**Group: L**

**Interviewer:** Gavin Randell (GR)

**Date:** 7 Jun 22, 2000hrs

**Location:** Aldershot

GR: This is group Lima and the tape recorder is on. My first question for you is, have any of you deployed on operations with the Army Reserve before?

[all shaking heads]

L1: No.

L3: No.

L2: No.

GR: No? That’s OK. Have any of you been deployed as regular soldiers?

L1/L2/L3: No [all together]

GR: OK, and does that include…you’ve not done anything like Op RESCRIPT or anything like that?

[all shaking heads]

L2: Nothing yet.

L1: No

GR: OK, so fresh points of view or all around, that’s really valuable. The next thing then is, how important do you think it is that Reserves actually do mobilise and deploy as part of being an Army Reservist.

L2: I think it is important in the Army. Because Reservists, we have only two hours at Tuesday night, like once a week like a drill night. We haven’t learned anything at all. So if we go to, like, the serious one, like deployed, mobilised from one place to another place, we have to learn lots of things and we can see the activities what the regulars are doing on. And I think this way we have to learn lots of more things in Army to do….if we go to the mobilised in my view.

GR: So you feel it’s…you learn a lot more about being a soldier by mobilising and getting to practise your skills.

L2: That’s it, yes.

GR: Okay, how about you?

L1: Yeah, I think it’s important to...From a learning point of view, it's….’cos like the lessons Tuesday night and stuff there…they are quite useful and all that but…there’s only so much that a pen and a whiteboard can tell you rather than actually experiencing it and practising it in the flesh. So being able to…get out there….get your hands dirty. Just…Yeah…How to make it happen on your own accord is quite important to understand how to use those practises to your advantage.

GR: How about, how about you?

L3: Yeah, I do believe that we need this kind of experience to go in the deployment and to help the regulars. Coz we’re not a regular, but as a reservist we’re doing weekends and drill nights only but….Yeah, we can’t do it in a frontline, but we can support the regular in the back support. So it’s if you have time and if he continues reserve support, then we need to be front, help the regulars. Because we are here as an Army. We need to help them anyway.

GR: So for you, it’s part of the job? You wouldn’t be in the Army Reserve if you weren’t prepared to go-

L3: -Yeah

GR: Go for operations?

L3: That’s why we’re here as an Army, not to gain qualities or you know, ‘cos as an Army you might need some kind of help from….that can help to the regulars. Yeah, I think. You could do what is helpful for the regulars as well.

GR: OK, and you mentioned that the training that you get on Tuesdays and weekends is, purely for practical reasons, quite limited. You know, there’s only a certain amount of time. How confident do you feel based on that training to be able to go and do your job on operations as logisticians?

L3: I think that, because we are busy, with the schedule of our own job. So we are focusing with our job and suddenly they’re coming after 2, 1, 2, 3 months to do in directly in a field. So it’s like…not fully confidence coz we have not used to everyday like the regular soldier, so that thing we have little bit difficulties, and not confidence… but should be fine.

GR: But you think, very quickly, practise makes perfect?

L3: Yes, that’s the thing, very quickly, with practice. Everyday our job is different and that after come to another way, so it should be totally different. So...it should be like that.

[pauses]

GR: OK. How about you, do you feel…?

L1: Yeah, I agree with that. Like I think being told and being shown up on the board, you know, harbour drills and that sort of thing, like you might know the drill. But then actually coming to doing those tasks can be quite daunting at first, but when once you get in a rhythm of it, especially if you’re alongside the regulars and they can show you the ropes and stuff, is yeah. It’s easy to kind of get hang on getting the job done.

[pauses]

GR: Okay. And we mentioned a little bit about doing your job then. As you’re a Reserve logistic unit where do you see yourselves fitting into operations? You’ve already mentioned working alongside the regulars will be really important. Do you think that will be in your trade role or will it be in a more sort of general duties type role?

L2: Yeah, ‘cause we are trade, our trade is to support the regulars, with support kind of like…any kind of stuff they need, we need to transport and provide them when they need. So as a logistic, if they’re sort of anything like ammunition or food our job, as a reservist, is to provide them what they need so they can…Do not feel any short and that they can do their job properly.

GR: Okay. And, what do you think makes it attractive to mobilise on an operation? You said it’s important for the training aspect and because it’s all part of the job. But what other things do you think makes it seem like a good thing to do?

L1: I guess…you know, if you’re getting out there and you’re doing your bit to help complete the operation and contributed to the final result. So yeah…

GR: Doing something worthwhile?

L1: Yeah.

L3: I think, in my opinion, I think we need to get more jobs like regular, like, label or like 2-3 days in a different places than to use to them. With the familiar with them doing works, some sort of stuff, you know, on a regular basis. Like wanting to be better. My opinion.

GR: So if you got used more frequently-

L3: Yeah, yeah.

GR: -that would be a good thing? OK, how about you? What do you think makes it…might make it easy or attractive to mobilise for operations.

L2: It’s like our training is only weekend so. Basically, it’s his like our….Also, our main job is the civilian. Some serve just 4 days, 5 days, and after that only if they’re off, they’re coming up their reservist and do the training. Some might, if they have more off days again to help more, but they don’t have…if they have only two days off in the week then they can have in two weeks as well as more than they get 2. It means…after five days of work, doing two days in the Reserves, it’s…if you can do it, it’s good. But if you can’t, you can’t force them.

GR: So what you’re saying is it’s quite a big personal commitment. You know, you’re doing 5 days of work and then another two days of work with the Army. really. Many times you don’t get any days off if you’re doing that

L2: Yeah.

GR: I guess that leads onto my next question which might…what sort of things make it unattractive or perhaps difficult to mobilise with the Army Reserve?

L1: I support if you’ve got, like, commitments outside of it, like family and personal matters, and things, it might be a bit difficult to leave that behind for long periods of time.

L2: Yeah. I’m with him. I you’re a family person and if you have kids. Sometimes it may feel hard to leave them and go on operations. But if you are single and if you have then you can go then you must go and help the Army.

L3: That sort of thing. But when we have to leave the job with the commitment.

GR: Yeah.

L3: And we need to find time to serve, to be Army Reserves….is like completely hard.

GR: Yeah. So yeah, the practical issues of family and employment are….make it potentially difficult. But then is it…from what you said, the attraction of being mobilised is actually the intangible things that are not practical matters so… And would you say that if opportunities were to arise, you would want to mobilise for them?

L3: Yeah, why not.

L1: Yeah.

L3: As long as we have the timing, like all the information for us. Then we are probably like ready to go.

GR: So you mention early information, you mean the amount of time, the amount of notice you have in advance?

L3: Yeah, yeah, advance. And I’m very keen to go.

GR: How important do you think it is that you might have a choice over whether you mobilise or not? You know, if the unit asks for volunteers first rather than just telling individuals, you must deploy?

L2: I think, well…if your civvy job and your family helps you, then you should…go and voluntarily help the Army. But if the Army really needs you, it’s emergency situation and, you should go and help anyways. But. voluntarily it really is like if you have family, if your civvy job, isn’t happy with you going to deployment, it’s a bit hard to go and do the options like that.

GR: Okay. How about you?

L1: Yeah, I think. Putting a voluntary option is quite important because to consider the bigger picture, you know you might not know what someone has going on outside of the Army and, yeah, it’s important just to, not apply pressure at such an early stage, just so…say, if a soldier wanted to mobilise but couldn’t at that specific time, but then, over that period, can possibly, you know, get some things in order to go and do it then...you’ve already had a few volunteers come forward and then if it comes to a point that everyone’s needed, then you’re more likely to have more takers with that, and the voluntary scheme.

GR: I suppose looking at the combination of your personal desire to mobilise, combined against practical matters, how might you present your mobilisation to say your employer? Would you, would you tell them you volunteered or would you just let the Army tell them that you’ve been directed to mobilise?

L1: I would probably tell them I’m a volunteer at the earliest convenience. Just to make sure they have a chance to sort things out if needs be. So that way it’s less pressure on them, but it kind of keeps the ball rolling.

L3: Yes.

GR: OK. And you trust that they would be relatively positive. That they would see that relatively positively?

L1: I think it was a serious matter then, yes. If it was something not so serious, then possibly not. But then…

GR: What do you think they’d see as a serious matter as you put it?

L1: Like…possible invasion. And, yeah, conflict involving an allied country, say or something like that. Any sort of…national threat really.

GR: But there are other operations you feel that they might see as a bit more-

L1: Yeah.

GR: -discretionary and less serious.

L1: It’s difficult really. Say, like, a humanitarian operation, where the regulars are already involved, but they’ve asked for volunteers from Reserves and they might deem that we as Reserves are not completely essential. So yeah…

GR: So there’s a bit of salesmanship maybe required, maybe on your part, but also on the part of the organisations to make it seem that you are genuinely required.

L1: Yeah.

GR: How about you, would you be open and honest with your employers?

L2: Uhhh..[nodding]

GR: You’re nodding…like, yes, I would be, but maybe not?

L2: Yeah, I think so…[pauses]

GR: We mentioned a little bit about deploying as logisticians in your trade role. How well prepared do you feel as a team, whether it’s within this Squadron or whether it’s within the Regiment as a whole, to be able to deliver on whatever you are asked to do?

[pauses]

L2: Well…our main trade is a driver.

GR: Yeah.

L2: So, need more drivers and, you know, they are trying to get them trained more but, I don’t think it’s still…they are still struggling to get them traded as a…And they need to pass everything from theory to practical and they need to go to Leconfield [the Defence School of Transport] to do B3 [initial military driver training] kind of stuff, but they are doing, but…Still there…well I’m traded up, but in my Squadron there’s few only. If we need more like B3, if we go to operations, we need to use the vehicle which you need to be, to complete, B3. As B3 you can drive SV [Support Vehicle – military HGV]. So yeah, they need to be traded before go to deployment.

GR: So you… I guess if your colleagues have not, I’ve not done their trade training, maybe do you feel that you don’t practise enough as a big team, together?

L2: They can help but not with the driving as if there is one driving and you got colleague who is not driver. He can help you with the loading and everything, but if it’s a long way, there is only one driver in the SV, is bit hard for the one driver.

GR: You are limited by how far you can go for how long and so on. Okay. So again, it feels like practical limitations on what you think you can achieve. Both as individuals, but also as a team as well. You know, not getting enough people trained means your trained team is just not quite big enough, is that fair to say?

L2: Yeah, yeah.

[pauses]

GR: How do you feel you get on as a team? Do you feel like you are friends as well as military colleagues? Not necessarily just within this room or with specific people, but, you know, within the Squadron or the Regiment as a whole?

[10 second pause – nervous glances at each other]

Maybe I’ll rephrase it, and I’m honestly not trying to catch anybody out! Do you think it would be more attractive to go on operations with people that you knew, you were friends with and got along with compared with strangers, let’s call them, but people who you knew would be really professionally competent anyway?

L1: Yeah.

L2: Yeah.

GR: So you think you know the sort of the personal bonds between individuals would be quite attractive?

L1: Yeah.

L2: Yeah.

GR: Quite encouraging?

L1: ‘Cos it builds that trust that you got out in the field and that would kind of boost confidence knowing that, you know, you’re safe with them, they’re safe with you and you’re more. Well, you be more effective and efficient at that point because, you kind of…you know each other and you kinda...you can come to work together, bit like a well-oiled machine to c complete tasks.

GR: Do you think you need to all be trade trained to generate that or can you get it from other sorts of exercises and practise?

[7 second pause]

L2: As a logistic point of view, you need to be traded. But to do other kinds of training, it’s I think, you need to be, say…with other kind of training if you are all together and do the means as a group, it will be easy….I think.

[6 second pause]

GR: Okay. We mentioned closer towards the start about, you know, doing a job well done and doing something worthwhile, do you think going on operations in general is something that is a good thing to do. Do you have confidence and faith that you will be asked to do things that are worthwhile, or do you think it comes down to a task-by-task basis?

[10 second pause]

L3: Could be for go to the operation, so we need…we need to have a proper practice, more practice. And so it should be done by task-by-task. So we learn and increase the confidence level. And then after, so we’re ready for the deploys and we can prepare everything in front.

GR: So you want to do a good job, which requires a bit of practice but also, it’s important what that job is as how you feel about it?

L3: Yes, Yes.

GR: You know whether it’s something that’s individually-

L3: We need to know already what is your role. What is your preparation going to be, is better.

GR: And, do you think understanding exactly what a particular job will entail beforehand is important when it comes to mobilisation? You know, understanding what you’re going to be doing is pretty important?

L3: Yes.

L1: Yeah.

GR: OK. What about the benefits you get from mobilisation, like what sort of things do you think you would get as a benefit from being mobilised? We already mentioned the sort of the military practice…

L2: In my view it’s also like, not for everyone. Everybody have different procedures, bit in my view, if I go to the different country and activities with more regular soldiers, so I enjoy about myself because I like to visiting in a different country also and I need to see the world, what is going on. Every time if I go to the different country with the different activities with the Army. So I need, I learn lots of things, not only for the Army’s activities, but personally the benefits of going and looking with the different places what they are doing, what the culture is there, what the peoples are doing. So I think lots of education also.

GR: So, a bit of adventure, but also personal development.

L2: Yes, personal development.

GR: How about you?

L3: Yeah, it’s same, like. Bit of knowledge, educations, their traditions. Yeah, to know more about the other troops as well. Your colleagues, your friends, your allies.

L1: Yeah, I think also, when you get mobilised, you have that satisfaction that you’ve gone out and you’ve helped, you’ve done your bit for the op and you’ll meet new people and, yeah, you’ll unlock new skills, which you could probably bring home with you and use in your training and possibly a bit in your civvy life as well.

GR: And you’re all relatively new to the Army Reserve. You know maybe one or two years in, something like that? Did you think about the prospect of mobilising and going on operations when you joined, or were there other reasons that you joined instead?

L3: As a Reservist?

GR: Yeah.

L3: So…we have already the full-time job. We have to learn new things like so, I come here as a driver, so trade, so I have to a licence also, for the trucks. So another benefit is we have a chance to go in a different country as well as a sportsman also. Like any competitions with the football, like volleyball or badminton sort of things activities and, so that…The thing is, I would like to enjoy with the far from the family, also with… as a team with friends enjoying like holidays. Feel like with friends and with the gathering and enjoyable with refreshment from the family also.

GR: OK. How about you?

L2: Well joining the Reserve at that time, I didn’t thought about the mobilisation as a Reservist. I thought it’s really only within the countries and with the regulars and in the future, if anything arises, you might need to go….Yeah, while joining the Reserve I didn’t thought about mobilisation at that time. But…yeah…

GR: It was just something in the background, may be part of parcel of it, but not a big factor?

L3: Yeah. You never know in the future, probably we don’t have to face that situation like that situation. But if that happens that you need to be there, because you are there to help the Army. The deployment is one part of that as well…

L1: Yeah, it didn’t initially cross my mind when I first joined, but…Yeah, I joined to just fill in my time a bit more, learn some new things, get to know some new people, had a bit more adventure. And, yeah, it’s just the way I see it, like if I need to be mobilised as well, I did sign up for it in the first instance. Yes, I’m looking for adventure and new skills and that kind of thing, mobilisation might be a good way of getting it.

GR: Okay. So we’ve covered really all the specific areas I wanted to talk about. Before we finish are there any final points that anyone wanted to make, but were not able to mention before? [all shaking heads] OK, great. Thank you very much for your help today. I will turn off the recorder.