

Future Reserves 2020

A Contribution and Think Piece – Brigadier Roger Hood QVRM TD DL

New thinking proposes a multi-skilled National Reserve that capitalises on the volunteering ethos of many UK citizens who are willing to defend this country and help other people.

The three perspectives of this paper

From the perspective of the Prime Minister and the Government, we should accept that the Future of the Reserves could extend well beyond the MOD. It is a national issue and impacts Government and the protection of the UK.

Secondly, the perspective is 2020, and any UK reserve needs to be configured for a decade hence. [The review team will know that in 2000 nobody predicted the momentous world events and wars of the last ten years. A vivid reminder of how much change occurs in ten years]. It is axiomatic that the Armed Forces will change their role, purpose, size and structure, significantly by 2020, a period which will span economic recovery and two more Strategic Defence Reviews.

Thirdly, the Armed Forces will need to be prepared to defend the UK from multiple, simultaneous threats that will be diverse in character and unconventional. This all comes at a time when the UK's Armed Forces and its Reserves are at their smallest for a century. These circumstances demand new thinking and access to wide ranging capabilities.

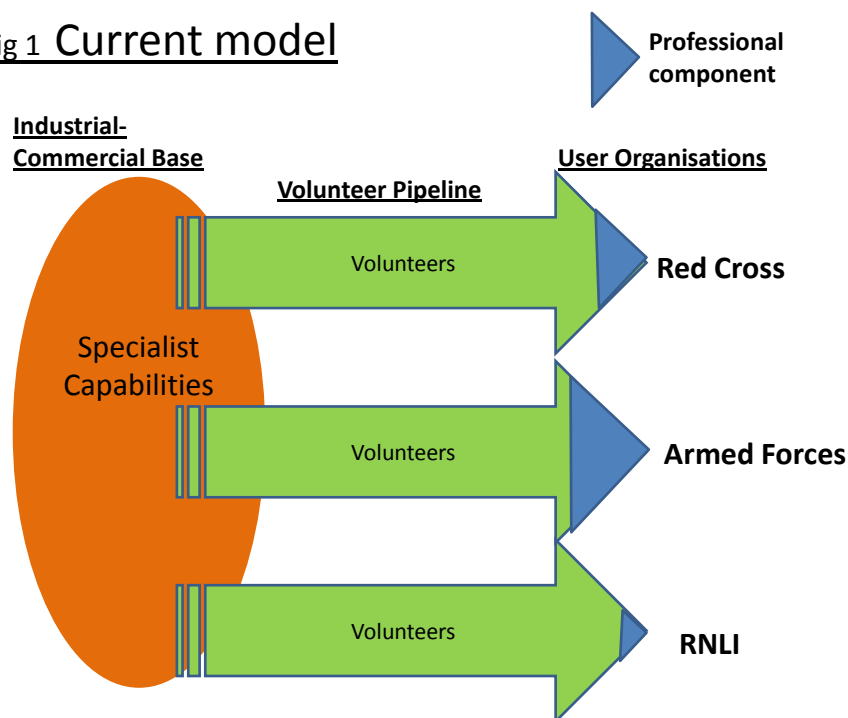
Therefore the current Future Reserves 2020 recommendations should include a blueprint for a new Reserve Capability for the UK by 2020. When and how the reserves will be constituted and used is a national question, not just an MOD question, and it involves myriad stakeholders; the volunteers, employers, families, local communities, the nation, the regular Armed Forces, the emergency services and other professional organisations.

Considering the UK's Armed Forces Reserves in this wider, national, context is completely consistent with the principles recently espoused by General Lamb and Colonel Williams, and discussed at the RUSI conference in December 2010.

The Future.

In the future we can expect that a trained reserve will be needed to supplement many professional groups spanning the police, ambulance/medical, lifeboats, Army, Navy, Air Force, fire and rescue, communicators, Samaritans and mountain rescue, for example. In reacting to certain unexpected events the same skill sets will be in demand to supplement those provided by the professionals. Today, there are an estimated 170,000* adult volunteers that train and practice with their respective professional organisations across the UK and are available to be 'called-out' as required. This current model is depicted in Figure 1. It illustrates how each volunteer organisation, whether government or charity sponsored, has its own, dedicated, Volunteer Pipeline which is connected to society through the commercial, industrial and public sectors that trains the people in the necessary skills for their civilian occupations, eg medics, engineers, administrators, accountants, communicators etc.

Fig 1 Current model



There is a striking similarity in structure adopted by each user organisation. It is noticeable that the Armed Forces is unique in having a large cadre of regular professionals. St John Ambulance, for instance, has 1 regular to every 9 volunteers, and other organisations and are coordinated by a few professionals.

I suggest the Prime Minister has given the Review owners, VCDS and Julian Brazier MP, a unique opportunity to propose a new framework for the use of the nation's volunteers. The paper develops this theme by recognising that a trained pool of volunteers could exist for use by the Armed Forces in support of an ever decreasing regular force. It also recognises that the increasing diversity of tasks which may be allocated to the Armed Forces, particularly in the fields of cyber security, terrorism, stabilisation operations and post conflict reconstruction.

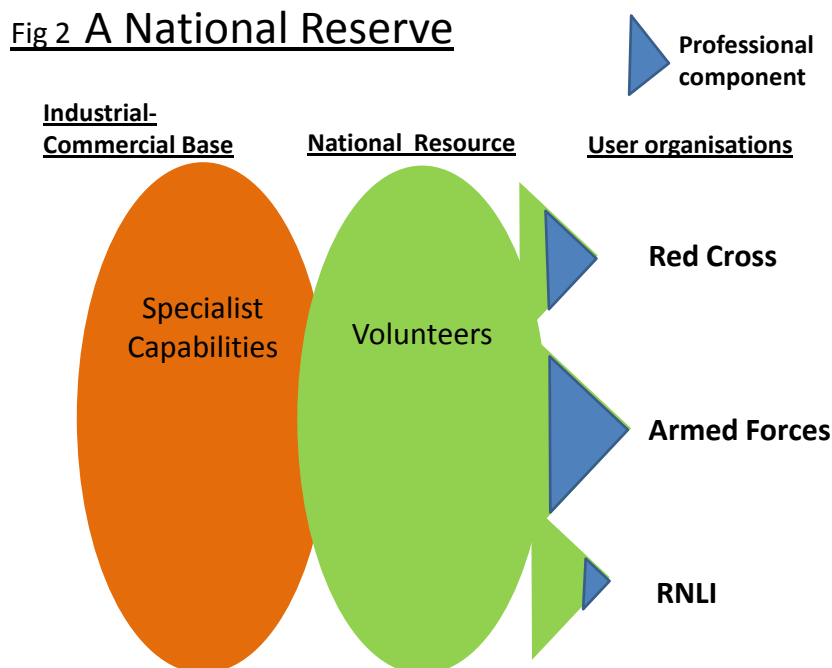
The Future Character of Conflict (FCC) acknowledges that the Armed Forces will require timely access to niche and specialist skills to enable 'conventional military operations' to progress at the necessary pace, even in State-on-State conflicts; multi- media operations and rapid intelligence analysis being cases in point. The FCC expects the 21st Century adversary to coordinate attacks on the target region's infrastructure, thereby prosecuting war against a population on several fronts simultaneously. Today, the UK Armed Forces are only really equipped, at scale, to deal by kinetic means.

A new concept for 2020

In 2020 we do not know what demands will be placed upon the UK Armed Forces, nor do we know the nature of the threats. However, an enduring and multi-skilled volunteer reserve of, say, 1/4 million people who are trained in specialist skills, and are used to accepting different styles of

command and coordination, could be drawn upon by whichever professional structure is in command of a situation, eg police, local authority, military, coastguard. This is true whether it is in the UK or overseas, it is war, peace keeping, stabilisation operations or disaster relief. To some people it might be regarded as ‘an appropriate mobilisation to deliver a Comprehensive Effect’ (cf delivering the Comprehensive Approach).

This new concept is depicted as Figure 2, where the quality and size of the common resource pool has been dramatically increased for use by any one professional organisation. Army, Navy and RAF Reserves have always been resilient and able to change to new conditions, and it is assumed the same thread runs through the volunteer ethos of the Red Cross, Auxiliary Firefighters, Police Specials, Lifeboat crews and the St John Ambulance....many of whom have volunteered to help in worldwide disasters in addition to their UK commitments. I contend that the volunteers will adapt faster than it will take to create a new National Reserve that is homogeneous, functionally linked and effectively coordinated. It may require a coordinating body, such as a National Reserve Authority, to provide the glue between the various organisations and to mobilise the unique skills for an event.



I urge the Future Reserves team to rise to the challenge and propose a Framework for a National Reserve for 2020, or earlier. A Framework capable of dealing with the unknown issues of the next decade by having a volunteer pool of sufficient size and motivation that it can meet all of the needs of the nation, including the needs of the Armed Forces. It should also have a wider utility for local and regional disasters.

For the last three decades Britain’s UK Armed Forces have excelled in providing and commanding the headquarters for coalition operations of the ARRC, UN and NATO. Here, a coalition of volunteers is

being proposed that could greatly extend the capability envelope of the Armed Forces by 2020. This coalition of reserves might also be regarded as an important component of the 'Big Society'.

This paper makes the case for a National Reserve of volunteers capable of supporting several professional organisations – the defence reserve component of the National Reserve would be trained by the military. It harnesses the volunteering ethos of many citizens to the benefit of the United Kingdom.

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ANNEX

1. *Volunteer Statistics (adults) (sourced from internet searches, Dec 2010)

a. Military Reserves	32,000
b. St John Ambulance	21,000
c. Red Cross	20,000
d. Police Specials	15,000
e. Auxiliary Fire-fighters	18,000
f. RNLI	4,500
g. WRVS	45,000
h. Samaritans	<u>17,000</u>
	<u>172,500</u>

2. Possible skill sets envisaged within the National Reserve:

- a. Military, Naval and RAF service personnel
- b. Medics
- c. Police
- d. Fire, Search and Rescue
- e. Logisticians
- f. Information Communication Technologists
- g. Multi – media communicators
- h. Engineers – energy, water, civil, building, infrastructure,
- i. Legal advisers, judiciary
- j. Transportation specialists
- k. Mountain-earthquake rescuers
- l. Spiritual leaders
- m. Local government and administration
- n. CBRN & hazardous environment operators

3. Anticipated Threats

- a. Cyber Attack
- b. Economic Corruption
- c. Communication Infiltration

- d. Terrorist Attacks; kinetic, CBRN,
- e. Energy & Transport Disruption
- f. Expeditionary wars and reconstruction
- g. Expeditionary peacekeeping

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