

Press release: Scottish troops send their loved ones messages for Christmas

Thousands of UK Armed Forces personnel, many of them based in Scotland, are working this Christmas to help keep Britain safe at home and around the globe.

Over 100 soldiers from the 2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland (2 SCOTS) are currently deployed to Iraq where they are undertaking a training and mentoring role to counter Daesh terrorists.

They left for the task from their base at Glencorse Barracks in Penicuik, near Edinburgh earlier this month to join more than 600 British soldiers in the country in non-combat roles, helping to train Iraqi forces. Over the last three years UK forces have helped train over 58,000 Iraqi Security Forces.

Meanwhile the Fife-based Scots Dragoon Guards are playing a key role as part of the UN Peacekeeping force in Cyprus. Also in the Gulf, two Clyde-based Minehunter ships are serving over the festive period.

2018 marks a busy year for Scottish units, as of January, four of the seven Battalions of the Royal Regiment of Scotland as well as the Scots Dragoon Guards and the 19 Regiment Royal Artillery (The Scottish Gunners) will be deployed on operations overseas where they will not only be developing the defensive capabilities of the UK's allies but also playing a critical part in assuring the security of the UK.

Since 1969 the UK has also had a submarine on patrol for every minute of every day, providing the UK's nuclear deterrent and this Christmas is no different. As you read this a submarine is underwater on patrol. As one submariner based at Clyde said "It will be odd spending Christmas onboard the boat, but the Navy are never off duty and its part of the job. We'll make sure we do Christmas properly but I will be thinking of my wife and wee boy back home in Glasgow."

In total around 5,000 UK sailors, marines, soldiers, airmen and airwomen are serving on operations across the globe from Somalia and South Sudan to Kuwait and Ukraine.

Troops based in Scotland will be busy at home as well as abroad and as ever the Squadrons of the UK's Quick Reaction Alert will be on duty at RAF Lossiemouth, many of them ready in their green flight suits waiting for the call to scramble.

Secretary of State for Scotland David Mundell said:

I pay a huge tribute to the brave servicemen and women from across

Scotland who are away from their families over the festive period – and throughout the year – to keep us safe. I offer a heartfelt ‘thank you’, commend their professionalism and wish them a very happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

Commanding Officer, The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, Lt Colonel Dominic Coombes said:

The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards is currently deployed on Operation TOSCA as part of the United Kingdom’s commitment to the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. Christmas will always be a bittersweet time for those deployed and their families back at home, but while we miss our loved ones in Scotland and elsewhere, we will come together as a Regimental family to make the most of an opportunity to enjoy Christmas as a collective. At the same time, we’ll redouble our efforts in our operational role as we go into the New Year and the latter stage of our tour before looking forward to returning home in time for Easter.

Also sending messages home were:

Squadron Leader Karen Swanston, deployed to Afghanistan, who said: “I’d like to say a big Hi to my parents at home in Hawick, my nieces Isobel and Katie. Merry Christmas!”

Corporal Musson, Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, Cyprus: “I’d love to say hello to my wife and three kids and I cannot wait to see you in January for your holidays.”

Drum Major Gordon Prescott, Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, Cyprus: “I’m going to be out here for Christmas, so I just thought I’d take this moment to wish my wife, Jill, a happy Christmas, love you loads. Merry Christmas to the rest of the family as well.”

Trooper Knowles, Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, Cyprus: “Wishing a great Christmas to all my friends and family at home in Scotland.”