



Intelligence Corps – History

Manui Dat Cognitio Vires Knowledge gives strength to the arm

The Intelligence Corps is one of the smallest Corps in the British Army with approximately 1850 serving Officers and soldiers.

What the Corps lacks in size, it more than makes up for in impact and influence.

Pre First World War

Prior to the Boer War (1899-1901) the British Army formed ad-hoc intelligence organisations that were disbanded during peace time. The need to analyse and interpret large amounts of information during the Boer War resulted in an intelligence element which stood at 132 officers and 2,321 soldiers at its peak. Intelligence continued to be underfunded with only a small counter intelligence department formed in 1909 (now MI5) and in 1912 a second small department tasked with gathering intelligence overseas (now MI6). However, at the outbreak of the First World War, action was undertaken to raise an Intelligence Corps.

First World War

The Intelligence Corps was formed on 05 August 1914. At this time the Corps consisted of Army and Metropolitan Police Officers and other specialised civilians identified by the War Office Intelligence Department. They operated in all theatres of war and behind enemy lines. Despite the success of the Intelligence Corps, the Corps was disbanded at the conclusion of the war.

Second World War

It was apparent that intelligence support would be vital to the British war effort. The Corps was formally constituted with the consent of King George V on 15 July 1940, with the formation being notified on 19 July 1940 in Army Order 112. The Field Security Wing (part of the Corps of the Military Police) was absorbed into the Intelligence Corps. The Intelligence Corps played a vital role in the war with its members involved in working for Special Operations Executive (SOE), the founding of the Special Air Service (SAS) as well as contributing to deciphering the enigma code. In January 1945 the Corps numbered 3,040 officers, 5,930 soldiers and 1,553 attached officers.

Cold War

The post Second World War threat was from the Warsaw Pact countries, in particular the Soviet Union. This included being posted to East Germany to join the British Commanders-in-Chief's Mission to the Soviet Forces in Germany (Brixmis). This was a liaison mission that provided the opportunity to collect

intelligence on Soviet military activities and equipment in East Germany. The Intelligence Corps played a major role in counter intelligence and counter espionage which characterised the cold war period.

Conflicts and Emergencies Post 1945

The Corps has been involved in all conflicts and emergencies including: Palestine, Malaya, Korean War, Cyprus, Suez, Brunei, Indonesia, Dhofar (Oman), Northern Ireland, Falkland Islands, the Gulf, Africa, the Former Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, Iraq and Afghanistan. On 01 February 1985 the Intelligence Corps was officially declared an 'Arm' (combat support) instead of a 'Service' (rear support).

Under Army 2020 the Intelligence Corps continues to grow. Two new reserve battalions have been raised and reserve units can be found across the UK.

The Intelligence Corps continues to support commanders' decision making process from the tactical to strategic level, provides the land counter intelligence support on operations and in the home base as well as numerous specialist roles.

If you are interested please speak to a member of the Corps Engagement Team

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