

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: INSPIRING RESERVISTS

Defence**Focus**

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MISSION IN MALI

**British troops train
Malian soldiers**

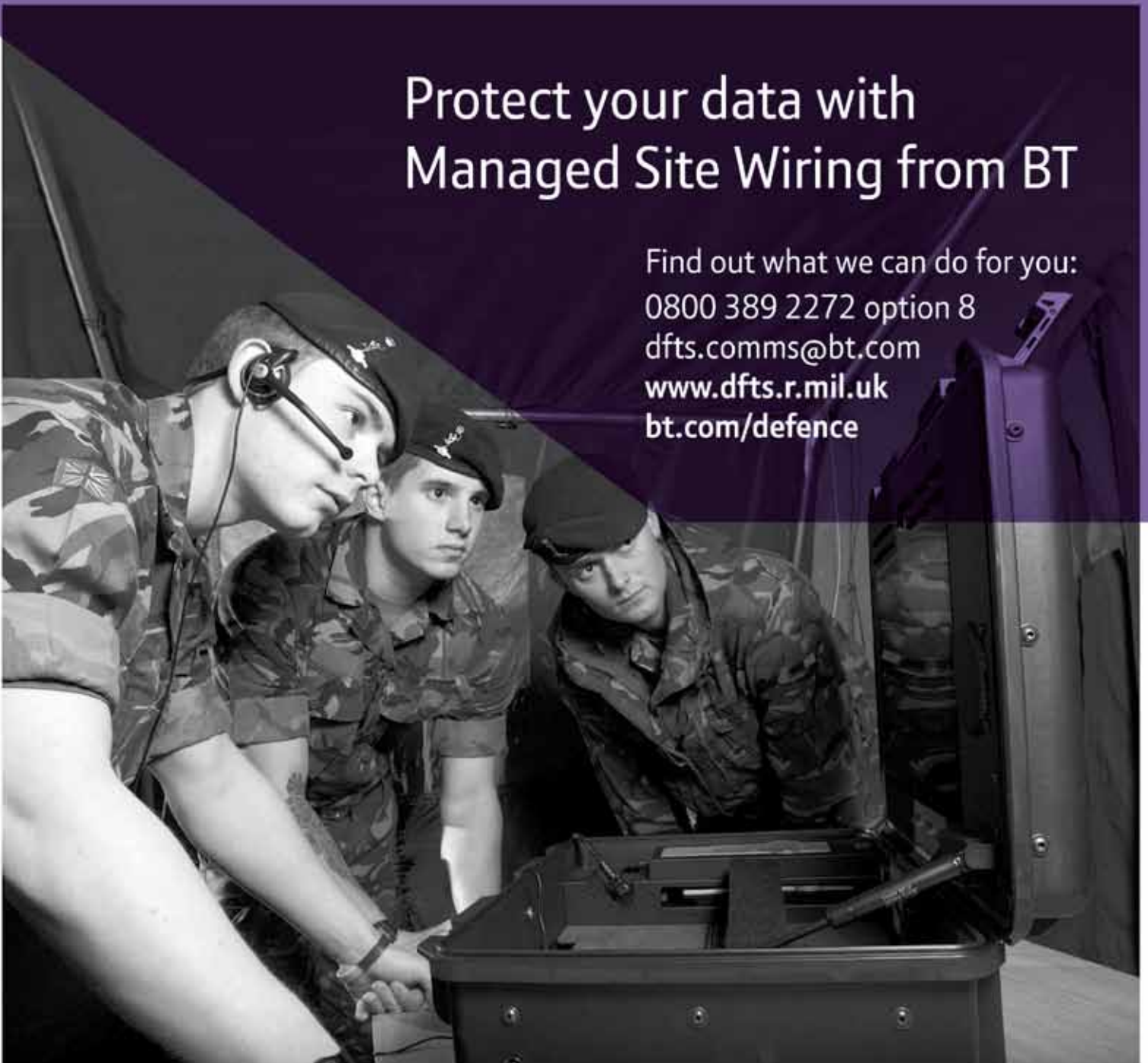
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**SANDY TIMES: HOW TROOPS
FOUGHT THE FLOODS P18**



P12

Regulars

P22 MY MEDALS

Warrant Officer Class 1 Andy Peat talks about his medals

P24 HEALTH

Sit up straight and learn how to avoid the most common causes of backache

P27 COMPETITIONS

Win two nights away and a chance for some fine dining at the Casa Hotel

Features

P6 ARMY 2020

Adaptable Force unit commanders get ready for the challenges ahead

P8 EU AND MALIAN ARMY

A look at the EU Training Mission rebuilding the Malian army

P12 FEMALES IN THE FORCES

To mark International Women's Day we talk to two female reservists

P14 INTO AFRICA

We talk to the British and Irish soldiers who are mentoring the Malian infantry

P17 WATCHKEEPER

Royal Artillery pilots flight test this capable unmanned air system

P20 APPRENTICE PIECE

National Apprenticeship Week draws attention to the benefits of these schemes



P14

EDITOR'S NOTE

DefenceFocus

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FIONA SIMPSON



For some, 2014 hasn't got off to the best start. So far, this year has been wet. Very wet. The wettest of the wet since records began, apparently.

With many areas of the south of the country knee-deep in water, thousands of Service personnel stepped in (quite literally) and saved the day.

On pages 18 and 19 we look at the timeline of the floods and speak to some of the personnel who were lending a hand to the flood-stricken communities.

However, some lucky people on the *Defence Focus* team have managed to keep their feet dry at least.

Our intrepid reporter, Ian Carr, has been getting away from the rain and gale force winds to the sun-baked savannah of Mali to see what the lads from 1 Rifles

are up to, and met the man that the Chief of the Defence Staff was so impressed by that he promoted him on the spot.

As part of the 23-country EU Training Mission to the west African country, UK troops working alongside Irish soldiers are delivering training to the Malian Army.

Ian also met with the French counterparts who are leading the mission, and had the chance to dust off his O-level French. Look out for further stories in the April edition.

March sees both International Women's Day and National Apprenticeship Week and we take the opportunity to meet two women reservists and apprentices in Defence.

These are Leigh Hamilton's last features for the magazine before she goes off for her new challenge of becoming a mum for the first time.

By the time the April edition is out she'll be knee-deep in nappies. So congratulations Leigh, 2014 will be a fabulous year for you! **DF**

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**RESERVISTS FROM
THE RIFLES WORK
HARD TO DAM A
ROADWAY IN WINDSOR**



Picture: Corporal Richard Gave



ADAPT AND OVERCOME

In step: members of 1st Battalion The Rifles teaching Malian soldiers as part of a European training mission

Picture: Senior Aircraftman Dek Traylor

UNIT COMMANDERS HAVE BEEN BACK TO SANDHURST TO PLAY THEIR PART IN CREATING AN AGILE ADAPTABLE FORCE REPORT: IAN CARR

“Sit up!” bawled the Command Sergeant Major from 1 (UK) Armoured Division, getting the second Adaptable Force symposium underway. Dutifully the audience of 300 or so senior and commanding officers stiffened and smartly directed eyes front. In the chilly Sandhurst auditorium all chattering ceased, ears were opened and brains were put into gear.

You could argue that the non-commissioned officer’s alarm call symbolised more than just the fact that a general was about to take the stage. It also encapsulated the Army’s response to the clarion call that a new and integrated organisation was in need of creation.

When Army 2020, the plan to rethink and redesign the British Army, was unveiled in 2012, some commentators saw the cuts in numbers as a harsh blow to one of our most cherished national institutions.

Yet, while tighter public purse strings did undoubtedly set the context for these radical changes, as Professor Michael Clarke, Director General of the Royal United Services Institute, pointed out, Army 2020 is about much more than just cuts.

Instead, the reforms, led by Lieutenant General Nicholas Carter, are about creating a Service that is an agile grouping of forces nimble enough to cope with all the uncertainties, technological advances and need for interdependencies and partnerships that a post-Afghanistan world will demand.

Although the headcount was shrinking, being the professional pragmatists that they are, the Army saw and understood the lie of the land and characteristically just got on with it. This second symposium was a natural next step in the journey.

On the stage now, guest speaker General Carter reminded his audience that the redefined purpose of the Army was to create an organisation at graduated readiness. It would be an army that, when necessary, could deliver a rapid reaction capability, while an adaptable force, comprised of paired regular and reservist soldiers, would provide a pool of forces that could conduct a range of supporting tasks.

These will include the backing up of combat operations, the protection of standing commitments such as Cyprus and Brunei, supporting conflict prevention by delivering defence engagement overseas in areas of interest to the UK, and ensuring the

safety of the citizens of the UK.

“Underpinning all of this,” said the General with some vim, “is a war-fighting ethos. We are first and foremost soldiers.”

Setting the scene for the symposium, Major General James Chiswell, General Officer Commanding 1 Div, said, “We have gripped the big idea; this is our opportunity to explain to you where our thinking currently is and tap into your views and experience as we take forward this exciting opportunity together.

“As operations in Afghanistan draw to a close, the Army’s focus is moving toward deterrence, reassurance and conflict prevention, noting that prevention is better than cure, and often much cheaper.”

There was much for the audience to discuss, from core competences and culture to training and how to integrate regular and reservist soldiers. But if you were searching for a common theme you would probably plump for engagement.

At home this means engaging with the public, reassuring them and binding them ever more closely to their army. “It is critical that we connect with society,” said General Carter. “We need to explain why we matter, and how we can help in times of civil need, such as in the recent floodings. That’s how we will safeguard our future in times of financial hardship and how we will be able to recruit the talent we need.”

There is nothing new in this. Army

bases are used to engaging with their local communities, whether that be through cadet schemes, local authorities or engaging with local employers. Growing numbers of local communities are choosing to support the Armed Forces through community covenants. But more needs to be done, making imaginative use of every opportunity.

Brigadier Greville Bibby, Commander 15 Brigade based in York, gave examples of how links had been fostered through joint apprenticeship schemes with local employers and sporting clubs. “By being more engaged at home we will be able to build better links with society so that we can all benefit. It requires local solutions and a flexible and integrated approach,” he said.

Extending this ethos of engagement to the wider world, the argument is that by making most use of relationships abroad, both military and civilian, the UK’s prosperity will build, its influence in the world will extend and home security will strengthen. And the soldiers of Adaptable Force will play their part.

“Smart manoeuvre requires us to build better understanding and relationships overseas so that we can more fully play our part in an increasingly connected world,” said Major General Chiswell.

“It also requires us to make sure our combat skills remain as strong and sharp as ever so we are ready to respond if required. The question that lies before us is, how do we optimise ourselves for this balance of soft and hard power?”

In a world of change one thing that Major General Chiswell can rely on is that, having been set their objective, the soldiers will find a way of securing it. **DF**



Bags of help: flood relief efforts

Picture: Sergeant Mike O’Neill/RLC

MISSION POSSIBLE

**IAN CARR VISITS THE KOULIKORO
TRAINING CAMP TO SEE WHAT IMPACT
10 WEEKS OF TRAINING CAN HAVE ON
MALIAN SOLDIERS**

**Land of hope: soldiers from 1st
Battalion The Rifles are aiding the
European Training Mission by teaching
Malian soldiers key aspects of combat**

It's not quite six o'clock in the morning and already it is worryingly warm. In a few hours the heat will be beating down on the surrounding savannah like a hammer on an anvil.

Just outside the accommodation block, the urgent sounds of infantrymen engaged in their daily PT disturb the hopeful few still in their bunks trying to eke out a couple more minutes under their mosquito nets.

Accompanying the rhythm of jogging feet, the deep-throated sing-song tribal chanting of the soldiers tells you that there is only one place you can possibly be. Africa.

At Koulikoro, a vibrant settlement on the banks of the River Niger, a testing two-hour drive from Mali's capital, Bamako, it is the start of another day at the Koulikoro Training Camp (KTC).

Here, under a French lead, a European Training Mission (EUTM) of 420 personnel from an overall partnership of 23 countries, including the UK and Ireland, is working hard to rebuild the Malian army.

They have ten weeks in which to train them in combat skills and rekindle their esprit de corps. After that, these Malian soldiers will be posted to the north to relieve their comrades who are protecting the country from the threat of a jihadist and al-Qaeda insurgency.

Two years ago state control over the north of the country rapidly crumbled. An inconclusive military coup followed which all but destroyed the Malian army.

Eventually, at the request of the Malian government, French Armed Forces intervened against the Islamist insurgents who were threatening to advance south. Although civilian rule was re-established last year, the situation remains fragile.

To help the Malian authorities reach a position where they could exercise their legitimate sovereignty over the whole country, the French invited their European partners to assist.

The EUTM was launched on 18 February 2013. It has a non-combat role building a sustainable and professional Malian military by providing expertise and advice across a range of functions, and by training combat units at KTC.

Standing by a whiteboard in the sunshine outside the camp HQ, French Lieutenant Colonel Pierre Barnard explains the mechanics of how this all works. It is a useful introduction to how the lessons are run at KTC. Rarely are they held in formal classrooms, and the use of PowerPoint presentations is all but banned.

"I am in charge of the training mission. We have at least 420 people here; 187 of them from 18 nations are dedicated to the training. The rest provide things like force protection,



Model soldiering: rocks, bottle tops and bits of wood are used to explain ground tactics

catering and medical services," he said.

"We are 60 kilometres from Bamako where the EUTM HQ is. But here we have to count journeys in hours not in distance." Memories of the recent journey here, where the driver had to negotiate potholes and free-range pedestrians carrying all kinds of produce, not to mention mopeds burdened with as many as four passengers and often a goat, back up the colonel's words.

"This camp is the centre for Malian training. We share it with their officer academy and junior staff college. At the far end is the Malian soldiers' camp. To accommodate our trainers and provide the facilities that they need we have invested €8m," said Lieutenant Colonel Barnard.

Overall, European partners have

contributed €23m to the first EUTM mandate which expires on 14 May.

KTC measures 800 metres by 200. It has two indoor classrooms, which are used as little as possible as the instructors discovered early on that using one of the six outdoor classrooms makes more sense.

There are three sandboxes used to create models to explain ground tactics and exercises.

"We also have blackboards. We train the Malians using very simple equipment that they can easily reproduce in order to train themselves," said Lieutenant Colonel Barnard.

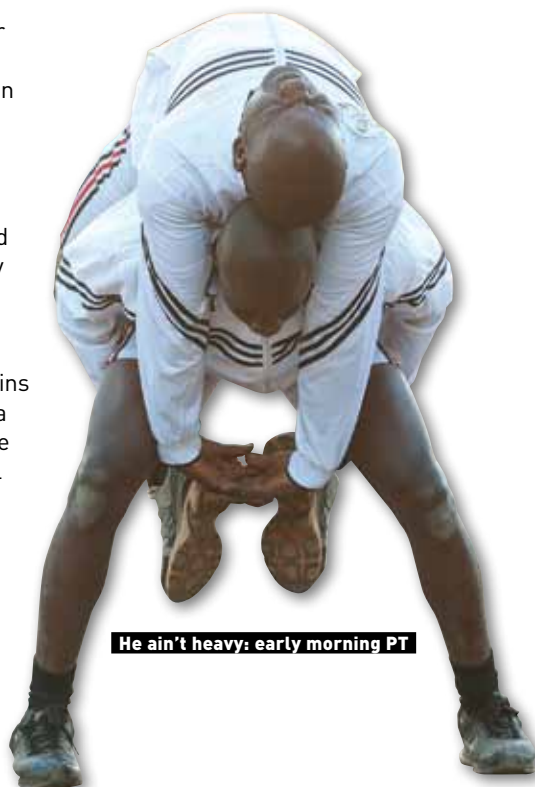
A 20-minute drive away there is a 600-metre firing range built especially for the mission. There are three training areas each about three kilometres away from the camp that offer different types of terrain. They are large enough to be used for company level exercises.

But don't imagine anything like Sennybridge. These are just rural areas that have been identified as suitable and which are used with the full support and agreement of the locals who live there.

Indeed some of the training takes place in and among the civilian population. It is not unusual to see Malian soldiers practising a house search, looking for weapons stashes and booby traps, while a Malian family next door goes about its business unperturbed.

A short walk from KTC, along a path which cuts through a ridge separating the training area nearest to the camp from the River Niger, brings you to the ghost village.

This small development of streets, houses and buildings set back from the road to Koulikoro is shunned by the locals who are convinced that it is haunted. But it is perfect for the purposes of teaching



He ain't heavy: early morning PT

soldiers the art of house searches and route clearance. If you can imagine a kind of ready-made African version of Salisbury Plain's Copehill Down, you'll get the idea.

So far three Malian battalions known as Groupement Tactique Inter-Armes (GTIAs) have completed the training at KTC. At the time of *Defence Focus's* visit, the fourth is approaching the halfway point.

The soldiers arrive in their platoons after their basic training. To prepare for the part that they will play during the 10-week course, their platoon and company commanders will also have completed an extra two weeks leadership training. Each GTIA comprises around 750 personnel.

"The training is broken into three parts," explained Lieutenant Colonel Barnard. "The first two weeks is about individual skills such as weapons handling and patrolling skills. Then we have a five-week phase where we bring the training up from squad to company level." This phase also contains specialist training such as sharpshooter drill and lessons in rules of engagement and human rights.

"We finish with a three-week-long combination phase where we bring all the training together. We intensify the exercises and extend them over a number of days," said Lieutenant Colonel Barnard.

Increasingly, the Malian platoon commanders take greater responsibility for the lessons and for planning activities. "The idea is for us to progressively disappear and put the leaders in charge of their own training and their own tactical reflection," said Lieutenant Colonel Barnard.

A recent initiative is to train the trainers so that the Malians can continue to progress after they leave KTC.

The European trainers acknowledge



Sand blasters: Malians improve their aim on the 200-metre range

that there is a lot to achieve in 10 weeks, but see the programme as being ambitious but realistic. To motivate the soldiers and to help build an esprit de corps, each intake is given a name which has great significance within Malian culture; names such as Waraba (lion), Elou (elephant) and Sigui (water buffalo).

Some, naturally enough, pick things up more quickly than others. The current cadre, GTIA4, are known as Balanzan, a type of tree. They have been impressing the instructors with their attitude and approach to the challenge that faces them.

Major Sam Cates, officer commanding the joint UK-Irish training team, told *Defence Focus*: "Every GTIA has a different flavour. I thought we had perhaps reached a high watermark with GTIA3, they were pretty good, but I've been staggered by what a good balance there is in GTIA4.

There's a mix of new recruits who are fresh, keen to learn and energetic, and older guys who have already had experience of fighting in the north, so they can shape things and bring confidence. It's the little things like making sure everyone is organised and ready to start that matter."

Under Major Cates there are 21 soldiers from 1st Battalion The Rifles and seven from the Irish Defence Forces. They are all volunteers, which is why the enthusiasm and energy are there in bucketloads, as is the banter, not just between the Irish and the Brits, but the Malians join in too.

Yet while the soldiers are clearly enjoying their deployment, their days are long, their workload is high and their sense of responsibility to the Malians unmistakable. In fact many say it is knowing that they are training soldiers who will soon be applying what they have learned for real that makes the experience so rewarding.

Lieutenant Peter Barton, a training officer and the man who puts the UK-Irish training programme together, puts it into context. "When you have been out on exercise for a few days and the Malians haven't really had a chance to sleep, and you are trying to push them that little bit harder to get an extra 10 per cent out of them, sometimes you have to say 'look guys, in three weeks, you're going to be doing this for real'.

"It gets them focussed and you feel you are doing something meaningful that has purpose. You can see it in all our guys. You just want to give the Malians every opportunity that you can to do well."



Board room: Lieutenant Sean Ryan teaches Malians about keeping watch



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Hospital rounds: Captain Lisa Irwin in the Afghan National Army hospital

WOMEN AT ARMS

TO MARK INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, DEFENCE FOCUS SPEAKS TO TWO FEMALE RESERVISTS WHOSE MILITARY CAREERS MAY INSPIRE OTHERS TO JOIN THE ARMED FORCES

Captain Lisa Irwin joined the Army Reserve after her interest was sparked at a freshers' week she attended at university in Cardiff.

Although her father was in the Royal Air Force, Lisa decided to join the Army Reserve because of her interest in all things mechanical.

She took the plunge after visiting a recruitment centre to find out more, and signed up to the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in 1986.

Lisa, who in her civilian life is an NHS paediatric nurse, is currently in Afghanistan on her third Operation Herrick tour and is filling the role of cultural specialist.

The post is all about building relationships with locals and community leaders, and feeding back to her commander pertinent information that could affect operations.

Although Afghanistan is still a very male-dominated society, this does not limit the roles that women reservists can undertake on operations there.

She explained: "In the Defence Cultural Specialist Unit it doesn't really matter whether you are male or female, we can all do the job.

"You just need to have an ability to learn a language and engage with local nationals and leaders in whatever area you're working in."

Lisa works closely with the Afghan National Security Forces in her current Op Herrick role and has found that adopting local traditions and cultures is invaluable in building relationships.

She said: "Whenever I go across to see them I always wear a head scarf and the Afghans comment on how nice it looks and how I'm showing respect for their culture.

"They really do appreciate that."

SHARED UNDERSTANDING

Another way to build relationships in Afghanistan is by understanding the language.

Lisa studied Pashtu and Dari for 15 months which has enabled her to engage in conversation with the Afghans, a skill that has proved invaluable.

The most rewarding experience of her reserve career so far was in 2010/2011 when she bonded with local women in Nad 'Ali South.

"In that area I managed to bring together a group of women and give them

some health education which was a really satisfying experience.

"It's very important because in Helmand there isn't much in the way of healthcare provision, especially for women.

"I was teaching them basic things such as nutrition, ensuring they use clean water, and trying to help them to help their families."

CONFIDENCE-BOOSTER

Being a reservist has had a positive read-across to her civilian job.

Lisa believes that developing organisational and management skills has proved useful, as has being able to work in a team and being able to deal with outside her comfort zone.

She said: "My military career has also improved my confidence. I don't worry about standing up and giving a presentation to 100 people now."

With a fruitful and varied reserve career behind her, would she recommend the experience to other women?

"Definitely. I've had so many opportunities, and the camaraderie you get in the Forces is amazing. Not only have I deployed three times, but each

time it was in a different role.

"I've been a vehicle mechanic, part of the female engagement team, and this current role working with the Afghan mentoring team.

"I've been to Belize for two weeks on exercise, and I've been to Germany several times.

"I think it's a really good environment to work in with plenty of opportunities."

IN THE NAVY

Her enthusiasm for military life is echoed by fellow reservist Petty Officer Lynn Cook.

Since joining the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) in 1999, IT project manager Lynn has deployed to Iraq, trained alongside Nato forces in Chile and Spain, and briefed merchant ship crews on counter-piracy measures in Dubai.

But her proudest moment came in 2008 when she shot down a 240mm rocket that was heading straight for Basra Airport.

"It happened on a quiet Sunday afternoon. I was manning one of the big Phalanx guns," she remembered.

All of a sudden the alarm went off. A rocket was heading straight for the area of the camp where the living quarters were. Lynn didn't hesitate, she did what she had been trained to do.

"I disengaged the hold-fire button and the gun burst into life. The noise was deafening."

Later they found the pieces of the incoming rocket that she had destroyed way out in the desert.

"That evening people were coming up to me in the mess and congratulating me. But I kept saying 'I didn't do anything. I was just doing my job'."

When she got back to the UK, Lynn was named best junior rating at her unit's awards ceremony.

"At that moment I felt so proud to be part of the RNR."

TAKING UP THE CHALLENGE

The 46-year-old mother-of-one is now based at Medway Division in Chatham.

But she started her reserve career at HMS *Scotia* in Rosyth; the principal RNR unit for the east of Scotland.

Lynn had been in the Sea Cadets when she was a kid but wanted more of a challenge. "I was 32 when I signed up, so I was one of the older ones," she said.

Most of her training was carried out at the weekend.

"We did a lot of theory – learning about ships, the structure of the Royal Navy, drill and so on. Fitness was the hardest part. We had to run a mile-and-a-half in 14 minutes," she said.



Tanks for the memories: Petty Officer Lynn Cook in Camp Charlie, Basra Airport

“ I disengaged the hold-fire button and the gun burst into life. The noise was deafening ”

"The first time I tried, I managed a mile and then threw up! I hadn't exercised properly in 10 years!" But Lynn soon got back in shape.

The course culminated in two weeks at HMS *Raleigh* in Torpoint in Cornwall where the recruits were taught a host of skills including navigation and rope work.

There was also an extremely wet overnight exercise on Dartmoor, a flood damage control exercise in a mock ship that was steadily filling with water, and a lot of drills.

"We were shouted at a lot – but it was all part of being turned into capable, solid sailors."

When Lynn completed her training she joined the RNR's Maritime Trade Operation (MTO).

The MTO is the interface between the Royal Navy and Merchant Marine which ensures that civil shipping can conduct its trade safely around the globe.

In recent years the MTO has focused its efforts on the growing problem of international piracy.

Its current main operational base is in Dubai and featured in the recent box office hit *Captain Phillips*.

Two years ago, Lynn found herself in the port of Jebel Ali in Dubai briefing merchant sailors of all nationalities on how to avoid being captured by pirates.

"The heat was a killer," she said. "But it was a fascinating job."

THE NEXT GENERATION

Lynn is now working as an instructor

for new-entry RNR recruits and has just committed herself to a further five years as a naval reservist.

"It's great fun," she said. "There's a lot of camaraderie and you make friends that you never forget."

"You also assimilate so many skills and experiences that come in useful in your civilian work – like leadership and management. And employers really value all the experience that you bring back to the workplace."

"If I had one piece of advice for anyone thinking of joining I would tell them to just go for it. I did, and I have never looked back."

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Line of duty:
Malian soldiers soak
up combat tactics from
members of 1st
Battalion The Rifles

FAST TRAIN



Listen up: Rifleman Lizamore teaching house searching

UK AND IRISH SOLDIERS CRAM MALIANS WITH COMBAT SKILLS WRITES IAN CARR

Surrounding the Irish Defence Forces' sergeant is a sea of Malian soldiers' faces furrowed in concentration. In one of the houses in the ghost village, they have just been taught how to conduct a room search. Now they are searching for the answer to the Irishman's question.

"What is the most suspicious thing in this room? Remember you are looking for the absence of the normal, and the presence of the abnormal," he prompts in a thick brogue.

One of them offers a suggestion via the interpreter. The sergeant has been waiting for this moment. He takes no hostages. "No. I'd say the thing that is most suspicious here is the fact that there are more than 30 armed soldiers all crammed into this person's living room."

Let's just say the joke loses its punch line in translation. It doesn't matter. Over the course of 10 weeks training there is enough banter to let one laugh get away.

What does matter is that the lessons have stuck and the Malians have just displayed a good grasp of the systematic techniques that they must follow when searching, and of the tell-tale signs that will indicate when something's not right.

One lesson in particular has been repeatedly driven home. "You must be inquisitive when you search. But remember, when dealing with civilians, 98 per cent of them will be innocent people just wanting to go about their business," said the Irish instructor. "Treat them and their things with respect, just as you would want your own mothers and sisters to be treated. Damage their property and

you will turn them against you."

A year ago the behaviour of the national army, retreating from jihadist insurgents in the north, attracted criticism about the way they had treated civilians. Now, at the Malians' own request, training in human rights and in rules of engagement form very important elements of the programme.

"We tell them that the army exists not to fight wars but to support the country's civilians. Soldiers are there to serve," said Corporal Danny Ray of 1st Battalion The Rifles, one of the UK's instructors.

Talk to any of the instructors and they will tell you that not only are the Malians a naturally friendly people and a joy to work with, but also that the soldiers are motivated and ask some pretty penetrating questions of their own.

"They are extremely inquisitive," said Lieutenant Sean Ryan of the Irish Defence

Force, a platoon commander with the third UK-Irish training platoon.

Many of the Malians in this, the fourth batch to come through the 10-week course at Koulikoro Training Camp (KTC), are seasoned soldiers with experience of fighting jihadists in the north.

"Many are premier class soldiers. Conditions for them by our standards are hard, the food isn't great, but they have bought into this training package, which is arduous, because they know that what they are learning could save their lives," said Lieutenant Ryan. "They have a genuine desire to deploy back to the north, rebuild the confidence in their military and stabilise their own border."

In 10 weeks, the aim is to do as much as possible to prepare the Malians by training and mentoring them in all the component parts they need to take and control an area, and maintain stability within it by driving off and deterring an enemy. They must be able to do this while reassuring the civilian population, creating trust which will lead to helpful intelligence they can use to strengthen their grip on a situation.

At first the lessons focus on giving the soldiers individual skills. In fairly swift order that develops into increasingly complex training tasks and integrated two and three-day-long exercises at platoon and company level. These test how effectively the Malians can put into practice the infantry skills they have been taught; skills which the French KTC camp commandant, Colonel Alexis Uhrich, acknowledges as the things at which the British infantryman excels.

Dolo Boureima, 2 company commander, who has 25 years' experience with the Malian army, agrees. "This is very good training that we need. The British are very serious and really insist on making us skilful as soldiers," he said.

By the end of the



On the threshold: Malians on exercise search a house

Grub up: a Malian cook prepares the soldiers' lunch



programme it is the Malian platoon commanders who take the lead with gentle nudges from their UK-Irish counterparts.

It's ambitious. As Corporal Ray, who has just been covering the basics of strike operations, explains: "Obviously it's condensed, for example in our own basic training you might spend two or three months on strike ops alone."

But there is a magic ingredient which makes the seemingly impossible achievable. And that is flexibility.

"There is no prescriptive centralised training programme that we have to follow," said Major Sam Cates of 1 Rifles, officer commanding the joint UK-Irish training team. "On day one I'm told by Colonel Pierre Barnard, who has overall responsibility for the training, what we have to deliver by the end of the course, then it's up to us to work out the best way of doing that."

There is little room for PowerPoint presentations in the programme. Training is kept as simple and as practical as possible. And because the approach is flexible, rather than slavishly following a set syllabus, the pace can be changed according to the needs of the students.

"If you find you have extra time because they have caught onto something quickly you can push it and bring in extra elements and make it more complex," said Lieutenant Peter Barton, the training team platoon commander. "Which is exactly what happened when we were teaching group attacks to the current platoon.

"They grasped the basics quickly. So instead of them having to just deal with one attack, we developed the situation so they were faced with attacks coming from more than one position. Then threw in a surrender and a casualty to deal with."

By the same measure, if a lesson needs

reinforcing then that can be accommodated too by tweaking the next day's activities.

Each group that comes through the KTC gate is a different mix of experience, capability and age. Having a flexible approach means that the training can be moulded to fit the needs of the soldiers and the pace can vary to make sure the pressures being applied are useful without being too intense.

"One of the things I tend to keep an eye on at the end of the course and warn the instructors to be mindful about is the levels of confidence," said Major Cates. "There are times and places when it is right to push the Malians to failure point, but by the last week we need to be careful in what we say.

"If something hasn't gone well we need to be sensitive about how we talk about it. We don't want them to leave this place feeling nervous."

There is perhaps another ingredient that makes the efforts of the trainers so effective. They have all volunteered for this deployment, consequently the morale and motivation is palpable.

Last year 1 Rifles were set for a stint in Afghanistan when, due to the drawdown, their tour was cancelled. Many, robbed of the chance to deploy to Helmand, saw the chance to join the EU Training Mission in Mali as too good to miss.

Working with motivated volunteers has made Major Cates' job easy and he has been impressed with his team who are, he feels, working well beyond their rank in many areas.

That was clearly the conclusion that Head of the Army, General Sir Peter Wall, came to as well when he ordered the first field promotion in 60 years to Rifleman, now Lance Corporal, Gigar Das, after watching a flawless

lesson in marksmanship.


There have been challenges to overcome, but most of these tend to stem from what Major Cates describes as mechanical problems. Things such as providing better food for the Malians so that their energy levels don't dip during the day.

"I'd say we are all enjoying this mission. It's a privilege and a pleasure to be here. The frustrations arise from things like there only being 22 vehicles available for 180 instructors who need them for training, either to transport the Malians to the ranges, or to teach them vehicle patrolling. Some things need more than a bottle top to teach effectively," he said.

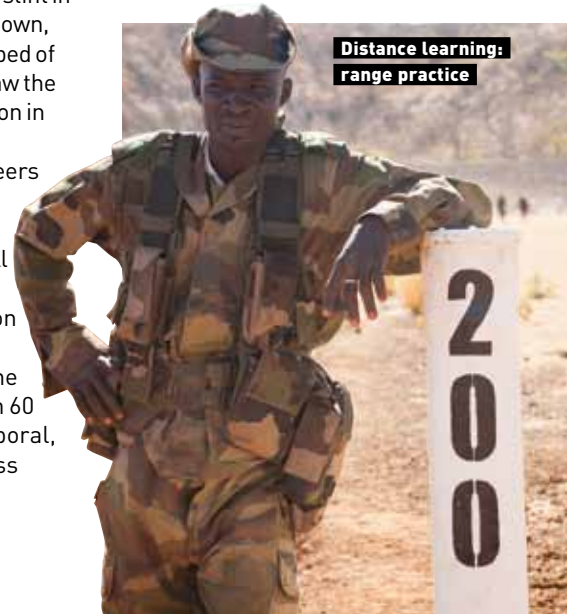
And then, the kitchen has to provide food for 750 people, three-times-a-day. So sometimes it can be a struggle to get people fed at a suitable time. Getting food out to soldiers on exercise can be a problem, and if it doesn't arrive until 15.00 when the activities have been planned around a 13.00 break for lunch, with only two-and-a-half hours of daylight left, it can be frustrating.

But for the volunteers of the UK-Irish training team, the deployment has been valuable. For the more junior, such as Rifleman Sean Lizamore who joined the Rifles just 18 months ago, the experience has given him a glimpse of what it is like to be on the receiving end of training.

For the more experienced, like Lieutenant Barton, it has meant a shift of perspective. "Being here gives you a lot more confidence to be adventurous in what you can try. As a young commander it has shown that the more you are prepared to realise the full capacity of your men, the more you are willing to give them, the more you will achieve."

Perhaps the last word should go to the calmest and most experienced of all, Colour Sergeant Peter Squires. "If you've been training people for 10 weeks and you know in your head that what's leaving the door is a far better product than what arrived, you can only be happy." 

Distance learning: range practice



KEEPING WATCH

THE UNMANNED AIRCRAFT, WATCHKEEPER, GETS THE ALL CLEAR TO UNDERGO MILITARY FLIGHT TESTING WITH THE ROYAL ARTILLERY

The Army has received the go ahead to start testing the reconnaissance and surveillance aircraft Watchkeeper at Boscombe Down in Wiltshire.

Up until now, the unmanned air system (UAS) has been put through its paces by highly-skilled industry experts and having achieved more than 600 hours of flying time it will be tested by highly skilled 1st Artillery Brigade pilots in a restricted airspace over the Salisbury Plain Training Area.

Gathering crucial information from the battlefield, Watchkeeper will provide UK troops with life-saving surveillance, reconnaissance and intelligence. It will also give personnel on the ground much greater situational awareness, helping to reduce threats.

The Army already operates four types of unarmed UAS in Afghanistan which play an important role protecting soldiers on the ground.

Minister for Defence Equipment, Support and Technology Philip Dunne said:

"Watchkeeper will provide real-time information for troops conducting operations on the ground, allowing them to understand better and thereby overcome threats they may face. The release to service is a major milestone



Fingertip control: soldiers operating Watchkeeper

in this important programme.

"Watchkeeper is the first unmanned air system developed and built in the UK to become operational.

"It will be a significant capability for the Army for years to come and there is

no doubt that it will prove to be a battle-winning technology."

Watchkeeper, which took its first UK flight in 2010 by Thales UK, has a wingspan of 35 feet and can fly at an altitude of up to 16,000 feet. **DF**



Eye in the sky: Watchkeeper undergoing flight trials



Help floods in: 22 Engineer Regiment hold back the tide in Romsey

Picture: Corporal Richard Cave

WATER WORLD

WITH RECORD RAINFALL AND STRONG WINDS BATTERING MUCH OF THE COUNTRY, MORE THAN 5,000 TROOPS WERE ON HAND TO HELP WITH FLOOD RELIEF OPERATIONS

Images of rivers swelling to take over vast areas of countryside, railway tracks hanging precariously above the raging sea and members of the Armed Forces stepping in to help seem to have been the staple of every news programme in 2014.

As stormy weather brought high winds, driving rain and strong waves, the UK coastline was battered and flooding inland wreaked havoc across the country.

Much of southern England saw the wettest January since records began, more than 100 years ago. Some areas experienced twice the average rainfall for January.

It continued unabated into February with more storms drenching already saturated ground, forcing more people from their homes, leaving thousands without power and causing damage to both houses and businesses.

This was when the military stepped in with more than 2,000 Servicemen and women, regulars and reserves committed to flood relief and prevention work across the country.



Dam it all: Gurkhas redirect water away from homes

Picture: Corporal Richard Cave

The Royal Air Force, as well as having personnel on the ground, flew missions with Tornado GR4 and Sentinel aircraft to capture optical and radar imagery to help the civilian authorities co-ordinate flood relief efforts with a view to preventing further flooding.

One of the areas to be hit first was the Somerset Levels, a low-lying area in the

west of England. The floodwater there left farmland submerged and forced hundreds of residents to evacuate their homes.

On 6 February residents received some longed-for relief in the form of around 100 Royal Marines from 40 Commando based in nearby Taunton.

The marines got to work throughout the Somerset Levels moving and filling sandbags, filling Hesco flood defence barriers, relocating pumps, and providing support to the local authorities and emergency services.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Chris West and approximately 100 soldiers from Zulu Company of 1st Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers were among the first to respond to the flooding at Wraysbury.

“When we first arrived, we had to establish which properties were vacant and which ones needed to be evacuated,” said Lieutenant West, the first platoon commander on the all too soggy ground. “We also needed to ascertain if there were any vulnerable or sick people to make sure that they could get access to help.”

In some places the flooding was so severe that ambulance and fire vehicles struggled to get access to these areas to provide assistance. But with the help of Lieutenant West and his team, they were able to get through to do their job.

"Using our trucks, we were able to transport rescuers to where they needed to get to as the water was so deep," explained Lieutenant West. "We helped in whichever way we could – from evacuating homes to sandbagging."

As well as the agencies all pulling together to respond to the floods, local residents also joined forces to give help. A volunteering service had been set up at the local primary school and people were turning up there to offer their services and equipment.

"The community support was great," added Lieutenant West. "Even though we had our rations, the local people cooked us food, which was really kind considering what they were going through."

As the days went on the rain continued to pour, and in the south east the Thames reached its highest level for 60 years. The flooding along the river forced many residents from their homes. In the Thames Valley area military personnel were on hand in a number of locations.

In Surrey, the Thames burst its banks at Chertsey. Soldiers from 2nd Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles and the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment assisted civil authorities by erecting a 600-metre Aquadam flood barrier brought over from Sweden.

Lieutenant Adam Irvine's 22 Engineer Regiment squadron was called up on the night of Thursday 13 February to recce the River Test in Romsey.

"We were asked to provide an engineering solution as the river was about to burst its banks," Lieutenant Irvine explained. If it had, that would have affected several hundred homes in the area. With time running out, the team was under pressure to come up with a solution.

The squadron used its engineering nous to create a combination of a Hesco barrier and scaffolding to fashion a makeshift solution.

The idea was to control the rate of flow going down to the stream toward Romsey by creating a kind of sluice-gate.

"Quite a few solutions had been thought about but a lot of them involved dropping things into the water," said Lieutenant Irvine. "But I didn't want my guys to get too close and risk falling into the water."

So we came up with the scaffolding solution as it's quite easy to move it about and drop into place. It had never been done before so there was a lot of trial and error."



Wading in: soldiers providing support in areas affected by flooding

Picture: Corporal Richard Cave

The site was a tricky one as there was no access for vehicles so everything had to be moved in by hand.

Professional qualified engineer Major Nick Frances came up with the design of the apex and worked out the rate of flow and how much pressure could be put onto the design.

"It's very different from the normal work we do," he said. "But all the Royal Engineers have trades, so I used those guys whose trades involved working with scaffolding to work on that solution."

The first structure didn't manage to hold the flow entirely but it did take enough pressure off to prevent flooding.

A second attempt with a similar scaffolding structure by a new team who arrived the next day did the job.

And the residents of Romsey were extremely grateful for the soldiers' hard work and persistence.

"The locals were brilliant," said Lieutenant Irvine. "They kept coming out on site to see what we were doing and get a better understanding. We actually got cakes made for us, so that was great!"

This on-the-spot flood-averting made for some pretty varied work for Lieutenant Irvine's squadron.

"Many of the guys had just got back from Afghanistan in September. They are prepping for an infantry exercise in Kenya, so it's all been very different."

"But all the guys have their training so they are well equipped to handle such situations. It's a great opportunity for them to do something new."

And for some of them, the story hasn't ended there. More than 200 personnel from the Royal Navy, Army and RAF have been trained by the Environment Agency to act as flood defence assessors.

"There's a few guys that have been selected from across the regiment to help out."

"The Environment Agency have been providing the training so it's a very good opportunity for them to learn how to help and carry out the assessment of the flood defences. We've sent our best qualified guys to go forward for it," said Lieutenant Irvine.

At the time of going to print, military personnel were standing by to assist local authorities in recovery work.

Tasks are likely to include rescuing people using helicopters and specialist vehicles, building up flood defences, sandbagging, and working with the Environment Agency to review and repair flood defences.

Whatever is needed you can bet that the people of flood-hit communities will be grateful to see them. Expect more cakes boys and girls! **DF**



Bags of help: 40 Commando Royal Marines in Somerset

Picture: LAPhot/Rhys O'Leary

APPRENTICESHIP WEEK

NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK SHINES A LIGHT ON HOW BENEFICIAL THESE SCHEMES CAN BE FOR BOTH THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE BUSINESS THEY WORK IN

All eyes were on apprenticeships from 3 to 7 March as the seventh National Apprenticeship Week took place. The week celebrated the contribution that apprenticeships make not only to the individual, but also to businesses and the wider economy.

The Ministry of Defence is the largest deliverer of apprenticeships in the UK and

the Army apprenticeship scheme alone is the largest employer training programme in the UK, with more than 10,000 soldiers on the programme at any time.

Apprenticeships offer the opportunity to develop skills and competency in a broad range of sectors, making an effective contribution to operations and support to operations. The opportunity to gain

civilian recognised qualifications through a structured programme of learning is one of their attractions.

Gaining on-the-job experience is the other side of the coin and benefits the individual as well as the Department.

Defence Focus takes a closer look at some of the personnel flying the flag for apprentices.



ANTONY OAKES

After years spent in the Army, Antony decided he wanted a change and moved into an administration role. He decided to try his hand at a level 3 business admin apprenticeship.

Since then, he has become a civil servant in MOD and has used his fresh skills to develop a new electronic case management system. This allows those involved in organising events to access an online diary at the click of a button.

Antony explained what his apprenticeship has done for him: "I found the course very interesting as it related to my work. I had lots of evidence through my job to call upon which meant that I used very little of my own time.

"Work-based learning is great for exactly that reason; you learn at work. Evidence of your skills is readily available so you're not spending time looking for it. I think the only thing I had to instigate was proof of presentation skills. I did a lot of this in the Army and felt quite comfortable with it but my current role doesn't require me to give presentations so I had to make that happen but that was fine.

"The main thing that I discovered was that I knew more than I thought I did. It makes you stand back and realise what you have done and what you have learnt. Now I can call upon this knowledge with a sense of pride and achievement."

As a result of the course, Antony has pushed himself to do new things. When he noticed that everyone was working on paper diaries and organising events on paper, he knew he could do something to improve things. The electronic case management system he set up did all this for them.

He said: "I think it's the proof of my skills that gave me the confidence to find new ones.

"It's a great opportunity to stand back and realise what you've achieved - I'd recommend it to anyone in the Forces."

Expanding knowledge:
Antony Oakes

PRIVATE FRANCIS ONAI

Francis is 34 years old and is currently serving with 26 Regiment Royal Artillery based in Germany. He is originally from the Volta region of Ghana.

He completed 14 weeks of basic infantry training at the Army Training Centre in Pirbright which he found challenging but extremely enjoyable.

His next phase of training was at the Defence Logistics School in Worthy Down where he completed his class 3 chef training which set the foundation for his new trade.

He picked up all the skills that are necessary in order to feed people in any kind of environment, using all kinds of equipment, from a purpose-built sanitary kitchen to an improvised field kitchen on operations made out of disused ammunition boxes.

It was during his initial training that Francis completed the mandatory units of the level 2 NVQ in professional cookery.

On completion of his training, Francis was assigned to his present regiment where he completed his professional cookery NVQ and has since also completed a level 2 award in customer service.

During his time with the regiment, Francis has deployed on exercises in Germany and Canada. He has competed in catering competitions and enjoyed the experience and challenge.

He said: "I love the Army because it has helped to build my confidence, develop good team spirit and also taught me solid core values which are very important in our day-to-day life."



Cooking up a storm:
Private Francis Onai



Flying high: Able Seaman India Dalton

ABLE SEAMAN INDIA DALTON

India joined the navy in September 2008 aged 20 and very soon was enrolled onto the IT, software, web and telecoms apprenticeship framework.

She was one of several students who were put forward for the National Apprenticeship Awards in 2009, and she went on to gain a highly commended from e-skills, the Sector Skills Council for the IT and telecoms sector.

India is currently serving on board HMS *Dragon* and has continued to impress her superiors with her performance and her methodical and exemplary work ethic.

India has enjoyed her time in the Royal Navy, so far having completed three deployments and visiting more than

30 countries, making some loyal friends.

During this reporting year India took over managing the duty roster, which she has carried out methodically, displaying her good judgement and her practical and fair approach.

She has proved that she is a team player and this is reflected in her ability to guide the junior members of the team in troubleshooting and diagnostics of small problems within the DII system.

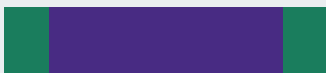
She has demonstrated her spare capacity by completing her level 2 first aid course and continuing in her progress towards an A-level in Spanish during the deployment.

She has a high standard of military bearing and is a well-respected rating amongst her peers and superiors.



MY MEDALS

Warrant Officer Class 1 Andy Peat shares his experiences of being a bomb disposal expert and talks through some of his medals with Emily Bird



NORTHERN IRELAND

Operation Banner, as it was known when I first went on tour there in 1996, was really interesting.

I was in an explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) team and we were getting called out to public places to defuse explosive devices including car bombs and pipe bombs.

At that stage of my career I was there to do electronic countermeasures for bomb disposal. The team's role was to stop the bomb from functioning, neutralise it and make it safe for the public, police and the army, and ensure there was no damage to property or infrastructure.

Being in an English-speaking town and in a place that looked just like home while on an operation where

bombs were going off felt really surreal.

Overall I spent a lot of time in Northern Ireland, completing seven tours over a six-year period.

During that time, we had the Lisburn car bombings, where several hundreds of pounds of explosives were detonated at Thiepval Barracks.

Ebrington Army Barracks were also bombed, destroying an unmanned guardhouse and damaging the perimeter fence, and then there were the attacks on Stewartstown and Omagh.

It was an interesting time, but the completion of a task was always good. You can see a real tangible effect when a device is made safe.



IRAQ

Iraq was completely different to what I'd experienced in Northern Ireland because there was a greater threat of being shot at while trying to render a device safe.

As well as that, being shot at, we also had to consider other factors when out on missions, like the extreme hot and cold temperatures, and the state of the roads and buildings.

We had to learn quickly how to overcome these challenges. Pulling together as a team was very important. As well as a good team spirit, I always find that the British Army's sense of humour is amazing. Even in fire fights you will always find a guy who can make you smile.



AFGHANISTAN

I was first posted to Afghanistan in 2007 where we had to be more flexible, agile and mobile.

Due to the irrigated, lush area around the River Helmand, known as the green zone, our operations had to be more mobile. Trying to get our trucks through the green zone was nigh on impossible so we had to travel on foot, leaving our vehicles out in the desert.

We had to carry everything on our backs – kit, equipment, ammunition, food and water; we couldn't even wear our protective bomb suits because they were too heavy, weighing as they did about 98lbs.

We would have to walk up to 8 kilometres, and bearing in mind we were carrying all that weight, sometimes it was quite hard going.



MENTION IN DISPATCHES

In my first month in Afghanistan, a key bridge was hit by an improvised explosive

device (IED), which was being overwatched by insurgents. We needed to clear the bridge and link up with the units that were on the other side.

When I moved down to the bridge I was attacked from about seven different positions. The insurgents shot at me and fired two rocket-propelled grenades.

I was petrified, but I just had to concentrate on the best way of clearing the bridge. It didn't feel like it was really happening.

I managed to get to the bridge OK while having to return fire to protect myself. I rendered the device safe, came back through a fire fight and linked up with the commander to tell him it was clear to continue with the assault.

Once it sank in what had just happened, I realised that it had been a bit of a close call as one of the grenades had missed me by less than a metre. At the time I was just too busy trying to keep moving to notice.

LONG SERVICE AND GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL

This cites everything I've done in the past 16 years of service, starting with my first peacekeeping mission in Angola, then going onto the evacuation operations in Lebanon. Finally there were my tours of Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan.

I've come a long way since I joined the Army apprentice college in 1991.

Now, as a regimental senior ammunitions technician in 33 Engineer Regiment (EOD), when I'm not on tour, I provide training to the junior operators. I also help the next batch of guys prepare for their tours of Afghanistan or anywhere else that they are required to go for contingency operations.

Bomb disposal is an area I've been working in for about 18 years now and I like it that my trade has a unique skill set.

For each device that is taken off the streets, on average, between one and three people are still walking around, and that's great.

It's hard to deal with children and families who get caught up in war.

No one wants to see small children scared to go outside or play in a field in case they get killed or severely wounded.

It's nice to see people just being able to go about their lives, go to school and farm their fields with no risk.



ACCUMULATED CAMPAIGN SERVICE MEDAL AND BAR

In 2002, I received my first Accumulated Campaign Service Medal (ACSM) for completing 1,080 days on tour. In 2005 I received my bar to the ACSM for completing another 1,080 days.

By 2011 I'd completed in total 2,880 days so I received my second ACSM.

Being on tour and away from the family is tough, but they are great. Admittedly, they don't like the risks I face, but they support me and that's important.

I think they have the worst job, as it's they who have to deal with not knowing what I'm doing and worrying if I am safe. That is a very hard situation to deal with, families always imagine the worst.



GEORGE MEDAL AND ANDERS LASSEN AWARD

Last year, I was on a mission with the Danish Special Forces and the Afghan Special Police to secure a bomb-making factory in Afghanistan when one of the Danish soldiers set off a device. He landed on top of another one, luckily without setting it off.

Although it was the middle of the night, it quickly became apparent that we were in a compound that was surrounded



On reflection: Warrant Officer Andy Peat at the wall of remembrance

Picture: Corporal Andy Reddy RLC

by at least 12 IEDs.

So, in the dark, I had to dig under the injured soldier. He had lost both his legs and his left arm. I had to manually render the device safe while he was being treated so that we could pull him off the device and get him out of there.

As this was going on, another soldier knelt down on top of an IED. So I had to dig underneath him as well. Then I had to follow the same procedure as before, all while trying to clear the area and move everybody back to a safe place.

Clearly, being in front of a guy who has been blown up is very hard to cope with, but we're a team. It's my job to re-engage my brain and

work in that team as quickly as possible to get the injured out so they can get the medical treatment that they need.

After my efforts on this mission, I was presented with the Anders Lassen award by the Crown Prince of Denmark.

It's given in memory of Anders Lassen, a Danish Special Forces soldier who was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry in 1945. And so each year the Danish Special Forces community give this award to those who have carried out acts of bravery alongside them.

It's nice getting recognition, but being able to make a difference and help others is what gives me a real sense of purpose.



Crowning glory: Warrant Officer Andy Peat being presented with the Anders Lassen award by the Crown Prince of Denmark

Picture: Corporal Andy Reddy RLC

WATCH YOUR BACK

FIND OUT ABOUT THE MOST COMMON CAUSES OF BACK ACHE AND HOW YOU CAN KEEP YOUR BACK IN GOOD HEALTH

If you suffer from back pain, you are not alone. With four out of five adults experiencing back pain at least once in their lifetime, it's the largest cause of work-related absence in the UK. Here are the most common back-related complaints.

Back strain

Lower back pain from muscle strain is usually caused by any type of movement that puts undue stress on the lower back. Frequent causes include lifting a heavy object, lifting while twisting, or a sudden movement or fall.

It is important to lift objects correctly with your feet apart and one foot in front of the other, to create a stable platform. When performing the lift, bend your back, knees and hips slightly to achieve the desired angle without overextending. The object should be closer to your hips than any other part of your body when carrying.

When changing direction, do so with your feet, not by twisting your back. When lowering the object, bend your knees and not your back – keep your back straight.

Neck pain

You can get a painful or stiff neck if you sleep in an awkward position, type on a computer keyboard for a prolonged period of time, or even from sitting in a draught.

Anxiety and stress can also sometimes cause tension in your neck muscles. To minimise the chances of neck pain, ensure your posture is correct when sitting and sleeping.

Your mattress should be firm enough to support your body while supporting the weight of your shoulders and buttocks, keeping your spine straight.

If your mattress is too soft, place a firm board, ideally two centimetres thick, on top of the base of your bed and under the mattress. Your head should be supported with a pillow, but make sure your neck is not forced up at a steep angle.

Slipped disc

A slipped disc occurs when the outer case of the disc ruptures; the gel inside bulges and protrudes out of the disc.

The damaged disc can put pressure on the whole spinal cord or on a single nerve root. This means that a slipped disc can cause pain both in the area of the protruding disc and in the area of the body that is controlled by the nerve that the disc is pressing on.

It is not always clear what causes a disc to break down, although age can be a common factor.



As you get older, your spinal discs start to lose their water content, making them less flexible and more likely to rupture.

It is very important that you keep active if you have a slipped disc. Initially, it may be difficult to move around if you are in severe pain; however, after this, you should start to move around as soon as you can, which will keep your back mobile and speed up your recovery.

Make sure any exercise you do is gentle and does not strain your back. Swimming is an ideal form of exercise because the water supports your weight and puts very little strain on your joints.

Sciatica

The sciatic nerve runs from the back of your pelvis, through your buttocks, and down both legs, ending at your feet.

When something compresses or irritates the sciatic nerve, it can cause a pain that radiates out from your lower back and travels down your leg to your calf.


Sciatic pain can range from being mild to very painful. A slipped disc is the most commonly identified cause of sciatica, but in some cases there is no obvious cause.

There are steps you can take to minimise your risk of a slipped disc or back injury that could lead to the onset of sciatica.

Maintaining good posture, being careful when lifting and warming up before exercise will all reduce the risk of back injury.

Yoga will improve flexibility, increase the strength of core muscles and help support your back.

Bad posture or being overweight significantly increases your chances of encountering back pain.

By following these tips, you can save yourself the agonies of this all too common a complaint. 



This article comes to you from CS Healthcare, the specialist provider of health insurance for civil servants. Telephone 0800 917 4325. www.cshealthcare.co.uk

This article is general advice only. If you or a family member have any medical concerns contact your GP or medic.

VITAL NUMBERS

THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT THERE READY TO HELP YOU

RN Benevolent Trust: Grants, advice and income supplements for veterans. Call 0239 2690112 or email rnbt@rnbt.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

Royal Marines Benevolent Fund: Relieves hardship among serving and former Marines and dependents. royalmarines.charities@charity.vf.free.com or call 02392 547201.

ABF The Soldiers Charity: Support to soldiers and veterans. www.soldierscharity.org or call 0845 241 4820.

RAF Benevolent Fund: Help for RAF personnel past and present. rafbf.org or call 0800 1692942.

The Charity for Civil Servants: Helps anyone who has worked for the Civil Service and their dependents. Advice about support and financial help. 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 or call (UK) 01980 615975.

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

HIVE: Tri-Service information covering issues like education and health. 167 offices. hive.mod.uk.

Royal British Legion: Charity providing financial, social and emotional support to vets and serving, and dependents. www.britishlegion.org.uk or call 0808 802 8080.

RFA Association (RFAA): Comradeship and care for current and former RFA personnel. www.rfa-association.org.uk or contact 01772 685427.

SSAFA Forces Help: Supports serving personnel, veterans and the families of both. Practical and financial assistance

and emotional support. 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. Contact the Defence Business Services on 0800 345 7772 (+441225 829572 from overseas) or em: PeopleServices@pppa.mod.uk.

Matters of conscience

and whistleblowing under the Public Interest Disclosure Act. Call 0800 3457772. Select option four.

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

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, email: contact@oscc.gsi.gov.uk

Naval Personal & Family Service and Royal Marines Welfare:

NPFS & RMW have three main offices in the UK, where the serving person's next of kin resides determines which office to contact.

■ Eastern area office - HMS Nelson - Tel: 023 92 722 712 - after hours 023 92 726 159.

■ Western area office - HMS Drake - Tel: 01752 555 041 - after hours 01752 555 220.

■ Northern area office - Helensburgh - Tel: 01436 672 798 - after hours 01436 674 321 (Ext 4005)

RM Welfare - 01752 836 395 (via duty officer, guardroom RM Stonehouse).

The Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS):

Charity providing welfare support from frontline to recovery for wounded, sick and injured serving personnel and their families when they are in hospital, rehabilitation or recovery centres. www.dmws.org.uk or call 01264 774000

SUDOKU

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

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

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

Solution to the February 2014 puzzle

CHESS



Compiled by: Carl Portman

Magnus Carlsen may be the new kid on the world champion block but Bobby Fischer will remain one of the most well-known chess players of all time.

His style was at times simplistic, yet he was very deep, especially in the endgame where he really was machine-like. Both players though have at least one thing in common – the desire to win even when positions are drawing.

I am sometimes asked who the better player is but it is not correct to compare champions from different eras. Fischer defeated the Soviets virtually single-handed and had no super computer to help him do so. He systematically chipped away at the Soviet Regime until it crumbled to dust.

Carlsen has the same killer trait but is a self-effacing young man who seems to have a more well-rounded personality. He is Norwegian and interested in other aspects of life as well as chess.

Fischer wrote one of the most inspirational books ever in *My 60 Memorable Games* and the position this month is from one of the games



contained within its hallowed pages.

Fischer here is black (to move) against Wolfgang Unzicker of Germany at the Varna Chess Olympiad 1962. This was the position after Unzicker had played 26.Kf1. Black now has a decisive shot but what is it and why? I will give a copy of *Bobby Fischer Goes to War*, kindly donated by Chess & Bridge of London, to the first correct (or nearest) answer drawn.

Send your answers to me at carl.portman@hotmail.co.uk please.

The answer to February's problem was 1...Qg3+. The winner will be announced. Winner of the Dec/Jan problem was Peter Hickey from DSTL Fort Halstead.

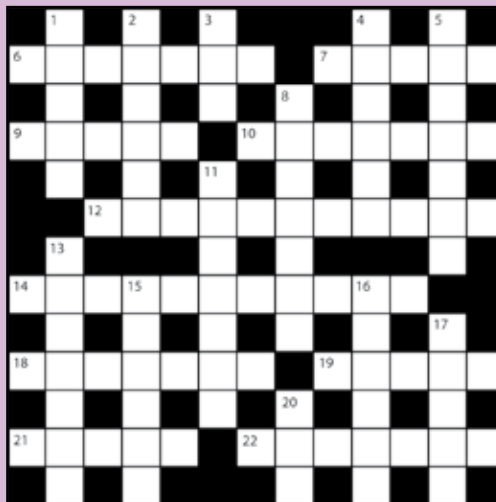
TOPICAL CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 6. Mobile home (7)
- 7. See 20 Down
- 9. Host city of the 2014 Winter Olympics (5)
- 10. Illegal musical recording (7)
- 12. Sophie, whose 2014 album is *Wanderlust* (5-6)
- 14. He plays Martin Sixsmith in the Oscar-nominated movie *Philomena* (5,6)
- 18. Sweet but slightly salty Swiss cheese (7)
- 19. See 21 Across
- 21. And 19 Across. He performed with Sir Paul McCartney at the 2014 Grammy Awards (5,5)
- 22. He recorded a video to save endangered animals with Prince William recently (7)

DOWN

- 1. He succeeded Margaret Thatcher as UK Prime Minister (5)



- 2. Artist who said 'In the future, everyone will be famous for 15 minutes' (6)
- 3. Michael Jackson album which features the song *Man In The Mirror* (3)
- 4. Whirlpool (6)
- 5. Formation of troops in parallel rows with the end of each row projecting further than the one in front (7)
- 8. Record of events during a ship's voyage (3-4)

- 11. Metal tool used for gripping and pulling things (7)
- 13. Anabolic _____, a drug used illegally by some athletes to enhance physical performance (7)
- 15. Long journey by sea (6)
- 16. Blood vessel (6)
- 17. Colour associated with emeralds (5)
- 20. And 7 Across. Talent show which has Kylie Minogue as a star judge (3,5)

SOLUTION (NO PEEKING)

- Down**
- 1. Major 2. Warhol 3. Bad
 - 4. Vortex 5. Echelon
 - 8. Log-book 11. Pincers
 - 13. Steroid 15. Voyage
 - 16. Artery 17. Green 20. The
- Across**
- 6. Caravan 7. Voice 9. Sochi
 - 10. Bootleg 12. Ellis-Bextor
 - 14. Steve Coogan 18. Gruyere
 - 19. Starr 21. Ringo 22. Charles



OFFERS

PRIZE

Win a two-night stay at the Casa Hotel and a Marco Pierre White three-course meal

WIN A GOURMET BREAK

Treat yourself to a gourmet break at the Casa Hotel in Hampshire. Our prize includes a two-night stay, breakfast, three-course dinner with a bottle of wine on one



evening, and a luxurious afternoon tea. The Casa is set in large and elegant grounds and offers a lounge bar alongside the stylish Marco Pierre White Wheeler's of St James's restaurant – "the most booked restaurant in Hampshire" (awarded by TopTable and OpenTable). It features a menu embracing British and French classics in Marco's trademark style.

Situated in the Hampshire town of Yateley, within 25 miles of Heathrow and Gatwick Airports, the Casa offers a picturesque location and is a perfect base for exploring the likes of Thorpe Park, Chessington World of Adventures and Legoland Windsor, or enjoying the tranquility of Savill Garden in Windsor Great Park and Virginia Water. If that isn't

tempting enough, free on-site parking is available. www.thecasahoteluk.com

OFFER: £75 dinner, bed and breakfast per person, per night, based on two sharing, with a bottle of champagne and free bedroom upgrade. Call 01252 873275 and quote "Defence Focus".

Terms and conditions

Prize and offer for two adults sharing double/twin room valid until 31 December 2014 and subject to availability. Dinner is three-course daily menu. House wine included in prize.

TO WIN

Email your name, address and phone number to dmc-newsdesk@mod.uk by 14 April 2014. Don't forget to enter **Gourmet Break** in the subject line.

WIN TICKETS TO WAR AND PEACE REVIVAL SHOW 2014

Come along to RAF Westenhanger, Folkestone Racecourse, and experience all the action and excitement of The War and Peace Revival from 16 to 20 July 2014. Featuring battle re-enactments and arena

events, there are military vehicles and a funfair, making it a great family day out.

The Vintage Village features civilian displays from the 1930s to the 1960s including the Home Front, Land Army,

classic cars, fashion shows and makeovers. Live music gives a real festival feel to the world's biggest military vehicle event. Camping is available with exclusive evening entertainment.

This year we mark the centenary of the start of the First World War, the 75th anniversary of the start of the Second World War and the 70th anniversaries of D-Day and Arnhem.

TRAVEL DIRECTIONS

We are a couple of minutes off J11 of the M20, with plenty of free parking. Mainline Westenhanger station is immediately next door and the high speed train will stop just for us on Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 July. The Channel Tunnel terminus is five minutes away and Dover ferry port about a 15-minute drive. See www.thewarandpeacerevival.co.uk or call 01304 813337/813945. Day tickets are undated so book early and save 20 per cent until 7 April.

TOWIN

Email your name, address and phone number to dmc-newsdesk@mod.uk by 14 April 2014. Don't forget to enter **War and Peace** in the subject line.



PRIZE

Two readers will win a family ticket to this year's War and Peace event from 16 to 20 July

Work for the MOD? Get up to 20% off Pay monthly plans

for you and up to five friends with
Vodafone Employee Advantage

Vodafone
Power to you



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or pop into your local store