

Inside PJHQ

Down in the Bunker



It's a hush-hush sort of place. But we were allowed a peek into PJHQ Northwood's best-known 'secret'

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NORTHWOOD seems about as suburban as you can get in greater London. Then you come across the high fence surrounding one of the Services' best-known "secret" establishments – the Permanent Joint Headquarters.

And behind the barbed-wire, deep underground, is PJHQ's Control Room – known by one and all as the Bunker.

Since it was set up in 1996, PJHQ has earned a first-class reputation, having been the national focal point for more than 40 operations.

The staff of up to 400 are divided into joint-service teams controlling theatres at operational level. It is a classic example of separate services working together with a common aim.

When *Soldier* was invited along last month to take a peek behind the normally

Nerve centre: Operations in Bosnia, Kosovo and the Middle East are controlled from here. Inset – Maj Mark Thomas RE, part of the integrated joint-service staff, monitors events

closed doors, teams were dealing with Kosovo, Bosnia, Sierra Leone and the Middle East.

Staffed 24 hours a day, each joint-service desk is overseen by an officer at major rank or equivalent in direct contact with a theatre of operations.

Direct communications are constantly maintained with the MoD, Land and Strike commands, and Nato. The Fleet headquarters is on site at Northwood.

Video conferencing facilities link PJHQ with command sites and operational headquarters. Officers frequently visit the theatre they control.

PJHQ's Chief of Joint Operations, Vice Admiral Sir Ian Garnett, described the fundamental role of PJHQ as "directing,

deploying, sustaining and recovering UK forces".

Surprisingly, it has nothing to do with UK defence. Nor does it deal with actions involving Nato's Article V – in other words, general war – where operational command of UK forces would be handed over to Nato. Nor indeed is PJHQ responsible for the strategic nuclear deterrent.

What PJHQ *does* do is command operations and perform the co-ordinated support function in any other Nato operation in which Land, Fleet and Strike commands provide the military capability. It leads the UK's contribution to international coalition operations.

"The Ministry of Defence's job is policy and to provide ministerial strategic

Building a seamless force

AS the person responsible for co-ordinating the development of the JRRF, Maj Gen Cedric Delves places a high priority on team-building and breaking down inter-Service barriers in PJHQ.

"This requires a trust, respect and even an affection with one another, and it is not easy to develop," said Maj Gen Delves, Chief of Joint Force Operational Readiness.

"We recognise that people's

immediate loyalties are to the people closest to them. People in small groups relate best to one another and the bigger the thing gets, the less personal it becomes.

"It could be said that the current state of joint fighting is a form of synchronising the activity in separate areas. We want to go further in working in an absolutely integrated fashion. We want to create a force with a desire and an ability to fight as one."