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Civilians will outnumber soldiers at the MoD [1]

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Liam Fox?s announcement that the army will be cut from 101,000 regulars to some 82,000 by 2020 means, on current numbers, that we will have more civil servants fighting for us, or maybe themselves, than we will have soldiers. At the last count, we had 85, 781 civilians in the MOD. Of course some of those are deployed with service personnel and it is argued that we have civilianised more service roles than other countries.

Civilians cost less per head than service personnel but the trouble with that argument is that it reduces the jobs for soldiers when they are not fighting or training. Roughly speaking, military personnel spend on third of their time in each of the three roles, namely active service, training and recharging the batteries at home. And reservists are cheaper because their employers pay for the third role.

The MOD/armed forces comparison is complicated by the civilian deployment with the services and the converse: service personnel driving desks. Every MOD administrative job seems to need a military and a civilian staffer to supervise each other although that is not as bad as it was. In Germany, the 19,710 service personnel are assisted by 7,190 civilians. Grossing that up gives about 35,000 civilians with the armed forces leaving 51,000 at the centre.

The difficult question to which the Defence Analytical Service and Advice people do not seem to have the answer (their website is excellent by the way) is the number of service personnel doing civilian jobs. And where does one draw the line between headquarters required by the army (Andover) and other MOD offices?

One thing is obvious: the ratio of civil servants to armed forces is wrong. We do not need one civil servant for every soldier. Dr Fox should cancel the cut in army regular active forces and cut the desk drivers, both civilian and military, instead ? starting with the most senior.

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[3] http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript
[4] http://disqus.com