

The Pomegranate

Issue One: October 2012





Cover Image: The flag of The Royal Dragoon Guards is raised at PMAG HQ on the day of the handover from 1st Bn The Welsh Guards.

Commanding Officer's Foreward

As a way of introduction to our first newsletter from Op HERRICK 17 I would just like to explain its scope. As you will see it does not solely focus on Royal Dragoon Guards' activities but encompasses all of the Police Mentoring Advisory Group (PMAG) and will, in time, include those of the Warthog Group. This is deliberate as PMAG is an organisation comprising of 11 different capbadges and two nations under RDG command, and is an all inclusive team working to the same mission with a common thread of news. It would however be improper not to include the Warthog Group (A Sqn) who, whilst not under my command out here, still retains its link to our home base through my HQ. We therefore aim to try and include two organisations comprising a host of different units with a newsletter that shares a common purpose- to connect us to our friends and families.

I can begin this update by reporting that we are now at last all here. This in itself has been no small task; the beginning of our Relief in Place began some two and a half months ago. Putting aside the logistical and administrative friction that this has caused, I am just glad to have everyone in the same theatre of operations. You will no doubt know how spread out we are (essentially we cover the whole of Central Helmand) but I nonetheless regularly see all of the soldiers under my command and will see the Warthog Group often once they get established. I can reassure you that the boys (and some girls) are in good spirits. They are mostly thoroughly settled into their role and locations and have been delivering the mission now for at least a month. They are doing an outstanding job.

Our first impressions are of a country which has progressed a great deal since the Regiment was last here. The people are more secure, the insurgent is on the back foot and our Afghan counterparts in the police are more professional and more confident in their own ability. It is gratifying to see that the ISAF efforts over the last ten years or so have been worthwhile. It remains challenging work however, and as you will know some of it is done from some pretty hard living conditions. The boys are making the best of it though and I am constantly impressed with their resilience and cheerfulness. The rather eclectic mix of RDG, QRL, 1RGR, REME, RMP, Int Corps, R Sigs (and others!) and even Danish Police is a refreshing one and seems to work well. Indeed, it would seem that our cultural diversity and different



professional backgrounds add to the strength of the mentoring group. It certainly makes for entertaining orders sessions!

I therefore hope that the combined news of our force appeals to the combined nature of our home base. We will update you every month on how we are getting on and we can always be contacted by return through the Rear Party and the Welfare Office if you need to get hold of us. In the meantime, I hope that this newsletter serves to keep you informed and connected to our work in Afghanistan.

Quis Separabit.

Lt Col Jamie Piggott
Commanding Officer



Lt Col Piggott proudly takes the reins from Lt Col Bossi

Editor's Welcome

So here it is, issue one of *The Pomegranate*, the newsletter for the friends and families of the Royal Dragoon Guards and all those serving with us during Operation HERRICK 17. In this issue the contributors focus on how we're settling into our new roles, and how we've been spending our initial down time. There are frequent mentions of the accommodation and food (something close to all our hearts) and the Queen's Royal Lancers' need to adopt pets. A lot of effort has been put into this by all involved and I hope you enjoy reading it as much as we have enjoyed putting it together.

October has proven to be a busy month and as well as taking over from our HERRICK 16 counterparts, we have experienced the Gurkha holiday of Dashain and the Islamic religious festival of Eid Al-Adha. The main take home points though, are that morale is uniformly high, we are already having successes and that your support has been hugely appreciated. Speaking of which, Christmas may seem a long way off, however should you want to send gifts, the deadlines are fast approaching, with presents for those in PBs and CPs needing to be sent by Monday 19th November, and those to MOB Lashkar Gah or Bastion posted no later than Monday 3rd December.

Lt Bobby Crean,
Editor



Police Mentoring and Group (PMAG) Headquarters

Capt Iain Monk

We're now one month in and time is flying! A detailed handover from the Welsh Guards has allowed us to get to grips with our roles and we're starting to understand life in the Lashkar Gah Main Operating Base (MOB) a little more. When I arrived into Lash on the 18th of September I was excited at the prospect of working for the Welsh Guards (WG). This isn't the first time other Battle Groups have suffered my natural charm and humour and I still find it interesting watching how others go about their business, witnessing the different leadership styles in action. I had worked with the Chief of Staff at Field Training Unit in Salisbury Plain, so I was aware of his work ethic and what he would expect from me. The CO was very welcoming and did not ask too much of me in my early days, although I may have tested his patience on occasions for which I can only apologise. Although the headquarters was run by the Welsh Guards, there was an increasingly eclectic mix as we all started to arrive. Come to think of it the only Welsh Guards in the Ops room were the CO, Chief of Staff and the RSM. The early weeks with the WG were fun, although I was definitely looking forward to the arrival of the RDG and there is nothing like watching the shell shocked face of Dan Tanner, our Ops Officer, walking into HQ for his first day at work!



Capt Dan Tanner lectures an enthralled Capt Charlie Arrowsmith

As a headquarters, we were aided in making the place our own by the fact that our arrival coincided with a move to a new location within the base. The downside to this move is that we are now very close to the landing site for helicopters and whilst most of us have



What a difference a week makes. Above left, we start to move into the HQ. Above right: The CO holds forth in a brief to the staff

developed the ability to sleep through them, the American Ospreys are an earth-shuddering exception to the rule, with an uncanny ability to turn up whenever our Intelligence Corps attachment, Sgt Wibberley, starts to give a brief.

The cook house in Lash serves fantastic food, which makes the large gym all the more necessary. The Royal Dragoon Guards are bonding with our Danish Influence Officer, Major Bo Wacker, and the attached personnel from the Royal Gurkha Rifles, Military Intelligence,



Royal Corps of Engineers, Educational and Training Services and Royal Military Police. There really is an eclectic mix here, and we are also joined by civilian police and cultural advisors. Despite the mix, the RDG are stamping our own unique brand on the place, and all look forward to Pipe Major Gray's music as our flag is raised every morning. The CO's Rover Group is located with us and although we've only been here a few weeks they have already travelled throughout our Area of Operations (AO), Trooper Sam Lowe describing his role to date in the Royal Dragoon Guards' blog, which should be 'live' by the time you read this.

Lashkar Gah Training Centre (LTC)

Maj Steve Kirkman

LTC is located in Southern Helmand Province, just 4km North East of the Main Operating Base and bustling metropolis of Lashkar Gah. The LTC is the regional training centre for the Afghan National Police (ANP) and we're currently seeing some really positive results as we train ANP personnel from all over Helmand Province. The courses on offer are varied, ranging from specialised Counter IED courses, Medic training and Basic Police Patrolman courses, to Non Commissioned Officers' courses.



Sqn Leader Major Steve Kirkman ensuring that, Major Mark Cooling 1WG, gets on board the helicopter, to ensure he becomes, **"Ground Force Commander!"**

On completion of the dreaded "Welcome to Afghanistan... now you are on RSOI" the Royal Dragoon Guards and 1 Royal Gurkha Rifles' (1 RGR) training teams finally arrived at our home for the tour, LTC. The workload from the offset has been fast paced, helping everyone to settle quickly into a routine, which we hope will serve us well

throughout our deployment. One month in and morale remains high, helped by the relatively mild temperatures of around 35°C.

LTC has great facilities for troops to utilise when they're not working, such as wireless internet and a welfare room complete with all the Sky Sports channels, much to the frustration of the Sqn Ldr who wants to watch the many repeats of Downton Abbey. The word from 'downstairs' is that the vetoing of Downton is the reason for him being so grumpy most of the time! We also have a fully fitted indoor and outdoor gymnasium, so if your husband, boyfriend or girlfriend deployed with a bit of lard, the only excuse for it being there when they get back down solely to lack of effort (and eating a little too many of the gastronomic arts created daily by our very diligent chefs!).





Sgt Tek in discussion with MOI at LTC



"The Blhuminator." Enough said.



Our Brothers in Arms. Soldiers from 1 RGR.



The Gold-plated solution- Afghans teaching Afghans



The team take a break in the shade.



Capt Stevie Stewart and friends



Squadron Leader's Notes

Maj Ben Watts



D Sqn Ldr and Col Ismail (Dir OCCP) at Kajaki Dam With Mr Ahmadi (Provincial Governor's Chief of Staff) and Raza (Interpreter)

D Squadron were amongst the first RDG boots on the ground for Op HERRICK 17. The 2IC and I arrived in Bastion to start our RSOI training on 12th Aug, over two months ahead of the Squadron Main Body and with the SSM and SQMS not far behind, this left us in the rather uncomfortable position of having the HQ in Afghanistan and the rest of the Squadron back in the UK finishing pre-deployment training without us. Thanks to the valiant efforts of Capt Shaun Mackey and all who remained in Catterick, the rest of us came through the final exercises on Salisbury Plain with flying colours and deployed to Afghanistan without any significant issues.

Now that we are in Theatre and have had time to take stock, it has become apparent that the Regiment has been handed one of the most complex and interesting roles in Theatre. Trying to develop the capability of the Afghan National Police is critical to the planned withdrawal of NATO forces by 2014 and as such the spotlight is really on us. In addition, the ability to get out on the ground on a daily basis and actually work with the Afghans is something that few of our colleges in 4th Mechanized Brigade will get the chance to do.

D Squadron itself has two main responsibilities. Firstly we provide the Advisor Team for the Helmand Operations Coordination Centre - Provincial (OCCP), an organisation that coordinates Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) activity across Helmand and facilitates the sharing of information between the ANSF and with Coalition Forces. The critical point about this role is that it covers not just the familiar British Task Force Helmand districts of Lashkar Gah, Nar-e-Saraj and Nad-e-Ali, but also the 10 United States Marine Corps Districts as well. This means we work closely with the USMC on a daily basis and it gives the OCCP staff a unique and fascinating Province-wide view. The OCCP mentoring task falls to the majority of SHQ personnel.





Catching up with old friends on RSOI



Sgt McCartney inspects the 2IC's baking skills on a visit to the OCCP.



In addition to the OCCP, D Squadron also takes on the responsibility of District Advisory Team Lashkar Gah (DAT LKG). This encompasses the majority of the Squadron, with Troops forming the Police Advisor Teams (PAT) and working to the Squadron 2IC who runs DAT LKG.

Still with me?! I said it was complicated...

The job of the PATs is to deliver the bulk of the Police mentoring effort. To visit checkpoints and precinct headquarters on a daily basis, to form a close working relationship with Police commanders and to assist with issues such as police continuation training, first aid, map reading and even helping them with their logistics system. This last point is a hot topic at the moment with winter just over the horizon and many Police stations lacking basic shelter and winter provisions.

Pre-deployment training was useful, but could never fully prepare you for a role like this, so the speed with which the PATs have found their feet and for them to have taken to the task with such relish has been impressive and is a real credit to them.

SILICON 41

Lt Ali Smith

The Police Advisory Team (PAT) operating in the District Centre (DC) of Lashkar Gah here in Helmand Province has undergone a number of changes over the course of our training, but we are now on the ground and helping the Afghan National Police (ANP) provide better and lasting security for their communities. Shortly before deploying I learned that the PAT would be formed of 11 soldiers from 1st Battalion Royal Ghurkha Rifles, complemented by a Junior NCO from each of the Royal Military Police and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineer and this has created a really interesting mix.

This variety of cap badges and backgrounds have bonded quickly, as we only had our week-long Final Training Exercise in the UK together before deployment. Cpl Khagendra and I deployed first and quickly got a feel for the role, however, our predecessors' headed back to the UK all too quickly, in fact they left on the same helicopter that brought our boys in! It was good to get the team back together again and start doing the job we had been training for.



Sgt Prakash (10QOGLR) handing over to Lt Smith (RDG)



Shortly after our arrival we had another significant change; we discovered we would not only be taking over mentoring these AUP from our predecessors, but would also be taking over mentoring from another PAT in the Lashkar Gah DC area. As a result we are now mentoring the AUP from 5 Precincts with a total of 30 police checkpoints, so we are prepared for a fairly busy time on Op HERRICK 17!

The Policemen we have met here so far have been very friendly towards us, often drinking tea (or “Chai”) with us or giving us very large apples! The checkpoints themselves are often quite basic, but are in a very interesting variety of locations and the policemen are always very welcoming.



CP Bost West Karez by the River Helmand

Silicon 41 are now settling in nicely and getting to grips with our role and equipment here in Lashkar Gah. We are visiting checkpoints almost every day and starting to better understand the area, and most importantly the people around us; continuing the work that has gone before to enable the Afghan people to provide lasting security in their country.

SILICON 43

Tpr Steve McClure

As I write this, the PAT has been in Patrol Base Attal for about a week. The first day we got here we were thrown into the deep end and told we were going out on the ground for a patrol. We left early in the morning, got to the Check Point with the Light Dragoons and the Afghan Uniformed Police and had our first taste of Afghan chai, an experience I’m sure we’ll learn to love. The patrol was really very simple, but with our protective clothing, equipment and weapons, the heat was noticeable!

We have certainly hit the ground running, and have done many more patrols since then, we are bonding really well with our Afghan partners and are looking forward to getting to know them better.



Dashain, A Gurkha Christmas

Lt Bobby Crean

Part of Pre-deployment training involves lessons helping us to understand the different cultures we experience when in Afghanistan, but it is easy to forget that there are many different cultures within the Army. One of the benefits of working with 1 RGR and Queen's Gurkha Engineers (QGE) is that we are able to learn more about Nepalese culture. This was particularly enjoyable this month, as Wednesday 24th October marked the 10th Day of the Hindu religious festival of Dashain. This commemorates the Hindu God's victory over a monster after a 9 day long battle. In Nepal, children will be given small gifts, and families will get together over the succeeding days to celebrate with each other. Tikka (a red mark on the forehead made with rice and yoghurt) is given out by the most senior member present to mark this victory. In LTC, the Gurkhas hosted ex-service personnel, our American and Afghan colleagues and Lt Col Piggott, as a goat was slaughtered and a fantastic curry cooked. Those in attendance wish you all Doshain ko subukomana!



A traditional image showing the battle celebrated during Dashain



A)



B)



C)



D)



E)



Photo captions:

A) The Dashain party gets into full swing. B) Attendees proudly show off their Tikka. C) Mr Ramesh and Sgt Lil entertain the audience. D) Maj Kirkman realises the beer is non-alcoholic. E) Gurkhas happy to see the Brigade photographer.



Nad-e-Ali

Maj James Lance



The Man, the Legend, the Lancer

After an extensive period of training in the UK and a lengthy start to the tour, C Squadron QRL have finally arrived in Nad-e-Ali and taken over from Support Company, 1WG. We are split into seven Police Advisory Teams, known as PATs (but also referred to by their callsigns, which all begin with 'SILICON'). One could say that they take a good thing and make it better (one of the great properties of silicon). Four

PATs are provided by Queen's Royal Lancers, two by 1RGR and one by The Royal Dragoon Guards. Each of these PATs is responsible for mentoring a number of Afghan Police checkpoints throughout the area. Squadron Headquarters is providing a District Advisory Team (DAT), responsible for mentoring the District Chief of Police and his staff. Due to the size of the district, the PATs are spread all over the place and will be having quite different experiences, so we thought it would be best for each to write a short update. I hope that you enjoy reading them and that they give you some idea of what we've been up to, but the main take away is that we're in, we're settled, morale is high and we're relishing the challenging task that we've been set.

District Advisory Team (DAT)

2Lt Giles Moon

The first member of the DAT to deploy was the Squadron Leader, Maj James Lance, who left in mid-August in order to get to grips with our task before the remainder of the Squadron arrived. He has taken to his task like a duck to water and his habit of consistently pulling fifteen hour days has already reduced the 2IC (Capt Ed Barker RDG) to a state of despair. The Squadron Leader will often approach his staff with what Ed calls, paraphrasing the late and great Sherlock Holmes, a "Three Pie Problem". As if God was telling him to slow down, the Squadron Leader also came perilously close to becoming the first member of C Sqn to be sent back to the UK after a particularly nasty wasp sting. With a helicopter on its way and a stretcher called for, the 2IC realised the danger of additional work and quickly stepped in to halt the proceedings.

Travelling with the OC was SSgt 'Mine Roller' Long, the Squadron Quarter Master Sergeant (SQMS), and Cpl Gardner, our communications guru. Almost as soon as they arrived, the SQMS disappeared into a whirlwind of paperwork and was last seen sobbing gently in his store as he was handed yet another pile of forms to complete. Cpl Gardner, meanwhile, has



been single-handedly supporting the Afghan Police's radio system armed only with a Blue Peter upbringing, a roll of duct tape and a good sense of humour. As the rest of the team have arrived, we have slowly created our own niches. SSgt Edwards and Cpl Fowler jumped head first into their role as mentors for the Afghan ops room and despite complaining constantly about the workload and frustrations of the job, the pair are rarely to be found without their feet up and enjoying a cup of tea while bonding with the local police. Nice work if you can get it!

Capt Tyler has taken on the difficult task of mentoring the Afghan Local Police (ALP). A policeman in normal life, he is often to be seen whiling away the hours watching 'World's Wildest Police Chases' and wishing he was back home on the mean streets of Birmingham. Meanwhile, signals support in the Ops Room is provided by the experienced Cpl Wilson and fresh-faced Signallers Jarrett and Young. So far, Cpl Wilson has gallantly taken it upon himself to show his protégés why you should avoid the local cuisine, by spending a week bed ridden with D&V.

No account of the DAT would be complete without a mention of Lt Bragger and Cpl Millan, the intelligence team. Lt Bragger has been sent away from the Coldstream Guards for undisclosed reasons, but has since found a new love in Cpl Millan. That Lt Bragger couldn't stop himself from texting Cpl Millan while the latter was on leave has us all concerned about how he will cope when he returns home.

The DAT have enjoyed the start of what promises to be an interesting and rewarding tour and are extremely grateful for the continued support from back home. We look forward to keeping you updated on our progress through the coming months.

Silicon 51 (3rd Troop, C Sqn QRL)

Lt Nick Bartrum

After the long period of Mission Specific Training (MST), which all who deploy to Afghanistan must attend, 3rd Troop have arrived and started their tour. It would be wrong to name and shame those which made our time in Bastion memorable, but I'm sure we will all remember Sgt Steve Allen's encounter with an insect, Cpl James Monaghan deciding to sleep through his onward flight and Tpr Jack Morgan losing all his morale somewhere near the American shops!

We have taken over from a Police Advisory Team (PAT) that was formed of the Queen's Own Gurkha Logistics Regiment and now we can really set about our task. To describe what a PAT does day to day is an impossibility. We have 10 Afghan Uniformed Police and 5 Afghan Local Police checkpoints to mentor. The Afghan Uniformed Police are recruited from all over Afghanistan whilst the Afghan Local Police are recruited within their village and provide the security for that area. We have had to remain flexible, but by being so, we have already had a number of successes, including conducting foot patrols with the Afghans and successfully ordering them new winter clothes.





SILICON 51 shows Victorian restraint in celebrating Tpr Lawton's birthday.

The highlights of the tour so far have been the Troop Leader's culinary skills and Tpr Daniel Lawton's 21st birthday, not quite the night out in Newcastle that he expected, but the cake was a good surprise. Another highlight which mustn't go unmentioned is the Afghan hospitality and kindness towards us, although this includes the dubious gift of endless chai (tea) wherever we go. This is a watery, tasteless drink which normally has something swimming in it, but it would be incredibly impolite for to refuse, and the answer to LCpl Mike Mann's plead of, "do I have to drink all the woody bits?" Is a resounding "yes" whilst saying how delicious it is.

Finally, we have to say a great many thanks to everyone who has kindly sent out packages and post to all of us already- it is fantastic to receive anything from home and very much appreciated.



The AUP prove immune to Lt Grey's infectious happiness.



Cpl Monaghan enjoys yet another cup of chai.

Silicon 52 (1st Troop, C Sqn QRL)

Lt Charlie Gray

As a Troop, we are located in Patrol Base Wahid. Morale is high and the base is more comfortable than we expected. Silicon 52 has already completed a number of familiarisation patrols to get a feel for the area and the local police with whom we will be working. We've made our tents our own, with essential home improvements rivalling those of 'Grand



Designs' and the lads are already stamping their personalities on our routines. LCpls Scotty McNie and Harry Ayers are very proud of their hesco-built sofa, which is the envy of the other units based here, who have repeatedly tried to steal it. Tpr 'Jugsy' Tittle has enjoyed collecting disused vehicle equipment to produce over sized jewellery and other 'bling', while LCpl Roy 'Frankie' Farrell has enjoyed spending the majority of his time repairing vehicles.



Tpr Tittle sporting some jewellery in homage to the A Team.

The next few weeks will see the PAT patrol more regularly to work with the Afghan Police. We will enjoy many a lunch time meal in check points and hope that we can maintain the momentum we have achieved.

Silicon 53 and 57 (C Coy, 1RGR)

Lt Sandy Nightingale

Silicon 53 has had an interesting start to their time in Afghanistan. Having finished our training in bastion, we moved to Patrol Base Pimon, and rapidly began endearing ourselves to the police we work with. We've helped them improve their checkpoint and were invited to a delicious dinner afterwards. Furthermore, to thank us for our efforts, we were given a goat and a chicken. The goat (lovingly called Fonzi) did not last long and was soon turned into a curry by the Police. The Cockerel, Terence, has lasted much longer, despite becoming the most hated pet in Pimon! SN 53 has tried explaining to everyone who would listen (and quite a few who won't) that it is quite natural for a chap like Terence to do his best to wake everyone up at 0600 every morning, but this doesn't seem to be pacifying the masses. Terence's days may be numbered, but not if we can help it! In the mean time, we look forward to the arrival of Silicon 57.





The sign speaks for itself. Silicon 53 strike a pose

Silicon 54 (2nd Troop, C Sqn QRL)

2Lt Jimmy Willcox



Silicon 54 have a patriotic group picture before leaving the UK

making their bed spaces home, Tpr Chappel possibly taking this a bit too far, regularly being seen emerging from his 'room within a tent' in a sleeping bag suit!

Having been briefed not to adopt cats or dogs as mascots, a praying mantis called 'Manny' has become quite a hit with the PAT, Tpr Wood happily catching flies for it and new improvements for its cage appearing almost daily.

Meanwhile, despite all the bold predictions regarding the most massive Trooper at the end of tour, as the evenings draw in and the temperature drops, film nights begin to look more appealing than the gym!



Silicon 54 has finally arrived in Patrol Base Wahid despite the best efforts of the RAF to spread the PAT across the entirety of Helmand province. We are now enjoying to getting to know the police in the area and some characters are already shining, Sgt Hodge making quite an impact with the Afghans due to his speed at learning the local language.

Not to be outdone by other PATs, the lads have spent what free time they have had

Silicon 55 (C Sqn, RDG)

Lt Jonny Clover

After 6 months of Mission Specific Training, the 13 Royal Dragoon Guardsmen who make up call-sign Silicon 55 have arrived in Afghanistan. We are a Police Advisory Team (PAT), aiming to train, mentor and advise the Afghan Local Police (ALP) and the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) in Nad-e-Ali.

The first month has flown by as the team focused on getting to know the local area and the policemen with whom they will be training, patrolling and laughing with over the next 6 months. Although I have struggled to learn a lot of new names and places, Cpl 'Bez' Berwick, who has deftly navigated the murky under-waters of equipment and stores accounting, and the team have made a promising start.

Without a doubt, our highlight has been the ANCOP vs ISAF volleyball match. The final score is much disputed, but I am adamant that ISAF won (although it some of our weaker players claim they were deliberately trying to let the Afghans win!) Looking forward to the next few weeks, the team are going to be focussing on building their local knowledge, cementing our new friendships and beginning to develop the strengths and capabilities of the ANCOP and ALP.

Silicon 56 (4th Troop, C Sqn QRL)

2Lt Sam Secombe

Cpl Doak and I have been in Patrol Base Pimon in the North West of Nad-E-Ali for two weeks. The rest of Silicon 56 have been completing a final training package in Camp Bastion with some members of the PAT completing additional driving and vehicle commanders' courses. Silicon 56 is now in an excellent position to hit the ground running as soon as the main body of the PAT arrive at Pimon.



Silicon 55, just before going out on patrol



The end of another fun packed day



Cpl Doak and I have visited many of the Afghan Police checkpoints in our precinct and have received warm welcomes from the commanders and the policemen who man them. We are currently well into our second gallon of chai (tea) each. Cpl Doak is finding it a little hard on his stomach, but has bravely kept calm and carried on. The police check points that Silicon 56 mentor include Afghan Uniform Police (AUP), Afghan Local Police, ALP and ANCOP. Each police type needs a tailored advising approach and direction, which Silicon 56 is more than capable of delivering thanks to a flexible approach and an excellent training package.

We have been working closely with 1st Battalion, the Mercian Regiment and have often used the Mercians' Mastiff group to provide vehicle moves and extra manpower to maintain momentum.

Moving forward, we are looking to continue with our programme of checkpoint visits in the near future and looks forward to building strong relationships with their ANP partners. We have already seen improvements in the quality of the Afghan Police and we hope to be able to continue this trend over the period of our tour.



Archaeological evidence of HERRICK 12 found in CP Shamil
Storai

B 'The Black Horse' Squadron

Maj Hugh Pearce-Gould

After a very long deployment process we are all, at last, safely out here in Helmand (although at the time of writing, I seem to have misplaced Cpl Lawton). The main body of the Squadron arrived in Afghanistan at the end of September to complete the takeover from our predecessors in the Nahr-e-Saraj District Advisory Team (NES DAT). We share our home and role with 1st Sqn Guards Hussars of the Danish Army, making us the only Multi-National Squadron in Helmand. As with everyone deploying on HERRICK 17, we're all working hard to get to know our Afghan Police partners and settle into our new homes. Before I pass you onto the PAT commanders, I'd like to express our thanks for all the support we have already had from home, it means a great deal to receive a letter or better yet a parcel.



Squadron Headquarters Troop.

Lt James Heath

Although we had an excellent hand over it, was not until our predecessors left that B Squadron started to really make the place home. With SSgt 'Mouse Killer' Turner's vision and some hard work from the troops, the quality of life has improved immensely. The Nahr e-Saraj DAT is now as comfortable as it can be given the resources available, and security is far better than when the Squadron arrived. SSgt Bradley and his team have been doing well in their mission to mentor the Afghan Police headquarters in coordination of operations; this important job is not the most glamorous, however SSgt Bradley is never short of volunteers for some reason. Life in the ops room is far from dull. SSM Bob Hickinson provides much needed morale and there is a steady hand on the logistical tiller. Capt Ben Jacobsen, our Danish Second-in-Command, concerns himself with planning our daily lives and feeding us rather disturbingly salty liquorice, while Capt Gannon formulates plans and ideas for yet more training for the Afghan Local Police.



Two Sqn Ldrs and one DCOP comparing Sabres

To pass the time when not working there are good gym facilities, a welfare tent with TV and Table-Tennis and, most importantly, a messing tent complete with an Army chef who manages to serve up some excellent food with fresh rations. I am spending much of my time analysing the correlation between AUP mentoring and the performance of my Afghan Exchange Traded Funds; I often remind the lads that the harder they work, the closer I come to owning an SL Mercedes-Benz! The bathroom facilities have recently been upgraded to three toilets and two showers thanks to Trooper Cooper and morale is very high.

Gereshk Police Advisory Team

2Lt Si Ramage



Taking a pause with our Afghan friends before yet more chai

The tour started with a busy few weeks while the boys got used to both the city and the well used vehicles that had been left as a special morale boost from the previous Police Advisory Team (PAT). After repairing the vehicles and acquiring various spare parts from "willing" donors, the PAT was ready to deploy to the



city and begin the important task of ingratiating ourselves with the local populace and the AUP. The average AUP patrolman likes to discuss the length of his beard, how many wives we have in comparison to him and local fishing. The result is often offered to the lucky PAT OC and Sgt 'Six Pack Jacko' Jackson as a show of friendship. The staple line for persuading Jacko that this fish is fit for human consumption is the promise that it has been caught in a rare, clean backwater of the Helmand river.

Helmandi fish are not the soldier's worst enemy however, this honour is bestowed upon the veritable army of mice that currently inhabit the camp. The solution to this problem has been the over ordering of rat poison and mousetraps. Being a little over zealous in our ordering, the Chinook helicopter was unable to deliver them, as they weighed over a tonne! We are still eagerly awaiting them.



Tpr Bowes living his childhood dream of being Postman Pat

Aside from vermin extermination, the boys have been doing a sterling job visiting check points (CPs) throughout the city. The CPs range in size from the absurdly small and virtual uninhabitable, to the almost opulent. At every CP the boys charm the AUP with tales of home ranging from colourful stories of their families, through to the seemingly incomprehensible fact that a good Englishman has milk with his tea. This seems an unfathomable absurdity to the locals as they take their chai with nothing but a huge amount of sugar.

Aside from our day jobs assisting and advising the local police the soldiers who make up the PAT have been working incredibly hard to provide the camp with their daily supplies of mail and washing. All mail is greatly appreciated and provides much needed entertainment and morale. We would like to echo the thoughts of those writing earlier in offering a big thank you for the support we are receiving from friends and family at home, we are hugely grateful.

PB2 Police Advisory Team

Lt Tom Shorland Ball

It may have been frustrating at times, but RSOI in Bastion was our last run out before stepping 'outside the wire', and needless to say a strong performance was put in by all. We have been lucky enough to have been hosted by Burma Company, 3 YORKS, and then Delhi Company, 1 RGR. A few of the guys worked with the Gurkhas on Op HERRICK 12 and this has provided a great opportunity to meet old friends and share stories in the luxury of the PB, whilst 'enjoying' what is becoming a consistent menu of evening curries!





The fantastic blokes of the PB2 PAT

PB2 offers the guys everything one could want on operations. Whilst not too comfortable, the PAT has its own tent, with each man allowed his own area to conduct his admin. Privacy may be lacking, but as the weeks have passed the lads have not proven to be shy with each other (thank you Tpr Cook!). The PAT dynamic is working well and we even have a PS3 with a plasma TV for use during our downtime. We have been a little slow in really making the place feel homely, so please feel free to send anything else you may think might make our home better, be it posters, music or the like.

The boys have been out every day, making those all too important first impressions with the local police. We are responsible for 12 CPs and on the most part the patrolmen and commanders are happy to see us. We have been hosted with ample cups of Chai and so inevitably everyone's bowels are increasing in strength due to the somewhat limited washing up facilities. Never the less, it is great to get around and do the job for real, and everyone seems to be enjoying themselves, especially as the temperatures are drop out of the 30s.

ANCOP Barracks

2Lt Guy Amir

C (The Black Dragons) Squadron provides the Mentor Group for the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP). It has two Police Advisory Teams (PATs), one based in FOB OULETTE and one based in Nad-e-Ali. The Special Support Kandak (SSK) Mentor Group is embedded at the HQ ANCOP Barracks in Lashkah Gar.

It has been a busy and exciting first month for C Sqn, with great hospitality shown by the both the Afghans and our US Marine Corps Counterparts. Lessons have already been learned, and on our first evening here Col Sadat, CO of the SSK, invited us to dine with him at his home. It was during this meal that Capt Charlie Arrowsmith bravely represented the RDG in a chilli eating contest but was made rudely aware of his limitations by Col Sadat (Capt Arrowsmith was subsequently bedded down for 24 hrs citing severe stomach pains and vivid hallucinations).



Capt Liv Arrowsmith smiles, unaware of the horrors to follow

The facilities here are quite favorable, which is mainly a result of the Americans knowing how to do war in style. I certainly did not expect to see a communal humidor filled with The Honduras' finest! The nights have started to get colder and once or twice we have woken up



shivering. We cook our own food and both Sgt Flemming and Sgt Cooper have taken on the role of chef-come-housewife with great aplomb. The internet is a big boost to morale and Sgt Riva (EOD) is able to speak to his loved ones back home on a regular basis. So much so, we are all now on first name terms with his friends and family.

The gym here is also well equipped, allowing a good range of cardio and resistance training with Sig Lowe acting as our personal trainer in all phys-related matters. Even WO2 Richards is starting to make the Marines look bad as he completes two gym sessions a day. Despite putting in a good 15mins of Zumba fitness every other day, I am yet to notice any results. Sgt Cooper has set up an event on Justgiving.com called the Run up to Christmas, raising money for Great Ormond Street Hospital. Between us, we will be running 200 miles over 24 hours on Christmas Eve. Some have suggested that this was the reason Capt Arrowsmith upped sticks and moved to the MOB to become SO3 ANCOP. All I would say is watch this space for updates!



Capt Doll: So hard, one rifle just isn't enough!

Looking to our mission, we are already having successes. We have managed to mentor the SSK in various aspects, including counter-IED, signals and driving & maintenance. Reports have come back suggesting that the SSK progression is good and the lessons are being well received. The plan now is to train ANCOP instructors who will be able to go out and train their own units, leading to a complete transition from ISAF to Afghan National Security Forces responsibility.



The ANCOP PAT, so excited, they just can't hide it!



ANCOP PAT Combined Force Burma (CF BMA)

Lt Andrew Moncrieff

The ANCOP PAT in CF BMA have found themselves busy from the outset. Much of the PATs time has been spent forging relationships with the new 4/5 Kandak commander, Col Nadir and his men. The new Kandak appears to be motivated and keen to make a difference during their tour of duty. We have been warmly welcomed to any checkpoint and it has been quite humbling to see people insisting that they share what little they have with us. All members of the PAT have had the opportunity to sample both Afghan chai and local food which has gone down very well.



On patrol with the ANCOP

In terms of mentoring the ANCOP, the PAT have initially been focusing on the basics. However there have also been initial surveys carried out on their checkpoints to ascertain what the ANCOP need to do to winterise these locations. The PAT are surprisingly well accommodated in FOB OUELLETTE. Although tented, the FOB benefits from phones, internet a large gymnasium (the 'Muscle Beach' or 'Where sweat meets steel', according to Cpl Wood) with plenty of equipment. There is even a shower tent which has (although we have never seen it) been rumoured to produce a hot shower. Cpl Murray, hardened by his Scottish upbringing, still complains that he can't get the shower cold enough! The chefs work tirelessly to produce good food from as many fresh ingredients as possible, and we only have to eat rations once a week in order to give the chefs a rest. Despite not being located with any other Royal Dragoon Guards morale is high, as there is a large amount of independence for the PAT and the Scots Guards who are based in FOB OUELLETTE look after us very well. The future looks equally busy for the PAT who will have to continue to help the ANCOP to settle in as well as looking to assist with increasing the security that the ANCOP provide to Route 611. The end state being that the ANCOP provide security for Route 611 without ISAF assistance.



PMAG Rear - Camp BASTION

Capt David Brooks

The J1/J4 JOC is literally, in the rear, with the gear. Responsible for meeting everyone as they step off the plane, we have been busy with all manner of tasks, such as coordinating training, arranging flights forward (I don't want to say this is difficult, but Cpl Marshall has very little hair left after tearing it all out), planning R&R and ensuring that all the required stores get to our boys and girls on the front line.

So far this has included collecting and sending forward everything from mail and vehicle spares (efficiently 'procured' by SSgt Perraton), to such luxuries as bedside lamps and digital boxes (Commandant LTC - you are welcome)! Unfortunately there are certain things that even an experienced team like mine can not get; for example the vacuum cleaner requested by the QM so he can vacuum up all the dust in Helmand - Dyson and Hoover both saying they couldn't give us a warranty, as we are in the middle of a desert!



Capt Will Lines and David Brooks talk Adjutant stuff!

However, the team are working hard and RQMS Bass has now been here for so long, that he swears he remembers when the British were last here in the early 20th century, a time even predating the last time that Sgt Johnston stopped talking; even Cpl Tomlinson now refers to him as Grandad! The team must also pay tribute to the sterling efforts of CSgt Bikash Gurung and Sgt Lil Gurung from 1RGR, their assistance is invaluable and they have quickly become much loved members of the team.

With everyone now in place forward, Cpl Taylor is hoping that questions such as "Will this ever calm down?" and "Why won't they leave me alone?" will migrate to questions such as "What am I going to do with myself?" and "Will the Adjutant finish that fourth plate of food?" - we remain confident he will not be disappointed.

Eid Al-Adha

Lt Bobby Crean

Eid Al-Adha is an Islamic religious festival commemorating the Prophet Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son to God. It is celebrated on the 10th day of the final month in the Islamic calendar, and as with Dashain, falls in October. To celebrate Eid Al-Adha, Afghanistan has a national holiday from the 26th-30th October, with Government Offices closing, and members of the ANSF travelling to visit their families. Traditionally, animals are slaughtered, with the meat being divided into thirds. One third for immediate family, one third for friends and neighbours and one third given to the poor. Keen to be involved in Afghan culture, soldiers and officers from the PMAG bought sheep to be given to the Afghan police working in the Provincial Police Headquarters and food from ISAF was distributed. It proved to be a very worthwhile day, giving us a unique insight into our new friends, and a parade was held the following day, where the Provincial Chief of Police gave a speech praising our partnership.



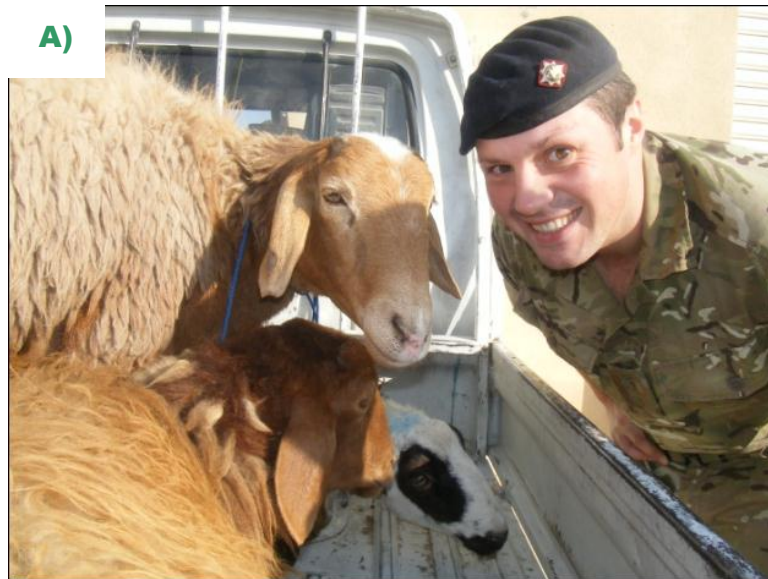


Photo captions:

A) Capt Lloyd Walton-Rees and friends- a meeting of minds! B) The Provincial Chief of Police, the Commanding Officer and other local dignitaries attend the Eid Al-Adha parade. C) ANP on parade for Eid Al-Adha



Chaplain's Corner

Padre Andy Harding

For my first newsletter I thought that the best thing to do was to introduce myself. I'm Padre Andy Harding and I am the chaplain to the Royal Dragoon Guards and lucky enough to be with the PMAG as the chaplain for the duration of this tour.



The coolest Padre in Afghan

I actually have the best job in the world. I get to travel around theatre to wherever there are members of PMAG and I've been able to do a deal with another chaplain to get to spend time with A Squadron too.

Some chaplains in the past have travelled around Bastion on quad mobile is often labelled the 'God Quad.' However there are no quads available in our MOB. My preferred mode of transport is an Italian Scooter but sadly there are no military Vespa's available either, so I've had to rough it and fly around in helicopters. It's a hard life!

So what do I do? My role includes being a priest, a visitor, friend, a listening ear, agony aunt, photographer, video man and many other things besides. Most importantly though, my role is to be a visible sign of the love that knows no boundaries and cannot be separated by distance. God's love can be expressed in many ways and can be used as a conduit for thoughts and prayers. All those in the Royal Dragoon Guards, those serving with us and our friends and families are in my prayers, and indeed, your loved ones are just a thought and a prayer away so when they want to reach out to you, you will be there for them, wrapped up in the love of God. So please pray for us and stay in touch. Thank you and God Bless.

