

Press release: Scottish troops send their loved ones messages for Christmas

Thousands of UK Armed Forces personnel, many of them based in Scotland, are working this Christmas to help keep Britain safe at home and around the globe.

Over 100 soldiers from the 2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland (2 SCOTS) are currently deployed to Iraq where they are undertaking a training and mentoring role to counter Daesh terrorists.

They left for the task from their base at Glencorse Barracks in Penicuik, near Edinburgh earlier this month to join more than 600 British soldiers in the country in non-combat roles, helping to train Iraqi forces. Over the last three years UK forces have helped train over 58,000 Iraqi Security Forces.

Meanwhile the Fife-based Scots Dragoon Guards are playing a key role as part of the UN Peacekeeping force in Cyprus. Also in the Gulf, two Clyde-based Minehunter ships are serving over the festive period.

2018 marks a busy year for Scottish units, as of January, four of the seven Battalions of the Royal Regiment of Scotland as well as the Scots Dragoon Guards and the 19 Regiment Royal Artillery (The Scottish Gunners) will be deployed on operations overseas where they will not only be developing the defensive capabilities of the UK's allies but also playing a critical part in assuring the security of the UK.

Since 1969 the UK has also had a submarine on patrol for every minute of every day, providing the UK's nuclear deterrent and this Christmas is no different. As you read this a submarine is underwater on patrol. As one submariner based at Clyde said "It will be odd spending Christmas onboard the boat, but the Navy are never off duty and its part of the job. We'll make sure we do Christmas properly but I will be thinking of my wife and wee boy back home in Glasgow."

In total around 5,000 UK sailors, marines, soldiers, airmen and airwomen are serving on operations across the globe from Somalia and South Sudan to Kuwait and Ukraine.

Troops based in Scotland will be busy at home as well as abroad and as ever the Squadrons of the UK's Quick Reaction Alert will be on duty at RAF Lossiemouth, many of them ready in their green flight suits waiting for the call to scramble.

Secretary of State for Scotland David Mundell said:

I pay a huge tribute to the brave servicemen and women from across

Scotland who are away from their families over the festive period – and throughout the year – to keep us safe. I offer a heartfelt ‘thank you’, commend their professionalism and wish them a very happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

Commanding Officer, The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, Lt Colonel Dominic Coombes said:

The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards is currently deployed on Operation TOSCA as part of the United Kingdom’s commitment to the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. Christmas will always be a bittersweet time for those deployed and their families back at home, but while we miss our loved ones in Scotland and elsewhere, we will come together as a Regimental family to make the most of an opportunity to enjoy Christmas as a collective. At the same time, we’ll redouble our efforts in our operational role as we go into the New Year and the latter stage of our tour before looking forward to returning home in time for Easter.

Also sending messages home were:

Squadron Leader Karen Swanston, deployed to Afghanistan, who said: “I’d like to say a big Hi to my parents at home in Hawick, my nieces Isobel and Katie. Merry Christmas!”

Corporal Musson, Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, Cyprus: “I’d love to say hello to my wife and three kids and I cannot wait to see you in January for your holidays.”

Drum Major Gordon Prescott, Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, Cyprus: “I’m going to be out here for Christmas, so I just thought I’d take this moment to wish my wife, Jill, a happy Christmas, love you loads. Merry Christmas to the rest of the family as well.”

Trooper Knowles, Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, Cyprus: “Wishing a great Christmas to all my friends and family at home in Scotland.”

[Press release: Update on Wimbledon & Putney Commons Conservators inquiry](#)

The Charity Commission (‘the Commission’) [opened a statutory inquiry](#) into Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (‘the charity’) on 18 August 2016. This was to examine regulatory concerns regarding the granting of an easement in August 2014 for access rights over part of the charity’s land at a

significant undervalue and the consequent potential financial loss to the charity.

The Commission was also concerned about an ongoing dispute within the trustee body relating to the easement that might impact some trustees' decision making and the group's effectiveness and ability to work together.

On 31 May 2017 the Commission [appointed an interim manager](#) to consider the trustees' decision not to take further action in respect of the loss suffered by the charity following the granting of the easement. The charity's trustees remain responsible for the day-to-day management of the charity.

The interim manager's duties include:

- reviewing the information supplied to the trustees' legal advisers;
- considering whether the decision was taken properly and was in the best interests of the charity;
- obtaining further legal or valuation advice for a new decision to be properly made if required; and
- making recommendations as to whether further action on this matter is proportionate and in the interests of the charity

The interim manager's work at the charity continues. He has spoken to current and ex-trustees and other relevant parties and reviewed a substantial level of documentation. Having presented a progress report to the Commission, he is gathering further information on valuation matters before submitting his final report.

The Commission is aware that elections for new trustees for the charity are due to take place in February 2018 and that the deadline for applications to stand is 2 January 2018 if applicants wish their details to be published and sent out with the ballot papers by the Electoral Reform Services. The actual deadline for candidates as specified in the charity's 1990 election bye laws is 'not less than two weeks before the date of the election' ie 14 February 2018.

The Commission is providing this update to help potential candidates decide whether to stand. It would encourage those with appropriate knowledge and skills to consider standing.

The Commission hopes that after the election all the elected and appointed trustees will work together to take the charity forward. This would include considering mediation to resolve any outstanding issues within the trustee body and putting into place any actions issued by the Commission.

The Interim Manager will submit a final report to the Commission when he has gathered further information on valuation matters and completed his review. The Commission will, subject to the Interim Manager's findings, look to close the inquiry as soon as is reasonably practicable. We cannot put a definite timescale on this at present but envisage it being within the first six months of next year.

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish

a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and its findings and conclusions.

Ends

PR 84/17

Notes to editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see the [about us](#) page on GOV.UK.
2. Search for charities on our [check charity](#) tool.
3. Section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 gives the Commission the power to institute inquiries. The opening of an inquiry gives the Commission access to a range of investigative, protective and remedial legal powers.

Speech: PM address to troops at RAF Akrotiri: 22 December 2017

I am delighted to be here in Cyprus with all of you today – and to have this opportunity to say a big thank you on behalf of our whole nation for everything that you are doing to keep our country safe by working to bring peace and stability to this region.

And I am especially pleased to be here with you just before Christmas. For at this special time of year it is even more important that you know just how vital your work is – and just how much I appreciate the sacrifices that you and your families make in the service of our country.

Here in Cyprus, you are at the epicentre of so much of our military activity in the region.

It is from here that you have conducted more than 1600 air strikes against Daesh targets and supported more than 1450 personnel working with our allies and partners in Jordan and Iraq to fight Daesh and prevent its re-emergence.

And let's be clear just what a difference that has made. Just three years ago, Daesh declared a Caliphate in Iraq and Syria: a safe haven in which to carry out the most barbaric acts and from which to plot murder on our streets at home.

But today, thanks in very large part to your efforts, that so-called Caliphate has been crushed and no longer holds significant territory in Iraq or Syria. You should be incredibly proud of that achievement.

While we need to continue to deal directly with the threat they still pose in the region, we also need to focus on training the Iraqi Security Forces so they can keep Daesh out – which is why the work we are doing, and you are supporting, to train over 60,000 Iraqi security personnel is so vital, as I saw first-hand on my visit to Baghdad last month.

It is also from here in Cyprus that you are sustaining our efforts to support the wider stability of our allies in the Middle East.

This includes the expansion of the Quick Reaction Force in Jordan which I visited with King Abdullah in April and discussed with him again when I was in Amman late last month.

Let's be clear why this matters too. As conflicts and tensions fuel instability across the Middle East, it is not just the security of that region which is threatened, but the whole international order on which global security and prosperity depends.

And as Daesh seeks new ungoverned spaces from which to plot and carry out attacks, it is not just in those spaces that security is at stake but in the UK too.

So it is vital that we support the stability of our partners across the Middle East.

It is also here in Cyprus that our armed forces are working for the United Nations on Operation TOSCA to help keep the peace at the buffer zone through Nicosia.

This is an important part of the work that we are doing in fulfilling our international responsibilities as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

And I am clear that as a global Britain we will honour those responsibilities and continue to play a leading role in upholding the values and rules of the international order on which we depend.

As part of this, I have committed to ensuring that we continue to meet our NATO commitment to invest 2 per cent of our GDP on defence and to spend 0.7 percent of GNI on development.

But it is you – your professionalism, your courage and your sacrifices that give meaning to the pledges we make as a nation. It is you who take down our enemies and stand by our allies when the going gets tough.

I also want to thank our hosts in Cyprus for all they do to enable you to operate from here. And I think I speak for everyone here when I say that this is a special place – something of a home from home – for the British armed forces.

Finally, as we enter a year that marks the centenary of the end of the First World War – and of course the centenary of the Royal Air Force – I hope you can take great pride not just in what you do, but also in what you are part

of.

From its origins as the first entirely separate and independent national air force, fighting over the Western Front from 1st April 1918 – to the leading edge fighter, strike and transport aircraft of today, those of you in the RAF are the present day pioneers of the world's most iconic air force.

While every one of you here today is part of one of the greatest military forces in the world.

And I hope that as a nation in this special year ahead, we can collectively raise the national consciousness of the work that you do and the sacrifices that you make in the service of others.

As Prime Minister, I will do everything I can to lead the nation in this endeavour.

For you are quite simply the pride of our nation. And that is how you should be treated.

So let me start that mission by thanking you once again for everything that you are doing and by wishing you and your families the best possible Christmas and a happy, safe and successful 2018.

[News story: D-day as evaporator starts its mission](#)

The £750m plant is needed to clean out the site's reprocessing plants.

Sellafield's newest plant is up and running, supporting the site's clean-up mission.

Evaporator D has been set to work reducing the volume of Sellafield's most radioactive waste product – highly active liquor.

The £750m plant is the only evaporator on the site able to process high-level liquid waste created during the clean-out of the Sellafield's reprocessing plants.

It acts like a giant kettle, reducing the volume of liquor so it can be turned into glass form and safely stored.

The facility was switched on at 8am on 8 December and is going through a 12 month process to prove its capability to regulators.

Once fully operational, Sellafield's two older evaporators will retire.

Steve Bostock, Sellafield Ltd chief operating officer, said:

Cleaning up the Sellafield site safely and securely is our mission. Evaporator D is a critical part.

It will enable us to clean out our former reprocessing plants; no other facility could do this.

It will also allow us to retire our oldest evaporators. We've worked these evaporators hard and they are nearing the end of their useful life.

Sellafield Ltd operates on behalf of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA).

Duncan Thompson, the NDA's Sellafield programme director, said:

Evaporator D provides important capability required to complete our mission in a safe, secure and cost-effective manner.

It's a complex piece of nuclear engineering and I thank all those involved from Sellafield Ltd and the supply chain for their hard work and commitment.

The project to design and construct Evaporator D was challenging. It was the first project of its size in many years. The building includes 23,000 tonnes of concrete and 22km of pipework. It also required the construction of other facilities, such as cooling towers.

The evaporator modules were so large they had to be transported by sea. A docking platform was constructed on Sellafield's beach. Bridges and street furniture were removed to clear its route from shore to site.

Lessons learned have shaped how Sellafield Ltd will manage future projects. A project delivery directorate has been created alongside the 'Project Academy', which provides training for the company's workforce, supply chain, and people from the local community, in association with University of Cumbria.

Evaporator D was delivered by Sellafield Ltd and principal contractor Costain on behalf of the NDA, as part of its work to reduce the hazards left from the UK's civil nuclear legacy.

News story: Foreign Secretary arrives in Moscow

During face-to-face talks in Moscow with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov, Mr Johnson will encourage cooperation on joint international challenges, including preserving the Iran nuclear deal and the threat posed by North Korea.

He will say that as permanent members of the UN Security Council the two countries should work closely together – as they historically did in the Second World War and, more recently, on the Iran nuclear deal.

But he will stress the UK will continue to defend its interests where they, and those of its allies, are threatened amid concerns that hostilities between Russia and the West are the highest since the end of the Cold War.

During the discussions, Mr Johnson will say our relationship with Russia cannot be 'business as usual' while it continues to support destabilising activities in Europe.

The Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

The UK and Russia are permanent members of the UN Security Council, and it's right that we continue to talk to each other.

Our relations with Russia cannot be 'business as usual' whilst Russia continues to attempt to destabilise European states, including Ukraine.

However, it is vital for international security that we do talk to each other – as the consequences of miscommunication or misunderstanding are grave. My visit to Russia comes at a critical time as we need to work together to solve the world's most pressing global challenges.

We have a relationship with Russia that spans over 450 years. Our similarities and historical links far outweigh our current political disagreements.

The Kremlin has positioned Russia in direct opposition to the West, but it doesn't have to be that way.

The visit will also be an opportunity to discuss important areas of cooperation, such as our security preparations for next summer's World Cup.

The UK and Russia share a common goal of a safe, secure World Cup. Thousands of fans from the UK are expected to travel to Russia. The UK is already working with Russia to help ensure the safety of British