

**THE
UNITED KINGDOM
RESERVE FORCES**
EXTERNAL SCRUTINY TEAM
ANNUAL STATUTORY REPORT
2021

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Contents

Foreword	4
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2021 Report	
Introduction	7
Report Themes	7
Reserve Strength	8
Defence Reviews	8
Reserve Force 2030	10
Utility of the Reserve	11
Funding	13
Mobilisation	14
Use of the Reserve	15
Terms and Conditions of Service	16
Frictions	16
Estate	17
Reservist Health	20
Assessment	21
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Annexes	
A. Some Reflections on the History of Reserve Forces in the United Kingdom	25
B. External Reporting Provisions of the Defence Reform Act 2014	29
C. External Scrutiny Team Terms of Reference	30
D. Secretary of State for Defence Response to 2020 EST report	32
E. Previous Report Recommendations – 2013 to 2020	40
F. Defence Statistics – Reserve Manning Achievement & Trends	51
G. Reservist Mobilisation and Deployments	58
H. 2021 Report Main Recommendations	60
I. Summary of Priorities for 2021/22 Work	61
J. External Scrutiny Team – Membership	63

FOREWORD

1. Last year's report was delayed by three months because of the pandemic, which has made this year's reporting period shorter and more problematic with the ongoing limitations on conducting visits, particularly as there has been limited routine physical training by reservists. But I would like to record our appreciation of the MOD and the three Services who did everything they could do to host us virtually and physically in the latter months, and provide us with all the necessary reports and evidence to complete a report in this extraordinary time.
2. This year our team has been joined by Air Commodore (Retd) Paul O'Neill, who is a great asset having concluded his regular service considering personnel strategy in the RAF. I also am delighted to welcome Professor Gary Sheffield to the team as our academic. He is well known to the military having taught at Sandhurst and on the Higher Command and Staff Courses and is well versed on matters that concern the Reserve having written widely on the two world wars. His thoughts from a historical perspective leading to the use of the Reserve in the future are included at Annex A.
3. We acknowledge that this year's review is more limited than a normal year with a reduced number of recommendations. This was inevitable because of the reduced activity levels but it is certainly an important moment of time in the development of the Reserves and its contribution to Defence capability. The description of a Whole Force, describing the combination of regular and reservists in a single military entity, has been around for well over a decade but at times it has been questionable whether Defence was really committed to this end state. But the conclusion of the recent Integrated Review makes it very clear this is the only way forward not only because of the restraints on the affordability of the regular component but also the acceptance there is much to be gained from greater use of the citizen servicemen & women and their broader, and sometimes unique, specialist skills gained from their civilian qualifications and employment.
4. As we said in last year's report we welcomed the Chief of Defence Staff's instigation of the Reserve Forces 2030 Review (RF30) and the early indications of its ambition. Lord Lancaster's review published in March this year has not disappointed in its breadth and ambition. Its conclusions and recommendations are laudable that if implemented will lead towards a truly integrated and effective Whole Force. It is not a funded programme like the Future Reserve 2020 (FR20) and we would surmise significant investment will need to be made to achieve the intended outcome. But an implementation team has been set up to take forward its recommendations. We look forward to engaging with them and commenting on the progress that is being made.
5. It is 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 Reserve and maximises the benefits the reservists, their employers and wider society can bring.

S F N Lalor
Major General (Retired)
June 2021

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 B).¹ Terms of Reference for the EST is at Annex C. This will be the seventh report under these statutory arrangements.
2. We submitted our last report through the SofS for Defence on 8 October 2020. It was placed in the Library of the House on 11 February 2021. On 30 June we received his response to our report, updating us on progress and commenting on our recommendations (see Annex D).
3. **Methodology.** This year's report covers a much shorter period than normal because of the late delivery of the 2020 Report due to the pandemic and our wish to get back to the usual timing of delivering the report to the SofS as required by the Reserve Forces Act 1996. We had useful visits to the deputy Service Chiefs,² Vice Chief of Defence (VCDS), Chief Defence People (CDP) and Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (Reserve and Cadets) (ACDS (R&C)) and visited Headquarters and Establishments with Reserve responsibilities, as well as a cross-section of units around the country to understand the situation 'on the ground'. Many were conducted by video conference due to COVID restrictions and suffered from technical glitches, but we were pleased that we were able to get on to the ground in the latter part of the reporting period and meet 'in the flesh'. Understandably, we still were limited by not being able to visit reservists conducting training or on exercise, such as Exercise JOINT WARRIOR.
4. This report is dominated by two themes. Firstly, the effective use of the Reserve on Operation RESCRIPT and other operations in support of the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, it is shaped by the publication of the Integrated Review (IR) and Reserve Forces 2030 Review (RF30). These documents set a welcome ambition for the Reserve, and describe opportunities for building further on the utility of the Reserve, but have not yet been turned into specific policy. This report will report on how the Reserve's potential, as described in the IR and RF30, might be turned into reality.

REPORT THEMES

5. Our mandate is to report on the state and capabilities of the Reserve Forces. Last year we noted that, although the strength of the Reserve had much improved, a number of institutional impediments to reserve service remained without change. And, without these impediments being removed, the full value of an integrated Whole Force will not be achieved. It is not altogether surprising that our report picks up on the same themes, or impediments, each year – funding, Terms and Conditions of Service (TACOS), integration, mobilisation as examples – as our mandate remains the same and we focus on the issues that impact significantly on reserve force capability. As before, all previous recommendations are listed at Annex E.

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

2. Second Sea Lord, Deputy Chief of the General Staff and Deputy Commander Capability.

6. We also indicated that the IR and the RF30 would result in significant change and opportunities for Defence and the place of the Reserve to meet the challenges of the future. Those facing the UK in 2020 have proved the value of a trained and committed Reserve. Under Operation RESCRIPT, reservists from all three Services have been deployed in support of the national COVID-19 pandemic response. It also demonstrated again that the reservist volunteer would come forward when required and Defence can be confident this will be the case in the future. The value in such a surge capacity has renewed focus on having such a Reserve, and not only in Defence. In this year's report, as well as our usual commentary, we highlight the conclusions and recommendation of the Defence Command Paper and the RF30 and examine where further work is required to increase the utility and use of the Reserve in order that the outputs, talents and synergies of the Whole Force³ can be maximised.
7. However, as before, we start with a commentary on workforce strength, because the capability of a force starts with people and units manned to their established strength.

Reserve Strength

8. The detail of the manning statistics is at Annex F.⁴ The targets for trained strength in the three Services remain: Royal Navy (RN) – 3,100; Army – 30,100; Royal Air Force (RAF) – 1,860; totalling 35,060. Although, the overall strength of the Reserve increased by 400 to 37,410 personnel (RN – +200; Army – +100; and RAF – +100), there was a reduction to overall trained strength by -220 to 32,700. The reductions were in the RN (-10) and Army (-360), but the RAF impressively continued to grow their trained strength by +150.
9. The main effort of the Army's Home Command has been on recruiting, particularly for the regular Army, as it had become undermanned. Although this has been a success for the regulars – the recruiting targets have been met in the last two years – it has not been reflected for the Army Reserve where only 78% and 75% of the Reserve recruiting target was met in the last two years. **In a Whole Force, it is disappointing to observe it does not seem possible to maintain a consistent focus on reserve recruiting as well.** Regulars also were given preference over that of reservists for spaces at basic training, which were reduced overall because of the limitations imposed by COVID-19. Furthermore, some Phase 2 courses (initial specialist training) were increased from two weeks to three weeks. **All of this impacted negatively in getting reservists who wish to join through basic training.**
10. We learnt that the main effort of Home Command has been shifted to the 'Lived Experience', perhaps not surprising as regular recruiting targets have been met and the strength of the regular Army is set to reduce from 82,000 to 75,500 by 2025. However, **we would recommend 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.** Without this, we assess that reserve manning will get out of balance and therefore need another Operation FORTIFY⁵ with an unnecessary additional cost to recover the situation.
11. Given the smaller trained strength targets and increase in untrained strength, recruiting for the RN and RAF should be less of a problem or challenge.

Defence Reviews

12. We fully support the themes in the Defence Command Paper that *"...the reserve forces will be given new, more clearly defined roles..."* in order that they provide

3. Defence Command Paper 2021, paragraph 6.6.

4. 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.

5. The Army's operation to address Reserve manning during the FR20 programme.

greater capacity and “... an alternative source of diverse talent to conduct operations at home and abroad.” More importantly, we endorse the desire to create “... an efficient and fluid spectrum of military service...” so that the reservist can have a range of commitment options.⁶ We also continue to endorse the need to improve the way that reservists are recruited and employed in order to tap into those skills that reside in the civilian and private sector, but are ones that regular forces find difficult to grow and retain. If realised, this should enable “... a more productive integration of the Reserves.”⁷

13. As in previous reports, we have been encouraged by our conversations with senior leaders of the three Services. We were told that their Reserve has become more integrated and integral to delivering the required operational output. The Army and RAF are going further to integrate, understand and utilise the strengths of the Reserve. The RN's intent is less clear to us. We were told that the requirement should be driven by the Service need but we are concerned that could lead to the feeling of the Reserve being considered purely as a commodity, overlooking the imperative to provide a military environment and community which will both attract and retain individuals with the required skills.
 - a. **Royal Navy.** The RN recognise that in order to maximise synergies of the Whole Force, the Maritime Reserve will be given new, more clearly defined roles. It will continue to focus on auxiliary roles such as those undertaken by the Submarine Warfare, Information Warfare, Engineering and Air Branches and full-time mobilised roles at sea with Offshore Patrol Vessels and 3 Commando Group. **There is the potential for a RN Reserve role in the Type 31 Frigate.** The recently approved Maritime Reserve Directive is to be revised, as part of the wider Navy Command Transformation, and how that describes the ultimate implementation intent, and the RN's interpretation of the Whole Force concept and the part played by its Reserve, will be critical.
 - b. **Army.** The Army continue to stress the importance of the Reserve and, while it will be integrated fully into the regular structures with a warfighting role, the intention is that it also will **lead on the protection of the homeland and delivering the Army's contribution to national resilience.** We look forward to seeing the Army's evolving structure with all reserve units having clearly defined roles and clear purpose.
 - c. **Royal Air Force.** The RAF has ambitious plans for its Reserve, developing as a component of its transformation programme Astra for the Next Generation Air Force of 2040. In this, having exceeded its FR20 trained strength targets, it **is planning to grow the size of the Part-Time Volunteer Reserve to 5,000 over the next 10 years. There is also an ambition to ensure that 10-20% of RAF deployments** will comprise reservists, forward deployed and/or in UK-based operational support. The RAF Reserve value their significant contribution to routine outputs and the opportunity to work alongside their regular colleagues within the UK and overseas. The RAF look to improve career management processes and identify paths for volunteer reservists to earn promotion to both Warrant Officer and Air Vice Marshal.
14. For this ambition to be realised, we would reinforce our recommendation of last year **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**

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid and paragraph 7.34.

and capability development. It is not that the capabilities of regulars are doubted, but the detailed knowledge of mobilisations and the interaction with reservists, their families and employers is a specialist subject with nuances, advantages and limitations which are not so readily apparent to regulars who have had little previous experience of working with their reserve counterparts. It has been suggested it is not possible to have part time reservists working in dynamic operationally focused functions but we do not accept this as with modern IT and communications, reservists can always be available and able to make an input.

Reserve Force 2030

15. Last year we welcomed the intent of RF30 and the early indications of its ambition; it must be considered as an opportunity to make real progress in the development and utility of the reserve element of the Whole Force. Perhaps in an ideal world a review would not be required as this progress might have been made by Defence and the three Services through routine development and staff work, but it is appreciated there are always competing priorities. **Thus we understand why the Chief of Defence Staff instigated this review so progress did not cease after the completion of FR20. The challenge now will be translating the good work of this review into real change up to 2030 through determined action and commitment.**
16. We also support any initiative that will assist in unblocking the barriers or impediments, highlighted in paragraph 5 above, as a means to unlock the potential of the Reserve, particularly as many support and reinforce what we have been reporting on since 2013. RF30⁸ provides a positive vision for the future of the Reserve that moves beyond FR20 and *"... is designed to inform programmes that are likely to influence the development of the reserves and to initiate new projects where there are gaps."* Although, it is not costed and remains unfunded and therefore at the moment represents policy guidance rather than a programme, an implementation team has been formed within CDP's organisation to develop the ideas that will then require approval and resourcing.
17. RF30 describes a conceptual model of three types of Reserve:
 - a. **The Reinforcement Reserve** – reservists that routinely support defence output and activity, more akin to auxiliaries.
 - b. **The Operational Reserve** – reservists who regularly are trained and exercise for contingency tasks – a reserve in the true sense of the word.
 - c. **The Strategic Reserve** – ex-regular and ex-reservists who retain a reserve commitment that can be called up to generate surge capacity in extreme cases of national threat. It was known formerly as the Regular Reserve and as we commented last year, in the past members were called up for a day to register and those that wished to, then could conduct training with Reserve units, but this has not been exercised in recent times.
18. Of the 21 recommendations in RF30, we would highlight the requirement for a budgetary strategy that makes it easier to use the Reserve (B.4) and all the recommendations that would help unlock the potential of the reservists – simplified commitments (C1), a spectrum of service (C2), an agile workforce function (C3) and further develop reserve recruiting (C4). We comment on these more fully below. We believe there is an opportunity for the implementation team to make some quick progress and wins by removing barriers to the use of the Reserve, which will be appreciated by the Services and thus have their support as the review progresses.

19. We believe that a key role for the EST is to report on the implementation of RF30 and its impact on the capabilities of the Reserve and how it remains consistent with other broader Government and Defence ambition for the Reserve, reflecting the potential contribution of the Reserve as a whole, as well as the individual reservists. Doing so will require other parts of Defence to engage with the FR30 implementation team, notably the capability and finance areas, as well as the single Services.

Utility of the Reserve

20. The above Reviews all point to a greater use of the Reserve, particularly the Reinforcement Reserve, and therefore a need for a greater utility from this component. RF30 describes the 'offer' in terms of the Defence People Strategy model on the 'Lived Experience' under the headings of Environment, Motivators, Opportunities and Reward. We have said that in order to attract and retain the reservist, all Defence has to do is deliver on the 'offer', which we believe for the Reserve comprises: provision of interesting, challenging and worthwhile training; the opportunity to deploy on operations alongside regular colleagues; the opportunity to have 'fun'; and to feel valued by Defence.⁹ We believe that this still holds true and will do so in the future. When met, we have seen well recruited units with high morale. It does create camaraderie and a sense of belonging to a team that has purpose, and most importantly, reservists feel valued and that what they do is worthwhile. Conversely, measures that undermine this feeling of worth have a negative impact much greater than the actual monetary value of the measure itself.
21. In RF30, Brigadier The Rt Hon The Lord Lancaster says that his service life *"... has been part of a fairly consistent juggling act between the competing demands of a hectic professional career, private life and soldering."* This is true for all reservists and will always be the case. However, what would appear to be changing is the demand from the three Services for greater use of the Reserve. Greater frequency and overall number of deployments imply that the Reserve will need to be held at a higher readiness than before. Rather than relying on part-time volunteer service, **an increased Minimum Commitment through service on a contractual basis, for example using the Additional Duties Commitment (ADC) (a binding 'contract' for up to 180 days service in any one year) may have to made.** This increased force preparedness will also, as the Army has recognised, require a greater level of training with and alongside regulars, all of which will require a commensurate level of funding. The RN and RAF already use elements of their Reserve as auxiliaries in this way to good effect in reinforcing the regulars, albeit with smaller numbers. From our visit to the RN, it would appear that there is strong ambition from senior commanders to broaden the pool of such auxiliary functions using reservists on varying contractual terms to be used as required and to give assurance of availability.
22. Under this model, the key question is whether it is possible to recruit and train the greater numbers envisaged in future in what RF30 terms the Reinforcement element of the Reserve. However, working patterns and expectations are changing and peoples may be prepared to accept, even prefer, a more fluid approach to jobs and careers, being able to dip into one and then another. Members of the Reinforcement Reserve may be part-time workers of their MOD and civilian employers to different degrees – working and being employed at different times by either. This is highlighted in the RF30 Report where three different scenarios are postulated of how a maritime reservist might view the workplace.¹⁰ This approach would fit in with the increasing trend to a portfolio approach to the workplace in future generations. We acknowledge that there may be a different emphasis

9. EST Report 2018.

10. RF30, page 40.

on the means of delivery of the constituent parts of the 'offer', **but more will be expected of reservists and not necessarily at their choice of timing.** We would make the point that no one knows what the employment market will bear in the provision of a larger number of reservists routinely and consistently committing to a large number of days of military service per annum, and any such commitment should be trialled and tested over a number of years before any judgement is made. Conceptually, we believe it is possible as the target working population is large with a myriad of different types of employment and vocations. But, the need for the reservist to feel that what they do is of value and valued remains paramount. We note that a **greater percentage of regulars have a positive opinion of the value and professionalism (high 70s) of the Reserve in 2021 than in 2020,** but, however, the proportion of personnel rating the Reserve as well-integrated remains at only 68%.¹¹

23. All three Services undertook in-year savings measures this year that impacted upon the Reserve. Each found it necessary to reduce the Reserve pay budget. The Army and RAF both retained sufficient to enable reservists to achieve their annual certificates of efficiency. The RN chose to stand their reservists down for almost three months. **We believe the RN's arbitrary cutting of Reserve Service Days (RSDs), breaches the implicit contract that the service has with its reservists, and undermines the personal sense of worth and being valued;** we heard that it now was acknowledged as a mistake. Rather like similar cuts by the Army in 2009, there appeared to be little understanding on the impact on their reservists' remuneration expectations and thus their value to their Service. In this particular case, we learned it also impacted on operational output as reservists, working as auxiliaries, particularly in the Engineering and Air Branches were not able to turn up for work. The team understands that the RN was later able to re-direct some funds to enable new-entry training to continue and to reinstate some operational roles, but in our visits we did find that there was a strong residual sense that individual sailors were no longer truly valued. All three Services have used RSDs as an in-year financial regulator in this way in the past. If used again, and we do not advise or support this, we assess the impact would fall proportionately harder on the Operational Reserve or part-time volunteer reserve, as members of the Reinforcement Reserve may well be contracted.
24. We assess that all the changes required can be delivered and is within the gift of the Services and MOD to deliver, but it **will require detailed and long-term planning and proper agreed costing. We would caution against moving too fast as the reservist of today may be different to those required of tomorrow.** As we have reported, a reservist can simply leave if the offer is not met, or the balance between the demands of the civilian employment, domestic life and reserve service are out of kilter and impossible to manage. Since it takes time to recruit and train a reservist to the required standard, the inflow and numbers need to be secured before the outflow begins of those who do not wish for this style of career or the new demands of reserve service. However, we note lateral inflow and making use of specific civilian skills will mitigate this issue.
25. The attitude and support of employers will be key to this development. They have been and continue to be very supportive. The number of companies signing up to **the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) continues to grow at an average of 25 signings per week, despite the difficulties imposed by COVID-19 lockdown, and now total 6,978** as at the end of May 2021. This number would have been greater but for the COVID-19 pandemic causing a number of businesses to fail. There are also over 100 applications for consideration of the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Award, which currently stand at 354. Employer engagement and support might never be more important.

¹¹. Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2021.

Funding

26. Clausewitz identified the nature of friction and the impact on operations where in principle everything in war is simple, but the simplest thing is difficult to carry out. The task for commanders is to identify and eradicate possible sources of friction in order to maintain simplicity. We have consistently commented on one constant source of friction, which has bedevilled how the Reserve is used – funding: how much does the Reserve cost and how should it be funded, particularly when it is used on contingency operations. It is a harsh reality that the Defence annual budget is always under pressure and each Service struggles to maintain the expected annual cash expenditure and, thus, unplanned additional expenditure with greater use of the Reserve is an unwelcome event for the accountants. But under the Whole Force concept, it is axiomatic that the Reserve will be used, indeed has to be used. **To remove this friction, we have recommended since 2014 that the MOD should consider establishing a contingency fund to be available for short notice operations. This was a recommendation of the FR20 Commission.**
27. Rightly in our view, the MOD directed that the Reserve should be part of its contribution to support Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the funding friction remained and served to distract and occupy staff time when it might have been better employed elsewhere. The MOD only claimed 'marginal costs' from Partners Across Government (PAG), which meant that the Services had to meet the full costs from their in-year budgets. We noted that the RN and RAF fund its Reserve from their overall manpower budget. This has worked well under routine conditions, but proved challenging particularly with the greater demand for Operation RESCRIPT. The Army holds a budget for RSDs and mobilisation. The same debate then arose over the merits of using the Reserve, with unbudgeted in-year costs, as against the already sunk cost of the regulars. This was exacerbated as the increased demand and use of the Reserve coincided with a difficult financial year and the need for in-year savings measures. Hence the decision was taken to demobilise reservists in 2020 once the first wave of the pandemic had abated with a consequent reduced demand signal for military support.
28. In January 2021, it was agreed that costs associated with Operation RESCRIPT could be recovered from PAGs. **If this had not happened, we question whether there would have been the same willingness to use the Reserve as the Services were in the throes of finalising in-year saving measures and their end of year spend.** It also was agreed that reservists could be deployed on RSDs for up to 28 days with Ministerial approval. This initiative raised separate issues, which are discussed in greater detail below.
29. In summary, as at May 2020, it was estimated that cost of mobilised reservists was £72m, but this came with a possible unknown variance of +/- 20%. More up-to-date figures were not available at the time of writing. If it is accepted that the Reserve will take part in homeland resilience operations as indicated in the IR and RF30, then we repeat our **recommendation from 2020 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.**
30. We are pleased to note the RF30 recommendation supporting this critical requirement – *"a budgetary strategy that makes it easier for workforce planners to dynamically flex funding between workforce types and enables more reservists to be mobilised each year."*¹²

12. RF30 Report, page 11, recommendation B.4.

Mobilisation

31. We commented in detail on the mobilisation process in last year's report and made a number of recommendations. It is clear from our visits to Service Headquarters (HQ) that these have been recognised. One **recommendation that we would continue to emphasise is that embedded part-time reservist posts are built into key HQs** – Security Policy and Operations (SPO) in the MOD, the Land Operations Centre (LOC) and Standing Joint Headquarters (SJC) – in a similar fashion to that which we have recommended in paragraph 14 above. While reservists might not have as a broad view of all military disciplines as their regular counterparts, what they do have is broad knowledge of the reservist and what can or cannot be achieved if they are to be mobilised, as well as to advise how best to manage the interface between Defence, reservists and employers. It was this ingredient that was missing in the early days of Operation RESCRIPT which led to misunderstandings or myths about the Reserve capabilities, and is avoidable in the future.
32. In principle, the process for mobilising reservists for contingent tasks is simple – MOD receives the demand and develops an activation order, the Services trawl for volunteers in what they call Force Sense (FSen) to see if there are suitably qualified reservists that can be used. Services then produce a Force Generation order (FGen) and the reservists deploy. We acknowledge that using reservists does bring a degree of added complication to this process. We observed two Observe, Orient, Decide and Act (OODA) loops running. That of the SPO and SJC as they respond to the demand signal of a crisis, often fast moving and subject to change. And that between the SPO and Service HQs as they FSen what reservists might be available, wished to be available and in what time frame. Before committing, the reservists need to consult with their employer and family. In visits to units, we saw that Commanding Officers, through the use of social media groups and QR codes on DefNet, can communicate and get a response very quickly. Nevertheless, it is a fact that once Service HQs have firmed up numbers and started the process of either mobilisation or calling forward reservists on RSDs, the situation (or demand signal) may change. During Operation RESCRIPT, this led to reservists being mobilised, but not tasked, mobilisations being revoked or reservists being stood down early from a task, often at very short notice. We heard of examples of this happening on a Friday afternoon prior to deployment on the following Monday.
33. It has been common practice for the Services to use RSDs to deliver operational output for up to 14 days. RSDs have also been used as a means of deploying reservists on homeland resilience tasks – response to flooding being an example. Experience on Operation RESCRIPT has indicated a trend that this mechanism will be increasingly used in the future and reservists now can be deployed for up to 28 days with Ministerial approval. It is acknowledged that this is a cost effective and flexible option for operational planners and commanders, particularly if costs are met by PAGs. However, it does raise a number of questions.
 - a. **Employer Support.** As part of their Employer Notification process, reservists are expected to have a discussion with their employer over what their 'training year' might look like – annual camp of 14 days, courses etc. In the future, as indicated in paragraph 17 above, this may include weekday training in order to train alongside regular colleagues or paired units. A reservist also has to complete a mandated number of training days and tasks to qualify for their 'Certificate of Efficiency' and

earn the training bonus. Employers increasingly generously give reservists an additional 14 days paid holiday so that attending annual camp does not use up their annual holiday allowance. Greater and additional use of RSDs for Military Aid to Civil Authorities (MACA) tasks then may compromise training standards if training results in employees having to use their holiday time and employers are unwilling to release their employees later in a year. **We also would like to see greater analysis of the civilian status of reservists and whether they are students, casual labour, self-employed or employees as this must have a bearing on their availability, particularly at short notice.**

- b. **Employee Protections.** Reservists deploying on operations on RSDs do not have the same employee protections, nor does the employer get recompensed to find a short-term replacement as for those being mobilised. In terms of medical support, a reservist injured while training on RSDs will receive a disablement allowance commensurate with their Service rank. A mobilised service person is likely to be kept mobilised until fit. We have advocated that an additional, separate and different mobilisation package was developed for reservists deploying on shorter, less kinetic Defence Activity other than Operations (DAOTO). UK homeland resilience operations also fit into this category. This did not have the support of the three Services, but we heard that there is greater support for 'an enhanced' RSD to resolve these anomalies. **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.**

Use of the Reserve

34. In paragraph 13 above, we indicated how the three Services view the integration of the Reserve in the Whole Force. The Services use their Reserve differently. In general terms, the Army Reserve is largely (not exclusively) focused on contingent capability, while the RN and RAF use more of their reservists as reinforcements to routine outputs using RSDs, ADC or Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) commitments. Despite the numbers deployed on Operation RESCRIPT, there still are opportunities for reservists from all three Services to deploy on overseas operations as the Annex G demonstrates. Of particular note, 6 Rifles took over from 7 Rifles on Operation TOSCA in Cyprus¹³ and the Royal Yeomanry have performed strongly on Operation CABRIT¹⁴.
35. Reservists continue to come forward when asked to take part in Operation RESCRIPT. They want to serve and be used, particularly on homeland resilience operations that impact on their region or locality. **Units and their people want to be seen taking part in operations in their locality**, as much as their community and employers want them to be used. Employers that generously give reservists additional paid holidays to facilitate training then can see the worth of what they have done. We have come across examples of where regular units are drafted into a region to carry out resilience tasks, while local Reserve units effectively stood by and watched. We highlight three examples:
 - a. In South Wales, the ambulance service requested military drivers to support their operations. The local Reserve regiment was ready and capable of immediately providing this support, but stood by and watched another regiment from England deploy into the area, conduct additional driver training and carry out the task.
 - b. In the South West, regular units set up regional testing sites, provided mobile testing units and provide support to the NHS while the local Reserve unit, despite being located very closely, was not used.

13. Op TOSCA is a six month UN operation in Cyprus, normally undertaken by regular units.

14. UK's operation in support of NATO in Poland and the Baltic states.

- c. On a smaller scale, a logistic support/caterer staff officer was requested by the civilian agencies for support to the G7 conference. A reservist was found with all the right skills and, furthermore, was known to and had worked and exercised with all the relevant agencies. But because his 15-day deployment on RSDs attracted an additional cost, a regular was selected.

While, we recognise that the deployment and operational use of units is the Services' business, we comment here because of the wider impact that **such use has on recruiting and retention of reservists and their feeling of worth, and how it runs counter to the Whole Force initiatives articulated by the Services and in the IR and RF30.**

Terms and Conditions of Service

36. We have commented before on how reservists have been deployed on different TACOS, but on the same task, depending on the Service preference. As a result of the IR and RF30, we were briefed that the Army's Reserve Transformation work has examined the alignment of its vision of an increased role for the Reserve to what is required to deliver it. This includes policy reform to remove barriers, the need for the necessary funding, changes to TACOS and types of commitment. RF30 highlights the eight different varieties of commitment from Part Time Volunteer Reserve service to Full Time Reserve Service.¹⁵ In essence these commitments fit into four categories: part-time volunteer service; part-time contracted service; full-time limited service (constraints on deployment) and full-time full service (or unlimited, no constraints on deployment). Increased use and reliance of the Reserve to support regular forces, whether as part of the Reinforcement, Operational or Strategic Reserve is likely to exacerbate this difference and increase the anomalies between the Service on how they use their Reserve. **We recommend that RF30 takes forward, as a priority, 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.**

37. In taking this work forward, we note that while the conceptual clarity of the Reinforcement, Operational and Strategic Reserve is helpful, the language might lead to rigidity into how the three categories might be viewed as distinct elements. If so, this could constrain how TACOS and overall utility are developed given that, in practice, a reservist may contribute to more than one output. For example, those in the Reinforcement Reserve might be used as an Operational Reserve in homeland resilience operations; where do the reservists of units that deploy on operations such as Operation TOSCA sit – Reinforcement or Operational Reserve; an ex-regular with a reserve liability (Strategic Reserve) might also be a volunteer used routinely for their civilian or former military skills (Reinforcement Reserve). Creating discrete Reserve entities could erode the framework's value by confusing roles and the technical arrangements under which individuals are to be employed.

Frictions

38. Each year we do see how the Services take steps to remove barriers that inhibit Reserve service, particularly over the conduct and delivery of training courses. Nevertheless, we continue to come across instances of such barriers that range from the lack of recognition of civilian qualifications to new processes being implemented as seen through the regular prism, but with little or no recognition of the reservist. The former prove to be particularly irksome as much effort is made by Defence to have military qualifications recognised by the civilian sector.

15. RF30 Report, page 58.

39. Although we highlight three examples from the Army and RAF, there will be many others in these two Services, and also the RN.
- a. We came across a Lance Corporal who in his civilian job was a teacher and held a Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) and was teaching 16 year-olds. However, before being able to instruct military personnel he had to complete a five-day Defence Instructors Techniques course. This is the first in a series of three that allows military personnel to gain the equivalent of a PGCE. Furthermore, despite holding a PGCE, as only Corporals can instruct, he was unable to do so.
 - b. The RAF has introduced a new Human Resources Operating Model (HROM) for its personnel that sees HR staff being removed from their RAuxAF squadrons and HR issues being managed from regional hubs and on-line through an HR portal. This change was developed through the eye of the regular prism, and without due consideration to the unique needs of reservists of all cohorts. The HR Portal App did not incorporate any Reserves-specific HR processes such as Certificate of Efficiency and Annual Training Bounty payment, Attendance Based Pay and mobilisation. Provision of HR support at weekends and the requirement for a MoDNet account to access the HR portal, which not all reservists have, were also not considered. Although, this is being put right, a fully integrated Whole Force approach would have seen the Reserve requirements built in from the start, or, as we emphasised above, the integration of reservists into the various staff structures may have prevented this occurring.
 - c. A Corporal was required to complete the Army Mariner Class 1 Course before he could 'command' a Combat Support boat and/or mexifloat, when a brief familiarisation might have been more appropriate. In his civilian job as a Merchant Naval second officer (the navigator), he holds: an Officer of the Watch (OOW) unlimited certificate, a qualifying degree in Marine Operation, oil and gas industry and Civil Aviation Authority qualifications. He is serving aboard specialised ships providing statutory emergency response capability and logistics, including offshore transfer of semi-standardised cargo and bulk liquids, and ground support to helicopter operations at North Sea gas installations. His responsibilities include navigational planning, documentation, communications, aspects of safety and loading, training of officer cadets and leading on deck as necessary, and so on.
40. In a similar vein, while it is understandable the overall availability of military courses is constrained for both regulars and reservists, in these circumstances it impacts more acutely on the reservist who is limited by time and availability. We recommend 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. There is also scope to take the lessons from greater use of distributed learning during the COVID-19 pandemic to support Reserve training and education.

Estate

41. 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 years old. The vast majority of the VE is Army and faces the same challenges of the regular estate – high maintenance and modernisation cost and unfunded life-cycle replacement liabilities.

42. We had been advocating a review of the VE and we are pleased to report that the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association Estate Review report was delivered to SofS at the end of January 2021 as planned. The purpose of the Review was to deliver a common understanding of the Estate; identify opportunities to rationalise and optimise in order to unlock long term value; and offer challenge to go further in this rationalisation and optimisation. All aimed at optimising and modernising the VE so that it becomes more of an asset than a liability.
43. While in previous reports we have said that the VE is in decline because funding has been primarily on reactive (fix-on-fail) maintenance expenditure, the Review noted that it was in fair or good condition of repair – perhaps relative when compared to the Regular Estate – although it is presentationally poor and in places unfit to support the training needs of the Reserve. Not counting the funding from the Services earmarked for a particular new project, or upgrades to current buildings or sites, in Financial Year (FY) 21/22 the VE has been funded for little more than reactive maintenance and carrying out statutory and mandatory inspections and tests. The VE has a backlog of £381m of unfunded RDEL and CDEL maintenance and sustainment tasks, yet in FY21/22 it has received only £0.824m of RDEL for sustainment, and **no CDEL, having had its entire £3m of CDEL sustainment funding taken as a savings measure**. This only can exacerbate the problems caused by lack of investment.
44. Since April 2018, funding for infrastructure has been delegated to the single Services. This brought about a much more capability-based approach to the estate and a prioritisation of funding towards the sustainment of the estate, rather than just a focus predominantly on reactive maintenance spend. The same cannot be said of the VE as maintenance and sustainment funding for it remains a Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) responsibility, consequently, there remains a disconnect between the users of the estate, who bear the safety and capability risks associated with it, and the funders of it. The focus on arresting the long-standing and so called, 'managed decline' of the Regular Estate by its users and funders, the Services, is not being replicated on the VE, which continues to degrade in condition.
45. The Review provides reason for hope and we fully support its aim to identify opportunities to optimise and rationalise – as we have said before, the VE is too large and underutilised; there still are sites earmarked for disposal from the FR20 programme (Project NEWBURY) that sit empty consuming valuable estate funding. We welcome the assurance that the Review was not a disposal exercise, nor one with targets for disposal in order to generate receipts, and we agree with the proposal that all receipts should be reinvested back into the VE.
46. However, even if these opportunities are seized, there will remain a significant number of assets requiring significant sustainment expenditure if they are to continue to be able to provide the Services with safe and environmentally sustainable capabilities, fit for the 21st century and demonstrative of commitment to the Whole Force ethos from an estate's perspective.
47. **We also welcome the Review's challenge to go further, but would urge caution in implementation.** A consistent theme from our visits was that the Reserve does not always receive the prominence they deserve for societal engagement. As the regular Defence estate reduces, in many areas especially in the devolved administrations, the Reserve (and Cadets) are the only representatives of Defence. This is not always recognised by the devolved

administrations or valued as a Defence output and the potential value of the Reserve element perhaps is not harnessed as effectively as it might be.

48. The need for a regional footprint, proximity to population centres and manageable travel time from work/home locations to aid recruiting, can be at odds with the purist approach to an efficient estate – one which is maximised for the overall number of units and reservists. It requires the input of commanders, not just the managers of the estate. Previous reviews, having been equally bold in design, but have never quite delivered the vision because of the many competing factors that influence the laydown of the VE. To this end, upfront funding is required with a recognition that the investment required to facilitate change can prove more to be more costly than at first anticipated, while receipts might not be so great.
49. On our visits, we were much impressed by what the RN has done to both HMS KING ALFRED in Portsmouth and HMS CAMBRIA in Cardiff, which are a testament, as we have noted before, to the RN's approach and use of FR20 funding to improve their Reserve estate and make it fit for purpose.
50. The situation with the Army is less positive. We have reported before on the impact of the delay, or a 'pause' on implementing FR20 projects as a result of in-year saving measures. In effect, while an in-year financial target might be met, the overall cost of a project is increased. These continue. As examples:
 - a. The project to locate 154 Transport Regiment RLC in one reserve centre in Dunfermline was ready to be tendered in February 2020, but it was paused in March 2020 as an imposed in-year saving measure. Anticipating that this delay would result in increased costs, a bid for additional funding was agreed for February 2021. Even so, it is not anticipated that the main business case will be approved until October 2021. Currently, professional fees to re-start the project have added £90K, but there will be other increases due to rises in costs of construction materials and labour since the work was originally tendered in 2018/19. To compound the problem, as the original allocation of money for the project was based on calculations dating back to 2010, only two thirds of what is required to complete the re-build of the ARC on one site is currently funded. Until the final stage is funded, the unit will need to occupy the adjacent Bothwell House site, further delaying any disposal receipts for that site.
 - b. A new build at Horfield Army Reserve Centre (ARC) in Bristol should have been completed in FY 20/21 for 7 Military Intelligence Battalion. Due to the paused funding, the tender process is only just being awarded (June 2021); it will be a stretch to complete the work in FY 21/22 (the original Project NEWBURY completion date was FY17/18). The planning approval will expire in May 2022; any further delay will result in additional work being placed on a stretched estate management team to renew the approval, and extra cost.
 - c. Similarly, a new build of essential technical accommodation at Keynsham ARC in North Somerset, due for construction in FY21/22 for 101 Battalion REME, may only be completed in FY22/23 (once again, the original Project NEWBURY completion date was FY17/18). In this case, the lack of a funding stream has also delayed the completion of design consultancy work, and there is a risk that planning approval may expire before work can start. Any further slippage may see these projects completed nearly 10 years after FR20 was announced.

In all of the examples, an additional factor, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, is that contractors are reporting a shortage of staff and rising costs and long delivery times for steel and timber. Any further delay might require tenders to be revisited to account for increased costs.

RESERVIST HEALTH

51. We have commented the challenges facing units to keep track of reservist medical fitness because, while Occupational Health is delivered by Defence Primary Health Care (DPHC) organisation, the NHS is responsible for primary and secondary healthcare. Furthermore, DPHC does not have access to NHS medical records of reservists.
52. There is time in routine and planned mobilisation and deployment of the Reserve to bring reservists up to the medical standards required, such as for those reservists deployed on Operations TOSCA, CABRIT and others. Operation RESCRIPT demonstrated that there are varying standards of medical administration between units – not all understand the responsibilities of the unit and individual – with some units very well prepared, others not so. Moreover, there is no requirement in policy for Reserve personnel to be kept in-date for UK vaccinations (e.g. a 10 yearly tetanus booster) as is the case for regular personnel. Consequently, the 'Theatre Entry Standard (TES)' medical standard set by the SJC meant that only 1961 reservists were immediately deployable, while 2689 required appointments for vaccinations – 43% for a tetanus booster and 39% for a MMR vaccination.
53. While there is a need for better administration and preparation, additional resources will be required to allow the latter, if the Reserve is to be called on more frequently and at short notice as envisaged. Project CORTISONE – the development of Defence medical information systems to improve connectivity will address this to some extent. As will the need to keep medical information up to date as a requirement to qualify for a Certificate of Efficiency and Training Bounty.
54. To address medical preparedness, we made some recommendations in last year's report – annual health declaration, periodic medicals linked to birthdays, vaccinating reservists on entry at the end of basic training when they are already 'captive' in a military establishment. RF30 recommended that processes are reviewed "...to improve reservists' medical and dental readiness for tasks."¹⁶ We would go further and observe that medical standards for reservists, particularly those in the Reinforcement Reserve, will need to be the same as for regulars with time, resources and access to medical facilities for vaccinations, appointments hearing tests etc.
55. In terms of delivering the medical services to the Reserve, DPHC report the following:

Occupational Health. *The period from April 2020–April 2021 saw a decrease in out of hours activity from 3,600 to 2,400 appointments, however this should be seen in the context of continued support to the employment of reserve personnel on MACA tasks. During the whole period access to DPHC facilities has been limited by COVID restrictions. The Reserve Occupational Health teams have demonstrated agility and tenacity in adapting the way they work to incorporate remote working as well as delivering necessary face to face clinics particularly to support force preparation both for UK MACA taskings and operational deployments to Ops CABRIT, TOSCA, SHADER, TRENTON and TORAL during this period. Reserve OH teams have delivered*

16. RF30 Report, page 12, recommendation D6.

in the region of 9,000 in hours appointments during the same period. The number of appointments delivered to Reserve personnel by DPHC as a whole is not currently available.

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. Current data do not provide numbers of Reserve personnel accessing this service, however forthcoming changes to record keeping will provide data on Reserve access.

Dental Inspections. DPHC Dental offers assessment and any necessary restorative work for reserve personnel nominated for mobilised service (from up to six months prior to mobilisation), or who is being held at high readiness (R5, 30 days' notice to move, or less). This offer is well received, when reservists are aware of the entitlement, but DPHC continues to see low numbers of reservists accessing this service.

Mental Health. DPHC continues to see modest demand for access to mental health care by members of the Reserve. Revision to Annex C of JSP950 Lft 2-7-2 outlines expanded entitlement to Defence mental health services, notably:

- a. Non-mobilised reservists who have deployed on operations from 1 Jan 82 onwards (this was previously 1 Apr 2003), regardless of whether any part of this service was as a regular member of the Armed Forces, where their mental health problem is thought to be related to operational deployment;
- b. Those serving in Limited Commitment (LC) or Home Commitment (HC) Full-time Reserve Service (FTRS) positions. For this group the presenting problem does not need to be related to operational deployment but should have an impact on their functioning in their current FTRS role.

ASSESSMENT

56. This year's review has highlighted a number of positives in the state of the Reserve and in particular, the clear requirement in the IR and the RF30 Reviews to deliver a Whole Force. The ambition of the MOD and Services, even though necessary to deliver defence outputs, is to be applauded. But, while RF30 remains unfunded, it only represents ambition and direction of travel, but not a programme in the sense of FR20 and there will need to be a clear and undiluted determination to deliver the intent over the years ahead. We welcome all the ideas to 'unlock the potential' of the Reserve, but caution that careful consideration and that reservists thinking and expertise is required and integrated into all Lines of Development in order to ensure success.

