

16 Air Assault Brigade formally handed over its Op Herrick tasks to 3 Commando Brigade in Helmand Province, Afghanistan on 8th October 2008.

One of the highlights of their 6 month tour came when around 2,000 British troops, working with ISAF counterparts, formed a huge convoy to deliver a 200 ton hydro-electric turbine 180 kilometres by road from Kandahar airfield to the Kajaki dam.

The turbine, when it is fully operational, will improve the provision of electricity and irrigation to southern Afghanistan. 16 Air Assault Brigade have also been involved in the training and mentoring of the Afghan security forces and have led several highly successful operations against key Taliban elements.

Commander Brigadier Mark Carleton-Smith RM said: "16 Air Assault Brigade can reflect with great pride and professional satisfaction at its achievements in Helmand this year. The quiet resolve and sustained determination of the Task Force has been outstanding and through their selfless commitment, every soldier has played his or her part in delivering progress in support of the Afghan government. We also honour the memory of those members of the Task Force who have been killed and those who have been wounded. Their sacrifice and courage will never be forgotten and our thoughts are with their family and friends".

The Royal Marines' 3 Commando Brigade is the Royal Navy's amphibious infantry on permanent readiness to deploy across the globe, and is a core component of the UK's Joint Rapid Reaction Force. Their deployment is expected to last until April 2009. For 3 Commando Brigade this is the second deployment to Afghanistan in the last 2 years. It represents a significant contribution from the Naval Service in terms of both Royal Marines and Royal Navy personnel.

Their commander Brigadier Gordon Messenger said: "My priority will be to continue the momentum; working closely with our Afghan and coalition partners to develop the capacity of the Afghan governance structures and security forces and to deliver much needed stability and security to the people of Southern Afghanistan".

Although the majority of 5000 personnel in the Brigade are from the Navy's Royal Marines, around 40% are Army. The Brigade consists of the following units:

- 45 Cdo Royal Marines (approx 650 RM personnel)
- 42 Cdo Royal Marines (approx 650 RM personnel)
- 1 Rifles (approx 500 Army personnel)
- 2 Royal Ghurkha Rifles (approx 600 Army personnel)*
- Queens Dragoon Guards (approx 600 Army personnel)*
- 3 Bn REME (approx 150 Army personnel)*

*These units do not permanently belong to 3 Cdo Bde and have been attached for the Herrick 9

deployment.

- Commando Logistics Regiment (approx 450 personnel). CLR provide combat service support, including medics, drivers and vehicle mechanics. Within CLR there are 74 RN and RN Reserve personnel.
- The Royal Naval Medical Service is providing 212 personnel, including consultants, GPs, Nurses and Paramedics.
- 29 Cdo Regt Royal Artillery (approx 400 Army personnel).
- 24 Cdo Engineering Regt (approx 400 Army personnel).
- Brigade Headquarters (approx 100 personnel).
- Command Support Group (approx 300 personnel).

In addition to 3 Cdo Bde, the RN has approximately 200 personnel from the Fleet Air Arm in Afghanistan:

- The Naval Strike Wing provides air support to troops on the ground from the Harrier GR9.
- 845, 846 and 847 Naval Squadrons from the Joint Helicopter Command provide Sea King and Lynx helicopters