

From: Major General Andrew SD Harrison DSO MBE



Colonel Commandant
Regimental Headquarters
Merville Barracks
Colchester
ESSEX
CO2 7UT

E-mail: Andrew.Harrison568@mod.gov.uk

The Regimental Community

22 August 2021

Paratroopers, Families,

Over the last week I have, once again, witnessed our incredible Paratroopers at the very frontline of a dangerous, dynamic and debilitating operation. Only those on the Kabul airport frontline will be able to understand the pressure they face, but they are bravely squaring up to an incredible challenge to save thousands of lives.

As our soldiers deployed onto the runway to face the chaos of a crumbling nation, they had no idea what the operation would bring. The Taliban, our enemy for decades, was manning ad hoc checkpoints in dangerous proximity. The threat of attack, from either the Taliban or from thousands of recently released prisoners, was everywhere. A second's loss of concentration could lead to separation and death and any moment rifle or rocket fire could bring disaster.

For days they have had no sleep. Most will have witnessed unimaginable levels of human desperation, viewed through the prism of fatigue and pressured decision-making. Few, if any, will ever have seen anguish and fear on quite this scale and at such proximity.

But once again our troops have proved ready for anything. Young Paratroopers have proved the value of high readiness, incredible training, supreme fitness and an awe-inspiring combination of courage and compassion. This operation is far from over, and we wish them the very best of luck as they seek to forge order from chaos, to extract hope from despair.

Having spent years in Afghanistan, over multiple tours, I understand how painful this final chapter in the UK's involvement will be. I feel for the Afghan population. But I also feel desperately sad for the families of our bereaved, the wounded, the veterans and all our families.

This campaign has not ended in the way any of us would have wished, but I want you to know that our reputation, carved out of the soil of Afghanistan by our soldiers, will endure forever. The stories of courage and stoicism displayed by Paratroopers in Afghanistan will resonate in our national history forever.

The many gallantry awards the regiment has earned, including two Victoria Crosses and a George Cross, and numerous other meritorious awards, are testament to the collective valour and efforts of all four Battalions. They fought in some of the most iconic and audacious actions of this century.

Our Afghanistan veterans have honourably served our Nation. They have marched through Afghan dust to the sound of the guns and built on the extraordinary reputation this Regiment

holds. I will always be proud to be an Afghan veteran and will forever tell the amazing stories of our soldiers with pride.

I will now salute fallen friends with a tear in my eye and my HERRICK campaign medal worn proudly on my chest. As painful as it has been, I would not have wanted to be anywhere else.

For all those on the baseline at the Airport, stay safe and continue to be strong. For all our serving soldiers, for all our veterans, for all the relatives of our soldiers and for all our bereaved families, on good days and bad, the Regiment is always there for you.

Utrique Paratus!

Andy Harrison
