

GURKHAS PREPARE FOR AFGHANISTAN IN BRUNEI
By Captain Tom McShane
On the edge of the rainforest, in the searing heat and humidity of Brunei, fierce Gurkhas take the battle to the enemy in preparation for an upcoming tour to Afghanistan.
Soldiers from the 1st Battalion The Gurkha Rifles have been training in their own back yard on Exercise COMMANDO RAJAH which is a massive Joint multi-national exercise involving the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, United States Marine Corps and the Bruneian Armed Forces.
The training has been geared to develop the Gurkhas to prepare for their deployment on Op HERRICK 12 next year by experiencing similar environments and scenarios to those they'll face in Afghanistan.
"One of the things that COMMANDO RAJAH has brought to us on this occasion is the attraction of the US Marine Corps. We had a Company of them joining us, they didn't work distinctly, they worked, integrated with my people, and as a consequence even down to Section level. I had Section Commanders commanding Sections that comprised elements from other nations and that's an invaluable experience for them.
"The important part of this Exercise is that it's a very important building step into our redeployment training for Afghanistan. We're very fortunate because it comes as part of being in Brunei; if we were based in the UK we wouldn't of had this opportunity and I doubt whether we would have had the chance, for example, to work with the US Marine Corps or the Bruneians in the way we have. So for us it's an invaluable additional building block to the training that we'll do back in the UK," said Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Bourne.
"This training is really realistic and very good for the Afghanistan because I know what happen in Afghanistan. Here we can see now we have American Troop and American men, Commander from British and air support ♦ everything similar in Afghanistan. So it is realistic and very interesting," said Corporal Agnish Thapa.
After a hot and tiring, but successful exercise, the Gurkhas will be packing up their boxes and move back to the UK and will continue to prepare and train for Afghanistan safe in the knowledge that they can operate and fight in these tough conditions.