



Mail from Mali

C Squadron QDG OP NEWCOMBE Newsletter

C Squadron, 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, is deployed on Operation NEWCOMBE 2 alongside the 2nd Battalion The Royal Anglian Task Force providing a Long-Range Reconnaissance Group to the United Nations. Working as part of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), we are contributing to establishing and maintaining peace.



This, the fourth edition of 'Mail from Mali,' covers the month of August, which saw us deploy on an operation for the majority of the month as part of the Long Range Recce Group (Mali). At the time of writing, towards the end of the month, C Squadron are officially over half way through their deployment on Operation Newcombe 2 and have had another successful month.

August started in a fairly fast paced manner with a visit from a senior British General as well as the preparations for the second long patrol. August was always of intrigue to C Squadron due to it being associated with the wettest month of the year. Preparations for the patrol included working out how to best waterproof the vehicles, our equipment and ourselves! After a week, we were all ready to go and after a good brunch we headed to the area of operations packed with food supplements, waterproofs and extra morale having recently received a significant in load of post.

The operation was focussed on the towns and villages along the prominent road in Mali, where we would speak to the residents to understand their issues and concerns as well as having a physical presence to provide them with security. For C Squadron, we had considerable freedoms and visited difficult to reach villages, utilising our off road capability to its fullest extent. On one of the days we were fortunate enough to visit a forested area which not only provided an opportunity to put 'UN Berets in remote locations,' but also allowed the soldiers and officers of C Squadron to appreciate another beautiful part of Mali. The forest was a large expanse of lush vegetation around a natural water feature; some didn't want to leave this tranquil part of Mali! As the operation progressed we provided support to civilian agencies working on behalf of the United Nations and other government agencies, yet another part of the wide ranging role we have as a Squadron on this mission.

Whilst the operation was dogged with frictions outside our control, it was a success for C Squadron. The weather was largely kind to us, although a few were caught out by the thunderstorms which most inconveniently tend to occur between 0300hrs – 0500hrs in the morning. Over the operation, C Squadron covered over 1300km per vehicle, an illustration of the distances we are driving.

After another 17 days deployed, the majority of the Squadron returned to Camp Bagnold for a well-earned cold can of coke and a burger. 2nd Troop followed a few days later having provided protection to the logistical elements of the Task Force. The Squadron then set about the mammoth tasks of repairing the vehicles and sorting out kit and equipment for the next patrol. Everyone was in high spirits and enjoyed a nice shower, fresh food and the occasional burst of Wi-Fi. There had been another in load of post when we returned and so spirits continued to rise.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the wider operational elements which we are currently experiencing. As I am sure you all, as our support network will appreciate, August has been a difficult and challenging time for the British Military as it grapples with the ongoing situation in the Middle East. Whilst it is not my place to comment on the situation, it is worth mentioning that there is consequently significant strain on other areas of Defence. As such there will be inevitable delays to post and other issues may not be resolved as quickly as before. To that end, I must thank you all for your patience with regards to the lack of Wi-fi, the welfare provision and postal deliveries we are experiencing. Please know that at all levels, every effort is being made to make the lives of our soldiers better and we will continue to identify solutions where possible. Thank you again for your continued understanding.

C Squadron now looks forward to welcoming September, our fifth month deployed on Operation Newcombe 2 and another one filled with exciting challenges and opportunities. In this month, the Headquarters from the QDG will visit us and we will look forward to welcoming them.

To conclude, I will again thank you for all your support whilst we are deployed. We hope you are all well and enjoying summer leave.

Major Bryn Williams

Officer Commanding C Squadron



Photo Collage – August 2021





JNCO Development Course



Here he is.. Tpr Carew at the front by a long shot!

The early days of August saw the Task Force delivering a Junior Non-Commissioned Officer development course. This was a challenging and useful opportunity for our junior commanders and senior troopers to show off their skills and knowledge, as well as learn about what it takes to be a leader on operations.

This course was both mentally and physically challenging. There was a 2 mile weighted run which was highly competitive. QDG vs 2 Royal Anglian. I am pleased to say that our very own Tpr Carew came first by some distance.

Language Training



Sgt De Jongh using some newly learnt phrases.

There are many languages spoken in Mali. French is the most widely spoken language, however its actually not as widely spoken as we expected. The interpreters we have speak most of the languages, but this limits communication to anywhere the interpreter is present.

The idea behind training the soldiers and officers in basic phrases and questions/answers, is to broaden our ability to build rapport with multiple people while on a patrol. The ability to be friendly and interact even on a basic level enhances our reputation as a friendly UN force that is here to help protect the civilians.

Tactical Intelligence Foundation Course



Lt Wills gathering intelligence in a village with Tpr Faulkner.

Intelligence gathering is one of our key roles here in Mali. We are trying to understand the security situation as well as the key issues that the civilians face day to day. All this information feeds into the UN, helping towards the over-arching mission of delivering lasting peace in Mali.

To help us with intelligence gathering, a tactical intelligence course was developed. This course was delivered to the junior intelligence reps from each Troop and a few other keen volunteers. It taught the basics behind building the intelligence picture in an area and how to get people to tell you the information you need.

This was a very useful course which has enhanced our intelligence gathering capability at troop level. Both the Troop Leader and the intelligence rep can work together and ensure no details are missed.



Medical Aid to Civilians



During our patrols we are able to visit many very poor villages and settlements. The civilians here do not have access to medical aid and as a result many of them are carrying serious infections etc.

Where possible we are able to offer them some basic aid and pain relief. Even though this is a small thing for our medics to do, the people are extremely grateful. It seems they aren't used to acts of kindness.

This photo shows LCpl Brown cleaning and dressing a deep wound on this young man's foot. It is certain that this wound would have become infected if left untreated.

Peacekeepers Playing Football

The role of a Peacekeeper here in Mali is varied. Here you can see two C Squadron soldiers playing football with the children from a small village. The children are very friendly and always want to play games. Football and catch are generally the games of choice.

Playing games and having some fun with the children is a great way to build the trust of the adults in the village. It is also a fun way to pass the time.



Dismounted Patrolling



We may be a Light Cavalry Sqn which prides itself on being experts at mounted manoeuvre, however we also operate dismounted. The situation out here requires us to carry out dismounted patrols through towns and villages that suffer at the hands of the extremist organisations.

The temperatures are in the 40 degrees out here which makes dismounted patrolling hard work. There is a lot of kit and equipment to carry for our protection and of course plenty of water to keep us going.



C Squadron

A word from Cpl Gilliam – 3rd Troop



August has seen C Squadron deploy further south in Mali close to the Niger border. As well as pushing further East. After recent events, the long patrol focused C Squadron to some of the larger towns south and small settlements east of the Gao region to reassure the population and deter unwanted activity.

After a big learning curve on the first long patrol, navigating and negotiating sandy dunes and flat plains, we thought we had it sussed. But welcome in the rainy season, which again tested the navigational skills of the commanders, the ability of route selection by the drivers and the waterproofing techniques by the gunners. Enduring even heavier sand and rain storms, cutting winds, breath-taking shows of lightning and chest rumbling thunder claps. But none the less, once the worst was over it never stopped us completing our tasks. We just had to use a little out of the box thinking. Keeping steady and being blue.

It is very humbling to be part of a larger picture bringing safety and security to those less fortunate with no reward but the satisfaction of knowing that we as a Squadron are making a difference (no matter how big or small). Yet in the process it makes me think of home and just how much our loved ones are missing us just as much we are missing them.

Upon returning to Camp Bagnold, the cycle of rehab starts again. Checking the vehicles and kit. Exchanging that which needs it and readying ourselves for the next stage of the operation. Followed by some well-deserved downtime and a little bit of basking in the sun.

A word from Trooper Faulkner – 4th Troop



After arriving in late May, we are now at the half way point of our tour in Mali. We are all acclimatised and have settled into the way of life out here. Everybody knows their individual jobs and what is required of them.

Whilst out on the ground, we are travelling further which is enabling us to get to hard to reach places, communicate with vulnerable civilians and gather more information to aid the UN mission. The main effort when we are out is to help protect the people who need it most. Every day is different which I find exciting. One day you can be navigating through huge sand dunes miles away from civilisation, and the next day, you can be repairing a small child's sandals or helping some ladies make a rug for their home.

Now back in camp, the vehicles are due some repairs and servicing before departing on our next patrol. During the rehabilitation period in camp, the Squadron will be enjoying a night at the bingo, a half marathon with the Germans and numerous volleyball tournaments with the Poachers.



Attached Arms

A word from Sgt Clarke – PUMA Tac Sgt



After hitting the half way point on rotation 2 on OP NEWCOMBE, the detachment settled into the way of life on operations being fully embedded with SHQ C Sqn QDG. Camp BAGNOLD which sits as an extension to the German camp is a small but well-resourced camp that has a vehicle park, dinner hall, welfare suite, indoor and outdoor gym. The accommodation is two man rooms with enough space to live comfortably, which has UK power sockets, bathroom communal showers at the end of the accommodation block

Preparation for the operations not only consist of vehicle checks and serviceability of personnel kit, but the run up of PUMA systems (unmanned aircrafts). Making sure there is correct mapping installed, the day and night cameras work and the aircraft are airworthy, this is conducted by the detachment commander and pilot prior to leaving camp. Our Missions vary from dynamic taskings from either Task Group Head Quarters or predominately OC C Sqn. With tasking ranging from patrol overwatch, new areas of interest, route planning, first light or last light flights for local area clearance. This information will get sent verbally over the net or put into a briefing pack for analysis that gets processed at TGHQ and PJHQ. This give the commanders on the ground full situation awareness.

The combination of the experiences the detachment have got from operations on OP NEWCOMBE and the steep learning curve have resulted in a highly capable detachment. This means that once returned to the UK, they will take a leading role in the preparation for the future detachments.

A word from Cpl Cripps – LEWT Commander



The LEWT (Light Electronic Warfare Team), based in Pembrokeshire, Wales, with 14th Signal Regiment, has now been attached to C Sqn QDG for around 5 months, dating back to the Mission Rehearsal Exercise (MRX), back in April. Now at the half way point of the deployment, our 3 man team has integrated well into C Sqn, and have 2 patrols remaining on Op NEWCOMBE.

Life has been relaxed whilst on camp, but very busy for the most part whilst on patrol. There is plenty of time in between patrols to allow us all to relax and take some down time before deploying again. Our job role involves listening to enemy communications, and providing situational awareness and force protection to the tactical commander on the ground. We deploy with an interpreter, who is a specially recruited local national who also speaks English, and is able to translate what is being spoken about on enemy radio networks.

Once deployed on patrol, how we are being utilised and who we specifically get attached to is decided by OC C Sqn, with recommendations from myself when required. There have been numerous different tasks for us to carry out over the last few patrols, but we often find ourselves either attached to a troop, or positioned with SHQ in order to provide continuous monitoring of enemy communication networks. Mali provides a challenging operational environment, vastly different to the usual Salisbury Plain or Brecon Beacons that we are used to exercising on. However, the LEWT has adapted and acclimatised well, enabling us to work as well as possible. For all of us, this is our first operational deployment, so the experiences and knowledge gained over these last few months have been invaluable, and will set us up well to take our careers further once back home in the UK.

Hopefully the remainder of the tour will go as well as the first half has, and we can have a good and lasting effect on deterring those who wish the civilians here harm. We are all looking forward to coming home in a few months time, ready to take some well-earned leave and enjoy the festive period with our loved ones.



Quote Of The Month

“Heroism doesn’t always happen in a burst of glory. Sometimes small triumphs and large hearts change the course of history.”

Mary Roach

UN Fun Facts

- The UN and its agencies supply vaccines to 45% of the world’s children.
- When the UN was founded there were 45 members – there are now 193.
- The UN’s World Food Programme (WFP) provides food and assistance to some 91 million people in 83 countries.

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