**A TIGER AND THE MILITARY COVENANT?**

**Covenant -**  cov·e·nant \ˈkəv-nənt, ˈkə-və-\

1. A usually formal, solemn, and binding agreement.
2. A written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action.

OK, so we are agreed on a covenant is. We are Veterans, what is our part in this, and how can we help make it happen?

Firstly, it should be said that a Veteran must have a firm intention to turn the words of the covenant into good deeds, and this will require passion and commitment in doing your bit. There are two sides to any contract or agreement, so Veterans have a part to play.

The covenant is a familiar concept to Cromwell’s Solemn League, and Covenant entered into by Parliament: “All Parliament’s affairs have prospered well since the Covenant was taken, look at our victories and successes” – The Soldier Catechism 1644. The Military Covenant has become the prism through which all welfare or ‘people’ issues relating to the UK’s Armed Forces community – serving personnel, their families and veterans are focussed. Although the Military Covenant is now established in public policy, uncertainty lingers about its exact nature and provenance. Counter-intuitively, the Military Covenant is not an antique compact signed by the New Model’s Commander-in-Chief and neither was it drawn up in Wellington’s era. Like many traditions to be found in the UK, particularly those surrounding national institutions such as the Armed Forces, the Military Covenant was invented.

As an Armed Forces Veteran your example is needed and will continue to be, in maintaining the positive perception of Armed forces personnel. Without that goodwill, the covenant fails. If the covenant fails then first goodwill and then, ultimately, trust is withdrawn.

By now our Veteran Tiger – “Tommy”, has served, has become a Service Leaver, and weathered the trauma or transition, and is now an employed civilian, contributing to the nation in the workplace. Tommy’s positive example can:

* Promote the fact that his or her employer is an armed forces-friendly organisation;
* Tommy’s value as an employee should enthuse the business to support the employment of veterans young and old;
* Tommy’s knowledge, skills, and attitude will serve to help the company better understand the Armed Forces including Reservists to ensure that they are fully supported and do not face discrimination.

The British public has been sceptical about the more recent deployments but remains highly supportive of the UK Armed Forces. The following are some perceptions of UK Armed Forces personnel

* Over 90% of the public say they support Armed Forces personnel regardless of their opinions about the missions;
* More than 75% of the public think current members of Armed Forces are more likely to be respected by wider society;
* 64% of the public know of a charity or organisation for ex-Service personnel. The most well-known was Royal British Legion and Help for Heroes - More than 75% of the public buy a Poppy during the Poppy Appeal each year;
* At least 70% of the British public support access to priority health services for Veterans with physical or mental health injuries;
* While public hostility seems small, it is important to note this corresponds to about 1.24 million people, with potentially grave consequences for the civil-military relationship in the UK.

The UK’s Armed Forces have engaged in military deployments that extend back to this country’s imperial past. The Armed Forces have long been a key focus of interest for both the UK public and the media, the past decade of involvement in intense operations, has increased interest.

How supportive the population is, or how much they understand of the Armed Forces can seem unclear. How the public perceives their Armed Forces is necessary for the following reasons:

* Public opinion plays a significant role in supporting defence and foreign policy.
* The attitudes of the public can influence recruitment and retention in the Armed Forces as well as how Service leavers transition back into Civvy Street.

On the whole, the UK public has high regard for the Armed Forces, but little support for the recent missions. The public makes a clear distinction between the politics of the mission and the individuals serving on it. Military deployments may have introduced the public with an intuitive understanding of the fundamental realities of military life compared to other European states. This form of knowledge highlights a distinctive feature of UK civil–military relations.

Regarding the nation’s respect for the welfare of serving and Veteran Armed Forces personnel, history is a poor blueprint for twenty-first-century public policy. The models that generate goodwill, trust and esteem come from Veterans stepping out into Civvy Street and leading by example – Good Luck!

“And Harry doesn't mind, if he doesn't, make the scene
He's got a daytime job - he's doing alright” – *Dire Straits*