**Group: J**

**Interviewer:** Gavin Randell (GR)

**Date:** 3 May 22, 1945hrs

**Location:** Windsor

GR: So this is group Juliet. The recorder is now on. My first question, by way of an ice breaker, is who here has deployed on operations with the Army Reserve before?

J1: I haven’t, no.

J3: No.

J2: No.

GR: Not Op RESCRIPT? Nothing to do with that? You said you were an ex-regular. Did you deploy operations?

J2: Yes, multiple HERRICKS.

GR: Okay was that as a, in this kind of unit as a signaller or different type of unit?

J2: It was Signals, different trade, but yeah.

GR: OK. So we’ve got obviously some operational experience and then and then less either side, but that’s absolutely fine and it kind of reflects the broad range of experience I think within the Army Reserve as a whole. My first substantial question is, how important do you think it is that reserves mobilise and deploy as part of their service?

J1: I think it’s pretty important. I put my name down multiple times to do different things or whatever came up, there hasn’t been that much. It was a TOSCA and a TORAL. Nothing anywhere near your level. But that was the only sort of like opportunities other than the Kenyas come up and I put my name down. But it wasn’t successful for either, obviously. But I think it’s pretty much every individual should try and look themselves, because you’ve trained so hard to do it. You should be put into action and that’s what’s required, in my opinion.

J3: Yeah, I agree. I think especially with the amount of cuts into the regular army, and that being increasingly downsized. You know, you think in theory that they would put that bit more emphasis on reserves, actually you know, as you say, actually putting their name down to go forward for service. I mean it’s kind of joining up quite like my dad been in the Reserves for about 30 years or so. He put his name down for tours and operations and never actually got to go on one. So yeah, I think the more opportunities you get to go out there actually show what you’ve learned, but actually, yeah to do it in an operational context is becoming a lot more important.

J2: I’d like to reinforce that point. It’s absolutely essential and some regular units, they would not be able to actually accomplish their objectives without boosters from the reservists. My last unit was \_\_\_\_\_\_[regular unit], which is ECM [electronic counter measures]. And we had, on every team that we sent out. We could not maintain an adequate number of like manpower to actually do the job. So we have to get reservists in because we wouldn’t have been able to do the job and we would undergo six months of training, pre-deployment training before we even go and do our infantry skills. And we would always have two to three reservists from a variety of different units. And they always brought something else to the table, like one other reserve we had was ex-regular and the other one was civilian PTI, I forget exactly what his thing was. We would go out on squadded runs and would use his skills, and the ex-regular was ex-infantry so we’d have his wealth of knowledge. You wouldn’t have got that with regulars trained in-house because they are all the same. They have very few extra life experiences to bring to the party. Reservists are a tool that are relatively under-utilised.

J1: Just out of interest, when you went on your tours, were there more and more reservists each time you went or was it relatively the same?

J2: It was pretty much consistent cause that that wasn’t an SOP for the unit, certainly because we had, trying to remember the specifics of the numbers, it’s been like seven years. We were a training team of 6-7 regular, bar me, SPSL, all Lance Corporals. But then we would have acting ranks from almost any unit in the Signals that would come in. I remember a couple of teams specifically that were not out that long and they always have something to prove, and very often performed better, both in a fitness level and a trade level than the regulars, including myself. But they would come from backgrounds, they were joining the reservists, they volunteer for the operations. So they wanted to be there. Now, \_\_\_\_\_\_[their previous regular unit] a very, very good unit and a lot of people wanted to deploy with them. But without that, that niche job would not be able to, would not have been tenable, I don’t think.

GR: OK. So, you’ve mentioned certainly that the organisation is a whole gets a lot from it. Reservists are integral to what the Army needs, in terms of both numbers and particular skillsets. Why do you feel, personally, that that it’s important? Maybe personally for you? We’ve already mentioned that the amount of effort you put in personally to date, it would be a culmination in terms of mobilisation. Are there any other factors that make you feel that that’s important?

J1: Well, you sign on the dotted line. You got all the benefits out of everything, to do, and you’ve basically worked. You’ve got, like all the AT and everything else. Other bits and bobs, I’ve grown as an individual through it and the experiences that a lot of my peers, friends outside the Army never get. It feels like you’ve done it, you’ve signed on the dotted line, and you have the potential, and you always look to do that. You might as well do it when you should do it. It’s a sense of you got all the nice things you have to do, what you signed up to.

GR: You feel like it’s a duty to give something back to the organisation for what you’ve received?

J1: That’s what you signed up to. You got the good things, and you’ve driven, and you’ve always designed to go that way. That’s what you should do.

GR: Okay.

J2: I might argue with you!

GR: Please do.

J2: I don’t think…so, you mentioned signing on the dotted line with duty and they’re all good things, but just to throw spanners. Ultimately, when you’re when you’re doing whatever it is you signed up for, you're not thinking about the fact that you signed up for it. You’re there, you’re in a situation. You will get done what needs to be done. But the people that signed the dotted line, I think from, experience, and it is limited…If you say like “all I’ve done,” it’s not that much in the grand scheme of things, the people that signed the dotted line are the people that are going to get up and do it anyway. So it’s not other things about signing the dotted line and doing the duty I think it’s more that the Reserves attract, by being publicly doing these things, they attract the right kind of people. Just being, like, so I signed here in September. So I did my attestation second time in September and because I haven’t had any mil kit, I haven’t actually been able to do any of the skills or any of the training. But I have watched everybody in the squad to try and work out the difference between reserves and regulars so vast. Doesn’t, I can’t even fathom! How did the, sort of, the whole operation is different than…with the regulars, it becomes a job. And I didn’t even think I thought about, well I’ve got to do the bad stuff with the good stuff. After five years, it’s kind of blurs together. And in a year later is all good stuff. But the bad stuff is also good stuff. When you are volunteering for each thing you can decide no, I’m not going to turn up tonight. The people that turn up, they are the people that you want left and right of you.

GR: Almost like you, you volunteer every evening, every weekend, whereas as a regular volunteer once, and that’s kind of it until you leave the service because as you say, it’s a job.

J2: Yeah. It’s hard being a Reservist. Because, yeah, you’ve got to get in your car. [laughing]

J1: I’m not gonna lie, when I was doing my PNCO. Whatever they call the Lance-Jack course.

J2: Junior Cadre?

J1: I was Junior PNCO and it always got drummed into me, I think it’s ALDP now. Yeah, change. When I was on that, you did feel like there was the scenario of, there is a regular course in there’s like only two reserves on it and you didn’t, I do feel like I understand that scenario like ‘coz I watched. It is like there’s a lot of guys just like doing it is the normal swing of it and then they saw me just like bumbling around ‘coz that’s what I did. I took two weeks of holidays to go and do this, so I might as well enjoy it! [laughing] Even if it…

J2: Yeah, there is a difference, a distinct difference.

GR: OK, so you give up something, so there’s no point in giving up your holiday from work to do something you're not interested in. It may as well be something good that you feel positively about. Okay. Thinking then about the sorts of operations that your unit might do. What kinds of operations do you think your unit might be suited to?

[pause]

J2: I’m going last!

J3: I’ve only just transferred in, so…[laughing]

J1: Well, I think saying having the BOWMAN detachments on here as an operational use is an absolute joke, for the sense of…

GR: Sorry, absolutely…?

J1: Nothing.

GR: Not useful?

J1: Not useful for the sense of the BOWMAN equipment that we use is so outdated versus what NATO use. Because I’ve been, I’ve gone and done little NATO exercise like two weeks or whatever, and we were so left on the side of it and then having conversations with individuals. As what we are defined to be, as part of NATO, even the squadrons you used to be so much more linked to NATO, even our parent unit don’t use BOWMAN or what level work, so having a detachment to go out and do something I don’t think will have…I don’t think would have to go out as a self-run individual thing and actually be useful.

GR: And presumably that’s an Army wide problem. The kit and equipment we have as you’re suggesting is not interoperable with NATO?

J1: Well, I wouldn’t say, I haven’t say like. Yeah, well, in the sense of regular counterparts won’t use it as heavily as what we have…is the feeling that I’ve got under my understanding of what I’ve got from other people is that there’s a sense of, a lot of units will end up using other equipment. There is no regular counterparts. When we went with BOWMAN equipment when we went out, we were the only...We were the only assets out there, forgotten assets is what I felt. Even on a NATO-led scenario. But to go back to regular points, when we went on that, a lot of regular units whet, “you will never get that, the comms will be replaced,” but we ended up doing because we fought that hard to do. But that’s all we did. Once we set it up, we were useless, after that because we were next to generators.

GR: So you feel like you’re training for warfighting on equipment which is obsolete or just not useful in the grand scheme of things, for the role that you would have.

J1: Yes. Then for on the secondary role of what to, quite a lot of I feel, the reservists are moving towards are the home assets, scenario, I think we’d be fine. But we don’t use enough data. Data is a huge asset. Having just setting up basically terminals, laptops and everything. don’t use that enough, so if the blue lights ever needed us, we probably wouldn’t be as strong asset as they would require of us. That’s what I believe.

GR: OK.

J2: I think you sell yourself short.

J1: Maybe!

J2: I’m gonna use more regular service examples, cause they’re the only ones I’ve got. My first operational tour, our entire regiment deployed. We didn’t take any radios! It wasn’t radios that we needed. Because we were not using CLANSMAN, BOWMAN, we’d just left PTARMIGAN as well, in Afghanistan as a unit. We went out there to provide comms to everybody, but the comms we were providing, in the main were not radios, it was information systems, ‘cos that will what was needed and... But, hey, you know, BASTION, we set up BASTION in the very beginning. But the skills that you gain from knowing what frequency ranges certain radio bands work at, how cables plug in together, voice procedure. The knowledge is what the unit gives you. It’s not the kit. I don’t rate BOWMAN that highly because on ops you're not really talking to people over radio. Well, yes, you are. But you’re a signalman, you’ll be one signalmen in a FOB using the one radio that they have to communicate over certain range. More often than not you will be re-roled training on a specific thing and send out to do that job, and then perhaps re-roled again whilst on tour. So operationally, I don’t think this unit will be using BOWMAN anyway. Take us, the skills that you’ve got, how to use radios and all say, right, you need to know how REACHER works.

J1: But that said, that’s a, like, for me, that I don’t think that would be a huge issue for the sense of, but I’ve got IT skills outside. I’m saying I’m not saying that basically, I’m trying to say is, what we are spending hours in, what I’ve spent like an extra 2 hours today looking after my vehicle in that sense, it seems…just a mundane scenario. If you get, and I completely agree with what you say. That’s what I envisioned it would probably be, but I’m saying for what…but yeah…

GR: So just taking away, for a second, the actual equipment you’ve got and go back to your point of the core skills that you learn. Even if you were to be given a completely different sets of equipment and enough time to learn it, do you think that do you feel confident that with that training you’d actually be able to go out there and do your job? So as individuals?

J1: Yes.

J2: If it’s a radio and it uses RF and you got a precis, anyone in this building can learn! Or they should have the confidence because they’ve already learned it.

GR: The principles being the same, and so you have the building blocks, it’s just a different box with different buttons and knobs?

J2: Yeah.

GR: You mentioned for a second the secondary role, the UK operations. Do you think the same applies to that? Same idea?

J1: Reality. Yes. So like we used to have a….oh I forgot…I can’t remember what it is now. We haven’t had it in so long it got removed. It was like all the laptops and everything basically to make it like they like HQ sort of thing. And you have all these different laptops, all different connexions and everything like that. And that always seems like a strong asset, but then the regulars…our equipment got taken away from us. It was seen as it was required by something else. I think we could, we could, if push comes to shove, and needed things to be done. I think that we could do it and what we have now, even just a BOWMAN would do something. But it would be a first stage and something else would overtake us.

GR: You mentioned quite a lot about equipment and that kind of thing. What about the people? Do you feel like you’ve got a strong team here that could deal with anything that the Army throws at it?

J1: I would say 5050 of the scenario of it that you want. You have to put some individuals that really wanted to do it and then there’s some individuals that have turned this into, I’ve been in so long and then sort of just dragging out or wanting to have the fun part more than they want the other bits. Plus, there’s the technical individuals for our trade, I feel, and there are theother individuals, either soldiers, more soldiery sort of individuals or they are non-green in general. That’s all those, of, three categories come here. So it’s a 50/50 scenario for who would get selected depends on the answer. I think we could it. And I think enough time, yes, I think we could get it going.

J2: I think with the with the manpower thing again, I’m going to compare with how the regulars work! This unit, as an operational capable unit was given a fast baller it would collapse. There’s no strict chain of command that is clarified to all its personnel. So I got here in September and ye, OK, so I came from the regulars, but I’ve been seven years out of the regulars, I know how to change command works. I know how to recognise a rank and I know what regular appointments are and what their responsibilities are but here because of the under manning status, the people are dual, tri-roling. We got regular personality go, reservists. I don’t want to do specific examples that would require names, but we have certain ranks in certain positions. That are doing different jobs so without having a Troop ORBAT of what everyone’s responsibility it would look at utterly chaotic as it appears to change regularly. What happens when an ASP Signaller needs assistance. He goes to his chain of command, which is an app on his phone. Which requires them to see it’s okay, so you can do some stuff when you’re not in unit and this is how reservist units must work, but it would take so long. I’ve been here…I’ve never been here more than two weeks in a row. But the numbers and the people that turn up for the different, if that’s already become quite obvious to me, other we need to see who turns up...[pauses]…it’s not gonna work!

GR: So you have you have a core of people that turn up quite regularly.

J2: Yes.

GR: But yes, You’re suggesting that that doesn’t really constitute a useful military team?

J2: No.

GR: It’s a collection of individuals rather than the military team, as you might understand it?

J2: Yeah, I would say that. Based on my experience, you know, I mean…I don’t even know if there is a call-out list. Well, let’s say somebody broke into the armoury and we need all hands on deck. I mean, I know there is no ammunition within 200 metres of here, but if we needed to organise that for whatever reason, let’s say Russia does a special military operation in the UK. I can imagine if the UK gets invaded, we’re going to have as many people with a rifle in their hands as possible. I don’t know. I’m not paid enough to even think about that. I play computer games! When you do that kind of thing, and this is what happens. You know, you grab a gun, start shooting. It would never happen. Not a single person is building would get their hands on a rifle because there’s no…You know, you should be able to look at single piece of paper and call someone, that person calls these two, that person…that kind of organisation doesn’t even exist? We did a call-out in Lisburn Barracks. Yes, okay, Northern Ireland is slightly more kinetic than Windsor! But that ability needs to be…you know, and no one’s said...the only actions-on are we have is for a fire alarm. One of my actions-on when we actually find something at, whatever time, 1925, just before parade. But everyone’s gaggled up in the hall. I mean, I’ve never done Op WIDEAWAKE because I’m in duty troop and I haven’t been able to get up here early enough. I wanna do it, ‘cos I wanna to see what kind of levels of discipline Op WIDEAWAKE has. I’ve done Op WIDEAWAKE and we have found something, and I know how an Op WIDEAWAKE is supposed to work when you actually find something that no one’s planned for. And it…it would...collapse.

J1: I’ve found shit.

J2: Yeah?

J1: Yeah, in the post-box.

J2: Oh yeah?

J1: Yeah! Somebody-

J2: Okay what happened?

J1: Well, we went and kicked it! [laughing]

J2: But *that* is perfect! Yeah, I, I… [flabbergasted] I mean, this is anonymized, but I think the whole…

J1: I get what you mean, I think, COVID’s killed it. I mean, I don’t know what you think. There’s no…it’s not gone back into the scenario because it’s not, there’s not been any, like…the vehicles haven’t gone out. Things haven’t happened, like the way…You’ve also got a very….new…squadron in my eyes for a lot of the lower blokes. Upper ones have been here a long while. Well, so I think they should be. Those two things haven’t helped. The scenario, it has exacerbated it. It’s never been great, but it has exacerbated it. That’s my opinion.

J2: So you notice the change between pre and post COVID?

J1: Massively.

J2: OK.

J1: COVID has killed it we haven’t… It’s just a simple thing of we haven’t gone out and used vehicles. People haven’t gone out inside start screaming at individuals like in fire and manoeuvres. When we went and did our ECT, it was very back to basics because we had a lot of new blokes. We had a problem with people got injured and stuff, and we had off. I ended up being, went from 2IC, to IC, and I had, I lost half my section from injuries cause it’s some noise thing and honest to God it was… basically grabbing individual that had more than a year experience was fucking hard! And I literally brough, yeah, I was literally 2IC to a bloke who was like in for two years, he was all…still a bit like blergh.

J2: That’s what you get paid for! [laughing]

GR: Which is quite different from the proposition of ‘grab a rifle.’

J2: I was using extremes!

GR: Of course.

J1: But you didn’t even have to like… you always have the guys that….obviously your rank and you are supposed to do it. Meringue can use voice to do it. You don’t even have the old private…the old one that you can go here, “You look after Johnny.” They’re all fucking Johnny’s! It was more than likely going to end in…level…sort of like…You can’t keep an eye on everything. It was pretty…I think that’s the sense of COVID has killed a lot of it.

GR: So lots of enthusiasm, but a lot of challenges as well? As someone who is much newer, is that something you recognise?

J3: I was about to say, because before I came here is much newer is absolutely. Cotton covered this before I came here. I was part of the OTC, then I was still living in Bristol and I was with the \_\_\_\_\_\_[reserve unit] in Bristol, and I went there about six weeks before we went into lockdown. And as things happened, they basically said, “right, unless you are fully trained, don’t come in.” So I was pretty much there for about six months not being able to do anything. And by the time I came back, I was the only recruit that came back after that. So I completely agree. I wasn’t even…I didn’t even know who is in the chain of command, what processes were all these kinds of things. We only went back to face to face training for about another six weeks before we were back into lockdown then it was training over zoom for another five months after that. So, see I completely agree with what you are saying, I mean that definitely didn’t help. He didn’t. You know, actually, you know, I was with them for over a year and I didn’t do any training with them at all. And yeah, it just felt bit pointless. I can’t really comment on what it’s been like here, obviously you two would be better qualified on that.

J1: Well I was OTC as well. And I know a lot of blokes who are sporadically through and a lot they have had feelings like that. The infantry with probably the best out the lot as they did…we’ll the London ones. Seem to went, press the fucking button! Ended up their…CQB quite quickly, faster than what….Compared to here.

GR: By CQB you mean reacting to the situation?

J1: Oh, no, I mean like going in houses. You know going ‘round-

J2: -Close Quarter Battle.

GR: Sorry. I see.

J1: Yeah, Close Quarter Battle. Err, what’s it? FIBUA or FISH or whatever.

J2: FISH? Is that a new one?

J1: Fighting in someone’s house! [laughing] That sort of level!

J3: CHIPS as well!

J1: [laughing] And they were…but here it got to the point it was like we can’t go in the dets, because of COVID. Fair enough because you would be too close. You can’t see anyone else, when I went on…just…it’s very…like my experience of COVID, it was very…one second it was all bad and you have to protect it. And then I went on my Lance Jack course everyone has to have their own basha, but they were in the fucking block, every bed was taken up and there was double beds. It was like very…like

J2: Do you notice it improving?

J1: It’s getting better, it’s getting better, but I still feel like everyone is scared of the scenario of….we haven’t done anything, so everyone’s really scared of, “ohh, we don’t know what vehicle is gonna be like this like.” Okay, fair enough, you’re trying to protect us. Let’s take the driving for example. Our Regiment went from, ahh, none can drive, everyone’s going to blow up and die if anyone drives! To, oh fuck! We suddenly need drivers and we haven’t put anything in. Everyone’s fine to drive! It was like. it literally was that was a piece of paper that went from, I will blow up everything car!

J2: That’s pretty normal. Army stuff!

J1: Yeah, I understand, it’s an Army thing over it. Like the rifle cleaning or whatever. But it just feels like everything is trying to be too protective.

GR: Do you feel like there’s a fear of failure?

J1: Hugely. Scared that we’re all going to fuck up. You’ve got to do that, okay. Alright, maybe don’t take a load of like Land Rovers and have more bods in a detachment than like standard. Like four, maybe have six or whatever and then you can go through it and there’s more people to check like involved in it. Yeah? Versus…And then you get vehicles out and they think you might not even have to do a full tap one, you could do the whole, like I said as with support or do it as a UK ops scenario and then push out. Just try and get some momentum…[pauses]

GR: That that’s really useful. Thank you. And I think I sensed the frustration in your voice in that you clearly feel passionately that you want things to be better than you currently perceive them to be. You clearly put a lot of time and effort into coming here and turning out and you want things to be better for everybody than perhaps they currently are, so there’s nothing wrong with that, certainly. Turning towards the prospect of mobilisation or operations, then. What do you think makes it difficult or unattractive to mobilise and deploy on operations from your perspective?

J1: So, like my thing is that the Army is trying to put a lot more reserves in the sense of, be more based UK like and that will free up regulars to go and do what they need to abroad. But it’s like the sense of, sometimes you want to have feel like you’re just driving, like going up to Scotland and driving out like an Ambulance here. If you have the C licence or not, maybe want to do a little bit more kinetic or whatever like that. It sounds stupid…but it’s also what’s on the table. And also what your employer will do. Like some will play ball. Play. Mine doesn’t really want to play ball. With all that sort of stuff….

GR: So employers are potentially difficult, but you also want something meaningful and challenging to do as well in that.

J1: Yeah.

GR: Without that incentive, it’s quite unappealing?

J1: Yeah.

GR: How about you?

J2: I am constantly comparing regulars and reserves. I’m trying to get out of the habit ‘cos it’s pointless, because I’m not a regular anymore! But looking at things like RAPS…

GR: That’s the pay system?

J2: Yeah. Yeah, still getting used to it. No-one ever told me about it either. I just go on the Defence Connect, which was only actually just been…Oh, you've all got Defence Connect now and then I left. So it was really great to see all of that! Anyway… Where was I going? [pauses]…oh yeah, mobilisation…[pauses] gone. I’ll gather my thoughts, you go on.

J3: Well, it’s hard for me to say because obviously I’m still quite new to it all, but I mean, I get the fact what you said about employers and things like that because in my old job that had they were very, very against it. But the new company that I work for now, they pretty much have a whole policy for Reservists. Cause I mean it's quite easy because when the company I work for are quite, you know they are global companies, they do have a policy for it. So I know that if I do get mobilised, for me won’t be an issue. But yeah, I completely understand when you say that. I think that, to me that seems to be the main sort of draw back and actually getting the tick in the box for it.

GR: OK.

J2: Cool. There’s so many opportunities, mobilisation opportunities. That’s why I mentioned RAPS and all the newsletters for all the different units, which I don’t have access to anymore! Looking through them all and seeing all of the unit responsibilities, I’m just wondering if you want more opportunities. There’s nothing stopping you sidestepping the chain of command, you’re not going over the chain of command. You are just literally going wooop [gestures sideways with hands]. To other units and saying, do you want help on this exercise? Or coming up to them and asking if they need a hand or something like that. I did that in the regulars. It’s feasible as long as your CO is happy with you jumping ship a little bit. But with Reserves you don’t, you don’t even need that. You’ve got a whole regiment of opportunities and it’s like you can take your pick and yeah, you need to worry about your employer. I don’t have that problem, fortunately, because I made the decision to no longer work for anybody else, ironically, by the chain of command again! But I’m here as a volunteer. I could not turn up for six months. That would affect my integrity, but the opportunity to not is there. But yeah, there’s so many things opportunities, but yeah, you pay for everything now. The financial incentive is negligible. It’s literally duty or fun. And I see the two go hand-in-hand, so…

J1: I think the government how much the…becoming a Reserve is to be a crutch. Like how much they want it to be so much more than what it is going to be. They basically have to change the laws around it too. In my opinion, to make it, if you work, if you operate in this country, you accept that these individuals are that. I know they have to, I know it’s not gonna be feasible, but how much they feel when we have the meeting with the OC a few months ago on how like what they felt like the Army was going to change and use the Reserves as a massive crutch for the shrinking of it all. Something’s gotta change because you’ve got you’ve got basically going to make the Reserves eligible to it. Whereas keeping old laws and old establishments isn’t working.

GR: So you’re saying, maybe taking some of the element of choice out of it? Clearly you volunteer turn up every Tuesday, Wednesday evening.

J1: From the employer more.

GR: I see. OK.

J1: So the employers don’t have the choice. They accept…I took my Army career like being a Reserve out of my CV originally coz it did change. I suddenly got first. And I knew other people that have done…

GR: But you feel some employers are, like maybe some reservists, willing to accept the benefits of having the support from the Army-

J1: Totally.

GR: -but not willing to pay the price by having some of their employees as reservists.

J1 You can’t prove it. They’ll just put it on some other scenario. And it’s not just me either.

J2: It’s a bit of a…culture change, isn’t it?

J1: Well, yes, when I was OTC, like, when we were all coming out of uni so there is and I will go other experiences so I literally like put my OTC as my final year, like scenario. I didn’t put I was in the Signals and suddenly the jobs came flying in. I even told some of the people that were trying to get me jobs, drop it, and suddenly I got more responses. It was a big culture change.

J2: That’s like saying you don’t have to tell a prospective employer about disability.

J1: Well, you don’t!

J2: [laughing]

J1: Well it was a scenario, I walked in. And I was like, “Yeah, I’m a Reservist”. Like when I went in and they had to make the policy for me.

J2: [laughing]

J1: And it wasn’t a small company. I don’t know how they didn’t. They are like the biggest privately owned software company in the UK.

J2: Cool!

J1: And they didn’t have one until I joined. And it’s only just suddenly changed.

J2: They didn’t have one that was out of being a reservist? That’s kinda weird.

J1: But you’ve gotta change to be doable. You know, what I mean, I know there’s going to be exemptions say if you’re a doctor, would be one of the examples. Or a GP, all those other things. But obviously there going to be some examples, of the rules that if you are genuinely needed. If you are just a fucking infantry then you might just…but if you are a doctor maybe it’s not worth it.

J2: But that was that was done.

J1: It probably is.

J2: In [unintelligible], that was done. They didn’t deploy nurses.

J1: I’m not saying…not things…but I know that they started to think about that. But my external skills, I can actually change squadrons to join a specialist squadron because I’m a software engineer.

J2: Cool! I’d do that! [laughing] My specialisation is engineers…

J1: Well you could do a national service on, which they do with reduced days. You don’t have to do…

J2: We’ll we won’t be seeing you for much longer!

GR: So we spoke a little bit about the disincentives. On the other hand, what do you think makes it easier or attractive to potentially mobilise and deploy with the Army Reserve? We’ve mentioned duty as one thing, but the actual, what makes mobilisation seem attractive to you?

J3: I guess like you were saying earlier, like the opportunity to put things that you’ve actually learned into practise, ‘coz I mean as we mentioned earlier on you have to bring yourself here on Tuesday night, go away on weekends. Give up holidays, you know, evenings, things like that and to actually go and put into practise, I think, you know, for me, that would be a big incentive to mobilise. I don’t know if you two agree?

J1: But there’s also the ones that you hear. Suddenly changes. You’ll be surprised how much saying, went on HERRICK, or who actually went and did this stuff when versus when you don’t. You see the difference between like the NCOs, I think. Like if you honestly feel like NCOs are someone that has done that, I think it becomes…people listen to them or there are the exceptions who just stand there chatting dits and don’t actually do much but…you do see yourself become better. I think, I don’t know…I see them individually be better ‘coz they’ve had the experience. That’s it in my eyes. It’s not just about what you have, it’s what the majority has.

J2: Apart from the obvious incentives like, you get a ton of money, you get to put into practise skills that you’ve learned and will then understand that some of them are very valuable and some of the not. Educates you into knowing where you want to spend your energy. There’s hidden incentives as well, which you won’t realise until you actually do this. And it is what you just touch the experience once you’ve got a little bit of experience in something and you can bring it back, and then you can spread it as long as you got the confidence to do so and spread it to the rest of the unit. And that’s why I found certainly with my last unit, with regs. The team that came back off ops would then teach the team about to go on ops. So you would always have a team going out that was bang up to date with SOPs, TTPs… current operational modus operandi, or whatever the correct terminology is, I have long forgotten most of it. But the teamwork thing as well. Like, there’s no consistent, like, the point we made before, there’s no consistent team, but if you take that team that you’ve made, you deploy them out on whatever it is, whether it’s a two-day hike across a mountain, in sweltering heat or training for the lanyard trophy, which I can’t wait for by the way, or an operational tour for six months. Each one gives the intangible stuff that the ability to form relationships and close knit team while completing an objective is not understated and the problem is, with reservists, they have to volunteer to actually experience that because they don’t get that in barracks. Doing a little bit of drill gives you a very tiny amount of camaraderie forming, you know if you do it in time and the correct drill movements and all that crap. Yeah, once you get a team out, and the experience of working together. That’s the incentive for me.

GR: Yeah.

J2: Because I’ve done it. And I know how good it feels when you get something done. That was…not plausible and you and guys around you manage to actually make it work. The confidence that gives you to achieve whatever the hell you want is immense and a lot of regulars don’t get that. But with reservists you get to pick and choose. You can choose what you want to do. It’s great!

GR: Yeah.

J2: It’s so good!

GR: Thank you. My final question is about time. How much notice do you think you need for any sort of mobilisation or deployment?

[pauses]

J1: Depends, because for some, like you can get through the high readiness where the employer accepts it, off it and you have this much smaller, some employers are happy to. Reality is, with me, I probably have to have a max like two weeks. Like the bear minimum would be two weeks, because it would depend on the cycle of what my works is. They only really, like, you screw up with work for the two week cycle. It’s down to the individual, how much they can drop and how much, what is required of the of them. Like I have to get everything ready to then go. That’s not going to last, I think it’d probably get, a month. A minimum, I think, in general, would be my answer. Which doesn’t help the idea of…[trailing off]

J2: I would say it would depend on the unit and yeah, the employer with self-employed individuals, it might matter more, but, I f the unit was stood up for an operation as a unit, that’s going to be a pretty serious operation for a Reserve unit. I suspect, normally they would possibly deploy piecemeal. I mean, I know regular units that were replaced by Reserve units because they were in a higher readiness state. But if let’s say \_\_\_\_\_\_[this Squadron] was to deploy out to do, whatever, BOWMAN, let’s say, for argument’s sake. If that was an operation, chances are, that that operation would have been planned well in advance. Maybe not the unit going, but certainly the potential for the operation and you would stand units up... six months in advance, I would suspect so. I would say it depends on the operation. If it if it’s not an operation, it's an exercise, it doesn’t matter. Because your available manpower, that you’re gonna take okay. I’ve got this unit, OK 100 blokes. I know for a fact that at any one time, I’m only going to make 10 available. So given two weeks, I’ll be available, that’s one, so there will be people available so. Necessity of a warning order…

GR: So many cases, what you’re saying is that, the time you have is the notice you need and you go with what you’ve got?

J2: Yeah. If it’s do or die to deploy the unit out, then employer be damned. You might not even have a choice, mightn’t you.

J3: Yeah, worst case scenario.

J2: We are Reservists, true, but if there is something to fight…who cares!

J1: Well that comes back to, the government control of how much they want to pull and, like, what I’m saying about the laws, how much they really want to pull.

J2: Yeah, war-time laws.

J1: I understand, I know, I know, that’s war-time is a very extreme circumstance for all, and if it comes down to it, depending on the kind of law, you go wherever.

J2: For your employer, if you wanted to do an operation next year or exercise, whatever opportunities arise.

J1: It’s all about the levels, really, and how much you can do it. It’s all about cycles, so you can, if you do one, you won’t be able to do one for another two years? I think the law is. I think if you go off tomorrow, you go for one. That individual cannot go, won’t be called-up by the Army stands. Like you can’t just do that.

J2: Is that Reservists?

J1: Yeah, I think if you go off on one tour, I think that window time where you can’t get called for another.

J2: But you could volunteer.

J1: hmm [agreeing]. You get so much rotation. And employers can play the card versus…you might volunteer, but then the employer can say, “well, he went off this point.”

J2: And didn’t have the permission and all that.

J1: Or they can whinge about it. I don’t know.

J3: Probably just fire you.

J1: I think there is a clause there.

J2: At least you’d have some time off.

J1: I don’t know, I don’t know what it is, but that’s the…[tailing off].

J2: Make yourself unfireable!

GR: Great. So, we are coming to the end of our time available this evening, I don’t wish to impose on you too much before we finish. I wonder, are there any sort of final points you might have thought of that you didn’t get a chance to say earlier. Maybe the conversation moved on that you wanted to mention now. No? OK. Well, thanks very much. With that, I shall turn off the recorder.