

## **1 R ANGLIAN Update 2 - 15 March 10**

### **A (Norfolk) Company Update:**

It has been a week since I returned from R&R and despite concerns, I found them in strong form – professional and determined to continue the mission. Of course all our thoughts are with Capt Martin Driver and his family and we all certainly miss him. Maj Matt Walker, the OMLT OC, covered for me for a week, for which I was grateful. We handed back during an Op to clear several legacy IEDS from old insurgent firing points. This has continued to make the area safer for the local nationals. Patrol Base WOQAB finally closed this week. 2 Platoon were the last ones there and the Royal Engineers stripped out everything less the outer Hesco wall. As 2 Platoon patrolled away a swarm of local nationals moved in. Over the next two days they demolished the remaining infrastructure and now the patrol base is no more than a 'green field site'. The RSM visited for a couple of days, which was appreciated by everyone – he found two of our little 'gifts' (rocks in his bergan, etc), but we haven't heard whether he's found the third yet! We took him up to see the FSG at Roshan Tower which was an interesting patrol as the wadi remains at a high level with some pretty treacherous currents. 2 Platoon have also spent a couple of days at Kunjack OP where they conducted some training with the ANP and patrolled some areas around Musa Qaleh District centre that have been not been patrolled by us before.

1 and 3 Platoons with the ANA conducted a very successful night ambush which resulted in the Javelin's CLU operator positively identifying two insurgents laying an IED. Out of effective range to the killing group, a co-ordinated shoot was conducted by our tame HCR CVR(T) resulting in two less IED layers. 1 Platoon also found themselves most of the way up Mount Musa Qal'eh this week. They put in a sniper OP that overlooked Karimanda village and was very successful in engaging insurgents. Sgt Johnson did describe the climb as 'quite a lick' and said that sat on a mountainside all day in the sun left him 'feeling like a boil in the bag'.

Two culverts built by local nations but paid for by ISAF are now complete including a Hesco screen covering the culvert pipes, stopping debris clogging up the pipe and also stopping any IEDs being placed under the culverts. The bridge outside former Patrol Base WOQAB is a solid build and the engineers have confirmed that it will support approximately 25 tonnes. Payment has been made in full to the contractor which now concludes the bridge and culvert projects. Locals have once again talked about the lack of power in the AO. They are very happy that ISAF have bought and fitted a brand new transformer for the area. However it now appears that the underlying problem is the number of power lines and poles that are damaged or broken. Government electricians are now in the area looking at the downed lines.

### **C (Essex) Company Update from Op MOSHTARAK:**

Opportunities for reconstruction and development within the village of Noor Mohamed Khan Kalay have taken a bound forward these last two weeks whilst efforts are being made to establish a united and robust community spirit across the AO.

The first of a series of influence expansion operations into insurgent safe havens was held in the village of Islamabad Kalay and was a resounding success as over 250 locals attended. Inside the village of Khowshhal Kalay, in excess of 400 children were given notebooks and pens in an attempt to stimulate their desire to learn and apply pressure onto their parents to teach (part of the Learning to Learn initiative). Embedded partnering has now been permanently established between ISAF and ANCOP and the Company has adopted a model for partnering known as 'Lead, Guide, Follow, Assist, Monitor/Extract'. Insurgent attempts to disrupt our efforts

through intimidation and hoaxes have been countered by the re-deployment of further troops onto the Southern Patrol Base and C Company have focused primarily on deepening the 'hold' within the south of Nad-e Ali. An influence expansion operation to the west of Khowshhal Kalay also allowed ISAF and ANCOB to engage positively with a number of hitherto isolated and hostile communities.

Although hampered for five days, work has recommenced on the central mosque and other projects in Khowshhal Kalay. The route between the hamlets of Noor Mohammed Khan Kalay and Gorup-e Shesh Kalay has now been cleared and will remain secured by a new Check Point, increasing the freedom of movement for locals, government officials and Security Forces. In all, the last two weeks have seen continued positive work being carried out in C (Essex) Company's area.

#### **D (Cambridgeshire) Company Update:**

I have been delighted to see continued commitment and determination displayed by all as we approach the 5-month point of the tour. Significant progress has been achieved on all fronts this week. We have consolidated a foothold in the community between FOB Khar Nikah and Patrol Base Zumberlay, resulting in local nationals visiting the FOB daily to inquire about further opportunities to interact with ISAF and GIRoA. We have successfully initiated a pilot scheme, Op AMANI DAGARUNA (Safe Fields), to encourage locals, through a reward scheme, to accept more responsibility for security within the AO. This really began fully following the identification of solar power generation systems as an appropriate reward for local support. The power of reconstruction and



Maj Olly Brown conducting the Weekly Security Shura

development continues to impress in the Upper Gereshk Valley. New communities are drawn to ISAF and GIRoA almost on a daily basis and this week has also seen several locals approach us about joining the ANP. Across the AO the population report that they feel secure and in most areas they have not seen the Taleban for months. On an entirely different note, I was delighted but equally concerned by a senior elder saying that he "loved me as much as he loved his own sons" on account of the support ISAF have delivered.

The Taliban remain determined to mount attacks on Patrol Base Bahadur, which has resulted in a series of IED finds this week. The rise in the number of IEDs near to the Patrol Bases is not a cause for significant concern as we retain freedom of movement throughout areas we need to dominate and patrol. Importantly, the enemy do not have the freedom to dig in victim operated IEDs within our belt of security; rather, they are only able to position crude devices which we have been able to find and combat. Members of FSG D have performed admirably in finding IEDs – Pte Keogh in particular, whose tally has nearly reached double figures, including a suspected No Metal Content device.

Local nationals in the area of the Patrol Base are continue to suffer some intimidation from the Taliban but when I conducted a series of mini-shuras with them this week atmospherics were positive and they appeared highly supportive. Atmospherics remain very positive indeed in the northern half of the AO and I am delighted to see the progress made this week in expanding our sphere of influence. In the South, our Danish platoon is making progress with the community in its area.

In addition to operations, a reporter from the Guardian Newspaper has joined the Coy for a short visit. This offered the troops in the Upper Gereshk Valley an opportunity to compete with the burgeoning list of A-List Viking media celebs elsewhere in theatre! He also gave me several tips on how I should go about writing the next edition of Castle Magazine. The Company Group was very disappointed to hear the news that the RSM no longer loves us and has postponed or called off his visit to us. The CSM mentioned something about a 'crate'....whatever that means!

### **Battalion Headquarters:**

The key events of the last two weeks have been centred around the HPTC. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of March the Prime Minister visited as part of his trip to Afghanistan to thank the troops for their work. Lt Col Woodham hosted him on the visit to the Training Centre and many of you will have spotted the pictures in the newspapers over the last week. The Prime Minister spent over an hour at HPTC meeting the recruits, not only speaking to the ANP but also the ANA and ISAF Police Mentors who had travelled down from Babaji to work alongside their Combined Force partners. The ANA and ISAF troops were from the Patrol Base that the ANP were deploying into, giving the three elements of the Combined Force the opportunity to train together in the last week of the HPTC course.

The second major event has been the graduation itself, followed by the equipping and onward deployment of the recruits from Course 10/01. 150 recruits graduated on a parade that was inspected by the Provincial Governor and Tom Dodd, the Deputy British Ambassador. The VIP guests flew down especially for the parade and witnessed the graduating course demonstrating their skills in compound clearance



ANP recruits from Course 10/01 mount their vehicles at the ANCOP Barracks before deploying to PB4 in Babaji.

and vehicle search before presenting certificates to the best 10 recruits. After the VIPs had left there then began the long and frustrating job of issuing all the equipment, heavy weapons and vehicles to the course before escorting them down to the ANCOP Barracks. Once the majority had been moved to the ANCOP Barracks the job of tracking down 16 missing recruits

began – it turned out that the ANP guarding the HPTC had decided that they needed an uplift and so had ordered 16 policemen to join them! The following morning 100 ANP, accompanied by their mentors, flew and drove to PB4 in Combined Force Nar-e Saraj (South)'s AO. The deployment provided 100 extra partnered troops into the

area, allowing security to be increased over the AO. That same day the remaining 50 policemen were sent back to the districts where they were recruited.

Other than this the daily role of mentoring the ANP continues, with the QM beginning an ANP Board Of Officers to provide both ISAF and the ANP an idea of what equipment is held where in Helmand. The BOO is being run Province wide and in every check point and police station.

Several 'Battlefield Circulation' visits have been conducted with Col Shirzad and the Commander of the ANCOP Brigade, giving them the opportunity to visit their policemen in the areas cleared by Op MOSHTARAK. A helicopter recce over Nad-e'Ali and the route into Marjah showed both police officers the ground that was being held by ISAF, giving them a far better appreciation of the situation than could be gained on the ground. Following a hot debrief afterwards (conducted by the RSO in his guise as SO3 J3/5 in Task Force Headquarters) the ANCOP Commander and Col Shirzad gave the orders to their policemen to move to bolster the ISAF positions in the newly cleared areas.

All in all a productive and rewarding period that has seen real improvements in the capability of the ANP in Helmand.