



Future

use of the UK's

Reserve Forces





The Reserves are an integral and vital part of the UK's Armed Forces, as set out in the Defence White Paper 2003. Anybody who joins the Territorial Army, Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Marines Reserve or Royal Auxiliary Air Force should do so in the expectation that they will be mobilised at least once.

In meeting this requirement, not only is the continued dedication and enthusiasm of our Reservists essential but so is the support of their families, partners and employers.

This document sets out how the Government intends to employ our Reserve Forces in the future.

Types of Reserve Forces

There are two key types of Reserve Forces: the Volunteer Reserve Forces and the Regular Reserve.

Members of the **Volunteer Reserve Forces (VRF)** serve within VRF units and usually train in the evenings, at weekends and for at least two weeks each year. Although some members have served in the Regular Forces, there is no requirement for them to have done so. There are some 40,000 members of the VRF, of which 86% are in the Territorial Army, with the remainder split between the Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Marines Reserve and Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

The **Regular Reserve** is made up of those ex-members of the Regular Forces who still have a liability for mobilisation.

Within the totality of our Reserve Forces there are two, small, specialised groups which will continue to be developed over the coming years:

- **Sponsored Reserves**

Some services which are provided in peacetime by a civilian contractor are provided on operations by staff drawn from the contractor's workforce who are members of the Reserve Forces, and have been mobilised. Individuals in this category are known as Sponsored Reserves.

- **High Readiness Reserves**

Some Reservists have specific skills which may be needed urgently. If they hold High Readiness status, they require the written agreement of their employer to do so because, in emergencies, they could be mobilised with less than one week's notice.

The roles of the Reserve Forces

The Reserve Forces have three primary roles:

- **To augment the Regular Forces for enduring operations**

When enduring operations (for example, in The Balkans) would over stretch the Regular Forces, Reservists will be mobilised to provide an additional source of manpower, which will, in turn, allow Regular personnel time to recuperate. Whenever possible, mobilisation will be on a voluntary basis but compulsion may be used if necessary.

- **To provide additional capability for large scale operations**

When a large scale operation is undertaken the Regular Forces will require support from the Reserve Forces, in the form of both individual reinforcements and formed Units, to add either weight or specialist capability. This is the situation where the largest number of Reservists is likely to be required, most of whom will be mobilised irrespective of whether they have volunteered. It is the type of operation undertaken least often.

- **To provide specialist capability**

There are some specialist capabilities which it would be impractical to maintain on a full-time basis – at least on the scale which could be required in all possible circumstances. These are often capabilities which Reservists can contribute by virtue of the skills and experience they can bring from their civilian roles. Examples include transport specialists, linguists or doctors.

As the Volunteer Reserve Forces are based at nearly 400 locations across the UK, they are also ideally placed to fulfil two other important roles:



- **To provide a civil contingency reaction capability for crises in the UK**

The regional Civil Contingency Reaction Forces (CCRFs) are made up of Reservists from all three Services. If required, they would be mobilised to provide assistance to the civil authorities in the aftermath of a major terrorist attack, catastrophic natural disaster or similar crisis in the UK. They can be mobilised at very short notice but only for short periods of time. Reservists who volunteer to serve on a CCRF do so in addition to their normal Reservist role.

- **To maintain links between the military and civilian communities**

Through both their training centres across the country and their members who straddle civilian and military society, the VRF provide vital links between the military and civilian communities.

There will also continue to be some opportunities for Reservists to volunteer to serve with the Regular Forces overseas and in the UK on 'Full Time Reserve Service' (FTRS).

Use of the Regular Reserve

Members of the Regular Reserve often have a great deal of experience, but their skills and fitness tend to fade rapidly after leaving the Regular Forces. Those who wish to retain their skills will often join the VRF.

Therefore, when mobilising Reservists, we will turn first to the VRF and only mobilise Regular Reservists when the relevant VRF resources have been exhausted or the particular capability required does not exist within the VRF.

Whilst the arrangements for the management of the majority of the Regular Reserve will remain mostly unchanged, special arrangements will be put in place to maintain contact with those with particular specialist skills or experience.

Use of individual Reservists out of their military role

Some specialist VRF units are made up of people utilising their civilian skills in a military context but, in most cases, people join the Volunteer Reserve Forces to undertake military activities which provide a contrast to their civilian employment. We have a duty to respect this motive when mobilising individuals.

We will not mobilise a Reservist to take advantage of his or her civilian skills if he or she joined to serve in a different role, except with the express agreement of the Reservist and his or her employer.

This will not preclude a commander on operations from ordering an already mobilised Reservist to carry out a task for which he or she is qualified, provided it is in response to a changing situation, is a short term expediency and no other alternative exists.

Frequency of mobilisation

The Volunteer Reserve Forces are not an infinite resource. Their availability to fulfil the roles set out above depends upon their levels of recruitment and training and upon their availability for mobilisation. The attitude of Reservists, and of potential Reservists, will in turn be influenced by the attitudes of both their families and of their current and potential employers.

The Reserve Forces Act 1996 limits the time for which any Reservist may be mobilised. In most situations a maximum cumulative total of one year out of three applies. It is recognised that regular mobilisation of the VRF up to this maximum is unsustainable. The feedback from Reservists and employers is that a limit of up to 12 months' service in aggregate over 5 years is more reasonable unless the individual volunteers for more frequent tours. Where possible, this is the level which we intend to apply unless no viable alternative exists.



Notice of mobilisation

Although Reservists are, technically, on immediate notice for mobilisation, it is recognised that a reasonable period of notice is required both by the Reservist and his or her family and by the Reservist's civilian employer.

Whenever possible, particularly when the mobilisation is for an enduring operation, our intention is to give a formal notice period of around 28 days. We believe that this provides sufficient notice to Reservists and is fair to employers, as it reflects the period of notice most employees are required to give if changing employer.

Support for employers

We recognise the vital contribution that employers make when Reservists in their employ are called out and we take careful account of their views and attitudes – gathered through research, direct contact and the National Employer Advisory Board.

In addition to activity by individuals and the chain of command, employer support is maintained through SaBRE (Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers), a national information and support campaign with a strong regional component.

We aim to communicate to employers the benefits, rights and obligations associated with employing a Reservist. Critical to continued employer support are their rights to apply for the mobilisation of an employee to be delayed or cancelled and further to have access to financial assistance to offset any

costs incurred. It is also vital that they understand their obligation to re-employ Reservists who have been mobilised, in accordance with the Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Act 1985.

Conclusion

Reserves today are recruited and maintained to be used on operations, rather than solely as a last resort against territorial threats to the UK. Our Reservists recognise this duty and have responded to recent challenges superbly.

For the Government's part, it is incumbent upon us not only to provide the necessary training and equipment but also to recognise the issues faced by Reservists, their families and their employers and take steps to mitigate the disruption caused by mobilisation.

Useful websites

Ministry of Defence
Territorial Army
Royal Naval Reserve
Royal Marines Reserve
Royal Auxiliary Air Force
SaBRE (Supporting Britain's
Reservists and Employers)

www.mod.uk
www.ta.mod.uk
www.royal-navy.mod.uk
www.royal-navy.mod.uk
www.rafrereserves.com
www.sabre.mod.uk

