

## Armed Forces Day

### 30 June 2018

#### Summary

Armed Forces Day takes place on 30 June 2018.<sup>1</sup> The event takes place annually on the last Saturday in June, and has been held since 2009.<sup>2</sup> This year it coincides with the centenary of both the end of the First World War and of the formation of the Royal Air Force. The Armed Forces Day [website](#) sets out the purpose of the day:

Armed Forces Day is a chance to show your support for the men and women who make up the armed forces community: from currently serving troops to service families, veterans and cadets. There are many ways for people, communities and organisations across the country to show their support and get involved, from attending an event or joining us online to throwing a party or local event.<sup>3</sup>

Events to mark Armed Forces Day are organised locally across the UK. In addition, each year a town or city is chosen to host the Armed Forces Day ‘national event’. Llandudno, Wales, will host the event in 2018.<sup>4</sup>

The Wednesday prior to Armed Forces Day is designated as [Reserves Day](#). The Armed Forces Day website describes the intention behind the day:

Reservists give up their spare time to serve in the reserve forces, balancing their civilian life with a military career to ensure that should their country require them, they would be ready to serve as part of the military [...] However, the contribution they make to our Armed Forces often goes unrecognised. As such an annual Reserves Day was created to highlight and recognise the valuable contribution reservists make to our armed forces.<sup>5</sup>

#### Background

Armed Forces Day was introduced following the [Report of Inquiry into National Recognition of Our Armed Forces](#), published in May 2008. The inquiry, established by Gordon Brown’s Labour Government, concluded that the armed forces had “become increasingly separated from civilian life and consciousness”.<sup>6</sup> To address this issue, one of the report’s recommendations was the establishment of an “Armed Forces and Veterans Day”, to incorporate the annual Veterans Day which had been held since 2006.<sup>7</sup> The report recommended Armed Forces Day be held at the end of June on a Saturday to enable school children and most working adults to attend.<sup>8</sup> In its response to the report in October 2008, the Government declared its support for the recommendation and announced plans to hold the first British Armed Forces and Veterans Day on 27 June 2009.<sup>9</sup> The town selected as the venue for the first national event was Chatham, Kent.<sup>10</sup> The table below lists all the venues of the national event between 2009 and 2018.

**Table 1: Host Town/City of Armed Forces Day National Event, 2009–18**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Location</b>
2009	Chatham, England
2010	Cardiff, Wales <sup>11</sup>
2011	Edinburgh, Scotland <sup>12</sup>
2012	Plymouth, England <sup>13</sup>
2013	Nottingham, England <sup>14</sup>
2014	Stirling, Scotland <sup>15</sup>
2015	Guildford, England <sup>16</sup>
2016	Cleethorpes, England <sup>17</sup>
2017	Liverpool, England <sup>18</sup>
2018	Llandudno, Wales

### **2018 Planned Events**

The Minister of State for Defence in the House of Lords, Earl Howe, has described the decision to appoint Llandudno as host of the national event:

Llandudno represents a superb venue and I'm sure the town will bring together the whole nation in celebrating our armed forces [...] The support from the Welsh Government and local communities, coupled with the rich and vibrant history of Llandudno, means that the town is the ideal choice to make the event even more successful in 2018.<sup>19</sup>

Conwy County Borough Council, the local authority for Llandudno, has set out the following on the planned activities to mark Armed Forces Day:

There'll be hundreds of military and veterans marching in a parade through Llandudno on the big day, and an events village will entertain crowds with activities and opportunities to get up close to some amazing military vehicles, equipment and dynamic displays.<sup>20</sup>

A report in the *Daily Post* stated that "more than a quarter of a million people are expected to descend on Llandudno" for Armed Forces Day, and "the Princess Royal, Princess Anne, will attend the event, and there will be flypasts from the Red Arrows, [...] a Lancaster bomber, Spitfire, and a Hurricane".<sup>21</sup>

According to the published [programme](#) for the national event, the parade and flypasts will be followed by a series of military demonstrations from various regiments of the armed services, with the day ending with a music concert.<sup>22</sup>

A [full list of planned local events](#) across the UK is available on the Armed Forces Day website.<sup>23</sup>

### **Criticism**

In previous years, Armed Forces Day has been the subject of a number of protests and other acts of opposition. Prior to the inaugural Armed Forces Day in 2009, Sinn Fein released a statement in

opposition to the flying of a British military flag by Belfast City Council.<sup>24</sup> At the 2009 event in Glasgow, thirteen people were arrested for attempting to disrupt the Armed Forces Day parade.<sup>25</sup> The 2014 national event in Stirling, Scotland, received criticism for allowing children to play with guns and other military weapons.<sup>26</sup> In April 2018, Symon Hill, Coordinator of the pacifist organisation Peace Pledge Union, argued in the *Guardian* that the celebration of Armed Forces Day contributed to a “culture of everyday militarism which is not healthy for a democracy”.<sup>27</sup> However, speaking at the time of the 2009 national event, the then Chief of the Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir (now Lord) Jock Stirrup, stated that opposition to the armed forces was a view held by a “tiny minority”.<sup>28</sup>

## Armed Forces Statistics

The data below provides an overview of UK armed forces personnel, expenditure, and operations.

### *UK Forces Services Personnel*

As of 1 April 2018:

- 194,410 total armed forces personnel, including:
  - 84,270 Army and Gurkhas Regular Forces
  - 32,480 Royal Navy/Royal Marines Regular Forces
  - 32,960 Royal Air Force Regular Forces<sup>29</sup>

### *Reserve Personnel*

As of 1 April 2018:

- 36,280 total trained and untrained reserve personnel, including:
  - 29,710 Army Reserve
  - 3,600 Maritime Reserve
  - 2,980 Royal Air Force Reserve<sup>30</sup>

### *Defence Spending*

- £35.3 billion total defence expenditure 2016/17<sup>31</sup>
- £8.7 billion spend on new equipment and infrastructure 2016/17<sup>32</sup>
- 2.14 percent as a share of GDP (estimated) 2017<sup>33</sup>

### *Operations*

- In 2016/17, UK forces were deployed on over 20 operations in more than 25 countries, including:
  - Countering Daesh: c 1,350 personnel deployed
  - Countering Boko Haram in Nigeria: c 300 personnel deployed
  - Afghanistan: c 600 personnel deployed
  - NATO missions in Europe: c 1,760 personnel deployed
  - Humanitarian/peacekeeping operations: c 940 personnel deployed<sup>34</sup>

## Further Information

- House of Lords Library, [Armed Forces Reserves](#), 18 June 2018
- House of Lords Library, [Size and Capability of the UK's Armed Forces for Contributing to Global Peace, Stability and Security](#), 17 November 2017

<sup>1</sup> Armed Forces Day, [About](#), accessed 4 May 2018.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Armed Forces Day, [AFD National Event](#), accessed 18 June 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Armed Forces Day, [Reserves Day](#), accessed 4 May 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Defence, [Report of Inquiry into National Recognition of Our Armed Forces](#), May 2008, p 3.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p 7.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Defence, [Government's Response to the Report of Inquiry into National Recognition of Our Armed Forces](#), October 2008, p 6.

<sup>10</sup> BBC News, [Thousands Attend Armed Forces Day](#), 27 June 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Office of the Secretary of State for Wales, [Wales Flies the Flag to Lead Armed Forces Day 2010](#), 21 June 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Defence, [Lorraine Kelly Launches Armed Forces Day 2011](#), 17 June 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Defence, [Armed Forces Day Preparations Underway](#), 11 May 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Defence, [Nottingham Hosts Fifth Annual Armed Forces Day](#), 29 June 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Defence, [Stirling to Host Armed Forces Day 2014](#), 27 August 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Defence, [Guildford to Host Armed Forces Day 2015](#), 28 August 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Armed Forces Day, [A Royal Welcome in Cleethorpes](#), 19 May 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Defence, [Armed Forces Day 2017 to be Hosted by Liverpool](#), 25 July 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Armed Forces Day, [AFD National Event](#), accessed 8 June 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Conwy County Borough Council, [Armed Forces Day: Newsletter No 1](#), November 2017, p 1.

<sup>21</sup> Zara Whelan, [UK Armed Forces Day Is Taking Place in North Wales—And It's Going To Be Huge](#), *Daily Post*, 13 June 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Conwy County Borough Council, [Armed Forces Day 2018—Programme of Activities](#), accessed 15 June 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Armed Forces Day, [Find Events](#), accessed 11 May 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Sinn Fein, [Statement by Sinn Fein on 'Armed Forces' Flag at Belfast City Hall](#), 24 June 2009.

<sup>25</sup> *The Scotsman*, [Thirteen Held After Forces Day Protest](#), 28 June 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel Sanderson, [Armed Forces Day Kids With Guns Controversy at Family Celebration for British Troops](#), *The Herald*, 29 June 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Symon Hill, [Growing Culture of Militarism in UK](#), *Guardian*, 28 April 2018.

<sup>28</sup> BBC News, [Thousands Attend Armed Forces Day](#), 27 June 2009.

<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Defence, [UK Armed Forces Quarterly Service Personnel Statistics: 1 April 2018](#), 17 May 2018, p 4.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p 9.

<sup>31</sup> Ministry of Defence, [Annual Report and Accounts 2016–17](#), 19 July 2017, HC 21 of session 2017–18, p 14.

<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Defence, [UK Defence in Numbers](#), September 2017, p 2.

<sup>33</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, [Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries \(2010–2017\)](#), 29 June 2017, p 3.

<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Defence, [UK Defence in Numbers](#), September 2017, p 8.

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