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BRITISH SOLDIERS IN SEX CHECKS AT SAFWAN BORDER

British soldiers are carrying out daily spot sex-checks at the Iraq-Kuwait border . . . on hundreds of sheep!

As part of the border anti-smuggling operations, a squadron of soldiers from The Light Dragoons has added the intimate inspection of livestock to its long list of daily tasks.

The smuggling of female animals out of the country is against the law in Iraq, and because the price of a ewe is so high (thousands instead of just a few dollars for a male animal) sheep smuggling has become a major problem in the area.

Major Sam Plant, the squadron leader, said: "It is dirty, smelly, flea-ridden work. It is not something any of us ever imagined we would do in the course of our careers with the British Army."

Smugglers will cram up to 70 beasts at a time into the back of a truck which makes the inspections even more difficult. Several trucks approach the border each day and any driver found to have ewes in his truck is turned back. The job is especially difficult in the dark, but trucks are still turning up as late as 11 pm.

"My soldiers have to get into the trucks, right in among the animals in order to check under their tails to look for testicles. Luckily most of them can see the funny side. In fact, some of the soldiers are developing quite an expertise – they can sometimes identify ewes simply from the shape of their heads."

The Light Dragoons are based at Az Zubayr, southern Iraq, where they are part of the 11,000 strong British Forces contingent carrying out reconstruction and security operations in the area. Their other duties include foot and vehicle patrols, vehicle check points and they are soon to be supervising the construction of a new border crossing customs facility.

Their home base is Swanton Morley, Norfolk, near the county town of Norwich.