

The British Joint Helicopter Command



The Joint Helicopter Command (JHC) was established as a formation in Land Command in 1999 to bring together all the United Kingdom Forces' battlefield helicopters under one organisation whose purpose is to deliver and sustain effective Battlefield Helicopter and Air Assault Assets, operationally capable under all environmental conditions, to support the UK's Defence Mission and tasks.

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The Command operates over **250 aircraft including the Sea King and Lynx helicopters of the Commando Helicopter Force; the Chinook, Puma and Merlin helicopters of the RAF and the Lynx, Gazelle, Apache, Bell 212 and Islanders of the Army.**

The Command headquarters are collocated with HQ LAND in Wilton, near Salisbury. The JHC comprises some 15,000 personnel, about 7,600 of whom serve in 16 Air Assault Brigades¹.

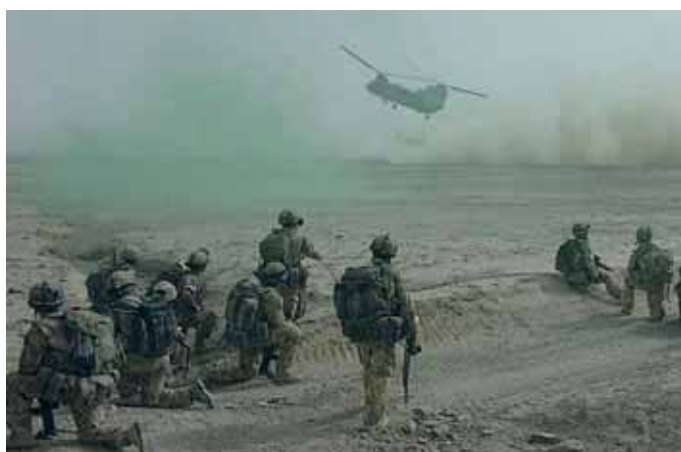
The helicopter units in the JHC comprise

the RN Commando Helicopter Force, all operational Army Air Corps aircraft and all RAF support helicopters. Royal Navy helicopters that operate as part of ships weapon systems, such as Anti-Submarine helicopters, and both RN and RAF Search and Rescue (SAR) helicopters, are not part of the JHC.

The JHC provides **a unified command structure for the integration of Battlefield Helicopter and Air Assault combat, combat support and combat service support units.** The principal focus of all JHC activity is the delivery of effective Battlefield and Air Assault combat power in support of operations. It strives to provide a coherent structure

to ensure that the correct level of appropriately resourced, trained and sustained forces are available for employment by a Joint Commander in support of land, special forces or amphibious operations. To achieve this vision, it aims to provide an efficient joint approach to doctrine, structures, training support and working practices; harmonising these across the three Services. The JHC seeks to build on the skills and knowledge of individuals as well as the strengths and traditions of the single Services in order to raise standards of safety and quality. It also seeks to forge strong links across the Command. In short, the JHC values the individual and maintains the ethos of the three fighting Services, whilst focusing their joint capabilities to enhance the operational effectiveness of UK Battlefield Helicopter and Air Assault forces.

Commander JHC's overarching intent is that the Command delivers **a coherent and integrated Air**



Manoeuvre capability to Defence, comprising an effective mix of attack, utility, surveillance and support battlefield helicopters and air assault forces all either supported by, or in support of the maritime, land, air and special forces components. Deployed Force Elements will be tailored to the mission with joint C2, fires, intelligence and logistics to conduct operations across the spectrum of conflict and in all environments. Units, equipment and Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) should be configured for the most likely small and medium scale scenarios, but must be capable of adapting for large scale warfighting.

Units in the JHC break down into **five main areas.**

The Commando Helicopter Force (CHF) is based at the Royal Naval Air Station (RNAS) at Yeovilton and operates 35 aircraft. Whilst well-

operations when supported by Amphibious Task Group (ATG) shipping, or when ashore alongside elements of 3 Commando Brigade, a Joint Helicopter Force (JHF), or similar formations. Its purpose is the provision of tactical mobility, ISTAR, and aviation combat support and combat service support primarily to 3 Commando Brigade during littoral operations. It is configured to provide the capability to conduct a simultaneous two company-group lift. The CHF is made up of a headquarters capable of provide a JHF HQ during amphibious operations and of four Naval Air Squadrons that provide the UK Amphibious Forces with lift, ISTAR, Light Utility Helicopter (LUH), training and Maritime Counter-Terrorism (MCT) capabilities. Since 1968, the CHF has carried out annual Arctic training deployments to Bardufoss, 200nm inside the Arctic Circle. The purpose of these training deployments has been to



versed in the conduct of land-based support helicopter reconnaissance and surveillance missions, the CHF is **primarily a maritime force that is trained, equipped and organised for expeditionary joint operations in the littoral environment.** It is a self-contained operational formation, with organic C2, signals, Mobile Air Operations Teams (MAOTs), aviation fuel and logistics capabilities that allow stand-alone deployments of short duration, and sustained

develop and sustain the CHF's capability to fly in support of UK/Netherlands Amphibious Forces (UKNLAf), the only formation in the UK ORBAT specifically trained for and current in Mountain and Cold Weather Warfare.

16 Air Assault Brigade is based in Colchester in Essex, with the majority of its units in the surrounding area. It is made up of two AAC attack regiments, one AAC Light Utility

Helicopter (LUH) regiment, four air assault battalions, an artillery and engineer regiment and other support elements. As **an air manoeuvre brigade,** it is a unique formation within the UK order of battle. It is a highly capable and rapidly deployable force that offers wide potential across the operational spectrum. It is designed to secure or open points of entry for other Land or Air elements and to confer significant high utility combat power. As a result, it is used frequently on operations, most recently in Afghanistan.

Army Aviation units provide integrated aviation operations as part of Land Manoeuvre within Land operations. In warfighting operations the principle task of Army Aviation is to form **the core element of Air Manoeuvre.** Aviation units form Combined Arms Battlegroups (BGs) and are given manoeuvre missions, that see them using fire and manoeuvre and operating within the context of mission command. They are expected to operate in and dominate their own battlespace employing organic and non-organic (including Joint) systems to prosecute operations. Additionally, Aviation BGs or Aviation manoeuvre units are able to operate in support of other Component Commanders (Maritime, SF and Air). Attack, Utility and Specialist Aviation units support Land and Joint Operations in Combat, Combat Support and Combat Service Support roles in both war-fighting and Other Operations. The Army Air Corps (AAC) is organised into Regiments, Squadrons and Flights and these units are based around the world.

The RAF Support Helicopter Force, which includes Chinook, Puma and Merlin squadrons based at Aldergrove, Benson and Odiham, provides **helicopter support primarily to LAND components for a wide range of current and contingent tasks.** It operates a fleet of 68 aircraft. At RAF Aldergrove, the Joint



Helicopter Force Northern Ireland is tasked to provide designated air and aviation capabilities for operations in Northern Ireland in support of the Police the defeat of terrorism and the maintenance of public order. RAF Benson provides a fully deployable, tactical headquarters and is responsible for Puma and Merlin training and exercise support, whole-fleet management, equipment procurement and support for deployed forces. The presence at RAF Odiham provides the same headquarters capability and is responsible for similar tasks as Benson involving the Chinook. RAF Odiham also houses the Joint Special Forces Aviation Wing (JSFAW) which is a joint RAF and Army unit comprising Chinook HC2, Defenders and Lynx in support of Special Forces operations.

¹ The overall figure includes over 800 reserves from the Territorial Army, Royal Naval Reserve and Royal Auxiliary Air Force, plus 380 civilian staff.

The JHC is in the vanguard of the Joint approach within the British Forces. It has ensured a rationalization of battlefield helicopter support and has brought a central focus for the capability. It enables doctrine, structures, training, support and working practices to be harmonised across the UK's three Services. It provides a unified command structure for the integration of battlefield helicopters, with the air assault, combat support and combat service support units of 16 Air Assault Brigade. Recent experience has proven that **battlefield helicopters are an essential enabler for almost every operation in which British Forces are involved.** For that reason, it is in high demand, particularly in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, where helicopter assets have proven pivotal, enabling unrivalled mobility to Land Forces. The JHC underpins this and provides a coherent, efficient approach, enhancing the delivery, interoperability and effectiveness of combat power for operations to the benefit of the operational commander.