

# THE FORMATION SIGN



JOURNAL OF THE MILITARY HERALDRY SOCIETY

## Shoulder to Shoulder with Us - The Army in Ukraine



Russia's unprovoked, brutal invasion of Ukraine has shone light on a lesser known role of the British Army. Under the title *Operation Orbital*, since 2015 small numbers of British troops - initially 30 but later increased - have helped train Ukraine's soldiers in medical, logistical, intelligence and infantry skills. The training mission, its troops rotated every two months, its command staff every six months, operated away from the eastern conflict zones, its HQ in Kyiv, the Royal Navy and Royal Marines providing maritime training from 2018. One training exercise - Joint Endeavour – saw 250 troops from 16 Air Assault Brigade take part in the UK's largest parachute drop in over a decade. From October 2021 members of the RAF Regiment and RAF Police assisted with air force protection training. In November

2019, the Ministry of Defence announced it had trained some 17,500 Ukrainian troops and extended the Operation for another three years. From 2020 Royal Navy personnel provided maritime training and support alongside naval personnel from Sweden, Canada and Denmark.

In February 2022, aware of the build-up of Russian forces on the Russo-Ukrainian border and concerns of an impending Russian invasion, the UK began supplying Ukraine with anti-tank weapons, teams from the Ranger Regiment deployed to provide training on how to use them. On 17th February the UK ended its training operation due to concerns of a "no notice" attack by Russia, but has continued to supply anti-armour weapons and man-portable air-defence systems. Shortly before the teams were withdrawn, the Commander of Operation Orbital, Colonel James Thurstan, Coldstream Guards – shown here wearing the Operation's arm badge – briefed the Prime Minister on its work. The example of the badge appears courtesy of **Norman Wolden**.



The situation in Eastern Europe prompted NATO to enhance its forward presence there, establishing four multinational battalion-size battlegroups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland on a rotational basis. Wearing a NATO 'EFP Battlegroup' sign the Groups, led by the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and the United States are described as 'robust, multinational, combat-ready forces' According to *Britain at War* magazine the British group includes a tank crew from the Wessex Yeomanry, all of them Reservists, the first such crew since the Second World War. Thanks to **David Payne** for the photo of the badge in use.