

OFFICIAL

Commanding Officer, Commando Helicopter Force



Colonel D B Stafford MBE

Col Stafford assumed the post of CO CHF in Jan 2020. His previous appointments in the Ministry of Defence were in Defence Strategy and Priorities (DSP) during the National Security and Capability Review, then in Defence Commitments, and latterly as an Assistant Head (Commitments) in the International Security Directorate.

Commissioned into the Royal Marines in 1994 he joined 40 Commando RM deploying on various exercises and an operational tour in Northern Ireland. In late 1996 he undertook flying training at the School of Army Aviation and after a brief spell at 847 Naval Air Squadron (NAS), flying Gazelle AH1, he converted to Sea King Mk4. Thereafter he served with 845 and 846 NASs as a Flight 2IC, Flight Commander and Operations Officer, conducting numerous arctic and amphibious deployments and operational tours in Bosnia, Northern Ireland and Sierra Leone.

On completion of initial staff training in 2001 he conducted the Qualified Helicopter Instructor (QHI) course and was assigned back to the Commando Helicopter Force as an instructor at 848 NAS, concurrently flying in support of the Maritime Counter Terrorism Flight. He rejoined 846 NAS in 2004 overseeing the introduction of the BROADSWORD surveillance role as Training Officer and undertook further operational flying in Bosnia, Iraq and Lebanon. An assignment to the staff of Director Naval Personnel then followed as a Career Manager with specific responsibility for the Joint Helicopter Command, Joint Force Harrier and RN Air Traffic Control cadres. He returned to the cockpit in 2009 as the Executive Officer 845 NAS, during which time he commanded the CHF Detachments attributed to Operations HERRICK and LANSBURY.

Promoted, selected for Air Command and awarded the MBE in 2012, he was subsequently assigned as Chief of Staff CHF, a brief but extremely busy tour which included command of Aviation Task Force (2) during COUGAR 12 and JOINT WARRIOR 13/1. Following his conversion to Merlin Mk3/3A Colonel Stafford assumed Command of 846 NAS when it stood-up on 30 September 2014.

He has a mechanical engineering degree from King's College London (1992), and a Masters in Defence Studies (2013) completed alongside Advanced Command and Staff Course.

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