

= Michael Walker , Baron Walker of Aldringham =

Field Marshal Michael John Dawson Walker , Baron Walker of Aldringham , GCB , CMG , CBE , DL (born 7 July 1944) is a retired British Army officer . Commissioned in 1966 , he served in Cyprus , Northern Ireland , and in a variety of staff posts in the United Kingdom until 1984 . After being given command of a battalion , he was mentioned in despatches for his service during a second tour of duty in Northern Ireland , this time in Derry , and subsequently served a tour on Gibraltar . He was promoted to brigadier , unusually having never held the rank of colonel , and took command of 20th Armoured Brigade in Germany before becoming I Corps chief of staff .

As a major general , Walker was appointed General Officer Commanding , Eastern District , before becoming Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff at the Ministry of Defence . He took command of NATO 's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) , which deployed to the Balkans in 1995 , Walker becoming the first officer to command the land component of the NATO @-@ led Implementation Force . For his service with the multi @-@ national forces in the Balkans , he was awarded the American Legion of Merit . After relinquishing command of the ARRC , Walker spent three years as Commander in Chief , Land Command , before being appointed Chief of the General Staff ? the professional head of the British Army ? in 2000 . In 2003 , he was promoted to Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) ? the professional head of all the British Armed Forces . While CDS , Walker attracted controversy during the modernisation of the armed forces , over allegations of prisoner abuse during the Iraq War , and over comments that the media coverage of Iraq may have endangered British troops .

Walker retired in 2006 and was subsequently appointed Governor of the Royal Hospital Chelsea , a post he held until 2011 . He is married and has three children .

= = Early and personal life = =

Born in Salisbury in the British colony of Southern Rhodesia (modern @-@ day Zimbabwe) to William Hampden Dawson Walker and Dorothy Helena Walker (née Shiach) , Walker was educated both in Southern Rhodesia and in Yorkshire , first at Milton School , Bulawayo , and then at Woodhouse Grove School , West Yorkshire . He spent 18 months teaching in a Preparatory School before joining the British Army . Walker married Victoria (" Tor " , née Holme) , in 1973 and the couple have three children ? two sons and one daughter . He lists his interests as sailing , shooting , tennis , skiing and golf .

= = Early military career = =

After attending the Royal Military Academy , Sandhurst , Walker was commissioned into the Royal Anglian Regiment as a second lieutenant on 29 July 1966 . He served as a platoon commander with the 1st Battalion and was promoted to lieutenant on 29 January 1968 . In 1969 he was posted to Cyprus for a two @-@ year tour , and served in Northern Ireland during The Troubles , before attending the Staff College , Camberley . He was promoted to captain on 29 July 1972 .

After serving in a staff position at the Ministry of Defence (MoD) , Walker was promoted to major at the end of 1976 , and rejoined 1st Battalion , to become a company commander , based in Tidworth , Wiltshire . In 1979 , he took up another staff post at the MoD , after which he was promoted to lieutenant colonel in 1982 . Until 1985 , he served as Military Assistant (MA) to the Chief of the General Staff . He was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the New Year Honours List in December 1984 .

In command of the 1st Battalion from 1985 to 1987 , Walker served another tour in Northern Ireland , this time in Derry , and later a tour on Gibraltar . He was mentioned in despatches in 1987 " in recognition of gallant and distinguished service " in Northern Ireland . Unusually , Walker was promoted directly to brigadier at the end of 1987 , without having held the rank of colonel . He took command of 20th Armoured Brigade , based in Germany , from 1987 to 1989 , before holding the post of Chief of Staff , I Corps between 1989 and 1991 .

= = High command = =

Walker attained general officer status with promotion to acting major general in 1991 and took command of North East District and 2nd Infantry Division . Having served in the Gulf War , he was promoted to Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) later in 1991 . He was granted the substantive rank of major general on 2 December 1991 , with seniority from 14 February 1991 , going on to serve as General Officer Commanding of the Eastern District and then as Assistant Chief of the General Staff from 11 December 1992 to 3 October 1994 .

On 8 December 1994 , Walker was appointed commander of NATO 's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) , which had its headquarters in Rheindahlen , Germany , and promoted to acting lieutenant general . He was granted the substantive rank of lieutenant general on 15 March 1995 , and knighted in the 1995 Queen 's Birthday Honours when he was appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath . Under Walker 's command , the ARRC deployed to the Balkans in December 1995 . There , he became the first commander of the land component of the NATO @-@ led Implementation Force (IFOR) , until his return to the UK in November 1996 .

His IFOR command in Bosnia was indirectly criticised by Richard Holbrooke for his refusal to use his authority to also perform nonmilitary implementation tasks , including arresting indicted war criminals :

Based on Shalikashvili 's statement at White House meetings , Christopher and I had assumed that the IFOR commander would use his authority to do substantially more than he was obligated to do . The meeting with [Admiral Leighton] Smith shattered that hope . Smith and his British deputy , General Michael Walker , made clear that they intended to take a minimalist approach to all aspects of implementation other than force protection . Smith signalled this in his first extensive public statement to the Bosnian people , during a live call @-@ in program on Pale Television ? an odd choice for his first local media appearance .

He was appointed a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George at the end of 1996 .

Succeeded as COMARRC by Sir Mike Jackson , Walker was promoted to acting general and appointed Commander in Chief , Land Command on 27 January 1997 . He was granted the substantive rank of general on 2 April 1997 . In recognition of his service with IFOR between 1995 and 1996 , Walker was awarded the American Legion of Merit (Degree of Commander) , and granted unrestricted permission to wear the decoration , in May 1997 . In September 1997 , he was appointed Aide @-@ de @-@ Camp General to Queen Elizabeth II , succeeding General Sir Michael Rose , until he in turn was succeeded by General Sir Richard Dannatt . He was promoted to Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath in the New Year Honours List at the end of 1999 .

Having served just over three years as Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief , Walker was appointed Chief of the General Staff (CGS) ? the professional head of the British Army ? on 17 April 2000 , taking over from General Sir Roger Wheeler . He remained CGS for three years , after which he was promoted to Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) ? the professional head of all the British Armed Forces ? on 2 May 2003 , succeeding Admiral Sir Michael Boyce (later Lord Boyce) . As CDS , Walker criticised some of the media coverage of British deployments in Iraq . In particular , he claimed that attacks on the Black Watch were " enhanced " due to news reports on their location . He went on to say that " [as a result of the media coverage] , there could well have been a response by those who wished us ill to go and meet us with something like a bomb " . His comments were rejected by a spokesman for the National Union of Journalists , who retaliated " When generals turn around and start blaming reporters for their own mistakes , it is a sign they aren 't doing their own jobs properly " . Also in 2004 , Walker , along with General Sir Mike Jackson , then Chief of the General Staff , attracted controversy over reforms of the armed forces , which included the amalgamation of several army regiments to form larger regiments , leading to the loss of historic names .

In an interview with the BBC in October 2005 , Walker suggested that the army 's recruitment had been adversely affected by the Iraq War . He also commented on the war in Afghanistan , on which he said " There 's a lot of work to be done , of which the military is only a very small part . Ten years

, 15 years , long @-@ term . This is not going to be solved in a short term " . In the same month , he gave an interview for The Sunday Times , in which he said that soldiers ' morale had been damaged by the unpopularity of the war among the British public . Later in 2005 , Walker was instrumental in drawing up new procedures for the treatment of British service personnel accused of abusing Iraqi prisoners , following claims that the army had abandoned those soldiers charged in connection with the prisoner abuses . In February 2006 , Walker headed up a military delegation to Bulgaria to discuss military cooperation between the British and Bulgarian governments .

Walker gave evidence to the Iraq Inquiry on 1 February 2010 , in which he spoke about funding for the invasion of Iraq and subsequent planning .

= = = Honorary roles = = =

Lord Walker has held a variety of honorary and ceremonial roles in different regiments . He was granted the honorary titles of Colonel Commandant and Deputy Colonel of Queen 's Division (of which the Royal Anglian Regiment is part) in April 1992 and Honorary Colonel , 3rd Battalion Duke of Wellington 's Regiment (West Riding) (Yorkshire Volunteers) , in October 1993 , which he relinquished on 30 June 1999 . In 1994 , he succeeded General Sir John Learmont as Colonel Commandant of the Army Air Corps and held the title until April 2004 , when he was relieved by then Lieutenant General Sir Richard Dannatt (later General Lord Dannatt) . In 1997 , he was appointed honorary Colonel , The Royal Anglian Regiment , in succession to Major General Patrick Stone , and was himself succeeded as Deputy Colonel by Brigadier John Sutherell . Sutherell , then a major general , went on to succeed Walker as Honorary Colonel in February 2000 .

= = Retirement = =

Walker relinquished his appointment as Chief of the Defence Staff in April 2006 and retired from the Army , succeeded as CDS by Air Chief Marshal Jock Stirrup . In September 2006 , Walker was appointed Governor of the Royal Hospital Chelsea , holding the post until February 2011 when he resigned suddenly . On 24 November 2006 , it was announced that he would receive a life peerage , and , on 19 December , he was created Baron Walker of Aldringham , of Aldringham in the county of Suffolk , sitting in the House of Lords as a crossbencher . He was given the ceremonial appointment of Deputy Lieutenant of Greater London in 2007 . Walker was appointed as an honorary field marshal in the Queen 's 2014 Birthday Honours .

= = Arms = =