



## Welcome to the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme



**The Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme opens a unique window into the world of everyday life in the armed forces and the tasks they are asked to undertake on our behalf.**

The objective of the scheme is to help parliamentarians understand the work of the armed forces and foster genuine personally informed contributions to participate in defence debates.

Find out more from **Sir Neil Thorne the founder and Chairman of the scheme** and from **Sir David Richards the Chief of the Defence Staff**.

If you wish to view our current brochure, please download a copy below:

**Low Resolution (Faster):**  (PDF 1.3 MB)

**Higher Resolution (Better Quality):**  (PDF 10.89 MB)

**2013/2014 Accounts:**  (PDF 153 KB)

**Further information on the scheme:**

**History:**  (PDF 72 KB)

**Briefing:**  (PDF 73 KB)

**Course Notes:**  (PDF 65 KB)

**Programme:**  (PDF 27 KB)

**MoD Article:**  (PDF 3.0 MB)

New website for Armed Forces Parliamentary Trust: [www.afpt-uk.org](http://www.afpt-uk.org)



## Introduction to the scheme

### Sir Neil Thorne - Founder and Chairman



When I entered the House there were very few members of parliament with previous military experience and there are even fewer today, which had a serious affect upon the quality of our debates. In this situation, I felt that even a very limited experience of service life must be of help to members in providing them with some foundation for informed comment.

By experiencing life from the lowest rank upwards would have given the graduates benefit, but clearly members of parliament do not have time to do this, so I have invited them to spend 22 days in a year looking at service life from the perspective of a Lt Commander, a Major or a Squadron Leader. This is usually the highest rank which deals with the private sailor, soldier and airman on a day to day basis.

It soon became necessary for participants to be issued with a uniform not only for use as a working overall, but also to enable them to benefit from the experience of becoming embedded within a unit and being treated as one of the family. Our own badges of rank soon followed to help our hosts at all levels identify their guests and to put them into a proper junior context.

In 1997, the then Secretary of State asked me to expand the scheme and to maintain MPs' interest in and knowledge of the services over a longer period. A Post-Graduate scheme for 20 days was therefore introduced in 2000 to demonstrate a little of the life of a Commander, Lt Colonel or Wing Commander. Another step was taken soon after by the introduction of a third level for another 20 days at the level of a Naval Captain, Colonel, or Group Captain to learn about jointery and how the services now co-operate closely with one another. The fourth and final experience at Commodore, Brigadier and Air Commodore level is based on the course at the Royal College of Defence Studies.

Mr Speaker continues as our President, and I am also grateful to members on all sides of both Houses for their advice and help.

My thanks too to General Sir David Richards, the Chief of the Defence Staff, who takes a very close interest in our work, to the Service Chiefs, the First Sea Lord, the Chief of the General Staff, the Chief of Air Staff and the Vice Chief of Defence Staff, the Permanent Secretary, Mrs Ursula Brennan, and to all of their own staff who have been involved. The sponsor companies BAE SYSTEMS, Rolls Royce, AgustaWestland and Capgemini continue with their generous support.

In times when we are asking our young sailors, soldiers and airmen to undertake hazardous duties on our behalf it is vital that members of parliament should ensure that they are fully aware of how the service system operates.

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## Introduction to the scheme

### General Sir David Richards – Chief of the Defence Staff



It is a pleasure to give my very strong support to the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme which, for over twenty years, has successfully engaged members from the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the European Parliament with the activities of the Armed Forces. At a time when the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force are engaged across the globe, we particularly value the opportunity this scheme presents for parliamentarians to get a closer look at what we do.

It is through visits over the year, including to Afghanistan, the Falkland Islands and the Caribbean, to ships, airbases and army establishments - both in the UK and abroad - that members of the scheme will see the drive and determination of our forces. Members' operational visits, in particular, give an opportunity to see at first hand how it is, the quality of our people which underpins our overall ability to sustain operational success over time, and the training and equipment required to support them in this essential task to support the national interest in an uncertain world. This year, as the decisions made in the Strategic Defence and Security Review begin to take effect, the insights provided through the scheme will help to inform debate and provide a wider understanding of the post-review force, which must be capable of reacting to a number of diverse threats.

I cannot emphasise enough the benefit of engaging with personnel from all three services, whose daily activities play such an important role in government business. The Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme facilitates that engagement in an environment that allows a frank exchange of views and open discussion. This ability to connect with all ranks is the great benefit of the scheme, and it has an enviable record of success. Its goal continues to be to enable parliamentarians to be appropriately informed and alive to the issues affecting capabilities of the Armed Forces.

I encourage you to grasp this opportunity and return the enclosed application form.

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