

Scribblings

Journal of The Pen & Sword Club

News, Views, and Muse for defence communicators

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The AI Genie is Out of the Bottle: The Dark Side of Artificial Intelligence

AS THE WORLD moves into the era of artificial intelligence, the phrase "the genie is out of the bottle" has never felt more relevant, writes Scribblings Editor Mike Peters. While AI technology promises to transform industries and improve everyday life, its rapid deployment has clear consequences.

AI systems have introduced many unintended consequences that could spiral beyond our control. In the quest for efficiency, we may be giving up the ethical integrity that is central to our human experience.

AI technologies are infiltrating every sector, from manufacturing to healthcare to defence, and many could lose their jobs. The Office for National Statistics recently estimated that up to 20% of jobs in the UK could be automated in the next decade. This rise of a 'skills gap' will leave some workers struggling for employment in a rapidly changing landscape, with a generation potentially lost to economic instability that threatens to worsen inequality.

The recently released UK Government Playbook for AI has military implications. AI could be both an invaluable asset and a significant liability. As the UK strives to remain at the forefront of military technology, AI's potential to enhance reconnaissance, logistics, and tactical operations is undeniable. However, reliance on AI-driven systems raises troubling questions about ethical warfare, accountability and data integrity in media operations and strategic communications.



The use of autonomous weapons systems could lead to conflicts occurring at speeds that outpace human decision-making, raising fears of unintended escalation and collateral damage. International scrutiny of AI militarization may heighten tensions with adversaries wary of an arms race fuelled by automated warfare.

Moreover, the potential for cyber warfare and information operations by AI technologies poses a threat to national security. Hackers could exploit vulnerabilities in interconnected military systems, resulting in breaches that could jeopardize sensitive operations and erode trust in government capabilities. The prospect of AI being used in disinformation campaigns and psychological operations presents a daunting challenge for policymakers.

As the AI genie escapes the confines of its proverbial bottle, the need for careful consideration and regulation becomes more pressing. The implications for military operations are particularly critical, as the integration of AI strategies demands rigorous oversight and accountability.

AI has significant advantages and disadvantages when applied to military media and information operations. AI brings advantages in speed and efficiency. AI can process and analyse vast amounts of media, open-source intelligence (OSINT), and social media data in real time, allowing for rapid response to emerging narratives and misinformation. It can improve media monitoring and track global media coverage and sentiment across multiple languages and platforms, ensuring military communicators stay ahead of the information landscape.



Advanced AI tools can verify images, videos, and news sources to counter adversary propaganda before it spreads widely. It can be used in psychological targeting by following social media users' behaviour to craft highly targeted psychological operations (PSYOPS), similar to commercial advertising techniques but applied to influence operations.

It can model potential media battlespaces, testing how different messages will resonate with audiences before they are deployed in the real world. It can speed the production of plans, news releases, and communiques.

However, AI also brings risks. AI-driven media operations risk crossing into manipulation or propaganda, raising ethical concerns about misinformation and violating laws on psychological operations. Commanders and media operators may place too much trust in AI-generated intelligence or responses, leading to strategic missteps if the AI makes errors or is manipulated.

Opponents can also use AI to spread deepfakes, disinformation, or counteract military narratives, leading to an AI-driven information war. AI will struggle to understand cultural sensitivities, irony, and context in human communication, which can lead to misinterpretation and ineffective messaging.

While AI can detect deepfakes, it is also being used to create ever more convincing fake videos and audio, making verification a constant battle. Adversaries can feed AI misleading data or exploit its biases to make it produce unreliable or harmful recommendations. AI-generated messaging may lack authenticity, and if audiences realise military communications are AI-driven, they may become sceptical and distrustful of official information.

AI systems used in media ops are potential hacking targets, and if compromised, they could be turned against their own forces or used to spread false information.

AI offers powerful capabilities for military media and information operations, but it must be used carefully, with human oversight to mitigate ethical risks, adversary countermeasures, and unintended consequences. The ideal approach is a hybrid system where AI augments human decision-making rather than replacing it.

Artificial intelligence cannot be un-invented. It is here to stay, to be mastered and used. For defence communicators, the tools of AI are now available.

They must be applied and the necessary skills acquired. The application to the 21st century battlefield must also be examined in depth - and with urgency.

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....and a quick word on AI from The Pen's Executive Council member Jay Janzen, NATO's Strategic Communications Director, at SHAPE.

"Our information ecosystems are being poisoned. Researchers recently uncovered 'LLM grooming,' which is the infection of AI chat bots with massive amounts of Russian propaganda.

Meanwhile, algorithms on the platform X favour sensational content, while Meta has ceased third-party fact checking. All while actors such as Russia, China, and Iran accelerate their malign cognitive warfare campaigns.

"It is time for action. If our water supplies were being systematically poisoned, there would be no hesitation or delay.



The information environments that surround our societies are just as vital to survival. Governments should prioritise programmes that promote societal resilience. Militaries and other government entities should dramatically increase investments in cognitive capabilities. Citizens should protect their own networks and advocate for cognitive defence"

Below, Club member, Charlie Miller, former defence and foreign affairs editor of the London-based Press Association and senior communicator at BAE Systems and Boeing, delves into ways and means of maximizing the use of the medium.

Avoid the AI Temptations: Clear Writing is the result of Clear Thinking

THE ALLURE of Artificial Intelligence is increasing with every advance in technology. And it's easy to understand why. A study by researchers at one of the world's leading universities, MIT, found that ChatGPT significantly enhanced the quality of writing by college-educated professionals while cutting the time to complete writing tasks by around half, says Charlie Miller, former Press Association defence and foreign affairs correspondent and corporate communicator with BAE Systems and Boeing.

That represents a huge opportunity when most of us spend well over half of our working life writing emails, documents, and presentations.

Whether this sparks the end of human writing is the subject of fierce debate. But many young people are already asking themselves whether they should even bother to invest in learning to write well. However, I am writing for an informed audience. Writing is at the heart of what most, if not all, of us in the Pen & Sword Club actually do.

We are well aware that writing is an essential part of thinking. Clear writing is the result of clear thinking. Whenever we write, we usually learn something new about the subject, we organise and structure our ideas, we target our audience, and we compress everything to cut out the excess and focus on the insights.



As the Farnam Street blog puts it: “Writing about something teaches you about what you know, what you don’t know, and how to think.

Writing about something is one of the best ways to learn about it. Writing is not just a vehicle to share ideas with

others but also a way to understand them better yourself.”

When we write we develop our own unique, authentic, and nuanced voice. This can easily be lost to the more repetitive, predictable, and often formulaic content produced by generative AI bots, which tend to follow patterns.

So, what value do Chatbots offer? Experts say the key is to see AI as an aid, tool to help rather than do the writing. The writer should remain involved in each stage of the writing process.

“If you make smart use of AI as a writing tool, you’ll actually become a better writer and thinker, and not one AI can simply replace,” argues Alexandra Samuel in the Harvard Business Review.

“AI can be valuable in turning your initial notes into a more organised summary or outline. Once you have all the ideas out of your head and extracted from your documents, ask ChatGPT to turn them into an organised, annotated outline you can follow as you draft.

“Use an AI bot to help you make decisions about your structure. If you’re undecided about whether to begin an article with an anecdote or a preview of your argument, for example, get the AI to write both versions from your notes or outline. (Or even better: get drafts from different AI bots so you can evaluate a range of options.) Then you can see which is most effective, and, over time, hone your own instincts about what’s best for any particular writing project.”

But when it comes to the actual drafting of your document or presentation, it is best to avoid the temptation of having AI write that all-important first version. If you can’t resist, the issue becomes trying to find your own words later. The value AI can bring here is to deliver options for those challenging sections such as transitions, and to act as a virtual sounding-board.

AI can recommend changes to tighten up the writing, explain an argument, correct grammatical errors and typos, and a variety of other suggestions.

As configured today, AI is a tool, a partner that can provide helpful advice and get you through a period of writer’s block. But the user still needs to know what great writing looks like. The combination of tone of voice, creativity, clarity, and precision brings your personality - or the personality of the brand/organisation - to life, providing greater impact on your audience.

You, alone, have clarity on your objectives, understanding of your audiences and their needs, and the ability to select and create content that is compelling and persuasive.

With a smart approach, it is possible to reap all the benefits of AI while retaining your original thinking, tone of voice, and personality that is human and nuanced.



Club member Charlie Miller has decades of global experience helping major companies and organisations across more than 40 markets, to successfully navigate reputation issues, challenges, and crises. Charlie previously led Boeing's highly diverse global communications team management. Prior to Boeing, Charlie jointly led Corporate Media Relations as Head of News at Europe's biggest defence company BAE Systems. He forged a successful 20-year career as a journalist, primarily covering Foreign Affairs and Defence for the UK national news agency, the Press Association. He reported extensively from conflict zones, including the 1991 Gulf War and the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. He was awarded "UK Scoop of the Year" for breaking the news of the death of Princess Diana in 1997. Charlie is based in Chicago

Penny Mordaunt & Communications Guru Paul Moorcraft join 'The Pen'

FORMER UK Secretary of State for Defence Penny Mordaunt and communications guru Professor Paul Moorcraft are among the new names joining The Pen & Sword Club in the opening months of 2025.

Honorary Captain, Penny Mordaunt, Royal Naval Reserve, is a former British Conservative politician who served as Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons from 2022 until 2024. She was MP for Portsmouth North from 2010 to 2024. She ran twice for the Conservative party leadership in July–September and October 2022.

In May 2019, Penny was appointed to the Cabinet position of Secretary of State for Defence, becoming the first woman to hold the post.

In the February 2020 reshuffle, she re-entered government as Paymaster General and In the 2021 reshuffle, she was appointed Minister of State for Trade Policy. She also held the appointments of Leader of the House of Commons and Lord President of the Council. She played a notable role in the Coronation of King Charles III carrying the Sword of State throughout the ceremony.



After graduation from Reading University Penny worked in public relations in various sectors. Under Prime Minister John Major she was Head of Youth for the Conservative Party, before working for two years as Head of Broadcasting for the Conservatives under party leader William Hague (1999–2001). She worked as a communications specialist for the Freight Transport Association (now Logistics UK) from 1997 to 1999. In 2000, she worked briefly as Head of Foreign Press for George W. Bush's presidential campaign

She was Communications Director for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea from 2001 to 2003, before leaving to set up a new Anglo-American website called 'virtual conservatives'.

From 2004 to 2006, she was a director of Media Intelligence Partners. Penny worked again for the Bush campaign in 2004. She was a director at the Community Fund, which merged with the New Opportunities Fund to create the Big Lottery Fund, and created the Veterans Reunited programme, enabling service men and women to visit World War II battlefields and be involved in commemorative events.



Professor Moorcraft, an internationally respected expert on crisis communications, especially relating to security issues, has been a regular broadcaster on BBC TV and radio, as well as Sky, Sky-Arabic, Al Jazeera, and op-ed writer for international newspapers including the Guardian, New Statesman, Washington Times, Canberra Times, and Business Day. He is the author of a wide range of books on military history, politics, crime, and mathematics.

Paul spent five years as a senior instructor at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, and later the UK Joint Services Command and Staff College. He also worked in Corporate Communications in the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall.

The Ministry of Defence recalled him for service during the Iraq war in 2003. One of his main roles in Whitehall and as a member of the directing staff at JSCSC (later the UK

Defence Academy) was advising on and teaching media operations. He also worked in media ops in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Iraq.

He worked fulltime for Time magazine in Africa, then for the BBC and most of the Western TV networks as a freelance producer/correspondent. He has worked in 30 war zones in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Balkans, often with irregular and, sometimes, jihadist forces. He operated in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine/Israel, Nepal, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Syria, Turkey, Sri Lanka and, for a pleasant change, the Maldives.

A print and broadcast journalist, Paul worked extensively behind ‘enemy’ lines, most notably with Jihadists during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan where he suffered a serious eye injury during a mortar attack. He has worked with and reported on special forces in countries as far apart as Nepal and South Africa, as well as serving as an officer in Zimbabwe’s forces.

The author has also worked in desert war zones, most recently during six trips in Darfur, Sudan, where he spent time with rebel groups and separately with Sudanese government forces. A fellow of the Royal Historical Society, he returned to his Welsh homeland in 2021.

In the course of his academic career Paul taught full-time at the University of Zimbabwe, University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of Cape Town, University of the Witwatersrand, Cardiff MCC University, Baylor University, Deakin University, University of Waikato and Bournemouth University, as well as lecturing part-time at the Open University and University of Westminster.

Soldier Magazine - 80 years of British Army news

THE BRITISH Army’s official magazine – *Soldier* – is marking its 80th anniversary by sharing its entire archive online for the very first time, writes Managing Editor Steve Muncey. Established by Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery in March 1945, it was originally published to inform and entertain as a morale-boosting magazine for troops of the British Liberation Army fighting across Europe during the last months of the Second World War.

By 1997 it had evolved into a glossy monthly magazine catering to every branch of the British Army. And some 1,300 editions later, it continues to keep personnel up to speed on Service news around the world.

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The journalists at Soldier have reported on every conflict the British Army has been involved in and describes itself as the Army's primary means of internal communication outside the chain of command. Each edition includes a wide selection of not-to-be-missed news, features, sports, reviews, and letters.

Milestones of the publication include the Soldier reporter who was one of the first to record the horrors of the Bergen-Belsen Nazi concentration camp and the unearthing of Operation Pluto, the mission by British engineers, oil companies and the British Armed Forces to build submarine oil pipelines under the English Channel to support the Normandy invasion.

Later, it would publish some of the most iconic images to come out of the Falklands War, highlight the soldiers' perspectives of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, and put the Army's first openly gay soldier on its front cover, generating significant media attention.

And as part of a major digital upgrade, Soldier Magazine's complete back catalogue is now available via the Army website, meaning veterans, family members, serving troops and the public can look up articles dating back eight decades.

This archive provides a fascinating window into the Army's operations, training and the ups and downs of military life since the end of the Second World War.

“We've also introduced a new online version of the magazine optimised for reading on mobile phones and tablets – Ideal for those on the move. It's our hope that these improvements will help Soldier to continue shining a light on hot topics, views and opinions that matter to serving personnel.”

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To mark 80 years of Soldier magazine, a short documentary film and exhibition have been launched at the National Army Museum in London. Some of the earliest editions of Soldier, including an original first edition (March 1945) and a VE Day special issue (May 1945), are displayed along with magazine covers from across the decades.

Brigadier (Retired) Justin Maciejewski, DSO MBE, Director of the National Army Museum, said: "For 80 years, Soldier Magazine has covered every major conflict and explored issues at the heart of the soldier's world. As the national home for the Army's history and heritage, we're delighted to partner with the magazine's committed team to reveal the remarkable story behind this much-loved publication.

In the year we mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day, we're proud to celebrate the wartime birth of a magazine which still does so much to enrich Army life."

A small group of civil servants who are trained journalists uphold Soldier Magazine's finest traditions today, with letters and news articles talking openly about the very best and worst aspects of military life dominating its pages.

Most importantly this trusted title continues to keep soldiers, informed, educated, and entertained in the same manner that Monty intended.

Bring back shortwave!

By Clifford Beal, The Spectator Feb 15, 2025

Clifford Beal is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow at Exeter University and the former editor-in-chief of Jane's Defence Weekly. A Pen & Sword member he regularly attends club networking events.

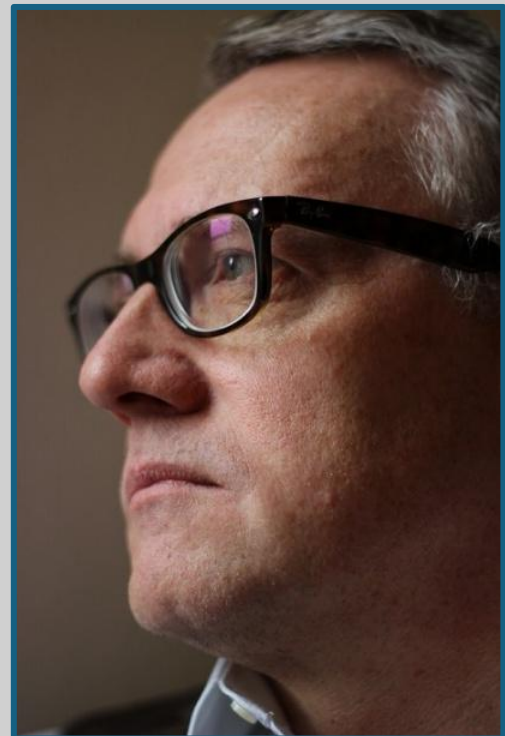
AESCHYLUS is credited first for the time-worn aphorism that in war, truth is the first casualty. But in the next major conflict, truth could find itself joined by virtually all information.

As a society at war, we face becoming blind, deaf, and dumb once the balloon goes up. Britain and most western countries have put all their eggs in one large basket: that of digital communications. In a time of global conflict, this could be a risky and painful prospect.

The rise of digital communications has been a boon but has also opened society to grave risks through cyber war. Ukraine found this out in the first years of its war with Russia. Just as worrying has been the penetration of television, the internet and streaming radio by hacker groups, both military and criminal.

Attempts to change the narrative of society and sow discord through fake news and false information, denial-of-service attacks and interference with GPS signals have all been a serious challenge in the ongoing war. Ukraine has hit back with its own hacktivist networks, even disrupting Moscow television stations, and the cyber war continues.

Last year, in the United States, the FBI revealed the existence of a massive penetration of American telecommunications networks by China, conducted by a threat group dubbed 'Volt Typhoon.' It had taken vast amounts of data about Americans, including text messages, and perhaps inserted malware into networks. This complex cyber-attack against routers and switching networks could have been ongoing for years.



More recently, the spate of sabotage against data cables on the floor of the Baltic sea, involving Russian-linked or Chinese vessels, has raised alarm about communications and internet vulnerabilities for Nato allies.

If a major regional or global war erupts, UK power networks could be struck hard and cellular communications compromised as network providers and utilities are hit by cyberattacks and even physical strikes. Satellite links too might come under attack and face disruption.

All streaming services, including television and radio, could be interrupted, mobile phones may lose signal, and if the electrical grid is hit, issues recharging your phone battery might make the last point moot.

The evolving UK Emergency Services Network for first responders is based on a BT/EE-run cellular network using 4G and some 900 masts dotted throughout the country.

Even with cyber firewalls, the system could still have reliability issues during wartime and is not likely to replace the existing 4G Airwave system until 2029.

First responders might be able to communicate with one another, but how will the general public be kept informed?

It's not all doom and gloom, however: global conflict can spark innovation. During the second world war, Britain developed civilian and military communications networks superseding copper landlines and vulnerable deep-sea cables.

The new technologies were largely jam-proof and allowed secure voice and data to be transmitted across Britain and the world. Radio telegraphy and shortwave radio became the mainstays of British wartime communication methods.

In battle, newly harnessed Very High Frequency (VHF) radio helped the RAF defeat the Luftwaffe by allowing reliable, rapid communications between fighters and ground stations.



Credit: Getty Images

Moreover, the enemy could not jam shortwave or mediumwave broadcasts in Britain, meaning the population could be kept informed. Mobile transmitters were deployed along

with fixed stations, and an immense national effort on the production of radio equipment and components at the strategic level was initiated, ramping up as the war progressed.

Might it be time to bring shortwave out of retirement? The BBC continues to broadcast on shortwave to Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, but budgets and audiences have declined markedly over the years. Updated with the latest tech innovation, Digital Radio Mondiale (DRM) sound quality and compression are hugely improved, eliminating the snap, crackle, and pop.

There is just one UK-based shortwave transmitter remaining in operation, at Woofferton in Shropshire, which was built during the Second World War. But China (and, to a lesser extent, Russia) has invested heavily in shortwave broadcasting for both domestic and international reach, with many transmitters spread across the country.

Even tiny Vanuatu in the Pacific has recently decided to use shortwave broadcasting as the basis of its emergency response network in times of natural disaster.

True, it's retro-analogue, but shortwave gets through to people where more sophisticated digital communications fail. Perhaps it's time Britain doubled down on ensuring national resilience and took another look at radio.

A fleet of analogue, mobile transmitting stations could be a good investment if Britain finds itself at war and under a sustained information attack – an attack which could make hitherto service outages look like a minor inconvenience on an otherwise sunny day.

And maybe the public should start digging out those old hand-cranked shortwave receivers and pocket radios again – or better yet, buying new ones, though the vast majority are now made in China.

Members in the News

The changing face of Europe: the waters would be clearer if it was just a matter of Russia v Ukraine

WRITING for the Critic this month, defence author, media ops specialist and Club member Peter Caddick-Adams, singled out the discussions at the 43rd Munich Security Congress. He said: The waters would be clearer if it were just a matter of Russia versus Ukraine, but Munich 2025 was grappling with several interrelated and underlying security themes.

Namely, America re-orientating its role in the world, not least with China, Taiwan, the Koreans, and Israel, as well as Russia; Europe trying to overcome internal tensions and determine its own



future in terms of defence and security; the changing nature of transatlantic alliances between Washington D.C. and various European countries and with NATO; and finally, the United States navigating a way through its own, increasingly acute domestic challenges.

All are tectonic in their own right and affect each other. Along the way, the UK has to find a role and decide on its dance partners for the next few decades in the aftermath of a toxic Brexit. In terms of defence, our world is no longer one of a binary choice between America or Europe; there are more partnerships to be had with reliable allies throughout Europe, with the Canadians, Japanese, Israelis, and Australians.

As MP Nick Timothy wisely observes, rearming without reindustrialising would make little sense, with continued dependence on foreign suppliers. Failure to rewire domestic manufacturing but increase defence purchases, would also exacerbate the UK's existing

trade deficit plus fail to address the issue of the ability of overseas manufacturers to block transfers of equipment to third party countries, as Germany and Switzerland have notably done over supplies to Ukraine. He notes that Washington can afford to spend far more on defence, because its contractors are overwhelmingly American.

At the very least, a UK government might have to swallow hard and consider nationalising steel production and probably shipbuilding, the control of which administrations of all hues have been remarkably passive. There needs to be a rethink, too, about using Chinese technology for critical infrastructure, for example to build UK wind farms in the North Sea, which potentially might leave Beijing in control of the turbines. Amid numerous reports of Russian-related vessels cutting or spying on UK and Baltic offshore pipelines and cables, and suspected Russian drones buzzing airfields in England, it seems remarkable that the UK has no government minister specifically in charge of vital infrastructure security.

Hopefully, this will all be addressed in the upcoming Strategic Defence Review, announced by John Healey on 16 July 2024, which is expected soon and to which I submitted evidence. However, I fear more fudging, for the decades-old logic of UK defence vested in shrinking budgets, aircraft carriers, and boosting special forces, might have been appropriate for elective conflicts against weaker states and terror groups, but seems increasingly inappropriate for action against peer or near-peer adversaries.



BFBS 'Moment That Made Me'

US VICE President J D Vance draws international condemnation for his comments on Ukraine, most recently his reference to security guarantees from "some random country that hasn't fought a war in 30 or 40 years". Social media is trolling him on his service as a USMC Public Affairs officer (referred to as a combat correspondent in one of the kinder posts on the subject), writes Club Chair, Colonel Rosie Stone.

By his own admission he "was lucky to escape any real fighting" during his deployment in Iraq, but this recent narrative reminded me that several MOG(V) personnel, including myself, experienced firsthand some of the realities of fighting whilst working as media operations specialists in Afghanistan.

There will be similar stories from Iraq, and well documented experiences from those who came before us in the Army Film and Photographic Unit (AFPU) who served in World War II. Civilian journalists, often escorted by military media operators are specifically targeted or killed in modern conflict.

Late last year I was asked by British Forces Broadcasting to describe a military 'Moment that Made Me' for a series that features in its regular award winning SITREP podcast that provides discussion and analysis on defence, foreign policy and the stories affecting the British Forces. It is presented by Kate Gerbeau, with expert analysis from Pen & Sword Club Honorary Vice President, Professor Michael Clark.



Without hesitation I described the moment in Helmand that I shared with our small media team and soldiers of the Lancashire Regiment on patrol, when we were briefly caught in a firefight on the main route between Lashkar Gah and Gereshk.

I was recording an audio diary for BBC Radio Lancashire and caught the whole incident on MP3. As the firefight continued outside the compound, I was invited by the Cultural Advisor, Captain Anna Crossley, along with photographer Leanne Christmas (MOG) into the inner compound.

Meeting the women and children of the family in this unique situation was a game changer for me. It led to an MSc in Gender and Conflict through Cranfield University, taking on the inaugural role of Director for the Defence Human Security Advisor course at the UK Defence Academy, Shrivenham, and helping to launch the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Afghan Women and Girls.

If you would like to watch or listen to the interview, use the following links:

[BFBS SITREP audio - *The Moment That Made Me* - Col Rosie Stone](#) [YouTube Video – *The Moment That Made Me* | Colonel Rosie Stone](#)

Irish public are blissfully unaware that the Third World War has already begun

THE SAD FACT is that, while we may be neutral, Ireland's Defence Forces are well and truly neutered, writes club member and defence analyst, Colonel (retd) Dorcha Lee in the Irish Examiner.

He added: The Irish public are blissfully unaware that the Third World War has already begun, however low-keyed.

Dorcha is a former United Nations peacekeeper with extensive experience in the Middle East and as an international election observer and as a military adviser to the EU in Brussels. He continued: Unlike the First World War and the Second World War, the Third World War is a hybrid war, where military means are coordinated with non-military means. The non-military means include economic warfare, information warfare, psychological warfare, cyber warfare, lawfare, political warfare (i.e., interfering in elections).



The current domains of war are land, sea, air, space, and cyber space. Over the horizon threats may include environmental warfare, as technology already exists, locally, to control the weather. The late Stephen Hawking listed AI and alien invasion as the greatest threats to humanity.

Some defence analysts are of the view that, if any one of the Big Three, US, Germany, or France, withdrew from Nato, Nato would collapse. Some of the staunchest supporters of Irish Neutrality assume that Nato will come to our aid if we are in trouble.

They quote the “secret agreement” of RAF air cover if a hijacked aircraft enters Irish air space. In time of war, however, when multiple threats prevail, the RAF has to put the UK’s interest first and foremost.

At the height of the Cold War, Sweden and Finland, remained neutral/non-aligned, even when the nuclear war drums could be heard in the background. The Ukraine War was their wake up call. They joined Nato knowing that a Russia-Nato war is looming on the horizon.

The lack of public awareness in Ireland of national security and defence issues is a serious problem. RTÄ 1,700 employees but no Defence Correspondent. Somewhere, in a parallel universe, there must be another Ireland where the multiple threats facing our national security and defence are taken seriously.

John picks mainstream when the chips are down



JOHN Neilson, Vice President of The Pen and Director of International Communications for Lockheed Martin has the strong view that mainstream media is alive and well. Writing on LinkedIn, John was previously with BAE Systems - including a spell at Gripen International - but started his PR career within the motoring industry with Nissan, said:

“Lately, I’ve noticed an increasing wave of criticism about mainstream media - claims that it’s losing its impartiality and relevance in shaping opinions. Some go as far as to suggest traditional journalism is on a terminal decline. I still personally challenge that view.

“Having worked closely with journalists worldwide for nearly 30 years, I’ve seen firsthand the critical role mainstream media plays in delivering accurate, impartial reporting. Yes,

the media landscape has changed but, as in any walk of life, change to meet evolving needs is no bad thing, it’s critical for survival.

“Social platforms are overflowing with ever-changing content of course, and ‘influencers’ command huge audiences. But unlike established news outlets- at least in democratic nations - many of these voices operate without editorial oversight, fact-checking, or accountability. “Take the ongoing war in Ukraine. Nearly three years after Russia’s illegal invasion, social media remains flooded with fake news and conspiracy theories. The result? It’s harder than ever to separate fact from fiction.

“Senior leaders across industry, politics, and government still turn to traditional media to provide in-depth, well-researched information, expert commentary, and credible analysis. While social media prioritises speed and engagement, mainstream journalism - when done properly - offers depth, balance, context, and a certain level of integrity too. Trends will come and go, but as long as traditional media adapts and evolves, I would argue that its role in shaping public perception and informing the world remains essential. What do you think? Is traditional media really in ICU and losing all influence? I’m not so sure.”

Shortlisted in Athena 40 Awards

SINCE breaking the exclusive on sexism and misogyny in the Welsh Rugby Union, award winning journalist and Club member Liz Perkins has been working on a series of rugby stories. “I had the opportunity to interview the former England rugby international and World Cup winner Matt Dawson, who is teaming up with hit mobile game Monopoly Go to bring together fans at this year’s tournament.

Liz, who has experience of working across the national press from the Daily Telegraph to the Sunday Times was shortlisted for the Athena 40 Awards dedicated to Women's Interventions to Sustainability, under the 'ESG & Media' category. This recognises her outstanding work, vision, and dedication to her industry and to driving meaningful change.



Liz is the night news editor of the Daily Express, where alongside her role she successfully changed the law through the award-winning End This Injustice campaign. She was named Sports Journalist of the Year after she wrote an exclusive around claims of sexism and misogyny in the Welsh Rugby Union in the Daily Mail and also won Journalism of the Year for her work.

Liz is also a regular contributor on Times Radio. She was previously defence reporter for the South Wales Evening Post/Wales Online where she regularly reported from Afghanistan between 2008 and 2014

Crikey Jings – it's a corker

War Correspondent, and a defence specialist at the Times. Michael Evans has a new spy thriller, Agent Redruth, sequel to Shadow Lives, coming out in July several months later than originally planned... but for the right reasons. Says Michael who also appears regularly in The Spectator, : Hopefully, it will be in all good bookshops, as they say!



Here is what Julie Lewthwaite, editor at Rowanvale Books, the publisher, said: "This is such a good read! It started out strong. The plot is solid, the characters rounded, and everything follows on nicely, although not predictably. There are plenty of good twists and turns. (The lions! Crikey jings!) It's definitely a page-turner. The book's a corker."

The book has been endorsed by six distinguished authors and writers. Here is just one of them: "I found Agent Redruth hugely enjoyable - fast-paced, intricately plotted and shot through with all the authentic detail you'd expect from a journalist of Michael Evans's experience and calibre. In short, a blast! It'll fly off the shelves." Giles Whittell, author of Bridge of Spies. So, July 31!!!

A respected Fleet Street journalist with more than 40 years of experience, Michael's life and career have been shaped significantly by his experiences as a war reporter. He developed a reputation for having some of the best contacts in the defence, military, and intelligence world. He has covered six wars in the field and written his memoirs in First with the News which features his experiences, from agonising dilemmas in the Bosnian war to flying with British paratroopers into Kosovo.

Stephen speaks for UK gun trade

STEPHEN Jolly, who once served as the Ministry of Defence's Director of Defence Communications takes over as Executive Director of the UK's Gun Trade Association in March. Club member Stephen is a corporate affairs professional who led high-profile global functions at Nomura, Clearstream, Regus, the University of Cambridge, and the Ministry of Defence, and has spent much of the past five years working outside the UK. He is returning from a role in Oslo to head up the body that promotes and protects the British gun trade.



A keen sporting shot and former Army reservist, Stephen will be responsible for leading a trade association that was originally founded in 1891. The trade itself goes back to the 14th century.

The association works closely with Government on licensing and regulatory issues, advises law enforcement agencies and local authorities. It acts as the ears, eyes and voice of the UK gun trade representing manufacturers, distributors, and retailers across the United Kingdom and beyond.

The UK gun trade forms an important part of Britain's £3.3 billion shooting sector which employs the equivalent of 67,000 jobs. Said Stephen : "It is a privilege to be asked to represent one of Britain's oldest and most prestigious trade associations. Despite its international reputation for

excellence, Britain's gun trade faces many challenges. I look forward to continuing the outstanding work of my predecessor, Simon West, in defending and promoting this small but vital sector of the British economy."

Stephen was Director of Communications at the Ministry of Defence from December 2012 until June 2015. He left this role to take an assignment as a senior research fellow in Military Information Operations at the Defence Academy on behalf of the MoD.

Before working for the MoD, Stephen was Cambridge University's director of external affairs and communications and held an academic appointment at the Judge Business School. At Clare College, he served on the College Development and Art Committees. Stephen left the Defence Academy in June 2016 to join M&C Saatchi.

When Words Won't Do

CLUB CHAPLAIN, Father Kevin Bell has added another collection of poetry to his publications.



When Words Won't Do is an examination of the world from a different viewpoint - via the left-field approach to love, loss and living.

Black Country-born Kevin is parish priest of All Hallows Church, Twickenham. Before that he was a police officer, later he joined The Royal Army Chaplains Department, serving both at home and abroad. These poems, written exclusively during his tenure at All Hallows, are offered as a source of guidance from a poet who has experienced life in all its danger and glory. Price: £12.99 plus P&P

Kevin is a songster as well as a writer and has previously published two other poetry collections -- *Slipknot* (2012) and *Where the Wild Poppies Grow* (2019). He has also produced two music CDs entitled *Answers for the Brave* (2020) and *The Shamrock and the Rose* (2022)

Kevin has had a distinguished career both in military chaplaincy and parish ministry. Prior to his appointment at All Hallows, he served as an Army Chaplain.

His tenure in the military was marked by a deep commitment to supporting soldiers, earning him respect for his ability to connect with service members and address their spiritual needs.

In 2014, Kevin transitioned to parish ministry, when his induction was attended by notable figures, reflecting the high regard in which he is held. Under his leadership, All Hallows has maintained strong ties with the local community, including collaborations with the Rugby Football Union (RFU) in Twickenham and local schools for events such as nativities and harvest services.

His book, "Where the Wild Poppies Grow," is an anthology of poems reflecting on his experiences during a period of high operational tempo for the British Army. The book has been praised for its thoughtful and sometimes haunting portrayal of military life, with proceeds supporting charities aiding those affected by military service.

Copies of his new book can be ordered directly from New Generation Publishing, www.newgeneration-publishing.com

Andrew Drwiega Obituary

It is with great regret that Scribblings reports the death of club member, Andrew Drwiega. Andrew was a senior independent defence and aviation editor and journalist, a corporate communicator and conference chairman and producer. He held a BA (Hons) Degree in War Studies from Sunderland University and was a member of several associations including the Royal Aeronautical Society, Army Aviation Association of America, Association of the United States Army, Royal United Services Institute, and the Air Power Association.

Andrew was the Editor-in-Chief of the defence magazines *Armada International* and *Asian Military Review*. Both have an independently certified circulation of over 23,000 copies per issue.

Over the years Andrew, a regular at club networking events, has been a contributor to *Jane's Defence Weekly*, *Military Technology*, *Aerospace* (Royal Aerospace Society), *Mittler Report* (Germany), *Air International* and others. He had a particular focus on strategic affairs as well as military rotorcraft



Andrew reported on attachment with British and American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan on a total of six occasions between 2005 – 2010 (three times each country), twice with the United States Marine Corps and four times with the UK's Joint Helicopter Command. He also participated in numerous NATO and British military exercises in the UK and internationally, as well as with the UK's Maritime Coastguard Agency.

Previously, Andrew served as Director of Shephard Publications Ltd during which time he also edited *Defence Helicopter* magazine and was responsible for the other magazines in the portfolio. After leaving the Shephard Group he served as the International Bureau Chief for *Rotor & Wing* magazine (part of Washington DC-based Access International).

Andrew has organised the bi-ennial *Future of Military Rotorcraft* conference at the Defence and Security Exhibition International (DSEI) convention in London, UK, since 2015. He also worked as a consultant trainer for the UK Government's Defence & Security Organisation where he has helped to train serving soldiers to engage with the international media during defence exhibitions such as the NATO Summit (Wales) and DSEI in London.



Swing and Sway the SSAFA Way

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, one of The Pen's two affiliated military charities, leads the nation's VE Day 80 celebrations, saluting 'Our Greatest Generation' with music, dance, and first-hand stories of the wartime generation with a party at the Albert Hall on May 8.

Exactly 80 years on, it is one of the final Second World War anniversaries for the country to mark alongside those who lived through it; The Greatest Generation. May 8, 1945, was a day of celebration with the streets brimming with people singing and dancing; bittersweet for many who had lost loved ones in the war or were waiting for their safe return.

The RAF Squadronaires, part of The Central Band of the Royal Air Force, will take the audience back in time with iconic 1940s favourites, while the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra will perform the nation's best loved classical anthems, both joined by guest vocalists.

The event will feature untold personal accounts of those who were there 80 years ago to the day, as well as the key moments that led to the end of the Second World War in Europe, with performances and narration by stars from stage and screen.

The show will reflect on SSAFA's long history and its role during the Second World War. The event will also look ahead to the 80th anniversary of VJ Day in August.

The Armed Forces charity, which celebrates its 140th anniversary this year, offers support to those currently serving, regulars and Reservists, in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, British Army and Royal Air Force, veterans and military families - as well as veterans from the Merchant Navy. For more information visit www.ssafa.org.uk



Communications are Worshipful!

THE COURT of Aldermen, meeting at the City of London's Guildhall, approved full Worshipful status to the Company of Communicators, making it the 113th Livery Company of the City of London on March 4. The Pen & Sword Club extends hearty congratulations to our affiliated organisation and to our joint membership.



Master Communicator, Jason Groves, welcomed the announcement, saying: "This is a very exciting day in this our 25th anniversary year. It is a moment in our Company's history but also our industry's history, as we take our place amongst all the other professions that have contributed to the UK's economy and the reputation of the City of London over the centuries. It is a recognition of the value that people who work in Communications bring to the country.

"Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to achieve our aim of becoming the Worshipful Company of Communicators."

Hugh Colver, the Pen & Sword's Immediate Past President added: "As an Honorary Freeman of The Worshipful Company of Communicators, as well as Past President of the affiliated Pen & Sword Club, I wholeheartedly congratulate them on achieving the full honour embodied in their acquisition of full status as a

livery company. The initiative to form the Company was always admired and welcomed within the communications world and it is great to see them achieve Worshipful Company status after so much hard work and commitment. Our relationship with them has always been fruitful - and their annual Military Dinner is always a high point of the social year. Well done."

Who's Who in The Pen?

Seventeen Years retired - OR IS IT?

WHEN I retired from the Civil Service in January 2008, I wondered what I would do with this newfound freedom, writes Lieutenant Colonel (retd) David Falcke, who for some years led the Pen & Sword Club's Westcountry regional events. So what's happened since?

For the past seven years I had been Chief Media Advisor at Headquarters Land Command at Wilton, supervising a mixed team of military and Government Information Service officers plus co-ordinating (or trying to) the activities of all the Regional Press Offices.

I had attended the Civil, Service Retirement course and two things stuck in my mind, drink lots of water and don't rush into any commitments! Try telling that to my better half! (Karen Moseley to members of the Media Operations Group)) who was still Senior Press Officer for the Army in the South West.

In December 2007 we had bought and moved into a late Victorian town house in Salisbury which had not been very sympathetically altered by the previous occupier, and I was to be the project officer for the remodelling.

Other people had ideas for me too. Nigel Gillies, former Grade 7 at HQ Adjutant General based at Upavon, had just had to give up his role as military correspondent for the Salisbury Journal due to cancer and I was approached by the regional publicity officer for the Army Benevolent Fund in the South West, Brigadier David Shaw, and asked if I would consider taking over where Nigel had left off..

In a meeting at his offices in Bulford, where incidentally I saw all the A5 flip chart jottings with Bryn Parry that led to the inception of Help for Heroes, (but that is another story) I was told that we needed to keep a military presence in the Salisbury Journal, and he asked me to put myself forward for the job.

I rang the Journal, had a short interview with the managing Editor, Bill Browne, and was immediately appointed. I was given a fixed sum for a weekly half page with additional sums for any images. So it began. In the early days it was pretty easy, Karen was SIO SW and kept me in the loop and I attended all manner of press facilities and events from major exercises, charity fundraisers, medal presentations and welcoming the troops home from deployments.



At the same time, I applied to be a SSAFA Caseworker. I had been a Samaritan for several years but felt that I needed something more hands on and helping with the ex-service community. Completed my training in London and joined Salisbury Division as a caseworker working to retired Colonel Sue Rollo whose knowledge and zest for life is an inspiration to all.

Initially, most of the cases still centred around older veterans and their families. Funds to convert a bathroom into an accessible shower, insulating a static caravan home, provision of an electrically powered vehicle. These elderly veterans were almost always reluctant to ask for help and incredibly grateful for the help that we were able to get for them.

As we are in an area with a very high concentration of regular forces, many on discharge want to stay in the area and need help with moving into new, usually social, housing and need white goods, carpets, and curtains. I found these younger claimants more demanding and quite often came with more complex issues associated with their service, a high number with operationally induced PTSD.

Ten years ago I volunteered to be a helper at the Salisbury Museum. Karen had taken early



retirement from the GICS and had successfully battled cancer and taken a part time job at the Museum. I joined a small team archiving the photographic output of the Salisbury Journal. The Journal had handed over all their photographic material prior to going digital. This consisted of filing cases filled with little envelopes of neatly cut 35mm negatives and the photographers' logbooks.

Each numbered envelope was opened and the negatives placed on a flatbed scanner, scanned and a reference number given, dated and file information from the logbook entered.

I always remember Hilary Roberts, the archivist at the Imperial War Museum, stressing the need for accurate file information otherwise the image was of no historical value.

I started filing images from 1953 and have now reached 1988 and filed some 74,000 individual images. Only another 25 years to go!

Getting information from the Army has become more and more difficult with the regional media staff being more closely controlled by both Army HQ at Andover and MOD. COVID really allowed the Army to close its doors, and the regional staff worked from home. I still managed to find stories but was getting less and less help from the media staff at HQ Army SW who were often as frustrated as I was.

It could take up to three weeks for some simple 'Home Town Story' copy to get clearance for publication. I still get the occasional invitation to events, but it is very rare, and they say that they are only allowed to work on story lines that come from Army HQ or MOD.

Still, in my 17 years I have never missed a deadline, filing copy from Queen Mary 2 in the Atlantic, from hotels in India and Myanmar and I am still on the same rate of pay as when started all those years ago!

Working for SSAFA

On the SSAFA side, nine years ago I became a mentor. The original concept was to take service personnel who are medically discharged and stay with them for about a year to help them manage their transition into civilian life. I have had mentees from all three services, but not Royal Marines, male, female, and transgender, young and not so young, some with severe injuries, others just needing a helping hand to manoeuvre the transition to being a civilian.

My last three mentees have been medical discharged, most at quite short notice and all three had no idea that this was about to happen, so there is quite a lot for them to cope with; finding a job, accommodation, often with medical needs, some mental, that need to be transferred to the NHS. All rather daunting but manageable with a little help.

Unit Press Office in Belfast – Without Training!



Commissioned into the Middlesex Regiment in 1963 David followed a fairly normal career path. In 1973 he was Unit Press Officer during an operational tour in North Belfast with no training. "Located close to the Europa Hotel where most visiting journalists stayed, we were the easiest unit to visit and had plenty of media coverage," he said.

"I enjoyed working with the media and we had a productive relationship, camera crews would let our intelligence section view footage of riots which helped to build up a good picture of the activists in our area. In January 1974, the Sun Man of the Year was a British soldier serving in Northern Ireland, selected from the Battalion under my supervision.

"My career continued normally, but I always volunteered to be the Unit Press Officer which included a very busy period when the Battalion were firefighting with Green Goddess in Merseyside with the press continually pressing for information.

“ In 1979 I was posted to HQ South East District in Aldershot as the Staff Office Grade 2 Public Information. My boss was a GICS SIO, Squadron Leader Don Winterford, a WW2 Mosquito pilot with a handlebar moustache and who drove a huge BMW motorbike. The information Officer in Kent was David McDine who had retired from DDPR(A) in the MOD with ill health and took an information officer's post close to his home, I could not have had better mentors.

“Aldershot was the Home of the British Army (and the Parachute Regiment), so we had plenty of both positive and defensive issues. About six Royal visits a year, the Aldershot Military Show where we ran a Press Tent, always interest about the Gurkhas at Church Crookham, there was never a dull moment. I ended my Regular career with British Military Advisory and Training Team (Zimbabwe) and took redundancy in 1983.

“ After a three-month job search for a PR position (Army PR was not that highly regarded in those days) I began my civilian life as a Press Officer at London Transport. After 18 months I became Public Relations Executive for the Bus and Coach Council, the trade association for the public transport industry.

“ Not comfortable in this role, I saw an ad in UK Press Gazette ‘Free newspaper for sale in the NW of England.’ Using my redundancy money I bought the title ‘Congleton Express,’ based in Cheshire and published monthly from a kitchen table. I rented an office, hired staff, and turned it into a two edition, full colour weekly free newspaper.

“In 1987 saw a full page advertisement in the UK Press Gazette calling for people with military and journalist experience to join the Territorial Army Pool of Public Information Officers – so I applied. The Interview board was chaired by Colin Mason with Lieutenant Colonel Peter Bishop and David McDine as board members. Peter and I had been Company Commanders together in 3 QUEENS and David McD knew me from Aldershot, so I was accepted.

“I was cap badged KINGS and worked out of Fulwood Barracks in Preston under the experienced eagle eye of SIO Roger Goodwin. Sold the paper in January 1991 and in May at a rather boozy Dinner Night at South Cerney I volunteered to go to Turkey to help with the relief operation for the Kurds – Op HAVEN (or Op Provide Comfort if you were an American).

“Very quickly I found myself in the Kurdish-inhabited area in support of 3 Commando Brigade living outside the wire and supported by two Royal Navy photographers. An amazing couple of months.

“ On return I got a job with the British Red Cross (BRC) as Regional Media Co-ordinator North West, (alongside Major Tim Wakefield for Wales) working from home four days a week supporting branches from Cheshire to Cumbria.

I was working at HQ Land in the Media Production Centre (MPC) on TA MTDs in 1994 when I was called in by the BRC and told that I was being made redundant. Major Doreen Cadwallader stepped in, and asked if I would like to go to Bosnia so back into uniform and off to Bosnia as OC News Team West based at Vitez.

“The press Centre, and our accommodation, was outside the camp and I had a driver/clerk, RLC photographer and an SO3 who did radio and community relations – one Anthony Lloyd, RGJ, who later came back as a freelance journalist - but that's yet another story!

At the end of the tour in March 1995 I was given three options; work in the MOD, work in JHQ as a watchkeeper or join the MPC as a writer working in Bridge End House, it was a no brainer, so into the MPC went I with my dog.

“ I sat the Civil Service GICS exam (alongside Martine McNee), passed and held the ticket until a vacancy arose in the MPC as an Information Officer. Promoted to SIO and became the Chief Media Advisor until I retired.”

Save this Date for your Diary

ACT now and reserve your seat! Get this date in your diary for the Pen & Sword Club's next London symposium on Wednesday, June 18 (1000 -1600). The subject is The Role of Defence Strategic Communications in Today's Security Environment.

The symposium will discuss the critical role that Strategic Communications must play in combatting the threat to national and regional security from an increasingly aggressive frontline of information warfare.

Come and join guest panellists and practitioners as we explore the current state of UK and NATO Strategic Communications and identify opportunities to enhance security within the context of complex geopolitics and more coordinated misinformation and disinformation campaigns.

The Keynote speaker is The Lord Robertson of Port Ellen who was Secretary of State for Defence (1997 – 1999) and 10th Secretary General of NATO (1999 – 2003). Lord Robertson is the External Reviewer for the current UK Strategic Defence Review.

All enquires to the Club Chair: rosiestone@talktalk.net