

Defence News

Official News blog of the UK Ministry of Defence

Monday, 12 December 2011

Defence in the Media: 12 December 2011

Summary

Various media this weekend reported that [HMS Ocean has returned home to Plymouth from operations off Libya](#). | Various media also report on a [daring raid in Helmand of an IED factory by British and Afghan troops](#). | Various newspapers report on the inquest into the disappearance and death of Highlander Scott McLaren, saying that the inquest has heard how he was captured and tortured by the Taliban after leaving his fortified base at night to retrieve a pair of night-vision goggles he had left at a checkpoint. | An article in the Sunday Times speculates that four hundred troops from the Special Forces Support Group will be redeployed to help bolster Olympic security. | BBC Online features [reports from the Upper Gereshk Valley which show how close UK forces are to the insurgency](#). | [The Times](#) reports that Ryan Crocker, the American Ambassador in Kabul, has suggested that US combat troops could stay in Afghanistan after the 2014 deadline. | The Daily Telegraph reports that [the US vacated an air base in Pakistan yesterday](#) as Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani warned that the blocking of NATO convoys to Afghanistan could last several weeks. | The [Sun](#) reports that the youngest officer to receive the Military Cross could be charged with war crimes after dead Taliban fighters' fingers were cut off. | The Independent reports that [police are to trial a laser gun that fires a blinding wall of light](#) in a bid to stop rioters. Similar weapons are used in Afghanistan to protect convoys from insurgent attacks. | The Wall Street Journal reports that [the Commander of US Special Operations Forces has backed the expansion of a local militia programme in Afghanistan](#). | The [Daily Telegraph](#) reports that Tony Pollard, a BBC archaeologist, has been criticised by veterans groups after announcing plans to excavate Falklands War battlefields. | The [Sun](#) reports that Nigel Benn has called for greater support for personnel leaving the Armed Forces. Benn has been made an ambassador for British Military Martial Arts. | The [Sun](#) also reports that Veterans Minister Andrew Robathan has said sorry for attacking the campaign by Second World War Arctic Convoy heroes for medals.

Sapper Elijah Bond dies in UK from wounds sustained in Afghanistan

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm the death of Sapper Elijah Bond from 35 Engineer Regiment at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham on Thursday 8 December 2011 as a result of wounds sustained in Afghanistan. Click [here](#) to read more.

Accommodation and domestic support for senior officers

The Daily Mail reports that [Forces top brass are under orders to cut costs by furnishing their homes from IKEA and John Lewis](#).

Today, the MOD announced that it has changed its policy for senior officer accommodation and provision of domestic assistance which will save at least £3m a year.

Following a comprehensive review, the Ministry of Defence has disestablished the status of Official Service Residence (OSR) this financial year and is publishing a new tri-Service policy on the provision of domestic assistance and official hospitality.

Until now, a number of Service properties at the highest level were granted OSR status if the post held by the occupant involved significant official entertaining duties. This status conferred an enhanced package of furniture, fixtures and furnishings for that property which has now been discontinued so all equivalent Service Families Accommodation is managed to the same standard.

In addition, the support provided to the most senior officers, such as domestic assistance for official hospitality, has been reduced and harmonised across the Services. The changes also revise the rules in relation to official hospitality. The combination of these measures is expected to save at least £3m per year. Domestic assistance will now be linked to official hospitality events and officers in command will receive five hours' domestic assistance per week in support of their role rather than the 24 hours per week under previous arrangements.

The Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, Andrew Robathan, said: "The Ministry of Defence is committed to identifying efficiencies and savings where possible whilst maintaining essential operational capability. These measures will ensure that the support provided to senior officers and those in command is appropriate and driven by business need, and they will lead to savings in due course."

There are currently 26 properties classed as OSR. The changes to OSR mean savings will be made over time as and when the furniture, fixtures and furnishings require maintenance or replacement.

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