

ENQUIRE WITHIN

Question: *Do you think it is right for Prince Harry to go to Iraq with his regiment or was it right for him to be kept away from the dangers?*

Answer: The Royal family has a long tradition of deployment in the armed forces. For example, as recently as 1982, Prince Harry's uncle Prince Andrew saw frontline duty as a helicopter pilot in the Falklands War. However, on 17th May, 2007, the Ministry of Defence said that specific threats had been made by insurgent groups against Harry, including listing him as a kidnap target, and this made any deployment far too risky.

Richard Dannatt, the head of the army told reporters. "I've decided the risk to Prince Harry is too great, I've also decided that the risk he brings to his troop and his squadron ... is also too great."

Well, as Prince Harry is third in line to the throne of the United Kingdom, it seems to me that would be ridiculous that such a prominent member of the Royal family should be considered for war duty.

The propaganda benefits of an insurgent group killing him or capturing him would be so great and would have such serious implication which would last far possibly a hundred years. Can you imagine the media circus which would attend such an incident? It would dominate our screens and radios for hours every day, cancelling virtually every other programme for the foreseeable future. Then would come the photographs of him in chains, then the threats to behead him, then the messages purporting to come from him to his mother the Queen...

Need I go on?

The death of a royal in Iraq or even worse, his capture, would have such serious implications for our country's self-esteem and self-image, as

well as the esteem in which we are held around the world. Britons everywhere would be held to ridicule for taking such a foolhardy risk.

To add to this already full set of objections, we have the danger which such a prominent soldier would bring to the other men and women serving in his unit. Their level of stress and the dangers they face would be immediately higher than other soldiers and it is just not fair to expose them to the risks.

What has made the change since 1982 and Prince Andrew's war service?

Well clearly, we are dealing with a different type of opponent. In Iraq we are dealing with people who are so desperate that they have no difficulty in recruiting young men and women to become

suicide bombers. Because they have so little hope, the normal restraints on how to treat prisoners of war have been thrown away and any amount of cruelty and barbarity is to be expected.

So what kind of life could Prince Harry have if he is not to be treated as different? We all understand that those engaged in international

politics are at risk from all sorts of threats and they require body guards for the rest of their lives. They choose their life, but the Royal family don't and so they are powerless to be ordinary and do common things.

The logic of prince Harry and other royals joining the army or trying to have regular lives is flawed. If Royals want to have normal careers, they will need to shed the claims of monarchy and become truly fellow citizens with the rest of us.

Neil Richardson

