

UK LIAISON TEAM
24 MEU
FOB KALSU
IRAQ

03 December 2004

PRESS RELEASE

RUNCORN MAN SUPPORTS THE BLACK WATCH IN IRAQ

Signalman Simon Hidderley has been an essential member of the UK Liaison Team based at the Forward Operating Base Kalsu, home of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit in Iraq, approximately 20 KM to the South East of Camp Dogwood, the base of the Black Watch Battle Group. A member of 80 Squadron from 33 TA Signals Regiment he was mobilised to Iraq in July but was sent to the Triangle of Death to provide IT support when the Black Watch were re-deployed to the area.

During his time with the US Marines, Simon has had many roles, primarily employed as an Information Services Engineer, responsible for the secure intranet connectivity between UK forces in Iraq, he has also found himself working as a radio operator, standing watches and even going on joint patrols with his Marine comrades. 'When I found out that I was being sent North I was apprehensive, not because of the fear factor but because I wanted to know what duties I would be doing and whether I was up to the task. I have been in the TA for almost 3 years so I am still learning my trade but this has been a great experience and I am picking up things all the time.'

'Working with the US Marines has been spot on.' he said when describing his tour, 'They have made us very welcome and cannot do enough for us. The highlights have been the joint patrols and when we were able to play with their weapons on the firing range. The pump action shotgun was awesome!'

At home Simon works for Husco International Engineering as an assembly engineer. 'Husco have been very supportive. I had only been working with them for 5 months before I was called up, but my boss is also in the TA so they fully understood the situation when the letter arrived. I am the first from the company to be called up but they certainly see benefits of the TA. The leadership and teamwork carries over into the workplace and I hope that the communications and IT experience will one day lead to a promotion.'

The Black Watch will soon return to the UK and Simon will rejoin his unit in Basrah before flying home to the UK in January. 'I am looking forward to seeing my family and taking Dad out for a beer. I must admit that I haven't been telling my parents much since I have been out here because I don't want them to worry. I will soon be back though and we can all start looking forward to a big celebration when I get home.'

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Sig Hilderley is 20 and lives in Runcorn. His parents Frank and Helen also live there and are very supportive. He attended The Heath School.
2. Images:
 - (1) Sig Hilderley
 - (2) Sig Hilderley2
 - (3) Sig Hilderley3
 - (4) Joint PatrolAll images by Lt Cdr Walters
3. Local Papers:- Runcorn Weekly News, Runcorn World
4. For further details please contact the Press Information Centre at Basrah at picbasrah@defencemediops.co.uk or Lt Cdr Walters at dickie_walters@hotmail.com.