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Dear Margaret

DEPLOYMENT OF MILITARY RESERVISTS IN A CIVILIAN ROLE

Thank you for your letter of 1 August asking for additional information on the Military Stabilisation Support Group (MSSG). I apologise for the time it has taken for this response.

The Composition and Purpose of the MSSG and its Relationship to the Civilian Support Group

The MSSG is a hybrid organisation which recruits from across the three Services (both Regular and Reserve components) and from retired service personnel who seek to rejoin in order to use their professional credentials within a military environment. Members of the Regular component are selected through the Military Secretariat process in line with their career profile. Reservists apply and attend a selection process before being accepted for service with the MSSG.

MSSG's mission is to prepare and deliver Civil Effect/CIMIC planning teams and functional specialists capable of providing stabilisation support to all deployed formation HQs and Battle Groups in order to contribute to Permanent Joint HQ and Joint Task Force operational capability.

The MSSG works across six key areas:

- (1) Economy, Finance and Livelihoods
- (2) Governance, Political Reconciliation and Settlement
- (3) Humanitarian and Disaster Relief
- (4) Infrastructure and Public Services
- (5) Policing Borders and Justice
- (6) Operations, Planning and Logistics

It also provides a conduit to other specialist arms (Regular and Reserves) across the three Services, in order to access appropriate skills according to the need and complexity of the task. MSSG actively seeks out individuals with specialist skills and experience.

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MSSG's current establishment is as follows:

- (1) Regulars – 76
- (2) Reserves – 100
- (3) Non-Regular Permanent Staff – 16
- (4) Civilians – 11

MSSG supports the work of the Stabilisation Unit (SU) and provides a full time Regular Liaison Officer to the SU to ensure an integrated approach. The Commander of MSSG is a member of the SU Management Board and attends the Building Stability Overseas Board (BSOB) as an observer; BSOB reports to the Building Stability Overseas Steering Group (BSOSG) which in turn informs the National Security Council. The Commander of MSSG also has a role across Defence as Assistant Director for Stabilisation.

The MSSG's relationship with Civilian Support Groups is conducted through the SU. It has worked with other Civilian Support Groups (International and Non-Government Organisations (IO/NGO)), but these have been primarily in operational theatres and at the direction of the Head of Mission (normally civilian). MSSG teams do engage with IO/NGO at the lower levels; mainly to advise on where their support (particularly immediately after kinetic operations when civilians are unaware of the current situation) can best be focused.

The terms under which military reservists can be deployed in civilian roles

Part VI of the Reserve Forces Act 1996 Chapter 4 part VI sets out the authorisation for the call out of Reservists; section 56 deals specifically with *"operations outside the UK for the protection of life or property or on operations anywhere in the world for the alleviation of distress or the preservation of life or property in time of disaster or apprehended disaster"*. Reservists can only be mobilised under this Act if an official "Military Operation" is declared through the Chain of Command and Permanent Joint HQ.

MSSG reservists are trained and utilised within their professional skill set and as military generalists in terms of planning, briefing, leadership and integration with other UK or International service units. When mobilised (in accordance with the 1996 Act), MSSG reservists can be deployed anywhere in the world and in all theatres of operation. If a Reservist is not mobilised, MSSG is severely restricted in the ability to deploy him/her to areas where there is a heightened security threat. Lack of mobilisation can reduce the flexibility to use MSSG reservists as Subject Matter Experts, to train or advise the Governments and/or armed forces of host nations.

Reservists, even those with specialist skills, cannot normally deploy to high risk areas e.g. Nigeria, where no military operation has been declared. Occasionally, where a reservist is the most appropriate individual to deploy, this is done following a detailed Risk Assessment.

MSSG does not deploy its reservists as civilians. If MSSG requires the skill/experience of particular Reservists, they are mobilised and deployed as "military" advisers – in uniform. Recent examples include the mobilisation of farmers, land agents and bankers to improve Afghan expertise in agriculture and economic development. The only way in which a reservist can operate in a "civilian role" is if he or she is on the Stabilisation Unit's Deployable Civilian Expert list and is used as an SU "civilian expert". Reservists utilised in this way are not mobilised and do not wear uniform.

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The implications, if any, of the recent announcement of the transformation of the Territorial Army into the Army Reserve

The intent of the July 2013 White Paper *Reserves in the Future Force 2020: Valuable and Valued* is to increase the utility of the Reserves and enable them to deliver the aspirations first set out in the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR). The SDSR made clear that the reserves should be an integral part of the UK's Armed Forces, providing additional capacity as well as certain specialisms which it would not be practical or cost effective to maintain as a regular capability. The White Paper sets out how some of these specialist skill sets might be utilised; the work of MSSG is just one aspect of the overall vision for the Reserve forces expressed in the White Paper.

The White Paper embraces the concept of greater utilisation of reserves in a variety of roles in fragile states that UK wishes to influence. Critically it proposes a change to the way in which the Army can utilise Reserves to give MOD greater flexibility than under the current legislation. This will be a significant improvement in MSSG's ability to utilise reservists in higher risk countries, which are currently the domain of the regular forces and is expected to make a major difference in the MSSG's capacity to deliver its tasks appropriately and effectively.

The White Paper signals the Government's intention to amend the Reserve Forces Act to widen the current categories of military tasks for which Reserves can be mobilised. It also seeks to improve Terms and Conditions and compensation to employers for loss of talent whilst individuals are mobilised.

Yours ever

W. Peter

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