

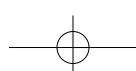
Restoring the Covenant

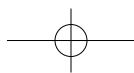
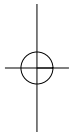
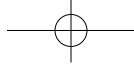
THE MILITARY COVENANT COMMISSION'S
REPORT TO THE LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

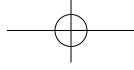


**They're doing their duty.
Are we doing ours?**

**MILITARY
COVENANT
COMMISSION**







Foreword

Last March David Cameron, impelled by increasingly disturbing reports reaching him about the state of our Armed Forces, asked for an enquiry to be mounted to establish what, if anything, had happened to what is known simply as the Military Covenant.

He was kind enough to ask me to chair the enquiry, assisted by Chris Newton and with Dr Andrew Murrison MP providing political guidance. Together we put together a team of seven, all with expertise in various areas of the broad spectrum to be investigated.

Back then few of us, I suspect, had heard of the Covenant or, if so, only in the vaguest terms. Our first task was clearly to establish what it was and in what manner, if at all, it had been damaged.

Establishing what it is was not too difficult. Though rarely written about and even more rarely even referred to, the Covenant goes back a long way. It is essentially a pledge made by the people of this country via their civil power, the Government of the day, to the Army.

It pledges that in exchange for the members of the Army being prepared to go into harm's way while wearing the uniform of our country, the nation will provide a range of support and sustenance to them. This support includes salaries, equipment, medical care, compensation, pension rights, family support, housing and more.

I do not think any of us, at the outset, had an inkling of the lamentable damage we would discover over the succeeding months that had been inflicted on the Covenant, or the level of cynical advantage that had been taken of the most stoical, courageous and professional troops in the world. What we uncovered was not a falling short but a national scandal of political dereliction and bureaucratic ineptitude that has led to many unnecessary deaths as our men and women have been hurled into war after war with profoundly inadequate support from the home country.

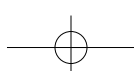
We divided our labours into ten parts, each under a subject heading and each generating several sub-heads. These are all to be found in the early pages of the report now before you.

In the same report you will find the Commission's recommendations for repair of the damage and improvement for the future. Without wishing in any way to pre-empt the work of the next Conservative Defence Secretary, restoring the Military Covenant will not be easily repaired or restored.

At the time of the issue of this report, and entirely due to neglect, recruitment is in freefall and retention of the most experienced and the best almost impossible. Some of the damage to the best Armed Forces in the world may never be repaired.

Permit me one final comment. At the foot of the betrayal of the Covenant between people and Army lies one factor more than any other – the refusal over a decade with the money needed to furnish the support our soldiers had every right to expect and which we had promised them. I personally believe that this refusal derives solely from the man who was for that decade Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Frederick Forsyth
Chairman of the Military Covenant Commission



About the Commission

The Military Covenant Commission was launched by David Cameron on 4 March 2008 amidst widespread concern that serving members of our Armed Forces, their families and veterans were getting a raw deal.

The Commission was tasked with examining the health of the Military Covenant and writing a prescription for remedial measures that could be paid for through a reallocation of existing MoD resources. It has consulted widely and received a large number of submissions.

Its interim report 'The Health of the Covenant' was published on 17 June.

www.militarycovenantcommission.com

The Commissioners

Chairman: Frederick Forsyth CBE

Commissioners:

Major Dan Byles (Retd)

Joe Fairbairn MBE

Rear Admiral Iain Henderson CB CBE DL

Sir John Keegan OBE

Air Commodore Allan Vaughan OBE (Retd)

Simon Weston OBE

Captain Ellie Whyte (Retd)

Secretariat

Secretary: Chris Newton

Parliamentary Adviser: Dr Andrew Murrison MP

Terms of Reference

1. The Commission will be constituted as a Standing Commission that will offer advice to the Leader of the Opposition on the health of the Military Covenant.

2. The Commission will have no fewer than six members appointed for renewable terms of twelve months. A Chairman will be appointed by the Leader and there will be a secretariat provided by the Conservative Party. It will have representation from the three Services and from commissioned and non-commissioned ranks. Appointments will be unpaid.

3. The Commission will focus on the following areas:

- ***The Overall Health of the Military Covenant*** – how to ensure that the Armed Forces are treated with the respect and gratitude they deserve for the unique role they play in society.
- ***Armed Forces and Public Services*** – how the provision of housing, health and education services for Armed Forces personnel and their families can be improved.
- ***Respecting Veterans*** – how to improve the treatment of those who have served in our Armed Forces and fought for their country.
- ***Care of Bereaved Families*** – how to ensure that the Government and its agencies can provide suitable services for the families of those who have lost their lives serving our country.

4. Any recommendations made by the Commission must be paid for within existing and planned defence budgets.

Summary of Conclusions

A Three-Way Covenant

- **The Army Covenant.** The current single Service Military Covenant is inappropriate in a Tri-Service operating environment and its wording fails to explain the relationship between the Armed Forces, Government and Society.

The Armed Forces – Part of Us

- **Government and the Armed Forces.** The distance between the Government and the Armed Forces is increasing and the appointment of a part-time Defence Secretary has not helped. There is a need for a greater understanding of the work of our front-line Forces across Whitehall.
- **Government and Society.** Our Armed Forces receive widespread public support but the gulf between them and the society they serve has widened over the past 60 years. We believe that there is greater scope for young people to gain a greater understanding of the Armed Forces through the school curriculum, cadet forces, and university training units.

A Better Deal in Uniform

- **Overstretch and Retention.** Retention, particularly among officers, is a major concern. It is exacerbated by an unprecedented operational tempo, overstretch, undermanning, and lack of career flexibility.
- **Reservists.** Reserve forces are undermanned. There is sub-optimal utilisation of reservists' civilian skills and unresolved conflict between reservists and employers in relation to mobilisation.

Operational Welfare

- **Equipment.** The Government's failure to provide Service personnel with appropriate equipment and protection on operations is lamentable, particularly in relation to air assets.
- **Other Operational Issues.** The onward march of 'lawfare' has a price in terms of the reliance that commanders feel they can have on the Government on whose behalf they are required to act in the most challenging operational circumstances.

Health Care

- **Defence Medical Services.** The Government has failed to resolve the undermanning that exists in many specialities within the Defence Medical Services. We are surprised by the Government's assertion that there is no military healthcare need for the Royal Hospital Haslar given the current tempo of operations.
- **Injured Personnel Healthcare.** We support the Ministry of Defence Hospital Unit (MDHU) and military ward models, and commend the world class rehabilitation at Headley Court. However, the balance between capacity and demand is questionable.
- **Mental Healthcare.** We are not satisfied that the current arrangement for in-patient mental healthcare of Servicemen personnel is optimal. We doubt that sufficient preparation has been carried out to cater for the demands likely to be made in the future by veterans.
- **Veterans' Healthcare.** Entitlement to priority treatment is not being sufficiently communicated to veterans or healthcare professionals.

Housing

- **Service Accommodation.** Too much Service accommodation is in a parlous state with 45 per cent of UK Single Living Accommodation and 56 per cent of overseas Single Living Accommodation at grade 4 on a 4-point scale.¹ The Government has no cause to celebrate its track record in maintaining Service accommodation.
- **Service Personnel and Housing.** The take-up of the various Government schemes to encourage Service personnel to buy their own homes remains low.

Veterans

- **Recognition.** We were disappointed to find that the Government has gathered insufficient data to provide an accurate picture of the Ex-Service community. Although Veterans' Day has often been successful locally, it has yet to achieve the national prominence that we believe it deserves.
- **Resettlement.** We believe that not enough is being done to help the most vulnerable Service leavers, particularly early Service leavers. Whilst most do well, homelessness statistics and data relating to the prison population suggest unmet need.
- **Social Exclusion.** Whilst most effect a seamless transition to civilian life, there is evidence that leaving the Services, especially after a short engagement, is associated with adverse outcomes like unemployment, marital breakdown, and homelessness.

- **Compensation and Pensions.** There is widespread dissatisfaction over pensions, widows' pensions and compensation for service attributable injury and illness. The Government's new Armed Forces Compensation Scheme is fraught with inconsistencies and has been adversely compared with compensation available to civilians injured at work.

Bereaved Families

- **Inquests.** Many bereaved families are still waiting far too long to have their cases heard. Moreover, we are disappointed that the Government feels it necessary to engage publicly funded lawyers at inquests which are meant to be non-adversarial and at which bereaved families are not similarly represented.

Reallocation of Resources

- **Government Waste.** We believe there is considerable scope for the better allocation of resources from within the existing defence budgets. We note the value of the defence estate and the money spent on consultants. Cracking down on Government waste would provide the necessary resources to fund the recommendations that we set out.

Conclusion

- **Overall Verdict.** The evidence we have seen since our interim report has aligned our view with that of others, namely that the Military Covenant is in poor health. We believe that recovery will require concerted and sustained effort by the Covenant's principal defaulter, the government.

Summary of Recommendations

A Three-Way covenant

- A new Tri-Service covenant should be established and issued as a Joint Service Publication. The new Covenant should contain two elements:
 - An enduring general statement outlining the relationship between the Armed Forces, Government and Society.
 - An annex containing specific provisions for serving personnel, their families and veterans. This will be subject to change with time given the evolving circumstances in which the Armed Forces operate.

2. The Armed Forces – Part of Us

- A permanent cross-departmental Military Covenant Committee of relevant Ministers should be set up under the chairmanship of the Defence Secretary.
- The Secretary of State for Defence should be full-time and the Minister responsible for veterans and personnel should be at Minister of State level.
- The wearing of uniform in public should be encouraged at the discretion of unit commanders. Personnel in the MoD should lead by example.²
- Businesses should also be encouraged to play their part in fulfilling the Covenant. Airports and airlines should follow the example of the United States, and in particular American Airlines and be encouraged to offer Service personnel wearing uniform with military ID free access to lounges
- Visits by Schools Presentation Teams should be encouraged. The former Defence Schools Presentation Team structure should be restored on a tri-Service basis.
- A new schools visits strategy should be devised in conjunction with the Department for Children, Schools, and Families. This strategy should involve plans to initiate dialogue with schools that currently do not participate in the scheme and plans to ensure greater co-ordination and consistency in delivery.
- A future Conservative Government should pilot more work experience schemes based on the Australian model so that young people have greater opportunities to have a taste of the Armed Forces.
- The National Citizens' Service proposed by David Cameron has the potential to facilitate greater interaction between the Armed Forces and young people.
- The National Curriculum should be explicit about the basic understanding required of the key conflicts that have moulded this country. The National Curriculum

should also specify explicitly that the current role of the Armed Forces be covered for secondary school-level citizenship.

- The Combined Cadet Forces schemes in state secondary schools should be expanded into areas where there is currently no major military tradition.
 - Officer Training Corps and University Air Squadrons should be encouraged to set up similar university alumni associations as the University Reserve Naval Units (URNUs) in order to keep in touch with people potentially interested in joining the reserves or the regulars.
- ### 3. A Better Deal in Uniform
- A future Conservative Government must conduct a Strategic Defence Review on entering office to match commitments and resources, and thereby address overstretch. The Government should emulate the American quadrennial review so that the current mismatch is avoided in the future.
 - The Armed Forces Pay Review Body should take into consideration the comments of ex-defence chiefs and the current CGS during their next review of pay and allowances.
 - The Armed Forces Pay Review Body should be put on a statutory basis.
 - Greater flexibility should be built into the Armed Forces career structure and age of retirement in order to help with manning and retention. A future Conservative Government should look at ways to reduce the bureaucracy and make transfer between different cap badges and Services easier.
 - An audit should be conducted of the skills that Reservists possess, their current military roles, and how any gaps in skills discovered can be closed.
 - Further work should be carried out by the National Audit Office to establish the relationship between reservists and employers and consider remedial measures, including the extension of the Sponsored Reserves concept to deliver specialist skills available in civilian life to meet Service exigencies.
 - Rules for Service voter registration should be changed so that Service personnel only have to register once on the Service register. The responsibility for ensuring that Service personnel register to vote should lie with the Ministry of Defence.

4. Operational Welfare

- A future Conservative Government should review the procurement process to ensure that the Armed Forces get the equipment they need when they need it.
- The Deployment Welfare Package should be continually monitored and reviewed to see whether enhancements could be feasibly made.
- A future Conservative Government should use the next Armed Forces Discipline Bill to provide protection to Service personnel who follow orders in good faith whilst engaged in operations.
- The Cultural Properties Bill should not put our Service personnel at risk or increase the burden of their liability whilst on operations.

5. Health Care

- A future Conservative Government should recruit to trained levels in pinch point specialties that are considered Service-specific, such as military psychiatry and look at Sponsored Reserves to plug existing and budgeted gaps in Defence Medical Service manpower.
- We endorse the Ministry of Defence Hospital Unit (MDHU) model of delivering secondary healthcare to Service personnel. However, the integrity of the military managed ward at Selly Oak needs to be monitored to ensure that, wherever possible and subject to overriding clinical needs of Service and civilian patients, military personnel are nursed together.
- Each Primary Care Trust should appoint a veterans 'champion' from existing staff to co-ordinate the care and service provided to veterans. They will be responsible for contacting veterans and their medical attendants, and for communicating veterans' entitlements, including priority treatment and the Medical Assessment Programme. It should be possible for this to be delivered within the existing PCT structure.
- A future Conservative Government should pilot a triage mental health follow-up telephone service for Service leavers who have deployed on operations. Mental health professionals would contact those veterans and monitor their situation. They would also be able to make any relevant referrals. Funding for this pilot scheme should come from existing Department of Health budgets.
- A future Conservative Government should at the earliest opportunity examine the wisdom of contracting out in-patient psychiatric services with a view to rebuilding in-house capability and restoring the specialty of military psychiatry. As part of that review, it should conduct a feasibility study into whether a Government-run military or explosion trauma victim in-patient mental health centre for the most seriously

affected personnel and veterans is desirable; and whether a suitable MoD or NHS location can found to house it.

- Indications of a relationship between the mental healthcare of Servicemen and veterans and the apparently higher than expected number of ex-Service prisoners should be explored.
- The sale of the Royal Hospital Haslar should be reviewed to determine what whether there is any residual military-related healthcare need there may be for it.

6. Housing

- All Service accommodation should be brought up to an acceptable standard, as soon as practicable, using receipts from the sale of surplus defence estate
- A future Conservative Government should identify a single point of contact in each locality and unit responsible for ensuring that maintenance and repair work to the defence estate is being carried out.
- The Secretary of State for Defence should make available surplus married quarters accommodation to Service personnel.
- A future Conservative Government should look at ways in which it can help Service personnel with house purchase, including investigating ways to communicate more effectively the availability of existing schemes.
- A future Conservative Government should seek to look at ways to improve Service leavers' and homeless ex-Service personnel access to social housing, and temporary accommodation in England.

7. Service Families and Children

- The Ministry of Defence should seek to fill any existing gaps in the current Unit Welfare Officer system for both the Regular and Reserve forces.
- A future Conservative Government should commission a study on the impact of Service life on children's education in the UK.
- The concept of a pupil premium outlined in the Conservative Party Green Paper, *Raising the Bar; Closing the Gap* to help school-children from disadvantaged backgrounds should be adapted to reflect the needs of Service children.
- As part of the above recommendation, thought should be given to ensuring that there is sufficient psychological support for children when their parent is away on deployment. This applies particularly to the children of deployed reservists since reservist families often lack the mutual support networks associated with their regular counterparts.

- A future Conservative Government should look at the scope for increasing the powers of Schools Advisory Committees further, in particular allowing them to appoint and dismiss head teachers.

8. Veterans

- A future Conservative Government should define more closely the veteran population to inform future policy. One way in which this could be done is to ask respondents in the next National Census whether they are serving in the military or have served.
- An independent advisory service for Service personnel and leavers should be created to foster financial literacy and competence, and provide basic skills in budgeting, small business management and self employment. The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales has told us of its interest in setting up such a service and we hope that further discussion will enable the concept to be developed further.
- In addition to the above recommendation, a future Conservative Government should explore with the relevant charities the possibility of a dedicated service for Service families that experience difficulty around the time of leaving the Armed Forces.
- A future Conservative Government should assist the voluntary sector in facilitating the implementation of the 'Troops to Teachers' scheme.
- A future Conservative Government should pilot 'recruitment and veterans offices' to supplement the work of charities. The system would involve using existing recruitment offices and staff to provide an additional advice service for veterans. These 'alpha and omega' centres will provide a local community link at the beginning and end of service life.
- When the relevant information is accessible, further work needs to be carried out on the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme to ensure its formulaic methodology is not disadvantaging the seriously injured and to better reflect compensation available in civilian life. In addition, an assessment of the apparently mean-minded changes in the standard of proof or time limit needs to be made to assess the impact on individual claimants.
- A further review of the Armed Forces Compensation system should be conducted with the aim of evaluating the fairness of the scheme in comparison to other public sector compensation systems.
- The expertise of the Pensions Appeal Tribunal must be retained during any attempt to create a Social Entitlement Chamber.

- Further work needs to be carried out into the feasibility of implementing the recommendations of Armed Forces pension groups.

- There should be an investigation into the causes of the apparently high proportion of the prison population that has served in the Armed Forces to inform preventative strategies and rehabilitation.

- A future Conservative Government should review the structure, membership and terms of reference of the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals (HD Committee). The reconstituted HD Committee should then review outstanding claims that will 'draw a line in the sand'.

9. Bereaved Families

- The inequitable system that permits the MoD to have taxpayer-funded legal representation but denies it to families must cease. The MoD should desist from hiring lawyers at non-adversarial inquests.
- The Commission would support the development, within the coroners' system, of practitioners with experience, of or interest in, military cases. The Oxfordshire and Wiltshire coroners' experience forms a good basis from which expertise could be harnessed.
- The Government should work with the voluntary sector to determine whether an independent advisory service along the lines of INQUEST specifically for bereaved families at military inquests should be considered.

10. Reallocation of Resources

If expenditure is incurred resulting from the recommendations of the previous sections, it should be met from existing budgets. However, we envisage that it would be possible to draw upon savings generated from:

- A review into the defence estate should be conducted. Receipts from asset sales arising from the review should be used to accelerate the accommodation refurbishment programme.
- There should be a comprehensive review of the administrative efficiency and effectiveness of the Ministry of Defence with a view to ensuring that decision making and business processes match best practice in organisations of comparable size and complexity.
- There should be a moratorium on the use of external management consultants.

Introduction: The current state of the Covenant

The Royal British Legion was so concerned about the health of the Military Covenant that last year it invested heavily in a major campaign called ‘Honour the Covenant.’ A large number of senior serving and retired officers, interest groups, analysts and think tanks have added their voice to that of the Legion. For example;

- **Lord Guthrie (former Chief of the Defence Staff).** ‘There is now a feeling—probably stronger than I can ever recall—that the Government are not keeping their side of the bargain and honouring the Military Covenant’.³
- **General Sir Richard Dannatt (Chief of the General Staff).** ‘My firm aim is to restore the balance of the Military Covenant – it is **clearly out of kilter** at the moment’.⁴
- **Demos.** Their recent report said that the Military Covenant has been ‘**damaged almost beyond repair**’ and that a new civil-military compact must be established.⁵

These comments were made against a backdrop of the Armed Forces being engaged in their highest tempo of operations since the end of the Second World War. The Government has sent our forces to battle on a peace-time budget and expected the men and women of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force to take up the slack.

Nobody should be surprised that overstretch and its consequences underlie most of the problems that we heard about in the course of our inquiry.

We have concluded that the Covenant is indeed under serious and unprecedented strain. This report sets out our evidence and a series of recommendations for remedial action that can be summarised in a ten-point action plan.

THE COMMISSION’S TEN-POINT ACTION PLAN

1. A three way covenant

Establishing a tri-partite, tri-Service Covenant through a dedicated Joint Service Publication (JSP) as a three-way statement of obligation between each of the Services, the Government and Society.

2. The Armed Forces – part of us

Normalising the Armed Forces as an integral part of national life.

3. A better deal in uniform

Improving terms, conditions and flexibility of service.

4. Improving life at the sharp end

Procurement policy and legislation, including treaty obligations, to be examined through the prism of force effectiveness and the protection of UK forces.

5. Getting healthcare right

Making dedicated Service wards a reality, removing access disadvantages suffered by service families and ensuring that personnel who have sacrificed physical and mental health in the service of their country become our top priorities.

6. Improving housing

Accelerating refurbishment of service accommodation and assisting home purchase in recognition of the difficulty of being an owner-occupier whilst serving.

7. A better experience for service children.

Recognising that Service life disadvantages children in rebalancing the funding for schools.

8. Giving due recognition to veterans

Ensuring that people that have given substantial service are properly recognised and, as a minimum, are not disadvantaged by having served.

9. A helping hand for the bereaved

Improving support for those that have lost loved ones in the service of their country and ensuring equitability at inquests and inquiries.

10. Getting maximum value for money

Extracting maximum value from finite resources in a tight fiscal environment by cutting external consultants, using asset sales to improve accommodation and stream-lining the MoD.

Part 1: A three way Covenant

1.1 Our Historic Tradition

Professor Hew Strachan in evidence to us and the Defence Select Committee assert that the term Military Covenant is an innovation. However, he admits that it reflects a previously unwritten compact:

'What was there before was the sense of unlimited liability in terms of those who sign to join up, and of course that was often stressed, to say that those who joined the Armed Services had entered into an extraordinary contract which ultimately involved the possible loss of their own lives, unlike any other form of employment, but it was presented as a one-sided contract with no expectations, extraordinarily, of a delivery from the other side of the equation. The Military Covenant is essentially the articulation of the idea that there should be a guarantee from the other side'.⁶

England's military exploits of the 16th century caused relatively large numbers of wounded and pricked the conscience of the Privy Council. During the reign of Elizabeth I, legislation required each parish to contribute towards the care of sick and wounded soldiers and mariners. The 1601 Act includes a passage that could be seen as the Elizabethan equivalent of today's Military Covenant:

'And forasmuch as it is found more needful than it was in the making of the said Acts, to provide Relief and Maintenance to Soldiers and Mariners that have lost their limbs, and disabled their Bodies in the Defence and Service of Her Majesty and the State, in respect the Number of the said Soldiers is so much the greater, by how much her Majesty's just and honourable defensive Wars are increased.

To the End therefore that the said Soldiers may reap the Fruits of their good Deservings and others may be encouraged to perform the like Endeavours'.⁷

The *Official Journal* of the House of Commons for the Civil War Years contains frequent references to the plight of soldiers and their families, and concern for veterans continued after the Restoration. The Royal Hospital Chelsea was founded in 1682 by King Charles II to provide 'succour and relief of veterans broken by age and war'⁸. A similar institution was established for seafarers at Greenwich.

If 24-hour embedded journalism has taken public awareness of conflict to a new level, in the 21st century, the war correspondents of the Crimea and their newspapers in the 19th Century brought the public face to face for the first time with the realities of warfare and the conditions endured by the military.

And one of Rudyard Kipling's best known poems, 'Tommy', describes the disappointment felt by a late-19th

century soldier at the way he was treated by the public in peacetime and contrasts it with his reception in time of war.

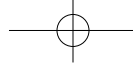
It seems that it takes war and its consequences for public awareness of the debt that we owe our Armed Forces to surface. Since we are in that position right now, it would be wrong if we did not seize the opportunity for articulating what we mean by the Military Covenant and our obligations that flow from it.

Box 1 - The Three Functions of the Military Covenant⁹

- 1. Strategic and Cultural.** The Military Covenant ensures harmonious civil-military relations and highlights the need for the Armed Forces to be professional in carrying out their work in accordance with the values of society.
- 2. Moral and Compassionate.** The Military Covenant recognises that there is a moral obligation on society to ensure that Service personnel and their families get a fair deal in recognition of the exceptional demands placed upon them, the risks they run and the restrictions on their ability to speak out individually or collectively in their own interests.
- 3. Practical.** The Military Covenant recognises that the Armed Forces must be treated well so they can recruit and retain people of the right quality.

1.2 The Limitations of the Current Covenant

Our interim report highlighted the limitations of the existing Army Covenant. Currently, although it is commonly taken to imply a Tri-Service compact, it exists solely in Army doctrine. Furthermore, it is drafted in vague terms that limit its usefulness (**Box 2**).



Box 2 – The Current Military Covenant

The current Military Covenant written into Army doctrine reads:

'Soldiers will be called upon to make personal sacrifices - including the ultimate sacrifice - in the service of the Nation. In putting the needs of the nation and the Army before their own, they forgo some of the rights enjoyed by those outside the Armed Forces. In return, British soldiers must always be able to expect fair treatment, to be valued and respected as individuals, and that they (and their families) will be sustained and rewarded by commensurate terms and conditions of service. In the same way, the unique nature of military land operations means that the Army differs from all other institutions, and must be sustained and provided for accordingly by the nation. This mutual obligation forms the Military Covenant between the nation, the Army and each individual soldier; an unbreakable common bond of identity, loyalty and responsibility which has sustained the

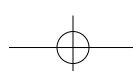
Army and its soldiers throughout its history. It has perhaps its greatest manifestation in the annual commemoration of Armistice Day, when the nation keeps covenant with those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, giving their lives in action'.¹⁰

Within the document, under the Loyalty part of the 'Army Core Values' Chapter (Chapter 3), there is another reference to the Covenant:

'The Nation, the Army and the chain of command rely on the continuing allegiance, commitment and support of all who serve: on their loyalty. Conversely, soldiers of all ranks, and their families, must be certain that the Army and the Nation will treat them with loyalty as well as justice. The system's loyalty to the individual - its obligation in the Military Covenant - is manifested in justice, fair rewards, and life-long support to all who have soldiered'.¹¹

Recommendations

- A new Tri-Service covenant should be established and issued as a Joint Service Publication. The new Covenant should contain two elements:
 - An enduring general statement outlining the relationship between the Armed Forces, Government and Society.
 - An annex containing specific provisions that will be required by serving personnel, their families and veterans to ensure the fulfilment of the Covenant. This will be subject to change over time given the evolving circumstances in which the Armed Forces operate.



Part 2: The Armed Forces – Part of us

2.1 The De-normalising of Armed Forces in society

The 1957 Defence White Paper set in train the abolition of national service. As a result of war service and conscription, the Armed Forces were once part of daily life and common experience. That is no longer the case, and this has led to what General Sir Richard Dannatt has referred to as the increasing gulf between the Armed Forces and Society. This has meant:

- A declining number of people have experience of, or contact with, the Armed Forces.
- There is decreasing understanding and empathy among the public and people of influence (politicians, civil servants, journalists, the judiciary) of the realities of service life since so few of them have served.
- Public discussion of defence is squeezed out by other issues, reflected in poor media coverage by journalists whose prime interests are not in military or naval matters.
- An increasingly challenging recruitment environment for the Armed Forces in attracting people with a variety of career options and values more closely aligned to the non-military virtues of individualism and hedonism.

All of this has had consequences for the nature of the interaction between Government, Society, and the Armed Forces, resulting in the situation outlined below.

2.2 The Relationship between the Armed Forces and Government

The Prime Minister and the Armed Forces

Relations between this Government and the Armed Forces are clearly strained. Sadly, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Armed Forces does not feature highly on the Prime Minister's agenda. Below are a few reasons for this view.

- **The Appointment of a Part-time Defence Secretary.** Our interim report documented the outrage in the defence community at the double-hatting of Des Browne as Defence Secretary and Scottish Secretary when the UK's Armed Forces' tempo of operations is at its highest for over 60 years.
- **The Observations of Retired Senior Officers.** It is alarming that so many ex-Service chiefs are queuing up to criticise Gordon Brown as Prime Minister and as Chancellor of the Exchequer. During the House of Lords debate on 22 November 2007, five former Chiefs of the Defence Staff criticised the Government and Mr Brown in particular. One of the most worrying comments from that debate came from Lord Guthrie who said that 'in my experience as Chief of the Defence Staff in Whitehall, he was the most unsympathetic Chancellor of the Exchequer as far as defence was concerned, and

the only senior Cabinet Minister who avoided coming to the Ministry of Defence to be briefed by our staff on our problems'.¹²

- **Remarks made by Serving Officers and High-profile Resignations.** The current Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Richard Dannatt, has taken public criticism of political masters by serving officers to a new level. As a 'soldier's soldier' his behaviour can be seen as an act of desperation in the face of an impervious administration. There have also been some high profile resignations such as that of the commander of the 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment during the 2006 Helmand deployment Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Tootal.

Whitehall and the Armed Forces

But there is a wider cultural issue within Whitehall. We noted in our interim report the concerns of former Chief of the General Staff General Sir Mike Jackson about the cultural differences between Government, the Civil Service, and the Armed Forces. The newly and expensively accommodated MoD must be better focused on the front-line.

The MoD is not the only government department responsible for the fulfilment of the Military Covenant. Responsibility lies with the whole of the machinery of government with departments and agencies such as the Department for Health, the Department for Children, Schools, and Families, and the Department for Communities and Local Government having particularly important roles to play.

The Government's belated cross-departmental report of July 2008 is welcome, as is its commitment to departmental Armed Forces advocates and an External Reference Group. Indeed, we see in the latter an attempt to mirror our own Commission. However, responsibility for cross-departmental working cannot be delegated and must involve ministers.

2.3 Public Attitudes

The uneasy relationship between the Armed Forces and Society is explored by Strachan.¹³ Survey data suggest public support, and we do not doubt the pride that the vast majority of the public feels towards the Armed Forces. However, the public seems at times unable to disentangle its opposition to Government policy from its admiration for the means of prosecuting policy, the Armed Forces.

Some progress has been made, particularly in turnout rates for home-coming parades. But there is still evidence of ignorance, abuse, and discrimination. For example, in September it was reported that Corporal Tomos Stringer was turned away from staying in the Metro Hotel in Woking when he showed his military ID card. He was reportedly told that it was management policy not to accept

military personnel.¹⁴ Whilst we recognise the subsequent apology which followed, we also note that this is not the first time that this type of discrimination has been reported. For example, in October 2007, a Serviceman was turned away from a petrol station because he was wearing uniform.¹⁵ We find episodes such as these extremely unfortunate and there can never be any justification for people to use them as a reason for discrimination.

The uniform and the ID card should be a source of pride to our Service personnel, and, as in the United States, should be a means by which companies can show their gratitude by offering discounts. Indeed, businesses in particular, should seek to find new ways of rewarding our Service personnel.

2.4 The Armed Forces and Young People

School Visits

We regard the interaction between the Armed Forces and young people as vital to developing a closer relationship between the Armed Forces and society. Our interim report covered the views of the National Union of Teachers and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The NUT has subsequently written to us to clarify its position. However the JRF, at least, apparently seeks to discourage Armed Forces' visits into schools on the grounds that young people are vulnerable to the misleadingly glamorous image of war and the military that they imagine the Armed Forces might present to children. We take a completely different view.

The Commission believes that interaction between members of the Armed Forces and school-children is extremely important if they are to understand what they do and why they do it. As the electors of the future they must have an understanding of the instruments of the policy that they will be supporting or opposing at the ballot box.

Whilst e-learning tools may have a place, there can be no substitute for personal interaction. This is why we disagree with Government plans to disband the MoD Defence Schools Presentation Teams whilst replacing them with the e-learning tool 'Defence Dynamics'.¹⁶

Whilst we recognise head teachers can still request visits from Single Service Student Presentation Teams with real, uniformed people, the recent Defence Select Committee report highlighted some of the current shortcomings of these visits and noted a lack of co-ordination and consistency.¹⁷ For example, the Royal Navy visited 4,370 schools in 2006-7; in 2007-8 the Army visited 4,281; whilst the Royal Air Force visited only 2,615 during September 2006 to September 2007.¹⁸

The National Curriculum

School visits must be followed up with a commitment to ensure that the National Curriculum does not ignore a discussion of military matters. The citizenship agenda must impart an understanding of the Armed Forces as an

instrument of government policy, past, present and future.

We are alarmed by surveys that show that around a quarter children aged 8 to 16 did not know that Britain was one of the countries that fought in the Second World War.¹⁹ There is a need to ensure that the wars and conflicts that shaped Britain and in which Britain participated in features heavily in national curriculum. We would also argue that there is a particular need to teach about the role of the Royal Navy given our geography and the important part it has played in our history.

School Programmes

There must be opportunities for the Armed Forces to engage with young people outside the classroom. The Commission has been studying ways in which other countries have facilitated a better understanding of their military. The Australian Government has conducted a work experience pilot programme. Students 'dress in Army uniforms, learn drills, undertake vehicle and workshop familiarisation, first aid, navigation, field craft and physical training'.²⁰ We believe that the MoD should look at ways to enhance work experience opportunities here.

In addition, we believe that David Cameron's National Citizens' Service scheme for school leavers could provide an excellent opportunity for school leavers to learn about life in the Armed Forces.

Cadet Forces

Cadet forces are an extremely good way of maintaining the link between the Armed Forces and society. They currently have around 130,000 cadets and 26,000 volunteers based around 3,000 sites²¹ and continue to be popular in the independent school sector and in schools where there is a large Service population. But in addition to this, we have previously expressed the view that Combined Cadet Forces (CCFs) should not be almost entirely the preserve of independent schools.

Some have suggested that cadet forces are inappropriate at a time when youth gun and knife crime is out of control. Their misunderstanding is breath-taking. Cadet forces inculcate values such as discipline, loyalty and self control. They also provide a sense of achievement and direction which might otherwise have been lacking. Notwithstanding this minority viewpoint, we are pleased to see that there is a cross-party consensus on this issue. This bodes well for the future.

Opportunities at Universities

Of equal importance are university organisations such as the Officer Training Corps (OTC), the University Reserve Naval Units (URNU) and the University Air Squadrons. Despite their potential importance in providing students with an experience of life in the Armed Forces, it appears that they have not been a priority. This contrasts with the

USA and Australia.²² We have noted with approval the ‘Summer Challenge’ trial in Scotland in which potential recruits are provided with an opportunity to do basic training.²³ In addition, the All-Party Parliamentary Reserve Forces Group reports that we are missing out on an opportunity to tap into a potential pool of recruits, particularly for the Reserve Forces.²⁴ However, the Royal Naval Reserve does have a system to keep in touch with former URNU members 12 to 18 months after graduation, through university alumni societies, by which time the former students will have been settled in terms of careers.²⁵ This good practice should be applied more widely.

2.5 Recommendations

- A permanent cross-departmental Military Covenant Committee should be set up, chaired by the Defence Secretary, involving the relevant Ministers from the appropriate government departments.
- The Secretary of State for Defence should be full-time and the Minister responsible for veterans and personnel should be at Minister of State level.
- The wearing of uniform in public should be encouraged at the discretion of unit commanders. Personnel in the MoD should lead by example.²⁶
- Businesses should also be encouraged to play their part in fulfilling the Covenant. Airports and airlines should follow the example of the United States, and in particular American Airlines and be encouraged to offer Service personnel wearing uniform with military ID free access to lounges
- Visits by Schools Presentation Teams should be encouraged. The former Defence Schools Presentation Team structure should be restored on a Tri-Service basis.
- A new schools visits strategy should be devised in conjunction with the Department for Children, Schools, and Families. This strategy should involve plans to initiate dialogue with schools that currently do not participate in the scheme and plans to ensure greater co-ordination and consistency in delivery.
- A future Conservative Government should pilot more work experience schemes based on the Australian model so that young people have greater opportunities to have a taste of life in the Armed Forces.
- The National Citizens’ Service which was proposed by David Cameron should provide an excellent opportunity for greater interaction between the Armed Forces and young people.
- The National Curriculum should be clear about the basic understanding required of the key conflicts that have

moulded this country. The National Curriculum should specify explicitly that the role of the Armed Forces, for example, its counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, crisis management, counter-narcotics, and civil defence roles be covered for secondary school level citizenship.

- The Combined Cadet Forces schemes in state secondary schools should be expanded into areas where there is currently no major military tradition.
- Officer Training Corps and University Air Squadrons should be encouraged to set up similar university alumni associations as the University Reserve Naval Units (URNUs) in order to keep in touch with people potentially interested in joining the Reserves or the Regulars. We envisage that this could be done through using existing resources.

Part 3: A better deal in uniform

3.1 Overstretch

Operational Tempo

The Government began well with its 1998 Strategic Defence Review. However, since then it has failed to match its escalating level of commitments with resources, resulting in overstretch. The admission by the MoD on the impact of this in its Annual Performance Report is damning:

‘For every one of the last seven years the Armed Forces have operated above the level at which they are resourced and structured to deliver...It cannot sustain indefinitely the nature, scale, and intensity of operations being conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last two years’.²⁷

Undermanning

This level of overstretch and subsequent retention problems is creating severe manning shortfalls across the Armed Forces and the overall level of undermanning (table 1) is of profound concern. The picture is even more worrying in a number of individual units and trades (these are known as pinch point trades). The MoD Annual Performance Report recorded the number of ‘pinch point’ trades each Service had in April 2008, which showed a considerable since 2004 (table 2). Some of the most vulnerable trades are highlighted in table 3.²⁸

Table 1: Service Undermanning

Service	Deficit in Manning
All Services	-5,790
Royal Navy	-1,220
Army	-3,500
Royal Air Force	-1,070

Source: *Defence Analytical Services and Advice*, TSP3, 1 July 2008

Table 2: Service Pinch Point Trades

Service	Number of Pinch Point Trades 2003-4	Number of Pinch Point Trades 2007-8
Navy	10	20
Army	26	30
Royal Air Force	19	24

Sources: House of Commons Defence Committee, *Recruiting and Retaining Armed Forces Personnel*, 30 July 2008, table 7; Ministry of Defence, *Annual Reports and Accounts 2007-8 Vol.1*, July 2008, para 276

Table 3: Shortfalls in Pinch Point Trades

Trade	Liability	Shortfall	Percentage shortfall
RN Harrier GR7 Instructors	7	4	57
RLC Ammo Tech Cpl-SSgt	285	128	45
Infantryman Pte-LCpl	14,615	1,647	11
REME			Recovery
Mechanic LCpl-Cpl	344	128	37
Weapons Operator (Linguist)	67	17	25

Source: *Hansard*, 7 July 2008, Cols. 1162-4WA

Harmony Guidelines

One symptom of overstretch and undermanning that is of particular concern to families is breached harmony guidelines. Personnel are experiencing shorter tour intervals than are recommended by the Ministry of Defence (table 4).

Table 4: Tour Intervals

	Guidelines	Performance	
Royal Navy	Fleet Units to spend maximum of 60% deployed year	Guidelines in a	‘broadly 3 cycle
Army	24 interval unit tours.	months	average between 23 months. Royal Artillery – 18.5 months. Royal Signals – 19.6 months. Royal Logistics Corps – 15 months.
			Some specialist units and sub-units had shorter tour intervals.
RAF	Unit tour to be no less than 16 months.	The average RAF tour interval was around 11 months.	
			The Elements of Joint Helicopter Command, Harrier, Nimrod, Tactical Imagery- Intelligence Wing, Tactical Medical Wing, 90 Signals Support Unit continue to break unit tour interval guidelines.

Source: *Ministry of Defence, Annual Reports and Accounts 2007-8 Vol.1*, July 2008, para 307

In addition, we can also look at ‘separated service guidelines’ (table 5), a measure of the time Service personnel spend away from home, for evidence of overstretch;

Table 5: Individual Separated Service

	Guidelines	Performance
Royal Navy	No 660 service period.	one to days a 36 Less than exceed separated month 1%
Army	No 415 service month period	one to days in any 30 exceed separated 10.3%
RAF	No of 140 days duty in 12 months.	greater than 2.5% personnel exceeding 9.6% of detached

Source: *Hansard*, 21 April 2008, Col. 1639WA

The situation would be even worse if it were not for the willingness of non-UK nationals to serve in Britain's Armed Forces. Currently 10 per cent of soldiers are not British nationals. We have heard from very senior sources that the figure for non-Gurkha, non-UK nationals is projected to rise to 15 per cent. Ministers need to explain why, exceptionally, it plans to rely increasingly on a non-UK workforce to man the British Army.

Personnel Fitness

The current tempo of operations is also having a considerable impact on some Service personnel's ability to deploy. The latest MoD Annual Report stated that 85.4 per cent of personnel were 'fit for task'.²⁹ The figure has been gradually falling for a number of years, and the MoD has in particular admitted that 'the Army experience continuing difficulty in maintaining medically fit numbers'.³⁰ The MoD explains that this is due to 'continuing casualties in the context of sustained high operational tempo, increased numbers of non-fully deployable persons being retained in service, and gaps in medical manning'.³¹ It has not explained the impact this has on the residual fit workforce and the contribution it makes to tour intervals, training shortfalls, overstretch and the likelihood that fit personnel will seek alternative careers. It appears to have done nothing about the situation other than to act as a rapporteur.

Training

Training Exercises Cancelled. Ensuring that personnel are sufficiently trained is a fundamental part of fulfilling the Covenant. However, the high tempo of operations has resulted in a number of training exercise cancellations. The Ministry of Defence documents the number of training exercises in its Annual Report. The data that we have for the last few years is given in **table 6**.

Table 6: Number and Percentage of Training Exercises Cancelled

Year	Scheduled Training Events	Cancelled Events	%
2004-5	379	79	20.8
2005-6	533	58	10.8
2006-7	680	64	9.4
2007-8	722	76	10.5

Source: Ministry of Defence, *Annual Reports and Accounts 2007-8 Vol.1*, July 2008, table 2

Pre-Deployment Training. The recent CGS Briefing Team Report highlighted a particular concern about the lack of resources for Pre-Deployment Training. The Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Richard Dannatt, commented: 'It is widely acknowledged that there are gaps in the provision of equipment for Pre-Deployment Training as the priority is to provide the equipment in-theatre for those on operations'.³²

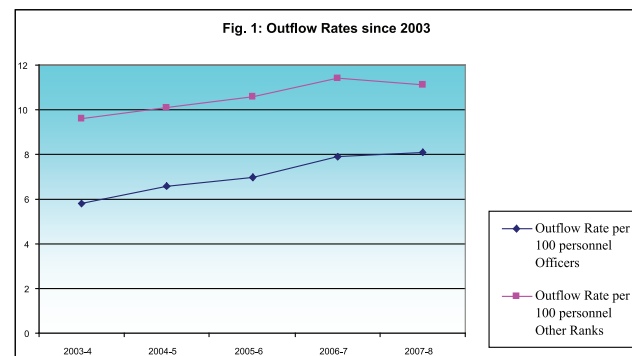
A lack of adequate training or gaps in particular types of training can have potentially severe consequences. The first recommendation of a Service Board of Inquiry into the death of Lance Corporal Matthew Ford in Afghanistan dated 15 May 2008 highlighted concerns over the provision of training to deployed personnel.³³

Training for 'Conventional' War. The events of the Russo-Georgian Conflict highlight the unpredictability of the current world order. It is vital that our Armed Forces remain flexible enough to meet a wide range of challenges. But it is doubtful whether there is sufficient time for Service personnel to train for major operations given the current preoccupation with counter-insurgency.

3.2 Retention

Trends

The impact of overstretch has inevitably had some impact on retention rates. The available data point an overall rise in outflow rates. This should be of grave concern to Ministers if they understand that people are the most important element of our Armed Forces. **Fig. 1** shows the trend since the Iraq War.



Source: Defence Analytical Services Agency

Service Personnel Opinion

Underlining the increasing levels of resignations, a closer look at the recent Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey reveals a worryingly high number of personnel freely stating that all is not well, or perceiving that all is not well across the service (tables 7, 8, and 9).

Table 7: The percentage of personnel who did not feel valued in the Service:

Service	%
Royal Navy	46
Royal Marines	32
Army	42
Royal Air Force	42

Source: Ministry of Defence, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2007*, July 2008, table 21

Table 8: The percentage of personnel who believed that morale was either low or very low in the Services:

Service	%
Royal Navy	64
Royal Marines	38
Army	59
Royal Air Force	72

Source: Ministry of Defence, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2007*, July 2008, table 15

Table 9: The percentage of personnel who said that they regularly feel like quitting the Armed Forces:

Service	%
Royal Navy	47
Royal Marines	37
Army	47
Royal Air Force	44

Source: Ministry of Defence, *Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2007*, July 2008, table 22

Key Sources of Dissatisfaction

What are the factors that are leading to this increasing level of dissatisfaction? These were outlined in the most recent MoD performance report.

- **Royal Navy**
 - Disagreement that the X-factor³⁴ is sufficient for compensating RN lifestyle.
 - Morale of the Royal Navy as a whole.
 - Other ranks personnel also listed ability to plan life in the long term.
- **Army**
 - X-factor.
 - The effects of service life on spouse/partners career.
 - Officers also cited efforts made to maintain or improve current service accommodation.

• **RAF**

- X-factor.
- The ability to do all the necessary administrative tasks for the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA).
- Other ranks also cited standard of equipment.³⁵

The survey provides an insight into grievances that are leading people to quit the Armed Forces. Examples are given in tables 10 and 11.

Table 10: The percentage of personnel who stated that the impact on family life either increases or strongly increases their intention to leave:

Service	%
Royal Navy	65
Royal Marines	62
Army	59
Royal Air Force	65

Source: Ministry of Defence, *Continuous Attitude Survey 2007*, July 2008, table 125

Table 11: Percentage of personnel who said that 'operational tempo and stretch' have either increased or strongly increased intention to leave the Armed Forces:

Service	%
Royal Navy	54
Royal Marines	41
Army	41
Royal Air Force	59

Source: Ministry of Defence, *Continuous Attitude Survey 2007*, July 2008, table 126

Career Opportunities

The Commission believes that retention levels can be improved if there were greater opportunities within the Service career structure. One suggestion is that service personnel unhappy with their current job should transfer between the Services. But the Defence Select Committee noted that this process is rather difficult and bureaucratic.³⁶ The Commission believes that this must change, and the MoD must make flexibility and 'jointery' a reality in managing its human resources if it wishes to retain people.

Ageism

We note that the Government's general insistence that employers should extend the age of retirement has not been observed by the MoD. There is considerable disparity in the age at retirement of career personnel between the Services and between trades. We consider that the premature departure of trained personnel is wasteful and would like to see greater flexibility in standard engagements so that continuing service is contingent upon physical fitness for work rather than age.

Table 12: Comparison of the Manning Strength of the Volunteer Reserve Forces in 1997 and 2008:

	1997 Total strength	May 2008 Requirement	Trained strength	Percentage Strength
Royal Naval Reserve	3,560	1,784	1,640	92%
Royal Marines Reserve	N/A ⁴⁰	582	536	92%
Territorial Army	51,690	30,274	19,940	66%
Royal Auxiliary Air Force	1,360	2,000	778	39%

3.3 Finance

One of the key sources of dissatisfaction we have highlighted was X factor rates and pay. This Chief of the General Staff's Briefing Team report noted earlier this year that 'more and more single income soldiers are now close to the UK Govt definition of poverty'.³⁷ General Dannatt's report also noted that this combined with the Pay As You Dine (PAYD) arrangements meant that 'a number of soldiers were not eating properly because they had run out of money by the end of the month'.³⁸ In June General Dannatt developed his remarks in a widely reported critique of military pay that compared the income of private soldiers unfavourably with that of traffic wardens.³⁹

The setting of pay is a matter for the Armed Forces Pay Review Body (AFPRB) an independent organisation whose recommendations are traditionally accepted by Government. We hope the AFPRB will note the adverse comparisons that have been drawn in the course of its 2009 review. However, there are other practical measures that Government can take to help Service people, including those personnel on operations, and these are included in our recommendations.

Source: *Hansard*, 22 July 2008, Col. 1056WA.

3.4 Reserve Forces

We must not also forget that the important and integral part role that our Reserve Forces. Our interim report described the changing role of reservists. Volunteer reserve forces are being more closely integrated with the regulars through operational necessity. However, overstretch is also bearing down on reservists as figures for manning and retention reveal (**table 12**).

The MoD's Annual Report commented that 'this [undermanning] is not sustainable indefinitely'.⁴¹ It is not within the scope of our investigation to examine the structure of the Reserve Forces and we note that their role and structure is currently the subject of a MoD review. We hope the review will take note of the recommendations made by the All-Party Parliamentary Reserve Forces Group in its report, some of which are included in the list of concerns below.

- **Recruitment.** There is a crisis in the current bearing and recruitment of Young TA Officers. The Government has failed to utilise the Officer Training Corps at universities as a recruiting tool.⁴²
- **Welfare Support.** The interim report noted inconsistencies with the provision of welfare to volunteer reservists and the lack of welfare facilities in some units.⁴³ We also note that many reservists are unaware of what is available because of poor communication.⁴⁴ The Defence Select Committee also heavily criticised the welfare provision of reservists, stating that 'in several areas the level of support needs to be improved substantially'.⁴⁵ We will address welfare in general in **section 7**.
- **Cuts in Training.** The most recent CGS Staff report said of Territorial Army training: 'although not officially "capped", funding difficulties have led to training being curtailed'.⁴⁶ Moreover, the Public Accounts Committee has commented that cuts to key competitive training exercises have had an impact on morale.⁴⁷
- **Medical Reservists.** The NHS careers of junior healthcare professionals may be adversely affected by deployment. This is a pity since the training value of operations should be obvious.⁴⁸ It should not be beyond the capabilities of the extensive postgraduate training bodies in the Defence Medical Services and the NHS to formulate operational training credit that will appeal to junior healthcare professionals and their seniors seeking continuous professional development. In the longer term, the concept of Sponsored Reserves taken up from the NHS might be developed if the current tempo of operations is to be sustained. However, this is only likely to happen if the training benefits of deployment are properly recognised.
- **Utilization of Skills.** Both the Public Accounts Committee and the All-Party Parliamentary Reserve Forces Group have noted that the MoD does not assess or record the range of skills our reservist personnel have to offer. We agree with the APPRFG that there should

be an audit of skills that would better inform the future size and shape of reserve forces and potentially lead to increased job satisfaction.⁴⁹

- **Reservist-Employer Relationship.** The second 2007 CGS report stated that current legislation (Reserve Forces Act of 1996) 'is perceived as protecting the employers, not supporting soldiers. Most units have anecdotal evidence of soldiers dismissed from civilian work for TA membership although all have been formally dismissed for other reasons'.⁵⁰ There is corroborating anecdotal evidence cited recently by the Defence Select Committee.⁵¹ It appears that the reservist-employer relationship tends to be particularly strained in smaller companies that are reliant on critical staff for their viability.

3.5 Service Voting

Previous Arrangements

Before 2001, all Service personnel registered as Service voters, which meant that they only had to register once. This remained effective until the person left the Armed Forces. Section 59(3) of the 1983 Representation of the People Act also made the Ministry of Defence responsible for ensuring that Service personnel are registered to vote.

A Working Party, chaired by George Howarth MP, was set up in 1999 which recommended changes in the electoral registration system. However, whilst Service voting was considered, it appears that the implications of the group's recommendations on Service personnel were not considered in detail.

The subsequent Representation of the People Act 2000 ended the previous arrangements. This resulted in Service personnel serving abroad having to register to vote each year.

Current Arrangements

In 2006, the Government changed the rules again. Section 13 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 enabled the Secretary of State to develop secondary legislation that could extend the length of service qualifications to up to five years. Subsequently, the Service Voters' Registration Period Order 2006 extended the length of Service voters' registration as an elector from 12 months to 3 years.

Service Personnel Voting Registration

There was much concern at the 2005 General Election because many Service personnel had failed to register to vote. This subsequently prompted the internet blogging organisation, the Army Rumour Service (ARRSE), to publish a paper looking into how voting registration was handled. It highlighted how many Service personnel, particularly those who were deployed to Iraq were unaware of the voting registration arrangements, and raised concerns

about the lack of information that the MoD was providing, particularly to deployed personnel.⁵²

Despite efforts by the MoD to improve the dissemination of information, the most recent Defence Analytical Statistics Agency Voting Survey revealed that:

- 69 per cent of personnel said that they were registered to vote, leaving nearly a third (31 per cent) saying that they were not registered to vote or they did not know.⁵³
- There is still a great disparity in voter registration between the Services. Only 62 per cent of Army respondents said that they were registered to vote.⁵⁴
- And the problem of overseas based personnel registration remained problematic. Whilst 73 per cent of UK-based personnel had registered to vote, only 43 per cent of overseas personnel said that they were.⁵⁵

This is clearly unacceptable and shows that the systems that have been put in place since the 2000 Act have made it more difficult for Service personnel to vote. This is a damning indictment of a Government that has put considerable effort into re-jigging our electoral arrangements supposedly to improve turnout and leaves it open to the accusation of being interested only in helping those that are more likely to support it. That Service voters were not considered when changes were first made in 2000 represents, at best a lack of thought for the military in the formulation of domestic policy and, arguably, an expression of the breakdown of the Military Covenant.

Service personnel and their dependants must be fully informed about voting procedures. The disadvantage they suffer in exercising their vote because of their Service must be erased. We disagree with the requirement to constantly re-register. Service personnel have enough to be concerned about, and this extra burden constitutes a disincentive to vote.

3.6 Recommendations

- A future Conservative Government must conduct a Strategic Defence Review on entering office to match commitments and resources and thereby address overstretch. The Government should emulate the American quadrennial review so that the current mismatch is avoided in the future.
- The Armed Forces Pay Review Body should take into consideration the comments of ex-defence chiefs and the current CGS during their next review of pay and allowances.
- The Armed Forces Pay Review Body should be put on a statutory basis.

- In order to keep outflow levels as low as possible, greater flexibility should be built into the Armed Forces' career structure and age of retirement in order to help with manning and retention. A future Conservative Government should look at ways to reduce the bureaucracy and make transfer between different cap badges and services easier. Units, if it is possible from within existing establishment levels, should also find ways to make it easier for Armed Forces personnel to take gap years and career breaks.
- An audit should be conducted into the range of skills that Reservist personnel possess, their current roles, and where there are gaps that need to be filled.
- Further work should be carried out by the National Audit Office to discover the relationship between reservists and employers and remedial measures considered, including the extension of the Sponsored Reserves concept to deliver specialist skills available in civilian life.
- Rules for Service voter registration should be changed so that Service personnel only have to register once on the Service register. The responsibility for ensuring that Service personnel register to vote should lie with the Ministry of Defence.

Part 4: Operational welfare

4.1 Equipment

The Military Covenant is not helped if our Service personnel do not receive the equipment and protection they need. It is with immense regret that the Commission has to report that in its opinion the Government has not kept its side of the bargain in two principal respects:

Supplying Equipment and Deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan

- **Iraq and Body Armour.** Some of the provisioning failures in the early phases of Operation TELIC were mainly technical, but deliberate political decisions by Ministers played a part.
- One of the most high profile of these cases concerned the supply of Enhanced Combat Body Armour (ECBA) and the death of Sergeant Steven Roberts in March 2003. Sergeant Roberts had been ordered to give up his enhanced body armour three days before his death due to shortages and inadequacies of the supply system. Yet the Board of Inquiry Report recorded that political decisions taken in the run-up to the war deliberately slowed down the process of procuring Enhanced Body Armour. The report noted that:
 - ‘During the summer of 2002, constraints were placed on military activities (including procurement which might have negatively impacted on negotiations with the United Nations. No further action regarding the procurement of ECBA [Enhanced Body Armour] was undertaken until September 2002’.⁵⁶

Despite agreeing to many other UORs in the meantime, the then Defence Secretary’s office only agreed to ECBA UOR on 13 November 2002.⁵⁷

- **Afghanistan and Basic Equipment.** The supply issues in the early stages of Operation TELIC were still apparent during the initial deployment to Helmand Province. The Board of Inquiry into the death of Captain James Philippon highlighted once again that key Urgent Operational Requirements (UORs) were delayed for political reasons. The report stated:

‘The MoD and the Treasury were unwilling to commit funds to UORs enhancements prior to any formal political announcements. On-going UORs were halted during the 2-month delay period. As a result, many key items of equipment arrived in theatre late, and some even failed to meet the Op HERRICK 4 deployment at all’.⁵⁸

Captain Philippon was killed during a contact with the Taliban in June 2006. He did not possess key equipment such as an under-slung grenade launcher and night vision goggles. This may have been crucial in

determining a different outcome.

Whilst there were additional problems with the supply chain, such as the failure to follow the correct staff procedures, it is not acceptable that at this stage, given the controversy over the death of Sgt Roberts, the Government continued to hesitate in approving UORs for financial and political reasons.

Current Equipment Issues

- **Opinion of Personnel.** The response from a recent Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey reveals a worryingly high level of dissatisfaction among Service personnel about the adequacy of their equipment.

The percentages of personnel who were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the amount of equipment and resources to do the job were:

- 48 per cent of the Navy.
- 55 per cent of the Royal Marines.
- 49 per cent of the Army.
- 49 per cent of the RAF.⁵⁹

- **Hercules Aircraft and Explosive Suppressant Foam.** 10 Service personnel died on 30 January 2005 in Iraq when a Hercules aircraft was hit by ground-to-air fire which caused an explosion. The subsequent Board of Inquiry concluded that the lack of a fuel tank safety system might have contributed to the crash.⁶⁰ It has been reported on several occasions that pilots had requested that explosive suppressant foam be fitted prior to the 2005 crash.⁶¹

- **Armoured Vehicles.** In 2006 concerns were raised over the number of deaths of personnel who were travelling in lightly protected ‘Snatch’ armoured vehicles. Increased sophistication of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) has exacted a toll that was avoidable.

From July 2006, the Government announced that more vehicles would be ordered as Urgent Operational Requirements. These included the Mastiff, Bulldog, Vector, and Ridgback vehicles. Anecdotal evidence suggests that these are of variable quality and suitability, with the Mastiff being the best. But in 2008, concerns were still being raised about the use of Snatch Land Rovers, especially after four personnel were killed in a Snatch vehicle on 17 June 2008. This has prompted a review into the use of the Snatch.

We recognise that the decision on which armoured vehicle should be deployed is not straightforward and must be determined by commanders in the light of terrain and mobility as well as safety. But the MOD procurement process must ensure that the widest possible range of vehicles are available.

Table 13: Number of Helicopters 'Fit for Purpose' Across the Services

Helicopter type	In service (total fleet)	Average number of aircraft fit for purpose (FFP)	FFP as a percentage of total fleet
Royal Navy			
Sea King Mk 4/6c	42	15	36%
Lynx Mk 3/8	63	29	46%
Merlin Mk 1	38	20	53%
Sea King Mk 5	15	7	47%
Sea King Mk 7	13	7	54%
Army Air Corps			
Apache AH Mk 1	67	24	36%
Lynx Mk 7/9	96	31	32%
Royal Air Force			
Chinook Mk 2/2a	40	19	48%
Puma Mk 1	38	16	42%
Merlin Mk 3/3a	27	10	37%

Source: *Hansard*, 21 May 2008, Column 309WA**Table 14: Number of Air Transport and Tanker Aircraft 'Fit for Purpose' across in the RAF**

	Number in service	Average number of aircraft Fit for Purpose	Percentage of fleet Fit for Purpose
C-17 ⁽¹⁾	5	2	40%
Tristar	9	5	56%
VC10	16	7	44%
C-130K	19	9	47%
C-130J	24	13	54%
Nimrod MR2	15	6	40%
Nimrod R1	3	1	33%
Average	91	43	47%

Source: *Hansard*, 20 May 2008, Col. 180WA

- **Helicopters.** The availability of helicopter lift, particularly in Afghanistan, remains a top concern. Our interim report referred to the case of Corporal Mark Wright who was fatally wounded in Helmand. His injuries are reported to have been exacerbated because the available helicopters did not have the right winches. **Table 13** illustrates the parlous state of current helicopter fleet.
- **Air Transport.** Similar concerns have been expressed about the air transport fleet and in particular the fact that flight delays are eating into Service personnel's rest and recuperation, annual leave and post-operational tour leave time.⁶² **Table 14** illustrates the current availability problems. The National Audit Office has also expressed its concern about the current state of the Hercules C-130 fleet. It stated that the impact of the current operational tempo, combined with the withdrawal of aircraft over the next few years and the delays in the delivery of the replacement of the A400M aircraft, could result in 'significant risks to the availability of tactical fixed wing aircraft in the future'.⁶³
- **Nimrod MR2 Aircraft.** 14 British Service personnel died when a Nimrod MR2 aircraft (XV230) crashed in Kandahar Province on 2 September 2006. The subsequent Board of Inquiry concluded that the most likely cause of the fire was a fuel leak which ignited against a hot pipe in a compartment near the wing-fuselage attachment. Indeed, the Ministry of Defence was warned on several occasions about fuel leakage concerns.⁶⁴ The Board of Inquiry also identified contributory factors that led to the loss of the aircraft, including the age of the non-structural systems, the

maintenance policy for the Nimrod fleet and the lack of a fire detection and suppression system.⁶⁵

The Assistant Deputy Coroner for Oxfordshire, Andrew Walker, said that the aircraft was not airworthy.⁶⁶ Whilst this is disputed by the MoD, it is nevertheless important to note that the replacement of these aircraft following decades of service, has not happened because of the ongoing delays with the Nimrod MRA4 upgrade programme.

- **Implications for Policy.** The catalogue of failures to provide our Forces with the equipment they need lays bare the Government's failure to honour the Covenant.

Whilst the UOR process has much to commend it and has been a rare ray of sunshine in an otherwise dismal procurement scene, we would counsel caution in relying upon it after a shortfall has been identified, since it would reduce the need for foresight in procurement, and court critical safety shortfalls in rapidly evolving battle conditions.

4.2 Current Deployment Welfare Issues

Frequent visits by Ministers to troops in theatre are no substitute for going the extra mile in providing for the welfare of our people. We have been alarmed at reports of even the most basic requirements being neglected.

- **Water Supply.** It was reported during summer 2008 that British soldiers based at Musa Qaleh had been suffering from water shortages. It was also reported that they were obliged to rely on water from wells made portable by treating with unpalatable chemicals. Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment have written home to their families to complain about constant thirst.⁶⁷
- **Deployment Welfare Policy Support.** The MoD offers a range of facilities for Service personnel on operations. These include free letters, newspapers, access to email and media facilities, and publicly funded telephone calls. But the Army Families' Federation has stated that there is room for improvement.⁶⁸

4.3 Military Law

Key Developments

The UK's Armed Forces are the best behaved and most disciplined fighting force in the world. However, the current operational environment is a chaotic, unforgiving one in which critical judgements and split-second life and death decisions are routinely made. We ask a lot of the young men to get it right. Whilst the Commission would want to make it clear from the outset that no Service personnel are not above the law, there is a perception among Service personnel of a lack of understanding and

empathy among some in the legal profession, the media and in Whitehall. This may foster a reluctance to act when called upon to make those fast decisions in the most challenging of circumstances.

A balance must therefore be struck in military law that ensures that troops conduct themselves with the highest level of honour and probity but also reflects the unique environment in which deployed personnel operate. However, there is evidence that the Armed Forces are becoming operationally constrained by the increasing prevalence of 'lawfare'. We note the collapse of the court martial of the seven members of the 3rd Battalion, the Parachute Regiment charged with the murder of Nadhem Abdullah provoked a great deal of controversy.

Personnel Opinion

Surveys indicate that the fear of prosecution remains a key concern among officers and personnel. A survey of officers for the academic journal *Defence Studies* published in March 2007 found that:

- 43 per cent of all respondents (50 per cent of Army respondents) believed that operational effectiveness (OE) has been damaged by changes to UK law.⁶⁹
- Across the three Services 43 per cent of respondents believed that changes in the law were putting the lives of Servicemen and women at risk. It can be seen from the Army responses that 50 per cent agreed with this statement.⁷⁰
- 77 per cent of respondents believed that they are much more likely to be investigated and charged than ever before. The figure in the Army is even greater at 82 per cent. Only 10 per cent of respondents disagreed with the statement.⁷¹

These results confirm that whilst it is essential that proper discipline is maintained, there is a perception among officers and personnel that the Government is not supporting them at a time when they need it most. In addition, whilst the media may have had a role in increasing this perception, some expert opinion also suggests that the Government could do more to reassure personnel.

- In 2006, the historian Professor Jeremy Black wrote, 'the current use of the law pays scant heed to the problems of military activity and action'.⁷²
- In 2005, the former Chief of the Defence Staff, Admiral Lord Boyce, said:

'The Armed Forces are under legal siege and are being pushed in a direction that will see such an order being deemed as improper or legally unsound. They are

being pushed by people schooled not in operations but only in political correctness. They are being pushed to a time when they will fail in an operation because the commanding officer's authority and his command chain has been compromised with tortuous rules not relevant to fighting and where his instinct to be daring and innovative is being buried under the threat of liabilities and hounded out by those who have no concept of what is required to fight and win'.⁷³

- There are also some concerns that the new Cultural Properties Bill will stifle operational effectiveness even further, and increase the scope for 'lawfare' at the expense of the Armed Forces. These concerns must be addressed.

4.4 Recommendations

- A future Conservative Government should review the procurement process to ensure that the Armed Forces get the equipment they need when they need it. Lessons should be learned from the speedy acquisition of UORs, which should then be applied to mainstream procurement. Furthermore, to ensure that the British national interest is always the priority, a future Conservative Government should ensure that the full range of procurement options are open to consideration.
- The Deployment Welfare Package should be continually monitored and reviewed to see whether enhancements could feasibly be made.
- A future Conservative Government should use the next Armed Forces Discipline Bill to provide protection to Service personnel who follow orders in good faith whilst engaged in operations. **Box 3** contains a passage from the Australian Defence Force Discipline Act 1982 which provides an example of what the new legislation could look like. Further work should be carried out to see how such legislation can be secured within a British legal context.

Box 3 – Australian Defence Force Discipline Act 1982 (Section 14)

Act or omission in execution of law etc.

A person is not liable to be convicted of a service offence by reason of an act or omission that:

- (a) was in execution of the law; or
- (b) was in obedience to:
 - (i) a lawful order; or
 - (ii) an unlawful order that the person did not know, and could not reasonably be expected to have known, was unlawful.

- The Cultural Properties Bill must not put our Service personnel at risk or increase the burden of their liability whilst on operations.

Part 5: Health care

5.1 The Defence Medical Services

Undermanning

- The Defence Medical Services are severely undermanned. The supplement to the Armed Forces Pay Review Body report for 2008 stated that ‘the DMS continues to be characterised by low manning levels, operational pressures, and risks to retention. The position has remained the same for many years’.⁷⁴ **Table 15** highlights the extent of this undermanning. Key specialist trades are also severely undermanned, and these include:
 - Pathologists – 79 per cent.
 - Rheumatology and rehabilitation personnel – 58 per cent.
 - Psychiatrists - 54 per cent.⁷⁵
 - Dental officers - 6 per cent.⁷⁶

Table 15: The Strength of the Defence Medical Services

	Requirement	Personnel trained strength
Royal Navy	1311	1378
Army	4516	3783
Royal Air Force	1748	1574
Tri-service	7575	6735

Source: Hansard, 21 July 2008, Col. 842WA

Morale

The reasons for this undermanning can be partly explained through a recent survey carried out by the British Medical Association which revealed significant retention problems among service doctors. The survey revealed the following:

- 66 per cent of respondents cited overstretch as a key cause of dissatisfaction in morale and motivation.⁷⁷
- 8.5 per cent of respondents intend to leave in the next 12 months; 18.9 per cent said in the next 2 years; and 37.6 per cent in the next 5 years.⁷⁸ Of those planning to leave, 37.7 per cent said they would leave through a Premature Voluntary Release.⁷⁹

5.2 Aeromedical Evacuation and NHS Treatment

Treatment of Injured Personnel in the UK

- As a result of the 1994 Defence Cost Study, military hospitals were closed and Service secondary care centred on Military District Hospital Units. These were later called Ministry of Defence Hospital Units (MDHUs) and are located in geographically dispersed NHS hospitals.
- Since 2001 aeromedically evacuated casualties have been managed chiefly by the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine based at the University Hospital Birmingham

Foundation Trust (UHBFT) and, in particular, at Selly Oak Hospital.

- A series of reports in 2006 and 2007 highlighted shortcomings in the care of Service personnel. One of the main concerns was the fact that military personnel were being cared alongside civilians. Recently, Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Tootal, commander of 3rd Battalion the Parachute Regiment at the time of the 2006 Helmand deployment commented that ‘the poor aftercare and the constant struggle to get the proper welfare provision for some of my wounded, once they had left hospital, caused me profound concern’.⁸⁰ These reports contributed to the decision to set up a Military Managed Ward at the main orthopaedic/trauma unit in Selly Oak. It reached Full Operating Capacity in 2007.
- Furthermore, on 4 July 2008 the MoD announced the location of a new trauma and orthopaedics ward for the treatment of injured Service personnel in the new ward at Edgbaston which is due to open in 2010. The Commission welcomes this. There remains, nevertheless, a need to monitor constantly the relationship between demand and capacity as our military operations continue.

Visiting Families

- The Birmingham location means that most Service personnel are treated a long way from their families and units. Service welfare charities and families associations have voiced concerns about welfare provision and accommodation for those families visiting relatives.
- Some accommodation is provided and the MoD does cover the cost of travel, accommodation and subsistence for two close family members of Service personnel who are placed on the Very Seriously Ill (VSI), Seriously Ill (SI) or Incapacitating Illness or Injury (III) lists to be at the bedside of their injured loved ones. This is done through the DILFOR UK scheme. This can be extended to allow other additional family members to be at the bedside. Initially this allowance is provided for seven days, but can be extended for as long as necessary. However, the extension has to be linked with medical evidence. The Royal British Legion is calling for this link to be removed and wants Service families to be entitled to DILFOR as long as their relative remains on the VSI and SI lists.⁸¹

Royal Hospital Haslar

The last UK military hospital, the Royal Hospital Haslar, is scheduled to be sold off in 2009. There has been interest from Service charities in the site and we remain to be convinced that there is no military healthcare need for its highly adaptable accommodation.

5.3 Mental Healthcare

Service Personnel and Mental Healthcare

- **Current Operations and Mental Health.** A number of studies over recent years have highlighted concerns about the relationship between deployment and the subsequent onset of mental illness. In one report, the King's Centre for Military Health reported that the prevalence of all psychological symptoms is higher among those deployed for 13 months or more. Furthermore, the prevalence of severe alcohol problems is reported to increase with duration of deployment (Table 16).⁸²

Table 16: Percentage of Personnel who have been deployed for 13 months or more with Psychological Symptoms

Symptom	Percentage
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder	5.2
Psychological distress case	21.8
Multiple Physical symptoms	14.5
Severe Alcohol Problems	23.9

Source: Roberto J Rona et al, 'Mental health consequences of overstretch in the UK Armed Forces: first phase of a cohort study', *British Medical Journal*, 30 June 2007, table 3

- **Alcohol Abuse.** As indicated in the above table, there is increasing concern that Service personnel are increasingly turning to alcohol and other substances as a means of dealing with overstretch and the stresses of Service life. The King's Centre for Military Health found that 67 per cent of men and 49 per cent of women in the regular Armed Forces are drinking at levels which the World Health Organisation considers to be harmful for health, compared with 38 per cent of men and 16 per cent of women in the general population.⁸³ Furthermore, 48 per cent of men and 31 per cent of women engage in 'binge' drinking (that is drinking six or more units of alcohol on one occasion on a weekly or daily basis).⁸⁴ The report suggests a range of possible causes but highlighted an association between deployment on Operation TELIC I and heavy drinking in men'.⁸⁵
- **NAPO's Warning.** In August 2008, the probation staff union NAPO published research on the number of prisoners it believes have served in the Armed Forces. It estimates that this number could be as high as 8,500. It also states that the vast majority of offences were violent and related to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and drugs or alcohol abuse. It raised concerns of the minimal access to counselling services for veterans.⁸⁶ The Commission notes these concerns.

• Service Mental Health Care

- **Out-patient Care.** Out-patient care is provided through 15 Departments of Community Mental Health (DCMH). These are run by mental health teams of psychiatrists, mental health nurses, and mental health social workers. We have seen that psychiatry is one of the 'pinch point' specialties within the DMS. Military psychiatry is a military medical specialty that cannot easily be bought off the shelf since many of the conditions it deals with have a distinct occupational element that requires practitioners with insight into the working environment. Furthermore, it is naive to suppose that reliable advice to commanders on issues like substance abuse in an Armed Forces context or the management of post traumatic stress disorder can be provided without a cadre of in-house military psychiatrists. It seems likely that the contracting out of in-patient work to the private sector has made a career in military psychiatry unattractive.
- **In-patient Care.** In-patient care was provided until 2003 by a psychiatric unit in the Duchess of Kent Military Hospital. However, it was subsequently decided that in-patient military mental healthcare should be contracted out to the privately run Priory Group. Whilst we accept that most mental health services are provided in a service community setting, we are not convinced that it is right to deal separately with in-patient mental healthcare by contracting it out to the private sector.

There are concerns that the private sector does not have the relevant military expertise.⁸⁷ Of all health issues related to work, mental healthcare requires the greatest level of understanding of the causal link between occupation and illness. It seems remarkable, therefore, that this particular specialty should have been singled out for removal to the private sector. We fear that the move reflects the 'out of sight, out of mind' philosophy that has historically bedevilled the management of the mentally ill.

In addition, we are not convinced that the private sector has necessarily provided the best value for money. **Table 17** provides the most recent figures for the cost and treatment provided.

Table 17: Cost and Number of Military Patients Treated at the Priory Clinic

	Number of patients treated	Contract value (£ million)	value
1 December			2003
to 31 March 2004	58	0.4	
1 April			2004
to 31 March 2005	321	4.2	
1 April			2005
to 31 March 2006	351	4.5	
1 April			2006
to 31 March 2007	305	3.4	
1 April			2007
to 30 September 2007	160	1.9	

Source: *Hansard*, 13 November 2007, Col. 122WA

- **Post-Deployment Monitoring.** Post-deployment monitoring of Service personnel is crucial for the early identification of mental health symptoms. This is especially important for Reservists, who melt back into society after an operation without the support of comrades. There are currently two schemes.

The first is Post Operational Stress Management (POSM) which is a 36-hour decompression period in Cyprus. Decompression is a standard method used, for example, by the Canadians. This scheme is currently being assessed by the King's Centre for Military Health.

The second is Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) consisting of briefings from personnel rather than health professionals. This was initially trialled by the Royal Marines and is now being implemented. Whilst we believe that the idea has its merits, we share the concerns of the Royal British Legion that the findings of the Marines trial should be published and the scheme properly evaluated.⁸⁸

- **Longer Term Mental Health Surveillance.** KCMHR is also undertaking health surveillance of veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan in addition to its work with Gulf War and Balkans veterans. The Royal British Legion believes that this project should be extended to all personnel.⁸⁹
- **Reservist Mental Health Programme.** In response to a KCMHR study which suggested that reservist veterans of Operation TELIC 1 were particularly vulnerable to mental health problems, the Government announced the Reservist Mental Health Programme. However, the Royal British Legion has evidence of an enduring lack of awareness of the programme. For example, a survey of 500 GPs across England and Wales revealed that 84 per cent knew nothing about the scheme.⁹⁰ It seems that there are a

large number of reservists who are not gaining access to the mental health treatment they need because doctors are not in a position to refer them.

Mental Healthcare and Veterans

The charity Combat Stress reports that veterans take, on average, 14 years between leaving the Services and referring themselves to one of their treatment centres.⁹¹ In addition, the average age of new referrals during 2007-8 was 42 years.⁹² It follows that the DMS, NHS and Service charities will have to anticipate a surge in clients with mental health problems over the next two decades as a result of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan. The evidence below raises some doubts over their readiness to deal with such increase in cases.

- **Screening and Medical Assessment Programme (MAP).** Veterans who have served in the Falklands and subsequent operations are entitled to a mental health examination, which is chiefly provided by St. Thomas' Hospital in London under the Mental Health Medical Assessment Programme (MAP). But the Public Accounts Committee has recently criticised the MoD for doing 'little to advertise the provision for veterans' and that it 'should do more to raise the awareness of the new provision'.⁹³ This is reinforced by a Royal British Legion survey of 500 GPs which found that 71 per cent knew nothing at all about MAP. The majority of those who knew about the scheme heard about it through the media.⁹⁴ This means that there are a considerable number of veterans who could be assessed are not because GPs are not referring them to MAP.
- **Out-patient and Community Mental Healthcare.** Veterans' access to mental health treatment comes primarily from the NHS. But the NHS may not fully appreciate the particular anxieties associated with Service life, and that mental health provision on the NHS is at best inconsistent. Moreover, currently there is currently no proper system for tracking veterans after they have left Service. The Defence Select Committee earlier this year said that 'we are concerned that the identification and treatment of veterans with mental health needs relies as much on good intentions and good luck as on robust tracking and detailed understanding of their problems'.⁹⁵

Whilst we welcome the piloting of a new service which aims to trial how clinicians with service-related expertise can be better used, we will have to see whether this will be effective.

- **In-Patient Care and Combat Stress.** Mental health services are provided by the NHS and charities such

as the Ex-Services Mental Health Society (Combat Stress). Combat Stress provides residential treatment at three centres around the country. Costs to the MoD and the number of referrals are below.

Table 18: MoD Funding for Combat Stress

Year	£m
2006-7	2.9
2007-8	3.1

Source: The Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society, *Report and Accounts*, various years

Table 19: The Number of New Referrals to Combat Stress

	No. of New Referrals
2005	759
2006	948
2007	996
2008	1,160

Source: The Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society, *Report and Accounts*, various years

The level of demand can only increase as the legacy of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts unfolds. Whilst the Commission welcomes the increase in state funding announced last year, we are still very concerned about the rise in future demand.

Our concerns match those of the public. We note the survey commissioned by the SAS veteran Andy McNab which indicated that the public felt that veterans were not being properly cared for. In his poll, 76 per cent of adults believed the Government's commitment to the psychological care of veterans was 'inadequate' with discharged personnel left to 'get on with it'.⁹⁶

5.4 Service Families and Healthcare

Our interim paper outlined the problems that Service families experience when moving from one Primary Care Trust authority to another. It recommended that service families should not lose their place on a NHS waiting list when they move from one PCT to another.

This idea was subsequently adopted by the Government in its Service Personnel Command Paper. We welcome the fact that the Government has listened to us on this issue and look forward to seeing how, precisely, it will carry out its pledge and to its audit of effectiveness. The same goes for dentistry. We note the Command Paper's assertion that it will improve access to dentistry for families by making use of facilities on military bases. However, we also note that the DMS is short of dentists.

5.5 Rehabilitation

Patients with the most serious conditions are ultimately referred to the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court in Surrey.

In our interim report, we recognised the excellent facilities that are provided at Headley Court. The Commission also noted that the charity SSAFA Forces Help decided to provide accommodation for visiting personnel and highlighted our concerns that the Government had not addressed the problem of visiting family accommodation in a timely manner.

The key problems remain capacity and range of facilities. The charity Help for Heroes is raising money to build a gym and swimming pool for Headley Court. The Government has promised an additional £24 million for Headley Court but there is a backlog of work to be done to improve accommodation. This expenditure should be monitored to evaluate the extent of the improvements that this money can bring.

5.6 The NHS and Veterans

Priority Treatment

The treatment of veterans is the responsibility of the NHS.

In 1953 responsibility for the treatment of war pensioners was transferred from the Department of Pensions to the NHS and with it a ministerial undertaking that NHS hospitals would prioritise them over others that have the same level of clinical need. In 2007 Hull PCT said this would also apply to its veterans whose injuries were suspected of being caused by Service life and the Government endorsed the position.

Our interim report discussed research conducted by the Royal British Legion that found that:

- Of those war pensioners who had sought NHS treatment for the condition for which they received a war pension, over three-quarters (78 per cent) said they were not treated ahead of other non-emergency patients.
- Only 3 per cent of these people remembered being asked by an NHS health professional if they were war pensioners.
- The survey also found that 76 per cent of those taking part were not aware that they are entitled to priority treatment.
- 71 per cent of GPs questioned knew nothing at all about priority treatment.⁹⁷

This is clearly unacceptable. Whilst the recent

announcements may have increased awareness, more needs to be done to explain the position to healthcare professionals and potential beneficiaries.

5.7 Recommendations

- A future Conservative Government should look at Sponsored Reserves to plug existing and budgeted gaps in Defence Medical Service manpower and recruit to strength in pinch point specialties that are considered Service-specific, such as military psychiatry.
- We endorse the Ministry of Defence Hospital Unit (MDHU) model of delivering secondary healthcare to Service personnel. However, the integrity of the military managed ward at Selly Oak needs to be monitored to ensure that wherever possible and subject to overriding clinical needs of service and civilian patients, military personnel are nursed together.
- Each Primary Care Trust should appoint a veterans' 'champion' to co-ordinate the care and service provided to veterans. They will be responsible for contacting veterans and their medical attendants and for communicating veterans' entitlements, including priority treatment and the Medical Assessment Programme. It should be possible for this to be delivered within the existing PCT structure.
- A future Conservative Government should pilot a triage mental health follow-up telephone service for Service leavers who have deployed on operations. Mental health professionals would contact those veterans and monitor their situation. They would also be able to make any relevant referrals. Funding for this pilot scheme should

come from existing Department of Health budgets.

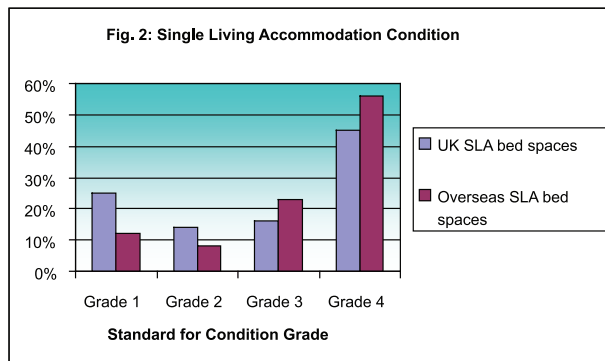
- A future Conservative Government should at the earliest opportunity examine the wisdom of contracting out in-patient psychiatric services with a view to rebuilding in-house capability and restoring the specialty of military psychiatry. As part of that review, it should conduct a feasibility study into whether a Government-run military or explosion trauma victim in-patient mental health centre for the most seriously affected personnel and veterans is desirable, and whether a suitable MoD or NHS location can be found to house it.
- In addition, as part of the review into mental health services, further work needs to be carried out into a potential relationship between any weaknesses in the provision of mental health care for veterans and the number of ex-service prisoners.
- The sale of the Royal Hospital Haslar should be reviewed to determine what whether there is any residual military-related healthcare need there may be for it.

Part 6: Housing

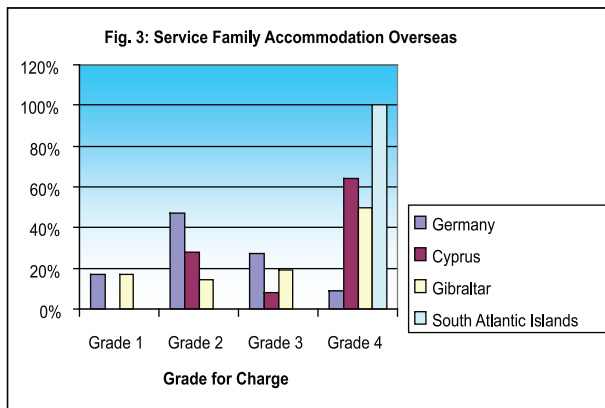
6.1 The Condition of Service Accommodation

- The poor accommodation that many in the Armed Forces and their families have to endure has been well documented. The Defence Select Committee has described the condition of some housing as ‘disgraceful’ and ‘were told that soldiers from 1 R ANGLIAN [1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment] on deployment to Afghanistan had more comfortable accommodation than their comrades left behind in Pirbright’.⁹⁸

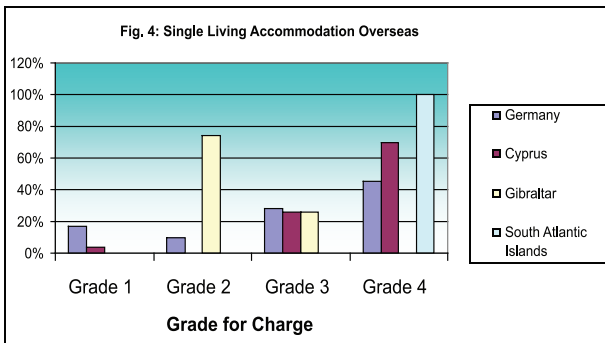
These comments are supported by statistical evidence as shown in **fig. 2**. The standard of accommodation in some of the overseas locations is shown in **figs. 3 and 4**.



Source: *Hansard*, 7 July 2008, Col. 1160WA



Source: *Hansard*, 9 July 2008, Col. 1602WA



Source: *Hansard*, 9 July 2008, Col. 1602WA

It is therefore unsurprising that housing issues remains the Army Families’ Federation’s biggest area of concern.⁹⁹

6.2 Housing Maintenance

Single Living Accommodation and Regional Prime Contracts

Improvements and maintenance of accommodation is the responsibility of five Regional Prime Contractors. However, there are concerns that money is not being spent wisely. In 2006-7, Defence Estates had to find savings of £13.5 million (4.5 per cent) in the funding of Regional Prime Contracts largely through deferrals in planned maintenance repair. This had implications for defence estate maintenance as projects had to be cancelled or deferred. They included key work such as re-roofing projects and redecoration programmes.¹⁰⁰ However, other minor works did go ahead regardless, including the construction and refurbishment of sports facilities, such as tennis courts and all-weather pitches which cost at least £1.6 million.¹⁰¹

Modern Housing Solutions and Service Family Accommodation

A contract for maintenance and refurbishment of the Service Family Accommodation has been made with Modern Housing Solutions (MHS). As with the Regional Prime Contracts, there have been concerns about the way in which the maintenance has been done. **Table 20** shows the complaints received about the service:

Table 20: Complaints Received by Modern Housing Solutions:

Month	Actual complaints received
May 2007	474
June 2007	425
July 2007	795
August 2007	541
September 2007	703
October 2007	828
November 2007	759
December 2007	519
January 2008	658
February 2008	612
March 2008	562
April 2008	731
May 2008	622

Source: *Hansard*, 18 June 2008, Col. 1016WA.

General levels of dissatisfaction were also recorded in the recent Continuous Attitude Survey (**table 21**).

Table 21: Percentage of Personnel Either Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied with Efforts to Improve Service Accommodation:

Service	%
Royal Navy	40
Royal Marines	49
Army	49
Royal Air Force	55

Source: Ministry of Defence, *Continuous Attitude Survey 2007*, July 2008, table 171

Responsibility for Maintenance

The Defence Select Committee revealed that there was considerable confusion over who had overall responsibility for ensuring that maintenance and repairs were being carried out.¹⁰² In a later report, the Defence Select Committee stated that 'it is now one year since we published our report [on Defence Estates], and we are still receiving evidence that the standard of maintenance repairs and levels of customer satisfaction falls well below the expectation of Service personnel and their families'.¹⁰³ This state of affairs is completely unacceptable, and continues to cause immense frustration to many Service personnel and their families. It is a prime example of a failure to honour the Covenant.

6.3 Home Ownership**The Current Situation**

By virtue of their service, personnel are disadvantaged in getting onto the property ladder. The most recent Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey found that only a third of soldiers are home owners.¹⁰⁴ The CGS Briefing Team Report noted, 'house purchase plays a larger part in a decision to leave the service than has been previously thought'.¹⁰⁵ In other words, house purchase and quitting the Army have been linked in the minds of those weighing up their career options. If the link is broken, it seems more likely that people will want to stay.

Current Arrangements

Current schemes to promote service personnel home ownership include:

- Long Service Advance of Pay (LSAP) scheme which enables serving personnel with a minimum four years' service to a £8,500 interest-free loan or 182 days pay (whichever is smaller) towards the purchase of a house in the UK. The loan is then repaid over 10 years.
- Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) HomeBuy key worker schemes.
- English Partnerships First Time Buyers Initiative and other shared equity schemes.

However, the Public Accounts Committee recently provided evidence that the suggested that the schemes do not seem to be particularly popular in the Service community. For example, the number of completed DCLG HomeBuy purchases is 30.¹⁰⁶

6.4 Social Housing and Temporary Accommodation

We are pleased that the recent Housing and Regeneration Act has ended the injustice of previous social housing legislation in the way in which it discriminated against leaving service personnel because priority is given to those who can establish a local connection. We are also pleased to see that preferential access for injured ex-Service

personnel is also being improved. Nonetheless, we note the Royal British Legion's evidence presented to us which stated that more can be done through legislation and through local authorities to improve the access to social housing for Service leavers.

We also note the point made to us by the Royal British Legion about improving homeless ex-Service personnel access to temporary accommodation in England. They propose to bring English legislation (which places 'vulnerable' people with a Service history within the priority group) in line with Welsh legislation (which does not use the subjective term 'vulnerable').

6.5 Recommendations

- All Service accommodation should be brought up to an acceptable standard, as soon as practicable, using receipts from the sale of surplus defence estate
- A future Conservative Government should ensure that there is a single point of contact in each locality responsible for ensuring that maintenance and repair work to the defence estate is done.
- The Secretary of State for Defence should make available surplus married quarters accommodation to Service personnel.
- A future Conservative Government should look at ways in which it can help Service personnel with house purchase, including investigating ways to communicate more effectively the availability of existing schemes.
- A future Conservative Government should seek to look at ways to improve Service leavers' and homeless ex-Service personnel access to social housing, and temporary accommodation in England.

Part 7: Service families and children

7.1 The Impact of Service Life on Families

The Importance of Service Families

Nothing is more important to Service people than their family. However, Service life is not always conducive to family life.

- Marital and Relationship Problems and Breakdown.** There is considerable evidence to suggest that the current intensity of operations is having an impact on family life and, as a result on retention. The Army Families Survey of 2007 found that of those Army spouses who believe that operational deployment has changed their partner's behaviour, 64 per cent of officers' spouses and 68 per cent of soldiers' spouses said that the change in behaviour was having either a negative or very negative impact on their family.¹⁰⁷ This is reflected through the problems that Unit Welfare Officers have to deal with. As the Army Families' Federation stated, 'Unit Welfare Officers report spending a large proportion of their time on relationship issues, especially for young soldiers'.¹⁰⁸
- Welfare Provision.** Welfare provision, in addition to that provided by charities, is mainly delivered through Unit Welfare Officers, chaplains and padres. Information can be found through HIVE information centres. However, the Defence Select Committee has voiced concerns about the existing gaps in the service, stating that this is having 'a detrimental effect on the quality of welfare support provided to service personnel and their families'.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the Defence Select Committee criticised the delivery of welfare provision, stating that it failed to cater for the needs of individual personnel and families.¹¹⁰ This is alarming at a time when the pressure on families, as a result of current operations, has increased significantly.
- Finances.** Evidence from Service charities suggests that many Service families are having difficulties with the current cost of living. The hike in the real cost of living in recent months will make a bad situation worse. Whilst there are a series of allowances and measures in the Deployed Welfare Package; charities report that families' financial situations, particularly taking into account the demands of children, remain financially stretched.¹¹¹
- Careers.** We have heard that Service life can have a dire effect on the careers of non-service family members. According to the Army Families' Federation;

'Spouse employment is particularly challenged by turbulence. Careers are almost impossible to develop since opportunities are difficult to match in new locations (whilst the serving soldier continues a career progression).

Promotion opportunities within careers are limited if there is uncertainty about duration in one place and earning capacity is reduced'.¹¹²

- Social Isolation.** CGS's Briefing Team and Service charities report that the isolated position of many of our garrisons mean that some Service families find it extremely difficult to become part of the local community leading to a sense of social isolation. It seems likely that this will play a significant role in decisions to quit the Armed Forces for what is perceived as a more settled life in a fixed community.

7.2 Children and Education

Childcare

One key concern is the lack of pre-school childcare facilities for Service parents.

CGS's Briefing Team report last year stated that 'more needs to be done to provide pre-school childcare and After School Clubs in order to assist working wives and single parent servicewomen'.¹¹³ The report also highlighted remote barracks that lacked childcare provision. For example, the feedback from families in Wattisham stated: 'There is no childcare provision here at all. Colchester has it but we do not it seems highly unfair'.¹¹⁴ This links in with tales of social isolation cited in the previous section.

Whilst the Commission welcomes the general approach of the Command Paper to enable Service families' greater access to local facilities, the situation regarding families in garrisons which are more isolated will still need to be carefully monitored.

Education

Schooling for Service children is provided by one of the following;

- In the UK through the UK state education system.
- Abroad through the MoD run agency Service Children's Education (SCE).
- At boarding schools. There are two run by the MoD and there is access to Continuity Education Allowance that provides the greater part of independent boarding school fees.

The interim paper examined in some detail about the educational facing Service children generally as regards education. The key issues were:

- Insufficient Information.** Little is known about service children in the UK because their performance as a group has not been recorded on the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) in the past. Whilst we welcome the fact that

Service children will be enumerated from the beginning of this year, we have been unimpressed by the lack of interest previously shown by ministers at the DfES/DCSF towards the plight of schools with substantial numbers of service children.

- **Mobility.** Service children are moved frequently. The Army Families Federation states that whilst up to 11 per cent of civilians in the UK move house in a year (2 per cent move outside their local authority area), up to 40 per cent of Army families move every 12 months and many move from overseas.¹¹⁵ The Commission has obtained new data on the mobility rates of SCE schools (percentage of students on the school roll leaving at 'non-standard' times). Some of the schools most affected are featured below:

Table 22: Mobility Rates of Service Children's Education (SCE) Schools

School	Percentage
<i>Primary and Middle</i>	
Ayios Nikolaos School	103
Hornbill School	85
Montgomery School	79
Mount Pleasant School	184
Mountbatten School	99
Sir John Mogg School	100
<i>Secondary</i>	
Prince Rupert School	73
St. John's School	62

Source: *Hansard*, 24 June 2008, Col. 177WA.

As indicated in our interim report, we must bear in mind the Ofsted report which stated that 'almost all schools with mobility above 15 per cent have average GCSE scores below the national average'.¹¹⁶

Box 4 – Mobility Indexes

In terms of how the statistics should be interpreted, Veterans' Minister Derek Twigg states, 'the Mobility Index figures used by SCE are based on the Dobson-Henthorn formula which calculates mobility percentages based on the overall impact to the school roll by children either arriving or leaving each school at a non-standard time, i.e. prior to the normal school leaving age. This can on first sight cause some confusion, e.g. if a School roll is 100 and 50 children leave and are replaced by a different 50 children then the Index would show a percentage score of 100'.¹¹⁷

- **Impact on Performance.** Evidence for Year 6 pupils from Wiltshire County Council highlighted a 'consistent gap' between the performance of all children and children from Forces' families. For example, 81 per cent of all Wiltshire children achieved a level 4 in English, whereas only 74.5 per cent of children from Forces' families achieved the same level.¹¹⁸
- **Different Curricula and Systems.** A key consequence of mobility is the fact that Service children have to keep adjusting to different curricula, syllabuses, and, ultimately when considering devolution, different educational systems. This can potentially lead to a Service child not receiving a fully rounded or complete education. A recent Army Families' Federation survey found that repeating subjects such as 'doing the Romans four times' was a particular concern.¹¹⁹

Education in the UK

Our interim report devoted considerable attention to the UK's educational system. It noted in particular the neglect experienced by schools with high proportions of Service children by the Department for Children, Schools, and Families. It noted the concerns of the State Schools Working Group (SCISS) and its proposal that LEA funding formulae should recognise the extra challenges that service children may pose in terms of providing educational support. The Government has recently announced its intention to review the funding formula.¹²⁰

We suggest the Conservative Party proposal to offer pupil premiums for disadvantaged children should be used as a vehicle for helping to remove the educational disadvantage suffered by Service children.¹²¹

Service Children's Education Schools

SCE educates 13,000 children in 44 schools. 36 are primary schools, 2 are middle schools and 6 are secondary schools. They are situated throughout the world including Germany, Cyprus, and Belize.¹²²

Ofsted inspections and the Defence Select Committee report of 2006 praised the quality of SCE schools. However, there were a few concerns;

- **School Advisory Committees.** There were concerns over the lack of powers of SCE School Advisory Committees compared with governing bodies in UK schools. Whilst some progress has been made, the Government argued against implementing a recommendation from the Defence Select Committee to allow School Advisory Committees to appoint and dismiss head teachers.¹²³
- **DCSF Co-ordination.** Concerns were expressed that some DCSF initiatives were either not being delivered or were delivered later in SCE Schools.¹²⁴

Boarding Schools

- It is estimated that around 11,000 service children are educated in boarding schools, two of which are run by the MoD. Boarding schools are a favoured option among many Service parents because they offer stability and undoubtedly yield a benefit in terms of the quality of educational provision.
- Service personnel are entitled to the 'Continuity of Education Allowance' (CEA) to help provide continuity of education for a child. However, there is a smaller up-take from the lower ranks. More should be done to establish the reasons for this other than the fact that they tend to be younger and therefore less likely to have children of school age.¹²⁵

Emotional Support and Deployment

As noted, the most stressful time for any child is when their parent goes away on active service. However, evidence from the Army Families' Federation seems to suggest that provision in UK schools is varied.

'Service schools provide support for families but many Army sons and daughters go to schools where there is no understanding of the impact dangerous deployments have on family life. The unpopularity of the Iraq deployment is felt by children in schools where staff do not sympathise with the present UK involvement in the conflict'.¹²⁶

We were disappointed to read this since we expect teaching professionals to be capable of leaving politics outside the classroom.

7.3 Recommendations

- The Ministry of Defence should seek to fill any existing gaps in the current Unit Welfare Officer system for both the Regular and Reserve Forces.
- A future Conservative Government should commission a study of the impact of Service life on children's education in the UK.
- The concept of a pupil premium outlined in the Conservative Party Green Paper, *Raising the Bar, Closing the Gap*, to help school children from disadvantaged backgrounds should be adapted to reflect the needs of service children.
- As part of the above recommendation, thought should be given to ensuring that there is sufficient psychological support given to children when their parent is away on deployment, especially for reservists whose parents are not based together but are spread out all over the country. Commanding Officers or unit representatives should be encouraged to visit head teachers to ask them to speak to staff and parents if possible, so that children of absent parents can be better supported and cared for.
- The quality of the overwhelming majority of Service Children's Education Schools (SCE) is very good. Therefore, we believe that these schools deserve greater freedom to run their own affairs. A future Conservative Government should look at the scope for increasing the powers of Schools Advisory Committees further, in particular allowing them to appoint and dismiss head teachers.

Part 8: Veterans

8.1 The Recognition of Veterans

Figures and Estimates for the Ex-Service Community

The interim paper noted that we have very little knowledge of the particular concerns of veterans as a social group. No official statistics are kept showing how many ex-Service people there are, or how many people are deemed to be veterans according to the Government's definition (**Box 5**).

Box 5 – The UK Definition of a 'Veteran'

'A veteran is anyone who has served in HM Armed Forces at any time, irrespective of length of service (including National Servicemen and Reservists)'.

Source: Ministry of Defence Website

We commend the work of the University of York and the King's Centre for Military Health. And we believe the comments made in the King's Study on veterans in 2003 about the need for more co-ordinated research on veterans' issues are still very relevant today.¹²⁷

The Royal British Legion has also carried out work on the profile of the veterans' community and how this will look in future.

In terms of the current profile, the RBL estimates that:

- The ex-Service community (including dependants) numbers 10.5 million, equivalent to 18 per cent of the UK population.¹²⁸
- The report also stated that there are 4.8 million ex-service veterans.¹²⁹

In 2020, the profile will be slightly different.

- The total size of the ex-Service community is forecast to decline from 10.17 million people in 2005 to 7.55 million people in 2020.
- The forecast 5.9 million ex-Service community adults in 2020 will include of 3.1 million ex-Service veterans and 2.8 adult dependents.
- The 85 + age group will increase from 290,000 in 2005 to 920,000 in 2020 (National Service people reaching old age when life expectancy is increasing).¹³⁰

8.2 Veterans' Day

Previous Veterans' Days

The first Veterans' Day in June 2006 was deemed to be a success and it has become an annual event held on 27 June, although in 2007 Veterans, Day was eclipsed by Tony Blair's resignation. The Commission has given Veterans' Day its support but we believe it remains a concept that has yet to reach its potential.

At its inception Gordon Brown promised that there would be 'ceremonies in every constituency and locality of the country to mark National Veterans' Day, where we present veterans with medals at local ceremonies'.¹³¹

Whilst there has been much good work locally, the Commission believes that the first two Veterans' Days did not receive sufficient national prominence. In addition, some veterans we heard from said they had difficulties in attending an event due to travel difficulties or the lack of anything going on in a particular locality. They expressed a desire to hold more local events in addition to the main national event.

Veterans' Day 2008

Did the Veterans' Day in 2008 fare any better?

- **Local Impact.** On a positive note, there was a considerable amount of regional news coverage and local events on Veterans' Day. There were many badge-giving ceremonies and other events. Local authorities also showed their appreciation of veterans through various policy announcements.

For example, the Mayor of London Boris Johnson announced that all people in London who receive a payment under the War Pension Scheme and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme would be entitled to free travel.¹³² This policy and the subsequent extension of it nationwide are very welcome developments. The event at Trafalgar Square was also very useful in catching the attention of the local media.

- **National Impact.** Whilst the main national events in Blackpool were very successful, the Government did not succeed in creating greater national awareness of veterans and raising the profile of the day. The media focus was inevitably on the first anniversary of Gordon Brown becoming Prime Minister.

An Armed Forces and Veterans Day?

The National Recognition Study proposes strengthening Veterans' Day to form an Armed Forces and Veterans' Day. The Commission agrees with this, although we note that merely changing the name is no substitute for coming up with some practical measures to ensure that Veterans' Day is given a higher profile.

8.3 Resettlement

The Resettlement Package

Service personnel's access to resettlement services is depends on length of service. The resettlement package consists of a series of briefings, workshops and support services on areas including:

- Job interviews and CVs.
- Careers and business.
- Housing.
- Pensions.

The key problems highlighted by our investigation and by the National Audit Office include:

- **Early Service Leavers.** Whilst we acknowledge that the provision for experienced Service leavers is generally very good, improvements still need to be made for early Service leavers. The Public Accounts Committee recently commented that, 'early Service leavers are most vulnerable to exclusion, yet the majority of the Department's resettlement support is directed at those with longer Service histories'.¹³³ Whilst we welcome the provisions in the MoD Command Paper to give Service personnel who have served for six years or more free further and higher education, there is no strategy for early Service leavers. This is rather odd since these are the most vulnerable.
- **Service Provision.** Particular concern has been expressed about first-line services (for a definition, see **Box 6**). This is especially important as early service leavers are very dependent on them. In the Army and in mobile units, first-line services are provided by non-specialist military staff, with their resettlement duties being around 10 – 20 per cent of their job. There is a high turnover of such staff and they are also deployable. Subsequently, this has led to delays in the processing of paperwork. A NAO survey of second-line staff showed that 65 per cent felt that paperwork at the first line was subjected to delays, with 45 per cent reported that paperwork was regularly lost at the first-line.¹³⁴

Box 6 – Resettlement Service Structure

The resettlement service is provided in three tiers.

First Line. Information and administrative support provided by Resettlement Information staff in the Army, Navy, and RAF.

Second Line. Advice and guidance provided by resettlement advisers in the Army, Navy, and RAF. In the Army, the same adviser is also responsible for individual education.

Third Line. Access to services provided centrally by the Career Transition Partnership which is contracted out to Right Management. These provide either the Full Resettlement Programme or the Employment Support Programme.

- **The Impact of Overstretch on Preparation Time.** We share the concerns of the National Audit Office and the

Public Accounts Committee that due to operational and other pressures, Service personnel do not get sufficient time to take advantage of the services available to them.¹³⁵

- **Grants.** A common complaint is that the grants received are insufficient, particularly money for training and travel grants. The Government has promised to increase the Individual Resettlement Training Costs which pays for external training to £1,018, but we have not had official confirmation of its implementation.¹³⁶

Troops to Teachers

There is considerable scope to improve the link between the Armed Forces, schools and society by employing ex-Service personnel as teachers. To facilitate this, we have welcomed the entitlement of personnel to free further and higher education, enabling Service leavers to complete a university degree.

Our interim report noted the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) report, *Troops to Teachers*. This looked into an American programme (T3) in which retiring service personnel are retrained as teachers to work in schools in challenging inner-city areas and observed the success of the scheme.¹³⁷

The new education provisions for Service leavers and the work already carried out by the charity Skill Force mean that the building blocks should be in place for a similar scheme in the UK. Skill Force has programmes running in 26 local authorities.¹³⁸ The Commission believes that Government should work with the voluntary sector to ensure that the largest number of local authorities possible benefit from the involvement of former Service personnel. But we also recognise that given the time it will take for ex-personnel to get trained and the initially small numbers available, any scheme would have to be targeted in order to deliver the anticipated benefits quickly.

We are attracted to the CPS's concept of basic skills tutors.¹³⁹ The scope for those who do not qualify for the further and higher education allowances to become tutors should be explored.

8.4 Social Exclusion and Welfare

Unemployment

A survey conducted by the NAO of personnel who had left the Armed Forces prior to October 2007 showed 6 per cent of those asked were unemployed.¹⁴⁰ The NAO survey also revealed that unemployment particularly affects early Service leavers, as 16 per cent of this group was unemployed and looking for work.¹⁴¹ Whilst early Service leavers are not entitled to the full range of support offered by the Career Transition Partnership, first line staff are entitled to refer vulnerable cases to the CTP. However, there

has been very little evidence of this happening.¹⁴²

Debt

In the NAO survey published in 2007, 11 per cent of Service leavers admitted they had problems with debt either before they left the services or at the point of leaving. The average debt at this point was £8,645. The percentage rose to 13 per cent after leaving the Services, and at this point the average debt was £10,219.¹⁴³ This might have something to do with the fact that the financial briefings focus more on pensions.

Homelessness

A report into homeless veterans in London was carried out by the University of York in 2008. The report concluded that:

- An estimated 6 per cent of London's current non-statutory ('single') population has served in the Armed Forces. This equates to 1,100 people.¹⁴⁴
- Although the vulnerability and needs of ex-Service homeless people and other homeless people are similar, the study reported that a larger proportion of the ex-Service homeless people had alcohol, physical or mental health problems.
- There is a lack of awareness of the various ex-Service provisions, particularly among older veterans. Whilst we outline some of the concerns about the current resettlement package, we acknowledge that many older veterans do not have access to any and are therefore less prepared for civilian life. Many of the veterans were unaware of and had not approached the various ex-Service Action Group on Homelessness (ESAG) initiatives such as those provided by Veterans Aid and Project Compass. The report noted confusion about the services provided by welfare charities and whether they qualified to use them.¹⁴⁵

Relationship Breakdown

A key cause of homelessness identified in the University of York report was relationship breakdown after service. It stated that the divorce rate is higher among ex-Service personnel than the rest of the population.¹⁴⁶

Furthermore, the University of York report noted that interviewees often attributed the breakdown of their relationship to strain placed on their marriage after Service life, 'arising from wives' resentment of their prolonged absences or frequent moves due to redeployment for example – and/or that their divorce was the eventual outcome of difficulty adjusting to living as a family unit "24/7".¹⁴⁷

Older Veterans

We also note the Royal British Legion's new campaign

'Back to Rationing?' and its work in highlighting pensioner poverty. The campaign has only just been launched and so we would recommend that there should be further discussion between the Conservative Party and the Legion about this issue.

8.5 Compensation and Pensions

Compensation

• **The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS).**

The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme was introduced in 2005. The scheme consists of a tax-free lump sum payment which is paid according to a 15-level tariff system and with a guaranteed income payment for the first 11 tariffs. But since its introduction, it has taken attracted criticism and undergone some minor changes.

The Government initiated two reviews of the scheme. These have been driven by reports of inadequate payments to seriously injured people, notably the case of Lance Corporal Ben Parkinson who received a lump sum payment of £152,150 after sustaining serious multiple injuries in an explosion in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁸ In addition, apparent discrepancies with civilian cases and awards have also fuelled concern.

The latest review increased maximum lump sum payment from £285,000 to £570,000. Whilst the Commission welcomes any improvement, we believe that inequities are still likely to arise from the formulaic way in which compensation is calculated - which treats the injured as a sum of their injuries rather than as a whole person. The Government's reviews have been piecemeal affairs conducted 'on the hoof' in response to negative press coverage rather than genuine attempts to address the problems of the scheme as a whole.

Some of the remaining problems of the current scheme have been highlighted by the Royal British Legion. They include:

A change in the standard of proof from 'reasonable doubt' to a more civilian term 'balance of probabilities'.

A change in the onus for proving that the injury was caused through Service from the Government to the claimant.

A change in the time limit on claims to five years from the date that medical treatment was first sought. The limit to claim for a condition which has been deteriorating is 10 years.

These changes seem mean-minded and will act against the interests of the injured. The actual impact on successful claims is currently unknown as Parliamentary

answers have not provided the reasons for the rejection of claims. However, the Royal British Legion has provided a series of anecdotal cases that were accepted under the War Pension Scheme but were rejected under the AFCS.¹⁴⁹

In addition, we also note that the Government is reviewing the compensation payments of other public sector workers. In August 2008, the Government published its consultation paper for police injury compensation.¹⁵⁰ We believe that there is a case for conducting comparisons between Armed Forces and other public sector compensation systems to ensure fairness.

- **War Pensions and Pensions Appeal Tribunals (PAT).**

The PAT is the final resort for former Service personnel denied a war pension by the MoD. The Ministry of Justice is proposing to make changes to it. The Government is planning to streamline public tribunals and courts into a new single entity, the Social Entitlement Chamber. However, this has been publicly criticized by a number of key people and charities, as many fear that the military expertise of the Pensions Appeal Tribunal will be diluted or lost.¹⁵¹

Armed Forces Pensions

Between 1975 to 2005 Service Leavers received their pensions through the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 75 (AFPS 75). The Government brought in a new scheme Armed Forces Pension Scheme in 2005 (AFPS 05). Veterans who were using the AFPS 75 scheme prior to the introduction of AFPS 05 were given an opportunity to change schemes when it was introduced.

The Forces Pension Society (and other charities) has campaigned relentlessly to bring about the necessary changes to Forces pension schemes over the years. It continues to highlight the remaining inconsistencies between the two schemes and pre-1975 arrangements. We note the FPS' concern for war widows.¹⁵²

The Government has rejected the proposals of the Forces Pension Society due to their retrospection rule regarding pensions in the public sector. However, the FPS points out that this has not prevented some retrospective changes in the past. We believe that some further research is needed although we do appreciate the likely cost of retrospective changes to pension schemes.

8.6 The Awarding of Medals

The Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals (known as the HD Committee) makes recommendations to the Sovereign on the award to medals. This is meant to be an arms-length body although its independence of government has recently been disputed in

debate in the Commons.

There are a substantial number of claims for medals, mainly campaign medals, and concerns over the lack of official endorsement to wear others. Many veterans have written to us about their particular campaign. Notably, there are campaigns for a Bomber Command medal, a medal for those injured on operations to match the American 'Purple Heart', a medal recognising National Service, and a National Defence medal as some veterans feel that the Veterans' Badge is inadequate.

Many veterans believe that the rules governing the HD Committee have been inconsistently applied in recent years.

We believe that there is a good case for looking again at the rules governing the awarding of medals, the merits of particular claims and the structure of the HD Committee itself.

8.7 Recommendations

- A future Conservative Government should define more closely the veteran population to inform future policy. One way in which this could be done is to ask respondents in the next National Census whether they are serving in the military or have served.
- An independent advisory service for Service personnel and leavers should be created to foster financial literacy and competence, and provide basic skills in budgeting, small business management and self employment. The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales has told us of its interest in setting up such a service and we hope that further discussion will enable the concept to be developed further.
- In addition to the above recommendation, a future Conservative Government should explore with the relevant charities the possibility of a dedicated service for Service families that experience difficulty around the time of leaving the Armed Forces.
- A future Conservative Government should assist the voluntary sector in facilitating the implementation of the 'Troops to Teachers' scheme.
- A future Conservative Government should pilot 'recruitment and veterans offices' to supplement the work of charities. The system would involve using existing recruitment offices and staff to provide an additional advice service for veterans. These 'alpha and omega' centres will provide a local community link at the beginning and end of service life.
- When the relevant information is accessible, further work needs to be carried out on the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme to ensure its formulaic

methodology is not disadvantaging the seriously injured and to better reflect compensation available in civilian life. In addition, an assessment of the apparently mean-minded changes in the standard of proof or time limit needs to be made to assess the impact on individual claimants.

- A further review of the Armed Forces Compensation system should be conducted with the aim of evaluating the fairness of the scheme in comparison to other public sector compensation systems.
- The expertise of the Pensions Appeal Tribunal must be retained during any attempt to create a Social Entitlement Chamber.
- Further work needs to be carried out into the feasibility of implementing the recommendations of Armed Forces pension groups.
- There should be an investigation into the causes of the apparently high proportion of the prison population that has served in the Armed Forces to inform preventative strategies and rehabilitation.
- A future Conservative Government should review the structure, membership and terms of reference of the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals (HD Committee). The reconstituted HD Committee should then review outstanding claims that will 'draw a line in the sand'.

Part 9: Bereaved Families

9.1 Inquests

- **Background.** Since the Court of Appeal ruling in the 1980s concerning the death of Helen Smith, a coroner must investigate an unnatural or suspicious death relating to every body repatriated into his or her area where the death occurred outside England and Wales. This means that the deaths of Service personnel abroad have been subject to a coroners' inquest.¹⁵³
- **Backlog.** There continues to be a considerable backlog of cases waiting to be heard. The current data indicates that there are around 80 cases outstanding, a small reduction from the number announced in April.¹⁵⁴ Behind each case file is a grieving family anxious to know the circumstances surrounding the loss of a loved one.
- **Legal Representation.** Our interim paper focused on the unfairness that existed in terms of access to legal representation by the MoD and the inability of families to gain state funded legal representation. The MoD has spent over £1 million since 2003 on legal representation at inquests, but the families are not entitled to publicly funded lawyers.¹⁵⁵ This is despite the fact that Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth insisted that inquests are 'non-adversarial, fact-finding proceedings'.¹⁵⁶

9.2 Recommendations

- The unequal playing field that permits the MoD to have taxpayer-funded legal representation but denies it to families must cease. The MoD should desist from hiring lawyers at an inquest.
- The Commission would support the development within the coroners system of practitioners with experience of, or interest in, military cases. The Oxfordshire and Wiltshire coroners' experience forms a good basis from which expertise could be harnessed.
- An independent advisory service along the lines of INQUEST specifically for bereaved families at military inquests should be considered.

Part 10: Reallocation of resources

10.1 Government Waste Reduction

It is the Commission's belief that our recommendations can be funded using the current MoD budget with the assistance of proceeds of waste reduction. We suggest:

- **MoD Estate.** The MoD estate contains 240,000 hectares (1 per cent of the UK mainland), of which the built estate consists of approximately 80,000 hectares.¹⁵⁷ Whilst we appreciate that the MoD has already conducted an appraisal of its estate needs, the scale of the holding revealed by the National Asset Register suggests that further receipts may be achievable to improve the quality of service accommodation.¹⁵⁸
- **Ministry of Defence Management.** We believe that the organisation of the Ministry of Defence should be examined to see whether its structure is wholly appropriate for the challenges of today. There should be a full investigation into claims by analysts that the MoD is top-heavy.
- **Consultancy Contracts.** Civil servants are employed to manage, not to offload, their work onto expensive management consultants. We find the following profligacy unacceptable:

Table 23: Cost of MoD External Consultancies since 1997

	£ million
1997-8	148
1998-9	178
1999-2000	207
2000-1	372
2001-2	404
2002-3	263
2003-4	263
2004-5	211
2005-6	225
2006-7	129

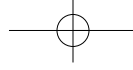
Source: House of Commons Library

- **Artwork.** Former Chief of the General Staff General Sir Mike Jackson's autobiography is rather revealing about MoD civil servant priorities. He said 'civil servants preferred to spend on abstract art money which might otherwise have directly benefited soldiers and their families. It may seem a small point, but to me it was so indicative of the cultural divide in the MoD'.¹⁵⁹ To take an example, £232,000 (excluding VAT) was spent on purchasing works of art in 2004-5.¹⁶⁰

10.2 Recommendations

Where expenditure is incurred resulting from the recommendations of the previous sections, it should be possible to draw upon savings from the areas below.

- A review into the defence estate should be conducted. Receipts from asset sales arising from the review should be used to accelerate the accommodation refurbishment programme.
- There should be a comprehensive review of the administrative efficiency and effectiveness of the Ministry of Defence with a view to ensuring that decision-making and business processes match best practice in organisations of comparable size and complexity.
- There should be a moratorium on the use of external consultants.



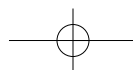
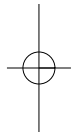
Annex: Consultation

Formal Consultation

In addition to interested former defence chiefs, politicians, and peers, the Commission has contacted a wide range of Service organisations, Service charities, academics, think-tanks, faith groups, and interested individuals and experts. We have also consulted with business and industry.

Public Consultation

The Commission has also consulted the public through either post or e-mail submissions via its website.



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