

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](http://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

Sqd 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.





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