



ADDRESS TO LAUNCH RESERVE FORCES DAY

by

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL ANGUS HOUSTON, AO, AFC

3 December 2005

Ladies and Gentlemen, Reservists—good morning. Firstly, let me say what an honour it is for me to have the opportunity to speak on the occasion of Reserve Forces Day. The Reserve Forces have always, and will continue to, make a vital contribution to Defending Australia and our national interests.

Since Federation, Australia's Reserves have seen service in every major conflict in which we, as a nation, have been involved. Indeed, during the first half of the last century the Reserve Forces provided the mainstay of Australia's Defence capability.

Our Australian military ethos has been shaped in a unique way by the ideal of the citizen soldier. Our most famous and revered commanders were Monash and Blamey. In each case, I believe their successes can in large part be explained by the additional insight and skill gained in their successful civilian careers. And of course, our ANZAC tradition is built upon the concept of the citizen soldier.

But despite this khaki-beginning, the Army does not have a monopoly on the citizen soldier. The ranks of the Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force have each been rapidly expanded by thousands of patriotic Australians each time our nation has asked for their service.

Today, just as in the past, Reservists continue to provide vital elements of ADF capability. We have all seen the contribution of our Reservists through their outstanding service as part of recent operations. Our current generation of Reservists have served with distinction in places like Cambodia, Somalia, Rwanda, Bougainville and East Timor, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Solomon Islands and Indonesia.

As I speak here this morning, the ADF has approximately 220 Reserves deployed on about 5 operations all over the Globe. Our Reservists are performing many tasks, the most common of which are medical in nature, involving Doctors, Nurses, Specialists and Medical Assistants. Our people are also working as Information Officers, Transport Officers and tradespeople.

All of these current deployments highlight that we are now calling on the Reserves to do more as part of the ADF. The Navy, Army and Air Force Reserves provide a very real and essential military capability enhancement and sustainment to our operational activity.

Our Reservists face the same dangers and risks. Sadly, when we lost nine ADF men and women on the Indonesian island of Nias in April, among them was a Royal Australian Navy Reservist, Lieutenant Matthew Davey, a Doctor who was posted to HMAS Kanimbla's Primary Casualty Reception Facility for Operation Sumatra Assist. Matthew was part of a team that was making a remarkable difference to those who were suffering. These were people willing to help those in need, who put the needs of others before themselves. Matthew's death, along with his 8 comrades, is a loss that continues to be felt very deeply by their ADF family.

In closing here today, I would like to reiterate that the ADF values its part-time members greatly. Part-time military service is very demanding and it requires very real sacrifice from you, your loved ones and your employers. We simply could not have achieved our remarkable recent successes without the support of the Reserve element of all three services at every phase of our operations. Together, our Reserves and our Regular components provide the ADF with a defence capability greater than the sum of its individual parts.

I commend Reserve Forces Day to you all as an opportunity for the wider Australian community to acknowledge the service of past and present Defence Reservists. Reservists have a long and proud tradition of service to Australia in peace and in war. Reservists come from all walks of life, and contribute to a wide variety of roles within the Australian Defence Force. And Reservists selflessly give up what little spare time they have to serve their country.

For all of these reasons—and many more—I thank all ADF Reservists for the service you render to your country. You most certainly earn the distinction of being 'twice the citizen' so aptly put by Winston Churchill all those years ago.

To all our Reserves: I appreciate your commitment; I salute your ethic of service; and I thank you most heartily.

Thank you.

--ends--