

UK LIAISON TEAM  
24 MEU  
FOB KALSU  
IRAQ

24 November 2004

## PRESS RELEASE

### MAIDSTONE TA MAN PROVIDES VITAL SUPPORT TO THE BLACK WATCH IN IRAQ

Captain Paul Banyard has been a key member of the UK Liaison Team based at the Forward Operating Base Kalsu, home of the 24<sup>th</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force in Iraq, approximately 20 KM to the South East of Camp Dogwood, the base of the Black Watch Battle Group. A member of 124 Petroleum Squadron RLC (V) from Maidstone he was sent forward to central Iraq to provide an essential communications link between the Black Watch Battle Group and the Multi National Headquarters in Basrah.

Paul spent 6 months in Iraq, the first part of his tour as a member of the team in charge of all Reservists in Iraq, ensuring that their pay, pensions and terms of employment were all looked after. He also dealt with Reservists wishing to extend and was surprised by the numbers that wished to remain in Iraq. 'We had 52 members of the 207 Field Hospital requesting to stay out here which is great for the cause.'

'My role with the Black Watch has been totally different. At Kalsu I have been principally responsible for the casualty reporting, ensuring that we have all the facts available in a timely fashion so that the teams back home can inform all the families. Sometimes it can take a while for information to come through which adds a lot of pressure, but you just have to stay focussed. It is odd having a job that you hope for a quiet day in the office and to be bored. Luckily for the last few days that has been the case.' Whilst describing the hardest aspects of his job he reflected on an incident a few days earlier. 'Dealing with the soldiers who lost their limbs was disturbing and it took a while to get over that. However, you have a job to do and you have to put the families first.'

As one of the advance party of 6 men sent to FOB Kalsu, he had to set up the Liaison Headquarters from scratch. 'It was a journey into the unknown, but the US Marines bent over backwards to help us. They have been extremely friendly and although they have slightly different methods it has been a great experience to work with them.'

At home, Paul is a Health and Safety Executive Manager for McMicolas PLC in London. 'McMicolas have been very supportive of my mobilisation to Iraq and the TA. I think that this stems from the benefits that the TA brings to them. I have been in the TA for 31 years and it has definitely made me more assertive and has improved my communication skills. With intensive operations it makes you disciplined to meet tight deadlines under pressure and this certainly helps in the office environment.'

'Most of my troop have been in Iraq last year so when I was called I was not disappointed. My family were obviously concerned but this role has made me a better officer and has given me vital experience to take back to the unit.'

Paul has now completed his tour in Iraq and heading home to his wife and family. Shortly before leaving he described his tour as 'A lifetime experience. I am really looking forward to getting home to Therese and Alexander for a break and some holiday although I am worried about all the decorating chores that seem to have been mounting while I have been away.' I am sure that with Paul's determination he will get everything done in time and still manage the break he deserves.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Capt Banyard is 48 and was born in Mundeford in Dorset. He lives in Maidstone with his wife Therese and son Alexander (9) who attends Roseacre Primary School.

2. Image:

(1) Capt Banyard and Humvee at FOB Kalsu

(2) Capt Banyard 2

Images by Lieutenant Commander Richard Walters RNR

3. Local Papers:- Kent Messenger, Downs Mail.

3. For further details please contact the Press Information Centre at Basrah at [picbasrah@defencemediops.co.uk](mailto:picbasrah@defencemediops.co.uk) or Lt Cdr Walters at [dickie\\_walters@hotmail.com](mailto:dickie_walters@hotmail.com).