

From the Virtual Trench to the Battlefield: Lessons from 3 Para Bn in the Drone Era - VIDEO

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In the heart of Germany, the **Ex Rhino Titan** exercise offered a unique insight into the United Kingdom's combat capabilities. The soldiers of the **3 Para Bn** of the **16 Air Assault Brigade**, were the central participants in what has been described as **the largest parachute drop operation in Europe in the past twenty years**. An impressive deployment of forces, with **approximately 3,000 personnel**, RAF Atlas A400M aircraft, Chinook helicopters, and the participation of French troops and Gurkha. However, behind the spectacle of the training and the massive commitment of resources, serious questions arise about the **true relevance of these maneuvers to the requirements of contemporary conflicts**.

The gap between theory and battlefield reality

The exercise opened with a spectacular drop, but observation in the field revealed a **temporal disconnect**: the structure and dynamics of the maneuvers closely resemble those refined over decades of military history. In light of recent warnings from senior British military leaders – that infantrymen must **become accustomed to high-intensity close combat and extreme violence**, drawing on lessons from the war in Ukraine – the crucial factor that appears to be missing is the **constant and pervasive presence of drones**.

During the exercise, the drone threat was largely **virtual or digitally augmented** by flight controllers. The geographic constraints of training areas, such as the Sennelager Training Area, and **strict safety regulations**

(which prevent, for example, drones and Chinook helicopters from flying in the same airspace to avoid collisions) severely limit realism. This is far removed from the situation faced by armed forces such as Russia's, which test and experience **the impact of drones on the real battlefield every day**.



New technology and future prospects

Despite these structural limitations, the exercise showcased **cutting-edge equipment** that reflects the British defense industry's post-Ukraine response:

- **Dropper drone systems:** At an advanced stage of development, they can **deliver precision explosive payloads** and are set to equip the Royal Irish Regiment soon.
- **Lightweight Multi-Mode Radar (LMMR):** A field radar system capable of **tracking incoming drones at distances of up to 20 kilometers**.

These technologies exist and are sophisticated, but the real critical issue lies in **their integration in the field**. If the objective of *Ex Rhino Titan* is to prepare paratroopers for **modern warfare characterized by saturated skies and loitering munitions**, training will inevitably have to evolve. It will require **larger training areas, less reliance on virtual simulations, and greater flexibility in accepting operational risk**,so that the British Army's elite can truly be said to be ready for the next major challenge.

Source: UKMod