



## **Foreword by Lieutenant Colonel RJ Westley MC**

### **Commanding**

"Shoot straight, Run fast, Drive on"

The Army offers you a career that is varied, exciting and rewarding and your officers and NCOs will invest more time and effort in you than any other employer. You will continue to learn new skills, visit new countries and have experiences that are way beyond the dreams of your friends back home. Most of them will look forward to Friday as the end of the working week; you will be looking forward to Monday, as you will be doing something that they can only read about. You are joining an exclusive club that is based on trust, commitment and teamwork, with friends who will walk side by side with you for as long as you want.

Your Battalion has a vested interest in you whether you are in basic training, newly joined, an "old sweat" or leaving at the end of your career. We invest in you from end-to-end. We want you to succeed and will stop at nothing to make sure you do.

### **Update from Afghanistan - JUNE 07**

***As I write this update we are all coming to terms with the death of LCpl Paul "Sandy" Sandford who was killed in action whilst leading his fire team in an assault on a Taliban trench system in the village of RAHIM KALAY on 6th June. It was a day when B Coy and the Czech Platoon were fighting all day long and achieved a hard fought victory over a determined and ruthless enemy.*** LCpl Sandford will be sorely missed; a stalwart of B Company and immensely respected and loved in 1 WFR he had the heart of a lion, our thoughts are foremost with his wife Gaynor and his family.

The pace of operations has picked up, you may have noticed that the 'phone calls and e-mails are shorter and less frequent. This partly due to the fact that our terminals are in need of renovation, which is underway, and partly because we are so busy. The Taliban have finished their poppy harvest and have turned their attention back to disrupting the activities of the Government of Afghanistan, us and the people. But they are losing both militarily and in terms of support from the very people they seek to subvert.

We have started the first reconstruction projects in schools, on roads, hospitals and a mine awareness programme for children in Gereshk. In Lashkar Gah the progress is more advanced and we in Gereshk have some catching up to do!

The companies are doing very well and have established a reputation for tough but fair, no-nonsense soldiering as I knew they would. In LASHKAR GAH C Coy have had some notable successes, capturing a vehicle with arms and munitions, shooting dead a local Taliban commander who had opened fire on them and capturing a Suicide Bomber and his equipment as he was preparing for an attack. B Coy have had a difficult job in managing the Upper Gereshk Valley, which has been quite violent over the last month, and dealing with the frustrations of having Battle Group Headquarters on their doorstep! A Coy are coming to the end of their time in Sangin and will return to BASTION for a brief respite before moving off again to Helmand pastures new.

R&R has started and the first batch is on its way for a short period of rest. We are trying to meet all the timelines for the groups heading back but there will be frustrations with flight changes and I ask you to be patient; we are doing all we can.

Finally a big thank you to you all for your continued support; it has been a great help at this time especially when you are so busy dealing with everything back home. The less we have to worry about, the more focussed we are on the job and the enemy and the safer we are. We remember Sandy Sandford and are doing our very best to keep everyone as secure as possible.

Thank you, again, and best wishes,

Richard Westley

## **Update from Afghanistan - July 2007**

If I have been remiss in updating you then please forgive me. For the last 26 days the Battle Group (BG) has been deployed on combat operations in the Upper Gereshk valley on Op LEG TUFAAN (Little Storm).

C Coy in LASHKAR GAH has been doing some outstanding work thwarting suicide bombers and allowing vital reconstruction and development to continue. They have not had an easy time of it but their success in deterring insurgents has made a desperate enemy turn his attention to planting Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) rather than exposing himself to direct action. Tragically this manifested itself in an attack on a patrol to the west of the Provincial capital which resulted in the death of Drummer Wright and serious injuries to Cpl Dennis, Pte Shelton, Pte Wise and Cfn McKinlay (REME). There have been some notable successes and the company has arrested suicide bombers, confiscated enemy weapons and equipment and surgically removed a major terrorist leader who attempted to engage them with small arms fire and paid with his life due to crack marksmanship. The real benefit of C Company's efforts is in the fact that, due to them alone, the Helmand Executive Group and Government of Afghanistan can operate in LASHKAR GAH and business is thriving in the Provincial Capital.

A Coy Group are in GARMSIR. It is a lawless place whose only inhabitants are the enemy. They are mounting combat patrols every day and engaging the enemy whenever they can. The disappointment for many of us is that we cannot get there to see them as a trip there means a stay of 10 days, something that I cannot afford to do and OC A Coy would loathe it anyway...no Coy Commander wants his CO to stay for that long! In late June and early July they took part in Op PECHTAW, seizing the

far bank of the River Helmand and allowing the Royal Engineers to erect a Medium Girder Bridge, enabling future operations to be conducted by them. It is tough work and they are isolated to a degree. They are....loving it!

Op LEG TUFAAN aimed at defeating the enemy in the Upper Gereshk Valley and pushing them back from the Town. ***Decisive Ops were conducted between 06 and 12 Jul and involved a Battle Group deliberate attack. The BG comprised B Coy Group, 2 Coys of Afghan National Army and the Czech Special Ops Group (SOG) with combat engineers, a battery of artillery, an electronic warfare detachment, close air support and attack helicopters The fighting was intense with the enemy counter attacking at every turn. At one stage, B Coy having seized the village of RAHIM KALAY from the enemy, the enemy counter attacked in numbers, getting to within 50 metres of BG Tac HQ before being beaten back by heavy fire from a B Coy platoon and accurate, danger-close fire from our own Mortar platoon. The enemy were finally defeated on the morning of 13 Jul as the BG cleared the village ADIN ZAI. A message of thanks was read out by the village Elder as they were liberated from the Taliban. The attack cost us dear with Gdsmn Hickey (Somme Coy, LONDONS attached 1 WFR) being killed in action by enemy fire in the assault on ADIN ZAI, and five other casualties. By the end of the operation on 26 Jul, Drummer Derenlaghi had been gravely wounded with two other minor casualties when BG Tac HQ hit a mine and a member of the Czech SOG had lost a foot to an enemy RPG round in a raid on enemy positions in SHURAKIAN Village. It cost the enemy dear too. Over 250 were killed in action and they had lost their ill-gotten heartland.***

It has been a hard tour-perhaps harder than some were expecting-and it has drawn on reserves that many did not know they had. Through the activities of the men of 1WFR BG, the Afghans are being given a chance to establish something from a lawless and once failed state. The fighting is far from the be-all and end-all; it is an enabler to reconstruction and governance. We must drive forward the infrastructure; education, health, security and roads. In order to this we have to defeat the enemy and that means fighting. It is a good job that the men of 1WFR are fighting men.

The BG is doing so very well and the men have established a reputation second to none out here. This will come as no surprise to those that know them but you should know that what they have achieved on the field of battle this year at least equals what already the Paras achieved last year and the Marines over the winter. It has been hard, visceral fighting and it has come at a price. Sandy Sandford, Tom Wright, Sean Dolan and Darryl Hickey made the ultimate sacrifice. They will not be forgotten. I hand over the BG in two weeks time and it will be the hardest thing I have had to do in my career. I am the proudest CO in Afghanistan because I have the best soldiers in the World who have continued to "shoot straight, run fast and drive on". I wish Lieutenant Colonel Simon Banton the very best of luck as he steps up for the last bit of the tour and urge the men to stay focussed, stay safe and keep on being the best.

With Best Wishes,

Richard Westley

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