**Group: F**

**Interviewer:** Gavin Randell (GR)

**Date:** 12 Apr 22, 2000 hrs

**Location:** Stoke-on-Trent

GR: This is group Foxtrot and we’re now recording. So the first question I have is an ice breaker really, and I’d like to understand, which of you has deployed on operations with the Army Reserve before?

F1: Yeah, I have to point. But it was it in the UK. So it was on Op RESCRIPT. So it only lasted three weeks as well. So the experience is only within the UK. I’ve not deployed outside it, the UK.

GR: And you were mobilised for that?

F1: Yes, yeah.

GR: Okay.

F2: And I was the same as well, on Op RESCRIPT.

GR: OK.

F2: I haven’t done any other mobilisations.

GR: Were you working together as a team?

F2: Yes.

GR: Where you in the same section, same platoon or?

F1: yes, we were, yeah.

GR: Well, that’s really good. And you’ll, you’ll notice you probably have heard the plans for the Army Reserve will include a little bit more UK operations in the future. So, moving on, how important do you think it is that Reserves do mobilise and deploy as part of their service?

F1: Very really. It’s kind of why we’re here, isn’t it? If we don’t deploy, it just seems like, why we doing it? It’s nice to feel, its a presence there as well out of our image.

GR: So there were benefits from the organisation?

F1: Yeah, and benefits from individuals gives us experience. This is kind of why we joined a lot of people during the Army wasn’t just it wasn’t just to turn up on a Tuesday night. Do the odd weekend every now and then. I think it….probably…helps the Army support. I mean I don’t know what the numbers are in the fighting force. But I think there is the potential there for Reserves to draw in quite a lot of people. So if it is like UK operations with Op RESCRIPT, with running the mobile testing units for the COVID tests. It kind of draws from all over the place and we’ve got advantages we might be able to bring, even regular Army can’t. We’ve got people working count-social care, for example, on RESCRIPT, where we had to, part of the job is also to look at the people we were treating to see, and assess is there any concerns there? It could be the perfect kind of person to have.

GR: So in individual skills are really good?

F1: Yeah.

GR: But also the type of people. You know, bringing so many people in. Actually gets more support from society because you’re involving more people. Is that what you’re saying?

F1: Yeah. Right. Like I said, it gives the Army the capacity. If you don’t want… the Army has responsibilities abroad, obviously, and security’s the main one, things like internal operations, you can see the benefit where it gives you that pool to draw without disrupting the bigger picture.

GR: Okay okay. So yeah, it’s less… you might not get more support from the public, but it just allows the Army to go further and help the public, which, or the society, which then might then-

F1: I guess you can see the advantage. If you’re talking something like, are working a lot of you work on the ship and maybe they see and they can relate to you quite easily.

GR: Yeah.

F2: I would say that mobilisation is important as a Reservist, just as part of, like, a natural progression from going through training to then going on exercises and then progressing into, sort of, operations and mobilisations. Sort of going down that route.

GR: So yeah, it’s just all part of the job? You train for it. So you go and do it.

F2: Yes.

GR: Yes, okay great. You both deployed on Op RESCRIPT, which was Military Aid to the Civilian Authority, or MACA. Do you think your unit is really well suited for that? That kind of job, if it comes up?

F1: Yes, yes. It is well suited, but I wouldn’t want to limit us to that role only. We are an infantry unit. Again we are we are well suited to supporting the infantry. If in that is the primary role. Yet at the same time I think the evidence from RESCRIPT is that we did, we did do a good job. We quite quickly adapted to it. Managed quite well, integrated well with, again, some regular units that we did work with and the public in general.

GR: Yeah. Why is it you think, you don’t want to be pigeonholed into that MACA role?

F1: Well, I guess I guess the agreement will be that I didn’t join the Army solely to just be…I know it’s not, we’re not the TA anymore, with the Army Reserve.

GR: Yeah.

F1: Yeah, you don’t want to be limited solely to territorial defence or just support to the public during emergencies.

GR: So it’s important that you keep that chance to do, ultimately, warfighting or humanitarian or peacekeeping operations overseas? That’s that kind of thing.

F1: Yes definitely.

F2: I would agree with that as well.

GR: Yeah?

F2: It’s important that we were seen as like… we can do, we can go and do the job that we’re supposed to do, but, when we are needed we can fit and adapt to different tasks as well.

GR: OK. So are you from what you’re saying, it’s quite hard sell to say, “join the Army Reserve, only serve in the UK when there are floods or there's a disease,” it's quite a difficult sell, but actually the whole package is more attractive?

F1: Yeah, I don’t think we’d get the numbers who did if the Army Reserve just became that. If it just became…it wouldn’t be quite as interesting to a of people.

GR: Olay.

F1: I think. I think from my point of view, one of reasons people join the Army is…you just don’t want to just work to a nine to five job. You know, you want to travel, be able to take part, not necessary just to go on mobilizations. You want the opportunities.

GR: Yeah. And when you deployed on Op RESCRIPT, or mobilised for Op RESCRIPT, what made it easy for you to make that choice, to mobilise?

F2: The easiest thing for me was the fact that I was going with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_[this unit]. And so I wasn’t going to be sort of like a backfill into different unit. It was, I was going with my sort of unit and it was going to be people that I know and, sort of, worked with previously.

GR: Yeah.

F2: That made it really easy for me to say, “yes.”

GR: Sure, how about you?

F1: I think this partly, I think the support was quite good from the unit itself. It made it very easy. With the training we did it, anticipated, we did a training package just before the deployment. And I mean well, not all, some of us deployed straight off, and some of us deployed later, yeah. But I think the support we had into it and then we were there…they were there with us to do all the paperwork, make sure we have understood what we were doing and that helped a lot.

GR: Well, it is good that the unit helped you in doing something that they’ve asked you to do!

F1: Yeah, well, it’s good. You get sometimes where you just get a load of paperwork and get told, “fill this out.” Not really sure where you are going, what you’re going to be doing. And it was all quite clear. We didn’t know exactly what the plan was time as it was changing as it went along. But we had a strong idea what we’d be expected to do.

GR: OK. And, what do you think made it difficult, or might have made it difficult? To make that choice….to mobilise.

F1: So from my point of view, the difficult part was me was leaving family behind coz especially at the time which has been in a lockdown, it was hard to say, “I know you still care about yourself, but I’m going through for potentially up to six months….bye, have fun!” So that was quite hard. That was quite hard decision, a hard conversation to have.

GR: Yeah.

F1: So it’s probably it’s probably the hardest thing to work out.

GR: Do you think your family understood that you felt you were going to do something worthwhile?

F1: They did but it was the practicalities were the hardest point. Obviously it helped that we were actually in the UK. But even then it was there was a good cause, you know, like they felt like how it’s a good cause to go to and support, even though even though they weren’t. They obviously had their own issues with going, but they kind of overcame then.

GR: Yeah. What difficulties did you find?

F2: I found my employer. I used to work away for like a period of time on a ship and then it come home sort of be in the UK for a period of time and I was due to go back to a ship. So they wanted me to go back, but I wanted to do the mobilisation because it was my first opportunity to actually go mobilize and I wanted to do it. So that was kind of the hardest thing to sort of get by.

GR: OK, sure. And do you think those things you’ve just spoken about apply equally to other types of operations or whether it’s a warfighting operation? Do you think those same sorts of things would be true? You know, it’d be really positive, having your team support, but also difficult for family reasons, and that kind of thing?

F1: Yeah, definitely if anything amplified, because the risk was fairly low on the RESCRIPT operation. So that didn’t really come into the equation.

GR: Okay and we mentioned a little bit about, choice. How important do you think it is that you have some choice over whether to be mobilised or not?

F1: It is important, I think obviously there are situations where you made not have a choice and everyone accepts that when they join the Army. But I think it’s good to be given the opportunity where you might go and what opportunities you take. At the same time it helps to almost with me is, a way of wording this here, it to be perceived your employers that you don’t’ have a choice. You know you get this letter, it says you have to go that helped me a lot because I didn’t tell them. I said I want to go through it. I just said I said, I’ve been warned off, I might have to go. And then when they sent the paperwork over. I said, ohh yeah, I’ve gotta go.

GR: Yeah. So you volunteer for compulsory mobilizations? You leave off the volunteer bit. Stickler, when it comes to employers, do you have a more open conversation with your family?

F1: Oh yeah, definitely I would, yeah. It would be a good route to go.

GR: You wouldn’t bluff them? How about yourself?

F1: No, no.

GR: I would agree with that completely… I mean, I’ve definitely had sort of. The conversation with my family Prior to joining the Army and I know that the hardship would possibly come up, but I know, but they kind of understand and support my sort of decision to Mobileye’s no matter what the sort of task is. I would say that. The letter comes across to the slightly easier. Even though I have volunteered, yeah. OK. And if it was a different sort of operation, I’m speaking hypothetically. How serious do you think it would need to be before you thought my choice is less important than then the operation were going on.

F2: Yeah, I said. I think you make that acceptable. You join the Army like I used current examples. If we should invade a NATO country and got called upon. I think everyone here would accept that they don’t expect about it may come through your being deployed. Yeah. You can’t expect to have much choice in that.

GR: Okay.

F2: Yeah, I think it’s quite easy to accept that there’s no choice when you looking at conventional warfare between countries, yeah. Rather than something like counter-insurgency.

GR: Yeah. You feel like when the time comes, everyone will know in their guts. Yes. You know, it’s time to put my personal choice aside, team rather than as individuals, given the choice, given the opportunity?

F2: Yes.

GR: OK. And we mentioned a little bit about the team spirit aspect of it. Do you think it’s important that you deploy as a team, rather than by individuals, given the choice.

F1: Yeah, I definitely yes, I know it’s quite common to get backfilled into units, but I wouldn’t expect. It to be solely a team might be a combination of both and we certainly need support from other areas that we don’t have access to it in the reserves on a regular basis, yeah. But yeah, I do. I do think it’s possible. Be at least maintain some connexion you’d like to see.

GR: You’d like to see. At least I don’t know, a section, go together, as a team?

F1: If anything else, we work together as a team.

GR: There are friendly faces around people?

F1: Yeah, you know, you know just there are people around, people who you know and trust.

GR: Yeah, okay. And how about you?

F2: Yeah, I agree with that too as well.

GR: Yeah. And how well prepared or trained do you feel for deploying as a team, even if as a small team? Let’s say for warfighting. You kind of feel that if you were needed then a section of platoon or whatever could be put together and they be ready to go.

F1: Yeah, I think we’re in position where the numbers we get here now and it’s not just the numbers, it’s people’s attitudes to tell people who are quite keen for it, who are ready to go and those who are not so much. In terms of training, I know a lot of people do more than the, I know there is the minimum requirement, but most of us do well beyond that. Obviously it’d be nice to get more, better training. I think I’ve seen that, as I’ve been in the Reserves, the training’s improved, the opportunities that you get, and equipment is improved.

GR: Yeah.

F1: I think everyone would be confident in our abilities and in on the numbers we could put forward.

GR: And of course, before any operation there would be specific training for that operation.

F1: Yes, with the pre-deployment training.

GR: So you feel both individually and prepared as a team that you could take on the challenges that come your way.

F1: Yes.

F2: So I’m somebody who has, like, minimal commitment to the Reserves, a lot of the time. So, I do get a lot of skill fade, because I’m working away. I don’t think that I would be like ready now, but I think if we were able to do a pre-mobilisation training, and after that I think I’d be up to speed.

GR: Yeah, Okay. And speaking about a specific part of your team, do you feel that your leaders, at whatever level, kind of set the example when it comes to mobilisation? Do you see them being as available as the soldiers for any tasks that come up?

F1: Yeah, I’d say so. I came back to the example we have. They were there alongside us, as needed. Any, all the ones there ask for. I’d say that it went up there, but they weren’t all needed. It would’ve been ridiculous just to have some officers and Senior NCOs around. But I felt like if required they would have been that.

GR: Yeah.

F1: I think they would be the case on a large scale operation too.

F2: It was nice to see, sort of, the NCOs and officers there. As you said, they might not have been needed, but as reservists, I think we understand that if they weren’t there then…we would understand that they have civilian jobs and you know they have the choice as well.

GR: But it makes you feel looked after-

F2: Yes, yes really.

GR: -if you see if you see your boss who you see every Tuesday and weekends, there, you know, actually if I have a problem, I can go to them and they can help me sort it out and I could just get on with my job. They can speak to someone to get any assistance.

F2: Yeah, Yeah.

GR: And how often do you think it’s reasonable for you to be deployed? If you were to get used quite a lot or get mobilised quite a lot, what do you think would be too much?

F1: As in not voluntary is it?

GR: Well, it could be either. I recognise that there’s both voluntary and there’s also, you’re getting cajoled and really strongly encouraged to mobilise and you think, well, enough is enough, you know, I’ve just come back!

F1: So, as I say, I’ve been in around 7 years now. And that’s the only deployment I’ve done. There have been opportunities in Estonia and so on. That kind of thing is never really going on in a way, a long time training exercise or whatever it is there for, it’s not appealed as much, as strongly.

GR: So a case by case basis?

F1: Yeah, it depends on the situation really. I think if we were, if we were being pushed to be deployed on things that were not as critical, again, once every five years would seem like a reasonable amount to justify that.

GR: Yeah.

F1: But again, if it was a more extreme circumstances, if you understand the need, if the need was, you saw the need then you would accept it more often.

GR: Yeah, okay. So, if you felt it was less serious or less worthwhile, it’s actually harder to be motivated to work towards supporting it.

F1: Exactly, exactly. And I wouldn’t be as keen if, you know, I was told you have got to be deployed on a Sunday. Well, it obviously serves its purpose, if it is essentially a training exercise.

GR: Yeah. Okay.

F2: For me, it’s just be about, sort of, employer relationship. So if the Army could, sort of, guarantee that my employer would keep me in the position for when I eventually do get back, or eventually when I do get back into the UK and I’m stably in the UK. If the Army could sort of guarantee that my relationship wouldn’t, sort of, deteriorate with my employer, then then I’d be happy to mobilise whenever.

GR: Okay. And I guess linked to frequency, is the amount of notice that you that you get. How much notice do you think is important for you as individuals and your teams?

[pause]

F1: Yeah, I guess it is. I’d say, I guess, it is as much as they can give! Again, it would depend on the circumstances if it’s something that’s coming up quite frequently. I’d like to know well in advance so I can make preparations. A minimum of months in advance. Whereas, if it was an urgent situation you’d understand. You’d still again, I’d like at least a month in advance, but they need to plan. I think it depends on if you could understand why you been within short notice, then you’d be more accepting of it.

GR: Yeah.

F2: Yeah. I would echo that as well. Like for RESCRIPT. It was quite, sort of, reactive things. So we had to, like, minimal notice. We didn’t really lose people because there wasn’t as much notice. There were still people that wanted to mobilise.

F1: The main reason we lost people for Op RESCRIPT was they were working in services…

GR: So they were key workers?

F1: Yeah, so they were more useful to country, yeah.

GR: And how important do you think it is that the country supports, the public supports whatever it is you’re being mobilised to do? Does that impact on your thinking at all?

F1: Yeah, it does make part of it. Yeah, and I know the support doesn’t feel great for the Army at the moment. You do get it is some areas, an example is, I wouldn’t leave here now in my uniform and travel home. And I wouldn’t like to travel, I mean, you are actually advised not to travel over in uniform by yourself.

GR: Just for some sections of the community might be less supportive than…

F1: Yeah, but in general. If it was, like, a specific operation. We were quite well supported not, by everyone. There were still cases on RESCRIPT where you’d get people opposed, opposed to what you were doing for some bizarre reason. You’ve got to expect, there is always going to be a minority who will be like that, but the majority support was there and it did help. You know, people would thank you as you were working, and it does make you feel like what you are doing is worthwhile.

GR: And you accept that part of the duty is protecting the whole community and that some of that community might not appreciate it, or appear to appreciate in the first instance.

F2: Yeah, it definitely makes it a lot easier when you’ve got public support. When you seem to be doing something that’s worthwhile. It makes it much easier.

GR: Yeah, okay. And we mentioned a little bit earlier on about the unit made it particularly easy for you to deploy on Op RESCRIPT. You felt it was relatively straightforward and you got support. What aspect does that make it easier for you personally? And it just took worries away and the uncertainty?

F1: It is, yeah. As I said, you knew what to expect to a degree. And you felt like they were there with you to walk you through it and any issues that, you know. It was they were on it straight away and if not straight away they’d get back to you.

GR: Yeah.

F2: Yeah, yeah. I’d say that the, like the administrative process, just kind of flowed quite well, but we were away at Altcar doing the sort of MATTs camp and sort of gearing towards what jobs were going to be on RESCRIPT.

GR: Yeah.

F2: And then, the paperwork came and that was all that we all went through that together as he said. And it just made it all flow very, very nicely.

GR: Sure. Do you hear horror stories from maybe people have been in longer about times that mobilisation went not so well or less smoothly? And does that put people off?

F1: I wouldn’t say, I wouldn’t say people really talked about it as being overly difficult. Part of the process. I’ve not felt that from the guys over here. We’ve got here and people you spoke to. I t can take a while, can be a pain, but it’s not that never talked about it like that.

GR: It’s just paperwork, it catches up…

F1: You gotta get out the way.

GR: Yeah, Okay one final thing I did want to ask you about is: you’re volunteers, you have said you accept it’s your duty and all part of the job to be mobilise. Do you worry that having made that commitment, that if you didn’t mobilise at the time that you might get in trouble? Does that ever cross your mind?

F1: I’d expect that would get in trouble. Yeah. If I refuse to. I guess the question around it would be if you had, if you had quite a large moral dilemma for what you were being asked to do. I guess I have faith that I wouldn’t be asked to do anything, kind of there is a very support there if that’s your case, I guess. But as long as you can argue this, that is why you have problems. But yeah, course you’d worry about that.

F2: Yeah, I would worry about that as well. I’d feel like there would be some sort of repercussion for not saying yes…

GR: In the first instance, you’ve already said that you’re quite well motivated towards it all anyway. But of course it’s a legal agreement that you enter into so, but it sounds like from what you’ve already said, you’d be more positively attracted to going somewhere with your team? And by association, not letting them down? You don’t want to be left behind, I guess.

F1: Yeah. You wouldn’t want to maybe miss out and be one feeling, I sort of let them down. Not doing you’re your fair share.

GR: OK. Thank you. I think that really covers off the questions that I had. So, before we finish, are, there any other points you would like to make it or had you had any thoughts that you were going to interject, but the conversation moved on?

F1: No, I think I managed to get in everything I wanted to say.

GR: Excellent! Thank you very much. I will turn the recorder off now.