



Number 2 Coy Christmas and New Year Update

First of all, a Happy New Year to all friends, families and loved ones! We hope that you have had a fantastic Christmas. Time flies and with the tempo out here Christmas already seems a long time ago, but spirits remained high throughout the company, and I am sure those on R&R over Christmas and the New Year were very well received back home!

Our thanks to you all for all the support you continue to give us. Every letter, parcel, bluey and email bring immeasurable morale to each and every one of us, and we cant thank you enough. What is even more humbling is the support we receive in terms of welfare parcels from the general public in general. It is staggering.

All the Multiples have provided an update, as they see it, for you to read, which you can enjoy below. Those that I have spent time with have been doing a fantastic job. Professional as ever, committed, enthusiastic and an absolute privilege to command, you have every right to be extremely proud of what the company have achieved so far.

We are already in the planning stage for our handover – who takes over from has not yet been confirmed, but we are hoping that the company will be back in the UK by the end of April at the latest.

Have a fantastic 2010!

**Major Jeston Na Nakhorn
Company Commander
Number 2 Company**

Silicon 11

Silicon 11 has been a very busy multiple since we arrived in Helmand. We have operated all over the Lashkar Gah area of operations as well as in Nad e Ali. Our first patrol took us to four ANP check points North of Lashkar Gah and gave us a good chance to see the ground we would be operating on. It was also our first encounter with the Afghan National Police (ANP).

The ANP dress is (when worn) a blue-grey uniform carrying Kalashnikovs and a few magazines. Very rarely do you see a member of the ANP wearing a helmet. Their look is somewhat scruffy and their body armour is thin as they do not carry armoured plates in it. All the ANP that Silicon 11 have encountered so far have worked hand in hand with the Guardsmen whilst on patrol and are keen to impress at every opportunity.

ANP Check Points are little outposts, some without walls, but are very defensible with sangars made from sand bags and planks of wood. Sangars are mostly built on top of roofs and the checkpoints on the highest points on the ground.



Lt Rutt conducting an impromptu shura with some NDA locals.

Within the first week of arriving in Lashkar Gah we took part in our first deliberate operation, a block and vehicle check point on Highway 601. Fortunately this proved to be a very quiet 24 hours but served as a good introduction and reality check for the multiple.

After a quite few weeks Silicon 11 were keen to test out our two new Ridgeback vehicles and were tasked to embed at an ANP checkpoint on Highway 601. On route to the checkpoint we were channelled North into unknown territory and whilst moving through a quiet village were ambushed by small arms fire and RPG's. The decision was quickly made to break contact and extract out of the killing area. The Ridgebacks proved their worth in terms of both protection and speed. Unfortunately the same level of protection was not afforded to the tyres and when out of contact the multiple quickly realised that between the two vehicles they had four flat tyres. While returning to base both vehicles became bogged in and after five hours of digging on it was decided that a recovery vehicle was needed. A cramped and cautious night stalling on followed until the recovery assets arrived in the morning and all call signs were able to limp home. A challenging time for all but one during which all the members of the multiple shone.



LCpl Jacobs on patrol near Bolan Tank checkpoint.

Silicon 11 is currently based in Nad E Ali where we are mentoring the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) who have temporarily replaced the ANP while they get retrained. This has proved to be busy and kinetic time with a number of small arms contacts and the constant challenge of working and living alongside our Afghan partners. Morale remains high within the multiple and we are looking forward to finishing our current task and returning to Lashkar Gah to continue partnering the ANP.

Silicon 12

Silicon 12 (now Cobra 43) are currently based in CP 9 (W) in the BJI (BG) AO. Shortly after our arrival it became very apparent just how basic life was going to be at the CP. The compound we occupied was approximately 20m x 15m square with one sangar and the accommodation consisted of three pods housing six cot beds in each. Only one pod was equipped with a roof. There was no electricity or running water unless you counted the stream and plunge pool to the rear of the checkpoint. Although a source of water, it was unfortunately located downstream from our partnered ANP checkpoint.....

Thanks to BG HQ and with the help of the Royal Engineers the call sign were able to winterise the checkpoint before the winter rains arrived. This consisted of putting roofs on the remaining two accommodation pods, building a store for the rations, kit and ammunition and we also got aggregate spread on the floor to prevent it getting too muddy in the rain.

Our partnered Afghan National Police (ANP) are split between two checkpoints about five hundred metres apart on each side of a wadi, with about eight policemen in each at any one time. There were obvious problems with the ANP in the early days: they had not all been through the required eight week training course and few had ID cards. The multiple have worked hard to mentor the ANP and improve their skills sets. This has included weapon handling, basic first aid, compound clearance and searching.

The relationship between the multiple 12 and the ANP has flourished since we first arrived. There is partnering at all levels from the joint patrols to the joint arrest and restraint lessons which saw the Guardsmen and the police laughing and joking as they put each other in various holds.

We're hoping that our efforts here will lead to the local population trusting the police more and see that they are there for the protection and security of the area. This will also lead to the locals rejecting the Taleban way, ensuring a peaceful and trouble free Afghanistan for the future.

Silicon 13

Based out of Lashkar Gah, Silicon 13 has conducted a number of varying tasks. Everything from embedding at ANP checkpoints to long range desert patrols in our Ridgebacks. The majority of the three months of our tour have been spent gathering details of all the checkpoints in the Lashkar Gah area including the number of ANP present, their levels of training and the extent of the defences at each checkpoint. We have also been kept busy employed as an escort service for the ANP between Camp Bastion and FOB Price.

Silicon 13 has proved to be one of the most flexible call signs and have provided support to engineer assets conducting recces and builds of checkpoints in need of defensive development. By far the most enjoyable and demanding of their tasks has been the embedding with and mentoring of the ANP at checkpoints. We have spent a reasonable amount of time in all the areas surrounding the Lashkar Gah PRT including a few long embedded mentoring sessions in the Bolan area, a short embed at Shindac, a week long embed in Zarghun Kalay in the Nad e Ali area and by far their longest embed was ten days in the Popalzai area.



Silicon 13 move through the desert.

One of our first patrols saw us embed at the Bolan T-Junction checkpoint, a well established checkpoint with good defensive positions with the Forward Line of Enemy Troops within touching distance. Shortly after arriving the multiple experienced their first contact with the Taliban in a 2 hour sporadic contact, allowing LCpl Harris to get some hands-on experience with the HMG mounted on the RWS on one of the Ridgebacks and the GPMG gunners showing their worth suppressing the enemy firing points.

Midway through November Silicon 13 moved to Nad E Ali to embed at Zarghun Kalay, bringing new challenges to Silicon 13. The main effort was to support the ANP to allow the freedom of movement through the area for both ISAF and ANP call sign's. This was a direct result of an incident in the area regarding a rogue ANP attack on ISAF and a crack down on the ANP. It soon came apparent how much insurgent activity was present in the area, as during the route back in from a foot patrol, the call sign was hit by an IED strike, a close shave, but one that was overcome by the skills and drills of the guardsman. This was followed by a number of shoot and scoot small arms contacts on the checkpoint we had occupied and on foot patrols we launched in the area.



A quick pause for a photo shoot with the ANP

More recently we worked with Silicon 19, an engineer call sign and a Desert Hawk detachment to build and later occupy a completely new checkpoint on route 601 heading East out of Lashkar Gah. The checkpoint is designed to overwatch not only a dangerous crossing point on the 601 but also the area of Popalzai which has seen a large amount of insurgent activity. Once the check point was established the multiple quickly set about defending it and making it home for the ten days we were there. The atmosphere was good and the multiple managed to conduct some GDA patrols with the ANP North into Popalzai which gave us a good opportunity to introduce the new ANP to the locals and to find out how they felt about the build.

All in all Silicon 13's tour of Afghanistan has been enjoyable so far and the morale of all the ranks is high, we have been lucky enough to have seen a lot of southern Afghanistan and have had the chance to work with a wide variety of different nations and units. Most importantly this has given every man and woman in the multiple something positive to remember and take away with them at the end of the tour.

Silicon 14

Silicon 14 have been based in or around Lashkar Gah for the duration of our tour so far and as with all of the other multiples we have been extremely busy with a variety of taskings. Initially they were very busy patrolling and embedding at various ANP checkpoints each of which has its own particular characteristics. Most are keen to have ISAF stay and are happy to share the chi and keen to tell stories of their time fighting against the Russians with the Mudja Hadeen. However some are less receptive and it took some real diplomacy and skill on the part of the interpreter to win their confidence.



The interim Helmand Police Training Centre (iHPTC) in its infancy.

The multiple have had our fair share of activity. Early on in the tour, while embedding at an ANP checkpoint in the Bolan area, the multiple came under contact from small arms fire and RPG. After a brief fire fight the Taliban broke contact and extracted. It was a good first taster of a direct fire contact and gave the multiple some early experience.

After a short week of covering for the Grenadier Guards in Nad e Ali Silicon 14 found themselves permanently based at the Interim Helmand Police Training Centre. The multiple were responsible for the security and build of the training centre while it was in the construction phase. A dull but crucial job. Soon we would be longing for the routine of the build phase because we were quickly tasked with training 150 Afghan recruits hoping to join the ANP. Split into platoons of 30 the recruits are escorted around by 2 members of ISAF who are also responsible for teaching certain lessons. Since the course started the multiple has been rushed off our feet.

We are now looking forward to the graduation of our recruits at the end of January and beginning whatever task might be thrown at us next.

Silicon 15

On the 19th October, and having completed RSOI, we said our goodbyes and wished each other luck as each multiple of Number 2 Company went our separate ways. Silicon 15 had been tasked as the Police Mentoring Team for the whole of Gereshk, a city with a population of over 50 000 and with nearly 300 ANP to mentor and train. Since October we have found ourselves involved in numerous fire fights with Taliban as well as locating and dealing with IEDs on a weekly basis. The highlight so far has been locating and disposing of an IED factory where there was enough HME to make at least 10 IEDs.

Despite being under a constant threat from suicide bombers as well as enemy fire we are, as always, undeterred and professional. As we near the half way point of our tour morale remains high and the multiple are looking forward to the New Year but more importantly to getting back and having that well deserved cold beer with our loved ones and friends.

Silicon 16

Based in Sangin in the Northern part of Helmand Province Silicon 16, led by Sgt Thompson, are responsible for training, mentoring and partnering the Afghan National Police. During our time we have faced many challenges which have proved rewarding and frustrating in equal measure.

During our initial encounters with the ANP, the first thing the multiple noticed was their shabby appearance and poor weapons handling skills. They were quite happy to leave loaded weapons lying around in camp and struggled with simple drills such as loading and unloading their personal weapons. However during our time, the multiple have taken great pleasure in seeing things slowly but surely improve. The ANP are now keen to learn and have even started parading in the mornings for roll call after following the examples set by the men of Silicon 16.

There has been a marked improvement in the ANP NCOs who have started taking the initiative in passing on their skills and experience to the newer members of the ANP, such as drill and weapons handling. Silicon 16 have also been teaching them first aid skills, headed up by our own medic, LCpl Constantine as well as VCP lessons and patrolling skills to name a few.



LCpl Age (RMP) conducting a lesson on person search with the ANP.

Most importantly the multiple have been focusing on imparting our vast knowledge of foot drill to members of the ANP and after a painstakingly frustrating 45 minutes of telling them to “Pin the arms in to the side of the body!” and “Raise the chin!” there was a vast improvement, which was a small victory.

Silicon 16 have taken advantage of the renowned Afghan hospitality and are constantly being offering the cups of ‘chi’ (or a brew to you and me) when we visit the ANP at their check points. We were even invited to a special meal for the festival of Eid which is enjoyed by all.



The FOB Jackson tree and basic living conditions.

The multiple continue to work hard and look to remain in Sangin mentoring the ANP for another 4 months and although, naturally, we all miss our loved ones back home, we are excited about the new challenges that lie ahead. There is a real belief within the multiple that the ANP are improving and that by the end of Op Herrick 11 there will be a noticeable change.

Silicon 19

As part of Number 1 Company, Silicon 19 we were initially assigned to the Roshan tower where the fire support group would be based. The remainder of the company were to be in PB Woqab. On arrival to Afghanistan we again completed the mandatory safety briefs and training and were ready to deploy onto the ground.

However not long after arriving in theatre plans changed for Silicon 19. The Battalion became a Battle Group in the BJI AO and fourteen hours before 1 Company deployed to PB 4, Silicon 19 was formed to become a Police Mentoring Team. As we watched the remainder of the company fly out Silicon 19 moved by Mastiff to FOB Price. We quickly deployed onto the ground, including RMP attachments to Checkpoint Lion in the BJI AO surrounded by a mix of green zone and generic Afghan compounds and villages.

On arriving at the checkpoint there was little in the way of creature comforts and only the bare minimum of facilities: a toilet area complete with WAG bags, a make shift wash and shower area and a cooking area. This was going to be hard work. Over the next few weeks we improved these

by cleaning and doing some building. This included an ops room, defences and sleeping areas. The Coldstream way of operating was a shock to the attached RMP. We would start with a 0700 hours reveille and areas. This included litter sweeps, burning the toilet bags, cleaning tables and sweeping the dust out of the compound. This however was not our main job the improving of defences and living accommodation fell second to patrols, mentoring the ANP and completing MSST taskings.



Checkpoint Lion Pre Build

The clearance patrol was a 2 kilometre stretch of road which required clearing so the Logistic Patrols could transit through safely. The multiple were often responsible for picketing the route and searching local nationals with the aid of the Afghan National Police. Then it would be onto any MSST patrols required. These patrols were very 'hearts and minds' orientated and focused on talking to the locals to see if they needed any help with repairing wells, building hydro-electric generators and flood defences. The multiple also provided them with speakers for prayers and prayer mats for the mosques.

After a number of weeks the Royal Engineers arrived at the Checkpoint to build up proper defences and to improve the defences already in place. Over the few days they were there they transformed our basic checkpoint into a well defended checkpoint with a good standard of living accommodation. All they required was to be fed well and cleaned up after; it was a top job even by the Coldstream standards.



Checkpoint Lion Post Build

With the completion of the checkpoint Silicon 19 were then able to crack on with their patrols and continue to mentor the ANP. Mentoring the ANP is the primary role of the Royal Military Police headed up by LCpl Mitcheson and Cpl Harwood.

Despite attending an eight week training course the ANP arrive at a checkpoint at square one and must be built up from the bottom. Lessons consisted of basic patrol skills, first aid, search techniques for both person and vehicle searches and policing techniques. They would then demonstrate these skills out on patrol. The ANP are good at this but without ISAF prompting they just tend to stay in a fixed location. However it was good to watch how they progressed.

After living and working in Checkpoint Lion for approximately six weeks the multiple once again proved our flexibility when we were given 12 short hours notice to move. We quickly collapsed the checkpoint stripping it to a bare minimum and handed it over to the ANP to operate from. It came as a bit of a shock but once completed we moved to Lashkar Gah to join Number 2 Company HQ and a couple of the other Silicon multiples. From there we were tasked to move to the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) barracks and partner the ANCOP.

From this location we operate on 3 to 5 day patrols visiting various Police Checkpoints within the Lashkar Gah AO, continuing with our role of mentoring and partnering with the ANP.