

[Ruining the TA](#) [1]

Written by [Damian Merciar](#) [2] | Sunday 25 October 2009



The British Army is one of the most called upon in the world. It delivers more "bang for buck", than possibly any other regularly utilised force. Equally though, these expectations have become so entrenched, that any additional request put to the Army, is considered already done once it has left the mouth of the Minister of State for Defence (for it is often left to the junior Minister, rather than the Secretary of State for Defence, to make unpopular decisions regarding manpower). The recent decision to halve the number of days payable for training, to the TA, is the most short sighted decision on the part of the MOD in a very long time.

The TA runs on the goodwill of its personnel. We have families, we have increasingly demanding jobs, we are paid a starting salary of approx £30 a day, to put ourselves in harms way. There is no greater civic commitment, than to be a member of Her Majesty's Forces. The TA do this in addition to their full time jobs and lives. The British contribution to the Iraq War, was reliant on roughly 15% of its troops being TA. The war, quite simply, could not have been conducted without them. They also require immense management time to co-ordinate efforts, training, pre-deployment training - and simply 'showing up'. I personally know members of both the TA and the Reserves (recently left members of full time Service personnel), who have missed the birth of a child, whilst away on Operations. This is a regular occurrence for our full time Army colleagues, but it is a big "ask" for someone who has volunteered to be there in his or her spare time...

After numerous strategic defence reviews and initiatives, during which the profile of the TA has been intrinsic to the future operational capacity of the Army, to now have its ability to service that capacity ? to effectively be cut off at the knees ? is ruinous. The phrase "One Army" was coined several years ago to highlight Government policy that there was to be no separation between the Army and the TA. Both Services are interlinked and dependent on each other, from logistical support to specialist (and expensive) training, shared between the two platforms. The Army has roughly 110,000 personnel, and the TA roughly 35,000: the TA are integral to the Army.

I recommend to simply reverse these short sighted cuts, and have the bravery of their convictions to actually go further along this integrationist route, and afford the TA the recognition that their bravery in the field warrants. To go further with equipment sharing, and after Tour support: still there are too many instances of damaged TA soldiers returning to their civilian lives without the support their full time colleagues receive.

To cut by half the days available to be paid (to 11), effectively means one weekend every two months - either that, or some units are just ceasing Training for several months. This is supposed to fulfil duties that prepare our TA colleagues to go forward to deployment training, and, at the very least, to provide the "Home Guard" function, vital to protect this country's national interest. The net result, in a year's time, could easily be an operational TA of half its present size, its members simply having drifted away...back to their own lives. We anticipate with resignation the new Government's response at that time.

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