

Annex 3.4 Kirkcudbright Training Area

1 Suitability

Location/Distance/Accessibility

- 1.1 Kirkcudbright Training Area (KTA) is situated on the northern coastline of the Solway Firth, in Dumfries and Galloway approximately 90 kilometres west of Carlisle.
- 1.2 It is approached along the A711 from Dumfries, which runs along the northern boundary and the A75 between Gretna and Stranraer, providing a convenient training resource for units stationed in Northern Ireland and Central and Southern Scotland. There is no rail access.

Topography

- 1.3 The coastline consists of a series of craggy buttresses falling to a rocky shoreline. The remainder of KTA comprises low rolling hills, typical of the farming countryside encountered in most parts of north-west Europe. Land use is predominantly agricultural, although there are areas of managed woodland. Sheep and cattle grazing dominate agricultural land management and the grazing regime contributes significantly to the availability of natural and realistic training.
- 1.4 Although weather conditions on the coast can be severe, the character of this prime farming land is only variable and demanding to a limited extent.

Size and Shape

- 1.5 KTA covers approximately 1900 hectares of land, arranged in a broad swath adjacent to an extensive length of coastline, with the public road (A711) running along the northern boundary. As a result all live firing is from north to south toward the sea danger areas. The sea Danger Template is extensive and extends some 24 km by 33 km (a total of 57,000 hectares). Within the outer limits of this Danger Area are 3 separate Danger Templates that relate to different firing regimes.

- 1.6 The small size of the training area restricts the extent of training activity and only one IFFC can run at any one time. In addition, there is only camp accommodation for one company, which is insufficient to accommodate safety staff necessary to facilitate the IFFC. Battalion level dry training exercises are only possible if nearby TOPL arrangements at the Galloway Forest and Dalbeattie are utilised, although these need to be booked independently.

Facilities

- 1.7 KTA offers first class facilities for fire and movement and dry training exercises in realistic and testing conditions. All the ranges are field firing and can accommodate two platoons training simultaneously. There are planned field firing exercises for section up to company level. The range can accommodate all approved weapon systems, including MRLS. There are no restrictions to live fire or dry tactical training, although at present there is generally only live firing on one Saturday night per month and no live firing on Sundays.
- 1.8 Recent infrastructure developments include the provision of a new ammunition compound and the first phase of the development of the field firing ranges, including moving targets, grenade pits and effects pits. Additions for the future include two platoon-defence ranges live firing facilities for battalion support weapons.
- 1.9 Dry training can take place across the whole range, on the fringe areas of the tank road and the hard standing when there is no live firing. During live firing exercises no dry training is possible due to the stock being moved into the safe areas to the north of the training area.

2 Availability

Priority

- 2.1 The priorities for training on KTA under Landso 1406 are for field firing and infantry training for units based in Northern Ireland (EPORT¹). This includes use by helicopters, police services and dogs. In addition, it is used for testing of equipment and ordnance by QinetiQ and by the Territorial Army (TA) and cadets at the weekends.

¹ Extended Periodic Operational Refresher Training

- 2.2 The implementation of plans for the development of KTA have led to the provision of facilities to allow infantry field firing exercises to complete IFFC up to Stages 4 and 5 and it is anticipated that this will result in much greater use in the future, especially by 19 Brigade and by the TA at weekends.

Disruption

- 2.3 Disruption to normal training priorities for pre-operational training is currently low.

Limitations

- 2.4 The size of KTA restricts its use as a multiple training resource. EPORT exercises take over the whole training area, as do weapons testing exercises and trials. The inability to undertake battalion level exercises without recourse to existing TOPL arrangements also poses constraints upon its utility and in addition, these facilities are not administered by KTA.
- 2.5 Environmental considerations also lead to some limitations to use. The full length of the coastline is notified as a SSSI because of its geological interest and there are three Scheduled Monuments within KTA, which are out of bounds for military training activity. No digging is allowed anywhere on the training area and wheeled vehicles are only permitted on the tracks.
- 2.6 Public access to KTA is via a public road (A711), which runs along the northern perimeter and the road to Abbey Burnfoot, which is open to the public when the red flags are not flying. All other roads within KTA are closed by barrier gates. It is not yet clear what effect the Land Reform (Scotland) Act will have on public access across KTA, where and when military training permits.

3 Available Sub Unit Training Weeks

Typical annual training programme

- 3.1 Regular EPORT training forms the backbone of the annual training programme. This is booked for between 24-26 weeks per year and utilises the whole of the training area. In addition, trials and equipment testing are booked for one week per month and also utilise

the whole of the training area. There are therefore only about 20 5-day training weeks available to meet the light for CP1, CP2 and CP3 training needs.

Availability for CP1 and CP2 light force training

- 3.2 Once the prioritised training outlined above has been programmed there is limited spare availability for additional light force training. At best KTA could accommodate either 20 sub-unit training weeks of live fire tactical training to the exclusion of any dry training or 104 sub unit weeks of dry tactical training excluding any live fire training. These would be mutually exclusive and could not be carried out at the same time. However, this potential availability is unlikely to be available in the blocks of time required for CP1 and CP2 mandated training and under Directed Training any spare capacity will be utilised by 19 Brigade, when it is re-based in the north.

4 Sources of Information

- 4.1 Details of the Kirkcudbright Training Area contained in this Annex is drawn from the following data sources:
- ATE Scotland : User Guide
 - ATE Scotland : Public Information Leaflet
 - RPS "*Public Access Consultancy for the Army Training Estate : Regional Report ATE Scotland*" 2003
 - Meeting with Commandant KTA, 2 February 2005