**LINGO Part 1**

The stupid half of me said to my other half, why don’t you write a Blog about military language and its civilian equivalents? It was more an instruction rather than a question; many will know that my stupid half is dominant ☺

My more intelligent half had a knee-jerk reaction and thought, why not catalogue the contents of Noah’s Ark, or, here’s a Gordian knot, undo it and neatly stow away that rope, please. But then again, what fun! During a period in my Army career, I had the privilege of serving with an incredibly diverse group from all corps and arms and spent a considerable amount of time on operations with nearly all Infantry regiments. That meant absorbing some of their own unique language, words, phrases, and sayings. Evolutionary linguistics is the interdisciplinary study of the emergence of the languages. I have no such ability, but our Armed Forces have the unique capability to create words born out of their experiences that find their way into the Oxford English Dictionary, and over the years many words that started as military slang have found their way into everyday parlance. Given the plethora of sources out there (this blog began as +70,000 words long). I am surprised that the Defence Centre for Languages and Culture (DCLC) does not provide a course on the language and culture of the Royal Marines, the Parachute Regiment, the Guards, or any of the Corps and Regiments, Royal Air Force, and Royal Navy. Such is the panoply of lexicon!

Once I thought about writing a tongue in cheek guide to good eating in Security Forces bases in an Egon Ronay style. A missed opportunity?

If you are a Service Leaver and getting ready to look for a job on Civvy Street, you may need some basic training on how to convert your military language into terms that will resonate and connect with civilian employers. While translating "militarese" is not an exact science, it is essential to become familiar with the terminology of businesses in Civvy Street, and how some of it might equate to your individual military experience. Transitioning back to civilian life can be daunting in itself, changing aspects of your language to more effectively connect and communicate are essential to the successful Veteran.

It can be painful for Veterans to hear discussions and watch movies about modern wars when the dialogue is full of obsolete slang. Language changes with the times and the Armed Forces are no different. Personnel deployed on operations Northern Ireland, Bosnia, the Falklands, Iraq and Afghanistan have developed an expansive military vocabulary, taking elements from popular culture as well as the doublespeak of the military industrial complex. The ideal is to find work in a company of like-minded souls and continue to speak the way you used to and engage in the inevitable banter. However, the ideal is not always available, and Veterans make changes to their life to succeed.

Of course, we Brits have inherited some language from our allies, such as - REMF from the Americans. We all know what that means, but I prefer the typically British, less crude, understated, yet cutting – PONTI (Person of No Tactical Importance). A great many Armed Forces euphemisms translate perfectly in Civvy Street, and continue to have high relevance, for example;

7 P's

“Prior Planning and Preparation Prevents a Piss Poor Performance”

So, what works, what needs translating, and what really shouldn’t be used at all with the uninitiated (Civilians)?

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| **Term / Phrase** | **Meaning** | **Translation** | **Remarks** |
| All cammed up and nowhere to go | A cancelled operation | Cancelled | Will probably need explaining. |
| Ally | The term for a battlefield fashionista | Chic – Trendsetting… |
| Andy Capp’s Commandos | Army Catering Corps | Cooks | Will probably need explaining. |
| Baltic | Cold | Freezing cold | Civilians might not understand the level of cold that you are trying to describe. |
| Bangstick / Bunduqia | Rifle | Weapon | More likely to become your Cell phone and Laptop. |
| Banter | Ruthless mickey taking and character assassination | Teasing | With extreme caution, Civvies really don’t get it! |
| Basha | Sleeping quarters | Home | Will probably need explaining. |
| Ball bagged | Knackered | Fatigued | Be polite! |
| Battle Taxi | Warrior APC | The Underground, Bus, and Taxis. | How you get to work. |
| Beer Tokens | Money | Cash, probably a credit card | It has other uses in Civvy Street. |
| Bezza | Best mate | Best Friend |
| Biscuit Tin | Unarmoured Land Rovers | Chelsea Tractors | Often poorly parked. |
| Bible Banger | Royal Navy term for Padre | Vicar or Priest |
| Biff / Biffer | Someone who spends a lot of time on sick notes | A possible malingerer |
| Biff chit | Sicknote | Doctors Note | Essential if you go unserviceable in Civvy Street. |
| Bimble | Walking slowly without intent. | Stroll, amble, wander | You will see a lot of that in Civvy Street. |
| Binned | Discharged | Fired, made redundant, sacked. | No explanation needed |
| Black Taxi | Boots | Walking shoes |
| Bleeps | Royal Signals personnel | Probably the IT Department | Veterans |
| [Blighty](https://www.arrse.co.uk/wiki/Blighty) | The UK | England, N. Ireland, Scotland, and Wales | Home |
| Blue Jobs | The subject of much banter | Royal Air Force | **Veterans** from the RAF |
| A Bunch of Fives | Punch | Physical violence | My Dad used to call it that. |
| Bobfoc | Body off Baywatch Face of Crimewatch | Referring to unattractive women | Not politically correct, be careful |
| Bobfok | Body of Barbie Face of Ken | As above | Not politically correct, be careful |
| Bodysnatchers | Stretcher bearers | The Ambulance Service | A bit dark for general use |
| Bootneck or Booties | Royal Marines | Royal Marines |
| Boomstick | A shotgun used for breaching | A tool used for sweeping the floor. |
| Brag Rags – | Medal’s and campaign ribbons | Your **Veterans** badge – Wear it with pride! |
| Brylcreem Boys – | Royal Air Force | WWII term for RAF | **Veterans** |
| Brown Jobs / Pongo’s | RAF and Navy slang for the Army | WWII term still in use, but not as widely | **Veterans** |
| Buckshee | Spare kit acquired without proper chits | Unaccounted for spare equipment |
| Cabbage Commando  | Chef | See Andy Capps Commandos |
| Cake & Arse Party | Not very good | Highly Disorganised |
| Canteen Medals | Food stains on your uniform | Keep a spare shirt and tie at the office |
| Chin-strapped | Knackered | Very tired |
| Chogey | Locally Employed Civilian (in overseas camp) |  | Caution – not politically correct, don’t use it. |
| Chocolate Orange | General, Commanding Officer | CEO or Managing Director | **The Boss.** |
| Corgi | CO’s really good idea | CEO’s directive or initiative |
| Chunky | Pioneer Corps | Roadworker | **Veteran** |
| Chippy | Rubbish kit – your kit looks proper chippy | Pound shop clothing and equipment | Low-cost stuff. |
| Colonel Gadaffi | NAAFI | Pub, Restaurant, Bar |
| **Term / Phrase** | **Meaning** | **Translation** | **Remarks** |
| Combat Handbag | New smaller issue Bergen | Laptop Bag | Things change, although you can carry your laptop in a backpack if you prefer. |
| Commissioned Labourer | Late Entry Officer | Consultant | Older, wiser, and often a Veteran |
| Crab Air | RAF | Low-Cost Airlines |
| Crow | Recruit | Can’t Read or Write | They walk amongst us. |
| Desmonds | The SAS | To be treated with respect. | **Veterans** |
| Desert Lily | Urinals made from canteen tins or other empty cans | The restroom. | Portaloo. |
| Dhobi | Washing | Laundry |
| Dhobi Dust | Washing powder | Daz, Omo, Ariel….. |
| Dig Out | Help Yourself | The self-serve buffet | All you can eat is not a challenge! |
| Dobra | Alls good | Everything is ok |
| Donkey Walloper | Household Cavalry | Nice chap, works in the city. | **Veteran** |
| Egg Banjos | Fried egg sandwiches | Pret a Manger sandwich | They probably don’t do Egg Banjos |
| Egyptian PT | Rest | Rest | ZZZzzzzzzzzzz |
| Fat Albert | Hercules Aircraft | Jumbo Jet or A380 | No business class in a Herc |
| Face like a robbers dog/face like a smashed spanner | Unattractive, see Bobfoc/k | Not attractive |
| Feds | Special Investigation Branch | The Police (not the pop group) | Even their mothers hate them |
| File 13 | put in the bin | Shredder |
| Fish and Chips | Fighting In Someone’s House and Causing Havoc In Public Spaces | A traditional British Meal | Salt and vinegar? |
| Fred | future royal engineer disaster | Carbunkle. | See HRH Prince Charles for advice |
| Full screw | Corporal | Probably a Senior Manager, now. | Highly motivated empire builders. **Veteran**. |
| Fobbit | Someone who doesn’t leave the Forward Operating Base | The Receptionist | They also serve who sit and wait |
| For those of you who have done well, Well Done! For those of you who didn't do quite so well, Bloody Well Done Anyway!” | The CO is showing unoriginality and a lack of genuine interest. | The CEO is showing unoriginality and a lack of genuine interest. |
| Gat | Rifle | Pen | Your next weapon of choice |
| Getting Eyes On | Seeing something | Reading a Spreadsheet |
| Glasshouse | Military Prison | Prison |
| Gleaming! | Really good | Excellent |
| Glito’s | Good looking in theatre only | What goes on tour stays on tour… | Controversial |
| God | RSM | Not politically correct, a **Veteran** |
| God’s Acre | Parade Square | Horse Guards Parade | Where **Veterans** fall in for Remembrance Sunday |
| Gonk Bag | Sleeping bag | King size double bed |
| Grollies | Underpants | Underwear |
| Grope | Ground operational exercise | Cop a feel | Gross Misconduct, grounds for instant dismissal |
| Gravel Bashing / Square Bashing | Marching around the parade square | Repetitious training and evaluation |
| Green Slime | Intelligence Corps | Corporate Intelligence |
| Grunt | Infantry Soldier | **Veteran** |
| Gym Queen | Physical Training Instructor | Personal Trainer | **Veteran** |
| Hand your bedding in | retiring from the army to do another job | Service Leaver | **Veteran** |
| Hanky Panky | ginger beer or other non-alcoholic beverage mixed with whisky or brandy to get around dry ship rules (Royal Navy) | Another reason for dismissal |
| Heads | Toilets (Navy) | The gents, or the Ladies |
| Hoofing | Really good | Excellent |
| Horror bag | Packed lunch | Pret a Manger | Picnic |
| **Term / Phrase** | **Meaning** | **Translation** | **Remarks** |
| If it ain’t snowing, we ain’t going / if it ain't raining we ain't training – refers to the level of difficulty expected of every training exercise |
| Jack | Selfish | Very Selfish | Civilians might not understand the level of selfishness that you are trying to describe. |
| Jankers | Be on a charge or punishment duties | On remand | That’s what my Dad used to call it. |
| Kate Carney | Army | Rhyming slang | I was in the Kate. |
| Kebab compass | used to find their way to barracks when drunk | Navigation by fast food outlets | Get a Taxi home |
| Kronenburg (Kronenburg 1664) | out on the drink and a woman looks 16 from behind and 64 from the front | Be careful, not politically correct |
| Kit Kat arse | the effect of being sat in a Bedford four-ton truck for hours on end | the effect of being sat in an Underground train for hours on end | No change |
| Lance Jack | Lance Corporal | Probably an old salt at Goods in | **Veteran** |
| Lawndart | Paratrooper | Probably on the “circuit”. | A **Veteran** with Airborne Initiative |
| Long Range Sniper | Royal Artillery | Gunners (not Arsenal FC) | **Veteran** |
| Lumpy Jumpers | Female Service Personnel | Female colleagues | Do not use, not politically correct. Female **Veterans**. |
| Green Maggot | Sleeping Bag | King size double bed | Anybody can be uncomfortable |
| Matelots | Sailors | Royal Navy | **Veterans** |
| Meat heads | Royal Military Police (RMP) | Even their mothers hate them… | **Veterans**, so we love them |
| Mincing | Doing things with no specific purpose | A certain way of walking | Be careful, can be a politically incorrect term |
| MOD plods | Ministry of Defence police | Police | Mostly **Veterans** |
| Monkey(s) | RMP | More coppers | **Veterans** |
| Minging | Disgusting | Disgusting | Really not nice |
| Moon Chicken | Someone who is crazy or odd | A weirdo | They walk amongst us….. |
| Mouth Like Gandhi's flip flop | Dry mouth | Very Thirsty | Could probably use a beer or two |
| Mufti | Civilian clothes | Your day to day attire | Dress for Success |
| Muppet | Most Useless Person Pusher Ever Trained | Every company has one… |
| Muck and Bullets | Pretty bad | Not all Beer and Skittles | Not a great time |
| NFI | No f\*\*king interest | No flipping interest |
| NATO | Normal Tea Order (white with two sugars) | White with two sugars, please. |
| NIG | New in Germany/New In Green | The office junior |
| Off the hook / let out to play | firefight | At work | Unless your civilian employment involves gun play… |
| On Stag | On Guard Duty | At work | Day to day duties |
| Pad | Married quarters | Home |
| Pavement Pizza | Vomit |
| Pressing sheets | Sleeping | See Egyptian PT |
| Pimp-mobiles | B7 armoured Range Rovers | VIP CP transport | Chelsea Tractors, often badly parked |
| Pink death | the meat put in ration packs by the cookhouse | Picnic | See Horror bag |
| Poets day | Push off early tomorrows Saturday | Friday | The weekend is coming, use it well |
| Pongo | Army (used by those, not in the Army) | **Veteran** |
| PONTI | Person Of No Tactical Importance | A nicer version of REMF | Personnel probably on the company overhead |
| Rag order | A Squad or individual in disarray / in a mess | No clear desk policy |
| REMF | Rear Echelon Mother F\*\*\*\*\*s | See PONTI |
| Rock Apes | RAF Regiment | Often the source of much humour to other Armed Forces | **Veteran** |
| **Term / Phrase** | **Meaning** | **Translation** | **Remarks** |
| Rodney | Officer | An awfully nice chap | **Veteran** |
| Rupert | Officer | Another awfully nice chap | **Veteran** |
| [Sangar](https://www.arrse.co.uk/wiki/Sangar) | Possibly derived from the India a fortified observation and security position | A security position at a front gate or perimeter of a government building, possibly fortified. |
| Scab Lifter | Medic | First Aider | A bit dark, use carefully |
| Scaleys | Royal Signals | Probably the IT Department | **Veterans** |
| Scran | Food | Breakfast, lunch, or dinner |
| Septic Tank | Yank (American) | Our American cousins | Colonials |
| Shiny / Gucci Kit | Rare or expensive equipment | Louis Vuitton | Relates to all expensive brands |
| Slop Jockey | Chef | See Cabbage Commando | Armed Forces cooks are a recurring theme in military humour and banter, **Veterans** |
| SNAFU | Situation Normal (all f\*\*ked up) | Administrative error |
| Sneaky Beaky | Them….. |
| Snowdrop | RAF Police | Even more police | **Veterans** |
| Sprog | Recruit | A School Leaver on Work Experience attachment |
| Steffi Graf | Leyland Daf (4 Tonner) | HGV |  |
| SWAT | Some Weekends and Tuesdays | The Territorial Army | Reservists |
| Swamp Donkey | Someone who wets the bed |
| Tab (Tactical Advance to Battle) | Long march with weight | The Underground and Buses are on strike. |
| Teeny Weeny Airways | Army Air Corps | Helicopters | VIP transport or Air Ambulance |
| This is bone | Bone is a favourite term for something pointless | Time wasting | It happens everywhere….. |
| Toms | Young soldiers (Parachute Regiment) | Veterans |
| Trapping Kit | worn with the intent of gaining female affection | Smart, casual or your clubbing outfit |
| [Webbing](https://www.arrse.co.uk/wiki/Webbing) | As worn by the type of ladies I never get to meet, and several dodgy types down Union St. |
| Wet | Drink, usually but not always a cup of tea (also brew) | Earl Grey or Lapsang Souchon | Can be taken NATO |
| Whoever said the pen is mightier than the sword obviously never encountered automatic weapons | A sentiment is shared by **Veterans** frustrated by the pace and politics of the office. |
| Willy Wocker – | Chinook Helicopter | if you see it in the city, it’s either lost, or something big is going down |
| Wingman | Your buddy | Colleague | Can also be your friend |
| Wooden Tops | Brigade of Guards | Nice chaps that work in the city | **Veterans** |
| Yaffle | Food | Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner |
| Yaffling Spanners | Knife, Fork & Spoon | Cutlery |
| Yomp | Long march with weight (Royal Marines) | Public transport is on strike again! |
| You’re on your own time now | A favourite motivational phrase from a Warrant Officer | Unpaid overtime |

**Voice Procedure** includes various techniques used to clarify, simplify and standardise spoken communications over Combat Net Radio, as used by the Armed Forces. A great deal of that also creeps into everyday speech, even SMS text, and emails, such as:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Term / Phrase** | **Meaning** | **Translation** | **Remarks** |
| Roger that, sometimes abbreviated to - RT | Understood | Not to be confused with….. |
| Ack | Acknowledged | Received | Not necessarily understood |
| Wilco | Will Comply | Will get the task done. |
| Say Again | Repeat your last message | Please say that again |

Veterans, by nature of their unique experiences and background, are generally effective communicators, although sometimes their language of the past can creep in and identify them, Veterans:

* Listen first;
* They use people’s names more;
* They let others talk, and talk about themselves;
* They focus on making others feel important, and their inclusion;
* They emphasise similarities.

“And with these words, I can see;
Clear through the clouds that covered me;
Just give it time then speak my name;
Now we can hear ourselves again” – Pink Floyd