



06/11

ROYAL ANGLIAN NEWS

JUN 11

BATTALION ACTIVITIES

1. **1st Battalion**

The pace of life for the Vikings through June remained busy. The rifle companies had to cope without their 2ICs as they, along with the Battalion Intelligence Cell attended the Tactical Intelligence Collection (Afghanistan) (TIC(A)) course in Chicksands Camp in Bedfordshire. The course trains officers and soldiers to process and analyse the wealth of intelligence that is collected in theatre; a skill which will be crucial to success in 2012. The companies themselves have been heavily committed to training at the Crew Training School in Bovington which will prepare the Battalion to man the wide range of vehicles now available on operations. At the same time the pressure of other training support tasks has remained, with all companies providing support to the HERRICK 15 CALFEX in Otterburn, and a few travelling back out to Kenya to act as observer controllers for other battlegroups.

All these extra courses and commitments did not mean any focus was taken away from the basics. MATT training and assessment is a continuous process, particularly given that the companies are rarely together in one place at one time. Shooting, a core function, has been thoroughly tested this month with plenty of time on the ranges. This included, where possible, practices on the support weapons that, only three years ago, were a scarce commodity. GPMG, HMG and GMG live firing is now a standard and important part of training.

Meanwhile D Coy has conducted a range of specialist training pertaining to each of the Platoons. The Recce PI has been training new CVR(T) drivers ready for its deployment to Canada. The FSGs have been conducting cross training to ensure all are fully qualified on both GPMG(SF) and JAVELIN weapon systems, as well as music practice for the fast approaching Minden Day. And the snipers have been away on a comprehensive local range package and now find themselves residing on Sennybridge Training Area for the month of July.

Community engagement has also been a recent theme with the Bn supporting an Armed Forces Day Parade at Lingfield, the Viking Families Support Group dedicating a memorial stone in Bury St Edmunds and A (Norfolk) Company starring as the prize bull at the Norfolk Show. These are all vital events which maintain and reaffirm our county links.

2. **2nd Battalion**

[As the heat increases, the Poachers have continued to](#) make full use of the facilities on offer in Cyprus and nearby countries. On the TRB front, [A Company handed over high readiness](#) to C Company and on the social scene, [the BBQ season is once again in full swing.](#)

On the training front, [B Company have been most active, deploying to Jordan on the Counter-IED Task Force Mission Rehearsal Exercise \(MRX\) and completing their Operation Readiness Assessment \(ORA\) prior to assuming](#) their role in [high readiness.](#) [Major Paul Muncey](#) assumed command of B Coy prior to departure, [having to endure a more hectic final 3 months in Battalion](#)

than he was expecting. The exercise itself was physically testing, with long marches across the desert and the opportunity to conduct live firing with 360° arcs. Upon their return they undertook an Operational Readiness Assessment, a test designed by HQ British Force Cyprus to gauge the capability of the Company prior to their assumption of the high readiness role. Military Working Dogs, ATO, support helicopters and interpreters were used to assess skills such as compound clearance and searches, cordon operations, enemy clearance and ground domination patrolling. A day of live firing at Akrotiri was also conducted to assess the proficiency of firers on the range. The Company will now enjoy some well earned leave.

C Company have been on high readiness throughout June and have ensured their soldiers are current in their basic military skills. MATTs have been the focus of the company, along with enjoying the Sport and Adventurous training activities available on the island. They provided civpop and enemy for the ORA, which proved to be a welcome break from the norm. 15 soldiers also completed a Pashtu Language in Episkopi, qualifying them to Basic Patrol Pashtu standard.

July will see Capt Adam Mackness and Capt George Wyndham return from Afghanistan to be replaced by Capt Olly Child and Capt Charlie Powell. This will leave D Company minus a few officers, but Major Mark Nicholas, Capt Niel Frost and CSM Neil Reader have plenty planned. If not loaning their Fire Support Groups (FSGs) out to the companies for exercises and training events, the troops have been conducting military training in the mornings and sport in the afternoon. Adventurous training has also featured highly, with plans to enter a team in the Army Skydiving Championships.

Trials and training for basketball and swimming has commenced in anticipation for the hotly contested Inter-Company competitions in July. In rugby, the Poachers entered a team in to the Akrotiri Rugby 10's, with The Dhekelia Poachers being runners-up in their league group before being narrowly beaten by 2 YORKS. The Poachers Orienteering received their awards for winning the Cyprus League, with special mention going to Major Phil Messenger (Bn 2IC) who achieved best runner on the island. In shooting, the top-shots from Battalion went forward from the winning Cyprus Shooting Competition into Bisley, where the team will hopefully pick up further silverware and the award of top 100 Army Shot badges to the team.

3. **3rd Battalion**

June has been another busy month for the Steelbacks with ongoing UN operations in Cyprus, routine training and preparation of soldiers for Op HERRICK 16 hitting the headlines. In the background, much work has already been done in planning for the return of Op TOSCA personnel and the re-unification of the battalion towards the end of the year. Significantly, and here are some dates for your diary, this will include Freedom/Welcome Home parades in Market Harborough and Oadby & Wigston on the 8th and 9th of October 2011 respectively.

Operations in Cyprus continue apace with a number of discrete mini-ops designed to provide evidence to the UN 'Senior Management Group' (that includes the UN Secretary General's Special Representative) to shape lasting decisions/changes to the running of the Buffer Zone; in this respect alone and aside from other activity, Steelbacks are leading and contributing directly to the evolution of UN operations and the normalisation process at large. To engender better relations with Turkish and Greek Cypriot forces we have held working breakfasts for both that featured quality British fayre followed by a background briefing and weapons display - it all went down very well and our excellent relations, coupled with the continued top-drawer performance of the soldiers, are backed up by the simple fact that incidents on the Buffer Zone are at a historic low. Steelbacks have also been busy on the representative side, with Officers and Warrant Officers front and centre at the annual ABF dinner (in full Mess Kit and with tables laden with Regimental silver) through to selected attendance at the Queen's Birthday Reception at the British High Commission. It doesn't stop there either; coinciding with Royal Tigers Weekend, Maj Mark Bevin organised a Battalion dawn memorial service for fallen Royal Leicester soldiers who lie at Waynes Keep cemetery and we have also organised and taken part in the UN Medal Parade held on the derelict but iconic Nicosia

Airport site. As always, we have had plenty of high profile visitors but GOC 5th Division and Maj Gen The Duke of Westminster are worth special mention here. If you want to see an example of what has been going on, follow: <http://www.bfbs.com/news/cyprus/award-cyprus-un-operations-49184.html>

Back in UK the Battalion continues to recruit and train hard; notwithstanding the Future Reserves 2020 announcement in mid-July, our focus in terms of delivering sustainable capability for employment on operations is clear. This month has seen training at both Company and Battalion level with, in the case of the latter, a subtle switch in focus in the form of Ex STEELBACK WATERLOO. Held on the weekend of 18/19 June at Thetford, STEELBACK WATERLOO concentrated on challenging our junior commanders while developing and deepening mental and physical robustness across the board. With deliberate uncertainty round every corner, phase one took place from midnight on Friday through to Saturday evening and involved a 20km patrol with six demanding stands then back into camp for a Waterloo Dinner and, for most, a very early night...

Sunday saw leaderless command tasks and navigation for the soldiers while commanders got stuck into Military IT training (everyone needs to know about this now - ignorance is not an excuse!) and some valuable training study syndicates and discussion periods; these are important as they shape commander's ideas and imagination while contributing to the format of future training events. All in all it was a successful and, for most, unexpected event - the Honorary Colonels and COS 49 Bde also came along and, as usual, their support was most welcome. Routine training aside, work continues on the preparation of soldiers for HERRICK 16 and on a revised format for our Annual Deployment Exercise in September which will be a combined event with 3 R WELSH and based on Infantry Live Fire Tactical Training in a contemporary environment. As always our recruiting efforts continue, so please spread the word wherever you can - with plenty of challenge on the horizon, we want the right kind of people in the Steelbacks now.

And that's it for Jun. In July's edition, look forward to more reports from Cyprus (over the half-way point by then!) and an update on where we are with UK activity including details of the Freedom Parades.