

DON'T BOTTLE IT UP: TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

# DefenceFocus

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## YEARS IN AFGHANISTAN

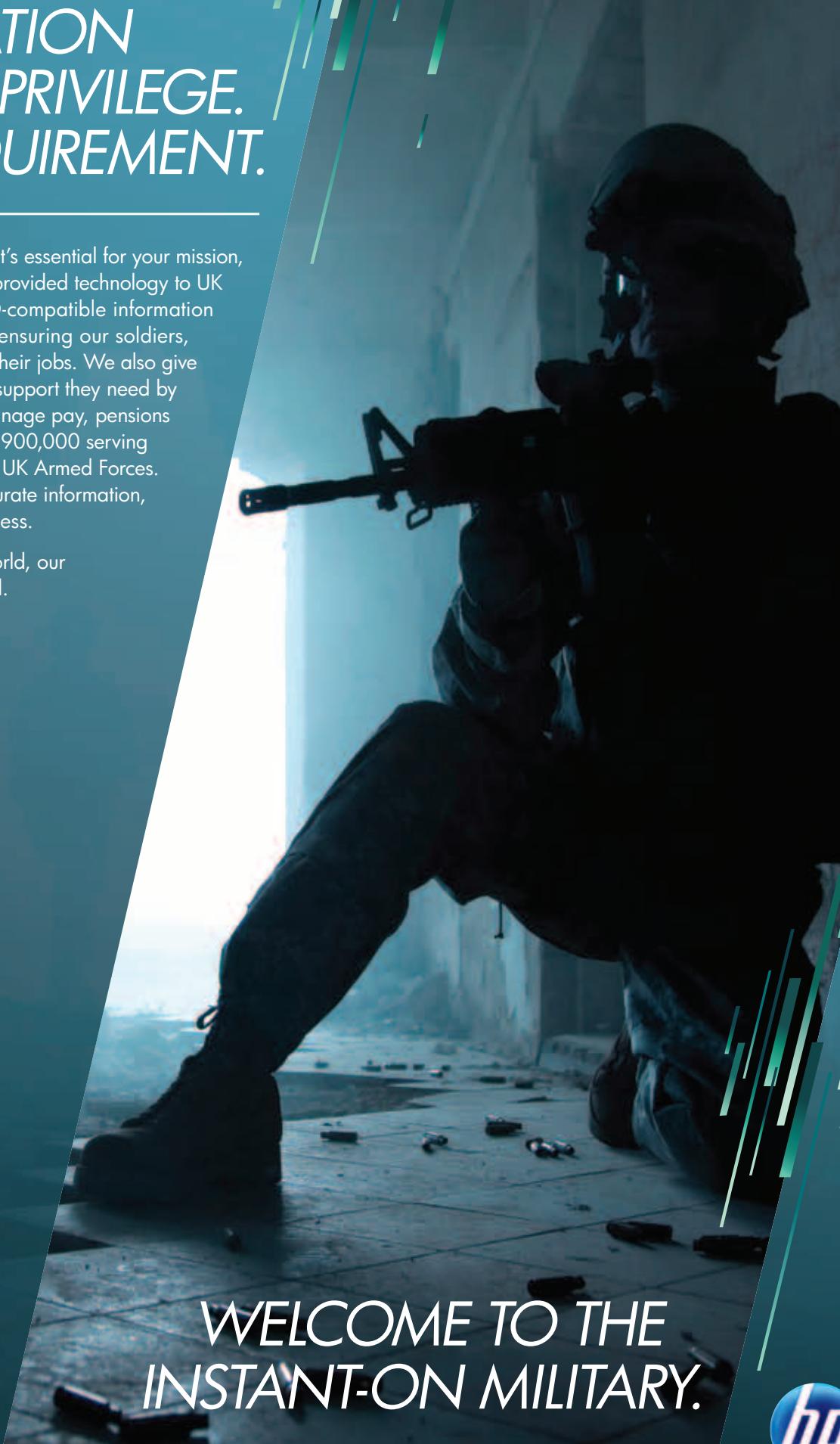
Will the Afghan security services be ready by 2015?

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## DefenceFocus

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## DANNY CHAPMAN

Did you know that following the Second World War the different sectors of the western part of Berlin remained under British, American and French control until the 1990s? That's nearly 50 years after the end of the war. Which, perhaps, gives a different perspective for many of us on the 10 years this month that UK forces have been operating in Afghanistan.

To mark those 10 years we have made this October issue of *Defence Focus* heavily focused on Afghanistan and have a range of people, from the Deputy Commander of Task Force Helmand and soldiers on the ground, to the civilian head of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Helmand and a US Special Forces officer, all giving their views on the progress being made. Much of the talk now focuses on preparing the Afghan security forces for 2015, when NATO combat troops are expected to leave the country.

As the US Special Forces officer just back from Helmand writes (p16), talk of

winning, in the type of war going on in Afghanistan, is meaningless. And you only have to cast your eyes over the, much reduced, media coverage of events in Iraq today to see that there are still random acts of violence going on there long after foreign militaries have effectively left.

Therefore, winning for the UK in Afghanistan it seems is not about beating the insurgents full stop, but leaving a nascent infrastructure with its own security services who are able to manage the insurgency themselves.

And the key word is manage. The large scale Taliban attacks we have seen in Kabul recently are likely to continue and probably for some time after our combat troops have left. But the different views expressed in this magazine from those on the ground do suggest that by 2015 the Afghan forces will be able to manage.

How long the UK, and in particular non-combat UK Armed Forces, will be needed to support the Afghan forces after 2015 remains to be seen. One thing seems likely though, it won't be for 40 more years.

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# IN MEMORIAM

## DEATHS ON OPERATIONS - 27 AUGUST TO 25 SEPTEMBER 2011



### Sergeant Barry John Weston

**Sergeant Barry John Weston, from Kilo Company, 42 Commando Royal Marines,** was killed in Afghanistan on Tuesday 30 August 2011.

Sergeant Weston was fatally injured by an improvised explosive device (IED) while leading a patrol operating near the village of Sukmunda in southern Nahr-e Saraj district, Helmand province. The patrol was participating in an operation to disrupt insurgent activity and draw them away from the civilian population.

Sergeant Weston, aged 40, from Reading, joined the Royal Marines in

September 1991 where he impressed from the outset as one of the fittest members of his recruit troop. He joined Mike Company, 42 Commando Royal Marines in May 1992.

He went on to enjoy a varied career which saw him serve in Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Iraq. He distinguished himself as a Reconnaissance Operator, Platoon Weapons Instructor and Recruit Troop Sergeant, among many other talents.

Sergeant Weston joined Kilo Company, 42 Commando, in May 2011.

He leaves behind his wife Joanne, and their three daughters Jasmine, Poppy and Rose.



### Lance Corporal Jonathan James McKinlay

**Lance Corporal Jonathan James McKinlay, from B Company, 1st Battalion The Rifles,** was killed in Afghanistan on Wednesday 14 September 2011.

Lance Corporal McKinlay was killed by a burst of small arms fire while on patrol with his team and members of the Afghan Uniform Police in a village near to Checkpoint Chaabak in the Nahr-e Saraj (South) district of Helmand province where he was based.

Aged 33, from Darlington, County Durham, Lance Corporal McKinlay

joined the Army in 1996 and served in Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan. He held an impressive array of qualifications, making him a great asset to his company and the battalion.

Deploying to Afghanistan as a battle casualty replacement in June 2011, having recently qualified as a Bravo Mortar Fire Controller, he was an outgoing and friendly commander, and very much a 'doer' about his checkpoint, having time for everyone he met.

He leaves behind his wife Lisa, his mother Valerie, sister Becca, and his children Megan, Ollie and Piper.



### Marine David Fairbrother

**Marine David Fairbrother, from Kilo Company, 42 Commando Royal Marines,** was killed in Afghanistan on Monday 19 September 2011.

Marine Fairbrother was fatally wounded by small arms fire while on a patrol as part of Combined Force Nahr-e Saraj, in support of an Afghan National Army patrol into the village of Old Khorgajat.

Aged 24, from Blackburn, Marine Fairbrother joined the Royal Marines in November 2009 and was drafted to 42 Commando Royal Marines where

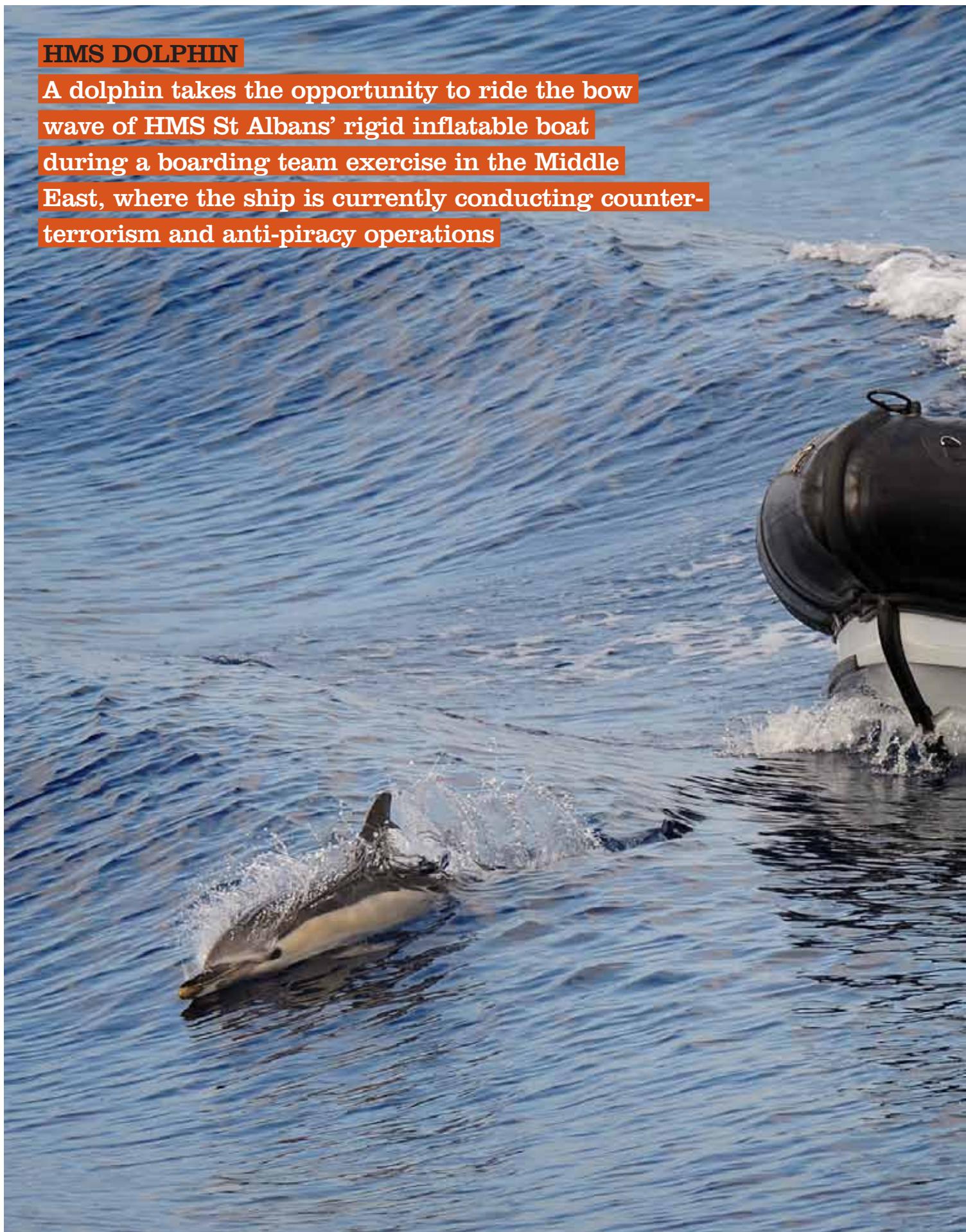
he joined Kilo Company, 'The Black Knights', and immediately began pre-deployment training for Operation HERRICK 14.

He enthusiastically immersed himself in training, and qualified as a Team Medic; a responsibility which he assumed with characteristic diligence and professionalism. He was a highly motivated Royal Marine who was excelling in his first appointment and had aspirations to specialise in the Landing Craft branch.

He leaves behind his mother Julie, sisters Ruth and Emily and his girlfriend Melissa.

**HMS DOLPHIN**

**A dolphin takes the opportunity to ride the bow wave of HMS St Albans' rigid inflatable boat during a boarding team exercise in the Middle East, where the ship is currently conducting counter-terrorism and anti-piracy operations**





# TEN YEARS ON

## A DECADE AFTER 9/11, TRISTAN KELLY REPORTS FROM HELMAND AS ALL EYES LOOK FORWARD TO 2015

**I**t is ten years ago this month since UK troops first entered Afghanistan. In the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US and the Taliban regime's refusal to hand over those responsible, US and UK forces launched Operation Enduring Freedom on 7 October 2001.

The operation's aim was to end Al-Qaeda's use of Afghanistan as its base for terrorist operations. Five years later UK troops moved into the Taliban stronghold of Helmand with the same essential aim of not allowing Afghanistan to once again become a safe haven from which terrorists can launch attacks on the streets of Britain.

The strategy since 2001 for NATO troops in Afghanistan has evolved and expanded, as the situation on the ground has changed, from the initial removal of the Taliban regime to the protection of the Afghan people while political structures and means of governance are developed in the space that improved security provides.

Key to governance of course is the rule of law and a country needs its own security forces to implement this. So while UK troops are now undertaking a number of tasks in Helmand, from helping with reconstruction to patrolling outlying areas and protecting the population from the insurgency, it is the training of the Afghan

National Security Forces that is key to fulfilling Prime Minister David Cameron's commitment that in 2015 British forces will end combat operations in Afghanistan.

Because by the end of 2014 it is envisaged that the Afghan National Army and Police will be ready to replace NATO troops in providing protection to the Afghan people and denying the Taliban and Al-Qaeda the opportunity to use the country as a safe haven.

Current forecasts are that the number of trained Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) personnel will reach 171,600 and 134,000 respectively by October 2011.

The current Deputy Commander of Task Force Helmand (TFH), Colonel Andrew Jackson, sees the formal transition from UK to Afghan forces for responsibility of security in central Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province, which took place this summer, as the key example of how this strategy will allow NATO forces to withdraw from Afghanistan.

"Transition in Lashkar Gah is extremely important as it represents the start of something completely new," Colonel Jackson says.

"We are very conscious that now we are on a seam of

**Attention: New ANP recruits**  
**take to the drill square at Lashkar Gah**  
**Training Centre**





**Job satisfaction: ANP officers at CP Tank keep a watchful eye**



**Cautiously optimistic: Deputy TFH Commander Colonel Andrew Jackson**

**“ We created something that was driven by the Afghans ”**

two different types of activity; the classic shape, clear, hold, build operations largely led by British forces in the three districts of central Helmand, and then what comes after transition, which is the Afghans themselves taking a lead on these operations.”

In terms of measuring progress in Helmand, Colonel Jackson says that the 2009 US-led surge in troop numbers in the province was the real beginning:

“What has been achieved in those two years is incredible. I think the south has changed out of all recognition. Looking at the American areas of Nawa and Marjah I remember thinking Marjah was going to be a bloodbath. Indeed it was difficult but when you see what is in place there now the change is incredible. I think the same has also been wrought in parts of the British area of Task Force Helmand, particularly Nad ‘Ali and in Lashkar Gah, and there are signs that that can develop and extend elsewhere.”

It is the Afghan Uniform Police (AUP) that now largely hold responsibility for day-to-day security in the central areas of Lashkar Gah and Nad ‘Ali. Insurgent attacks in Lashkar Gah since the formal transition to Afghan responsibility in July have largely been dealt with by the AUP. The most recent, an attempted suicide attack on the main bank, caused terrible damage at the AUP checkpoint but was unable to wreak havoc on its intended target.

Afghan Police at the Operational Co-ordination

All Pictures: Steve Dock





**On patrol: Lieutenant Nick Gross talks to local Afghans during a routine patrol in the village of Shin Kalay in Nad 'Ali**



**Control centre: Captain Menelaou, 2 RGR, offers advice to an ANCOP controller in the OCC-P**



**Flying high: Afghan flags are being seen more often**



**Overwatch: British forces on a regular visit to an Afghan Local Police checkpoint**

Centre Provincial (OCC-P), based at the District Police Headquarters in Lashkar Gah, are at the heart of the force's ability to respond to such attacks. Here, Afghan police controllers are currently being mentored and aided by members of the British Police Mentoring and Advisory Group (PMAG).

For Major Marcus Miles, Officer Commanding (OC) the PMAG at the OCC-P, the thwarted suicide attack on the bank is a case in point of the progress in intelligence-gathering and public trust achieved by the AUP.

"The intelligence is increasingly coming from Afghans as well as our own sources," he explains. This intelligence led directly to the checkpoints being established around the bank and Major Miles believes this reduced casualty numbers from over 100 to 24.

While Major Miles concedes that in the eyes of many Afghans a shadow still hangs over the Police from years of poor discipline and corruption, this is slowly being chipped away. In Lashkar Gah district centre, where transition has now occurred, this is aided by the fact ISAF forces no longer patrol on foot and the only flags to be seen are those of the Afghan Government and Afghan security forces.

Outside of Lashkar Gah progress is also being seen in areas such as Nad 'Ali where it is hoped formal transition

can take place soon. Again the Police are also at the forefront of this effort – be they AUP, Civil Order Police (ANCOP) or Local Police (ALP).

Major Jamie Murray, is OC of B Company, 2nd Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles (2 RGR), who are currently mentoring and partnering ANCOP, AUP and ALP in southern Nad 'Ali. He says that a key indicator of the progress has again been the willingness of locals to offer information to both Afghan and ISAF forces.

Over the tour so far his company has conducted over 75 shuras with local elders. "At those shuras," says Major Murray, "and elsewhere, we are getting told where bad things are happening, i.e. where IEDs are being laid. It is the Afghan locals that have told us in all but two or three incidents where the IEDs are. We use the phrase that we have well over 25,000 counter-insurgents in this area."

He adds though that the information provided at the shuras is not just about security but about the locals' lives in general. "If you did this a year ago that shura would be entirely about security," Major Murray emphasises.

One of the key features of Nad 'Ali, as opposed to Lashkar Gah, is the presence of ALP, a force whose development saw "huge amounts of frustration", according to Colonel Jackson.

Pushed heavily by former ISAF Commander

General David Petraeus, the ALP programme has been described by NATO as a critical component to bringing governance and security to the Afghan people at the local level.

"We thought that the idea for a Local Police initiative was going to be picked up by local people and run without any problems at all, but it exposed all sorts of different tensions that we weren't aware of," Colonel Jackson said.

Travelling to one Local Police checkpoint it is easy to see how those tensions could arise. Major Murray explains that it is manned by relatives from a single family, armed but dressed in civilian clothes, and that his fears were raised when they discovered that they had all travelled to the nearby compound of another family with which they had a blood feud. It was with relief that he discovered that they had done so to deliver the peace offering of a goat so that they could begin their operations in the area from a fresh footing.

"What eventually happened is we created something that was driven by the Afghans at a pace they were comfortable with and as a result it is now much stronger," Colonel Jackson adds.

High profile attacks in Kabul and fierce fighting still occurring in other areas of the country show that Afghanistan is still short of anything approaching normality. But the benefits of increasing the capacity of the Afghan security forces and the respect they are starting to garner as a result is already beginning to show.

Across the TFH area of operations as a whole the traditional summer fighting season this year was much subdued. For example, 2 RGR's B Company, partnering Afghan Police in what was just 18 months ago a hotbed of insurgent activity, has not seen anything like the levels of violence they were expecting.

This, together with the arrests of high profile Taliban commanders and ever-improving infrastructure, notably roads and social and economic development, give Major Murray reason to be

optimistic about the prospects for the future.

"ISAF will begin to decouple and move into what is known as tactical overwatch in this particular area and the Afghan Army, for its part, will move further to the edges, to the peripheral areas," he said.

"Concomitant with an Afghan Police rise of capability and strength we are getting close to a point where this area will transition to Afghan security responsibility."

Ten years on from the first Western forces setting foot in Afghanistan it is easy to lose sight of why British forces are there at all, and the sacrifices that have been made, but for Colonel Jackson the events of 9/11 and the overthrow of the Taliban regime are very much in the minds of British forces as they continue their mission.

"I think it is still very relevant for young soldiers here, after all if 9/11 hadn't happened we wouldn't be here," he said. "That was the reason for coming to Afghanistan and we have been pretty effective at achieving the goal that was set out as a result of 9/11, which is preventing Afghanistan from becoming a terrorist safe haven. That of course has led on to everything else we are doing here."

"People always say that of course the Taliban are just waiting for you to leave in 2014. My counter to that is they can wait as long as they like. But what they will find when they come back is substantially different to the situation they left before we arrived in strength. What they are going to find is a revitalised and very capable set of security forces. Police, Army, NDS all operating together, they are going to find a government that is actually reaching out to the people in the rural areas in a way they didn't before and are able to give them an opportunity they didn't have before. But more than anything else as a result of that security and as a result of that opportunity they are going to find people that are confident enough to reject the insurgent and also reject the intimidation, as we have seen already."

"I think what's been achieved is heading in the right direction and if we can keep this momentum going then come 2014 we can leave the Afghans with a going concern that security has a chance of enduring." **DF**

**Street life: there has been an upswing in economic activity in Lashkar Gah as improved security brings increased confidence in the future**



Service stress: this image is taken from the "Don't Bottle it Up" campaign

# DON'T BOTTLE IT UP

TO MARK THE ARMY'S MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN, A SENIOR NCO REVEALS HER OWN BATTLE WITH DEPRESSION AND THE SUPPORT THAT HELPED HER RECOVERY

"I didn't really notice the signs and symptoms for what they were," admits the now confident Staff Sergeant Vicky Charnock. But it wasn't always that way. In 2009 Vicky was diagnosed with depression, writes Lorraine McBride.

"I had been physically ill and had been having problems – I hadn't been sleeping well and was in the grip of low mood, low appetite and tearfulness – but I didn't recognise it for what it was," said Vicky.

Vicky is a regular soldier who has served all over the world including Bosnia, the Falklands, Germany, Northern Ireland and Afghanistan.

Although she had been finding it increasingly hard to cope, her diagnosis came like a bolt from the blue.

"I felt embarrassed and ashamed," said Vicky, "which is why I now want to be involved in this campaign. There was no need to be embarrassed but I didn't think I should be suffering. I hadn't been through any trauma and didn't realise

how common depression is."

Vicky sought medical help after her welfare officer handed her a leaflet on depression. "And that was literally the first I knew of it," said Vicky. "At that point it was quite upsetting to realise that I was suffering from a mental health problem, but I wanted to get better so I went to my medical officer which kick-started my recovery."

Vicky acknowledges that initially she worried about admitting her problems. Following a recent promotion she felt she had a lot to prove, and wrongly feared that coming clean could end her career. The problem was exacerbated when Vicky resorted to using up annual leave whenever she had a bad day or week, rather than increase her sick record.

Although her memories of that time are hazy, the tipping point was when Vicky became increasingly tearful and went to her unit welfare officer for help. Prior to diagnosis, Vicky assumed her low moods were due to prolonged ill-health, which she tried to ignore - becoming increasingly stressed.

"I first fell ill two weeks before I came back from Afghanistan, which continued through my post-tour leave, but I was still ill when I arrived at my new unit. I kept having bouts of sinusitis and flu - it just seemed like I had really low immunity."

"I just thought that a combination of everything had led to my low mood."

During her treatment Vicky was prescribed a small dose of anti-depressants and attended weekly sessions with the Army Welfare Service and Community Psychiatric Nurse at the DCMH (Department of Community Mental Health) at Tidworth. There, the nurse taught Vicky coping mechanisms to control her anxiety attacks, and before long she felt much better.

"I learnt to calm down a bit and to recognise my negative thoughts for what they were, and challenge them," said Vicky. "I'd say, I might think I'm rubbish but what evidence is there?"

"Throughout the whole period I was suffering, and even throughout my recovery I believed that my mental illness was caused by physical illness. In hindsight I wonder if it wasn't the other way round."

Depression can stem from a range of factors including trauma, genes or just life's lottery. In her case, Vicky thinks that low self-esteem and work pressures may have triggered her own bout of depression.

"I had a really busy four-year period and I think it all caught up with me. I don't know if it was because I was physically ill, or because I had been deployed heavily in



**Recovered: Staff Sergeant Vicky Charnock urges troops suffering from stress to seek help**

the four years leading up to it, but I don't blame anybody. I enjoyed my tours, but I wonder if just the tempo of bouncing between deployments, being away from friends and family and routine, started to get me down a little bit."

The Army's mental health campaign is titled "Don't Bottle it Up" which is apt, because, for many, the Army has a mantra of "keep a stiff upper lip" running through it like lettering in a stick of rock. "I think even if people realise they are suffering, they are reluctant to get help because of the stigma, which is how I felt," conceded Vicky.

She adds: "What I do know now is, that if anybody is feeling like this, they absolutely need to go and speak to somebody, anybody..."

"Obviously the first place people start is with friends and family, but ultimately if you don't get better then you are going to need some help."

While Vicky understands a natural reluctance to seek help, she urges readers experiencing regular periods of stress or anxiety to confide in their chain of command, unit welfare officer, padre or doctor.

Vicky is very positive about her experiences now. Fully recovered, this

fearless, chatty woman believes she has emerged stronger than before her illness and has a renewed confidence.

And Vicky very much believes that if people are afraid to talk about depression then it reinforces stigma.

"Mental illness does happen, but you can get through it," she said. "So many people go through it that if we didn't recover we wouldn't have anybody left. That's why I'm doing this," she continued. "I don't want people to feel as embarrassed as I did because they really don't need to. It is common but totally fixable with treatment."

"Obviously that year that I spent ill wasn't the best year I have had, and it wasn't the best report I have had, but that is because they can only write about what I have done, and I hadn't done enough to justify a good report. But aside from that there have been no long-term implications on my career."

"Even before this campaign," she adds, "I'd made a decision to not be embarrassed if mental illness cropped up in conversation. The more people that talk about it, then that is how attitudes change. In a strange way I'm even glad that I've gone through it and my illness proves that it has had a silver lining." **DF**

Don't  
**bottle**  
it up.

# SUPPORT NETWORK

**Help is available****Medical Officers / GPs**

If individuals have concerns regarding their mental health they should speak to their MO/GP who can get them the help that they require (just as they would for a physical injury).

**Reserves Mental Health Programme**

This offers assessment and treatment and can either be accessed through GPs or by calling 0800 032 6258.

**TRIM Practitioner**

TRIM is a non-medical intervention that is peer delivered. TRIM practitioners are able to listen to you and offer practical advice and assistance. Every major unit in the British Army has a number of TRIM practitioners available to provide support.

**Army Welfare Service (AWS)**

The AWS provides a professional and confidential welfare support to all service personnel and their families, wherever they are located. The AWS has 3 main tasks: Community Support, Personal Support and HIVE information services.  
T 01980 615957 or 01980 615977  
E LF-AWS-welfareinformationservice@mod.uk

**Department of Community Mental Health (DCMH)**

There are 15 military DCMH facilities across the UK and a further 4 in Germany which provide out-patient mental healthcare. Referral is through the MO/GP.

**Padres**

Regardless of faith, chaplaincy support is available to all service personnel and their families. Discussions are confidential and outside of the CoC. Contact your unit Padre or email: epadre@armyঃmail.mod.uk

**Unit Welfare Officer**

The main task of the Unit Welfare Officer is to help service personnel and their families with advice and assist in solving problems.

**Chain of Command**

It is the CoC responsibility to ensure that simple support is provided, reasonable adjustments to work are made and to create an ethos where stress related illness is recognised and accepted without prejudice. The CoC should also keep an eye on their personnel and sign post to professional help where necessary.

For Royal Navy and RAF Service personnel with mental health concerns, similar services to those listed above are available. Individuals who would like to seek advice are encouraged to contact their Senior Medical Officer at their Primary Care Centre.



# A MILITARY TABOO

## THE ARMY'S MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN URGES TROOPS TO NOT SUFFER IN SILENCE. REPORT: LORRAINE MCBRIDE

Mental illness is still seen by many as a taboo. Which is why Lieutenant Colonel Tony Rock from the Army's Health Promotion Team has launched the Army's first ever campaign to tackle the stigma surrounding mental health issues.

The officer is all too aware that many in the military feel reluctant to admit to any mental health problems they may be having, and hopes that the campaign titled "Don't Bottle it Up" will transform people's outlook.

"I think a lot of it is because they see it as a sign of weakness; that they are letting down their mates, their colleagues, their chain of command, their families and themselves," Lt Col Rock said, adding that he believes that in a macho environment like the Army, the instinct is to suppress struggles with conditions like stress, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Levels of mental illness in the Armed Forces broadly mirror those in the general population, but particular groups within the Forces may be more vulnerable to certain disorders and the MOD continues to fund research studying the mental health of serving personnel and veterans.

### BARRIERS

Studies have also highlighted the need to destigmatise issues around mental health, identified as the main barrier to individuals seeking help. "Failure to seek help could have serious consequences such as excessive drinking or violence, particularly in a family environment," said Lt Col Rock.

Indeed research by King's College indicates that excessive drinking can be problematic and some troops distress after an operational deployment by drinking to excess for up to six months on their return before returning to a normal pattern.

"People who experience mental health problems can experience a significant impairment of thought, mood, memory or the way they view the world that affects their judgement, behaviour, capacity to recognise reality, and/or ability to meet the ordinary demands of life," says Lt Col Rock. "They may also be experiencing difficulties at work or home as a result."

The campaign, targeted at all serving Army personnel, both Regular and Reserve, aims to break down the stigma associated

with mental health, signpost the support and care services already available and encourage personnel to seek help if needed, formally or informally. And Lt Col Rock calls on personnel to be vigilant for signs of stress among colleagues and friends, particularly if they seem anxious.

"You are more aware of issues with colleagues because you have a far closer relationship," he said. "It is important that people understand and look for symptoms."

### SCARRED

One non-medical initiative available for personnel after traumatic incidents both on operations and in peacetime is the Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) programme, a peer-delivered psychological support system. TRiM encourages Army personnel to talk through their trauma problems and seek help at the earliest stage.

So are we doing enough to make sure our troops aren't coming off the battlefield scarred for life? "Wherever stress goes with the territory, we have a real responsibility as an employer to ensure wherever possible we are alleviating potential problems of stress-related illness, both occupational and operational," said Lt Col Rock.

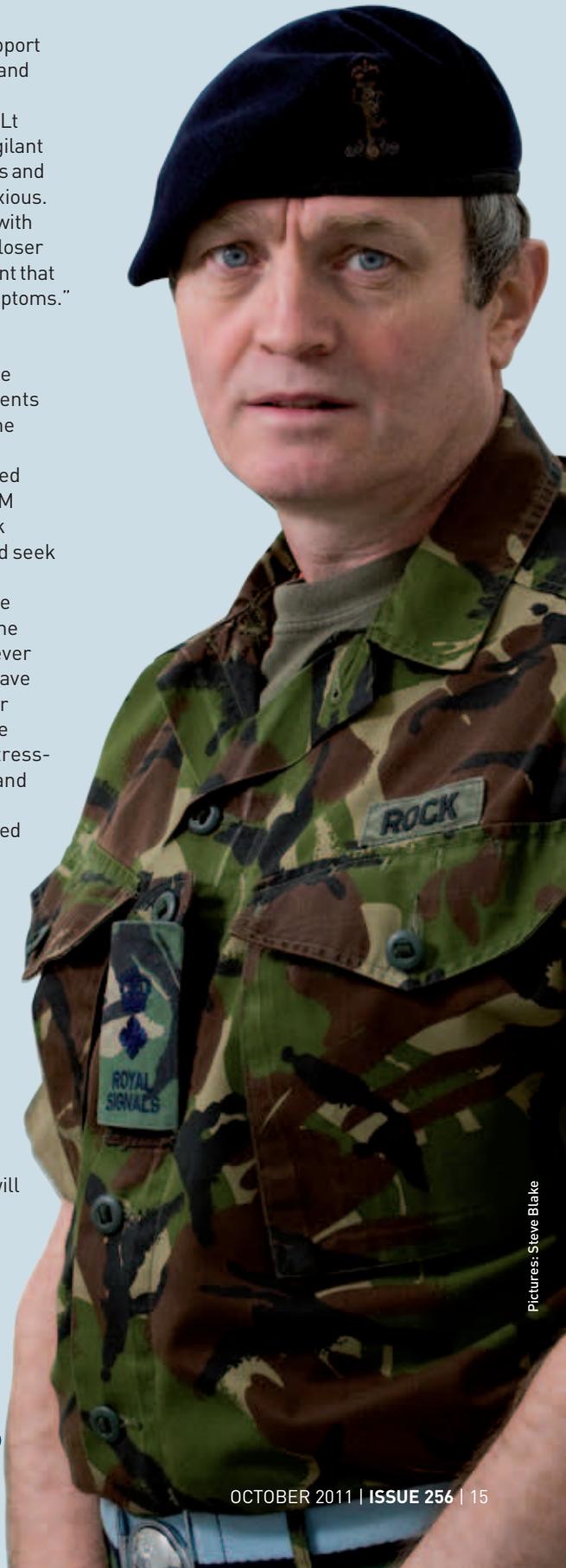
Lt Col Rock has been encouraged by the receptive response to the campaign but remains far from complacent. "Do I think people are still out there suffering and not coming forward? Absolutely," he said. "Some people will never admit they have a problem. Others won't admit it until someone tells them and, sadly, others will suffer breakdowns."

He suspects that many people struggle on in denial over concerns of the effects on their career, but he insists that the chain of command will deal them sympathetically.

"Our message is it won't affect your career, but like any illness or injury, you do have to ask for help, otherwise the problems will snowball," says Lt Col Rock.

"My advice is to confide in someone who will listen to you and be able to give sound advice.

Above all, don't bottle it up." **DF**



Pictures: Steve Blake



Picture: Sgt Martin Downes

# TAKING UP THE FIGHT

**US ARMY SPECIAL FORCES MAJOR FERNANDO M LUJAN SAYS AFGHANS HAVE A WILL TO WIN** © 2011 THE NEW YORK TIMES

**W**ASHINGTON – Returning home after 14 months in Afghanistan, I've sensed a growing gloom over the American war effort. Many of the policy wonks, politicos and academics I meet here seem resigned to failure.

While sipping their Starbucks, a few mutter the word "unwinnable". They speak in grim sound bites: a gunfight on the United States Embassy's doorstep, a helicopter shot out of the sky. But before people outside the Beltway (*Washington's M25*) accept this hardening conventional wisdom as fact, allow me to offer a different view.

I am an Army Special Forces officer by trade, and spent the past year leading a small team of Dari- and Pashto-speaking Americans whose mission was to embed with Afghan Army units. We went weeks wearing Afghan uniforms and sleeping at tiny outposts, eating local food and staying up late speaking with Afghan soldiers in their own languages. While I can't pretend to know the intricacies of Afghan-Pakistani politics (nor can most "experts" on the evening news), I can describe the truth on the ground.

The southern provinces of Kandahar and Helmand were ground zero for the 2010 Afghan surge and the area

where we devoted the full weight of our resources and resolve. The headlines hide deeper trends in places where the Taliban, until recently, enjoyed uncontested rule. Riding around with Afghan soldiers from dozens of different units, we heard one message everywhere: "Last year we couldn't even move out of the front gate without being shot or blown up. Now we control as far as you can see."

And the civilian population is starting to stir in these newly reclaimed districts. In little-known places like Arghandab, Panjwai and Nad 'Ali, Afghans are moving back into their long-abandoned homes. Weekly tribal shuras – like town hall meetings – are beginning to flourish in areas where not even a handful of elders would attend a year ago, for fear of being assassinated. The Taliban are not standing idly by. Pushed out of many of their strongholds, they have shifted tactics, focusing on high-profile attacks on softer (usually civilian) targets. But we fail to see the subtleties at home.

In May, after one such attack in Kandahar, I joined some Afghan officers watching the local news coverage, expecting looped footage of explosions and chaos. We were all surprised to see four small children, their faces blurred, in an impromptu news conference.

They recounted how the Taliban had given them candy and persuaded them to don suicide bomber vests by promising that they wouldn't die and that their impoverished families would be provided for.

Regardless of their political views, all Afghans regard children as off limits. That night, watching the children tell how they were recruited, the Afghan captain at my side, a tough Pashtun named Mahmoud, shrugged and said in Dari, "They're getting desperate."

But optimism in Afghanistan should not be mistaken for naiveté. We've paid a terrible price for the gains we've made, and Afghans know we're leaving. Insurgents still control many areas and are certain to attempt a counter-offensive as foreign troops withdraw. My optimism is rooted instead in an intangible metric, gleaned from the thousand cups of tea we drank and the hundreds of patrols we walked: the Afghans have the will to win, with or without us.

There are still corrupt, lazy, incompetent senior officers in the ranks, clinging to positions they've bought or traded for. Yet for every one of them, I met five young, hungry soldiers eager to take up the fight. Men like Jawad, a brilliant 23-year-old intelligence officer, or

## “ the Taliban are getting desperate ”

Jamaluddin, a sergeant major who had revolutionised his entire battalion from within.

I watched them wake up early every morning to drive unarmoured Ford Rangers down some of the most dangerous roads in the world. They unfurl huge Afghan flags and fly them from every truck. I watched them run toward the sound of gunfire, despite often having only a Vietnam-era flak vest or less to protect them. These men are Uzbeks, Hazaras, Tajiks and, increasingly, Pashtuns – former rivals now working together. They are the beginnings of a nation.

"Winning" is a meaningless word in this type of war, but something is happening in the Afghan South that gives me hope. Rather than resignation, America should show resolve – not to maintain a large troop presence or extend timelines, but to be smarter about the way we use our tapering resources to empower those Afghans willing to lead and serve.

For all our technology and firepower, we will succeed or fail based on what happens after we bring our troops home. Young Afghans like Mahmoud, Jawad and Jamaluddin will be the ones to stay behind. Many of them lack education, training, equipment, even uniforms – and they serve for years in dangerous postings with only the rarest opportunity to visit their families. But the best of them keep doing their jobs in the face of hardships we can't even imagine.

None of them accept failure as a foregone conclusion. Neither should we. 

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

**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](http://royal-naval-association.co.uk)

**Royal Marines Benevolent Fund:** Relieves hardship among serving and former Marines and dependents. [royalmarines.charities@charity.vfree.com](mailto:royalmarines.charities@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. [rafbf.org](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://rafa.org.uk/welfare.asp).

**HIVE:** Tri-Service information covering issues like education and health. 167 offices. [hive.mod.uk](http://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. [ssafa.org.uk](http://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](mailto:PeopleServices@pppa.mod.uk).

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**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 the JPA system, and Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre: 0800 0853600: 0800 1692277 or [veterans-uk.info](http://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](mailto: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).

# THE MAN WITH THE HELMAND PLAN

**MICHAEL O'NEILL, HEAD OF MISSION FOR THE HELMAND PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM SPEAKS TO TRISTAN KELLY IN LASHKAR GAH ABOUT THE DRAW DOWN TO 2015**

**DF:** What are the priorities for the Helmand Plan?

**MO:** One of the main aims of the PRT is to help deliver the Helmand Plan which is a joint strategy and approach over the next four years among NATO countries and the Government of Afghanistan - the plan was signed off by Helmand Governor Mangal - for development.

The first priority for the Helmand Plan is governance, which is about helping the Afghans set up and strengthen provincial and district level systems of governance.

A lot of our work, reflected in the Helmand Plan, is about working with Afghan officials, going out and mentoring and training the council and the line ministry officials in basic functions; how to do plans and budget and deliver them.

Rule of law is the next priority and that is about getting more judges and prosecutors deployed, largely in Lashkar Gah but also out in the districts.

Thirdly, there is social and economic development which covers health, education, agriculture and infrastructure like roads, irrigation and power.

The key theme of the Helmand Plan is about not doing stuff ourselves but how we can help the Afghans to do it. I think there is a close parallel between what we are doing in terms of governance and the justice system with what Task Force Helmand are doing on partnering and mentoring the Afghan National Security Forces, with the balance increasingly shifting to the Afghans.

**DF:** So how is the plan going?

**MO:** I think it is going well, there has been good progress in Helmand, especially in central Helmand, particularly in the last 18 to 24 months, on the foundation stone which is improved security and freedom of movement, and that again comes back to what ISAF has been doing with the ANSF.

So good progress, but quite a lot still



Picture: Steve Dolk

to do. The key test now, in the final two or three years that we are here is making the structures that now exist, but are still fairly rudimentary and fragile, stronger and more durable so that as we start to pull out gradually over the next three years the Afghan system will be able to take the strain.

**DF:** How can we be confident that money is not being wasted through corruption?

**MO:** I would say two things: the first is that

you can see a lot of tangible results for the investment in terms of more schools, more clinics, more kids in school. There are hundreds of kilometres of new roads that the UK and US have funded. There are real fruits of the investment to show.

The other point is we work very hard, both here and also at national level to monitor the expenditure, to put in all the checks and balances that we can.

On occasion if we find what appears to be impropriety or corruption we will

investigate that and get the Afghan authorities on to it. All the Department for International Development money here is independently audited so there are those checks in addition to the monitoring we do day to day.

**DF: When we stop combat operations will attention shift away from Afghanistan and development there stall?**

**MO:** David Cameron, Barrack Obama and other leaders have said that we are not going to repeat the mistake of walking away that we made back in the '90s.

We saw the consequences of that in terms of international terrorism. We are not going to repeat that mistake but there will be a shift and there should be a shift, because I think people in Britain and people in the US and Afghans want to see that. They don't want to see large numbers of foreign troops and all of us in the PRT here indefinitely, they want to be able to run their own affairs and I think that is what British people want too.

But there will still be assistance, there will be a continued DfID programme and it will work the way it does in most developing countries.

**DF: How important is Governor Mangal's leadership in Helmand?**

**MO:** His leadership has been extremely important. In many key areas of work such as counter-narcotics or roads, or political outreach in northern Helmand, he has really set a strong agenda.

But in any political system politicians are going to move on. And to see if the system is really healthy and really functioning that is one of the tests.

I think from our perspective we will work with Mangal as long as he is provincial governor and if somebody else comes in we will try and work with them. But we will also work with the provincial council, district governor and district councils. So we have got to be engaging with all the different bits of the system.

**DF: What work has been done to develop the civil service in Helmand?**

**MO:** It is a huge part of the work for all the teams in the PRT. We have people from our development team, for example, working very closely with the provincial education ministry and provincial health department and it is about helping them make their own systems work.

We help organise and fund training packages for prosecutors and judges and target individuals for training.

We have had people from our

governance team travelling around each of the districts with Afghan officials putting on training programmes to show them how to design and put together a district development plan with a budget, so that can get sent up to Kabul and signed off and the money can then start flowing down.

**DF: How important is private investment and attracting back ex pat Helmandis?**

**MO:** Hugely important. Getting the private sector moving really is fundamental. People want jobs and ultimately they are not going to come from international donors or from the Afghan government. They will come from the private sector.

We have two people here working full time on private sector development, both with a private sector background. They are working with local businesses, the Helmand Business Association for example, and we are funding the

from decades of conflict, where you would have international assistance but delivered and run by a host government and host authorities.

**DF: How important is the education and empowerment of women here?**

**MO:** That is a complex area and brings sensitivities with it. Obviously the role of women in this society, like anywhere else, is hugely important.

I'd say the picture varies quite a lot across the province. The provincial council of 15 elected people includes four women and they are pretty vociferous and active on the council. In Gereshk you have five women on the district council.

Maybe 25 per cent of the total number of kids in school in Helmand now are girls. But of those, 90 per cent are in Lashkar Gah and Gereshk, which I think reflects the fact that these are the two big urban centres and are probably

**“Getting the private sector moving really is fundamental”**

development of an agri-business park.

Also, we are trying to attract multinationals and external investors and that is beginning to happen. It's early days, but as we start to draw down and spend less money here we also need the private sector to step up.

**DF: Will the better security attract Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and will this be a help or a hindrance to Afghan independence from aid?**

**MO:** I spent three years working in Sudan and I think that in any country NGOs have got to watch out for inadvertently creating a dependency culture.

NGOs should have an exit strategy and do themselves out of business. Nonetheless there is plenty of valuable work that NGOs can do.

We have an NGO presence here already in a small degree – the hospital in Lashkar Gah is run by Médecins Sans Frontières. We would like to see more of that and a greater presence of international organisations, for example the United Nations.

We would like Afghanistan in three to five years' time to look more and more like other developing countries, including those that have suffered

relatively more liberal than other more remote parts of the province.

There are lots of powerful reasons why we should be trying to support women's issues in certain respects, for example maternal mortality is a huge killer in Afghanistan. But at the same time I think it would be wrong for us to come in and try and impose on a conservative rural society a completely different set of values.

So we are trying to judge those things and tread carefully but at the same time trying to do some of the things that need to be done.

**DF: What end state is the PRT working towards for 2015?**

**MO:** To leave things in a state where the institutions are sufficiently developed where the Afghans are able to run effective systems of government, development and justice and stimulate economic opportunity.

They will still get international assistance, in similar ways that the ANSF will, but they will be running things themselves and above all the Afghan Government will be responding to and providing for the needs that ordinary people have. **DF**



# TODAY AND TOMORROW

## REDUNDANCIES IN THE SERVICES ARE A TOUGH REALITY, BUT THOSE SELECTED CAN AT LEAST EXPECT GOOD SUPPORT

**C**oming to the end of a career can be an unsettling experience both for the individual and their family. Some cope with the transition more easily than others of course, but when the end comes as a result of redundancy, dealing with the change can be even harder.

This year, to help achieve the reduced headcount established in the Strategic Defence and Security Review, 2,800 Service personnel are being told that they are to be made redundant. More will follow.

Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir David Richards summed it up in his letter to all Service personnel: "While for some redundancy may be seen as an opportunity, for others it will understandably represent a significant challenge for both the individual and their families."

Sadly redundancy is a fact of life. Tough though it may be, it should come as no surprise that the Armed Forces are geared up to cope. In a career where you receive the best training, the best equipment and the best support from the best military organisation in the world, why should that duty of care be any different when the time comes to leave?

For those selected, the future may seem uncertain, yet what they can be sure of is that they will be treated fairly, and the support they will receive will be the best. Each will have been selected by their Service by boards using scoring against published criteria designed to ensure that the right balance of skills across the rank structures is retained.

"Redundancy may come as an unpleasant shock or a welcome opportunity," it says on the Royal Navy's Fleet Redundancy Cell website. "Either way, everyone affected needs to start thinking about the future." The information and advice that follows is a good example of how seriously, and sensitively, each Service is taking its duty of care.

A tri-Service policy covers the overall Armed Forces Redundancy Programme, with each Service operating their

own redundancy programme within the policy framework. Commodore Jonathan Woodcock of Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Personnel) said: "Success of the programme will mean that we have the right balance of skills, competence and experience for the future Armed Forces while ensuring that those leaving do so through a process which is fair and which offers the best opportunity to resettle into civilian life."

Each of the Services is providing their people with huge levels of support while dealing with Service-specific issues too – for example, when will Navy personnel in seagoing units who are made redundant be transferred ashore?

Everyone's circumstances are different, a fact which the Services have taken on board. As stated by the head of the Army Redundancy Cell: "Every individual has been treated as that – as an individual." Part of that is making sure that notification of redundancy is done face-to-face wherever possible. Individuals are encouraged to discuss issues with either their chain of command, unit human resources officers or unit resettlement officers. Those who have the difficult task of notifying people have themselves been prepared so that they can handle the interviews with respect and sensitivity.

"Before breaking such news it is essential to address your own feelings both on the issue of redundancy itself and the impact on the person," advises the RAF's briefing pack for senior officers. "Although many people may have been expecting it, when actually faced with reality, most feel stunned."

Reaching everyone is no small task. During the Army's first tranche of redundancy notices, the process of notification relied on a collaboration of effort between the staff of the Director Staff and Personnel Support (Army), the Director Manning (Army) staff at HQ Land, the Army Personnel Centre, the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency and many other supporting organisations. It depended on the support and compliance of the chain of command – and of course the

individuals themselves. Like its sister organisations in the other Services, the Army Redundancy Cell had to reach out across every continent and time zone to contact those affected.

Redundancy leads to a massive change in a person's life. Arguably for those in the Service, this can be even more daunting as it also means hanging up your uniform to make your way in civvy street. Things that used to be squared away by the Service, where to live, the kids' education, healthcare, suddenly become your responsibility. But help is at hand.

When people receive their notification letters they also get lots of information and sources of advice; where to go for financial advice, the ramifications of Service housing and what support there is to find a home in civvy street. There is also advice about finding new careers with details about resettlement and useful contacts in the relevant Service charities.

For those leaving there is a lot to do to prepare for a new life. In order to allow time for people to make the right decisions a reasonable period of notice will be given. Those who applied for release, and more than two-thirds of those selected by the Army were applicants, will receive six months' notice, and those selected who did not apply receive 12 months' notice.

All personnel leaving under redundancy will qualify for resettlement. For most this will mean that they are entitled to the full programme, which includes a three-day career transition workshop, one-to-one career consultancy, a job finding service, retraining time, a retraining grant and access to a wide range of accredited vocational training courses.

So while a life in the military may have come to an end, the Services provide plenty of support to help their people prepare for a new life after the Armed Forces. **DF**

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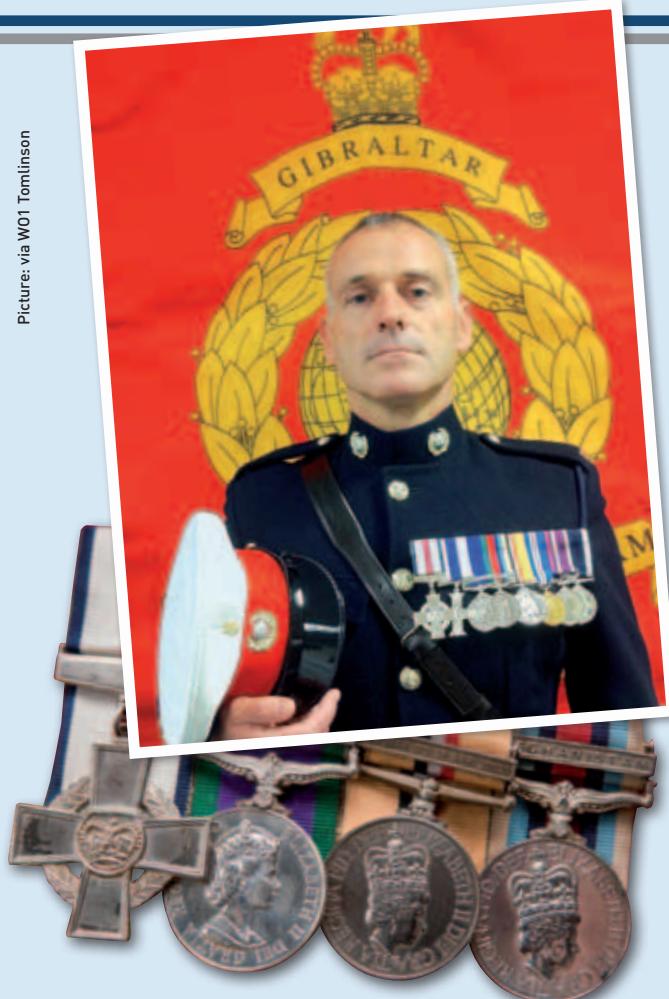
## CONSPICUOUS GALLANTRY CROSS

I got the CGC for my actions during Op Phantom Fury in Fallujah, Iraq. While on patrol we were caught in a substantial ambush from the river bank.

Directing the craft ashore in a counter attack I dismounted and engaged the enemy face-to-face, clearing trenches at very short range, from around six feet in some cases.

I only did what I did because I knew I had my marines behind me and that they would be following me wherever I went.

Picture: via WO1 Tomlinson



## MILITARY CROSS

While in Afghanistan in 2009, there was an incident which involved a Viking armoured vehicle initiating an IED in front of us. We were under heavy fire – it was a massive ambush by insurgents.

The rear cabin had been blown away with three army lads inside; they were suffering from blast shock and concussion, so I got them out and directed their fire so they could start suppressing the enemy position.

The front cab was totally destroyed and I found the driver on the other side covered in armoured plating. I was joined by an army guy and we administered first aid to the driver. I then had to find the marine who was in the gunner position. He was about 30 metres up a hill on high ground.

I tried to free him up from the gun mount which had been completely blown off, but he was unfortunately dead. I managed to get him out of the turret and back to the Viking.

We stretchered the casualties and the fatality out and took them to a nearby patrol base for evacuation.

This is the medal I'm most proud of because I share it with an amazing bunch of young marines and attached soldiers

# MY MEDALS

Over his 23-year military career, Warrant Officer Class 1 Matthew Tomlinson, Royal Marines, has seen action in several operational theatres.

Interview: Leigh Hamilton

that continually pushed themselves above and beyond the call of duty and put their lives on the line on a daily basis.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

My first tour of Northern Ireland was in 1991 for eight months. I was working for Senior Naval Officer Northern Ireland.

Based in Belfast, my role was to conduct boarding operations throughout the coastlines of Northern Ireland.

My second tour of Northern Ireland was in 1998. I was there for 13 months. I did the same job as my first tour, but by that point I was a Corporal and this

tour proved more interesting and challenging.

## IRAQ

In 2005 I was on an exchange programme in the United States so I deployed to Iraq with 2nd Marine Division USMC for just over three months. I was the Riverine Task Force advisor and we patrolled the rivers as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I was working in areas such as Fallujah, Ramadi and Iskandariah.

This proved to be a very demanding tour. We were under fire a considerable amount of time on the rivers

and during ground ops.

I was placed in charge of a ground force element, a 10-man team, that dismounted from the gunboats and went out on the ground conducting searches, intelligence-gathering and reacting to enemy attacks.



## AFGHANISTAN

In 2002 I did a short tour providing media security on Op Jacana. I was based in Bagram which was used as a mounting base for pushing out operation patrols.

I provided security to the media who were trying to gain information on the missions being conducted.

There wasn't that much interaction with locals and it was a different environment compared to Helmand province. I deployed again in 2009 as a Sergeant Major on Op HERRICK 9 and 10, working with the Armoured Support Group.

I noticed a difference between the two tours; this was due to the heightened IED threats targeting vehicles and increased insurgent activity, in 2009, in general.

While conducting resupplies, for example, to certain patrol bases, in some parts of Nad 'Ali we would be extremely cautious. However, over the months we would at times be able to drive a lot more without having to dismount and clear the roads.



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# A NEW DIGITAL DAWN



**VIRTUAL VILLAGE:** A VIRTUAL REALITY AFGHAN VILLAGE WILL HELP TROOPS SEEK OUT IEDs

## MOD IS HARNESSING THE CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND EVER-POPULAR FIRST-PERSON COMPUTER GAMES TO HELP TRAIN PERSONNEL. REPORT BY LEIGH HAMILTON

**A** new training and development tool, which will help personnel learn how to locate and deal with IEDs in Afghanistan from the safety of their base in the UK, is proving that computer animation and digital effects are not just for gaming or science-fiction fans.

First-person games such as Call of Duty and Medal of Honour are dominating the gaming scene. So the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) and the Human Factors Integration Defence Technology Centre (HFI DTC) have been exploiting the latest technologies since 2004 in order to grab the attention of younger military recruits and keep them engaged while training them at the same time.

The DTC's role is to provide research and technological knowledge which will improve MOD's current and future equipment programme. One of the DTC's academic collaborators, the Human Interface Technologies (HIT) Team at the University of Birmingham, is an internationally-recognised group involved in the development

and evaluation of virtual-reality-style computer-simulated training games.

The games already being developed for defence can be programmed in classrooms by instructors to depict life-like situations which military recruits then have to negotiate on a computer. Scenarios, such as searching for an IED in an Afghan village or evacuating a UK town to deal with a suspect package, can be personalised by trainers for each recruit. No simulation is the same and it's a safe way to learn how to deal with some very dangerous situations.

The games are designed to complement the existing military training experienced by Service personnel and act as an added bonus – a "training multiplier", as some describe it. Although enthusiastic about the work, the research team strongly agrees with the view that real life exercises remain the best training solution for members of the Armed Forces.

One of the first of the simulated serious games – described by the Birmingham researchers as "simulation with engagement" – to be used in training

personnel is SubSafe, which has been added by the Royal Navy to their training curriculum at the Waterfront Learning Centre in Devonport.

SubSafe is used in the first few weeks of Navy training for new recruits to learn the layout of a submarine. The simulation enables the recruits to virtually walk around a submarine and learn the locations of compartments and their contents.

Director of the HIT Team, Professor Bob Stone, personally spent time aboard nuclear submarines, including HMS *Tireless*, to ensure that images of every nook and cranny of the vessel were collected and transferred into the interface so the simulation is as accurate as possible.

Professor Stone explained: "SubSafe is used so recruits can become familiar with the layout of a submarine prior to going on board and particularly with regards to the location of safety equipment. SubSafe is used particularly to address issues such as if you need to find emergency breathing kit quickly or to help bring the boat to the surface in an

emergency, where would you go and what would you do?

"Recruits were getting standard PowerPoint presentations and very static line drawings on whiteboards and, while SubSafe doesn't replace those, when used alongside them it makes the learning more engaging."

Research is currently underway to create a virtual reality Afghan village and UK town. With input from the Defence EOD Munitions and Search School, various situations have been created relating to realistic scenarios. The HIT Team's technology allows the user to 'virtually' walk around the town or village and learn what signs there may be that an IED has been laid in a public area.

For example, as the user walks down a side street in the Afghan village, a ring of stones has been placed in the middle of the path. This is significant, as Professor Stone explained: "Because older members of an Afghan village create visual signs that there is an IED in the area so that their children don't set it off."

Sensory elements have also been added to the simulation as the role of daylight or night-time can make a huge difference to whether a suspect item is spotted or not. Professor Stone said: "Lighting makes or breaks a simulation. It's like sound, as soon as you add it to a virtual environment you get a new level of engagement."

"It's very important to simulate realistic lighting because at certain times of the day it can conceal certain important features – disturbed earth, command wires, and so on. If you're driving a bomb disposal robot down a street at four o'clock in the afternoon, then real-world features such as long shadows and interference on the robot's closed-circuit TV system must be simulated. Without this, trainees may detect cues unrealistically in the simulation and then run the risk of missing them in the real world."

Sound is another vital aspect of the simulation as Professor Stone explained: "Sometimes soldiers will say they knew something was wrong because of the lack of sound."

The HIT Team is even investigating the possibility of using a new smell delivery system to further enhance the training simulation, although delivering such a capability in defence simulation-based training may be quite a few years away yet.

Asked what his proudest achievement for the DTC has been, Professor Stone, without hesitation, exclaims enthusiastically that his latest development to help injured Service personnel recover while in hospital is the best yet:

"My favourite has to be the restorative environment simulator that we're creating for Defence Medicine, simply because of the response we've had over the past few months from colleagues at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine and the medical teams looking after the casualties in 412 Ward at Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital."

The programme allows the user to move around virtual recreations of areas in South Devon, complete with a beach, babbling brook, grass, plants and trees, in an attempt to let those who are bed-bound feel like they are outdoors.

The sounds of waves lapping and a breeze gently wafting are designed to provide a few moments of escapism for those who may feel like they are finding the confines of the ward or the view outside onto bricks, steel and glass too overpowering.

This is another example where the use of smell technologies may make a huge difference to the user really



**Day trip: a Devon village has been recreated for some escapism for wounded troops**



**Down under: the Subsafe game recreates the inside of a Royal Navy sub**

buying into the simulation. But who knows what the future may hold? Having recently received the MOD Chief Scientific Adviser's Commendation Award for his work in this area, Professor Stone is very cautious when trying to predict what the next transformational technology will be.

"A new piece of interactive technology comes onto the market almost every two weeks and each device has an appropriate niche," said Professor Stone.

"The DTC's work is to find what that niche is and not to be wowed by technology the way we were in the 1990s."

With the ever-developing world of technology working at a faster rate than ever before, does Professor Stone think that 'serious' games and virtual reality training will ever replace the real life versions? "Not in my lifetime and not in yours. This will not replace real life, hands-on, in-the-field training. We will need to wait for a Star Trek 'Holodeck' before that happens!" **DF**

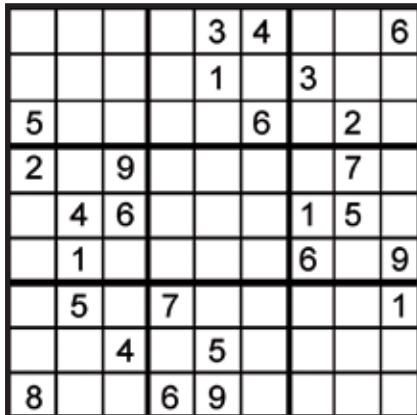
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# SUDOKU



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

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

Solution to the September 2011 puzzle

Send in your Sudoku solution by 31 October 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 44.



# CHESS



I AM taking voluntary early release from the MOD after 30 years. My last day of service will be 30 December and I will be exploring new opportunities in the world outside of the Civil Service. I have been asked by several colleagues if I will still be writing the *Defence Focus* chess column after I leave. I am glad to confirm that I will.

One of the things I want to do when I leave is write a book about chess from the amateur perspective and I am looking for quirky or humorous anecdotes from chess players.

If you have anything you would like to share please let me have it by the end of November. One example I shall use is the time a chap put a gun down by the chessboard and said to his opponent that he felt lucky that day!

And now for this month's problem, study the following position from the game Chigorin-Tarrasch, Nuremberg 1896.

It's a very tricky endgame puzzle. White (to play) resigned here thinking he had lost his f-pawn and the game.



What did he overlook? Send your answers to me at [carl.portman282@mod.uk](mailto:carl.portman282@mod.uk)

The first correct answer drawn wins an excellent chess DVD supplied by those lovely people at Chessbase. Please visit [www.chessbase.com](http://www.chessbase.com)

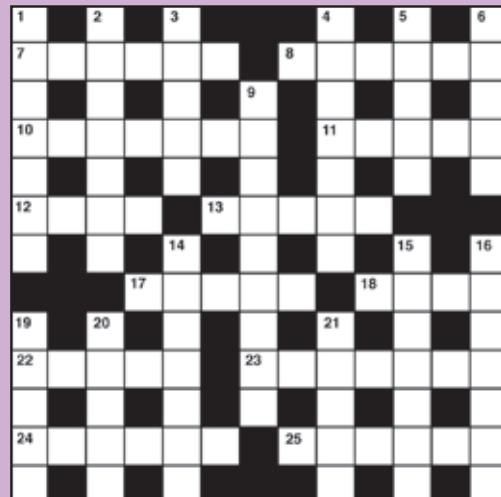
The answer to September's problem is 1.Qxf3! gxf3 2.Bb5+ Ke7 (if 2...Qd7 white will win on material) 3.Bg5 mate. Winner to be announced.

July's winner was Alan Hill from (JCA) PT and the August winner was Peter Hickey from DSTL Fort Halstead.

# TOPICAL CROSSWORD

## ACROSS

- 7. And 14 Down, 24 Across. Rev W. Awdry's fictional steam locomotive (6,3,4,6)
- 8. He is the current Formula One world champion (6)
- 10. British Prime Minister from 1908 to 1916 (7)
- 11. Japanese martial art involving bamboo swords (5)
- 12. Meat dish (4)
- 13. Piece of equipment used in the sport of curling (5)
- 17. He plays President Bartlet in The West Wing (5)
- 18. See 9 Down
- 22. Person who flies an aeroplane (5)
- 23. Area of fruit trees (7)
- 24. See 7 Across
- 25. Capital city blighted by rioting in August 2011 (6)



## DOWN

- 1. England's very successful cricket captain (7)
- 2. Bunch of flowers (7)
- 3. He used a sling to kill Goliath (5)
- 4. Actor who plays Norman Bates in the classic horror movie Psycho (7)
- 5. Lead singer with The Police (5)
- 6. Fluid circulated by the heart (5)
- 9. And 18 Across. Experimental 2011

## SOLUTION (NO PEEKING)

- |        |                       |                               |                          |                     |                       |                              |                               |                       |
|--------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Across | 1. Strauss 2. Bounder | 3. David 4. Perkins 5. String | 6. Blood 9. The Tree Of  | 7. Thomas 8. Vettel | 10. Asquith 11. Kenzo | 12. Stew 13. Stone 17. Sheen | 18. Life 22. Pilot 23. Orchar | 24. Engine 25. London |
| Down   | 20. Blyth 21. Scoop   | 21. Ypres                     | 22. The Tanck 15. Mirand | 23. Blood           | 24. Sledging 19. Pres | 25. Blood                    | 26. Life                      | 27. Stew              |

film starring Sean Penn and Brad Pitt (3,4,2,4)

14. See 7 Across

15. Hart, the English actress and comic (7)

16. Otis, the great soul singer (7)

19. During World War I, some English troops called this Belgian city Wipers (5)

20. He was set adrift during the Mutiny on the Bounty (5)

21. Exclusive newspaper story (5)



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**Terms and conditions:** The prize weekend is for two people sharing a double room for two nights, including breakfast and lunch or dinner in the Caxton Grill. Prize weekend to be taken by end April 2012, subject to availability.

## WIN A HOTEL BREAK

To celebrate the reopening of St Ermin's Hotel in London's St James's Park following a £30m restoration, one lucky *Defence Focus* reader will win a weekend break for two.

Built in a horseshoe around its own lovingly restored and lushly replanted courtyard garden, the four-star deluxe St Ermin's Hotel offers dramatic

public spaces, comfortable bedrooms plus an atmospheric bar and lounge, and the new Caxton Grill restaurant.

Even if you don't win, MOD staff will still be offered a complimentary glass of wine if you dine at the Caxton Grill before 31 December 2011. To reserve, log on to [www.caxtongrill.co.uk](http://www.caxtongrill.co.uk) and add MOD into the "Remarks" section.



## GET A HEAD START

### Win a pair of Denon headphones worth £250.

Denon's AH-NC800 Noise Cancelling Headphones use cutting-edge technology to shut out 99 per cent of ambient noise – making them perfect for listening to music in a loud and busy environment, such as on planes and trains.

And thanks to Denon's extensive audio knowledge, built up during its 100-year history, the headphones deliver superb deep bass and smooth treble. The AH-NC800 noise-cancellers even feature Denon's Compressed Audio Restorer technology, which improves sound quality from

portable music players. The design delivers up to 40 hours continuous use, and should you run short of battery power, they still work as pure headphones.

To maximise comfortable listening, the AH-NC800 design uses a headband that disperses pressure evenly over the head, while the ear-pads are sewn from soft leather to create a gentle touch. Two detachable, differing length cables, along with an airline adapter and a neat carry case complete the package. For more, log on to [www.denon.co.uk](http://www.denon.co.uk)



**TO WIN,**  
Just email your  
name, address  
and phone number to  
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by 10 November 2011.  
Include the phrase  
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Bromsgrove is one of Britain's oldest and largest independent schools. Utterly dedicated to the individual pupil, despite its size, we shun public school drones and instead look to produce creative citizens with a strong moral compass and a dash of pizzazz to boot.

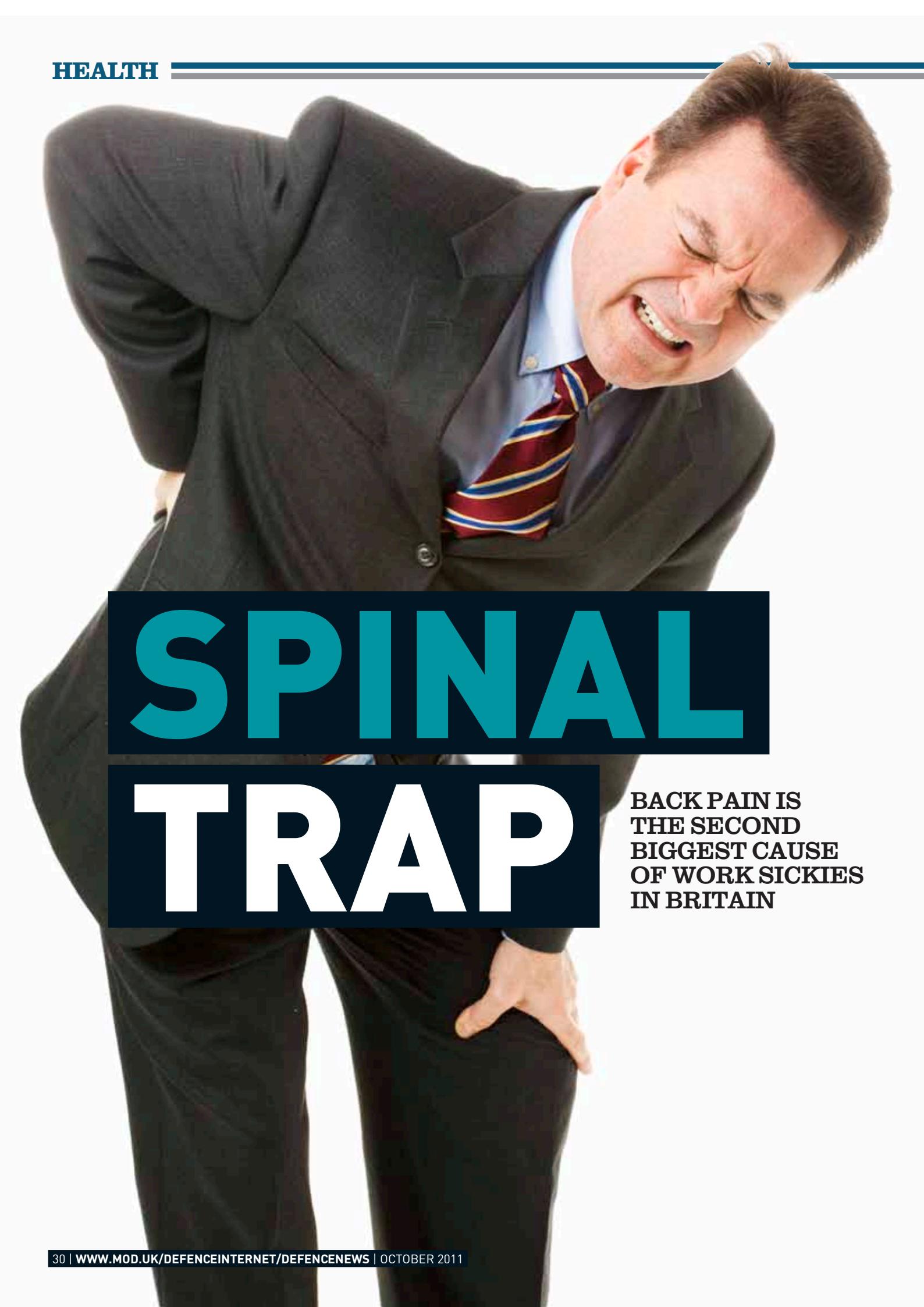
We are currently halfway through the biggest build programme in the school's 500-year history, and although buildings are not the be all and end all (great teachers can run a super school in a pig sty), Bromsgrove's facilities are being enhanced on a truly spectacular scale.

Last year Ofsted once again gave us their highest accolade: "outstanding", while the Good Schools Guide says we "inhabit the academic stratosphere" and lauds our extra curricular programme as one of the finest it has seen, and the Tatler's Good Schools Guide called us a "Great school ... with a fantastically global perspective."

But it's all froth on a marketeer's daydream unless the pupils are happy, focused and keen to make a difference for the better. They are. One thousand six hundred of them from two to 18 years old. Thirteen hundred are British but another 300 from 35 nations around the world make Bromsgrove unique. Ancient, but as contemporary as tomorrow, Bromsgrove's scope is staggering: from A level to the International Baccalaureate, day to boarding, the arts to sport, pupils can soar.

Friendly, engaging and – despite its ranking – not driven by league tables, Bromsgrove is a local, national and international centre of learning. You will receive the warmest of welcomes should you visit.

As a footnote: Tatler also called us "a breath of fresh air". We liked that. And we hope you will too.



# SPINAL TRAP

BACK PAIN IS  
THE SECOND  
BIGGEST CAUSE  
OF WORK SICKIES  
IN BRITAIN



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

Hello from the Medical Centre at HM Naval Base Clyde. Most of us will have episodes of back pain at some point in our lives – it's the most frequent reason for long-term sick leave. It's second only to the common cold as a cause of days lost at work.

More than 90 per cent of cases of low back pain are said to be mechanical in origin. The cause is thought to be a strain or small tear of a ligament or muscle. The pain is felt only in the back and the person is otherwise well. The pain should get better quickly with simple painkillers and by keeping gently active.

Sometimes, a nerve can become irritated and cause pain elsewhere in the body. Take sciatica, for example; this is a condition caused by irritation of the main nerve to the leg, causing pain down the leg and foot. Irritation of the nerve can be due simply to inflammation of nearby muscles or due to a bulging or "slipped" disc pressing on the nerve. Although the real problem is actually in the back, the pain is felt down the area that the nerve supplies.

**“ Previously, people were told to go to bed and rest until the pain got better but nowadays the advice is to keep moving”**

Some symptoms may flag up a more serious problem and should be reported urgently – these include any problems with bowel, bladder or erections, weakness or numbness of your legs and weight loss or pain lasting more than a week or so. If you have any of these symptoms your doctor will want to see you straight away and may refer you to hospital for tests.

Luckily, most people with sudden or acute mechanical low back pain improve quickly if they follow advice from their medic or physio and take simple painkillers. Previously, people were told to go to bed and rest until the pain got better but nowadays the advice is to keep moving. You're much less likely to end up with chronic back pain if you can keep gently mobile. It also stops you becoming too fed-up.

How can you avoid a repeat episode? Regular exercise such as swimming will help strengthen your back and, if you're on the heavy side, losing weight will help. Think about your posture if you work at a desk and ensure you sleep on a firm mattress. If you look after your back it should give you years of quality service. Stay healthy and I'll see you next month.

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

## NOT SO LITTLE BRITAIN

**WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT THE UK'S OBESITY EPIDEMIC?  
FOUR EXPERTS SHARE THEIR VIEWS ON A WEIGHTY ISSUE**

**DARREN CAMPBELL MBE**

**OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALLIST**

Obesity is a big problem but I believe that increasing the activity of young people is key to tackling the issue. If we can help them find activities that excite them, then fitness becomes less of a chore. Thanks to the network of School Sport Partnerships, school sport has come on in leaps and bounds. As an ambassador for the Youth Sport Trust, whenever I visit schools, I'm blown away by the opportunities on offer. Traditional sports remain popular, but there is a growing number of activities such as dance, gymnastics and golf, both in lessons and after-school clubs. It is also crucial to meet the needs of pupils who don't get fired up by traditional sports so they are not turned off from sport for life.



is taken, then 60 per cent of men, 50 per cent of women and 25 per cent of children will be obese by 2050. The US culture is miles ahead of us in how they treat obesity where they are accepting, caring and non-judgmental. When I was a school nurse, I had the fizzy drinks machine removed and, if I had my way, I would ban shops selling junk food within 100 yards of a school.

**ELLEN MASON**

**SENIOR CARDIAC NURSE,  
BRITISH HEART FOUNDATION**

At the BHF we have become concerned about the risks from obesity, because premature death from heart disease is largely avoidable. The single biggest factor to avoid it is to give up smoking and stay slim. It's a problem that needs tackling from all sides. Parents must make sure their children are active and eat well. Schools need to serve up healthy meals and the government should legislate in food labelling. That said, being too dictatorial just doesn't work. Nor does demonising people who are overweight. The best thing we can do is point out the risks of their lifestyle and benefits of change, and support them.

**SARA STANNER, SCIENCE  
PROGRAMME MANAGER,**

**BRITISH NUTRITION  
FOUNDATION**

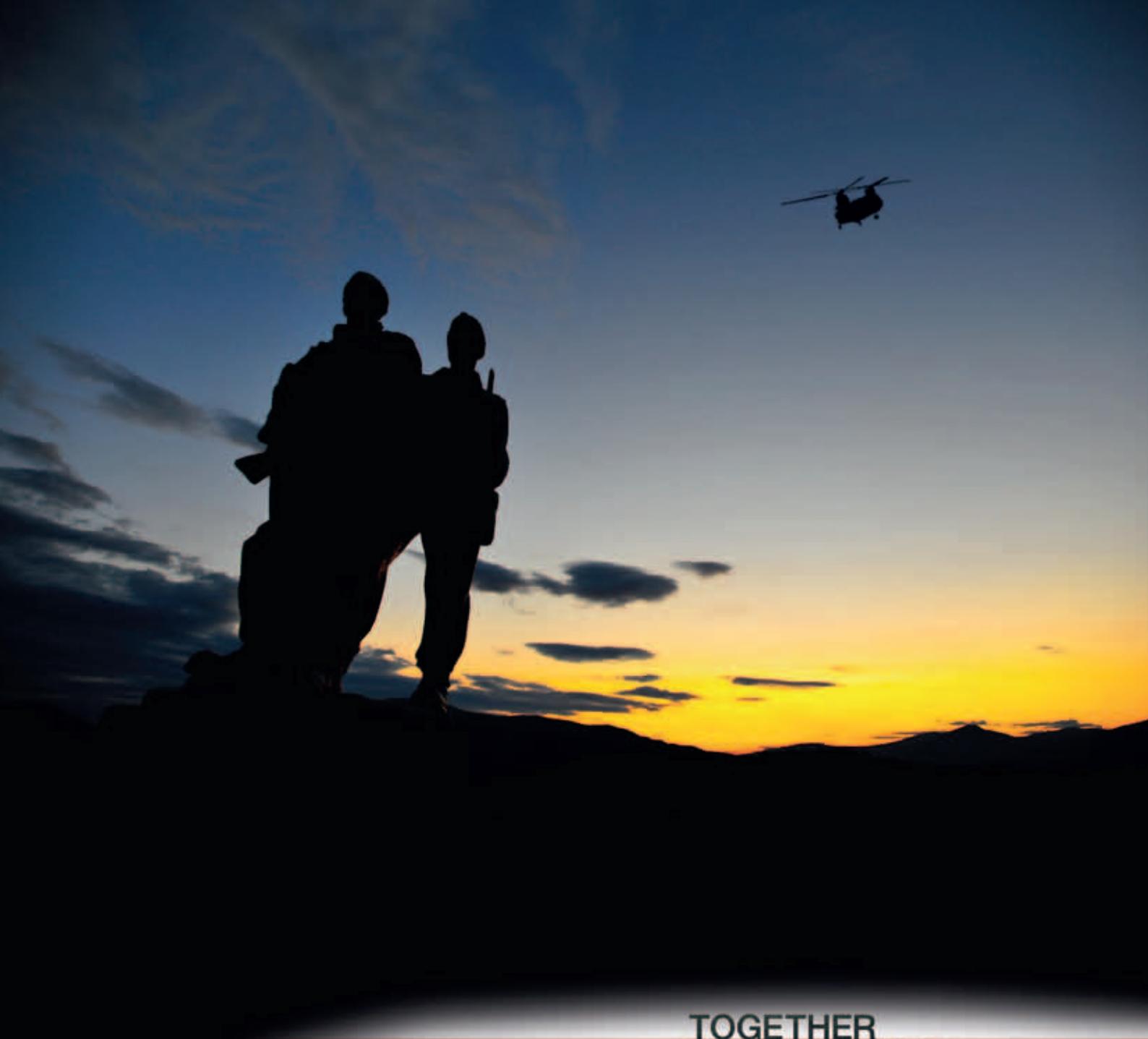
My role at the British Nutrition Foundation is heavily bound up with getting the obesity message out to schools. If you're overweight in childhood, you're much more likely to be an overweight adult. The food supply has to change too. We all saw how easily people switched from full-fat to low-fat milk when it was offered to them in the supermarkets. The food industry definitely has a role to play.

*This article first appeared in benhealth, the magazine of leading mutual organisation Benenden Healthcare Society. The Society provides affordable healthcare on a discretionary basis to public sector and third sector workers, including the Armed Forces. Visit [www.benenden.org.uk](http://www.benenden.org.uk) for details.*

**JANE WALLACE**

**SURGICAL WARD SISTER,  
BENENDEN HOSPITAL**

In Britain one in four adults is obese, as is one in 10 children aged two to 12. We're looking at an epidemic, and, if no action



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