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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

As we pass the first anniversary of the start of hostilities in Iraq, a snapshot of where the Corps are today, gives a true reflection of the diversity and wide ranging capabilities of the Royal Marines role. 'From Sand to Snow', a subtitle in one of the unit's articles is a reminder that within six months of returning from operations in the desert, a large proportion of the Corps were training in the Arctic Warfare role in Norway in temperatures of down to -32°C (the lowest recorded in these pages). Whilst the Brigade moves on from the Winter Deployment to Exercise *Joint Winter*, at the same time, one Commando Unit is halfway through an Operation *Banner* tour in Northern Ireland and smaller units are still providing vital support in the Gulf region.

The Brigade Headquarters reports that: '3 Commando Brigade, less 45 Commando, are about to return from a highly successful Winter Deployment to North Norway. Some 2300 men took part and following the cancelled deployments in 2002 and 2003, the novice training bill was particularly high with the Commando units (40 and 42) having 90% and 75% novices respectively. In spite of some misleading articles in the UK media, the issued clothing and equipment does work and none of the Cold Weather Injuries (CWI) sustained had anything to do with the quality of the kit. However, with temperatures at routinely around minus 20 degrees in many locations, it was a particularly challenging environment in which to train such a large number of novices. The CWI statistics reflect both this and a reduced threshold for the diagnosis of CWI in comparison to previous years. None of this though should detract from what has been a widely enjoyed, demanding and professionally rewarding deployment, and which culminated in the first major amphibious exercise (Ex *Joint Winter*) using HMS *Albion* as the command ship with the Brigade and COMATG staffs embarked.'

Also in this issue, we provide information on several manpower management issues including officer career development, the Direct Specialisation Scheme and the opportunities for longer careers through the 2nd Open Engagement. These are just a few of the ongoing initiatives designed to improve conditions of service and enhance career prospects. The success of these initiatives is borne out by a considerable reduction in the manpower underbearing over the past few years with future projections remaining optimistic, despite planned uplifts in requirement for manpower and equipment. Shortfalls of NCOs also continue to be addressed by merit based promotion and increased capacity on command courses, and again, forecasts are positive. Much work has been undertaken and is ongoing, to provide better, more stable, and longer career prospects for all ranks.

**Covers: Members of 42 Commando RM training in Norway during Winter Deployment 2004. The front cover shows Juliet Company conducting ice-breaking drills.**

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**Registered at Stationers' Hall**

## CONTENTS

83	<b>The Corps Today</b>
	<b>Cartoon by Bateman</b>
84	<b>40 Cdo RM: Northern Norway</b>
86	<b>42 Cdo RM: Winter Deployment 2004; From Sand to Snow</b>
88	<b>45 Cdo Gp: Northern Ireland</b>
90	<b>Introduction of Apache</b>
91	<b>UKLF CSG: Support Squadron's Winter Deployment; Novice Course</b>
93	<b>539 Asslt Sqn: 20th Anniversary</b>
94	<b>Cdo Log Regt RM: Winter Deployment</b>
96	<b>FPGRM: Ex Dhofar Safari; Ex Tartan Wader</b>
98	<b>CTCRM: Specialist Wing; The Foundation Phase; Life as a S3 Instructor; Children's Activities</b>
102	<b>1 Asslt Gp RM: A Word from the Converted; Sport Update</b>
104	<b>847 NAS: A Stay of Execution</b>
106	<b>Royal Marines Police</b>
107	<b>AMPHIBFOR: Battlefield Tour</b>
108	<b>The RM Band Service: Sporting Activities and Achievements</b>
109	<b>The Mountbatten Festival of Music</b>
110	<b>DGHR(N): Direct Specialisation Scheme; Useful Contacts; 2nd Open Engagement</b>
112	<b>Noticeboard</b>
114	<b>RM Officer Career Development</b>
115	<b>Medals Update</b>
116	<b>BOWMAN</b>
117	<b>The Armourers: Life with the Desert Rats</b>
119	<b>Letters</b>
	<b>Royal Marine Cadets</b>
120	<b>Army Training Estate South West</b>
121	<b>Adventurous Training in Slovenia</b>
122	<b>RM Museum</b>
124	<b>Around the Messes</b>
129	<b>A Successful Intervention in Africa</b>
130	<b>Association News</b>
140	<b>Reunions</b>
145	<b>Families and 'Can you Help?'</b>
146	<b>Books and Recordings</b>
147	<b>Classified Advertisements</b>
148	<b>Old Comrades</b>
154	<b>Corps Sport: Sportsman of the Month; Boxing; Fencing; Basketball; Mountaineering; Martial Arts</b>
Cover	<b>Corps Gazette</b>