

# *Scribblings*

*Journal of the Pen & Sword Club. News, views,  
analyses and comment on matters of interest to the  
defence communications fraternity*

*March 2021*

*Editor: Mike Peters*

Now you see it...then you don't. Will they,  
won't they ditch British armour: But wait – is  
there an £80 billion cunning plan?



IN THE FEW WEEKS since the pictures of digital camouflage for British Army tanks was released to the defence press the media and the public could easily have become confused. First you see them, then you don't. Will the Ministry of Defence make a decision that could have long implications and reduce the size of the tank fleet, or even consign them to history?

Are they going to scrap Warrior, disband the Red Arrows - the public's much loved, flag waving aerobatic team, and will they allow the navy to lose another fleet of frigates?

But the weekend before the fateful day of the Integrated Defence Review the media abounds with speculations of an £80 billion massive boost for defence. Is this part of a cunning mastermind public relations plan, asks Editor Mike Peters, right, who wonders why the Defence Select Committee has published its report on the state of British Armour just days before the publication of the Integrated Defence Review.

Once again Britain's mainstream media has been awash with stories about cuts in the defence budget. Speculations include not only armoured forces but a major reduction in the number of soldiers in an already dangerously small army.

It seems the Queen's Flight and the Red Arrows have been touted to disappear from the air force along with some older fighters. And the navy continues but with constraints on finance so big that naval reservists were sent, in effect, on long term leave. Where do these stories come from? Some suggest it is an internal government battle, others that there are those who cannot help but leak or is there now a cunning plan – a politically inspired use of the media. Whatever it is, it has kept the media and the defence aware public waiting for more.

Scribblings gives Pen & Sword Club member, Philip Ingram, one time Colonel in the Intelligence Corps and now using his Grey Hare Media platform to speculate on just why the Ministry and its advisers take to the air and the national press just before the appearance of the long-awaited Defence Review. He argues that from a military perspective the approach defence takes to information and messaging operations is wholly wrong and misfocussed.

The army found itself in an unusual Twitter spat in the last month . The use of Regular officers in media and communications was challenged on the basis that civilian information staff would be much cheaper and more effective. Fortunately, Major General Neil Sexton, Director of Engagement & Communications stamped hard on that one. One of the Twiteratti asked: "Should comms jobs and other such specialisms be posts given to uniformed, and the relatively expensive to resource Officer Corps, when a civil servant would do it better and for less money? An audit of senior posts would be quite the reveal."

Says the General: "If you put comms (internal + external, both 'digital first') properly alongside the other reputation and stakeholder management disciplines and accept a frequent need to deliver effects on deployments, then you have to use a blend of civilians and military with the right skills."

And he got the reply: "I am going to Direct Message you rather than say out loud the thing I normally say in these circumstances." Just what expletive was that?

Scribblings agrees with General Sexton! On operations defence communications needs a balanced mix in media and communications of uniformed officers and the ministry's civilian practitioners. This was part of the debate in the Falklands aftermath. What the current Twitter- short debate did not address was the use of Reservists with professional communications knowledge and high value, lifetime expertise to bolster the full-time organisation in times of conflict and peace keeping operations.



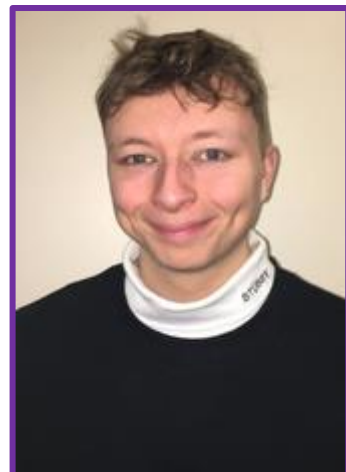
In recent times the Royal Air Force appears to have grasped that nettle well and its 7644 Squadron within RAF Media Reserves takes a route that was pioneered by the Army's sadly missed Media Operations Group (Volunteers). MOG (V) began its life insisting it was better to recruit professional communicators and teach them soldiering rather than the opposite. Its long-term plans included the addition of specialist, media savvy escort officers – another of the necessities on the modern battlefield.

As Scribblings reveals in its Digest, later in this edition. the right balance was struck in 1991 when Britain joined the coalition to defeat Saddam Hussein. Unlike the Falklands War the Ministry mobilised its communications reservists (after much protest at the original approach of just asking for volunteers and the adverse implications for employment) and the eventual in-country team for Operation Granby and both Desert Shield and Desert Storm had the right mix.

That in-theatre team was of necessity led by Regular soldiers. The selection of officers who know the units involved, their capabilities, and who have operational staff backgrounds - and, most of all - the ear of senior command, is vital. But never forget the professional expertise of the Reservists and the strong group of civilian government information specialists who can “look over their shoulders” and gauge the impact of decisions on the Ministry.

Indeed, some may have forgotten that MOG (V) had a cadre of professional communicators who were serving as teeth-army Territorials and in the defence industry before the unit was formed.

The last few months have seen some dissatisfaction with the Ministry's approach to communications and detailed briefings for the defence specialists. They feel they are often neglected by the Services. The claim that there would be better publicity and understanding of problems all round is made by Harry Lye, a senior reporter at Global Defence in London, right, who argues that bringing the specialised knowledge of the defence magazines into play would do much to help counter a “bad press” by providing technical balance and authority. But if they are not briefed regularly, they cannot fulfil that role.



The last year has not seen defence slip away into the inside pages but there is no doubt the COVID-19 pandemic has absorbed the attention of the world's media. Later this year Scribblings will look at how Britain handled the public information aspects of the contagion that has done so much harm to the country's economy and cost so many lives.

Sometimes the question is also asked about the military contribution to solving problems of the pandemic. The social media publicity has been good but sometimes it has seemed difficult to drag detail out of the Ministry on just how much effort the military has contributed. It has been undoubtedly invaluable to use military expertise and there have been some spectacular results.

The question is: has there been enough “hometown story style” activity. It has become unfashionable in some circles to discuss this tried and trusted method of gaining acknowledgement of a job well done. There is nothing like a face and name in local publications to produce satisfied soldiers. There may be fewer provincial and local newspapers to carry stories but there is plenty of opportunity still.

The ability to use social media well is already within the armed forces and as Harry Lye writes later in these pages the Ministry might do well to listen to their own practitioners on how this medium can be expanded.

Within the media, or so it seems, are stories that Scribblings and mainstream media journalists find disturbing. Especially the revelations about journalist Roy Greenslade following a full feature in the British Journalism Review. Scribblings includes the British media reaction and the robust ethical debate it has engendered.



# £80 Billion upgrade for the for military to arm it with new tanks, warships and ‘kamikaze drones’.

Government announces modernisation drive to ensure the Armed Forces are ready to fight the wars of the future.

By LUCY FISHER, Deputy Political Editor; BEN RILEY-SMITH, Political Editor and DANIELLE SHERIDAN, Political and Defence Correspondent March 12 2021



*HMS Lancaster, centre, leads Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian warships in the Baltic Region. The Royal Navy is heading an international task group of half a dozen warships on a security patrol of the Baltic.*

BRITAIN'S MILITARY is to get an £80 billion upgrade as the Government announces a modernisation drive this month to get the Armed Forces ready for the wars of the future. The Telegraph understands that is roughly what will be invested in improving military equipment over the next four years. The total over the next decade could amount to close to £200 billion.

More than a hundred ageing Challenger 2 tanks will get new turrets, guns, sensors and engines, becoming more deadly in the battlefield, while new frigates are being acquired. The cap on the number of nuclear warheads Britain can stockpile will increase from around 180, The Telegraph has learned, ending a decades-long drive to cut stocks.

There is also a new push under way to acquire what are called loitering munitions, sometimes dubbed “kamikaze drones”, which can hover around a target before donating. There has been alarm that hostile nations such as Russia and Iran have been using such munitions, which are a cross between cruise missiles and armed drones.

One senior government source said: “Technology has proliferated, that’s what we should worry about. Everyone from terrorists to other nations have modern equipment and killer drones.” The moves form part of a major rethink of Britain’s defence, foreign policy and security outlook, with results to be revealed in two government documents over the coming fortnight.

The first, the UK Integrated Review, will be published on Tuesday. It will map out what the Prime Minister’s ‘Global Britain’ vision means in practice, including a tilt to the Indo-Pacific. The second, the Defence Command Paper, will come out March 22. It will reveal a major modernisation plan for the Armed Forces, seen as long overdue by defence chiefs.

The proposals will include cuts to troop numbers and the scaling back of so-called “legacy platforms”, which are parts of the military that have been prominent since the 20th century.

Government figures have stressed that such changes should be seen as “retirements” rather than “cuts”, given the overall Ministry of Defence budget is increasing.



“To modernise, some things have to be retired. Otherwise, the musket would still be on the field,” a senior government source said.

The changes will affect all branches of the Armed Forces, the Army, Royal Navy, RAF, and Strategic Command, which oversees cyber-attacks. The focus

on so-called kamikaze drones reflects how rapidly combat is changing in the battlefield, with nations (including adversaries) increasingly investing in them.

A senior defence source said: “We’re seeing them used all over the place. How to counter the capability and how to use it are two things there is a lot of interest in.”

## How Government is preparing for wars of the future

Boris Johnson has billed the integrated review into Britain’s foreign, defence and security policy as the most radical overhaul of the nation’s posture since the end of the Cold War. The review will be published on Tuesday, while on March 22 a Defence Command Paper will set out the Government’s plan for a generational modernisation of the Armed Forces.

The Prime Minister unveiled a £16.5 billion funding uplift for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) over the next four years at the spending review last November to fund the strategy. The challenge for Ben Wallace, the Defence Secretary, and the service chiefs, has been to balance pouring cash into upgrading legacy platforms with investment in cutting-edge military technologies.

## Nuclear Deterrent

Britain is set to publicly declare on Tuesday that it is increasing the number of nuclear warheads it can stockpile, The Telegraph understands. At present the UK has around 180 nuclear warheads. The higher cap will signal a new direction from Britain on nuclear non-proliferation, making a firm statement on the nation’s position as a nuclear power.

The Government has already confirmed it is replacing the existing warheads that are used in the Trident nuclear deterrent. Ministers have also committed to building four new Dreadnought Class nuclear attack submarines to replace the current Vanguard boats by the middle of the next decade.

*Royal Navy Vanguard Class submarine HMS Vigilant returning to HMNB Clyde after her extended deployment.*



Defence sources said research collaboration between the UK

and US was expected, but the MoD confirmed on Thursday night that both the warheads and submarines would remain independent, sovereign programmes. The heightened cap is due to be unveiled amid fears about China’s swelling nuclear stockpile.

Sam Armstrong, of the Henry Jackson Society foreign policy think tank, said: “The world is an increasingly dangerous place, and this increased nuclear deterrent tells us all we need to know about where the long-term threat from China is heading.”

Experts on nuclear non-proliferation stressed how striking a move the policy would be. Matthew Harries, a senior research fellow in nuclear policy at the Royal United Service Institute, said: “An increase in the UK’s declared nuclear stockpile cap, if confirmed, would be a significant reverse of steady disarmament progress since the end of the Cold War.”

## Tanks and armoured vehicles

The Army’s ageing Challenger 2 tanks require an urgent upgrade to their turrets, guns, sensors and engines. Around 150 to 170 of the UK’s 227 tanks will be upgraded, according to defence sources. The remainder will be mothballed for spares, it is understood.

All 758 Warrior infantry fighting vehicles are meanwhile expected to be “abandoned” from next year. They are set to be sold off to save money, insiders have said. This decision will be balanced by a move to accelerate the introduction of more than 500 Boxer mechanised infantry vehicles.

These vehicles are set to arrive next year to avoid a gap between the two programmes. A Whitehall source signalled the programme would also be expanded, saying: “We are increasing the order of Boxer and that’s the right thing to do.”

Question marks hover over the future of the Army’s high-intensity armoured warfighting capability if the modernisation does not also boost field artillery and air defence systems.

## Troop numbers cut.

The Army is set to fall to around 73,000 soldiers, finally abandoning its minimum threshold of 82,000 personnel – a target it has not met for years. A formal reduction to the service has been on the cards since December 2019, when Boris Johnson dropped the pledge from the Tory election manifesto.

Its current full-time trained strength is 76,348. Service chiefs are set to rely on the organic departure of troops, due to resignation or retirement, to reduce the headcount rather than make personnel redundant, it is understood.

## Fighter jets

Britain is expected to pull back from its previously stated ambition to buy 138 F-35 Lightning II fighter jets, which are the most expensive weapons system in military history. The UK is so far only contractually obliged to buy 48 of the stealth multi-role fighter jets by the end of 2025, at a cost of £9.1 billion.



The US-designed fifth-generation jets will be bought in tranches over many years, however, meaning decisions about future orders can be thrown into the long grass, avoiding confrontation with Washington now about the

final order numbers. Investment is also being poured into Tempest, a UK-led programme to develop a sixth-generation fighter jet.

One design option is for this to be an unmanned aircraft. Engineers at BAE Systems are exploiting the digital environment to design, test and fly conceptual models for Tempest, a next-generation combat air system for the UK. It is also set to be accompanied in flight by a swarm of unmanned combat drones known as “loyal wingmen”.

## Innovative weapons

The use of loitering munitions, which are a cross between cruise missiles and armed drones, by Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan and other nations has been watched closely by the MoD.

Defence chiefs have pushed for the UK to invest in developing a domestic capability. “We need to develop these capabilities, test them, experiment with them and work out how best to employ them. That might require some changes to how we organise the way we fight,” said a defence source.

More investment is planned for autonomous, AI-enabled systems, including both aerial and underwater drones, as well as land-based robots. Unmanned capabilities are particularly attractive because they avoid the need to put personnel at risk of harm.

## Fresh focus on the Indo-Pacific

The review is expected to set out the Government's post-Brexit “Global Britain” vision, which includes a new emphasis on the Indo-Pacific. HMS Queen Elizabeth, the first of Britain's two new aircraft carriers which have collectively cost more than £6.2 billion, is due to set sail on its first operational deployment around late April. It will sail to the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and east Asia, into China's backyard, testing freedom of navigation rights.

*HMS Queen Elizabeth departs from the Naval base on Mar 1. The £3 billion aircraft carrier is expected to undertake an additional series of sea trials in preparation for her first active deployment planned to begin in May.*



Defence chiefs are also examining plans to “forward base” more personnel and assets (including warships) overseas in the Middle East and Pacific regions. Bases and ports in Japan, Australia and Singapore have been scoped out as potential options by officials.

Britain has already confirmed plans to triple the size of its military base on the coast of Oman to enhance the Royal Navy's presence “east of Suez” after Brexit.

## Boost to fleet and shipyards

The Prime Minister has announced that the UK will acquire eight Type-26 frigates, which are sophisticated anti-submarine warships, as well as five Type-31 frigates, cheaper general-purpose warships.

His plan is to restore Britain's position as “the foremost naval power in Europe”, he said last autumn, as he also confirmed plans for new support ships to supply food and ammunition to the aircraft carriers, and new multi-role research vessels.



Combined, the programmes are set to support up to 10,000 jobs and are seen in Whitehall as a boost to the Union as shipyards in Scotland and Northern Ireland are set to benefit.

## New organisations

A long-delayed National Cyber Force, a joint unit between the MoD and GCHQ, is being created to boost protection to Britons at home as well as to develop new offensive cyber weapons to deploy against adversaries overseas.

RAF Space Command is expected to be capable of launching its first rocket by 2022 and will aim to better shield the UK's satellites. A new Artificial Intelligence agency is meanwhile set to develop autonomous weapons systems. Stressing the importance of data in future conflicts, a senior Whitehall source said: "What's certain is that the future will be about cyber, space, AI."

An MoD spokesman said: "As threats change our Armed Forces must change and they are being redesigned to confront future threats, not re-fight old wars. The Armed Forces will be fully staffed and equipped to confront those threats. "We will not comment on speculation about the Integrated Review, which will be published on Tuesday."

The UK Integrated Review is understood to be around 100 pages long and entitled "Global Britain in a Competitive Age".



## Ageing equipment puts Army 'at risk' – obsolescent and outgunned says report.

THE BRITISH ARMY is likely to find itself "outgunned" in any conflict with Russian forces, MPs have warned. In a damning report, the Commons Defence Committee described efforts to modernise the Army's fleet of Armoured Fighting Vehicles (AFV) as "woeful". The ageing and depleted fleet puts the Army at "serious risk" of being outmatched by adversaries, it states.

The Ministry of Defence has promised "an upgraded, digitised and networked armoured force to meet future threats".



In the report - entitled 'Obsolescent and outgunned' - the committee highlighted the "bureaucratic procrastination" and "general ineptitude" which had "bedevilled" attempts to re-equip the Army over the past two decades.

In 1990, the UK had around 1,200 main battle tanks in its inventory, today it has 227 - the report states. It said armoured vehicle capability had reached "a point of batch obsolescence, falling behind that of our allies and potential adversaries".



## Analysis

By Jonathan Beale

Defence correspondent

"The Army's Armoured Fighting Vehicle programme has been plagued with uncertainties," said Committee Chairman Tobias Ellwood, pictured below left. "The decision to invest in fighting vehicles is too often hampered by uncertainties over what the Army wants them for and pitted against the desire to fund other defence priorities," the Conservative MP added, a reference to the government's clear intention to move from industrial age to information-era technology.

The report comes ahead of publication of the government's Integrated Review of foreign, defence, security and development policy, which will be set out by Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Tuesday. Described as the most important defence review since the end of the Cold War, it is expected to focus on developing new technology such as robots, autonomous systems and meeting new threats in the domains of space and cyber.



A Ministry of Defence spokesperson said: "We thank the Defence Committee for their report and acknowledge their recommendations as we look to improve the management of our large and complex equipment programmes. "Aided by the substantial £24bn settlement for Defence, the Integrated Review will provide resources to deliver an upgraded, digitised and networked armoured force to meet future threats."

A defence review, due to be published shortly, will promise to transform and modernise Britain's armed forces to fight the wars of the future. But this report raises serious questions as to whether the Ministry of Defence can actually deliver.

MPs describe the MoD and specifically the British army's efforts to modernise its ageing fleet of armoured vehicles as "a woeful story of bureaucratic procrastination, military indecision, financial mismanagement and general ineptitude".

Hundreds of millions of pounds have been "squandered" with little to show for it. It's left the army with tanks and armoured vehicles outmatched and outgunned by a peer adversary like Russia.

To modernise its tanks, the Army will have to significantly cut numbers. Some programmes, like the upgrade to hundreds of Warrior Infantry Fighting Vehicles, are likely to be scrapped altogether. The MOD says the defence review will "deliver an upgraded, digitised and networked armoured force to meet future threats".

MPs are not so sure. They say the Army's armoured capabilities are "at risk of being denuded on the basis of promises of technically advanced 'jam tomorrow'". Last November, Mr Johnson announced a "once-in-a-generation modernisation" of the armed forces.

Ahead of Tuesday's review, the Committee urged government not to ignore the "decaying" AFV fleet. The report stated the Army is four years away from being able to field a "warfighting division", which, even under the Ministry Of Defence's (MOD) own current plans, would still be "hopelessly under-equipped".

It said soldiers called on to fight a 'peer adversary' - namely Russia - in the next few years "would, disgracefully, be forced to go into battle in a combination of obsolescent or even obsolete armoured vehicles, most of them at least 30 years old or more".

MPs added the MOD needs to urgently address its shortfalls in artillery, air defence and anti-drone capabilities, citing the Russian investment in modern missile and rocket artillery systems which defined their rapid victory in Ukraine in 2014.

"A mixture of bureaucratic procrastination, military indecision, financial mismanagement and general ineptitude has led to a severe and sustained erosion of our military capabilities," said Mr Ellwood. "This will have a profound and potentially devastating impact on our ability to respond to threats from adversaries."

"In a conflict, the capable men and women working for the armed forces may find themselves outmatched, reliant on a fleet of outdated and outmoded fighting vehicles. The government should make no mistake, these failures may cost lives."

Commenting on the report, Labour said "Conservative defence cuts and indecision" had weakened the Army. "Our Army would currently be forced to go into battle with out-of-date armoured vehicles that could be heavily outgunned. Nothing characterises Boris Johnson's 'era of retreat' over the last decade more starkly than this," said shadow defence secretary John Healey.

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## In the information age is it time for Defence to embrace a need for proactive messaging?

*By PHILIP INGRAM, Pen & Sword Club member; a former Colonel, senior planner and intelligence officer, who now runs his own media agency Grey Hare Media.*

HOW DO WE KNOW it is time for a defence review, this time the Integrated Defence and Security Review? The MoD starts to play in the information sphere with messaging about cuts, trying to elicit emotional responses, whether formally or informally there is always a surge.



February 2021 starts with a typical Saturday Mail headline, “Shocking state of the British Army exposed: Secret MoD report reveals 32 out of 33 infantry battalions are dangerously short of battle-ready soldiers.” The Journalist who wrote it, Dom Nichols, highly respected, quotes his source as an MoD report.

It is clear from the reaction that the MoD felt the sting and tried to discredit the story. Roll out the comment from the Duty 3\*, on a Saturday, Lt Gen Sir Tyrone Urch, Commander Home Command and the Standing Joint Commander (United Kingdom), clearly DDC had passed it to the Army with clear instructions to Army Comms (if there is ever anything clear from DDC). For once a robust short sharp defensive punch from Ty Urch and back to silence

Then we see reactive stories about MEDIVAC in Mali, and COVID cases amongst troops deployed for training to Kenya and there is one common theme. They are all reactive and as such start from a defensive perspective. A shield up and shutters down approach to messaging in a social media driven information age cannot under any degree of analysis, be right.

However, continuing the theme, The Times publishes an exclusive saying, “Dozens of tanks to be scrapped in ‘redesign’ for army of the future, brining into question not just the numbers of Challenger Main Battle tanks but also the upgrade programme for the Warrior Armoured Fighting Vehicle.

Larisa Brown the Defence Editor for the Times is an experienced Defence journalist and wouldn’t have published the story unless it had come from reliable, checkable sources, i.e., inside Defence.

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*Slightly tongue in cheek in his Twitter profile, Philip Ingram refers to himself as an “Ex spy, specialised in taking over countries, now writes and broadcasts about things intelligence, security, cyber, CBRNE (that is Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives), geopolitics, terror and more. Philip is a widely published journalist, specialising in the security and intelligence arenas, who has built on a long and senior career in British Military Intelligence. He is recognised as a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons.*

*Philip now runs his own media company, Grey Hare Media, that specialises in delivering informed content. Whilst serving with the British Army for over 26 years and leaving as a Colonel, he was fortunate to command some fascinating units including 1 Military Intelligence Battalion.*

*Philip is frequently asked to comment for BBC TV News and Radio, CNN, ABC, CBC, Euronews, Turkish TRT World TV, Russian RT.com, and has given content in the past to BBC Mundo, Japanese NTV and many more .*

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The ‘info ops’ campaign being run is suggesting that it is the Army that is under real pressure in this Integrated Review. However, if their messaging machinery, and these stories are likely to come from its informal messaging machinery, why can’t they focus this effort against those that threaten our country?

My personal impression of defence messaging outside the Integrated review timescale is it is a self-deprecating overly protective, backward leaning and reactive service. I wanted to call it a capability, but I fail to see evidence of it falling into that bracket. It is lumped into the J/N/G/A 3 area but is treated as an also ran rather than either an underpinning or current operation.



However, a few great programmes don't make up for the fact that the information space and therein the messaging space is a current 'battlespace' with daily activity. However, this is deep battle activity and a deep battle in isolation has limited, if any long-term effect.

This is where people block those, they disagree with on social media, but this just has the effect of ensuring the feed seen is always positive and supporting, thereby reinforcing a groupthink that all is well. I have personally seen recent examples of comms staff blocking some recognised defence influencers and commentators.

Ken McCallum the new Head of MI5, when he first came into office last year said that Moscow delivered "bursts of bad weather", but China was responsible for "changing the climate" when it came to security activity and intelligence.

British military doctrine, in the Army's ADP Land Operations recognises the need for, "effects that need to be imparted on the relevant audience," in what it also describes as a "complex and dynamic environment manoeuvre has to take account of a much broader audience than simply the 'enemy', and the need for a new idea called "Integrated Action."

So, if we look at that from a military perspective – which the MoD should do, we have our national agencies recognising Russia and China as our biggest threats, we have active information operations from both targeted across the UK and British global interests on a daily basis. We know what the threat is, where it is from and how it is being delivered. Our national intelligence agencies have made that clear. However, messaging from the MoD is and remains reactive rather than proactive something even Sun Tzu suggests is not ideal.

I fail to understand, why the likes of General Patrick Saunders, Chief of Joint Operations will describe to the Sky News PODCAST series, 'Into the Grey Zone,' the way Cyber operations are being used to "fight threats below the threshold," yet it seems messaging, and information, continue to fall into the all too difficult category.

This is further reinforced by 2020DIN03-005, the extant DIN covering 'Contact with the media and communicating in public.' It requires 1\* officers and above to have clearance to comment on anything a week before commenting. It requires those below 1\* to ensure, "communication in public or contact with the media on high-profile topics and contentious issues must be referred to DDC Secretariat."

The policy effectively gags any immediate ability to react. Worse is there is nothing that seems to look at the threat and be proactive, i.e., as Sun Tzu says attack, in order to defend against the daily threats exploding on our social media feeds or newspapers undermining the very fabric of the society we have a MoD charged with defending.

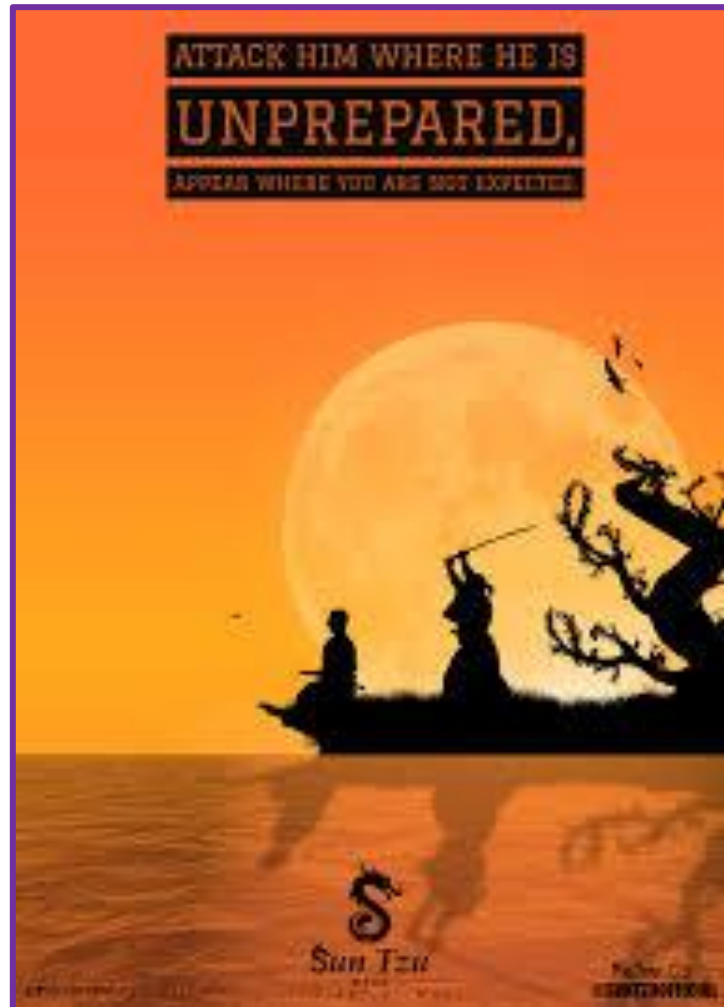
As an old-fashioned military planner, I go back to what I am told to do and what the Ministry of Defence is told to do is, "work for a secure and prosperous United Kingdom with global reach and influence. It will protect our people, territories, values and interests at home and overseas, through strong armed forces and in partnership with allies, to ensure our security, support our national interests and safeguard our prosperity."

However, if the threats to our security, prosperity, global reach and influence are "complex and dynamic," requiring "Integrated Action," when is proactive messaging going to form part of a proactive defensive posture?

Has the time come for commanders' daily ops briefs to be messaging first and kinetic second? Given the political dimension of messaging and the cross departmental nature of having a properly proactive defensive operation managing and defending below threshold threats to the UK, should the Secretary of State for Defence and defence ministers have proactive operational roles empowering military activity in the information sphere rather than stifling it in case No10 gets upset?

When will the military put messaging front and centre of its J/N/G/A 3 Operations on a daily basis, as we are fighting a conflict in the information sphere today? It is a "below the threshold" conflict but one where the UK defence approach seems to be to impersonate an ostrich rather than take a proactive stance.

Surely there is something wrong when military commanders have the authority to take decisions to kill before they can take decisions to talk?



# The problem with MOD comms .....and how to fix it.

*BY HARRY LYE, Senior Reporter, Global Defence Technology making his Pen & Sword Club Scribbles debut. March 2021*

THE WORLD of defence communications can sometimes feel like one of extremes; some defence departments are very open, easy to access for any publication, others are closed books. Sitting somewhere in the middle is the Ministry of Defence.

This article is not intended as a criticism of the MOD, but rather a case for more active engagement with a wider pool of the press. Coming from the trade press, I and several colleagues have noted that often it can feel like the MOD is more interested in working with the nationals.

While this is understandable as any press operation wants its stories to have reach, it means that the corps of the press that has expertise in the subjects are left with the scraps.

A prime contrast to this is the US Department of Defense (DOD), which engages heavily with what could be called the 'trade press'. Most recently, during the Association of the Air Force's Aerospace Warfare Symposium, I along with colleagues across the pond were invited to 11 briefings with senior US Air Force leaders across three days.

US Army Europe also regularly holds briefings with reporters and often provides access to senior leaders.

On the flip side, I can count on one hand the number of MOD briefings I have been invited to as a defence reporter over the past two years.

While briefings are not the be-all and end-all of access - they are a good place to start and regular engagement with the wider press would both help the public understand why defence

makes the decisions it does, and probably help defence make better ones.

As Number 10 has its lobby briefings that will soon be televised, would it be unfeasible for the MOD to follow suit?

Even if it were once a week, a regular opportunity to put questions to the MOD on anything from procurement to operations surely could not be a bad thing.

This would also allow the MOD to be more proactive than reactive; instead of

battling rumours about cuts, it could instead lay out what could be on the cards and make its case for changes from a more favourable position.

While the press would still report on these topics, proactive PR must be better than constantly being on a reactive footing.





Another area of improvement would be as simple as widening the pool of journalists who receive briefs on stories. Many of my colleagues in the trade press will know the feeling of seeing a story in a national paper and then having to wait for it to be published on gov.uk or having to contact DDC to receive the release.

If national papers can get this information under embargo, and it is going to the public domain anyway - I see no harm in the trade press receiving the same briefs.

Some siloes of defence are excellent in this regard, particularly Dstl and DE&S which often seem to be on the front foot, however, when it comes to the wider realm of defence, for trade press colleagues this can be all too rare.

This would be a small change that could serve to benefit the discussion; the specialist press can often bring expertise or ask questions addressing more technical issues than national papers, getting more information to a more defence-focused audience.

Many of these things I do not believe are solely the problem of the MOD, but rather a by-product of the way the UK Government as a whole engages with the press. The SpAd and press machine of the MOD could, it seems, be given more freedom to chart its own path in terms of who it talks to and when.

Another change that would improve access and communications would be to make the language defence uses more penetrable. Quotes press releases and even tweets can often be punctuated with unnecessarily complicated language that can leave even the most seasoned reporters scratching their heads. While this language can be justified in the context of doctrine when used in communications it only serves to confuse when used as a tweet.

A recent example of this is a tweet from the Royal Armoured Corp which read: "Challenger and Warrior working in concert to deliver tempo on the battlefield with @ChurchillsOwn.



When the ground is wet and muddy, the value of high terrain accessibility associated with tracks is clear". Could this not have just simply said: "Challenger and Warrior working together to deliver results on the battlefield"?

While 'working in concert to deliver tempo' may make sense to some, it does not translate to the layperson and could unintentionally put some people off from engaging.

Bucking this trend is a cohort of officers and personnel who have mastered the art of social media, that engage openly with the industry and public in a way that is interesting and accessible. The MOD would do well to listen to these personnel and learn lessons from them when it comes to approaching social media.

In short, navigating the world of MOD comms can be difficult for the defence press. However, simple changes to make the facilitation of this easier would also have positive effects for defence as a whole when it comes to engagement.

To put it simply, proactively engage, widen the net of who receives briefings and use plain English. This would not only benefit the trade press but also defence as a whole.



## What might 2021 bring the British military?

By The Wavell Room Team: who describe themselves as “a bunch of enthusiastic individuals who believe strongly in constructive debate, discussion and openness in order to arrive at a sound, non-bias and informed position on many subjects. The team are all volunteers and support this non-profit in their own time.

WITH HINDSIGHT, 2020 was not a good year for those spending the weeks before Christmas making year ahead predictions. Covid-19 was only identified officially by China on New Year's Eve, while the killing of Iran's General Quassem Suleimani on January 3 took Western military operations into uncharted territory from the start.

The pandemic meant no one in the UK military – or the wider world – had anything approaching the year that they expected. Deployments changed, exercises cancelled, job rotations delayed and changed, career paths altered. And, of course, everyone spent far too much time on Zoom and MS Teams.

Still, if being proven wrong was a reason not to make predictions, no one would ever try. In that spirit, therefore, here are areas where interesting things may happen in 2021:

### The Integrated Review – lots of money, lots of cuts – or both?

Every Strategic Defence and Security Review is described as the one that will bring systemic change and sustainability to Defence – and in many ways the Integrated Review now delayed from 2020 was more ambitious yet. What was supposed to find Britain's ambition and place in a shifting global system, however, arguably found itself overtaken by events before it even started – and must now catch up.

In November, the Prime Minister announced an additional £16.5 billion for defence over a four-year period, the biggest increase since the Cold War, with particular pledges on shipbuilding, cyber and space capabilities. Good news for fans of Type 26, 31 and planned Type 32 frigates, potentially much less for the army's planned purchase of Boxer and Ajax armoured vehicles or upgrades to Warrior and Challenger 2 – the Defence Secretary has warned of “tough choices” to come.

What it means for ordinary service personnel is even less clear – except for members of the Royal Naval Reserve, who reportedly face being told simply not to turn up at all for much of 2021 as their contribution to balancing the books.

### Russia and China in the spotlight – with deployments to match

As CDS made clear in his Christmas RUSI speech – delivered, like much else this year, remotely – HMG believes great power politics is back. That means countering this Russia and China, both seen having tried to take advantage of the pandemic to further shift the world towards authoritarian interests.

The confrontation with these “authoritarian rivals” (rather than “enemies”, to quote CDS) ranges from decisions over Huawei and 5G to the global competition between rival national vaccines and international summits like the G7 and G20. Expect more military-focused conversations about “winning in the grey zone”.

What that means will vary from very unsexy “capacity building” to high profile, relatively short notice events like September’s JOINT ENDEAVOUR, the dropping of more than 200 UK paratroopers for exercise in Ukraine not far from Russian territory.

Two deployments may grab particular attention. The first will be Defender 2021, a major US-led multinational NATO demonstration of commitment to Europe replacing a similar major exercise scaled back this year in the early weeks of the pandemic (“sneezed off”, as Russia’s government outlets described it). The second will be the first major operational deployment of HMS Queen Elizabeth and the carrier strike group, reportedly heading to Asia and its maritime disputes.



Also expect more support to nervous allies, from China-facing Australia to the nervous nations along Russia’s border regions – Sweden increased its defence budget by 40% in December on worries over Russia, but others have less cash.

## A newly engaged America – but a still fragmenting world

Providing the current incumbent can be persuaded to genuinely leave the White House, 2021 may see a very different United States on the global stage. Already, President-elect Biden has appointed a number of key Obama-era figures, bringing relief to many of America’s allies even as it worries Whitehall a little over Brexit.

In much of the world, of course, America never really went away – the Pentagon has done what it could to showcase robust support for European allies throughout the Trump presidency, while US forces in Asia have also become ever more assertive.

The Middle East, however, may be a very different matter – and whatever Washington might choose, the world seems to be getting more complex.

The past year has given us numerous examples of what that means – such as the deadly border confrontation this summer between India and China.

It’s also been visible in the hugely complex, shifting dynamics around NATO member Turkey, which has moved both closer to Russia this year through buying S-400 air defences while fighting proxy wars with Moscow in Libya and facing off over Armenia-Azerbaijan.

A pre-Christmas rocket attack by Tehran-backed militia on the US embassy in Baghdad – and the muscular posturing by Washington that followed – are also a reminder that the risks of conflict with Iran have not gone away.

All this complexity has implications for UK operations, whether in Iraq, Afghanistan or sub-Saharan Africa. Conversely, however, it may also leave the UK public and political and defence leaders caring even less about any individual theatre.



## Peacekeeping in Mali – with little peace to keep.

One area where UK defence has decided to undertake something new is Mali, and the opening weeks of 2021 should give a good indication of how that operation will shake out. Some 300 UK troops arrived in theatre in December, shortly emerging from quarantine to join the UN force MINUSMA.



Their mission – long-range reconnaissance and ISR – is potentially risky. Mali is the U.N.'s deadliest current peacekeeping mission, Islamist militant groups are becoming bolder every week and the domestic politics of Mali are complex following a coup. The UK deployment has been criticised for unclear aims – and it remains far from clear how much activity ministers and commanders will allow them to undertake.

## Covid response, culture and career questions

In the short-term, Covid isn't over – and that means more military commitment to the response, including vaccine rollout, not to mention whatever other crises require effort through the winter. For individuals and their units, that means even more than usual will be uncertain when they return from Christmas leave.

For some capabilities and maybe even cap badges, the Integrated Review makes even surviving 2021 far from a foregone conclusion. Even in “growth” areas like cyber and information operations, skilled personnel sign off every year, frustrated by being unable to remain – or promote – because career tracks do not yet exist. Midcareer entry and more flexible career structures have been discussed for years, but it is unclear if they will genuinely move closer in the next 12 months.

In the short term, Covid-related economic worries may ease the worst of the recruitment and retention challenges seen in recent years. But that won't last forever. Already, some negative news is clearly coming down the pipeline. Awkward stories in the first half of the year may include ongoing questions over HMS Prince of Wales's leak, alleged war crimes by UK special forces and the first court-martial of a major general in living memory over potential fiddling of school fees.

As the pandemic eases, the military may have to work harder than ever to protect and define its “image”, address sometimes toxic cultures, deliver opportunity and keep the people on which – even more than its equipment – UK security depends.



## Does size matter for Britain's shrinking Army?

*By JONATHON BEALE: Defence correspondent, BBC News February 24 2021*

THE BRITISH army is already the smallest it's been in 400 years. And it's about to get even smaller. A cut in the number of troops is expected in a defence review, due to be published next month. Options include losing up to 10,000 soldiers from the regular Army's notional strength of 82,000 in order to help fund its modernisation.

Ministers have made clear there will still have to be painful decisions for the armed forces, despite the extra £16.5bn given to the Ministry of Defence over the next four years.

A senior Army officer has told the BBC that technology will allow the Army to become "leaner and more agile". But it comes amid warnings that the Army is already too small, and that more cuts will worry allies and limit its ability to fight. Over the past year the Army has been preparing for a radical transformation. It wants to embrace new technologies - from drones and robots to artificial intelligence.

Brig. John Clark, the head of Army strategy, insists no decision on troop numbers has yet been made. But he says by harnessing technology "you're able to achieve the same effect with fewer people".

However, Jack Watling, of London's Royal United Services Institute warns of "the excitement of new capabilities coming at the expense of traditional hard military power".

Remember, the majority of soldiers in a modern army are there to support and sustain a fighting force. The tip of the spear, the combat element, is often about a third of an army's total strength.

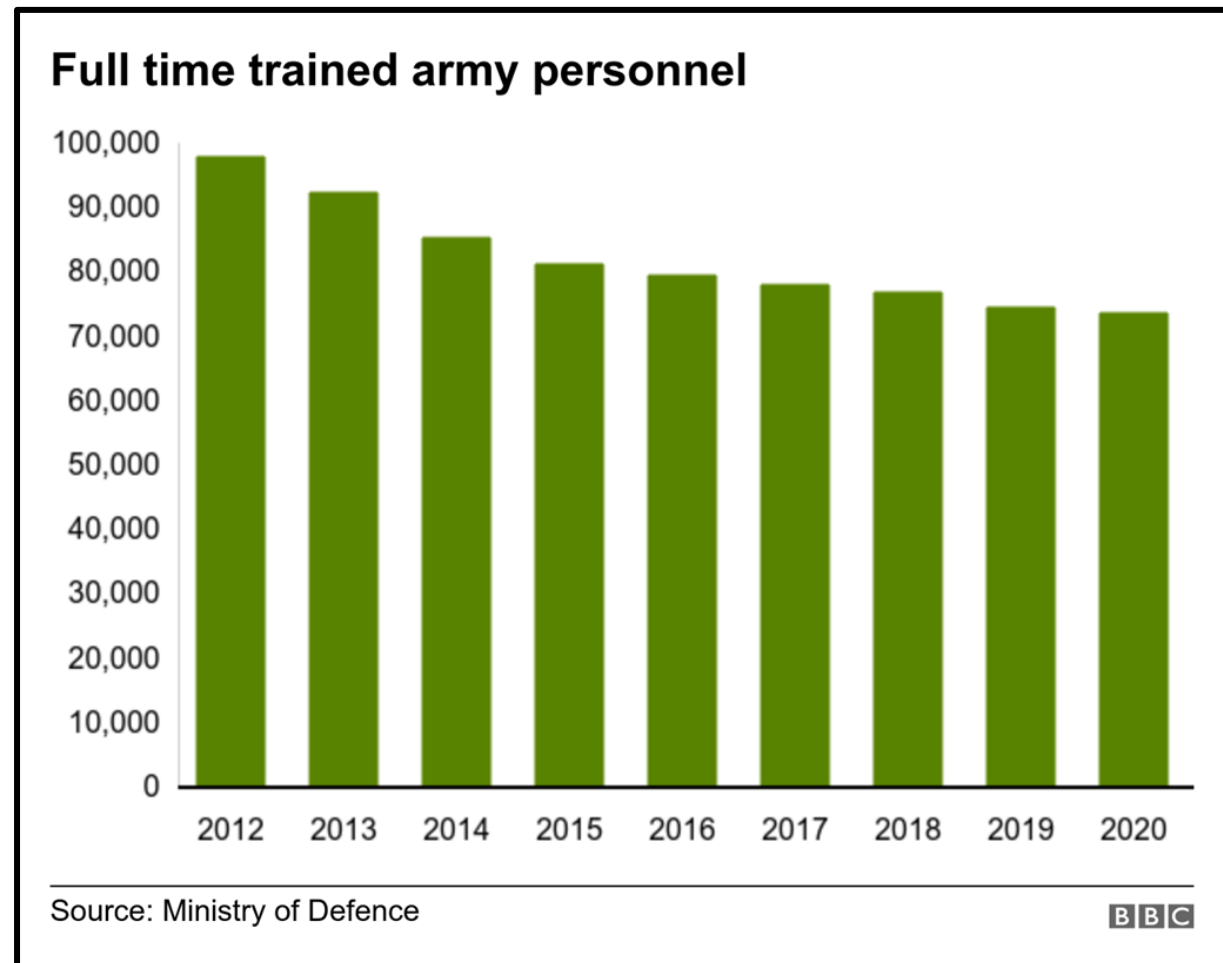
The rumours in Whitehall suggest the Army will be losing several infantry battalions, part of the fighting force. Mr Watling says an army of just 72,000 should still be able to take and hold "a small town", bearing in mind the British army struggled to secure the Iraqi city of Basra, when it was 100,000 strong.

It might appear to be a contradiction, but the Army believes even if it's smaller, it can still have a bigger presence around the world. It's embraced the government's mantra of "global Britain". For the Army it'll mean operating from a number of "global hubs" in parts of the world where it already has a presence - such as Kenya, Oman and Brunei.

Brig. Clark says: "We see those as launchpads through which we can routinely send more of the British army out to train, develop and demonstrate." He says by being forward-deployed the Army will be able to respond and manage threats "more rapidly and decisively". He describes it as prevention rather than cure. It signals a shift in the way the Army wants to operate.

Brig. Clark talks of "smaller teams that can go out there and compete beneath the threshold of conflict" - the so-called "grey zone" where militaries operate discreetly in the blurred lines between war and peace.

Ben Barry, of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), said: "I see a clear aspiration to do more with the Army further away, but forces cannot be everywhere at once."



Too small to fight a major war. There are certainly questions as to whether a smaller army, spread around the world, will be able to meet its existing commitments to NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). In theory, the UK can deploy a war fighting division to defend Europe.

Mr Watling of RUSI says among the components of a division would be around 200 main battle tanks. The British army is likely to have half that number.

Mr Barry, of the IISS, says allies in eastern Europe are left wondering whether the British army of the future will be sending "armour and infantry or aggressive algorithms" to help defend them.

The Army's plans do include updating increasingly obsolete armoured vehicles and the addition of more potent long-range artillery systems. Brig. Clark insists the Army will still be able to field a warfighting division. But the Army's definition of a division appears to be changing.



Does size matter? The UK already has one of the smallest armies of any major European nation. And that worries its closest military ally, the United States.

US General Mark Milley's plea to the British army at a London conference just a few years ago was that "you don't get any smaller".

Kim Darroch, the former British ambassador to Washington, recently said the message from the Pentagon was "...do not go down any further and expect to retain your current credibility".

The truth is that the British Army's credibility had already been damaged in the eyes of the US. America had to come to the rescue of the British army in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr Barry and Mr Watling also question whether an army of 72,000 could do another Helmand - a long, enduring campaign. Brig. Clark insists it could. But the British army has a recent history of biting off more than it can chew.



## 77th Brigade 'is not being used against UK population'.

*By GEORGE ALLISON, UK Defence Journal February 2021*

LAST YEAR, Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir Nick Carter revealed that 77th Brigade was involved in countering misinformation online relating to Coronavirus. It is understood that this effort has now ended, with 77th Brigade keen to point out that their capabilities were not used against British citizens.

In an update to the 'Ministry of Defence COVID Support Force' guidance on the UK Government website, it states:

"77th Brigade previously support Cabinet Office's Rapid Response Unit with monitoring and detecting disinformation and misinformation. Instances identified were passed to the Cabinet Office for action. The Brigade is no longer involved in these tasks which came to an end in the summer.

The 77th Brigade are not currently supporting in the Cabinet Office with any projects that would involve interactions with British Citizens who might be posting disinformation nor misinformation and any capabilities are not being directed at the UK population. 77th Brigade do not, and have never, conducted any kind of action against British citizens.”

Back in 2019 Scottish National Party politician Douglas Chapman claimed that 77th Brigade are “attacking and undermining” people in Scotland. In the now deleted Tweet, Douglas Chapman MP posted:

Essentially, he claimed that the British Army were engaged in operations online against British citizens, there was however no proof offered.

## What do 77th Brigade do?

In their own words, “Our aim is to challenge the difficulties of modern warfare using non-lethal engagement and legitimate non-military levers as a means to adapt behaviours of the opposing forces and adversaries”.

Basically, 77th Brigade specialise in “non-lethal forms of psychological warfare”, using social media including Facebook and Twitter to fight with information in response to external factors, like Russian misinformation.

Their target is typically Russian propaganda, propaganda that is notably very active around NATO troops deployed to the Baltics alleging that the soldiers there are criminals and rapists. More recently, their target has been COVID19 misinformation.

Russia is at the forefront of information warfare in the modern age, utilising an array of organisations and strategies to spread disinformation to further national strategy but how are they doing it? The flood of inaccurate stories is so strong that both NATO and the European Union have established special offices to identify and refute disinformation, especially with coronavirus. The point of units like 77th Brigade is to counter this kind of threat.

## There is no vaccine for fake news.

*By ADAM HARTLEY, Spreckley Partners, February 2021: This article first appeared on GlobalComPR Network.*

**LAST MARCH** as we entered the very first lockdown, we published a timely blog on practicing responsible PR in an ‘infodemic’, as a response to warnings about ‘fake news’ from the World Health Organisation.

WHO director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus identified a parallel between the emergence of the real-world COVID-19 virus and the disturbing growth of fake news, noting: “We are not just fighting an epidemic; we’re fighting an infodemic.

“Fake news spreads faster and more easily than this virus and is just as dangerous.”

Right now, as we approach the grim first birthday of the pandemic in Europe, the extent and impact of 2020’s fake news infodemic is all too clear.

From QAnon zealots storming the US Capitol Building, through to the alarming rise in COVID-19 deniers, anti-vaxxers and conspiracy theorists, the spread of political and medical disinformation is arguably more of a threat to democracy and public health than ever before.





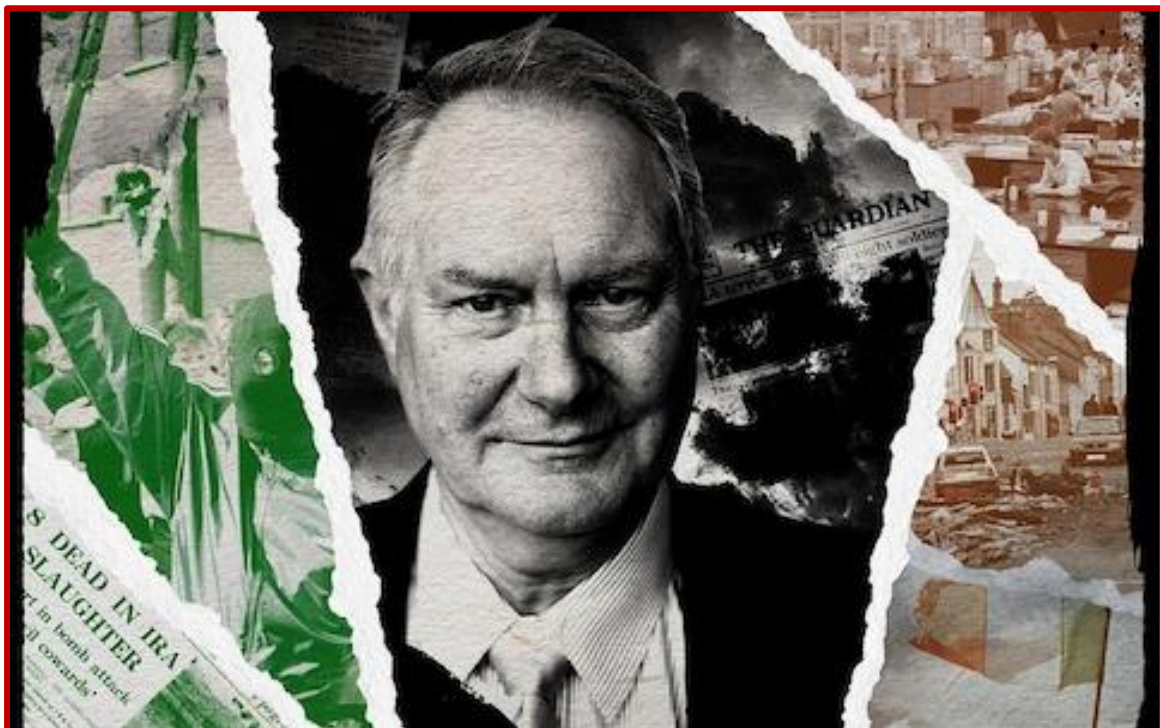


“One feature of the social media infrastructure is that it strips information of context,” explains David Robert Grimes. “The adage that all publicity is good publicity is even more true online; it does not matter why you shared an article, this share reverberates. All too often, the net effect is that bad ideas reach new audiences. The sobering reality is that there is no panacea against the ravages of conspiracy theory. Research seems to suggest prevention is better than cure, and it is easier to train people to spot potential falsehood than disabuse them of wrong-headed notions.”

To put it bluntly, there is no one vaccine that is going to stop this ‘infodemic’. But there are ways in which we can all, as individual citizens and as professional PR consultants, do our bit to counter the viral spread of fake news online and in print or broadcast news.

One clear and obvious way we can start is by giving our support to news outlets and journalists that practice and promote traditional news values: factual, unbiased and objective reporting that is in the public interest.

Plus, in our personal lives, perhaps we might all benefit from sharing fewer fact-free and context-less memes and news about conspiracies and hoaxes. No matter how ironic or well-intentioned or critical we might think we are being.



## Roy Greenslade: the inside story of the Fleet Street editor and the IRA

*By BILL GARDNER; ROBERT MENDICK and CHARLES HYMAS, Home Affairs Editor: The Telegraph March 5 2021*

THE IRA weapons dump at a remote spot in the Welsh countryside was thought to be intended for a Christmas bombing campaign on the British mainland.

In the autumn of 1989, the Sunday Times had heard that police were keeping watch on the secret cache but, with the agreement of Scotland Yard, had chosen not to publish details of its existence. The authorities needed more time.



But more than 30 years on there are now questions being asked about whether the information on the weapons dump and other Sunday Times investigations into the IRA stayed within its newsroom. It emerged last week that one of its most senior executives at the time was secretly supporting the IRA, covertly cheering the terrorist group on from behind the office walls and condoning its bombing campaign that murdered innocent civilians both on the mainland and in Northern Ireland.

In an article, Roy Greenslade revealed that while working at the heart of Fleet Street he had been secretly devoted to the paramilitary cause, and may even have tried to meddle with his own newspaper coverage to try and discredit the British armed forces. Writing under a pseudonym, Greenslade had contributed articles to a Sinn Féin pamphlet, attacking the British government.

And perhaps most troublingly of all, Greenslade revealed that he had enjoyed close relationships with senior Republican leaders, and even spent his family Christmases with a senior Sinn Féin activist named as a member of the IRA's Army Council.

"In a sense, I guess I employed what might be called journalistic entryism," Greenslade wrote in last week's British Journalism Review. The 74-year-old added that he had been "in complete agreement about the right of the Irish people to engage in armed struggle" – even as the newspapers he worked for denounced the IRA's terror campaigns.

"I came to accept that the fight between the forces of the state and a group of insurgents was unequal and therefore could not be fought on conventional terms," Greenslade wrote. "In other words, I supported the use of physical force."

Greenslade left the Sunday Times in 1990, and after a short stint as editor of the Daily Mirror, spent much of the following 28 years as a media columnist for The Guardian, frequently berating other journalists for perceived ethical misdeeds.

Greenslade was also hired as professor of journalism at City University of London, where students paid £9,000 a year for a course which included his lectures on how journalists should behave. Later he gave evidence to the Leveson Inquiry.

But the journalists who worked under Greenslade are now concerned that he may have been guilty of far worse than hypocrisy. Instead, they say his admissions raise serious questions about whether intelligence on IRA activities may have found its way to the Republican leadership. Others say Greenslade would have been privy to Government briefings while editing the Daily Mirror in the early 1990s.

David Leppard worked as crime correspondent at the Sunday Times under Greenslade in the late 1980s, reporting weekly on the IRA campaign of bombings and assassinations, and later led the newspaper's Insight investigations team.

"The entire thing is scandalous. Roy has questions to answer," Leppard told The Telegraph this week.

"We were getting information, which we were relaying to Roy in advance of publication about police operations, security service information. Much of that information we couldn't publish because it would compromise active investigations," he said.



“There always were discussions in the office when Roy was the managing editor about surveillance operations, technical details around IRA mortars engineering, about the type of explosives they were using, about the sources of supply from the Republic and Northern Ireland into the mainland, about police surveillance operations, about current investigations on people who had been arrested, fingerprint analysis on bus tickets, all sorts of stuff.

“Quite frankly, if I had known what I now know, I would have refused to do that job. It would have been potentially compromising my sources, but also national security. Not to be pompous, but people were dying.”

Leppard remembered one instance when reporters got wind of a surveillance operation codenamed Pebble on a suspected IRA arms dump in Pembrokeshire but kept the information quiet for weeks after Scotland Yard imposed a news blackout. In December 1989 armed police made their move, arresting two IRA operatives and uncovering a cache containing 100lb of Semtex explosives, detonators, and heavy automatic weapons. The head of Scotland Yard’s anti-terrorist branch later said the store was likely intended for a Christmas bombing campaign.

“That was the kind of thing we knew about, but didn’t publish,” Leppard said.

“The fact that police arrested the two men might suggest that the IRA didn’t know they were watching. But we knew that the IRA had a very concentrated and forensic information-gathering exercise about what the police knew about them. They had a counterintelligence department, obviously, counter surveillance techniques. They would have wanted to know the kind of information that we had,” he said.



“Roy is claiming to be some sort of entryist on behalf of the IRA into the media, and I’ve covered a lot of intelligence stories in my life. And we all know an entryist is a double-sided operation where the person infiltrates an organisation and then reports back to the handler.

“Roy had access to highly classified information. And if he wanted to be an agent inside the heart of the British establishment, in order to obtain information about what the security apparatus knew about the IRA, it’s difficult to see a better position to be in.

“I’m extremely alarmed about the prospect that information we may have acquired from the most confidential of all sources might have found its way somehow to the very people that we were investigating.”

Greenslade discussed the period in an interview with the British Museum in 2007, unearthed by The Telegraph.

“Various people in the office had MI5 contacts. And it was quite amusing to watch them all come up with different stories from each MI5 contact, none of whom were ever named to us,” he said.

Less amusingly, in 1983, a 24-year-old journalist named Philip Geddes was killed by an IRA bomb outside Harrods. Christopher Wilson, an author and broadcaster who helped set up a memorial fund in his memory, this week asked whether Greenslade may have information about those connected with terrorist acts.

Greenslade told The Telegraph that he categorically denied passing on any information to the IRA, adding that he never had access to classified state secrets. “I was an intellectual supporter, not a practical one,” he added.

Indeed, some of Greenslade's other colleagues at the time – including his former boss – doubt that he passed on any significant information to his associates in the IRA.



Andrew Neil, editor of the Sunday Times from 1983 to 1994 and a staunch unionist, told The Telegraph: "I find it hard to see how he could have had any influence." The newspaper had a track record of investigating the IRA, naming first Gerry Adams as the IRA's chief of staff, and then Thomas 'Slab' Murphy as its senior organiser in the 1990s, and attracted criticism for its attempts to undermine the TV documentary *Death on the Rock* over the shooting of an IRA terror cell by the SAS in Gibraltar in 1988.

Greenslade by his own admission tried to interfere with the Sunday Times's coverage by calling one of his own reporters in a fake Irish accent, relaying a bizarre tip that SAS soldiers had boasted to an airline captain in a hotel bar that they had known the men were unarmed. Greenslade later admitted in the British Museum interview that he had been handed the information by a "Republican contact", adding: "I did my little bit to try and get at the truth."

Peter Hounam, the Sunday Times reporter who Greenslade attempted to hoodwink with his fake Irish accent, told the Press Gazette yesterday: "Setting aside my Gibraltar investigation, my concern is now that our wider investigations into the Troubles may have been compromised if, as Roy says, he was so close to paramilitaries."

But Neil said: "Even if he [Greenslade] called up the IRA, so what? I can't think of any time involving the IRA or the Irish situation where he had any role."

"We knew he had a Trotskyite view. We didn't know he was an IRA supporter. He might have had Republican sympathies, but he never tried to force them on the paper."

The greater worry was "Roy's ability to embellish stories. You could take the guy out of The Sun but never The Sun out of the guy," said Neil of Greenslade's move from the tabloid to his broadsheet newspaper, adding: "In the history of British journalism he doesn't even merit a footnote. Those who worked with him more closely than me, when they saw he had become professor of journalism on ethics, said it was akin to Henry Kissinger winning the peace prize."

Greenslade explained in his recent article how he was first drawn to the IRA cause in the early 1970s, after a "a quick-fire educational tour" of Belfast and Londonderry while working for The Daily Mail.

Later he met an Irish journalist, Noreen Taylor, who at the time was distributing pamphlets for Clann na hÉireann, an IRA-supporting group for Irish emigrants. Her parents were staunch Catholics who had moved to Glasgow from County Donegal so that her father could find work as a bricklayer during the Troubles. She was "imbued with a Republican spirit," Greenslade wrote last week.

Taylor was already married to a senior journalist at the Daily Mirror, and Greenslade's short first stint at the paper – before he returned as editor, and later admitted fixing a £1m Spot the Ball competition – was cut short when her angry husband confronted him in the newsroom.

Soon afterwards on a trip to Ireland, Taylor, now Greenslade's partner, introduced him to Patrick Doherty, who later became vice chairman of Sinn Féin and was once named in Parliament as a member of the IRA's Army Council.

"My first kiss of Donegal in June 1971 turned that youthful infatuation into a full-blooded love affair," Greenslade later wrote of the visit.

"I closed my eyes. I had already fallen for Noreen. I knew I was falling in love with her homeland too."

“Back in Britain days later, I haunted bookshops, reading everything I could find about Ireland – history, politics, topography, literature, mythology, poetry and especially everything about Donegal.

“I searched in vain for an Irish connection. My mother thought there had been talk of my great-grandmother being Irish. If she were, we could find no proof. Did my name offer a clue? In Olde English, I discovered it was grene slaed, which means ‘dweller in the green valley’. Well, in Donegal there were green valleys galore.”

Greenslade’s IRA sympathies grew deeper after the events of Bloody Sunday in January 1972. As he rose through the Fleet Street ranks, however, Greenslade decided to keep his views on Ireland to himself.



“I needed a wage because I was on the verge of taking a mortgage,” he wrote. “Better, then, to button my lip and carry on... to own up to supporting Irish Republicans would result in my losing my job.”

Greenslade moved in with Taylor and her young son and daughter (Hollywood actress Natasha McElhone) and the pair later married. Family Christmases were spent at the Doherty’s’ home in Donegal. Eventually, in

1989, the couple decided to buy their own house nearby, but the local police were aware of Greenslade’s IRA connections and did not give the family a warm welcome.

“I have fantastic sympathies with the Irish Republican movement and lots of our friends are drawn from that,” Greenslade said in the British Museum interview.

“Being friendly with the vice president of Sinn Féin, our closest friend there, drew some unwelcome attention from some people. Within the town, it was well known. I don’t think the guards, which is what they call the police in Ireland, were my best friends then.”

Greenslade admitted in last week’s article that while working on Fleet Street he was secretly writing articles for An Phoblacht, Sinn Féin’s media outlet, under the pseudonym George King (‘King George’ reversed).

An Phoblacht used a number of fake by-lines, to give the impression of a much larger staff of volunteers and was edited and laid out from Sinn Féin’s headquarters in Parnell Square in Dublin. One source suggested that Greenslade wrote editorials, not just articles.

“He was Johnny on the Spot as far as events in London went, like the mortar attack on John Major’s cabinet during the first Gulf War, and the Brixton jail escape in 1991,” the source added.

Greenslade has claimed that he and his wife “did not know the level of [Doherty’s] participation” in the IRA despite witnessing police raids on Doherty’s home. Yet he has never made mention of Doherty’s notorious brother Hugh, a member of the Balcombe Street Gang arrested in London during a six-day siege in December 1975, after 35 people had been killed in a campaign of gun and bomb attacks lasting more than a year.

One source claimed that Greenslade’s other associates at the time included Jimmy ‘Mortars’ Monaghan, who reportedly gained his nickname due to his skill in manufacturing homemade mortars and once served as head of the IRA’s engineering section. Greenslade denies this.

Perhaps Greenslade’s most mysterious friendship, however, was with the suspected Hyde Park bomber John Downey. Identified as a suspect a month after the 1982 bombing that killed four British soldiers, Downey had been convicted of IRA membership in May 1974, and was also wanted in connection with a car bomb that killed two UDR members in August 1972.



After police put his face on a wanted poster, Downey was reported to have led a shadowy existence during the 1980s, moving between Republican safe houses. Later he opened an oyster farm near a village in Donegal, close to Greenslade's home.

During the collapse of Downey's eventual trial in 2014, it was revealed that Greenslade had stood surety for him when he was granted bail. The journalist bought his oysters from Downey, the court heard.



In last week's article, Greenslade insisted: "John was, and is, a Donegal neighbour. All I know of him is his dedication to peace." Family members of the Hyde Park victims, however, believe Greenslade has questions to answer over his friendship with Downey, and his links to the IRA.

In a letter seen by The Telegraph, the brother of 19-year-old trooper Simon Tipper, who was killed in the attack a fortnight after his wedding, urges Boris Johnson to back a police investigation into Greenslade's activities.

"Greenslade is, of course, entitled to express his political opinion and support for Irish Republicanism. However, his glorification of and support for terrorist violence is dangerous and it appears to me to be potentially criminal," Mark Tipper writes.

"I would like to ask for your support to ensure that all necessary and appropriate investigations are carried out into whether, in his position as the editor of a national newspaper and a senior executive on other newspapers including the Sunday Times, Greenslade might have provided material support to the IRA by passing it confidential and sensitive information."

In a statement issued to The Telegraph, Greenslade said: "I was not privy to any classified information. I was an office-bound executive with no contact personally or by phone with any person from the security services. So, it follows that I didn't pass any such information to anyone.

"I categorically deny passing any information to the IRA at any time. I didn't have any information to pass on. I was an intellectual supporter, not a practical one."

But a Whitehall source signalled tacit support for an investigation into Greenslade last night, suggesting that his activities "cannot be overlooked".

"Roy Greenslade recently admitting he supported IRA terrorism during the Troubles is abhorrent and an insult to the families of all those who were killed at the hands of the IRA," the source said.

"The fact he had until relatively recently been teaching media ethics to journalism students is bitterly ironic. His shameful duplicity cannot be overlooked."

## The IRA and The Guardian

After years of furious denials, former Guardian editor Alan Rusbridger has finally condemned Roy Greenslade. In a statement, Rusbridger said Greenslade – who for 28 years used his pages to lecture the rest of Fleet Street on ethics – should have been more honest about his “obnoxious” support for the IRA.

Greenslade ought to have been “frank about his own political beliefs and attachments” when publishing articles on Northern Ireland, he added. But the idea that Rusbridger was in the dark about Greenslade’s beliefs may come as a surprise to his critics.



More than 20 years ago, an article in The Spectator magazine alleged that there was an “IRA cell” at The Guardian, with Greenslade at its heart. The piece by Stephen Glover claimed that the paper’s pro-IRA leanings were evident in its editorials, often critical of British government policy.

Other members of the cell allegedly included Georgina Henry, the paper’s deputy editor, who died in 2014. At

the time, Rusbridger responded furiously, issuing a long statement denying reported aspects of Greenslade’s friendship with former Sinn Féin vice president Pat Doherty, and insisting that Henry had never written leading articles for the paper.

The Spectator refused to apologise, instead running an interview with Ronan Bennett – Henry’s partner, a former Republican anarchist turned screenwriter and a close friend of Rusbridger’s, who co-wrote a BBC drama with him on genetic engineering in 2000 – conducted by the magazine’s then-editor, Boris Johnson. When Johnson asked Bennett whether he would turn in the Omagh bombers if he found out who they were, the reply was “No.”

In the intervening years, Greenslade’s columns and blogs frequently appeared to reflect his Republican sympathies, including “BBC programme used anonymous single source to smear Gerry Adams” in 2016, and “The IRA hunger strike and Fleet Street’s graveyard of truth” in 2011.

A Guardian insider said this week that the newspaper regularly hosted “Shinners” – members of Sinn Féin – and that “Martin McGuinness was a regular in the editor’s office” during the Alan Rusbridger years. “It is no secret Shinners were in and out the offices,” the journalist told The Telegraph.

Rusbridger had also been aware of criticism aimed at Greenslade after he openly criticised an alleged IRA rape victim, accusing her of hiding an anti-Sinn Féin bias. In a 2014 Guardian column, Greenslade questioned the claims made by Máiría Cahill in an award-winning BBC documentary, suggesting that she had “only sought to go public with her sexual abuse allegations after she had turned against the organisation for political reasons”.

The BBC has contacted Greenslade for a response. In a statement this week, The Guardian said it had received a complaint from Cahill and “is investigating this issue. The readers’ editor will also be reviewing other historical Roy Greenslade articles concerning Northern Ireland, to ensure that they meet The Guardian’s editorial standards and are sufficiently transparent,” a spokesman said.

Greenslade insisted that he “did nothing more than the scores of journalists who keep their political views to themselves”.

# Roy Greenslade's support for the IRA and the difficult questions it raises.

By ALAN RUSBRIDGER, The Guardian, March 7 2021: Alan Rusbridger was editor of the Guardian from 1995 to 2015.

ONE OF THE STRANGEST encounters of my life took place in the basement of an anonymous office block just behind Buckingham Palace in London. There was a big state dinner that evening, and the area was stiff with security. Did any of the police notice two well-known terror leaders slip through a doorway?

Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, both key figures in the Irish republican moment, had been bidden to the meeting by a former MI6 officer. Let's call him James. James had been closely involved in the development of the peace process in Northern Ireland and had established a relationship of trust with McGuinness.



Though by then retired, James maintained an active – if unofficial – interest in securing peace and had become concerned in late 1999 that the Good Friday agreement was in trouble over the question of decommissioning.

The two Irishmen sat in something like respectful awe as James, an old school figure of some charisma, read out a prepared speech explaining that their silence on decommissioning the IRA's weapons was seriously damaging their credibility and was leaving Tony Blair and Bill Clinton looking increasingly exposed.

It was a scene I will never forget: this beady-eyed, paternalistic

establishment figure from British intelligence addressing the two leading Irish republicans of their generation about political realities.

When he had finished it was McGuinness's turn to speak. Decommissioning, he explained, was a totemic issue for the republican movement and he and Adams had a licence from the leadership to pursue political options provided they did not discuss it. "If Gerry were to make a speech about decommissioning," said McGuinness, "some young lad would come and shoot him tomorrow." Memories of Michael Collins do not fade.

Over an hour or more they went back and forth on the dilemma all terror leaders have faced through history when trying to bring their movements around to using political means rather than guns.

Why was I there? From James's point of view my presence was a signal that there was no government involvement in the meeting. From my point of view – even though I could not write about the meeting itself at the time – there was considerable journalistic value in being able to understand the thinking of the Sinn Féin leaders at such a crucial political moment.

# the guardian

Peace in Northern Ireland was not won overnight, despite the signing of the Good Friday agreement in April 1998. The prolonged, stumbling, nuanced journey to some form of new politics and reconciliation involved a huge leap of faith on all sides.

The Guardian, more than most British papers, believed early on that peace was possible; that the veteran Sinn Féin leaders were sincere about the negotiations; and also, that they had a reasonable chance of eventually bringing the men of violence with them. But we knew we could be wrong – and to that end, I, as editor, repeatedly took every opportunity I had to check that we were not acting naively.

That involved a great deal of legwork by me and Jonathan Freedland, who was writing most of our editorials. We questioned not only senior republicans, but Blair himself, along with his point man on Northern Ireland, Jonathan Powell; the Northern Ireland secretary, Mo Mowlam; intelligence chiefs; the most senior police officers; sources in the US and Irish governments and the full range of political players in Northern Ireland. Freedland was in regular contact with, among many others, David Ervine, a former paramilitary who had served jail time for possessing bomb-making equipment and who had gone on to become a progressive unionist leader. I myself met his mentor, Gusty Spence, a former paramilitary leader, who had also abandoned violence and who was critical in persuading the Ulster Volunteer Force to decommission.

With the benefit of more than 20 years of an albeit fragile and flawed peace in Northern Ireland, a fair-minded view might be that the Guardian broadly called it right. The Good Friday agreement was signed, and McGuinness and Adams did eventually persuade the overwhelming majority of republican gunmen to lay down their weapons. McGuinness went on to become deputy first minister. Sinn Féin is now a major political force both north and south of the border.

It was understandable at the time that the staunchly pro-unionist newspapers were suspicious both of the peace process and of the Guardian's belief that it was something to be argued for. Though few criticised our straight reporting or balanced comment pages, we became used to being labelled "pro-IRA", even if it was untrue.

Equally untrue were conspiracy theories about who was supposedly pulling the strings of the puppet leader writers.

Which brings us to the matter of Roy Greenslade, a former media commentator on the paper, who, with rather strange timing, recently outed himself as someone who was not only a republican, but who also supported the use of physical force.

Greenslade – whose long career included senior editorial positions at the Sunday Times, the Sun and the Daily Mirror – had made no secret that his political leanings were much more nationalist than unionist. But his publicly known views on Irish politics were no obstacle to him being offered, and accepting, a media column on the robustly pro-unionist Daily Telegraph in 2005.



In one sense, this is all a red herring. Greenslade had no role at all in Guardian editorial conferences and wrote not a single Guardian leader on Northern Ireland. When he and I spoke, it was to do with the media columns he wrote, not his ambition for a united Ireland.



But his belated decision to “come out of hiding” does raise difficult questions about the possible overlap between a journalist’s private beliefs and their work. I’ve worked with numerous journalists who have strongly held political views and affiliations, some private, some public. To what extent should they feel obliged to place those on record, even if they sincerely believe they are unconnected to what they write?

I am not alone among his former editors and colleagues in feeling let down by Greenslade for leaving it until his retirement to place on public record his sympathies for the armed struggle.

Those beliefs were irrelevant to the vast majority of his output at the Guardian. But he did very occasionally write about Ireland and media coverage. Given what he has now shared, I believe he should have avoided those topics – or, at the very least, have been consistent in letting readers know more about where he was coming from – especially as the Guardian’s own guidelines have long been explicit about declaring interests.

In particular, Greenslade had criticised transparency in a 2014 piece about a BBC programme on Máiría Cahill’s claim of rape by an alleged IRA member. Given his own lack of transparency, that was, at best, hypocritical.

The piece spectacularly fails on transparency grounds. Had Greenslade been open with me back in 2014, I would have been able to come to a different judgment about it overall. So, I am sincerely sorry to Máiría Cahill, both for the article and for the upset it must have caused her. Both the Guardian and Greenslade have also apologised.

But I will make no apologies for the Guardian’s role in, correctly, believing that peace was possible at a time when many not only doubted it but worked actively to frustrate the attempts to achieve it. Unlike Greenslade, we were never “pro-IRA”. There was no “republican cell” pulling editorial strings. We did journalism. And, in the end, we were right: peace was possible.

## Into the Grey Zone: The 'offensive cyber' used to confuse Islamic State militants and prevent drone attacks.

*By DEBORAH HAYNES, Foreign Affairs Editor Sky News,  
February 2021*

THE UK has revealed new details about a secret cyber operation against Islamic State that targeted the group’s ability to fly drones, meddled with their phones and hit their propaganda.

The mission - told to Sky News by the head of GCHQ and a top general in their first joint interview - gives a sense of the kind of hacks and other covert attacks Britain is able to conduct against countries, criminals and terrorists in the grey zone of cyberspace.

Speaking about the challenge, General Sir Patrick Sanders, commander of Strategic Command, warned that the UK’s enemies are using social media to sow division, spread conspiracy theories and tear “the fabric of society apart”.

He and Jeremy Fleming, the GCHQ director, said a new cyber force launched last year could be used to help protect the UK from disinformation attacks spreading online. The two men were speaking on Sky News’s Into The Grey Zone podcast about the National Cyber Force as well as the action against Islamic State (IS), which is the only avowed offensive cyber operation by the UK to-date. It was most active in 2016 into 2017.





*General Sir Patrick Sanders is head of Strategic Command.*

"I think it sends a really strong signal that we and our allies were not going to leave cyberspace as an uncontested place," Mr Fleming said about the IS mission. "We have to defend it. We have to make sure it's as secure as possible. We have to make sure that it is still underpinning our commerce, our economy, our society and our communities.

"But equally, when adversaries like Daesh (Islamic State) overstep the line, then they need to expect us to contest it, too."

## **The cyber fight against Islamic State**

IS shocked the world in 2014 when it seized swathes of Iraq and Syria. The militants also surged across the internet, using it to spread terror and attract recruits with horrific images of attacks and bogus promises of a better life in a self-declared caliphate.

The United States, the UK and other allies launched a visible military campaign against the group, with warplanes and troops, but they also quietly went on the offensive online.

Britain has previously acknowledged it used "offensive cyber" against IS, but this is the first time anyone has spoken publicly in such detail about what happened.

### **Preventing Islamic State drone attacks**

One element of the mission was to disrupt attempts by IS to launch attacks from the air with drones. It involved GCHQ officers and British special forces, who were deployed in the region in support of the Iraqi military and Syrian Democratic fighters

"We piloted some really early technologies to disrupt Daesh's use of some pretty basic drone technology, but which was causing us a problem," Mr Fleming said.

The GCHQ director declined to further describe how this happened other than to say: "We used cyber techniques to affect how a drone operated."

## **Confusing militants by disrupting phones.**

The UK also targeted the devices, such as mobile phones and laptops, that IS extremists were using to communicate with each other on the ground.

It is thought the operation stopped commanders from being able to send instructions to their foot soldiers or altered the content of these messages, meaning individuals might be tricked into heading in the wrong direction and getting killed.

There is evidence some fighters, no longer able to send or receive messages, felt so cut off and isolated that they simply dumped their weapons and left the battlefield, Sky News understands.



*The UK used offensive cyber to confuse IS militants and infiltrate their propaganda.*

"We wanted to ensure that when they tried to co-ordinate attacks on our forces, their devices didn't work, that they couldn't trust the orders that were coming to them from their seniors," General Sanders said.

"We wanted to deceive them and to misdirect them, to make them less effective, less cohesive and sap their morale.

"But you can't just do that in cyberspace. You have to co-ordinate and integrate that with activities that are going on the ground, whether it's from our own forces, special forces and others."

## **Disrupting Islamic State's online propaganda**

The other, much broader, dimension to the cyber mission was an effort to takedown or degrade IS's online propaganda and its ability to groom new recruits.

This involved conversations between governments and big technology companies like Facebook and Twitter to remove harmful content from their platforms.

But, for material that remained out of reach, British cyber spies launched malware against computer servers in different countries around the world to lock IS out of their accounts, delete and distort information on their files and remove online posts and videos.

US cyber operators were also involved in the effort.

Mr Fleming said: "We prevented their propaganda, both through physical actions on the battlefield, but also remotely getting to their servers, getting to the places that they stored their material."

## **Creation of the National Cyber Force and using 'offensive cyber'.**

The need to be able to use cyber to cause harm against adversaries and to disrupt or deter attacks prompted the UK to establish the National Cyber Force in a partnership between GCHQ and the military.

The Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, and the defence laboratory at Porton Down are also involved. The force was officially avowed in November 2020, although it has been operating since April of that year.

General Sanders said the term "offensive cyber" is about the deliberate manipulation of computer systems and data to achieve impacts in the real world.

He said the biggest effect is not necessarily the ability to make a computer break or a power station switch off. "Almost the more important use or opportunities or threat that come from cyber is its ability to influence people," he said.



## Using offensive cyber in other arenas

The UK appears to be evolving how it might respond to a disinformation attack by a hostile state, with a potential role for the cyber force in defending democratic events like elections.

"What you're seeing are our adversaries, our rivals, exploiting the tools that are meant to make for a more utopian society - so things like social media - against us, fuelling conspiracy theories and really sowing division and tearing the fabric of society apart," General Sanders said. "You could go so far and describe it as almost fuelling a civil war inside some of these societies.

"So, when it comes to promoting the cohesion of society and to protecting our democratic processes and countering the sort of hack and leak examples that you describe there, that, yes, offensive cyber is unquestionably one of the tools that is available to governments and we don't do this alone.



## Army recruitment campaign says 'failing is a strength' in bid to counter 'perfection' on social media.

*By DOMINIC NICHOLLS, Defence and Security Correspondent: Telegraph 7 January 2021*

THE LATEST t Army recruitment campaign says “failing is a strength” in a bid to counter the “perfection” often presented on social media. New adverts across TV, radio, online and social media will seek to show the positives of failure. Falling short is not a reason to quit, the adverts say, but a way to “learn and grow in order to win when it really matters”.

The army says failure is often seen as a weakness in wider society, to be avoided at all costs. Many young people are “obsessed by projecting perfection through social media, exam results and material objects”.

Launching the new campaign, called ‘Fail, Learn, Win’ Lieutenant General Sir Tyrone Urch, the Commander of Home Command, said: “At its core it reminds us that in the Army we are proud to train to the point of failure, so we can learn and grow.

“That’s the way we nail it when it really matters. Aim too low and succeed? No thanks. We’re the British Army.”





Polling by the MoD showed three quarters of young people feel held back by a fear of failure when taking on new challenges. Interviews last November with over 1,000 people aged 16 to 25 revealed 83 per cent agreed failure is an important part of learning and growing. Over half said a fear of judgement from other people was the main reason they were scared to fail.

Nick Terry of Capita, the firm employed to run the army campaign, said: “There can be a perception that there is no room for failure in an Army career, but we want to show that failure is embraced as a powerful learning tool with this year’s recruitment campaign.

“We hope the campaign will lead to potential applicants seeing the Army as a supportive place where they can fail, learn and win as part of a continually uplifting team to become the best version of themselves.”

The campaign is the fifth iteration of the ‘This is Belonging’ series . Previous campaigns in the series have caused controversy by appealing to ‘snowflakes’ and ‘phone zombies’. Last year’s campaign aimed to show how a career in the Army can build lifelong self-confidence, in contrast to “shallow hits that fade fast” from fashion purchases and social media ‘likes’.

New data show the controversial campaigns may have worked in meeting recruiting targets. Applications to join the Army are now at a five-year high. The 2019/20 recruiting year target for regular soldiers ready to train and regular direct entry officers was met in its entirety. Reserves recruitment achieved 95 per cent of the annual target.

In one of the new adverts, we see a soldier collapsing face down in the mud at night whilst on a patrol. ‘What’s our most powerful weapon?’ a voiceover asks. ‘Failure,’ we are told. The man looks exhausted, and we can hear other soldiers calling him on. He tries to stand but collapses again in the muddy water. The voiceover says: ‘Fail. Learn. Fail again.’ He is joined by a comrade and nods as the man explains something to him. He forces himself out of the mud and continues on his mission as we are told: ‘Learn more. And then win when it really matters.’

A second film in the new series shows a female soldier falling behind her squad on a run. As she falls to the ground we are asked: ‘What’s the first step towards victory?’ The narrator tells us: ‘Failure’. She seems to doubt herself and an instructor exhorts her: ‘Come on, keep going.’ The soldier gets to her feet and carries on running.

‘You fail, you learn, so you can win when it really matters,’ we are told, as the woman catches up with her squad.

# Royal Navy and Airforce get low-code bridge in UK military recruitment saga.

By LINDSAY CLARK, *The Register* March 4 2021



*"Crew aboard the HMS Westminster Type 23 frigate in 2018"*

PERHAPS learning from the not-insignificant errors attributed to the Army's efforts at recruitment IT, the UK's Navy and Airforce have decided to farm out development of their systems with the award of a £9.5m contract to low-code software specialist Pega Systems.

A contract award notice said the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy were naming the supplier to build a no-code/low-code "applicant support tool" with reporting analytics to help with the hiring of personnel.

The plan is to "provide a more efficient recruitment operating model; enhance the recruiter's experience; improve the candidate's experience; remove the need for local off-system candidate tracking tools; and introduce new capabilities such as ranking candidates across all careers offices in a single merit order list to allow selection of the best available rather than taking 'first past the post'," the notice said.

The call-off from the G-Cloud Framework Agreement would result in a three-year deal for subscription fees and professional services.

The accompanying contract said data may be processed in AWS data centres in the UK, but that no personally identifiable information would be stored in that cloud.

The Airforce and the Navy have access to the much-troubled Defence Recruiting System, the result of a 2011 £1.3bn deal with Capita, but the low-code platform could also address legacy systems.

Capita's Recruitment Partnership Project (RPP) for the Ministry of Defence went live in 2017, riddled with bugs and missing critical functionality, leaving recruits unable to register.

In 2019, MPs described the British Army as naïve for signing the deal.

The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force were also affected by the glitches, but to a much lesser extent, losing around 150 and 84 recruits respectively since November 2017, according to a report from spending watchdog the National Audit Office.

Nonetheless, Capita has been awarded a two-year contract extension worth £140m, set to start in March 2022.

Now the UK armed forces are tendering for a new system set to be worth between £1bn and £1.75bn including a transition period, a seven-year contract and an optional three-year extension.

In October last year, the government launched its second effort to bring together military recruitment in the UK. The new model, set to be in place from 2024, would help ensure that the quantity and quality of candidates meet the needs of all three services, while providing a clearer route for people looking to join the armed forces, the government said at the launch of the Armed Forces Recruiting Programme (AFRP).

“All three services are looking to transform their recruiting operations over the next 2 to 5 years and have given commitment for alignment and coherence by March 2024,” it said.

Meanwhile, Capita marches on undeterred. After the British Army renewed a contract that retained Capita at the heart of its recruitment services, the outsourcer snaffled a £1bn deal to provide training services for the Royal Navy and Marines.



## Blackadder star goes forth into battle against cancel culture.

By MATTHEW MOORE, *The Times* Media Correspondent January 5, 2021

ROWAN ATKINSON has condemned online cancel culture, comparing social media mobs to medieval gangs who hunted out heretics to burn. The comic actor, best known for his Blackadder and Mr Bean characters, is also a committed free speech advocate, defending the right to insult and cause offence.

In an interview with Radio Times, he blamed social media platforms for increasing polarisation, making users less tolerant of dissenting opinions. “The problem we have online is that an algorithm decides what we want to see, which ends up creating a simplistic, binary view of society. It becomes a case of either you’re with us or against us. And if you’re against us, you deserve to be ‘cancelled’,” he said.

“It’s important that we’re exposed to a wide spectrum of opinion, but what we have now is the digital equivalent of the medieval mob roaming the streets looking for someone to burn. So, it is scary for anyone who’s a victim of that mob and it fills me with fear about the future.”



Last year Atkinson spoke out against the Scottish government's plans to expand hate crime laws, warning the proposals could limit free expression.

He previously led a successful campaign against Westminster legislation that would have criminalised insulting language.

The actor also hinted that *Blackadder* could be set for a revival, more than 30 years after the poignant charge into No Man's Land at the close of *Blackadder Goes Forth* in 1989. Atkinson said it was "certainly not impossible" for the sitcom to return, indicating there had been early discussions about possible scenarios. "That's about as optimistic as I can be and I'd rather not speculate on when it could be set," he said.

The first series, broadcast in 1983, was set in the Middle Ages, with subsequent series shifting forward to the Elizabethan period, the Regency court and the trenches of the First World War.

It was reported in 2019 that Atkinson had met with co-stars including Tony Robinson, who played the dogsbody Baldrick, and Stephen Fry (Melchett) about a potential reunion, reimagining his *Blackadder* character as a modern-day university lecturer.

Atkinson, 65, admitted that recapturing the comic spirit of the first four series would be a challenge. "*Blackadder* represented the creative energy we all had in the 80s," he said. "To try to replicate that 30 years on wouldn't be easy."

Atkinson also said he was "in the foothills" of developing an animated *Mr Bean* film but had no wish to reprise his most famous role in a live action series. "It's easier for me to perform the character vocally than visually," he said. "I don't much enjoy playing him. The weight of responsibility is not pleasant. I find it stressful and exhausting, and I look forward to the end of it. I don't actually like the process of making anything — with the possible exception of *Blackadder*, because the responsibility for making that series funny was on many shoulders, not just mine."

Atkinson already voices a spin-off *Mr Bean* animated TV series. The original *Mr Bean* was shown on ITV between 1990 and 1995. Last month it was announced that Atkinson had created an entirely new character — a house sitter who is tormented by a malicious bee — for a Netflix comedy series *Man Vs Bee*.



## Most popular newspapers in the UK. National press ABCs

*UK Press Gazette, February 2021*

THE MAIL ON SUNDAY reported the smallest drop in print circulation in December – but this was still down by 9% on the year before. It had an average circulation of 954,497 in December 2019, down to 865,439 last month. It was the only newspaper not to see a double-digit year-on-year decline, with the Observer the second smallest drop (by 10% to 147,296).

The Financial Times saw its print circulation fall by more than a third (35%) year-on-year to 105,358 – the biggest fall among the UK's paid-for national newspapers.

However, the FT did grow by 1% month-on-month as it continues to recover from the initial COVID-19 lockdown slump common to each of the titles.



The Guardian saw the biggest month-on-month growth of 2% in December.

The biggest fall from November 2020 was at the Sunday People, down 5% to 120,429.

Wales went into lockdown on 20 December while Scotland and Northern Ireland were placed under tight restrictions from Boxing Day and much of London and the south east of England entered strict Tier 4 restrictions days before Christmas.

Metro and the Evening Standard, which had their free commuter distribution models hit by the Covid-19 lockdowns, were still 45% and 38% down respectively on the previous year's print readership.

National news brand circulations in November 2020 (ABC) with monthly and yearly changes – this page will be updated monthly:

The above figures do not include the Sun, Times and Telegraph titles which have all chosen to keep their ABC circulations private since the start of 2020. The column for bulks refers to copies which are circulated for free at venues like airports and hotels.

## 2020 in focus

These charts show the steep effect the first Covid-19 national lockdown, announced on 23 March, had on the UK's national newspapers – and the slow recovery ever since.

The free daily Metro was by far the hardest hit as commuters disappeared from train stations and other key locations almost overnight. Circulation had started to bounce back as publisher DMGT begun to ramp up distribution again however, the title faced a small slump in circulation in November.

Most paid-for titles have seen similar trends in both the effect of Covid-19 and the slow pace of recovery since April.

### 2000-2020

We have also charted the longer-term change in ABC circulation over the past 20 years across the UK press. These charts show the extent of the print decline from the Sun reaching 3.76m in 2000 and the Sun on Sunday's launch in February 2012 with a short-lived 3.21m before dropping to just above 2m.

Meanwhile, though the Daily Mirror and Daily Mail once were competitive in print reach at around 2.3m-2.4m in 2000, the Mail now has a circulation three times the size of its former rival.

The Sunday tabloids all saw a spike in 2011 after the closure of the News of the World but few retained the readers – the Sunday People and Sunday Mirror did best at doing so, but largely lost them when the Sun on Sunday launched. These charts will be updated each month to include the latest figures.

### November 2020

Several national news brands managed a month on month increase in print circulation in November, with The Observer seeing the biggest rise at 4%. The Observer's print circulation rose from 145,680 to 152,129 having remained steady in the previous month.

The Sunday Express, the Sunday People and the Guardian also saw print sales rise 1%, after seeing declines between September and October. The Observer saw the smallest year-on-year decline at 5%. It was the only title not to report a double-digit year-on-year fall.

The Financial Times had the biggest paid-for decline (36% to 104,024) followed by the i (31% to 151,888). Metro and the Evening Standard, which had their free commuter distribution models hit by the Covid-19 lockdowns, were still 46% and 40% down on the previous year's print readership.

### October 2020

The Observer was the only national print newspaper brand not to see a year-on-year print circulation decline in October.

The Observer's print readership remained steady on 145,680 as every other title except the Mail on Sunday, which fell by 9%, reported a double-digit year-on-year decline.

The Financial Times had the biggest paid-for decline (39% to 105,592) followed by the i (31% to 151,888). Metro and the Evening Standard, which had their free commuter distribution models hit by the Covid-19 lockdowns, were still 45% and 39% down on the previous year's print readership – although Metro managed to add a fifth back onto its output in October.

## BBC boss: Journalists must be 'activists for impartiality' - Press Gazette.

By CHARLOTTE TOBBIT, Press Gazette Jan 11 2021

Journalists must be “activists for impartiality” to defend the news media in the face of distrust and disinformation, according to BBC director-general Tim Davie.

Davie (pictured), who made impartiality one of his four priorities for the BBC when he joined in September, said organisations like his need to be “more overt about our intent”.

“Impartiality is something we learn, it’s a skill, and we need to show people this is what we are in business to do,” he said on a panel about how to rebuild trust the media during Monday’s Reuters Next event.

“The other thing is I think we need to be confident and double down on our point of difference which is we are impartial; we do believe there is a truth, and we know it’s a somewhat impossible task to get to perfection in the endeavours we make but that is what we’re going to do. I think we have to be really proactive.

“We are activists for impartiality weirdly in terms of what we need to do now. If we care, now’s our time.”

Despite an increase in demand for trusted journalism since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, there were fears any increase in trust would prove “short-lived”.



Before the virus hit last spring, overall levels of trust in the news globally (across 40 countries) were at the lowest point since the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism began to track the data, with 38% saying they trusted news overall.

Davie pointed to the demand shown for BBC fact-checking service Reality Check’s content as he said, “we’re seeing big responses to fact-based journalism”.

He said an in-depth piece explaining the groups from QAnon to Proud Boys who broke into the Capitol topped the BBC News website’s trending list last week.

Davie also urged people to remember that “impartiality isn’t dull” or dry: “It is absolutely a real appetite for evidence, for truth, for testimony. It can be really good flavoursome reporting.

“I think it’s very important that those of us fighting for impartial media and for truth telling should absolutely not give way to ‘we have to do this in a way that gets the maximum clicks immediately’ but it also doesn’t give up on the theatre of it, the emotion of it, all the things we want to bring.”

[

Davie was joined by Reuters president Michael Friedenberg, who advocated letting readers see behind the curtain to “so people understand the basis by which we’re making our reporting” as facts are questioned more than ever before.



Friedenberg said: “As the world is becoming more polarised there’s this rich green field right in the middle [where] the world is looking for unbiased, objective and independent news to help them make the proper decisions.

“What we used to take for granted is we used to think that fact was fact and now even fact is being questioned so the reliance on data, the

reliance on science, the reliance on factual information has never been more important.

“I think what we as media organisations now need to do is open up the curtain and let people in and understand the transparency by which we are reporting and creating this content because unfortunately we can’t just do what we’ve been doing for hundreds of years of just saying ‘trust us.’

“I think we now have to make sure that everybody’s part of that process and opening up that viewpoint, so people understand the basis by which we’re making our reporting.”

Davie echoed the idea of a “green field” that is rich for unbiased reporting, even without asking people to turn to solely to wholly impartial sources like the BBC.

“I think people are smart,” he said. “They can go and read a bit of partial media, have a flavour over here but then a significant part of their time spent absorbing the news is ‘okay I need to go to a source I can trust, I need to go somewhere where I can set the story in perspective and get quality analysis’. That’s the green field Michael was talking about.”

[Read more: New BBC director-general tells staff to work elsewhere if they want to share opinions online or in columns]

Davie urged media organisations to be “very active” and work together to boost trust and tackle misinformation and disinformation: “It’s never going to be a perfect solution here. We know that.

“But it is really important we get on the front foot and we don’t assume this is the norm. I think there’s enough scale between us and there’s some quality organisations that could work together to have a material effect on this.”

Both men raised concerns over anti-media abuse and threats, with “Murder the media” scratched into a door of the Capitol during the riot last week while Davie noted BBC journalists were among those being harassed as they tried to report from the scene.

Friedenberg said: “There’s great division right now, be it geopolitical, social, socioeconomic or quite frankly the digital divide, and I think our efforts to make sure that our reporters are safe both from a physical perspective and mental perspective will only allow them to feel comfortable reporting the truth and hopefully bring those divides further together rather than further apart.”

Davie added: “I’m worried about it. I think now’s the time when leaders like Michael and myself need to be very vocal and supportive of our journalists.”



*Clockwise from top left: Richard Stephenson, ex-Civil Aviation Authority; Caroline Murdoch, HS2; Aileen Thompson, HS2; Paul Vallance, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority; Julie King, HS2; and James Slack, Downing Street*

## Official figures reveal £1m spend on best paid government comms professionals.

*By JONATHON OWEN, PR Week January 14 2021*

A NUMBER of PR professionals working in government are among the highest-paid officials in the country, according to new Cabinet Office figures. Six individuals have made the latest list of senior civil servants and officials in departments, agencies and non-departmental public bodies who earn at least £150,000 a year.

The 2020 list, released last week, reveals that the comms contingent earn more than £1m a year between them. They are among 552 individuals designated as "high earners" by the Government. This is the highest number since it started reporting these statistics in 2010.

HS2 chief executive Mark Thurston is the highest paid of this group, with a salary of between £620,000 and £624,999, while two of his most senior comms professionals are among those listed below.

### **James Slack, director of communications, Downing Street – £150,000-£154,000**

James spent 20 years in journalism in a career that culminated in him becoming political editor at the Daily Mail, before leaving the newspaper in 2017 to become Theresa May's official spokesperson – a role he reprised under Boris Johnson.

He was appointed director of comms last month in the wake of the departure of Lee Cain and Dominic Cummings from Downing Street.



**Richard Stephenson, former director of communications, Civil Aviation Authority – £155,000-£159,000**

An experienced PR professional, with a career spanning more than 20 years, Richard has held senior roles at Centrica; AXA UK & Ireland; The Post Office; Prosek Partners; Smithfield Consultants; and Citigate Dewe Rogerson. He left the CAA last month after almost six years at the aviation regulator and is now chief executive of Aerotime HUB, a media title for the aviation industry.

**Paul Vallance, group director of communication and stakeholder management, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority – £180,000-£184,999**

According to his LinkedIn profile, Paul “thrives on leading in a rapidly changing, international environment while remaining resilient under pressure and intense media scrutiny.” Prior to joining the NDA in 2016, Vallance was director of comms and marketing at Rolls-Royce’s Land & Sea division and had previously spent five years at the firm’s nuclear division. He has also worked at British Nuclear Fuels Limited, where he was group director of comms.

**Julie King, community engagement director, HS2 – £185,000-£189,999**

Julie has spent more than 20 years in comms, holding a series of roles at organisations including TfL and BAA Heathrow, where she spent more than five years as comms manager for Heathrow and Terminal 5. She also worked at the Olympic Delivery Authority, where she was head of external relations, and spent more than three years as corporate affairs director, UK, for defence and aerospace contractor Leonardo. She joined HS2 in December 2016.

**Caroline Murdoch, group director, communications, Network Rail – £205,000-£209,999**

Caroline has more than 20 years’ experience in comms, including director of corporate affairs roles at both the National Crime Agency and Transport for London. She was also chief of staff to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner. She leads corporate comms at Network Rail, and one of her “key accountabilities” is to integrate the organisation’s “long-term business strategy with its external stakeholder communications and internal employee engagement”, according to Network Rail.

**Aileen Thompson, strategic director of stakeholder engagement, HS2; £215,000-£219,999**

One of the public sector’s most experienced comms chiefs, with a career stretching back almost 40 years, Aileen is also the best paid. She joined HS2 in August 2019, after a career including stints at Weber Shandwick; Burson-Marsteller; Kellogg’s; Vodafone; Innovate UK; and the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI). Her role is to “maximising opportunities to promote HS2 Ltd, building and protecting its brand and reputation”, according to the Cabinet Office.

## **Army tanks given hidden edge in combat with new digital camouflage.**

By DOMINIC NICHOLLS, Defence and Security Correspondent: December 30 2020

THE ARMY’S move away from “bog standard green” tank camouflage has reduced detection rates by 80 per cent, a new trial has shown. Field trials of an innovative multi-patterned camouflage could add another layer of deception to protect soldiers in combat. The new Multi Coloured Digital Camouflage Five (MCDC5) is designed to work in both urban and rural settings.

Recent studies by the army, as part of the Hide, Deceive, Survive project, have shown the new camouflage can cut detection by trained soldiers down to 20 per cent, compared to existing paint schemes.

Lieutenant Colonel Rob Page, the Commanding Officer of the Armoured Trials and Development Unit believes it is a “big win”. Trials at the Army's tank training range in Bovington, Dorset, have shown soldiers without special optics find it much harder to see the new design.

The work has been a collaboration between the army, the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, the Tank museum, industry and veterans. Ideas have even been crowd sourced through social media. “Young soldiers with fresh ideas, combined with experienced instructors and professionals have attacked it in a different way,” Lt Col Page said.

Camouflaging a tank at ranges up to 300 metres is almost impossible as soldiers will almost always spot the vehicle. Equally, beyond 1000 metres, the colours meld in the visible spectrum so tanks look just like black boxes and camouflage patterns add little. Historically most anti-tank weapon system engagements occur between 300 and 1,000 metres. The new design has been targeted to work best between these ranges.



*Invented in the US in 1970 digital camo has been adopted by China.*

Introducing confusion in man or machine for even a couple of seconds could make the difference between the enemy creating a smoking hull or receiving the business end of 60-tonnes of British Defence policy. “If I can delay that targeting cycle, that's a win, because this thing doesn't operate on its own,” says Major Charlie Brunskill. “Once an anti-tank team shows itself and goes through that cycle, if I can add three more seconds to that I can perhaps get a shot off first.”

The new design consists of a mixture of pixelated blocks of five colours, with different thermal and infra-red properties. The resultant camouflage makes it hard for soldiers and drones to recognise what they are seeing.

Recent experience from the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan shows how vulnerable tanks can be to airborne assets. However, enemy weapon systems relying on Artificial Intelligence to recognise the visual, thermal or electronic signature of a tank can also be spoofed.

Multi-spectral paint schemes and modern technology can confuse drones into thinking the tank is a different vehicle, or even in a slightly different place. It means enemy drones could expend valuable weapons unnecessarily or be unable to fire as they cannot understand what they are looking at.

David Willey, curator of the Tank museum, says painting the tank in a modern design that is not “boring standard NATO green” also has a psychological effect on friend and foe alike. “Never underestimate the impact of heavy armour: what it looks like and what its presence is,” he said.

Major Brunskill agrees, saying interest in the concept has been “phenomenal”. “It’s like giving the Armoured Corps a new uniform. It’s just like putting stripes on your car as a kid; it goes 10 per cent faster,” he said. “That has an effect on the enemy as well.”

Lt Col Page says the new design is not “bumper-sticker vanity”. “It not only increases survivability; it makes the best of community interest around vehicles and around innovation in a way that we wouldn’t normally do. This has created a buzz in the armoured community because it shown that really low-level innovation can have a massive impact. It’s about pride in the vehicle and people.”

He said the Challenger 2 equipped Cavalry regiments in the army are clamouring to get the new design. “That’s exactly what we want. For defence I think that really shows what an enterprise we are. It’s not just the soldier in the vehicle. It’s the links to industry, science, the museum and the community of interest. We couldn’t do what we do without it. These innovations used to be the preserve of specialist units. We’ve democratised that process. You can deceive the technology and the human. Fact.”

## Three Chinese spies posing as journalists expelled from the UK.

*By LUCY FISHER, Deputy Political Editor:  
February 4 2021*



THREE CHINESE SPIES who falsely posed as journalists have been expelled from Britain in the past year, The Telegraph can reveal. The trio are understood to be intelligence officers for Beijing’s Ministry of State Security (MSS) and arrived in the country on journalism visas under the fake pretext of working in the media.

A senior Whitehall source confirmed that the three spies each purported to “work for three different Chinese media agencies”, which have not been named, and that they “all set foot in the UK” in the past 12 months. Their true identities were uncovered by MI5 and they have since been forced to return to China. It is thought likely that the Chinese media companies were integral to their cover stories were complicit in these plots.

The Chinese Embassy has been contacted for comment.

The revelation comes amid growing concerns in Government about Chinese economic espionage and intellectual property theft from British universities and companies. Downing Street is expected to introduce new legislation to tighten and update current laws on spying and the Official Secrets Act in the next parliamentary session, due to begin in May.

Proposals are being examined for a US-style Foreign Agents Registration Act, which would force lobbyists who work on behalf of foreign governments to register or face sanctions including jail and deportation. This would aim to outlaw acts of malign interference and influence by foreign states that do not currently meet the threshold of illegality.

The Government is looking at tabling a single “mega Bill” on national security to encompass all these elements, according to sources. British officials said it was common for Chinese intelligence officers working undercover and undeclared in the West to use the pretence of media work as a cloak for their true activities.

Last year, Fraser Cameron, a former MI6 intelligence officer, was accused of selling secrets to two Belgium-based Chinese spies who were accredited in Brussels as journalists.



Reports quoted Belgian security service sources saying the Chinese nationals worked for the MSS and the Chinese military. Mr Cameron denied the allegations against him and said they were “without foundation”.

The MSS is China’s civilian intelligence and political security agency. It is a well-resourced agency and was established in 1983 as a merger of the units previously responsible for foreign intelligence, economic espionage, counterintelligence, political security and influence work, according to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute think tank.

The revelation that three Beijing operatives posing as journalists have been expelled from Britain comes after Ofcom on Thursday revoked the UK licence of the Chinese state-owned broadcaster CGTN. The broadcasting regulator found the English-language satellite news channel was not under the editorial control of its licence holder, breaching a requirement under British law.

An application to transfer this licence to a new entity was rejected on the grounds that it would ultimately fall under the control of the Chinese Communist Party. The Ofcom rules ban broadcasters from being controlled by political bodies. While CGTN will no longer be permitted to air programmes in Britain, it may continue to exist as a media company. Its employees are permitted to continue to live and work in the UK subject to the conditions of their visas, it is understood.

Julian Knight, Tory chairman of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, welcomed the watchdog’s decision to revoke its licence. "The ruling is confirmation that the Chinese Communist Party is the ultimate controller of its broadcasts which is not permitted under UK law," he said. "CGTN had already breached broadcasting codes with a forced confession, and failure on impartiality over coverage of the Hong Kong protests."

In a statement on Friday, CGTN said Ofcom’s investigation was "manipulated by extreme right-wing organisations and anti-China forces". In a separate decision last May, Ofcom found CGTN in “serious failure of compliance” by presenting biased coverage of pro-democracy protests that swept Hong Kong in 2019.



## **GB News faces advertising boycott: Andrew Neil sets out 'anti woke' vision.**

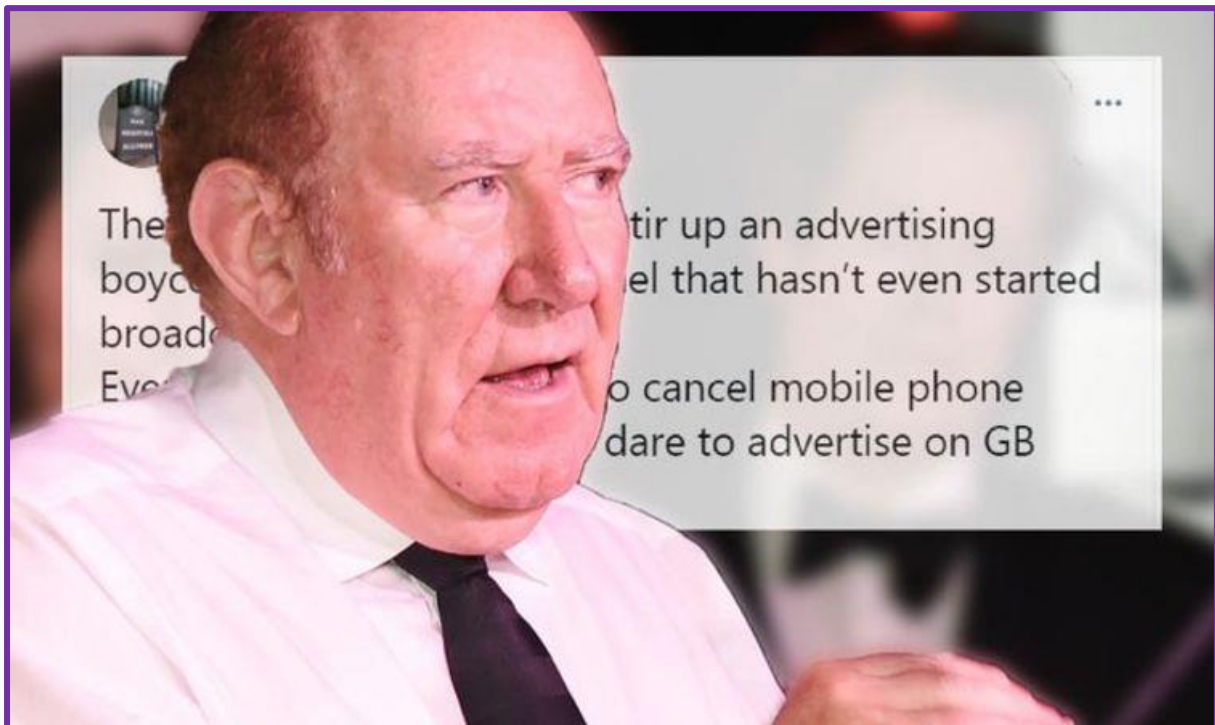
By DOMINIC PONSFORD, UK Press Gazette February 21, 2021

ANDREW NEIL set out his anti ‘woke’ vision for GB News on the same day that the channel faced an attempted advertising boycott prompted by campaign group Stop Funding Hate. Hundreds of Tweets have been sent to banks, mobile phone companies and other brands using the hashtag #DontFundGBNews.

Although GB News has yet to broadcast a second of coverage, Stop Funding Hate used articles from the Evening Standard and Guardian, speculating that the channel will be right-wing in the mould of Fox News, to justify its campaign.



Chairman of GB News and presenter of the channel Neil described the “woke warriors” behind the advertising boycott as “hilarious”. But newspapers on the receiving end of Stop Funding Hate campaigns – which have included the Express, Daily Mail and Sun – have been rattled enough by its impact on advertisers to meet with its representatives.



A Twitter-led advertising boycott helped prompt the closure the News of the World in 2011. The Marina Hyde Guardian column quoted by Stop Funding Hate described GB News as “newsotainment” and “anti-impartiality”.

GB News hit back at this in a letter which The Guardian declined to publish which said: “GB News will be staunchly independent...We are absolutely committed to our mission to report news in the most accurate and balanced way we can.!”

Neil set out the channel’s ethos in more detail writing in the Sunday Express, a title which was staunchly in favour of Britain leaving the EU. He said he has joined GB News because: “ I believe the direction of news debate in Britain is increasingly woke and out of touch with the majority of its people.”

He said: “I believe our national conversation has become too metropolitan, too southern and too middle-class. Some journalists and commentators seem too confident that their liberal-left assumptions must surely be shared by every sensible person in the land. But many of those same sensible people are fed up. They feel left out and unheard.

“There’s a restlessness, a sense that they’re being talked down to; that much of the media no longer reflects their values or shares their concerns. GB News is aimed squarely at those people.”

He said the channel will appeal to the 80% of Britons who live outside Greater London. Rather than covering rolling news, he said: “We will build a community, with programmes led by journalists and commentators with warmth, character, knowledge, humour and yes, at times, some edge.

“We will not operate on the assumption that every problem demands a government solution. “Or that every solution must necessarily involve more taxpayers’ money. We will even broadcast the good news, perish the thought! Seriously, we believe the British appetite for endless gloom, doom, blame and divisive argument is waning. People feel battered and exhausted by it.”

He said that GB News will be “proud of our country” but he said: “Above all, we will conform to all the Ofcom rules designed to ensure impartiality and the absence of bias in news broadcasting. Facts must be well-sourced and accurate. Conspiracy and disinformation will not be tolerated. Mistakes will be quickly acknowledged and rectified.”

## Gremlins Attack!

SCRIBBLINGS suffered a gremlins attack in our last edition when a complete page was missed from one of our book reviews, *The Falklands: There and Back Again* by Mike Norman and Michael Jones.

Our apologies to the authors and our readers. The review can be read at the club website in the December 2020 edition. Pages 78-79. The missing copy, which follows on from page 79 is attached below.

*The Falklands War: There and Back Again: The Story of Naval Party 8901* answers many questions raised about the courageous fight to repel Argentinian invaders in 1982. It also asks pertinent questions about why this brilliant defence never attracted significant recognition. Why no medals?

The book is available from [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk) ISBN 1526710773. UK price £19.99. Authors: Major Mike Norman, Royal Marines and Professor Michael Jones, a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

*The missing page: “..... issue — the failure to separate the categories of defending the Falklands' capital and recapturing the Islands — which was one of the main reasons for the lack of recognition. It was, and remains, a considerable injustice.*

*Having failed to obtain any satisfaction from Admiral Fieldhouse, I petitioned Governor Rex Hunt directly. I suggested that perhaps the Falkland Islands could strike a medal for 2 April, for all the Royal Marines under my command and also the FIDF. Rex Hunt wanted the bravery of the Marines to be honoured. But on investigation, he found that the Falklands' Dominion status prevented the creation of any medal.*

*Life goes on. I went to Bahrain for three years (from 1984—7), training their Defence Force in Commando skills, not, I fear, with a great deal of success. I became Commanding Officer of the Royal Marines Reserve, Scotland, based in Glasgow, in 1989.*

*I would leave the Corps in March 1992. Since then, I have visited the Falklands on a number of occasions and enjoyed the Islanders' wonderful hospitality and companionship, and the fishing that I had promised myself for my tour of service there.*

*And I always try to attend the Naval Party 8901 annual reunion, held on the nearest Saturday to 2 April, open to members of the 1981—2 and 1982—3 detachments, alongside those of HMS Endurance.*

*On December 8, 1993 a simple but moving plaque was unveiled on the now demolished site of the Moody Brook barracks. It commemorates all the Royal Marines of Naval Party 8901 who lived and served on the Islands from 1965—82. In writing this book, Michael Jones and I have hoped to enlarge on that commemoration and share a story we believe is well worth telling.*

*And above all, we have wanted to pay proper tribute to the brave men under my command, those who fought with such professionalism and courage to defend Stanley against invasion, and those who came back to the Falklands to finish the job.”*



# Falkland Islands Defence Force – The oldest land unit of the UK's Overseas Territories



*This article was submitted to UK Defence Journal by J. Vitor Tossini. Vitor is a student of International Relations at the Sao Paulo State University. He also explores British imperial and military history and its legacies to the modern world.*

AS A LOCALLY RAISED defence unit from a British Overseas Territory, the Falkland Islands Defence Force (FIDF) has been working alongside the British Armed Forces for over a century. Following British Army doctrine, the FIDF has achieved a respectful position as a qualified and well-trained unit of volunteers.

Some of the 14 British Overseas Territories are home to military installations of the UK, playing a role in the British expeditionary capabilities. Britain retains responsibility for defence and foreign affairs of its overseas possessions. The country also maintains a military presence in the Falklands, Gibraltar, the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia, and the British Indian Ocean Territory.

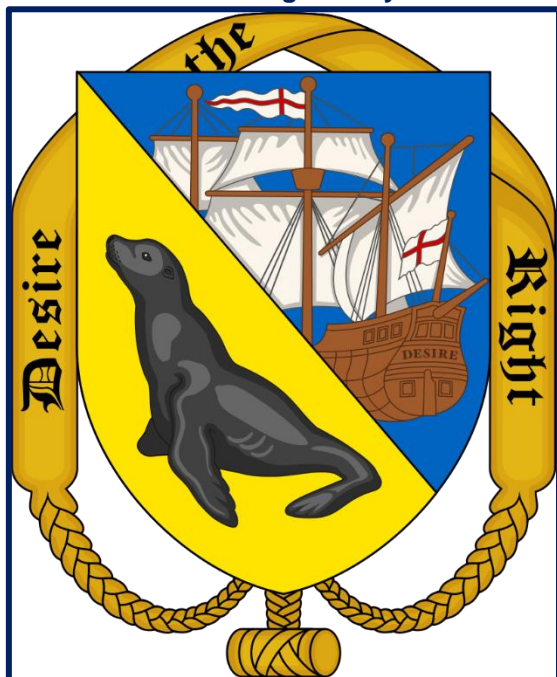
Additionally, some of its territories have their own locally raised personnel. These locally maintained units are generally concerned with ceremonial duties and civil defence. However,

the British Army's training contributes to the units' professionalisation while expanding the scope of challenges that the local forces can face, including dealing with natural disasters, illicit trade, and home defence.

Since the dissolution of the 'Royal Hong Kong Regiment (The Volunteers)' two years before Hong Kong's handover in 1997, the Falkland Islands Defence Force (FIDF) holds the title of the oldest land force of the Overseas Territories.

Officially established in 1892, the unit has its origins in the late 1840s when the first Governor of the Falkland Islands, Richard Clement Moody, formed a small militia force.

Moody's successor, George Rennie, facing the possibility of aggression from Russian privateers and warships during the Crimean War (1853-1856), supported the maintenance of a volunteer force, which, although not officially named, was known as the 'Stanley Volunteers'.





In June 1892, following the call into port of a Chilean steamer – with roughly 200 soldiers on-board – in the previous year, the unofficial volunteer force would become the ‘Falkland Islands Volunteers’. Governor Sir Roger Goldsworthy considered that the Chilean vessel, owned by one of the belligerents of the Chilean Civil War, presented an example of the security threats that could emerge to the Falklands.

In 1914, after the Great War broke out in Europe, military outposts around the Falkland Islands would receive the mobilised Volunteers. It is worth mentioning that 36 Falkland Islanders – many of them members of the Volunteers – enlisted in His Majesty’s Forces. Ten lost their lives during the war. In December 1914, the seemingly ‘calm’ watching duties of the military outposts around Stanley played a valuable role tracking a German squadron of two armoured cruisers, three light cruisers and three colliers under the command of Vice-Admiral Maximilian von Spee.

On 8 December, the German vessels’ smoke was spotted by one of the outposts and civilians – which were later awarded medals and chivalry – near the Fitzroy settlement and soon after by the outpost on Sappers Hills. The information provided a strategic advantage to the Royal Navy and resulted in the British victory at the Battle of the Falkland Islands. In 1919, the Volunteers were renamed as the ‘Falkland Islands Defence Force’ (FIDF).



*Members of the force on horseback in 1914.*

During the Second World War, the FIDF was mobilised again to operate the outposts throughout the islands. Additionally, more than 150 Islanders enlisted in the British Armed Forces, of which 26 were killed during the conflict. In late September 1939, volunteers from an Anglo-Argentine community arrived from Buenos Aires; some were rejected on medical ground and returned to Argentina. However, the Anglo-Argentine volunteers left the islands after two months once the danger of German raiders seemed to have passed. In recognition of FIDF contribution throughout the war, representatives of the FIDF participated in the London Victory Parade.

The British Government maintained a small detachment of Royal Marines in the Falklands from 1952 until 1982. This military presence enhanced the training of the FIDF, forming a special bond between the Royal Marines and the local unit. In September 1966, the FIDF and the Royal Marines worked together to contain a situation that highlighted the diplomatic dispute between London and Buenos Aires over the Falklands’ sovereignty.

On 28 September, members of an Argentine nationalist group hijacked a civilian aircraft of the Argentine Airlines (Aerolíneas Argentinas) and forced the captain at gunpoint to land in the Falkland Islands. Soon after the landing, the group demanded the Governor to recognise the Argentine sovereignty while taking four Islanders as hostages.

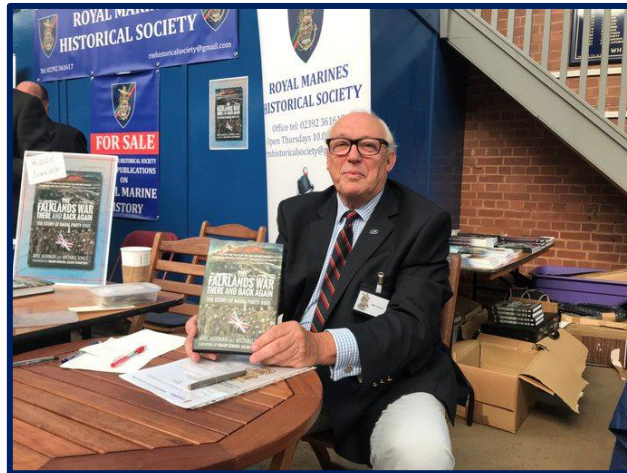
The hijackers’ initial plan involved storming the Government House in Stanley and compelling the Governor, then Sir Cosmo Haskard, to recognise the Argentine sovereignty. Besides, the group expected that their actions would lead the public in Argentina to force the Government in Buenos Aires into an open invasion of the disputed territory.



Their ambitions soon faced the reality of the resistance presented by the Royal Marines, the FIDF, and the Falklands Police. Moreover, the landing took place far from the Government House, the defence forces quickly surrounded the aircraft, and Sir Haskard was not present in the Islands on that day. Despite some popular demonstrations in support of the hijackers, the Argentine President condemned their actions. Thus, 'Operation Condor', the codename that the nationalist group used for their activities, ended on 29 September. Britain increased the total number of Royal Marines permanently based on the Islands from only six to roughly 40.

On 1 April 1982, the British Government informed Governor Rex Hunt of a possible Argentine invasion at the next dawn.

*Major Mike Norman, Royal Marines, signing copies of his book Falkland Islands: There and Back Again.*



Sixty-eight Royal Marines, 11 sailors from the HMS Endurance's survey team and no more than 120 members of the FIDF represented the British forces in Falkland at the time of the invasion. The Royal Marines' numbers were greater than the usual because the attack occurred during the changing over, meaning that both troops packing to leave the islands and their replacements were in the Falklands. Part of those Royal Marines embarked aboard the Endurance and headed to South Georgia.

Concerning the FIDF, many of its members lived in remote or isolated settlements. Considering the limited notice, around 40 of them managed to report for duty, including former members.

Their commanding officer's first orders included guarding the power station, the telephone exchange, and the radio station. Fearing disproportionate reprisal against the volunteers and the Islanders, Governor Hunt requested that the FIDF not engage with the enemy 'under any circumstances'. The FIDF barricaded themselves inside Stanley's Drill Hall.

Author Graham Bound (Editor's note: a member of the Pen & Sword Club) writing about the Falklands War, indicated that: 'Some, perhaps most, of the Defence Force were unhappy about their early withdrawal and at least one section on guard to the south of the town had sent a runner back to the HQ questioning the order.' Nevertheless, the British positions deteriorated quickly, and the FIDF's runner would not reach his fellows before the fall of the Government House.

During the first hours of the invasion, the orders were to concentrate the majority of the British forces in the Government House. After an intense exchange of fire that resulted in the death of one Argentine soldier, the increasingly fragile position of the defenders led Governor Hunt to negotiate 'a laying down of arms'. Most of the FIDF members were captured inside the Drill Hall, some near the Government House, and others after the fall of the Government House.

Until the end of the war, the Argentine Army kept part of the FIDF under house arrest. After the invasion, the Argentine Military Junta declared that the FIDF was an illegal organisation.

A former volunteer member of the FIDF, sworn as special constable the day before the invasion, provided the British Armed Forces with valuable intelligence information. An avid supporter of the Falklands association with Britain, Terence 'Terry' Peck first photographed the Argentine positions in Stanley and later managed to smuggle them out of the Falklands using British contract workers leaving the islands.

However, Mr Peck would soon become a target of the Argentines after the arrival of officers having the detailed files on locals known for their anti-Argentine positions. He planned to escape from Stanley. By 21 April, he had already left Stanley and headed to the countryside.

Peck, pictured below left with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, would remain distant from Stanley, receiving help from other islanders and eventually recovering weapons hidden by the Royal Marines.



On 21 May, the news he had been waiting for a month came in through a cryptic message over the short-wave radio stating that the islanders had just received 'a lot of friends'.

Mr Peck reached the British troops near San Carlos and spent three days giving detailed information about the Argentine positions to British officers.

However, Mr Peck's contribution to Britain's efforts to retake the Islands did not end at San Carlos. Major Roger Patton of the 3rd

Battalion, Parachute Regiment, offered him a position as a guide of his troops – attached to the 3 Para's D patrol company -, which Mr Peck quickly accepted. He guided troops during night patrols sent out to identify enemy numbers and positions and gathered assistance from local farmers to minimise the lack of military transport vehicles.

On 11 June, Terry and a member of the FIDF, Vernon Steer, participated in the Battle of Mount Longdon, advancing alongside the British troops. He only left the 3rd Battalion after they finally marched into Stanley. Mr Terry Peck was awarded an MBE in 1982 and honorary membership of the 3rd Battalion Parachute Regiment. Later he became a member of the Falklands' Legislative Council.

In addition, he dedicated years of his life to the South Atlantic Medal Association, established to provide care and support for British Falklands veterans. Mr Peck's story demonstrates the efforts and resistance of the FIDF and other Islanders during and after the Argentine invasion.

Since its reformation in 1983, the Falkland Islands Defence Force is entirely funded by the Falkland Islands Government and follows the British Army doctrine in training and operations. After the British victory in 1982, the professionalisation of the FIDF increased as the British military presence expanded, and the military infrastructure received a significant boost in the 1980s.

Following the war, the training involving the FIDF occurs once a week, with additional extended training weekends throughout the year. Moreover, serving members of the FIDF conduct training with the British soldiers on the Islands. The joint exercises generally witness the FIDF acting as 'enemy' forces against the British garrison.

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*A parade by detachments from (right to left) the Royal Navy, the Parachute Regiment, and the Falkland Islands Defence Force, on 14 June 2013*

Additionally, training with Royal Navy establishments in Britain in the operation of autocannons and fisheries protection duties expanded the local force's action scope. Subsequently, the training in Britain has given the Falkland Islands Government the possibility of mounting armed deterrence against illegal fishing. At least one Warrant Officer Class 2 (WO2) of the Royal Marines is deployed to the Islands as a Permanent Staff Instructor.

The FIDF operates as an – light role – infantry company, with mobility and flexibility as its main strengths. The mentioned rapid deployment and local knowledge give the force a special role in the search and rescue duties throughout the Falklands, reinforcing their importance to the local community.

According to Major Peter Biggs, Commanding Officer of the FIDF from 2002 to 2016, some modernisations included expanding the FIDF's configuration into a sniper/reconnaissance force capable of handling machine guns, close combat, and supporting amphibious units while co-ordinated by a central command.



The FIDF currently uses assault rifles (L85A2, which has been replacing the Steyr AUG assault rifle), light support weapons system, general-purpose machine guns (L7A2) and 0.50-inch heavy machine guns. Since the late 2010s, the local force also uses the 'L129A1 Sharpshooter' semi-automatic rifle. The advanced supporting equipment includes night vision capability and secure communication systems. As Major Biggs noticed back in the 2000s, the FIDF is 'very well equipped'.

According to the Falkland Islands Government, supported by a 'small permanent cadre' the Reservists from the local community form the FIDF. Recruitment occurs once per year. The recruitment process is open to women and men that are 'ordinarily resident in the Falkland Islands, who hold a British or Commonwealth passport and meet the selection criteria'.

Once admitted, the new members have the opportunity to attend military courses in the UK. In 2010, the costs of the FIDF did not exceed the mark of £400,000. Considered as a military 'reserve force', the size of the FIDF is roughly 100 'Primary Reserve Personnel' plus another 100 'Secondary Reserve Personnel'.



Besides working alongside the troops supplied by Britain to ensure the defence and security of the Falklands, the FIDF also played a role during UK's Covid-19 vaccination programme for the Falkland Islands. In February 2021, the FIDF'S headquarters was adapted as a Covid-19 Vaccination Centre, and its members supported the medical staff. This task leads to the other function of the FIDF: supporting their local community.

Therefore, being the oldest British Overseas Territory unit, the Falkland Islands Defence Force has a long history of volunteer service and dedication to the defence of their community. The FIDF contributed to the British war effort in the First and Second World Wars, Britain's bloodiest conflicts.

They participated in handling the 1966 landing of the hijacked flight from Argentina, when some of its members were taken as hostages by the hijackers, and bravely resisted the Argentine invasion in 1982 even though the large-scale invasion left little time to call all of its members into service.

Since 1982, the FIDF has increased and expanded the scope of its military training and readiness, becoming a force adjusted with the islands' harsh weather and geography while maintaining its essence as a force created to defend their local community.