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Battling Bullying in the British Army 1987 – 2004

“Bullying has no place in training tough soldiers” House of Commons, 1989

Introduction - the UK context

- 1 The British Army is renowned as one of the most professional and effective armies in the world. Conditions of service for Britain’s volunteer recruits are a far cry from those faced by reluctant conscripts in Russia’s under resourced and decaying armed forces. Young British soldiers are not confronted with the phenomenon of *dedovshchina*, the institutionalized mistreatment and misuse of recruits by more senior soldiers and sometimes officers, that remains widespread in the Russian and other conscript armies of the successor states of the former Soviet Union. Nevertheless, there is evidence that the British Army has failed to eliminate incidents of violent and cruel behaviour towards its soldiers despite a longstanding official commitment to tackle the problem. In an internal Army survey in 2003, for example, 43% of a sample of 2,000 soldiers responded that bullying was a problem and 5% claimed to be victims of it¹.
- 2 The purpose of this article is to provide insights into the problem of the bullying, particularly of recruits, in the British Army. It will examine the nature and extent of bullying, official policy to combat it, and suggest reasons why the problem persists even in a long established, professional army that is subject to both democratic civilian control and parliamentary and public scrutiny. Although statistics illustrate that bullying takes place in all three British armed services, this study will focus on the Army, which has both the greatest number of recruits and proportionally the largest number of recorded incidents of mistreatment. The choice of 1987 as the starting point for analysis is not arbitrary. It was then that bullying in the Army became a significant matter of public and parliamentary concern, arguably for the first time. Since the late 1980s, it has also become increasingly clear to service chiefs that the ill treatment of soldiers tarnishes the positive public image of the British Army and hampers efforts to recruit and retain personnel with the appropriate aptitudes and skills in the competitive UK employment market.
- 3 The UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) defines bullying as : “...the use of physical strength or the abuse of authority to intimidate or victimize others, or to give unlawful punishments,”² Official MOD and British Army policy on bullying is “zero tolerance” and specific responsibility is placed on all leaders “to protect others from physical and mental bullying, and to report any incident promptly.”³ The latest Defence White Paper of December 2003 states that : “Our service personnel need to feel confident that they are individually valued and respected, that complaints from them will be dealt with effectively and fairly, and that harassment and bullying have no place in service life and that any perpetrators will be dealt with firmly”⁴.

MOD attempts to tackle the problem of bullying in the late 1980s

- 4 In 1987, about the same time that Gorbachev’s *glasnost* policy drew official and public attention to *dedovshchina* in the Soviet armed forces, a series of revelations about regimental initiation rites in the British Army forced the MOD to place the problem of bullying high on its personnel management agenda. Senior officers and defence officials were shocked by reports of bizarre and vicious initiation ceremonies in the Army involving beatings, humiliation and sexual assaults taking place in prestigious regiments such as The Coldstream Guards and The

King's Own Scottish Borderers. Reports of these events soon reached the press in the UK and abroad⁵. Some of the occurrences appeared uncomfortably similar in brutality to reports of the worst excesses of *dedovshchina* starting to emerge from the Soviet military. One example from a British infantry regiment will suffice to illustrate this point : “a 20 year old private... testified that his initiation consisted of being burned on the genitals, sexually assaulted with a broomstick, forced to march in place with string tied to his genitals and ankles and dropped from a window”⁶. Spokesmen for the MOD and the Army were anxious to stress that bullying was not widespread and claimed that press reports gave a false impression of the extent of the problem. In a statement to Parliament in January 1988, the Under Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, Mr. Roger Freeman, explained that in the previous two years, during which more than 20,000 troops had passed through training, only around 100 allegations of bullying, ill treatment and intimidation had been reported and nearly half of these had not been substantiated⁷. An internal review by the Adjutant General, General Sir David Mostyn, also concluded that bullying and other forms of mistreatment were not prevalent. However, Jack Ashley MP (now Lord Ashley), a leading parliamentary campaigner on behalf of bullied soldiers, expressed the view that the restrictions of *The Official Secrets Act*, fear of reprisals and an “atmosphere of intimidation” meant that many victims would not come forward to complain or give evidence against their tormentors. He claimed that official figures on bullying were only the “tip of the iceberg” of the problem⁸.

5 The incidents of serious mistreatment of recruits that emerged in 1987 resulted in the sacking of at least one commanding officer, a number of high profile courts martial cases and a vigorous anti-bullying drive by the Adjutant General. The MOD launched a series of measures to tackle bullying, which were reported to Parliament in January 1988⁹. A ban on unauthorized initiation ceremonies was the most significant action. The practice became illegal under military law and the subject was added to the section on discipline in *The Queens Regulations for the Army* :

“The essential ingredients of discipline and military efficiency owe nothing to any unauthorized initiation or other rites aimed at terrifying or inflicting physical or mental degradation upon any individual. Such conduct would be directly contrary to the requirements of training, morale and good leadership...Allegations of unauthorized activities are to be referred to the Special Investigation Branch for investigation with a view to the taking of disciplinary action under the Army Act 1955 against the instigators and other participants. The contents of this paragraph are to be repeated at least annually in all formation, unit and sub unit orders.”¹⁰

6 The man management training and selection of Non Commissioned Officer (NCO) and junior officer recruit instructors were also revised, as were screening measures during recruitment to identify individuals who might be particularly vulnerable to bullying. Welfare support for young soldiers was increased with the establishment of 92 additional Women's Royal Volunteer Service (WRVS) posts. These volunteers, quickly dubbed “Agony Aunts” by the press, were intended to provide a source of advice and assistance for junior soldiers who were too nervous to complain about ill treatment through official channels¹¹. At the time, complaints under the Army's redress procedure had to be processed through NCOs and officers in the chain of command who might be the source of a grievance in the first place. Extra funding was provided to establish an additional 100 supervisory posts in the Army's training organization, to be implemented by March 1989. However, then as now, the government resisted calls for an independent public enquiry into the bullying of recruits or the appointment of a military ombudsman to provide an element of impartial, external oversight and hear complaints by soldiers unable or unwilling to use the official redress process. The investigation of grievances remained in the hands of commanding officers, who could call on the services of the Special Investigation Branch (SIB) of the Royal Military Police when necessary. As such investigations were not independent of the chain of command, this procedure did not satisfy

Jack Ashley, who described it as “wholly inadequate”, not least because he felt commanders might suppress complaints rather than court bad publicity for their regiments¹². The MOD also failed to create a centralized database to collate complaints about bullying¹³ or monitor the impact of the measures being taken to combat the ill treatment of recruits. A number of the concerns raised in reports and parliamentary debates in the late 1980s have re-occurred periodically in discussions on bullying in the Army up to the present day.

MOD policy towards bullying in the post Cold War era

7 After the furor caused by the graphic press coverage of bullying in the late 1980s died down, there was little sustained public or political interest in the matter. Since conscription ended in 1962, few members of the public in the UK have any direct experience of life in the armed services; subsequently most politicians also take little interest in military matters. Besides, the attention of most defence commentators in the early 1990s was focused on the reduction and restructuring of the armed forces following the end of the Cold War. As a professional military, the British armed forces have traditionally been somewhat separate from the culture and values of wider society. For most senior officers, the Army’s relative distance from the public it defends has not been unwelcome as it has helped to safeguard the Service from social trends that could pose a threat to the distinct ethos and discipline necessary to sustain troops in combat. However, in the 1990s the British armed forces faced unprecedented challenges to their assumptions, values and management culture. A growing emphasis on individual rights and a welter of employment regulations and laws, such as the Human Rights Act of 1998, when Britain formally adopted European Union human rights legislation¹⁴ into national law, had a significant impact on the workplace in both the public and private sectors. National agencies such as the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) successfully attacked traditional attitudes concerning gender and race, not least in the armed forces. As a result, the Services had made considerable progress towards eliminating racial and gender based discrimination, bullying and harassment by the end of the decade. This was achieved through a package of measures that included a policy of “zero tolerance” of abuse, equal opportunities awareness training programmes and access for soldiers to civilian employment tribunals¹⁵. The MOD’s achievements were even recognized by the CRE, formerly a severe critic of racism in the armed forces¹⁶. As the MOD’s human resource management focus in the 1990s was directed at high profile and legally pressing equal opportunities issues, it is perhaps not surprising that problems associated with the mistreatment of soldiers in basic training were comparatively overlooked. However, some measures introduced to combat racial and sexual abuse and harassment undoubtedly assisted the victims of other forms of bullying. Redress of grievance procedures were revised in 1997, and again in 2002, to enable complaints to be addressed more speedily and efficiently. For the first time, it became possible for individuals to make complaints to officers outside their immediate chain of command¹⁷. Confidential telephone helplines, manned by welfare support agencies, were introduced in December 1997 to provide information and advice to soldiers who felt unable or unwilling to approach their superiors. Soldiers were also actively encouraged to take problems to medical officers, padres or the WRVS. Official guidance to officers and soldiers, particularly *The Values and Standards of the British Army* pamphlet of 2000, reinforced the “zero tolerance” of bullying and harassment message. These statements of principle were supported in practice by courts martial, which when appropriate sentenced those convicted of physical violence or degrading and humiliating behaviour towards other soldiers to detention and dismissal from the Army.

8 The MOD has consistently maintained that the bullying of recruits is a minor problem in the Army¹⁸. Official statistics reported to Parliament have tended to verify this claim¹⁹, although due to the fact that records of complaints about bullying were not introduced until December

1997, it is difficult to make comparisons with data from the 1980s or early 1990s. Even after 1997, significant gaps remained in the collection and collation of data, for example on the potential links between bullying and cases of self-harm²⁰ or absences without leave (AWOL). There is also evidence, as in the past, that many individuals are reluctant to make formal complaints²¹. A critical Amnesty International Report in 2000 on the UK's recruitment of under 18s, highlighted the particular difficulties faced by young recruits in this respect :

“The MOD's statements of principle do not allay concerns about accessibility to procedures for making a complaint, particularly with regard to children who may be easily intimidated and confused about the right steps to take. Nor do they allay concerns about the popular perception by young recruits that bullying is part of military life and that complaints will not be impartially investigated and acted upon²² ».

- 9 A number of press reports in the late 1990s, based on soldiers' testimonies and courts martial transcripts, indicated that the official position on the extent of bullying in the Army may have been too sanguine. The results of a *Sunday Times* newspaper investigation published in October 1997 portrayed an Army in which little had changed since the 1980s, with violent assaults on recruits and sadistic “initiations” still common²³. Despite a tendency for the press to sensationalise and exaggerate the extent of mistreatment, a series of reports between 1999 and 2002 of violent assaults on recruits and humiliating initiation rites organized by NCOs and older soldiers suggested that measures introduced to tackle the problem of bullying following earlier scandals were not working²⁴. A leading article in *The Independent* newspaper in 2002 claimed that there was “something deeply wrong” with the way new recruits were treated and described bullying as “routine”²⁵. The House of Commons Parliamentary Defence Committee²⁶ took a somewhat more restrained view in a report of February 2001, which nevertheless concluded that “...regrettable incidents of racial and sexual harassment and other forms of bullying are still occurring and efforts to eradicate these must continue”²⁷.

Isolated incidents or a widespread problem ? – the impact of recent investigations

- 10 During 2002, media and parliamentary attention turned to the issue of suicides of soldiers in training at Army bases in Deepcut and Catterick²⁸. Relatives of some of the deceased, unwilling to accept the verdicts of internal Army investigations, lobbied their Members of Parliament (MP) to call for a public enquiry. In a major parliamentary debate in February 2003 on soldiers' deaths in barracks, several MPs expressed alarm about possible links between bullying and suicide and one asserted that : “there is evidence of a culture of extreme bullying, routine violence and sexual harassment that constitutes torture and inhuman and degrading treatment”²⁹. Once again, government ministers sought to illustrate the gap between the rhetoric and reality, pointing out that the number of suicides in the Army was in decline and that statistics generally compared favourably with those for civilians³⁰. However, the same statistics revealed that the 16-19 age group was a noticeable exception, with suicide rates in the Army 1.5 times higher³¹.
- 11 In October 2002, Mr Adam Ingram MP, The Minister of State for the Armed Forces, commissioned a review of the initial training of recruits across all three Armed Services³². The timing and focus of the study was primarily motivated by continuing media reports of bullying and harassment and the unexplained suicides of young soldiers in training. The appraisal team's findings were published in February 2003; the MOD was at pains to stress that the consultants involved were both independent of the chain of command and the personnel organization. On the specific issue of bullying, the team found “no evidence of any organized culture of bullying or systematic harassment”³³ and concluded “...our overall judgement is that the situation with regard to bullying has improved in recent years and cases of alleged

assault or bodily harm are actually rare in Initial Training establishments³⁴. That said, the appraisal team noted that 7 – 8% of those interviewed claimed to be the victims of bullying, mainly from their peer group rather than supervisors³⁵ and concern was expressed about the “widespread reluctance” of recruits to report bullying incidents, which suggested that official statistics of the problem might, in the words of the investigators, be “technically unreliable”³⁶. A series of measures were taken as a result of the report, many of them familiar themes from earlier attempts to eradicate bullying. These included : more rigorous screening of recruits; improved education of instructors; stricter monitoring of training; guaranteed access by recruits to confidential welfare support; opportunities for recruits to provide anonymous feedback to the chain of command and improved ratios of instructors to trainees. A “training covenant” was also introduced to make explicit, and provide a common reference point for, the code of conduct expected of both instructors and recruits³⁷.

12 Anxious to be seen to be doing everything possible to improve the care regime for young soldiers, the MOD followed up the earlier report with a re-appraisal in July 2003 to assess progress³⁸. This second report acknowledged improvements made in many units and praised the ability of training establishments to produce large numbers of high quality, motivated soldiers. But, the team also concluded that the system was “running at risk” and still, “exhibiting the stresses and strains associated with a persistently high throughput of trainees and the effects of under-resourcing, notably in the area of supervisory and instructional manpower”³⁹. Lack of investment was also apparent in the shabby accommodation and poor support and recreational facilities found in some Army training units, which combined with an inadequate supervisory regime, created an environment where, “there is continued, high risk of personal and disciplinary problems arising until substantial, decisive corrective action is taken...”⁴⁰. The investigators received some reports of “low-level” bullying, again mainly within recruit peer groups, although most training staff interviewed felt confident that they could deter or prevent serious incidents⁴¹. More disturbingly, investigators found that some instructors in Army training units actively discouraged recruits from seeking help from welfare agencies or those officers specifically charged with recruits’ care⁴². Perhaps, not surprisingly, they encountered evidence of the perennial reluctance of British soldiers to approach officers with their problems⁴³.

13 These reports on initial training did little to reassure the growing number of MPs and sections of the media and public that were convinced bullying in the Army was rife⁴⁴. Unfortunately for the MOD, these perceptions were reinforced by the final Surrey Police investigation report, released in March 2004, into the suicide of young recruits at the Royal Logistic Corps (RLC) training establishment at Deepcut in southern England⁴⁵. Bullying, as such, was not the investigators’ remit, but their report nevertheless expressed disquiet about wider evidence of mistreatment of soldiers in the Army’s training establishments and recommended a broader enquiry into the problem⁴⁶. Whilst acknowledging improvements made in the Army’s care regime for young soldiers since 2002, the report was damning on the failings of the preceding 15 years. Among the issues highlighted by the report were the longstanding inadequacy of funding for welfare and supervisory resources in training and the absence of a coordinated, organization-wide response to deficiencies identified by previous investigations. To add weight to those MPs who had been calling for the appointment of a military ombudsman since the late 1980s, the report stressed the need for greater accountability and transparency in the Army’s training regime. It recommended a further enquiry to consider the benefits of “a continuous independent oversight mechanism” to enable the Army to strike a balance between the need for tough training and the management of the attendant risks for young soldiers⁴⁷.

14 Following publication of the report, the government agreed that the House of Commons Defence Select Committee would undertake an enquiry to follow-up the concerns and

recommendations of the Surrey Police report. To date, details and terms of reference have not been announced, so it remains to be seen how far the committee's deliberations will clarify the extent and nature of bullying in the Army and confirm or allay public fears. Given the historical record, it is probably too much to expect the committee to provide definitive answers.

Problems of analysis and the wider societal context

- 15 Throughout the period under discussion, the official MOD line has remained consistent that bullying is not a significant or widespread problem in the British Army. There is ample evidence to support these claims, but the MOD has not helped its cause by taking cover behind statistics of questionable value. Spokespersons for the organization have also tended to restate the mantra of “zero tolerance” rather than responding directly to specific parliamentary and public concerns. For champions of bullied soldiers, the MOD's instinctive culture of secrecy has generated a suspicion of deliberate cover-up, not assisted by continued official reluctance to countenance a full, independent public enquiry into initial training in the Army. As a result, notable efforts made by the armed services to combat bullying since the late 1980s have received scant parliamentary and public attention, whilst media reports that often exaggerate the problem of bullying have gone largely unchallenged. A sober discussion of the issue has undoubtedly been hampered by the relative lack of reliable statistics and the absence of comparative data on bullying from other Western armies. But, it is evident from the MOD's recent reviews, that the British Army's training system has suffered from long term under funding. Poor quality facilities and an inadequate level of supervision in some units created an environment that significantly increased the risk of occurrences of bullying. Whilst the MOD identified and introduced appropriate policies to tackle the problem from the late 1980s onwards, it arguably failed to follow through with adequate resources to implement and support them fully, at least prior to 2002. Official complacency, a lack of central policy coordination and direction, as well as the perennial difficulties associated with resource overstretch, all played a role in this failure.
- 16 The growing public consciousness of workplace bullying in Britain generally over the last 15 years is another factor that makes it difficult to evaluate the changing nature and extent of bullying in the Army. Because of social and legislative changes, employees are less likely to tolerate what they perceive to be intimidating or offensive behaviour by superiors or colleagues and are more likely to make formal complaints or seek legal redress than in the past. The armed forces are not immune from these changes, nor can they escape the consequences of the resulting trend towards what has been called a “culture of compensation” in which complainants seek to exploit their grievances for personal or financial gain⁴⁸. The Army is by no means the only organization in the UK that is perceived to have a problem with workplace bullying. Other areas of the public sector, including the prison, postal and health services have all suffered their share of damaging disclosures in recent years. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has described bullying in the British workplace as “alarmingly prevalent” and suggested that as many as 10% of British workers may be victims⁴⁹. The CIPD cited heightened awareness of equal opportunities' issues, combined with increased financial and staffing pressures in many organizations as contributing to the increase in incidents of bullying. Findings suggested that bullying was institutionalized in many organisations and complaints' procedures were often inadequate.
- 17 More research would be needed before it would be safe to conclude that the Army's record in recent years actually compares favourably with some other public sector organizations, but workplace reports and statistics suggest that bullying in the armed services might reflect a wider societal malaise rather than a peculiarity of the military environment. That said, much civilian workplace bullying involves verbal abuse, harassment or intimidation, rather than the physical threats, humiliation and violence, which have tended to characterize reports of

bullying in the British Army. Arguably, the military environment and culture, particularly during recruit training, cause soldiers to be more susceptible to serious bullying than their civilian peers. Recruits are socially and geographically isolated, subject to military discipline and are employed in an organization that values physical toughness and aggression. There is general agreement among sociologists that soldiering is different from other occupations⁵⁰. Soldiers may be required to give their lives for the wider community and their training has to inculcate the necessary physical and mental robustness to accept this. The battlefield is, in the words of Martin van Creveld, “the province of hardship and suffering, of stress, of fear and pain and death”⁵¹.

18 Essentially, basic training takes the civilian identity of each individual, breaks it down under constant pressure and rebuilds it as a soldier. It is a time of unique psychological vulnerability, especially for adolescent men and women whose personalities are still forming. NCO instructors have a crucial role in this process, reinforcing behaviour that confirms individuals’ new identities as soldiers and condemning that which does not. The process is necessarily harsh. Since 1945, there has only been one year in which British soldiers have not been killed in combat. There is, therefore, a fine line between tough training and physical and psychological abuse and it is easily crossed. Vicious, or simply over zealous, instructors are not the only source of potential mistreatment during initial training. Currently, vulnerable recruits in the British Army are more likely to be the victims of peer group bullying. Cruel treatment can never be condoned, but will be hard to eradicate in an organization that values strong group cohesion as essential to success on the battlefield.⁵² Such cohesion is particularly important in a small professional army such as Britain’s, where even soldiers from specialist and technical corps are expected to fight. It has long been accepted that soldiers are not bound together in battle by ideology or personal values but by the notion of comradeship. Such tightly knit fellowship requires informal group dynamics that reinforce attitudes and behaviours that allow soldiers to overcome and control their fears and emotions. Therefore, a necessary part of basic military training is to identify those individuals who cannot be socialized into such informal groups and remove them before they are in a position to undermine unit morale and combat effectiveness. The experience for individuals who fail to conform to the emerging group identity and standards of behaviour during basic training can be traumatic. Again, in such a situation the line between physical and psychological stress and real abuse can be slender.

19 Given the necessary toughness of military training, the British Army cannot hope to eliminate all forms of behaviour towards its recruits that might be considered bullying in an increasingly sensitive and litigious civilian employment environment. The MOD faces an unenviable predicament. It has to reassure parents that their sons and daughters will not be brutalized during training, whilst at the same time ensuring that soldiers are adequately prepared for the rigours of combat. Outside scrutiny of military training might satisfy some of the MOD’s more vociferous critics, but could impose such stringent standards of care for soldiers during training that operational capability is ultimately undermined. Nevertheless, if the British Army is to escape the imposition of external oversight, the MOD’s policies to combat bullying must be backed by a real commitment on the part of leaders at all levels to enforce them, as well as continued improvements that build on the training infrastructure and staffing measures launched in 2002. The recruitment process must also identify vulnerable and unsuitable individuals before they enter the military training system. The MOD will have to apply constant vigilance over its training regime if it wishes to retain its independence to train soldiers at the required standard to maintain the British Army’s professional competitive edge.

20 There are many contrasts, not least in culture, traditions and the nature of civilian control and accountability, between the British Army and those of Russia and other post Soviet states. By comparison, British soldiers are well trained, fed and paid; the vast majority of

their officers have a strong professional ethos and integrity. The British Army's recruits are volunteers and although they face tough training, it is not a regime of institutionalised cruelty. However, the British Army's efforts to tackle bullying, its successes and failures, can still prove instructive for those militaries currently blighted by *dedovshchina*. British experience suggests that recruits in professional armies can be as vulnerable to mistreatment as those in conscript militaries. Because basic training deliberately isolates soldiers from wider society and necessarily stresses physical toughness, it intrinsically creates an environment in which bullying can occur. Tackling the problem requires, not just the introduction of appropriate corrective measures such as those discussed above, but also a commitment to back them from all levels in the chain of command, especially junior NCOs. Adequate investment in training establishments is essential to ensure that accommodation and supporting facilities are of satisfactory quality, staffing levels are sufficient and instructors are properly selected and trained. These measures are critical to maintain discipline and sustain morale and thus counter the element of bullying behaviour that seems to be present in even the most closely controlled military training establishments. As the British Army has found, greater transparency in the training system may be the price of restoring public confidence in the wake of well-publicized mistreatment scandals. If armies in the successor states of the Soviet Union can overcome the worst excesses of *dedovshchina*, they will, like the British, still face the challenge of striking a balance between tough training for combat and a care regime that prevents the exploitation and abuse of young soldiers by their supervisors or peers.

Endnotes

1 Interview given by General Anthony Palmer, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff on BBC Newsnight 4 November 2003. Available from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight> (Accessed 6 April 2004)

2 UK MOD, The Values and Standards of the British Army – A Guide to Soldiers, March 2000, paragraph 23. Available from: http://www.army.mod.uk/servingsoldier/usefulinfo/valuesgeneral/values/ss_hrpers_values_slidr_w.html (Accessed 24 March 2004).

3 *Ibid.*

4 UK MOD, Delivering Security in a Changing World, Defence White Paper, HMSO, 12/03, C16147, Supporting Essays, Essay 5 People, p. 17.

5 See for example : David Hughes, "Army to Fight Bullies", *The Sunday Times*, 29 November 1987, Howell Raines, "British Army Stung by Tales of Brutality in the Ranks", *The New York Times*, 6 November 1987, p. 8. and Yvonne Preston, "British Army to Curb Its Bully Boys", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 November 1987, p. 23.

6 *The New York Times, Ibid.*

7 UK Parliament, House of Commons Hansard, HMSO, Col 254, 26 January 1988.

8 *Ibid.* Col. 340, 27 October 1987.

9 *Ibid.* Cols. 255 – 256, 26 January 1986.

10 The Queens Regulations for the Army, revised edition March 1996, IAC 13206, HMSO, Part 6, paragraph 5.201A.

11 Hay J. "Agony Aunts Plan to End Army Bullying", *Sunday Mail*, 31 January 1988.

12 UK Parliament, House of Commons, Hansard, op cit, Col. 341, 28 October 1987.

13 Official statistics for incidents of bullying were not kept until December 1997.

14 Unlike those of Spain and France, the British armed forces are not exempt from this legislation.

15 Military personnel may only apply to Employment Tribunals in cases of alleged sexual or racial discrimination.

16 See House of Commons Select Committee Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence, Appendix 4, Racial Equality in the Armed Forces, HMSO, January 2001.

- 17 For details of the British Army's redress procedures see: Army General and Administrative Instructions (AGAI) management and Resolution of Complaints Vol. 2 Chapter 70, May 2002. Available from: <http://www.army.mod.uk/servingsoldier/termsofserv/discmillaw/ref/index.html> (Accessed 8 April 2004)
- 18 See for example the comments by the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff in the BBC Newsnight interview of November 2003. *op cit*.
- 19 UK Parliament, House of Lords Hansard text for 20 Jun 2000, Col. 424 and House of Commons Hansard Written Answers for 5 Mar 2003, Col. 1028W.
- 20 Until as recently as 2002, self-harm was regarded as a disciplinary matter and evidence of "malingering".
- 21 Proceedings of the House of Commons Defence Committee Second Report, 14 February 2001, paragraphs 126 - 127.
- 22 Amnesty International Library, "United Kingdom: U-18s: Child soldiers at risk", 7 November 2000, chap. 3.2 Bullying and remedies, pp. 6 – 8. Available from : <http://web.amnesty.org/library/print/ENGEUR450562000> (Accessed 9 April 2004) Uniquely in Europe, the UK's professional armed forces rely on the recruitment of under 18s to meet recruiting targets. This age group represents up to a third of the total intake, particularly in the Army.
- 23 Jonathan Carr-Brown and Stephen McGinty, "Army Recruits Sue MOD over Initiation Beatings", *The Sunday Times*, 19 October 1997.
- 24 See for example: "New Recruits were forced to dance Naked Conga", *The Herald (Glasgow)*, 4 February 1999, p. 10. and Jason Burke, "Bullied army recruits being forced to desert" , *The Observer*, 4 June 2000.
- 25 Leading Article, "The Army must fight to restore confidence in its training ", *The Independent*, 29 October 2002, p. 16.
- 26 The Defence Committee, which has cross party membership, provides parliamentary oversight over all defence policy, administration and expenditure matters. The committee can summon government ministers to give evidence for its enquiries.
- 27 House of Commons Defence Committee 14 February 2001, *op cit*. paragraph 128.
- 28 Ironically, in 2001, Russian officers had asked for help from their British counterparts to combat the high rate of suicide in their armed forces, estimated at around 2,000 per year. See: Macer Hall "Russians call in our Army over suicides", *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 August 2001.
- 29 UK Parliament, House of Commons Hansard Debates for 4 February 2003 (pt.1), Col. 3WH.
- 30 *Ibid*. Cols. 16WH, 19WH and 20WH.
- 31 Dr T. Fear and Scott Williamson, "Suicide and Open Verdict Deaths among Males in the UK Regular Armed Forces" Defence Analytical Services Agency, 14 July 2003, pp. 2 – 3. Available from: <http://www.dasa.mod.uk/publications/pdfs/suicide/suicide.pdf> (Accessed 14 April 2004). The analysis also indicated that the US military had higher rates of suicide than the UK Armed Forces.
- 32 Directorate of Operational Capability, MOD, Appraisal of Initial Training, 18 December 2002. Available from: http://www.mod.uk/linked_files/publications/it_appraisal_full.pdf (Accessed 12 April 2004)
- 33 *Ibid*. paragraph 72.
- 34 *Ibid*. paragraph 73.
- 35 *Ibid* paragraph 71.
- 36 *Ibid*. paragraphs 74 – 75.
- 37 MOD Press Notice No: 032/03 Appraisal of Initial Training, 10 February 2003. Available from: http://news.mod.uk/news/press/archive/archive_master.htm (Accessed 14 April 2004)
- 38 Directorate of Operational Capability, MOD, "ReAppraisal of Initial Training", 14 July 2003. Available from: http://www.mod.uk/linked_files/publications/it_appraisal_full.pdf (Accessed 16 April 2004)
- 39 *Ibid*. paragraph 56, p.12.
- 40 *Ibid*. paragraph 29, p. 6.

41 *Ibid.* paragraph 23, p. 5.

42 *Ibid.* paragraph 17. p. 3.

43 *Ibid.* paragraph 30, p. 6. Researchers have found a greater emphasis on formal military discipline in the British Army, compared with those of other Western European countries. This might be a factor in the reluctance of British soldiers to approach their officers with problems. See: Joseph L. Soeters, Donna J. Winslow and Alise Weibull, Military Culture, in Giuseppe Caforio ed. Handbook of the Sociology of the Military, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, New York, 2003, p. 243.

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46 *Ibid.* paragraphs 1.24 p. 6 and 4.18 p. 23.

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Abstract

This article explores the attempts by the UK MOD to eradicate bullying in the British Army. Although British recruits are not confronted by mistreatment that compares with the phenomenon of *dedovshchina*, the Army has struggled to eliminate incidents of bullying from the ranks, which have tarnished the image of the British Army. The article examines the nature and extent of the problem, the efficacy of official policy to combat it, and suggests reasons

why bullying persists even in a long- standing professional army. It also seeks to provide instructive insights for those militaries of the successor states of the Soviet Union that are currently blighted by *dedovshchina*.

Keywords : Dedovshchina, Hazing, Violence, Armed Forces, NCO, Bullying, British Army, Military Service, Russia

Research Fields : Military Sociology

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