



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.



C Squadron Group including the deployable hospital, explosive experts and elements of the resupply chain

September was quite the month for C Squadron; one which can be considered a real success and one which will be remembered by all the personnel in years to come. The month started quietly with the Squadron conducting administration, maintenance and checks following the completion of Operation MAKARA 2 at the end of August. Once the vehicle fleet and equipment had been serviced and prepared, we were able to enjoy some down time, making the most of the welfare facilities in both the UK Camp Bagnold and German Camp Castor. On the 5th September, 22 members of C Squadron conducted the 'Honouring Heldon' Half Marathon, a running event organised to raise money for the German soldiers who were injured at the start of our deployment. The excellent event was organised by our own Cpl Gay RMP. It involved running four laps around the UN Camp, finishing outside the Task Force Headquarters. Over 500 personnel from across the nations represented in Camp Castor (Germans, Swedish, Irish, British, and Romanian) took part in the event and raised over £7000. Particular mention should go to Lance Corporal Wilkinson and Trooper Carew who completed the half marathon in uniform and carrying 16kg in backpacks. After the run, everyone enjoyed a well-earned brunch and a few days of struggling to walk!

As September progressed, the Squadron started preparations for the next operation, Operation MAKARA 2 Bravo (2B). This included conducting orders, rehearsals and vehicle packing. Just before we deployed, the Squadron spent a day on ranges outside of Camp Bagnold to test fire all of our weapon systems. This proved to be a useful day and set the conditions for success on the subsequent operation. We were also fortunate to host Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Lloyd, QDG Commanding Officer and Major Paul Jones on their initial recce for the subsequent deployment on Operation NEWCOMBE 3 by the QDG Task Force. This was a great opportunity to hear how the wider Regiment was and to hear about life in the UK post COVID 19. They both briefed the Squadron on Regimental activities and enjoyed a few non-alcoholic beers with us over a Gurkha Curry. This Gurkha Curry was organised to raise money for the Gurkha Welfare Trust and was one of two social events the Squadron enjoyed during this period. The second was a pizza night in Bagnold Bay, the relaxation area outside the welfare room. It was a pleasure to host the QDG and I can speak on behalf of the entire Squadron when I say that we look forward to seeing them and the rest of the QDG Task Force in a few weeks; it means we will shortly be returning home.

In mid-September C Squadron had conducted all their preparations and left Camp Bagnold on Operation MAKARA 2B. On the first day of the operation, the skill and experience of the Squadron shone through and the soldiers and officers achieved a real success for the Squadron and for MINUSMA. Whilst I am unable to further explain this success, it is hoped that more official articles will elaborate. It is safe to say, everyone was very pleased with their efforts and the difference they had made to the people of Mali and the huge contribution to the UN. The rest of the operation included an interesting phase in Sorori forest, the area of interest from the previous operation and time spent in an area of Mali where the UN had not visited before. After a short return to Sorori forest for a final attempt at understanding the area, the Squadron was fortunate to be joined by the Medical Team, deployable hospital, explosive experts and elements of resupply and we headed East cross country. This move was pioneering for the Long Range Reconnaissance Group and set the conditions for success on the next and final operation of Operation Newcombe 2. It was during this route reconnaissance phase that the Squadron had another successful day, involving similar incidents to that achieved on the first day. Whilst sadly this also cannot be elaborated on further, again it is hoped that details will be displayed on more mainstream media. Despite working very hard and having a long operation, the Squadron returned in high spirits. We were welcomed back to Camp Bagnold with a cold can of coke and a hot dog. After a brief spell of working wifi and a good night's sleep, the Squadron then set about with post operation activity and again preparing themselves and their vehicles. Towards the end of the month, the Squadron were fortunate enough to have a well-earned stand down weekend.

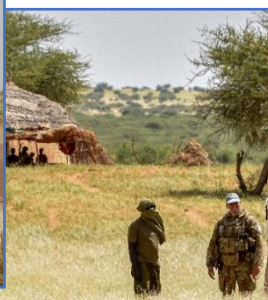
September was a real highlight for C Squadron and congratulations must go to all the officers and soldiers involved in the recent operation. It was impressive and truly commendable. As we enter our sixth and penultimate month in Mali, we look forward to our final patrol. Thank you all again for your continued support and welfare parcels. I hope this newsletter finds you all well.

Major Bryn Williams

Officer Commanding C Squadron



Photo Collage – September 2021





Gurkha Curry Night



C Sqn enjoying three types of Gurkha curry

The Gurkha soldiers here in Mali decided to treat the rest of the Task Force to an authentic Gurkha curry at the beginning of the month. They did this to raise money for Gurkha Welfare Trust. Everyone who enjoyed the food was asked to donate as much money as they could spare. Everyone was happy to give generously and then enjoy the delicious food.

They put on three different types of curry. Two chicken and one pork. Each of these had a different spice rating. The pork was the very spicy option, which many of us underestimated when choosing our curry.

The evening was a great success and hopefully they will do another one before we head back to the UK.

International Weightlifting Competition



The QDG Weightlifting Team. Sgt Humphreys as Captain

After the big success of the weightlifting competition which was part of Talavera Day earlier in the tour, another weightlifting competition was organised. The nations involved included Britain, Sweden and Germany.

The competition went on all day with all the major lifts being tested. Deadlift, chest press and squat. Sweden were the overall winners and the QDG team came second. A great effort from our team!

Sgt Humphreys was the individual winner and has been named the strongest man in the Task Force.

C Squadron Range Day



C Sqn Sniper test firing his weapon. He doesn't miss..

At the half way point of the tour here in Mali, C Squadron went out into the desert where there is a designated area for ranges and test fired all of our weapons to make sure they function properly. The conditions and environment out here are harsh and damaging to our weapons and equipment. It is essential that we take the time to test fire so that we are sure they will fire if we need them.

It was a great day for the Squadron. We fired Heavy Machine Guns, Grenade Machine Guns, General Purpose Machine Guns (GPMG), SA80, Pistol, Sharpshooter and Snipers.

LCpl Lewis 4th Troop was top shot on the grenade machine gun and LCpl Allen 3rd Troop was top shot on the heavy machine gun.



Route Reconnaissance



As part of the Long Range Reconnaissance Group here in Mali, one of our key roles is to carry out long range route recce out in the desert. Some of the places we visit are isolated and only accessible via difficult cross-country travel. C Squadron take the lead on this activity as it is our core business and our vehicles are designed for cross-country work. We have successfully found routes for the Task Force on every patrol so far.

The greatest success being a 120km route east which we found on the last patrol. It is no easy task out here. We need to navigate through ever changing terrain seeking out a route suitable for every vehicle in the Task Force.

Keeping Fit And Strong Out In The Desert

The patrols out here are long and the heat takes its toll on the body. Many have experienced a reduction in appetite and almost all of us have lost considerable amounts of weight. It is important that we find ways to exercise and not lose muscle as well as a bit of spare fat.

Many people have brought exercise bands out and others use what is available to them. Cpl Gilliam can be seen in this photo trying to beat the troops record time for holding a 7.62 ammunition box with straight arms. Once the heat of the day has past and we are in a secure leaguer, it is common to see troops working out by their vehicles, all trying to get in great shape with a tan before they return home! Some still have a way to go...



Working With Interpreters



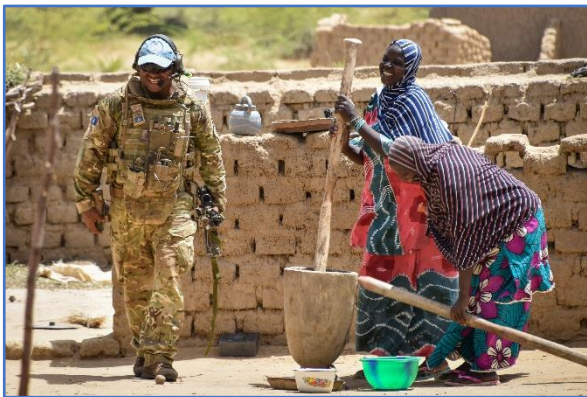
Over the tour, C Squadron has worked with some fantastic Malian interpreters. They are all very different characters and they have integrated with the squadron exceptionally well. They live and work with us day in and day out on the patrols, so we get to know them very well. Most of them speak a number of Malian languages (of which there are many) and they have to work the same hours we do.

We simply couldn't achieve as much as we do without them. Their charisma and professionalism is what allows us to communicate with the civilians so well and unlock the important information we need to gather to push forwards the UN mission here in Mali.



C Squadron

A word from Cpl Kaikadavu



Op NEWCOMBE 2 comes with its own trials and that's the same with everything else we do in life. However our pre deployment training and mission rehearsal exercise have given us the tools need to sustain us in Mali. This is my 6th operational experience, but it is my first peace keeping mission. It is certainly different than the others, but it doesn't change the values and standards of how we operate and what the British Army is known for when deployed in challenging operational environments.

The month of August and September was very challenging due to the rainy season, sand storms and heavy rain which makes it difficult sometimes to move around the desert. The ground gets soft and vehicles get bogged in, which happens to most lead callsign's but this only makes the job more enjoyable. We've constantly been hit by storms in the last 2 months but it doesn't impact our Tasks.

I've really enjoyed my experience here in Mali and it's also helped me to understand the bigger picture of why we operate in Peace Keeping Missions. As much as I've missed my family and I know that they are also missing me right now, we have to do what we do for the safety of our friends and families, and as for Op NEWCOMBE 2, the safety of all Malian civilians and UN Forces.

A word from LCpl Purvis



Being one of very few females deployed out on the ground I was anxious to switch roles and swap my stapler for a HMG. When waking up out on the ground you aren't sure if you are going to be met by a picturesque sunrise or a blinding sandstorm. One of the most rewarding aspects of the tour so far is being able to engage with the local women and children. The children out here have made this experience for me. The ability to be so happy with so very little in life is amazing. Engaging with the civilian population is a reminder of how important what we are doing out here actually is and the impact just having a presence in the local environment makes.

Being surrounded by such a good bunch of soldiers makes it so much easier when it does get hot and long out on the ground, whether that be playing made up games or cooking up concoctions with the tinned foods our families have sent out.

We are now into the period which sees us conducting maintenance on the vehicles and preparing for deploying out on the next patrol as well as having some well-deserved down time to play volleyball, get back to training in the gym and socialise as a squadron.



Attached Arms

LCpl Brown & Cpl Franks – C Squadron Medics



We are both combat medic technicians (CMTs) attached to C Squadron QDG. We provide both lifesaving interventions, primary healthcare to deployed soldiers and where possible, to civilians. As CMTs, we are trained to an exceptionally high standard in providing battlefield advanced trauma and life support. We have deployed on a number of overseas operations in the past such as Iraq, Sierra Leone and Poland, so between us we have plenty of experience and the Squadron is in safe hands.

We have both worked with C Squadron and the QDG for several years, so integrating with such a welcoming Squadron has been easy. Whilst on operations in Mali, we forward mount with the Sabre Troops to allow us to be as close to the point of wounding as possible if required. We are regularly a part of both mounted and dismounted patrols which we enjoy. Out here we can meet interesting civilians and see first hand their way of life.

We have had a number of amazing experiences with C Squadron, such as delivering much needed medical care to local nationals. These people do not have immediate access to healthcare. Some of them have been victims of terrorist armed groups and so it is very rewarding to be able to help them. Another constant highlight is delivering primary healthcare treatment to the members of our Squadron to keep them healthy and fighting fit.

All in all our time with C Squadron has been a fantastic and memorable experience. We are all now looking forward to safely completing our last patrol and getting home in time for Christmas with our families and friends.

Cpl Gay – Royal Military Policeman



I am the Royal Military Policeman attached to 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards for OP NEWCOMBE. This is my first six-month Operational Tour, however I have spent the majority of my seven year career in and out of various parts of Africa. These previous experiences have helped me during my time in Mali so far.

My role entails being the subject matter expert in dealing with the detention of persons who are believed to be a part of Terrorist Groups and ensuring particular laws are upheld by other armed groups under the Algiers Peace Agreement. I am fulfilling two roles whilst in Mali and help conduct the exploitation of items recovered off the ground like electronics or weapons. I have also conducted road search surveys in order to ensure safe movement of the force. Whilst on camp in Gao, I help other RMP attachments to police the force when and if required, whilst also co-ordinating various sporting events for the Task Group and other Nations deployed here.

I work alone in my capacity however; I was told from the very beginning that I am not attached to C Squadron, but I am a part of C Squadron. I believe this is so and it is a privilege to work with a professional Sub-unit group for this Op Tour.



Quote Of The Month

“Peacekeeping is not a job for soldiers, but only soldiers can do it.”

Dag Hammarskjold - Former Secretary-General of the UN

Fun Facts

- UN Peacekeeping forces comprise 116,919 field forces from 123 countries.
- The most recent country to be admitted to the UN was South Sudan in 2011.
- C Squadron have travelled more than 100,000 km while deployed on Op Newcombe 2, which is two and a half times around the world.

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Date of next issue: October 2021