

News

Tiger tanks roll up for reunion with their crew

It was one of the most feared weapons of the Second World War. The German Tiger tank was bigger, more heavily armoured and had a larger gun than almost anything the Allies could muster (Simon de Bruxelles writes).

Five of its six variants are about to go on display at the Tank Museum in Bovington, Dorset,



Five of the six types of Tiger were brought together for the Dorset exhibition

on Thursday, the first time they have been together at the same time. They will be reunited with two of the handful of surviving

crew who fought in them, Wilhelm Fischer and Waldemar Pliska, both in their mid-90s. The museum owns the world's only working

model, which appeared in the film *Fury* starring Brad Pitt. Mr Fischer said crews were given better treatment than the infantry to make up

for their discomfort. "Every month I got four packages from Adolf Hitler: they had chocolate in, cigarettes, sausage," he said.

Imams advise army eager to recruit more Muslims

Kaya Burgess
Religious Affairs Correspondent

Leading Islamic scholars and imams have attended a conference with military top brass as part of an unprecedented drive to encourage Muslims to join the armed forces.

Conducted without publicity, it was held at Sandhurst last week to improve the armed forces' relations with Muslims and address concerns about operations in Muslim countries, *The Times*

has learnt. General Sir Gordon Messenger, vice-chief of the defence staff, and Air Vice-Marshal Edward Stringer, assistant chief of the defence staff for operations, briefed Islamic leaders and heard presentations from scholars, who also met Earl Howe, a defence minister.

The group of about 25 scholars visited Sandhurst, RAF Northolt, Army Training Centre Pirbright and the Ministry of Defence over three days.

The conference, conceived before the Westminster terrorist attack, was

organised by Imam Asim Hafiz, Islamic adviser to the service chiefs. Officials from Sharia councils also attended.

In the programme notes, Mr Hafiz wrote: "This private conference is focused on building a positive relationship between the UK armed forces and some of the UK's leading Muslim religious voices in a spirit of developing understanding and mutual insights."

It covered the "ethical, tactical and operational complexities" of army operations, aiming to "improve the per-

ception of the UK armed forces as well as learn from senior scholars".

Qari Asim, imam at Leeds Makkah mosque, attended a vigil after the Westminster attack with the Archbishop of Canterbury. After the conference he said: "It's the first time there have been such large numbers from Muslim leadership on a retreat to a military HQ."

He said scholars agreed that Islam does not prohibit Muslims from serving in the British Army, which has only 560 Muslim soldiers: 0.6 per cent of soldiers

compared with 4.4 per cent of the population. Mr Asim said military chiefs were honest and genuine in exploring this lack of diversity.

Ashfaq Siddique, of the Al Madina mosque in London, said there was an honest dialogue with military chiefs about operations in Muslim countries.

An army source said they needed talented people of all religions. "Our engagement with the Muslim community is probably the weakest, so is the obvious area we need to engage in more."

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ALLOWANCE
GET AWAY.**

LET'S TALK HOW.

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