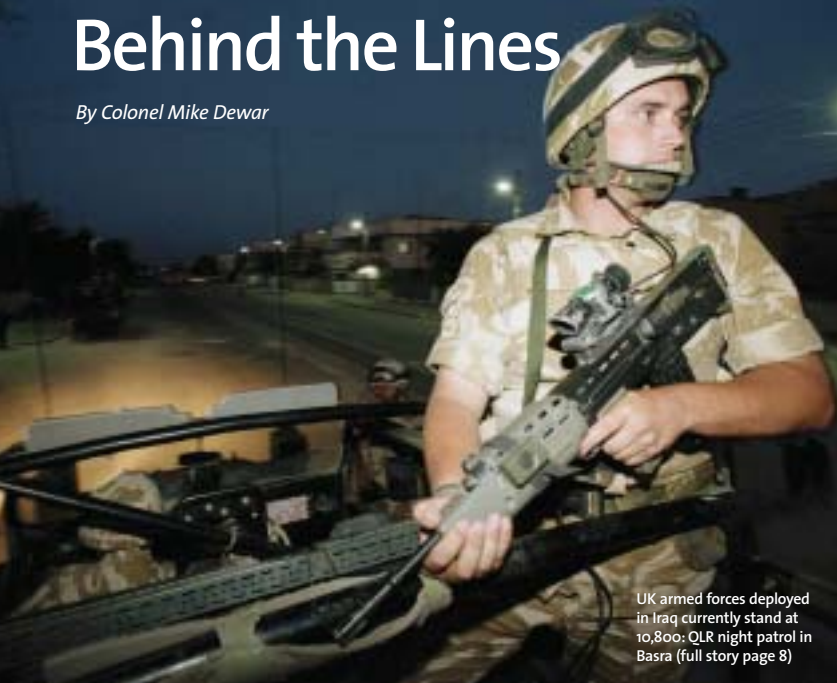


# Behind the Lines

By Colonel Mike Dewar



UK armed forces deployed in Iraq currently stand at 10,800; QLR night patrol in Basra (full story page 8)

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## Policy issues

# Armed Forces Manpower

## Is overstretch becoming chronic?

At the end of 2003 the Regular Armed Services were under-established by some 7,690 or 4% of the trained requirement. The Government has managed to de-emphasise this shortfall somewhat by including Gurkhas and Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) personnel in the figures. This has allowed Ministers to say that the shortage of trained personnel stood at 5,560. The full figures are outlined on this page (see box). Whichever figure one takes, the fact remains that a total strength of under 200,000 for Britain's Armed Services at precisely the time that the Government has (rightly) chosen to deploy military force as an instrument of foreign policy in Iraq, Kuwait, The Persian Gulf, Cyprus, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Gibraltar, the Falkland Islands, Belize, Sierra Leone, The Federal Republic of Germany and, as an instrument of domestic policy, in Northern Ireland, is inadequate to meet Britain's commitments.

The Prime Minister made a moving and heartfelt speech to British troops in Iraq in early January. He underlined the debt of gratitude owed by him, his Government and the British people – not to mention the Iraqi people – to the British forces in Iraq. He rightly called their cause a noble

## Trained Armed Forces:

### Full Time Requirements and Strengths at 1 Oct 03

(All figures rounded. Percentage female in brackets)

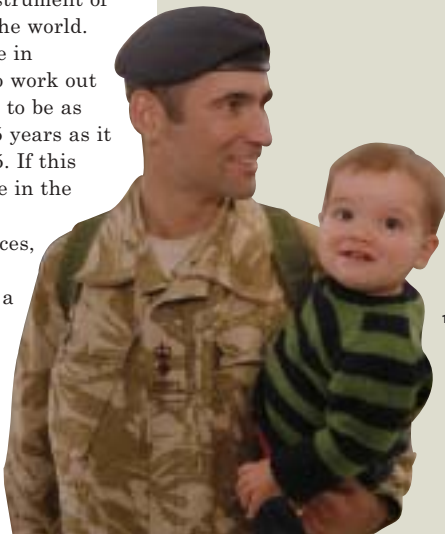
	Requirement	Strength <sup>(i)</sup>	Deficit/Surplus
<b>UK Regulars</b>			
RN/RM Officers	6,900	6,890 (7.6%)	-10
RN/RM Other Ranks	31,670	29,670 (8.7%)	-2,000
Army Officers	13,600	13,470 (9.5%)	-130
Army Other Ranks	89,730	85,160 (6.8%)	-4,570
RAF Officers	9,560	9,630 (11.5%)	+70
RAF Other Ranks	39,830	38,780 (10.8%)	-1,050
Sub-total	191,290	183,600 (8.4%)	-7,690
<b>Gurkhas</b>			
Army Officers	110	140 (NIL)	+30
Army Other Ranks	3,290	3,280 (NIL)	-10
Sub-total	3,400	3,420 (NIL)	+20
<b>FTRS<sup>(ii)</sup></b>			
RN/RM Officers	NIL	200 (15.0%)	+200
RN/RM Other Ranks	NIL	900 (13.3%)	+900
Army Officers	NIL	540 (18.5%)	+540
Army Other Ranks	NIL	620 (11.3%)	+620
RAF Officers	120	210 (9.5%)	+90
RAF Other Ranks	180	160 (6.3%)	-20
Sub-total	300	2,630 (13.3%)	+2,330
<b>Total trained</b>	<b>194,990<sup>(iii)</sup></b>	<b>189,650<sup>(iv)</sup> (8.3%)</b>	<b>-5,340</b>

- Home Service Battalions of the Royal Irish Regiment (about 2,100 fulltime), the Gibraltar Permanent cadre (about 180) and mobilised Reservists are excluded from the above figures.
- FTRS (Full Time Reserve Service) are trained Reservists voluntarily serving as Regulars for short periods (from six to 42 months).
- Due to rounding, the total trained requirement is given in the original as 195,020 (not 194,990).
- Due to rounding, the total trained strength is given in the original as 189,450 (not 189,650).

one. But Mr Blair cannot go on presuming upon the loyalty of the Armed Forces. He is asking too much of them. The Defence Budget remains low on the Chancellor's priorities and yet at the same time the Prime Minister asks more and more of the Armed Services. Something has got to give.

Instead of playing around at the margins, the plain fact needs to be recognised that the Army could do with an additional 5-10,000 established manpower, mostly infantrymen. And this assumes a manpower saving in the next 5 years of 7-9,000 in Northern Ireland. The Armed Forces cannot be expected to sustain the level of operational commitments that have been demanded by this and previous Governments over the past 15 years. It is unfair on our soldiers and on their families. It is true to say that no other Military in the world would be expected to, or indeed does, achieve the same levels of operational commitments as the British Armed Forces. Some 30% of British Army manpower (and more of British Army infantry manpower) has been consistently either deployed on operations or preparing to deploy on operations at any one time for over a decade. No other military, including the US military, would consider this possible.

The Prime Minister must tell the Chancellor to bite the bullet. Established manpower in the Army in particular needs to be increased if the UK wishes to continue to use military force as an instrument of foreign policy around the world. You don't need a degree in International Affairs to work out that the world is likely to be as unstable in the next 15 years as it has been in the past 15. If this means a modest change in the Defence Budget at the expense of Social Services, Transport, Health or Education, it would be a price worth paying. The President of the United States has had the guts to bite the bullet. Now it's the turn of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.



1 Lt Col Jorge Mendonca, CO 1QLR, holding his son Guy at Teeside Airport on 7 Nov 03 on return from the battalion's 6 month tour in Basra - a small part of another changeover

## News Miscellany

# Manning

## Civil Contingency Reaction Forces (CCRF)

The Armed Forces' Minister said that "some 5,000" Volunteers had signed-up to serve with the CCRF. The CCRF "remain on target to achieve operational status by the end of this year".

On 31 Oct 02 the Minister outlined how the Volunteer Reserves of the three Services were to be used to deal with the aftermath of terrorist attacks, accidents

or natural disasters. 14 CCRF, each about 500 strong, are to provide assistance at short notice. The 14 CCRF were due to be fully effective by 31 Dec 2003.

There has been something of a deafening silence on the CCRF. It would be good to know whether these organisations really do now exist and that they are properly equipped and trained.

# Apache Helicopter

## Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Report

The PAC published (18 Nov 03) a Report on 'Building an Air Manoeuvre Capability: the introduction of the Apache Helicopter'. The Report follows an earlier Report from the National Audit Officer (NAO - HC 1246, published on 31 Oct 02) on the same subject and it is equally critical of the MoD. The Report highlights the problems with the separate weapons and training contracts, which have led to the

storage of 40 Apache from production. Additional costs of £24.4m have also been incurred.

The last of 67 Apache is due to be delivered in April 2004 but, due to the above problems, the Army Air Corps is not now expected to achieve Full Operational Capability with the aircraft until August 2006. As with the earlier NAO Report, the PAC's findings are a considerable embarrassment to the Defence Procurement Agency.

# Iraq

## April 2004 changeover

1 Mechanized Brigade is due to replace 20 Armoured Brigade In Iraq in April 2004. Also about 1,100 extra Reservists were due to be mobilized from mid-February 2004. As of November 2003 there were some 1780 members of the Territorial Army serving in Iraq. There remain a total of around 10,600 personnel serving in the Gulf. The Defence Secretary said recently that the UK remained "determined to maintain appropriate forces deployed in Iraq and the wider Gulf region for as long as is necessary"- whatever that means.