

[REDACTED]

From: BSR903OC01
Sent: 28 May 2008 13:32
To: AUDHQCMD01
Subject: Op HALDANE (part 1)

Sir,

Op HALDANE was executed yesterday. It was an op put on by 4X to get me to the Commonwealth War Memorial 10Km WNW of Shaibah airfield. The Memorial commemorates 40,500 Service personnel killed between 1914 and 1921 in Iraq. It used to be centre piece of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Cemetery in Basrah, but was moved piece-by-piece in 1997 on orders of Saddam.

The Basrah War Cemetery is some 10km north of the city on the west bank of the Tigres (in bandit country) - there were 4500 individual graves standing facing the memorial, but the majority were [REDACTED] and are being stored by the CWGC until such time as Basrah the cemetery is safe to visit - when they will be re-laid. By all accounts the type of sand stone used for the headstone suffered severe erosion from blowing sand.

I have built up a good relationship with Julian. During one of our meetings I told him I was searching for Maj. Pat McAvoy and we worked up the plan. At 1100Z we lifted and just 12 mins later landed at the LZ. The team consisted Brig Julian and his MA (photog), an interpreter and CP team of 5. The Merlin lifted for other tasking. However, 2 x AH64 remained as cover throughout (one hi 500' one lo 200').

When the dust had settled I found myself in the middle of nowhere - literally. In scrubland known as Dowrat Anas. It was the furthest north point that 'Norman Scharzkopf's' Hail Mary, left hook in the 100 hours war reached before turning east. It's the Iraqi Kursk - 48* and blowing 30 kts.

There is this memorial - about 80 meters long with 45,500 names of fallen displayed. It looks like a set from a Harrison Ford Movie. Nevertheless, we set about with vigour searching for Maj. McAvoy. Alas, there was no such name - or anything close at any rank. However, many of the slabs had been damaged and lay on the floor. I couldn't help thinking about the remoteness of it all - 40,500 UK soldiers - forgotten. Then I wondered why Saddam had ordered that it be moved into the middle of the desert where he suffered one of his biggest humiliations and not let it be destroyed like the gravestones.

That Maj. McAvoy's name is not there does not mean that this memorial is not for him. His slab could have been damaged in the move, or he could be one of the 4500 with headstones in the cemetery just north of the City. The visit there will be op HALDANE (part 2) - when the environment is more permissive.

By the way there are no Andrews or Harwoods or even Frees on the wall - otherwise you would have had a photo.

Needless to say - I stood and said a prayer for Maj Pat - (and the other 50,000 or so folk we have lost in this corner of the world) - for [REDACTED]

At 1200Z the Merlin returned and we were back in the COB 15 mins later.

Hard Copies next week.

[REDACTED]



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DSC00464.JPG



DSC00465.JPG

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Comd 903 EAW

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

TO THE GLORY OF GOD,
AND TO THE HONoured MEMORY
OF THESE OFFICERS AND MEN
OF THE ARMIES OF
THE BRITISH EMPIRE,
WHO FELL IN THE IRAQ CAMPAIGN
IN THE YEARS 1914-1921,
AND WHOSE GRAVES
WERE NOT KNOWN.

McINNES C.M.
MASSER S.A.
MURDOCH T.
NEWMAN F.D.
PANNELL F.D.C.M.
PARKINSON R.W.
POTTER J.
PRICE W.
RADAGE T.
SIMONS W.E.
STEWART R.
SULLIVAN E.
TALBOT C.H.
TAYLOR H.
TOWNSLEY W.
VINSON H.W.
WARWICK S.G.
WEBB H.J.

WALLETTS H.J.
MANN W.E.
MARNANE M.
MARSHALL H.
MAYNARD A.S.
MIDGLEY E.
MOFFATT T.E.
MORAN F.
MUNRO J.
PARKINSON G.
PARSONS E.O.
PEILOU R.
PLUNKETT J.
PRICE F.
REYNOLDS F.A.
REYNOLDS C.R.
ROGERS H.J.
RUSSELL R.

SEELEY W.C.
SELLERS U.
SHARP F.
SLATER H.
SMITH A. 139984
SMITH A. 350369
SMITH J.T.
SMITH R.
SMOUT W.O.
SPENCER A.
SPENCER H.C.
STANSFIELD F.
STONE H.H.
TOLSON T.
TOMLINSON C.H.
TOWNSEND J.J.
TROUP R.A.

WATKINS W.A.
WEAVER C.A.
WEBSTER C.
WILKINSON S.R.
WILSON C.
WOOD W.
WOOLACOTT W.H.
WOOLLACOTT S.
YOUNG C.
YUILLE C.F.

PIONEER

EDWARDS H.
SHAW T.H.
SLADE S.
SMITH J.
WILSON J.

ROYAL FLYING CORPS

LIEUTENANT

PECK R.H.

FLIGHT SERJT.

WEBB A.

SERJEANT

TAYLOR A.

LIEUTENANT

FARMER W. McD.

CAPTAIN

TRENCH P. R.O.

LIEUTENANT

SHILCOCK J. W.

CORPORAL

REID A.

1ST AIR MECH.

DRAPER V.G.

EAVES J.R.

VINCENT T.W.

ROYAL SCOTS

SECOND LIEUT.

EDWARDS A.J.

THE QUEEN'S

LCE CORPORAL

COOK W.G.

MEARS T.C.

ROAKE J.

2ND AIR MECH.

DODD H.

GEORGE R.E.

GORRINGE P.

KEEFE W.

PASS W.C.

PONTING D.

SECOND LIEUT.

INMAN L.Y.

PRIVATE

HOUSLEY H.J.

MAYNARD C.T.

P.

