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ARMY 2020

You will know that the Secretary of State for Defence today made an announcement to Parliament on Army 2020. The statement included changes to the Infantry and specifically a reduction from thirty six to thirty one battalions (plus the Special Forces Support Group) by 2016. The decision on which Regiments were to reduce in size has been made on the grounds of demography, present and future, and recruiting record.

You will know also that our Regiment is directed to reduce in size by one Regular battalion. I have spoken to Lieutenant Colonel Neil Den-Mckay and the other Commanding Officers to tell them, and through them the bulk of the serving Regiment, that The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders 5th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland is to be placed in suspended animation at a date to be confirmed but after the current commitment as Air Manoeuvre Task Force is completed in the middle of next year.

The Secretary of State has also announced that the names associated with the 5th Battalion are to continue in the form of a new public duties incremental company for Scotland based in Edinburgh and with the full title of Balaklava Company, 5th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland (The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders). This mirrors the arrangements where Foot Guards 2nd Battalions endure through the three incremental companies. It is a positive and we must capitalise on the opportunity.

While this is not entirely unexpected in terms of the loss of **a** battalion, the detail of exactly **which** battalion brings both clarity and challenge, particularly for those in the Battalion affected. In terms of clarity, the work to establish roles and bases for the Army of 2020 will not be completed for some while. In the first instance therefore current plans, operational commitments and other priorities have not gone away, and we must maintain our focus and standards, while looking to the future and managing the concerns of our for whom the future looks less certain. I recognize that individuals will be unsettled by the decision and also concerned about the future. CGS has assured me that the reduction does not make officers and soldiers of the Regiment any more vulnerable for redundancy etc and that the vast majority will see very little change as they continue serving across the Regiment.

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We will tackle the process of effecting the change, which includes influencing the work over the coming year to decide future roles and bases for the Regiment and working through how best to effect the directed change from a seven to six battalion Regiment, as a Regimental issue to be handled collegiately, with imagination, professionalism and generosity of spirit to those who are affected directly.

Finally politics and constitutional matters. My line to CGS throughout has been that we would not play politics as a Regiment; and we have not done so. The attached lines are designed to be deployed appropriately to the media, local politicians, members of antecedent regiments etc should they enquire.

In conclusion I, like you, regret the change but now we must get on with:

- executing the orders given while setting the example for the rest of the Army to follow in terms of soldiering, ethos and comradeship,
- acting as a Regiment, and adjusting RHQ to present a united, positive Regimental front and approach in Scotland,
- focusing on the Jock, as is our inherited, defining and proud practice,
- winning the argument for challenging roles,
- and doing the best for every serving man and his family.

External Lines to Take If Asked

All change is difficult; but change is not new for the Army. In 1881 the Cardwell Reforms formed famous Regiments like The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders; and in 2006 The Royal Regiment of Scotland was formed by bringing together the existing Scottish Infantry Regiments.

Since 2006 the Royal Regiment of Scotland has proved itself a worthy inheritor in its own right of the legacy and unmatched reputation of all the Scottish Infantry as outstanding operational soldiers, and now embodies what it means to be a Scottish infantryman.

The changes announced today affect all parts of the Army. The Infantry carries its share of reductions and the placing of 5 SCOTS in suspended animation sometime in 2013 and the formation of Balaklava Company represents the Royal Regiment of Scotland's share of the reductions in the Army.

Today's announcement does not change anything for any of those who served in an antecedent regiment and have since left. The Argylls, along with the five other antecedent Scottish infantry regiments, merged their 1st battalions into the Regiment in 2006. The change is an adjustment to the size and organization of The Royal Regiment of Scotland.

Before today's announcement The Royal Regiment of Scotland itself represented 1/7th of the British raised Infantry. Once the changes are completed Scotland will be providing 5 of the 29 infantry (one sixth) battalions raised from Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Sustaining that contribution requires Scotland to lean into recruiting.

Tradition is tending a flame and not worshipping ashes. With its 4 Regular and 2 Territorial battalions, and supported superbly by Scotland's 8 ACF Battalions and the antecedent regimental communities, The Royal Regiment of Scotland embodies the spirit, ethos and culture of the Scottish fighting infantry soldier and is something of which Scotland should be very proud. We continue to recruit hard to ensure that high quality young men can be part of something special.

The Regiment has a job to do, with all its battalions committed to operations or contingency tasks for the next year, and a bright future to look forward to. The commitment, support and encouragement of Scotland for the Regiment and for the young men serving in the Regiment is now what is needed.