

# The Royal Marines Vision

Think *Commando*





The 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review directed the Armed Forces to optimise their contribution to the 8 National Security Tasks focusing on PROTECTING the UK's interests whilst SHAPING a stable world. The emphasis will be on prevention and early crisis response.

This document explains how the Royal Marines can provide the nation's leaders with military options for achieving these strategic effects, pro-actively and with precision. It emphasises that this contribution is made possible by the particular and exceptional qualities of our people - *Commandos*. As the Chief of the Defence Staff explains:

*'In conflicts to come, people will become our edge. It is intelligent warriors, agile and thinking people who will improvise and who will seize and hold the initiative.'*

Throughout our almost 350 years of history we have remained a vital, lean and versatile part of the Royal Navy. We have a war fighting lineage and reputation on sea and on land which is second to none. We are committed across the Service's core roles of International Engagement, Maritime Security and War Fighting, exploiting the unique advantages of integrated, poised maritime forces. In our philosophy and practice, we epitomise an efficient, inclusive Joint organisation; jointly resourced in our manpower, equipment, tactics and doctrine. We are smoothly interoperable and highly valued by our American and European

counterparts. We are characterised by nimbleness and resilience. We thrive in ambiguity. We specialise in manoeuvre and surprise. We routinely prevail against the odds. These are the qualities that underpin our expeditionary nature.

The front lines of danger in the 21st century will lie along the global *seams* and threaten our national interests in new ways.

We provide politically flexible, economic, scalable military options with particular utility at the sea/land interface (the littoral), one of the key *seams* where complex hybrid threats are most likely to emerge; threats which demand exceptional powers of analysis, of lateral thinking, of discrimination and incisive action to confront and to overcome.

Unveiling the Commando Memorial in 1952, The Queen Mother observed that,

*'The Commandos were raised in urgent clouded days; they hardened themselves for battle by sea, land or air, in which nothing was certain except the hazards they would face. To them danger was a spur, and the unknown but a challenge.'*

The Arab Spring is but the latest manifestation of the unpredictability of world events. This document describes how we will evolve and enhance yet further our ability to react to complex, uncertain challenges, and our value to the people of these islands.



## Our Vision

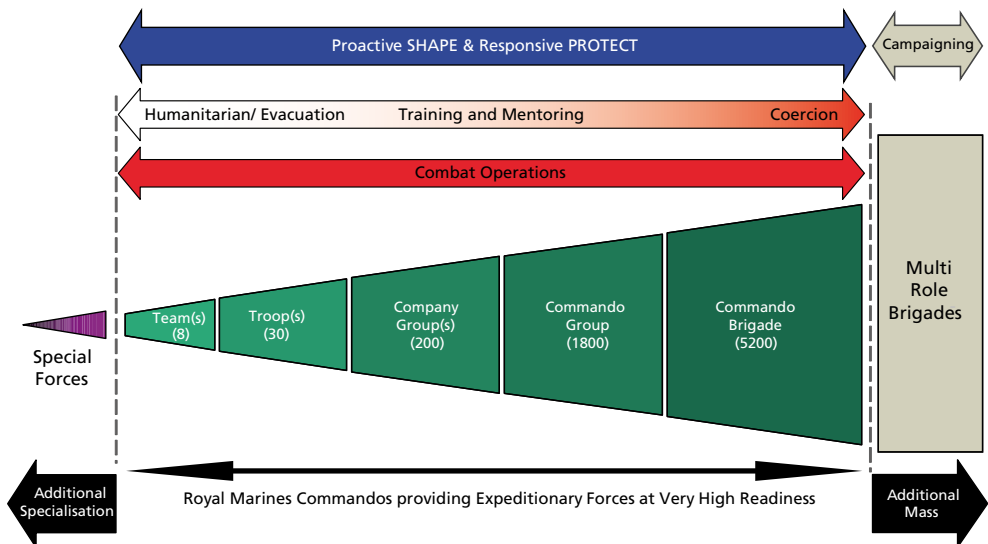
The Royal Marines will be the UK's Expeditionary Force of choice.

As prescribed by the Defence Strategic Direction, the Royal Marines will support the UK's requirement to PROTECT its national interests, tackle risks before they escalate and exert global influence (SHAPE). This will be delivered via the 3 key Naval Service roles of International Engagement, Maritime Security and War Fighting.

Joint and expeditionary in nature the Royal Marines will be:

- Enabled by Joint support (Navy, Army, RAF) and Other Government Departments.
- At the heart of the UK's input to key military coalition partnerships.
- Resourced to provide a wide range of military options at Very High Readiness.
- Integrated with the Royal Navy's specialist amphibious ships; focused on utilising their unique capabilities of amphibious force projection and expeditionary command and control.

## The Royal Marines Position Within UK Defence





## Our Mission

### Commander UK Amphibious Forces will:

- Provide a 2-star headquarters capable of delivering operational level command as the Maritime, Land, Joint or National Component command element (a unique Defence capability).
- Be regarded as the first choice alternative to JFHQ in command of expeditionary operations.
- Be held at Very High Readiness, with the ability to forward deploy. The headquarters will provide scalable command options for both enduring and contingent operations, with particular emphasis placed on commanding expeditionary coalition operations and partnerships.

### 3 Commando Brigade will:

- Maintain one Commando Group and other force elements at Very High Readiness in order to deploy bespoke, agile force packages rapidly in response to security challenges sitting between the roles of the UK Special Forces Group and the Army's Multi-Role Brigades.
- Be able to deploy forward in order to PROTECT and SHAPE, intervene early in crises, with options from 8-man teams to the entire Brigade. The staff will be capable of commanding separate elements, simultaneously deployed around the world, prosecuting different missions.
- Maintain the capability of rapid strategic deployment by sea or air transport. It will be optimised for the maritime/land seam; and expert in harsh environments and complex terrain.
- Be capable of war fighting for Complex Intervention.
- Provide an integral but separable element of the Response Force Task Group.

### The Commando Training Centre will:

- Remain the crucible of the Royal Marines; vital to the selection, training and through-life support of intelligent, agile and robust people with a compelling, distinct and powerful ethos. Not just a training establishment it is where *Commando DNA* is forged and maintained.
- Remain at its cost efficient, perfectly situated site.
- Deliver innovative world class recruit, officer, command and specialist training based on a *Commando* syllabus informed continuously by the experiences of 3 Commando Brigade and wider Defence.
- Continue to be regarded as a Defence exemplar; a pioneering establishment setting the benchmark for military training, education and development.
- Drive Tactical Force Development.

### The Royal Marines Band Service will:

- Generate world class bands committed globally to deliver defence diplomacy - an iconic instrument of UK influence and soft power, which galvanises the moral component of fighting power.

### The Royal Marines Reserves will:

- Deliver a relevant, integrated and effective operational Reserve force focused on exploiting specialist and valuable civilian skills.

## Our Wider Defence Contribution

- Safeguard the UK's Nuclear Deterrent.
- Protect the Royal Navy's ships.
- Continue to provide the greatest individual contribution to the UK Special Forces Group (the Royal Marines at 4.4% of UK military manpower, currently provide 43% of frontline, 'badged' Special Forces).

# The Strategic Context

*'The 21st Century strategic environment is characterised by increasing complexity, volatility, uncertainty and diversity. Complexity calls for intellectual adaptability; uncertainty calls for practical agility. Adaptability requires open-minds; Agility requires that Armed Forces should train to be versatile, to have a number of skills.'*

Professor Paul Cornish, Head of International Security Programme Chatham House and member of the CDS Advisory Panel. May 2011.

**Response.** The 2011 Arab Spring is a salutary reminder that above all we must be prepared for the unexpected. If, in the future, the UK is to respond successfully to un-predicted, non-discretionary crises then it must hold uncommitted, flexible force elements at Very High Readiness for contingency operations. Such contingencies may include: conducting humanitarian relief operations; non-combatant evacuations; dealing with imminent terrorist attacks and threats to UK energy supplies; or focused coercive interventions (such as limited raiding by specialised forces). **Royal Marines Commandos, maintained at Very High Readiness provide a key element of the UK's Adaptable Posture, designed for independent, expeditionary, rapid response.**

**Hybrid Warfare.** In future conflicts, smart adversaries will present a simultaneous, hybrid jeopardy - combining conventional, irregular and high-end asymmetric threats. Such conflict could involve a range of trans-national, state, group and individual actors, capable of co-operating and directing their effects both locally and globally. **Success within complex hybrid conflict demands the powers of acute situational analysis, lateral thinking, creativity, nimbleness and incisive independence of mind synonymous with Royal Marines; inculcated from the outset in Commando training and fostered thereafter.**

**Conflict in the Global Seams.** The front lines of danger in the 21st century lie within populations at the global seams; environmentally (between sea and land); culturally (between different ethnicities, groupings and religions) and at resource gradients (between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'). This is pre-eminently the world of the Royal Marines. **The Royal Marines will continue to modify and develop their capabilities to face hybrid threats in these seams, particularly those that emerge in an urban and/or littoral context, where the majority of the world's population lives and where political and economic activity is increasingly concentrated.**

**Prevention.** As a rule of thumb, preventing conflict is a thousand times cheaper than engaging in it. In financial austerity, it is logical to assume that

discerning, targeted PREVENT activity will increasingly be favoured with engagement on a geographic scale dictated by Britain's global political and trading interests and interdependencies. We need to grasp better the political value of such proactive military security undertakings and find better ways to resource them. Credible prevention (trust-building, deterrence, containment or coercion) relies on credible military forces, as well as cultural understanding and sensitivity. **Embarked across the spectrum of the Royal Navy's warships, the Royal Marines offer a unique capability to poise Commandos at sea. They can be forward deployed – indefinitely if needs be – as a uniquely flexible instrument of foreign policy to deter, engage and to build trust; switching subtly between these various postures to convey political intent and to prevent conflict.**

**Agility.** Military agility demands a culture of trust, a wide variety of skills, and the ability to decentralise resources and decision making rapidly in order to respond to the unexpected. **The Royal Marines ethos places a premium on initiative and promotes trust at all levels of command to enhance practical agility of decision and action. All Royal Marines train to be Commandos before specialising in one of 28 skills ranging from Combat Intelligence Analyst to Special Forces Operator. They are all multi-environment trained. Together, this provides exceptional organisational agility to adapt to changing circumstances.**

**Partnerships.** SDSR 2010 made clear that the UK government wishes to develop existing and create new international partnerships. **The Royal Marines will strengthen existing relationships with the likes of the USMC (the Royal Marines partner of choice) and within the UK/NL Landing Force. It can be the vector to develop and lead new partnerships such as with France within the recently agreed Combined Joint Expeditionary Force.**

**UK Defence Resources and Funding.** A real increase in UK Defence spending is unlikely before 2015. **The Royal Marines will continue to demonstrate that they are a highly cost efficient organisation.**



## The *Commando* Distinction

**The trusted quality of the Royal Marines *Commandos* is internationally renowned. Their distinction as a military force is the product of 3 key characteristics:**

### Versatility

**Amphibious and Air Mobile - Expeditionary - Multi-Role / Multi-Environment - Modular - Political Choice**

Whether forward deployed at sea, or at readiness in the UK, the ability to project a *Commando* force provides a mosaic of political options. They can be discreetly manoeuvred either to achieve surprise or overtly to demonstrate national will. They are able to operate in urban, desert, arctic and jungle environments, leading Defence in many aspects of this multi-dimensional training. Once embarked, Royal Marines leverage the unique, potent naval capability of latent sovereign British presence off any coast, anywhere. They can reassure, partner, contain, threaten or coerce, without actually setting foot ashore.

They can be reinforced or withdrawn from a region at lower political risk than land based options and may operate freely without need of host nation support. In contrast, land and air based theatre entry options need a secure third party base from which to launch – this inevitably imposes constraints, with political and financial implications.

Maritime-based land forces provide the perfect building block for alliances with other coalition partners, especially USA, France and Australia. *Commando* forces can be projected by any means available and in any sized grouping, from small teams of expert advisors to the entire force. They can deliver or enable soft or hard effects and switch between the two effortlessly. If required, they can contribute forces to enduring land campaigns, as they do today.



### Value

**A Small Force - Lean 'Tooth to Tail' Ratio - Broad Utility - Adaptive Once Deployed**

Value is an expression of utility versus cost. *Commandos* provide a distinct capability between the Special Forces Group and the Army's Multi-Role Brigades, making a disproportionate contribution to Defence with respect to their size, cost and share of the operational burden. As a Maritime Force trained to deploy anywhere and at Very High Readiness to do so – they regularly display this utility.

They retain an exceptionally lean 'tooth to tail' ratio, with over 70% of the Corps committed to operationally deployable units. They routinely innovate to enhance effectiveness and efficiency, in such areas as: Trauma Risk Management (TRiM), Viking All Terrain Vehicle, Enhanced Urban Combat Training, Teach-Coach-Mentor, Synthetic Training, and Hunter and Hasler Rehabilitation Companies.

The Royal Navy's amphibious ships need no major spending for over a decade. Despite their proven quality and greater utility, a Royal Marines *Commando* costs less to train per year of service, than his Army infantry counterpart.



## Excellence

### **Commando Ethos - Trusted and Respected - Fighting Spirit - Intellectual Nimbleness**

Excellence mitigates risk. Quality expands choice. The quality of Royal Marines Commandos ensures an effective first response and dynamic, ethical adaptation to unforeseen world events. Headlines like *"We are sending a team of British Commandos to..."* send a very strong message to adversaries and friends alike that the UK is responding seriously to a situation by sending an elite capability. *Commando* selection ensures that almost half of all recruits are qualified to join any of the Services as officers. Many hold degrees. *Commando* training is such that on the day of completion men are ready to deploy into combat. Many do.

And once deployed, their *Commando* training ensures that they thrive in complex, confused situations. Where necessary, *Commandos* will fight ferociously but regard focused violence as a last resort. It is this Excellence that ensures that the Royal Marine is so well suited for the Special Forces.

The quality of *Commandos* provides political assurance. This is the reason why, time after time, the Royal Marines have been the first British ground forces committed to operations - in the Falklands, Sierra Leone, Iraq and Afghanistan. And more recently why they poised off the Libyan coast. This Excellence is engendered at the Commando Training Centre, itself rated by OFSTED as the best recruit training establishment in the UK and internationally renowned for offering some of the most progressive military training in the world.



## Next Steps

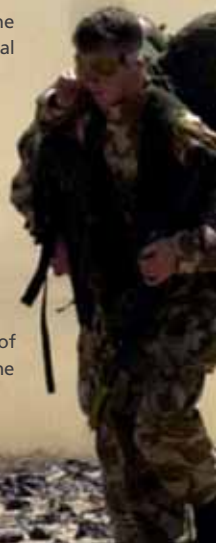
The Royal Marines will reconfigure, to best deliver expeditionary force options. The following notes provide broad planning guidance for achieving this, which will be developed, prioritised, sequenced and delivered through a campaign plan.

### Command Responsibilities

- **Commandant General Royal Marines** will be accountable through the Navy Board to the Defence Board and Joint Force Command for delivering this vision, assisted by the Royal Marines Strategy Group. In future, Commander UK Amphibious Forces will provide oversight and assurance of all such forces, whilst retaining the agility to deploy in a command capacity.
- **Commander 3 Commando Brigade** will be the Royal Marines 1-star operational commander in the land or maritime environment; tailor deployable force packages to requirement; and be both the UK's 1-star Land Component Commander and alternative Joint Task Force Commander of choice.
- **Deputy Commandant General Royal Marines** will primarily focus on future capability generation and manage the delivery of this vision.
- **Commandant Commando Training Centre** remains responsible for the delivery of all Royal Marines individual training (including Reservist training) and increasingly, for specific Royal Navy individual training. He will be supported by Commander 3 Commando Brigade in delivering Tactical Force Development; and by the Deputy Commandant General in delivering 'through-life' organisations - the Royal Marines Cadets and Royal Marines Association (Veterans) - as well as sports, heritage, charity and welfare activities.
- **Equipment.** *Commando* forces will optimise for rapid global deployment. Common equipments, marinised where essential, must be efficiently tailored to ensure that these forces can be swiftly projected at distance. A balance between force protection, mass and deployability will be achieved to leverage Very High Readiness expeditionary operations. Command and control systems must be configured for multiple, separated groupings and tasks.
- **Logistics.** Future agile operations will demand innovative logistic support. The advantages of sea-based logistics need to be exploited further, particularly in the context of the Response Force Task Group.
- **Commando Doctrine.** The priority will be to develop Joint doctrine for complex operations in the global *seams*.
- **Training.** *Commando* training will remain at the heart of the Royal Marines' ability to generate a trusted and distinct capability for the UK. The Commando Training Centre engenders a unique ethos, rigour and individuality. Lessons and insights from military operations, industry and academia will be quickly integrated into individual and collective training. Training will focus on operating in the harshest of environments in which the UK is likely to have significant interest.
- **Personnel/Infrastructure.** In line with Government policy, the Royal Marines will seek to concentrate its units in the South West of England in order to maximise the efficiencies of a reduced geographical footprint whilst enhancing the quality of life of its people and their families. Whole Force Management will be developed to integrate better the Reserve and Regular units and to optimise the ability of Royal Marines to flex between the Regulars and the Reserves.

### Restructuring

- **Information.** Information focus will be enhanced to enable *Commando* forces to better understand the operational environment, conduct discriminating military action and win the information battle.
- **Organisation.** In line with Defence requirements, 3 Commando Brigade will deliver a Lead Commando Group of up to 1800 men at Very High Readiness and the remainder of the Brigade at High Readiness. Unit organisation and structures will be re-examined to maximise future expeditionary effect.



## Afterword by the Commandant General Royal Marines

I hope that this document explains the human qualities of Royal Marines *Commandos*, and how they can be employed in the future to provide a special edge in preventing and when necessary fighting conflicts. I would like to conclude with a story of one such character - 'Stevie,' a 24 year old 'Bootneck' Corporal. It is the night of the 20th of March 2003, and he is a few miles off the coast of Iraq's Al Faw peninsular. As he silently leads his 8-man assault section across the flight deck of HMS ARK ROYAL to the waiting Sea King helicopter, he notes the fires on the horizon as Tomahawk missiles strike their targets. The Second Gulf War had begun.

This is the moment he has rehearsed exhaustively for 2 months. He knows every building at his target intimately – has drawn them, modelled them and mentally inhabited them. But as the aircraft door begins to slide shut, his Company Commander appears.

*"There's been a change of plan Stevie,"* he shouts. *"You have to attack a totally different target, about 10 kilometres from the one we planned."* Stevie looks at his boss, a big, toothy smile lighting up his camouflaged face. *"No worries, Sir, I knew it was too good to be true!"* And with that, he pulls out a pen to write down the new grid reference.

As Napoleon said of the Royal Marines, *'What could be done with a hundred thousand men such as these?'*



## The Royal Marines at a Glance

- The Royal Marines provide **Commando** contingent forces at **Very High Readiness**.
- They thrive in complex operations at the **global seams of risk, uncertainty and threat**.
- Their operational flexibility ensures that they provide **excellent value to the UK**.

### Roles

- **Commando Forces:** Very High-Readiness, elite forces, capable of rapid deployment.
- **Amphibious Troops:** Which can be discreetly projected from the sea to conduct operations on land.
- **Maritime Security:** Providing a unique maritime security capability, expert at ship to ship operations.

### Contingency Forces

- **Commander UK Amphibious Forces:** A 2-star expeditionary HQ, designed to command UK or multi-national operations.
- **3 Commando Brigade:** UK's *Commando* force. Can be deployed in packages from 8 to 5200. This Brigade contains the following elements:
  - Brigade HQ – specialist command & planning staff.
  - 40, 42 and 45 Commandos - 700-man fighting units.
  - 30 Commando Information Exploitation Group.
  - 29 Commando Regiment Royal Artillery.
  - 24 Commando Regiment Royal Engineers.
  - Commando Logistic Regiment.
  - 539 Assault Squadron: Specialist amphibious and protected mobility (Viking) unit.
- **Royal Marines Reserves:** Reservists serve alongside Regulars as equals.
- **Royal Marines Band Service:** Renowned for the world's finest military bands, they are also trained to be medical orderlies for military operations.

### Tasks

- Crisis prevention and deterrence.
- Mentoring and training.
- Crisis response.
- Stabilisation and peace-support.
- Humanitarian operations.
- Non-combatant evacuation operations.
- Maritime Interdiction Operations e.g. counter-piracy.
- Contribution to enduring land campaigns.
- Nuclear protection.
- Complex Intervention.

### Committed Forces

- **Fleet Protection Group:** Permanently provides the security for the UK's nuclear deterrent and deployed RN ships. Contains specialists capable of ship interdiction and assault and maritime sniping.
- **1 Assault Group:** Specialist unit, expert in amphibious warfare. Provides Landing Craft and small boat detachments to deployed amphibious ships.

### Operational Support

- **Commando Training Centre:** Conducts all *Commando* training and specialist Royal Navy individual pre-deployment training. Oversees the training and development of Landing Craft and the Viking All Terrain Vehicle.

