



**Report of a Suicide Prevention Workshop
in Washington, October 2014:**

Comparing US and UK Military Suicide Rates Over Time and Comparing Factors Related to Suicide

Surgeon Captain John Sharpley Royal Navy

3- 5 April 2017

**HFM-RSY 275 – Military Suicide Prevention
Riga, LATVIA**

INSIDE SATURDAY'S **Daily Mail**

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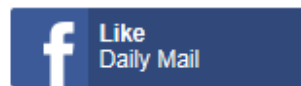
Suicide of Falklands veterans

by ALUN REES, Mail on Sunday

A shocking little-known toll of the Falklands War is revealed today, 20 years on.

More veterans have taken their own lives since the South Atlantic conflict ended than the number of Servicemen killed in action.

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Fewer Falklands War suicides than feared, study suggests

14 May 2013 | UK

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The claim that more Falklands veterans have killed themselves since the war ended than died in action is not borne out by statistics, a study says.

Some 255 UK personnel died in action, but a veterans group has said the suicide toll since 1982 exceeds that.

However, the Ministry of Defence has found 95 deaths were recorded as suicides as opposed to...



The MoD investigated the circumstances of 21,432 Falklands veterans 30 years after the war

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Features



President Obama State Visit 2011



4 Sub Groups to the Task Force:

- Transition
- **Mental Health**
- Physical Wounded and Rehabilitation
- Families



The Mental Health Subgroup

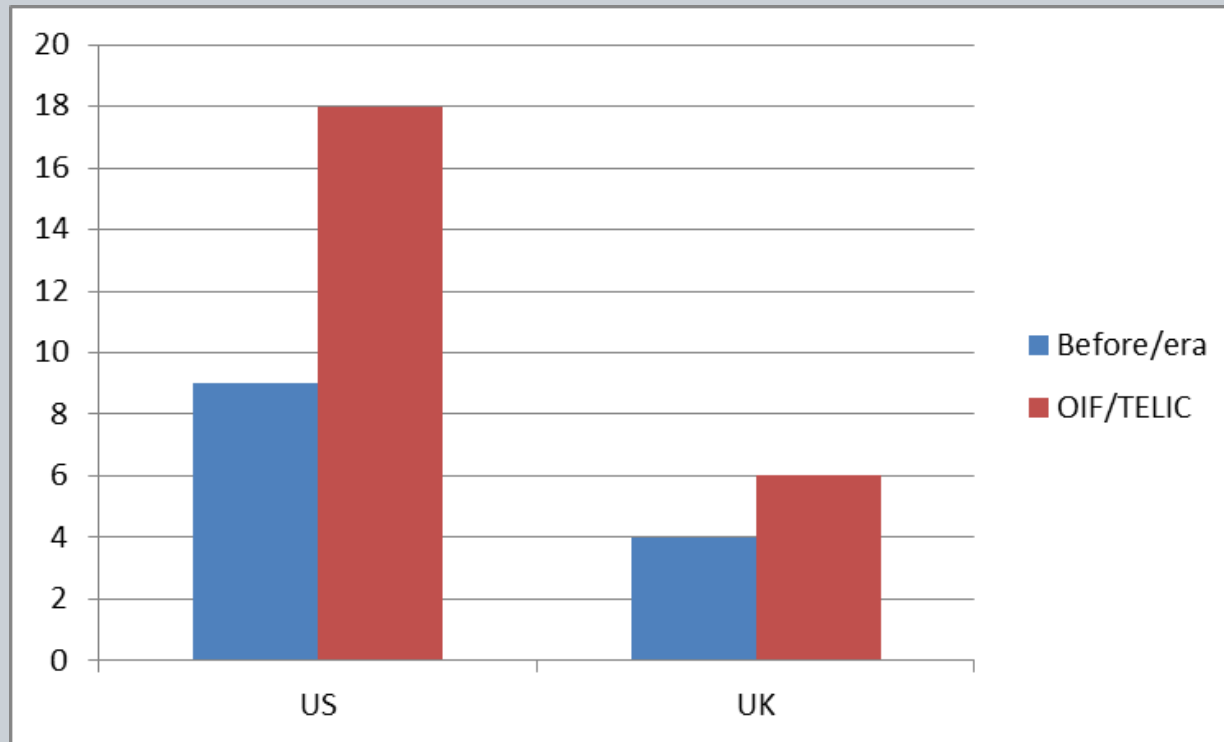
- Research & Evaluation
- Deployment Mental Health
- **Suicide Prevention**
- Communications and Digital Innovations



US UK: Similarities and Differences.



Overall prevalence of outcomes: PTSD



US: Hoge et al NEJM 2004; 351:13-22

UK: Hotopf et al. Lancet 2006; 367: 1731-1741



What might account for the US- UK differences?



What might account for the US- UK differences?

- **Demographics**

- older, more officers, fewer reserves



- **Location in theatre**

higher rate of fatalities in Iraq (but not Afghan)



- **Time in theatre**

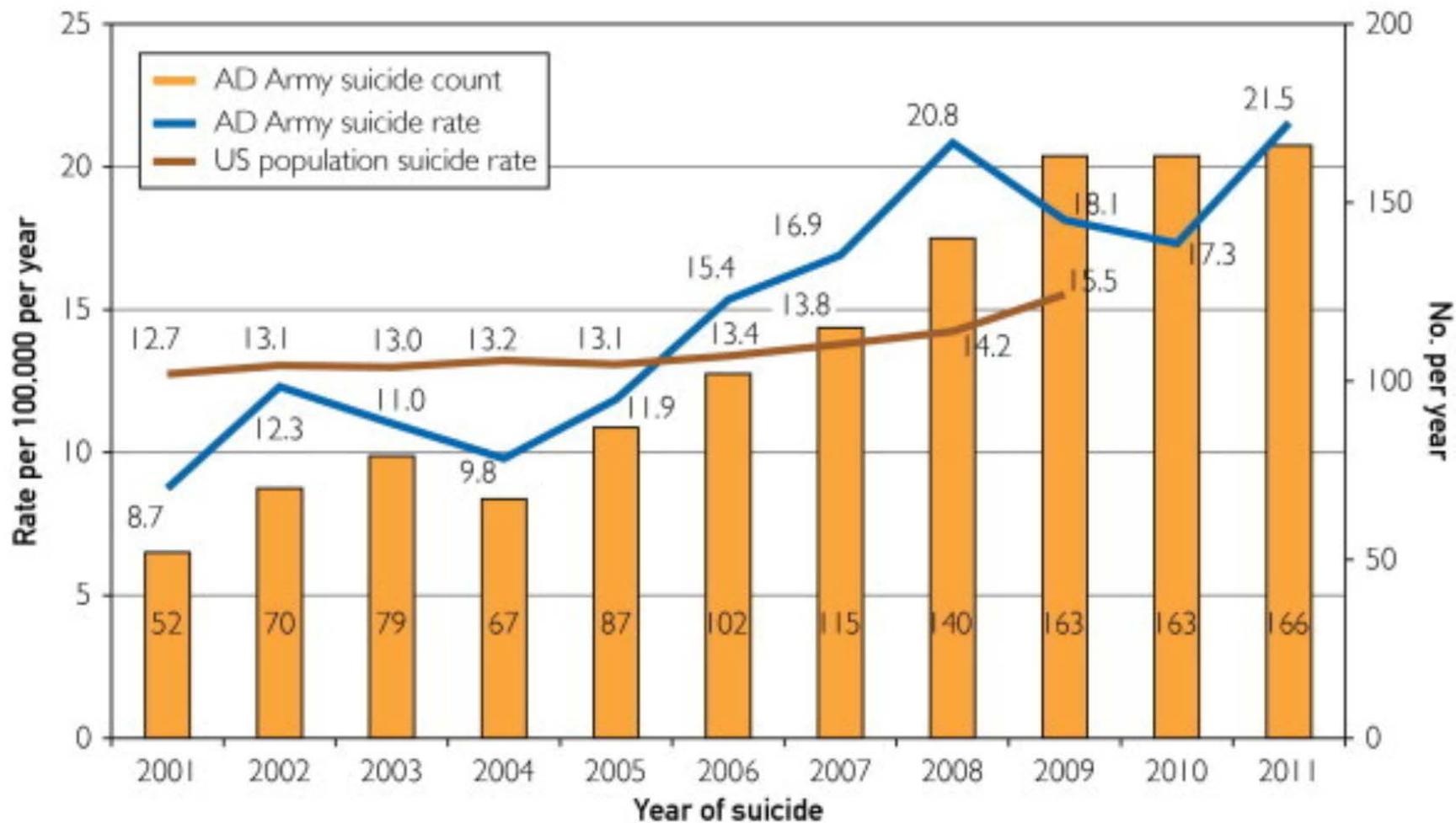
- Shorter
- More “Dwell” time

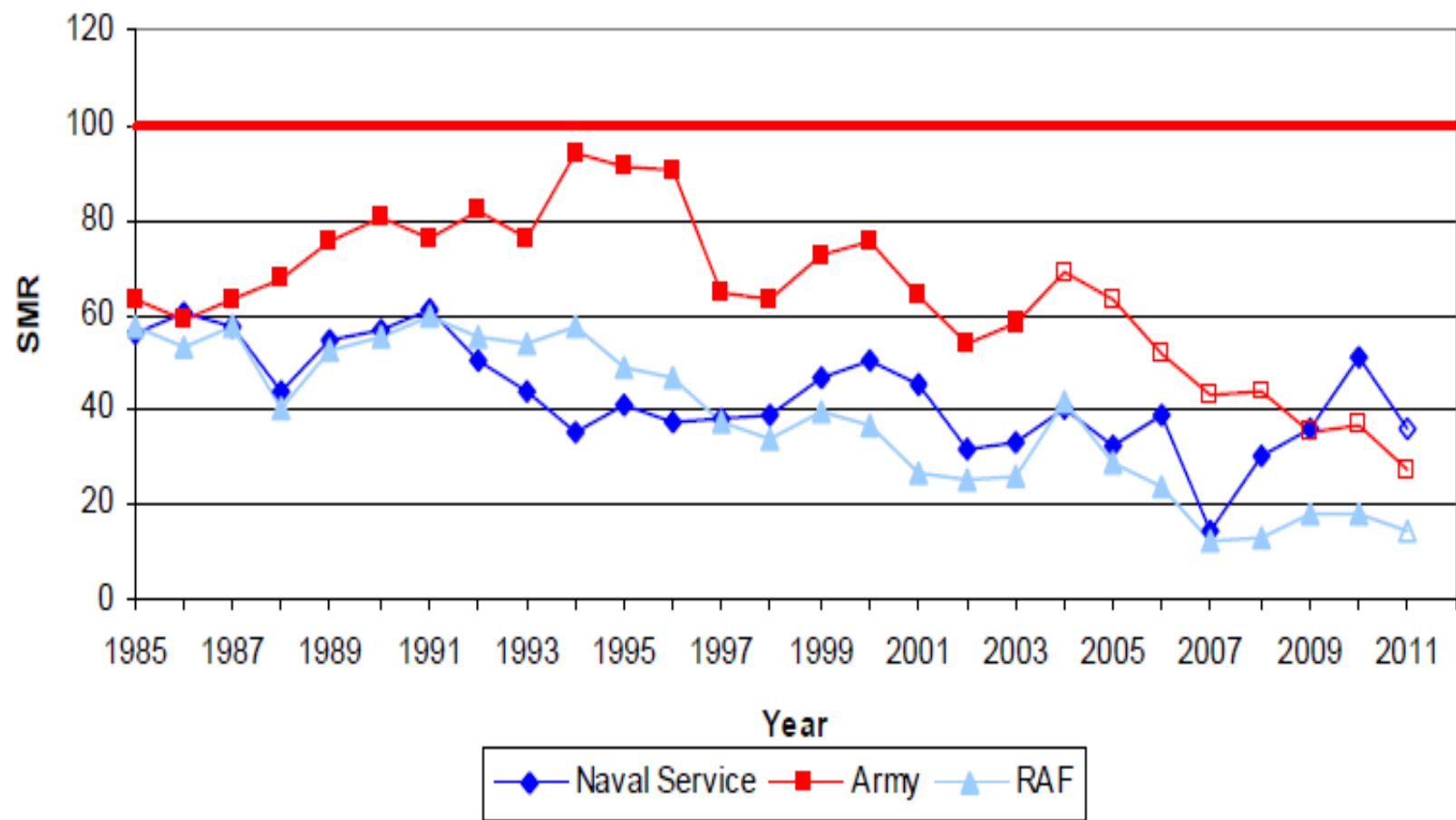


National Health Service

having one







¹ The year shown is the mid-point of a three-year average, e.g. 1985 refers to the period 1984-1986.

² Ratios have been standardised for age and calendar year.

³ If there are any waiting verdicts in the 3 year period, the data point is shown as hollow.

⁴ the red line indicates the value expected if the number of observed suicides in the UK Armed Forces was the same as the number expected based on the age structure of the UK population.



Categories for Investigation

- **Concepts**
- **Epidemiology**
- **Risk Factors**
- **Cultural Factors**
- **Policy Issues**
- **Wellbeing Management**
- **Mental Healthcare Provision**
- **(Interventions)**
- **Military Factors**
- **Civilian / National Issues**



Concepts

- UK includes Open Verdicts

Epidemiology

- Veterans – similar picture
- Method – Firearm use: US > UK
- Prevalence of mTBI: US > UK
- Homelessness amongst Veterans: US > UK



Policy Issues

- Benefits Access: US \$400K death benefit – UK None
- Command direction for MH evaluation: US ✓ UK ✗

Cultural Issues

- Stoicism
- Recruitment during Conflict: US ↓ UK ↑
- Media portrayal of Suicide
- Expectancy of Positive vs Negative Outcome of Welfare Interventions



Mental Healthcare Provision

- Access to MH care outside Military
- Decompression
- Means Restriction: Firearms
- Means Restriction: Prescribed Medication
- Suicidality as Specific target of Psychotherapy



Military Factors

- Mission Combat Exposure
- Who deploys on Missions – Officer / Rank ratio; age profile
- Tour Length / Dwell Time
- Individual Augmentees: US MH ↑ vs UK MH →



Counter-Intuitive Findings

- **Accession Policy: US more restrictive than UK**
- **Anger Issues: UK >> US**
- **Mental Health Screening**
- **Welfare Package Provision**
- **Family Support**
- **Mental Healthcare Provision**
- **Separation / Discharge due to MH Conditions**



Research Questions

- Would increasing firearm restriction work
- Would Fitness policy changes reduce suicide
- Look at stoicism. Measures ?
- Why is there a recruitment difference in conflict ?
- Does honesty during accession matter ?
- Understand Early Leavers better
- Does provision of welfare package matter, or is it expectation ?
- Does gatekeeper training work ?



Conclusion

Complexity – The more you look....

Quite a lot of Research to do.....



Questions ?

