

North Devon Conservatives

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The Territorial Army deserve our support for their century of service ***Labour Ministers in retreat over plans to make massive cuts to TA training***

PHILIP MILTON, PROSPECTIVE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT for North Devon, today welcomed Labour's latest U-turn – abandoning plans to make significant cuts to the Territorial Army.

On 15 October, the Government announced that weekly and monthly Territorial Army training would be cut by a massive £20 million – wiping out training for tens of thousands of Territorials. This £20 million was in addition to cuts of £23 million earlier in the current financial year. This represents a third of the Territorial Army's annual budget. However, following pressure from Conservatives, the Labour Government has dropped the plans.

Since 2002, some 20,000 reservists have seen active service in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Balkans, most of them from the TA. Fourteen Territorials have given their lives. Today some 550 Territorials are serving on the front-line in Afghanistan. Dozens more serve in the Balkans and other places across the globe. But the Labour Government has treated the TA shamefully. In 1997 there were 57,000 members of the Territorial Army. Twelve years later numbers have fallen to 35,000.

Philip said:

“Through good times and bad, the Territorial Army has given this country a proud century of service. Thanks to Conservative pressure, Gordon Brown has been forced to abandon his damaging and ill-thought out plans to cut TA training. Common sense has prevailed.”

“But Gordon Brown's embarrassing U-turn cannot undo the damage to morale and trust. The TA plays an important role in our community and nation, and Conservatives will always stand up in support of their invaluable work and service.”

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“As an employer I have seen the benefits to a previous member of my own staff who was able to complete a six month tour of duty with the TA in Iraq and have since been proud that he has taken the decision to return and serve his Country as a Captain in the regular army.”

Notes to Editors

U-TURN ON PLANS FOR TA CUTS

In October 2009, the MOD announced that a number of Territorial Army training sessions would stop for six months resulting in around £20 million worth of savings. A spokesman said: “These are challenging times and like all government departments, we have to live within our means” (*BBC News Online*, 10 October 2009).

At first, when the issue was raised by David Cameron at Prime Ministers’ Questions, Gordon Brown announced that: “the Territorial Army work that is directed towards Afghanistan is properly resourced and will continue to be properly resourced” (*Hansard*, 14 October 2009, col. 291). However, as the backlash against the cuts grew, Labour Ministers announced they would scale back their plans – cutting £17.5 million, rather than £20 million. But by the time of Prime Minister’s Questions a few days later, Brown told the house: “Having looked at all the issues...I decided it was the right thing to do [not cut]” (*BBC News Online*, 28 October 2009).

PREVIOUS TA CUTS

This is not Labour’s first attempt at cutting the Territorial Army budget. The TA (including Officer Training Corps) have been reduced from around 58,000 to 35,000 since 1997 (DASA, *UK Defence Statistics 2009*, table 2.15).

Moreover, one of Gordon Brown’s last acts as Chancellor was to cut the TA budget by £2.5 million for each of the financial years 2007-08 and 2008-09. Labour Ministers have admitted:

“The budget assigned to our Territorial Army has slightly decreased—I did say that I would not deny that. That was not an easy decision to take, but it must be put in context. Last year, we spent about £350 million on the TA. We plan to reduce that by £2.5 million this financial year and by the same amount in the next financial year. I am advised that that will in no way adversely impact on the operational ability of the TA or its support to current operations. The savings are against areas such as recruiting of some specialist units and the running of annual conferences, and savings will also be made by reducing the number and frequency of TA competitions” (*Hansard*, 21 June 2007, col. 1542).

SIZE OF THE TA

There are over 35,000 Territorial Army personnel, based on over 2,600 sites.

“Dr. Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what the location is of each Territorial Army centre in the United Kingdom; (2) what the (a) establishment figure, (b) current manning figure and (c) location is of each unit of company equivalent level or higher of the Territorial Army in the United Kingdom.

Bill Rammell: There are more than 2,600 sites accommodating the reserve forces and Cadets, ranging from Cadet huts to training areas. The Territorial Army (TA) shares many of these sites with other reserve force and Cadet units, and some TA units are based at regular Army sites. Following the recommendations of the Strategic Review of Reserves to improve the Volunteer Estate, we are currently capturing detailed information about reserve force locations. Once this information is available, I will place a copy in the Library of the House. A copy of TA sub-unit establishment liability figures will also be placed in the Library of the House. As at 1 April 2009, total

manning for the TA was 35,350. Manning information is held in the Joint Personnel Administration system but not in the format requested. This information could be provided at disproportionate cost in the requested format only” (*Hansard*, 7 July 2009, col. 662W).

Although a detailed list has not been published, an outline list of the locations of Territorial Army units across the country is available at: <http://www.armedforces.co.uk/army/listings/10068.html>

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