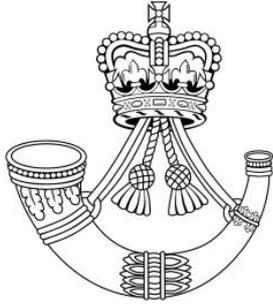


## From General Sir Patrick Sanders KCB CBE DSO ADC Gen



Colonel Commandant  
The Rifles  
Regimental Headquarters  
Peninsula Barracks  
WINCHESTER  
SO23 8TS

Telephone: 01962 828527  
E-mail: [admin@the-rifles.co.uk](mailto:admin@the-rifles.co.uk)

29 November 2021

Dear Friend of The Rifles,

You will be aware of the Defence Secretary's announcement last Thursday regarding the Integrated Review (IR) and the Army's 'Future Soldier' change programme contained within it. Having Major General Rupert Jones written to alert people to the IR back in January, I want to take this opportunity as Colonel Commandant to update you now on what Future Soldier means for all of our Riflemen.

Profound changes to the character of warfare, including advances in artificial intelligence, quantum computing and robotics require the transformation of the Army's equipment, structures and way of operating and warfighting. The IR has driven the modernisation of the Army for the Information Age. This technical modernisation comes alongside a reduction in the size of the Regular Army to 73,000, in part to make it affordable. This has required some extremely difficult choices to be made to ensure the Army is as useful and usable as possible, whilst retaining the ability to rapidly expand if required. When combined with the 30,100 in the Army Reserve, the British Army will still be over 100,000 strong. It is a very exciting prospect and what will emerge is a more expeditionary, capable and competitive Army, better suited to the challenges of the digital era and technically one of the most modernised armies in the world. An Army fit and ready to fight the wars of the future not those of the past.

### What do we know so far in terms of The Rifles

**New Divisional Structures.** The Rifles is proof that a large Regiment that offers opportunity, choice and variety to its people is the model for sustainability. As such, the Infantry will restructure into four new Divisions based on our successful model. The Rifles and The Royal Gurkha Rifles (RGR) will form a new 'Light Division' by September 2022. We already have strong bonds with our fellow RGR Riflemen and over the next six months we will look to understand the opportunities that this presents. Within the Light Division our RIFLES battalions will adjust as follows:

**1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The Rifles.** 1 RIFLES will remain under its current arrangements but will re-role to become a Light Mechanised Infantry (LMI) Battalion in April 2023 and deploy to Cyprus (Dhekelia) that summer for a two-year tour before returning to Beachley Barracks, Chepstow in 2025. In 2028 the Battalion will then move to a new barracks in Caerwent, five miles outside of Chepstow. The tour to Cyprus will provide excitement and variety, with the battalion remaining in its heartland in the long-term universally welcomed. The new establishment for 1 RIFLES will include a mix of Regular and Reserve Riflemen.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion The Rifles.** 2 RIFLES will remain a Light Role (LR) Battalion based in Thiepval Barracks, Lisburn, transitioning to its new structures by April 2023 and subsequently resubordinate to a different Brigade. Its new structure will see a Warfighting Establishment of consisting of Regular and Reserve personnel.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion The Rifles.** 3 RIFLES will become a Security Force Assistance (SFA) Battalion in 2024, when it will also resubordinate to 11th Security Force Assistance Brigade. 3 RIFLES will re-organise to its future structure from 2024 to 2025 and move from Edinburgh to Blackpool in 2027. SFA battalions will operate with conventional partners in permissive environments; commissioning, designing, delivering and assessing security force assistance activity. This prestigious new role requires fewer personnel and the Battalion's new Warfighting Establishment will reduce significantly and consist of Regular and Reserve personnel. This change will need careful management but once through the transition, having a RIFLES battalion in the North West, sufficiently close to our roots in Yorkshire, Durham and Central England and in a busy and exciting new role presents real opportunity.

**4<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Rifles.** As previously announced, 4 RIFLES will become 4th Battalion The Ranger Regiment on 1 December 2021. It will remain in Aldershot and receive a small uplift in workforce. As part of the Army Special Operations Brigade, Ranger battalions will be routinely deployed alongside partner forces: training, advising and, if necessary, accompanying them in support of our national interests. The strong link between 4 RANGERS and RIFLES will endure. We will regret the loss of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion from our order of battle, but I know you will all share my pride that it has been selected for this prestigious and exciting role, reflecting its distinguished and ground breaking performance as Specialized Infantry.

**5<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Rifles.** 5 RIFLES will remain in Bulford and restructure from an Armoured to a Mechanised Infantry Battalion by April 2025. The Battalion will swap tracks for wheels and operate the new Boxer vehicle as it comes into service thereafter. The Warfighting Establishment will consist of Regular and Reserve personnel. As one of five Mech Inf Battalions, 5 RIFLES will rotate to Cyprus as the Resident Infantry Battalion (Episkopi). The rotation will see the Battalion spend two years in Cyprus followed by eight in the UK. Of note: when the Battalion conducts its Cyprus rotation it will do so as a Light Role Battalion, leaving elements in Bulford.

**6<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Rifles.** As part of the Reserve, 6 RIFLES will resubordinate to 19 Brigade in 2023. 19 Brigade will be stood up in 2022 and consist of two Reserve Cavalry Regiments and eight Reserve Infantry Battalions. 19 Brigade force elements will pair with and support other Regular units.

**7<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Rifles.** As part of the Reserve, 7 RIFLES will restructure by April 2023 and remain paired with 5 RIFLES.

**8<sup>th</sup> Battalion The Rifles.** As part of the Reserve, 8 RIFLES will join 6 RIFLES in 19 Brigade, also resubordinating in 2023.

**F (The Rifles) Company The London Regiment.** As part of the Reserve, LONDONS will restructure in 2024 and be renamed 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion The London Guards, establishing a stronger link to the five Regular Foot Guards Regiments. At this time, it is not known how the change will affect our Riflemen in F (RIFLES) Coy but they will receive our full regimental support as the plan emerges.

All structural changes will be complete by March 2025, driven by current tasks, equipment, real-estate and workforce requirements. Some elements of change, such as rebasing will take slightly longer but by 2028 all activities setting our Regiment up for future success should be complete.

My first concern will be for the care and management of our Riflemen and their families through this transition. Change is always difficult and appears even more so at first glance but by any standard Future Soldier recognises the achievements and potential of The Rifles since its formation in 2007. Nonetheless, all of our battalions will be impacted to varying degrees. My predecessors who designed The Rifles did so in 2007 to ensure that the Regiment remained flexible and adaptive to face future challenges and this has been vindicated by an Integrated Review that has delivered real opportunity for Riflemen. Above all, I am truly delighted that we will continue to be your Regiment, fighting for our treasured communities and thank you for your vital part in ensuring this.

Swift and Bold

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patrick Sanders". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.