise they will never stand on their own feet."

A major success for the international partnership was achieving its target of reducing the African force from an inefficient, poorly-skilled group of 17,500, to a professional, apolitical body of 8,500 soldiers.

Sierra Leone's Chief of the Defence Staff, Major General Robert Yira Koroma, explained that the military education provided by IMATT is reaping tangible rewards.

"Training is an area where it has succeeded the most – from when they arrived in 2002 up to now, it has been very worthwhile," he said.

"We have been able to build the Armed Forces Training Centre to take 100 to 200 people, which is very beautiful."

"Also the Horton Academy – where we are taking students from places like Ghana, Liberia and Senegal – has been created.

"The training is strengthening our Army a lot and changing the outlook."

The senior military officer went on to highlight how far his country has come since 2002, when it was moments away from becoming a lawless failed state.

"For a post-conflict city like Freetown, we thought that armed robbery and crime would be high, but it isn't and that's because of IMATT's involvement," he said.

"When people were discharged from the Army they had been trained and went into trades rather than turn to crime."

The restructuring of the RSLAF has led to its international acceptance as a well-organised force and it is currently providing military aid in Darfur.

"It's amazing that we have gone from soldiers being called rebels to sending troops on a UN mission," said Major General Koroma.

"It is something to be proud of in the RSLAF and it's following because of the British help."

On April 27 the West African nation will mark the 50th anniversary of independence after 150 years of British colonial rule, but the celebrations will not bear any grudges towards the UK.

Brigadier General Mohamed Ali Cesay, Sierra Leone's Commander Joint Forces, spoke on behalf of his countrymen and nation.

"We are celebrating 50 years of independence but we are pleased to copy the British model.

"A lot of things have transpired between Britain and Sierra Leone, but they came to our assistance when we needed it most.

"The UK is top of the scale when it comes to providing assistance."

With a beaming smile, the charismatic officer added: "It's been a pleasure to have them here after the wonderful operation they undertook with the West Side Boys. When we had no-one else to rely on, IMATT came to the rescue."

Although the list of the team's positive effects is long, there is no attitude of complacency as Sierra Leone is listed as one of the poorest countries in the world and has an average life expectancy of 42, compared to 79 in the UK.

That most Sierra Leoneans live with large families in tiny corrugated shacks and very little food, is a reality not lost on IMATT troops.

"The poverty really smacks you in the face, especially up-country where every meal is cooked on an open fire, there is no electricity and healthcare is of a very poor standard," Colonel Martin said.

"But there are real opportunities for Sierra Leone to generate serious income from its minerals; it has got fantastic fisheries and oil has been found offshore.

"It is a success story but the story isn't over just yet." 

■ This is an edited version of an article by Joe Clapson which was first published in SOLDIER - the magazine of the Armed Forces



No Surprise: British help has taken Sierra Leonean forces a long way since 2002

# A TOWN THAT CARES

**AS THE QUEEN BESTOWS ROYAL STATUS ON WOOTTON BASSETT, MAYOR, MARY CHAMPION EXPLAINS WHY THE CARING LOCALS TURN OUT TO HONOUR FALLEN HEROES. INTERVIEW: LORRAINE MCBRIDE**

**I**f ever a town deserved a medal it's Wootton Bassett, said Jacqui Thompson, the visibly moved widow of Senior Aircraftman Gary Thompson who was tragically killed in Afghanistan in April 2008. This simple tribute from a bereaved loving wife and mum spoke volumes about the comfort that can come from caring strangers.

"I personally feel I owe the people of Wootton Bassett a lifetime of heartfelt gratitude for the deep respect they showed my Gary and the rest of our incredibly courageous brave young men and women," said Jacqui. "The people of Wootton Bassett are truly remarkable. I feel that that the town will always have a place in my heart. The community have made it deeply symbolic the way they welcome our heroes home."

Dignity, respect and compassion may be old-fashioned values but the local residents of the Wiltshire town of Wootton Bassett are proud to uphold them by saluting the men and women who make the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

It is a commitment that will no longer be carried out by the loyal community of Wootton Bassett, because the closure of RAF Lyneham later this year means that repatriations will switch back, as was always planned, to RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire. But it is a commitment that has been rightly recognised.

Wootton Bassett will be the first town in more than

a century to be granted "royal" status in recognition of the way it honours fallen troops. Last month, Prime Minister, David Cameron told MPs that the Queen had agreed the tribute "as an enduring symbol of the nation's gratitude to the people of that town". Mr Cameron said the "deeply moving and dignified demonstrations of respect" from locals had cemented a deep bond between the public and troops. The tribute is appreciated by Wootton Bassett's mayor, Mary

**“ We stand there for just half an hour...but they have paid the ultimate price ”**

Champion. "This is a great honour for our community as the repatriations move away from Wootton Bassett," Mary told *Defence Focus*. "While we have never sought recognition for our simple act of respect, I am certain





that this will serve to reinforce the pride and gratitude we feel for the members of our Armed Forces, who are always in our thoughts."

Mary is proud to be the elected face of such a caring community. It grew from a trickle but it wasn't until 2007 that it dawned upon Mary, a then-councillor, of a growing trend for many of its 12,000 locals to turn out. Every time a coffin passes through, butchers, bakers, housewives and old soldiers stand shoulder to shoulder as the cortege slowly passes. As the death toll in Afghanistan rises, sadly, it has become an all too familiar sight. "There are a lot of theories about how it began," muses Mary. "Different people have their own recollections but I think that people just stood as they went by. Then they realised it was coming from RAF Lyneham and it started like that.

"We've always been a caring community," Mary says. She thinks its geographical proximity may be a factor, just two miles up the road from RAF Lyneham where the locals head for their shopping. It can't be easy to have a parade of coffins passing through regularly, even for Wootton Bassett's stoical locals. "It isn't depressing but just imagine, we stand there for half an



hour and that is just a little bit," says Mary. "But they have paid the ultimate sacrifice so we owe it to them."

If the media presence is a pain, then Mary shrugs that, if anything, the media has gradually calmed down. "At first, there were always cameras clicking, but they are very much more respectful now."

Recently, Mary wrote a moving speech to describe the events surrounding a repatriation ceremony, titled, "How I dread these words." Whenever she turns on her TV and hears the news that a soldier has been killed in Afghanistan, her heart goes out to the bereaved.

Mary wrote that while repatriation arrangements are made by MOD, life chugs on for the community. In fact, repatriation day starts early in town with police and sniffer dogs carrying out routine checks. Many police officers give their time freely. Meanwhile, the Cross Keys pub offers a refuge for grieving loved ones where kind-hearted landlady, Kirsty is a shoulder to cry on.

At 11am, C17 jet rumble overhead and locals pause, knowing that the plane approaching RAF Lyneham, is carrying the fallen. There, tearful families receive loved ones with full military pomp at the chapel of rest.

Veterans always arrive early, in time to chat to old comrades and reflect on their own lost pals, many buried in distant lands. As mayor, Mary doesn't shy away from the media glare because she knows that the wave of support is appreciated by troops in faraway lands.

Mary arrives early at the war memorial so she can spend time with the bereaved. Often she is wordless, knowing that nothing can console their pain. But many, she says, draw comfort from the fact that their loved ones have done their duty.

As the bell tolls, the town falls silent as the cortege arrives. Mary quietly slips away leaving the families deep in thought.

In her speech, Mary writes: "The funeral director leads the cortege from church to the war memorial where the procession halts to observe a moment's silence. It is so profound that all you can hear is raw emotion of grief. Flowers are placed lovingly on the roof of the hearses. Occasionally the wind catches petals and they are blown to the ground. I feel so sad that something so lovingly placed only stays for a few moments; it almost symbolises the short precious lives of the young soldiers."

Ask if the sombre rituals have irrevocably changed the atmosphere and Mary shakes her head. "No. Life goes on normally. It has to."

Mary, whose son is a former Royal Marine, firmly believes that her beloved community could teach the rest of Britain a thing or two about respect. Ask how many processions Wootton Bassett has seen and Mary protests that she has never counted saying: "Each time is as important as the last and the next one to come."

In March, the MOD announced that later this year, repatriation ceremonies will move to RAF Brize Norton. There is no doubt though that Wootton Bassett's contribution will live on in the hearts of a grateful nation as a shining example of a town that cares.

How does Mary feel to see Wootton Bassett on the map for something so vital? "Well, I'd rather it wasn't happening," she says. "But I'm very proud of my town. We just show we're behind the lads and lasses that whatever our feelings about the war, it doesn't matter, they are our boys and we support them." DF

# MORAL SUPPORT

## THIS MONTH, NEW IMPROVEMENTS TO THE ARMED FORCES COMPENSATION SCHEME CAME INTO FORCE

The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) provides compensation for any injury, illness or death which is predominantly caused by service. In early 2010 former Chief of the Defence Staff, Admiral the Lord Boyce, published the results of his review of the scheme, which made several recommendations for improvement.

When the final legislative changes come into effect on 9 May, the MOD will have successfully implemented all of the Boyce Review's recommendations, within its target of one year. And as Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, Andrew Robathan, puts it: "These changes will have a direct and positive impact on our Armed Forces personnel."

On average, lump sum payments will see an increase in excess of 25 per cent. Other awards have also been considerably improved, for example, the maximum lump sum payable for mental health has been almost tripled to £140,000. This one-off payment will also be accompanied by a regular income stream.



In at the deep end: Lump sum payments will increase in excess of an average 25 per cent

### ARMED FORCES COMPO SCHEME

- The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) provides compensation for any injury, illness or death which is predominantly caused by service on or after 6 April 2005
- The War Pension Scheme (WPS) compensates for any injury, illness or death which occurs up to this date
- All current and former members of the UK Armed Forces, including Reservists, may submit a claim for compensation.
- To request a form or for advice and guidance call the free helpline: 0800 169 22 77 (UK only), +44 1253 866 043 (overseas) or visit: [www.mod.uk/afcs](http://www.mod.uk/afcs)

Lord Boyce's review took special account of the changing nature of injuries and in particular some personnel's serious multiple wounds received from IEDs in Iraq and Afghanistan. As such, the scheme now calculates payments differently for individuals who have suffered multiple injuries in a single incident – previously, most individuals would only receive compensation for the three most severe injuries; now they will receive some compensation for each of their injuries.

The change which Andrew Robathan believes to be "most notable" is the increase in monthly payments for those with the most serious injuries. Their Guaranteed Income Payments have been increased to reflect the lasting impact of more serious injuries on likely future promotion prospects and on the ability to work up to age 65.

Army Pay Colonel, Colonel Fiona Gardner, gave *Defence Focus* the Services' view of these changes when she said, "The improvements recommended by Lord Boyce, and implemented in full, now appropriately recognise the totality and severity of injuries suffered by our people, and delivers awards that are both fair and just.

"We have a compensation scheme that is fit for purpose: to provide financial compensation in recognition of the sacrifice made by our Service Personnel on the nation's behalf."

The changes do not just benefit future claimants. Those who have already received an award under the scheme will automatically have any uplift calculated and notified by the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency. 

# PREPARING FOR THE BIG DAY

**PRINCE WILLIAM HAS SERVED IN THE ROYAL NAVY, ARMY AND RAF AND ALL THREE SERVICES HAVE KEY ROLES IN THE ROYAL WEDDING, REPORTS LORRAINE MCBRIDE**

ONE of the first sounds that the royal newly-weds will hear as a married couple will be a fanfare fit for royalty. When Prince William and Catherine Middleton sign the register in Westminster Abbey, trumpeters from the Central Band of the RAF will herald the moment by performing a special fanfare written by Wing Commander Duncan Stubbs. For now, it is being kept secret, but the 30-second piece titled Valiant and Brave takes its name from the motto for 22 Squadron in which William serves as a RAF Search and Rescue pilot.

During rehearsals at RAF Northolt, Wing Commander Stubbs, principal director of music RAF Music Services, said: "A fanfare is quite a prescriptive piece anyway. It's not as if I lock myself up in a garage and wait for some inspiration. Far from it." So how will it feel to have two billion

people listen to his composition? "I think on the day, we'll be focused on getting it right," he said. "Our only awareness will be the audience there, and anyone else watching will be on the other side of the camera. Anyway, whether it's one person or a million, we've still got to get it right."

Away from royal weddings, SAC Ben Godfrey says that the band leads a packed schedule, often performing in Britain's cathedrals, which they fill with their enormous sound. Asked to describe his excitement, SAC Andrew Lofthouse said: "On a scale of 1 to a million, it's got to be a million," which seemed to be the consensus.

Iraq veteran Sergeant Kevin Miles adds: "The whole world will watch, but we are there working and we have a job to do." But what is Sergeant Mills' verdict on his boss's composition? "It's wonderful, my boss wrote it!" he jests, tongue firmly in cheek.



Main picture: Andy Holmes



**Blowing their own trumpet:**  
The Central Band of the RAF



**Plane for all to see:** Squadron Leader Ian Smith will perform a flypast

# SMITHY'S SKY SALUTE

**WHEN ROYAL NEWLY WEDS WILLIAM AND KATE STAND ON THE PALACE BALCONY, SPITFIRE PILOT SQUADRON LEADER IAN SMITH WILL PERFORM A HISTORIC FLYPAST**

IF GETTING a gold-embossed invitation to the royal wedding is like winning Willie Wonka's golden ticket, then Squadron Leader Ian "Smithy" Smith has the next best thing. His mission? Ian has been chosen to fly a Spitfire in a special salute as William and Kate stand on the palace

balcony. It will be an iconic moment watched by an estimated audience of two billion and "Smithy" couldn't be more chuffed. "As much as I'd love to have been invited to attend the royal wedding on the ground, I'll be able to attend in the air so I'm very proud," he says.

Squadron Leader Smith has clocked up 6,000 flying hours under his belt, and this is his sixth season flying the iconic Second World War fighters as CO of the RAF Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (RAF BBMF). Ask him to define the Spitfire's unique appeal and Smith who

portraits: Mandy Reynolds



**Helping the press:** Captain James Hulme will ride behind the royal coach

## THE PRESS OFFICER

WITH the hours ticking down until 29 April, the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment's (HCMR) press officer, Captain James Hulme admits that the sheer scale of fielding hundreds of phone calls from news-hungry reporters is tricky. Or as James puts it: "Journalists are a nosy bunch and have ways of making you divulge..."

James is also riding in the procession in one of 4 divisions of the Household Cavalry, which make up the Sovereign's

grew up hooked on wartime movies and air shows, asks rhetorically: "Well, which schoolboy would never have dreamt of flying a Spitfire?" With its unique design and wartime heritage the aircraft are treasured by millions of aviation fans, and Ian unashamedly waxes lyrical. "The beautiful engine noise is distinctive. The Spitfire is the prettier of the two and has captured the nation's imagination but the Hurricane should be recognised for its war fighting in 1940. They are just the most beautiful airplanes and we are the most privileged, lucky people to be able to fly them."

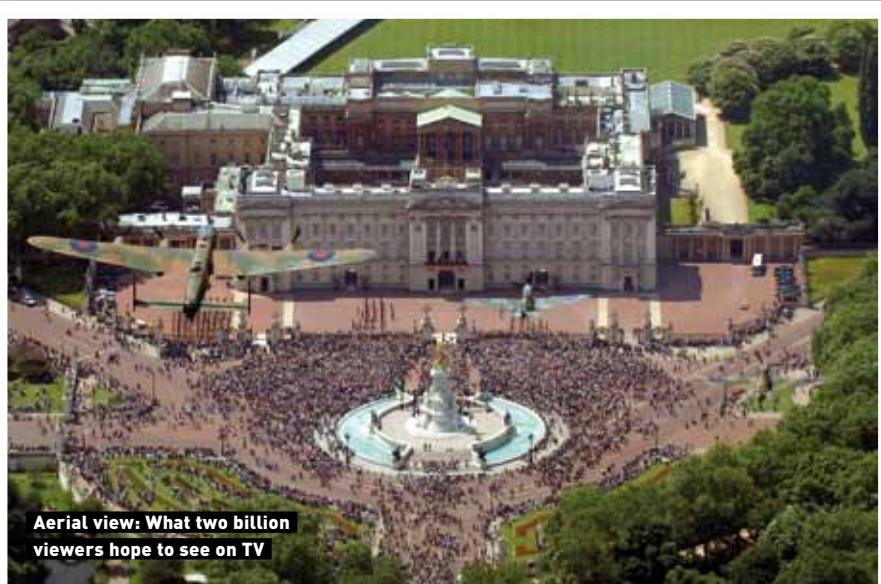
Three Second World War aircraft from the RAF BBMF will be represented on the day. Ian believes they are a world away from their modern military equivalents.

"Spitfires are priceless so we have got to choose our pilots carefully, those with mechanical empathy and 'good hands and feet' says Ian. "They are beautiful but

are all very tricky to land. When you get airborne in a Spitfire, you have an angel on one shoulder and a devil on the other. The devil tempts me, "Sit back and enjoy this," while the angel reminds me, "You've got to land it!"

As for taking centre-stage, Ian who is based at RAF Coningsby, remains cucumber cool. "We are a professional organisation. We have trained, we've achieved and we will be there to the second in exactly the right place." So much so, that he stresses there is no contingency plan for the flypast to be brought forward or delayed ("The guys have to be ready for us").

So how exciting is the wedding? "Enormously!" smiles Ian. "We are delighted to be involved so it's 10 out of 10 for excitement. Let's hope that the English weather doesn't conspire against us but if it's a nice day, we'll be there. Only God can stop us from going."



Escort. James will ride his favourite steed - aptly named William - an elegant ebony horse who exudes "real character".

"William is an intelligent, inquisitive horse. He has seen it all before and even though he is 20, he has so much energy, he is like a young horse." For the HCMR, Trooping the Colour, and Changing of the Guard are "regular fixtures" but military history buff James discovered that the Life Guards have been escorting royal weddings since 1661 - and 349 years later, they are still at it. The biggest surprise for strangers, says James, is learning that all officers and soldiers on horseback have served in Afghanistan within the last 12

months or are about to go. "Throughout time, people think we just ride horses, look smart and wear medals," says James. "But we have earned our place since the 1660s."

James is especially savouring the moment the newly-weds leave Westminster Abbey when he commands 4 Division to "Form the escort," when the couple step into the glass carriage, for a stately trot back to Buckingham Palace.

Although the eyes of the world will be firmly fixed on the couple, it's possible that James has bagged a plum role riding just behind the royal carriage. "Anyone doing that will be on every china plate marking the royal wedding for the rest of time," he says.



## ALL THE QUEEN'S HORSES AND ALL THE QUEEN'S MEN

LANCE Corporal of Horse Dan Ridge will be one of 200 immaculately attired riders trotting behind the royal coach.

Dan will ride Vengeful, an ebony horse almost 20-years-old and fast approaching the end of his Army service.

"The Army matches horses to riders in terms of build, weight, height and natural ability," says Dan.

With just days to go, Dan's diary is crammed with dawn rehearsals to practise riding manoeuvres through the silent streets of the capital. He says: "We get London to ourselves and over each rehearsal, it builds up, drawing in more and more guys."

To prepare horses for the wall of noise, the army enlists the help of what they dub "rent-a-crowd".

"We put them through their paces, through the streets of London, around buses and people gradually getting them used to the noise. They clap, cheer, wave flags, play symbols and drums, anything so that the horses aren't scared on the day," says Dan.

Dan glows as he describes the "honour" of taking part in a spectacle watched by billions. "My mum has set the video and she and my grandparents will be able to follow it all on telly and hopefully recognise me."

Military mares: Back at Horseguards stables



# SHINGLES

**EVERY YEAR AROUND 250,000  
PEOPLE IN THE UK WILL  
SUFFER A BOUT OF SHINGLES**

**Rash action: Shingles can be painful  
and unsightly for sufferers**





By Surgeon Commander  
Nick Imm in Faslane

Hello from HM Naval Base Clyde in Faslane. Around 250,000 people every year in the UK will suffer a bout of shingles. It's an unpleasant condition which can have lasting effects. Luckily, prompt treatment can be very helpful – let's talk about it.

Shingles is a reappearance of the virus that causes chickenpox – it's one of the herpes family of viruses. Most people have had chickenpox as a child. Although the chickenpox rash completely disappears, the virus tends to stay in the body, lying dormant in some of the nerves. Later on in life, the virus can be reactivated and cause the symptoms of shingles. We don't know exactly what triggers the virus to become active again but shingles is more common as we get older and in people who have problems with their immune system. Having said that, I've certainly seen shingles in young people who are otherwise very well.

#### SYMPTOMS

Usually the first symptom that is noticed is a tingling or burning sensation under the skin. Different nerves are responsible for different areas of skin and the part that is affected by shingles depends on which nerve is infected with the virus. It's common to develop a band of pain around one side of the body. Over the next few days a rash develops which then becomes an area of fluid-filled blisters. These gradually dry and crust over.

If you develop shingles you should visit your GP early on as treatment can be effective in reducing the severity of the attack and the chance of longer-term problems. It's usually diagnosed by the rash and symptoms alone. Anti-viral tablets must be started within the first few days of the onset of the problem to be most helpful. Soothing creams can also be used to reduce the skin irritation. People with shingles should avoid contact with newborns and pregnant women.

#### NERVE DAMAGE

Unfortunately, a relatively common result of shingles is damage to the nerve which results in pain in the affected area – long after the rash itself has cleared. This is called neuralgia and can be quite tricky to treat. If you suffer with this you may be offered tablets from your GP which need to be taken regularly for many weeks.

A particularly serious type of shingles is when the skin around the eye is affected, this is an emergency and needs to be assessed by a hospital eye specialist straight away. Rarely, the infection can affect the brain, causing encephalitis requiring urgent hospital admission.

Be on the lookout for shingles and do make sure you get medical advice if you think you may be developing the condition.

Stay healthy and I'll see you next month.

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

# BRING ME SUNSHINE



## WILL 2011 MARK AN END TO BRITISH SUMMER TIME? ROSALIND RYAN MET CAMPAIGNERS WHO SAY PUTTING THE CLOCKS FORWARD WILL BRING HEALTH BENEFITS

Who wouldn't love an extra hour in the day to spend more time with the children, cook a leisurely meal or walk home in the evening without fearing danger lurking in the dark? While it is not possible to create a 25-hour day, campaigners are calling for Single Double Summer Time (SDST), where the clocks would be set forward an extra hour in winter and two hours in summer, giving us a "spare" hour of daylight every night.

Changing the clocks may bring many health benefits, and boost the economy. Environmental group 10:10 has launched a Lighter Later campaign to highlight the impact of moving our clocks forward.

"There are many benefits to changing the clocks," says campaign manager Daniel Vockins. "But most importantly, we are wasting hundreds of hours of daylight every year by sleeping through them every morning. If we put those hours back into the evening, people can do whatever they want."

Scientific studies collected by Lighter Later's supporters indicate that the campaign could cut nearly 500,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere – the same as taking 50,000 cars off UK roads. It would reduce electricity bills, as we wouldn't need to flick on the lights or heating so early, and reduce crime. An extra hour of daylight should also cut traffic accidents. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents says switching to SDST could prevent 80 road deaths and

212 serious injuries every year, as the extra daylight would make children, cyclists and pedestrians more visible, and drivers more alert.

Health experts have also joined the debate. Dr Mayer Hillman recently wrote in the British Medical Journal that our wellbeing would "vastly improve" if we stop putting our clocks back. He says extra light would give us more time to exercise, cutting preventable conditions like obesity.

Dr Hillman also argues that we feel happier during summer, which could help reduce Seasonal Affective Disorder. The campaign has gained such momentum that MPs are now considering legislation to move the clocks forward. The Daylight Saving Bill, championed by Tory MP Rebecca Harris, passed its second reading in Parliament in late 2010. The Government is now considering a review on the topic. If analysis shows it is worthwhile, a three-year trial to examine the impact of such a time change could be introduced.

If the bill is eventually successful, we could see Britain switch to a brighter, healthier and happier way of life.

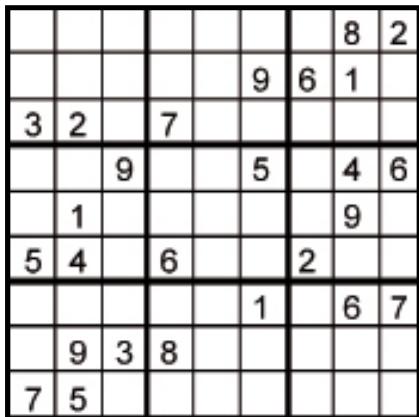


**Benenden**  
Healthcare Society

This article comes to you  
from Benhealth magazine.  
[benendenhealthcare.org.uk](http://benendenhealthcare.org.uk)



# SUDOKU



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



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



Compiled by:  
**Carl Portman**



Vera Menchik was born on 16 February 1906 in Moscow, to a Czech father and a British mother. She gained fame as the world's first women's chess champion and competed in tournaments with the leading male chess grandmasters, defeating many of them, including future World Champion Max Euwe. After the Russian Revolution she moved to England with her parents.

Compiled by:  
**Carl Portman**

Taught chess by her father at the age of nine, she won the British girls' championships in her first year of arrival. She became a pupil of the great Géza Maróczy and went on to win her first World Championship in 1927. This remarkable woman defended her title six times in every other championship of her lifetime and lost only one game, winning 78 and drawing four.

She won many tournaments in Britain and in 1937, married the subscriptions editor of the British Chess magazine. As Britain entered its sixth year in the Second World War, 38 year old Vera, who was widowed the previous year, was killed by a V-1 rocket bombing raid in Clapham. Her

# CHESS

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Compiled by: **Carl Portman** the world's first women's chess champion and competed in tournaments with the leading male chess grandmasters, defeating many of them, including future World Champion Max Euwe. After the Russian Revolution she moved to England with her parents.



mother and two sisters perished with her.  
Vera is gone, but not forgotten.

Here is a lovely position from the game T.Forster – B.Konig, Hungary 2003/4. It is black to play and win. Your job is to find out how, giving all moves to the end.

Send your answers to me at carl.  
portman282@mod.uk The first correct  
answer out of the hat wins a chess book,  
kindly donated by Chess Direct at [www.chessdirect.co.uk](http://www.chessdirect.co.uk)

The answer to April's problem is 1.Rxc8 Rx<sub>c</sub>8 2.Qxh6+! Kxh6 3.Nxf7+. The winner was Lieutenant David Ross, RN from Portsmouth. Winner of March's problem was Major N.V.Krykunivsky from Abbey Wood.

# **TOPICAL CROSSWORD**

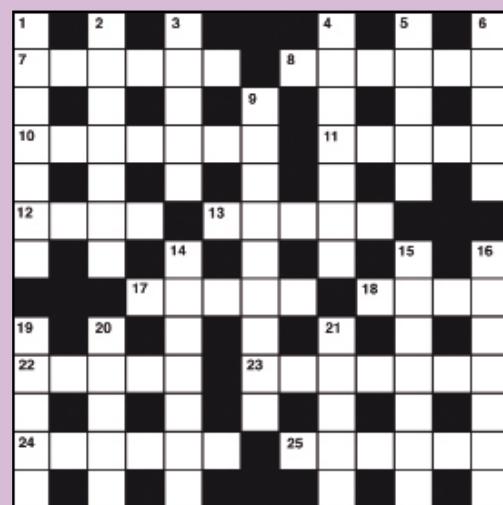
ACROSS

- ACROSS**

  - 7.** Fortified wine made in Spain (6)
  - 8.** 'Knight And Day' is one of his recent films (6)
  - 10.** Windhoek is the capital of this African country (7)
  - 11.** See 21 Down
  - 12.** Lion's long hair (4)
  - 13.** Slang term for a prison guard (5)
  - 17.** Hollow spine of a porcupine (5)
  - 18.** Opera song (4)
  - 22.** Restorative drink (5)
  - 23.** Staple food in Chinese cookery (7)
  - 24.** Loudness of a sound (6)
  - 25.** Large, mounted piece of weaponry (6)

Down

1. A powerful earthquake triggered one that struck Japan in March [7]
  2. This country's Foreign Minister is Guido Westerwelle [7]
  3. Illegal payment in return for a favour [5]



- 4.** Star of the Coen Brothers' Oscar nominated re-make of True Grit (7)
  - 5.** The United Nations started action against this country in March (5)
  - 6.** Number of Snow White's dwarfs (5)
  - 9.** Club which knocked Arsenal out of this season's Champions League (9)
  - 14.** See 19 Down
  - 15.** Rugby Union country which wrecked England's Grand Slam hopes in this

### SOLUTION (NO PEEKING)

- ACROSS**
  - 1. Tsunami 2. Germany
  - 3. Bribe 4. Bridges 5. Libya
  - 6. Seven 9. Barcelona
  - 14. Buscemi 15. Ireland
  - 16. Parsons 19. Steve
  - 20. Ankle 21. Conan
  
  - Down**
  - 1. Cannon
  - 24. Volume 25. Cannons
  - 22. Tonics 23. Noodles
  - 21. Scrub
  - 17. Quill 18. Africa
  - 12. Mane 13. Screw
  - 10. Namibia 11. Doyles
  - 7. Sherry 8. Cruise

- season's Six Nations Championship  
(7)

**16.** Church of England clerics (7)  
**19.** And 14 Down. Actor who plays Nucky Thompson in television's 'Boardwalk Empire' (5,7)  
**20.** Joint connecting the leg to the foot (5)  
**21.** And 11 Across. Creator of Sherlock Holmes (5,5)

# NO MORE EXCUSES

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WEIGHING less than two pounds this innovative training system, worth £200, delivers greater performance and functionality than large exercise machines costing thousands.

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TRX® Suspension® Training was born in the United States, created by the famous Navy SEALS and developed by Fitness Anywhere®, Suspension Training®.

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## TO WIN

just email your name, address and telephone number to dmc-newsdesk@mod.uk by 31 May 2011. Include the phrase **TRX Fitness** in the subject line.

## WIN TWO NIGHTS ON THE ISLE OF MULL

THE ISLE OF MULL has something to attract any visitor, and thanks to this offer from Tiroran House Hotel, you could have the chance to go and see for yourself.

This remote four star Victorian country house nestles in its own micro climate and has spectacular views, 10 large ensuite bedrooms, period country house furnishings and quality finishing touches throughout.

Visit nearby Iona with its ancient abbey or Staffa to see Fingal's

Cave famed for their charming puffins. Climb Ben More, just a stone's throw away or simply relax in front of the log fires and admire the view. Tiroran offers wild life including white tailed sea eagles, golden eagles and otters.

Dining is an integral part of your stay and particular effort is made to add to this elegant experience using the best fresh local produce is coupled with fine wines from around the world and maybe an after dinner single malt.

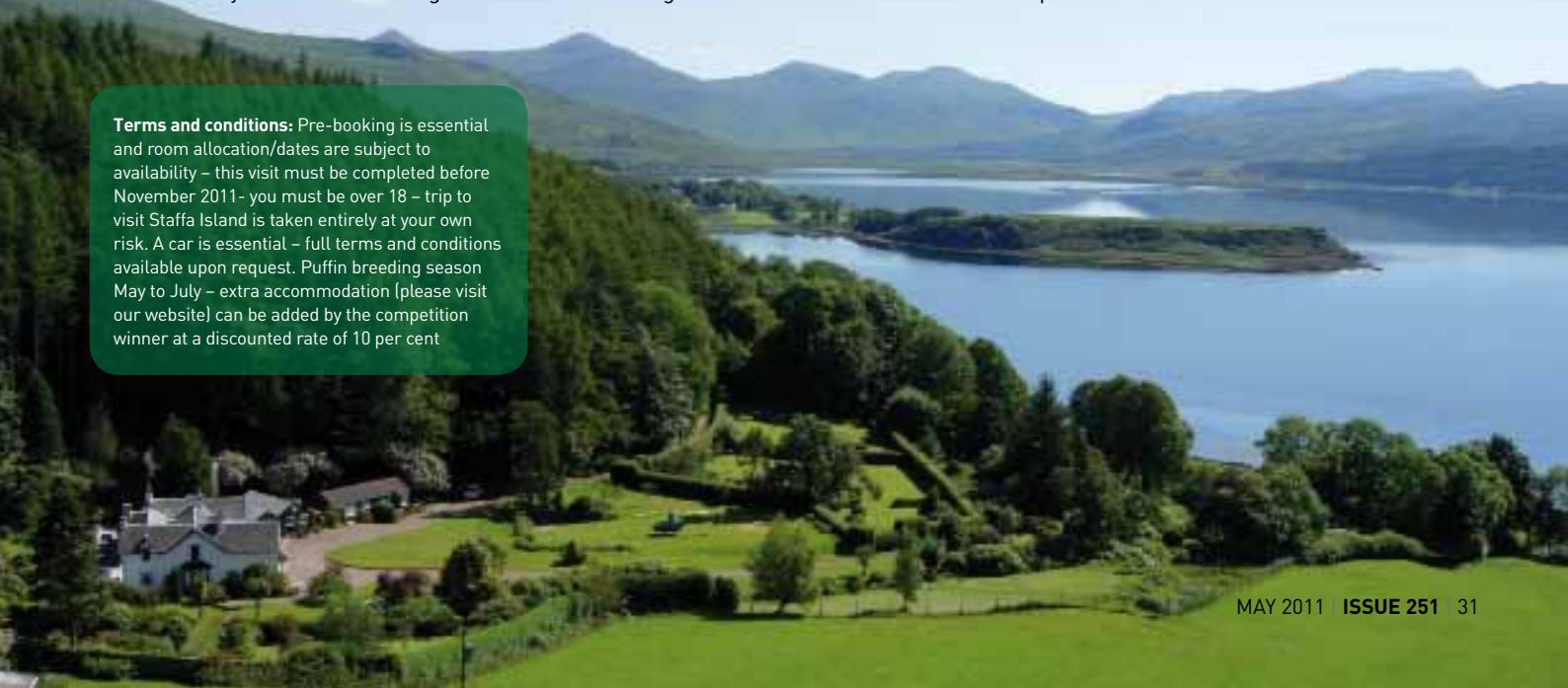
Tiroran House is offering one *Defence Focus* reader and their companion the chance to win a two-night stay to include dinner for two on their first night and a boat trip to see Fingal's Cave.

To win simply answer the following question and send it with your name, address and phone number to dmc-newsdesk@mod.uk, with Tiroran house in the subject line, by 31 May 2011.

**Q Which Mitford sister associated with Mull put a gun to her head the day Britain declared war on Germany?**

For more, visit [www.tiroran.com](http://www.tiroran.com). Or email info@tiroran.com quoting *Defence Focus* for 10 per cent discount on accommodation prices +44 (0)1681 705232

**Terms and conditions:** Pre-booking is essential and room allocation/dates are subject to availability – this visit must be completed before November 2011 – you must be over 18 – trip to visit Staffa Island is taken entirely at your own risk. A car is essential – full terms and conditions available upon request. Puffin breeding season May to July – extra accommodation (please visit our website) can be added by the competition winner at a discounted rate of 10 per cent





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