British Journal for Military History

Volume 7, Issue 1, March 2021

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ISSN: 2057-0422

Date of Publication: 19 March 2021

Citation: Hannes Ziegler, "Very Prejudicial to the Service of the Revenue': The British Army on Coastal Duty in Eighteenth-Century East Anglia', *British Journal for Military History*, 7.1 (2021), pp. 46-63.

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'Very Prejudicial to the Service of the Revenue': The British Army on Coastal Duty in Eighteenth-Century East Anglia

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ABSTRACT
Throughout the eighteenth century, one of the main peacetime functions of the British Army was to supplement the Customs in combatting smuggling, but it remains little studied. The article aims to explore the structural features of the cooperation between the British Army and the Customs service on coastal duties by giving particular emphasis to matters of potential conflict. A second aim is to study such matters for the East Anglian counties. The article ultimately aims to show that while successful coastal policing depended on the cooperation between the Customs and the army, the supposedly frictionless cooperation was anything but straightforward.

Throughout the eighteenth century, one of the main peacetime functions of the British Army was to supplement the revenue service of the Customs in combatting the illicit landing of goods. But whereas the arrangement has been described as "part of the routine of the peacetime standing army", this aspect of British military history in the eighteenth century in fact remains – with few exceptions – surprisingly unexplored.[1] J. A. Houlding has provided details regarding the strategic visions of the War Office behind such measures as well as the general patterns in the deployment of troops.[2] This gives a helpful overview of such activities, but any details on how this cooperation between different government officials might have worked in practice are obscured by the one-sided approach from the perspective of the War Office and its records. Paul

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DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v7i1.1467
[1]John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783,* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 51.
[2]J.A. Houlding, *Fit for Service: The Training of the British Army, 1715-1795,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 77-89.

Muskett, on the other hand, has taken the opposing view by studying the involvement of the military in anti-smuggling operations for the first half of the century from the viewpoint of the Customs Board and the Treasury.[3] His, however, is an at times anecdotal account that does not explore the structural features of such cooperation in detail. Muskett also restricts himself, as other studies that touch on the matter routinely do, to the counties of Kent and Sussex. Overwhelmingly, moreover, the concurrent service of the army and the Customs officers on the coast is seen in a rather dichotomous perspective that perceives these forces as harmoniously pitched against the daring and violent activities of the smugglers.[4] Wherever any rifts between the different rationales of the Customs officers and the army have been encountered, these were downplayed as sporadic and largely 'unimportant disputes'.[5] This, however, does not seem to be accurate. In a report to the Treasury by the Commissioners of the Customs from October 1764, the latter related the results of a recent inspection into the port of Arundel, which found:

> that the several Non Commissioned Officers and private Men belonging to the Regiment of Dragoons Quartered in Sussex, upon the Smugling Service, have signed a general agreement, that whatever Share of Seizures shall be paid to any one party upon the Coast, the same shall be given to one of the Officers, and afterward distributed amongst the whole Regiment, and that, in Consequence thereof, the Men, when called upon, do not go chearfully upon Duty, as they know their Share will be but trifling. And they having further represented, that Instances can be given, where the Officers of the Customs have been betrayed to the Smuglers, by the party of Dragoons, they had taken out, in order to assist them in the Execution of their Duty. And as these practices may have already been and in future may be very prejudicial to the Service of the Revenue and a discouragement to the Officers to exert themselves, the Commissioners direct me to signify the same to you.[6]

As this letter indicates, the cooperation between the army and the Customs in coastal policing operations was fraught with complications and at times open conflict that

[3]Paul Muskett, 'Military Operations Against Smuggling in Kent and Sussex, 1698-1750', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 52 (1974), pp. 89-110.
[4]Aside from Muskett and Houlding, see also the literature on smuggling in this period Frank McLynn, *Crime and Punishment in Eighteenth-Century England,* (London: Routledge, 1989), ch. 10; Cal Winslow, 'Sussex Smugglers', in Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John G. Rule, E.P. Thompson, Cal Winslow (eds.), *Albion`s Fatal Tree. Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England,* (London: Allen Lane, 1975), pp. 119-166; Paul Muskett, *English Smuggling in the Eighteenth Century,* (Diss. Open University, 1996)
[5]Muskett, 'Military Operations', p. 108.
[6]The National Archives (TNA) Treasury (T) 1/429, No. 29.

seriously threatened to defeat the very purpose of sending troops on coastal duty in the first place. As of now, such dynamics remain largely unexplored even for Kent and Sussex and particularly beyond. The purpose of this article is thus twofold. It aims to explore the structural features of the cooperation between the British Army and the Customs service on coastal duties by giving emphasis to matters of potential friction and conflict. Such matters include the stationing of the soldiers, the supervision of coastal efforts, the terms of cooperation, as well as fraud and remuneration. A second aim is to study such matters beyond the usual location for eighteenth-century studies on smuggling by looking at the East Anglian counties instead of Kent and Sussex. The article ultimately aims to show that the supposedly frictionless cooperation of the Customs and the military was anything but straightforward. It also calls into question whether the army, as Houlding suggested, was more effective at coastal policing than the allegedly 'ineffective' Customs officers.[7] Success, as the article will show, depended on the cooperation of these forces – and yet cooperation was never a given. Highlighting these difficulties also underscores the more general problems of combating illicit trade in eighteenth-century Britain.[8] In particular, the article shows that the limited success of enforcing Customs duties was – in no small part – due to enforcement efforts fraught with internal competition. In advancing these arguments, the article makes use of records of the War Office, the Treasury, the Customs and Privy Council, thereby extending the range of sources previously used for such questions.[9] Whereas basic information, e.g. the stationing of troops etc., can be established reliably, especially with the records of the War Office, many of the sources used in the chapter originate in complaints being raised by the Customs or the military, usually mediated by the Treasury or Privy Council. Such sources tend to be partisan and scattered. Informed by the intensity and recurrence of such complaints, the article aims to highlight the most prominent areas of conflict and debate.

[7]Houlding, *Fit for Service*, p. 77.

[8]On the extent and problems of smuggling see Hoh-Cheung Mui, Lorna H. Mui, 'Smuggling and the British Tea Trade before 1784', *The American Historical Review* 74 (1968), pp. 44-73; on the challenges of enforcement see Hannes Ziegler, 'The Preventive Idea of Coastal Policing. Vigilance and Enforcement in the Eighteenth-Century British Customs', *Storia della Storiografia* 74 (2018), pp. 75-98.

[9]Among the sources of the War Office, use is made of the marching orders (WO5), communications with the Treasury and the Customs Board (WO1) and general out-letters (WO4). From Privy Council are used its unbound papers (PC1) and its registers, containing minutes and orders (PC2). Treasury documentation used here includes Treasury in-letters (T1), out-letters to Customs (T11), minutes (T29), and miscellaneous papers (T64). For the Customs, the focus is on the letters from the head official at Great Yarmouth to the Customs Board in London and vice versa (CUST97).

There are good reasons why Kent and Sussex have received much scholarly attention in relation to smuggling, coastal policing and the army's coastal duties. It was here that designated efforts at systematic coastal policing were first made from the 1690s onwards. With the ascension of William III and Mary II, and in the context of the French war, a growing amount of government attention was paid to the southern coasts. Both because of rising levels of smuggling and the perceived threat of Jacobite infiltration, Parliament, Privy Council and the Treasury took steps to prevent such mischief so detrimental to the economic welfare and the political stability of the Williamite regime.[10] Throughout the 1690s, several Acts of Parliament were passed to restrict the amount of illicit wool export.[11] As the smugglers were also perceived as potential agents of the enemy, the executive was eager to enforce these legislative measures with designated officials. From 1690 onwards, riding officers in service of the Customs were stationed on the coasts of Kent and Sussex, supplementing the earlier establishment of Customs vessels to police the shore by sea.[12] As early as 1690, this effort was also backed by the armed forces. Several of the Wool Acts required the Lords of Admiralty to have war ships cruise the southern coast.[13] In the same vein, detachments of the British Army were posted on coastal stations to supplement the service of the riding officers on land. Already in November 1693, Privy Council ordered the War Office to quarter some of the dragoons stationed in Kent nearer

[10]See for the Customs service's war against smuggling in this period Paul Monod, 'Dangerous Merchandise: Smuggling, Jacobitism, and Commercial Culture in Southeast England, 1690-1760', *Journal of British Studies* 30 (1991), pp. 150-182; Neville Williams, *Contraband Cargoes: Seven Centuries of Smuggling* (London: Longmans, 1959); Edward Carson, *The Ancient and Rightful Customs: A History of the English Customs Service* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972); Graham Smith, *Something to Declare: 1000 Years of Customs and Excise* (London: Harrap, 1980). William Ashworth, *Customs and Excise: Trade, Production, and Consumption in England 1640-1845* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). The most detailed account remains Elizabeth Hoon, *The Organization of the English Customs System 1696-1786* (Newton Abbot: David&Carles, 1968, first published 1938),

[11]1 William and Mary, c. 32; 7&8 William III, c. 28; 9&10 William III, c.40; 10 William III, c.16; 11 William III, c.13. On the wool legislation see Julian Hoppit, *Britain's Political Economies: Parliament and Economic Life, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 216-248.

[12]TNA Privy Council (hereafter: PC) 2/77, 190-191; T29/11, 173; T11/14, 41-42.

[13]See for instance 10&11 Will. III, c. 10, 1699. See also the respective orders of Privy Council in 1690, PC2/73, 385, 525. Graham Smith, *King`s Cutters: The Revenue Service and the War against Smuggling* (London: Conway, 1983).

the coast "to prevent the bringing over Prohibited Goods and carrying out of Wooll, and Stop Intelligence between England and France".[14]

Such ad hoc measures were put on a more formal footing towards the end of the decade. In June 1698, two troops of dragoons were stationed at Canterbury and Ashford to complement the service of the Customs officials. From these headquarters, smaller units were quartered in places like Folkestone, Dymchurch or Romney. These detachments, moreover, were frequently moved from station to station and for the encouragement of the soldiers, the dragoons were allowed two pence per day for such service.[15] The stationing of the dragoons was left to the Customs officers. By September 1698, the soldiers had been assigned stations by the supervisor of riding officers, Henry Baker.[16] Thus the coastal duty of these troops – which were in constant service until at least 1702 – was accompanied by administrative decisions regarding their pay and instructions, as well as the chain-of-command between the officers of the dragoons and the Customs officials: The army was to lend assistance to the Customs officers when and if they required it. The army, moreover, was to follow the recommendations of the Customs regarding their stations, seeking their quarters 'in such places as shall be Concerted and thought Convenient from time to time between the Commanding Officer of the said Regiment and Collector of the customs'.[17]

During the first decades of the eighteenth century, the coastal duty of the British Army was concentrated on Kent and Sussex, but it was intermittent service at best. In November 1716, for instance, the Treasury and the Customs appeared confused as to why the service had been abandoned after 1707.[18] Hence it was reactivated in 1716, though again this was restricted to Kent and Sussex.[19] It was under the de facto premiership of Robert Walpole, and particularly from the 1730s onwards, that the army's coastal duty became a more structural feature. It was then, moreover, that the service spread beyond Kent and Sussex. Analysing the marching orders of the War Office, Houlding was able to identify six regions in particular where troops were deployed on coastal duties, namely Cornwall and Devon, Dorset and Hampshire, Sussex, Kent, Essex as well as the Norfolk and Suffolk coastlines.[20] After the Union

[14]TNA PC2/75, 279. Similar orders were also given in February 1697, see T1/43, no. 27.
[15]TNA PC2/77, 190-192; T1/54, no. 8.
[16]TNA T1/56, no. 29; T1/63, no. 21.
[17]See the marching orders from the War Office, for instance TNA War Office (hereafter: WO) 5/32, 207. See also the report from Henry Baker in 1707, PC1/3/50.
[18]TNA PC1/3/50.
[19]TNA T11/16, pp. 427-431.
[20]Houlding, *Fit for Service*, pp. 79-81.

with Scotland, dragoons were also routinely sent to the assistance of the officials of the Customs of North Britain.[21]

In Norfolk, the first arrival of dragoons was reported in the summer of 1732, though a number of dragoons was stationed in Suffolk earlier.[22] The earliest instance of large detachments of dragoons sent to both counties seems to be in spring and summer 1735 in response to the murder of a dragoon at the hands of smugglers. A company of foot soldiers was sent to Hadleigh, Bildeston, Langham and Boxford to assist the civil magistrates and Customs officials in apprehending these offenders and preventing smuggling in general.[23] In the same vein, a detachment from the 7th Dragoons was sent to Norfolk to assist the revenue from Norwich and nearby stations.[24] A second detachment of dragoons was sent to Norfolk just weeks later, with stations along the Norfolk coast at King's Lynn, Gaywood, Snettisham, Heacham, Dersingham and Burnham Market.[25] Such troops were regularly ordered to exchange places or redeployed to other stations. In the main, however, the military remained a constant presence in both Suffolk and Norfolk during most of the century. In Suffolk, they were stationed in places such as Ipswich, Colchester, Chelmsford, Langham, Bildeston, Boxford and Hadleigh, while in Norfolk stations included Great Yarmouth, Norwich, King's Lynn, Beccles, North Walsham, Cromer, Winterton and Southwold.[26] The dispersal of the army, however, was at times much more widespread. In September 1751, a disposition from the War Office ordered 178 soldiers into 13 towns near Norwich and Great Yarmouth. That same day, altogether 65 soldiers were stationed at six towns near Colchester and Ipswich.[27] Even more striking is a disposition of soldiers from May 1739 which listed 52 individual villages and towns as stations for nearly 300 soldiers along the Norfolk and Suffolk coast.[28] These soldiers were nominally stationed at headquarters in larger towns with smaller detachments then posted to nearby villages.

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[21]TNA T1/102, no. 97; T1/106, no. 70. The case of Aberdeen shows that the military was in as much demand in Scotland as in England, see National Records of Scotland CE87/1/1, 27 February 1730, 1 May 1730, 17 June 1730, 17 November 1730; CE87/1/2, 16 September 1741, 2 March 1744; CE87/1/5, 28 July 1773.

[22]TNA Customs (hereafter: CUST) 97/7, 16 August 1732, 6 September 1732.

[23]TNA WO5/32, pp. 12-14.

[24]TNA WO5/32, pp. 19-20. See also CUST97/75, 17 April 1735.

[25]TNA WO5/32, p. 32.

[26]See the respective marching orders from the 1730s to the 1750s, TNA WO5/32, p. 132, p. 207, p. 212, p. 236, p. 404; WO5/33, pp. 62-63, p. 70, pp. 241-242, p. 284; WO5/40, p. 413; WO5/41, pp. 55-59, pp. 515-516; WO5/42, pp. 169-170. See also the request for more troops from December 1772 in WO1/875, pp. 33-36.

[27]TNA WO5/41, pp. 54-59.

[28]TNA WO5/33, pp. 241-242.

Backed by respective orders from Privy Council, such posting of troops near the coast appears at first glance directed by the War Office. This is also the impression given by Houlding.[29] Looking closer at the pattern of communication between the executive departments involved, however, the Secretary at War rather appears remarkably passive in the process. Marching orders were a reaction to specific requests by the Commissioners of the Customs, who frequently applied for military aid in specific areas, often indicating the proper number of troops and stations in their requests.[30] These were, in turn, guided by the petitions of the inferior officers in the outports (that is all ports outside London), who frequently applied to the Board for military aid.[31] If the War Office retained a degree of agency in the process, it was by leaving requests unanswered. Quite often, intervention by the Treasury or multiple requests by the Customs Board were needed to get the War Office to act. From Great Yarmouth, it was not uncommon for every single officer of the preventive branch to sign a collective petition for military aid after individual petitions had failed.[32] Yet despite minor differences as to when, where and how many soldiers were needed on coastal duty in Norfolk and Suffolk, the impression from the records of the War Office is that this pattern seems to have worked without major frictions.[33]

This is not the impression if one includes the view of other departments and particularly the outport records of the Customs. Here, signs of trouble can be seen from the beginning. During a survey by the supervisor of riding officers of Kent and Sussex, John Saxby, in 1716 for instance, it emerged that the service before 1707 had not been as smooth as the executive assumed. Though the real issue did not surface, it was reasoned that this might be due to "misunderstandings between those soldiers and the officers of the Customs".[34] A better view of these disagreements is contained

[29]Houlding, *Fit for Service*, pp. 75-90.
[30]See for instance TNA WO1/875, WO1/876, WO1/877 for requests from the Customs Board for military aid from the 1770s onwards. See also TNA CUST29/5, 11 April 1780, 11 November 1780.
[31]See for instance the requests from Great Yarmouth in the 1770s: TNA CUST97/20, 21 August 1769; CUST97/21, 22 June 1772, 7 August 1772, June 1774; CUST97/22, 1 June 1775, 17 March 1777; CUST97/23, 16 May 1778. See also the statement from the Weymouth collector: "Nothing but a military force can support the officers in the due discharge of their dutys." CUST59/1, 4 March 1718.
[32]TNA CUST97/25, 11 June 1784. Similarly WO1/877, 1 August 1782, 20 May 1783, 23 May 1783.
[33]See the statistical account of military aid to the Customs in 1780-83, TNA T64/151. For more background on the wider impact of these domestic duties of the British Army see Houlding, *Fit for Service*, pp. 55-76.
[34]TNA PC1/3/50.

in account of Lieutenant General Henry Hawley, regimental colonel of the 1st Regiment of Dragoons, which was occasionally sent on coastal duties during the 1740s and 1750s including in East Anglia.[35] Hawley's letter to the Treasury was of a general nature and touched on all the major sources of conflict between the military and the Customs. He argued that the reasoning behind the stationing of the soldiers as devised by the Customs was inadequate to their task and needed to be done in a 'more Millitary disposition'. He also complained that the ways of remuneration disadvantaged the soldiers. Perhaps the most critical point of Hawley's attack, however, concerned the chain of command in coastal operations and the hierarchy of Customs men and military officers.[36] Partial though it was, Hawley's outburst is a comprehensive summary of the most prevalent areas of conflict and can thus serve as a convenient starting point to explore these issues further.

The most serious issue raised by Hawley was whose authority was to prevail in coastal matters. Seeing that the Customs officers were corrupt and ineffective, Hawley claimed, the revenue would be better served by having them act as "advanced Spyes" in service of the better organised military personnel. He also wanted the military officers to 'have fuller Powers to make Seizures when they can' and that the 'Customs house people shall have Orders to go with an Officer when he requires it as also to give him intelligence if they please so to do'.[37] Though he did not say so openly, he aimed at a reversal of the hierarchy in coastal operations. According to the instructions of both the Customs officers and the soldiers, it was the former who were empowered to call the military for assistance and not vice versa. It was also the Customs officers who had the authority to seize contraband and in fact the entire logistics of preventive activity was in their hands. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the Board of Customs was quick to dispel such aspirations. 'We humbly Report, We do not apprehend we have authority to give them any further power than they have at present.'[38]

Far-fetched as Hawley's ideas may seem, they do reflect an area of continuous friction between the Customs officers and the military officers on coastal duties. Though the chain of command was never questioned on the level of communications between the War Office and the Customs Board, the lower ranks of both services constantly engaged in petty strife over such matters. Perhaps most common were cases in which the military officers refused to act when called upon by Customs men. In some cases,

[35]TNA WO5/51, 515-516; WO5/42, 171.
[36]TNA PC1/5/111.
[37]Ibid.
[38]Ibid.

officers claimed not to have sufficient orders. Sometimes, this was true.[39] At other times, the situation was less clear. When the 16 Regiment of Light Dragoons quartered at Norwich refused assistance to the Customs in December 1786, it was because the soldiers were currently not 'understood to be employed in that duty'. This was despite their being employed in that duty earlier and also despite the fact that the troops at Norwich had assisted the Customs for decades.[40] Among the commanders of the troops, there was in fact a tendency to interpret orders in the narrowest sense possible. In August 1778, for instance, riding officer Henry Norton complained that troops stationed at Chichester suffered the smugglers 'to pass by the Military': 'The great Gangs boast of their passing without any hindrance from the assistance of the Soldiers and all the Gentlemen are surprised at their not assisting us.' As the only obligation of the troop was to inspect the coastal posts once a day at six in the morning, it could not possibly be an 'obstacle to the Party to go after the Smuglers in the Night.[41]

Even where orders were clear, the soldiers' reluctance to follow calls of the Customs men was obvious. When, between August and December 1786, the riding officer Rowley at Knockholt asked for the assistance of the light dragoons quartered at Maidstone for coastal duties, he was continuously refused. Indeed, Captain Sankey of the detachment at Maidstone engaged in creative foot-dragging, repeatedly claiming a lack of men or horses. Though polite to the end, Sankey continued his excuses until the detachment was sent elsewhere.[42] In a case at Norwich in November 1779, on the other hand, Captain Money of the 9 Regiment of Foot refused to act as he deemed the force of smugglers on the coast too great for him 'to Cope with.[43] Other excuses focused on military procedures, such as the necessity to put the dragoons' horses to grass in the summer. From Aldeborough, Customs men informed the Board in 1775 that 'the Soldiers Horses are generally put to Grass in the Summer, but that the Men being sent here without their Horses will be useless'.[44] Similarly, on the coast of Lincolnshire in 1771, several troops of dragoons had been withdrawn by the military

[39]TNA CUST82/5, 6 February 1745. See also the incident in Norfolk, WO1/877, 2 November 1781: "There is about 19 Dragoons have been quartered at Northwalsham some months. I have applied to the Quarter Master for their Assistance and although they are within 5 Miles of the Sea it could not be complyed with without an order from the War Office".
[40]TNA WO1/827, 17 December 1786. See the similar case at Norwich in WO1/875, 25 February 1774.
[41]TNA WO1/876, 13 August and 15 August 1778.
[42]TNA WO1/827, 25 August, 8 October, 22 October, 26 October, 7 December, 12 December 1786.
[43]TNA WO1/876, 13 November and 16 November 1779
[44]TNA WO1/875, 4 March 1775.

commander to put them to grass, refusing to bring them back without 'a particular order'.[45] The Customs men in Norfolk and Suffolk were thus continuously frustrated by the fact that military commanders were only willing to send foot soldiers to the coast.[46]

All these cases reflect a general opinion among the military commanders, expressed in a memorial sent from the Secretary at War, Sir George Yonge, to several regimental commanders in May 1784, that the coast duty was beneath the higher callings of the military, subjecting the soldiers 'to the calls of the Revenue Officers, on every trivial or false information' which prevented them 'to render effectuall assistance in any real occasion of importance.'[47] In this view, the coast duty was generally detrimental to the 'necessary and essential Discipline' of the regiments.[48] Such negative views were only exacerbated by the fact that Customs men were commonly seen to be flimsy in their requests. There were reports that when military commanders offered assistance to the Customs officers, they met with a general 'reluctance' to cooperate.[49] It also did not help that Customs officer were suspected to be unreliable partners. When a party of riding officers and dragoons was violently attacked near Southwold in August 1783, Gabriel Clifton, the surveyor in charge of the operation, "rode away, and left us to defend ourselves as we thought proper", refusing to send assistance from Southwold.[50] Instances such as these encouraged the military commanders to mistrust the Customs officers and were certainly an important reason to debate and dismiss their authority as routinely as they did.

A second concern in General Hawley's letter was the stationing of the troops along the coast. According to him, the soldiers were not quartered in 'a military disposition' and this exclusively followed the priorities of the Customs. If the task of the military was – alongside the prevention of smuggling – to prevent 'any riseing or Riots in such places', 'a long Chain of Quarters close to the Sea [...] is looked upon as impracticable by way of defence'. Quarters, he argued, needed to be consolidated and 'more within Land, and at proper passes, and Passages of Rivers' as this would also allow intercepting the smugglers more easily.[51] Much like the question of authority, the underlying

[45]TNA WO1/875, 7 September 1771.
[46]TNA WO1/877, 23 July 1783, 30 August 1783. Foot soldiers were unanimously deemed of "very little use".
[47]TNA WO4/125, 22 May 1784. The memorial was also discussed at the Customs Board, see TNA CUST29/5, 17 April 1784.
[48]TNA WO1/875, 4 January 1771.
[49]TNA WO1/877, 8 December 1781.
[50]TNA WO1/1020, 31 August 1783.
[51]TNA PC1/5/111.

rationales of quartering the troops was a perennial concern in the cooperation between the Customs and the army.

At the time of Hawley's writing in 1746, this was in fact already an old problem that had surfaced as early as 1719 in Kent and Sussex. That year, one Mr. Girling, stationed with the dragoons in Kent, had written to the Board of Customs with proposals to make the coastal watch more efficient as the soldiers and riding officers could at present not discover the 'Fiftieth part' of the smuggling business. The problem, as he perceived it, was mainly the 'inconveniency of Quarters for Men and Horses', as the detachments were thoroughly dispersed over the whole stretch of coast allotted to them. It was thus difficult to bring more than three or four of them together in a speedy manner. Such dispersal, moreover, also inhibited a strict supervision of the soldiers who had 'all the Opportunitys imaginable of caballing' with the smugglers, being 'from under the Eye of their Officers'. Girling proposed to have the dragoons quartered directly on the coast in three conveniently placed stations in large houses under supervision of their officers. From these stations, coastal patrols of riding officers escorted by soldiers would effectually prevent smuggling.[52] The proposal was quickly quashed by the Customs Board who had sent John Saxby, supervisor of riding officers, to evaluate the feasibility of the proposal. Saxby argued that the terrain was too difficult for heavy horses making the proposed patrols 'by no means practicable'. The re-quartering of the troops in central places was also problematic, as houses were 'very scarce' or 'not Large enough'. In all, the proposal was deemed impracticable.[53]

The Board of Customs, in this and other cases, simply deemed the forms of quartering the troops a non-issue. Whenever forces had been sent on coast duty, the Board argued, 'we have directed the Surveyor General of the Customs to Consult the Commanding Officer […], in what manner to Quarter the Soldiers, so as best to answer the purposes they were sent for.'[54] Yet this was only part of the story, as such consultation did not always produce harmonious results. As several cases from East Anglia illustrate, there was often disagreement between different Customs officials as to how the troops were most efficiently quartered. As Hawley's letter indicates, moreover, there was also disagreement between the commanders of the troops and the Customs officials about what constituted the best disposition of the forces on the coast.

Throughout the early 1730s, there was constant strife between the collectors at Great Yarmouth and Ipswich regarding the quartering of the dragoons. When the former asked for military assistance on the Norfolk coast in September 1732, he was aware

[52]TNA T1/224, No. lxxxvi.
[53]TNA T1/224, No. lxxxv.
[54]TNA PC1/5/111.

that dragoons were stationed at Halesworth and Harleston at the time but deemed these places too far from the sea to be of any help and requested a removal to Lowestoft.[55] A few weeks later, this was answered by the collector of Ipswich who agreed to a removal of the dragoons but only part of the troop and not to Lowestoft, but further south to Southwold. The collector of Great Yarmouth promptly protested that such re-quartering would not help secure the Norfolk coast but only 'the parts adjacent to themselves in which we can't blame them but can have no Relation to our Security.' In any case, if they were moved towards the coast, why not move them all, seeing that they would do no good 'in an Inland Country?'[56] These different opinions about the placement of troops not only show that collectors preferred to have them at their own disposal, but also displays different attitudes to where the prevention of smuggling was best achieved – at the seaside or inland.

To what extent there was also disagreement between the Customs officers and the military commanders is best illustrated by the case of Robert Sexton, supervisor of riding officers on the Norfolk coast in the 1770s and 1780s. A busy applicant for military assistance on the coast during these years, he always insisted that such troops needed to be quartered 'by their commanding officer conformable to his [that is Sexton's] recommendation at such places along the Coast, where they can best assist the Officers, and render the most effectual Service to the Revenue'.[57] Troops placed at his 'Disposal' would serve the revenue best.[58] But when troops were sent in March 1773, their commander claimed to have orders to remain at North Walsham where they, according to Sexton, 'can be of Little or no Service to the Revenue'.[59] Though Sexton petitioned for their removal, the soldiers remained at Walsham. The next year, the issue recurred: A troop of soldiers was placed at Walsham with the commander refusing to move elsewhere.[60] Once again, Sexton complained. At Walsham, the soldiers were no use, he argued, as the next Customs officers were between seven and 23 miles distant, making it impossible to get assistance in time. And this was not the only problem, 'as its almost impossible to take a party of soldiers out of Walsham

[55]TNA CUST97/7, 6 September 1732.
[56]TNA CUST97/, 30 October 1732. The collector of Great Yarmouth ultimately achieved nothing and was still petitioning in May 1733 and July 1734, see CUST97/7, 28 May 1733; CUST97/8, 29 July 1734.
[57]TNA CUST97/21, 7 August 1772. See his other petitions, sometimes in conjunction with others, from 22 June 1772, 25 January 1774, 23 June 1774; CUST97/22, 15 May 1777; CUST97/23, 16 May 1778; WO1/875, 12 March 1773, 27 March 1773, 1 July 1774; WO1/877, 5 November 1781. Petitions from Customs officers in Norfolk also in WO1/876, April to May 1778, pp. 695-715.
[58]TNA CUST97/21, 5 August 1772.
[59]TNA CUST97/21, 20 March 1773, 23 March 1773.
[60]TNA CUST97/21, 25 July 1774.

without being betrayed there being so many of Smugglers and their friends residing in Town'. Again he wanted the soldiers 'placed along the Coast as usual' and again he was disappointed.[61] The same recurred two years later, in 1777.[62] Sexton's frustration was wholly understandable, for orders from the War Office held that all troops should be 'distributed along the Coast as the Revenue Officer shall judge best for the Service'.[63] Such orders notwithstanding, military commanders often refused, claiming to have no 'Power to Remove them without an order from the War Office'.[64] Only very occasionally did Sexton thus obtain a more satisfying quartering of the troops.[65]

Such refusal on the part of the military commanders was often rooted in military thinking. When the collector of Ipswich wanted the soldiers of the 3 Dragoon Guards farther distributed over his district in 1771, the commanding officer refused, preferring to have soldiers concentrated in head-quarters for he reckoned that such dispersal would 'impede the necessary and essential Discipline of the Regiment'.[66] Among the military commanders, there was indeed an understanding that the coast duty did not only comprise anti-smuggling business, but was also meant for the quashing of riots and defence of the country. Such thinking was less common among the Customs officials. Though most collectors were happy to have troops nearby during the 1745 Jacobite rising and most appreciated military assistance in putting down riots and securing captured smugglers, Customs officials predominantly called on the troops for Customs rather than military purposes.[67]

Beyond the clash of different rationales in using the troops, the refusal of military commanders was often also an expression of their deep contempt of Customs officers. When George Eaton, riding officer at Happisburgh, requested re-stationing of the dragoons in Norfolk in 1786 – moving them from Walsham to Happisburgh –, the commanding officer Colonel Robert Lawrence vehemently rejected these plans with reference to Eaton's dubious character. As he had obtained information that one of Eaton's sons was a smuggler, he suspected that such plans were meant to make Eaton appear diligent but were really designed to conceal fraud. If the dragoons were at

[61]TNA CUST97/21, 23 July 1774.
[62]TNA WO1/876, 24 November 1777.
[63]TNA WO1/875, June 1775, pp. 61-62.
[64]TNA WO1/876, 17 November 1777.
[65]See for instance TNA CUST97/22, 30 May 1775.
[66]TNA WO1/875, 4 January 1771.
[67]See for military request in 1745, TNA CUST82/5, 14 November and 30 November 1745, 29 January 1746. Soldiers were also used to guard prisoners or to prevent riots: WO5/32, 374; CUST97/13, 21 January 1744; CUST97/11, 23 August 1740. For a request for military defence against privateers on the Norfolk coast, see WO1/877, 11 June 1782.

Happisburgh, Eaton could have them 'galloping with him about the Country, as having the appearance of doing his Duty', but they would 'be so easily watched they could not move without its being known'. Under such circumstances, Lawrence preferred the troops at Walsham and to have Eaton send for assistance when needed, 'which would be much more likely to benefit the Revenue than the Plan he proposes, which I do think would not only be useless to it, but hurtful to the Service'.[68] In its answer to this, the Board defended Eaton's reasoning. Soldiers, they argued, 'cannot be too nearly placed to the smuggling operations, for if they did not seize, they would in some degree prevent the operation.' When, however, the soldiers were placed at greater distance, such as Walsham, 'the least Parade of any Military Arrangement' would alarm the smugglers and make them put off their operation until the army had gone.[69] The military rationales behind the quartering of the army on coastal duty was, it seems, forever inconsistent with the service of the revenue.

Disruptive as such conflicts were, perhaps the most pertinent of conflictive issues concerned the question of remuneration. Where smuggling was involved, a fortune could be made by fraud and collusion. The Board of Customs was well aware of this issue and developed its own ways of dealing with it.[70] Between the agents of two executive branches that were not exactly on good terms in the first place, however, collusive behaviour quickly became a common source of mistrust and a common accusation. To prevent such discord and remove incentives for collusive behaviour at the same time, the Board of Customs was keen on providing just and speedy remuneration.[71] Even this, however, proved far from easy. As early as 1706, the military service in Kent and Sussex had revealed a structural dispute in this respect. During the 1716 survey by John Saxby, it appeared that the soldiers 'formerly imployed in the like service, were under great discouragement from the irregular payment of the allowances intended for them'.[72] Indeed, the dragoons stationed in Kent claimed in 1702 that allowances disbursed by the then supervisor of riding officers, Henry Baker, had only been paid until 1700.[73] Baker admitted to this. The problem, as an exchange between the Treasury and the Customs reveals, was not that anyone disputed that the soldiers were entitled to their allowances, but that it was unclear from where such money should come. The Customs Board claimed to have 'no authority for making such Payment'. Baker for his part insisted that such money should be 'constantly paid them by myself out of the forfeitures ariseing by seizures and

[68]TNA CUST97/26, 14 January 1787.
[69]TNA CUST97/26, 2 March 1787. Eaton was later dismissed, but for different reasons, see TNA CUST97/27, 29 October 1788.
[70]Winslow, 'Sussex Smugglers'; Ziegler, 'Preventive Idea', pp. 93-97.
[71]See for instance TNA CUST29/5, 15 February 1783.
[72]TNA PC1/3/50.
[73]TNA T1/79, no. 51.

Convictions'. Allowances for the soldiers, in other words, were to be paid out of contraband successfully condemned in the Exchequer. But these funds were re-directed by the Treasury in 1700. Ultimately, therefore, the Treasury agreed to pay the arrears from the civil list.[74]

Minor as this dispute appears, it did concern the very foundations of the cooperation between the Customs and the army. The Customs Board, upon encountering the problem in 1716, was sufficiently alarmed to strive to eliminate such tensions by putting remuneration on a different mode. Whereas soldiers had received a daily allowance for their service before such time, amounting to two pence, the Board decided that in addition to two pence for stabling their horses, soldiers were to receive a share of each successful seizure in which they assisted personally. Such shares were common for the Customs men, who received three quarters of such seizures, with the remainder going to the crown. From now on, soldiers were to receive half of the king's share and a third of the officer's share for personally assisting in seizures.[75]

Little did the Customs Commissioners anticipate that this was to be a major source of conflict. As General Hawley's letter indicates, seizure rewards were a source of constant strife. Hawley claimed that the Customs officers frequently cheated soldiers out of their shares by making them drunk after successful seizures, buying their shares 'for a little money'. This was why the Customs officers preferred the soldiers dispersed in threes and fours. For if they wanted assistance, the commanding officer would always offer a larger number than the Customs men desired and send an officer along with the party. 'This they dont like', Hawley claimed, the easier to cheat ordinary soldiers or connive with them at defrauding the revenue. By way of remedy, Hawley suggested that the Customs men ought always to take an officer with them and that the seizure rewards were to be divided not amongst the soldiers on actual duty only, but amongst the whole regiment.[76]

Though Hawley's accusations were stark, and no proof of this could be obtained, the Board of Customs was fully aware that 'Frequent Disputes […] about the Division of the Money due to the Officers and Soldiers' did in fact arise.[77] As the efficiency of its service on the ground depended on the due cooperation of the military, however, the Board was keen on devising regulations to ensure that soldiers were actually rewarded. In 1737, when the coastal duty of the army had become quite frequent, it furnished all the ports with instructions for better accounting practices in seizure cases. Among these, it was stated that the 'Nature and manner' as well as the 'True

[74]TNA T1/98, no. 35.
[75]TNA PC1/3/50; T11/16, pp. 427-430.
[76]TNA PC1/5/111.
[77]TNA PC1/5/111.

Circumstances' of military assistance should always be clearly stated, the better to judge their 'pretensions to a Reward'. If any Customs officer was found negligent, the soldiers' reward was to be paid from his share.[78] Only a few months later, the collector of Great Yarmouth was informed that the Board had received complaints that several dragoons on coast duty had not been paid their shares. The collector was to send affidavits by the officers, informing the Board of 'the Circumstances of time place and manner of pursuing finding and seizing the Goods and what Officers Dragoons and Soldiers were present'. To ensure due rewards for the soldiers, Customs officers were also henceforth to state such particulars under oath.[79] The collector of Great Yarmouth followed these orders diligently, requiring officers to provide affidavits about the involvement of soldiers in a seizure, including how many and which.[80] Upon finding that the circumstances of a particular seizure were different than claimed, the Board forced officers to repay their shares to the soldiers.[81]

A second measure taken by the Board speaks more clearly to how dangerous the issue of shares could be for the Revenue. Similarly to what Hawley would observe a decade later, the Board had been informed as early as 1735 that Customs officers, when calling for military assistance, had a tendency to take out too small a number of soldiers 'to Answer the Purposes Expected from them upon such Occasions.' This often resulted in the soldiers being 'repulsed' when confronting the smugglers.[82] In 1735, and again in 1737, Customs officers were reminded to take as many as were actually needed and to consult with the commanding military officer 'what Force may be proper to take out'.[83] For the Board, compliance with this order was vital, for it was not modesty that motivated their officers. As Hawley argued, such reluctance was a result of the Customs men eyeing larger shares for themselves by swindling the soldiers out of theirs or by entering into a fraudulent agreement with them when no commanding officer was present. In addition to stating what assistance had been given by the military, affidavits by Customs officers therefore also required a declaration 'that there was no private or Collusive agreement between them and the Dragoons or Soldiers'.[84]

The military commanders had their own views of seizure rewards. In 1746, General Hawley thought it best to fight such abuses, if the seizure money was not given to the

[78]TNA CUST97/75, 26 March 1737. See also CUST59/71, 26 March 1737.
[79]TNA CUST97/75, 30 March 1738.
[80]TNA WO1/877, 9 February 1782; CUST 97/10, 10 March 1737; CUST97/22, 5 March 1777; CUST97/9, 21 July 1735; 20 October 1735.
[81]TNA CUST97/10, 8 April 1738.
[82]TNA CUST97/75, undated, around July 1735.
[83]TNA CUST97/75, 26 March 1737.
[84]See the following examples from Great Yarmouth: TNA CUST97/75, 30 March 1738; CUST97/9, 21 July 1735; CUST97/10, 10 March 1737; CUST97/26, 2 March 1787.

individual soldiers who assisted the seizure but divided among the regiment. The Board rejected this but was clearly aware of this practice.[85] In February 1785 for instance, the Portsmouth collector reported that the 3 Regiment of Dragoon Guards had entered into an agreement that any seizure money was to be distributed among the whole regiment rather than given to the individual soldiers. Whereas the commander of the regiment felt that this would 'prevent discontent among the Soldiers', the collector thought that it was 'to the disadvantage of the Revenue'. Paying the soldiers who assisted the Customs would prove 'a continual Spur to them to be active and vigilant'. The trifling shares received in the current method were 'but a poor recompense for encountering Hardship, fatigue and oftentimes great danger and makes them appear lukewarm and dissatisfied'. The agreement, therefore, needed to be dissolved and to prevent 'any murmuring amongst the soldiers' they should be frequently exchanged so that everyone had an 'equal chance of Emolument'. By this method, the soldiers would also have less occasion 'to form connections with the Smugglers to the disadvantage of the Service'.[86] A similar case was reported from Dover in 1772 where this arrangement was seen to give 'great Discouragement to the Men who are actually employed in the Service and make them Lukewarm in the Execution of their Duty.' The small shares received by these soldiers were also deemed "a great inducement" of taking bribes.[87]

Though it concerned the activities of even the lowliest of Customs officials and soldiers, the matter of seizure rewards was a struggle between the upper ranks of the executive. The Customs Board aimed at regulations beneficial to the revenue, including strict measures against collusion; the military just as eagerly argued for a prevalence of military thinking. In 1784, the case was settled in favour of the latter when the 15 Light Dragoons stationed in Norfolk was informed that henceforth every detachment of soldiers should be under the command of at least a subaltern officer. All applications by revenue officer, moreover, were to be made to the commanding officer and all parties of soldiers going on anti-smuggling duty needed to consist of at least twelve men and an officer. Any 'Money arising to the Troops from Seizures', finally 'is to be divided […] among the […] Men of the Regiment generally and not to be confined to those only who are personally concerned in making the Seizure.'[88]

It is difficult to assess the overall contribution of the army in anti-smuggling duties. Houlding has argued that the first two lines of defence – the revenue cruisers and the riding officers – were largely ineffective and there are many contemporaries who would have readily agreed. But it is difficult to maintain that it was exclusively the use

[85]TNA PC1/5/111.
[86]TNA CUST58/13, 19 February 1785.
[87]TNA WO1/875, 3 October 1772.
[88]TNA WO4/125, 22 May 1784.

of the military that held smuggling in check. It is true that the Customs officers were often perceived to be negligent and corrupt.[89] But so were the soldiers. They had a tendency of being bribed, 'getting drunk' or being absent from duty;[90] they were repeatedly proven to be colluding with smugglers;[91] and their efficiency in the coast duty was widely doubted. John Saxby, in 1716, argued that many seizures 'would have been made without the Dragoons' and led the Customs Board to conclude 'that the Dragoons have not answered the service at first Intended.'[92] The military, moreover, lacked the knowledge to effectively track the smugglers and was ignorant of the complicated legal procedures in seizure cases. In 1784, the War Office itself admitted that 'the Revenue has not hitherto derived all the benefit that might have been expected from the assistance of the Troops employed on the Coast Duty'.[93] As other administrators realised, however, the coast service – especially from the 1720s onwards – could hardly do without a 'Superior Military Force.'[94] If only to deter the smugglers, a military presence – 'properly and constantly stationed along the Coast' – was for the most part deemed necessary.[95] When prompted regarding the results of their cooperation with the military, the riding officers at Great Yarmouth were in fact able to produce a fairly impressive list of seizures over a five month period in 1774 and 1775.[96] Their work, as the frequent petitions from East Anglia and other parts of the country show, could not be done without the ready availability of the military. Brute force alone, however, was just as unlikely to prevent the smuggling trade.

In view of this, it is understandable that both the Board of Customs and the War Office maintained a rhetoric that unanimously feted the cooperation of their agents on the coast. As this study of coastal operations in East Anglia has shown, however, the actual service was bedevilled by petty strife and open conflict particularly at the lower end of the ranks. Such conflict, moreover, was embedded in a structural clash of two different executive rationales, especially with a view to the stationing and the remuneration of the troops as well as the hierarchy of the different departmental orders. Cooperation, in other words, was an executive ideal – but the reality was different.

[89]See for instance WO1/875, 20 December 1774.
[90]TNA T1/224, No. lxxxvi.
[91]TNA T1/224, No. lxxxv.
[92]Ibid.
[93]TNA WO4/125, 22 May 1784.
[94]TNA CUST98/1, 29 December 1719.
[95]TNA CUST97/14, 9 January 1747; CUST97/25, 20 October 1783.
[96]TNA CUST97/22, 2 August 1775.