

Brigadier Patrick Sanders, of 20 Armoured Brigade/Op Herrick 15, quoted Churchill at the announcement of 39 Operational Honours on 27th September. He pointed out the thousands of Service men and women unsung behind the 107 awards given. They are, he says, "the very best of their generation", and they have achieved in Afghanistan "a clear and quantifiable success".

Elayne Jude of Great North News Services reports from the National Army Museum below. She also took the photographs which remain (c) www.17dragonsphotography.com

Brigadier Sanders stressed that the Brigade were, in the midst of the Afghans, "among friends". The Afghan National Security Forces had delivered the tour's successes. Characterising the Afghans as "brave, patriotic, resilient, colourful, difficult to deal with", he said he would "go back tomorrow". Many of the people in the room (mostly in uniform) had, he said, already volunteered. Conflict was "messy and human". On a bad day, heavily mined and under fire, it was easy to feel that everything was unravelling, and the instinct for self-preservation came to the fore. What distinguished today's award winners was their ability to suppress that instinct, and perform extraordinary acts.

Quoting statistics attributed to the Brigade, the PRT and independent sources, Brigadier Sanders asserted that during Herrick 15's rotation, Helmand saw local support for the insurgency dip to 7%, and support for the Afghan security forces at 90%. Two out of the three areas for which the British were responsible were now under Afghan control. The British were working to Afghan priorities.

The Brigadier claimed a 30% reduction in casualties for Herrick 15. 23 did not return.

The Adjutant General, Lieutenant General Gerald Berragan CB, remarked that the award winners were "fantastic role models for their generation". "We will be in a better position to judge 20 Armoured Brigade's success in transition over the coming months".

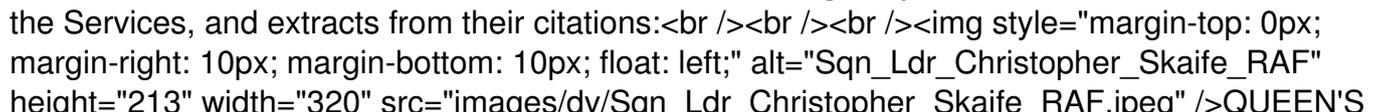
With Afghanistan inevitably overshadowing the medals, there was also recognition for the RN's work in mine countermeasures in the Arabian Gulf, the RM Counter Piracy Task Force, and the RAF's quiet lifesaving of civilians.

There were 50 awards for Gallantry: RN/RM 5, Army 39, RAF 6.

There were 54 awards for Merit: RN/RM 8, Army 38, RAF 8.

Two awards went to foreign recipients, and one CMG was bestowed.

Here is a small gallery of medal winners from across the Services, and extracts from their citations:



QUEEN'S COMMENDATION FOR VALUABLE SERVICE

Sqn Ldr Christopher Skaife, RAF
LO to Afghan National Police/Training Operations Manager
Southern Afghanistan, 20 Jun 11 - 16 Jan 12

Sqn Ldr Skaife overcame a number of challenges that hampered the ANP's ability to train policemen in the south region. Coalition policing partners were motivated by his performance to work with their Afghan counterparts to provide high quality training to increase the capability of the ANP. Skaife formulated and arranged the only police officer candidate course in Afghanistan outside the National Police Academy, graduating 73 extra police officers for southern Afghanistan, triple the number predicted. Subsequently it was assessed that 12 staff officers would be needed to complete the work Skaife had done single-handedly.

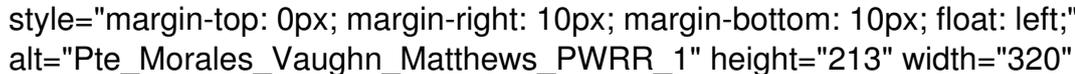


QUEEN'S COMMENDATION FOR VALUABLE SERVICE

Pilot Officer Sttevei Jean Atalla RAF
MSST Operator CF NES (N) 1 Yorks
Helmand Province, Sept 11- Feb 12

Pilot Officer Atalla has been employed as a Military Stabilisation Support Team Operator. On arrival it quickly became

apparent that a fresh approach was needed. Patrols were frequently engaged and there was repeated IED seeding, with no coherent village leadership. Atalla generated plans to improve local and national engagement and responsibility. She weaned the locals from dependence on ISAF funded projects and promoted sustainable government activity. She was instrumental in leading negotiations with key local elders. Atalla's approach is a model for stabilising a complex area and her conduct as a young officer exemplary.



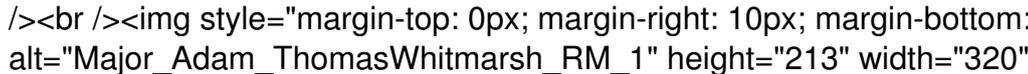
MENTION IN DISPATCHES
Private Morales Vaughn Matthews
The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment
Rifleman Helmand Province, 10 Nov 11

Whilst on patrol Pte Matthew's multiple were ambushed from a number of firing points. Matthews and two comrades began to manoeuvre to ensure the patrol's protection and to avoid being outflanked. Caught in the open, one soldier fell, apparently wounded. Rather than seek the safety of a nearby wall, Matthews vaulted it and took up firing position, identifying and neutralising the enemy position. His comrade ran forward to extract the fallen soldier. Matthews covered their withdrawal, remaining in the open and on view. His actions certainly saved his comrades from wounding or death. Repeatedly involved in firefights with the enemy throughout his tour, Matthews has routinely performed with courage and determination, to be relied on in the face of adversity.



MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE
Lt Com Philip Edward Dennis RN
Commanding officer HMS Middleton & HMS Quorn
Op Kipion 28 Jun 10 - 7 Dec 11

Lt Com Dennis deployed on two separate operational tours of the Arabian Gulf, in two Mine Countermeasures Vessels (MCMVs). During his first tour on HMS Middleton his crew was awarded the Surface Flotilla Efficiency Trophy for Engineering and second in the overall operational category. Lt Com was selected to take command of HMS Quorn at short notice. He has served in the Gulf on Op Telic and Op Kipion for 20 of the last 36 months.



QUEEN'S COMMENDATION FOR VALUABLE SERVICE
Major Adam Thomas Whitmarsh RM
Chief of Staff - Counter Piracy Task Group
Op Kipion, 21 Sept 11 - 4 Feb 12

Major Whitmarsh was Chief of Staff and Head of Plans to the UK Counter-Piracy Task Group HQ Staff. The TG was deployed in early September 2011, and conducted a highly successful series of counter-piracy operations. Major Whitmarsh played a leading role in development and execution of the Counter-Piracy surge. New to marine ops, he prepared an inexperienced HQ staff for operations while managing their deployment to the Middle East. Whitmarsh has produced an outstanding demonstration of maturity, diplomacy, professional fortitude and strong leadership beyond his years and rank.