



CRFCA

Council of Reserve Forces'
and Cadets' Associations

THE UNITED KINGDOM RESERVE FORCES

EXTERNAL SCRUTINY TEAM

ANNUAL STATUTORY REPORT
2024



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FOREWORD

1. We would like to record our appreciation of the MOD and the three Services who, as ever, provided our team with substantial briefings and interacted with the team positively throughout the reporting year. We welcomed to our team this year two new members; Professor Vincent Connelly joined us as our academic advisor and Mr Guy Wynne-Jones as our medical specialist.
2. This will be our first report to the Secretary of State of the new government, and we look forward to interacting with the ministerial team and Parliament.
3. Clearly with the commencement of a Defence Review and the acknowledgement of the urgency of the threats facing the UK, it is an important moment in the work of the External Scrutiny Team (EST) and our opinion on the health and capabilities of the Reserve. We should remind ourselves why the EST exists, and whether its purpose is relevant today. When the Prime Minister of the time, in 2011, instigated the Independent Commission to Review the UK's Reserve Forces, the question he posed was whether or not, in the context of modern threats and modern skills, we made optimum use of reservists and the volunteer ethos of our society. The answer to this question was clearly no as a funded programme (£1.8bn) known as Future Reserves 2020 (FR20) was implemented. In addition, external scrutiny was considered essential so the implementation of the FR20 programme was protected and *"... to ensure that our Reserve Forces do not again become an easy resource regulator."*¹



4. Depressingly, the Commission's fears have been proven correct and, after some years of progress, it is probably right now to conclude the situation today is hardly better than at the time of the Commission's work. In the last two years, we have reported that there was a real risk of a tangible decline in the health, and thus capability of the Reserve, unless there was a coordinated approach to ensuring there was a balanced equation consisting of a clarity of purpose for all personnel and units, combined with demanding training, appropriate scales of equipment and sufficient logistical and administrative support. In addition to the ongoing failings of the recruiting system, reserve workforce numbers suggest this equation is not in balance, so the risk this year continues. The Reserve in part has become hollowed out just as much as the regular component is now described.
5. In this year's Defence Review, we would suggest that it is of fundamental importance this equation is understood as the "science" of delivering capability from the Reserve. The detail of the science should be transparent and accepted by all parties and must be resourced and maintained by the Services if they are to provide an assured capability for defence. We believe that now, with such clear threats, is a moment of time for change; whether it is driven by financial necessity, a need for greater scale or meeting the need for more diverse skills and capabilities that might be more available from our civilian society on a part time basis.
6. In Part A of this year's report, we have endeavoured to give our view on the potential of the volunteer reserves to provide an increased contribution to defence to meet the threats that will be defined by the Defence Review. The lack of improvement in the management of our reserves is disappointing, and difficult to understand, when there is such a clear and cost-effective solution to placing more capabilities in the Reserve, allowing greater resource to be invested elsewhere in Defence. Is there cultural blindness at play sometimes, lack of knowledge of the dynamic and potential of society or conservatism driving resistance to change?
7. We are sensitive to the significant competing priorities and challenges for Defence and do not underestimate the complexity, but do believe that a properly structured and resourced Reserve is part of the solution, not only as a cost-effective way of delivering military capability and fighting power, but also widening the connection with society which no doubt in time of need will be very important.
8. I hope that the 2024 EST Report is of use to the Defence Review team as they assess the threats facing the UK and the Defence Forces required to meet them, found from both the regular and reserve forces.



S F N Lalor
Major General (Retired)
July 2024



INTRODUCTION

1. The Future Reserves 2020 (FR20) Independent Commission identified a requirement for an annual report by an External Scrutiny Team (EST) on the overall health of the Reserve Forces. The first two reports were provided at the request of the Secretary of State (SofS) for Defence in 2013 and 2014. On 1 October 2014, the Reserves Forces' and Cadets' Association (RFCA) had a statutory duty placed on them to report annually to Parliament on the state, and an assessment of the capabilities of, the United Kingdom's Reserve Forces (Annex A). Terms of Reference for the EST is at Annex B. This will be the tenth report under these statutory arrangements.
2. We submitted the 2023 Report to the SofS for Defence on 19 July 2023. The SofS placed the Report in the Library of the House of Commons on 8 November 2023. We received a response from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary and Minister for Defence People and Families to both Reports on 23 November 2023, which is at Annex C.
3. **Methodology.** We visited Headquarters and Formations with reserve responsibilities as well as a cross-section of reserve units around the country to understand the situation 'on the ground'. In our visits to Headquarters, we met with the First Sea Lord, Commanders' Home Command and Field Army, Assistant Chief of the General Staff, Deputy Commander Capabilities RAF, Commandant General RAF Reserve, Commander Strategic Command, Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (Reserve and Cadets) and senior reservists from all three Services.
4. The 2022 and 2023 reports, and indeed this year's Report, reflect the state of the Reserve before the 2024 general election. As there is a Defence Review underway, reporting in 2025, this report is in two parts:
 - a. **Part A** considers the Reserve contribution to UK Defence and what is required from a Reserve to generate mass, given the current threats to the UK and her allies, to help inform the Defence Review.
 - b. **Part B** considers out routine, in year observations for this reporting period.

Part A – The Reserve contribution to UK Defence

CONTEXT

5. In 2011, the Prime Minister commissioned a Review of the Reserve Forces because *“... he questioned whether or not the balance between our Regular and Reserve Forces was the right one and whether or not, in the context of modern threats and modern skills, we made optimum use of our Reservists and the volunteer ethos of our society.”*³ The Commission concluded that the Reserve need significant revitalisation and re-orientation. Further, the Reserve was in decline and formed too small a part of our overall national military capability.
6. The Independent Commission Report (Future Reserves 2020 (FR20)), which was published before the seizure and annexation of the Crimea by Russia in 2014, and subsequent invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, recommended that the total FR20 trained⁴ strength targets for the Reserve of the three Services should be 35,060 by 2015: Royal Navy – 3,100; Army – 30,100; Royal Air Force – 1,860.⁵
7. It also recommended that the size of the Reservist component should increase further to maximise the cost effectiveness of having a larger Reserve component within the Whole Force. Its view was that **the total trained strength of the Army Whole Force – Regular and Reserve – should be about 120,000 personnel. Nevertheless, on current plans, the strength of the Army Whole Force is just less than 100,000** (73,000 regulars and 25,000 reservists⁶ of the Active Reserve), even if all units are fully recruited and fit for deployment, which has never been the case.
8. In our 2022 Report, we said that there was a real risk of a decline in the health of the Reserve. In our 2023 Report, we observed that the health of the Reserve was indeed poor, and the decline seen in 2022 had become more apparent.
9. The MOD welcomed our 2022 and 2023 reports – see Annex C – and commented on what was being done in the people space and highlighted how the recommendations from the Haythornthwaite Review would better seek to integrate the Reserve.

3. Future Reserve 2020, Foreword, page 4.

4. The point at which the Services count trained strength is different: the RN and RAF only count as trained those who have completed initial professional training (Phases 1 and 2), while, since October 2016, the Army includes those who have completed Phase 1 training in the trained strength figure.

5. However, in 2020, the RN amended the FR20 trained strength target to +/- 20% of 3,100 and the Army has reduced its trained strength requirement by 3,000 from 30,100 to 27,097. The Royal Air Force has set itself a more ambitious target to expand to 5,000.

6. We set out in our 2022 Report the basis for this figure. Of the 27,000 reservists, 25,000 were the trained reservists in the Army's deployable warfighting structure.

RESERVES OF TODAY

10. As can be seen in the strength table below, the total (rather than trained) strength of the Reserve has been declining year on year from the high point of April 2021, particularly for the Army; it is now only 180 personnel stronger than it was in 2012 at the time of the Independent Review and thus the recommendation of 30,100 trained soldiers has clearly not been met. As at June 2024, the decline continues.

	2012 1 Apr	2021 1 Apr	2023 1 Apr	2024 1 Apr	Difference Apr 21-24
All Services					
Total Strength	30,070	37,410	33,830	32,490	-4,920
Maritime Reserve					
Total Strength	2,570	4,080	3,460	3,310	-770
Army Reserve					
Total Strength	25,980	30,030	27,240	26,160	- 3,870
RAF Reserve					
Total Strength	1,520	3,300	3,140	3,030	-270

11. A more detailed breakdown of the above figures is in Part B. Also in Part B, is our report on what we found from our visits to formations and reserve units. As in previous years, we found much that was good at the individual level - reserves from all three Services prove that they are of utility, useful and play their full part in support of current operations and tasks; and there are opportunities to conduct challenging, relevant and rewarding training, particularly on the many overseas exercises.
12. However, all too often, we found examples of barriers to reserve service that we have reported on before. In particular, we would highlight:
- The Reserve lacks a clear and resourced sense of purpose. Although, there are signs that this is slowly emerging, the Defence Review needs to articulate this if the Reserve is to be provided with the sense of urgency and commitment that we believe is essential to meet the challenges facing the nation, and the Reserve component of the Whole Force.
 - The current system for recruiting the Reserve remains unfit for purpose, and we remain concerned that the future recruiting system does not adequately reflect the unique requirements of the Reserve.
 - Future Soldier establishments of Army reserve units are inadequate to meet the War Fighting Increment (WFI) demand to reinforce regular units for warfighting.
 - The continuing decline and deterioration of the Army's Reserve Estate due to insufficient resources. There is now a much greater likelihood that buildings will have to close as they are no longer safe. **All of which will impact negatively on the ability of Army to recruit, retain and generate the required Reserve capability.**

13. We have described the capability 'equation' that underpins the health of reserve units and the Reserve more generally. In simple terms a *"... unit must have a clear, defined role, a robust establishment with the necessary numbers to achieve a critical mass that is maintained by effective recruiting and good retention, well equipped to conduct a high tempo of quality training with sufficient logistical and administrative support so it is an appropriate and acceptable burden on the part time reservists."*¹³
14. In our 2022 and 2023 Reports, we reported that this equation was out of balance - that not all units had a clear role, their establishments were not robust, and they were not fully equipped for their war role or to facilitate training across the Services. There, also had been very little improvement in the ratio of application to join the Reserve to actual attestation. Hence retention is poor, units and specialisations are understrength and numbers declining.
15. In its response to these Reports, the MOD said that it was confident that *"... the work being delivered by the Department is evidence of our commitment to arrest any decline in the health of the Reserve by initiating the start of generationally significant transformation programmes for the benefit of the Whole Force."*
16. However, our assessment in 2024 is that the health of the Reserve has not improved; it is still poor, and worse, and continues to decline. In its Army Command Order of December 2023, the Army recognised that it must have a viable offer to attract and retain and halt the decline in the Reserve. As at July 2023, a significant number of Army reserve units' current workforce strengths (over 20, the majority are combat service and combat service support units) are breaching 50%, or lower, of establishment. The Royal Navy too recognises the need for a national spread to attract and recruit yet the recent historical reallocation of resources and introduction of technological improvements are yet to produce the promised dividends. Given the overall decline in numbers across the Services, we do not anticipate that there has been an improvement. **We conclude that the current equation that underpin the Reserve is not viable and effectively hollows out the reserve capability.**
17. While this clearly was not intended, given the statements of intent in the Independent Review and Defence Command Paper, it has been the unwelcome accumulative effect of many separate resource decisions aimed at delivering short-term savings. These continue and Army Reserve units reported on the significant impact of In Year Savings measures imposed on their activity, despite a minister, under the previous Government, stating that these savings would not happen⁸. **We, therefore, conclude that the current resourcing of the Reserve is inadequate and the balance to the equation will not be returned until this also is addressed.** Across the Services, there is clearly a direct correlation between the equation being out of balance, deteriorating manning levels and thus the military capability that is planned to be available. Any improvement, or indeed growth, cannot be achieved if the start point to any programme is that it cannot cost more. This is not our view alone. A 2024 House of Commons Defence Committee Report⁹ stated that the Chief of the General Staff, the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Minister for the Armed Forces all acknowledged that the Reserve could not currently provide the mass which would be required in a time of war.

7. EST Report 2022, paragraph 45.

8. Minister for Defence People, Veterans and Service Families to RUSI Reserve Forces Conference, October 2023.

9. House of Commons Defence Committee Report HC26 "Ready for War" First Report of Session 2023-24, page 34.

18. The 2011 Independent Commission to Review the UK's Reserve Forces identified that the *"... UK's Reserve Forces are in need of significant revitalisation and re-orientation."*¹⁰ Looking to the future, given the strength numbers highlighted above and the stated ambition for the Reserve in terms of mass, which we examine below, we now say that we are at this point; progress initiated by the FR20 programme to revitalise the Reserve has ceased and is going backwards. Moreover, FR20 was designed to configure the Reserve to contribute to the kinds of smaller scale conflicts as Iraq and Afghanistan. If we are indeed now facing the threat of state-based conflict in Europe or elsewhere, that should change the demand signal for the Reserve and needs a new conceptual model that goes beyond the Reserve Forces 2030 Study (RF30).¹¹
19. When we visited the previous Minister for Defence People & Families in January 2024, he asked us to look at other models for reserve forces. We feel that this will be of equal value to the new government and the Defence Review Team, hence our report delivers this.
20. Our starting point was to make sense of the current stated ambition for what Defence requires from its Reserve forces, particularly in terms of mass. However, before we set out this analysis, it is useful to state that the Reserve traditionally provides reservists as either: individual augmentees (IA) to reinforce or bring current units and formations to war strength; specialists that do not exist (in sufficient numbers or at all) in regular forces; units that are structured, established, equipped and trained to fight as units; battle casualty replacements (BCR); or all four. These roles can be fulfilled by reserves in one of two broad categories: the active reserve, and; the strategic reserve:
- a. **Active Reserve.** The Active Reserve is those personnel who volunteer to serve part-time, and who are regularly trained and exercised in their particular Services, before being mobilised, or are engaged in supporting current operations, either having been mobilised or delivering outputs through their Reserve Service Days (RSDs).
 - b. **Strategic Reserve.** The Strategic Reserve is a contingent force comprising those ex-regular officer and other ranks that have retired from regular service, but still have a statutory liability for service when called up for war, and who are not in the Active Reserve.
21. Although it is not a surprise that the Armed Forces of other nations differ in size and structure, driven by their own history and culture, we note that many the UK's allies all have much larger reserve forces in totality, and also in proportion to the Regular force. There would seem to be acceptance that the Reserve must play a larger part in generating mass, which is reflected in many of our Allies plans to grow their Reserve in numbers¹². Professor Connelly's essay at Annex D, on Cold War 'whole force' planning between 1980-1990 illustrates how the Army, in a time of austerity, invested in its Reserve to provide cost effective mass and became structurally more like its NATO allies where the Reserve provided the majority of the force in wartime.
22. The changed circumstances brought by war in Europe have been recognised by Defence in the Integrated Review Refresh and Defence Command Paper Refresh (DCP 23). However, having studied high level MOD publications, we find that there appears to be a mismatch, and consequent lack of clarity, between the ambition or recognised need for mass in this new environment, and the resources that might be provided.

10. Future Reserves 2020, Foreword, page 4.

11. Ministry of Defence, Reserve Forces 2030 Review: Unlocking the reserves' potential to strengthen a resilient and global Britain, May 2021.

12. The following nations have announced growths in their reserve forces since 2022: Germany, France, Poland, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Belgium, Rumania, Hungary, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Norway, Sweden.

23. We note that DCP 23 expressly rules out any increase in the size of the Active Reserve even though the return of major war in Europe means that we need to be able not only to deter, but to fight and win, which requires the ability to sustain fighting despite the inevitable losses of people and equipment. However, DCP 23 stands by what was written in DCP 21 and maintains that force levels should remain broadly at the levels (reduced in the case of the regular Army) announced in DCP 21.¹³
24. Elsewhere, DCP 23 recognises the requirement for sufficient mass, which must come from the Reserve, both Active and Strategic¹⁴, but also says that “... *for too long headcount has wrongly been seen as proxy for outcomes within the size of the regular forces taken as a totem of our national military prowess.*”¹⁵ But conversely:
- The War in Ukraine has reminded the world that Reserves are essential both on and off the battlefield. Making the Armed Forces more capable and resilient, the Reserves deliver both mass and access to battle-winning specialist civilian capabilities that Regular forces cannot readily generate or sustain*¹⁶.
 - The 2nd and 3rd Echelon forces required to reinforce and sustain warfighting capabilities and protect the homeland should be found from the Strategic Reserve¹⁷.
25. The current Defence Reserves Campaign Plan (DRCP) takes a more expansive view of Reserves including a Contingent National Defence Force (CNDP) and a Strategic Reserve. However, while recognising the need to maximise the Reserve potential, it does not define mass or describe how the Reserve might grow, apart from creating, or rather re-creating, the Strategic Reserve.
26. We would agree with the ambition to bring Strategic Reserve out of abeyance, which, although not adding significant numbers of individuals to the Reserve as they already exist, would make them more accessible and useable, but there has been little indication of how long this will take, and if funds have been allocated over and above what is already being spent on the Active Reserve. There are no stocks of uniform and personal equipment on the shelf available to be issued, resource uplift to allocate personnel to administer, nor do we know how willing or able the Strategic Reserve will be in the event of mobilisation.
27. On 8 May 2024, in a written response to House of Lords inquiry on the implications of war in Ukraine, MOD wrote: “*The Ukraine conflict has reminded us all that peer warfighting requires significantly more resources and material than recent counter-insurgency campaigns, and that forces can only stay in the fight if those stocks can be replenished. Requirements aren’t just for stockpiles of ammunition, but for reserves across classes of supply, and of personnel, infrastructure, and platforms. ... This means that not only does our first fighting echelon need to be fully resourced to fight on the first day, but that forces need sufficient stockpiles of equipment, supplies and spares to immediately replenish the force. Further back, the force needs the training infrastructure and capacity to rapidly train volunteers and formations to form a second and subsequent fighting echelons. And we need the relationships with industry to rapidly replace our equipment, platforms and munitions. This is a whole of Government and national endeavour.*”¹⁸

13. DCP 23, pages 2 and 3.

14. DCP 23, page 8.

15. DCP 23 page 19, paragraph 12.

16. DCP 23, page 23, paragraph 28.

17. DCP 23, page 24, paragraph 29.

18. Ministry of Defence – Written Evidence (IUD0015).

28. We also find there is a lack of clarity of what is meant by 1st, 2nd, or 3rd Echelon of forces and which Echelon is to be reinforced by which part of the Active and/or Strategic Reserve. DCP 23 says the 2nd and 3rd Echelon will be found from the Strategic Reserve. CGS in a speech to RUSI on 12 September 2023 said the Active Reserve force will form the 2nd Echelon. We note that the Army describes its Echelons under the extant 'Future Soldier' establishments as follows:
- The 1st Echelon is found from the current regular force, reinforced by the Active Reserve to provide specialists and WFI to bring the regular force to its war fighting strength. It is estimated that this will take up 70% of the Active Reserve.
 - The 2nd Echelon is found from the 30% remainder of the Active Reserve, who also appear to have no equipment or stocks to deliver the units required - this would be approximately 8,000-10,000 people, which appears woefully inadequate for sustaining conflict at any scale or lengthy duration.
 - The 3rd Echelon will be found from the Strategic Reserve and volunteers who choose to join when asked.
29. Last year we commented that the NATO Force Model (NFM) gave a clear statement of purpose and ambition of what force is required for warfighting. It envisaged the 3rd (UK) Division deploying as the UK's warfighting division as part of the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) and 1 (UK) Division remaining in the UK as a resilience force. In order to be able to deploy at its war establishment, 3rd (UK) Division envisaged making up its regular units with workforce from other regular units outside the Division. This year, we learnt that, as at September 2023, 1 (UK) Division will be offered on rotation to NATO as the land element of NATO's Allied Reaction Force. In this scenario, neither Division will be able to 'rob' the other to bring itself to war establishment and each will be more dependent on the Active Reserve to complete its war establishment using identified WFI from the reserve units. Moreover, both Divisions rely on the Active Reserve as a significant proportion of the logistic units required to deploy.
30. Thus, we deduce that:
- IA's, BCRs and formed units will all be found from the theoretical 25,000 trained reservists in the Army's deployable warfighting structure identified in paragraph 7 above. A worst case is that only some 16,000¹⁹ might be available, given current workforce numbers and those that are non-deployable because of fitness and training states.
 - On current trained strength, numbers in the Army's Active Reserve are inadequate, or at best barely adequate to bring up regular forces in the 1st Echelon to war establishments. 2nd and 3rd Echelons will have to be found from the Strategic Reserve and other volunteers.
 - A credible reserve and reinforcement plan is needed to be able to force generate all IA's, BCRs and units established, equipped and trained to fight as units as we did in Cold War and countries such as the USA, Finland and Poland do now or have resourced plans to deliver.
 - We are unclear how the formations deployed as part of the NFM would be sustained or reinforced beyond the 1st Echelon. There appears little appreciation that deployed formations will require pools of BCR's for non-battle injuries and disease²⁰, as well as the combat losses that must be expected when in contact with an enemy.
 - We are unclear how the Army would deal with the concurrent demands of NFM enablement, sustaining the institutional foundation, contribute to the National Defence and Resilience Plan, while preparing to deliver a 2nd and 3rd Echelon.

19. Last year, we reported that only 18% of reservists were in date for all medical standards and for the majority, it would take three appointments and six months to meet the standards set out in policy. However, we realise that risk could be taken on this policy in warfighting and note that the Army are reviewing the deployment medical standards to allow for flexibility. For example, not requiring vaccinations for UK or possible Europe deployments where there is no medical requirement.

20. An appreciation also identified as absent in the recent British Army campaign in Afghanistan.

- f. **Two years after the invasion of Ukraine, the Army has no coherent plan for how to deliver mass nor prepare for a longer-term conflict.** We say this because the Reserve contribution to Exercise STEADFAST DEFENDER – the largest deployment to NATO in 40 years, involving 40,000 NATO personnel, 16,000 who are British – is minimal. There appeared to have been no ambition to include Army Reserve units exercising on their Annual Camps as part of the exercise activity, as took place during the Cold War, and allowing Army Reserve units to work to a clear purpose and deliver demanding training.
- g. We would observe that thinking in the other Services also needs to mature to reflect the implications of the threat for their bases and ways of operating as well as wider national resilience.

RESERVE OF TOMORROW

- 31. We urge the forthcoming Defence Review to be clearer than ever before on what the country really needs of its Defence Forces, unfettered by pre-conceived ideas of military constraints. The subsequent single Service plans should give urgent and radical consideration to harnessing the huge potential of society for delivering highly motivated and able volunteers, acknowledging the strengths and opportunities provided by its regular and reserve cohorts, when examining the requirements for, and of, the Reserve.
- 32. In this, we do not believe matters will improve if it is done within the confines of the current envelope of resources and numbers. Further, for perhaps understandable reasons given current funding levels, we fear that prioritisation is likely to be given to the regular component, driven by culture of the regular cohort, but this would not solve the problem of affordable contingent mass.
- 33. In our judgement there should not be a limit on the ambition to be able to fulfil some capability requirements permanently, as well as generate others at pace from the volunteer reserves. Our experience is that there would be enough enthusiastic and capable citizens that would serve, but only if their recruitment and in-service experience is positive, with a clear sense of purpose and resourced in a credible and modern manner that compares with their expectations from their civilian lives. In addition, we would argue strongly that capability from the Reserve can be considered as assured as they routinely have proved their commitment through their voluntary service, although that assurance is a collective one – the Reserve will provide the right people – rather than the assumption of individual assurance in the case of regulars.
- 34. The differences between regulars and the Reserve are not as well understood as they should be at the moment, **therefore, we do not believe that different, wide ranging or ambitious options for the Reserve will be advanced by the MOD for Government to consider, unless they are specifically asked for. We would recommend that the Defence Review Team should ensure that it engages with those who have the knowledge, experience and radical perspective of what a volunteer part time reserve is capable of, if it is given a clear role, is properly structured, equipped and resourced.**

35. Areas to examine would be:

- a. **What is meant by mass?** We would contend that a credible Reserve should be able to generate IAs, BCRs, as well as units structured and equipped to fight. However, we are not convinced that current structures or numbers of the Reserve can deliver this. For the Army, it is hard to see how this mass can be found from today's establishment of the part time volunteer Active Reserve of 25,000? **We contend this figure is too low to be credible as additional mass and recommend that a more robust and transparent science should be applied to quantify the requirement, including for sustainability of the force in combat.**
- b. **The balance between regular forces and the Reserve.** Despite the attritional nature of peer on peer continental warfare, the high cost of increasing the regular workforce means it is unlikely that the Regular Army will be enlarged substantially. Therefore, we conclude that the UK requires a larger Active Reserve. In this, a cost comparison study between Army regular and reserve sub-units, conducted by Defence Science and Technical Laboratory (Dstl) in 2015, for the MOD found that reservist sub-units were cheaper than regular sub-units²¹, until point of mobilisation and use on operations. Therefore, if Government requires greater mass, given the current resource constraints and other pressures on the defence budget (stockpiles etc), it would seem that mass can only be generated affordably by expanding the Reserve.
- c. **Clarity of Purpose.** We recommend that the Army's Project Wavell provides clarity on the Active Reserve's role in reinforcing the 1st and/or 2nd Echelons and also define the balance in the Reserve between finding IAs, BCRs, sub-units and units to reinforce the 1st and 2nd Echelons. In this, **we would recommend to Project Wavell that units of the Army Reserve should be structured to deploy and fight as units, as they were during the Cold War, to deliver collective capabilities as opposed to a WFI to regular units.** The 'mass' from units structured to war fight, also allows for mass to train at scale. This scale, in turn, allows for more interesting and challenging training, which aids retention; scale sustains and enables success. Even without expanding beyond FR20 numbers, we note that that Army has untapped potential of 3,000 to expand as, in 2020, the Army decided to reduce its Reserve trained strength requirement from 30,100 to 27,097.

36. Following on from this, a review should assess:

- a. What capabilities can be held in the Reserve, rather than regular forces as they have a lower training burden because of modern technical systems and can bring to bear their inherently civilian skills – transport, logistics, signals, AI/cyber and drones. Further, short of general war, these capabilities are used infrequently, or not at scale.
- b. Whether a greater preponderance of weapon systems that are only used in warfighting, apart from some elements required to be held at high readiness – MLRS, Air Defence, Drones (both offensive and defensive), rear area security, prisoner of war guard force²² – be held by the Reserve. This would allow the Army to use finite regular workforce elsewhere.

Based on these two paragraphs above, we would recommend that in this Defence Review, all three Services consider what warfighting capabilities and/or weapon systems can be held predominately in the Reserve.

- c. The Multi Role Medical Regiment concept has been a success, but could be expanded to cope with the greater number of casualties that peer on peer continental warfighting is likely to generate, and that is seen in Ukraine today. Professor Connelly notes that there were Cold War plans to evacuate 3,500 surgical cases daily back to the UK for every day of intense fighting. These casualties would need to have been retrieved and stabilised from the front line first. While numbers of service deployed then were larger, experience from Ukraine indicate that casualties on both sides are significant.

21. When not deployed, two reserve sub-units are less expensive than a regular sub-unit and a reserve sub-unit is broadly comparable, if not less expensive than a regular sub-unit when deployed. Dstl Report dated 25 Mar 15.

22. The deployment of the latter was an afterthought in the Gulf War (Op GRANBY) in 1990.

- d. **In Part B, we comment on the success of 19 Infantry Brigade as a focus for reserve units and, we, therefore, recommend that the Army build on the success of 19 Infantry Brigade and create other functional brigades, or all arms Reserve brigades. The latter would allow more easily for all arms training.**
- e. From its Reserve, the RAF already provides IAs and formed units and gets immediate value from its Active Reserve through the use of RSDs in supporting the provision of core outputs. In addition, the RAF has sought to involve civilian specialists more, for example in space, and has taken positive steps to introduce reserves into flying roles, especially where commercial airline pilots are qualified on the same basic type of aircraft – A330, Boeing 737/P8. More could be done to use reserves to improve crewing ratios even for the existing aircraft fleets, but if the Defence Review concludes that growth of the force is needed, flying reserves would provide an affordable pathway to that growth. As well as crewed aircraft, reserves could/should play a part in operating remotely crewed systems, and in counter-uninhabited air system capabilities. Moreover, as part of the Air Reserves Optimisation and Agile Combat Employment work, **we recommend that the RAF should consider creating multi-discipline units that deploy to provide the support to the aircraft and crews that have been dispersed from their Main Operating Bases to other airfields and landing strips across the UK.** This would include logistics, engineering, planning and force protection from air and ground threats. The RAF Reserve could also provide a surge capability to offer enhanced defence of the operating bases if the threat increased.
- f. **We would recommend that the Royal Navy consider expanding its Reserve component for UK maritime security (UK waters and abroad) to augment the delivery of a range of capabilities being introduced by the new platforms and technologies such as the SEA-Class workboats²³** in their various training and operational roles including autonomous mine countermeasure (MCM), defence of ports and anchorages, surveying and intelligence. We say this because in recent years, the Maritime Reserve mobilised teams of sailors and marines at short notice to enable Border Force Cutters to regenerate and operate in UK waters. Further, up until 1996, the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) commanded and crewed MCM vessels and other patrol vessels such as the Archer class P2000 in the defence of ports and anchorages role. All an indication of the latent capability and responsiveness of the Maritime Reserve. Should it do so in the future? The Seaward Defence capability was lost, and there is currently no dedicated specialised defence in the nation's ports and anchorages, or for coastal above water and underwater critical national infrastructure. There may be a role for the RNR in the emerging area of 'drone warfare' both in defensive area, such as surveillance in coastal waters, as well as offensively, augmenting any potential regular capability. Should the Royal Marine Reserve be structured to provide units similar to reserve parachute regiments?
- g. The National Defence and Resilience Plan would suggest a reliance on the Strategic Reserve as the preponderance of regular forces, supported by the Active Reserve, are deployed in support of NATO. We have heard of the ambition and work to bring the Strategic Reserve out of abeyance. While it is relatively simple to identify who is in the Strategic Reserve – HMRC records – to be credible, it requires communication with those who have a liability, resourcing (stockpiles of uniform and personal equipment), administration, a training structure and a mobilisation plan that is practised. Concurrently, employers need to be kept informed so that they too are aware of, and are bought into supporting the Strategic Reserve. We would also caution that a Whole Force approach to National Defence and Resilience is not rejected out of hand as it will take some years for the Strategic Reserve – and the mechanisms to enable its use, which might include the ex-reservists of the Active Reserve – to be brought to life. On this latter point, this could be done through, either through a mobilisation liability similar to that of ex-regular service personnel, or a data base from which willing volunteers can be called in time of crisis or when needed.

23. The Vahana vessels vary in size from 11-18 metres in length and are designed with interchangeable capability modules.

CONCLUSION

37. The Strategic Defence and Security Review 2010 took risk against holding large scale military capability against a backdrop of no conventional military threat to the UK and NATO. The Integrated Review Refresh and DCP 23 would seem to acknowledge that this strategic context is no longer valid.
38. As the UK is to offer most of its Armed Forces to NATO for warfighting, to be credible, these forces, especially the Army, require Reserves to deliver the mass required to sustain high intensity combat. However, as the Independent Commission found in 2011, albeit against different (less demanding) circumstances, we still find that the Reserve is in decline and forms too small a part of our overall national military capability, given the new environment.
39. We believe that many of the challenges faced by the Reserve stem from the fact that the Reserve equation is out of balance. If this is the case, to bring that equation back into balance will require a faster and more responsive recruiting system, enlarging establishments and providing equipment for units that are credible in the eyes of the reservist for the roles that they are being asked to undertake. It is clear that the current level and availability of resourcing is insufficient to achieve the supply that we assess should be needed to meet a realistic demand based on the threats required. We believe that if the stated ambition of being able to generate mass is to be realised, it has to be underpinned by adequate resource in order to bring the equation into balance. If not, the Reserve will struggle to recruit and retain the numbers Defence needs to deliver the tasks set it.
40. While we acknowledge modernisation of the Armed Forces will bring additional benefits beyond simple numbers, there will still be a basic requirement for mass to sustain our Armed Forces for, and in warfighting. The costs of increasing the Reserve are not that high, when compared to regular forces, but the return on this investment would be significant, and would allow the UK to improve its current offer to NATO with a larger, more credible and more sustainable force package.
41. The 2011 Commission said their work offered “... a *generational opportunity to make much needed changes to the UK’s Reserve Forces ...*”²⁴ and this was in the context of no conventional military threat to the UK. Their recommendations have not been fulfilled or sustained and there is now a clear strategic threat, which demands greater focus and determination in achieving substantial capabilities from the Reserve. We conclude there is so much to be achieved through our reserve forces in a cost effective and innovative manner, taking advantage of the volunteer spirit and the extraordinary skills that exist in our society. We would suggest the ‘generational opportunity’ is now at hand, and of critical importance.

24. Future Reserves 2020, page 8, paragraph 3.



Part B – 2024 Routine Observations

Reserve Workforce Requirements

1. We continue to report against the FR20 trained¹ strength targets for the Reserve of the three Services: Royal Navy – 3,100; Army – 30,100; Royal Air Force – 1,860; totalling 35,060. As there had been no public announcement of any change since the issue of the FR20 report, we reported last year that in 2020, the Royal Navy amended the FR20 trained strength target to +/- 20% of 3,100 and the Army has reduced its trained strength requirement by 3,000 from 30,100 to 27,097. The Royal Air Force has set itself a more ambitious target to expand to 5,000.

Trained Strength

2. The table shows that workforce numbers had continued to decline when compared to what we reported last year and year on year from 2021. In the particular the Army's total strength only is 180 personnel greater than it was at the time of the Independent Review. Figures for June do not show any improvement.

	2012 1 Apr	2021 1 Apr	2023 1 Apr	2024 1 Apr	Difference Apr 21-24
All Services					
Total strength	30,070	37,410	33,830	32,490	- 4,920
Trained strength	22,960	32,700	30,360	29,570	- 3,130
Untrained strength	7,110	4,710	3,480	2,920	- 1,790
Maritime Reserve					
Total strength	2,570	4,080	3,460	3,310	- 770
Trained strength	1,830	2,870	2,730	2,680	- 190
Untrained strength	740	1,210	720	630	- 520
Army Reserve					
Total strength	25,980	30,030	27,240	26,160	- 3,870
Trained strength	20,000	26,940	24,810	24,070	- 2,870
Untrained strength	5,990	3,090	2,430	2,090	- 1,000
RAF Reserve					
Total strength	1,520	3,300	3,140	3,030	- 270
Trained strength	1,130	2,890	2,810	2,820	- 70
Untrained strength	390	410	330	210	- 200

1. The point at which the Services count trained strength is different: the RN and RAF only count as trained those who have completed initial professional training (Phases 1 and 2), while, since October 2016, the Army includes those who have completed Phase 1 training in the trained strength figure.

Recruiting

3. Last year, we reported that, on average, for every 100 applications to the Army Reserve, only six people are attested at the end of the recruiting pipeline, and the process, or time of flight, takes an average of 10 months; it takes a further 10 months to complete basic training. Further, twice as many leak from the pipeline for voluntary reasons, or drift, rather than being compelled to do so. As such, despite all the efforts to improve the system, we assessed that the current system for recruiting was not fit for purpose and there is a similar pattern across the Reserve. Acknowledging it is a competitive market, a localised volunteer organisation, such as military reserves, demands fast processing of recruits, within days and weeks, not months.
4. This year, we noted that despite much effort by hard working and dedicated staff - military, civilian and contractors - being put into improving the recruiting pipeline, there has been little improvement in the ratio of those that start the process and those that attest at the end of it. We were briefed that improvements to the pipeline have resulted in an average outcome of 100:7. **Though there is wide variation across units, our conclusion is that the current system remains unfit for purpose.**
5. On our visits, staff have endeavoured to reassure us that requirements of the Reserve has been fully integrated into the development of the new Armed Forces Recruiting Programme (AFRP). However, we cannot help but note that – and we hope that we will be proved wrong - whether AFRP, if based on a pipeline, will be any more successful, particularly when AFRP will be responsible for recruiting for all three Services, from nuclear submariners, to RAF fast jet pilots to Army truck drivers.
6. **We must conclude the current recruiting system simply does not work for the Reserve Forces.** Years of tinkering and consistent under delivery also point to a system that cannot be repaired. We would recommend radical action to remove the Reserve Forces from the current overly centralised system and replace it with a responsive and localised system that does work.

Utility and Use of the Reserve

7. Given the focus of this year's report, in this section, we touch only briefly on some issues we observed when visiting the single Services. In this, we were encouraged to hear from the Assistant Chief Defence Staff, Reserves and Cadets, of the prominence and importance given to the Reserve within the MOD and Services, and of the work being done through the Defence Reserve Campaign Plan to maximise the potential of the Reserve through existing planning and transformation programmes.
8. We also would wish to point how we continue to be highly impressed with how the reservist of all three single Services continue to be of utility, useful and play their full part in support of current operations and task, conduct challenging, relevant and rewarding training, balancing these requirements with those of family life and civilian job.
9. Although, it is perhaps a truism that a reservist does not join for the pay, we have picked up across all three Services that, when taking account of the cost of travel, it often can cost more to attend training, particularly for those at the start of a Reserve career, than to be paid for it. Further, reservist pay has not kept pace with the increases to the National Living Wage. Given, as we note above, that a reservist balances family, job and reserve service, a reservist's family cannot help but notice that their reservist family member is not only away, but is being paid less than if they were stacking shelves.

10. Royal Navy.

- a. Maritime Reserve (RNR and RMR) continues to deliver competent individual augmentees (IA) in support of the Royal Navy. It is now standard that 13% of its trained strength is used as an auxiliary in support of Royal Navy deployments and operations.
- b. The Royal Navy is clear that it requires IAs, rather than formed units from its Reserve. We noted last year the shift in focus to a capability demand for the RNR, rather than focussing on what the current RNR can provide. However, the transfer of Ships' companies from regional units to national Branches, once trained, has meant that the reservists of the latter do not support routinely the former, breaking the culture of unit cohesion and loyalty; decline of professional Training Branch instructors supporting units and numbers attending training. *We understand what is trying to be achieved, but question whether the balance is right and we suspect further change will be required to ensure the reservists are best placed to deliver against the demand requirements. The decline in numbers in units was notable (less so in HMS PRESIDENT), particularly as the RNR has buildings and facilities in an excellent state of repair, due to FR20 investment, but too empty of people and out of balance officer and other ranks numbers in others.*
- c. We noted the positive steps that RMR London has taken in restructuring the Commando training programme (assured the Commando Training Centre) by extending training and greater gaps between weekends, which is proving retention positive. It has also produced a command and leadership development pathway post the commando course, again encouraging retention.

11. Army.

- a. On the positive side:
 1. With a mobilisation budget of £38m, the Army reservists, like the other two Services, are playing a full part in supporting operations, whether as individual or units, such as Operation (Op) TOSCA, the UN peacekeeping mission in Cyprus and Op INTERFLEX, the training of Ukrainians in the UK.
 2. There are also many opportunities to conduct overseas training, whether in Croatia or the United States.
 3. The formation of 19 Light Brigade, an experimental, non-deployable Brigade Headquarters and Brigade of 10 reserve Yeomanry and Infantry units has been a success. It has proved itself to be able to efficiently administer and lead reserve units and be a centre of experimentation and innovation – mobilisation exercises, unit collaboration for courses and training. Further, it has conducted the largest Army Reserve deployment and training exercise in many years. This event was based on deploying a Battlegroup to Bergen Hohne in Germany for two weeks and drawing troops, not only from 19 Brigade, but also 11 and 8 Brigades, 2 Medical Brigade and 101 Operational Support Brigade. We commend that this initiative should be included the STEADFAST DEFENDER exercises, highlighted in the main body of the report.
 4. We applaud the initiative in 2024 to ring fence an Army Reserve core budget and output fund to be used for routine training and guaranteeing that it would not be subject to in-year saving measures later in the year. We cannot emphasise enough the negative impact of such savings on morale and feeling of worth.

5. We applaud the Army's work to reduce the burden of equivalence with the Regular Army. We heard of work to reduce unnecessary administrative burdens and to remodel training courses so reservists can deliver capability from the time they have available and still be provided with a motivating career progression ladder. This work also demonstrates that Reserve can deliver meaningful operational capability with careful thought and planning.

b. On the negative side:

1. Even though there was no high level intent of this in 2023/24, confusion over the implementation of late in-year savings measures meant that reservists who had achieved their Certificate of Efficiency, were told to stop training.
2. We have commented on the Future Soldier reductions to unit establishments and the impact that this has had. For example, we regard it unrealistic for an infantry battalion, with an establishment of 334, to find a War Fighting Increment (WFI) of 284 that includes all but four of its private soldiers and 30 more Lance Corporals than it actually holds. In another unit, while its WFI represents 80% of its workforce, it is only required hold 75% medically fit for deployment.
3. As at July 2023, a significant number of units' (over 20) current workforce strengths are at around the 50%, or lower, of establishment. Despite considerable efforts to improve recruiting, given the overall continuing decline in numbers, we do not anticipate that there has been an improvement. The majority are in the combat service and combat service support units. This should not be surprising in the light that we found transport regiments do not have any trucks on which to train, or artillery regiments have no guns or ammunition to fire. This should be of considerable concern as some 50% of 102 Operational Support Brigade, in support of 3 (UK) Division, is made up of reserve units.
4. There is still the nonsense of Yeomanry regiments have the same Basic Unit Fleet (BUF – 15 x JACKAL vehicles) as their regular counterparts, but only one civilian mechanic, rather a fully-fledged Light Aid Detachment (LAD) - 2022 Report.
5. We heard of a number of instances where internal policy and practice stifled the ability to recruit ex-regulars into units or curtailed the ability of successfully recruited units to overbear by rank. Given the dire state of recruiting overall we are concerned that local supply success is being overly controlled from the centre using workforce models more appropriate to the Regular force.

12. Royal Air Force.

- a. The operational output remains – 56% of RSDs were expended on operational output, as opposed to routine training. Fifteen percent of augmentation for operations was found from the Reserve.
- b. We applaud the RAF decision not to impose in-year RSD saving measures, but regrettably RAF unit in joint organisations (Joint Helicopter Command) did suffer in that aviators who had met their Certificate of Efficiency had their training constrained.
- c. We note the ambition to grow both in numbers and capabilities, but actual progress is slow. Although the fall in trained strength is comparatively low, we note that actual numbers are held up by Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) personnel rather than part-time reservists. Further, the outflow will increase as reservist aviators reach their retirement age over the next two years.

- d. Nevertheless, the foundations are being laid with the four Reserve Support Wings reaching initial operating capability (IOC); and FTRS personnel being replaced by part-time volunteers, increasing the opportunities for further career advancement, if wished. As with the other two Services, given the constrained and finite resource envelope, there is the danger of a perception that anything given to the Reserve is a loss to the regular component and, therefore, there is a vested interest for the regulars not to support the Reserve.

Reserve Estate

13. The Reserve and Cadet Estate (Volunteer Estate (VE)) consists of some 5,000 buildings spread over 2,147 sites across the UK (1,790 of these locations are Cadet sites). The VE represents some 68% of the total Defence sites by number, but occupies only 5% in area and 3% of its running costs. Most of the VE consists of relatively basic infrastructure spread over many small, low value land parcels. As with the wider Defence estate, just under 50% of the VE is 50 or more years old.
14. In previous reports, we have reported that funding received to manage the VE primarily has been on a reactive (fix-on-fail) maintenance basis and highlighting that the **paucity of funding means that the VE, at best, is in managed decline.**
15. The incorporation of the VE on 1 August 2024 into MOD Built Estates contracts, which already provide Hard Facilities Management services to Defence facilities across the UK, should help mitigate many of these issues and deliver a higher standard of service for users; however, this will continue to operate within the existing financial allocation. **Nevertheless, this year, we report that the situation facing the VE and, therefore, directly impacting on the ability of the Reserve to generate capability is even more acute as set out below.**
16. The overall funds made available for Hard and Soft Facilities Management have not increased, less for some allowance for inflation. Indeed, the trend of a reducing allocation for the Hard Facilities Management element continues.
17. Further, bids have been unsuccessful for monies in FY23/24 and FY24/25 specifically required to meet statutory and mandatory compliance, in particular for gas and fire safety, and addressing asbestos risk.
 - a. Seventy two sites, principally Army Reserve Centres (ARC) and Royal Naval Reserve Centres will have their gas networks recommended for closure by MOD's Principal Gas Engineer if the 1872 identified non-compliances and advisory remedial works are not rectified by September 2024, and earlier in the case of some specific issues. **Without heating and hot water it is probable that sites will need to close,** with a forced relocation of reserve activity to an alternative receiver site to maintain training output, which will impact on reserve cohesion and reputation.
 - b. A programme of passive fire safety surveys completed in March 2023 identified the need for statutory and recommended remedial works in 148 ARCs where there is designated sleeping accommodation. While commanders have been able to accept the risk to life in the short term, enduring use of the ARCs with risks to life left unrectified is untenable, resulting in collective and residential training having to take place on the already oversubscribed Defence Training Estate, which is at operating capacity due to support to ongoing operations. This will impact on the Reserve's ability to meet training objectives in support of their operational outputs to regular formations.

- c. Lack of funding meant not all identified asbestos, formally rated as Very High Risk or High Risk, could be removed by the end of FY 23/24, as required by Defence's Enduring Asbestos Management Strategy. The asbestos risk to life will increase over time due to age-related degradation of materials (e.g. roofing sheets), meaning that in due course assets will need to be placed out of use, such as the vehicle workshops for 103 Force Support Battalion REME in Ashford and the garaging for the reconnaissance vehicles for D Sqn, The Queen's Own Yeomanry in Newcastle.
- 18. To make matters worse, the VE has received no routine Capital Departmental Expenditure Limits (CDEL) Sustain funding from the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) since FY21/22, and none is provisioned in FY24/25, for the £182m worth of specified Sustain tasks on the VE Forward Maintenance Register (FMR). Here we do acknowledge, but have not included, monies that the Army has been spending on the VE – a total of some £89m in FY23/24 and FY 24/25 – but this has been earmarked mainly for improvements to the Army Cadet Estate (Tranche 1 of the RFCA Estate Optimisation Programme (REOP)) and legacy FR20 projects, some much delayed as they were subject to repeated in-year savings measures.
- 19. We have reported that Tranche 2 of the REOP had included a number of Defence Collaboration Hubs (DCH) in major conurbations and plans to modernise existing regional and small Resilience hubs. However, no options gained any funding in FY23/24. While we understand the pressures on defence funding, we found this disappointing as it would appear that any plan to improve the condition and capability of the VE, given the dire situation reported above, significantly never progresses beyond a plan.
- 20. We reported that for FY24/25, a number of options were being made with the strong recommendation that if only a limited scope option was approved, it would allow Defence to test and adjust the concept of DCHs in key urban conurbations. Regrettably, no option was approved or funded.
- 21. The net result of this accumulative underfunding and investment, both for daily, routine maintenance, sustainment of the VE and forward development of the VE, is that:
 - a. The funding made available is insufficient to enable the VE to be maintained and sustained in a safe, compliant and functional state.
 - b. Previous warnings that ARCs may have to be closed is now a reality and the incidence of closures is only likely to increase.
 - c. The accumulative underfunding should be understood, calculated and identified as a financial risk for Defence.

All of which will impact negatively on the ability of Defence to generate and sustain Reserve capability, which is routinely used to augment Regular capability in support of operations, as well as to provide capability for UK resilience operations.

Reserve Health

22. Within the Defence Primary Health Care (DPHC) organisation, there are seven FR20 funded teams of DPHC staff that deliver in and out of hours appointment (weekends) for reserve units. The DPHC footprint across the country has contracted with medical centres being closed, staff reduced and now gapped posts. This footprint does not match the Reserve footprint, for example in the Greater Manchester/Liverpool area there are only two small medical centres amongst a significant concentration of reservists. Nevertheless, 12,000 appointments were delivered in 2020/21, approximately 6,000 from the reservist teams - (3,300 at weekends and evenings, the remainder during the week). Over this period 20% of appointments offered for both weekday and out of hours clinics were not taken up. Yet, we also heard from units that they struggle to get necessary appointments.
23. In the 2022 and 2023 Reports, we recommended that there should be a clear statement of the medical requirement need of reservists and gave some ideas when reservists might be vaccinated in order to bring them closer the standard required of regulars essentially when they were captive on the end of basic training, attending specialist courses or preparing for overseas exercises (Annex F). The MOD response (Annex C) was the single Services should set the appropriate medical standards and medical fitness and preparedness was a topical issue. Further, that this would be tracked as part of the AGILE STANCE capability audit.
24. DPHC is engaged in AGILE STANCE, which has raised awareness of gaps in the medical readiness of reservists (vaccination, medical grading, surveillance) within the single Services. Demand for aspects of occupationally focused healthcare is growing, which has highlighted how the single Services need to articulate and co-ordinate the demand signal for services to improve the deployability of the Reserve. Currently 77% of the Reserve require at least one element of force health protection to be at the same level as regular personnel. Addressing the gaps to meet requirements for rapid mobilisation at scale and pace requires clearer prioritisation and planning. In turn this will mean matching available resource to demand.



Annexes:

- A. External Reporting Provisions of the Defence Reform Act 2014.
- B. External Scrutiny Team Terms of Reference.
- C. Parliamentary Under-Secretary and Minister for Defence People and Families Response to the 2022 and 2023 Reports.
- D. Cold War “Whole Force” Planning 1980-1990 in the British Army.
- E. 2024 Report Main Recommendations.
- F. Previous Report Recommendations – 2013 to 2023.
- G. External Scrutiny Team – Membership.

EXTERNAL REPORTING PROVISIONS OF THE DEFENCE REFORM ACT 2014

The Defence Reform Act 2014 placed a responsibility on Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations to submit an annual report on the state of the UK's Reserve Forces under the following provisions:

113A Duty to prepare report on volunteer Reserve Forces

- (1) An association must prepare an annual report on the state of the volunteer reserve forces so far as concerns the area for which the association is established.
- (2) A report on the state of the volunteer reserve forces is a report that sets out the association's assessment of the capabilities of the volunteer reserve forces, having regard to the duties that may be imposed on members of those forces by or under this Act or any other enactment.
- (3) The assessment referred to in subsection (2) must, in particular, include the association's views on the effect of each of the following matters on the capabilities of the volunteer reserve forces:
 - (a) the recruiting of members for the volunteer reserve forces;
 - (b) the retention of members of those forces;
 - (c) the provision of training for those forces;
 - (d) the upkeep of land and buildings for whose management and maintenance the association is responsible.
- (4) A report under subsection (1) must also set out the association's assessment of the provision that is made as regards the mental welfare of members and former members of the volunteer reserve forces.
- (5) An association must send a report under subsection (1) to the Secretary of State –
 - (a) in the case of the first report, before the first anniversary of the day on which the last Future Reserves 2020 report prepared before the coming into force of this section was presented to the Secretary of State, and
 - (b) in the case of subsequent reports, before the anniversary of the day on which the first report was laid before Parliament under subsection (6).
- (6) On receiving a report under subsection (1), the Secretary of State must lay a copy of it before Parliament.
- (7) The duties under this section may, instead of being performed by an association, be performed by a joint committee appointed under section 116 by two or more associations in relation to their combined areas.
- (8) Where by virtue of subsection (7) a joint committee has the duty to prepare a report –
 - (a) references in subsections (1) to (5) to an association are to be read as if they were to the joint committee, and
 - (b) section 117(1)(a) (power to regulate manner in which functions are exercised) has effect as if the reference to associations were to the joint committee.
- (9) In subsection (5)(a), 'Future Reserves 2020 report' means a report prepared by the External Scrutiny Group on the Future Reserves 2020 programme.

COUNCIL OF RESERVE FORCES' AND CADETS' ASSOCIATIONS EXTERNAL SCRUTINY TEAM: TERMS OF REFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

1. The FR20 Report¹ was commissioned by the Prime Minister in October 2010 in recognition of the relative decline and neglect of Reserve Forces.

PURPOSE

2. The Commission identified² a requirement for an annual report on the overall state of the Reserve Forces. It recommended that the Council of Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations (CRFCA) was best placed to meet this requirement, given its existing provision by (non-discretionary) statute to provide independent advice to the Defence Council and Ministers on Reserve Matters. The Defence Reform Act 2014 sets out the duty of the CRFCA to prepare annual reports of the state of the volunteer Reserve Forces. Roles and responsibilities in the production of the reports are set out in the Enabling Agreement.³

ROLE

3. The CRFCA External Scrutiny Team is to report to the Secretary of State for Defence on the state of the volunteer Reserve Forces and provide independent assurance to Parliament.

MEMBERSHIP

4. After consultation with the MOD, the RFCAs will appoint the Chair of the CRFCA External Scrutiny Team. The Chair will be appointed for a maximum of five years.
5. Membership of the External Scrutiny Team should be no greater than eight, to be decided by the Chair after consultation with the MOD through VCDS. It should provide representation from the three single Services, appropriate Regular and Reserve experience and independent expertise. Whilst its composition may change, the External Scrutiny Team must retain the expertise that enables the Chair to perform his duties effectively. The membership should include at least one member who is able to assess the provision made as regards the mental welfare of members and former members of the Reserve Forces.

BASELINE AND METRICS

6. 1 April 12 is to be taken as the baseline date from which progress of the Future Reserves 2020 Programme will be assessed.
7. RF&C will undertake coordinating activity with the single Services to ensure that the External Scrutiny Team has the assistance it requires to enable them to assess trends based on MOD manning and demographic information (such as age). Metrics to be routinely monitored are to be agreed in consultation with the MOD but may include:
 - a. Outflow rate and return of service;
 - b. Fit for Employment; Fit for Role; Fit for Deployment;
 - c. Percentage achieving bounty;
 - d. Gapping levels of Regular, Reserve, FTRS and Civilian Permanent Staff who support the Reserve community.

1. Future Reserves 2020: The Independent Commission to Review the United Kingdom's Reserve Forces. July 2011.

2. Para 104 (p. 43).

3. Enabling Agreement dated 7 October 2014.

ASSESSMENT

8. The External Scrutiny Team's report is to be set in the context of the ability of the Reserves to deliver capability required by Defence, and should assess the state of the Reserves including:

- a. progress against delivery of the FR20 Mandates and in the context of the recommendations of the FR20 Report, the condition of the Reserves.

and beyond the FR20 Programme:

- b. the recruiting of members for the volunteer Reserve Forces;
 - c. the retention of members of those Forces;
 - d. the provision of training for those Forces;
 - e. the upkeep of land and buildings for whose management and maintenance the Associations are responsible.
9. CRFCA will be involved in the development of the Programme through the Reserves Executive Committee.

ACCESS

10. RF&C will assist in facilitating access to serving military personnel, sites and furnishing additional data as required.

COSTS

11. Funding to cover the External Scrutiny Team's total personal expenses in the order of £9-10K pa⁴ has been agreed. RF&C will provide advice on the submission of claims and recovery of expenses.

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

12. Media engagement, if necessary, is to be conducted through MOD DDC in conjunction with RF&C.

DATE AND FREQUENCY OF REPORTS

13. The External Scrutiny Team shall present a report to the Secretary of State for Defence annually, reflecting the requirements of the Defence Reform Act 2014.

14. The Secretary of State for Defence will deliver the report to Parliament.

⁴ This is recognised as an early estimation and reflecting steady-state costs beyond Yr1. CRFCA can bid for further funding as required as part of GIA.







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RT HON DR ANDREW MURRISON MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE AND MINISTER
FOR DEFENCE PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

4/4/2/10/ap

29 November 2023

Dear Major General(Retd) Simon,

I was most grateful to receive the External Scrutiny Team's 2022 and 2023 reports and I would like to thank the Team for their hard work. I have set out comments on the specific recommendations in the reports at the Annex to this letter, but I also want to take the opportunity to make some more general observations concerning the Reserves.

Over the past two years Reservists have continued to make an invaluable contribution to Defence. They provided critical support to the pandemic response whilst also deploying on other tasks at home and overseas, including UK operations in Cyprus and Gibraltar; working as part of the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence in the eastern part of the Alliance and the United Nations Force in Mali; and deploying on global counter-terrorism and counter-piracy operations. More than 5000 Reservists also undertook full-time roles throughout 2021/22.

The 2022 report suggests that Reserve recruitment is being affected by a lack of effort on the part of the Front-Line Commands. Despite the challenges mentioned above, we saw more than 4,700 people join the Reserves during the recruiting year 2021/22. However, the UK employment market is not immune to the present global recruitment challenges and competition for key skills remains high. We remain committed to growing the Reserve Forces to help meet our requirements for both mass and specialist skills.

The past few years have presented numerous unforeseen challenges to the UK, both domestically and internationally. We have witnessed the beginning of the largest conflict in Europe since WWII. Russia's invasion of Ukraine was a key factor behind the decision to refresh the Integrated Review and the Defence Command Paper. Both documents have initiated substantial activity in the Front-Line Commands to continue the transformation of the Reserves to meet the requirements of our modern

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Force. Defence is always present on the first line of response. Consequently, the Government has taken decisive action over the past twelve months with the aim to arrest and address the challenges being faced.

In March, the then Defence Secretary, the Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP, welcomed an additional £5 billion for Defence over the next two years, and announced the publication of the Integrated Review Refresh and the Defence Command Plan Refresh. The increase in funding will allow the UK to meet the challenges of an increasingly volatile and complex world. The Prime Minister also set out an ambition for Defence spending to reach 2.5% of GDP in the long term. It acknowledges the need for immediate action and long-term funding security to enable Defence to deliver its essential operational outputs whilst committing to the delivery of crucial transformation programmes.

The Integrated Review Refresh, commissioned in response to the unforeseen pace of emerging geopolitical threats, clarified the Government strategy and re-focused our efforts. The Defence Command Paper Refresh, published four months later in July, made a profound statement of intent as to how Defence plans to meet present day challenges whilst modernising for the future; evidenced by a dedicated opening chapter on People. The message is clear, “our People come first. They are our asset which underpins our strategic advantage”.

The Department’s commitment to prioritising our People is further evidenced by the decision to take forward all 67 recommendations from the Haythornthwaite Review (June 2023). We will improve Armed Forces terms and conditions and incentivisation, to realise the complex, long-term, systemic change recommended by the Review. This is a mammoth undertaking by the Department and testament to our commitment to our People. The work that will be undertaken will include improving the inclusion of Reserves in Strategic Workforce Plans; working to streamline how Service Personnel transition between different Terms of Service throughout their career to better balance the Service need with individual priorities for personal and family life; overhauling People management processes through the removal of unnecessary bureaucracy by simplifying existing policies and digitalising HR processes; developing a dedicated career path with a new, more realistic total reward package and a more flexible approach to training paths as part of a total reward approach and Spectrum of Service. This will amount to a new, more agile, digitally driven People system that genuinely puts individuals first and the Reserves will continue to be fully integrated at every stage of this process.

Additionally, The Armed Forces Recruitment Programme is contracting for the delivery of an end-to-end recruitment process to come into effect from January 2027. All candidates, Regular and Reserve, will follow the same process and will utilise a common digital solution, representative of our Whole Force Approach. We have placed the candidate experience at the heart of the programme requirement through the establishment of the Reserve Working Group, once again embedding Reservists and Reserve specialists at the centre of the Department’s transformational programmes.

It is a great honour for me to be a Defence Minister at such an exciting time of dynamic change. This is a team effort, and I am immensely grateful to all Service

Personnel, not least Reservists, for their unwavering dedication to improving the Armed Forces. I am confident that the work being delivered by the Department is evidence of our commitment to arrest any decline in the health of the Reserve by initiating the start of generationally significant transformation programmes for the benefit of the Whole Force.

Thank you once again for the reports.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Andrew Murrison." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'M'.

RT HON DR ANDREW MURRISON

Annex A

EST RECOMMENDATIONS 2022

22.1 That Reserve recruiting has a consistent and transparent marketing spend, and staff focus.

A consistent and transparent spend is key to planning and delivering a successful marketing campaign to meet inflow requirements for Reserves. All three Services are committed to ensuring that recruiting spend is both protected and transparent and are working to improve recruiting performance in the Reserves environment.

22.2 That unit structures should be reviewed and tested against the offer to ensure that they are sufficient for unit cohesion to allow quality training, thus meeting the professional and technical development of all ranks.

This is being implemented in the Royal Naval Reserve through Project PENFOLD that improves unit administration and Command and Control, and Project THESEUS that is modernising training and improving its assurance. Royal Marines Reserve unit structures are subject to ongoing work being reported to the Navy Executive Committee. All work will cohere Reserves training estate within the broader work for Royal Navy infrastructure.

Within the Army there are four ongoing and developing work strands that will provide the opportunity to review Army Reserve structures: the End-to-End Review of the Army Reserve; the Army's NATO New Force Model Hypothesis; the Integrated Review Refresh; and Exploratory Land Operating Concept (2025-2035).

The Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF) Squadron Structures Review aims to enable efficient growth of the Part Time Volunteer Reserve (PTVR) component over the coming years by ensuring that the size and composition of RAuxAF squadron HQ establishments are sustainable and driven by clear design principles. It is hoped that by improving consistency across the Squadrons, providing PTVR career pathways to OF7 and by utilising a blend of PTVR and Full Time Reserve Service Personnel in leadership and training positions, the Squadrons will be able to deliver greater levels of output and enhance attraction, recruitment, and training of all RAF Reserves.

The Reserve Estate Optimisation Programme presents an opportunity to enable capability-driven basing and infrastructure solutions which we must endeavour to resource.

22.3 That further consideration is given to our 2016 recommendation that the Army revisits the decision to withdraw LADs from Reserve units to create REME battalions.

The Army is not currently planning to revisit this decision; it may do so after the Integrated Review Refresh.

22.4 That a decentralised system is practised and embedded into the mobilisation process.

The RN and RAF already operate decentralised mobilisation systems. The Army is taking steps in this area. A series of Army pilots will conclude in early 2023 with a commitment to embed any necessary changes as a result. Increasingly, e-mobilisation is complementing the decentralised systems.

22.5 That Defence articulates a clear statement of the medical requirement needed of reservists in this era of greater use of the Reserve, and an acceptance that changes to current policies will require resources to implement.

The Front-Line Commands, in consultation with Defence Medical Services, determine and apply appropriate medical standards for Reservists. They are best placed to identify the medical requirements for operational/kinetic deployments and UK resilience operations. These standards are always likely to vary, depending on the Service and the role being filled. Part of the work being undertaken by the RF30 implementation programme involves examining whether medical processes could be refined, which could be especially beneficial if Reservists need to be mobilised at short notice.

Annex B

EST RECOMMENDATIONS 2023

23.1 That the journey for taking an applicant who wishes to join the Reserve through the new AFRP incorporates a clear nexus of the constituent parts, so that they do not become ‘blockages’ that cause applicants to give up or drift away. The requirement of the Reservist should be designed into the new AFRP contract from the outset, alongside the needs of the Regular Service person.

The Armed Forces Recruitment Programme (AFRP) is contracting for the delivery of an end-to-end recruitment process that is common (as much as appropriate) for Regulars and Reserves (Vol Res, Army and RAF Sponsored Reserves and Royal Fleet Auxiliary) and is a tri-Service programme. The new recruitment service, Armed Forces Recruitment Service (AFRS), comes into effect from January 2027, with Contract Award in May 2025; Reserve recruitment remains the responsibility of the single Services until January 2027.

Within AFRS, all candidates applying for Reserve and Regular roles in any of the single Services (sS) will follow the same process, unless there is a need to deviate, e.g., for specialist assessments related to a particular role. The constituent parts of the process have been set out for the Bidders to incorporate into their planned solutions, as has where any parts need to be completed in a particular sequence. A common digital solution will be utilised to track candidates through the process, enable candidates to access help and guidance at a time that suits them, and enable the creation of data led solutions to maximise recruitment.

Candidate experience, Reserve and Regular, has been placed at the heart of the AFRP requirement. The future suppliers’ ability to retain candidates and convert them to recruits is linked to their remuneration through contractual performance indicators and an incentivisation mechanism. Regular and Reserve Candidates attract the same priority and weighting in this mechanism and will therefore receive the same focus and effort from the future supplier. The design of the e2e process will minimise the number of ‘pain points’ in the recruiting process and encourage/nurture all candidates to remain engaged.

Meeting the requirement of Reserve recruiting and the Reserve candidate experience has been integral to the discussions with bidders. Ongoing delivery of AFRS will be the responsibility of the AFR HQ; within this HQ there are four roles established to represent Reserve interests, act as single Service Reserve and Non-Traditional Entry policy advisors for the HQ and recruitment operation, as well as a conduit into the single Services.

AFRP identifies and addresses Reserve Force requirements, risks and issues through its Reserves Working Group, including representation from sS, Strategic Command and Reserve Forces 30, to support the smooth transition of Reserve Candidates into the future Service. It is envisaged that the Working Group governance will continue to operate under AFRS, albeit with a change in focus to ongoing Reserve Recruitment issues.

23.2 That the Royal Navy's capability studies have senior Part Time Volunteer Reservist (PTVR) experienced Reservists attached to each one, thus ensuring Reserve-informed debate and conclusion.

The range of outcomes of Project PENFOLD, which includes the Waterfront-Inland partnerships varies across the Maritime Reserve (MR) regions and work is ongoing to refine the models, staff laydown and, in some cases, to buy back permanent staff positions.

HMS FLYING FOX and HMS CAMBRIA work together as a regional grouping with staff supporting both Units. Additional activity has been introduced through HMS FLYING FOX with the Information Warfare Capability using the facility as a regional hub to deliver weekend training and enabling Reserves to provide a direct contribution to Operational Capability using Reserve Service Days.

23.3 That the capability pillars should all have senior Part Time Volunteer Reservist (PTVR) experienced Reservists included in their management teams, rather than having them concentrated in Commander Maritime Reserve's (COMMARRES) headquarters.

In accordance with 2SL's strategic priorities, a consistent and persistent recruiting campaign for the Reserves recommenced in September 2022 with early evidence that Expressions of Interest are now returning to pre-Pandemic levels. Maritime Reserves Orders 23/24 published in March 2023 set out COMMARRES' priority to support recruitment activity and retain the workforce in support of Navy Command Priorities.

23.4 We recommend a specific and new TACOS that is appropriate for a new specialism, rather than trying to shoehorn them into current TACOS designed for more general and wider use.

This recommendation relates specifically to Reservist Cyber specialists.

The Army have engaged with Defence and other Front-Line Commands on the development of appropriate TACOS for Reserve Cyber specialists (including the possible use of the new FTRS Reduced Commitment). Defence's Modernising Terms of Service (MTOS) Working Group is an effective vehicle to facilitate the agreement of 'TACOS' under single-Service secondary legislation. Consideration will be given to aligning to the Spectrum of Service work identified in the Haythornthwaite report.

Within the RAF, bespoke specialist Terms of Service (TOS) already exist for this cohort to cover entry standards, recruitment, training and promotion. UKSTRATCOM are currently leading a review of Tri Service Cyber TOS with the intent to harmonize across all three Services. The outcome is expected later this year.

23.5 We recommend that if Defence is to optimise and improve the Volunteer Estate, a start has to be made, if only the ‘Lite’ option.

We recognise the crucial role of the Reserves as part of the Whole Force and the need to adequately sustain and modernise the Reserve Estate now and into the future. The 2021 RFCA Estate Review highlighted the issues and identified options to address them. Subsequently, the then SofS established the Reserve Estate Optimisation (REO) programme to develop and deliver a programme of works to improve the volunteer estate. Overall, significant Defence investment (up to c£1.0Bn) is required to deliver and sustain the infrastructure to underpin an agile Reserve, match-fit to play its part in delivering Defence outputs, including force generation, UK resilience, and homeland defence.

REO is in the first phase of delivery (Tranche 1). Through a forecasted investment of £29.070M, it is creating 85 enhanced or new-build Joint Cadet Centres, bringing together both Army Cadet Force (ACF) and Air Training Corps (ATC) detachments to deliver an improved lived experience whilst optimising the Cadet Estate and realising new opportunities for training and collaboration. Whilst achieving this, it is disposing of 121 sites from a total of 1790 individual sites across the Reserve and Cadet Estate, including the disposal of 12 already vacated Reserve Centres.

The approach this year has been to deliver one proof of concept urban Defence Collaboration Hub (DCH) and enhanced facilities at a major Reserve Training site. If successful, the intent is to submit options in future years for further DCH sites in key cities and separate, smaller scale, betterment projects elsewhere. Combined, they will support the increased demand on Defence Reserve capability, against the backdrop of a challenging recruitment and retention environment, while delivering a more effective and efficient estate. DCHs will create military points of presence within key cities to strengthen Defence’s and the Nation’s ability to respond effectively to Protect and Resilience tasks, while providing a focal point for modernised Reserve recruitment, training and Regular and Reserve integration across the Services. There are opportunities for optimisation across all sites to provide a modern, efficient and relevant estate, whilst maintaining a critical dispersed footprint to recruit, engage and deliver capability.

23.6 To improve medical fitness and readiness, in past reports we recommended that Reservists are vaccinated at the conclusion of their initial training. We would recommend further that consideration is given to: a. Whether this also could be done when attending specialised training and in the preparation for overseas exercises, i.e. when Defence has a captive audience.

b. A lever, perhaps the Certificate of Efficiency, is used to encourage compliance with existing policy requirements such as updating medical status and having an audio assessment every two years. c. Certifying reservists as MFD if in date with medical standards in the same manner that aircrew cannot be certified Fit to Fly if out of date with medicals.

Medical fitness and preparedness is a topical issue and being tracked as part of the AGILE STANCE Campaign Plan Capability Audit. The Annual audit is reviewing those Reservists who were Medically Fit to Deploy (MFD) at their last medical and also the status of vaccination records. In addition, a number of options are being considered to improve awareness of the medical status of the Reserves. Options include linkages between Defence Primary Healthcare (DPHC) and NHS GP systems, self-declaration and vaccination during initial training.

The Army continues to work closely with Defence to improve reserve medical assurance. This includes reviewing policies on vaccinations, medical status, audio assessments, and possible linkages to certificate of efficiency.

There is also an ongoing workstrand within the Chief of Defence People (CDP) area considering employability vs deployability for Regular personnel which should also include Reserves personnel, e.g. overseas deployment vs UK Homeland deployment and the Theatre Entry Standard for each.

COLD WAR ‘WHOLE FORCE’ PLANNING 1980-1990 IN THE BRITISH ARMY BY PROFESSOR VINCE CONNOLLY

The spectre of war in Europe has seen UK Defence developing a strong offer to NATO alongside a new National Defence and Resilience Plan and considering the options for Reserve Forces to bolster both. UK Defence has a track record of successfully developing plans supporting NATO for a war in Europe concurrent with National (Home) Defence where Reserve Forces were key. Planning for a war in Europe was abandoned in the 1990's and replaced by planning for smaller scale conflicts. This article reflects on the Cold War period between 1980-1990 that may be pertinent to today's planning for war and the use of Reserve Forces.

Throughout the Cold War the UK with NATO allies produced operational plans to fight the Soviet Union and their allies across Europe and the North Atlantic if Article 5 of the NATO treaty was triggered. The UK had a large Regular force based in Germany (The British Army of the Rhine – BAOR) as a forward presence for NATO for this contingency but to be sustainable for war this presence needed reinforcement from the UK. The UK was also a staging post for US Reinforcements to NATO and an important naval and air base. This made the UK a prime target for the Soviet Union in any conventional war with NATO. This threat required operational plans to ensure the Military Home Defence of the UK, fulfilling Article 3 of the NATO treaty to resist armed attack in wartime.

Then, as now, there were not enough Regular Forces to meet both the NATO and Home Defence requirement. Reserve Forces, however, provided a cost-effective option to cover Regular Force gaps as they could be declared to NATO for war but were much cheaper than Regulars in peace. In the financial austerity of 1980, it was more politically acceptable for the incoming UK Government to save costs by re-organising the Regular Forces and re-invest the savings made over ten years in improving and expanding the capability of the volunteer reserves, such as the Territorial Army (TA), and making more credible the Army's Regular Reserves, while remaining affordable in a time of austerity. The Royal Navy and RAF also followed a similar path with a more modest expansion plan for wartime demand.

The British Army plan was so successful that by 1990 and the end of the Cold War, the totality of the Army's volunteer and Regular Reserve provided a potential reinforcement of over 250,000 personnel in addition to the 155,000 strong Regular Army. The British Army structurally at this point was much like its other European and US counterparts where Reserves in war provided the majority (60%) of the Army and it had an active plan for regeneration of more personnel. Today it is much less like its NATO allies who are all expanding their Reserve Forces again.

The British Army thought in the Cold War that the root of planning for wartime success was having a series of war plans available for the fight, alongside plans for Transition To War (TTW), and being willing to train and exercise against them in order to develop a war winning force. The combined war plans set the overall strategic demand signal and underlined the importance of Reserve Forces for the many extra demands a national level war imposes on an army. The development of war plans laid bare the sheer necessity of Reserve Forces to wartime success. Throughout the Cold War the development of Defence wide, and service specific, TTW plans were common. These plans were detailed, kept updated and they provide the last worked examples of how the UK prepared for warfighting in Europe with NATO against Russia and her allies. They can provide many pointers to how to develop such plans today, cognisant of the changed circumstances of the threat and current force levels.

1. All data is from public sources including the National Archives collections of Cold War files.

2. This saw Royal Auxiliary Air Force units for ground defence of airfields plus extra Royal Naval reserve forces personnel for mine countermeasure (MCM) vessels, defence of ports and anchorages, and naval control of shipping.

It could also be argued that having such plans in place was successful for:

- Politically demonstrating we had a Defence wide plan to mobilise rapidly, deliver against our NATO commitments, protect the UK and sustain Defence for warfighting with a strong Reserve - so contributing to strategic deterrence
- Providing all units, including the Reserve Forces, with known roles for warfighting and training focus, aiding recruitment and retention.
- Providing a high-quality evidence base to argue for more resource where there were gaps and determine priorities for investment.
- Accelerated force development through exercising plans leading to improved Reserve Forces performance and productivity through the 1980's.

Wining the first battle

As much as today, it was important not to lose the war in the first battle. To win the first battles of the Cold War it was obviously vital that regular forces were ready for battle in Europe but also equally that reserve reinforcements arrived from the UK, ready to take their place in the Order of Battle (ORBAT) as rapidly as possible. However, it was thought there would likely be early conventional strikes on the UK to slow down the reinforcement of NATO and reduce UK willingness to fight. Therefore, rapid activation of Home Defence would be required and would be simultaneous to the deployment of UK forces reinforcing NATO. These simultaneous activities needed UK wide enabling and command functions, responsible for delivering and commanding Regular and Reserve Forces for Home Defence, outloading the reinforcements forward to NATO and would provide the wartime institutional structure to sustain and regenerate the Army.

Therefore, with a real threat and a demand for much complex and concurrent activity under time pressure, it was recognised that the TTW period was vitally important to plan in detail. So much could go wrong, potentially denuding or slowing down the UK commitments to NATO at a critical point. This was especially important for Reserve Forces who had to be legally called up from civilian life, mobilised and made ready for their wartime roles³.

TTW was not just about the UK Armed Forces. A war involving the UK and NATO against the Soviet Union would be a whole nation effort with a requirement for the Armed Forces to integrate TTW and mobilisation plans with the rest of Government. Without planned civil co-operation at all levels the UK Armed Forces could not provide the scale and pace of reinforcement and outload required and would also struggle to enact their Home Defence plans. Reserve personnel were integral to this process with their knowledge and experience of civil and government systems and links into industry.

British Army planning for War

The Army had the largest requirement for reinforcement if the Cold War turned hot. Detailed consideration was given to how the Army would fight and sustain itself as part of a nation at war. The Battlefield Development Plan in the early 1980's considered future workforce and equipment needs and concluded the Army could only fight as a complete wartime "Whole Force" reinforced with units from the TA and individuals from the Regular Reserve. An Army Mobilisation Committee co-ordinated plans and instituted studies to develop the detail of how to rapidly reinforce the Army from the Reserve Forces. Plans were not sacrosanct and were subject to constant updates and were flexible enough to be adaptable to a range of contexts. There were always a multitude of studies ongoing examining the problems that wartime would give the Army and its Reserves.

3. This was not new. Similar plans for the Army had worked well in 1914, launching the British Expeditionary Force, with their integral Reserves, rapidly into the fight, concurrent with a Home Defence plan, so allowing the BEF to influence the outcome of the first battles of a long war.

There were never enough people to satisfy all potential war time demands and never enough units required to sustain a war. As a result, as a first step, all useable Regular and Reserve units were identified as part of a mobilisation Order of Battle (ORBAT). The ORBAT was divided into parts to cover all units for BAOR, unit reinforcements for BAOR and other NATO needs, Home Defence units and units/HQs for institutional resilience purposes. The ORBAT also identified those peacetime units (primarily Regular) without a mobilisation role which would disband in war. All personnel in the Army (all Regulars and all Reservists) were allocated a role in a wartime unit or HQ to absolutely maximise the mass of the workforce available. Personnel from the disbanding units contributed to the Redistribution of Regulars Upon Mobilisation (RED RUM) plot providing an extra 23,000 Regular Army reinforcements for wartime units. There were plans to scour every opportunity for the supply of personnel. From how to use, in war, the 24,000 former TA soldiers that left each year to deciding that the 16,000 TA and 17,000 Regular Army recruits in basic training could be used once they reached a 60% training standard.

Every individual in the Reserve Forces and their unit had a place in the ORBAT and a potential wartime mission. This delivered clarity of purpose for training and mission focused exercises improved the ability of units to deliver against their likely tasks and improved performance. The plans to deliver the mobilisation ORBAT were refined and collated together with SOP's and staff instructions such as the 1986 "Regulations for the Mobilisation of the Army". These together provided a basis for the preparation of formation and unit TTW, mobilisation and warfighting plans and clearly defined the responsibility of the units, HQ's, staff and services, allowing a much more rapid response in a crisis.

Command responsibility was simply delineated. The "Homeland" function was delivered by HQ United Kingdom Land Forces (HQUKLF) in TTW and war. It was responsible for delivering Military Home Defence of the UK, the reinforcement of BAOR and NATO from the UK, host nation support to NATO allies, mobilisation of the TA and Reserves and longer-term regeneration, recruitment and training through the Army regional structures. BAOR and the 1st (British) Corps in Germany was responsible for fighting the war in Europe and identifying the demand and providing the plan for receipt of troops, equipment and stocks from the UK.

The Territorial Army (TA)

The TA, (as the Army Reserve was named in the 1980's) provided individuals primarily drawn from civilian life who voluntarily trained as part time members of a TA unit in peacetime and were compulsory mobilised for full time service in wartime. The role of the TA was to provide formed units to reinforce commitments to NATO and for Home Defence. In 1988, the 86,000 strong TA ORBAT saw about 55,000 allocated in units to reinforce BAOR, 5000 to reinforce the flank of NATO and 26,000 for Home Defence. TA units would be considered fit for war once they had mobilised to 70% of their planned warfighting workforce but it was estimated about 90% would report.

TA reinforcing the British Corps

TTW would require the BAOR to mobilise 1 (British) Corps to NATO for warfighting in Germany. The "1st echelon" of the Corps based in Germany was high readiness and consisted of mainly Regular Army units, 55,000 strong, and could theoretically fight alone, but it required specialists, medical units and enablers and even combat capability from the UK based TA to rapidly reinforce it. Each Armoured Brigade included a TA Light Infantry Battalion with a dismounted anti-tank missile mission for ground holding defence of the Brigade area plus a TA light recce Battalion to give depth to the Brigade screening force. Other high readiness examples include the independent TA Brigade Group trusted to hold urban terrain, provide a block for an expected enemy axis of advance, and act as a pivot for any countermoves/attacks by the Corps Reserve. The Brigade was tasked to arrive within 72 hours of mobilisation and the training, readiness and exercise of this Brigade Group was agreed following a formal set of trials.

The “2nd echelon” for the Corps was met by a TA heavy Infantry Division with two TA Brigades and a Regular Brigade providing for rear area security, being a general reserve for line holding and counter penetration and giving much needed additional Combat Support for air defence and engineering from their Divisional Troops. The Division exercised as such and deployed successfully on large scale events such as Exercise LIONHEART in 1984. The British Rear Combat Zone and Communications Zone to enable the Corps Lines of Communication were massively increased by many TA logistical, engineering and medical units. These were important for quickly moving stocks to the Corps that would be vulnerable to attack if too far forward, much like today’s long-range threat. It was not just one way traffic either, it was estimated the UK would receive 3,500 surgical cases daily back to the UK from BAOR for every day of intense combat plus the need for evacuation of 100,000 civilians from danger zones in Germany and abroad.

TA units produced plans to mobilise at their UK TA centres and either move as a formed unit with a UK collect “Vehicles on Mobilisation” plan to disembarkation ports or they would move to airfields, fly to Germany and marry up with pre-stocked unit equipment (PUE) in theatre. Often units would do a combination of both. TA nationally based specialist units would mobilise through a Temporary Mobilisation Centre based at a major capbadged unit. These concurrent moves all required UK wide comprehensive movement and logistic plans that would be enabled by the early call up of TA specialists and staff to bolster regional HQ’s. They would oversee the safe movement of all reinforcement through their areas of responsibility cognisant of the Soviet attack threat to ports and choke points. Many UK based regular unit and NATO reinforcements moves and civil liaison were also integrated into these movement plans.

The Regular Reserve Reinforcement

The Regular Reserves (Army Reserve, Long Term Reserve and Army Pensioners as named at the time) were former Regular Army personnel who retained a legal liability for call out or recall in an emergency. Their primary role was to provide individual reinforcements in wartime as both Regular and TA units were never 100% complete. About 10,000 Individual Regular Reservists were allocated to BAOR units as Warfighting Establishment Reinforcement (WER). They also provided a 15,000 Battle Casualty Replacement (BCR) pool. Each formation was allocated BCR numbers to draw from, based upon estimated attrition statistics for warfighting of up to 60% casualties after six days of high intensity fighting. Half of the BCR pool was to form “General Service” units due to the inability of heavily denuded combat units being able to absorb large numbers of individuals BCR’s. This was a lesson from previous wars and has been seen in Ukraine today.

Regular Reserves allocations to units were controlled centrally in the UK but organised and administered regionally. On mobilisation Reservists would report to a UK regional Reinforcement Drafting Unit and then fly to Germany from a regional airfield. Those allocated to TA units would mobilise with the TA unit. They retained a basic uniform scaling and mobilisation instructions for reporting in war and were required to attend an annual briefing at a local TA Centre. With a bonus payment for attendance, 92% attended briefings in 1983. Mandatory attendance of up to week for refresher training was proposed but never enacted but they could volunteer with local TA units and join major exercises. It was estimated that circa 137,000 Regular Reservists were theoretically available in 1985. However, 40,000 were thought unusable, unavailable or untraceable, 5,000 were in protected employment and a further 7,000 were in the TA. This left 78,000 (57%) for service needs. Legislation changes, giving a longer liability, cost effectively increased numbers by 25% to 183,500 by 1990.

Reserves reinforcing Home Defence

Reserve Forces have provided the backbone of Home Defence Forces throughout UK history. Political interest in Home Defence planning has traditionally oscillated between non-existent and very involved at short notice, meaning that Home Defence may not be left solely to Reserve Forces. Regular Forces have been sometimes held back from planned overseas deployments for perceived Home Defence threat, real or not⁴. In the 1980's there were never enough Regular forces to satisfy concurrent "Home and Away" demand but political interest, the perceived threat and worries over TA mobilisation timings led to a sensible "Whole Force" approach to Home Defence. In 1983, Home Defence involved a substantial force of 21,000 Regulars, 14,000 TA and 9,000 Regular Reserves. This was considered wholly inadequate against the threat and the plan was to expand Home Defence to 110,000 personnel by 1990, through growing more TA units with an extra 29,000 personnel and allocating 45,000 more Regular Reserves. The increased extra numbers of Regular Reservists would form more General Service Unit's and be organised geographically to contribute to Home Defence in their local area.

The growth required from the Home Defence TA in the 1980's was not primarily for static guard forces (though there were additional personnel for Key Point guarding – see below). Most of it was for wider tasks that were identified through understanding the demands made in war on a UK based Army dealing with concurrent Home Defence, reinforcement of BAOR, host nation support to NATO allies, regeneration, and institutional resilience. New TA units delivered a wide range of engineering, communication, logistic, transport, C2 and training tasks to sustain both Home Defence and the ability to reinforce and support NATO (including air defence, outloading depots, traffic control, convoy escorts, route guarding, bomb disposal, airfield damage repair). Some TA skeleton units were also created with a small part time TA cadre (e.g., special transport units, staff HQ's) to be further backfilled by Regular Reservists on TTW. Dormant "war only" contracts between the Army and civilian suppliers to provide UK transport and logistic support provided assurance but at no cost until needed. Government Departments running their War Book plans had a large demand for TA military liaison officers from the early stages of TTW.

Civil Defence in the UK has often lagged far behind Military Home Defence and could potentially make much demand on the Armed Forces in war. Following the demise of widespread Civil Defence in the 1960's, the Armed Forces did not formally take Civil Defence into account for its 1980's Home Defence planning. Despite this, 1980's Home Defence exercises often saw the Army dealing with Civil Defence issues including refugee control, public order and protection of civil installations including food stocks.

The TA Home Service Force

Some external Home Defence studies in the early 1980's proposed a "Home Guard" type force separate from the TA and Regular Reserves. There was great doubt whether volunteers would come forward in the peacetime numbers they envisaged. It was also claimed the studies had under-estimated the costs of such a force, difficulties training and administering it, and the practical, legal and political difficulties of administration in peace and control in war. However, the studies did draw the Army's attention to the high turnover of trained TA personnel every year. It was suggested that these trained TA personnel, and also some Regular leavers, could be persuaded to join a new "Home Service Force" (HSF) to guard key points since the time demands (6-10 days a year) would be much reduced from that of typical TA service (27-38 days or more a year). Age restrictions were also relaxed. The 1984 HSF pilot scheme recruited well and was expanded nationwide. Recruitment of trained personnel enabled HSF sub-units to come up to operational readiness very quickly and was highly cost-effective. By 1990, there were 47 HSF sub-units around the UK, aligned to TA units but with specific war roles to guard Key Points in their region.

4. 30% of the combat power of the BEF, two complete Divisions, were held back in August 1914 for Home Defence at the last moment.

Plans for a 3rd echelon and regeneration

A key aspect of Home Defence and general war planning was activating a recruiting and training organisation to sustain the Army with new reinforcements over time. This “3rd echelon” would create new units and, in time, provide new formations and a General Reserve for the Army. The regeneration plan for a wartime basic recruiting and training organisation needed 1500 Regular and Reserve personnel on TTW.

The priority for this recruiting and training organisation was to first grow Home Defence forces from civil volunteers. It was assessed that 6,000 personnel could be trained to meet the standard required of a basic infantryman for Home Defence every 2 weeks from willing civilian volunteers, ex-TA members, UOTC cadets etc. These trained recruits would be formed into Composite General Reserve (CGR) Units, with their SNCO's and officers drawn from TA and Regular Reserve personnel. The CGR units would relieve those Regular and Reserve units already allocated to Home Defence and allow these more trained units to be moved to NATO as warfighting reinforcements. Over time the Regeneration function would allow the build-up of a "General Reserve" division with equipment stripped from the UK training base and available for a range of contingencies including relieving BAOR Divisions in the line or even supporting the extraction of BAOR from the continent following conventional defeat.

Conclusion

The successful growth of the Army's Reserve Forces in the 1980's were dependent on a number of key factors. First, the political will to invest in Reserve Forces growth to provide cost effective capability when funds are short. The temptation is always to invest in higher quality Regular Forces but their higher cost can preclude the mass required to sustain an Army for war. Second, is understanding, in detail, the demands there will be on an Army in wartime across concurrent demands, including the ability sustain and regenerate itself. This understanding underscored the 1980's conclusion that the only affordable Army for war was one with a core of high quality 1st echelon Regulars supported by generous amounts of “good enough” Reserve capability to enable wartime mass, deliver the 2nd and 3rd echelon and cover most of the Home Defence needs. Third, was the enablement of a wartime plan owned by the chain of command that delivered clarity to the Reserves and that was often exercised and developed further improving reserve performance. These plans recognised that the volunteer reserve (TA) was best suited to providing the extra units needed for war that train collectively in peace and that individual reinforcement was needed but was best achieved by the Ex-Regular Reservist. It all seemed to work.

Between 1980 and 1990, the British Army structurally became much more like its other European and US counterparts as the Reserves provided the majority of the wartime Army. The Army also had a wartime plan for the regeneration of more Reserves. Today, the equivalent of the TA, renamed the Army Reserve, has decreased in liability from 55% of the strength of the Regular Army in 1990 to less than 40%. It is also expected to provide both individual war establishment reinforcements in the 1st echelon and some collective capability reinforcement for the 2nd echelon, all from within the same Army Reserve units. It is difficult to serve two war time missions effectively. The Ministry of Defence no longer publicly reports Regular Reserve numbers, despite trying numerous times to bring it out of abeyance.



EXTERNAL SCRUTINY 2024 REPORT – MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- 24.1** We would recommend that the Defence Review Team should ensure that it engages with those who have a sufficiency the knowledge, experience and radical perspective of what a volunteer part time reserve is capable of, if it is given a clear role, is properly structured, equipped and resourced. (Paragraph 34)
- 24.2** We would recommend to Project Wavell that units of the Army Reserve should be structured to deploy and fight as units, as they were during the Cold War, to deliver collective capabilities as opposed to a WFI to regular units. (Paragraph 35c)
- 24.3** We would recommend that in this Defence Review, all three Services consider what warfighting capabilities and/or weapon systems can be held predominately in the Reserve. (Paragraphs 36a and b)
- 24.4** We recommend that the Army build on the success of 19 Infantry Brigade and create other functional brigades, or all arms Reserve brigades. The latter would allow more easily for all arms training. (Paragraph 36d)
- 24.5** We recommend that the RAF should consider creating multi-discipline units that deploy to provide the support to the aircraft and crews that have been dispersed from their Main Operating Bases to other airfields and landing strips across the UK. (Paragraph 36e)
- 24.6** We would recommend that the Royal Navy consider expanding its Reserve component for UK maritime security (UK waters and abroad) to augment the delivery of a range of capabilities being introduced by the new platforms and technologies such as the SEA-Class workboats. (Paragraph 36f)

PREVIOUS REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY OF 2013 REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 13.1 (Link to the Commission's recommendations 3, 4 & 8)

As a matter of priority the Department should issue a plain-English narrative which sets out the Reserves proposition: a narrative which is commonly adopted across all the Services and, as a minimum, covers the purposes of the Reserves; the manner in which they are likely to be used; and individual levels of obligation.

Recommendation 13.2 (Link to the Commission's recommendations 6 & 12)

FR20 manpower metrics should be more granular for the period to 2018 to demonstrate changes within the recruit inflow pipeline and should not concentrate solely on the achievement of Phase-2-trained Reservists.

Recommendation 13.3 (Link to the Commission's recommendation 26)

Priority must be given to fund and introduce quickly an effective management information system which accurately captures Reservists numbers; states of training, preparedness; availability; attendance; and skill sets.

Recommendation 13.4

More analysis is undertaken to determine the causes of 'manning churn', to better inform how retention measures could be better targeted.

Recommendation 13.5 (Link to the Commission's recommendations 2 & 21)

In parallel to development of pairing/parenting responsibilities, further analysis is needed for scaling of equipment and vehicle holdings at Reserve unit level, including the provision of low-tech simulation alternatives.

Recommendation 13.6 (Link to the Commission's recommendations 5, 6, 17, 18 & 23)

FR20 Army basing should take account of regional capacity to recruit, not just to facilitate proximity, and should also be phased to initially preserve current TA manpower until such time as alternative inflow is more fully developed.

Recommendation 13.7 (Link to the Commission's recommendations 8, 22 & 23)

That work is initiated to look at the potential to employ Reserves with critical skills, where their employment was best served in a reach-back rather than deployed role; and that their TACOS be examined for appropriate adjustment.

Recommendation 13.8 (Link to the Commission's report, Annex C, paragraph 8)

That senior military and political leadership initiate a comprehensive information campaign with the Services' middle management to address the cultural change necessary to secure FR20, drawing on the narrative we recommend above.

SUMMARY OF 2014 REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 14.1 Further work on Whole Force and the New Employment Model, coupled with the desirability of easier transfers between Regular and Reserve service, suggest that the necessity of merging the Armed Forces' Act and the Reserve Forces' Act should be kept under review.

Recommendation 14.2 The narrative developed for the White Paper should be updated to take account of FR20 delivery to date and used more extensively to market the value of Reserve service and the recruiting offer. It should also be used more extensively cross-Government.

Recommendation 14.3 FR20 measures which seek to bring down the average age of Reservists should be phased to follow those measures which will rely heavily on Reservist knowledge and experience for their introduction.

Recommendation 14.4 The single Services should examine the scope to apply a 'special measures approach' to turning round those units and sub-units most in need of assistance in reaching FR20 targets.

Recommendation 14.5 The single Services should examine a range of measures which better preserve the corporate memory of their Reserve components, including procedures for recording whether and how savings measures are planned to be restored during programming.

Recommendation 14.6 Recruiting processes should be subject to continuous improvement measures, with recognition that central marketing and advertising campaigns must be complemented by appropriately funded local/unit activity to nurture and retain applicants through the process.

Recommendation 14.7 Final decisions on Reserve Centre laydown and unit/sub-unit closures should be re-tested against local recruiting capacity and retention factors.

Recommendation 14.8 In order to ensure that necessary differences between Regular and Reserve service are appropriately managed, the single Services should consider the reintroduction of a dedicated Reserve career management staff branch (predominantly manned and led by Reservists) within their Personnel Headquarters.

Recommendation 14.9 Command appointments of Reserve units should continue to provide opportunity for part-time volunteer officers. When part-time volunteers are appointed, command team manning of the unit should be reviewed to ensure that the commanding officer is fully supported with no gapping in key headquarters posts.

Recommendation 14.10 The MOD should consider the option to restore the FR20 Commission's proposal that a contingency reserve fund should be established to be available for short duration domestic operations making use of Reserves.

SUMMARY OF 2015 REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 15.1 The MOD give further consideration to how it will safeguard the ability of Reserves to play a proportionate part in resilience operations, especially once the Reserves are at full manning and would otherwise have to dilute funds for annual training to offset costs.

Recommendation 15.2 Working within the existing governance system, build more inter-Service cooperation on experimentation and best practice on recruiting and retention, whether or not initiatives are universally adopted.

Recommendation 15.3 The three Services should review the separate roles played by the national call centres, the Armed Forces Careers Offices, the recruiting field forces and Reserve units to ensure that they are clearly optimised for Reserve recruiting.

Recommendation 15.4 The MOD and the Services should review the medical entry standards required of recruits and ensure that the screening contracts are appropriately incentivised and assured to achieve success.

Recommendation 15.5 The Services should initiate work to determine the recruiting resources necessary to ensure steady state manning of the Reserve beyond the FR20 period.

Recommendation 15.6 The Services should examine what more could be done to enhance manning through retention-positive measures, at least in the short term, including bespoke extra-mural activities targeted at the Reserve.

Recommendation 15.7 FR20 planning and risk mitigation should increasingly turn more attention to the growth of capability within the Reserve component, rather than a slavish pursuit of numerical growth.

Recommendation 15.8 Army Reserve basing requirements should be revisited as a consequence of availability of funds to deliver the original basing concept and on the evidence of other FR20 achievement; link to Recommendation 15.10.

Recommendation 15.9 DIO and the Services should review their multi activity and support contracts and, where relevant, explore ways in which they can be amended to ensure that they are Reserve-friendly.

Recommendation 15.10 The Services should conduct a command-led stock-take on all aspects of FR20 implementation by the end of FY 2015/16 and share lessons learned; link with recommendation 15.8.

SUMMARY OF 2016 REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 16.1 An urgent contract review of the Army Recruiting Partnership.

Recommendation 16.2 The Services undertake more granular analysis within their data gathering, to reduce the risk of specialist manning gaps in the final years of FR20 and beyond.

Recommendation 16.3 The high incidence of medical deferrals and time to resolution remain under close scrutiny in order to reduce both.

Recommendation 16.4 The Royal Navy and Army absorb recent innovations in officer Phase 1 training into their core officer development activity, as the issue will require sustained attention well beyond the timeframe of FR20.

Recommendation 16.5 Consideration be given to greater cross-pollination, shared practice and coordination between the three Services in the officer recruiting environment, particularly in the area of achieving greater penetration of the Higher and Further Education recruiting hinterland.

Recommendation 16.6 The Services keep under review the impact of losing Op FORTIFY enhancements (or Service equivalents) and, where appropriate to sustain recruiting beyond 2019, bring relevant elements into their core activity.

Recommendation 16.7 The Services examine units which have a significant young officer deficit to determine whether a poor proposition might be the cause and, if so, to assess whether it can be legitimately improved.

Recommendation 16.8 The Army consider how the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force use their Reserves in order to develop a better understanding of potential use of Auxiliaries in the Army Reserve; and that such analysis helps shape policies for the future employment system.

Recommendation 16.9 The Army revisits the decision to withdraw LADs from Reserve units to create REME battalions.

Recommendation 16.10 The manner in which Reserves can be routinely employed on national operations or for back-fill be revisited.

Recommendation 16.11 The Reserve narrative be reviewed to ensure it cannot be interpreted as intent to prevent use of Reservists for routine mobilisation and on national operations.

Recommendation 16.12 Work on defining the Army Reserve officer career pathway be re-invigorated.

Recommendation 16.13 Defence reviews whether a more flexible range of employment terms should be considered, to better incentivise recruitment and to provide more agility within a whole force approach to employment.

Recommendation 16.14 As options are considered for disposal of Regular estate, decisions are not taken before current or potential usefulness to Reserve capability-building has also been taken into account.

Recommendation 16.15 MOD and the Services recognise incomplete cultural change will be the main impediment to FR20 delivery and long-term Reserve sustainability, and introduce specific measures to inculcate cultural change.

Recommendation 16.16 The importance of localism for effective sub-unit command be addressed by simplifying systems where possible; providing adequate permanent staff support; and keeping training requirements at practical levels.

SUMMARY OF 2017 REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 17.1 A repeat recommendation that a formal contract review of the Recruiting Partnership be undertaken. (Paragraph 19)

Recommendation 17.2 That the continued employment of RSUSOs is revisited. (Paragraph 20)

Recommendation 17.3 That the use of medical waivers during recruiting should be better advertised to RN and Army units, and other relevant participants in the recruiting chain. (Paragraph 21)

Recommendation 17.4 That the Army should examine where the medical waiver authority is best lodged. (Paragraph 21)

Recommendation 17.5 That the single Services should review their recruiting medical contracts to ensure assessments are carried out with a greater degree of consistency and common sense. (Paragraph 23)

Recommendation 17.6 That the Services identify which units have experienced the most successful officer recruitment and explore the best means by which their successes can then be exported to less successful units. (Paragraph 24)

Recommendation 17.7 The Army should revitalise work to create a Reserve officer career pathway. (Paragraph 28)

Recommendation 17.8 That the Army develop and implement a policy to support appropriately Reserve unit commanding officers when the incumbent is a part time volunteer. (Paragraph 30)

Recommendation 17.9 That the MOD, Joint Forces Command and the single Services review the terms under which Reserves are included on or in support of operations, in order to develop protocols which make their inclusion easier. (Paragraph 35)

Recommendation 17.10 That the Services resist short-term in-year budgetary palliatives which directly or indirectly reduce routine Reserve activity. (Paragraph 37)

Recommendation 17.11 That the Services now initiate work to determine optimum return-of-service/retention rate(s) for their Reserves and put in place measures to achieve them, with the same vigour that they have applied in their recruiting effort. (Paragraph 39)

Recommendation 17.12 That work on the Reserves Estate Strategy be re-invigorated and accelerated, continuing to draw on local and regional expertise. We further recommend that priority is given to ensuring adequate funding is made available to sustain the existing VE until a new strategy can be implemented. (Paragraph 48)

Recommendation 17.13 That the MOD update the work on mental health in the Services that it has undertaken with King's College and commission fresh work to look specifically at the current situation for Reserves. (Paragraph 51)

SUMMARY OF 2018 REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 18.1 Given the challenging recruiting environment encountered by the three Services and the failure of the DRS, we recommend that the MOD and Services do not take further savings measures from the FR20 £1.8bn funding to manage FY18 in-year financial pressures. (Paragraph 15)

Recommendation 18.2 We would welcome an update on the proposed revisions to JSP 950 when these actions are completed. (Paragraph 22)

Recommendation 18.3 Given the criticality of DRS to the inflow of applicants to recruits, we recommend that 'Hypercare' is continued until all three services are confident that DRS works as intended reducing the 'time of flight' between application and being loaded on a Phase 1 recruit training course. (Paragraph 26)

Recommendation 18.4 Linked to paragraphs 16-26 above, until the frictions in the recruiting system are ironed out, whether induced by DRS or Service policies, we recommend that Op FORTIFY measures, such as the RSUSO, are continued beyond FR20 until the Services hit their trained strength FR20 targets and they are confident that manning is on an even plateau. (Paragraph 27)

Recommendation 18.5 We recommend that the three Services continue to examine that their courses – particularly those run by Training Schools – policies and processes and are adapted to take account of the needs of the reservist. (Paragraph 32)

Recommendation 18.6 We recommend that MOD produce an agreed costing method to compare the cost of regulars and reservists, drawing on the above work and that done by the Land Environment Military Capability Output Costs (LEMCO), and examine the opportunities to further increase their utility and value to Defence. (Paragraph 36)

Recommendation 18.7 We continue to recommend that MOD should consider the option to restore the FR20 Commission's proposal to establish a contingency reserve fund to be available for short notice and duration operations. (Paragraph 37)

Recommendation 18.8 That the Reserves Estate Strategy be re-invigorated and accelerated, continuing to draw on local and regional expertise. We further recommend that priority is given to ensuring adequate funding is made available to sustain the existing Reserve estate until the new strategy is implemented. (Paragraph 49)

SUMMARY OF 2019 REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 19.1 The MOD and the Services do not take further savings measures from the FR20 £1.8bn funding, given the FR20 programme trained strength targets have been missed and ask MOD and all Services to clarify what funding remains, and plans to spend it over the next four years. (Paragraph 7)

Recommendation 19.2 That: the Services determine what is the optimum percentage of Reservists within a deployed force (between 5-8%), which meets the requirement to mobilise Reservists to sustain the Whole Force Model, while being sustainable in the long-term, and fund this accordingly in their annual spending programme. (Paragraph 12)

Recommendation 19.3 That they [initiatives to allow for mobilisation on training tasks and a tiered mobilisation package for DAOTO] are developed further as a matter of priority, particularly the tiered mobilisation package as it would broaden the range of manning levers available to Commander, and thus enhance the utility of the Reserve, and answer the requirements to modernise, exploit and use the Reserve more efficiently as identified by the Commission. (Paragraph 16)

Recommendation 19.4 That:

- The three Services review their ongoing support arrangements for Reserve recruiting, to ensure the successful lessons of FR20 are not discarded; and
- RSUSOs are taken onto units' permanent strengths now in recognition of the vital role they play. (Paragraph 18b)

Recommendation 19.5 That similar work being done by the Australians and Canadians to minimise the steps in the [recruiting] process (including introducing a one-stop shop) is studied closely before the contract is re-let. We further recommend that ambitious targets should be set – one month if there are no issues, and six months if there are, and success or failure should be judged on these targets. (Paragraph 19)

Recommendation 19.6 That the Services continue the drive to adapt their Service policies and practices to take account of the needs of the Reservist. (Paragraph 21)

Recommendation 19.7 We recommend that the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force consider adopting such a system in order to ensure reservist knowledge and input is considered during policy formulation and operational planning, and be able to grow a Reservist (part-time) two star officer. (Paragraph 22)

Recommendation 19.8 Identified and approved FR20 [infrastructure] projects are not subject to the 'exceptions, suspension' regime in order that agreed funding for the estate is spent as intended and not delayed. (Paragraph 25)

Recommendation 19.9 That the three Services further promulgate the OH, rehabilitation, dental and mental health services in order to make Reservists fully aware of the medical services available to them. (Paragraph 27)

Recommendation 19.10 That consideration is given to a means whereby Reservists submit some form of annual health declaration and/or have routine medicals linked to birthdays. (Paragraph 29)

SUMMARY OF 2020 REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 20.1 That all three Services develop and maintain Financial Incentives to recruit ex regulars, particularly for those trades and skills that are expensive to train and develop, acknowledging this is a cost effective method for manning the Reserve. (Paragraph 15)

Recommendation 20.2 That the Reserve, through embedded part-time reserve staff posts should be involved in all aspects of the Whole Force:

- Across all Defence Lines of Development (DLOD) – particularly force design, and capability development.
- In the MOD (Secretariat Policy Operations (SPO)) – the MOD's operations cell – Standing Joint Command (SJC) Headquarter (HQ) and Land Operations Centre (LOC).
- As operational staff of higher HQs. (Paragraph 19)

Recommendation 20.3 That an assessment is made on the requirement for an uplift of personnel to meet the workload of managing a mobilisation and that additional personnel are mobilised to reinforce the RHQ of the mobilising unit, as enablers, before and throughout deployment. (Paragraph 21b(1))

Recommendation 20.4 That the issue of the provision of REME support to equipment heavy units, whether for training or operations, is revisited as the current process does not appear to be working. (Paragraph 21b(2))

Recommendation 20.5 That:

- The Services and the MOD review their plans for mobilisation so that it accommodates individuals as well as mobilising large numbers/units at short notice and rapidly.
- Reserve mobilisation expertise (staff posts with experience and expertise) is integrated into such areas as the SPO, SJC and LOC by creating embedded part-time reservist posts within those organisations.
- The process for pre-mobilisation medicals is reviewed and appropriate standards adopted for overseas and homeland operations.
- Revised processes are exercised routinely not only in units, but also the SPO, SJC and LOC. (Paragraph 25)

Recommendation 20.6 That MOD considers reviewing the capacity of the RF&C staff branch in the MOD in order that it is manned adequately to meet the demands it is set. (Paragraph 28)

Recommendation 20.7 That there is scope to consider developing a mobilisation package in support of those reservists deploying on shorter DAOTO, which is different to one that supports those on longer specific named operations or those that are more akin to warfighting. (Paragraph 29)

Recommendation 20.8 That the requisite training courses are adapted through modularisation, distribution, concentration and remote/virtual learning, and are assessed and measured on this basis. (Paragraph 32)

Recommendation 20.9 That the MOD urgently produces a transparent and agreed costing method across all three Services to compare the cost of regulars and reservists drawing on the Land Military Capability Output Costs (LEMCOC). (Paragraph 36)

Recommendation 20.10 That:

- Any receipts raised through optimisation/rationalisation of the Volunteer Estate should be reinvested back into new estate or maintenance for the Volunteer Estate.
- When the Volunteer Estate Review reports, and if a programme of work is proposed or required, funding is identified and ring-fenced so that it is not subject to subsequent in-year budgetary pressures. (Paragraph 44)

Recommendation 20.11 That Reservists submit an annual health declaration. (Paragraph 48)

Recommendation 20.12 That, like the Royal Navy, the Army and Royal Air Force undertake periodic medicals for its reservists, linked to age/birthdays. (Paragraph 48)

Recommendation 20.13 That such innovations [medical] required to facilitate the rapid mobilisation of the Reserve for Operation RESCRIPT are developed further, codified and adopted by all three Services. (Paragraph 50)

SUMMARY OF 2021 REPORT MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 21.1 That the same intensity of focus and consistency that led to the success of Army regular recruiting is applied to the Reserve, particularly given that the reductions to regular strength increase the importance of having a fully manned Reserve.

Recommendation 21.2 That the Reserve, through embedded part-time reserve staff posts, should be involved in all aspects of the Whole Force across all Defence Lines of Development (DLOD) – particularly force design and capability development.

Recommendation 21.3 That the MOD produces a transparent and agreed costing method across all three Services and, in addition, a contingency fund is identified and ring fenced to allow that use so that this almost perennial debate, or friction, does not arise.

Recommendation 21.4 If reservists are to be deployed on operations using RSDs more frequently and as a matter of policy, we recommend that the MOD reinvigorate the work to develop an appropriate package of support.

Recommendation 21.5 That RF30 takes forward work to simplify the TACOS available and guidelines, or policy (rules) for the appropriate TACOS to meet a given situation; i.e. RSDs for routine training; enhanced RSDs for short operational deployments (maximum 28 days) whether homeland resilience or DAOTO; and full mobilisation for longer deployments and more kinetic operations.

Recommendation 21.6 That Defence should be more forward leaning in making use of appropriate civilian courses and the recognition and accreditation of civilian qualifications, in lieu of military courses.

SUMMARY OF 2022 REPORT MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 22.1 That reserve recruiting has a consistent and transparent marketing spend, and staff focus.

Recommendation 22.2 That unit structures should be reviewed and tested against the offer to ensure that they are sufficient for unit cohesion to allow quality training, thus meeting the professional and technical development of all ranks.

Recommendation 22.3 That further consideration is given to our 2016 recommendation that the Army revisits the decision to withdraw LADs from Reserve units to create REME battalions.

Recommendation 22.4 That a decentralised system is practised and embedded into the mobilisation process.

Recommendation 22.5 That Defence articulates a clear statement of the medical requirement needed of the reservists in this era of greater use of the Reserve, and an acceptance that changes to current policies will require resources to implement.

SUMMARY OF 2023 REPORT MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 23.1 We, therefore, would recommend that:

a. The journey for taking an applicant who wishes to join the Reserve through the new AFRP incorporates a clear nexus of the constituents parts, identified in paragraph 19 above, so that they do not become 'blockages' that cause applicants to give up or drift away.

b. The requirement of the reservist should be designed into the new AFRP contract from the outset, alongside the needs of the regular service person. (Paragraph 20)

Recommendation 23.2 We would recommend that the Royal Navy's capability studies have senior Part Time Volunteer Reservist (PTVR) experienced reservists attached to each one, thus ensuring reserve-informed debate and conclusion.

Recommendation 23.3 We would recommend that the capability pillars should all have senior Part Time Volunteer Reservist (PTVR) experienced Reservists included in their management teams, rather than having them concentrated in Commander Maritime Reserve's (COMMARRES) headquarters. (Paragraph 23)

Recommendation 23.4 We would recommend a specific and new TACOS that is appropriate for a new specialism, rather than trying to shoehorn them into current TACOS designed for more general and wider use. (Paragraph 26d)

Recommendation 23.5 We would recommend that if Defence is to optimise and improve the VE, a start has to be made, if only the 'Lite' option. (Paragraph 30)

Recommendation 23.6 To improve medical fitness and readiness, in past reports we recommended that reservists are vaccinated at the conclusion of their initial training. We would recommend further that consideration is given to:

a. Whether this also could be done when attending specialised training and in the preparation for overseas exercises, i.e. when Defence has a captive audience.

b. A lever, perhaps the Certificate of Efficiency, is used to encourage compliance with existing policy requirements such as updating medical status and having an audio assessment every two years.

c. Certifying reservists as MFD if in date with medical standards in the same manner that aircrew cannot be certified Fit to Fly if out of date with medicals. (Paragraph 34)

EXTERNAL SCRUTINY TEAM – MEMBERSHIP

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Members:

Rear Admiral (Retd) C J Hockley CBE DL

Air Commodore (Retd) P E O'Neill CBE

Captain (Retd) S C Jameson RNR RD

Colonel (Retd) G Straughan OBE TD

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