**Group: D**

**Interviewer:** Gavin Randell (GR)

**Date:** 5 Apr 22, 1930 hrs

**Location:** Aldershot

GR: OK, this is group D and we are recording. The first question I have for you is a bit of an ice breaker, and I know you filled in on the questionnaire already, but I’d like to have an idea of who’s deployed on operations with the Army Reserve before?

D1: No, not yet.

D3: Not Yet.

D2: No, not with the Reserves.

GR: With the regulars though?

D2: Yeh.

GR: So where abouts did you go?

D2: Northern Ireland, operational, and two tours of Afghan.

GR: Oh right, OK. And was that within the \_\_\_\_\_[current Corps cap badge]?

D2: \_\_\_\_\_\_[infantry Regiment]

GR: OK, so you’ve changed Cap badge then?

D2: I got out, then, a few years later, I got back in.

GR: Got dragged back in? [chuckle]

D2: No, not quite! [all laughs]

GR: So none of you were involved in Op RESCRIPT or anything like that?

D1: In the beginning, yeah. I was more just at the Squadron, based at the Squadron. So it was for their health and safety, the PPE that had been distributed. So I was sort of involved in that just for the first two weeks, but then we was stood down. ‘Cause I think it was a case of just waiting for \_\_\_\_[regular unit] or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_[regular unit], they was caught out in Cyprus somewhere and couldn’t get back. So we sort of stepped in for a bit and once they got back they took over again.

GR: I see. So you weren’t mobilised?

D1: No, No, not mobilised.

GR: But it was RSDs.

D1: Yeh. It was a case we was given… a few of us were asked to come in, a few of us was able to do so, and then it just was just in the ARC for two, two or three, I think I did about three weeks in the end.

GR: Hmm.

D1: Just in based at the ARC, ready to be sort of…either pushing some boxes around, put ‘em in the back of a vehicle or going off and, sort of, navving for the guy who was driving-

GR: sure.

D1: just to get to the hospitals. That’s what it was really. So…I mean to be fair, most of it was done within first few days. I think they got most of it out and then we were just sitting around waiting for the phone to ring. But that was the only thing I’ve been involved in, but, it wasn’t exactly a mobilisation.

GR: Sure.

D2: You just volunteered for it.

D1: Yeh.

GR: Yeah. How about you?

D3: No, no.

GR: So still waiting to actually be involved.

D3: Yeah.

GR: Well, that’s OK. There’s quite a broad range of experience then within the room. So I think it’ll make a good discussion. The first question I have for you is, how important do you think it is that reserves actually mobilise and deploy as part of their service.

D1: Well, I think you should definitely be ready to mobilise without that, otherwise, well, what’s the point of doing it?

D2: It’s the point of being in the Reserves, isn’t it?

D1: Yeah Yeah, so that’s the thing. Something else, also making sure you’re medically fit to deploy, much as possible. So if it you are called upon, you’re ready to go. I think it is important to know that you are needed. Definitely.

D3: Yeah.

D1: What do you think?

D3: Well I’ve been in three years and I’ve never been mobilised.

D1: Yeah

D3: Yeah.

D1: But it is different now…Well, I’m probably doing all the talking at the moment… but it’s just one of those things. I think you’re being ready to go and being willing to go.

D3: Yeah,

D2: Yeah

D1: Isn’t it, as well? That’s the thing.

GR: So you see, it is all part of the job. As you said, why would you join the Reserves if you were willing or able to go to go anywhere? You said that you’ve been in three years,

D3: Yes, three years.

GR: But you’ve not…

D3: No…

GR: Have you had the opportunity or you still waiting training or…?

D3: Last year we got the opportunity to go to Cyprus but it was cancelled…

GR: So the opportunity was close, but not quite yet.

D3: Yes, not quite yet.

GR: That’s a shame.

D3: Yeah we are waiting for the next year…

D1: Well, we had….there was a possibility of TOSCA came up for \_\_\_\_\_\_[own unit] and it was only a selected amount, I think it was ten names I think, or 10 personnel go through the whole of \_\_\_\_\_[own unit]. And it was put out, who would be up for going. So I mean, I put my hand up for it and quite a few other people did as well. But I think \_\_\_\_\_\_\_[Regular unit] have gone on, which they will be getting ready next month, ready to go, well, do pre-deployment training anyway.

GR: Yeah, and is that the sort of thing that the three of you might be keen to volunteer for?

D1: Oh year, I’d volunteer for it….but…

D2: I ain’t got enough holiday, so….

GR: Fair enough So, your civilian employer?

D2: So, for me it would have to be on the call-up purpose. That’s the only way. I try to balance work, home life and the reserves. You know…

GR: They’re all very, very greedy. They call it very greedy with time.

D2: Yeah {laughs].

GR: Yeah, understood. But for the external considerations you would, ordinarily, be, you know, quite, keen to? I guess something like Cyprus would be a mobilisation, but is the problem for you, the time to be able to do the preparation for it?

D2: Well, if its mobilisation it’s mobilisation, isn’t it? You’ve got your mum, you’ve got your time to do it, but I don’t know about TOSCA.

D1: Yeah, that was going to be for mobilisation.

D2: Oh, was it?

D1: Yeah, yeah. But if it was…they wanted to see who was interested in it, I think, before they sort of put it out there. It was more, it was sort of thrown out a little bit and then to see who’s gonna bite. You know, cast it out to see who’s interested. So then see if they could pick from. And I think it was quite a few hands went up for it.

GR: Sure.

D2: ‘Cause we, me and some of the other lads was sitting by our phones when the first lockdown.

D1: Yeah, Yeah!

D2: Waiting, waiting for that call!

D1: Yeah.

D2: Waiting on the phone all day, like, “have you heard anything?” “Have you got anything yet?”

GR: So there was a lot of excitement about the possibility?

D2: Well, for me, being an ex-reg and that, and some of the other boys, yeah there was. And I had, not aimed at yourself, a lot of people volunteered. What they didn’t realise was the different between voluntary and mobilisation. So there’s a lot of people that rocked up into it who weren’t in the position to be deployed and I think that’s why you guys were stood down.

D1: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

D2: Because you weren’t in an operation yet.

D1: Yeah, we weren’t in an operation.

D2: You know. Not in an operational role. So that’s sort of….

GR: Yeah. What was it about the opportunity or potential for deploying or mobilising for the COVID response that was exciting for you? Or attractive?

D2: I think for me, it was back in green, full time. It’s not something, I’m not saying that as in like I want to be in green all the time, but it’s nice to be like a couple weeks or six months away from work and doing the Army role again.

GR: Having that…what is it about the being back in green? Is it the camaraderie?

D2: I think it is, yeah.

GR: And having a something really worthwhile?

D2: Yeah, Yeah.

D1: Yeah Yeah.

GR: Did you see it is worthwhile?

D1: Obviously it was sort being involved, getting involved with it and helping out, you know…not do your bit, because that’s pretty much what we all supposed to be ‘ere for isn’t it, doing your bit? But it was stepping up, I suppose. And they did, to be helpful.

GR: Of course. And then there was a lot of lots of uncertainty at the time, wasn’t there? Nobody was really sure what was going to be needed…

D1: Especially when you sort of sit at home as well, really. I wasn’t really doing much you know, ‘cause work all of a sudden was like, I like you, I was being paid from work, but then as soon as they said, they was looking for people, I though, yeah, alright. All I was doing was sitting at home, driving, ‘cos my wife, she works at the hospital. So she was working. And my daughter was as well. So my youngest daughter, who was at college….sorry school, she was just in the last year of school. She was bored and she’d had enough of me sitting about, so I thought, right then, I’ll get out the way then! [laughs] So we shipped her off to her aunt’s, she went to aunt’s, yeah, and I went to the ARC, yeah…

GR: How did you feel? You said you’ve been in three years. That would have been quite early in your Army Reserve career, I guess.

D3: Yeah, I think so.

GR: Did you feel the opportunity was there for you?

D3: Yeah. I found there was opportunity….And within three years, I’ll get some someone. But now. Just the things I cannot go anywhere like. Any other exercise? Something like that? I work in hospital in, during the COVID time…

GR: So you were a key worker? I see.

D3: I worked all days, within seven months, I didn’t get a break. Because we got 150 staff and more than 60 people get COVID every week. They got COVID going up up. Then the stuff shutdown. So we need to go seven days a week.

GR: So the idea of key workers-

D3: Yeah

GR- was quite new with the Army Reserve. There was no sense in taking people from one important job to put in here what might have been an important job…

D3: Then we got a message from here…that we will be supplying the PPE in hospital. I will work in hospital, so I come up from hospital to here, then I go to our unit to work from here to supply the PPE…[trails off]

GR: So it was, as you say that the key worker, yeah, aspect of it ruled you out really for that, OK. And I mean, we’ve mentioned the MACA Operation RESCRIPT already. Do you think that’s the sort of thing that Reserve units are really good for, do you think it’s something they should be getting involved in?

D1: Well, in theory, really we should be getting involved in everything.

D3: Yeah.

D1: You know, it should be across the board and I think. If we’re supposed to be here to prop up the, like, the regular army…

D3: We’re already ready. We’re already prepared. We’re already fit.

D1: So I think, yeah, as you say, we are there and we are trained to do the task, then we should be able to go anywhere really.

GR: Hmm.

D1: Not just if there’s a flood, you know, in the Lake District or something. Oh yeah, we’ll just get the Reserves in to do that.

GR: So you’ve got confidence that whatever the job is, it’s something you could handle?

D1: Yeah, I think it’s something it is. To feel that you have got the confidence and also that you got the, like, the expertise with the rest of the Regiment can feel that they are confident in the in us, but they could send this on to something anywhere really. I mean, if you think with what we’ve got going on in Mali and stuff like that, you know, I’m sure that there are guys in our Regiment that could quite easily be sent to Mali, for our UN details or something like that. And then I’m sure there’s been…a lot depends on what happens like with our friendly Russians, [laughs] with what’s going on there with these guys that we can… cause at some point if we do get involved in that. You know the logistics is going to be involved at some point, so its whether they will pull any Reservists into that as well.

GR: Yeah.

D2: Screening though.

D1: Yeah.

GR: Screening?

D2: Yeah. Screening. There’s a lot of troops here who aren’t ready. You can deploy who aren’t ready.

GR: So you have lots of volunteers, but they maybe need a bit more training, a bit more preparation?

D2: Yeah.

GR: You said you deployed to Afghanistan. Was it light infantry with the \_\_\_\_\_\_[Regular Regiment] or mechanised?

D2: No, it was light.

GR: Obviously that was a… probably a much more kinetic type environment than the Op TOSCA that’s been mentioned, or the MACA that we mentioned as well. Do you think that's the sort of environment that is good for reserves to be training towards an angling towards? And I know infantry is different from logistics of course.

D2: Again, if you were to look at some of the troops here, some of the troops would be ready. But there’s a lot of people still not ready. You think like? Normal trade is, what? Two years for someone in the RLC. Six weeks just basic training, they doing it in two weeks. So, yeah, in five years you could be a full screw [Corporal rank]. And then you’re gonna be commanding troops…

D1: Yeah. I think as you say, with the screening. It's, yeah, the amount you put in and will be with the screening is making sure that person that you are sending is fit for the role and fit for the jobs and it doesn't, you know… But when you look up say for instance \_\_\_\_\_\_\_[this Reserve Regiment] across the whole board if you was to cherry pick. You know when you’re doing the screening you cherry pick, you probably only made the cherry pick 20 people out of the whole of the squadron and it would be ready to go off, you know, somewhere. But I think it should be that the Reserves should be at least considered for it…

GR: Yeah.

D1: …because someone then can look, because otherwise it is almost-

D2: Yeah

D1: We’re spending, the nation spending a lot of money on Reserves just, you know, just to be a statistic.

D2: Well, that was the idea, weren’t it? To lower the overall cost long term and then bring in more reservists.

D1: But it’s, it is one of those it with the Reservists. I mean I’m sure you, coming from regular background, is being with reservists, some people do it just for that weekend. But you know maybe I’ll fire off some guns, sleep in a muddy puddle for the weekend and that’s it. It’s all done. But some people want to do that little bit more and it is…that’s where the screening would be coming in, I think….making sure. And that’s where, I suppose, like in any job really where you get an appraisal and something like where we have like the MPARs and our SJARs there’s an appraisal there. And it’s just making sure, I suppose, that they’ve gotta be honest, haven’t they?. So then, because then when you’re looking back, if you want, yeah, we need, we got a deployment going on here. We need to send these people off, who we going to pick? SJARs come out I suppose in a way, and you sit there.

GR: So it’s about picking, that the right people who are ready at the right time?

D1: Yeah, yeah. Not just if there’s something going off yet, out of myself, and you [D2] if we was to be picked, you would be picked first and that would be rightly so because of the experience that you’ve got the knowledge and everything.

D3: Yeah.

D1: You know so that would make sense. But you would see that I think in in the paperwork as well. And then just your output, you know, and that’s where I think you have to make sure that when it comes to picking the Reservist, it is the cherry picking and making sure…Alright, we’ll just take all of \_\_\_\_[this Troop] off they go.

D1: Yeah, yeah.

D1: There’s 25 people.

D2: And if they drop rank as well…like going up against a Full Screw or Lance Corporal full time…I don’t think I would feel comfortable wearing that…

GR: You’d feel out of practice, you think?

D2: Yeah, Yeah. Willing to say, here, but you’d be willing to say here, I’m under your control, and I’ll step up if you need me to, but…

GR: Yeah.

D1: Yeah, definitely I would agree with that as well. It’s with, because also year, with Reservists, you sort of think a little bit differently sometimes I suppose we think outside the box because of having that, sort of, civvy mentality-mindset as well. So we think of something, that we can look at, something a little bit different than a regular soldier would. But I think when it comes down to, once you’re in that situation and it comes to the proper procedures, it would be a regular, really, that I think would have to take control more than a reservist. The Reservist would maybe take that back seat, be ready always to…you know, still give it 100% and be ready to get ready to step up. Almost be, not hand-held, but shadowed slightly in in a way. Yeah, so they can be progressed and moved on, and then they can get up to up to speed a bit quicker they could we if I was to go out into theatre somewhere, you know? And then there’s regular he’s going to be switched on straight away, where I’m going to be like, well I don’t know what’s going on! [laughs] Ummm…What do we do now? What? What’s this? So it would be, not sort of mothered, but you’d have to be, sort of, shown the ropes a bit until you’ve got yourself up to speed.

D2: Like micro-managed.

D1: Yeah. Yes, exactly.

GR: So it’s really that that preparation and ultimately training time, even if it’s training on the job, that’s really important?

D1: ‘Cos we’d get, is it, like, 3 months’ pre-deployment training so with that, it should be that a Reservists should be able to get up to a very good standard, but you still there still not going to be, maybe, something like that, I’m tarring everyone with same brush, but maybe some guys and girls will be up to speed and better. But I think it’s just got to be, maybe, just be prepared for them just to be a little bit that one step or half a step behind just for the first, once they first get in your country.

GR: Yeah…I suppose if I can tie together a couple of the ideas you’ve put together, it’s really summarised perhaps: pre-deployment training, with enough pre-deployment training you can be ready for anything. Especially if the willingness and the desire to go and get involved is there-

D2: Yeah, 100%

GR: you think the will and the desire to get involved is probably the most important part?

D1: Yeah, that’s it, yeah. ‘Cos it’s, no, yeah, it’s not really come on then, off you come, you’re coming with us and if you’re not really into it, you know, you’re not going to give 100%, are you? And then you’re just going to going to resent being there as well. It’s almost like waking up on Monday morning for a job that you don’t want to do-

D2: Could be stagging-on 24/7!

D1: Yeah.

GR: Do you think all types of operations are equally worthwhile?

D1: Well, without being on one, I don’t know. I thought I wouldn’t be able to say really. I would like to think that, every operation we go on is for a reason. You know it’s….reasons it’s the right reason coz….

GR: You are willing to trust the decision makers above you to make that choice?

D1: Yeah, yeah, it would be definitely. Yeah.

D2: Don’t have the choice, you’re in the Army!

D1: Yeah, well you are…

D2: It is though, i’nt it!

GR: Well, it’s interesting you say about choice because my next question really is actually about, How important do you think it is that you have any choice about mobilisation? Of course, there you might have intelligent selection, so where you get you get asked if you want to mobilise-

D1: right?

GR: - before people just send the letters out to avoid exemptions or deferments-

D2: Ohh, ok.

GR: -from yourselves or employers.

D1: Well, I think, yeah, we’ve had a few of those sent out over the last, sort of, couple of years. Where it’s like a feeler, isn’t it? So, would you be interested in mobilisation?

GR: Exactly, exactly.

D1: Yes. So you are, or you aren’t. Would your circumstances change if you was mobilised? Your job, because, you know, most people in the Reserves have got a job anyway. So it’s, you know your employer. How would this affect your employer or your employment? So you get asked them sort of questions.

GR: How important do you think that choice is, then? You mentioned you’re a key worker, so the choice was taken out of your hands last time, really.

D3: Yeah, I think it’s important, but if the, I mean, if the…my workplace if they love me, it’s important, yeah.

GR: So having a personal choice is really important

D3 Yeah, personal choice.

GR: It’s not always the Army saying you must go. Of course, you joined the Army Reserve, not the not the regular army.

D3: I’ve been here 3 years already. I didn’t do anything for the nation yet, so if I get asked, of course I will go over there.

GR: Sure.

D3: Yeah. And how do you think you might present mobilisation to your families and your employers? I mentioned the idea of choice. If you get mobilised, do you say to your employers, “I volunteered to go,” or do you say, “the Army’s told me to go”?

D1: I would be the Army’s told me to go because in that way it’s almost like it was out of my hands. Ever so sorry, they told me I gotta go. I wouldn’t say I’ve volunteered, because if I say I volunteered, they wonder “what you do that for? Well, now we gotta find someone to replace you for the next 10 months.” So, it would for me, I would be, yeah, that I’ve been told.

D3: Yeah.

D1: I’ve gotta go. Whereas with my family, they’re all behind the even when they’ve been watching the news recently they said, well, if you get called for that you have to go, won’t you? And they are quite happy for it to happen.

D3: Yeah.

D1: Yeah. My misses would be like, you’ll be gone for 10 months!

D2: I pre-warned my boss. So, when I had my interview with him, I explained to him that I'm in the Reserves and explained that at any point could be called up at a month’s notice or whatever. That’s it. It’s my family, it’s my wife that’s the problem! [laughs]

D1: Yeah, my wife, she was very supportive and the kids were as well. But yeah, but with work I did the same. I said to them, “I'm in the Army Reserves, so there's a good possibility that I could be asked…” And then also it was with the training I said I do a lot of training, there’s weeks here, weeks there. Well sometimes, which it does doesn’t it, it gets cancelled then they will shift it, oh right I gotta do another one! Or it’ll be last minute sort of changes. So they’ve been quite lenient at the moment.

GR: Yeah. You mentioned earlier on about preparation and that sort of thing. How easy do you think it is to get the resources is to prepare? You mentioned, so medical appointments, that kind of thing. Do you think they’re easy to come by and get to the levels that you need to be at?

D1: With this…I mean, if you’ve got the hospital down the road, but just trying to get blood tests and hearing tests-

D3: Oh it’s very difficult.

D1: Yeah, it’s such bit of a song and dancing, isn’t it, for a lot of guys to try and get arranged?

D3: Yeah.

D1: And then cos it’s during the week and because they work…it’s then... they’re having to take time out of work to get the hearing test, aren’t they? And things like that, which is bit of a pain because then it’s, oh, half a day today I’ve lost out my holiday just to go and get hearing test where, if you think, at Pirbright, you know, you’ve got the med centre in there which they do on a Saturday. Surely if the guys could get in there to do it or something. Maybe even if it’s even, once a month, the Reservists can go in. We could book him up a slot of Saturday morning or something. It could be a Saturday morning, paid, in you go…

GR: So you don’t think it’s as easy as it could be to kind of get the start line?

D1: Yes, I think it could be easier, yes. Yes, but it’s the cost, isn’t it? Again. So obviously putting someone in there on a Saturday certainly, someone for the eye test, someone for hearing, someone to measure how tall you are. You know, by the end of it, you gotta get six personnel. Just to go and…

D2: The other problem with that is, the Army doesn’t have records of my doctors, do they?

GR: As I understand it, there’s no link between the military and the civilian medical system.

D2: So if I was to go to the med centre, to do a hearing test that’s just on JPA [Army personnel administration system]. Blood test, just on JPA. Any medical problems, is just between my doctor and me, or the Army and me. There’s no…

D1: Which is strange, because when you do, like, your selection at the beginning you have to go to your doctor, get your notes so they can look at your records. There’s a letter that gets sent out but it almost, it’s a pointless letter! Because it doesn’t really do anything, does it? It doesn’t release any information, as such.

D2: So I had to get some injections but I had to have them done through the Army. Like typhoid, I think, and stuff like that. And I rang my doctors up, and they were like, “What do you need them for?” Explained I was in the Reserves. Oh well, you don’t need this one, you don’t need that one you don’t need that. OK, but the Army’s just told me I need that, that and that….Well, we don’t do it, or…so there needs to be that link, I think, as well….

D1: It is definitely, the left and the right hand aren’t talking to each other, I think, on that one when it comes to medicals.

GR: Different parts of society not supporting each other? OK…what other factors make it easy, hard, attractive, unattractive to be mobilised?

D1: I think with, with the Reserves, keeping on top of fitness is one thing I think, you know, we’ve got to be…I mean, not ‘cos I’m a fitness nut, but, you know, ‘cos I’m that little bit older, I have to try harder to make sure I can keep fit. And then it’s just making sure, you know, that when you’re in the Reserves, you make sure you are to a certain standard and you’ve got to have self-discipline yourself that way really because I think with the regulars, they are told, what, 3 times, 4 times a week, go on down the gym! But there’s no-one telling me, really, to do that, maybe, like once a week, be on a Tuesday, come on, we’re going for a run. But that’s not enough, to really cut it.

GR: So you feel like your individual preparedness is on you, and maybe the group training and preparedness, that’s on the Army?

D1: Yeah, Yeah, I think so. What it is, you’ve gotta be quite self-disciplined as a Reservist. You gotta be disciplined in your own fitness. Because no one else really is going to tell you to get on with it! Although, when the COVID thing was on, it was, right, you can get paid for, I think it was 2 hours, I think they was doing 2 hours a week. If you show us on strava you’ve done a run or something, a couple of times a week, you’ll get paid two hours. Which was, so people were doing it. Or, some people were! But it’s easy to…not. You know, it’s like one of those, you get home from work, you had a hard day. Do I really want to go for a run? Nahh, I’ll just turn the telly on, sort of thing and then it sort of slips, doesn’t it? [laughs] But then that’s just that mental preparing, isn’t it? And Physical preparing is just thinking, well, I need to need to make sure I go and do that because I might be needed.

D2: The pay as well. You said you’ve deployed as a reservist?

GR: No, I’ve been in charge of reservists. I’ve never been reservist myself.

D2: Oh, OK. So if I was to get called up on the 1st of January, then I wouldn’t actually get paid that until first of March. So that’s me technically two months without any pay!

GR: Quite a big gap! Especially with bills to pay families to support.

D1: Especially as you’re usually only one month away from losing your house, aren’t you? [chuckles]. Most people, most people live to just the edges of their means, don’t they?

D2: So pay is a …

GR: It’s big risk is putting a lot of trust in the system to get it right, first time.

D2: Being reservists our pay is always probably wrong!

D1: Ahh yeah!

D2: It’s not going to be correct straight away...it’s just being Army’ isn’t it? You’ll go out there, it’ll be a few months before it's even saw it…

D1: And it’s, ring Glasgow [location of Army Personnel Centre] [laughs]-

D2: and it’s always pushed back on you! . Just back on.

GR: Yeah, and all the while it’s your family-

D2: suffering!

GR: How about you? What do you think might make it attractive or unattractive? Harder, easier?

D3: Ah, harder!

GR: What would make it harder?

D3: …Oh, a difficult one…I think it’s the phys, with my age….

GR: So that the mind is willing, but the bodies still trying to catch up.

D3: Yeah. Like when we are tabbing, because I am so short, it’s single march and you do double march! Like at times it’s very hard!

GR: So you feel like you have to work hard on that. And it can be difficult

D3: Yeah, I can do, but it’s quite slow. My body…that’s the harder one, yeah.

GR: And you think that might put you off?

D3: I get to keep trying.

GR: You just keep trying, keep pushing through.

D3: To be honest, I tried to come join Army 2016. But I am 96 kilo Mantis is kilo. Then I tried to come join in 2017. I tried two years continued. Then, after 2019 I joined Reservist army, I passed! After two years...

GR: So yeah, you finally. Go where you wanted to go.

D3: yeah, after 6 years, yeah.

GR: Obviously hard won!

D3: Yeah, Yeh, that’s why I like that one. Now I feel myself I need to be fit. Always.

GR: Yeah.

D3: If I want to be Reservist, I need to be fit. So on week’s, maybe 3 or 4 times I go for a run. Before, I never run, I never do anything. And now my mindset is, I need to keep fit. That’s why I joined the Reservists.

GR: We, I mean, all three of you spoken about a lot of things that are quite individual, what would you think about: your training as a team as a squadron, as a troop, as a regiment. Do you think that as a team you’re kind of ready to go?

D1: I think what we have is when we have the training weekends? Which is weird. We don’t actually seem to work as a squadron of such, cause what they do is, quickly get all the squadrons together and then split everybody up so you don’t really get to see what each squadron is able…is capable of. So then we are not really working out what our strengths or weaknesses are. So, you know, I think…If it was squadron, … so we are \_\_\_\_\_[Squadron designator] we are \_\_\_\_[Troop], we are fitter than \_\_\_\_\_{other troop] I was told the other day. Like, that’s good. So that gives us that little bit of an edge already. But it’s just one of those. But it’s just one of those and that’s just that that little bit, just in our squadron. And so I think if we was able to set the squadrons sort of almost at each other I think would be good because then, that squadron is working as a team.

GR: But you feel like the team spirit isn’t a thread that runs all the way through everything you do?

D1: No, I don’t think so. Not so much. Also… because with our Squadron, because were split over two locations, of course we are here and obviously \_\_\_\_\_\_[other location] so it’s almost we’ve got very minimal equipment, compared to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_[other location] has go the ARC. They got the gym, they got all the vehicles. If we want to go and change a tyre on a vehicle, we then got speak to \_\_\_\_\_\_[paired regular unit]. But you gotta get someone to come out, where they can go straight out into the car park.

GR: Hmmm.

D2: And it is crazy coz this sites more secure than theirs’ is.

D1: Yeah.

D2: So why can’t we store…

D1: Yeah. I mean, even when it comes to the gym, we’ve got to, we have to book the gym. We can’t…. So for the RFT. They’ve got all their kit for the RFT, we can’t do anything, but we have to borrow it from them just to try and do with power bags and gearing up, they call it. So can you send some power bags over so that we can just have a feel of them so people can see what they are up against?

GR: Yeah.

D2: So, but I think it would be good to get more squadron, sort of, training going on definitely.

GR: Do you think that would help you as a team when it comes to operational deployments.

D3: Yes-

D1: Yeah, I think so. And also just that unity as well. So where you’ve got the guys working as a team, you know they’ve got your back as well and when people working together, you know you can rely on them is… I know that when you go, if it’s a deployment, you’re not… a lot of time, you’re going to be might be the only person from your squadron being deployed and you’ve got to fit into a completely different team. But if we can, have the squadron that worked and gelled, you know, the team just gets stronger and stronger doesn’t it. And that’s also where you do realise where you weaknesses are off, you know who you need to help along. It’s almost as if you get your strong person with that weak person and then they bring them up.

D2: I agree with what you say, but I also feel like maybe you should just take all your strongest troops…

GR: From across the Regiment?

D2: Yeah, across the Regiment, as if he were, these are the guys that have been deployed. Let’s get them together and let’s ponder. But, but then I’m not sure how it’d work. Whether you would be splitting between all the other units if you got mobilised and you go join up with C Company of this battalion or that battalion. So you probably wouldn’t have….

D1: Yeah, yeah, yeah, sure… I mean the other thing to that as well is, is out of the whole, if was the whole \_\_\_\_\_\_[of this Regiment] being deployed, I mean it wouldn’t be the whole of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_[this Regiment] that would be deployed anyway, just more than likely be the stronger members that be back to the cherry picking and screening.

GR: Sure. We’ve already mentioned a little bit about people who are almost ready to go? How much notice do you think is reasonable for Reservists to get to be mobilised? You already mentioned, I think one month just as a sort of casual example.

D2: …Depends what you need to do, doesn’t it? Completely depends on what you need to do. I mean…how easy, how hard is it to get a doctor’s appointment?...Just in general?

D1: Yeah, well…

D2: So imagine-

D1: Well you gotta get past receptionist million questions, haven’t you first? Like they’d diagnose you!

D2: I’ve gotta do this because I need to deploy okay. Well, I can’t fit you in for three weeks for dentist because you’re gonna have to have your teeth perfect. Everything checked…

D1: So in fact, I had to see a hygienist. So I’d tried to book an appointment and managed to get one for tomorrow, managed to get a cancellation, but it’s three and a half months waiting. Just to go see the hygienist.

GR: A military one?

D1: No, a civilian one.

D2: ‘Cos you don’t get military ones no more! [laughs]

GR: So really it’s the…the timelines are hindered by the support of the organisation gives? Is that fair to say?  
D1: Yeah, I think so. Yeah. It’s so yeah, it’s almost tripping ourselves up. Yeah. Yeah.

GR: It doesn’t make it easier? It’s just another thing that you’ve got to sort out alongside getting your family onside-

D1: Yeah

GR-, getting you your boss on side-

D1: yeah

D2: -while still working!

GR: While still working and while still training.

D2: Yeah. Up ‘till that point when you deploy, isn’t it? You got that whole month that you’re still going to be working as well as getting. Medically…dentally fit-

D1: It’s almost as though, once you know, you’ve got…the doctor, sort of, the appointment ready you then have to think about, okay, what else can I do that day? Oh right, yeah, I want to get the car sorted, and you almost want to make the half day that you had to take off…you know, you need to try and get three days into that. So it makes it worthwhile just going to….Otherwise you just going to the doctors just to get a piece of paper signed…

GR: So you feel like….you just need something that makes it easy. Get rid of the….obstacles.

D2: So that month, let’s say a month prior. So you’ve got a letter that you can take to your GP, to your dentist. Say whoever helps it needs to go to, just to… get yourself… That, I don’t know…your employer as well?

D1: It’s almost like, yeah, you get, yeah a month’s notice to move and then as it gets closer and closer then, you know, you got...

D2: I’ve still gotta give two weeks, two weeks minimum before I can get a day off. So you know what I mean…that’s…

GR: You need to give plenty of notice for six months off plus?

D2: Well, well, it’s not just that…but my boss will get the letter as well probably, the same day or afterwards. And then, obviously, like I said before, I also need to work up until that mobilisation. So in between then, I’ve gotta book holiday so I can do whatever else that…sort my admin out…

GR: Train your replacement at work, possibly?

D2: Yeah yeah, so it’s not like...

GR: So it’s one month, but it’s a busy month. It’s a lot… so, how about you timeline wise?

D3: I said last time I was ready to go, Cyprus, last year. I feel that one is very hard for me to…the holidays no problem, because if my 2IC sends a letter to the boss, then he will give the holiday. To prepare the medical and fitness things they need to put the tetanus injection. Because I didn’t want it here, I come from my country, I didn’t have any records here. I come here in 2009, after 2009 here, I registered for a GP, but I never see GP because I didn’t get sick. Then they want all my history.

GR: They want all these records,, you just don’t have!

D3: Yeah! They want all my vaccines. So every day I call a different place. The number one, blood test, it’s very hard to get the blood test. Then I go to... drawing for the blood. Then, when I could do it, but it didn’t take my blood! I got a GP, I go to GP in the hospital, I’m working here. They send me to GP. Then finally I go private, then I do that one. Then after that one everything I submit documents, then they want the hepatitis B injection, that took me two weeks. Then finally I get that one, everything done. Holiday done…and they cancel the deploying.

GR: Oh no!

D1:[laughing]

D3: I think nearly… Now it’s one months, OK, now I’m running, but the first time it takes two months.

GR: Well it's amazing. You still seem have kept your enthusiasm having gone so far and put it to be disappointed.

D3: Yeah.

GR: What I take from that is, you kind of feel like the Army doesn’t make it easy for you or itself to get you out of the door.

D1: No, it does feel as if…but I suppose from a regular point of view, they sort of see us a regulars, in a way. That, oh, what else are they doing? Yeah, because they just think you’re in the block, I suppose. And it’s, oh, well they can just walk down to the doctor and do that. But yeah, it’s not that easy, because as you say, you are juggling home. So it is, you've got two lives, isn't it? Almost.

GR: Yeah.

D1: And you got to try and split that…

GR: I think my final question is whether, or is about…do you feel like the leaders in your organisation? I suppose we’re looking at the kind of officer level. Do you think they set a good example when it comes to mobilisation?

D1: I don’t know really to be fair cause I’m….[unintelligible]…Yeah, with Captain \_\_\_\_\_\_[Squadron officer]…I think he’s done a lot of tours. You know, ridiculous amounts of tours. And then we’ve got…Captain \_\_\_\_\_\_, who loves it. He loves mobilisation! He’s just, I think it is under lockdown…

D2: But he’s an ex-reg isn’t he?

D1: Yeah, he’s just constantly got that…he’ll say, “oh yeah, I’ll go for that!” He’s got… So.

GR: So he strikes you as the sort of person who is, enthusiastic, ready to go?

D1: Yeah.

GR: It sounds like he sets a good example?

D1: I think he’s just bonkers! [laughing]

GR: He wants to go and maybe that encourages other people to go?

D1: Yeah, and then our OC…well he’s just gone to \_\_\_\_\_\_[overseas deployment] because he’s French speaking. So he’s out there….So.

GR: Well it sounds to me like they do set an example. You know they are willing and ready to go. Which is positive to hear rather than the other way around. If you were to have leaders who you thought would shirk their ‘duty,’ because at the start of course, you said, well, “you joined the Army Reserve to deploy.” If you have people who are not inspirational in that regards…

D1: Well yeah. We’ve got Staff \_\_\_\_\_\_She’s done a few tours as well, hasn’t she?

[Interruption outside]

GR: So it sounds like anyway, yeah….

D1: Yeah, they seem to have been involved and done tours.

D2: I, from a regular point of view, would cherry pick of our seniors…not all of them…

GR: Carefully?

D2: Yes. I’ve seen…I’ve seen some of the ranks, some of the people. Well, you could just see ‘em, just by walking around.

GR: You could see from their bearing? Will they cut it? I’m not sure they will…

D2: Yeah. Do you think something from a PTI’s point of view?

GR: Do you think that’s a feeling that lots of people have? You know that as in general, the troops can have and have an idea about who will be a will be a good, decent leader on operations Senior NCO or officer and who might struggle?

D2: Doesn’t really matter though, does it? ‘Cos we are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_[trade] or we are \_\_\_\_\_[trade], aren’t we? Because our main role is ‘Soldier first’, but we’re not. The infantry aren’t going to say, let’s get these \_\_\_\_\_[Corps cap badge] reservists in that section there they’re going out on patrol.

D1: It’s more likely going to be, get them the hell out of here!

D2: Get them back to BASTION, or wherever…stagging on there.

GR: Alright, so you definitely see the future like that, you’d be deployed in in trade, you know, and it’s very trade focused rather than…

D1: I think, yeah, for us as a \_\_\_\_\_\_[trade] regiment.

GR: Yeah, you won’t be used out of that trade, really?

D2: So, well, maybe. A Staffy who’s on the bigger scale is going to be in the stores or not doing anything other than that role really, they’re not going to be taking blokes out on patrols or whatever. But yeah, no. There’s definitely a few people who, personally I would be...stripping if I had the choice of the power.

D1: [laughing]

GR: Well, before we go into a promotion board or deselection board. I’ll call stumps there. Thanks very much for your contributions today. It’s been really interesting. There’s been some really useful information. Before we finish other any final points, any questions that you want to make?...No? Great in that case, I shall turn the recorder off.