

Strong and secure partnership

By **LT. GEN. SIR JOHN LORIMER KCB DSO MBE**

DEFENCE SENIOR ADVISOR TO THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA



SIR JOHN LORIMER is a senior British Army officer and the Defence Senior Advisor to the Middle East. Prior to this he served as Chief of Joint operations. He joined the British Army in 1981 and was commissioned into the Parachute Regiment. He has served as Commanding Officer, 3 Para. Under his command, the battalion deployed twice to Northern Ireland and took part in operations in Kuwait and Iraq. He studied Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge. He is the great-grandson of John Gordon Lorimer CIE, diplomat and author of the *Gazeteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia*, a former handbook for British diplomats in the Arabian Peninsula and Persia.

Lt Gen Sir John Lorimer
KCB DSO MBE with
His Excellency Sheikh
Nasser Sabah Al-Hamad
Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

The 120th Anniversary of the Friendship Treaty between the State of Kuwait and the United Kingdom gives the British Armed Forces a chance to reflect on the origins of this historic relationship and how far it has come since then. The treaty was signed in 1899 to help preserve Kuwaiti independence from its more powerful neighbours through British protection. The United Kingdom has been at Kuwait's side numerous times since then, most notably when Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait in 1990. In response to this, we committed 1st (UK) Armoured Division to support the Kuwaiti Government, representing one quarter of total British Army manpower. This was the largest overseas deployment of the British Army since WWII.

In the Air domain, Kuwait has played a key part in British military history. The first overseas deployment of the Royal Air Force was, in fact, to Kuwait in 1920. The RAF Museum in Hendon, north London, has a hangar dedicated to the unique relationship shared by the UK and Kuwait and we were most grateful for the extraordinarily generous gift of £5 million, donated by the State of Kuwait, to help renovate the museum as part of the RAF Centenary year in 2018. This was opened by His Excellency Khaled Al-Jarallah, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, during the 12th meeting of the UK-Kuwait Joint Steering Group.

The UK-Kuwait defence relationship is mutually beneficial, with Kuwait supporting UK and Coalition

operations in the region. In 2003, operations to overthrow Saddam Hussein in Iraq were launched from Kuwait, with 1st (UK) Armoured Division again leading the British Army deployment. A short war was followed by an extended counterinsurgency campaign, which necessitated a lengthy British Army presence in Kuwait. This remained until the British Army withdrew from Iraq in 2009. Today, Kuwait is a key partner to the Counter-Daesh Coalition, providing unfettered access, basing and overflight support to the UK and our allies, which has proved invaluable to the military campaign.

During my time as the Defence Senior Adviser for the Middle East and North Africa, I have been impressed by the strong, personal connections between the UK and Kuwait Armed Forces. The recent Ex Desert Warrior in January (a partnered Overseas Training Exercise between soldiers from 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, and their Kuwaiti counterparts in 6th Brigade) was a roaring success for both training and engagement. HMS Dragon also had the privilege of visiting Kuwait on 6-7 March in this historic year, following her successful six month deployment in the Gulf in support of regional maritime security. HMS Dragon's Commanding Officer, Commander Mike Carter Quinn, took the opportunity to host the Chief of Staff for the Kuwait Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Mohammed Al-Khudr on-board for lunch.



In summary, the UK-Kuwait Defence relationship remains as strong and productive a partnership as it did 120 years ago. This is evident in the many new and exciting initiatives we are exploring over 2019, ensuring that our Armed Forces are well placed to tackle, together, the evolving threats of today. *Kuwait's Vision 2035* paints an exciting and prosperous future for the nation and the UK Armed Forces will continue to play their part under HMG's support of the Vision's goals.

I look forward to continued personal engagement with our Kuwaiti friends during 2019 and throughout my tenure as the Defence Senior Adviser for the Middle East and North Africa.