

Reserve Forces & FR20 Programme Update – Winter 2015/16

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As 2016 dawns, the Future Reserves 2020 (FR20) programme nears completion, with 39 of the 40 deliverables outlined by the White Paper either delivered or on track.

We have turned the corner on recruitment and, with a total Reserve strength of 33,680 (including 26,290 trained), we are on track to meet our target of 35,000 trained Reservists by April 2019. The improvement made by the Army Reserve on recruitment and retention has been particularly impressive, as they have seen their strength grow by nearly 4,000 in the last 12 months. However, we cannot afford to be complacent as our trained strength targets become increasingly challenging over the next three years.

The Reserve Forces and FR20 remain priorities for this Government. The recent Strategic Defence and Security Review emphasised the vital contribution that the Reserves make to the Armed Forces, pledged to increase their use in Defence engagement and reiterated the commitment to deliver 35,000 Reservists.

There are currently more than 300 Reservists called out for permanent service, including on operations in Cyprus, Northern Iraq and the Falkland Islands, as well as providing support to the train, advise and assist mission in Afghanistan and maritime operations dealing with the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean.

We will continue to provide updates on progress regularly, but if you have any questions on the programme please do contact us.

Reservists on overseas training exercises

In October 2015, 100 ranks from the Royal Marines Reserve (RMR) took part in Exercise Commando Phoenix on Sennelager Training Area in Germany. The aim of the exercise was to conduct Live Fire Tactical Training to improve competency across a range of weapon systems.

Lt Col Richard Maltby, Commanding Officer RMR Bristol said: "Exercise Commando Phoenix is an excellent opportunity for RMR ranks to refresh their live firing skills. The ranges in Sennelager provide an ideal training ground from which the Reservists, from across all four Royal Marines Reserve Units, can demonstrate their professional application of soldiering skills and Commando spirit."



In October 2015, 200 Army Reserve medics from 204 (North Irish) and 243 (Wessex) Field Hospitals took part in Exercise Integrated Serpent at the US Navy Expeditionary Medical Training Institute (NEMTI) in California. The Reservists completed a 48 hour tented hospital exercise, where they were tested on operational problems such as multiple fractures, burns, bleeding and gastroenteritis. They then moved on to a Tactical Combat Casualty Care Course, practicing how to provide care under heavy simulated fire.

Col Alastair Taylor, Commanding Officer 243 (Wessex) Field Hospital, said: "We are very fortunate to have been able to train at NEMTI... our unit will come away with some valuable experience."



In September 2015, 611 Squadron (West Lancashire), the first of the new RAF Reserve squadrons to be formed under FR20, marked another major milestone when it completed its first Annual Camp at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus. Around 40 volunteers spent two weeks supporting the Station's output to operations. Trades present included drivers, physical training instructors, media and intelligence.

Wg Cdr SJ Davis, Officer Commanding Base Support Wing RAF Akrotiri, said: "I have witnessed the diverse range of skills and backgrounds the Reserves contribute to the whole force. It has been a significant opportunity for RAF Akrotiri to offer military familiarization to the new recruits to 611 Squadron and witness their vigour and enthusiasm for service life."



Royal Naval Reservists complete inaugural Project Hermes

A new initiative to fast-track Officer Cadets for the Royal Naval Reserve through their basic training has completed, with 50 Royal Naval Reservists taking part in the 8 week course.

The summer course, known as Project Hermes, started with a 4 week intensive package at Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, during which the cadets learned boat handling skills on the River Dart and practised their leadership skills and learned how to live and operate in the field on Dartmoor.

After completing Dartmouth, 35 Midshipmen then spent 4 weeks in a variety of ships and at sea where they completed the rest of their training, getting used to the routines of ships and experiencing the different departments that make up a complex modern warship.

Officer Cadet Ian Dorward, a 38-year-old lawyer, was among those on the course. He said: "Project Hermes is an ideal opportunity for me to expedite my officer training. Whilst eight weeks away from my civilian job may seem a big ask, my employer recognises that the training will bring benefits that outstrip the time away... I'm looking forward to applying the principles of leadership and management to my civilian career."

Project Hermes 2016 will run from 9 July to 2 September 2016. If you are interested, find out more at the following link: <http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/rnr/project-hermes>

Army Reservists tackle Ebola in Sierra Leone

In 2015, 59 Army Reservists deployed to Sierra Leone alongside Regulars and Reservists from all 3 Services, providing infrastructure, transport and treatment as part of the UK effort to tackle the Ebola outbreak. This included Army Medical Services Reservists from 14 different units, covering a variety of patient facing and support roles.

Cpl Rachel Falconer is a senior Staff Nurse at the A&E Department in Macclesfield District General Hospital and an Army Reservist with the Stockport Detachment of 207 (Manchester) Field Hospital. She deployed to Sierra Leone from February to April 2015, where she worked at the Kerry Town Treatment Unit. Because of her civilian experience, she was selected to lead a shift wearing full protective equipment to work in the highest risk Red Zone.



Cpl Falconer was awarded a Commander's Commendation, pictured, for her medical work and for organising a charity marathon to raise money for a local orphanage. She said: "I volunteered to go to Sierra Leone as I wanted to help in a humanitarian crisis. Caring for the patients with Ebola was rewarding and harrowing at the same time. It was a true life changing experience and I feel grateful for everything I have."

Success for the RAF Reserve in Northern Ireland

When the ensign was lowered at RAF Aldergrove in September 2009 it looked like the end of the RAF's presence in Northern Ireland. However, FR20 is restoring this in the guise of 502 Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF).

The unit stood up on New Year's Day 2013, regenerating the 502 name and badge from the previous RAuxAF unit at Aldergrove, disbanded in 1957. An establishment of 100 Reservists was formalised in November 2013 and the first attestation took place that month. 502 Squadron has now attested more than 125 people. As a multi discipline Squadron, it seeks to recruit individuals for roles including medics, logisticians, police, intelligence, media, physical training instructors and flight ops. The unit has a strong medical flight, having attracted a range of health care professionals including doctors, dentists and nurses. The Squadron's success has led to the establishment target being raised to 203 Reservists and there is little doubt this can be attained.

The squadron recently celebrated the 90th Anniversary of the formation of 502 (Ulster) Sqn, attended by Joan Christie OBE, The Lord Lieutenant of the County of Antrim, pictured. 90 years on, the RAF profile is once again on the map in Northern Ireland in the form of a confident, growing and enthusiastic Reserve Squadron focused on providing the RAF will well trained and motivated volunteers ready to meet the challenge of operations.

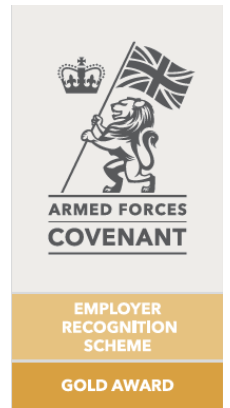


Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award 2015 winners announced

The 2015 Employer Recognition Scheme Gold award winners have been announced, with 16 employers from the private and public sector being recognised for their support to Defence People initiatives.

The winners include Atkins, The Automobile Association, Babcock, Fujitsu, Gateshead Council, Deloitte, Jaguar Land Rover, Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, ISS UK, J.P. Morgan, M-EC Consulting Development Engineers, National Express, PwC, SERCO and Tesco. These employers have been recognised with Gold awards for acting as an exemplar within their market sector, advocating support to Defence personnel issues to partner organisations, suppliers and customers.

Secretary of State for Defence, Michael Fallon said: "The support that these companies provide is making a real difference to our armed forces community. Whether allowing Reservists the time to train or supporting veterans and spouses, they embody what the Armed Forces Covenant is about."



Tesco launch their Armed Forces Network

Tesco announced new measures to increase vital support for Reservists and other Defence People at a Remembrance Day event at the Tower of London. Attended by Minister for Reserves, Julian Brazier, the event featured the launch of their Armed Forces Network. This aims to bring together ex-military and Reservist colleagues to help former and serving Armed Forces personnel to have successful careers at Tesco. It will also look outside the organisation to help those leaving the Armed Forces to adjust to life after the military.

Tesco also announced a new HR package for Reservists that includes two weeks' full pay for mandatory training and an additional five days fully paid leave for additional military activities.



Robin Terrell, Tesco Chief Customer Officer, said: "We have many serving and former military personnel working for us at Tesco, and they bring an immeasurable number of skills and benefits to the service we provide our customers."

Minister for Reserves, Julian Brazier, said: "We are delighted that Tesco, which was the first retailer to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant, is increasing their support for Armed Forces veterans and Reservists. Veterans and Reservists have much to offer to the private sector - with skills such as professionalism, discipline, leadership, management and team work - and it's good to see companies like Tesco making the most of the talent available, and supporting them all the way."

Employers pledge their support to Defence People

The number of employers to sign the Armed Forces Covenant continues to rise, with more than 800 having now committed to support a range of Defence People initiatives. Recent signings include key employers such as the Morrisons, the National League (formerly the Football Conference) and Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS).

In signing the Covenant, these organisations have committed to support serving Regular and Reservist personnel, veterans and military families in a range of ways including RBS providing members of the Armed Forces with access to tailored financial services through Holt's Military Banking, including special accounts and lending products.

Signing RBS' Covenant with Mark Lancaster, Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, Ross McEwan, Chief Executive of RBS, pictured, said: "It's vital that we do everything we can to better serve and understand the communities we do business in. We have a proud history of working with the Armed Forces and we want to serve them as well as we can as they continue to protect and serve us in the future."



Engineering company Atkins, a 2015 Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award winner, re-signed the Covenant at an event on 9 December. In doing so, they strengthened their pledges to support Defence People initiatives, including the commitment to establish an Atkins Armed Forces Champion, to represent the interests of their Reservist and ex-Armed Forces staff and drive their Partnering with the Armed Forces programme.

Transition of the SaBRE Campaign

The creation of Defence Relationship Management (DRM) to develop mutually beneficial relationships with national employers has subsumed the Employer Support functions previously provided by the Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers (SaBRE) campaign.

To reflect the new structure, and improve clarity and coherence of employer engagement, it has been decided to cease using the SaBRE brand in favour of the existing MOD branding.

It is important to note that the delivery of Employer Support will not be adversely affected by this change. DRM have been providing this support for more than a year and the branding change merely recognises this. As part of the change, the former Regional SaBRE Campaign Directors (RSCDs) are being re-titled Regional Employer Engagement Directors (REEDs). This reflects the wider responsibilities they have for Employer Engagement and Employer Support.

The Reserves Experience continues

The 2015 nationwide roll-out of the Reserves Experience culminated in successful engagement events in Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow, showing civil servants and their line managers the benefits Reserve Service can offer.

The Reserves Experience is designed to be an immersive event for Civil Servants to bust some myths behind what it is that Reservists actually do, including how they balance their time between Reserve service and a Civil Service job, the transferrable benefits between the two and the broad range of roles available.

Sgt Richard McAvoyn from 4 Lancs in Manchester who also works for the DWP said: "I joined the Reserves for a bit of adventure in my life and, although Jobcentre Plus can be an interesting place to work, I'll never forget going out on exercise in Africa. This has been my best experience as a Reservist to date and taught me a lot about myself and working with others under testing conditions."

Especially well represented at the Scotland events were the DWP, HMRC and the Scottish Government, who between them make up around 35,000 of the 44,000 Civil Servants in Scotland. The Scottish Government were represented by the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities, Keith Brown (pictured) - himself a former Royal Marine - who actively engaged in proceedings.

One attendee said: "I enjoyed how interactive the experience was, but also being able to talk to a number of current Reservists and gain more insight from them too."



2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review

The 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) has been published. It responds to the reality that risks and threats to our national security have increased in scale, diversity and complexity over the past five years.

On the Reserve Forces, the Review states the following: "The Reserves are an essential part of our Armed Forces. They allow us to access skills and expertise found in the civilian world. Reserve personnel help to link the Armed Forces to society, and employers benefit significantly from the transferable skills that Reserve personnel bring to their businesses. We will continue to grow our Reserves to 35,000, with increased investment in training and equipment and improved pay and conditions." The report also committed to the establishment of "an Armed Forces defence engagement career stream, making better use of Reservists."

Monthly Service Personnel Statistics

The December 2016 Monthly Service Personnel Statistics, providing data on Reserve strength and recruitment numbers as at 1 November 2015 is available at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/483219/Monthly_service_personnel_statistics-November_2015.pdf