

**The Sovereign Base Areas Administration and British Forces Cyprus
Covenant with Cyprus based UK Veterans**

***Regular, Reservist, Retired
Building an Enduring and Stronger Partnership***

CONTEXT

UK Armed Forces Covenant

1. The Armed Forces Covenant is an agreement between the armed forces' community (past and present), the nation and the government. It encapsulates the moral obligation to those who serve, have served, their families and the bereaved. The covenant's twin underlying principles are that members of the armed forces community should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services and that special consideration is appropriate in some cases. Within the UK, community covenants support the armed forces covenant. They are a voluntary, non-binding commitment by local councils to support members of the armed forces community in their area. Additionally, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) identifies and addresses genuine areas of disadvantage with major stakeholders, including the 3 Service Families Federations, the Soldiers' Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association (SSAFA) and the Royal British Legion (RBL).

Cyprus

2. It is estimated there are approximately 2,000 UK veterans who have chosen to live on the island of Cyprus, including approximately 200 in the Turkish Controlled Area (TCA). These personnel and their families, whilst subject to the same underlying principles as enshrined in the UK covenant, are not always able to benefit due to living abroad. Whilst that is their choice, many of these veteran personnel are members of service associations, a way in which links with serving military colleagues are forged and maintained.

Sovereign Base Areas and British Forces Cyprus

3. The SBAs are one of 14 UK Overseas Territories and the only one funded and administered by the MOD. The SBAs comprise 98 square miles of Sovereign UK territory on the island of Cyprus and are home to approximately 7,000 service personnel, UK based civilian personnel and their families. This is the UK Armed Forces' largest overseas Base. The 1960 Treaty of Establishment that established the independence of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) declared three governing principles for the SBAs: effective use of the SBAs as military bases; full cooperation with the RoC; and protection of the interests of those resident or working in the SBAs (i.e Cypriots). The SBA Administration (SBAA) is the *de facto* local authority to those that live in the SBAs including British Forces Cyprus (BFC); the serving community. There is no covenant between the SBAA and its serving military community, as the relationship between the two elements is mutually supportive. The SBAA/BFC has no formal responsibility for UK Armed Forces' matters outside of the SBAs, which remain the preserve of the British High Commission (BHC). Nevertheless, the connection between members of the Cyprus based veteran community and BFC is unique in many respects and offers mutual benefit to both parties. A bespoke, carefully framed and agreed Covenant therefore has merit.

THE SBAA/BFC COVENANT WITH CYPRUS BASED VETERANS

Intent of the Covenant

4. The intent of this covenant is to provide a formal agreement, subject to periodic review, of a strong and enduring partnership, between the Bases and the Cyprus based veteran community. This agreement is based upon a mutual understanding of service and sacrifice and a desire to work in partnership for the mutual benefit of both the serving and veteran communities.

Parties to the Covenant

5. This covenant is between the Cyprus based veteran community (including spouse/partner/widow(ers)) and the serving British Forces military community, UK Based Civilians (UKBCs) and their families.

a. **Veteran.** For the purpose of this covenant, a veteran is any person who has served in the UK Armed Forces for more than 6 months and who is permanently resident¹ in Cyprus. The veteran community will be represented by a senior veteran, who will jointly sign this covenant.

b. **SBAA/BFC.** The serving military community. UKBCs and their families are those who are temporarily resident in the SBAs. They are represented by the Administrator of the SBAs/Commander British Forces, who will jointly sign this covenant.

6. **Effective Date and Review.** This covenant will be effective from 9th July 2021 and subject to periodic review. The signatories and representatives² will meet annually in January to reaffirm this agreement and raise any issues of mutual concern or benefit.

What the SBAA/BFC will do

7. The SBAA/BFC will:

- a. **Acknowledge** the veteran community, including spouses/partners/widows(ers), as a trusted and valued on-island asset, undertake to ensure veterans are treated appropriately, recognising previous service as well as the knowledge, skills and experience they possess.
- b. Permit veterans **advantage** over other non-entitled personnel when seeking to become members of BFC clubs and societies. Veterans applying for membership will take preference over other non-entitled personnel and veterans will not count towards the 15% non-entitled personnel limit.
- c. **Where appropriate, allow access** for veterans and spouses to the wider SBAs/BFC estate, subject to the veterans assurance/vetting process, to use non publicly funded facilities as non-entitled personnel. Station passes will detail both the club/society/organisation as well as "VETERAN". UK Veterans' ID cards will be recognised by BFC and will assist in the BFC access pass application process.
- d. Undertake to **keep the veteran community aware** of ongoing relevant issues and community events, by linking with the Station Veterans' representative as well as Service organisations and Regimental Associations.
- e. **Maintain effective and appropriate communications** to both inform and manage expectations.

¹ Veterans who are outside of these criteria can still be accommodated as temporary visitors.

² In addition to the signatories, the parties to the review will be ACOS Sp, DCS, Station Commanders and Station Veterans' representatives.

What Veterans will do

8. The Veteran community will, on a voluntary basis:
 - a. **Actively** engage with BFC, **providing a Station Veteran representative** at Episkopi, Akrotiri, Dhekelia and Ayios Nikolaos, to work with Station Commanders and their staff in implementing aspects of this covenant. TORs for this role can be found at Annex A.
 - b. **Support** the work of the SBAA/BFC through insight, influence and promoting a positive message across Cyprus in support of SBAA and Station Community Engagements plans.
 - c. **Assist** through both membership of, and volunteering for appointments within, Station clubs/societies or support to welfare, and other voluntary positions, across the SBAA/BFC. This may include service through the Base Support Group (BSG).
 - d. **Promote, contribute to and attend** relevant Station events and, where appropriate, places of worship.
 - e. **Apply, when available³**, for the UK Government Veteran identity card to assist BFC in granting concessions to veterans and validating service. This will also assist with the BFC pass application process.

Conduct

9. SBAA/BFC undertake to treat the Veteran community with respect, recognising their service, include veterans in the planning and conduct of appropriate BFC and Station events and communicate effectively.
10. Veterans undertake to follow BFC and Station direction, specifically on matters of security and Health and Safety, and continue to uphold the high values and standards of the UK Armed Forces.

Limitations

11. This covenant is unable to make provisions for:
 - a. Treating veterans as "entitled personnel" in accordance with the Treaty of Establishment. This includes, but is not limited to, employment in UK Dependent positions and access to duty free goods.
 - b. Permitting access to the SBAs through the waiving of immigration controls, which may be in place between Cyprus and the Turkish Controlled Area.
 - c. Any medical treatment, except in an emergency whilst on the Bases.
 - d. Use of Officers' or Sergeants' Mess facilities, unless a member, or having been invited and hosted by a current Mess member.
 - e. Use of any publicly funded facilities which would incur additional cost to the public purse including, but not limited to, Post Office and Recycling facilities.
 - f. Forgoing the normal assurance/vetting measures in place for serving military personnel, civilian personnel, contractors and Locally Employed Civilians. This will include obtaining Cypriot Police Criminal Records Check (CRC) at personal cost.
 - g. Confer upon veterans any rights. The decision of the Station Commander in whether a veteran can benefit from membership of clubs or access station facilities is final.

³ The roll out of the Government Veteran ID card has been delayed from Dec 19. Phase 2 (existing veterans) roll out work still ongoing as at March 2021.

Measures to be taken to ensure this covenant is appropriately implemented will be contained in direction from Chief of Staff BFC to Station Commanders. A copy of this direction will be shared with Station Veteran Representatives and distributed widely.

RJ THOMSON CBE DSO

Major General
Administrator of the Sovereign Base Areas
& Commander British Forces Cyprus

RP O'BRIEN CB OBE

Air Vice Marshal (Retired)
Senior Veteran Representative
Cyprus

Annexes:

A. Station Veteran Representative Terms of Reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR (*insert stn name*) STATION VETERAN REPRESENTATIVE

References

- A. The SBAA and BFC Covenant with Cyprus based UK Veterans. v5 Jun 21.
- B. Action Plan to Implement SBAA/BFC Veterans' Covenant. v2 Nov 20.

Background

- 1. In support of paragraph 8.a of Reference A; the veteran community will on a voluntary basis, actively engage with BFC, providing a Station Veteran Representative (SVR) at Episkopi, Akrotiri, Dhekelia and Ayios Nikolaos, to work with Station Commanders and their staff in implementing aspects of this covenant.

Appointment

- 2. This is a voluntary role working with and appointed by the Station as a direct link to the wider veteran community. The postholder will liaise with the Station Commander and ensure that the interests of the serving and non-serving users of station facilities are understood by both communities. These generic Terms of Reference (TORs) are produced by HQ BFC, however Station HQs are encouraged to enhance and edit the TORs, so that they better reflect the requirement and unique perspective of their individual Station and contribute towards building an enduring and stronger partnership to the mutual benefit of both the serving and veteran communities.

Responsibilities

- 3. **Roll out and delivery of Veterans Covenant:**
 - a. Provide a single Stn PoC for all Veteran related matters.
 - b. Support and assist veterans who wish to apply for BFC Station Access Pass. *At the discretion of the Station Comd and dependant on security state, this will also permit those veterans to access Happy Valley.*
 - c. Define and publicise to the veteran community which station facilities/amenities are (and are not) available to veterans holding a Station Access Pass.
 - d. Actively engage with the veteran community to promote the Veteran Covenant and outline opportunities this brings to veterans and manage expectations accordingly

4. **Enduring management and continual support:**

- a. Incorporate veteran matters into Station new arrivals briefs, explaining the veteran contribution to the Cyprus offer (clubs/societies/welfare support) and local regimental associations.
- b. In support of the station, make available an appropriate version of station arrivals brief, for non-entitled personnel, to the veterans who qualify for a station access pass.
- c. Support veterans who wish to apply for membership of clubs and encourage to volunteer to assist in the running of said clubs to highlight the importance of giving back to the community.
- d. Identify and advertise areas where voluntary assistance from veterans utilising knowledge, skills and experience might benefit BFC.
- e. Include veterans, where applicable, in the planning of appropriate Station events and encourage attendance and support from the veteran community.
- f. Maintain effective communications to the wider veteran community, primarily through service/regimental associations and clubs.
- g. Support production of veteran articles in the Cyprus Lion and BFC/SBAA social media platforms.
- h. Promote the opportunities associated with the BSG.

(Signed by Stn J1/A1 Staff)

(Signed by Incumbent)

(Authenticated by Stn Comd)

Rank, name, job

Email:

Ext:

Rank (retd), name, job

Email:

Contact No:

Rank, name, job

Email:

Ext: