
THE TIM HEALE DISPATCH

Books • Broadcasting • Military History • Adventure

History remembered.

Stories shared.

Adventures continue.



FOB Sangin, Helmand Province, 2008. The original 4 kW radio transmitter had failed beyond economic repair and was replaced with a 50-watt Radio In A Box (RIAB), ensuring broadcasts continued across the Sangin Valley.

Broadcasting on the Front Line

How Radio Became a Weapon in Helmand

By Tim Heale

The photograph on the cover of this issue was taken inside Forward Operating Base (FOB) Sangin in Helmand Province during my 2008 deployment to Afghanistan. Behind me sits a radio system that tells a much bigger story than most people might imagine.

By the time I arrived in Sangin, 15 (UK) Psychological Operations Group had already deployed a 4-kilowatt FM radio transmitter into the Sangin Valley. Local Afghan interpreters had been trained as radio presenters, while their supervisors learned the skills needed to become radio producers. Together they operated a genuine local radio station, broadcasting news, information, entertainment and public safety messages across one of the most dangerous regions of Helmand Province.

My mission was straightforward in theory but rather more challenging in practice.

I had been sent to repair the existing transmitter and return it to service. If that proved impossible, I had brought with me a 50-watt replacement RIAB – **Radio In A Box** – a compact broadcasting system capable of keeping the station on air.

After carrying out a full inspection, it quickly became clear that the original transmitter was beyond economic repair. The RIAB became its replacement, ensuring that broadcasts to the local population could continue without interruption.

I spent several weeks working in Sangin before continuing what would become one of the most rewarding operational tours of my military career.

Over the following six months, I travelled throughout Helmand Province delivering RIAB systems wherever they were needed. From Kajaki in the north to Garmsir in the south, and almost everywhere in between, each deployment involved much more than simply installing radio equipment.

Our real task was to leave behind a sustainable radio station.

I trained Afghan interpreters to become confident radio presenters, helping them develop the skills to communicate naturally with their own communities. At the same time, I trained their supervisors to become producers, responsible for planning programmes, managing broadcasts and keeping the stations running after I had moved on.

The equipment itself was only a tool.

The real success lay with the Afghan men who sat behind the microphones every day, speaking their own language, understanding their own communities and building trust with their listeners.

One question I am often asked is how you measure success in Psychological Operations.

Unlike artillery, where success is immediately obvious because the target explodes, the effects of communication are often far harder to measure. Building trust, changing attitudes and influencing behaviour can take weeks or even months, making the true measure of effect difficult to quantify.

Occasionally, however, the results were immediate.

One of those moments came in Garmsir.

On the very first day the new radio station began broadcasting, several local boys approached the Forward Operating Base carrying small scraps of paper. At first, the soldiers were unsure what they wanted.

Then it became clear.

They were bringing song requests and messages for their friends, exactly as listeners might do with any local radio station back home in Britain.

It was a simple moment, but an important one.

The local population were not listening because someone had told them to. They were listening because they already regarded it as **their** radio station.

For us, that small gesture said more than any formal report or statistical analysis ever could.

The broadcasts themselves carried local news, music, interviews, practical information and public safety messages. The aim was never simply to broadcast information, but to establish credibility. Once a station became trusted, important messages about security, unexploded ordnance, medical advice or local events were far more likely to be heard and acted upon.

Looking back, I still regard that tour as one of the finest of my military career.

Not because of the radio transmitters we installed.

Not because of the distances we travelled across Helmand.

But because we were able to help ordinary Afghans build something that belonged to them, a local voice, broadcasting to local people, proving that communication can sometimes be every bit as powerful as military force.

Next Month

From Kajaki to Garmsir – delivering Radio In A Box stations across Helmand Province, and the stories behind some of the remarkable people I met along the way.

Volume 1
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Inside this Dispatch:

Editor's Welcome – From Tim's Desk

Welcome to the very first edition of *The Tim Heale Dispatch*. This monthly publication brings together my latest news, broadcasting, military history, adventures and writing projects. Whether you've followed my books for years or have only recently discovered my work, I'm delighted you've joined me for the journey.

Thank you for being here. I hope you enjoy the first issue.

Tim Heale

Publishing Update – Two New Paperback Releases on the Way

I'm delighted to announce that the next two paperback editions in **The Parallel Six** series are now scheduled for release on Amazon.

The Parallel Six: Book Six

Paperback Release: 24 July 2026

Book Six continues the journey as Stephen, Johan, Vinka and Marlin face fresh challenges, deeper loyalties and ever more dangerous adventures. The paperback edition will soon be joining the Kindle version already available.

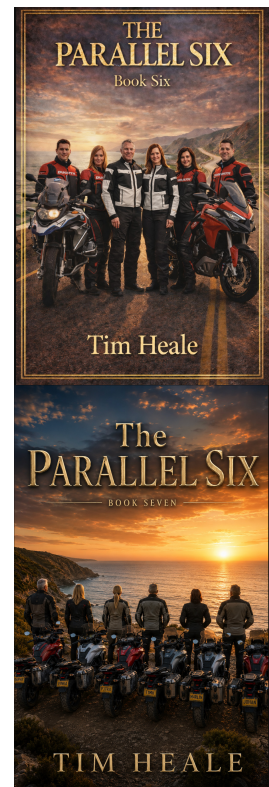
The Parallel Six: Book Seven

Paperback Release: 21 August 2026

The seventh book in the series also now has an official paperback release date. Bringing another chapter of the Parallel Six saga into print, it will be available just a few weeks after Book Six.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the series so far. Seeing these books become available in paperback is another important milestone, and I can't wait to get them into readers' hands. Watch this space for launch updates, photographs of the finished books, and a few surprises over the coming weeks.

Every new book is another step in the journey. Thank you for travelling with me.



Cover Story – Broadcasting on the Front Line: How Radio Became a Weapon in Helmand

Broadcasting News – VRN, QA Hospital Radio & Podcast Updates

Broadcasting continues to be a major part of my week, and I'm delighted to present two regular live radio shows.

Veterans Radio Network

Mondays | 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm (UK)

Music, stories, military memories and good company.

Listen live: <https://vrnradio.co.uk>

QA Hospital Radio

Thursdays | 9:00 am – 11:00 am (UK)

Two hours of music and entertainment for patients, visitors and staff.

Listen live: <https://qahospitalradio.co.uk>

Military History – A Forgotten Story from the Past

Looking Ahead – What's Coming Next



Books – Orange



Broadcasting – Gold



Military History – Green



Adventure – Blue

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A Monthly Dispatch from Tim Heale
