



RMR Close Quarter Battle on Ex. COMMANDO PHOENIX

## The Strategic Defence Review (Part 2)

The review, and its recommendations, has some immediate implications for Reserve Forces that are worth commenting on.

The first and most notable is the intent to grow the Active Reserve by 20%. For the Royal Navy, this means both the Royal Navy Reserve (RNR) and Royal Marines Reserve (RMR) – collectively the Maritime Reserves (MR) – and those ex-Regular Reserves on Full-Time Reserve Service or Additional Duties Commitments. While the timeline is not set, this provides clear intent that Reserves are critical to maximising the effectiveness of the Whole Force, something we see in the activities of our personnel daily.

The SDR made clear that we need the right mix of people as Defence moves to a skills-based organisation. This may mean recruiting more people for their existing skills not training them for a new part-time profession. Demonstrating this agility, the RNR has recruited its first direct entry officer to the Engineering (Res) Profession, allowing them to passport civilian engineering qualifications directly into their military specialisation. The Engineering (Res) cadre are also piloting how the Pan-Defence Skills Framework will be rolled out to the Maritime Reserves, capturing relevant Skills and Experience wherever, and however, they have been achieved.

Engineering is not the only area in which this work is happening, and we are in the midst of creating new pathways into the Reserves for meteorologists, chefs, and healthcare roles including pharmacists, physiotherapists, paramedics, dental nurses and hygienists. Our existing ‘offer’ will continue to adapt over the next few years to meet the demands of functional employers, innovating as demand arises to deliver new roles and capabilities such as operators of uncrewed systems or data analysts, creating more opportunities for individuals to bring Regular or civilian skills into Reserve service.

RNR personnel on Exercise Ballykinler, March 2025



## Introduction

As a Fighting Arm of the Royal Navy, the mission of the Maritime Reserves is to provide sufficient, capable, and motivated personnel to augment and reinforce Regular Forces at point of need. The publication of the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) on 2nd June reemphasised the importance of this mission and the growing imperative to be ready, to train for war, to inculcate a warfighting mindset amongst our people, and to grow the Reserves to better support Defence tasks now and in the future. In this brief we look more closely at what that may mean for the Maritime Reserves, and the opportunities it may present to our people.

What is reassuring is the position of strength from which we start. The last Back Pocket Brief summarised the incredible output delivered by the Royal Navy's Reserve Forces over the course of 2024. In addition to our mobilised Reservists and the c.350 on full-time or additional duties commitments, every month saw, on average, delivery of 4,200 Reserve Service Days of activity. Of this, c.2,600 days were in direct support of operational outputs. That high tempo of operational delivery and supporting activity has continued in the first half of this year and has been augmented with mobilisation of more than 70 Reservists to Op HIGHMAST supporting the Carrier Strike Group (more detail is in the second part of this edition of the Back Pocket Brief). This output sits alongside the regular drumbeat of recruiting, training and ceremonial functions that ensure Reservists are not only hold the skills and experience required but are the local connection between communities and the Royal Navy.

Choosing to learn a new skill alongside a busy day job or other commitment requires courage, resilience and determination. To then deploy those skills globally alongside Regulars shows exceptional dedication and requires the continued support of friends, family and loved ones. The SDR, and subsequent Defence and Royal Navy activity, not only makes clear the value of the Reserves, but gives us a mandate to go further, do more, and ensure we are ready for warfighting when required.

I hope you find this edition informative, and I look forward to updating you on another successful year in the next edition.

**Commodore Jo Adey RN ADC**  
**Commander Maritime Reserve**



# MARITIME RESERVES BACK POCKET BRIEF

**Flexible, Capable, Sustainable**

**Supporting the Royal Navy and UK  
Defence, at home and around the globe,  
365 days a year**



RNR personnel on Exercise Ballykinler, March 2025

## The Strategic Defence Review

Reviews of Defence, strategic or otherwise, are a regular activity of governments. The SDR published in June recognised the complexities and the conflict that comes with competing world views and shifting political sands. This SDR was the first to be delivered post the Second World War that was concurrent with war in Europe, heightened tension between Taiwan and China, and a demand from the US for Europe to pay more for its Defence.

For those that have not read all 140 pages of the SDR and its 62 recommendations, the key ambitions set out were:

- ‘NATO First’—stepping up on European security by leading in NATO, with strengthened nuclear, new tech, and updated conventional capabilities.
- Move to warfighting readiness—establishing a more lethal ‘integrated force’ equipped for the future, and strengthened homeland defence.
- Engine for growth—driving jobs and prosperity through a new partnership with industry, radical procurement reforms, and backing UK businesses.
- UK innovation driven by lessons from Ukraine—harnessing drones, data, and digital warfare to make our Armed Forces stronger and safer.
- Whole-of-society approach—widening participation in national resilience and renewing the Nation's contract with those who serve.

Personnel from HMS PEGASUS supporting the Ten Tors event, May 2025







RMR Distance Shoot on Ex. COMMANDO PHOENIX



AB1 Leah Haddock and AB1 Kenny Sinclair help recover the starboard sea boat on HMS FORTH



10 personnel on Ex Cold response, Feb 2025



10 personnel on Ex Cold response, Feb 2025

### The Strategic Defence Review (Part 3)

Alongside the increase in Active Reserves, the SDR also focussed on better engagement with and use of the Strategic Reserve – those ex-Regular service leavers that have a time-bound recall liability. In June, staff of the Maritime Reserve HQ led a widely attended table-top exercise at the Defence Experimentation and Wargaming Hub to consider the process to mobilise both Active and Strategic Reserve personnel at pace and scale in a 21st century context, leading the way for Defence in doing so. A practical exercise in the Autumn is planned to test the Operating Model the event produced.

Finally, SDR recognised the importance of Reservists as the connective tissue that binds local communities, defence and industry through the myriad employers our Reservists have. We recognise the importance of the role our Units play in local communities and the mutual benefit that comes from the wide range of relationships, from civic leaders, employers, through to trade and cadet organisations. Maritime Reservists planned to attend or deliver some 350 events over the course of 2025, from employer engagement through to national celebrations for VE Day in communities across the UK. This year, by the end of June, we have already delivered 233 events including HMS CAMBRIA exercising its Freedom of the City in Swansea in April to celebrate St David's Day.

### Our activity so far in 2025

Building on a busy 2024, February 2025 saw 46 members of the RMR deploy to Norway for cold weather training on Exercise HARESPRING, with another 92 deployed to Cyprus in May alongside 20 of their RNR General Warfare colleagues for live fire training on Exercises COMMANDO, and BLUE, PHOENIX respectively. In March, HMS HIBERNIA delivered a weekend of valuable training in military skills for Reserve personnel in Northern Ireland. More than 150 personnel, including members of the RNR, RMR, Royal Auxiliary Air Force and University Royal Navy Units, used a disaster recovery scenario to rehearse and develop an array of military skills from leadership through to medical.

We continue to routinely support Op KIPION, deploying intelligence and media operations specialist to UKMCC in Bahrain, with personnel also deployed in support of Ukraine.

The link between the RNR and the Offshore Patrol Squadron also goes from strength to strength, with a steady rotation of RNR ratings into positions aboard patrol ships deployed globally. Alongside these individual augmentees, junior Reservists often experience their first periods of sea time in Offshore Patrol Vessels, and in April eight personnel embarked HMS FORTH in the Falklands for two-weeks of sea training.

As the half-year ended, 35 Reservists were mobilised to support Carrier Strike Group as it departed Portsmouth, with embarked personnel in submarine control, intelligence, information operations, media, aviation and force protection roles, as well as shore-side liaison. A similar number will be mobilised later in the year as the first wave return home. Marking a return to the 42 Cdo owned task, the Ship's Force Protection Team for RFA TIDESPRING was comprised solely of MR personnel, with ratings and marines drawn from across the country to ensure the safety of a critical support element for HMS PRINCE OF WALES.

Sport and adventurous training are integral to building resilience and teamwork across Defence. In addition to having access to regular ski and sail expeditions Maritime Reservists get involved in representative sport for the Royal Navy, with coaches, officials and players variously in women's rugby, polo, horse riding, angling, tennis and even in the RN Raiders Parachute Display Team. In April, the MR football team hosted their Army Reserve counterparts for a match in Portsmouth, while in June the MR Field Gun crew participated in the annual tri-service Brickwoods Competition at HMS COLLINGWOOD, recording their best placing since 2019.

Finally, in recognition of the valuable contributions made by Reservists year upon year, June saw four members of the Maritime Reserves recognised in the King's Birthday Honours List. Captain Eugene Morgan received an OBE for delivering the Defence Experimentation and Wargaming Hub; Warrant Officer 1 Rob Govier and Chief Petty Officer Michael Watson were each awarded an MBE for their work with the NRC team in Wales and West and as one of HMS HIBERNIA's permanent staff respectively; Warrant Officer 1 Samantha Martin was awarded the King's Volunteer Reserve Medal. Huge and well-deserved congratulations to all four.

This Brief is just a snapshot of the activity undertaken across the Maritime Reserves in the first six months of 2025. Look out for our next update early in 2026 to see more of what we have been up to.

AB1 Duval exercising firefighting while deployed on HMS MEDWAY



All-reservist Ship's Force Protection Team on RFA TIDESPRING for CSG 25 deployment



AB Haskell competing as part of RN Skeleton Bob team



PO Brooks from HMS PEGASUS, Wimbledon 2025

