

Speech: Soldiering on Awards

It seems hard to believe that a year has gone by since the last Soldiering On Awards.

And what a year for our Armed Forces! All three Services have been flying the flag for Britain – from the RAF in Syria and over the Black Sea, to our Navy keeping the ocean sea lanes free, and our Army leading NATO's deployment in the Baltic.

What's more, we're celebrating 100 years since the end of the First World War and the birth of the RAF – the first and most famous independent air force in the world.

What better way to celebrate such a year than with the Soldiering On Awards?

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this evening, when we recognise and honour the talent, inspiration and enterprise of our Armed Forces community – whether serving, Reservists, or former members ... along with all those who support them.

Tonight we don't just celebrate bravery, determination and teamwork. We celebrate compassion and care. And the "can do" attitude which brings all those qualities together in the ethos of all those who serve.

These Awards shine a light on how that ethos contributes to society as a whole. Because our bond – our mutual dependence – extends well beyond times of danger ... times when we look to our Armed Forces for security and protection.

As a community and as a nation, we are truly stronger together.

This year the involvement of X-Forces extends the reach of the Awards even further. Now they fully encompass the business community – from start-up entrepreneurs to established businesses.

It's a great pleasure to welcome so many of you tonight, including X-Forces' Patron, Lord Young.

The Soldiering On Finalists here tonight come from right across our Armed Forces community. I'm humbled and privileged to be amongst such an outstanding group.

In reaching this stage, each and every one of you is a winner – and this evening is for all of you.

Distinguished guests, please join me in a round of applause for the 2018 Finalists ...

But that's enough from me. Let's hear from some previous Finalists and Winners.