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Retired Royal Navy Logistics community

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Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my very great pleasure to write to the community of retired Royal Navy logisticians once again and update you all on what has been happening within your Branch.

During the last year the Royal Navy has been as busy as ever, has stepped up wherever and whenever asked, and continues to be at the forefront of the contribution that Defence makes to the protection of the United Kingdom, our allies, and the wider global community. Our logisticians – Royal Navy, Royal Marine, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Civil Service – have equally been involved in enabling everything from Forward Presence in the Pacific and Non-Combatant Evacuation operations in Sudan, through to theatre drawdown from Mali and the ongoing efforts to move vast quantities of international equipment and ammunition into Ukraine. Closer to home, our commitment to Persistent Presence has seen the first deployment of Littoral Response Group (North) to the Baltic Sea and Norway, led by HMS ALBION. And of course, our critical work to support and enable global maritime operations goes on in the background, often unseen, day-in, day-out. Individually, each is impressive; taken as a whole, the achievements this past year have been as professionally remarkable as they have been diverse. I am constantly in awe at the commitment, talent, and professional skills on display within the logistics community and I know that those efforts are hugely appreciated at the very highest levels of Defence.

In my last update, I hinted at some of the ways in which we were attempting to modernise and evolve our traditional specialisations. The work has involved plenty of deep and honest self-reflection around our core business and previously held assumptions; not just 'what' is done but 'how' it is done. As the world continues to change at pace, tweaks to the fringes of our business will no longer suffice. We must fundamentally challenge ourselves to think differently about our workforce and employment models if we are going to be able to deliver the global and modern Royal Navy that the country needs now and out to 2040 and beyond. This view has been validated within the recommendations of the recent Haythornthwaite Review, and as a Branch we are well placed to meet the challenge it sets in terms of professionalisation, changing our skills base and becoming more agile as an organisation. This work will underpin an updated Logistics Branch Strategy that will be published in October and will set out clearly the route to achieve our ambitious plans.

Some of the elements to achieve this are already well advanced. Logistics Officer training for example has been completely refreshed to better prepare our junior LOs for a diverse range of shore, Staff and Naval Air Squadron appointments – their most likely first job following graduation from the Defence College of Logistics, Policing & Administration (DCLPA). The new pipeline sees them return to DCLPA for an enhanced pre-sea package ahead of their time as either an FF/DD Deputy Logistics Officer or singleton LO in a Submarine, Offshore Patrol Vessel, or survey ship. This

markedly reduces skill fade and ensures our people are best prepared for the challenge of keeping our ships and submarines deployed for prolonged periods around the globe.

For our senior officers, the system of selection and appointment by Career Field (e.g., Op Support, Management of Defence, Defence Engagement, etc) rather than just a generic branch quota is now firmly bedded in for promotion to Captain and will expand further to the Commander boards. You will be pleased to hear that our Logistics Officers remain very highly sought after for their versatility and breadth of experience, and for the second successive year have 'punched above our weight', with healthy promotion numbers compared to the overall size of the Branch.

For the rating cadres, we will move our Writers and Supply Chain personnel away from functional activity (inputting pay and allowance tasks and old-school stores accounting), turning them into a professional Human Resources arm and genuine Supply Chain Managers respectively. This is an exciting transition and much broader than the limited space here allows me to divulge. The Catering Services specialisation is once again leading the charge in terms of innovation; in just the last six months, we have simplified how we run catering accounts at sea, launched trials that will overhaul how we manage Non-Public and Welfare Funds, and introduced several Industry best-practice ways of working which, taken as a whole, claw back days' worth of time to our Leading Hands and PO Caterers – all of which can be better spent in the galley or mentoring our juniors. In terms of training, we are introducing a Fast Track scheme to tempt those with existing civilian qualifications into the Service (combined with Higher Starting Pay) and have introduced a new training pipeline for AB2s to get them qualified to AB1 more quickly. Perhaps most radically, we are, for the first time, looking to formally employ and deploy civilian Kitchen Porters alongside our uniformed personnel. Provided by the NAAFI, these extra hands will ensure our highly trained CS ratings can focus on the world-class food preparation and Defence Engagement activity for which they are rightly held in such regard.

I am delighted to see continued improvements in the relationship between the current and 'former' communities; the very act of you receiving this update is indicative of the progress made! It is important that we retain and strengthen ties with the wider logistics 'family', particularly as part of our development strategy will be to seek out opportunities for placements for our most talented. What better way to inspire or invest in our people than to have them taste life in a high-end restaurant, or advanced global distribution company, for example; if you would like to be involved I would be keen to hear from you.

In terms of the Senior plot, I am happy to announce that we will shortly have another Logistics 2*, with Cdre Paul Murphy, currently Deputy Director (Logistics) in NCHQ off to MoD Main Building in the Autumn. I close on a personal note: I too move back to the MoD imminently, where I will assume the mantle of Chief of Defence Logistics and Support. My time as Chief Naval Logistics Officer will therefore sadly draw to a close in 2024. It has been an absolute privilege to hold this historic role since 2019, and one that has afforded me the very real pleasure of routinely speaking to, meeting, and generally being involved with the people, direction, and output of this brilliant Profession.

You have my sincere thanks and appreciation for your invaluable support and engagement during my time in post,

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