

**STRATEGIC REVIEW OF THE UNITED KINGDOM'S RESERVE FORCES**  
**CORE SCRIPT/NEWSBRIEF (September 08)**

**Key Messages**

- Reserve Forces are, and will remain, an essential component of the United Kingdom's Armed Forces. They have played a vital part in maintaining the level of operational activity we have witnessed over the last five years and longer.
- In line with the MOD's vision for Reserve Forces as an increasingly integral part of Defence capability, a strategic review began work in April with the aim to ensure that we have Reserve Forces that meet Defence needs now and into the future.
- The review is fully supported by the heads of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. It is being conducted in an open and transparent manner, seeking opinions from across the Defence community and beyond.
- Stakeholder engagement and information gathering is underway, including presentations and workshops across the United Kingdom. Contributions are being positively encouraged from Reserve and Regular staff in a range of roles and at all levels.

**BACKGROUND**

Our Reserve Forces comprise both volunteer (primarily the Royal Navy Reserve, Royal Marines Reserve, Territorial Army, and Royal Auxiliary Air Force) and ex-regular reservists. While they continue to provide a strategic reserve for UK Defence, they have also increasingly demonstrated their utility on operations; indeed they have played a vital part in our ability to mount and sustain operations, in particular over the last 5 years. Since the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, more than 17,000 reservists have served on operations around the world. They make up around nine percent of British Forces in Afghanistan and four percent in Iraq. Within the UK they bring their military training to bear in contributing to the community when called upon in times of crisis and emergency.

Since before the 1998 Strategic Defence Review, MOD has been working towards a vision of the Reserve Forces as an increasingly integral part of Defence capability. We need to make sure that we are getting the best out of our Reservists; that their training and other opportunities are as good as they can be; and that Reserve Forces are structured, managed and equipped to deliver the capability that Defence needs.

A Review of the UK's Reserve Forces, led by Major General N J Cottam CB OBE, began in April and is due to report this Autumn. It represents an opportunity to look at the Reserves on their own merits and in their own right and enjoys wide support. The review has a broad remit. In particular it will look at:

- a. How best to refine the balance between the Regular and Reserve forces with a view to providing the required levels of capacity and readiness.
- b. Options for closer integration of Reserves and Regular units to gain greater utility of Reservists at all scales of operation.

- c. How to capitalize on reservists' civilian skills with the consent of the reservist and their civilian employer where appropriate.
- d. Which niche capabilities might be best filled by the Volunteer reserves, particularly in the light of current operations.
- e. The degree to which Reservists should be used in stabilization tasks – supporting one of the key implications for Defence arising from the National Security Strategy.
- f. Improvements to the Civil Contingency Reaction Force concept with a view to providing a flexible tool that ensures the optimum use of Reservists in times of crisis at home, without affecting their utility for primary overseas tasking.
- g. The continued validity of current Sponsored Reserve and Full Time Reserve Service models within the illustrative framework defined in Future Reserves.
- h. The degree to which reservists can be managed flexibly and outside niche capabilities, integrated with their Regular counterparts where possible – seeking to minimise duplication of overheads in infrastructure, training delivery and the chain of command.

The Review is not a cost cutting exercise although it is rightly considering value for money. It is being conducted in an open and transparent manner, consulting extensively.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

1. **Why do we need a strategic review?** Lessons and trends identified from our ongoing operations, as well as work carried out by the National Audit Office and the Ministry of Defence suggested that we could do more to optimise our Reserve Forces to meet the current and future needs of Defence. The strategic review will ensure we get our force balance right, whether between reservists and regulars, or between the roles for which Reserve Forces are structured, skilled, trained, available and equipped.
2. **Is this review simply a cost savings exercise?** No. The aim of the review is to ensure our Reserve Forces are structured in the most effective way to deliver the capabilities required. As part of this analysis there will of course be value for money considerations, given that the review will look at the optimum means of managing Reserve Forces but our primary focus is the delivery of capability.
3. **What about the Cost of Reserves Study?** This internal study was commissioned from the MOD's Management Consultancy Services following the National Audit Office report that said that Defence would benefit from a more detailed understanding of what Reserve Forces cost. The report helps us to better understand the link between expenditure and Reserves' outputs and has a role to play in informing the review but it is not the main driver.
4. **What was the internal policy work carried out before the review and what was its outcome?** MOD monitors its policy to determine if it remains sound or requires any change. This was done for the Reserve Forces, prompted by the lessons of recent experience in a number of areas. The work showed our current policy to be broadly correct but also pointed to areas which we could usefully develop or examine further, such as refining the balance and integration between

Regular and Reserve Forces; these have formed some of the starting points for the review.

**5. Isn't the Review evidence of overstretch in the Armed Forces?** No. Reservists have always made a vital contribution to the UK Defence capability and will continue to do so. The aim of the review is to ensure that we are making the best possible use of all of our Reserve Forces in the context of Defence as a whole, matching capability to requirement in the most intelligent way.

**6. What about the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the TA this year?** 2008 marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the TA, which is being celebrated with a wide variety of events under the banner of "TA100". This makes it an auspicious moment for us to ensure that the contribution made by Reserves continues to be as relevant for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as it was during the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**7. How does the Review relate to the Territorial Army Future Structure (TA FAS) work?** FAS shaped and sized the TA for its role in augmenting the Regular Army for large-scale contingent operations but the numbers of reservists mobilised over the last five years has demonstrated the increased importance of the TA's role in supporting enduring operations. These reservists have largely deployed either as individual augmentees or in small teams, where they have integrated seamlessly into the regular force. Given this trend, it makes sense to examine whether we have done all that we can to optimise the balance in the TA's structures between these roles.

**8. Is the review mainly about the Territorial Army?** Numerically, most volunteer reservists are members of the Territorial Army but the review is looking equally at the roles of each of the Services, recognising work that has already been carried out by the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force into their respective reserve forces.

**9. Are cadet forces and university units being examined as part of the review?** The review team may refer to cadet forces and university units because of the arrangements they share with Reserve Forces but they are not part of the review as they do not contribute directly to Defence outputs. The Review is looking at the role of the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations.

**10. Is the review an over-reaction to the particular circumstances of today?** The review aims to ensure that Reserve Forces can continue to make the best possible contribution to Defence both now and in the future. The review is looking at the challenges reservists face today but also at wider issues such as the different roles of our Reserve Forces and the balance between these and our Regular Forces.

**11. What has been done so far?** Since April the review team have carried out a massive information gathering and consultation exercise. Previous work has been studied, questions have been put to Front Line Commands and stakeholders have been engaged both individually and in groups. The team will now embark on a 2<sup>nd</sup> round of briefings/workshops run across the UK, facilitated by the RFCAs. Audiences have been drawn from across the Reserve and Regular community, including employers and Reservists themselves.

**12. What does the review mean for force structures/terms and conditions of service/command opportunities/links with the local community?** As explained earlier the review has a very broad remit indeed but the review intends

to make recommendation for the future of the reserves which allow the various elements to move towards the most **Sustainable, Usable, Integrated and Representative** arrangement which suits their particular requirements and circumstances.

**13. How can I contribute to the Review?** As part of the review the team is speaking to as many people with an interest in reserve matters as possible. The review team can be contacted via:

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**Ministry of Defence**  
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**The Service Chiefs say:**

**1SL/CNS.** I support fully this review which I am confident can only enhance the ongoing re-structuring and integration work currently being undertaken within the Maritime Reserves. By drawing on the significant contribution our Reserve Forces make on operations, we will be able to define better what we want from our Reserve Forces and deliver a structure and capability that is right for the future.

**CGS.** The time is right for a Review and I am looking to it to consider the appropriate balance of focus for the Territorial Army between large scale, contingent operations and those such as our current, enduring operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. This is especially important for the modern TA, which is driven by the desire to complement its Regular Army counterparts. I strongly support this Review as a genuine policy-led initiative and not as a cost cutting exercise.

**CAS.** I welcome this review. The members of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, like their colleagues in the Territorial Army and Maritime Reserves, are making a vital contribution to current operations and I am very keen that we ensure that the Force is properly recognised, rewarded and structured, to deliver what we need today and, just as importantly, what we will need to cope with the challenges of the future.