



AFF Germany roadshow 28 Sept 2016

Roadshow questions pre-posed

Q: What is the current timescale for the drawdown?

A: All units will return from Germany in 2019.

Q: When should we be expecting to go back to the UK?

A: The majority of moves will take place over the school summer holiday period to minimise any impact to children's education.

Q: After 2020, will there be any British military left in Germany at all?

A: Following rebasing there will be a small number of British military personnel left in Germany working in NATO headquarters or as liaison officers, and in specialist training appointments. There is an intent to retain Adventure Training facilities in Bavaria, although this and the future of the vehicle storage site at Ayrshire Barracks, Mönchengladbach, 23 Amphibious Troop at Minden and military training facilities in Germany are the subject of separate work.

Q: Is it possible Service personnel will be asked to stay unaccompanied?

A: Some Service personnel in key appointments may need to go across early and prepare the barracks for the main body of the unit to arrive, which would involve a small period of being unaccompanied before an individual's removals would arrive for their quarter. It also could work the other way around - families might move to the UK and the spouse then returns to Germany for a set period of time to close the barracks.

In all circumstances, maximum welfare support will be on hand from the unit and the Brigade HQ to assist with the burden of transition and to make the process as smooth as possible.

Q: What will happen after the end of 2018 when the UK leaves the EU? What will be the effect on kindergeld, private housing, Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) benefits and German spouses?

A: The right of British Forces to remain in Germany and the vast majority of the detailed rules governing our presence here are set out in the NATO Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and the Supplementary Agreement to SOFA, and are not affected by membership of the EU.

That said it is true that EU law and regulation does provide the basis for some of the benefits enjoyed by BFG, and by Defence more broadly. This has been acknowledged by the Permanent Secretary who has given a 1* led team the task of ensuring that these Defence impacts are fully considered within the government's negotiations. Headquarters

BFG is closely engaged with this central team to make sure that the unique circumstance of forces in Germany is factored into the broader work from the outset. It is recognised that people want answers quickly, but working through the implications will take a little time.

Q: When will we find out about next year's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force and on what level of readiness our soldiers will be? Will they be on high readiness 365 days of the year? What happens to leave? - Comd 20X

A: The Very High Readiness Joint Task Force has spent 2016 training to prove and confirm that it is fully ready to deploy. As of 1 Jan 2017, it is then available as a force to be deployed by NATO at short notice of anywhere between five days to 30 days depending on an individual's and unit's role.

Soldiers of any British Army unit will normally hold at this short notice to deploy every three years. Therefore, this is normal practice and it is how we ensure that we always have the ability to react to anything in the world, quickly.

Soldiers within 20 AI Bde will sit on this permanent ability to be ready for the whole of 2017. Life can carry on as normal; you can go on holiday, visit family in the UK and attend courses.

The most important point is that soldiers and dependants understand that serving personnel can be recalled to duty at any time to deploy.

The Brigade Commander offers two fundamental pieces of advice. Prepare your lives so that, if called, your personal administration is ready to support the deployment of your spouse and you are able to cope with family life in their temporary absence. For the past six months, soldiers within the brigade have been continually and strongly advised to get their own and their family's administration in order in case they need to deploy.

Q: Why are the imported items in the NAAFI so expensive? Things like razors and shaving foam are similar prices in the German supermarkets, if not cheaper there. Can we have a suggestion box in the NAAFI for items to be stocked?

A: NAAFI provides a convenience grocery retail offer with a 'taste of home' to the British Army and their families in BFG. This forms part of the overall Catering, Retail and Leisure (CRL) offer, which is agreed under a Service Level Agreement with DIO (MOD) and sits alongside NAAFI's other services such as JB's restaurants, Coffee Forums, Mess Services and the provision of meals and cleaning in SCE schools in BFG.

NAAFI aims to offer good value in retail (shops) with things like the promotional deals, which change every three weeks, big value packs, one off 'When It's Gone It's Gone' (WIGIGs), price marked packs sold at the pack price (which are converted at the Forces Fixed Rate (FFR)) and very competitively priced tobacco, wines and spirits.

NAAFI cannot compete on price with large, high street retailers like Real and Marktkauf in Germany, or Tesco and Asda in the UK, as they have a huge scale and can buy their products from their suppliers much cheaper than NAAFI is able to.

As a comparison, Tesco has 3,500 shops in the UK alone and Sainsbury has 1,250. NAAFI has 40 'shops' around the world, 18 of those are kiosks (canteens) on HM Ships; in Germany NAAFI only has 10 shops in total. A fair comparison to NAAFI would be a shop located inside a UK Army barracks, which would be managed by the contractor providing the CRL on site, e.g. Sodexo, ISS and likely to be a convenience retail brand such as Londis, Mace or Costcutter.

Suggestions for items to be stocked by NAAFI can be e-mailed in to NAAFI at tellmemore@naafi.co.uk or made to one of the NAAFI team on-site.

Q: The Telephone Assessment Service (TAS) system is very confusing; most people just go to A&E. Can you tell us what the TAS system is there for and what its limitations are?

A: Information regarding TAS can be found through BFGnet following 'medical and dental' links on the homepage. These will take you to the Patientwise.de website, or you can access this website direct. This website offers information about healthcare in BFG.

Patientwise.de offers support if you are feeling unwell. It recommends the first port of call being your local medical centre to book an appointment; numbers are offered.

If you feel the call is urgent, or during out of hours, you will be redirected to TAS (the number given is 0521 3053961). At any time, if you have a medical emergency, you should ring 112 or go to your local hospital A&E department.

TAS is designed to cater for urgent medical needs and out of hours contact. On first contact with TAS, a call handler will ask a series of questions to start the triage of your need. Emergency cases will be advised to go direct to A&E. If the call is considered urgent, you will be contacted within 20 minutes by a health professional. If it is considered non-urgent, you will be contacted by a health professional within one hour or referred back to the medical centre. Urgent appointments will be offered, and booked during the call, for within the next 48 hrs. Non-urgent appointments can be booked by the medical centre for within five days.

Q: Why is there no help for a family moving back to the UK before posting when it is because of school places? We have to pay for that move ourselves, £5000+! If we said we were separating, we'd have it paid for! Seems unfair.

A: All Service families are entitled on assignment and therefore there should be no additional incurred cost. Should the Service person decide to move at a different time due to a personal decision this would fall under the category of a mid-tour move. In cases of this nature, you should contact Pay and Allowances Casework and Complaints Cell (PACCC) for exceptional authority to be applied, with each case taken on its merit. The unit welfare office should be contacted for full details as to how to complete this process.

Q: There hasn't been much Royal Military Police (RMP) presence recently, especially with the RMP station closing in Gutersloh. With the recent security threats, we would expect to see more patrols and certainly a better response time, or at least someone to attend if there is an issue. What are the RMPs responsibilities?

A: The primary responsibility of the RMP is the maintenance and enforcement of Service Discipline and Good Order. We do this through the prevention and investigation of crime by persons subject to the Armed Forces Act. As the rest of the British Forces in Germany have drawn down so have the RMP, but we continue to patrol the community of which we are very much part. Sennelager Det 110 RMP retain a single 24/7 Military Police Station in Normandy Bks, Sennelager with a drop-in office in Mansergh Bks, Gutersloh which is open during routine working hours, both of which will take reports of crime or suspicious incidents. Patrols will be tasked to attend incidents as required. If we cannot get to an incident, because we are already on a call or because distance is a factor, in a timely response, we will ask the German Civil Police to attend. The RMP conduct patrol activities using intelligence-led policing; this means that by analysing criminal activity we apply our resources in a manner likely to deter or detect further crimes, concentrating them where they will do the most good. It is important to note that the RMP in BFG are far more than the marked patrol vehicles people see around the area. We have a dedicated Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) team, Specialist Vulnerable and Intimidated Witness interviewers employed within the Joint Response Team as well as 74 Sect Special Investigation Branch

(SIB) who investigate the serious and complex criminal cases associated with sexual assaults and/or violent crime. All of the RMP personnel associated with these various resources readily support the members of our community when and where they are needed most.

Q: If landlords want their properties back, how much notice do BFG require and how much notice could a family expect? Is it possible that landlords may wish to get their properties on the market early before there is a glut of properties for rent/sale in 2019?

A: The terms in the lease agreement dictate the notice period for both the landlord and the MOD. Usually we get nine months' notice from a landlord.

Yes, it is possible that landlords will look to get their properties back early, that was the case in Gütersloh and we looked to mitigate that factor by engaging early with landlords on an individual SFA basis based on an occupants TOUREX/Assignment/rebasing date.

We will be undertaking a similar exercise by early 2017 in Paderborn/Bielefeld.

Q: Why can't dependant employees allocate an element of their pay to a UK bank, specifically the pension payment?

A: Dependants receive a tax-free wage under the umbrella of the NATO Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). Any regular payments into a UK bank account would be subject to UK tax regulations and would not be in the spirit of SOFA. There is, however, a mechanism to pay final pay and gratuities into a UK bank account on posting.

Q. How will SCE ensure quality teachers are retained until summer 2019?

A. A Voluntary Early Release Scheme (VERS) package will be available for existing staff who remain until the end of the summer term 2019. VERS has proved to be an effective retention measure in previous school closures. In addition, UK-based teachers wishing to remain with SCE will have Priority Mover Status for any vacancies in the remaining schools in Cyprus and elsewhere.

Q: Families are encouraged to access more German facilities, but do not have the necessary language skills to do so. Can different ways of learning languages be looked into and funding offered (i.e. online courses, links with Paderborn/other universities)?

A: 41 Army Education Centre runs a variety of German language courses in the form of weekly daytime and evening classes at basic, intermediate and advanced levels. These courses are heavily subsidised by HQ BFG via the Personal Community Development Learning (PCDL) fund and this is the only avenue open to the Army Education Centre for dependant language training.

As an example, a person could attend a two-week intensive German course for the princely sum of €15 or 10 weekly sessions for a maximum cost of €40, and we have also offered daytime courses at Loeseke Community Centre to coincide with school timings, which sadly to date remain undersubscribed.

The Army libraries in each station hold a variety of CD language courses and textbooks, which are freely available for loan for self-study. They are also equipped with computers, which can be utilised for online learning of which there are several free courses available on the internet.

Courses are also available via the German equivalent of Adult Education Centres, known as Volkshochschule (VHS), and are located in most major towns; they run courses throughout term time.

Q: Compared to previous years, over the last 18 months there appears to be a reduced AFF presence in the community?

A: In summer 2015, the AFF Germany branch was restructured to reflect the Army's altered footprint in Germany. This coincided with a period of staff turnover, resulting in a temporary gapping of posts during the recruitment process. Staff were recruited and trained and AFF's presence within the community is back where it ought to be with coordinators based in the community, attending coffee mornings and toddlers groups as well as staffing the offices. In addition to this, AFF links in with UWOs, sits on school governance committees and attends meetings in BFG to ensure families' needs are considered.

Q: Why do we still have individual stations when the Garrison is so small now and why is there a necessity for two HQs - BFG and WFG?

A: HQ BFG created HQ Westfalen Garrison to focus on delivering the best possible support to all who live and work in our community here in Germany. With HQ BFG now concentrating on the bigger Army picture - such as supporting 20 (AI) Bde in its training - and drawing down the Army estate and returning it to the German Federal Authorities, having Westfalen Garrison concentrating on the immediate needs of the community means that energy can be focused into making life as good as possible for us all.

Q: Why do we have to pay £50 per child per return journey on the School Children's Visits (SCV) when they're all on the same booking? Can't it be per booking? It can be cheaper to book commercial flights myself rather than use SCV.

A: The aim of SCVs is to contribute towards the cost of reuniting children of Service personnel with their parents at their duty station during some school holidays.

It is a principal condition that there will be a parental contribution made towards all SCVs. This figure is worked out as follows: 100 miles x 2 (return journey) = 200 miles x 25p per mile = £50.

Q: What will happen to the NAAFI as drawdown gets closer? Will it be closed before families leave?

A: NAAFI will stay for as long as the service is required by the local command and community. During all the recent drawdowns, most recently in Alanbrooke Barracks and Princess Royal Barracks, NAAFI has been one of the last to leave and often the service is much more than is required by the small population remaining at the end. Dates for closure of facilities will be agreed with local command and DIO.

Q: Is there the option of getting UK flights back at Paderborn airport? Is it possible that more trooper flights from Paderborn could be allocated for families?

A: A number of commercial airlines have tried to generate sufficient interest in Paderborn-UK routes but all have found it financially unsustainable due to limited take up. It is possible to indulge on the Germany Air Trooper service (<http://bfgnet.de/need-to-know/low-cost-flights-available-with-indulgence-passage.html>) filling seats that are not used by duty personnel (military or civil servants returning for work purposes).

Q: The computer systems in the med centres seem to go down frequently, is there an issue there?

A: BFG medical centres use the Defence Medical Information Capability Programme (DMICP) to record your electronic health record (eHR). DMICP is a secure software package that operates on the Defence Information Infrastructure (DII) bearer system. During planned or unplanned DII outages, all systems borne by DII are inaccessible. BFGHS seeks to communicate planned outages, and alternative arrangements, with the BFG community as they are programmed. Unplanned outages known to take longer than 2-3 hours to repair can be notified to the BFG community by BFBS and HQ BFG alert system.

Q: Aside from the translator, where does the money from the Paderborn PRI go?

A: The PRI shops sale profit pays for the wages of the staff and the community translator. In addition, the initial set-up costs, approx. €30,000, has also been paid during the first 12 months of operation. Further donations have been made to the Wives Clubs, the SSAFA summer fete, the Comd BFG Open Day, the AWS Achiever Awards, the Nepal Appeal and the Garrison Christmas cake competition.

Q: The welfare flats are expensive considering the families could be removed at any time. Can the price be reduced or can there be the option of a separate flat on a first-come-first-served basis where your booking is secure?

The use of welfare flats for families visiting is an indulgence that is benefited from here in BFG; it is not an entitlement. In most other Army communities welfare and contact houses are much scarcer (in line with JSP 464 scaling 2-3 per a Stn), with stricter guidelines for what they may be used for i.e. to meet single parents' visitation rights or for genuine emergency welfare. Welfare flats are principally there for welfare cases and such cases will always take precedence over other bookings (units have confirmed that it is very rare that they've had to cancel a pre-arrange booking to support a welfare case).

Here in BFG the rate charged is set by the unit that manages the welfare flat and the monies taken are used to cover all costs associated with running the flat, such as utilities, cleaning and internal upkeep. These costs cannot be covered by the public purse when the flat is being used by visiting family rather than on welfare grounds.

Q: There is still a lack of skilled/higher level employment available for dependants. Is there anything that can be done to open up further the UK Based Civilian (UKBC) type posts?

A: The Labour Support Unit (LSU) is the conduit to fill vacancies authorised by HQ BFG and other BFG Agencies (SCE, BFG Health Service etc.), therefore has no authority to create vacancies. Whilst there is more opportunity for higher graded posts than there has ever been - roughly five per cent of posts are graded at C6 or above, equable with Directly Employed Labour (DEL) numbers - it is important to remember that all posts within BFG are in support of MOD outputs. Where specialist posts may be identified, dependants do not offer continuity in post, on average two years, which can then cause gapping or failure to fill critical posts in support of BFG.

UKBC appointments tend to provide the continuity of experience (and associated business resilience) in BFG, as their overseas tour lengths are generally between three and five years - considerably longer than many of their military counterparts. This is evidenced by the fact that Locally Engaged Civilian (LEC) dependant appointments tend to turn over, on average, every couple of years (in line with the soldier's posting).

There has been one instance of a former military post having been converted to an LEC dependant opportunity, due to the Army Personnel Centre's inability to fill it. In theory, we could also convert UKBC posts if there were to be similar difficulties in filling them - although to date this is not a problem we have experienced.

Q: It can appear that dependants are the last in line to be offered opportunities i.e. to attend courses/events/activities. Can anything be done about this?

A: Courses and events are provided to personnel across BFG in two specific areas, work and social. Community activities and courses (in the Army Education Centre) are open to all entitled people in our community. Local Hives provide a vast array of information to the local community on when and where these courses are taking place. The Labour Support Unit runs a number of courses and training activities for its workers, with some aimed at Dependant (DEP) staff. Where a military or civil service course is run, it must maximise its benefit by giving priority to those who are likely to use the skills within the

MOD once they leave Germany; DEPs might be offered places on these courses on a fill up basis.

Roadshow questions - asked and answered at event

Q: What is the policy on carpets?

A: The old policy was that they would be replaced at the 10-year point, but this is no longer the case. HQ BFG and Commander Westfalen Garrison will look into this policy further along with move-out standards.

The AFF Housing Specialist clarified that charges shouldn't be raised after the 10-year point.

Q: What plans have SCE got for drawdown, especially in relation to class sizes and continuity of GCSEs and A levels?

A: The current school lay down will remain until the end and the number of pupils at Kings will remain at around 300.

Presently, the schools are fully staffed, functioning well and the inspections are good. There will be sufficient staff.

Q: When moving back to the UK, will Year11 fit into the correct Exam Boards?

A: It is usually disadvantageous for a pupil to change schools part way through two year examination courses. This might result in repetition or omission of work on the examination syllabus. Furthermore, the receiving school may not use the same examination board, leading to differences in the syllabus and requirements even for the same subject.

Parents and students contemplating the possibility of staying into Year 10 or Year 12 at King's in Sep 18 are advised to discuss this carefully with the relevant staff at King's School.

Q: It would be nice to know how well the schools are performing - the information portal doesn't contain this information.

A: All schools publish what OFSTED require them to.

Q: When PWRR go to Bulford, will we get the flats?

A: There will be a variety of housing available, including new build properties. Some of the accommodation could be flats.

Q: There are concerns about rebasing and the availability of school places. How will this be dealt with?

A: Provision is made in the DfE's School Admission Code for the children of Crown servants returning to the UK from postings overseas. Paragraph 2.18 requires that for families of Crown servants returning from overseas to live in that area, admission authorities must allocate a school place in advance of the family arriving in the area, provided their application is accompanied by an official letter declaring a relocation date. Where vacancies exist at the school, DfE would expect places to be allocated to the family in advance of their move, even if they do not yet have a confirmed address. Where a school is over-subscribed, the admission authority needs to be satisfied that places are allocated lawfully, in accordance with the oversubscription criteria. Admission authorities

may expect to have some level of certainty about a family's intended new address, so that they can make sure they allocate a place lawfully. Admission authorities are expected to be flexible in what they would accept as confirmation of address, whilst ensuring statutory duties are met and admission authorities must not refuse a child a place simply because the family does not currently live in the area. (Reference DFE-00249-2015 and DfE School Admissions Code December 2014)

MOD civil servants who are posted overseas can also seek advice from CEAS on matters relating to the education of their children. This is particularly relevant when returning to the UK after a period overseas, when they may require assistance in obtaining school places. CEAS has four Parent Support Officers, all of whom are ex-teachers who are experienced in assisting families in appealing for places in schools. CEAS can be contacted via the help-line +44 1980 618244 or Mil 94 344 8244

Q: We filled out the survey on FAM - what has happened with this?

A: AFF Chief Exec confirmed that there have been two surveys - one by the MOD and one by AFF. The information gained from the AFF survey will be discussed with the MOD. No decisions have yet been made and FAM is currently a very high priority for AFF.

Q: What's happening with the CarillionAmey (CA) contract? We had issues when we were in the UK.

A: AFF has been meeting regularly with CA. There have been some improvements lately, but more is still to be done. Their contract has been referred to the Public Accounts Committee and there is a lot of work being done to hold CA to account. It may be that their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) need looking at because if their KPIs are being met, but families' needs are not, something may need adjustment.

Q: Do Babcock have the same KPIs as CA? We have three outstanding issues with Babcock and have not heard anything back?

A: Babcock and CA will have different KPIs, but if Babcock's are not being met then command should be told. It is a different process when a private landlord owns the property. The issue is still raised via Babcock, but the landlord must be given time to resolve the matter themselves before Babcock can step in.