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Soldiers' photographic representations of participation in armed conflict.

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Introduction

What makes soldier photography distinctive? In this chapter, we discuss the photographs that soldiers and other military personnel take and possess. Through this we explore how something ostensibly as simple as capturing or owning a photograph entails complexities around both the meaning of armed conflict, and the personal representation of participation in armed conflict. We look first at the range of practices around the taking of photographs of and by soldiers, and discuss the ways in which photographic practices might be seen as distinctive in military contexts. This includes the use of the photograph to mark the transformation of the civilian to soldier, the use of photographs for military purposes distinct from the more obvious official and tactical use of surveillance photography, and the use of photographs as a communicative tool for military personnel. We then go on to look at how photographs themselves, as material objects, have specific functions for military personnel as they move through and beyond their military lives.

The taking and collecting of photographs is a common social practice, something that with the availability of cheap and efficient photographic technologies is almost globally ubiquitous. We all do it. There is nothing in this practice that is in itself remarkable or notable, beyond the observations and theorisations that we can all make and share regarding the consequences of image ubiquity and the meanings of personal photography.[1] Furthermore, the use by institutions and organisations of visual images, for internal and external purposes, is an established organisational practice. Institutions and organisations from the private to the voluntary, national to the local, construct representations of themselves for external public consumption through the medium of photographic capture and display. Internally, the visual cultures of organisations speak to participants or employees through a repertoire of images.

Military forces and military personnel, then, are in some ways no different from other people, employees and institutions, in that the social and employment practices through which their work is conducted draw on visual imagery for functional purposes. But military forces and military personnel are, in other ways, highly distinctive. Armed forces are organisations invested by the state with the responsibility for the execution of legitimated violence. The specificity of military forces is reflected in their functions, from the requirement to kill to the responsibilities to correctly interpret complex in-theatre rules of engagement, and reflected too in social practices ranging from caveats in the application of employment legislation to the realities of death and serious injury for personnel. These specificities mark military forces out as different. So when considering the distinctiveness of soldiers' photographic practices, there is always a tension between the fact that military personnel act within the broad conventions and expectations of social norms, and the fact that they quite specifically do not. Furthermore, for all the training that military personnel undertake in order to produce their deadly functionality, they are still people with spouses, friends, families, interests, opinions and preferences for how they spend their time. Their reflections on this positionality through the medium of photography and the photographic image provide our focus here.

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[1]For an introduction to the conceptual issues that personal photography raises see Holland (2004) and Spence and Holland (1991).

This chapter draws primarily on a research project which examined soldiers' representations of themselves, print media representations of the soldier, and the dynamics between the two.[2] Part of this project entailed asking soldiers about their military identities, and we did this by using photo-elicitation interviews (see Collier and Collier, 1986; Harper, 2002; Jenkings et al, 2008). Sixteen depth interviews were conducted, and prior to each interview our interviewees were asked to select up to ten photographs of their military lives which they would be prepared to bring to the interview and share with the interviewer. The majority of the sixteen had left the armed forces by the time of their interview. Our interviewees ranged in rank from private to captain and included both people who had served in the regular armed forces and also one reservist. Our sample included fourteen men and two women. All had served either in the British Army or the Royal Marines, and had served for periods of between five and twenty-two years. The interviews were structured around the photographs each participant brought along, and the order in which the photographs were discussed was left entirely to the interviewee. The photographs were scanned at the end of the interview and the interview itself transcribed, producing a dataset of around 22 hours of interview narrative and 155 photographs. This dataset was then analysed using coding strategies drawn from a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1998); codes were defined on the basis of the discussions between respondent and interviewer during the interview. A number of key themes emerged around issues of identity, personal biographies, political understandings of military activities, the practices of memory work and the practices of photography itself. It is this latter theme which we focus on here. We should add that although the primary intention behind the interviews was to use photographs as a mechanism for bringing forth ideas about

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[2] 'Negotiating identity and representation in the mediated Armed Forces', Economic and Social Research Council grant RES-000-22-0992, Rachel Woodward, Trish Winter and K.Neil Jenkings (2006-07). See Jenkings et al, 2008; Jenkings and Woodward, 2010; Woodward and Jenkings, 2011; Woodward et al, 2009, 2010, 2011. Some additional material from another research project, on military autobiographical narratives, is also included in this chapter: 'The social production of the contemporary British military memoir', Economic and Social Research Council grant RES-062-23-1493, Rachel Woodward and K.Neil Jenkings, (2009-11).

military participation and identity, the taking, collection and use of the photographic images themselves emerged as an unanticipated additional line of inquiry.

This additional research focus in turn opened up new questions about military photography. There is a wider context here, in terms of existing work on military forces, imagery and image-capturing technologies, and the scopic regimes – the collections of practices and discourses through which dominant and socially-determined protocols are established for seeing and being seen – through which visualities develop (Campbell and Power, 2010, after Feldman, 2005). At a basic and fundamental level, as others have noted, photographic technologies emerged in parallel with developments in the technologies of warfare (particularly ballistics and mobilities) from the mid-19th century onwards, and that relationship between visualisation and the capturing of the image and the application of this for military ends has endured (see Virilio, 1989, 1994; Diller and Scofidio, 1996). We see this in the most simple of terminologies around the shooting of images and the camera/gun parallels this invokes. We see this relationship at work in the most sophisticated of military technologies and weapons systems, in the indivisibility of the technologies which enable an event such as a pilot's firing of the Apache attack helicopter missiles, the mechanisms which ensure their accuracy and the technologies which record the event for post-mission debrief (Macy, 2008, 2009). We see this in the technologies of surveillance through which urban spaces become militarised and securitised, attacked and defended (Graham, 2010). An ever-increasing mass of critical scholarship examines the focusing abilities of military forces themselves, the scopic regimes they bring into being and the lethal consequences for those under observation (for an introduction, see MacDonald et al, 2010).

Whilst the visualising, shooting and capturing processes we discuss sit within this broader range of visualisation and representational practices, our focus remains, however, at the more individual and personal scale of military personnel themselves. For aside from the technophiliac desires of the state and from the commentaries of those who enact and observe it, there remain people undertaking on a daily basis the extraordinary tasks of soldiering, and recording these practices through the ordinary act of photography. Our questions here are therefore about how the simple act of photography and the simple material or digital object that is the photographic image can be rendered complex and distinctive through their being conducted within military operations and military institutions.

Photographic lives

Soldiers are always being watched by other soldiers, and their activities are frequently photographed. From the very start of a career in the armed forces a soldier or equivalent will have his or her photograph taken, and there are clear parallels with the induction process within any institution (university staff and students are no different). The distinctive thing about military personnel is both that that process will continue and that it will be institutionally enabled, sanctioned and required. Official photographers therefore have a role beyond the taking of images capturing events such as passing out parades and formal activities. So whilst a great number of our interviewees brought to their interviews copies of official, formal unit photographs, many interviewees brought as well, or instead, photographs of operations (both from armed operations and from training exercises) taken by military photographers and passed to an individual as a record of an incident or moment within his or her military career.

Significant here were those of young trainees. One example showed a group of men marching along a track between fields, carrying heavy rucksacks and rifles, wearing khaki battledress and caps and led from the front by a man wearing the distinctive maroon beret of the Parachute Regiment. The photograph 'is a conclusion of a three-day exercise, which was your first real test, out in the wood and getting screamed at by a psychotic para'.[3] A subsequent photograph, a close-up head-and-shoulders shot of one of the men in the group, shows our interviewee fatigued and gazing into the middle-distance. Both photographs had been taken by an official photographer, who 'took some snaps for you to send home to your mum. "Here is me looking dead butch out in the woods"'. These photographs, and others like them in our dataset, had been taken as records of significant achievements in the training process.

A sub-set of these records of personal achievement were those produced by a number of Royal Marine Commandos, showing either the event of passing through a water-tunnel (part of the final commando test at the end of training) or of unaided exit from an icehole in water (part of the mountain and arctic warfare training test). These photographs are distinct in that they not only record progress through training but emphasise through their recording the

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[3] This and all subsequent quotations, unless otherwise stated, are from the 'Negotiating Identity and Representation' project interviews.

ritualistic and thus transformative nature of these events which turn young men into trained Commandos. These photos were often shared with family members; 'I got some just to give to my mum'.

The use of official photographers extends from training and exercises through to active operations. For example, a range of images from the war in Afghanistan – way beyond the scope of those captured by embedded journalists and civilian photographers – frame Ministry of Defence reports of action. The practice of using official (i.e. military) photographers on operations appears to be routine, and a number of our interviewees brought with them photographs taken in such contexts. One example from an operation in Northern Ireland in the early 1980s shows a group of men running across open ground. This was valued by its owner, who had sought out a copy; 'I like it. It's one of the few that I've got where you are out there on patrol'. He had a framed copy and displayed it on a wall in his home. Another example from another interviewee shows his younger self leaning with weapon ready across the bonnet of a Landrover; 'a lot of people said, you know, that's a good posed photograph. There was no posing about it whatsoever, that was back to [the] regimental photographer that one, he come along, click, and he was just snapping left, right and centre'.

It was more common for our interviewees to bring photographs they had taken themselves, rather than official photographs. For some, the taking of photographs melded with their military role. For some personnel in some roles, taking photographs is part of their military role and personnel with mapping and reconnaissance duties will photograph areas of interest as a matter of routine. Taking photographs whilst on patrol could also be necessary as a means of monitoring a local population. For example, an interviewee reflecting on a period of active service in Northern Ireland observed that

> the quickest way to keep kids in hand in a situation […] was to take a camera with you. They didn't like their photos taken because if you got a photograph of them throwing a brick, then you could get them in court, and you've got photographic evidence that they were doing something that they shouldn't have been doing. [The soldiers] didn't point a rifle at them – point a camera at them and they're off, gone.

Conversely, and nearly twenty years later, cameras could be used with children to different effect. A Royal Marine on operations in Kurdistan in 1991 presented a snapshot of himself surrounded by a group of about twenty young children and told a story of befriending the children, a lot of whom had fled with their families during the war and who had returned to

the safe haven established by UN troops. The children are smiling and waving, along with our interviewee, to the camera; 'it's almost… they see us as their saviours, really'. The process of taking the photograph, he explained, was part of a wider strategy of assuring the local populace that they were safe.

More mundane reasons for taking photographs on active operations included a basic need to communicate. For a Royal Marine who had spent periods of time on arctic warfare training in Norway and active service in Northern Ireland, photographs of, respectively, the troop skiing or of an 8-tonne truck and vehicle recovery trailer, or of the inside of a sangar (a type of observation tower) were taken primarily to tell civilian friends and family something of what the interviewee's military life entailed. Taking photographs was also about capturing an image of an event for future memory purposes. Images of celebratory events such as nights out did this, as did more mundane shots of routine patrols and places.

Soldier photography, we would argue, is ubiquitous, and some of our interviewees frequently underscored this point with references to the idea that a small pocket camera was just another part of one's kit, carried on exercises and operations on a routine basis even where photography was not a part of the military task itself. Restrictions on what could or could not be photographed were seldom mentioned. It is worth emphasising too that the majority of our interviewees had completed their employment with the armed forces in the 1980s and 1990s, and well before the mass availability of cheap, reliable digital cameras. These are recognised to have increased the quantity of images soldiers (indeed, anyone) can take and store. In this respect, there may be little difference between soldier and wider civilian photographic practices. The difference lies with the subject-matter.

Much of the subject matter for soldier photographs – military operations, training and events – will be readily identifiable in its distinctiveness from civilian topics. The aspect we want to focus on here is that of the posed photograph, the photograph which contains an image of an individual who is deliberately holding a physical position or posture for the benefit of the photographic image. The terms of reference of posed photographs draw primarily on representations of war and soldiering which circulate through other popular media. Film is the most significant here. So, for example, an interviewee showing a photograph of himself and colleagues during jungle training highlighted the visual references within the postures and attire of the people in the photo to the Rambo films. Others spoke of iconic images from the photojournalism of past wars. One interviewee drew explicit reference to the Vietnam war

and images of US troops when discussing his own jungle warfare training photographs. Another showing a photograph of British troops with a captured Argentinean vehicle in the Falkland Islands recognised the emulation in the positioning of the men of older, similar images from the Second World War. Given that most soldiers tend to be fairly young and in fairly good physical condition, it was unsurprising that a number showed individuals displaying their physique. One interviewee described a picture of himself in his uniform, arms crossed and gazing into the middle distance as the product of him wanting a picture: 'I hadn't really had a decent picture in my new uniform […] so this is a just a real vanity picture'. Colleagues were often remembered for their habit of striking a pose in any photograph; one image, for example, sparked recollections about a particular individual who 'couldn't help himself. Whenever he stood still, he would always strike a pose. He was your typical API [Army Physical Training Instructor] gym queen'.

Another element of distinction lies in the taking of what we might term the 'trophy photograph', photographs where the purpose of capturing the image is the assertion of presence at an event or in a particular place. We all do this, of course; what Barthes (1981) terms the 'certificate of presence' identifying an individual in a particular place at a particular time is a common trope within personal photographic practice. What is distinctive about soldier photography lies with the types of event – armed conflict – at which the individual's presence is certified by the photograph. One soldier (one of only two who explicitly mentioned restrictions on soldier photography) showed a photograph of himself standing in front of an AWACS surveillance plane in Oman in 2003 at the start of the Iraq war. 'We weren't actually supposed to take photographs. Me and me mate when no-one was looking […] got as close to it as we could and took a sneaky shot of it.' He had others in his collection marking his journey through Iraq via photographs of himself in front of other equipment and vehicles, bomb-damaged wreckage from the 1991 war and murals of Saddam Hussein. These war-tourist photographs were replicated in many other interviewees' collections. Some captured events that even in that context were thought to be unusual. An officer with a Territorial Army regiment produced a photograph of herself sat with two similarly-uniformed colleagues on a large sofa in a comfortable room with a Christmas tree in one corner. All three are smiling broadly. Taken at an ambassador's house in Kuwait during the Iraq War, the soldiers had been delivering donations for a children's charity's Christmas collection, and had been invited into the residence: 'We made sure we had a photo, because we didn't think anyone would believe us, that we'd managed to get in there.'

The idea of the photograph as trophy, however, goes beyond this simple certification of presence. The term has been applied within the British print media to photographs of dead and destroyed enemy bodies, and of images of events which are transgressive of military codes of conduct such as the beating or humiliation of prisoners. Our interviewees did not show us any photographs of this nature. Rather, the idea of the trophy photograph was applied to images which signified bravery or daring during operations. The example which epitomised this showed a Royal Marine on patrol in Belfast during the early 1980s, standing in front of a mural to Bobby Sands, an IRA member imprisoned by the UK government who died whilst on hunger strike. The fact of the memorial to Sands signifies that this photograph was taken in a Republican area of Belfast. For it's owner, by having his photograph taken in front of the mural 'I am saying "look at me, I am not scared of you". Just standing next to the wall, and me mates taking a happy snappy of me, "I am not scared of you"'. The mural was 'their trophy, and I've gone and taken it away from them, I suppose', by the act of having his photograph taken in front of it whilst on patrol.

We should note, however, that this urge to capture a certificate of presence or to take away from an event or a period of life 'proof' for memory purposes, was not ubiquitous. Again, we can consider the parallels with civilian photographic practices, and how the viewing or otherwise of photographs is a carefully managed activity (van Dijk, 2004). Some things we don't want to remember. Military personnel are no different; the distinction lies, potentially, with the nature and depth of the emotion stirred up by memories that may verge on the traumatic. A couple of our interviewees mentioned this quite explicitly, with reference to their choice of photographs to bring to the interview. In both cases, experiences in the 1991 Gulf War were not ones that they wanted to remember, despite the ostensible kudos associated with active service as part of a military career. Certifying their presence was not something they felt they wanted to do.

The final aspect of soldier photographs that we highlight here as a way of teasing out the distinctions that soldier photography raises, are family photographs. Specifically, we refer to kinship families, as distinct from the relationships of fictive kinship which, our research revealed, were a key element of the personal military identities of soldiers (see Woodward and Jenkings, 2011). Bringing photographs of family members to share during the interview was a way of bringing a wider lifeworld to the interviewee as a military operative; the interviews, after all, were set up explicitly as conversations around military identities. Some examples were rather poignant. For his first photograph, an interviewee in his late 50s

showed a photograph of himself as a young man, sitting in a room in beret and camouflage-print uniform, doing what looks like reading – he is looking down at something in his lap. Behind him, propped up on a radiator pipe, is a photograph of a young woman, smiling. He said that 'the photo at the back is of my girlfriend and I have still got that photo as well, but I didn't bring it, which is a shame because it would have been a nice link'. The interviewer asked whether the woman depicted was still his girlfriend. 'No, she's my wife now, […] we got married, so, er, not going too bad, 30 plus years, and that's typical squaddie in some respects you know'. Another interviewee, again as his first photograph in the interview and thus an introductory image, showed a photograph of a woman and a girl sitting in the front seats of a car, which looks civilian but which has the number plates blanked out and a blue siren on the top of the vehicle. The explanation of the photograph combined discussion of his duties in the car – he was a Royal Marine and at that time deployed with personal protection for VIPs during a posting in Naples – and the fact that he was able to enjoy family life with his wife and daughter on that posting. Another Royal Marine produced a photograph of himself and three others; one is wearing morning dress and the interviewee and two others are wearing dress uniforms. He talked of the significance of wearing his dress uniform at his own wedding, how it symbolised inviting the Marines 'to cross over into my private family' as he started his married life. Photographs such as these were significant for the ways that they prompted reflections on military identities but, more prosaically and for our purposes here, they are also significant for showing the normalities of lives that are often seen in civilian worlds as strange, unknowable, different.

There is an interesting question here about the ways in which the dynamics of the research interview, involving an interviewer presenting himself as a civilian social scientist and an interviewee presenting him/herself as a military operative, itself shaped our interviewees' representations of their military lives as normal and routinized, yet distinct because of their military context. On the one hand, we have no way of addressing this; the interviews were not set up as therapeutic exercises and because no follow-up interviews were conducted our observations on reflexivity are limited. On the other hand, and although we were mindful of the idea of the research interview as a unique occasion for the articulation and exchange of ideas and meanings, we were also aware that in some interviews, some interviewees appeared to be articulating rehearsed stories and observations, stories which may have involved the use of the same photographs, and presumably to both civilian and military audiences. We have no way of concluding definitively on the reflexive shaping of data collection and conceptual

development during the interview, beyond flagging up that the issue of self-presentational concern remains an open question here. However, as we discuss elsewhere (Jenkings et al, 2008), these interviews were interactional and involved the co-construction of ideas and understandings during the event.

The lives of photographs

We turn now to consider the lives of photographs themselves, and how the materiality of the photographic image is part of the negotiation over military participation. Photographs have lives, in that they have a physical presence, they occupy space, are put into their place. They have, as Rose (2003, 2004) has observed, an emotional geography. They also change over time, in terms of their physical form, becoming dog-eared and worn when un-framed, increasingly prized when mounted for display, or long-forgotten in old photograph albums and storage boxes. Elsewhere, we discuss how photographs contain memories, both in terms of prompting the work of remembering when the photograph is viewed, but also through the ways in which the storage and display of photographs works to put limits around memories which may be uncomfortable or traumatic (see Woodward et al, 2011). Here we focus on the material history of some specific examples of photographs to explore how a photographic image provides a material object through which past military experiences can be negotiated.

One such example, brought to the interview by a former Royal Marine Commando, is a monochrome image of 43 young men sitting on four rows of stepped benches in an outdoors location. Some non-descript buildings and a few trees are visible in the background. All the men are dressed identically and sit stiff and upright in identical positions with feet and knees together, hands balled into fists resting on knees with arms almost straight. None of the young men are smiling; all look straight to the camera. It is a photograph of when our interviewee first joined up, taken by the unit photographer and displayed on a public notice board during the period of the interviewee's Commando training. What is distinctive about the photograph is that the faces of 21 of the men have been crossed out with a black pen, and three of these have had their faces on the photograph coloured in with a pink felt-tipped pen. 'We went through the whole of training, and as people left they got crossed out, and the pink ones are the first three to leave, and the crosses are the guys who finished [i.e. left].' Our interviewee had taken the photograph down from the notice board when he was leaving his accommodation having completed his training; 'I just thought "I am going to have that

photo"'. In his discussion of this photograph, it became apparent that the photograph had held very different meanings to its owner over time, having been a living document. 'It is something you used to walk past all the time, 'cause it used to be on the notice board in the accommodation. So everybody would […] you could not but look at the photograph really'. At the time of its display on the notice board it was a reminder, for those who were still in the training troop, that people they had started training with had failed and thus disappeared, whilst they were still present but could, too, meet the same fate should they fail to complete their training.– Those who had left would no longer see it, and the photograph was not for them anymore. Viewing it years later, 'it holds a lot of history' for its owner reflecting back on the life histories of many of the young men depicted. It also prompted him to reflect back on his age on joining, his ambivalence as a parent in the present with children just a little younger than those young men depicted in the image, and his consideration of how his own parents and family might have felt to see their young son go off for military training. 'Most of them thought I'd never get through [training]. But that is what kept me going, I think…'. The photograph with its crossed-off faces is less a snap-shot of time frozen and more a representation of a sequence of departures over time.

A second example shows, again, a formal group photograph of 36 young men. The front row are seated, the second row stands on the ground and the third row stands on benches. Four of the men pictured are older and sit centre front wearing dress uniforms. The remainder wear khaki jumpers and trousers. All are wearing peaked caps. They stand outside, arranged in front of a brick building on which a sign is visible saying 'The Junior Regiment of Royal Signals Regimental Headquarters'. 'Obviously, this is a poignant moment for me', its owner told the interviewer. It shows him in Champion Troop, passing out from basic training with the added kudos of having excelled as a troop during the process. The photograph illustrated and captured personal success: 'this was a great achievement for me, […] I got there from me teachers telling me I was shit, and I'd never achieve anything. Social exclusion I experienced as a kid, and violence and things. But to actually get there…'. But this photograph also provided a material object through which the interviewee's experiences within the armed forces could be continually renegotiated. Viewing the photograph in the interview, its owner expressed a range of emotions – ambivalence, anger, pride, regret – at the processes of military socialisation which had affected the young man depicted in the photograph as he had proceeded through his military career. He had been (in his words) brutalised by his military experiences and much of the interview revolved around a tension between wanting to

remember (many of his photographs were of troop reunions) and wanting to come to terms with a violent past and move on. He had a copy of the photograph in his collection, and also a copy framed at his mother's house on permanent display. Although the idea was not explored explicitly in the interview, there was something rather poignant about the selection for permanent display in the parental home of a photograph of great personal achievement, when the stories told by its owner revolved around extremes of violent behaviour and a wider culture of aggressive brutality which, he intimated, he'd experienced during his military participation. What is significant here is the distinctiveness of this photograph of passing out. This is a rite of passage, similar to a university graduation perhaps, but its distinction comes through the memories of violence and abuse that it invokes.

Conclusion

Taking our collection of photographs and narratives as a whole, we conclude with some observations about the nature of soldiers' photographic practices and what they might tell us about representations of participation in armed conflict. The first point, which will be evident from our discussion of examples chosen in this chapter, is that the notions of 'peace' and 'conflict' as separate and distinct categories of social activity soon dissipate when faced with the photographs that soldiers take. There are parallels here with wider arguments emerging out of observations of the nature of the wars of the 21st century. These observations point to the instability of the war:peace binary, and highlight instead the necessity of foregrounding the complexities and interconnections between both states (see Kirsh and Flint, 2011). Most commonly understood as a consequence of the US-initiated 'war on terror' post-9/11, the geopolitical activities (such as the military invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan) which have caused the displacement of the war:peace binary have in turn prompted new conceptualisations of war as an on-going and almost permanent process (Johnson, 2004; Graham, 2010). Whilst the play of military power will vary markedly across time and space, we see in the present processes of militarization which are far-reaching and pervasive and – arguably – distinct in the ways in which they shape our thinking of what might constitute peace and conflict. The contemporary blurring of the boundaries between states of 'war' and 'peace' is prefigured by the dissolution of that distinction in our collection of soldiers' photographs and accompanying narratives. Soldiers, of course, can and do make the distinction between active operations and other activities undertaken as part of their work as

military personnel, and the photographs that many of them brought to interview made this clear. Active operations were what many of our interviewees were trained to undertake, and for all the traumas associated with remembering active operations, there was still for many a pride in recalling that they had participated in events of (frequently international) significance, and in turn those events stood out significantly within military careers. But equally, in terms of the lives described through the photographs and explanatory narratives, the binaries between war and peace are simply absent, and there is, rather, a continuum of experience. Furthermore, personal understandings of the ways particular events or incidents could be identified as acts of conflict or peace changed during deployments, and changed subsequently through both personal reflection and global geopolitical change.

The second point concerns the question of the legitimacy or otherwise of armed violence, and the individual's position with respect to that. As we noted in the introduction, the specificity of military institutions and personnel lies in their being granted by the state the authority to exercise violence, on the state's behalf. The photographs produced and discussed by military personnel speak to this idea by emphasising the professional expertise and skill of the trained military operative through which the exercise of lethal force is controlled and made accountable. Examples of this include discussions of the technical skills involved in keeping vehicles maintained and on the road during conflict in challenging operational environments such as Bosnia (with its blizzards) and Iraq (with its heat and dust); explanations of how individuals holding or firing weapons were shown (or could be seen to be) doing so in the correct manner; and discussions of patrolling drills in urban spaces. The discourse on soldiering offered across this selection of photographs is one of the professional, who uses skill and displays competence in the use of controlled forces. The photographs of military personnel have a distinctive role in confirming that specific function and skill, which is unique to them.

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