**Group: G**

**Interviewer:** Gavin Randell (GR)

**Date:** 26 Apr 22, 1930 hrs

**Location: Windsor**

GR: OK. This is group Golf and the recorder is now on. The first question I want to throw out there really by way of an ice breaker. I wonder if perhaps you could tell me if any of you have mobilised and deployed with the Army Reserve before.

G1: No I haven’t been mobilised.

G2: I was going to but then work and stuff got in the way.

GR: Where was that going to be?

G2: That was going to be Poland, back in 2020.

GR: Poland? Okay was up for an exercise?

G2: No, that was for six months. Deployment with the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_[Reserve cavalry unit].

GR: OK. So that would be Op CABRIT?

G2: Yeah.

GR: OK, great.

G3: No I haven’t, no.

G4: No, never.

GR: Well, it’s quite good that we’ve got a little, bit of experience, but also you have seen other friends and colleagues mobilised and deployed as well. So you’ve still got a lot of really useful ideas that we can cover. So, how important do you think it is that Reserves mobilise and deploy as part of their service?

G1: Oh, I think it’s really important because it’s…you join the Army. The Army is expected, whether regular reserves to go and do your job on a full-time basis as well as Reserve and be able to do your job in an operational or even an exercise area. I think it’s very important people understand that when they join. That it is expected of them. I mean, we are in a service and we are expected to do this. And it shows up what we can do as Reservists is, we can go and do our job and we are good at it! It probably surprises some of ourselves! Is that we can actually do the job considering how little training we do get. We can actually go and do it.

GR: So you say, surprised that you can do it. Do you feel confident that…?

G1: It depends, obviously, in the \_\_\_\_\_[this Corps] there’s a lot, a lot, so much training you have to do to be able to use the equipment and a lot to remember. And in any job you do, there’s always going to be skill fade. It’s kind of hard as a Reservist cause you got to balance your personal life with the Army Reserve. And you got to balance your job and a lot of people will start to have families and stuff. So trying to remember how to do some simple things with a radio. It is easy to forget and so I’m pretty sure if I were to get mobilised I’m sure the pre-deployment training will help kick it all back into me. I’ll start to remember all. I’m sure the same all happened to you guys and then I’ll probably be surprised at how good I am. Or how the training kicks in when I eventually do get out on duty.

GR: Okay, how about the rest of you? Do you think it’s important?

G4: I don’t think it’s as important to be mobilised. I think it’s important to have the skills tested, though. That you don’t need a 6-month deployment to keep the skills up to date. And if we are realistic, how many opportunities for a 6-month deployment come up? Not that many, and then you’re in a pool of quite a few that you have to get selected from. And if it comes up at the wrong time, you can’t do it. So I think the more important thing for me is that you kept skilled and up today, because ultimately, those mobilisations here and there are fine, but realistically we’re here if something, you know, we’re here as that backup force if something really big kicks off. And I’d rather be, not waiting for that one mobilisation where I go off somewhere, but staying with my unit and like, going away for, like, even if it’s just a month, but doing more consistent training with the unit so that when we, if we are ever properly mobilised as a unit that we’re all on the same wavelength. So individual mobilisation, I’m not sure, but I think conglomerately or collectively mobilisation is far more important. And I think, some of the issues that I have at the moment, I’ve only been in since November about fully trained, is the lack of training we do together because on Tuesday you’re not here. I might not be here. We don’t, we get one weekend a month and we gotta hit certain, we gotta get our training done. So I think there needs to be more specific, training as a unit to do to cover those bits.

GR: So being together as a team within you’re your squadron here is more important for you than an individual opportunity?

G4: Yes, definitely.

G2: I personally I agree with you, totally. I think it’s really important, obviously. It’s also just to challenge yourself, as well. To put you outside your comfort zones. We come in once a week or something. Sometimes we’ll go away on the old weekend and stuff like that, but actually if you get the opportunity to go away with an entirely different bunch of guys and girls to go and basically do what you’re trained to do, then. I really like that idea and I would like that kind of opportunity.

G3: I think we should be ready to be mobilised. I mean, I think there’s a little bit of a misconception between and...in theory, we should have the same level of skills that the regulars have after a certain training or after a certain time. What happens is, for example, when you graduate the university as a full timer and graduate as a part-timer you should have in theory the same level of skills, right? So that’s the way I kind of see the Reserves as well. But I do feel that sometimes some areas see us as a little bit like second-hand, like yes, we are back-up and I completely understand that. But once all our training is done, we should have the same level of skills like the regulars. And if you have the same level of skills then you have the confidence to be mobilised anytime as well. Me personally I think it’s. It's really important to be ready and to have that confidence and when the time comes, you have to be there because this is probably why some of us joined.

GR: Yeah. And particularly for any deployment, you feel the pre-deployment training before that, you’re confident that will get you up to the level that you need to be to be good to go.

G3: Yeah, yes, that’s correct. So I’m sure that if you put your name forward to be mobilised. If that happens, you will probably get a different type of training or a little bit more intense.

G2: Yeah, Yeah – you’ll get pre-deployment training before you go.

G3: But in the same time, I got to, definitely agree with you. It’s about being part of the group, part of this community as well. Yeah, it’s not only about going on the field with a rifle in your hand, it’s…there’s a lot of other things that you doing in this group and you do, not necessarily in times of war, or even in a peacekeeping mission, I guess.

GR: So. I suppose collectively it’s your weekends and Tuesday evenings are about building the team here. So you’ve got a team to go forward for any deployments where you get called-up together, the individual things can catch up with pre deployment training later to some extent?

G3: Me, personally, I would like to be ready before that predeployment training. I would like to be to have that level of skills of all that experience, that if I’m needed tomorrow, I should be able to be ready tomorrow. I don’t know if that’s realistic or not, but I think that’s the target.

G1: Yeah, but here you got to think about what you’ve been deployed for as well.

G3: That’s correct. Yeah, yeah.

G1: There’s so many factors to it, to actually being mobilised.

G3: Yeah, it depends what being mobilised actually means. You can be peacekeeping mission, you could be in a conflict situation.

GR: OK, sorry you had something to say?

G4: I was going to say, we should be ready to be mobilised. We shouldn’t rely on me going away. Separated from the unit. And I get that, I completely agree with what you say. But it shouldn’t rely on me going away for six months on my own to get to a level where I feel comfortable. This should happen is what I was getting at.

GR: As a matter of routine?

G4: Yeah. We should be ready to deploy it as a team, as a unit now. We shouldn’t rely on the, oh, I’ll put myself forward, I might get a deployment. The point I’m getting as it, we shouldn’t be relying on individual mobilisation. We should be ready and given equal footing in the regulars.

G3: With the regulars, yeah.

G4: And I do feel that we are always treated as a…when I said back-up, what I meant by that was that you were there, ready to go. Not, oh yeah, they are the cousin you don’t talk about. [laughing]. And it shows with things like equipment and things like that. You know, we don't get issued a lot of the stuff that the regulars do. I'm not saying we need everything the regulars do, but little things like daysacks for heavens’ sake. We don’t even get issued them! But the point was, yeah, I think we should be ready to mobilise, not rely on. You going away for six months to get yourself up to that level. When you come back and you might be the only one out of the unit that’s actually gone in last few years.

GR: So yeah, and by the time you come back from a lot of people have changed and you’re then the outsider when you’ve been away doing the job. I see okay. Something you mentioned actually about mobilisation being quite an exciting prospect?

G2: Yes, yeah.

GR: And worthwhile in itself. What kinds of operations do you think would be particularly worthwhile or exciting? Or is it any opportunity to go on operations?

G2: I think it’s just any opportunity whatsoever. So my old unit, the \_\_\_\_\_\_[Reserve cavalry unit] was the first Reserve lot to do CABRIT as a light cavalry unit. And they did, what was it? 6 or almost 9 months pre-deployment training which, because, as you said, they were coming from Land Rover WMIK to Jackal. Because obviously there are no Land Rovers out there. So they had to do that. The guys actually did go and have to do 9-month training on the vehicle, with the vehicle. And they had to run through, doing all that when normally it takes a regular good year, couple of years, to actually fully master that vehicle, that system.

GR: And that’s quite a commitment of time. You know 9 months of pre deployment training, before you even deployed.

G2: Yeah.

GR: Is that the sort of commitment you think is reasonable or is it very individual?

G2: I think it depends on the scenario. So obviously doing when they’re actually having to learn all the new vehicles like that, it was needed. But, if you do actually get that opportunity and you don’t actually need to learn it. Then you possibly don't need to do it as much. So for example, when the RIFLES did their deployment. I don’t know how long their predeployment training was. But being, sort of, I don’t know if it’s just the infantry or that sort of thing. They still need to do that build-up training, so it probably didn’t take them as long. So probably more like four, five months or something like that. Before, obviously, going out the door on to Cyprus.

GR: So, are you referring to the RIFLES going on…?

G2: Yeah, when they did Cyprus.

GR: OK, the peacekeeping tour?

G2: Yeah, yeah.

GR: Yeah, okay.

G4: I get what you mean, anything will be exciting.

G2: Yeah, definitely. I completely went off on one! [laughing].

GR: So again, it’s the opportunity to deploy as a team that is an exciting prospect?

G4: I think as well, just being able to go out as a soldier and just be able to do your job. And do…what we signed up for, really. You know, as a reservist I feel like some time giving back as well. You know, everyone has their own reasons for joining the military. Some want to do the AT [Adventurous Training]. You know, some people do it for whatever. And I joined to have an insight into the military life and I ended up quite enjoying it. So to be able to go out and do more things, to be able to get deployed would be my ideal.

GR: Okay. I suppose, all of the things you mentioned being overseas where do you see yourselves in relation to UK operations or MACA, Military Aide to the Civilian Authority, for instance.

G1: I think that’s sort of what the Reserves are doing at the moment, isn’t it?

G4: Our squadron used to be mainly doing that sort of stuff. I think, possibly just before you joined, maybe three years ago it was

G1: [laughing]

G4: We done mainly UK ops. That’s what we mainly did. So I think they were deployed for the Olympics and there's stuff after the floods. But yeah, I think that’s the sort of stuff, helping the Police out, when they have issues as well is what the UK ops side of it, I believe is. I don’t know if you guys agree?

G2: Totally, it’s just…anything, really, just to get out that normal coming Tuesday evening, the odd weekend and two weeks in the summer for annual camp.

G4: I’d rather be, and this is what I’m getting at: I’d rather we were mobilised twice, three times a year, for two or three weeks, a month, whatever it is, because that way you don’t have to worry about your…I’m a civil servant. So like, I get signed-off, right. But I’d rather be deployed, Yeah, three or four times a year for a couple of weeks or two a month in the UK, you get signed off, as a unit to do that stuff for longer, if we’re going abroad, that's what I'm sort of getting at. I wanna be mobilised more. I like doing this. But I don't wanna just…I don’t wanna have to throw my name in the hat to get mobilised. I’d rather go with my mates that I’m seeing week-in, week-out. Yeah, like you say about the homeland stuff, and I know there’s a bit of a focus on at the moment about the Reserves may be taking on that line, but just get to the end of the Army’s needs. Deployment passed for two weeks, signed-off, here’s your letter and he deployed for well, you know, it’s not two weeks, but you see what I mean? Mobilisation, more often, as a unit, more opportunities, as a unit.

G1: Yeah. I think when ops and stuff do happen, I know, so speaking to some of the guys who were in, I think some of them have left now, but they’ve been to Afghan and Iraq, they didn’t deploy as a squadron. They got, they backfilled all those spaces in the regulars. I think that’s how it’s normally done.

G2: Yeah.

G1: But I would love the idea of, the guy’s that I work with.

G2: Yeah, exactly.

G1: They guys I work with. You guys, all the people I know, going out there and, let’s say Afghan was still on. If we were called to deploy as a squadron. I know that we’d already have that team bonding.

G2: Yeah, Yeah/

G1: We’d have that initial bonding and everything have teamwork is already in place.

G3: Isn’t it, yes!

G1: Yes, exactly. And then we will deploy and then do that further training needed to get up to the point of need or whatever. That would be much better.

G2: It would be so much better.

G1: Depending upon, obviously, how it works or how much it is in the bigger picture....so I get your point.

GR: So to be more usable you need to be used for something and then actually if something of the most serious nature crops up, you know, a war-fighting scenario. What you have been doing, even if it’s not with your own equipment, actually you work better as a team because you’ve have been doing other things as a team.

G4: You can’t rely on pre-deployment training in those scenarios. You’re not going to have the time. This, now, should be our pre-deployment training. We should constantly be ready. Yeah, I know. Fitness and things are up and down and yeah, we’ve all got regular jobs. We can’t commit to the level of fitness that may be needed, but as long as we’re skilfully in positions, fitness can be dealt with very quickly. And that’s more the point I’m making around mobilisation. I think we should be doing it more often, as a unit to be ready for when it matters. 16:49

GR: Okay. And moving on to that, what kinds of things do you think would make it easier to mobilizer and deploy? Perhaps I’ll reverse the question first. What do you think makes it difficult at the moment?

G4: I think for some people, it’s getting released from work coz they’ve got that commitment. Obviously when you come back potentially that job might not be there. I think, as I said, I’m a civil servant, I’m pretty safe. Yeah, I think the Army matching the pay as well, that could be an issue for the Army. I don’t know that could be a blocker.

GR: That it might make some people too expensive?

G4: Yeah. More regularly doing it might push that paid band bracket, their budget, up beyond workability, I don’t know. But ultimately you’ve gotta weigh that risk factor up you. Is it worth spending that money now so you’re ready then, or hedging your bets? As we got, as you see on TV, it’s becoming more of a turbulent, sort of, terminalistic sort of, well, whirlwind sort of world we don’t quite know what’s over the horizon. I mean, that just lays into the point more that we need to be ready. We need to have more deployable individuals.

GR: Okay. What do you think might make it difficult or unattractive for you to deploy?

G3: I completely agree. It’s about the job that you have in your civilian life as well. I think this is one of the most important things for a lot of people and also the family commitments as well. And, you know 100% agree with that lot of people joined the Reserves for a reason. Because they really wanted to do this in their spare time. If they really wanted to be like full time and that’s all they do then they would have probably joined the regulars. So even though, yes, we do want to get to a certain level of skills to be somewhere like the regulars are.

G?: It’s a matter of balance.

G3: Yeah, Yeah. Exactly. So we’ve chosen the Reserves for a reason. [laughs] Otherwise we would have chosen regulars. I think these are these, yeah, these are the main things that probably…effect on his family commitments and our civilian job.

GR: OK. And from what you’ve said, do I take it that you see, the regular army as the benchmark you aspire to?

G3: From what I know, it terms of...of experience and the way they are trained in what they can do, I mean I think someone, somebody mentioned that they train for a year or nine months or something like that and then reach a certain level that we’d probably get in five years or six. And that’s only if we actually come to every training weekend and every Tuesday night! If you compare that, you know it is a little bit of a wait until you get to that level. And probably a little bit more opportunity. So if you have the time to do it like for example you have a gap year or something

GR: Yeah.

G3: If you wanted to more if your life allows you to do a little bit more, do other things more, to have more opportunities to do that and you know you was spot on with that, you don’t want your name to be in a hat and maybe you will be chosen just put your name forward. And probably you’ll be accepted to be mobilised, or to be part of that…

GR: Do maybe you worry that, and this will be a very casual phrase, that you’re not as good as a regular counterpart? Is that something that might concern?

G3: My concern definitely is that, so. You know, there’s no reason to hide it and I think. It’s a general attitude, I don’t know about you guys, but I spoke to other people and they were saying, well, I don’t think we are at the same level and I don’t know if we will ever be at the same level like the regulars. And you mention guys about the radius and all the technical stuff that we learn. It’s one thing when you do it once a week for two hours, if you’re lucky to do that, and probably two more weekends or four weekends, or another two weeks per year you touch those radios and work with it and it’s another thing when all you do that 8, 10 hours per day, five days a week or more than that. It’s quite, it’s quite unrealistic to think that you can do the same level like those guys!

GR: Easy to forget! I detect in all of you, I suppose, a self-confidence is a factor but also self-awareness. You know, it’s simply a matter of practicality. You don’t do it for as long in a day.

G1: We do a lot less training, but we I think when I first joined. It was three weeks’ worth of training. You do your phase one, which are regular soldiers, 14 weeks, which is a lot less, and then to the communications side of it, as a class three operator. That's two weeks which will take, you know, some of the guys who reckon, I think six years, six years, six months to a year to leave how to be a \_\_\_\_\_[?] systems controller. So they do a lot of training. And I don’t expect myself to be the same level as them because it’s not my full-time job. I do this as a part time. I’d probably still do it if I wasn’t getting paid, ‘cause we want to be here. So I don’t expect myself to be on the same level as a regular soldiers as a Reserve because it’s not my full-time job, I don’t do it every day.

G4: I think that’s what gets missed though. We won’t be as skilled as a regular soldier but I think Reserves are more highly motivated, more adaptable because we only have a short amount of training and I think that, to give us that credit, is like we’re far more absorbent of new information because we have very little time to do it than maybe a regular is. That’s not to say for definite, but that’s my feeling but the skill level of a regular will knock us flat because we don’t get the same exposure.

G1: I agree, our motivation is higher.

G2: Yeah.

G1: Because it’s not a day job. We want be here…

G2: It’s because instead of coming on Friday, they think, well, let’s go home! Let’s knock it on the head!

G1: And you’ll still be here at the desk saying, “what do we do next?”.

G2: [laughing] exactly, yeah!

G1: \_\_\_\_\_\_[?]

G3: Because I think for us it’s not just another day when we come here.

GR: You don’t have to be here, is what you are saying?

G3: Exactly. We come from the excitement. We come for the group that we have here, obviously for a regular, but you have to go to work. [laughing]. So we do it because we want to, and I think a lot of regulars, they do it because they have to and that’s a huge difference between us and the level of motivation and what motivates us is completely different.

GR: Well, it sounds like you’ve answered the first part of the question, anyway! You know, what makes it easier or attractive to deploy? And it is the fact that you want to do it and you want to be here.

G1: Definitely.

GR: Linked to that, do you think it’s important that you get along personally with the people in your team. Like, you know, within your squadron, is it important that you are friends as well as colleagues or comrades?

G1: I would say so. I’ve met some amazing people here and I’ve been in 6 years. I’ve seen people come and go, but one of the reasons are, you know, it’s a bit \_\_\_\_\_\_[?] on leave and then ‘cus of the group of friends I have here and people I get along with, its actually, no, I enjoy coming here. Putting me alongside the people I like every day, I work with good people and it brings you back in. Makes you want to come in. Makes you want to put the work in. ‘Cause your working with your mates. You don’t want them to start getting a bit, you know, he doesn’t want to be here. He’s not putting the work in because, they are mates as well. So there is that, you know, I want to be here, not just for the work side, but for the social side as well. It picks you up, and makes you want to go on the course, because your mates are doing it as well.

G2: It motivates you more.

G1: Exactly. When we went to Cyprus for about two weeks for our camp out there. I went out there, and it’s basically you got another in the first week of hard training. You doing drills every day. You’re on the ranges everyday but you are doing hard work with your mates. Basically, we only get paid pennies. You know, we are volunteers and we get paid to come here and see our mates and work with our mates. We go and do the training and the second week of that training is basically AT, a free holiday. [all laughing] If you’ve been on camp, you’ll understand how, as a Reservist, it’s basically a free holiday. But you are getting paid for it, but you are with your mates.

G2: Exactly, yeah.

G1: Good experiences and stuff.

G2: Then it’s obviously when you come back to camp, when you come back to the ARC [Army Reserve Centre], isn’t it? You’ve sort of then got them experiences with everybody else, haven’t you?

G1: Yeah, definitely.

G2: So like, when you come back into the Mess here, it’s like, oh, do you remember when so-and-so did whatever?

G1: And it’ll probably be the same as the regular army, or any good job you have. You know, the people you work with sometimes make or break a job.

G2: Yeah.

G1: And I think that is quite important.

GR: So linking those two ideas together. If the team here were to mobilise, but, you couldn’t go for whatever reason, how would that make you feel? What would be the impact of that?

G1: Oh, I’d be gutted.

G2: Yeah, I’d be gutted.

G1: I would love to be mobilised. My job can be quite demanding. I know if the Squadron was deployed, and I wasn’t able to go, I feel like I wasn’t being a team player. I feel like I’m letting the team down, because I’m not able to go and support my guys.

G2: You’d feel like the weakest link, really, wouldn’t you?

G1: No matter where they have deployed, you know, somewhere in the UK or even someone in Ukraine, if it all kicked off. You know, I feel like I’m letting the team down, so should be out with them. I don’t know what you guys feel.

G2: No, I totally agree.

G3: No, definitely. If everyone goes and I can’t go, I wouldn’t feel…

G4: It’s that missing out factor, isn’t it?

G3: Yeah, I’m missing out.

G4: I’ve missed my opportunity. Do you know what I mean, like?

G3: You would be gutted, yeah.

G1: So if you’ve been like…oh sorry, mate, go on.

G3: No, it’s fine. Well, it’s like, my idea is, if only 1 or 2 people from this Squadron are going and you’re not going. We’ll there’s another 10, 15, 20 more not going. But if everyone goes, then you are left out [laughing] then you’re going to be thinking, why me?

G1: And like you were saying about the, like, we train together, then the opportunity comes for us to all be deployed together, we can’t go. It’s just like, ahh, we are missing out. I’d feel, a bit bad if I couldn’t go. Big time! It’s what you join the Army for, to be deployed, in my opinion.

GR: And, how important do you think it is that you have a choice whether to mobilise and deploy?

G4: To a point, I think. Like you just said\_\_\_\_[G1] the fact that you can’t…if you’ve got something more important here, and you can’t go. But I think, on the same front, I think that choice has to be limited because it just starts getting to the point with, “ahh well, I don’t wanna go”. You need that, we’re here for, you can’t give too much choice. There’s gotta be a good reason for it.

GR: Yeah, the idea is I'm sort of picking up from within the group are on the one hand, you've got your domestic situation, your family and your job. But on the other hand, maybe you’ve got the idea that you want to be used more frequently, but in order to be used more frequently, you need to be reliably available.

G1: Also is also we need to have…there’s a sense of duty, but we’ve all signed-up.

G2: We signed on the dotted line.

G1: Yeah, we signed on the dotted line. We all took that oath. And if I’m needed, I will go. You know, I’ll pack up my bags that I have under the bed, just pack it all in, well, the limited kit I have. But I’ll go, unless I had a good reason in my job. I work as a police officer and I might be needed here more than needed abroad, but, I know I want to go. But, you know, it’s more my duty, but even if I had the horrible gut feeling, that you know, that something bad was going to happen, I’d still want to go because that’s the duty. That’s the life we’ve chosen.

G2: Yeah, I totally agree.

GR: Okay, I see the other guys nodding there as well….How might you present mobilisation to your families? Would you say, I volunteered for this or would you say the Army’s told me to go?

G2: “I volunteered,” I’d say. My family has always been forces.

GR: So, you feel like they’d be supportive?

G2: Yeah, oh God, yeah. I’m the only one that hasn’t done, who hasn’t been mobilised, like some Billy-no-mates! [laughing].

G1: My Mum would probably try and kidnap me, [laughing] so I couldn’t go! At least I know she wouldn’t admit to it.

G3: Oh, I’m going with the truth. If I volunteer to go, well I volunteered to go and I’d say that. If I’m being mobilised because I have to, well, yeah, I’ll just say that I have. Obviously it’s much easier in a way to say that you have to go [laughing] because…

GR: But you feel like, broadly, your families are pretty supportive of your service?

G1: Yeah, Mine is.

G3: I think they kind of understood. Once we’ve once we joined, they know there’s a chance.

GR: Do they know it’s important to you?

G3: yeah.

G4: Mine is a little bit different because I’m a bit older. This sort of age, obviously I’ve only just really started doing this. But my wife and kids, my wife would be more “ooohhh” [negative] so I’d have to play it right! I think, for me, it’s a little bit different. It’s when you’re, sort of, younger and freer! [laughing] But yeah, for me, it’s how you play, how you deliver the message. It wouldn’t necessarily be that, well I volunteered… it’d be more, well, the whole Squadron’s going, so I felt I needed to go with them. Yeah, or, “Oh no, I think, I’ve been mobilised!” [deadpan/sarcastically] [laughing]

G3: That’s actually very wise.

G4: Yeah, it’s more the delivery of the message for me, as opposed to that clear cut. Yes. Yeah, one way or the other.

GR: Yeah.

G4: But that’s just because, I’m a bit older, position, so…

GR: Would you be so honest with your employers? Or would you…?

G1: That's difficulty I’ve had previously. I've worked, before the police, I worked in a college and I could only take time off when it suited them. School holidays obviously, but I still had a certain amount of days I could use. So when I need to go on camp, and stuff, they will always get going, “no, you are too valuable.” They just sort of say, “no, we need you here,” we need you to do all these classes. You need to do this, this and this. And I’m like, yes, but I’ve also make this commitment. This is my one chance in the yeah I get to go away and do this with the team and be able to be a part of it. And I had to miss out and try and. But she sent me back a few times in my village, with my career, because I’ve missed out on things happening up now to go and be deployed on annual camp and stuff, because of my work-life. No, it’s not been easy. In my previous role, would have gone, “Yeah. I’ve been forced to go.” Got a letter from the Army just saying so. That would be my overall thought. In my current role, I’ll be honest with you, I’d just say, “I’m going, see you later!” and they would say, “yeah, see you later!”

G3: This is one of the reasons why I’ve actually recently changed my job.

GR: Okay!

G3: So my current employer accepts my Army Reserve life much better than my previous employer. So yes, I would be honest because, well, I’ve changed my job for this in a way.

GR: So you’ve gone for…you now work for someone you feel is more supportive of what you want to do.

G3: Exactly, yeah. And it wasn’t obviously the only reason.

GR: Of course.

G3: But it was a big reason in my decision. So I checked before I made that move to make sure that my new employer is OK with it.

GR: Sure. You mentioned just now about message delivery, if you like. Is the notice that you might get for a deployment an important part of that? Do you think?

G4: Oh, 100%. Because you can’t just switch a light on, you know, it’s not that easy. You have to…if I’m being deployed, I’ve gotta set all my affairs aside and sort everything out. I can’t just walk out and turn up the next day to be deployed.

GR: Yeah.

G4: So notice period is definitely important, but with the same acceptance…if it’s that major an incident or issue then I fully accept that if I only get a week’s notice so be it. But I think we’re in that position now, where any deployments would be getting a decent amount of notice, I think that is important to set everything straight, to then be able to deploy properly.

GR: How do you think that links with your idea that it would be quite nice to mobilise more frequently for a shorter amount of time? Because you said you want the long notice, but also mobilised more frequently for a shorter time.

G4: I think, so just to put that in context and clear that issue up. When I’m talking about a longer period, I’m talking here as things stay now. You’re not going to deploy for a couple of weeks ago, you’re going to deploy for months. So you need that notice period because you gotta set things right.

GR: OK.

G4: Going forward, if you do these things, you wouldn’t need that much notice, but if it was pre-determined that we have 1 camp here for two weeks. But the more the point I was getting at about mobilisation is make more annual camps in the year.

GR: Yeah.

G4: You know, it shouldn’t be a one off and it should be something we have to do, so that the employer understands, that’s why I was getting at with that mobilisation. So the notice is already built in as such.

GR: I see what you mean. Yeah. Okay. So, yeah, maybe consolidate the opportunities to get together as a team into fewer lumps, because what you can achieve in a weekend is not as great as, or collection of weekends, is not as great as a one- or two-week period. How do you guys feel about sort of the notice and the frequency aspect of deployment and mobilisation?

G1: I mean, I’ve been in the Army for six years as a Reserve and I’ve had…when I first, joined, there was an opportunity to go to the Falklands for six months and I, straight away, went up to the chain of command. I was like, “Yeah. It’s something I wanna do.” I’ve just come out of training, perfect time to be its focus. It is the Falklands, not the nicest place in the world, but I was like, “yeah, you know what? Early on in my career, it’ll be great!” We tried to get it all sorted but because I was brand new and you need a few competencies to go they said, you can’t go unfortunately, yet. I was like, “OK, yeah, fair enough.” I understood it. But I’ve had nothing else come through since about being deployed, and no-one’s tried. I’ve asked questions, I’ve said I’m always open if anything’s come in and nothing has come our way. There’s one thing came up for a two-week deployment, so back to what you were saying where the Regiment was given a tasking to go to the Falklands for two weeks and do some actual work from there on their communication stuff. And I don’t think you were in then, it was a good few years ago now, but that was one of those opportunities you were mentioning. But that was a great opportunity that I unfortunately missed out on for my job. But yeah, you know. More of those would be great. Things like that. And actually, being like, they were basically deployed, not on exercise, but actually went overseas, do some work. You get to go to the Falklands, not ideal! [laughing] They saw a few Penguins. Had a ride in a helicopter. But it’s a deployment, isn’t it? You are going there to do the job.

G4: That was the point I was making earlier. You’d put your hat in the ring but you were not chosen or you couldn’t go. And that’s what I’m getting at is that….like, how often do you get the opportunity? Not very often! You may say you do, but to actually get chosen, to be the chosen one is not that easy.

G2: It’s not easy. It comes for everyone. So if there is a deployment for, for example a couple of Signallers to go away with whoever for six months that will go round probably, all the Reserve Signal regiments.

GR: So, I’m sort of detecting a bit of frustration in this?

G2: Yes.

GR: You’re not just, you know, if there’s only five jobs to go somewhere If you like to go somewhere or 5 slots to go, that’s going across all signals reservists rather than give it to one unit.

G2: Yes, exactly.

GR: And actually you’re not really competing because actually you then just pick the best 5 from the team who are available from your cohort, rather than feeling you never really had much of a chance of getting it anyway.

G2: Yeah. Almost like getting a needle in a haystack.

G1: It’d be good instead of doing backfilling would be to just do it in rotations and just generally mobilise people. It’ll be like, right this year, \_\_\_\_[Regiment], if you’re going to be deployed, you’re going to need say twenty whoever, you know, or just a squadron’s worth from the whole regiment who would be deployed and then go that way. That would be much better of doing it.

G2: Yeah, Yeah.

G1: Say you’ve got 200 people and you only need 50, well, that’s roughly a squadron’s worth, isn’t it, given how the Reserve works. Then they can get the 50 people that can be mobilised or get the volunteers first and then do mobilisation or whatever and then go.

GR: And you feel that sort of rotation would make it easier for you as individuals, ‘cause you know when you are likely to be called when not, and you could also have an idea of what’s planned. Well, that’s planned and it’s in our turn. So it’s likely to be asked, it could be me.

G2: Yeah.

G4: Like an on-call type scenario. But this is going back to your original first question was how important it is to be mobilised, for me, what I was trying to get at there, not the be-all-and-end-all end and not because I don’t want to be mobilised, but because if I put all my eggs on me, having a successful reserves career by being mobilised, I may never achieve that. And that’s the sort of point I was mainly getting at, in a roundabout way. But exactly that is sort of the point. The way I’m kind of getting to about saying it…

GR: I’m sorry, but correct me if I’m wrong, it feels like a bit of regularity and predictability would be really important ‘coz linking back to what you said previously, and the frustration that you have volunteering for lots of things means in the background you’re trying to sort out your family life, say, to go away and then that opportunity never materialises. And you’ve made lots of arrangements that are now defunct. Is that fair to say?

G4: I can’t say I’ve experienced that.

GR: No, well as an example.

G1: I could exactly see how that [all over talking - unintelligible]

GR: Yeah.

G1: Well there’s a few people who have tried to get away, and that and tried to put things in place. But it is tricky being a Reserve. And I know, we could say, get a rotation put in place, but we’re not the commanders of the Army, we’re not all the 3\* and 4\*, you know. The put a plan in place and it works that way for a reason. We’re not trying to change it, but that’s how we feel, definitely, how it could be improved. At least that would benefit us, anyway.

GR: Okay. I think the final question I have is about leadership and you’ve mentioned about the team that you’ve got here a little bit. Clearly part of that team are also your leaders as well. To what extent do you feel that they encourage you to mobilise or deploy on operations and to what extent do you think they set the example in that respect as well.

G2: I’ve only been in with this lot a year, so…

G1: Mobilisation, I think, there is no pushing for it in the Reserve, from my opinion. When I first joined, there was a little bit. But no I think, The Army Reserve, the way I come across it from higher-up people is that they just want soldiers. They just want to tick the box and say that this person [?] has passed their competencies for the year. And then they go, well, “right that’s done.” If he gets anything extra good for him, but for me, and also for the soldier, it’s just about getting the competency throughout the year. That’s all the matters.

GR: Do you feel that maybe comes from a higher level than just the unit?

G1: Yeah, it definitely does.

GR: It’s part of the culture of the organisation?

G1: Yeah, it comes, obviously, anyway, you want to have competent soldiers who are signed off every year. Because it looks good for the Regiment. They want these soldiers here. Looking good, doing it. But get down to the Signaller himself, what have they got from that? Getting their money every year? Great! But I didn’t join for the money, I joined for the experiences and the driving courses, everything that you can get from the Army. So again, it’s just trying to get that balance as well. From the leadership, I don’t see there is much pushing toward it, “yeah, go and do this, go and mobilise”.

GR: No, “this opportunity would be perfect for you!”?

G1: I mean, they offer you courses, people push that out. I know the Permanent Staff Instructors are amazing. They do a lot of work here all the time. And they work really hard trying to get us on courses, but there’s very few opportunities for us to get mobilised and there is not much pushing, from say, our Troop Command and stuff, to get mobilised. In my opinion, I don’t know how you guys have felt since joining? Yours is a bit more recent?

G2: I can’t say a lot for this lot, but I know my old lot used to push quite a bit for deployments and stuff like that. So our paired unit was \_\_\_\_\_\_[regular cavalry unit]. So if they were going on exercise, they would say, right, a couple of guys going to vehicle crewmen, who wants to do it? Or, for example, there was one where the Gurkhas were going out to Belize for a couple of weeks, who wants to go a be a driver for them? It was sort of things like that. They would say, well, you got C licence, do you fancy having a go that? And sort things like that. They did try to push you a bit more towards it but, I’ve only been here about a year, but I’ve not seen any pushing for deployment or anything like that.

G1: Again, it varies every posting or anywhere in any organisation, there’s always going to be different areas and how people do things. Yes. But again, the Royal Signals which we are a part of, our role is a very generic role with, you know, there’s so many communications systems operators, not just in the Royal Signals, but also in other Corps, you know, if you look at the Air Corps, they got communications operators as well of their own. So you know, our job, we could, they got so many people to choose from. I can understand why there’s not many opportunities for us here at \_\_\_\_\_\_[this sub-unit]. So I completely understand how it works. Understanding, but of course I want more! [mumbling]. I don’t know what you, sort of, think?

G2: Yeah, I’ve literally been here a year.

GR: Great, thanks. So, we’re coming to the end of our time and we’ve covered off, I think, most of the things I wanted to talk about, just before I switch off the recorder, are there any final points that anybody has maybe there in the back of their minds that maybe got lost as the conversation moved on? Nothing like that. Fantastic. Well, I shall turn off the recorder now.