**Group: I**

**Interviewer:** Gavin Randell (GR)

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**Location: Portsmouth**

GR: OK. This is group India and we now recording. So firstly a bit of an ice breaker really. Which of you has deployed on operations with the Army Reserve before?

I2: I have. Just around the UK.

GR: OK.

I2: That was for Op RESCRIPT.

GR: OK, sure. Yeah.

I2: That one lasted a few months.

GR: OK. How about yourselves?

I1/I3: [shaking heads]

GR: OK, how bout with the regulars? You said you had previous service.

I1: No, I just missed out on Afghanistan. I went on a number of deployments and readiness deployments. But most of them were kind of ‘just in case’ deployments, not actual fighting deployments.

GR: Okay sure. So, how about you?

I3: No, No. I mean, I’ve not been in very long. Still finding my feet really.

GR: OK. So we have quite range of experience actually, which is which is good. So the first question I have is, how important do you think it is that Reserves do actually mobilise and deploy as part of their service?

I2: I think it’s very important. That’s why a lot of people join up. It’s one of the big incentives of people joining is so they have the option to do that, to mobilise and to deploy; or the option not to. It’s something you don’t get in the regulars it’s something you don’t get in civvie life. So it’s the only place you could get it. So I think it’s very important.

GR: You say, “the option.” Do you think that choice is particularly important?

I2: Yes, for a lot of people who joined . There’s family, not so much for me, I’m a student and it wouldn’t matter too much. But even for me, it would be disruptive, if I had to leave suddenly was forced to, I don’t know, during the second year of uni to delay finishing my degree, yeah, would be very disruptive. But for the families and things, it’s even more disruptive. So I think that option, you know, if you didn’t have that option, you wouldn’t get as many people joining.

GR: Yeah, of course. How about you?

I1: No, I think that’s one of the benefits of the Reserves, obviously, slightly different in my case, but if I was joining the Reserves to, kind of, get on the deployments it would be. That’s half the benefit, especially when I was leaving the first-time round. That’s for the benefit of, you can have the best of both worlds. I really enjoy that about Reserves here. Being able to just choose not necessarily be forced to go on the deployment you might not want to go on.

I3: Would you still join if you were not able to deploy?

I1: No, I don’t think. I think for me joining the Reserves was to have a foot in the door to the stuff I want access to. Not necessarily just to be in the Reserves, it is more for the opportunity. It sounds quite obvious! More for the opportunities it provides. But yeah, I think the options’ a big one definitely.

I2: I feel like, a lot of people, especially, I don’t know about you. If they come from regulars like they don’t join the reserves to become a Reservist, they joined the Reserves to be able to do the stuff they couldn’t do as a regular.

I1: Sounds obvious saying it out loud and different in my head! When I say it out loud, it sounds mega obvious, but actually yeah, it’s just about having access to have the choice of the things that I want to do and not do the things maybe I don’t want to do as a regular. Whether I’d feel that way if I wasn’t in the regs or not, I don’t know…

GR: More adventure training, less guard duty?

I1: Yes! Certainly a big influence on it, yes.

I3: Funny, ‘cos a lot of our instructors, when I went through CIC a couple of months ago, were saying they would join the Reserves. Because they felt they would get more opportunity to do things they wanted to do when they joined the Army in the first place. Instead of getting dragged away…

I1: Yeah, I’ve heard that as well.

I3: You know, all the things about the Army that, kinda, people aren’t happy with they can get away from.

I1: That’s what I’ve heard and for me joining to get myself back on that course and I found it almost, I’ve had no push back up myself trying to put book this course. I’ve had no push back from anyone, but in the regs when I was trying. When I went for this course first time around. Obviously I suppose it’s trying to get released from a regular job, but then, so now I can just book it whereas before I had all these, all these dramas of trying to book this course. So that’s, we’ve kind of gone away from deployments, but it kinda ties in, I suppose.

I2: I think the power is more with you.

I1: Yeah.

I2: I can decide what you want to do and what you don’t wanna do. Do you wanna book on a course, you can actively do that by going through Defence Connect and with speaking to people that…

GR: Yeah okay.

I1: Mobilising is definitely an important that for the Army Reserves generally for that experience. You’ve not going to get that experience during their weekend exercises. If you want to reserve force there, you know, to be held to a certain standard to work alongside the regulars. I think one thing reserves needs to be careful of that I’ve seen with, not necessarily here, but other places, I felt kind of an attitude that a lot of people treat it a bit like Army Club as opposed they’re here to train-

I2: You’re here to be a soldier.

I1: I signed up because I want to be a soldier.

I2: I think that’s probably more of a stigma you get if Reservists didn’t mobilise and didn’t deploy.

I1: Yeah, yeah.

I2: Because they would be doing weekend training sessions. It would be more like the OTC and things, but I think the Reserves needs that as well because you can’t just be…I’m not saying it’s gonna be deployments going around left, right and centre but, you need people in the Reserves to deploy, so you’ve got those people with that experience to then feed down on everyone else and then the circle just, goes again and again…

GR: To keep it sustainable?

I1: Yeah. It’s no good having a reserve force with no experience of a deployment.

I2: Speaking on that mobilisation deploying is one of the main ways as reserves when you get to connect the regular units that were attached to. So if we didn’t mobilise, we probably wouldn’t see them nearly as much.

GR: Yeah.

I2: So yeah, there would be a bit more of a disconnect.

I1: I’m coming up to 38. And a lot of guys I’ve met my age, who joined up with me through the recruit training. A lot of us are people who, we wish we did it when we were younger, we missed the window and I think. And I wouldn’t wanna go through all of this and the things I have to sacrifice to not be able to potentially mobilise. I mean, what am I doing this for?

I2: Yeah.

I1: That’s the other one. We do all the training and you get so mundane because you know you’re not doing it towards anything. It gets bad enough in the regs sometimes, and you are deployed, but I think it keeps you on your toes and, yeah, you do need it. So you are training toward something, rather than…

GR: Yeah. So, it’s being here for a purpose but also, being able to have an effect at the end of it?

I1: Yeah.

I2: Yeah.

GR: Speaking of having an effect, what kinds of operations do you think your unit is best suited to? And where do you think you could make an impact as a unit?

[pause]

I2: Umm… Well, the deployment that I did was just around the UK, Op RESCRIPT. That was a lot of…that was just manpower than anything else. And I think, infantry is great for that. Because we specialise in just in teamwork and being a rifle company. Yeah, we did really well in what we did there. So any general duties, I think. We would good at, but saying that, I can’t really speak to other operations and deployments from my own experience.

GR: Yeah, it’s interesting you mentioned teamwork. Do you think that’s important or less important when it comes to what you do?

I2: It is still important if you are mobilising and deploying. Obviously, it might not be quite as important coming in on Wednesday night every other week, but, if you need to deploy, you need to be able to switch it off or just keep it on. You need to be able to work as a team, definitely. Because I was moving around and living with these guys for quite a few months in really weird areas is the UK. Old Army barracks and things. I didn’t know them, not all of them that well when I first went on the mobilisation, but it didn’t take long for everyone to get together. And they reinforced that as well, in this unit. I’m not sure they would necessarily in other units.

GR: Do you feel like having done that mobilisation, as a whole, the team is better for it?

I2: 100%. Yeah.

GR: So whatever comes next, you’re better prepared for it, because you’ve done something together, even if it’s completely different from what comes next?

I2: Exactly, just the whole year. Just speaking as a private soldier it was brilliant. As I got to know a lot more, I got a lot more comfortable with a lot of senior ranks. But I think just looking at the whole organisation as itself, everyone was more comfortable dealing with each other. Sometimes, as in the Reserves, if you don’t see someone for months at a time or weeks at times there is a slight disconnection. You don’t quite get as comfortable….

[interruption]

GR: OK, well, we’ll keep it quick then. So, I suppose quite briefly then, what do you think makes it difficult or an unattractive prospect to mobilise?

I1: For me, unattractive is the, like we said, that disconnect you have when you haven’t been with the team for a while. For me, I would struggle to…I mean, it’d help once we’ve mobilised and deployed and then come back. Don’t get me wrong, like you just said, it will help that way. But me going on one, I think I feel a bit uneasy because I’ve not worked with these guys much before. You don’t work with them as much in the Reserves as a team. Naturally, obviously, because everyone’s got their own lives. I just feel a bit uneasy going in certain situations with…Guys I’ve worked with and for that aspect. I mean the pre-deployment training would help a lot, and that’s it nipped then. That’s it.

GR: That gives you the confidence that as an individual and as a team, you are ready to go.

I1: Yeah, but just now. You know, I haven’t been in the unit long. Other guys might feel the same because like you said, people can’t get in all the time. So it’s just that, again, just emphasising that disconnect you just you know him as often as we would be in the regs, so you just don’t feel quite as comfortable doing these things with these people because why, why would you? You haven’t been around them enough. And I think that’s just…if you had regular…if people had to come in, I’m not saying it would help, but if people had to come in and on a regular basis it would help people feel bit more comfortable with deployment. But maybe I just. I’m not. I’m not that moment on the here enough to kind of feel great about deploying.

GR: You don’t feel like you’re part of a part of the team quite strongly.

I1: No. I mean, I’ve not long joined back up. I mean it will come, because I’m always mingling with the guys. But I’ve just said it doesn’t happen as quickly. I think it’s what I’m trying to say.

GR: Sure. How about for you two? What do you think makes it difficult or unattractive?

I3: For me, Army wise, there’s nothing that puts me off and I would trust the military have a process that if I just deployed tomorrow, I’d all work itself out. It’s more just my work. I work for a defence contractor who are gold standard employer service of reservists. As much as they say that on paper, the reality and the attitude of my management is very different to what they’ve signed up to in the company. But I’d go tomorrow without hesitation

I1: I’m very much your boat with going tomorrow without hesitation!

GR: You’d love to get stuck in?

I1: Yeah, I’d love to get stuck in! Granted, the mingling bit. But once I’ve got to know the lads I’d still be buzzing to getaway.

I3: You know I’ve been passed out and officially certified as part of the unit now for a month. But no-one has really spoken to me or took it too aside and explained right this is the opportunities available. This is, you know, find your feet this, what we do? Well, I don’t have a clue about half the things \_\_\_\_\_[? Overtalk]

I2: I have to say I feel like that as well. I don’t know whether it’s just because I didn’t do any training or I didn’t do anything.

I3: Yeah.

I2: I’m literally just now I don’t even know what we really do.

I1: I’m in the exact same boat as you. No-one’s sort of said, this is the score. [laughing]

I2: This is what happens now!

I1: Yeah, I was kinda just stood there in rig the next day. You know, my first time in five…err yeah, just trying to find my feet…[overtalk]

I3: I’ve been here six months and no-one has spoke to me. You kind of you know the process through recruit training. What boxes you gotta tick.

I2: Have you done the CIC yet?

I3: yeah, I’ve done the CIC but I’ve been here a month and I’m like, now what?

GR: Listen, I know we are short of time so I’ll just offer one more question, if I may? What sort of things do you think make it easy or attractive for mobilisation and deployment?

I1: Right kit. Gucci training. Not just the bog-standards stuff.

GR: Interesting stuff?

I1: So yeah, interesting training. Not just stagging on the corner of a wood block in Sennybridge. Granted, get that done. Get it ticked off. I’m happy to do that, but just get some good training under the belt, make the lads feel like there a part of something.

GR: Give them something bigger?

I1: Yeah, something more bigger. Train toward something. Something worthwhile.

I3: I guess, when you mobilise and the role you do is gonna be good. You’re not just going to be stagging on a gate while the regs are out doing the job.

I1: Yeah.

I3: And again, that that comes back on itself. Then that benefits the unit, because you get that experience back and so the unit doesn’t just feel like they are just gonna stag on a gate every deployment and it kind of helps itself then because the guys joining the unit will then feel like when they do deploy, they are happy to deploy.

I2: I’d say, encouragement from the guys that work here, regular time.

GR: Yeah.

I2: Yeah, that’s a big thing. If they are gearing up to go then it kinda makes you wanna get involved. Having been away with people from here before.

GR: Yeah, okay great. Well, sorry, this is cut short a little bit we’ll draw stumps there. I don’t want to keep you here any longer than necessary. Thanks ever so much.