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Yorkshire troops must have proper equipment

Yorkshire Regiment soldiers must be given the best possible equipment – including access to sufficient numbers of helicopters - when they are re-deployed to Afghanistan later this year, Keighley and Ilkley Conservative Parliamentary Candidate Kris Hopkins has said.

Up to 300 troops from the 2nd Battalion Yorkshire Regiment will begin a six-month tour of duty in October, forming a key component part of the 11 Light Brigade.

Two soldiers lost their lives when the Yorkshire Regiment was last in Afghanistan between October 2007 and April 2008.

And Cllr Hopkins, a former member of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, said the Government must listen to British commanders on the ground when requests are made for additional troops and equipment.

“It has become increasingly clear that our Armed Forces have been let down by Gordon Brown who, in 2004 when he was Chancellor, pushed through a £1.4 billion cut in funding for helicopters,” he commented.

“As a result, the 5,000 British troops currently in Helmand have just 10 Chinook helicopters and five smaller Lynxes between them. In comparison the 8,000 American marines serving there have 120 Chinooks.

“As someone who served in Northern Ireland during the Troubles, I know only too well how vital the availability of helicopters is in treacherous areas where roadside bombs are an inherent danger to soldiers' lives.

“It is also widely known that a request for 2,000 extra soldiers was turned down by the Prime Minister earlier this year on grounds of cost.

“On behalf of those Yorkshire Regiment troops due to go to Afghanistan, I want to be assured that their safety is not being compromised to save money.

“Gordon Brown has lavished billions of pounds of taxpayers’ money to bail out the bankers, many of whom are already beginning to receive their bonuses once again.

“And yet the Prime Minister seems unwilling to provide sufficient funding to give our servicemen and women what they need to get the job done as effectively and safely as possible.

“This situation is simply not acceptable. Gordon Brown must do the right thing for our troops and our country.”

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