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# **Sustaining NATO Force Generation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Rebuilding Alliance Reserve Forces Post-Mission**

by Howard Coombs  
December 2019

# POLICY PAPER

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## **SUSTAINING NATO FORCE GENERATION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: REBUILDING ALLIANCE RESERVE FORCES POST-MISSION**

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## ► Executive Summary

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*In partnership with New Zealand, Canada has examined the post-mission phase of reserve operational employment. This work builds on the findings of the 2016 Dutch report, Lessons Learned from Commitments of Reservists in Operations (LLCRO), which provided an overview of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) ability for the international deployment of reservists, and the follow-on Canadian-led project that took place in 2018 and looked at the pre-deployment aspects of operations. Through both targeted research and national questionnaires, Canada and New Zealand have collected, analyzed and communicated key observations and lessons learned from NATO National Reserve Forces Committee (NRFC) member and partner nations to address the institutional support and structures necessary for successful post-mission reintegration, retention and re-engagement. Australia, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States provided responses to the questionnaires. Previous questionnaires from the earlier LLCRO projects and outside research provided breadth and depth to this study. The resulting examination is a comparative analysis of the discursive triad of military, family and employer support that underpins the successful return of NATO reservists after operations.*

### **Background**

In June 2016, the Netherlands authored the study “Lessons Learned from Commitments of Reservists in Operations” (LLCRO). This work was conducted on behalf of the National Reserve Forces Committee (NRFC) and was a broad examination of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) capacity for the international deployment of reservists. The report was prompted by NATO perspectives of increasing great power competition, extremism and population migration leading to a worsening worldwide security situation. This perception forced the Alliance to review and update its strategic objectives and policies. Following that, NATO operational contingency planning generated force-planning scenarios that required significant forces to sustain NATO-generated crisis response formations. These forces included reserve elements from NATO troop-contributing countries. From this, Canada proposed the next step to continue advancing the Netherlands-led LLCRO study, which was to specify the shared practices and factors that occur prior to deployment and their impact upon the force generation of NATO reserve forces. Work on this phase of the LLCRO project commenced in July 2017 with the distribution of questionnaires seeking information on the military, family and employer support structures NATO nations use to facilitate their reservists’ operational deployment. This effort ended in July 2018 with



promulgation of the Canadian-organized “Enabling NATO for 21st Century Operations: Fielding Agile, Responsive and Innovative Reserve Forces.”<sup>1</sup>

This report reinforced previous work indicating that agile, responsive and innovative reserve forces provide capabilities that are unavailable and/or economical to maintain in active duty forces. Reservists have complementary skills related to their civilian employment which can act as a bridge to evolving technology and competences. They provide augmentation, reinforcement, replacement and rotation for active-duty forces, as well as act as an expansion base for mobilization.<sup>2</sup>

National approaches to military readiness, family and employer support do not exist isolated from each other. They form a complex discursive package that influences all parties. A common thread in this relational dialogue is the need for consistent and informed communication among national and military authorities, the reservists, their families and employers. Along with that, early warning of military activities and, when possible, predictive deployment schedules were vitally important. While seemingly intuitive, all nations reinforced these points and they must be heeded.

Many contributors to “Enabling NATO for 21st Century Operations” noted the applicability of reservists to provide specialists on short notice, as well as the existence of national reserve forces that were suitable for immediate military requirements. In general, nations observed that reserve forces are best used for long-term commitments. This predictability will allow for pre-deployment training that enhances military performance and outcomes. Notification of deployment can be given well in advance, preferably at least three to six months prior to departure. This allows reservists to deal with personal readiness issues including medical, dental and physical fitness levels. Of note, a deliberate and structured preparation for operations reduces the mental stress associated with a perceived lack of readiness.

For immediate use of reserve forces, some degree of annual training is required to maintain military readiness. Tiered reserve force structures – dividing reserves into high-readiness to low-readiness organizations – are one way of focusing readiness efforts. High-readiness reserve forces receive the necessary training needed for immediate usage, while lower tiered forces receive only the training necessary to meet those lower levels of readiness. E-learning may assist with preparing reservists in time-constrained pre-deployment cycles. Barring that, an alternative is to use reservists for missions and tasks in which they possess current civilian skills. From this, one could argue that the creation of reserve units based on analogous civilian skills and recruiting from those professions will not only increase readiness but will provide focused capabilities to military forces. For example, the expanding field of cyber-defence could benefit from the involvement of reservists whose civilian professions are in the information technology sector. Higher degrees of immediate readiness, as well as equipment readiness, can be created through

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<sup>1</sup> See NATO, NRFC, Netherlands, “Lessons Learned from Commitments of Reservists in Operations,” (June 6, 2016); and see also, NATO, NRFC, “Lessons Learned from Deploying Reservists on Operations,” (LLCRO) project, and “Enabling NATO for 21st Century Operations: Fielding Agile, Responsive and Innovative Reserve Forces,” (Brussels: NATO headquarters, July 2018). Available at [https://www.cgai.ca/enabling\\_nato\\_for\\_21st\\_century\\_operations\\_fielding\\_agile\\_responsive\\_and\\_innovative\\_reserve\\_forces](https://www.cgai.ca/enabling_nato_for_21st_century_operations_fielding_agile_responsive_and_innovative_reserve_forces)

<sup>2</sup> Notes to slide 10, NATO, NRFC, “NRFC Briefing – Annex I to NRFC SOP,” (March 12, 2015).



integrated active-duty and reserve units, or a higher number of active-duty or full-time personnel in reserve units to deal with routine tasks and allow reservists to focus on training. Reservists who are preparing for operations should receive access to mandatory personal equipment prior to deployment.

As part of this pre-deployment effort, the provision of timely and accurate information concerning reserve activities, along with military and support organizations' points of contact, is critical to supporting reservists' families. Facilitating communication between reserve families and their absent members mitigates the impact of absences on family relationships. The method by which national direction determines how family support is dealt with is, in part, determined by the intensity of operations. The larger the reserve force commitment and the higher its operational tempo, the more likely an integrated approach with centralized co-ordination and decentralized execution will be necessary. The United States provides an example of this latter circumstance.

A major message reserve forces should reinforce with employers is that employees who are reservists bring many benefits to a company. Intangible benefits are the positive personal qualities and strong work ethic that reservists bring to their civilian places of employment, and more tangibly, the skills that the military teaches them and reinforces, from leadership to communications. This link between civilian and military employer is even more beneficial to both sides when military and civilian employment demand the same skills. These ideas must be consistently reinforced with employers and partnerships to ensure employer support for reserve activities.

Public recognition of employer support can prove a powerful incentive for employers to support reserve force employees and many methods of outreach from local to national can be used. Timely warning, predictability of deployment cycles and consistent communications are invaluable in maintaining employer support. Legal frameworks protecting reservists and compensation packages vary widely among Alliance members and partners, depending on differing national perspectives. Therefore, the decision to use legislation, and the degree of such regulation, to support reserve force employees is tailored to the circumstances of individual contributing states.

Multinational corporations that provide support to reserve employees in one country can be approached to give similar support in nations where they have offices but no similar agreement. By the same token, the policies of multinational corporations that benefit national reservists in one location can be requested for reservists of another country where a reserve force support agreement exists, but the same benefits do not.

The NRFC and the Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers, more commonly known as the Confédération Interalliée des Officiers de Réserve (CIOR), are both connected, collaborative, forward-thinking bodies that are committed to strengthening the capability and usability of Alliance reserve forces. Their relationship needs to be re-examined to ensure that their efforts are maximized, co-ordinated and mutually supporting. Along with that, the NRFC, CIOR, the Interallied Confederation of Medical Reserve Officers (CIOMR), the Interallied Confederation of Non-commissioned Officers (CISOR) and the International Conference on Employer Support to



Reserves (ICESR) should be looked at with a view to updating their connection with the NRFC. It may be timely to conduct a review of the key documents, such as “MC 0441/2 NATO Framework Policy on Reserves” (Jan. 19, 2012), “MC 0392/1 MC Directive for the National Reserve Forces Committee (NRFC)” (July 27, 2012), and “MC 0248/2 The Relationship between NATO and the Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers (CIOR)” (July 27, 2012).<sup>3</sup>

“Enabling NATO for 21st Century Operations” examined the institutional support and structures required to set the conditions for the force generation and successful deployment of capable, multi-purpose, integrated reserve forces. It found that while there were significant similarities between countries’ practices and the way they are implemented, there were also many differences. Despite this, it can be argued there are many paths to the same destination and it is contingent upon NATO to understand the commonalities and differences between these national approaches to maximize force generation for 21st century Alliance operations.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Since this recommendation, an updated Memorandum of Understanding between the NRFC and CIOR was signed Jan. 30, 2019 at NATO HQ Brussels. At the same time, overarching NATO policy documents still need review. See the website for the Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers/Confédération Interalliée des Officiers de Réserve at <http://cior.net/cior-and-nrfc-renew-memorandum-of-understanding/>; accessed May 31, 2019, n.p.; Enclosure to NATO, North Atlantic Military Committee, Secretary General, “Military Decision on MC 441/2 NATO Framework Policy on Reserves,” (Jan. 19, 2012); Enclosure to NATO, North Atlantic MC, Secretary General, “Final Decision on MC 0392/1 MC Directive for the National Reserve Forces Committee (NRFC),” (July 27, 2012); and, also Enclosure to NATO, North Atlantic MC, Secretary General, “Final Decision on MC 0248/2 The Relationship between NATO and the Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers (CIOR),” (July 27, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> The “Background” section was derived from NATO, NRFC, NRFC “Lessons Learned from Deploying Reservists ...,” and “Enabling NATO for 21st Century Operations ...” 2-4 and 17-19.



*The United States has increased its military presence in Europe with more troops, more equipment and more exercises. European Allies are raising the readiness of their forces, improving their equipment and making more contributions to our operations and missions.<sup>5</sup>*

– North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

**A**s described in the Secretary General’s Annual Report 2018, there is an urgent need for agile NATO forces to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. These trials were evidenced through events like Russia’s military engagement in Eastern Ukraine, increasing Chinese hard power projection capabilities, the conflict created by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), ongoing terrorism, and the large-scale movement of displaced populations desperate to find a better life. These occurrences, among others, resulted in a continuing commitment to enhance security for Alliance members through strong deterrence and defence of the North Atlantic region, as well as fighting terrorism and supporting stability in other regions. All of this created the requirement for readily deployable NATO forces that could be maintained and sustained.<sup>6</sup> The Secretary General’s Annual Report 2018 also indicated that the complexity of the regional and international security environment continues undiminished, as does the ongoing requirement for Alliance troop contributions. Consequently, NATO reserve forces’ ability to force-generate must be prevented from degrading. Understanding and implementing effective post-mission practices for reservists will contribute to this goal by creating conditions for the successful rebuilding of NATO reserve forces post-mission.<sup>7</sup>

In the same manner as previous reports, this post-mission examination of reserve service looks at the military, family and employer support that various NRFC members and partners provide to reservists. The idea that these three factors are critical in assisting reservists to continue fulfilling their military obligations was clearly discernible in the 2012 NATO policy document “MC 441/2 – North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Framework Policy on Reserves”. At that time, the document laid out that many Alliance members were diminishing the size of their full-time forces, while increasing their reliance upon part-time forces.<sup>8</sup> While national policy and socioeconomic factors were indicated as affecting the availability of NATO reserves, the idea of family, community and employer was also emphasized.<sup>9</sup> In a similar vein, since 2012 the analysis of the interconnections between the military, family and employer support to reserve service has been used to assess ways to strengthen NATO reserve forces.

<sup>5</sup> NATO, Secretary General, “The Secretary General’s Annual Report, 2018,” (March 14, 2019), 6. Available at [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_publications/20190315\\_sgar2018-en.pdf#](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20190315_sgar2018-en.pdf#), accessed May 28, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> NATO, Secretary General, “The Secretary General’s Annual Report, 2017,” (March 15, 2018), 56. Available at [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_152797.htm#](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_152797.htm#), accessed May 18, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> For an American perspective on enhancing reserve deployment over time, see Joseph Adams et al., “Sharing the Burden and Risk: An Operational Assessment of the Reserve Components in Operation Iraqi Freedom,” (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, October 2016); and see also Brett Korade, “Guard and Reserve Operational Support for Iraq and Afghanistan,” (Washington, DC: Reserve Officers Association, Aug. 1, 2017).

<sup>8</sup> For discussion of increasing full-time capability with part-time forces, refer to Guillaume Lasconjarias, “NATO Defence College Research Paper 99 – Send the Reserve! New Ways to Support NATO through Reserve Forces,” (Rome: NATO Defence College, November 2013), 2. Available at <http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=604>, accessed Jan. 15, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Enclosure to NATO, North Atlantic Military Committee, Secretary General, “Military Decision on MC 441/2 ...” paras. 3, 4.



The three aspects of support – military, family and employer – are looked at to identify effective practices used to assist reservists during post-mission. Militarily, the manner in which reservists are administered and supported is examined with a view to identifying effective practices. The methods employed to generate positive family support to reserve service after the homecoming are scrutinized. Finally, the existing programs used to facilitate employer support after a reservist returns to work are underscored through this multinational examination of the post-mission phase of reserve force employment.

## **Military**

*Findings from Canada and its allies have shown that a substantial minority of personnel with a past deployment to the conflicts in Southwest Asia have mental health problems (MHP), many apparently related to their deployment. The occurrence of MHP among personnel has important implications for military organisations; they are a leading cause of impaired productivity, absenteeism and turnover, and mental health care represents a large and growing proportion of health services delivered by military organisations.*<sup>10</sup>

– David Boulos and Deniz Fikretoglu

Boulos and Fikretoglu go on to state that there have been few studies of reserve force post-deployment mental health injuries, but that those which have been conducted in the U.K. and the U.S. suggest that reserve force members may have a greater incidence of mental health problems after particularly difficult deployments.<sup>11</sup> Despite this, most national returns also observed that separate statistics for their reserve forces did not exist or that there was no indication that a different level of psychological injuries had been determined post-mission for reserve forces.<sup>12</sup> In general, most nations indicated that military, veterans' organizations, national medical systems or some combination of these provided post-mission mental health services.

Interestingly, only a select handful of countries engage the military, family and employer in addressing post-mission mental health issues. Estonia, for example, indicated that the Estonian Defence Force psychologists, in conjunction with the family and – with the reservist's permission – the employer, will work together to alleviate psychological injuries. New Zealand also highlighted that the family is usually involved in post-deployment psychological debriefs, and

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<sup>10</sup> David Boulos and Deniz Fikretoglu, "Influence of Military Component and Deployment-Related Experiences on Mental Disorders among Canadian Military Personnel who Deployed to Afghanistan: A Cross-Sectional Survey," *BMJ Open* 8 (2018): 1. Available at <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/8/3/e018735.full.pdf>, accessed May 28, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Studies cited in Boulos and Fikretoglu ...

<sup>12</sup> Denmark indicated that there were at least two national/regional studies on post-deployment mental health that could contribute to an understanding of this topic, although not solely reserve-focused. NATO, NRFC, Denmark, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," (March 3, 2019), 3-4; Estonia indicated a general study on veterans which showed good levels of general mental health in them. NATO, NRFC, Estonia, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," (March 18, 2019), 3-4; New Zealand has an ongoing study of veteran mental health. NATO, NRFC, New Zealand, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," (Feb. 1, 2019), 2-3; and the United States questionnaire stated that in a recent study, in which reserves made up almost 17 per cent of the 478 cases, reservist post-traumatic stress disorder was 9.8 per cent (as compared to 8.9 per cent in active-duty members), alcoholism/drug use was 14.5 per cent, (11.7 per cent in active-duty members), the rate of depression was 3.6 per cent (8.1 per cent in active-duty personnel), and the numbers of suicides were higher in service members than the national average. NATO, NRFC, United States, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," (Dec. 4, 2018), 3.





while employers are not routinely involved, they can be if the need arises. However, it was noted that this collaborative effort is difficult to organize due to apprehension that others will perceive the injured reservist negatively. The Czech Republic acknowledged that the deployment cycle created significant stress on reservists and those close to them. In light of this, a model that takes into account the entirety of the deployment experience – from pre-mission, to deployment, to return – was created. The Department of Operational Psychology of the Military Health Agency, created in 2013, supervises this treatment framework. This department gives psychosocial help to members of the Czech Ministry of Defence and their family. This aid can be accessed in a variety of different ways, including via counselling centres, by telephone or email.<sup>13</sup>

An idea that took root in the U.S. army as a result of its operations in Afghanistan and Iraq was that of holistically preparing members for operations and training by increasing mental and physical readiness, and resiliency to stress, through better lifestyle. These concepts also gained credence in the Canadian army. Approaches to achieve better sleep, physical activity, nutrition and spirituality were promulgated through programs like the Canadian Army Integrated Performance Strategy (CAIPS), colloquially known as Army Strong.<sup>14</sup> These skills are taught and reinforced at the individual and unit levels, with introductory packages being given to entry-level combat arms officers and in some locales to soldiers. At this time, the program is not being consistently applied across the Canadian army's training centres and schools. Despite that, the intent is to integrate this approach into the formal training system and at the unit level for all active and reserve elements. By implementing this approach, it is hoped that physical and mental health issues that may occur during deployment will be reduced, with positive effects for both individuals and their units during the post-mission period. The Canadian Armed Forces has plans to operationalize an equivalent of Army Strong. This resource will be available to all members of Canada's military.<sup>15</sup>

Canada has also created institutional mechanisms that can assist leaders in dealing with the stress of operational conditions. These arrangements may also bear fruit in the post-mission phase. A relatively new concept is that of the command team. This is a grouping of a commander with a corresponding non-commissioned officer. At the highest levels, it is a flag or general officer as well as a Chief Petty Officer 1<sup>st</sup> class or Chief Warrant Officer, and arguably this exists through the various levels of command to junior officers and their corresponding non-commissioned officers. While the non-commissioned officers do not share the command function, they support the commander in exercising it and provide a sounding board for discussion and experienced advice. In the Canadian army, this type of relationship between officers and their non-commissioned

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<sup>13</sup> NATO, NRFC, Estonia, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," ... 3; and, NATO, NRFC, Czech Republic, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," (Dec. 18, 2018), 2-3.

<sup>14</sup> Readiness encompasses six fitness domains: (1) physical, (2) emotional, (3) social, (4) spiritual, (5) intellectual and (6) familial. Canada, Department of National Defence, Commander Canadian Army, "4500-1 (CA PD) Mission: Ready – The Canadian Army Integrated Performance Strategy (CAIPS)," Nov. 24, 2015), 1. Available at <https://strongproudready.ca/missionready/en/caips-en-02/>; accessed May 31, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Maj.-Gen. Stephen Cadden, Commander, Canadian Army Training and Doctrine Centre (Dec. 7, 2018); interview with Maj. Bernadette Myslicki and Maj. Nadia Worthington, Staff, Canadian Army Training and Doctrine Centre (Dec. 10, 2018); Canada, Department of National Defence, "Canadian Army Integrated Performance Strategy: Canadian Army Performance Triad (CAP3): Leader's Guide," (2017), 4. Available at [http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2017/mdn-dnd/D2-376-2016-eng.pdf](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/mdn-dnd/D2-376-2016-eng.pdf), accessed Dec. 18, 2018; and, NATO, NRFC, Canada, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," (Dec. 13, 2018), 6.



officers existed informally prior the articulation of the command team concept; however, it is now institutionalized.<sup>16</sup>

By and large, military support to reservists during the post-mission phase varied in terms of how nations deploy their reservists. If one tended to use reservists to augment active-duty forces, a structured checklist approach seemed to be the most common manner of ensuring that all military aspects of post-mission reintegration were carried out. In many cases, it was explicitly stated that there was no difference between processing reservists and active-duty personnel for post-mission return, although Denmark noted that post-mission integration for a reservist would be different than for that of a regular in the context of the circumstances surrounding that individual's unit. Another perspective is that of the U.S., which deploys large numbers of individual reservists, reserve units and formations, and therefore has a holistic and layered series of activities addressing many aspects of military, family and employer reintegration. Less elaborate programs exist in other countries.<sup>17</sup>

One example of a checklist was articulated by the U.K., which deploys reservists as individuals and integrates them into units. Reservists receive detailed directions regarding their return to reserve status prior to the post-mission phase. This includes:

1. Recovery of personal weapon(s) and ammunition;
2. Calculation of entitlement to any outstanding pay and/or allowances;
3. Calculation and authorization of leave entitlement;
4. Provision of an appropriate medical examination prior to cessation of permanent service;
5. Reviewing any welfare issues that may still be outstanding and ensuring that appropriate follow-up action is in place. Reservists are also reminded about the provisions of the Veterans and Reserves Mental Health Programme;
6. Provision of rail warrants and/or transport from the unit/demobilization centre to the railhead/airhead; and,
7. Completion of a demobilization certificate, a copy of which is given to the reservist.<sup>18</sup>

The U.K. also offers decompression services<sup>19</sup> and they monitor reintegration with the family and employer in order to assist the reservist with a return to society. A baseline set of policies deals with such things as decompression time with family before returning to work, as well as information sharing with the family and the employer. Government veteran services provide reintegration support to help veterans re-establish themselves. Communicating all that is offered

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<sup>16</sup> Cadden ...; and Alan Okros, "The Command Team: A Valuable Evolution or Doctrinal Danger?" *Canadian Military Journal* 13, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 15-21.

<sup>17</sup> NATO, NRFC, Denmark, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," ... 2.

<sup>18</sup> United Kingdom note: If any reservist experiences issues following deployment to do with health, or reintegrating to society or family life, they can receive medical and welfare support from their service. NATO, NRFC, United Kingdom, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," (Dec. 6, 2018), 1.

<sup>19</sup> Many countries that responded to the questionnaire offer decompression programs immediately after or within a short time of deployment.



in the post-mission phase is key to ensuring that the reservists and their families are aware of what is available. Finally, there is always an obligation to deal with any health issues that may arise during the deployment.<sup>20</sup>

The U.S. Department of Defense uses the nation-wide Yellow Ribbon Program. This program is intended to address the needs of American national guard and reserve forces. It connects the reservists and their families with resources they require throughout the deployment cycle – from pre- to post-deployment. This constant communication ensures that the family and community are aware that a reservist’s activities are foundational to this program. There are also reintegration weekends for the reservists and their families and friends, the support network post-mission.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Norway offers a 12-month post-mission program for all military, reserve and active, which includes: the provision of information from before to after the deployment; a mandatory decompression program of three to six days after the mission; a medal ceremony; a medical screening three to six months after deployment; two to three mandatory post-mission interviews after 12 months and support to families up to 12 months after returning from the mission. Hungary provides a “regenerating rest” in the post-mission phase designed to assist with strengthening mental and physical health. The reservists can do this alone or with their families. In Hungary, there are no other formal reintegration mechanisms.<sup>22</sup>

Not all countries showed national involvement or direction with post-mission. France, for example, indicated in the previous 2018 LLCRO report that there is little national oversight on reserve pre-deployment and redeployment, as individual units manage their own systems of support to reservists.<sup>23</sup> One can opine that with the continuing evolution of the French Garde Nationale concept, this may change to a more centralized system due to the increased size and tempo of this reserve force’s domestic security operations. Questionnaires indicate that countries that continually use reserve forces have national oversight on all phases of the mission.

Most questionnaires stated that in the post-mission phase, there were few indicators that the deployment affected retention either negatively or positively. For example, the U.S. responded that reserve force attrition was not impacted by a single deployment; however, when there were many involuntary deployments, attrition did increase. Norway perceived no appreciable increase in attrition within reserve forces after the mission.<sup>24</sup> The factors that affect a reservist’s decision to stay or leave military service in the post-mission period were consequently not defined. This is an area of future research which should receive cross-Alliance scrutiny.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Email from Lt.-Col. Stéphan Gosselin (SO CAN), “LLCRO phase 2 – SOM [Berlin] discussions,” (April 9, 2019 at 14:42), n.p.

<sup>21</sup> NATO, NRFC, United States, “Post-Mission Questionnaire,” ... 1-2; and the United States also uses military combat readiness centres to provide aspects of this support. Email from Gosselin ...

<sup>22</sup> NATO, NRFC, Norway, “Post-Mission Questionnaire,” (Nov. 6, 2018), 1. There was no information provided on the content of the post-mission programming directly after the mission or at the 12-month point; and NATO, NRFC, Hungary, “Post-Mission Questionnaire,” (Dec. 10, 2018), 1; The Czech Republic provides a 14-day wellness program for those who have participated in deployments of 90 days+. NATO, NRFC, Czech Republic, “Post-Mission Questionnaire,” ... 2.

<sup>23</sup> NATO, NRFC, France, “Pre-Deployment Questionnaire,” (Jan. 19, 2018), 5.

<sup>24</sup> NATO, NRFC, United States, “Post-Mission Questionnaire,” ... 3; and NATO, NRFC, Norway, “Post-Mission Questionnaire,” ... 3.

<sup>25</sup> The 2015 Reserve Force Retention Survey conducted in Canada, though not designed specifically for the post-mission period, indicated the most commonly cited reasons for leave from those polled were related to: (1) lack of opportunities for reservists (36.8 per cent), (2) conflicts between reserve force service and civilian obligations like work or school (32.8 per cent), and (3) dissatisfaction with aspects of the job itself



The Netherlands observed in 2016 that there are sometimes few mechanisms to track and monitor reservists after redeployment. No respondents indicated in their returns for this report that there were yet any specific processes in place to track reservists post-mission. In fact, Italy stated that when reservists, who for the most part deploy within active-duty units, return they lose oversight and it is only through informal contact with their deployed unit or through military personnel staff that engagement is at times maintained. Whether tracking of this nature is required is a question that is yet to be answered. One suspects that it will depend on individual national situations in how reservists are employed during and after a mission. Those who deploy reservists as individuals and have little formal oversight post-mission may have more need for this type of post-deployment accountability mechanism than others.<sup>26</sup>

## **Family**

The Bundeswehr Reservist Association has the following tasks:

- to provide lifelong support to all Bundeswehr reservists throughout Germany, including:
- *assistance in the provision of support for members of the families of servicemen and women currently on operational deployment via the armed forces family support organization [emphasis added];*
- to provide support to former Bundeswehr servicemen and women with operational experience;
- to assist in ensuring that all the measures that can be taken in support of the prevention, early detection and treatment of health disorders as well as rehabilitation that become necessary as a result of performing reserve duty abroad or in Germany, e.g., post-traumatic stress disorders, are also available for reservists ...<sup>27</sup>

– Germany

Access to medical and psychological resources, as well as decompression time, is not only important to the individual reservists but also to their families. The latter could include leave or vacation time. Also, recognition of the reservist's service in a way that includes the family can be of great value in the post-mission phase. Denmark highlighted that recognition of the reservist in a manner which involves the family and community is critical.

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(30.1 per cent). More than one in five members also reported that they might leave for: (1) reasons related to family (23.4 per cent), (2) dissatisfaction with compensation and benefits (22.3 per cent), organizational problems (22.2 per cent), or (3) because they intend to component-transfer to the active duty forces (21.8 per cent). NATO, NFRC, Canada, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," ... 7.

<sup>26</sup> NATO, NFRC, Netherlands, "Lessons Learned from Commitments ..." 71; and, also NATO, NFRC, Italy, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," (March 15, 2019), 2.

<sup>27</sup> Germany, Ministry of Defence, "The Bundeswehr Reserve Concept," (Berlin: Armed Forces Staff Branch, Feb. 1, 2012), 41.



Communication and information remain of primary importance. Denmark provides literature, counselling and support to reservists prior to reunification with the families to assist with creating a positive homecoming. Germany ensures that connections between positive military service and the family are maintained through a formal structure. This network provides links to other reserve families and specially trained military personnel who can provide many types of support. The philosophy underpinning this idea is that creating confidence in the mission and providing national support will encourage a positive family climate.<sup>28</sup>

Australia provides a considerable degree of military support to all its personnel, both active and reserve, in the form of programs and professional advice. This service is also extended to families throughout all phases of a deployment and into the post-mission time. Like many countries, this assistance is the same for both active and reserve duty military members. A military member is psychologically screened prior to returning, and again three to six months after returning, and families can be involved in treatment or counselling if the military member agrees.

Importantly, there are a host of experts who assist families during military service. One such group is defence social workers, who are professional social workers that understand the military. They help military members and their families deal with a range of challenges through the provision of casework and counselling. Defence social workers also provide advice and aid with other services through group work, community development and education programs, and referrals to experts outside the military system. These social workers also facilitate compassionate or family issues with the chain of command.

Military support officers, who are members of the defence force, provide other resources for active and reserve members as well as their families. These officers help families in the event of death, injury or illness by providing advice and support regarding military matters. More applicable to active-duty personnel are regional education liaison officers, educators who can advise families on education matters, particularly concerning movement between various state and territory education systems. Last are family liaison officers who give information, support and help to military personnel, their families and other approved groups. While these services are provided at any time to Australian military members, the liaison officers are normally more active during deployments.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, Belgium provides active and reserve families with the same services and information sessions about the deployment and pending return. In addition, the Ministry of Defence provides access to mental health advisors or other relevant services if needed. Poland, which currently does not deploy reservists, would use the same family support mechanisms for reserve as active-duty families if a deployment occurred. New Zealand highlighted that the family support system currently in effect for reservists post-mission is informal and it is left to the units to determine the

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<sup>28</sup> An instance of subsidized leave after mission is that of the Hungarian Ministry of Defence which pays for reservists' vacation time post-deployment. Email from Gosselin ...; Estonia offers a three-day spa treatment which must be taken within three months of redeployment and can be used alone or with another person. NATO, NRFC, Estonia, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," ... 3; Germany ... "The Bundeswehr Reserve Concept," ... 41; NATO, NRFC, Germany, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," (March 15, 2019), 2; and NATO, NRFC Denmark, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," ... 2, 4.

<sup>29</sup> NATO, NRFC, Australia, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," (Dec. 19, 2018), 2-4.



level of effort that is put into this aspect of post-mission support. New Zealand qualified this information with the comment that post-mission reserve family assistance was more systemic when reservists were deployed on a regular basis, which is not the case now.<sup>30</sup>

## **Employer Support**

*The Armed Forces Covenant is here to support you in your role as a reservist, helping you to balance your civilian work with being part of the armed forces.*<sup>31</sup>

– United Kingdom

The Armed Forces Covenant is a British term introduced in 2000 to represent the mutual obligations between the British public and its military. It is a type of social contract in which those involved define their duties vis-à-vis each other. Employers receive public recognition, with a hierarchy of awards, for signing the covenant and supporting reserve forces.<sup>32</sup>

Many countries rely on constant liaison and contact with employers not only to assure reservist availability for military service, but also to assist with post-mission protection of employment. Denmark has had an employer support program that provides this type of help for two decades. However, it has been observed that this non-legislative program is still evolving to deal with the changes produced by the deployments of recent years. The goal is to encourage Danish companies to develop a culture that can work with employees who are “twice the citizen”. Some, like Canadian Valerie Keyes, argue: “... that no legislation, compensation or other incentive can replace the goodwill that employers (and educational institutions) demonstrate towards their Reservist employees or student Reservists”.<sup>33</sup> French researcher Guillaume Lasconjarias reinforces this perspective and also argues for a wide range of programs to provide a multifaceted approach to obtaining employer support. Consequently, the reliance on non-legal mechanisms, like financial compensation and dialogue, to ensure reservist re-employment, predominated among the countries that responded.<sup>34</sup>

Canada has a good balance between job protection legislation and the Compensation for Employers of Reservists Program (CERP), in which employers are paid to release their reserve employee(s) for duty. The CERP program not only entices the employer to release that employee, it indirectly ties the employer to the success (or not) of the reservist’s military career, all the while

<sup>30</sup> NATO, NRFC, Belgium, “Post-Mission Questionnaire,” (Dec. 6, 2018), 1; NATO, NRFC, Poland, “Post-Mission Questionnaire,” (Dec. 10, 2018), 1; and, NATO, NRFC, New Zealand, “Post-Mission Questionnaire,” (Feb. 1, 2019), 2.

<sup>31</sup> United Kingdom, Ministry of Defence, “Armed Forces Covenant: Proudly Supporting Those who Serve – Reservists.” Available at <https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/support-and-advice/reservists/>, accessed May 31, 2019, n.p.

<sup>32</sup> See Anthony Forster, “The Military Covenant and British Civil-Military Relations: Letting the Genie out of the Bottle,” *Armed Forces and Society* 38, no. 2 (April 2012), 273-290.

<sup>33</sup> Valerie Keyes, “Sustainment of Reserve Service through Employer Support,” *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 12, no. 4 (Summer 2010), 66.

<sup>34</sup> NATO, NRFC, Denmark, “Pre-Deployment Questionnaire,” (May 4, 2018), 5; and, Winston Churchill in a much-used quote suggested that a reservist was twice a citizen. For another perspective on this idea, see Jody A. Hudec, “Views and Opinions: Twice the Citizen – Twice the Employer,” *Canadian Military Journal* 6, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 84-85; Email from Gosselin ...; NATO, NRFC, Germany, “Pre-Deployment Questionnaire,” (Feb. 18, 2018), 5; NATO, NRFC, Canada, “Pre-Deployment Questionnaire,” (Feb. 28, 2018), 11; and Lasconjarias, 11-12.



making them part of the nation's defence and security posture. Without supportive and willing employers, Canada would not be able to sustain the deployment of reservists. Sweden has in fact taken this to the next level with its ongoing project to integrate all relevant sectors of government and industry in the nation's defence. All this suggests that for some, it is better to entice employer co-operation than force compliance through legislation.<sup>35</sup>

Formal employment protection takes different forms in various nations and supports the employment of reservists. These legal policies normally have three general principles: (1) employers cannot treat a reserve force employee any differently than an employee who is not a reservist, (2) employers cannot impede their employees from reserve service and may be obligated to provide them with time off to fulfil reserve duties and, of importance for the post-mission period, (3) a reservist must be reinstated at work without loss of benefits or pay. The U.S. is well-known for its wide-ranging legal framework that provides for employment protection. Notably, among various legislation is the *Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act* (USERRA), which includes all these elements to safeguard reservists.<sup>36</sup>

USERRA guarantees that reservists receive re-employment after finishing active duty. This means there is assured work in the position which the reservist left, or in the position the reservist would have had with normal progression if they had not left for military service, or in a comparable job to the position the reservist left. Comparable employment means similar in pay, status and seniority. Along with this, reservists must inform their employers at the earliest possible moment about upcoming military service. They must also inform the employer when they intend to report to work. This should happen as soon as is practical after the end of their reserve duty. If the reservist does not adhere to these information requirements, then the right to re-employment may be adversely affected.

If a reservist believes that their civilian employer has not adhered to the legislation within USERRA, they have recourse to address the perceived transgression. Initially, they can contact their commanding officer, who may be able to resolve the issue with the employer or forward their grievance to the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (NCESGR), a part of the Department of Defense. Upon receipt of the complaint, the NCESGR will contact the employer and try to deal with the issue informally. Complaints can also be addressed through the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS). VETS investigates

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<sup>35</sup> Email from Maj.-Gen. (retired) Paul Bury (former Canadian HOD), "NRFCC LLCRO Report Post-Deployment DRAFT," (2019-06-05 6:45 p.m.), n.p.; "CERP is a [Canadian] Department of National Defence (DND) grant program for which the Department of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) provides administrative support. In addition to issuing grants to employers of reservists and self-employed reservists, CERP provides an opportunity to conduct outreach and bring awareness to the business community and educational institutions about the important role, training and special skills reservists bring to the military and their personal careers outside of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF)." Canada, Department of Employment and Social Development, "Funding: Compensation for Employers of Reservists Program – Overview." Available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/employer-compensation-reservists-guide.html>, accessed June 5, 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Lasconjarias, 4; NATO, NRFCC, United States, "Pre-Deployment Questionnaire," (Jan. 3, 2018), 9; and, reserve force employment protection legislation in the United States includes, in addition to USERRA, the *Service Members Civil Relief Act* (SCRA). The SCRA provides the reservist protections against civilian financial liabilities that would be incurred during the period of federal military employment. These include "rental property evictions, mortgage foreclosures, insurance cancellations, and government property seizures to pay tax bills." Plus, it restricts the interest collected on any loans that the reservist may be holding during the activation period to six per cent. United States Congress, "Congressional Research Service Report: Reserve Component Personnel Issues: Questions and Answers," (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, Jan. 18, 2017), 20.



the allegations and provides mediation to address the issues that were identified. If that is not successful, the reservist can then ask VETS to send the case to the Office of Federal Counsel, for federal employees, or the Department of Justice, for non-federal employees. In both instances, the case is reviewed and further action taken as necessary. In the former federal case, the claim will go to the Merit Systems Protection Board, and in the latter non-federal example, the Department of Justice may choose to pursue action in federal court against the employer on behalf of the reservist.<sup>37</sup>

There are international and national groups that encourage employers to support reservists. The International Conference on Employer Support for the Reserves (ICESR) is an informal grouping of nations with aligned interests concerning the military and national potential of reserve forces. There are also national organizations that assist with interfacing between reserve force employees and their employers. The Netherlands provides an example of one such employer support program that deals with regular operations and training, as well as deployments. It promotes the employment of reservists with employers by highlighting strengths they bring to the employer and providing potential employers with information that elaborates on the benefits of employing reservists. There are organized visits with reserve forces to view the service that they perform. In addition, there is financial compensation for employers during deployments of greater than three months, as well as annual awards for employers supportive of their reservists. Employer support organizations and their roles were discussed in more detail in the NRFC pre-deployment examination, “Enabling NATO for 21st Century Operations: Fielding Agile, Responsive and Innovative Reserve Forces”.<sup>38</sup>

## **Conclusion**

*The post-mission phase is one area that requires more attention. In several countries, reservists indicate that the [Ministry of Defence] MOD did not offer them an after-mission adaptation program. Time needs to be built into the post-mission model for longer periods of observation during reintegration to ensure that Reservists are prepared to return to their civilian employment and lifestyles.*<sup>39</sup>

– The Netherlands

*Success is enabled by a full and thorough demobilization process; identification of personnel who may be in need of medical or welfare support, and prompt provision of that support; demobilised reservists returning to their Units after their decompression leave and fitting back*

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<sup>37</sup> United States Congress, “Congressional Research Service Report,” ... 20-22.

<sup>38</sup> “ICESR 2017,” n.p. Available at <https://www.soldatkarriar.se/icesr-9-11-okt-stockholm/>, accessed May 26, 2018; Paul Earnshaw and John Price, “Employer Support for Reserves: Some International Comparisons of Reserve Capabilities,” *Australian Defence Force Journal*, no. 185 (July/August 2011): 45. Available at [http://www.defence.gov.au/adfj/Documents/issue\\_185/185\\_2011\\_Jul\\_Aug.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/adfj/Documents/issue_185/185_2011_Jul_Aug.pdf), accessed May 26, 2018; NATO, NRFC, Netherlands, “Post-Mission Questionnaire,” ... 2; and, see NATO, NRFC, NRFC “Lessons Learned from Deploying ...”; “Enabling NATO for 21st Century Operations ...”

<sup>39</sup> NATO, NRFC, Netherlands, “Lessons Learned from Commitments ...” 11.





*into the Unit structure and sharing their experience in a positive manner; and increased team spirit and morale where reservists in a unit have been deployed together.*<sup>40</sup>

– NATO, NRFC, United Kingdom

A successful deployment consists not only of transitioning the reservist to full-time service but also reintegrating the individual back to their reserve unit, family and employment. This post-mission area needs more study regarding how it affects NATO reserve forces. Further reinforcing that observation is that many respondents noted they treated active-duty and reserve forces the same as regulars in terms of reintegration post-mission, but offered no data to support that methodology. Also, many respondents stated there were no specific programs or data with regards to family and employer support, or factors affecting reserve retention after a deployment. It is evident from the lack of much formal scrutiny that most countries have neglected this reserve and failed to gain understanding. The situation is similar to that which the Netherlands articulates in the recommendations of the 2016 LLCRO report. The one notable exception to this lack of research into post-mission aspects of reserve service is the U.S., which has invested considerable resources into investigating this subject. This can be explained as the need to understand how to prevent erosion of reserve capabilities in the context of recurring reserve force deployments. Countries could also enter specific lessons pertaining to reserve force deployments in their national lessons-learned system and share that data, along with any reserve force deployment studies, within the NRFC.<sup>41</sup>

The need for constant communication and information highlighted in previous reports remains important. A predictive deployment schedule remains valuable as well for countries with high operational tempo and recurring reserve force deployments of the same individuals and groups. Highlighted in the 2016 LLCRO recommendations, and still relevant, was that a detailed post-deployment checklist is important to aid re-acclimatization and to identify those individuals who are in need of additional support or have not received the requisite transition services. On top of this, the degree of harmonization among the organizations and programs designed to support reservists, their families and employers is important and likely needs to be clearly understood by all parties, including the reservists' units. Physical and mental health issues are continuing challenges to returning reservists and their communities. Resiliency programs may assist with mitigating the occurrence or severity of these injuries. Estonia highlighted that the ability to provide for physical and mental well-being is the hallmark of an effective organization. As part of this, there is a military obligation to network with civilian health agencies and specialists to ensure seamless care of active and reserve veterans.<sup>42</sup>

Creating employer support takes many forms and needs a multifaceted approach. All countries that deploy reserve forces have existing organizations, programs and legislation depending on the level and tempo of reserve forces committed to operations. In the post-mission phase, involving

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<sup>40</sup> NATO, NRFC, United Kingdom, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," ... 4.

<sup>41</sup> NATO, NRFC, Netherlands, "Lessons Learned from Commitments ..." 12; see both NATO, NRFC, United States, "Pre-Deployment Questionnaire," ...; and, NATO, NRFC, United States, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," ...

<sup>42</sup> NATO, NRFC, Netherlands, "Lessons Learned from Commitments ..." 4.



the employer in the return through formal or informal events seems to be a useful mechanism to assist with the reservist's return to work.

Retaining reservists for future operations requires a holistic approach – it's not simply about the pre or post-mission periods or the deployment itself but all three, taking into account the discursive relationship between the military, family and employer in support of their reservists. The focus of all of this work is to prevent the degradation of NATO reserves by maintaining their force levels and their ability to support NATO operations. Accordingly, the emphasis is not solely upon enabling reservists to be available prior to a mission and supporting them during the deployment, but also successfully transitioning them during the post-mission phase. New Zealand succinctly articulated the desired objectives of that post-deployment period by stating that success or failure will be defined by the attainment of reintegration with family, employers and reserve units – reconnecting to normal family routine, demonstrating value to their employer and bringing new skills to their units. While the processes related to the attainment of these goals may look different for the various NATO nations, the end result for all is that the reservist has received the necessary support to allow them to re-engage with family, employer and military and is available to again deploy if the need arises.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> For further information on retention of reserve forces, albeit from a United States perspective, see Laura Werber et al., "Deployment Experiences of Guard and Reserve Families: Implications for Support and Retention," (Santa Barbara, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008). Available at <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG645.html> , accessed May 31, 2019; NATO, NRFC, United States, "Pre-Deployment Questionnaire," ... 11; and, also NATO, NRFC, New Zealand, "Post-Mission Questionnaire," ... 3.

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