

City troops head for Afghanistan



Soldiers from the The Royal Scottish Borderers, 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland have left their Edinburgh base for a six-month tour of Afghanistan.

Eighty troops set out from the city's Dreghorn Barracks to undertake a deployment which will see them provide training and advice to Afghan security forces.

✘ It is a role which the battalion's Major Andy Watson is confident they can handle despite recent attacks on Camp Bastion where the city troops will initially be based. Major Watson who has previous experience in Afghanistan, Iraq and Northern Ireland feels that his men can learn from these incidents and from their prior experience.

Major Watson told The Reporter:- "We try and draw lessons from that which we implement very quickly. We have had a lot of good training, and it is cultural training so we understand the Afghan culture, the Afghan psyche so we can maintain relations which are key to our role as advisors."

The battalion has previously been involved in similar training exercises and are looking forward to seeing how their advice has been put to use. Major Watson said: "They are very confident and keen to get out there. The ones who have been there before want to get back there and see how things have progressed. "

✘ With the deployment due to last six months the soldiers ✘ face spending Christmas away from their families. Major Watson acknowledges that this will be the toughest period saying: "That's going to be the hardest time for them. It's a

time to reflect as normally they would be at home with their family and friends.”

However, he is quick to point out that the troops are comfortable that there is an excellent support network for their loved ones and that they will be well looked after. Major Watson also points out that the support from members of the public is a source of strength for the troops. He said: The home support is always very good in Scotland and the guys really appreciate that. “

The battalion's last tour of duty in Afghanistan was in 2010.