

Press release: Alun Cairns visits Afghanistan and praises: “incredible spirit and contribution” of Welsh soldiers

Welsh troops based in Afghanistan are showing the “incredible spirit” of Welsh soldiers throughout history as they work to support the war-torn country, Alun Cairns said today.

The Secretary of State for Wales spoke after a 24-hour visit to see soldiers of the Welsh Guards based in the Afghan capital Kabul. Mr Cairns sat down with soldiers to learn more about their role in providing security and mentoring help to Afghan officials as the country’s Government continues its work of reconstruction. He also met senior British army commanders for an update on the troops’ peace-keeping mission.

Mr Cairns said:

I was inspired by the incredible spirit and determination of the soldiers I met who are doing their job in a volatile and often dangerous environment.

Having heard from the soldiers first-hand about their life in Kabul, I am incredibly proud of what the Welsh Guards are doing. This is a regiment with a century-long history of serving across the world in conflicts from WWII to Palestine and the Falklands. They are now on their third tour of duty in Afghanistan, and showing the incredible spirit they always do.

While I have always championed our Welsh servicemen and women, being in Afghanistan really brought home to me the work they do in dangerous circumstances. All of Wales owes them a vote of thanks.

There are currently 260 members of the Welsh Guards battle group deployed to Kabul as part of NATO’s Resolute Support Mission from all parts of Wales. The Secretary of State for Wales visited the Regiment’s base camp, sat in on preparations for a patrol and also learned more about their support for the Afghan National Army Officer Academy – often compared to the country’s equivalent of Sandhurst – which is producing the Afghan army’s future officer corps.

Notes to editors:

- The Welsh Guards came into existence on 26 February 1915 by Royal Warrant of George V in order to include Wales in the national component

to the Foot Guards. They were the last of the Guards to be created, with the Irish Guards coming into being in 1900. Just three days later, 1st Battalion Welsh Guards mounted its first King's Guard at Buckingham Palace on 1 March 1915 – St David's Day. Since then the Welsh Guards has served in WW2, Palestine, Aden, The Falklands War, Northern Ireland, the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan. The Welsh Guards are Wales's Senior Infantry Regiment with a formidable reputation forged throughout the last century.

- The regiment maintains very close links to the Royal Family and the Colonel of the Regiment is HRH The Prince of Wales. Due to the regiments dual role as combat soldiers and ceremonial troops, it is inextricably tied to the Royal Family. It is the fifth regiment of Foot Guards and regularly conducts guard duty at the Royal palaces and on state occasions such as the Trooping of the Colour.