

**US Reserve Officers Exchange Program
After Action Review and Comments**

Name and Rank: Anne M. Commerton, LCDR

Date and year of exchange: 17 -31 July 2011

Home Unit: NR Combined Joint Operations from the Sea, Centre of Excellence

Unit Visited: UK Joint Services Command & Staff College

A. Pre Deployment Phase:

1. Did your Reserve Component notify you sufficiently in advance to plan and execute your program? Yes
2. Were your travel plans and orders done correctly and in a timely manner? Yes.

B. Communications

1. Did your sponsor contact you before your visit? Yes.
2. Did he/she inform you of the unit schedule and program for your visit? Somewhat, we were told we were going to be in the Advanced Command & Staff Course but not informed of the schedule.
3. Did he/she inform you of what uniforms to bring to the exchange? Yes
Where there any uniform items or equipment required of which you were not Informed? No.
4. Was the information adequate to prepare you for the visit? Yes.
5. What information provided was most helpful? How to get to the school from London.
6. What information was missing that you would have liked to know? What to expect with the daily schedule, especially that we worked weekends.

C. Logistics and Transportation

1. Did your sponsor or a member of the unit meet you at the airport? No.
2. Were you provided transportation to the unit and return to the airport of departure to the US? No.
3. Were your accommodations comparable to that provided officers of your host unit? Yes.
4. Were meals provided and adequate? Yes.

5. Were you faced with any unexpected expenses? No.

D. Unit Activities

1. Did you fully participate in unit training? Yes.

2. Were you given a leadership position or did you remain as an observer? There were no leadership roles. It was a course setting and I was given all the responsibilities of the host nation officers.

3. Were you asked to brief your unit on your Reserve system or provide any other briefings on the US or our Armed Forces? No, but I offered them up in classroom discussions.

4. What was the mix of social, cultural (sightseeing), and military events in your program? Social events included a Dining in formal dinner and informal get together with our syndicate members. There were no planned cultural events. On a late Saturday afternoon, one of the UK Officers took a couple of us ROFEP attendees on a drive by of London. There were no military events in the course.

Was it appropriate? I think for the foreign officers they should have planned some of the above. It would have been nice to see some of the cultural aspects of the UK and some of the military events or venues. It was great to be exposed to their course and to hear about their military via lectures but it was geared to the UK Officers and is a requirement of their military, so some areas of lecture/discussion were not relevant at all to the foreign officers.

5. What was the best part of your visit with the unit? Meeting and mixing it up with the UK Officers.

6. What was the worst part of your visit with the unit? Too many lectures and assignments for the foreign officers.

7. What would you change about the unit portion of the visit? It would have been nice to actually work with a UK unit or command rather than attend a course, especially a course that was so UK rather than multi-national centric.

E. General Comments

1. Did the exchange meet your expectations? Not really. A member from my reserve unit went to Germany last year for the ROFEP and he actually worked with a German unit. I thought the UK version would be similar. It was not. It would be like sending a foreign officer to a version of our JPME courses. It is specific to their nation, not necessarily relevant to ours or our working together. It was however, very interesting to know how their military is set up and works.

2. What was the best part of the exchange visit or program? The best part of the program was getting to meet the UK officers and exchanging information about our militaries.

3. What the worst part of the overall exchange visit or program? The worst part of the

exchange program was the lectures and assignments.

4. What would you change about the visit or program? I would change the UK portion to be more like the German version where they are actually assigned to work with a unit. A lot of what I did learn about the UK military, I think I could have gathered from working with the actual people in general discussion.
5. Did participation in the Exchange program enhance your understanding of the United Kingdom, its Armed Forces, and its Reserves? Yes
6. Were you able to back brief your chain of command on the Exchange Program? I have not as of yet but will be doing so to the whole unit in November.
7. What did the British do differently from us that you think was better than us? Nothing I can think of.
8. What did the British do differently from us that you think was not as good as us? I think their system for the Reserves is not as good as ours and could be one of the reasons they have difficulty in recruiting and maintaining a viable reserve force. They do not offer a retirement benefit but do pay a bounty every year in lieu of. They also hold required meetings for reserves I believe it is monthly, it could be weekly, one night during the work week. Due to their number they also mobilize their forces more often which wears on the members and retention numbers. I heard a lot of talk about how they needed to work out a system with civilian employers so the Armed Forces could pull in their reserve members to work more closely with their active counterparts. They are also having difficulty with Reservists being mobilized and losing their civilian jobs when they return.
9. What is your impression of the British Forces. I think the British Forces are a dedicated group of people, similar to the US Forces that are willing to step up and serve their country.
10. How does the British Reserve System compare to the American Reserve system? From my perception, the British Reserve System is going through growing pains that the US Navy Reserve system went through a few years ago. They are trying to work on ways to become more integrated with the active forces. They spoke about retention being a problem but on the other hand stated that once a member has been deployed a few times they have outused their usefulness. I thought that was odd. As I said before they do not offer a pension or any type of benefits once the member leaves or retires from the system. They do normally stay longer as retirement is based on age rather than years of service.