

CENTRE FOR LAND WARFARE STUDIES (CLAWS)
INTERACTION WITH UK ARMY DELEGATION
UK FORCE RESTRUCTURING AND UPDATE ON AFGHAN WAR
4 February 2014
REPORT

Introduction

UK Army delegation led by Maj Gen DM Cullen, Assistant Chief of General Staff, visited CLAWS on 4 February 2014 and interacted with the CLAWS faculty, serving officers of the Indian Armed Forces and veterans. A presentation on UK Force Restructuring and an update on Afghan War was given by Col Nick Nottingham.

Col Nick Nottingham: Mission in Afghanistan

I am not going to review the whole Afghan campaign from the start. I am sure that you are familiar with it. I will explain to you from where we are now and what our future plans are, particularly pertaining to the training of young army officers. I will then cover how we plan to move on from that operation. We are an army that has oriented itself pretty much towards Afghanistan. We are now looking to the future; we are re-setting, re-cogging for contingency for what we see as a difficult and uncertain world. I will explain how we are going to do that. The final part of my brief is going to be about defence engagement. We are going to look out into the world, engage with it and understand it better so that we can advance appropriately for what might happen.

Op-HERRICK is the name of our operation in Afghanistan. We are determined to see the operation through to its conclusion. In terms of scale it was not that long ago that we were some ten thousand soldiers. We are now at 5200. We are conducting a relatively rapid drawdown and should be down to 500 by end of 2014. The new operation that will go forward from the year end is known as Operation-TORAL. It will be centred in Kabul and focus on the Afghan National Army (ANA) officer academy and training. There will remain some support elements and mentors for the ground forces. Our aim is to maintain a balanced and capable force till the end.

We need to demonstrate flexibility in doing that because things have never certainly been what you think they might be in Afghanistan. We shall maintain a degree of expeditionary outlook even if the balance of the operation is firmly shifting towards ANA leadership. We also have significant amounts of equipment which we have gotten into the theatre and a lot of our effort is in repatriating that equipment in good order. We are clearly interested in our post-2014 presence. We are absolutely certain that our centre of gravity is the success of the ANA and its ability to operate independently without us. So our enduring relationship with them is important. In enhancing their reputation we have the opportunity to build most effectively the stability of the country for the future.

Qargha is the home of the ANA Officer Training Academy. In terms of the operation design we have four stages namely preparation, mentorship, advising and assuring. We will have about 120 mentors and the support elements. Eventually these will draw down to a very small amount. Our partner nations have made 25% of the contributions to the operation. We anticipate putting some 1300 male and 150 females through the ANA officer academy each year. It is firmly based on principles of our own i.e. of the Royal Military Academy (RMA) at Sandhurst. The focus is on producing leaders while being nestled very much in the core values of the ANA. Having signed the agreement for the officer's academy there are a whole lines of

operation to get the mission up and running. The centre of gravity is firmly in producing young Afghan army officers who can command their platoons effectively.

Future Construct of the British Army

Army 2020 is the term we use. We intend to have three separate elements within the Armed forces. These are:

Reaction: A genuine contingent capability for deterrence and defence.

Adaptable: For overseas engagement and capability building.

Resilience: To remain ready on the homeland.

As the years go by we will build up that contingency and the ability to react. We also have our standing commitments. These include a small presence in Northern Ireland in support of the Blue Service particularly on the explosive ordnance and search side. We have substantial numbers permanently committed to the Cyprus where we intend to maintain two battalions as well as a small element for the UN operations and the Falklands. We have a Gorkha battalion in Brunei Darussalam and a couple of substantial training bases particularly in Canada and Kenya. We also maintain a NATO assigned core based in Gloucestershire, UK. Our contingent capability is comprised of three infantry armoured and sixteen air assault brigades including two commando brigades belonging to the Navy. Our adaptable forces deliver a number of elements. If we do engage again in an enduring operation, the three reaction force brigades will undertake the first three tours and then the adaptable forces shall assume command. In addition to their standing commitments, the adaptable forces shall have duties in fence engagement, overseas capacity building and preservation of UK homeland resilience.

Vanguard: The Army Readiness Order

Vanguard implies the collective nature of readiness. The idea is to get the army to a state of mind where everybody is ready. It is a graduated readiness wherein the armed forces are brought onto an operational and expeditionary footing. It sets priorities clearly and nestles them firmly in a joint context with improvement in both efficiency and co-operation within the Army and with the other forces. It is flexible in task organisation and increases our productivity through the exploitation of delegated powers. We have put a substantial reserve element into the Vanguard and intend to grow it to strength of about 30,000. These reserve forces shall be integrated with 82,000 regular forces and together they shall constitute the Army's readiness profile.

UK Engagement and Homeland Resilience

These days much of Southwest UK is flooded. This is a useful example of how we might be involved in supporting the government in times of a serious incident. In the past we have helped out by training fire fighters and tanker drivers to transport fuel. Both are instances where there is industrial machine use and where infrastructural support may be needed. Interfacing with the local community is also a very important task particularly for the adaptable brigades.

Defence Engagement

We see this as a vital part of our goals. We have been focussed on two enduring operations namely Iraq and Afghanistan. We now feel that it is time for us to reach out to different parts of the world to prepare ourselves better for the future. The emphasis is both on understanding and partnership. This applies especially towards a country like India. In some cases it is about capacity building where we help

improve the capabilities of our partners and in doing so understand the region better. This is an important aspect of our upstream conflict prevention. Our plan is to take each of the adaptable forces and assign them a region of the world. This basically entails a UK commander and his team looking very carefully at a region, studying it, travelling, meeting people and working with them to develop capacities, undertake military training and partner with those nations on a number of different levels. South Asia is going to be covered by the 11th Infantry Brigadeⁱ.

We maintain substantial relations in parts of the world (e.g. Southeast Asia) where we have our traditional allies such as United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and with whom we have enduring intra-operability agreements. Of course NATO remains at the heart of our planning as do our relations with close European nations. We are a relatively small army and cannot engage anywhere and everywhere. There are parts of the world where the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the Royal Navy are best suited to engage and indeed there are parts of the world where people do not wish to engage with us.

We feel we have a personal and enduring commitment to India. That is part of the reason for our visit here. The Chief of General Staff (CGS) is personally engaged in the relationship with India and will visit later in the year. Two Brigade Commanders i.e. Brigadier Chris Claydon (Cdr 2 Brigade till Sept 2014) and his successor Brigadier Andrew Hughes (145 Brigade from Sept 2014 onwards) will engage with you in the coming months and years. They will be visiting, talking and training with India and helping in simple ways with perhaps members of the Indian army coming back to the UK to undertake courses with us.

ⁱ*Delegation of Adaptable Forces* (Slide no. 17): Power point presentation by UK Army to Executive Steering Group (Land) – New Delhi, 04 Feb 14. Col Nick Nottingham OBE Late R IRISH, Colonel Army Int'l Branch, General Staff.

- 160 Infantry Brigade: Eastern Europe and Central Asia
- 51 Infantry Brigade: Gulf
- 42 Infantry Brigade: East Africa
- 7 Infantry Brigade: Near East
- 4 Infantry Brigade: North Africa
- 102 Log Brigade: West Africa
- 11 Signal Brigade: South Africa
- 8 Engineer Brigade: Southeast Asia