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**LYNX OVER THE IRAQI DESERT**

Soldiers from East Anglia are currently deployed on Operation TELIC 2 as part of the Joint Helicopter Force. 654 Squadron, 4 Regiment Army Air Corps, normally based at Wattisham Airfield near Ipswich, comprises a Lynx flight, with 5 Lynx helicopters based at Basrah International Airport, and a Gazelle flight, with 3 Gazelle helicopters which are based 150 kilometres north of Basrah at Al Amarah.

Lynx Flight have been based at Basrah International Airport since the beginning of July, working around the clock and regularly experiencing daytime temperatures reaching above 50°C, testing both the aircraft and their crews to the limits.

During the war, the Lynx had a key role, with its missiles being used to great effect in an anti-tank capacity. The Lynx is also often placed forward of the battle and provides an invaluable contribution to command and control.

654 Squadron Lynx Flight currently undertake tasks including patrols of the oil refineries, pipelines and pylon lines in the surrounding areas to help prevent sabotage. They also carry out surveillance and reconnaissance flights.

Gazelle flight undertake reconnaissance tasks in Al Amarah and have to cope with the extremely dusty conditions caused by a combination of high winds and a barren, sandy landscape. This can sometimes reduce visibility to 50 metres, making flying extremely difficult!

654 Squadron are due to return to the UK in early December for some well-deserved Christmas leave.