

CRFCA

Council of Reserve Forces'
and Cadets' Associations

THE UNITED KINGDOM RESERVE FORCES

EXTERNAL SCRUTINY TEAM

ANNUAL STATUTORY REPORT
2022



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FOREWORD

1. We are glad to say our meetings, visits and interactions with the MOD and the three Services in this reporting period have not been impeded by the pandemic and we were able to conduct a full and thorough programme. I 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.
2. It was disappointing that our 2021 report was not placed by the Secretary of State in the Parliament Library until 26 May 2022, some 10 months after it had been submitted in July 2021. As the purpose of the report under the Act is to inform Parliament on the state of our military reserves, this delay inevitably negated the benefit of the report to Parliament, and indeed Ministers, and we do hope this year's report will be released quickly, as was the case in prior years.
3. Last year I concluded *"it was an exciting time for reservists and we, like them, look forward to seeing how their individual Service structures and uses their reserves as they take forward the Integrated Review (IR) and we, in particular, positively anticipate the implementation of the RF30 as it breaks down barriers to the routine and consistent use of the Reserves and maximises the benefits the reserves, their employers and wider society can bring"*. And, therefore, it is concerning that in this year's report we have to highlight a lack of progress in this direction and, perhaps surprisingly so soon after an IR, our real concerns about the health of the Reserve. We, therefore, have concluded the report with an assessment that there is a real risk of a decline in the health of the Reserve.
4. We do not question Defence's appreciation of the importance and value of the Reserve, but we see real evidence of the damaging impact of seemingly endless negative investment decisions over the years, which in isolation could be absorbed but has significant accumulative effect. We can only assume the challenges and complexity of Defence's investment decisions will only increase with the country's response to the war in Ukraine and, consequently, the Reserve might be neglected.
5. Our conclusion is there is a now real risk of a tangible decline in the health, and thus capability, of our Reserve unless this situation is recognised and there is a coordinated approach to ensuring the Reserve is sufficiently resourced.
6. Finally, I would like to record my appreciation and thanks to two of our team who are standing down – Captain Ian Robinson RNR and Brigadier Philip Mixer RAMC. They have given up their time selflessly for many years being involved in incalculable number of visits and meetings reflecting their extraordinary commitment to supporting the importance and value of reserve service in this country. We are fortunate we are able to find well qualified and motivated retired regular and reserve officers to give up so much of their time to contribute to our work. We consider it critical our members are prepared to be on the team for many years, so we have the necessary detailed corporate knowledge and continuity on the Reserve Forces.



S F N Lalor
Major General (Retired)
September 2022





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 state 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)¹. Terms of Reference for the EST is at Annex B. This will be the eighth report under these statutory arrangements.
2. We submitted the 2021 Report to the SofS for Defence on 19 July 2021. On 26 May 2022, the Report was placed in the Parliamentary Library and we also received SofS's response and commentary on its recommendations (see 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, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Commanders Home Command and Field Army, Commandant General RAF Reserve, Commander Strategic Command and Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (Reserve and Cadets).

CONTEXT

4. This report is set within the context of the implementation of the Integrated Review (IR), Defence Command Paper, the Reserve Forces 2030 Review (RF30) and the Army's Future Soldier². We focus our comments on the development of the plans for delivery of these reviews in this first year. One also cannot ignore the war being waged in Ukraine as what might once have seemed unimaginable is taking place now – a return to war using conventional weapons in continental Europe. Although it is demonstrating the use of new technologies – drones, highly effective man portable anti-tank weapons, targeting of equipment and other key targets with long range precision missiles and cyber-attacks and exploitation of global social media channels – the Ukraine War has brought a renewed focus on the need for, and use of, mass in terms of equipment, people and munitions. The attritional battles also demonstrate the need for a credible reserve to sustain military operations, replacing the mass of the regular forces (personnel and materiel) as they are depleted, not just as individual reinforcements or small formed elements as in previous UK campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, but perhaps for formed sub-units and units as was planned and exercised during the Cold War on such exercises as REFORGER and LIONHEART.
5. Professor Gary Sheffield, team member and Visiting Professor in the Defence Studies Department, King's College London, has written a short piece of historical context – Expanding the Reserve Forces in Response to a Continental Threat: Some Parallels from History (Annex D) – which highlights a number of similarities to today's position, and is worthy of reflection as the rest of this report is read.

1. Defence Reform Act, 14 May 2014, Chapter 20 Part 3 Paragraph 47.

2. Future Soldier is a reform of the British Army resulting from the IR.

REPORT THEMES

6. Albeit the implementation of the IR is in its first year, we were disappointed to see some evident shortcomings on structures and resourcing. It should not be considered optimistic to expect the modelling within an IR to be such that resourcing of manpower, equipment and training activity would be in balance and not proven to be compromised in some areas.
7. We start our Report with a commentary on reserve strength as, even with modern technology and focus on modern platforms and equipment, capability starts with people and fully established units.

Reserve Workforce Requirements

8. We report against the FR20 trained³ strength targets for the Reserve of the three Services, as there has been no public announcement of any change since the issue of the FR20 report: Royal Navy – 3,100; Army – 30,100; Royal Air Force – 1,860; totalling 35,060. In general, we report that a significant under-achievement of both recruiting and of sustaining trained strength.
9. However, before examining the detail of the MOD's statistics on reserve workforce numbers, we noted that there was an Adjournment Debate on the Army Reserve in the House of Commons on 2 February 2022 where there appeared to be confusion over whether the Army had reduced the trained strength of its Reserve from the FR20 target of 30,100, or not, and what was included within this figure.
10. We can report that, although there has been no formal announcement, both the Royal Navy (by allowing variation) and Army (in absolute terms by 10%) have reduced their respective FR20 targets for trained strength personnel:
 - a. In 2020, the Royal Navy amended the FR20 trained strength target to +/- 20% of 3,100.
 - b. The Army has reduced its trained strength requirement by 3,000 from 30,100 to 27,097. We understand that this was driven by financial pressures rather than any assessment that the trained strength could be reduced following a capability required analysis, or if there was, we have not had access to it. The trained strength is made up of:
 - (1). 24,977 trained reservists in the Army's deployable warfighting structure.
 - (2). 1,940 trained reservists in what is known as the Institutional Foundation (i.e. staff in non-deployable HQs, Officers' Training Corps, training units etc).
 - (3). 180 trained reservists' roles paid for by the Army, but are filled by other single Services, principally RAF reservists in the Joint Helicopter Command.
11. Not included in the 27,097, nor the FR20 trained strength figure of 30,100, are the 1,471 Army reservists paid for by, and in other Commands, such as Strategic Command⁴, and those undergoing, but who have yet to complete Phase 1 training.

3. 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.

4. Special forces, cyber etc.

Trained Strength

12. For the best part of a decade under FR20, overall Reserve numbers have been climbing from a low base. Nevertheless, we assessed that without this same intensity of focus, particularly for the Army, the strength of the Reserve would deteriorate. Regrettably, this has proved to be the case. We have seen a reduction in focus on recruiting and the strength of the Reserve has reduced. As set out in Annex F and the table below, the overall total strength and total trained strength⁵ from 2021 to 2022 have declined significantly.

	2021 1 Apr	2022 1 Apr	Change 2021/2022
All Services			
Total strength	37,410	35,890	- 1,520
Trained strength	32,700	31,480	- 1,220
Maritime Reserve			
Total strength	4,080	3,810	- 270
Trained strength	2,870	2,870	-
Army Reserve			
Total strength	30,030	28,830	- 1,200
Trained strength	26,940	25,730	- 1,210
RAF Reserve			
Total strength	3,300	3,250	- 50
Trained strength	2,890	2,880	- 10

- a. **Royal Navy.** Trained strength has been maintained only because the 'hopper' was full at the beginning of 2021 (1,210 untrained personnel), which have now been trained. We assess that smaller numbers in the 'hopper', combined with the in-year savings measures to recruiting will mean that the Royal Navy will struggle to grow trained strength, but more likely will show decline.
- b. **Army.** The decline in the Army's trained strength mean that it is now over 4,000 understrength, when set against the FR20 trained strength target. The trend since 1 April 2022 has continued to be downward, and, although not available, it is said to be now the lowest since October 2016.
- c. **Royal Air Force.** Although the decline is small, it questions the Royal Air Force's ambition to grow its Reserve to 5,000 personnel, unless there is a clear and consistent focus on recruiting. Although still above FR20 numbers, the totals mask the numbers of Part Time Volunteer Reserve (PTVR) personnel as the figures include Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS), Voluntary ex-Regular Reserve (VeRR) and honorary positions.

5. Trained and untrained personnel.

Recruiting

13. It is disappointing to see all three Services' numbers decline from what was the high-level water mark of FR20 programme, particularly as we warned of this in 2018 and as late as last year. All three Services have failed to meet their recruiting targets, most acute being the Army. **We find that the root cause of this is inconsistency and lack of investment, both exacerbated by in-year savings measures.** Given the greater dependence on the Reserve, last year we recommended that the same focus that was given to regular recruiting should be given to the Reserve. In its response to the 2021 Report, the MOD said that the Army is "... working hard to bring the same improvement to Reserve inflow ...". We also have commented in the past that recruiting needs consistency in approach to be truly effective. Marketing should also be reserve specific to be effective, which **would suggest that there needs to be a protected reserve marketing budget.** It is quite clear sufficient resources were not applied to Army reserve recruiting, possibly because a greater effort was required for regular recruiting. This might have been because of an in-year expenditure restriction but the likelihood is it will end up being more expensive in the round to recover the reserve manning position and thus it is likely to have been a false economy. Making in-year savings that impact on recruiting would seem to be counter intuitive, given the greater dependence on the Reserve. **We recommend that reserve recruiting has a consistent and transparent marketing spend, and staff focus.**

Defence Recruiting System⁶

14. We previously commented on the inadequacies of Defence Recruiting System (DRS) and despite our visit to Home Command at the beginning of April, we did not learn until visiting units later in the month that the DRS had been shut down, because of a suspected hack. Units reported it as a major issue as new applicants were not coming through the system to be attested and this was **exacerbating the dire situation where outflow, sitting at 16.7%, is not matched by inflow.** We understand that a return to full functionality was planned for the end of May 2022 and, in the meantime, other measures had been introduced to process applicants. Nevertheless, we anticipate the reduced inflow of recruits will impact on overall strength. Perhaps obvious to state, this demonstrates the need for **a robust Business Continuity Plan (BCP) for this system and whatever is selected for the future.**
15. It probably does not need to be stated but, of course, poor recruiting leads to lower manning which means reduced military capability and it should not just be considered as a process. It is our opinion that society would be able to and willing to meet significantly greater demand for reservists and indeed, if needed, the reserves of all three services could be significantly larger.

Reserve Capability

16. Our mandate is to report on the state and capabilities of the Reserve Forces. Our primary observation is that having configured the Reserve for sustaining campaigning in Iraq and Afghanistan, Defence needs to determine what the implications of the IR and war in Ukraine mean now for how the Reserve will need to operate to deal with conventional and NBC threats from peer-states in the future. The question is whether the Reserve currently is configured or sized for this. There may be lessons from the Cold War era Territorial Army that need to be relearned, such as a requirement for the Reserve to function as units, not primarily as augmentees.

6. Defence Recruiting System is the IT system used by the Army for processing, administering and managing recruits. The Royal Air Force and Royal Navy use a separate system.

17. In previous reports, we have reported that, in general, the trajectory of the Reserve 'arrow' in terms of capability, utility and use of the Reserve, has been upward. The strength of the Reserve had grown and there was recognition of the requirement for Whole Force by the senior hierarchy of Defence and the single Services, thus reservists felt confident that they were appreciated and respected by regulars. This was exemplified by the contribution by reservists, not only on Op RESCRIPT (military support for the COVID-19 pandemic) as individuals, but also sub-units and units on operations in Cyprus (Op TOSCA) and the Baltic states (Op CABRIT).
18. In the IR, Defence Command Paper and RF30 there was a general recognition of a greater dependence on the capability of the Reserve, which was crucial to delivering the capability of the Whole Force, which would consist of fewer regulars than in the past. Not surprisingly, there was a lack of specificity in these high-level papers, which we hoped would be provided in subordinate plans, but as yet that has not been forthcoming. Even so, there appears to be a dichotomy between what is being said in terms of what is required of the Reserve, the importance of the Reserve for the delivery of defence capability, and the evidence we find on our visits. Out 'on the ground' we routinely found instances that appeared inconsistent with the high-level intent as set out in the Defence Command Paper and RF30. Greater dependence on the Reserve might suggest the need for new additional investment to develop that capability. Instead, we understand that there is no new investment and, as we highlight below, short-term savings have been made. This year we conclude that the trajectory of this 'arrow' has flattened and in some areas is downward.
19. Given the Defence Command Paper should have balanced requirements, output and resources, it is disappointing to find that the outcome, when combined with single Service plans, has not resulted in robust reserve structures that are fully resourced to deliver required military outputs and tempo for reserve service to flourish. This was noted by reservists with whom we spoke. Despite the commitment to spend "... £188bn on defence over the coming years – an increase of £24bn or fourteen percent ...",⁷ within months of publication of the Defence Command Paper in March 2021, savings measures were instituted. Examples of challenges facing the Reserve include:
 - a. The Royal Navy, rather surprisingly in the year after the IR when presumably the financial modelling was in balance, instigated further in-year saving measures against its Reserve of some £6m, including a £4.5m saving from the £1.8bn that the then SofS had set aside in 2013 as FR20 funds for its 10-year programme to revitalise the Reserve. The immediate impact was that some infrastructure and a planned buy of Gemini 2 Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats (RHIBs) for waterfront training units were cancelled, and cuts were made to the Sailor First recruitment drive. It should not be a surprise that the trained strength for the Royal Navy has not grown, although it does lie within the revised +/-20% figure.
 - b. The Royal Navy also is restructuring the support infrastructure for a number of units, thereby reducing the number of permanent staff required. A small number of waterfront training centres will remain with a full complement of permanent staff. Other units have been redesignated as inland support centres with very few, if any, permanent staff. We understand that permanent staff from the waterfront are to provide support as required for the support centres. We are concerned that the loss of core staff in the inland units might compromise the fine balance of the offer to the reservists, and hence recruiting

and retention. Reservists need to assess they are conducting worthwhile training and contributing to defence, and care needs to be taken to ensure that the administrative burden placed on them is not excessive. These measures compounded the already negative impact of the savings measures felt by reservists instigated in the previous year. **We consider this a significant risk.**

- c. Certain reserve infantry battalions have seen a cut in establishment, yet required to recruit a fourth Rifle company – the four Rifle companies will only have two Rifle platoons each (down from three). **This ‘hollowing out’ compromises the ability to train effectively and provide a professional career development for officers and Senior Non Commissioned Officers.** Again, this leads to a reduction of military capability and should be recognised as suboptimal.
- d. This ‘hollowing out’ is all the more difficult to understand when the Army’s current trained strength target (27,097 reservists) is lower than allowed for by FR20 (30,100 reservists). We understand that this was self-imposed and, therefore, **can only be explained by lack of resources and/or a necessity to maintain cap badges in the Future Soldier reorganisation.** In theory, 3,000 trained personnel are available to be ‘added back’ to such units’ establishments.
- e. We found a lack of understanding amongst Army units for the operational rationale for these changes, and this is not helped by the time it is taking to issue detailed implementation orders to units.
- f. While some units have full scales of personal equipment (e.g. VIRTUS, a personal issue of body armour and load bearing system), many have not and there is no sign of a plan to ensure that reserve units will be equipped fully, despite many now possessing a warfighting task.
- g. The operational effectiveness of units and individuals is compromised by the availability of training resources, for example by the lack of Reserve Service Days (RSDs),⁸ or by the limited availability of equipment.
- h. **Lack of trained strength in units has implications beyond just statistics – sub-optimal numbers lead to a sub-optimal command and training experience with the ‘offer’ thus compromised, and impacting on retention – a vicious downward spiral.**

In summary, despite the intent articulated in the Defence Command Paper and RF30, we believe that unless these issues are addressed and there is the same focus at the highest levels, as there was during the FR20 programme, **there is a danger that the situation that led to the decline of the Reserve, necessitating the need for the FR20 programme, could be repeated.**

8. Days allocated for training.

Reserve Force 2030

20. Last year we lauded the ambitious intent of the outcome of the review and highlighted the recommendations of RF30, which we assessed would assist in unlocking the potential of the Reserve, improve its utility and make its use easier. Although the MOD commissioned the RF30 Review, **it has not made a formal response, some 15 months after it was published in May 2021, questioning the degree of importance or priority given to it.** An implementation team has been established, but no funds have been earmarked to support implementation of its recommendations.
21. We have met regularly with the implementation team throughout the year. While unfunded, progress has been achieved – the team report that they have achieved up to 75% implementation on some recommendations, but only 5% on others; averaging 25% across all 18 recommendations.
- a. **Reserve Framework (B2).**⁹ Last year, we commented that creating the discrete Reserve entities of Reinforcement, Operational and Strategic Reserve “... could erode the framework’s value by confusing roles and the technical arrangements under which individuals are to be employed.” The RF30 team now have developed an agreed framework of an Active (combining the Reinforcement and Operational) and Strategic Reserve, which we would agree makes more sense. Support for reservists within this framework will be developed as part of the Terms and Conditions of Service (TACOS) workstream by the Modernising Terms of Service (MTOS) team in the MOD.
 - b. **Budgetary Procedures (B4).** We have commented on the perennial debate on how to pay for reserve forces when used in response to unforeseen operations, as it is/was a constant source of friction, and recommended the establishment of a contingency fund. The MOD has rejected this (Annex C), suggesting that costs could be met from a more efficient use of Whole Force workforce underspend. **We would agree that this makes sense, but only as long as the underspend is not reallocated to alleviate cost pressures elsewhere, or offered as a straight saving.** We understand that this issue has generated considerable engagement between MOD and the single Services, and we look forward to the solution.
 - c. **Reserve Headcounts (B5).** As indicated in SofS’s response to last year’s Report, the workforce planning regime has been redesigned such that once a Whole Force of a particular Service (regular and reservist) has been costed, single Services will have freedom to design and change force structures within this workforce cost envelope. However, we would observe that if there are political constraints on the overall force levels of component parts of the Whole Force, which would be completely understandable, **then this option becomes very limited.**
 - d. **Commitment Types/Spectrum of Service (C1/2).** We have commented on the different types of commitment for reserve service – RF30 highlighted eight varieties – and recommended that work was taken forward to simplify the rules and guidelines. A ‘TACOS and the Offer’ workstream has been developed between the single Services and MTOS is overseeing design and implementation.
 - e. **Mobilisation (D6).** A ‘mobilisation and readiness’ workstream has been developed to focus on a simpler and more automated call-out and mobilisation process. Allied to this would be agreed medical/dental minimum standards for UK operations such as Op RESCRIPT, including self-certification. All of this we support.

9. This refers to the recommendation number in the FR30 Report.

22. It is difficult not to be concerned that the endeavour and the cost of the review and its implementation team will be wasted if there is not a real determination to find the resources to deliver its key recommendations. These are all about delivering greater utility and dependable military capability so should be afforded the appropriate priority.

Utility and Use of the Reserve

23. In this section of the Report, we give greater detail to support the points made in paragraph 16-19 above.
24. **Role.** The current role of the Reserve in the Army – war fighting, reinforcement of Army operations and commitments and taking part in UK Homeland Protect and Resilience – as well in the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force (niche skills and individual reinforcements) is clear. This has been demonstrated by the deployment of reservists from all three Services on operations abroad and in the UK, whether as individuals or units. Nevertheless, while this higher level intent is well understood, **we find that it is compromised by in-year savings measures and reductions to unit establishments, undermining the ability to train for war fighting.** As examples:
- a. Part of the Royal Navy's transformation has been a requirement for the Maritime Reserve to provide crew for the Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs). There also is the potential for a role on the Type 23 Frigate (see last year's report). The purchase of RHIBs was deemed essential for this task, and therefore, the savings measure to cancel further planned purchases is all the more puzzling, **exemplifying the lack of clarity, which we reported last year, on what it is the Royal Navy requires of its Reserve.**
 - b. Certain infantry battalions' establishment are being reduced by 81 soldiers from 505 to 424, but at the same time, they are required to establish and recruit a fourth Rifle company; each Rifle company only will be 90 strong, comprising two Rifle platoons and a Support Weapons section of 12. The experience of reserve units is that a unit needs more than a section's strength of Support Weapon personnel and equipment to deliver a section capability. **It is, therefore, questionable whether infantry battalions will be able to deliver a support weapon's capability.**
 - c. While the reduction in numbers may be relatively painless to achieve, because each battalion will carry a greater or lesser number of Long Term Non Attenders¹⁰, if it also is combined with the closure of detachment locations, then trained soldiers may be lost if the next nearest Army Reserve Centre (ARC) is too far away from the reservist's home or place of work. Of more concern, Rifle companies will be unable to conduct meaningful company level training with only two Rifle platoons, particularly as the reality is that not all soldiers will be available for training at the same time. The same applies to the new Support Weapon sections.

In order to meet a key part of the Reserve offer, **we recommend 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.**

10. Those soldiers on the battalions' books, that have not taken part in training for 12 months.

- d. The Yeomanry are equipped with the JACKAL vehicle¹¹ and we previously commented that the Royal Yeomanry performed strongly on Op CABRIT. Under Future Soldier, the Royal Yeomanry will be reduced in size from 517 to 356 personnel; a loss of 107 trained soldiers (21%). This will result in a reduction from six SABRE squadrons to five, with each squadron cut from 80 to 67 personnel. While being permitted to hold more soldiers than the establishment allows, 25% for junior soldiers and only 5% for senior ranks, the latter will result in a loss of a wealth of qualification and experience. A second consequence is the regular senior soldiers, with the qualifications to instruct, will not be able to transfer to the Reserve if reserve Light Cavalry regiments are fully established in senior ranks, although not necessarily by trade. While JACKAL is a capable vehicle, it takes four years for a soldier to achieve Phase 2 status due to the length of training and availability of courses and 54 RSDs per annum to keep competent and qualified. This inability to retain experienced soldiers is keenly felt given the complexity of JACKAL and the time it takes to train soldiers, let alone qualify instructors.
- e. The cessation of the reserve Light Cavalry tactics course has meant that there is a backlog of 65 soldiers awaiting attendance and who, at the moment, only can attend the regular course. Maintenance is equally challenging. The Royal Yeomanry hold the same number of vehicles in its Basic Unit Fleet (BUF) as a regular Light Cavalry regiment, but only have one mechanic (a civil servant) and, because of a freeze on civil service recruiting, presently are not allowed to recruit the other two established posts. A regular Light Cavalry regiment has a Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) Light Aid Detachment (LAD) of platoon strength, as did reserve regiments until they were centralised into reserve REME battalions under a previous reorganisation. We would comment that the modest sums saved are significantly outweighed by the decline in the efficiency of the unit. **All of this might suggest that JACKAL is not an appropriate vehicle for the reserve Light Cavalry, without significant investment in training and support. To this end, we recommend 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.**
- f. The Royal Air Force is continuing its review of its Reserve under Project ASTRA. While committed to increasing the size of the PTVR, the details of how that increase will be employed remains work in progress. The ambition is commended, but we would like to see greater clarity in the requirement for next year's report.

Mobilisation

25. The Army mobilisation process was adjusted for calling out reservists on Op RESCRIPT from being done centrally at Chilwell to being decentralised through units or remotely; the Royal Air Force have always operated the decentralised model, and it works well. The mobilisation centre has moved from Chilwell to the training centre at Bassingbourn. For reservists in units based in Scotland being called out to support the ambulance service, this resulted in a 10-hour drive, overnight stay, then a short briefing and another 10-hour drive back to Scotland. Experience showed that the Very High Readiness (VHR) platoon from the 4th Battalion Parachute Regiment cannot make the first departing flights if it has to mobilise through Bassingbourn. Hence it is now allowed to mobilise through a decentralised system at Headquarters 16 Brigade. As reservists are used more frequently, whether on overseas operations or in support of UK operations, **we would recommend that a decentralised system is practised and embedded into the mobilisation process.**

11. The JACKAL is a 4 x 4 lightly armoured open top vehicle, developed to replace the long wheelbase Land Rover.

26. **Use.** We were much impressed with our visit to A Company 4th Battalion Parachute Regiment. The unit maintains a VHR platoon at 5 days' notice to move (NTM) and a company at 28 days NTM. It is able to do this because of a very professional approach from its soldiers and staff in recording all the mandatory tests and inspections, using 'My Muster'¹², necessary for rapid deployment and a collapsing timeline for operational deployment. Key is decentralised mobilisation; the unit has a full complement of permanent staff and all the soldiers are equipped with the same scale of equipment (e.g. VIRTUS) as regular soldiers in the 2nd and 3rd Parachute battalions. All – regular, reservist and all arms – will do the same qualifying test week, although the preparation route will be different. Conversely, we heard from other units that a workforce review might reduce the full-time establishment of battalion staff and also, not enough VIRTUS are held to equip every soldier. **We assess that what has been achieved by A Company epitomises the utility and use of the Reserve within a Whole Force mix of regular and reservist.** Further, there is nothing 'special' about this in that it could be achieved by all units adopting the same professional approach, if aided by a full complement of permanent staff, training opportunities and equipment.
27. **Homeland Resilience.** We understood from the Army that the Army Reserve would be supporting regular forces on overseas operations, but would assume primacy for Homeland Resilience, and be supported in this role by regulars. Reserve units have deployed successfully and conducted operations in Cyprus and the Baltic republics. Against this background, while we support that the direction that 50% of the force used on Op UNITY¹³ should be found from the Reserve, **we found it difficult to understand why a reserve unit was not used as the command and control backbone for the security outer cordon element of the operation.** Rather than use an 'in-place' local reserve unit with all its local knowledge and already well-developed resilience connectivity with local authorities and other 'blue light' forces, a regular unit from outside the region has been drafted in, which then has then to learn the area and establish relationships with the local organisations. This is a task that has been known about for some time and, therefore, there was plenty of time to prepare. While it is for the Army to decide how it should deliver operations, we make this point because of the positive and beneficial impact it has on retention and recruiting if local people can see 'their' local regiment playing a prominent role, and vice versa.
28. **Training.** A number of Army reserve units have commented that **the allocated 27 RSDs are insufficient to complete all the mandated training tasks asked of a reservist,** let alone role specific training, exemplified in our engagement with the Yeomanry and other technical units such as REME.
29. **Support to Reservists.** Last year, we recommended that an appropriate package of support for reservists deployed on operations using RSDs, as opposed to being mobilised, was developed. We did this so that reservists from whatever Service serving on the same operation or task are treated the same in terms of their TACOS. In 2019, we reported that reservists on Ex SAIF SAREEA III in Oman were deployed on different TACOS. It should be a basic point of principle that it is wrong that reservists serving together on the same operation are somehow treated differently. Last year, we commented on the more frequent deployment of reservists on operations using RSDs and recommended work to develop an appropriate package of support, suggesting that length of tour and type of operation be guides. The MOD's response (Annex C) was that there is a workstream in RF30 to examine TACOS, but commented that "... packages solely

12. An app on a desktop or mobile that enables reservists to highlight their availability for to support operations and commanders real time planning information. Integrated into My Muster is FAST, which gives reservist control over their commitment (availability and notice) and is shared with unit staff.

13. The military operation in support of the Commonwealth Games.

to duration or perceived risk might not fairly reflect the nature of the reservist's deployment." While we would agree that RSDs up to 14 days does offer a useful means of supporting operations, we would comment that our recommendation was not aimed so much at a simplified spectrum of service (recommendations C1/C2 of RF30), but more at the package of support so individual reservists and, importantly employers, are not disadvantaged through their service and support provided. In this, while we would agree that TACOS should not be dependent solely on risk and duration of deployment, we note that they are significant guides as they impact on the ability of the reservists to return to their civilian job, giving protection to both reservist and their employer. We understand that the Army are engaging with employers and will be trialling a number of different means of deploying reservists on homeland resilience operations in autumn 2022.

30. **Frictions.** Each year we see can how the Services are taking steps to remove barriers that inhibit reserve service, but they still persist:

- a. One example we made was that not all civilian qualifications are recognised and reservists, therefore, are required to undertake what would seem to be needless courses to earn an equivalent military qualification to be able to perform their role. In its response to our Report last year, the MOD emphasised the advances that have been made on the Joint Personnel Administrative System to record such civilian skills and qualifications. **But that was not the point we were making, it was recognition of these qualifications, not the record of them.**
- b. In another, we came across a Royal Air Force Police (RAFP) reservist, who holds a Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) qualification in the civilian police force. Yet this is not recognised by the RAFP, despite the fact the Royal Air Force sends RAFP personnel to attend the civilian police SIO courses.
- c. Another was of an Army reservist logistician, who is a qualified state schoolteacher. As a lance corporal, he is ineligible to attend the Army's generic instructional qualifications course, and is thus disallowed under single Service policy to deliver instruction in his unit.

31. **Courses.** We heard from more than one unit of a variety of challenges that relate to special-to-role, generic skills, and promotion courses. Units cite the centralisation of historically decentralised courses into regular schools and centres as being a key factor in a variety of frictions.

- a. In some instances, the reserve version of a special-to-role course has since been dropped, with the expectation that reservists can attend the regular equivalent, however the allocation of reservist places on regular courses are *de minimis*.
- b. Where a reserve version of a special-to-role course is delivered, infrequency and remote location create further challenges, notably with reservists requiring travel from Northern Ireland and Scotland.
- c. Common to most are **that the notification, booking and confirmation of courses is dysfunctional** – too little notice given, late course loading, late confirmation and being 'bumped' off at late notice are all barriers to reserve service, particularly those courses that are required for promotion or capability. We commented on this in 2020. We judged then that this issue should be easily solved, and we still do; **it is an issue that is in the gift of the single Services to resolve.**

Estate

32. 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 comprises 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.
33. We have reported that the fabric of VE is in decline because funding has been primarily on reactive (fix-on-fail) maintenance expenditure, and a backlog of £381m of unfunded maintenance and sustainment tasks. It was, therefore, disappointing that the RFCAs' bid for an enhancement in Financial Year (FY) 22/23 was not supported, and some £50m (£2m less than for FY 21/22) was allocated for the delivery of Hard¹⁴ and Soft¹⁵ facilities management (FM).
34. This makes the maintenance of the VE particularly challenging when over the last year, the RFCA estate teams estimate that there has been a 50% cost increase and a very much more difficult and dynamic environment in which to get work delivered because of a combination of: construction cost inflation; contractor availability (competition for firms, demand exceeding supply); workforce availability (COVID related sickness and overall availability of skilled workforce); materials availability and supply chain issues (delays in delivery due to COVID and Brexit); and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) scrutiny process depending on the cost of the project. Greater costs require more scrutiny – nothing wrong with the principle – but it results in a 4-6 month delay for the scrutiny process to run its course for what is the same project. **We would suggest that there is, perhaps, a need for scrutiny thresholds to shift in line with construction industry inflation.**
35. As we noted above, it is disappointing that the Royal Navy took funds from the FR20 programme as a savings measure, meaning that improvements to HMS PRESIDENT could not be made. This is particularly disappointing given the success of the estate improvements that the Royal Navy has carried out elsewhere earlier in the FR20 Programme.
36. The estate improvements and new builds under Project CHERITON and NEWBURY have either been completed or are now included under the RFCA Estate Optimisation Programme (REOP), of which more below. The work on the ARC at Swindon is complete; the ARC at Horfield (Quartermaster department for 7 Military Intelligence Battalion) is very nearly complete; and the work for Keynsham (technical accommodation for 101 Battalion REME, and 243 Field Hospital) is going to tender.
37. Last year, we described the impact of 'pausing' the work on projects as a consequence of a savings measure being imposed – that while in-year financial savings target might be met, the overall cost of a project is increased. **Regrettably this has proved to be the case with rebuild of Dunfermline ARC.** The decision to pause for a year has resulted in an actual delay of nearly 2.5 years, which meant the project had to be re-tendered and resulted in the **overall cost of the project rising from £4.5M to £7.6M.**
38. The work under the REOP to optimise the VE state continues. Most of the early optimisation (Tranche 1) affects the Cadet Estate, with only 14 reserve sites in scope, and it is not until Tranche 2 (2024) and 3 (2028), that greater impact is felt on the Reserve Estate.

14. Building maintenance, fire safety systems, lighting, plumbing are examples.

15. Waste management, landscaping, rents and rates are examples.

39. Although both Tranches 2 and 3 are driven by capability (which needs defining), we continue to urge caution when considering how far the optimisation goes. The need remains for a regional footprint, proximity to population centres and manageable travel time from work/home locations to aid recruiting and retention. As an example, there is one small ARC in Barnstaple, which covers the whole of North Cornwall, North Devon and West Somerset (an area noted as a good source of recruits). D Squadron Royal Wessex Yeomanry were moved from Barnstaple to Exeter, leaving a troop there. However, this troop is now also moving to Exeter, leaving just a platoon of the RIFLES in Barnstaple. Therefore, according to the criteria in REOP, which looks to close locations which only house sub-unit detachments, Barnstaple would be vulnerable to closure. As always with reserve units, when a reserve unit is relocated, its personnel do not move with it, unless commuting times allow, they either join another more local reserve unit, or simply leave the Reserve. Units report that their reservists will not travel further than 30-40 minutes for weekday training. As we reported last year, this may not matter if the nature of the training commitment expected from reservists within the Future Soldier force changes, but it needs to be tested.
40. These concerns do not alter our support for change as we recognise much of the reserve estate is not impressive and a route must be found to modernise the reserve centres to attract and retain the reservists of tomorrow. We recommended that this must be fully tested, particularly by those that bear the responsibility for recruiting and retaining the reservist – the units and formations that command them.

RESERVIST HEALTH

41. The delivery of occupational health services to the Reserve by Defence Primary Health Care (DPHC) continues to take place against limitations of current policy – examples include not recording blood groups nor fully vaccinating reservists on entry to the Reserve, both of which compromise readiness for deployment. To this end, DPHC is involved with Programme AGILE STANCE¹⁶ and with the RF30 medical/dental workstream providing evidence and understanding concerning the medical readiness of the Reserve.
42. In terms of occupational health, rehabilitation etc, DPHC have reported to us:
- a. *The following challenges remain but with some progress:*
 - (1). *Understanding of Reservists' health status – the principle of using an annual health self-declaration continues to be explored. The self-declaration form is currently in use to support force preparation for Op UNITY and will also be used to support plans for preparing cadres to be at readiness to support Homeland Resilience.*
 - (2). *Immunological protection – Reservists' vaccination status is not collected on entry. Some 40% of Defence medical records for Reserves are missing vaccination data requiring Units to ask for them to be provided in support of medical force preparation. Planning timelines for both mobilisation and overseas training do not, on occasion, facilitate force preparation.*
 - b. *Defence relies on individual reserve personnel to provide information on changes to their health and is likely to do so for the foreseeable future. While project CORTISONE and the development of Defence medical information systems may address this issue in the future, Defence remains reliant on individuals following policy. The single Services are examining use of various means such as using the annual certificate of efficiency as a lever to encourage reserve personnel to keep their medical information up to date.*

¹⁶. An exercise to test procedures for wider mobilisation of the Active and Strategic Reserve.

- c. **Occupational Health.** *The pandemic limited access to DPHC facilities leading to a reduction through 2020-21 in the number of appointments provided to Reserve personnel although support to operational deployment of Reserve personnel continued. The period from April 2021 to April 2022 has seen a recovery of Business as Usual activity as well as continuing support to overseas and UK deployments of Reserve personnel. The Reserve Occupational Health practice provided 3,160 out of hours appointments (an increase of 24% on the previous year) over the period and DPHC also facilitated the mobilisation of around 300 personnel for MACA tasks at centres in Scotland and Wales.*
- d. **Rehabilitation.** *Reservists are entitled to rehabilitation services when injured on military duty. Reserve personnel can self-refer to Primary Care Rehabilitation Facilities (PCRF) that are co-located with DPHC medical facilities. Since 2018 FR20 funding has supported 18 posts in rehabilitation services nationwide in recognition of the need to support Reserve personnel injured on duty. Data on Reserve uptake of these services is not yet available, however an overhaul of health data provision is underway and the possibility of making data on Rehabilitation access available will be explored.*
- e. **Dental.** *There is currently no policy that facilitates understanding of dental health for Reserve forces. Dental fitness is assessed as part of medical assessment on entry only. There is no mechanism by which Defence can capture civilian dental fitness data for Reserve personnel. Pre-mobilisation dental assessment is available by DPHC but is not currently mandatory. If an understanding of dental fitness is required for future use of the Reserves there is a need to provide more comprehensive policy. If greater input from Defence Medical Services is required resourcing will need to be considered.*
- f. **Mental Health.** *As previously reported there is access to DPHC Mental Health support for those with operationally attributable problems via referral from an NHS GP. This facility is now also available to those serving on FTRS (HC/LC) [Home and Limited Commitment] contracts regardless of operational experience. The ongoing revisions to medical data will allow better access to data concerning uptake.*
43. As there is a greater expectation of, and use of the Reserve, and therefore readiness, there will be a need for greater confidence in the reservists' medical fitness and readiness to deploy. However, while the same medical standards that are asked of regulars might not apply to reservists, there needs to be a recognition of what is required and policies to set a baseline and a system for rapid preparation – the medical standards required for operations overseas should be different to those required for an Op RESCRIPT or support to the Commonwealth Games. It is therefore questionable whether a system that has differing standards of medical information and relies on individuals to follow policy is fit for purpose for rapid mobilisation. The weaknesses in the current system are known to all, as are the policy developments required. In previous reports, we have suggested various initiatives: reservists submitting an annual health declaration; periodic medicals linked to age/birthdays; vaccinating reservists to the same standard as regulars at the end of initial training. Each Service approaches the requirement and solutions differently. Although progress has been made, it is slow. There are still policy gaps. To this end, we would recommend **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.**

CONCLUSION

44. Although we have listed a number of concerns, it would be wrong for readers to think that this has affected the operational output and performance of individuals and units of the Reserve, or limited the opportunities to train and serve. The deployment slides (Annex G) in this report show where many reservists from all three Services have deployed on operations. Whether as individuals or units, they have performed strongly and demonstrated their professional capabilities. There also are many challenging opportunities to train overseas and at home alongside their regular counterparts – a company group of 4 MERCIAN on Ex IRON WOLF in Lithuania (part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence); 10 Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment drawing on the support of 151 Regiment Royal Logistic Corps as they prepare to deploy on Op TOSCA; the Royal Wessex Yeomanry live firing their Challenger 2 tanks and sending a fully formed reserve tank crew with the Royal Tank Regiment battlegroup on Op CABRIT; and 7 RIFLES pairing with 5 RIFLES on Ex STRIKE 3 on Salisbury Plain, which will help prepare 7 RIFLES for their forthcoming exercise with the US National Guard in Michigan – are some.
45. But we have to conclude this year's report with an assessment that there is a real risk of a clear decline in the health of the Reserve. It is clear from the statements of intent in the IR, Defence Command Paper and RF30 that this is not the desired outcome, hence the importance we attach to highlighting this risk in our report, and explaining why this appears to be coming about. Resource restraints have clearly influenced many of the fundamentals that allow a reserve unit, and its reservists, to flourish and deliver the desired military capability. Each 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. If this is achieved, the reservists have a rewarding offer which they will meet with limitless enthusiasm and commitment and Defence has a real and ensured military capability.
46. What we have described in this report is an equation and if any one of these factors are out of balance a risk materialises and, as we have described, we are seeing a number of these factors becoming apparent. This has not happened by neglect but by the accumulative effect of independent resourcing decisions and we fear the warning signs are not fully recognised or understood. There is no comparison with the regular force who are full time employees and will be there whatever the situation might be. We do fear that the differences sometimes are not sufficiently understood and thus decisions are made with this potential accumulative negative effect.
47. The Prime Minister, in October 2011, instigated a review of the Reserve Forces and the outcome was the FR20 programme with a commitment to improve access to modern equipment, provide better training, all part of a £1.8 billion investment. This occurred because it was recognised the Reserve Forces had been neglected. We do not believe this is the case today as there is an acknowledgement the only way forward is with a Whole Force of regular and reservists maximising the cost effectiveness of the reserve component and in addition utilising the wider skills available from our civilian society. **But we are highlighting there is now a significant risk a similar decline will come about.** We fear the current situation is not one of neglect but a possible lack of appreciation of the subtle differences of delivering a capability from the reserves and ensuring the resources are applied effectively and, most importantly, consistently.



Annexes:

- A. External Reporting Provisions of the Defence Reform Act 2014.
- B. External Scrutiny Team: Terms of Reference.
- C. Secretary of State for Defence Response to 2021 EST Statutory Report.
- D. Expanding the Reserve Forces in Response to a Continental Threat: Some Parallels from History.
- E. Previous Report Recommendations – 2013 to 2021.
- F. Defence Statistics – Reserve Manning Achievement & Trends.
- G. Reservist Mobilisation and Deployments.
- H. External Scrutiny 2022 Report – Main Recommendations.
- I. 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.¹

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.

1. Inserted in Part 11 of the Reserve Forces Act 1996 (reserve associations), after section 113.

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.

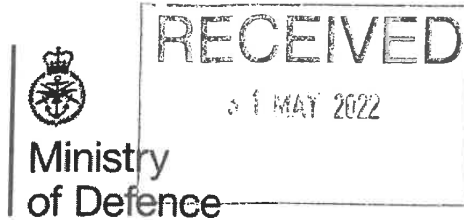
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

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.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE RESPONSE TO 2021 EST REPORT

**SECRETARY OF STATE
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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E-mail: defencesecretary-group@mod.gov.uk

4.4.2.11

26 May 2022

Dear Major General Lalor,

Thank you for the External Scrutiny Team's 2021 report on the Reserve Forces. I am sorry for the delay in responding to it. Comments on the specific recommendations made in the report are at the Annex to this letter, but I also want to take the opportunity to respond to some of the other observations made.

The report covers what was another challenging period for Defence. The requirement to ensure that working practices were compliant with Covid-19 regulations as far as possible placed constraints on our ability to recruit and train Armed Forces personnel, both Regular and Reserve, while we were at the same time supporting the ongoing national response to the pandemic. Despite these challenges, I am pleased that our Reserve strengths have broadly held up; and I am confident that the experience of being a reservist in 2022 and in the years ahead should continue to prove both challenging and rewarding.

While the response to the pandemic was, of course, the major undertaking during the period the report covers, I think it is important to acknowledge that reservists also continued to support other Defence activity in the UK and overseas, including in Afghanistan, Cyprus and as part of the Enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltics, as well as on global counter-terrorism and counter-piracy operations.

The report contains some suggestions about developing a spectrum of service, to make it easier to utilise Armed Forces personnel more flexibly. I believe that, in fact, this is already largely in place, with Regulars now having the opportunity to request flexible terms and Reservists able to work on anything from single Reserve Service Days to Additional Duties Commitments and full-time service, as

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well as being mobilised for permanent service. Full-time reservists are now also able to request flexible terms, which are comparable to those for Regulars. We are also examining the requirement for, and interest in, a scheme to make it easier for reservists to work in specialist military posts at more senior levels without first having to go through years of military career development. The increasing use of the SERVE jobs portal is giving more reservists sight of the various opportunities on offer and I hope and expect that the Front-line Commands will make more use of the flexibility that is available as their workforce plans develop and mature.

The report also makes some observations about how some reservists were managed during Operation RESCRIPT. I think it is important to set these observations in context. As part of prudent planning, Defence placed some 20,000 Regular and Reserve personnel at readiness to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. At the outset, it was not certain how many people might be required and in what roles. As the national picture developed, it became clear that not all of those personnel being held at readiness, whether Regular or Reserve, would be needed. In such circumstances, it was right and reasonable to stand volunteer reservists down and allow them to resume their normal lives. Every reservist who was brought into permanent service made a valuable contribution to the Covid-19 response, by enabling us to guarantee that we had enough people ready to be deployed at short notice if necessary. While I can understand that the experience may have been frustrating for some, all those who volunteered for mobilisation, and the employers who agreed to release them, deserve our gratitude.

The next few years may prove to be a time of further significant change for the Reserves. It is pleasing to see that reservists have generally welcomed the ideas and vision set out in the Integrated Review and the Defence Command Paper, together with the Reserve Forces 2030 report. The intent is to build on the improvements that the Future Reserves 2020 programme has already delivered. There is a general ambition to see the Reserves becoming further integrated with their regular counterparts and the wider defence enterprise, providing greater utility and assurance across a broader range of military capabilities and greater access to civilian skills.

There is, of course, a significant amount of work to be done to deliver the right changes for Defence. Most importantly, we will need to explore the challenges and opportunities the country faces and engage with society at large, and with industry and employers in particular, to establish to what extent they are willing and able to support and work with us. The scale of change that the various reviews envisage is significant; it is possible that not all the proposals put forward will prove practicable. And whatever changes are made will not come about in a matter of weeks, or even months. It will require an incremental approach, to build understanding of what the country wants and needs from Defence, and then to identify how best this can be delivered. And it will be vital that we communicate as much as possible with our reservists and their employers as our thinking develops

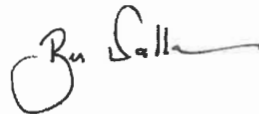
so that we can understand their attitudes and address any concerns they may have. In this, we will of course look to the RFCAs for support and assistance.

The coming months and years may be a challenging - but I hope not an unsettling - time for the Reserves as Defence develops its thinking on its future force structures and the roles the Reserves will fill within those structures. I believe the EST's reports can contribute useful information on the perceptions and attitudes as well as the utility of the Reserves as this work continues.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Thank you once again for the report.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Wallace', with a stylized flourish at the end.

THE RT HON BEN WALLACE MP

**Annex
Secretary of State letter
4.4.2.11**

EST RECOMMENDATIONS 2021

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.

The beneficial recruitment changes that the Army introduced to improve Regular inflow remain in place and the Army is working hard to bring the same improvement to Reserve inflow as has been seen in the Regulars.

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.

Each of the single Services sets its own workforce plan and their aim is always to place the best person for the job into any role. I hope that as work to examine and develop the ideas in the Reserve Forces 2030 and Future Soldier documents is taken forward, there will be an increased focus on the capabilities and experience that the Reserves can bring with them, and more opportunities will be opened to them across Defence.

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.

Our workforce requirement principles encourage the Front-Line Commands (FLCs) to apply workforce flexibility when filling temporary Regular gaps, adopt practices to enable the In-Year movement of funds between workforce types and ensure efficient use of workforce underspend. Defence Workforce Planning Instructions are clear that the guiding principle going forward should be that FLCs have freedom to design and flexibly manage their Whole Force within a workforce cost envelope. The principle of ring-fenced contingency funding for the utilisation of the Reserves has not generally been considered as a practical proposition because if, for any reason, such contingency funds were not used, they could be lost.

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.

At present we do not envisage an expansion to the operational utilisation of reservists on RSDs. The ability to utilise willing and available reservists for up to

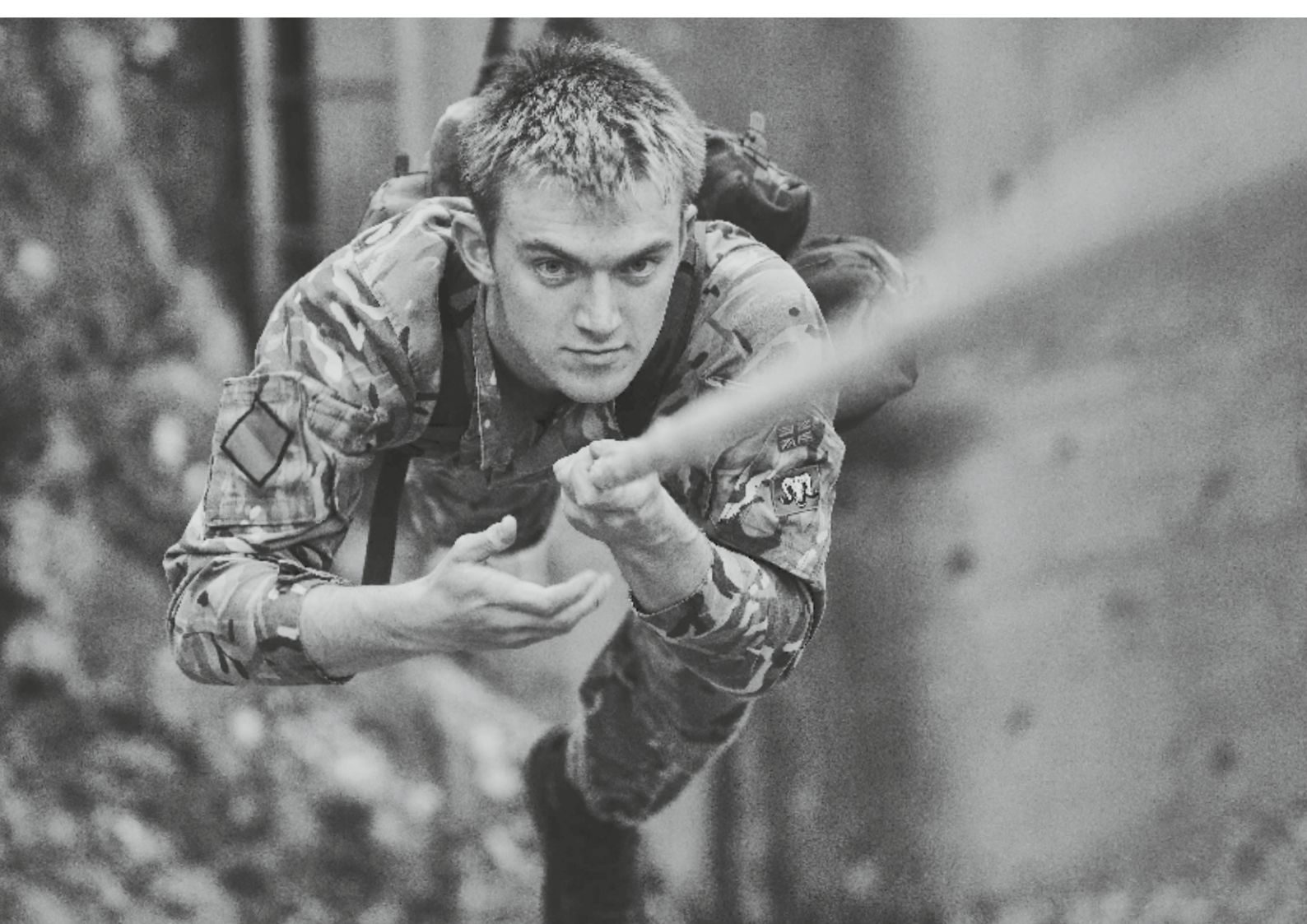
14 days for resilience tasks offers a useful short-term measure to respond to urgent issues. Other Terms of Service are more appropriate for longer-term roles.

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.

Within RF30 there is a workstream to examine the different Terms of Service and the conditions that accompany them. Any proposition for change would have to accord with the principles of the Defence People Strategy and the Whole Force Concept. Linking packages solely to duration or perceived risk might not fairly reflect the nature of the reservist's deployment.

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.

Reservists have been able to record their civilian qualifications on the Joint Personnel Administration system since 2020. The next step is to improve the functionality of the system, both to make it easier for reservists to complete the task and then to enable the information to be exploited. The SERVE portal is opening up visibility of job and role opportunities for suitably qualified and experienced people.





H R F C A
Grand Reserve Forces and Cadets Association

Expanding the Reserve Forces in Response to a Continental Threat: Some Parallels from History

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has brought interstate conventional warfare back to the European continent for the first time in decades. As a result, for the first time since the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, the UK must recognise that becoming involved in conventional military operations against a peer enemy in Europe has become a possibility, however remote. From a Reserves perspective it is opportune, therefore, to examine the state of auxiliary forces on the eve of the last two major European wars in which the UK became involved, in 1914 and 1939, and also to look at the processes of expansion of the armed forces.

While history rarely delivers straightforward ‘lessons’ for the present and future, it certainly offers ‘approximate precedents’ which are of value in providing context and guidance for contemporary decision-makers. Put simply and bluntly, there is value in learning from previous insights and, especially, errors. Using history in this way is not without its dangers. The temptation to cherry pick examples to make a case is ever-present, and interpretations must take full account of the original contexts and circumstances. Nonetheless, if carried out by analysts with appropriate expertise, the use of history in this way to shine a light on contemporary concerns can be extremely valuable.

1914

Field Marshal Earl Kitchener of Khartoum was appointed as Secretary of State for War in August 1914 and just a few days later announced that he believed that what we now call the First World War would last a minimum of three years, and Britain needed to raise a mass Army to fight it. He was correct on both counts. Kitchener thus overturned assumptions that the war would be short, and the British role would be primarily maritime and economic. His decision triggered improvisation, in other words, muddling through, on a heroic scale. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that although the UK had a large reserve land army – the Territorial Force (TF), formed in 1908 as the consequence of a significant and timely reform of part-time volunteer reserves – Kitchener decided to create a new force, the New Armies (or Kitchener’s Army) as a vehicle for expansion of the land forces.

This decision was taken from a mixture of motives, including Kitchener’s prejudice against Territorials, and resulted in a degree of overlap and duplication. In any case, the existing Territorial structure was not designed to facilitate massive and rapid expansion of the Army, which is exactly what happened in 1914 and 1915. In spite of this, in addition to New Army units being raised from scratch, TF units threw off new battalions and other units (so the pre-war 14th Battalion of the London Regiment, the London Scottish, became the First Line battalion, while newly created units became the Second and Third Line battalions, the 2/14th and 3/14th Londons). The enormous numbers of volunteers that came forward swamped existing facilities, meaning men were billeted in private houses, sports stadia, and even in horseboxes on a racecourse. Equipment, uniforms and weapons were in short supply, and available expertise in the form of experienced officers and NCOs were spread very thinly indeed. All this had an impact on the preparation and training of the huge volunteer army, which in turn had a knock-on effect on the operational effectiveness of newly-raised units and formations when they were committed to battle, first at Gallipoli and then on Western Front in 1915-16. Undoubtedly this helped to inflate the British Army’s losses in the First World War.

Kitchener himself remarked, at a particularly stressful moment, “Did they remember, when they went headlong into a war like this, that they were without an army, and without any preparation to equip one?” This was an exaggeration, but one with a strong element of truth. The failure to plan for a future expansion of the Army can be explained on political grounds, but still amounts to a disastrous self-inflicted wound. Since the signing of the Entente Cordiale with France in 1904, British foreign policy had increasingly aligned with

that of France and France's ally, Russia (Britain agreed a separate Entente with Russia in 1907). There was no formal alliance between the three powers, but at time of rising tensions with Imperial Germany the direction of travel was clear. Logically, defence policy should have been reshaped to reflect the new realities of international politics, but this did not happen. There were not even paper schemes to create a mass army, which was seen as being politically inexpedient, unnecessary and unthinkable – right up to the moment it was created. The methods used, calling for volunteers, took no account of the penalty paid by the British war economy of removing key workers from industry.

In general, the unplanned expansion of the Army in 1914-15 was wasteful and inefficient. Conscription was politically unacceptable, even at the outbreak of war, and was only introduced in 1916 when the supply of volunteers was running out. Creating a structure for Army expansion before 1914 would have been expensive but would have proved hugely beneficial when war came; it would have saved treasure and lives. Conversely, merely planning for expansion, thinking through the problems and creating blueprints, would have cost very little. But even this cut-price measure would have saved treasure and lives.

1937-39

When Nazi Germany began to emerge as a potential enemy in the mid-1930s, the Territorial Army (as it was now called) was in a sorry state. The era of the Depression, years of underfunding and spending cuts, had led to hollowed out, undermanned units. Annual camp, both a critical period for training and the highlight of the Territorial year, was cancelled on several occasions to save money. These morale-sapping decisions were myopic in the extreme. That morale was not more of a problem was testimony to units often having shrunk to little more than hardcore members, who kept up their spirits and unit cohesion through a variety of social activities, while gamely continuing to train and prepare for war with outdated and inadequate equipment.

From 1937 onwards there was a modest recovery, as, recognising the threat posed by Germany, the government increased defence spending. Simultaneously civilians, waking up to the growing menace, began to come forward in greater numbers to volunteer for the Territorials. As an example, the 1600 Territorials in Leicestershire and Rutland in May 1937 had almost doubled by May 1938. The Munich Crisis of September-October 1938, when Britain came close to going to war with Germany in defence of Czechoslovakia, prompted a flood of additional volunteers. For the first time in the interwar period, Territorial units were fully manned, or nearly so.

In the spring of 1939, Territorial units were adjusting to the new situation, absorbing and training new recruits with whatever equipment and weapons were available (although a welcome programme of modernisation was announced at the end of 1938). Then, without any warning or consultation, in March 1939 the Chamberlain government announced that the TA was to be doubled, virtually overnight. This was a purely political decision, a gesture to demonstrate British resolve to allies and enemies alike. Two weeks earlier Hitler had ripped up the Munich agreement by occupying rump Czechoslovakia. As such it made political sense, but it threw the TA into chaos. Once again drill halls were swamped with volunteers, and just as in the First World War, existing Territorial units were split in two as Second Line units were created. On paper, this was a huge expansion of the TA. In reality, it badly affected the efficiency of the existing units as experienced personnel were shipped off to the new creations and training was disrupted. Not surprisingly, some old hands were reminded of the situation in 1914. To make matters worse, in May 1939 the government announced the introduction of peacetime

conscription, and batches of 'militiamen' were called up into the Army. To prevent adverse press reporting, the conscripts were often given priority for equipment over the TA. All this reinforced the feeling that the TA was a Cinderella service.

When war with Germany broke out in September 1939, the Army was in the process of increasing in size, and unlike in 1914 there was no equivalent of Kitchener's Army: the TA was the primary vehicle for expansion. The introduction of conscription was undoubtedly the right step, even if it was in some ways mishandled. These were both lessons learned from the First World War. For all that, as in 1914, the expansion of the Army in 1937-39 was marked by improvisation and ill-thought out, ad hoc political interventions, and resulted in a degree of chaos. This was reflected in the patchy performance of TA units on operations in 1939-40, when at least some were demonstrably insufficiently trained, and suffered as a consequence. In fairness, some Territorial units fought effectively. So, just as in the period preceding 1914, better and more consistent planning would have saved treasure and lives during the early years of the Second World War.

Conclusion

Some things in life do not change very much. The politicians and military leaders responsible for the expansion of the UK's Reserve Forces in the first half of the Twentieth Century lived in an unpredictable world, were hemmed in by limited budgets and political realities, and faced emerging military threats. Their modern equivalents operate under similar conditions. The experiences of their predecessors offer much food for thought for contemporary decision-makers and practitioners.

During our investigations this year, the members of the EST have been perturbed by evidence of hollowed out Reserve units which lack critical mass. We were told that to avoid the politically embarrassing loss of cap badges, Army Reserve units have had subunits reduced in size or even removed altogether from orders of battle. Some units have had key equipment removed, or rely on a tiny number of key personnel for critical support. All this is adversely affecting troop morale and training and would undoubtedly have a deleterious impact should these units go on active operations in this state. The UK's Reserve Forces have been here before. All this smacks of the early 1930s. Decisions have consequences. The consequences of the decision by default to underfund and generally neglect the TA in the interwar period was that in 1940 undertrained and underequipped units were sent into battle in Norway and France, with sometimes disastrous results. The contemporary resonances are clear.

In other respects, the modern outlook is much brighter than it was immediately before the two world wars. In many ways, high level support for Reserve Forces is as good as it has ever been, as expressed in Project AGILE STANCE. However, we cannot ignore the disconnect with the situation on the ground. How many Reserves know very much about AGILE STANCE? Have the grassroots bought into the vision, or do they read about it but then compare the lofty aspirations with the very imperfect state of their unit, much as Territorial soldiers were doing in the 1930s?

Earlier it was stressed that the straightforward transference of 'lessons' from history is fraught with dangers, but the past offers approximate precedents. Looking at Reserve Forces today, particularly the Army Reserve, the historian cannot help but be struck by uncomfortable parallels with 1914 and 1937-39. In both cases, if appropriate and timely action had been taken, it would have prevented a great deal of trouble further down the track. There is every reason to believe that the same is true today. As Mark Twain is said to have remarked, 'history doesn't repeat itself but it often rhymes'.

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 (LEMCOG). (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 reinvestigate 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.

DEFENCE STATISTICS - RESERVE MANNING ACHIEVEMENT & TRENDS¹

Headline Figures

Table 1. Total and trained strength of the Future Reserves 2020 (FR20).

	2016 1 Apr	2017 1 Apr	2018 1 Apr	2019 1 Apr	2020 1 Apr	2021 1 Apr	2022 1 Apr	Change 2021/2022
All Services								
Total strength	34,760	36,220	36,260	36,400	37,010	37,410	35,900	- 1,520
Trained strength	27,270 II	31,360	32,200	32,560	32,920	32,700	31,480	- 1,220
Maritime Reserve								
Total strength	3,540	3,560	3,600	3,850	3,870	4,080	3,810	- 270
Trained strength	2,350	2,560	2,760	2,830	2,870	2,870	2,870	~
Army Reserve								
Total strength	28,670	29,940	29,710	29,470	29,930	30,030	28,830	- 1,200
Trained strength	23,030 II	26,660	29,960	27,070	27,300	26,940	25,730	- 1,210
RAF Reserves								
Total strength	2,540	2,730	2,950	3,080	3,200	3,300	3,250	- 50
Trained strength	1,890	2,150	2,480	2,660	2,740	2,890	2,880	- 10

Source: Defence Statistics (Tri-Service)

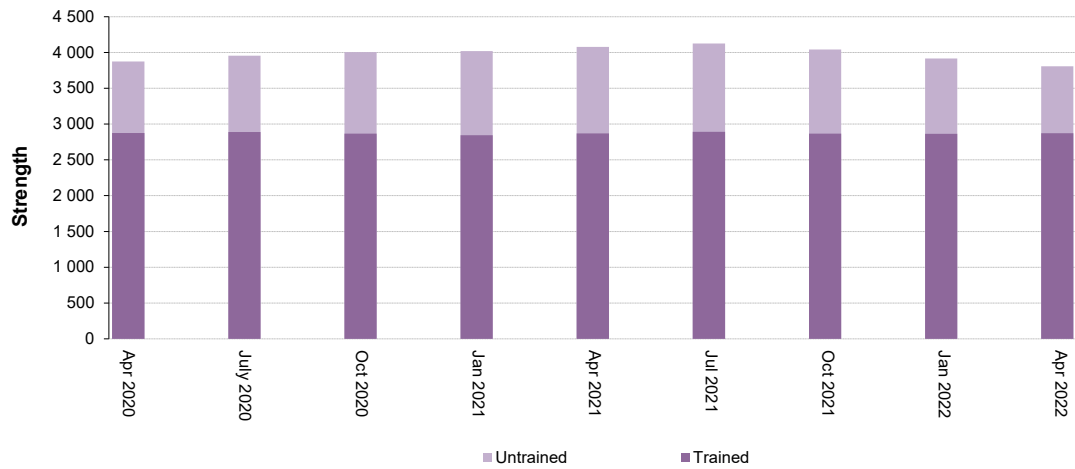
Appendices:

1. Maritime Reserves
2. Army Reserves
3. RAF Reserves
4. Officer data
5. Accompanying notes to tables

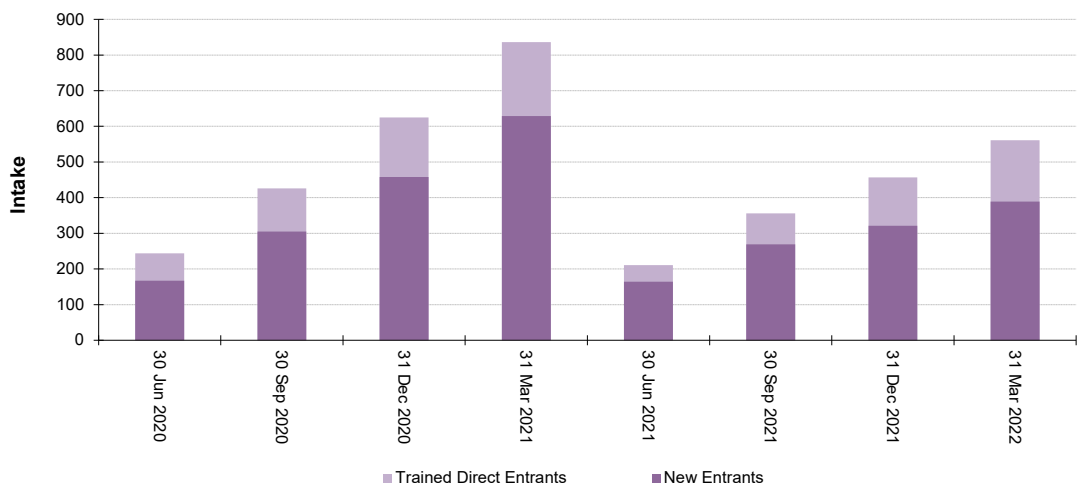
1. Data is drawn from the Defence Statistics Report as at 1 Apr 2020.

Maritime Reserve

Maritime Reserve Strength



Maritime Reserve Cumulative Financial Year to date Intake



Note:

New Entrants comprises of all intake into untrained strength. It includes new recruits, untrained ex-Regulars (either direct transfer or following a break in service), and untrained Reserve re-joiners (following a break in service or transferring from another Reserve Force)
Trained Direct Entrants comprises all intake into the trained strength and includes trained ex-Regulars (either direct transfers or following a break in service), and trained Reserve re-joiners following a break in service.

Maritime Reserve Quarterly Gains to Trained Strength and Trained Outflow

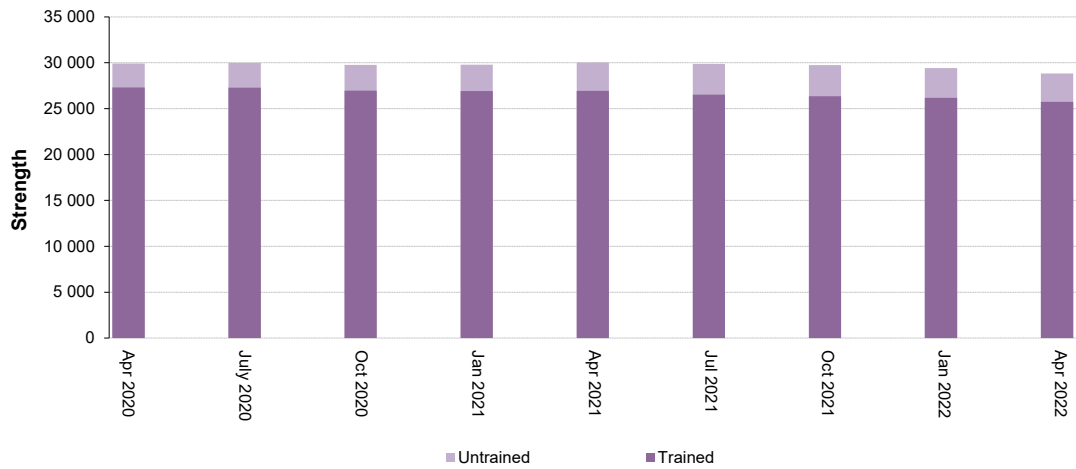


Note:

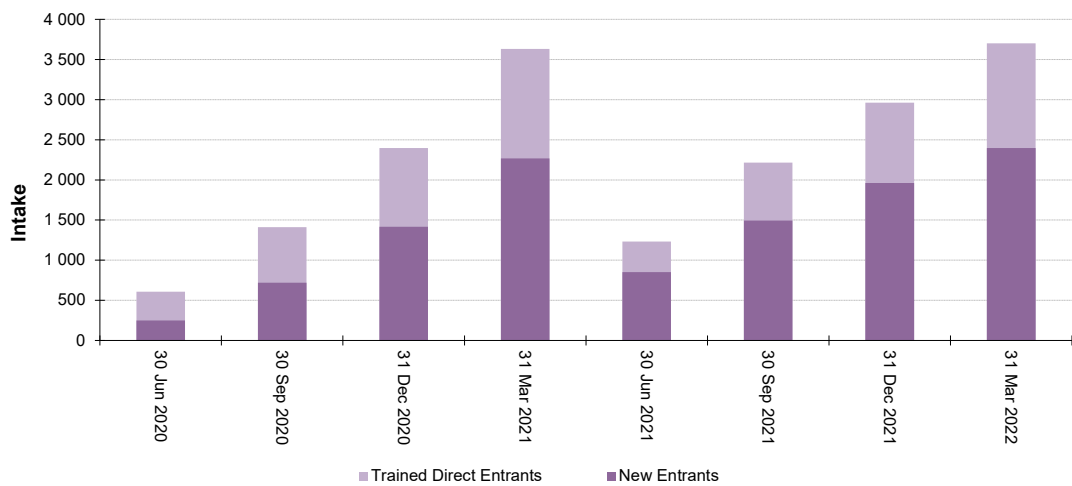
Gains to trained strength figures comprise personnel who complete Phase 2 training and personnel who enter directly onto the trained strength of the Maritime Reserve.

Army Reserve

Army Reserve Strength



Army Reserve Cumulative Financial Year to date Intake



Note:

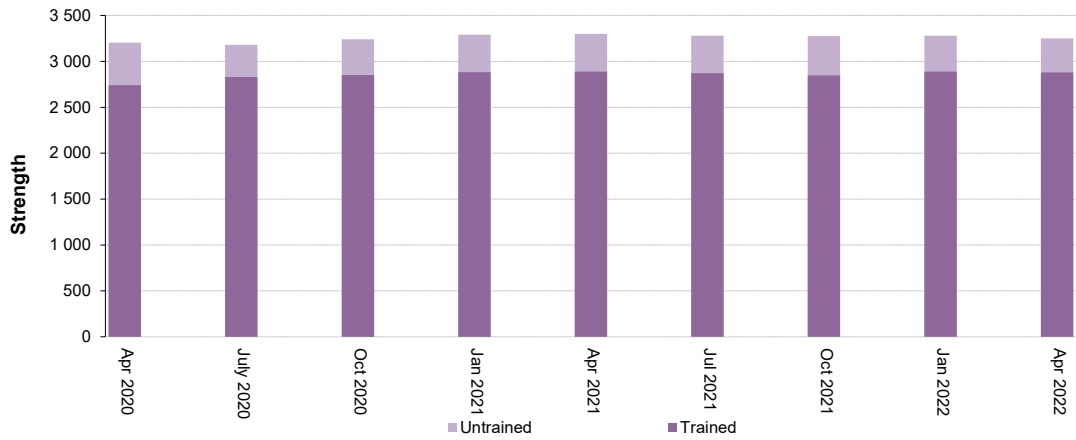
New Entrants comprises of all intake into untrained strength. It includes new recruits, untrained ex-Regulars (either direct transfer or following a break in service), and untrained Reserve re-joiners (following a break in service or transferring from another Reserve Force)
Trained Direct Entrants comprises all intake into the trained strength and includes trained ex-Regulars (either direct transfers or following a break in service), and trained Reserve re-joiners following a break in service.

Army Reserve Quarterly gains to Trained Strength and Trained Outflow

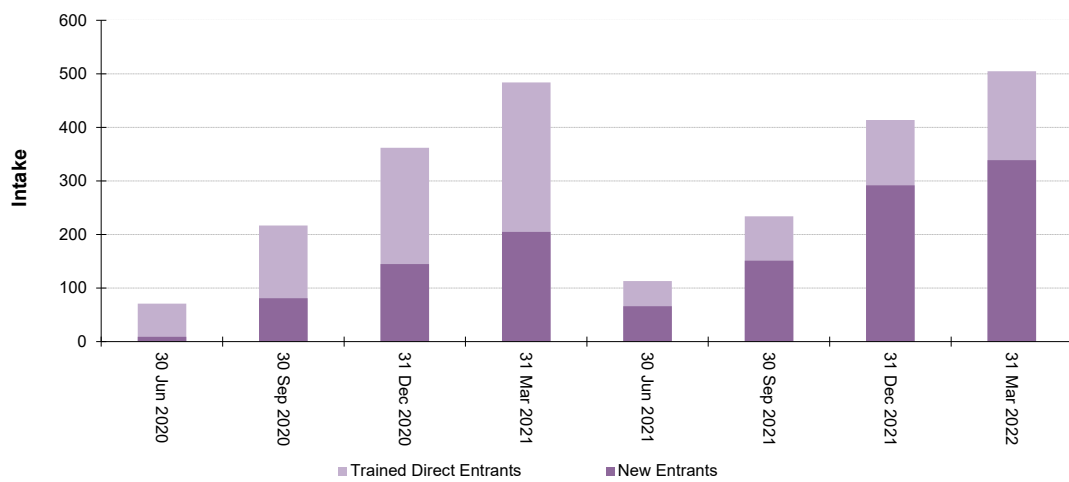


RAuxAF

RAF Reserve Strength



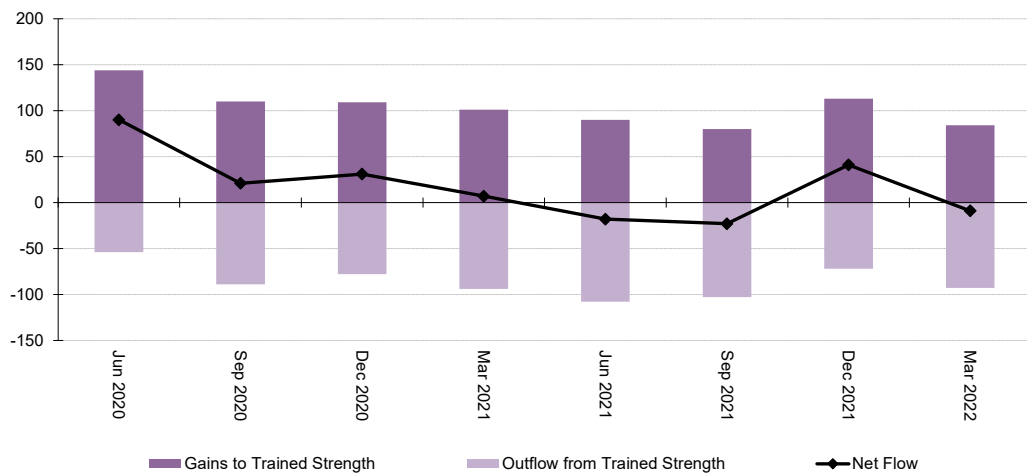
RAF Reserve cumulative financial year to date Intake



Note:

New Entrants comprises of all intake into untrained strength. It includes new recruits, untrained ex-Regulars (either direct transfer or following a break in service), and untrained Reserve re-joiners (following a break in service or transferring from another Reserve Force)
Trained Direct Entrants comprises all intake into the trained strength and includes trained ex-Regulars (either direct transfers or following a break in service), and trained Reserve re-joiners following a break in service.

RAF Reserve monthly gains to Trained Strength and Trained Outflow



Note:

Gains to trained strength figures comprise personnel who complete Phase 2 training and personnel who enter directly onto the trained strength of the RAF Reserves.

Officers

Table 2a Intake to and Outflow from Officers in the Maritime Reserve (Trained and Untrained)

	1 Apr 2016 to 31 Mar 2017	1 Apr 2017 to 31 Mar 2018	1 Apr 2018 to 31 Mar 2019	1 Apr 2019 to 31 Mar 2020	1 Apr 2020 to 31 Mar 2021	1 Apr 2021 to 31 Mar 2022
Officers strength at start of period	1,040	1,120	1,160	1,230	1,250	1,240
Intake to Officers	200	150	190	160	100	150
from another part of the Armed Forces of which	180	140	180	150	100	140
Rank to Officer in the Maritime Reserve	50	60	70	60	20	70
Regulars	100	70	90	70	50	40
University Service Units	10	~	~	10	10	10
No previous service	20	~	10	10	~	10
Outflow from Officers	120	110 r	120	140	110	150
to another part of the Armed Forces of which	20	20	20	40	30	20
Regulars	10	10	10	20	10	10
Left the Armed Forces	100	100	90	110	80	140
Officers strength at end of period	1,120	1,160	1,230	1,250	1,240	1,230

Source: Defence Statistics (Tri-Service)

Table 2b Intake to and Outflow from Officers in the Army Reserve (Trained and Untrained)

	1 Apr 2016 to 31 Mar 2017	1 Apr 2017 to 31 Mar 2018	1 Apr 2018 to 31 Mar 2019	1 Apr 2019 to 31 Mar 2020	1 Apr 2020 to 31 Mar 2021	1 Apr 2021 to 31 Mar 2022
Officers strength at start of period	4,840	5,100	5,410	5,600	5,940	6,080
Intake to Officers	680	750	660	780	690	580
from another part of the Armed Forces of which	600	670	600	700	620	510
Rank to Officer in the Army Reserve	100	120	120	160	150	180
Regulars	300	290	280	350	230	210
University Service Units	140	140	110	130	140	70
No previous service	90	80	60	80	80	70
Outflow from Officers	430	440	480	440	550	630
to another part of the Armed Forces of which	170	140	150	150	240	200
Regulars	100	80	90	90	130	110
Left the Armed Forces	260	300	330	290	310	430
Officers strength at end of period	5,090	5,410	5,590	5,940	6,080	6,030

Source: Defence Statistics (Tri-Service)

Table 2c Intake to and Outflow from Officers in the RAF Reserve (Trained and Untrained)

	1 Apr 2016 to 31 Mar 2017	1 Apr 2017 to 31 Mar 2018	1 Apr 2018 to 31 Mar 2019	1 Apr 2019 to 31 Mar 2020	1 Apr 2020 to 31 Mar 2021	1 Apr 2021 to 31 Mar 2022
Officers strength at start of period	390	430	530	620	680	760
Intake to Officers	80	170	150	140	170	210
from another part of the Armed Forces of which	80	150	130	130	160	190
Rank to Officer in the RAF Reserve	10	~	20	20	10	10
Regulars	60	110	80	90	120	60
University Service Units	~	~	-	-	~	100
No previous service	~	20	20	10	10	10
Outflow from Officers	40	70 r	60	80	90	180
to another part of the Armed Forces of which	10	40 r	30	20	40	20
Regulars	~	~	10	10	20	10
Left the Armed Forces	30	30	30	60	40	160
Officers strength at end of period	430	530 r	620	680	760	780

Source: Defence Statistics (Tri-Service)

Accompanying Notes to Tables

1. Future Reserves 2020 (FR20) includes volunteer reserves who are mobilised, HRR and volunteer reserve personnel serving on ADC or FTRS contracts. Sponsored Reserves provide a more cost-effective solution than volunteer reserves are also included in the Army Reserve FR20. Non Regular Permanent Staff (NRPS), Expeditionary Forces Institute (EFI) and University Officer Cadets and Regular Reservists are excluded.
2. Trained Strength comprises military personnel who have completed Phase 1 and 2 training for Maritime Reserve, the Army Reserve (prior to 1 October 2016) and the Royal Air Force Reserves. Following the change in definition of trained strength from 1 October 2016, trained strength for the Army Reserve comprises of personnel who have completed Phase 1 training.
3. Intake and outflow statistics are calculated from month-on-month comparisons of officer strength data. There has been a minor change in the methodology used to produce Reserves statistics from 1 April 2017. This now allows us to capture individuals who intake and outflow within the same month. For example, if an individual joins on 3 March and leaves on 29 March they are now counted as an intake and an outflow under the new methodology, whereas previously this would not have been identifiable. The net effect of this change on our Statistics is negligible and the figures above would not differ from that calculated previously by greater than ten personnel. This change does, however, improve both the accuracy and efficiency of our processes by, for example improving identification of those Officers who previously served in University Service Units. Some of these figures appeared in an ad hoc statistical bulletin 'Future Reserves 2020 Officer Intake and Outflow Statistics: 2017' published on 10 August 2017.
4. Intake to the FR20 shows the most recent previous service recorded on JPA including those serving in another reserve service. Personnel may have had a break in service and may have served in more than one role. Intake from University Service Units figures just show that someone has been in a University Service Unit at some point in our data; they may not have moved straight into the FR20 directly after leaving. Only ex-Cadets are counted as an intake from University Service Units. Army Officers include Army Officer Cadets.
5. Outflow from the FR20 includes those personnel moving to another part of the Armed Forces within the calendar month. "Left the Armed Forces" may include those who have a break in service before joining another part of the Armed Forces.
6. Intake and outflow from the Regular Forces includes transfers from/to another service.
7. University Service Units includes University Royal Navy Units (URNU), University Officer Training Corps (UOTC), University Air Squadrons (UAS) and Defence Technical Undergraduate Scheme (DTUS). Individuals counted ex-Cadets with a prior assignment type of one of these on the JPA system.

Rounding

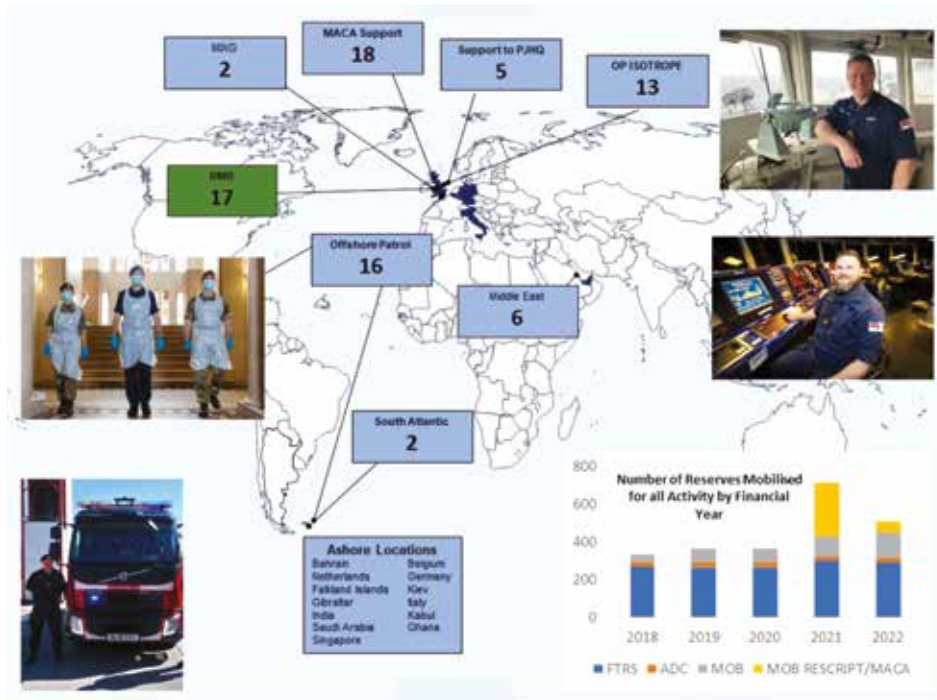
Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10, though numbers ending in '5' have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent systematic bias. Totals and subtotals have been rounded separately and may not equal the sum of their rounded parts..

Symbols

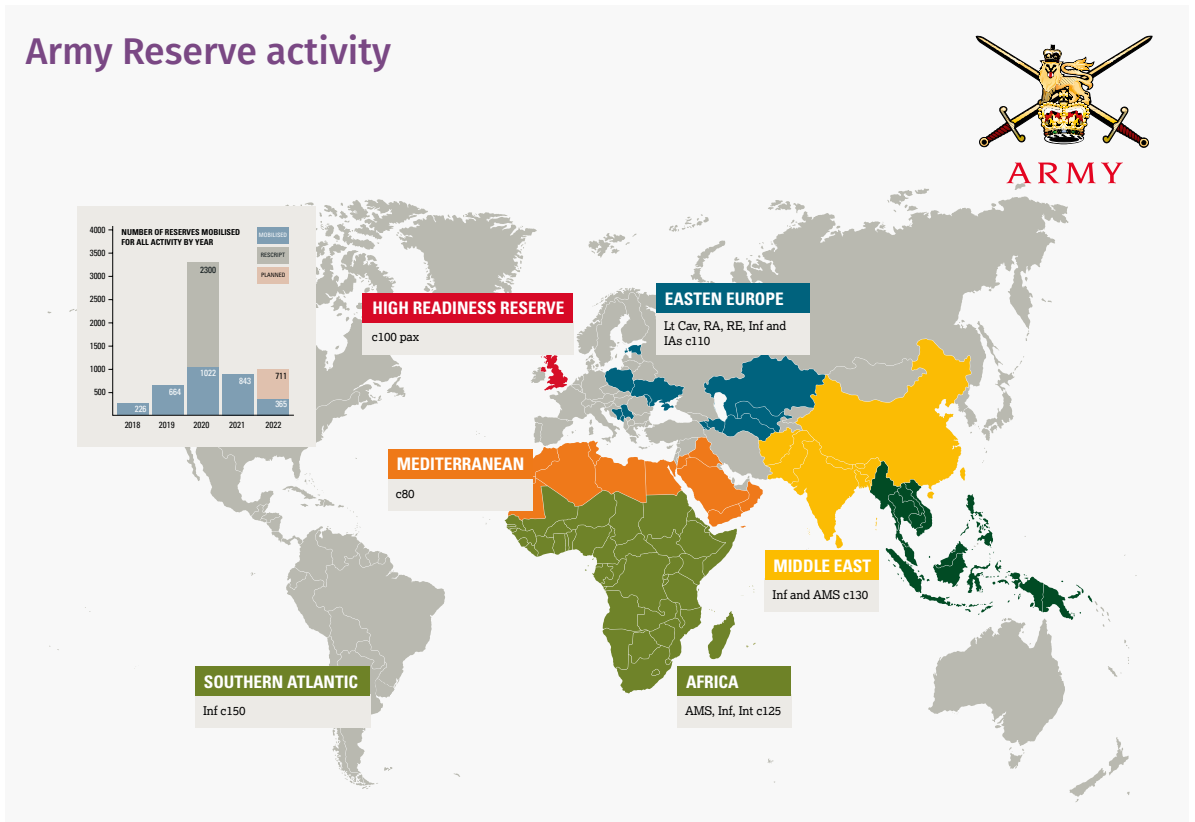
- r Figure revised since last publication
- ~ 5 or fewer
- Zero
- .. Data not available
- || Discontinuity marker

RESERVIST MOBILISATION AND DEPLOYMENTS

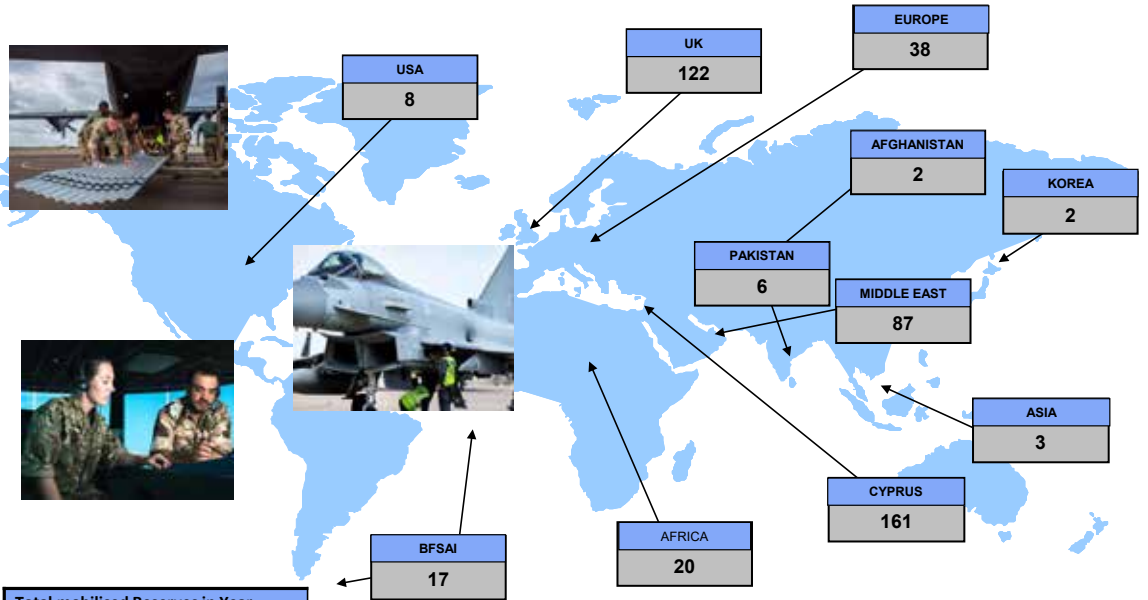
Maritime Reserve activity



Army Reserve activity



RAF Reserve activity



Total mobilised Reserves in Year	
Year	Reserves
2018-19	312
2019-20	365
2020-21	588
2021-22	466



EXTERNAL SCRUTINY 2022 REPORT – MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- 22.1** That reserve recruiting has a consistent and transparent marketing spend, and staff focus.
- 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.
- 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.
- 22.4** That a decentralised system is practised and embedded into the mobilisation process.
- 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.

EXTERNAL SCRUTINY TEAM – MEMBERSHIP

Chairman:

Major General (Retd) S F N Lalor CB TD

Members:

Rear Admiral (Retd) C J Hockley CBE DL

Brigadier (Retd) P R Mixer OStJ QVRM TD DL

Air Commodore (Retd) P E O'Neill CBE

Captain (Retd) I M Robinson OBE RD RNR

Colonel (Retd) G Straughan OBE TD

Professor G Sheffield MA FRHistS FRSA

Clerk:

Major General (Retd) J H Gordon CB CBE





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www.gov.uk/government/organisations/reserve-forces-and-cadets-associations