

Speech for Armed Forces Day

Saturday 25th June 2011

1. I am honoured to have been asked to open Jersey's second Armed Forces Day event today in Jersey.
2. Armed Forces Day was, of course, launched at the beginning of this week and Jersey participated in the "Fly a flag" campaign at the Cenotaph as part of a national campaign whereby thousands of flags are flown across the UK as well as in our bases overseas.
3. Why has Armed Forces Day been introduced and why is it so important? I think there are two main reasons.
4. Firstly, it gives us an opportunity publicly to express our appreciation and gratitude to those who lay their lives on the line on a daily basis in our interests. We often tend to take our peace and security for granted. But the fact that we have it is due very largely to the brave men and women of our Armed Forces who are our ultimate protectors. Too often their bravery and dedication is not fully appreciated. Armed Forces Day brings what they do to the forefront and reminds us of the vital contribution they are making.
5. As I have said, they are willing to pay the ultimate price on our behalf. Only a few days ago another young soldier was killed in Afghanistan. This brings the total to 374 since operations began there in October 2001 – and of course that takes no account of the significant numbers

of others who have been injured, some very seriously, during the course of their duty in that country. Nor, of course, does it take account of the many who were killed in the Iraq conflict.

6. The second reason why Armed Forces Day is so important is that it serves to support and encourage the Armed Forces themselves. I can do no better than quote what was said by a senior officer currently serving in Helmand Province in Afghanistan:-

“Whilst it would be a normal working day for military personnel from all three services serving their country across Afghanistan, it is heart-warming to know that the public back home are thinking of us on Armed Forces Day. The support of the British public is hugely important to us all, especially when we are so far from home.”

7. The Armed Forces do not consist solely of professionals. There are significant numbers of volunteer reservists in all three Services. WE in Jersey have our own Field Squadron and it is a great privilege to say that there are potentially six members who could be deployed to Afghanistan in 2012 who are currently undergoing pre-deployment training. A further two Squadron members have returned from active service this year, which brings the total number of personnel deployed to Afghanistan since 2007 to 10. I pay tribute to these members of the civilian community who have been willing to contribute to the security of their country by serving in the Armed Forces.

8. I have spoken of the sacrifices which are made by members of the Armed Forces. At the Levée at Government House this year a number of former members of the Services were over here on holiday courtesy of the Holidays for Heroes Charity. I felt very humbled to meet one young man who had decided to forgo his university career in order to go straight into the Army but had unfortunately been seriously injured by a roadside bomb, losing both legs and one of his arms. His courage, fortitude and sense of humour in the face of such adversity was deeply humbling.
9. Talking of Holidays for Heroes, I would wish to pay tribute to that charity and to the members of SSAFA and the RBL who carry out such excellent work in assisting former members of the Armed Forces. This is a tangible way in which we can show our gratitude and appreciation.
10. I much look forward to looking round those who are exhibiting and I am particularly pleased to notice various of the cadet organisations. I pay tribute to the adult volunteers who play such an important role in these organisations.
11. Today would not have been possible without the hard work of all those who have participated and I would like to thank the personnel of the Jersey Field Squadron for planning and staging the event. I hope very much that you all enjoy it and I have great pleasure in declaring this Armed Forces Day event in Jersey officially open.