

## The Household Brigade

Before the outbreak of the Twilight War the men of the British Army's Guards Regiments were a familiar sight, wearing scarlet tunics and bearskins as they stood guard outside various locations that included Buckingham Palace, St James' Palace and the Tower of London. Whilst the Guardsmen were photographed by countless tourists from all over the globe, their role was not purely ceremonial, and, largely unbeknown to the general British public, they were tasked with critical roles in time of War.

When the War spread to Europe at the end of 1996, these plans began to take on greater prominence. Whilst most regular Army units deployed to Germany to reinforce the British Army of the Rhine, two Guards Battalions (2nd Battalion, Grenadier Guards and 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards) remained in London, [see note 1], although their famous scarlet tunics and bearskins were rapidly discarded in favour of Disruptive Pattern Material camouflage uniforms and regimental berets). They were supported by a number of Territorial Army units, whilst a Squadron from the Life Guards remained at Windsor, just outside London [note 2]. Like all Army units in the Capital, they were under the operational command of London District, which was headquartered at Horse Guards in central London.



**Guardsmen from 2nd Battalion,  
Grenadier Guards patrolling at  
Heathrow Airport, February 1997**

Both Battalions remained in London throughout the opening phases of the War, where they carried out a range of internal security duties in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police. As the fighting in Europe intensified a number of personnel were transferred to units in Poland, with their places being taken by a mix of recruits fresh from the Guards Training Depot at Pirbright in Surrey and Guardsmen who were returning to duty after having been wounded fighting in Europe earlier in the War (many of these veterans belonged to the Coldstream, Welsh, or Irish Guards, and it was somewhat to their chagrin that they now found themselves serving with the Grenadiers or Scots Guards).

Following the first use of nuclear weapons in Europe the Guards found their role changing however; whilst they continued to provide security within London, a number of special detachments were formed during the summer of 1997. Several of these detachments were tasked with quietly moving items of key national importance out of London to safer locations in the countryside (the Guardsmen carried out these tasks with a prevailing sense of black humour, for most soldiers were under no illusions

about the inevitability of London being a target should the nuclear exchanges escalate and what that would mean for their own fate). Amongst items taken out of London during August and September 1997 were much of the Bank of England's gold reserves, which were stored in caves in North Wales, and historic treasures from the British Museum and the British Library, whilst a detachment from the Grenadiers was responsible for moving the Crown Jewels from their resting place at the Tower of London to a disused coal mine in Derbyshire. The operation was not confined to London, with other detachments carrying out similar tasks in Edinburgh, York, and other locations across the UK. Much of these movements were done at night and in conditions of great secrecy to avoid creating panic amongst the general population.

The highest priority though was devoted to the security of the Sovereign and the Royal Family. In the event of an all out attack on the UK the King and other members of the Royal Family would be evacuated from the Capital, an action that would be triggered by the code word FOXHOUND (throughout the late summer and early autumn of 1997 the King refused to leave London, feeling that if the people saw their Monarch abandoning the City it might spark a panic amongst London's population. At his instruction however, both of his sons were discretely taken out of London in late October to remote locations in the countryside - rumours would persist after the nuclear attacks that his younger son had left the country for either Australia or New Zealand). The Sovereign's close protection was also augmented during this period, with the last line of Royal defence being a Troop from the Special Air Service.

Throughout October and November troops waited anxiously as throughout Europe City after City was devoured by nuclear fire. Several practice drills were carried out during this period, and there was one false alarm in mid October. FOXHOUND was transmitted again in the early hours of Friday 28 November 1997. This time it was not a false alarm. Shortly afterwards five powerful Range Rovers with blacked out windows roared out of Buckingham Palace, headed west out of London. They were accompanied by several marked and unmarked Metropolitan Police vehicles and motorcycle outriders who cleared what little traffic there was as the convoy sped out of the Capital. Near the town of Staines in Middlesex they were joined by the armoured vehicles of the Life Guards and a detachment from the Scots Guards; as the Police vehicles pulled over, the convoy, now under full military escort, travelled southwest along the M3 motorway, making for the relative safety of Hampshire. Less than an hour later the first Soviet nuclear missile detonated in the air above London.

The nuclear attack on London caused horrific casualties amongst all of London District's units. The 2nd Battalion, Grenadiers Guards was virtually destroyed, with only small numbers of survivors managing to re-establish contact with higher headquarters individually and in small groups in the days that followed. The Scots Guards also suffered heavy casualties, but managed to remain intact as a coherent military unit, with the main body regrouping at Pirbright, where they took under command the bulk of the staff and recruits from the Guards Training Depot and began carrying out disaster relief operations in Surrey, distributing emergency supplies, maintaining law and order, and trying to deal with the large numbers of refugees coming out of the Greater London area. The FOXHOUND group would remain hidden at a secret location in the southern English countryside guarding the Royal Family until February 1998, when the situation was deemed stable enough for the Royal Party to move to the new Provisional Capital at Portsmouth.

The Scots Guards had moved from Pirbright to Portsmouth at the end of January in preparation for the arrival of the Royal Party and when the FOXHOUND group arrived in February the two Battalions reunited, at which point the 2nd Battalion, Grenadier Guards was reformed around a cadre of surviving Grenadiers augmented by personnel from other units. The majority of these augments consisted of men from the other Guards Regiments who had been serving at various postings in southern England either individually or in small groups (2nd Battalion, Scots Guards claimed any 'stray' Scots Guardsmen) and were formed into a composite Company, however to the private dismay of several senior Guards officers, a number of non Guardsmen were also attached to the Grenadiers to make up losses.

**"FOXHOUND, FOXHOUND, FOXHOUND"**

*It's impossible to describe the emotions that one felt when one heard the codeword. We'd spent some months training for it but always at the back of one's mind there was the hope that it wouldn't happen, that somehow rationality would prevail, that we wouldn't step over the Rubicon. All of a sudden that hope was gone, and so many things went through one's mind; thoughts of family mainly. But we had a job to do, a vital task had been entrusted to us.*

*The time for thinking would come later."*

***From the diary of Lieutenant Richard Anstruther-Jones, Right Flank Company, 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards***

Even with these additional troops, 2nd Battalion remained seriously under strength, although this was partly rectified in April when the Battalion was reinforced by a Gurkha Company which had previously been based at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Further reinforcement came during the next few months, when first the King's Colour Squadron, Royal Air Force Regiment [note 3], then 160 Provost Company Royal Military Police were taken under command, the RAF Regiment gunners giving the Brigade a light armoured and air defence capability.

With most of its personnel consisting of regular soldiers, the Brigade is one of the bulwarks of HMG's power in southern England, and has an extremely high priority when it comes to procuring fuel, ammunition, and supplies. It remains stationed at Portsmouth, where it provides security for the local area, as well as close protection for surviving members of the Royal Family and His Majesty's Government. At the start of 2000 it took under command a Royal Military Police Provost Company who provide security for Government buildings and the small number of diplomatic missions present in Portsmouth including the French Legation. The Brigade also provides training cadres for local militias, whilst the Life Guards and one Company of Guardsmen serve as a Quick Reaction Force, equipped with diesel fuelled vehicles and ready to respond to any potential threat to the area controlled by HMG (the Guards Company serves on a rotational basis). The Brigade has also supplied personnel for numerous operations outside the borders of HMG's territory, both overt and covert.



**RAF Regiment FV101 Scorpion CVR(T) somewhere in southern England, Summer 2000**

## Notes

1. At the start of the War three Battalions of Foot Guards were based in central London. 2nd Battalion, Grenadier Guards was based at Wellington Barracks in West London, and the 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards was based at Hounslow Barracks close to Heathrow Airport; the third Battalion (1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards) was transferred to Germany in early 1997, prior to which it had been based at Chelsea Barracks. The gap left by the Coldstreams was partly filled by mobilising Territorial Army and Home Service Force troops.

2. In late 1996 the Life Guards were based at Combermere Barracks in Windsor, where they operated in the Armoured Reconnaissance role. At the outbreak of War, one Squadron deployed to Norway with 3 Commando Brigade, Royal Marines, whilst another deployed to Germany with the 5th Airborne Brigade. The third Squadron, equipped with the FV721 Fox Armoured Car, remained at Windsor, where it had a home defence role. Whilst the Squadron's Foxes were occasionally seen at Heathrow Airport during the first half of 1997, its primary - and undeclared - role was to assist in evacuating the Royal Family from London in the event of a crisis. The Squadron also had a small number of M93 NBRC reconnaissance vehicles purchased from West Germany in early 1994 (as the FV721 and the M93 were both known as the Fox, to avoid confusion the latter was simply known as the M93 in British service).

3. The King's (or Queen's when the Sovereign is female) Colour Squadron was a ceremonial unit of the RAF based at RAF Northolt in north west London, close to Heathrow Airport. At the start of the Twilight War the Regiment was given a home defence role and equipped with FV107 Scorpion armoured reconnaissance vehicles

Note this piece is written for the canon V1 timeline, however with a few very minor tweaks is compatible with canon V2

## **Order Of Battle, 01st June 2000**

Location: Portsmouth, Hampshire

Strength: 1080 men

### **Brigade HQ and Signal Squadron**

Strength: 60 men

### **C Squadron, Life Guards**

Strength: 50 men, 3 x FV721 Fox, 2 x M93, 3 x Land Rover WMIK

### **2nd Battalion, Grenadier Guards**

Strength: 320 men

- HQ Company
- Inkerman Company
- Number 7 Company\*
- Sittang Company, Gurkha Rifles

### **2nd Battalion, Scots Guards**

Strength: 500 men

- Headquarters Company
- Right Flank Company
- G Company
- Left Flank Company
- Support Company

### **3 Troop, A Squadron, 22 Special Air Service Regiment (Alpha Three Zero)**

Strength: 10 men

### **160 Provost Company, Royal Military Police**

Strength: 80 men

### **King's Colour Squadron, Royal Air Force Regiment**

Strength: 60 men, 3 x FV101 Scorpion, 1 x Tracked Rapier, 3 x Towed Rapier

- A Flight (Light Armour)
- B Flight (Air Defence)

\* Composite Company; mainly consists of men from other Guards Regiments plus small number of personnel from non Guards units