



Armed Forces Reserves

Summary

This Briefing has been prepared in advance of the debate in the House of Lords on the motion moved by Lord De Mauley (Conservative) that “this House takes note of the contribution of the armed forces reserves to national security”. This debate is scheduled to take place on 21 June 2018, prior to Reserves Day which takes place on 27 June 2018.

Over recent decades, the role of the armed forces reserves has changed. While the reserves have retained their role providing support to regular personnel, since the end of the Cold War the size of reserve forces has reduced. The reserve forces have also taken part in a number of post-Cold War conflicts such as in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. This is in addition to providing support following natural disasters in the UK, such as during the flooding in Cumbria in 2009 and 2015 and in Somerset in 2014.

The Coalition Government and subsequent Conservative governments, under both David Cameron and Theresa May, have sought to increase the size and role of the armed forces reserves. Both these governments have maintained that greater use of reserves offers the opportunity to import skills from outside the military and that reservists could supplement the work of regular personnel so that their specialist military expertise can be used more cost-effectively.

However, this expansion has proved controversial as it has taken place at the same time as a reduction to the number of regular personnel following the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review. MPs and Members of the House of Lords have criticised the expansion of the reserves at the same time as the reduction in the number of regular personnel, arguing that it could damage the overall effectiveness of the UK armed forces because of difficulties in recruiting and retaining reservists and maintained their readiness.

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1. Introduction

This Briefing provides an overview of the changes to the role of the armed forces reserves made in 2010 and 2018 by both the Coalition Government, and subsequent Conservative governments, and the context in which these reforms have been undertaken.¹ It then provides further information on ongoing issues arising from these reforms, including the rate of recruitment; the impact on the overall readiness of the armed forces; and the degree to which regular personnel and reservists are integrated as part of a single force. It also considers recent issues regarding the relationship between the military and civilian employers.

2. Changes to Reserves Before 2010

Historically, the role of the UK armed forces reserves has been to supplement the regular armed forces and be mobilised at times of national emergency and homeland defence.² The armed forces reserves continue to fulfil this role, alongside providing support for civil emergencies. For example, the reserves have been deployed in response to domestic crises such as the Foot and Mouth crisis, and during the flooding in Cumbria in 2009 and 2015 and in Somerset in 2014.

However, the role of the armed forces reserves has also changed since the end of the Cold War. As in other Western democracies, the size of the reserves in the UK has declined. For example between 1990 and 2011, the number of Army reserves fell from 76,000 to less than 20,000.³ The research group, the Future Reserve Research Programme, has argued that this reflects the fact that there is no longer the need to maintain a large quantity of reservists available to supplement the size of regular armed forces.⁴

Since the mid-1990s, the remaining reserves have played a larger part in “expeditionary security management” or “power projection operations” than had previously been the case.⁵ For example, reservists have taken part in major UK deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.⁶ In 2004, reservists made up 20 percent of UK forces in Iraq and 12 percent in Afghanistan.⁷ For example, between March and October 2007, Somme Company, a company made up of a majority of Territorial Army personnel, were deployed in

¹ The House of Lords will be debating the issue on reserves on 21 June 2018, prior to [Reserves Day](#) which takes place on 27 June 2018.

² Christopher Dandeker et al, ‘[The UK’s Reserve Forces: Retrospect and Prospect](#)’, *Armed Forces and Society*, 28 February 2011, no 1 vol 21, p 7.

³ Future Reserves Commission, [Future Reserves 2020: The Independent Commission to Review the United Kingdom’s Reserve Forces](#), July 2011, p 12.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Christopher Dandeker et al, ‘[The UK’s Reserve Forces: Retrospect and Prospect](#)’, *Armed Forces and Society*, 28 February 2011, no 1 vol 21, p 7.

⁷ Future Reserves Commission, [Future Reserves 2020: The Independent Commission to Review the United Kingdom’s Reserve Forces](#), July 2011, pp 11–12.

Afghanistan.⁸ This company was led by a Territorial Army commander and it undertook a number of different roles, including protection of Camp Bastion.

3. Coalition and Conservative Government Policies

Over the past decade, both the Coalition Government, the Conservative Government led David Cameron and the current Conservative Government led by Theresa May have sought to expand the role of the reserves, increase the circumstances in which they might be deployed and increase the degree of integration between reservists and the regulars. This has been justified, in part, on the grounds that it would enable money to be spent more efficiently. However, plans to expand the size of the army reserves at the same time as reducing the size of the regular armed forces have been criticised.

3.1 Strategic Defence and Security Review (2010)

In its 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), the Coalition Government proposed that the role of the reserves should be modernised.⁹ It argued that the reserve forces should be more closely integrated with the regular members of the armed forces, as part of a so-called ‘whole force approach’.¹⁰ This would see the reserves taking on two main functions. Firstly, they would provide additional capacity when regular forces were deployed at “maximum effort”.¹¹ Secondly, they would provide specialists that would not be either practical or cost-effective to maintain within the regular forces, such as medical reservists.

Review of Reserve Forces (2011)

The Coalition Government also announced in the 2010 SDSR that it would commission an independent review into the future role and structure of the reserves.¹² The Independent Commission to Review the United Kingdom’s Reserve Forces published its final report in 2011 and concluded that the UK’s reserve forces were at that point in a state of decline.¹³ It identified the following trends:¹⁴

- The size of the reserves was too low, with trained and active strength the Territorial Army was estimated to be as low as 14,000, having reduced from a size of 76,000 in 1990.

⁸ Future Reserves Commission, [Future Reserves 2020: The Independent Commission to Review the United Kingdom’s Reserve Forces](#), July 2011, p 16.

⁹ HM Government, [Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review](#), October 2010, Cm 7948, p 27.

¹⁰ *ibid*, p 20.

¹¹ *ibid*.

¹² *ibid*, p 5.

¹³ Future Reserves Commission, [Future Reserves 2020: The Independent Commission to Review the United Kingdom’s Reserve Forces](#), July 2011, p 11.

¹⁴ *ibid*, pp 12–13.

- The reserves were also getting older, with a majority of reserve officers being over 40, compared to the average age for regular soldiers being a decade lower.
- There were also a number of factors leading to poor morale amongst reservist forces, the review argued. These included a lack of resources, as well as poor career progression. It also noted that reservist training and pay had been frozen for two years at the time the report was published.¹⁵

Expansion and Reform of Reserves Forces

In July 2012, the then Defence Secretary, Philip Hammond, outlined the Ministry of Defence's "Army 2020" strategy which included further details of reforms to the reserves.¹⁶ Mr Hammond said that the army reserves would be used more routinely and their size increased. He also argued that it would be more closely integrated with the regular army. The army reserves would be increased from a current trained strength of 19,000 to 30,000.¹⁷ At the same time the number of regular personnel would be reduced by 19,500 to a total size of 82,000.

Subsequently, in 2013, Mr Hammond announced that the size of the armed forces reserves would be further expanded to nearly 35,000 by 2018.¹⁸ This total figure would include 30,000 army reservists, 3,100 maritime reserves and 1,800 Royal Auxiliary Air Force personnel.¹⁹ To support this increase in recruitment, he announced that £1.8 billion funding would be provided over ten years.²⁰

The Coalition Government also introduced legislation intended to support the expansion of the reserves. The Defence Reform Act 2014, which received royal assent in May 2014, included provisions to change the name of the Territorial Army to the Army Reserve. It also removed limitations on how the reserves could be used, established in the Reserve Forces Act 1996, restricting their deployment to specific circumstances such as immediate national danger and the protection of life and property overseas. In addition, the 2014 Act enabled the Secretary of State to make additional payments to employers when reservists were mobilised and provide reservists with greater employment protection.²¹

¹⁵ Future Reserves Commission, [Future Reserves 2020: The Independent Commission to Review the United Kingdom's Reserve Forces](#), July 2011, p 15.

¹⁶ [HC Hansard, 5 July 2012, cols 1085–9](#); and House of Commons, '[Written Statement: Future Reserves 2020](#)', 5 July 2012, cols 65–7WS.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ [HC Hansard, 3 July 2013, cols 923–5](#).

¹⁹ Ministry of Defence, [Reserves in the Future Force 2020: Valuable and Valued](#), July 2013, Cm 8655, p 11. Further information is provided in the House of Commons briefing [Future Reserves 2020](#) (3 October 2013).

²⁰ Ministry of Defence, [Reserves in the Future Force 2020: Valuable and Valued](#), July 2013, Cm 8655, p 9.

²¹ Further information on the provisions in the Defence Reform Bill are provided in the House of Lords Library Briefing, [Defence Reform Bill](#) (6 December 2013).

The decision by the Coalition Government to expand the size of the reserves while reducing the size of the regular army was criticised by MPs and Members of the Lords. For example, the former army officer, John Baron (Conservative MP for Basildon and Billericay), argued that the Government had not presented sufficient evidence that the overall impact of loss of regular personnel would be adequately compensated by the increase in the number of reservists.²²

During a debate in the House of Lords in April 2014 on the balance of regular and reserve forces within the armed forces, the former Chief of General Staff, Lord Dannatt (Crossbench), argued that it was unclear whether the number in the armed forces would be a sufficient to meet UK's defence needs or whether it would be possible in practice to recruit the number of reserves that the Government had committed.²³ The then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Ministry of Defence, Lord Astor of Haver, said that the Government was confident that the armed forces would continue to have the right personnel in place and argued that the Government was making progress in recruiting reserves.²⁴

3.2 Strategic Defence and Security Review (2015)

In 2015, the Conservative Government published a new SDSR.²⁵ This committed to maintaining the size of the army regulars at 82,000, and the target for expanding the size of the reserves by 2018 was also retained. At the same time, the number of civilians employed by the Ministry of Defence would be reduced to 41,000 by the end of the parliament, which at that time would have been 2020.

While assurances regarding the maintaining of the size of the regular army were welcomed, there remained criticism regarding the sustainability of the government policy to expand the role of the reserves. For example, the UK National Defence Association maintained that it was unclear whether the reserve forces could provide a reliable source of personnel because of difficulties in recruiting and retaining enough reservists.²⁶ The former Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Sir Richard Shirreff, argued that, despite the Conservative Government's commitment not to reduce the size of the Army further, damage had already been done in terms of the loss of regular personnel.²⁷ He argued that, in these circumstances, the increased

²² BBC News, '[John Baron MP: Real Concern over Army Cuts](#)', 22 January 2013; and [HC Hansard, 17 November 2014, cols 23–4](#).

²³ [HL Hansard, 7 April 2014, col 1213](#).

²⁴ *ibid*, col 1233.

²⁵ HM Government, [National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015](#), November 2015, Cm 9161, pp 32–3. Further information on the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review is provided in the House of Commons Library briefing [The 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review](#) (22 January 2016).

²⁶ UK National Defence Association, [National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015: An Appraisal](#), March 2016, p 4.

²⁷ House of Commons Defence Committee, [SDSR 2015 and the Army](#), 29 April 2017, HC 108 of session 2016–17, p 14.

use of the reserves presented the risk that the Army might be “hollowed out” in terms of trained personnel that could be reliably deployed.

During a House of Lords debate on the role of reservists in October 2015, a number of Members raised concerns about the role of reservists. Earl Attlee (Conservative), a major of the army reserve, argued that the Government’s plans for expanding the reserves were flawed and based on an assumption that volunteer reservists were identical with their regular counterparts.²⁸ This, he argued, did not acknowledge their different skill sets and levels of knowledge, based on military or civilian experience. The Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence, Earl Howe, argued the Government was not seeking to swap regular personnel for reserves, but was instead seeking to better use existing UK defence resources, and “better harness the talents of wider UK society”.²⁹

Current Government Policy

Following Theresa May taking office as Prime Minister in 2016, the current Government has committed to continuing to pursue a policy of expanding the armed forces reserves.³⁰ Responding to questions from the House of Commons Defence Committee regarding the Government’s future plans for the armed forces, Secretary of State for Defence, Gavin Williamson, stated the Government intended to maintain the UK’s current defence capabilities.³¹ The Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, a member of the army reserve, has also stated that the Government would continue to increase the number of reserve recruits.³² Mr Williamson said that the recruitment of reservists with skills in cyber security formed an important part of the current Government’s cyber warfare strategy.³³ In May 2018, he announced that he would increase the number of army reserves in Northern Ireland, creating 189 new reserve posts.³⁴

4. Current Issues

As a result of the ongoing armed forces reserve reform programme, a number of issues have arisen that affect reservists and their role within the armed forces.

4.1 Recruitment

Under the current and previous governments, the main focus of the armed forces reserve reform programme has been increasing the numbers of

²⁸ [HL Hansard, 22 October 2015, cols GC 59–60.](#)

²⁹ [ibid, GC69.](#)

³⁰ House of Commons, ‘[Written Question: Army Reserve](#)’, 30 October 2017, 109458.

³¹ House of Commons Defence Committee, [Oral Evidence: Departmental Priorities, HC 814](#), 21 February 2018, Q83.

³² [HC Hansard, 24 January 2018, cols 145–6WH.](#)

³³ [HC Hansard, 5 March 2018, col 3.](#)

³⁴ Ministry of Defence, ‘[Defence Secretary Expands Army Reserve Numbers in Northern Ireland](#)’, 24 May 2018.

recruits.³⁵ Statistics from the Ministry of Defence now indicate that the recruitment rate is expected to meet its current targets.³⁶ However, recruitment was initially slow and, as a result, concerns were raised regarding the sustainability of this policy.

Recruitment Rate: Delays

In 2013 the Coalition Government committed to expanding the size of the armed forces reserves to 35,000 by 2018. However, between April 2012 and April 2014, the trained strength of the reserves had not increased, remaining at 19,400.³⁷ In 2013, the Ministry of Defence tasked Capita with recruiting 6,000 reserves, but it was only able to recruit around 2,000.³⁸

The Ministry of Defence faced criticism as a result of this slow rate of progress. In June 2014, the National Audit Office (NAO) reported that a delay to the recruitment of reservists risked the Ministry of Defence missing its targets.³⁹ As a result, this would create staffing gaps in the military and increase pressure on regular units. The NAO criticised the Ministry of Defence, arguing it had not tested how feasible the targets would be before announcing the policy.⁴⁰ In July 2014, the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee also criticised the Ministry of Defence on the grounds that it had not consulted with the Army or fully assessed the feasibility of its plans.⁴¹

Since April 2014, the Ministry of Defence has managed to increase the rate of recruitment.⁴² However, following these initial delays, the then Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, revised the recruitment targets for the army reserve in 2016, announcing that the Government's new target was to reach a strength of 30,100 army reservists by 31 March 2019.⁴³

In 2016, Sir Michael faced criticism regarding the categorisation of 'trained reserves' for the purposes of the armed forces reserve figures. Members of the armed forces receive two phases of training: phase 1 which consists of basic service training and phase 2 which consists of trade training. Since 2016, the figure for the 'trained strength' of the army reserve has changed,

³⁵ Council of Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations, [UK Reserve Forces External Scrutiny Team: Annual Report 2017](#), 21 June 2017, p 4.

³⁶ Ministry of Defence, [UK Armed Forces Quarterly Service Personnel Statistics: 1 April 2018](#), 17 May 2018, p 9.

³⁷ National Audit Office, [Army 2020](#), 11 June 2014, HC 263 of session 2014–15, p 10.

³⁸ House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, [Army 2020](#), 16 July 2014, HC 104 of session 2014–15, pp 10–11.

³⁹ *ibid*, p 12.

⁴⁰ National Audit Office, [Army 2020](#), 11 June 2014, HC 263 of session 2014–15, p 7.

⁴¹ House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, [Army 2020](#), 16 July 2014, HC 104 of session 2014–15, p 3.

⁴² Ministry of Defence, [UK Armed Forces Quarterly Service Personnel Statistics: 1 April 2018](#), 17 May 2018, p 9. Following the 2016 decision by the Ministry of Defence, this figure includes those who have only completed phase 1 training.

⁴³ House of Commons, ['Written Statement: Future Reserves 2020—Update'](#), 8 November 2016, HCWS248.

from only including those who had completed phase 2 training to those who had completed phase 1 training as well.⁴⁴ This decision was subsequently criticised by the Shadow Secretary of State for Defence, Nia Griffith, on the grounds that it would inflate the recruitment figures.⁴⁵ However, the then Conservative Government argued that figures now more accurately represent the reality on the ground, following a decision to allow for phase 1 trained personnel to be more widely deployed, such as in response to natural disasters.⁴⁶

Improvements to the Reserve Recruitment Rate

As of 1 April 2018, the size of the army reserve was 29,710, 90 percent of its 2019 target.⁴⁷ While increases in the reserve recruitment rate since 2014 have been welcomed by MPs and Members of the Lords, there has also been concerns about maintaining this rate over the long-term in order to meet the 2019 target.

In 2016, the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy concluded that, despite this commitment in the SDSR 2015, there remained the risk that manpower fielded by UK armed forces would not be adequate to meet the tasks they might face.⁴⁸ Specifically, the Joint Committee argued that it had difficult in practice to maintain a reserve force of “sufficient numbers trained to required levels”.⁴⁹

In 2017, the House of Commons Defence Committee argued that, if the Ministry of Defence missed its 2019 recruitment target, this would damage the reputation of both the Army and the Department.⁵⁰ It recommended that the Department review its recruitment policy to identify the blockages that existed in the system. In its response to the Defence Committee’s report, the Ministry of Defence stated that the Army Reserves Development Programme had been assessed in March 2017 by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.⁵¹ The Government said this review had found that the processes in the Programme had been improved, resulting in the increases to levels recruitment.

⁴⁴ Further information on training statistics is provided in House of Lords Library, [Future Capability of the UK Armed Forces](#), 21 December 2016, pp 8–9.

⁴⁵ Ben Riley-Smith, ‘[Ministers Accused of ‘Fiddling’ With Army Reservist Figures to Hit Ambitious Recruitment Target](#)’, *Telegraph* (UK), 13 November 2016.

⁴⁶ House of Commons, ‘[Written Statement: Strategic Defence and Security Review—UK Resilience](#)’, 29 June 2016, HCWS49.

⁴⁷ *ibid*, p 9.

⁴⁸ Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, [National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015](#), 10 July 2016, HL Paper 18 of session 2016–17.

p 23.

⁴⁹ *ibid*, p 22.

⁵⁰ House of Commons Defence Committee, [SDSR 2015 and the Army](#), 29 April 2017, HC 108 of session 2016–17, p 35.

⁵¹ House of Commons Defence Committee, [SDSR 2015 and the Army: Government Response to the Committee’s Eighth Report of Session 2016–17](#), 15 September 2017, HC 311 of session 2016–17.

In his 2017 review of army recruitment, the former Armed Forces Minister, Mark Francois (Conservative MP for Rayleigh and Wickford), concluded that good progress had been made in the Government's reserve recruitment agenda, after what he referred to as a "rocky start".⁵² However, he argued that it was vital that earmarked funding for the reserves be maintained beyond the £1.8 billion announced in the SDSR 2015.

The Council of Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations, in its 2017 annual report, stated that reserves in all three services were on a more healthy footing than in previous years.⁵³ However, it warned that the increase to the size of the armed forces reserves depended on maintaining recruitment and ensuring that new recruits were retained. It argued that this could only be achieved if funding remained stable.

It also said that, while the inclusion of phase I trained personnel in the final figures had been a factor in this improvement, the increase in recruits had only been possible through the recruitment efforts of individual units and sub-units.⁵⁴ The Council of Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations argued that the burden of this work had fallen on individual units, following the failure of the Recruiting Partnership Project, the contract between the Army and Capita intended for supporting recruitment.⁵⁵ The Government has acknowledged that there have been challenges in implementing the defence recruiting system.⁵⁶

4.2 Readiness

In addition to recruitment, several other issues have been raised concerning the reforms to the armed forces reserves. For example, one of the concerns regarding the expansion in the size of the reserve component is its potential impact on the readiness of the armed forces.

The Council of Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations has argued that, while the focus of the reserves reform programme has thus far been on recruitment, the Ministry of Defence needed to address outstanding issues regarding the training of the reserves.⁵⁷ It warned, following the drive to increase the number of phase I trained recruits, there remained a "mismatch between the overall trained strength and where those trained personnel fit within the Army structure".⁵⁸ The Future Reserves Commission has argued that, as part of the Government's reform programme, reservists must be trained and drilled to a sufficiently high

⁵² Mark Francois, [Filling the Ranks](#), July 2017, p 30.

⁵³ Council of Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations, [UK Reserve Forces External Scrutiny Team Annual Report 2017](#), 21 June 2017, p 4.

⁵⁴ *ibid.* p 12.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p 13.

⁵⁶ [HC Hansard, 6 March 2018, col 16.](#)

⁵⁷ *ibid.* p 12.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

standard to ensure they can be integrated effectively with regular forces on deployment.⁵⁹

A further challenge to readiness identified has been the speed at which reserves are able to be recalled. In April 2017, the House of Commons Defence Committee argued that the Ministry of Defence needed to improve its system for tracking, recalling and retraining the regular reserves.⁶⁰ The Committee cited problems the Ministry had had in the past in keeping track of those members of the reserves made up of former personnel who were still liable for recall. In response, the Ministry of Defence told the Committee that it was undertaking analysis of how to most efficiently generate forces to deploy in larger numbers.⁶¹ It also said that it was undertaking improvement in the mobilisation process.

4.3 Integration

Another objective of the Government's reforms is to increase the degree to which the reserves and regular forces are integrated. According to the Ministry of Defence's *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey*, a majority of personnel across all services believed that reserves were well integrated into the armed forces.⁶² The perception of reserves as being successfully integrated was highest in the Royal Air Force (74 percent), second highest in the Royal Navy (67 percent) and lowest was in the Army (58 percent).

The Ministry of Defence has publicised some specific examples of where it has sought to use the skills of reserve forces and regular forces in a more integrated way. For example, reserves had been recruited for the use of online technology for new, non-lethal forms of warfare. In the SDSR 2015, the Government announced the creation of a combined regular and army reserve unit, called 77 Brigade, specialising in "information activity and outreach" to influence opposing forces and adversaries.⁶³ The Ministry of Defence has sought to recruit personnel to 77 Brigade with specialist skills and a background in commerce, academia and industry.⁶⁴ The House of Commons Defence Committee has welcomed these steps but has warned the funding for such forms of warfare must be maintained if the UK and NATO allies are able to counter Russian efforts in the same arena.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Timothy Edmunds et al, '[Reserve Forces and the Transformation of British Military Organisation: Soldiers, Citizens and Society](#)', *Defence Studies*, 2016, vol 16 no 2, p 121.

⁶⁰ House of Commons Defence Committee, [SDSR 2015 and the Army](#), 29 April 2017, HC 108 of session 2016–17, pp 22–4.

⁶¹ House of Commons Defence Committee, [SDSR 2015 and the Army: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2016–17](#), 15 September 2017, HC 311 of session 2016–17, p 34.

⁶² Ministry of Defence, [UK Regular Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey Results 2018](#), 24 May 2018, p 6.

⁶³ British Army, '[77 Brigade](#)', accessed 12 June 2018.

⁶⁴ House of Commons Defence Committee, [SDSR 2015 and the Army: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2016–17](#), 15 September 2017, HC 311 of session 2016–17, p 4

⁶⁵ House of Commons Defence Committee, [Russia: Implications for UK Defence and Security](#), 5 July 2016, HC 107 of session 2016–17, p 37.

The Ministry of Defence has also been criticised for not efficiently exploiting the civilian skills of reservists. The Council of Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations argued that not enough regard was given to the existing skills of recruits when assessing their training requirements for military service.⁶⁶ For example, it stated in its 2017 annual report that:

[...] we have spoken to chefs, physical training instructors, drivers, mechanics, policemen and so forth who are bemused that their day-job experience counts for nothing when it comes to their military competence.⁶⁷

4.4 Employers

A further issue identified in supporting the maintenance of the army reserves is the role of employers. The Future Reserve Research Programme has argued that the civil component of the civil-military relationship for reserves needed to be taken more seriously by the Government.⁶⁸ This, it has argued, is especially important at a time when the military is increasing its demands on reservists because of increased training and a higher chance of deployment.

In the past, armed forces reservists have claimed to experienced push-back from some employers when it came to their military duties. In 2013, prior to the Defence Reform Act 2014 coming into force, the Ministry of Defence found that around half of reservists had said that they had been disadvantaged in some way in the civilian workplace.⁶⁹

The Armed Forces Covenant includes a commitment that both regular and reserve personnel should not face disadvantages compared to other citizens, and the Ministry of Defence's guidance to employers regarding the Covenant encourages them to support reserve service.⁷⁰ In his review of army recruitment, Mark Francois argued that reserve recruitment has achieved the support of employer organisations, such as the Business Service Association, the Confederation of British Industry, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Institute of Directors.⁷¹ However, he recommended that the Government needed to do more to encourage companies that had not already done so to sign the Armed Forces Covenant.⁷²

⁶⁶ Council of Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations, [UK Reserve Forces External Scrutiny Team Annual Report 2017](#), 21 June 2017, p 16.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Timothy Edmunds et al, '[Reserve Forces and the Transformation of British Military Organisation: Soldiers, Citizens and Society](#)', *Defence Studies*, 2016, vol 16 no 2, p 132.

⁶⁹ Ministry of Defence, [Future Reserves 2020: Summary of Consultation Findings](#), July 2013, p 4.

⁷⁰ Ministry of Defence, [The Armed Forces Covenant](#), 3 June 2016; [Armed Forces Covenant: Guidance Notes—Ideas for Best Practice](#), accessed 13 June 2018.

⁷¹ Mark Francois, [Filling the Ranks](#), July 2017, p 30.

⁷² An index of the business that have signed the Armed Forces Covenant is published by the Ministry of Defence: '[Search for Businesses Who Have Signed the Armed Forces Covenant](#)', accessed 13 June 2018.