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**FROM BASRAH TO WATTISHAM – FOR CHARITY!**

654 Squadron spend their days and nights flying Lynx and Gazelle helicopters in Southern Iraq, but between flying sorties they manage to squeeze in various money-raising schemes for a children's charity.

The Squadron, part of 4 Regiment Army Air Corps (AAC), have been deployed in Basrah, Iraq, on Operation TELIC 2 since July. The Squadron is normally based at Wattisham Airfield, near Ipswich, and they spend their precious free time pouring their energies into their fund-raising efforts.

These activities include quiz nights, camel racing and charging for haircuts (normally free for soldiers on operational tours), but the Squadron's main effort is to cover the distance between Basrah and Wattisham and back again, a distance of some 5600 miles, with a combination of rowing, running and cycling. Squadron members at every level can complete a training session of any length and then the distance is logged onto a special sheet and signed by a witness. The distance accumulated is marked onto a map weekly to check progress!

So far the Squadron have been clocking up the miles for seven weeks and have covered a distance of 1500 miles. As the final part of their project, the Squadron plans to run cross country from Basrah to Al Amarah, where they have an outpost of Gazelle helicopters; a distance of some 90 miles. 654 Squadron are due to return to the UK in December for some well-earned Christmas leave!

If you wish to help 654 Squadron to raise money for this charity, you can send a cheque made payable to the Blue Beret Central Bank to:

WO2 A Gardner  
SSM 654 Squadron  
JHF(I)  
Op TELIC  
BFPO 641  
(postage is free)

**Notes to Editors:**

- 654 Squadron are part of the Joint Helicopter Force, which encompasses Army, Navy and RAF forces and aircraft.