

Richard Leakey, Commander, UK Joint Aviation Group Afghanistan, MOD - Joint Helicopter Command

Colonel Leakey was born in Burundi, Central Africa and spent his early years in central and eastern Africa before returning to the UK for his secondary education. After completing a General Arts degree at the University of Leicester, Colonel Leakey attended the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst and was commissioned into the Army Air Corps in 1987. His early years as an Army helicopter pilot were in the Lynx anti-tank role with 3 Regt AAC based at Soest, Germany; this first tour included 6 months' operational flying in Northern Ireland. Following a 2 year exchange with the French 1^{er} Régiment d'Hélicoptères de Combat (1990-92) flying HOT equipped Gazelles, Colonel Leakey was appointed Operations Officer firstly in the recently created aviation battle group in 24 Airmobile Brigade and subsequently in the Brigade Headquarters itself. After attending Division 2 of the Army Command and Staff Course at Shrivenham and gaining a Master of Arts degree, Colonel Leakey was appointed to the Apache Project Office within the MOD's Procurement Executive. Colonel Leakey commanded 659 Sqn at Wattisham from 1998-2000; the Squadron was the Lynx Mk9 squadron in 4 Regt AAC, one of the two aviation battle groups in the newly formed 16 Air Assault Brigade. The period in command saw his squadron deploy in support of NATO's Kosovo campaign from Feb-Sep 99 with its principal task being to provide Lt Gen Sir Mike Jackson – COM KFOR – and senior HQ ARRC officers with battlefield mobility. In 2001 Colonel Leakey was selected for promotion to lieutenant colonel and was posted as the UK's aviation liaison officer to USAAVNC Fort Rucker, USA. He returned as CO 7 Regiment Army Air Corps in 2004; during this time he planned and executed the multinational aviation support to the Gleneagles G8 Conference in July 2005. From Feb-Jun 2006 Colonel Leakey commanded the UK's Joint Helicopter Force in Iraq. Following short staff appointments in the Joint Helicopter Command headquarters in Wilton and in HQ ARRC in Rheindahlen, Germany, Colonel Leakey was selected to command the UK's Joint Aviation Group – comprising all UK deployed helicopters – in Kandahar, Afghanistan from Oct 09-Apr 10. The highlight of this operational tour was commanding the multi-aircraft, coalition air assault in the opening phase of Op MOSHTARAK on 13 Feb 10. Colonel Leakey's assumed command of the Joint Helicopter Command's Flying Station, Aldergrove on 1st September 2010.

