

# *Scribblings*

*August 2020*

*Scribblings is the Journal of the Pen & Sword Club and offers news, views, analysis and opinion of interest to the military and defence industry information operations community. Editor-in-Chief: Club Executive Vice President Mike Peters: [michaelpcoms@btinternet.com](mailto:michaelpcoms@btinternet.com)*

# The world changed in a split atom second in 1945...but today's change is an early silly season and a zugwang!

IN ALL SERIOUSNESS the world changed in 2020! Not because we could not mark properly VE and VJ days and the end of the terrible conflicts of the Second World War, or because we remember that 75 years ago on August 6, the first spectre of a mushroom cloud darkened the skies over the Japanese city of Hiroshima - the fateful day we entered the nuclear age and, eventually, that deranged MAD era of mutually assured destruction, writes Mike Peters.

The world changed in 2020 as the struggle to master a killer virus pandemic confounded the best in science and health care and social media spread "disandmiss-information". Another wildfire contagion that too many will not recognise often contains malicious, calculated psychological operations as well as zealous and misguided deniers. Neither mainstream media nor politicians have yet managed to provide a coverage fully acceptable to the public.

As the Guardian reported, the "silent majority wants neutral and detached news." Any suspected politicisation of Covid 19 does not go down well. Those who work with the media, or are of the media, have been consumed by Covid 19 as they seek ways to fulfil a perceived duty of holding authorities to account while trying to provide balance to a story where often there is none. Creating fear and needless confusion by challenging all that authorities do or are thought not to have done, without due deliberation, is to be avoided.

As one scientist said in August: world governments are facing a dilemma. In the Journal of Public Health in Practice, he made the point that the Covid-19 pandemic has put authorities in a "zugwang" - a position in chess where every move is disadvantageous and where every plan must be examined "however unpalatable" it might be.

If the polls indicate that a majority of people think a government is doing a reasonable job in the difficult circumstances of a plague, communicators should take care not to "give the oxygen of publicity" to minorities who will always promote a different view when given the opportunity to express their opinion. Editors and news desks should assess whether such views are partisan. They should question if the claims have been subjected to peer review and whether the so-called alternatives can be substantiated.

Politics and the media has, undoubtedly changed, but whether or not for the better we will have to wait and see. With Prime Minister Boris Johnson announcing in the last week of July that he is to appoint a spokesperson who will brief the media on a daily basis - on live TV - then many of us in the communications business may reflect on the opening of a can-of-worms!

This presidential approach to working with the media has pitfalls. The salary of this new spokesperson, at around the £100,000 mark which has been mooted, means the incumbent will be dealing with the nation's top journalists who, in the majority of cases, will be earning very much more.



A quick glance at recently published figures reveals that the broadcasters that No.10 seems to prefer can, like Andrew Marr, earn over £400,000 a year or Laura Kuenssberg at over £250,000. This makes the pecking order look more than a little lop sided.

The PM's spokesperson must be as forensic, robust and acerbic, as the people he-or-she will be answering in a public forum. That might be a little difficult as the position No 10 is advocating seems to be well below the salt. Mind there are those who will seek fame, or infamy, at any cost.

After many years in the hot seat of media relations in the defence, aviation, environment and pharmaceutical industries, as well as in Whitehall and at the military sharp end, I would say it is imperative that the new TV guru reports direct to.... The Boss.

While Downing Street contemplates what it obviously sees as a major move forward in communicating with the public the morale among professional communicators in Whitehall and, particularly, the Ministry of Defence has collapsed. A leaked report that jobs are to be slashed in the Whitehall communications service produced a blast against government that prompted an apology from Alex Aiken, the Executive Director of Communications. The rumours suggest that the defence public relations team might be reduced to unworkable proportions – from 400 or so down to, possibly, as low as 30. The betting is unsure on whether those to go will be military or civilians, or both.

Will the Ministry of Defence and the other Whitehall departments defend their communicators. The future is unsure. It was once common practice to reduce the PR team in hard times, but this is now an outmoded concept. When the going gets tough it is the time to boost communication output.

The Ministry needs a highly competent team of communicators formed from trained and experienced professionals. Falling back on agencies – who will be undoubtedly expensive – has only a limited value because knowledge of the services and the way they work in peace and conflict is vital.

These are radical developments in Britain's political scene though, as one source, experienced in the workings of Whitehall and Westminster told Scribblings: "One thing that does surprise me is that nobody seems to understand the significance of the PM's spokesperson being a political appointment rather than an official. The person will not be a spokesperson for the Government but a party- political appointment and, therefore, in my view destined to fail in a key respect. The incumbent will simply be another politician and will be treated and attacked as such. It is an opportunity not to be miss." No doubt we will learn more in the weeks to come and the drama will be followed closely by Westminster, Whitehall and the mainstream media.

Maybe the world has changed because we all celebrated too early when the Berlin Wall came down and we thought the Cold War had ended. We cut back on defence expenditure, abandoned the shield of British Army of the Rhine, reduced the Royal Navy (where was it written ... it is upon the navy...that the wealth, prosperity and peace of these islands....do mainly depend?) and sold off or abandoned parts of the Royal Air Force's capability before replacement platforms were available. Now we are facing another defence review and the vultures are circling to savage the Ministry of Defence and seeking to divert cash into different budgets.

Maybe the world has changed because we are reading too much into the current cyber-attacks from "enemy" states, or the attempted electronic thefts of intellectual property and of



disinformation campaigns on social media where the public has yet to grasp the subtle dangers of this particular minefield.

Maybe we should be more aware of the trade and military stand-offs between China and the President of the United States of America; of the increasing Russian incursions into European airspace and submarines transiting the Channel; of what appear to be planned outbreaks of violence using primitive clubs swathed in barbed wire on the Indo-Chinese border on one hand and the flaunting of nuclear powered fleets, hypersonic missiles and war drones in south east Asia.



Yes, August 2020 is presenting a crazy mixed up world. Yes, the political and media silly season started early this year.

We learned from The Times in July of another alleged dressing down for senior military officers by the Secretary of State for Defence and the issuing of a gagging order to prevent discussions on the next round of defence changes.

In the world of military information operations and within the defence industry there is no doubt that the wide- spread speculation on the future of Britain as a credible military power with an enviable reputation in peace keeping is being harmed. Let alone the damage that is being done to the morale of our soldiers, sailors and airmen and women. Plus, the country's defence industry – a major employer and dollar earner.

It seems, too that much effort is being expended on political correctness and whether or not such terms as seaman and its like are forbidden in the military vocabulary.

While politically tempting, such silencing moves are never successful and are usually counterproductive. The requirement for secrecy on one side and the desire for open and free discussion in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be recognised and managed in a thoroughly modern manner.

Gagging orders will only produce more ill-informed speculation and even more misinformation on social media resulting in political unhappiness. As former Royal Tank Regiment Lt Colonel Stuart Crawford says in a UK Defence Journal story later in this edition – “we should let our soldiers, sailors, airmen/women, speak and have confidence in them.”



There are more than enough examples of bad public relations flowing around the murky waters. Not the least is the unfortunate jump-on-the-bandwagon book out of the US on the Duke and Duchess of Sussex.

What to the amateur might look a good move is poor public

relations for the Royal couple. Meddling with the media or trying to micro-manage the news is not to be undertaken lightly. That a number of media professionals have moved out of the royalty business in the last year should be sending a warning shot across the bows.

The last few weeks have also produced what must be, for the Ministry of Defence, unwelcome speculation from well-placed commentators. Mentions of Defence chiefs heading to The Tower and The Axe being taken to the Army have come from a former Head of RUSI.

Neither should the Government ignore the warnings of a former Commandant General of the Royal Marines on recognising that senior officers should be heard speaking truth to power.

As Churchill once said: *there are a lot of lies going around and half of them are true.* He might also have been speaking of social media when he said: *a lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.*

Allegations of media bias have also been flying around in the last month or so. There are a number of relevant surveys that help in this analysis. Countering these allegations has always been difficult for the media and, especially for the BBC. So, it was a welcome intervention from Ofcom that showed the national broadcaster came out on top as the nation's preferred source for Coronavirus news.

This relief was tempered by other stories that do not show the BBC in such a good light and include allegations of "blatant political bias." That Times Radio has launched with a formidable talent onboard. This and the changes mooted in the flagship Today programme should concentrate minds within the Beeb.

Scribblings notes a number of moves in and out of the Ministry of Defence media and communications leadership team and hopes to learn more in future from the Army's Director of Engagement and Communications.

Scribblings hears that some former Media Operations Group (Volunteers) are coming back into play after the disbandment of the unit and there has been a move by others to leave 77 Brigade and return to a purer media operations role.

Publicity for all the Armed Services remains centred on social media platforms. It would be interesting to see the full analysis of MoD publicity "hits" and assess the examination of how the services should place their stories – and what type of stories.

Accepting that there are security issues in publicising service people these days it is fair to recognise that the satisfied soldier syndrome has not gone away, and such publicity would help recruiting and, particularly retention. Social media does have an amazing following, but it does not always reach the whole audience.

Not all those in early middle age rely on social media and some of the most influential (public and family) leaders are not fans of this medium. Indeed, statistics can indicate that while 41 per cent of users of social media are in the 18-34 bracket the remaining 59 per cent are not so keen and seek their news elsewhere in traditional outlets.

Scribblings noted this week one ex-service organisation web site had tasked veterans to volunteer a story about their service days. A large number trawled through their albums and found their Hometown stories, and the local press cuttings, written about them in a previous era.





## Our busy membership...



A familiar face popped up this week in a Scottish story. Congratulations to former MOG (V) specialist Wendy Faux, left, on her promotion to Lieutenant Colonel and her new role as Head of the Arts for the Army.

Wendy has just featured in the Scottish Herald. The story appears later in this edition. Wendy's highly successful publicity for military wives over the last few years has also drawn favourable reporting.



Colonel Paul Beaver, another TAPIO, also made headlines with his participation in another Lockdown aviation event. His next talk at the Army Aviation Museum is scheduled for August 10 and will feature the Spitfire.

Paul appears almost nightly on tv programmes using his skills as a political and military broadcaster and uniquely is an Honorary Group Captain in 601 Squadron RAuxAF.



Congratulations to Colonel Deborah Oliver, well known to fellow club members as former Honorary Colonel of MOG(V) who has been elected as the next Master of the London Livery Company of Communicators.

Joining Deborah in her new Court will be three other Pen & Sword enthusiasts, Colonel Rosie Stone, Major Matt Fincham and Matthew West. The Pen & Sword Club is fully affiliated to the Company of Communicators which is continuing its progress towards Worshipful status within the London community. Deborah is already on the lookout for new members...!



Back in the news is Colonel Sir Tony Baldry. Now retired from a long career in the House of Commons where he held ministerial roles and worked closely with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Tony was one of the original members of the TA Pool of Information Officers.

As honorary Colonel of his Oxfordshire home county yeomanry Tony retains a great interest in the reserve forces and is also active in church matters. He features later in this edition in a High Court scenario covering diplomatic immunity and the Anne Saccoolas case.



Continuing our trans-Atlantic theme: congratulations to Richard Hyde, better known to Club colleagues as "Chris" who has been promoted to Colonel while serving as Director of Public Affairs to the US Army 1<sup>st</sup> Corps based in Washington State. He also manages publicity for the Joint Lewis-McChord Base, which is home to the 62<sup>nd</sup> Airlift Wing and sits under the shadow of the spectacular Mount Rainier. Chris has been a member of P&S since he served with the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps Public Affairs team at Gloucestershire. His promotion ceremony led by US Army Chief of Public Affairs; Brigadier General Amy Hannah was broadcast on Facebook Video. Chris now looks after the interests of 44,000 military personnel and 10,000 military civilian staff.



Three P&S members are much involved in the military charity High Ground's 30-mile walk along The Thames Path in a post-COVID physical fundraising event.

Leading the team is charity director Anna Baker-Creswell, left, and below left, Squadron Leader Malcolm Davidge and former Master of the Company of the London Livery company of PR Professionals, Brian Moore.



High Ground was formed in 2013 and has been working at DMRC Stanford Hall to deliver Horticultural Therapy to support the recovery of injured service personnel, with outstanding results.

For further information contact Anna- [anna@highground-uk.org](mailto:anna@highground-uk.org) or visit <https://highground-uk.org/news/> To donate please visit <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charity-web/charity/displayCharityCampaignPage.action?campaignId=13036>



Scribblings hears there is to be a change at the top of the Royal Naval Reserve media ops team. There is no announcement yet on the new team leader yet but in the Autumn, club member Commander Carolyn Jones will move to a new appointment at HMS Cambria, which has a new £11 million centre in Cardiff.

We hope to see Carolyn continuing her attendance at our monthly lunches once they get underway again later this year.



The RNR Media Ops Specialisation changes its name shortly and in future will be known as Maritime Reserve Media Operations Capability. The unit has been heavily engaged in the last few months with several members working with the Government Covid 19 group.

New P&S member Commander Greg Young, also a former media operations specialist is on the move. Greg, a director of Fork Marketing in London, is to take command of the RNR's prestigious base, HMS President, at St. Katherine's Dock, near Tower Bridge.

Greg recently handed over command of HMS Wildfire, the RNR prestigious headquarters at St. Katharine's Dock, near Tower Bridge.



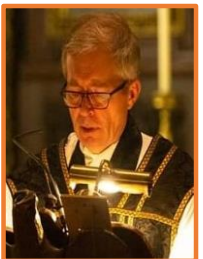
Former TAPIO, Major Sean Holden has revealed one of his Lockdown adventures on Facebook. He has qualified as an Advanced PADI Open Water Diver.

"I finally decided to get a more respectable qualification, having dived everywhere at a basic level qualification for 33 years.

"It was five dives in the churned-up silt of a chalk quarry, two of them, the coldest, deepest darkest, were down to about 80 feet. It was 18 degrees until about 25 feet when we hit an invisible sheet of cold and it sliced down to eight degrees.

"They were dry suit dives, so I was mostly warm except my face which felt as if it were clenched in a pane of ice. It was like a lake of Brown Windsor soup.

Visibility was down to five feet. You do feel out of the world. It's quite compelling. Corinna and all three sons, Jude, Jake, and Finn are divers. Freya -she likes to parachute.



All praise to our Club Chaplain, Father Kevin Bell for his work supporting the parishioners of All Hallows Church, Twickenham. Throughout the Covid Lockdown, Kevin not only stayed in touch but while the church was closed to his congregation, he went online with daily services and messages of comfort as well as acting as handyman and gardener.



Kevin continues his poetry writings and his expertise with the guitar. Scribblings is tempted to ask if his recent visit to Durham Cathedral was about prayer to his favoured Saint.... or for a quick eye test. Keep singing, Padre!

A big thank you to Roger Goodwin, former Director PR in Hong Kong and in Northern Ireland, with the experience of being a Falkland's minder behind him is now spending his retirement from the Government information Service as Curator at the Lancashire Infantry Museum.

Throughout Lockdown he has given us a daily story on the historic exploits of his county regiments.



Scribblings hears Charlie Miller is to retire from his role as Vice President International Communications for Boeing Aerospace shortly. The news comes shortly after his Boeing team won a major award for its PR work. Charlie was the defence correspondent with the Press Association brought him into contact with most defence industry commentators. He joined the British Aerospace PR team before going on to apply his skills with missile company MBDA. Charlie has promised to tell his tale in the next edition of Scribblings. Hopefully, that may include mention of his death of Princess Diana scoop.

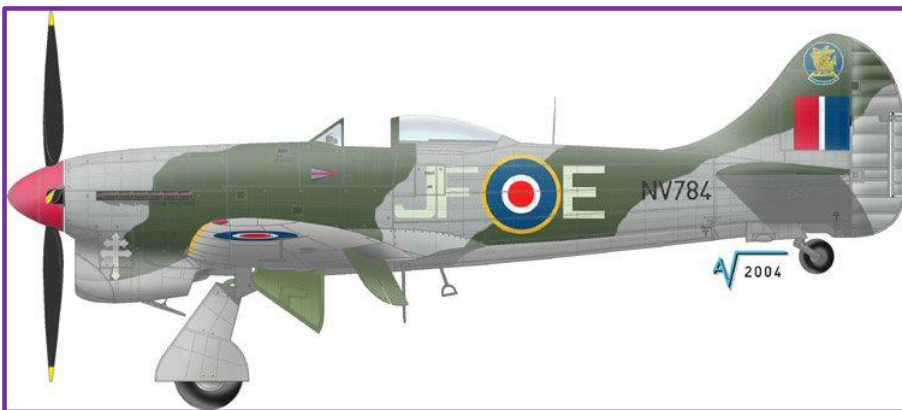
## What's Inside Scribblings this Month

Scribblings comes in two parts in August 2020. Our opening pages deal with current news and the second part of the edition deals with more historic aspects of media operations. The team examines the first story out of nuclear ravaged Hiroshima and the myths surrounding some of the war's leading generals.

How will we keep service people informed should the nation go to hot-war is a question posed after an examination of the Service newspapers produced between 1939 -45.

Scribblings also brings thoughts on the Royal Navy's Forgotten Fleet and the performance of armoured carriers in The Pacific and raises the question why we have forgotten some of the important battles of the global conflict.

Read on to find out why we pick this illustration of an RAF No 3 Squadron Tempest for this edition. The Cross of Lorraine is a clue. Look for Pierre Clostermann's tale in Part 2.





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## Exclusive: Downing Street seeks spokesman to 'communicate with nation on behalf of PM'



Commented [Mike Pete1]:

*By Christopher Hope, Chief Political Correspondent. The Telegraph July 28 2020*

BORIS JOHNSON has launched a search for a new £100,000-a-year spokesman to become the face of the Government in regular televised press conferences from this autumn. A job advertisement for a new spokesman to "communicate with the nation on behalf of the Prime Minister" will be posted online by Conservative Central Office on Wednesday morning.

Mr Johnson wants to build on the success of the Government's coronavirus press briefings which, until late last month, were broadcast to millions of Britons from Number 10 each day.

The successful applicant is likely to become a household name when they start to answer questions at regular press conferences from October, addressing what are expected to be large audiences on news channels, social media and YouTube.

The salary will be "based on experience" but it is expected by Whitehall sources to be over £100,000 a year. The successful candidate must also be willing to undergo security clearance. Number 10 has decided to make the role a political rather than civil servant post, so the spokesman will be able to engage and answer questions about opposition party policies, which a neutral Whitehall official would have to avoid.

Applicants are asked to email their CVs "and a statement of suitability of no more than 500 words" to Lee Cain, Number 10's director of communications, by Aug 21.

One source said the role will be "an extremely challenging job but also a hugely rewarding one".

- The job advert – a copy of which has been seen by The Telegraph – says: "This is a unique opportunity to work at the centre of Government and communicate with the nation on behalf of the Prime Minister."
- "The successful candidate will become a trusted political adviser to the Prime Minister and member of the senior team at Downing Street, reporting into the Prime Minister's Director of Communications."
- "You will represent the Government and the Prime Minister to an audience of millions on a daily basis, across the main broadcast channels and social media, and have the chance to influence and shape public opinion."
- "You will speak directly to the public on the issues they care most about, explaining the Government's position, reassuring people that we are taking action on their priorities and driving positive changes."

The recruitment advert asks for "an experienced and confident media operator who would enjoy working on camera and with senior ministers, political advisers, officials and journalists; who would relish the challenge and pace of televised briefings, and who has a strong grasp of foreign and domestic policy issues".

The main duties include "leading and promoting the communication of Government priorities through televised briefings to the media" and "setting the vision, direction and strategy for briefing the press on behalf of the Prime Minister".

Regular off-camera briefings for political journalists with James Slack, Mr Johnson's official spokesman, and Jack Doyle, the PM's press secretary, will continue to take place.

## Why the No 10 Spokesperson Job is a Poisoned Chalice

By Ian Dale

There's nothing Westminster journalists like more than a process story that potentially involves one of their own. This week the Conservatives advertised for a new No 10 spokesperson, who will host a live, televised daily briefing. We're all being invited to apply for a job which carries a six-figure salary and will turn the successful candidate into one of the most recognisable faces in the country. What's not to like? Quite a lot, actually.

No one in their right mind, and certainly no one at the top of their game, would apply for this job given the conditions they would have to operate under. It is the ultimate poisoned chalice – and I say that as someone who's being quoted as one of the favourites to land it. If you're of a betting persuasion I'd advise you to save your money.

The advantage of being 58 years old is that I have enough self-knowledge to know that I'd both hate it and, perhaps more importantly, be useless at it.

So why is No 10 breaking decades of parliamentary lobby tradition and insisting on these briefings being on the record? Simple. It fits into their narrative of going over the heads of political journalists and straight into people's living rooms. That's the reason the Prime Minister is utilising social media, especially Facebook, to reach voters directly, without the filter of so many tiresome political interviewers.

Although he is still doing some interviews, the audiences for his Facebook homilies and Question Time sessions are massive.

No 10 also found that their daily coronavirus press conferences turned many people against some of our leading political journalists because of some of the asinine and "gotcha" type questions they repeatedly asked. They've seen how the White House uses its daily briefings and they want a piece of the action.

It remains to be seen whether it is possible to overcome negative headlines just by employing a flashy spokesperson with the gift of the gab and the ability to argue that black is white. If whoever is chosen is perceived as being so on message as to be wired into the PM's brain, then it will just reemphasise the main criticism the Government faces – that it's too often duplicitous and casual with the truth.



the Chancellor Rishi Sunak. But would she want to compromise herself by taking a job, which, given it's being advertised by the Conservative Party and not through the civil service, is

I suspect No 10 has decided who they want to appoint and that an offer has already been made. The advert and application process is almost certainly a charade – something that has to be gone through for propriety's sake.

Allegra Stratton, left, is the favourite, not least because of her experience on Newsnight, ITV News and Peston. Currently a civil servant, she's working as director of communications for

bound to entail a certain amount of politicking? She's not the only one facing this question. Impartiality rules would make it tricky for working broadcasters on many networks to go back to their old jobs.

The other issue for candidates is how much access to the Prime Minister they will have. A successful spokesperson is invariably in the room when the key decisions are made. They need to know the mind of the Prime Minister, rather than have it filtered for them through Dominic Cummings.

The successful applicant should be on a par with Cummings, not his supplicant. Creative tension would inevitably follow, but that's for the Prime Minister to manage.

Real trouble will arise if the spokesperson becomes too successful and a star in their own right, thus overshadowing the very man who hired them in the first place and the person they are trying to convince is perfect in every conceivable way.

Finally, we come to the salary. Most front-of-house broadcasters are paid many times the £100,000 a year said to be on offer. While the privilege to serve is always a consideration, it's difficult to imagine a household name abandoning a career that has taken years to build for a job which will pay less, absorb them 24/7, and involve daily ritual humiliation.

As the saying goes, good luck with that!

## Power grab or rationalisation? Government plans huge reduction in comms personnel

By Ian Griggs. PR Week July 7, 2020

A SEISMIC SHAKE UP of Government comms teams will see the current cohort of 4,500 people across more than 20 departments slimmed down to hundreds by next year. The Government wants to implement a slimmed down comms function from April next year

Under the 'single employer' model, which has been mooted in Whitehall circles since 2016, directors of communication report to four new directors general of communication overseeing all government departments. The new directors general will be civil servants with significant comms experience, rather than political appointees, PRWeek understands.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet Office will be responsible for hiring all new personnel, in an effort to standardise pay and conditions across comms teams, replacing the current system in which individual departments make their own hiring choices.



Unions and industry commentators today described the move as a power grab by Downing Street and, in particular, the Prime Minister's chief adviser, Dominic Cummings, who has made no secret of his desire to challenge or dismantle the power bases that exist in the civil service.

### 'Overstaffed'

A senior government comms source told PRWeek that high-level discussions had resulted in a desire to make efficiencies and that fewer communicators would be needed in the future. The source said: "It is overstuffed at the moment. The ranks of communicators have swelled over the years and there is an argument, some would say, that that is not strictly necessary."

It was reported that the maximum number of people in any government comms team would be 30, which would dramatically affect larger departments such as the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Home Office and the Treasury. In 2017, PRWeek reported Office for National Statistics figures which showed that the MoD employed more than 500 people with a comms function, while the next largest HMRC and the Home Office – employed 390 and 330, respectively.

However, PRWeek understands that 30 is a baseline figure, with some departments expected to end the process with more than this number, and some with fewer. There will be inevitable job losses as a result of the move, however, particularly among larger teams.

Alex Aiken, executive director of the government communication service (GCS), has been tasked with implementing the changes. Following leaks of the plans which emerged on Friday, Aiken contacted all GCS members on Friday afternoon, in a message seen by PRWeek, to explain the move to concerned employees.

He told them that departmental comms chiefs had “debated” the idea of a single employer model since 2014 and that a decision had been taken to go ahead with the model in 2016. Aiken said: “Now is the time for us to formalise these arrangements to provide efficient and more effective government communication. Teams will still deliver departmental priorities. We will develop more shared capabilities, smaller, more agile teams and more emphasis on learning and sharing best practice. This will also be an opportunity to strengthen our professional practice, standardise pay and improve career progression.”

## Staged process

Staff and unions will be consulted on the plans and a panel, comprising senior civil servants, will be convened in September to look at the comms work of every government department. It will look at each department’s comms needs before April next year and work out a number that is “appropriate”, PRWeek was told. The changes are expected to be implemented from April 2021.

The role of director of communication (DoC) for government departments will remain in place and they will continue to run their own, reduced, teams and comms output. However, they will report to one of the four new directors general of comms, rather than being responsible to the ministerial team and boards of their own departments, and they will be “accountable to the centre”. DoC’s will also have a new career path open to them of rising to director general of

Senior officials hope to achieve at least some of the reduction in numbers of comms teams through natural wastage, when people either change jobs or retire. Some people will be offered different jobs in Whitehall, depending on their skills, for example in policy units, but there is an expectation that many will also be made redundant.

The FDA union, which represents mid-ranking and senior civil servants, said the changes were about control. Dave Penman, general secretary of the FDA, said: “This is a dramatic curtailment of the power of departments and their ministers to control their own communications. Taken together with the central control of special advisers, this further diminishes the role of ministers.”

Penman added: “Co-ordination of the government’s communications is obviously vital, but this move – as with the management of special advisers – is clearly about control. If I were a cabinet minister, I’d be fuming.”

## Rebuttal service

The Financial Times, which broke the news on Friday, quoted a source familiar with the plans as saying that the Government wanted press officers to concentrate on rebuttal and reactive comms, rather than the proactive work they do now. Sonia Khan who worked as a press officer for Works & Pensions, and later in more senior roles, said a focus on rebuttals would have implications for pay, staff welfare and future recruitment.

She added: “If you focus press officers on rebuttal only, you’re going to have to look at remuneration, as the workload in some departments can be relentless. Departments with big operational challenges and with trickier policy, such as home affairs and welfare, paid press



officers more, reflecting the challenges of their work but also to attract talent. Traditionally, some departments have struggled to recruit as everyone wants to work at the 'big four'."

Public affairs specialist Emily Wallace, right, founder of Manor Street Consultants, said the government had chosen the wrong focus by concentrating on rebuttal.

She said: "The idea that the primary function of government communication is to rebut criticism and misinformation feels like bunker-mentality politics. To work effectively, Government needs proactive communications which delivers effective consultation, informed policy-making and well-planned, well-organised announcements and briefings. If you get the proactive communications right, then the need for rebuttal is greatly reduced."



Wallace said the multiple challenges of COVID-19, an economic downturn and Brexit signalled that the Government should invest in its comms, not reduce and centralise it. She added: "This reorganisation feels very much like a grab for control by the centre of Government, stripping away the ability of Government departments to manage their message, and limiting the ability of Ministers to manage their own communications."

## Brain drain

Khan said that work in the larger departments required press officers who were experienced at handling calls from vulnerable members of the public "threatening to harm themselves". She added: "Many of these people may choose to look at more lucrative roles in the private sector instead, leading to a big loss of experience in the civil service."

PRWeek understands that government departments will be expected to continue producing proactive campaign work, despite having slimmed-down teams. But Khan, who is now a director at Cicero/AMO, said the changed focus raised questions about the role of government comms in the future and who would fill the gap.

She said: "In the past we've seen world leading campaigns from the UK on the Ebola crisis and on encouraging investment into the UK through GREAT. If key functions such as 'campaigns' are removed, are we expecting this space to be filled by the private sector instead?"

## Apology to civil servants over 'shocking' leak of job cuts

*By Aubrey Allegretti, Sky News*

CIVIL SERVANTS have reacted angrily after news their jobs are under threat was leaked to the media before they were told. Workers in Whitehall departments' communications teams went on the offensive in a call with media boss Alex Aiken. Mr Aiken apologised "for the way you learnt about these proposed changes" in a heated briefing, Sky News has learnt.

*Image: Alex Aiken told staff he wanted to 'regain your trust'*

But he confirmed redundancies may be needed given Downing Street wants all government departments to have 30 staff or "preferably fewer" dealing with journalists.

"I recognise it has hurt people and I'm sorry about that, and I will work hard to regain your trust," the executive director for government communications said.



He confirmed meetings with human resources bosses will commence from Wednesday, with the plans for removing many civil service jobs agreed by Christmas and rolled out by March 2021.

"If we need a redundancy scheme... then I suspect we will put that in place - but we are not in that place yet," he said in a bid to reassure staff.

But the announcement went down poorly with civil servants on the call. One staff member told him it was "completely tone deaf" while another attacked the "shockingly poor comms. This looks entirely political," a third said. A fourth voiced incredulity that the order was coming "from a PM who bumbles his way through every media appearance - that's not political, that's fact". A fifth person on the call asked: "Most times we have ministers that do not listen to our ideas... Why are we paying the high price for their lack of understanding?"

Mr Aiken had explained the plan to switch to a so-called "single-employer model" where all staff are managed by the Cabinet Office rather than their individual departments was originally agreed in 2017 - but postponed because of that year's election - and has been picked back up by Prime Minister Boris Johnson. He claimed the move will lead to "fewer, better, cross government campaigns" - coupled with the start of a televised Downing Street briefing that marks a "fundamental and radical change". Civil servants who are laid off will be given "due warning" and there will be attempts to move them to other roles in the civil service, he added.

Gary Graham, deputy head of the Prospect union that represents civil servants, told Sky News he had "never seen part of government act in such a chaotic and cack-handed way. The approach is crass and insensitive. Our members have been working tirelessly to support the country and keep the public informed through this pandemic - and this is how they get rewarded?"

"Members are obviously concerned about their jobs and careers - but they are also concerned for the citizens and stakeholders they serve and the organisations they currently work for. The leaked media stories, centralisation and snap announcement reek of low politics and headline chasing. The chaotic approach taken has not only destroyed the confidence of staff but also risks damaging the public's trust in the communications they receive from government."

A Cabinet Office spokesperson said: "Moving to a single employer model is a long-standing plan to make government communication more efficient and effective. There will now be a formal civil service process, overseen by a dedicated programme board. There will be full consultation with staff throughout this process."

## Top armed forces officers gagged by defence secretary Ben Wallace over aircraft carrier discussion

*By Lucy Fisher, Defence Editor, The Times July 28, 2020*

THE HEAD OF THE ROYAL NAVY has been admonished and all senior armed forces officers have been gagged after military proposals to station an aircraft carrier in the Far East were reported in *The Times* this week. Ben Wallace, the defence secretary, has banned officers at one-star rank and above from giving public speeches or appearing at think tank events.

The "pause" in external engagement, as it has been labelled by the Ministry of Defence, will remain until further notice.

Ministers want to stop senior officers making public pitches designed to influence the government's integrated review of foreign policy, defence and security, due to report this autumn.

Boris Johnson has said it will be the most sweeping and comprehensive rethink of Britain's approach to the world since the end of the Cold War.

*The Times* reported on Tuesday that military chiefs had drawn up an option to station one of the UK's £3.1 billion aircraft carriers in the Far East as part of an international alliance to counter China. Another proposal involved "forward-basing" a frigate, a smaller warship, in the region.

Comments on the subject were made publicly at a think tank webinar by senior personnel from the Royal Navy and the RAF.



Details of the aircraft carrier *HMS Queen Elizabeth*'s maiden grand voyage to the Indo-Pacific early next year also emerged, although the Ministry of Defence insisted that no final decision on its route had been taken.

Admiral Tony Radakin, the First Sea Lord was called in to see Mr Wallace to discuss the reports. Mr Wallace is thought to have become concerned about message discipline in the forces.

A defence source said last night that the ban would not last for ever. "The people who know best about what the armed forces need are those serving or in charge of the single services," they said. "We absolutely want to use their expertise and stories in a way that supports the integrated review, once this [ban] is unpaused and we are ready to re-engage."

The proposal to send the *Queen Elizabeth* to the Far East was backed by senior China hawks in parliament but Tobias Ellwood, Tory chairman of the Commons defence select committee, said that discussing it around the time of the decision to ban Huawei from Britain's 5G network was "reckless".

## Former head of Navy says military should focus on winning wars rather than 'political correctness'

*By Danielle Sheridan, The Telegraph Political Correspondent 20 July 2020*

THE FORMER HEAD of the Royal Navy has said the military should focus on winning wars rather than "political correctness" after a ban on words like manpower. Admiral Lord Alan West, former First Sea Lord, made his comments after it was reported that the First Sea Lord Tony Radakin had ordered sailors to stop using terms such as "unmanned" and "manpower" so as female recruits do not feel excluded.

Lord West, 72, said that while people have to be "very careful with words" because "in this very politically correct world it has a relevance", he hoped "that most of their (the Navy's)

attention is being paid at the moment to ensuring we have sufficient ships, weapons and men to prevent war and if there is a war, to be able to fight and win”.

"Those things seem to me merit a huge amount of attention and it seems that quite often we're focusing more and more on things like the RAF changing its uniform and all those soft things, which are lovely, but they don't actually help you when a war comes along."

It comes after the Chief of the Defence Staff warned that the Armed Forces must stamp out its "laddish" nature, as he warned he found the military's culture "really worrying".

General Sir Nick Carter also wrote a letter to all personnel where he said that while "we talk a genuinely good game", more needed to be done to deal with racism in Britain's Armed Forces.

It follows on from a review last year which concluded that the forces were led by a "pack of middle-aged white men" resulting in unacceptable levels of bullying, sexism and racist behaviour.

The report, by Air Marshal Michael Wigston, was commissioned after a 17-year-old female soldier was allegedly sexually assaulted by six male personnel.

However, the argument about what is deemed acceptable language has been questioned by some. Richard Drax, Tory MP and member of the Defence Select Committee previously told The Daily Telegraph that while it was important to crack down on racism, he did not want to see banter banished from the Armed Forces completely.

"Racism is totally unacceptable," Mr Drax said. "But there has always been a great sense of humour in the Armed Forces and in dealing with crisis they say the strangest things. It's a delicate balance. You don't want to ruin that."

Meanwhile the Navy has dismissed the idea that the word 'Seaman' is also to be dropped from its lexicon. Mike Critchley, a former Lieutenant Commander in the Navy, said: "The idea of Seaman being dropped would have been political correctness gone mad. This is just so unnecessary. It just feels like people have nothing better to do with their lives."

## A sea dog's salty views....



*By Julia Llewellyn Smith, The Times*

ADMIRAL LORD WEST our first sea lord from 2002 to 2006 with a Distinguished Service Cross for his actions in the Falklands where he was the last man to leave his sinking ship, always wears a bowler hat in public — a fuddyish choice even for a 68-year-old retired sea dog and member of the House of Lords.

"I know!" he hoots. "I'm probably the last man in London to wear a bowler hat. All I need to complete it is a waxed moustache." Yet far more extraordinary is that rather than living in the

home counties surrounded by other codgers bewailing our loss of empire, West lives in Hackney, east London, international capital of scraggy beards and cafes serving nothing but cereal. "I'm pretty sure I'm the only admiral ever to live in Hackney; I'm certainly the only non-hipster there," he affirms, continuing: "We moved there from Knightsbridge." Why did they move? "My wife's an artist; she's moved around so much for my career that when I left the navy I asked where she wanted to go. Now she's happy there with all the parties."

This isn't the conversation I expected. I'm meeting West to discuss Gibraltar and the claim last weekend by his fellow peer, Lord Howard, that Britain would, if necessary, go to war to defend the Rock from the Spaniards.

Instead, we're sitting in the House of Lords tea room, a morose-looking Lord Winston at the table beside us, with West recounting how he once accidentally booked himself and his wife into a brothel in Montreal, why he's limping after he tried and failed to jump a ticket barrier last year ("I was going to miss the train; I used to be able to jump ticket barriers") and the time when he was falsely accused of having an affair with Anni-Frid Lyngstad of Abba.



## Britain set to confront China with new aircraft carrier

*By Lucy Fisher, The Times Defence Editor, July 13, 2020*

MILITARY CHIEFS have drawn up plans to base one of Britain's new aircraft carriers in the Far East to play a part in countering an increasingly assertive China, *The Times* can reveal. HMS Queen Elizabeth, the first of the two carriers to complete training, will set sail on its maiden grand voyage as the centrepiece of a carrier strike group early next year. The £3.1 billion vessel is expected to visit the Far East, conducting military exercises with allies including the United States and Japan.

It is also likely to spend some time as a "floating trade fair", used as a platform for deals, according to a defence source. Today Beijing threatened to retaliate against UK companies doing business in China.

"It's a litmus test for the direction where the UK market would go after Brexit, and whether the UK businesses in China will be provided with an open, fair, and non-discriminate environment," said Zhao Lijian, a spokesman for the foreign ministry.

He said Beijing will closely monitor the development of the Huawei case in Britain. "It also will be the wind indicator if Chinese investments in the UK would be safe," Mr Zhao said.



Beijing arrested two Canadian citizens in December 2018 following the detention of Meng Wanzhou, Huawei's chief financial officer, in Vancouver. Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor have since been charged with spying in a case of "hostage diplomacy".

The carrier has a crew of about 700 personnel, rising to 1,600 when fighter jets and helicopters are on board. Two squadrons of F-35B Lightning II stealth combat jets, likely to be a mix of RAF and US Marine Corps aircraft, are due to be embarked during its Far East deployment. The carrier will be accompanied by two Type 45 destroyers, two Type 23 frigates, two tankers and helicopters.



The ship will complete its training with allies this autumn. Its sister vessel, HMS Prince of Wales, is about 18 months behind Queen Elizabeth in the timetable for its first big deployment.

Defence chiefs have drawn up proposals to base one of the carriers in the Indo-Pacific region. One option is to invite allies with F-35s, such as the United States and potentially Japan, to contribute airpower to a carrier strike group.

A wider array of partners, including Australia and Canada, could be invited to provide escort warships or submarines to complete the flotilla.

A source said: "One carrier will support NATO in the North Atlantic. Where else are you going to put the other? On the main trade routes and to counter the emerging threat of China. It would be an allied task group, a British carrier, but a coalition of the willing. That's how it's being looked at."

The National Institute of Economic and Social Research warned yesterday that a trade war with China would damage economic growth and lead to higher inflation and interest rates. Nathan Law, a leading Hong Kong pro-democracy activist, arrived in London after fleeing from a crackdown on freedoms in the territory imposed by Beijing.

Vice-Admiral Jerry Kyd, the fleet commander, served notice yesterday that the Royal Navy was "going to be coming back to the Indo-Pacific" region. "Our ambition is to be absolutely persistent and forward-based there, maybe with a carrier strike group, or maybe not. We'll see," he said,

He raised the prospect of Britain's F-35 stealth fighter jets disembarking in the region, adding that they could be sustained "through our US allies and through the hub in Japan". A British aircraft carrier could take them out there and bring them home again, he told a webinar hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, a London-based think tank. Another option is to base a smaller Royal Navy warship in the region, such as a frigate.

The plans are being examined as part of a review into foreign, defence and security policy, which is set to be completed this autumn. Insiders say that there is a "maritime orientation" to the defence part of the review .

Air Marshal Gerry Mayhew, deputy commander operations, suggested that allies in the region would welcome a larger British military presence. He said that alongside western partners, “colleagues in the Far East through the ‘five powers’ defence agreements and with Japan, and a whole host of others are really excited by the air and maritime opportunities that we bring.”

Britain joined the “five powers” alliance with Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia in 1971. Scepticism has been expressed from some quarters. Vice-Admiral Jeremy Blackham, a former deputy commander-in-chief fleet, cautioned: “If you put ships out a long way from home with necessarily limited military and logistic support, you need to know what your reaction will be if somebody calls your bluff.”

A spokesman for the Ministry of Defence said: “HMS Queen Elizabeth and its escorts will offer the United Kingdom a world-class sovereign carrier strike capability. No decision has been made on HMS Queen Elizabeth’s deployment.”

# WARSHIPS

INTERNATIONAL FLEET REVIEW



## P.M.'s 'BIG REVIEW' COULD PUT UK IN DEEP PERIL BY HACKING AWAY THE NAVY IT NEEDS |

*By Peter Hore, Associate Editor and Iain Ballantyne, Editor, Warships International Fleet Review July 29, 2020*



*The new strike carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth operating alongside US Navy and other Royal Navy units in the North Atlantic. Photo: US Navy.*

UK PRIME MINISTER Boris Johnson’s administration is set to honour his predecessor’s decision to hold a Strategic Defence Review every five years, announcing just before the COVID-19 ‘lockdown’ its commitment to an Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. In late February, the P.M. explained in a written statement that it was ‘the biggest review of our foreign, defence, security and development policy since the end of the Cold War.’

Mr Johnson went on: 'We need to grasp the opportunities of the next decade and deliver upon the Government's priorities. This is a defining moment in how the UK relates to the rest of the world and we want to take this unique opportunity to reassess our priorities and our approach to delivering them.'

- Certainly, there is every sign that it will be the most significant such review since the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) of 1997/98 after Tony Blair came to power. Following decades of commitment to a continental strategy – and to defensive posture against the Soviets in Europe – the SDR set Britain on the path to something that was new, but also tried and tested.

Back then, the Royal Navy, having entered the debate over the SDR expecting to lose what were then known as the Carrier Vessels Future (CVFs) – today's HMS Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales – but won its arguments.

Britain emerged with what was, in effect, a reversion to its historic and successful maritime strategy, a reset taking it away from committing heavyweight land forces to a battle against a Warsaw Pact blitzkrieg on the Central Front.



*The British amphibious assault carrier HMS Ocean, departing Devonport, Plymouth, in 2003 carrying troops from 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines to prepare for war with Iraq in the Gulf. Photo: © Tony Carney.*

### **'BLAIR'S WARS' TOPEDOED UK DEFENCE**

Unfortunately, Tony Blair's subsequent so-called 'wars of choice' in the early 2000s – the invasion of Iraq and intervention in Afghanistan – turned the UK back towards land-based campaigns for years. That experience has left the British people with no appetite for a certain kind of foreign field. The Navy was side-lined and sapped of funding during 'Blair's Wars' and also lost crucial capability developments, with its force levels slashed.

Nevertheless, the Navy committed air assets and also 3 Commando Brigade to play a key role in the land-locked battle zone of Afghanistan. In 2003 it even managed to deploy into the Northern Arabian Gulf a bigger task group to support the Iraq invasion than it had during 1990/91's massive – and successful – US-led Desert Shield/Desert Storm eviction of Iraqi occupiers from Kuwait.

The British naval task group performed well in 2003's (ultimately misbegotten) adventure, launching 3 Cdo Bde ashore into Iraq's Al-Faw Peninsula to famously 'kick down the door' for the rest of the coalition invasion force.

The Royal Navy did a lot with much less throughout the period 2001 – 2014. Aside from Afghanistan and Iraq operations it delivered Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HA/DR), conducted anti-piracy and counter-terrorism patrols, safeguarded UK home waters and Overseas Territories, rescued UK citizens from combat/crisis zones, waged war from (and in) the littorals off Libya.

It also deterred Russian aggression as part of NATO task groups and ran the Continuous at-Sea Deterrent, as well as clearing ordnance from the seas, plus providing fishery protection along with Search and Rescue (SAR).

It excelled – despite the blip of the 2007 HMS Cornwall incident in the Gulf – across the board. Today it still does so, despite being even more over-stretched.



*The French Navy strike carrier FS Charles de Gaulle (nearest) operating with the US Navy amphibious assault carrier USS Boxer in the Andaman Sea, both ships with strike jets embarked. Photo: US Navy.*

## A STORY OF BUNGLING AND WRONG TURNS

SDR was probably the only review to get the strategy right in recent years, even if events subverted the results. How much more likely is it that the Integrated Review (IR), possibly overseen by 'weirdos and misfits with odd skills' – as the P.M.'s own special advisor calls them – is going to get the strategy right and stick to the results?

This time 'round the buoy, following the economic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic, it remains to be seen whether Boris Johnson will maintain Britain's £42 billion annual defence budget, along with the manifesto commitment to increase defence spending by half a per cent per annum.

What is certain it that the UK Govt will seek better value for money from the eighth largest defence budget in the world (behind Germany, France, Saudi Arabia, Russia, India, China and the USA).

Johnson relies heavily on his special adviser, Dominic Cummings, who has slammed 'big and expensive' defence contractors for allegedly not being value for money when it comes to the UK taxpayer.

Cummings has argued for buying off the shelf rather than commissioning bespoke kit for the armed forces.

- One of his big bugbears is the new carriers, which Cummings has characterised as a 'farce' and 'unable to be sent into a serious war against a serious enemy.' This will be news to other aircraft operators the USA, China, India, Italy, France, Spain and Russia along with Australia, Japan and Egypt who all operate big flattop amphibious assault ships.

A prototype combat drone launches from a US Navy carrier during trials off the coast of the USA. Such unmanned aircraft striking from the sea are the likely future of the UK's new carriers too. Photo: US Navy.

## UK GOVTS NOT SERIOUS ABOUT DEFENCE FOR YEARS

What's hasn't been serious is successive UK Govts, which have failed to create a Navy around the new carriers to ensure they can be employed to their full potential in deterring enemies and if necessary, waging war. A start has been made, but UK force levels in escorts and submarines are woefully inadequate. Some of those the UK still operates are getting long in the tooth and lack firepower.

Failing to boost the Royal Navy in the Integrated Review – while cutting a carrier (or carriers) and amphibious ships – will reveal incredible weakness and lack of vision (or Defence reality) at the core of the Johnson administration.

An abject failure of this nature will be made more acute by the UK simultaneously talking tough to China, a rising maritime power.

It sees aircraft carriers as the means by which to measure the strength of a likely opponent (and whether or not they can be pushed around in all sorts of areas). China will be cock-a-hoop if any element of the Royal Navy is discarded, especially at a time when Beijing is creating a massive amphibious warfare force with, at its core, the very types of ships and naval infantry Johnson and Cummings may well discard.

A more particular argument turns on the F-35B jet, which possesses the unique and unmatched capability of operating from the British carriers without 'cats and traps', and the proposed buy of 138 aircraft.

Embarked in the carriers, these aircraft can operate anywhere in the world and also act as mothers to swarms of those drones Cummings professes to prefer.



*A UK-owned F-35B strike jet lands aboard the carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth during tests and trials off the east coast of the USA last year. Photo: US Navy.*

## WILL BORIS BOTCH THE F-35B DEAL?

Since the UK is the only Level 1 partner in the F-35 programme with the USA and Lockheed, British industry is guaranteed a 15 per cent of the manufacture of each one of the anticipated 3,000 aircraft that will be built for Allies worldwide – and which support some 24,000 jobs across every region of Britain.

This is surely a deal that appeal to the UK Government. And it is nonsensical that the RAF should argue for any portion of this buy to be diverted to the purely land-based F-35A, which cannot be used from the carriers, as it is not a Short Take-off and Vertical Landing (STOVL) aircraft.



That is very poor value for the UK taxpayer, no matter what the nominal price tag is for a F-35A compared with the F-35B. It, like the land bases it flies from, is so much more vulnerable to elimination by a potential foe than any carrier, too.

The Secretary of State for Defence, Ben Wallace, has recently stated that by 2040 most combat aircraft will be unmanned. The RAF's Typhoons and the F-35Bs are likely to be the last manned aircraft operated by the UK.

This is how the carriers, as bases for swarms of drones will enjoy a second life across their 50-year operational span.



*The British amphibious assault ship HMS Albion which was recently used as a sea base for littoral warfare trials with drones, as part of NATO's northern flank defence strategy against potential Russian aggression. Photo: Norwegian armed forces.*

## STAKES ARE HIGH FOR UK FLEET

For the Navy, the stakes are extremely high during the IR and yet it is optimistic. The Naval Service acknowledges that the present defence review is the most important in 20 years, is proud of its new carriers but is anxious to have enough F-35Bs to maximise their power, reach and utility as a conventional deterrent force.

Senior officers believe, however, that the world political situation has changed in the Navy's favour and necessitates a full-blooded Maritime strategy.

The Arctic and the Indo-Pacific region are growing in importance relative to the Gulf, while China and Russia have become more aggressive and confrontational at sea.

It requires the Navy to regain its operational edge and presence in the Atlantic and even further afield, such as in the South China Sea (the latter as part of the tripartite agreement signed by the bosses of the US Navy, the RN and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force).

Although NATO will remain the 'industry standard' for defence alliances, more bilateral and tri-lateral defence agreements will likely be summoned into being.

The USA will, as ever – regardless of whoever is President – need the legitimisation of allies. Even the mighty USN is overstretched and will welcome RN support.

Should there be no return to permanent forward basing of UK carrier strike groups 'East of Suez', there will be a call for a navy capable of providing deterrence and fighting to win wherever it is called upon to do so, whether in the Atlantic or the Indo-Asia-Pacific region.

The rapid evolution of Littoral Strike by the Royal Navy – using both the carriers and the amphibious warfare vessels, in conjunction with the Royal Marines – along with the already advanced development of drones for mine warfare and large, unmanned submersibles shows the British fleet is going in the right direction.

However, the current mix of surface warships, submarines, aircraft, amphibians and auxiliaries will be needed for decades yet and foolishly wrecking that fine balance will place the UK in deep peril

## US Air Force is pushing forward with 'Skyborg' combat drones

By Air Force Research Laboratory (via Defense News)



TWO SAN DIEGO defence contractors have made the cut for the U.S. Air Force's \$400 million Skyborg Vanguard program, which aims to integrate a family of combat drones alongside manned fighter jets on critical missions. The Air Force announced that General Atomics and Kratos Defense will join Boeing and Northrop Grumman in competing to build prototype robotic aircraft ranging from jet-powered "loyal wingman" drones to intelligence/surveillance planes for tactical missions.

Tapping artificial intelligence and other technologies that allow them to adapt to various battlefield conditions, these Skyborg-developed drones are expected to begin flying with piloted aircraft by 2023.

"Because autonomous systems can support missions that are too strenuous or dangerous for manned crews, Skyborg can increase capability significantly and be a force multiplier for the Air Force," said Brigadier Gen. Dale White, program executive officer. "We have the opportunity to transform our war-fighting capabilities and change the way we fight and the way we employ air power."



Concept art from the Air Force Research Lab shows how the F-35 could be linked to a series of drones through the "loyal wingman" concept.

Skyborg also aims to lower costs. Analysts estimate the base selling price for some of these combat drones could be as low as \$3 million to \$5 million per plane. That's markedly less than state-of-the-art piloted fighter jets such as the F-35, which can run up to \$100 million per aircraft.

The Skyborg program comes at a time of heightened competition among nations globally for technology dominance on the battlefield. It's one of three so-called Vanguard programs that are part of the Air Force Science and Technology 2030 initiative to deliver "game-changing capabilities" to Air Force operations.

"U.S. Air Force inventory needs are significant for tactical drones over the next 10 years," said Peter Arment, an analyst with Baird Equity Research. General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, based in Poway, is the long-time maker of the Predator and other drone platforms for various military branches and government agencies.

As part of the vendor pool for Skyborg, it will compete with the three companies for orders under the program, said a company spokesman.

Kratos Defence's drone business is based in Oklahoma, though the company is headquartered in San Diego. It makes target drones for training purposes. But it also builds more sophisticated unmanned aircraft. Its XQ-58A jet-powered drone completed multiple flights and hit milestones that the Air Force requested last year.

"Kratos has been and remains committed to advancing affordable unmanned technologies, and we are proud to be a Skyborg prime contractor," said Steve Fendley, head of the company's unmanned systems division.

Commented [Mike Pete2]:

Northrup Grumman also has a division in San Diego working on autonomous technologies for the military, though its Skyborg efforts are centred at the company's Palmdale facility.

Analysts think Kratos is in a good spot to win orders in the Skyborg program with its Valkyrie jet-powered drone, in part, because of the Air Force's focus on low cost and development speed.

"Kratos has completed several flight tests with the Valkyrie with different aircraft, and the company appears to have a head start relative to the other potential aircraft in the program," said Ken Herbert, an analyst with Canaccord Genuity.

## The US military is pulling nearly 12,000 troops out of Germany

*From: Task & Purpose, July 29, 2020*

THE US MILITARY is withdrawing nearly 12,000 troops from Germany, top military officials announced on Wednesday.

Roughly 5,600 U.S. troops will be moved from Germany to other NATO countries, while about 6,400 will return to the United States, Defense Secretary Mark Esper said at a Pentagon news briefing.

That would leave about 24,000 U.S. service members in Germany.

The withdrawal includes moving an Air Force F-16 squadron to Italy and the Army's 2nd Cavalry Regiment to the United States. Additionally, roughly 2,500 airmen at Royal Air Force Mildenhall in Britain will not be sent to Germany, as initially expected, Esper told reporters.

As the roughly 4,500 soldiers with the 2nd Cavalry Regiment return to the United States, other Stryker units will begin making rotational deployments to the Black Sea region, Esper said. Other stateside units will also rotate through Europe.



"The deployment of rotational forces from the United States, we have observed – whether it's the ABCTs [Armored brigade combat teams] going from the United States to Korea or the ABCT to Poland, or the bomber task force – we are finding that they are deploying at a much higher level of readiness; and while they are deployed, they are able to sustain a much more fixed focus on their mission and their capabilities," Esper said.

Esper also argued that rotational forces will have "a more enduring presence" in Europe than units that are currently permanently stationed in Germany.

"We will deploy from the United States and be able to keep units – in this case, a Stryker brigade, if you will, or elements of it – in the Black Sea Region in a more enduring way, more focused on the mission, and not constrained, if you will, with knowing that the families are back in Germany," Esper said.

Troopers assigned to Reaper Troop, 4th Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, drive their M1134 Anti-Tank Guided Missile Vehicle to its firing position during the squadron's live-fire exercise at the Grafenwoehr Training Area, located near Rose Barracks, Germany, March 15, 2016.

The headquarters for both U.S. European Command and U.S. Special Operations Command are also expected to move from Stuttgart, Germany, to Belgium, said Air Force Gen. Tod Wolters, head of EUCOM, who added the headquarters for U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Special Operations Command Africa could also leave Stuttgart.

Defense officials did not say how long these moves are expected to take, but Esper told reporters that “we could see some moves begin within weeks. Others will take longer.”

Esper and other military leaders argued that the moves are meant to be strategic and help deter Russia, but President Donald Trump has repeatedly said he wants to reduce the number of U.S. troops in Germany because he believes the German government is not paying enough money to NATO.

“They take advantage of us on trade and they take advantage of the military so we’re reducing the troops,” Trump told reporters on Wednesday during the Pentagon news briefing about the withdrawal from Germany.

When asked about Trump’s most recent remarks, Esper credited the president for getting certain NATO members to spend more on defence.

“Let’s be clear: I think that Germany is the wealthiest country in Europe,” Esper said. “Germany can and should pay more for its defence. It should certainly meet the 2 percent [of Gross Domestic Product] standard – and – I would argue – go above and beyond that.”



## The British Army and the Media - The Longest War

**UK Defence Journal 2020: By Stuart Crawford, a regular officer in the Royal Tank Regiment for 20 years, retiring in the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 1999. He now works as a political, media, and defence and security consultant in Edinburgh and is a regular commentator and contributor on military and defence topics in online and other media, including the UK Defence Journal. The Journal team prides itself on being volunteers – not paid or funded and is composed of defence professionals, cyber security and international relations graduates, serving and former military personnel, industry specialists as well as everyday military and defence enthusiasts.**



THE PUBLICATION by the Rand Corporation of Hew Strachan and Ruth Harris’ *The Utility of Military Force and Public Understanding in Today’s Britain* caused much fluttering in the doo’cots amongst the usual military commentariat, primarily because it recommended inter alia that national service in Britain might be reconsidered as a means of reconnection between the military and the general population.

Cue much spluttering from leather armchairs around the UK and legions of Bufton Tuftons waxed lyrical on the pros and cons of such a wonderful/preposterous (delete as applicable) idea. It’s an endless debate that never fails to excite.

However, much more interesting, to me at any rate, was the report's thoughts on military-media engagement. I was particularly taken by these few sentences:

- "If Britain is to generate a mature attitude to the use of armed force and, if need be, to the utility of war itself, it also needs a more mature debate about defence – one that trusts and engages the public, allows the armed forces to take part in the discussion, and in which the government enables and enhances the structures to permit those conversations."
- In its recommendations it says specifically that "Those in uniform should be able to speak directly to the press and should receive training to do so".

Heady stuff, perhaps, but not before time. As far back as I can remember the military-media relationship has been nightmarish, in my opinion. I say this as someone who has been both a PR/media comms operative within the army and an amateurish, pseudo-journalist who likes writing and commenting on military matters.

The nub of the problem, I believe, is that media and military have, in general terms, diametrically opposed and long-held positions here: the media operates on the 'everyone should know' principle while the army works on the 'need to know principle'.

And the twain shall never meet, not up until now anyway, although arguably they are inching closer albeit at glacial pace.

I suspect the military's ideal paradigm for the very best media communications of all is the example of the Falklands campaign in 1982. There the media had to rely on the military both to get to the conflict because of its remoteness and for the transmission of their reports back home to the UK. The military accordingly had huge control over journalists and power of censorship over what was allowed to get out of the theatre of operations.

That said, it still didn't always work perfectly, as the infamous reporting of Argentinian bombs failing to explode because their aircraft were releasing them at too low an altitude episode illustrates only too well.

This ideal model of media comms (for the military) was blown out of the water by technological advances. The wider availability of satellite phones, once the sole preserve of military and security forces, untied journalists from the constraints of military overwatch.

Now they could go and investigate and report anywhere without the military's patronage as long as they could get a satellite signal to transmit back home.

They were no longer bound by the constraints of being embedded with units as "accredited journalists" or reliant on information from official military spokesmen. I can well remember meeting a well-known and ex-regimental BBC journalist friend in downtown Riyadh just before Desert Storm took off.

He had already worked out the Coalition plan by applying first principles and was off up country to where he knew the action would shortly unfold, and from where he would report back unfettered. In essence, the military no longer has control over news and comment on military operations.

This loss of control was markedly exacerbated by the explosion of social media in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Now every junior soldier, sailor and airman/woman could, and did and now does, have access via their mobile phone to a plethora of communications channels which are totally open and uncontrollable.

I have written previously in the UK Defence Journal about this, saying this is anathema to chains of command. Strachan and Harris write about public communications being 'democratised' by new technologies and they are absolutely right. Military communication with the media is indeed no longer an elite pursuit of the senior hierarchy.





*UK Defence Journal has no affiliation to any party or political group, our members are drawn from across the political spectrum. The Editor, and owner, George Allison founded the Journal in 2014 after touring one of the new aircraft carriers in build at Rosyth, where he decided to document what he had learned in blog form. George has a degree in Cyber Security from Glasgow Caledonian University and has a keen interest in naval defence technology and cyber security matters.*



There are serious security implications, of course, of all of this. Not only might unsuspecting or naïve military personnel reveal too much in their communications, their smart technology is eminently traceable, as the Americans famously discovered when information from personnel running with their Fit Bits revealed the locations of some of their bases.

- The British army seems to have a downer on individual Twitter accounts at the moment and is trying to drive soldiers to use something called Defence Connect, which may be more secure but will undoubtedly be monitored, which makes it an unattractive option for most. There are even rumours that the 'Twitter Stasi' are tracking down and closing renegade Twitter accounts in efforts to retain control.

If true, it won't work, because the genie is well and truly out of the bottle and efforts to put it back will fail. Instead, and no matter how counter-intuitive it might seem to conventional military minds who, as Strachan and Harris put it, "see the Internet less as an agent for education and democratisation, and more as a threat, home to fake news and trolls", the military needs to embrace and adapt to the new communications context in which it has to operate.

Personally, I have no fears that properly trained and prepared military personnel of all ranks will not be able to hold their own in talking to the media where appropriate.

Which brings me back to the Rand Corporation report, which I think is both timely and bold in tackling this and other issues.

The MoD's PR efforts have been howlingly awful over the years, and we could take lessons from both the French and the Americans on how they do it much, much better. The army's current perceived approach to social media will not succeed.

Most journalists will, by and large, give the military a fair crack of the whip if brought on board and not treated with suspicion. If we truly do wish to reconnect the armed forces to the general population then the MoD in general, and army comms in particular, have to grow up a bit. We should let our soldiers, sailors and airmen/women speak and have confidence in them.

## National Service should be brought back, two thirds of the public say

*By Danielle Sheridan, The Telegraph Political Correspondent 27 June 2020*

NATIONAL SERVICE should be brought back, two thirds of the public have said, as Boris Johnson and the Queen issue thanks ahead of Armed Forces Day. While the period of compulsory service in the Armed Forces was phased out in the UK by 1963, two-thirds of Britons said that they would support its reintroduction, with many believing that it should be compulsory.

The survey carried out for the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association to mark Armed Forces Day today assessed 2,000 British people aged over 16.

I found 66 percent of people supported the reintroduction of National Service, with 51 percent of those saying that it should be completed over a two-year period. More than three-quarters of supporters of the scheme believe that it should be compulsory, meaning everyone aged over 18 is enlisted.

The survey also found 75 percent of people feel proud or grateful towards veterans and service personnel.



. Tobias Ellwood, Chairman of the Defence Select Committee, told The Daily Telegraph that he was "for national service", but would widen it so that it was "not just uniform national service".

The military isn't for everybody, but to dedicate a year of your life to doing something for Queen and Country, be it driving an ambulance, working for the forestry commission, learning about yourself, I would support this," he said.

- "Many would choose to select one of the naval, air force or army components, but there should also be a civilian component so that people aren't forced to do things against their choice.
- The objective of this is to give people confidence, life skills and strengths which they are not picking up at home or at school. It needs to reflect today's modern society and the country as a whole would benefit. It would embed a sense of loyalty to the nation."

It comes as the Queen released a statement thanking the Armed Forces for their work. "The Duke of Edinburgh and I join many around the United Kingdom in celebrating Armed Forces Day, and the efforts of our military both at home and overseas," she said.

The Queen also thanked "veterans, who continue to contribute to our way of life, long after they leave the Armed Forces. Having had members of my family serve in each of the Armed Services, I know only too well of the pride service personnel take in their duty," she said.

The Prime Minister also gave thanks to the Armed Forces, who he said "are there for us" be it "day and night, at home and abroad, at sea, on land, in the air and even in space and online.

Whether you're a regular, a reservist, a civilian contractor, a veteran, or the family and friends who support our military in so many ways, we as a nation salute you," he said. "And it's for all that and more, that I'm proud to salute our Armed Forces."



## Germans want national service back

*By Oliver Moody, The Times, Berlin July 10, 2020*

GERMANY is contemplating a return to National Service as a survey shows that most people are in favour of bringing it back. From 1956-2011 all young men were obliged to spend at least six months serving in the armed forces or volunteering for civilian organisations such as the Red Cross or fire brigade.

The aim was to make sure the military drew on wider society to prevent it becoming a distinct state within a state, as in the early 20th century. The duty was suspended so that the armed forces, or the Bundeswehr, could be made more professional.

The debate has resurfaced after Eva Högl, the left-wing Bundestag defence commissioner, said getting rid of conscription had been a “colossal mistake”.

Parts of the Bundeswehr, including its special forces unit, have been struggling to root out right-wing extremism in their ranks and Ms Högl argued that reviving National Service could help.

Politicians from all the mainstream parties criticised the proposal but it appears to have considerable support from the public. A survey published yesterday by the Funke newspaper group found that 57 per cent would like to go back to conscription, compared with 42 per cent opposed.

Although only 31 per cent of under-30s showed any enthusiasm for the policy, 72 per cent of over-60s said it was a good idea.

It was also backed by 78 per cent of voters for Angela Merkel's centre-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which has toyed with resurrecting National Service but gave Ms Högl short shrift this week. The populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) party described the suggestion as “the first useful proposal in years” from Ms Högl's Social Democratic Party.

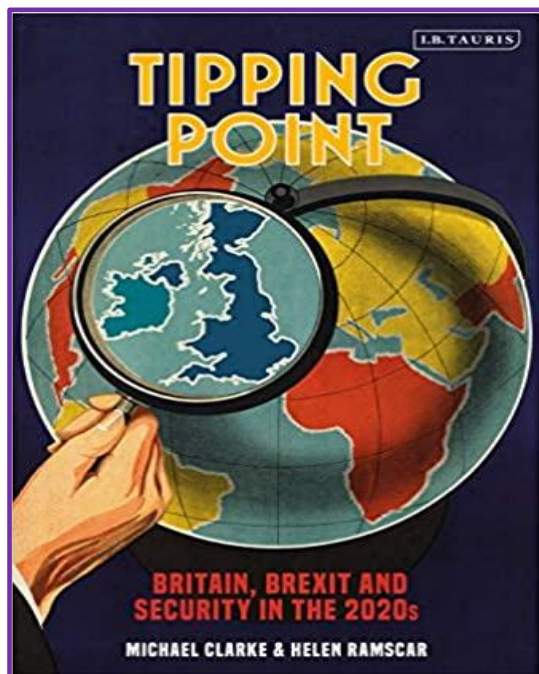
Several European countries, including Lithuania, Sweden and France, have introduced some form of National Service in the past decade. Germany seems unlikely to follow suit, at least for the time being. Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, the defence minister and leader of the CDU, has set up a volunteer service in the Bundeswehr, nicknamed “Your Year for Germany”, but ruled out conscription.

## Defence chiefs go to the Tower; Army waits for the axe.

*By Professor Michael Clarke, Tipping Point, July 7, 2020*

DEFENCE CUTS are back in fashion and the Army is again in the Treasury's sights. The Army is currently 74,000 strong. But that is the wrong number in any case. It will need to be either bigger or smaller to fit into a coherent defence strategy. Michael Clarke outlines the problem. Defence Chiefs went to the Tower of London last week, and now they wait for the axe to fall.

An away-day for the Chiefs to think about the future purpose – and shape – of British defence took place at the Tower while the Treasury axe was being sharpened for Covid-crisis defence cuts as the government absorbs the economic shocks and tries to get the public finances ready for a recovery.



And the size of the Army is, again, the focus of discussion. Without Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Iraq or Afghanistan to maintain commitments to Army personnel numbers, the question of what the Army is for, and hence how big it should be, is one that has taxed all the armchair generals since the end of the Cold War, and quite a few of them during it.

The present Army is 74,000 strong. That is the smallest British Army since 1770. But whatever the right number for the future Army turns out to be, 74,000 is almost certainly the wrong number. It is either too high, or too low; and it has arisen for a series of not very good reasons.

It is a matter of history that Conservative governments tend to cut defence capabilities, while Labour Governments almost always maintain them.

Conservative governments can get away with it without damaging their image, whereas Labour Governments must always keep proving

their prudent patriotism. So, Conservatives traditionally cut defence capabilities because they can, and Labour traditionally don't because they daren't. Defence spending comparisons are not much help.

Levels of spending expressed as a percentage of GDP have always been misleading, since a smaller proportion of a growing GDP can still constitute more defence spending, and rising percentages of a falling GDP, the opposite. In the post-Covid world where everyone's GDP will be taking big hits for the next couple of years, defence as 'percentages of GDP' calculations will be scarcely worth making.

In fact, relative real term levels of British defence spending have remained remarkably similar for the last half century. But the actual defence capabilities they buy have been in steady, and inexorable, decline. Unlike transport, communications, mass manufacture, or retail, the real costs of staying in the military business are rising, not falling.



Military power, overall, never achieves mass market economies or cheap technology breakthroughs, even where it takes advantage of civil sector innovation. And when Britain's range and depth of military capabilities have appeared unsupportable, it has generally been Conservative governments that have reduced them, as they are about to do now.

Yes, Britain can maintain world class forces, but at such low numbers that their sustainability, and even their operational effectiveness, are in question. British forces can undoubtedly be useful in many scenarios – they do their tactical jobs with great accomplishment. But that is not the same as being strategically significant – a claim that successive British governments have adopted as an article of faith.

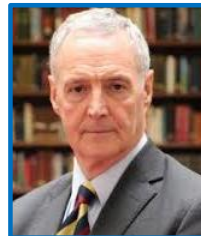
Making the £40 billion defence budget offer adequate protection to Britain's diversifying security needs, while also giving political leaders some real strategic cards to play in world politics, has become an almost impossible circle to square. Which is why Downing Street, and particularly Dominic Cummings, the Prime Minister's chief adviser, appear to be so keen to use the Covid axe to make structural changes to defence, not just to tidy it up. The Treasury is said to be floating 5% cuts all round for Whitehall as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review this autumn. But Downing Street seems to want to go a lot further in the case of the Ministry of Defence.

Investing in all the new technologies, becoming a leading player in cyber-warfare, electronic enabling technologies for command and control (the 'C4ISTAR' philosopher's stone), investing in advanced robotics and space domain warfare, AI and advanced policing technologies, are all expressions of a desire to jump a generation of normal military development and leap straight into the 2040s within the next decade. The emphasis on the heavy metal of military forces is seen as a shibboleth of old thinking in a military era that is disappearing fast for everyone – except the superpowers.

This is hardly a new thought in the British defence establishment. It has been a growing aspiration since the defence and security review of 2015. But the current trend of thinking appears to be that big investments in revolutionary technologies are also a way of arriving at a new, strategically effective, defence posture but also at lower levels of real term expenditure.

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*Michael Clarke was Director-General of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) from 2007 to 2015 when he retired from that role. Until 2001 he was Deputy Vice-Principal and Director for Research Development at King's College London, where he remains a Visiting Professor of Defence Studies. From 1990 to 2001 he was the founding Director of the Centre for Defence Studies at King's. He was appointed Professor in 1995. He is now a Fellow of King's College London and of the Universities of Aberystwyth and of Exeter, where he is also Associate Director of the Strategic Studies Institute. He has been a specialist adviser to the House of Commons Defence Committee since 1997*



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Not wanting to waste a good crisis, Downing Street appears to want to use the Covid emergency to cut and transform defence more fundamentally than even Conservative governments have previously attempted.

The assumption that defence could be both technologically restructured, and simultaneously cheaper – and quickly – can only be regarded as a triumph of hope over experience. And the Chiefs know better than anyone that while the character of warfare constantly evolves, its fundamental nature changes very little. When bayonets on the ground or a bit of heavy metal are genuinely needed, nothing else will do.

Moreover, while new technologies and systems can be phased into defence either gradually or quickly, established systems, once abandoned, are extraordinarily difficult to replace in any reasonable time frame. Recapitalising the armed forces is a fairly irreversible process.

And so, it is that the size of the Army – while the RAF and the Royal Navy are already at historically low levels – looks like the most obvious target for restructuring, because the current 74,000 number (actually 73,500 at the end of 2019) is so illogical. In 2000, a full decade after the



Cold War, British Army numbers were around 110,000, not counting its 45,000 reserve forces. When it was reduced after the 2010 defence review, the figure of 82,000 was stated by the Conservative government to be a floor, below which it would not be allowed to fall.

And that figure, it was subsequently postulated, should really be regarded as closer to the magical 110,000 because the newly reorganised Reserve Forces would add another 30,000 effective personnel to the Army's total, if required. But the reorganisation of the reserves never made this sleight of hand a genuine reality, and as Army recruitment suffered – a separate and sorry story altogether – the figure had drifted steadily down to around 76,000 by 2017.

At this point the then Minister of Defence said that 82,000 was now the 'target' figure. By 2018 the actual figure was hovering around the current 74,000 and was very difficult to justify by any national strategic logic – however carefully the Army specified its various different roles.

The bottom line is easy to state – though much harder to enact. If Britain's strategic ambition for its Army is to be able to field one, potent, combat division, sustainable for a relatively short time in continental Europe or elsewhere, then it doesn't need 74,000 people to deliver that output. Something around 60,000 would probably be sufficient. But if its ambition is to have an Army that is capable of more diverse tasks, and of some simultaneous combat operations in different places, then 74,000 is certainly not enough.



A combat division is a very capable politico/military formation. It is designed primarily for war-fighting, and if the focus of the Army were only to feed and support its various combat needs – infantry, armour, engineers, artillery, tactical air, logistics, personnel rotation and training, command and control, civil-military, intelligence, and so on – it would not be too difficult to achieve this with a smaller Army.

But the other side of the coin is also problematical. A combat division could not easily be used simply as a pool of expertise for a wider range of things. Even where a division might be devolved into its three (or more) brigades to undertake different tasks in separate places, its own personnel and logistics would not stretch to duplicating functions for simultaneous operations. It's big enough to go deep, but too small to go wide.

An Army that wants to be able to perform several simultaneous tasks – such as deterrence or ongoing reassurance missions to its allies, technical support or training for its friends, quick-reaction operational deployments, special forces missions, defence of Britain's overseas territories, participation in UN peace-keeping, support to the government in domestic crises, and so on – needs to be 100,000 or more to be a credible and sustainable force. And, of course, it has got to be able in the most dire of circumstances, to go to war – in whatever traditional or hybrid form that might take.

The optimistic interpretation of the present 'Army on the block at the Tower' debate is that the currently dire economic circumstances, coupled with the countervailing Brexit pressure to

make 'Global Britain' mean something, might for once produce a clear strategic intent within the Government that drives a consistent rationale for the Army's role, and hence its appropriate size for the next two decades or more. If that is the case, then the enveloping cloud of the Covid crisis will have some silver linings. But if the cart is put before the horse and Army numbers are drastically reduced in order to provide financial headroom for something else, then the Chiefs will again be defining the Army's role as a post hoc rationalisation for a crude spending cut.

And if the 'something else' for which this headroom cut has been provided is a risky dash for a cheaper, even higher tech, future for defence, then we might be creating defence forces with an uneven mixture of flashy, and distinctly less flashy, niche capabilities that don't convince either our allies or our adversaries that we are as capable as we like to think.

C4ISTAR stands for command, control, communication, computing, intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance. If they can all be achieved to a high and integrated level, then small forces – any forces – can be deployed to maximum effect.

## On politicians and Generals & speaking truth-to-power



*No less than 12 US generals have graduated to the presidency, says Lieutenant General (retired) Sir Robert Fry, RM, The Article, July 3, 2020*

IT ALL STARTED SO WELL. Presidential candidate Donald Trump seemed to hold traditional Republican views on defence and a promise to restore military spending formed a central part of his platform.

President Trump then followed up by reinforcing Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, accompanied by a loosening up of rules of engagement, and appointed a posse of generals to fill some of the big appointments in his cabinet.

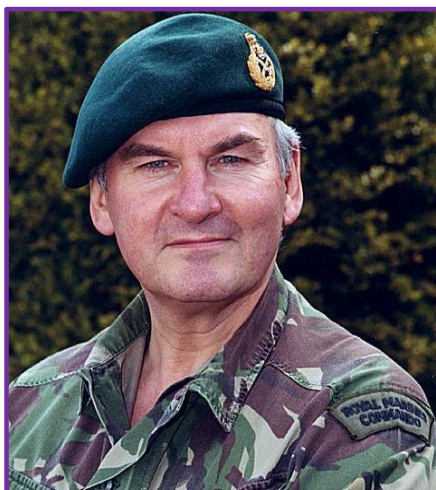
But as a recent rash of Washington-insider books by Peter Bergen and others illustrates, the course of civil-military relations has not run smoothly within the Trump Administration. The reasons for this are not hard to find. The American military reveres education and the recent generation of general officers are avowed bibliophiles, some with a slightly professorial air.

For a president, whose reading seems rarely to extend beyond the McDonald's menu and who is temperamentally equipped for deal making rather than the profound demands of complex affairs, this was never going to be a fit.

No matter how hard the assiduous Jim Mattis or the rather more didactic H R McMaster tried, the President felt more patronised than informed by their briefings. But the tensions went beyond matters of presentation and to the moral core of public service.

For the generals, loyalty cut both ways and was the first duty of command; for the President, it was a one-way street and came with the office. It couldn't end well, and the recent exchange of personal vitriol draws a line under an unedifying passage in US public life.

It hasn't always been like this. The fact that no less than twelve US generals have graduated to the presidency, starting with George Washington, testifies to a cultural mobility between military and political life. The branch of political science that has developed into the academic discipline of civil-military relations also found early expression in America, with Samuel Huntington (he of *The Clash of Civilizations*) publishing the seminal *The Soldier and the State* in 1957.



*Lt General Sir Robert Fry, former Commandant General of the Royal Marines and Director of Operations at the Ministry of Defence is now chair of Albany Associates.*

And, if ever the dream general to serve a democratically elected political leader in war was made incarnate, it would surely be George Marshall. Marshall served as Chief of Staff of the Army to both Roosevelt and Truman and his self-effacement, prodigious organisational skills, silky manner with Congress and ability to get along with allies made him the ideal support for the politicians he served. He also possessed a no more than average strategic imagination, which encouraged both presidents to believe they were the authors of military success.

Other nations with less established traditions of political transparency have also enjoyed periods of successful civil-military relations, as the Prusso-German triumvirate of Moltke, Bismarck and Kaiser Wilhelm the First illustrate.

That success did not survive Hitler, and, while some generals pushed back against his arbitrary decisions — Guderian, Rommel and Manstein prominent amongst them — they all paid a price.

The abominations carried out by the German Army and SS offers a salutary example of what happens when the civil-military relationship loses internal balance and one side becomes compliant to the demands of the other.

Even autocrats need military advice they can rely on, as Joseph Stalin found out when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in 1941. But it was a measure of both Stalin's utter ruthlessness and the different civil-military equation that obtains under dictatorship that he was able to consign General Georgy Zhukov — probably the single most successful military officer of the Second World War — to internal exile in 1946.

Yet it is the British example in the Second World War that is perhaps most instructive. Winston Churchill and his Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Alan Brooke, enjoyed a relationship based on profound mutual respect and, occasionally at least, cordial dislike.

Churchill characterised Brooke as a "stiff-necked Ulsterman", which can loosely be translated as a refusal to be bullied or intimidated by the Prime Minister's histrionics.

In turn, Brooke recognised that Churchill possessed sublime skills of political leadership without which the war could not be won, but he also had a tendency to strategic eccentricity by which it could easily be lost.

The battle of wills between the mercurial politician and the acerbic general must have been exhausting, but the whole was exponentially greater than the sum of the parts. It can reasonably be claimed that this was the most powerful civil-military combination of the war and gave Britain a prominence in final victory that would not have been available in any other circumstances.

All of which provides the prelude to a brief meditation on a phrase which has entered the language and has become the proudest boast an aspirant politician, or journalist can make: to speak truth to power.

In this telling, the fearless seeker after truth confronts a power that might be unpredictable, spiteful and may have a habit of shooting the messenger, all in pursuit of a greater public good.

This was exactly the dilemma facing Brooke as, for example, he tried to deflect Churchill from his Balkan fantasies in 1944; speaking truth to power is the first duty the general owes to the politician, the nation and his own conscience.

Why is it then, that the phrase seems so fatuous to the generation of British general officers involved in the Wars of 9/11?

In our recent wars, power has appeared less as an implacable edifice and worn a more fallible human face — often hesitant and occasionally tremulous — as it confronted challenges that nothing in its experience had prepared it for.

Speaking truth to power has often felt less like a process to be recorded in an Official History and more like a counselling session for politicians in search of comfort and reassurance.

There are a number of reasons for this and the first commends the recent generation of British politicians: quite simply our society has failed to throw up a political ego of Trumpian proportions, and we should be grateful for that.

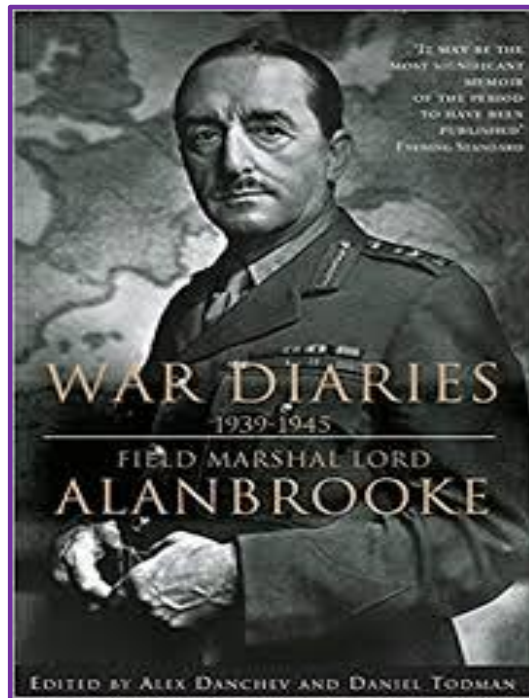
Other factors are more subtle and must be seen in their aggregate rather than their individual effect. Churchill charged at the battle of Omdurman, was a front-line correspondent during the Boer War and commanded a battalion in the trenches in 1916; he was involved in two wars of national survival where only definitive outcomes — victory or defeat — were possible.

Very few recent politicians have heard a shot fired in anger. They have fought wars of choice rather than necessity and been involved in ambiguous, insidious forms of combat that have few rules and no definable end.

Many have entered politics from the law, forms of public service or as special advisors and never considered matters of life and death beyond a rhetorical level. They had also been habituated to success, and Sierra Leone, East Timor and even The Balkans were no preparation for Basra in 2006. And, of course, the generals might have been better at sensing these changes and revising the terms of civil-military engagement accordingly.

Put all that together and it is hardly surprising that a generation of political leaders has felt — and looked — out of its depth when dealing with conflict that has none of the moral and material clarity of the world wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. War is unchanging but warfare adapts constantly, and civil-military relations need to do the same.

While that happens, just remember that anyone publicly claiming to be speaking truth to power is more likely to be burnishing their own moral credentials than addressing the fundamentals of strategy in a complicated world.



## Anne Sacoolas did not have diplomatic immunity in Dunn case, says ex-minister

**Tony Baldry, who signed immunity deal at RAF Croughton in 1995, says it applied to staff, not dependants**

*By Patrick Wintour, The Guardian, June 22. 2020*

US CLAIMS that the American Anne Sacoolas had diplomatic immunity when she drove into the British motorcyclist Harry Dunn last August have been rejected by the former Conservative minister who signed the agreement covering the base where her husband worked.

In court papers, the former Foreign Office (FCO) minister Tony Baldry said the diplomatic immunity deal reached in 1995 was intended specifically to exclude dangerous driving cases, or indeed any actions not related to the work of the staff at the base.

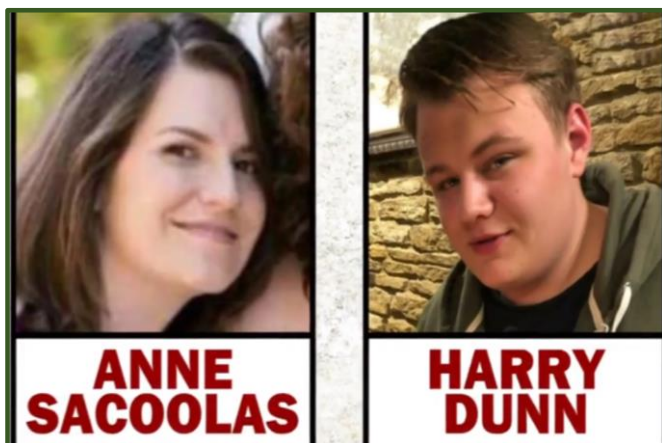
The interpretation of the agreement lies at the heart of the dispute about whether Sacoolas was able to leave the country and avoid prosecution. It is the first time the minister who signed it has set out his views on what he believes the then government meant.

He added that this limited immunity only applied to the staff at the base and no broader immunity was ever meant to be given to the staff's family or dependants. This would mean Sa-

coolas, whose husband Jonathan worked at RAF Croughton in Northamptonshire, should never have been allowed to leave the country or escape prosecution by police.

The US has claimed the 1995 agreement signed by the UK gave the family of staff at the base wider immunity than the staff themselves.

The conflict has led to a diplomatic standoff between the UK and the US, including a judicial review by Dunn's



parents seeking to show that the government acted unlawfully in granting her the immunity that meant she did not face a prosecution of death by dangerous driving. This is the claim relating to which the former minister has produced his statement.

The FCO had within days of the accident accepted the US claim that the agreement covering the RAF Croughton base gave Sacoolas immunity since it did not specifically exclude immunity for dependants.

Baldry's submission to the high court revealing his intentions at the time he reached the agreement with the US will form part of the judicial review to be heard by the court in the autumn.

In his submission, Baldry says: "I am sure that the US did not and would not have raised any specific request for dependants to be exempted from the law – had they done so I would have refused, or at the very least referred this matter to the secretary of state for him to decide. I cannot imagine any government agreeing to such an arrangement."

He added he did not think the FCO lawyers "would have made an oversight or drafting error that would create a situation whereby immunity was waived for agents outside work, but not



for their spouses. The UK government position had evidently been explained to the Americans and I believe that, by pressing their request and accepting our conditions, they consented to it."

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*A former member of the TA Pool of Information Officers and a member of the Pen & Sword Club, Sir Antony Baldry, TD, DL was Member of Parliament for Banbury from 1983 to 2015. After the University of Sussex where he read Law Tony was called to The Bar in 1975. He began his political career in the February 1974 general election and became personal assistant to Margaret Thatcher. When Mrs Thatcher later became Leader of the Conservative Party in 1975, Tony joined her Private Office, working as the link between her and the "Britain in Europe Campaign" and the "Yes" Campaign, for the 1975 EU referendum. In 1994 he moved to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to cover in the House of Commons for Lynda Chalker who was the Minister for Overseas Development but in the House of Lords. He spoke for the Government on International Development in the House of Commons. In 1995 he became Minister of State at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food – where he had to grapple with the twin problems of BSE and increasingly unpopular EU fisheries policies – a position he held until the fall of the Major government in 1997. In 2016 the dormant title of High Steward of Banbury was revived for him, and he was also appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Oxfordshire. In 2016, he was awarded the Langton Award for Community Service by the Archbishop of Canterbury "for his community service, especially as an advocate for the continuing contribution of parish churches to the common good".*



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The RAF Croughton base started to be used as a US communications relay station for its radio traffic from embassies across Europe from 1963, the court papers show. The US said it was not possible to undertake this work at the main US embassy building in London.

The US then asked the FCO for its technical staff at the base to be given diplomatic status, something the department was reluctant to accept, according to contemporary FCO correspondence now submitted to the court.

The submission sent by officials to Baldry dated 23 May 1995 showed officials were "less than happy" about the increase in numbers of staff, expressing concerns the technical staff might become involved in driving accidents in such a remote area.

The FCO letter to Baldry as a result recommended that acts performed outside the course of their duties should not be subject to immunity from criminal jurisdiction.

In his submission to the court Baldry writes: "The phrase 'we remain less than happy', is a civil service euphemism, because we were obviously extremely unhappy at the prospect of technicians and their dependents being placed above the law, and this I made clear by instructing that any agreement must be conditional upon the waiver."

The FCO said: "Tony Baldry himself admits he had no recollection of the submission and does not recall seeing the final agreement."

But the FCO insisted there was no waiver of immunity for spouses in the original Croughton agreement set out in 1995.

It added: "The FCO identified this anomaly after the tragic case of Harry Dunn. The foreign secretary instigated a full review of those historic arrangements – presided over by previous governments – and is now working to correct the anomaly."

The submission sent by officials to Baldry dated 23 May 1995 showed officials were "less than happy" about the increase in numbers of staff, expressing concerns the technical staff might become involved in driving accidents in such a remote area.

The FCO letter to Baldry as a result recommended that acts performed outside the course of their duties should not be subject to immunity from criminal jurisdiction.

In his submission to the court Baldry writes: “The phrase ‘we remain less than happy’, is a civil service euphemism, because we were obviously extremely unhappy at the prospect of technicians and their dependents being placed above the law, and this I made clear by instructing that any agreement must be conditional upon the waiver.”

The FCO said: “Tony Baldry himself admits he had no recollection of the submission and does not recall seeing the final agreement.” But the FCO insisted there was no waiver of immunity for spouses in set out in 1995. It added: “The FCO identified this anomaly after the tragic case of Harry Dunn. The foreign secretary instigated a full review of those historic arrangements – presided over by previous governments – and is now working to correct the anomaly.”



## Harry and Meghan urgently need a lesson in the art of good PR

By Harry Mount, The Telegraph, July 27, 2020

FOR A SEASONED HOLLYWOOD actress, the Duchess of Sussex is not much good at PR. If the revelations in *Finding Freedom*, the new book about Harry and Meghan, are to be believed – and there’s every indication the Sussexes helped the authors – she has been her own PR woman before.

The book alleges that, before her marriage, she set up “a paparazzi photo here and there” to boost her career.

Well, this semi-authorised book has done quite the opposite. It has put a bomb under relations between the Sussexes and the Royal family. And it has torched the Sussexes’ bridges with the press. Contrary to what the book says about Meghan’s reception in Britain, the media were overwhelmingly on her side when she first came on the scene.

Both Harry and Meghan have a one-sided view of public relations: that it’s fine when newspapers and magazines write nice things about them and that it’s OK for them to pump out positive news about themselves via social media. But, when the press are rude, then they bleat that their privacy is being invaded.

They have a one-sided view about royal attachments, too: that they should be allowed to withdraw from royal life yet maintain their (now-withdrawn) own Sussex Royal brand. But royal life



isn't a pick 'n' mix selection, you can't do all the fun stuff and get all the toys without doing some of the boring things and losing some of your privacy. When the Sussexes were still carrying out official duties, it now turns out, according to *Finding Freedom*, that they also wanted to have their cake and eat it.

They were allegedly aggrieved when they weren't given the deference accorded to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge at this year's Commonwealth Service in Westminster Abbey. But at the same time, they allegedly attacked the courtiers whose job it is to run the Royal family in such a way that deference is maintained, and all the minutiae of royal etiquette are observed.

If you want to be royal, you have to accept the number one rule: the order of succession. Granny first; Dad next; then big brother.

If only Harry had asked Granny about PR when he had his long chat at Sandringham with the Queen on ending his official duties.

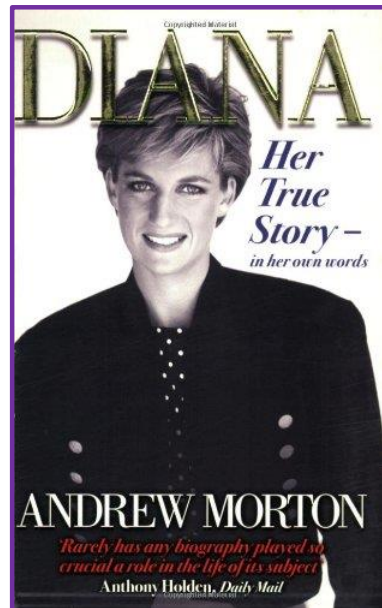
In her 68 years on the throne, the Queen has mastered the art of being royal: never explain; never complain; never give interviews; and never go to court, as the Duchess of Sussex is currently doing.

The Queen embodies what the Victorian constitutionalist, Walter Bagehot, said of royalty: "Its mystery is its life. We must not let in daylight upon magic."

Because the Queen has never given an interview, she retains mystery and magic. Because the Sussexes constantly air their hurt feelings – as in this new book – their mystery and magic are leaking away by the second.

If they'd stayed quiet, we could still imagine them as the modern embodiment of the beautiful prince and princess with their otherworldly thoughts on a higher plane. The moment they open their mouths, talk to an author or go to court, they reveal themselves as what they are: an actress with thoughts straight out of the Hallmark Greeting Cards School of Emotion; and a not very bright, unemployed man sitting in a McMansion in LA in a bobble hat.

- If the Sussexes really wanted to withdraw from public life, they could do just that: no public speaking deals; no film work; no royal brands. Plenty of royals have done it: just look at Lord Nicholas Windsor, the Duke of Kent's youngest son, who turned 50 on Saturday with no mention in the press except in the birthday's column.



If a royal does dare to dance with the press, it's a tricky manoeuvre. Diana, Princess of Wales, was a master at it, carefully leaking quotes to Andrew Morton's 1992 tome *Diana: Her True Story* and batting those fluttering eyelashes at Martin Bashir on the BBC in 1995.

Because Diana was so deft at PR, she could use the media to bring the country over to her side against the Royal family. Tragically, her son and daughter-in-law are having the reverse effect.

## UK Social Media Statistics for 2019

*By Alison Battisby, right, a digital marketing instructor and social media expert who has worked both agency-side and freelance in the social media industry since 2008. Alison has consulted a wide range of growing enterprises and big brands including Estee Lauder, Tesco and Pringles.*



IN THIS BLOG, we look at the latest social media statistics and demographics for the UK in 2019. As more social media reports are released throughout the year, we will keep this resource up to date with the latest figures and user insight.

There are now 3.484 billion active social media users around the world. This number represents 45% of the world's population and an increase of 280 million since January 2018. This growth rate is likely to continue in 2019. In the last month 98% of internet users have visited or used a social network or messaging service.

During 2018 there was a 10% increase in the number of mobile social media users. Today, the number totals 3.256 billion people, which is 42% of the global population. In the UK specifically, there are now 45 million social media users. This equates to 67% of the entire population. Of these, 39 million are mobile social media users. If you are not optimising your campaigns for mobile, then your content will not be having the desired effect. The UK is very much a mobile-first nation.

- Amazingly, 96% of UK social media users visited a social network or messaging service in the past month. Of these 77% actively engaged or contributed to social media in this time.
- Every day, the average UK based user spends 1 hour 50 minutes scrolling through social media sites. This may not seem that much if you work in social media but consider this figure spans across all ages and locations across the country.
- Interestingly, only 13% of UK internet users use social media for work purposes. In 2019, as more employee advocacy programmes launch, engaging staff members to utilise social media as brand we expect this figure will significantly increase.

Thank you so much to the legendary Digital 2019 report from WeAreSocial and Hootsuite for such great research. Let's now take a look at individual platforms and see what we can learn about UK usage.



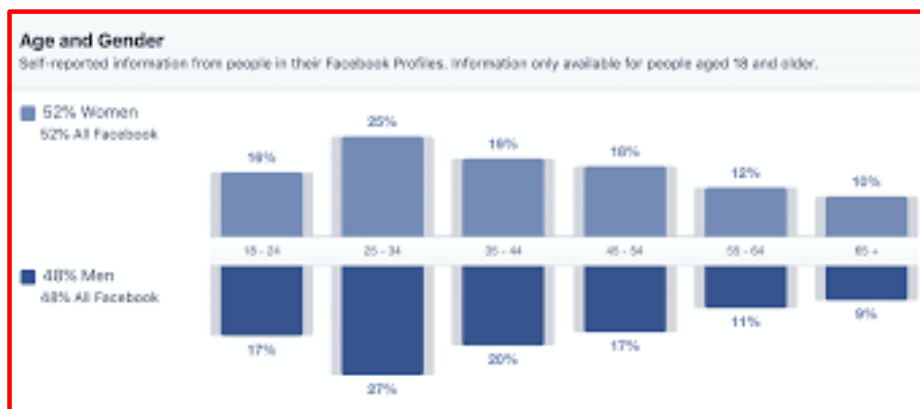
Facebook remains the dominant social platform by membership in the UK. Despite numerous scandals in 2018 it seems users and advertisers alike weren't put off from using the platform.

Examining the user base, it is easy to see why. Of all internet users in the UK, 78% of them use Facebook. More compelling is that a whopping 40 million people, or 71% of UK adults (+13 years old) can be reached with adverts on the platform.

According to Facebook Audience Insights, there are 35-40 million monthly active users on the platform. Of these, 52% identify as women and 48% men (based on users aged 18 and older)

There are now over 60 million active business Pages on Facebook globally, which is why many are turning to advertising on the platform to cut through the noise and reach your desired audiences. (Pst! We've got an Instagram and Facebook advertising masterclass coming up in London this April if you want to get started with the platform.)

In the UK, the average engagement rate on a Facebook post is 3.82% which is a small increase (0.13%) on this time last year. The average engagement rate for a photo post is 5.48% and for a video post is higher at 6.96%.



This data, via the Digital 2019 report backs up theories that video is the most engaging type of content you can share on Facebook. According to Facebook Audience Insights, the average UK user makes 6 comments, likes 11 posts, shares 1 post and clicks on 13 ads in a 30-day period.





YouTube is ranked as the UK's second most popular social media channel with almost as many users as Facebook. Last year, it was reported by Flint that 37.1 million adults are

using the platform in the UK. Although there are no up to date statistics, we can see that YouTube and Facebook regularly battle it out for the most visited social media platform every month.

Globally, the average viewing session is 40 minutes, up 50% from last year according to Omicore. Many brands are now using YouTube as it's a great place to host longer form content. Unlike other social networks, where users scroll passively through newsfeeds, YouTube users are intentionally searching on the platform for videos to watch.



At the beginning of 2019 there are an estimated 24 million Instagram users in the UK. This is 42% of the UK's population, which according to Instagram can all be reached with advertising. The gender split is slightly skewed towards females (54% vs 46% males).

Instagram is Facebook's success story with a huge amount of businesses flocking to the platform. According to Instagram, 80% of users follow a business or a brand so are looking for inspiration.



According to parent company Microsoft, engagement on LinkedIn is at a record high levels, with more than 610 million professionals now interacting on the platform and looking for new ideas and opportunities.

There are 27 million profiles in the UK, with 60% male and 40% female. According to Social Media Today, Microsoft claims there

has been a 34% increase in login sessions amongst those members who are most likely to use the platform to regularly engage and share. They said:

"More and more people are using the feed and giving feedback to their network's posts: our members generate tens of millions of viral actions (likes, comments, and reshares), and the number is increasing more than 50% YoY"

Revenue is also growing with 51% of UK adults (18+) now reachable by LinkedIn adverts, according to LinkedIn.



According to Twitter, 13.6 million people in the UK can be reached by advertising which gives us a clue as to the size of the platform. This number represents 24% of the UK population, aged 13+.

The gender breakdown is shared as 60% male and 40% female – however many Twitter accounts are companies not individuals so would be classed as neutral.

Advertising reach has declined by 0.7% in the last quarter. As we stated last year, Twitter has always been pretty cagey about its usage figures. They continue to remove hundreds of thousands of bots and fake accounts and this does affect their global statistics.



TikTok is a short-form mobile video app which launched in China in 2016. Originally called Douyin, it was rebranded as TikTok to appeal to international markets after parent company **Byte Dance** acquired musical.ly. for \$1bn in 2017.

The platform recently announced 500 million monthly active users globally, but has been the subject of safety concerns. If you haven't explored Tik Tok yet, then it's essentially humorous music videos and challenges. Take a look at this YouTube video for a flavour.

Usage surged ahead of Snapchat and Twitter last year and is already being used by thousands of British teenagers. After running its first major UK marketing campaign targeting Millennials over Christmas and New Year 2018, TikTok is set for big things in 2019.



Still using Pinterest. The mood-boarding platform now has 250 million monthly active users around the globe, which is an increase of 50 million since 2018. The channel is used by far more females than males (45% vs 27% of online UK adults, according to Flint in 2018).

86 percent of millennials say they use Pinterest to "plan life moments, big and small", so if your product or service is relevant then it's still important to have well optimised pins on the platform. One of the most valuable things about Pinterest is the long shelf life of Pins. The average pin is repinned 11 times. Eighty percent of all pins are repins and it takes a pin 3.5 months to get 50 percent of its engagement. That means a Pin can, on average, live for seven months (compared to Twitter's seven minutes).



Watch out as Google + is finally being shut down. Make sure you remove those buttons from your homepage, otherwise you risk looking a bit 2012!

Any Google+ pages you created, as well as photos and videos stored in your Google+ album archive. The deletion does not affect other Google

services. Photos and videos stored in Google Photos, for instance, will not be affected. Your Google account, which is linked to services such as Gmail, YouTube and Maps, will continue to work, but your Google+ account, which was only used for the social network, will be deleted.

## We're having the wrong conversation to fix social media

**The Drum™**

By Chris Walts, The Drum, July 6, 200

THIS MONTH many of the world's largest brands have opted to pause their advertising spend on social media brands, particularly Facebook, in support of a call for them to tackle the spread of misinformation on the site. The proliferation of misinformation and fake news is a continually dangerous trend that the sector has long been accused of not doing enough to counter. Christ Walts, social strategist lead for Ogilvy offers his own views and examples of how the issue could be tackled.

We've succeeded in creating the most connected society in history; over 4bn of the 5.5bn adults on earth own a smartphone. The difficulty is, connecting everyone includes connecting the 'bad people'. – Benedict Evans

Debates are raging around social media boycotts, algorithmic biases, and content moderation. But while most people seem to agree that they want 'bad content' removed, it's less clear what 'bad' actually is and what the consequence of that removal would be. Clearly things need to change, and systemic reforms are needed yet the problem is, we're all debating the wrong issue. We need to stop arguing about freedom of speech vs. content moderation. The real problem is freedom of reach.

## Freedom of speech in social media

It's easy to say there should be more content moderation but determining what should be taken down is far more complicated. Social networks offer a mixture of publishing options and different distribution models: there's advertising, recommendation engines, public feeds, stories, groups, private feeds, group messages, and one to one chat – Benedict Evans

Any conversation about moderation needs to include which distribution method should be moderated. Should, for instance, individuals be able to say whatever they want to a friend but not a group of friends or to the rest of the world? Where the lines get drawn are complex and incredibly important.

Any talk of content moderation naturally leads to a discussion around freedom of speech. However, freedom of speech has never been simple and has always had limitations. This



stems from the fact different liberal democracies have widely varying attitudes on who individuals should have the right to offend with their speech.

The US, for example, feels very different about freedom of speech around religion, minorities, and sexual exploitation than say Japan or India (Pew Global Attitudes Survey). Determining who gets to define the boundaries of freedom of speech is paramount and is difficult

to regulate and enforce on a country by country level. A global solution is needed, but that too has its own set of problems. As Benedict Evans says, "global regulatory solutions could force platforms to regulate at the lowest common denominator, which would mean the strictest rules." This could lead to a country like Myanmar's rules on freedom of speech being applied to the entire world, which isn't an acceptable solution.

## Addressing the real issue

While the discussions around freedom of speech and moderation levels are important, they completely miss the new technological element social media platforms have brought to public discourse: free amplification. Anyone, from anywhere, can now reach a global audience in minutes. The amplification effects of social media have redefined people's access to information in a way that hasn't been felt since the printing press.

Even the printing press isn't really a fair comparison, as social media has essentially made the print press free at point of access and given its users the ability to post its outputs directly to anyone in the world at any time.

The issue that needs to be addressed isn't freedom of speech that's we've had for decades, it's freedom of reach.

As Aza Raskin explains, "We are guaranteed the right to freedom of speech. We are not guaranteed the right to freedom of reach. We need amplification liability for internet platforms."

## Casey Newton expands on the issue further:

"Freedom of reach is arguably the question this year for platforms reckoning with their potential culpability in the erosion of democratic norms and the promotion of state violence. It's what separates them from normal publishers, to which they are constantly comparing themselves..."

Freedom of reach poses a different set of questions for platform policy teams and executives to think through. It asks in what ways a product can be exploited, wittingly or unwittingly, to recruit new followers for a person or an ideology — and whether the company feels comfortable with granting an account those privileges.

“What Facebook group you’re encouraged to join is a freedom-of-reach question. Which YouTube video gets recommended is a freedom-of-reach question. Which Twitter account you’re told to follow is a freedom-of-reach question. And who shows up in Snapchat Discover as a suggested follow is most definitely a freedom-of-reach question”, says Casey Newton



“It’s important then to understand what makes freedom of reach so different on social platforms from traditional media outlets. While traditional media outlets do amplify negative stories or points of view simply by choosing to talk about them, they also (can) discuss the subjects and add context, history and rebuttals. In contrast, the content on social platforms that gets amplified is simply the original content itself,” Newton continues.

The loss of context, coupled with social media recommendation algorithms, creates an echo chamber that continues to reinforce people’s views. This might be less of an issue if all of the content being created was factually correct, but often the most shared stories are fake or inaccurate.

- To combat ‘fake news’ many social platforms are now starting to include disclaimers and fact-checks on controversial subjects. While these steps are signs of progress and done with positive intention, it turns out people don’t often care that the post contains false information if it helps reinforce their world view.
- Darren Linvill, a professor at Clemson University who researches social media disinformation has found that, the goal of misinformation isn’t about trying to persuade people to adapt a new view, it’s about “trying to reinforce marketing beliefs and get people more entrenched in those beliefs. The more entrenched we are, the less possible it is to agree with the other side,” according to The Washington Post.

This means all of the disclaimers and counterpoints in the world might not any difference. Furthermore, the content in these situations might not even be what most people consider ‘bad’. It could just be misleading information or a lightly doctored image or video – something that wouldn’t violate most moderation policies. The problem is not the content or speech itself, but how easily it transmits.

## Building a better social future

We need to ask ourselves if it’s right and fair, that someone with 100 followers can instantly be seen by millions of people. Should there not at least be some initial limitations placed on publishing content to social platforms to curtail its reach and distribution?

Careful consideration clearly needs to be given to the issue to avoid silencing already marginalised voices and legitimate protest and journalism, but there are systems that could be in place to minimise the risks. For instance, accounts over a certain age, or content that has been reshared by a reputable source could have their reach limitations removed. Or perhaps post reach becomes limited to only grow at a rate relative to people’s followers. The goal isn’t to silence or stop people from being able to connect around the world, simply to slow the spread of information so it doesn’t propagate unchecked.

Many social platforms have taken steps towards content moderation and in some instances the solutions are becoming robust; Facebook, for instance, says it removed 9.6m pieces of hate speech in Q1 of 2022, but all platforms continue to avoid the underlying issue around freedom of reach. The conversation needs to pull a Silicon Valley pivot to break the echo chamber and create change.

While the current advertiser social media boycott may have some effect, there are questions about its authenticity as the Verge points out, "Going on Twitter to say 'Facebook should do better,' and collecting your retweets and getting a nice news story out of it while saving some money in the process... however, it's trying to solve the wrong problem."

The debate needs to shift to exploring the issues of freedom of reach and the reforms regulations required for a better social future. Critically, the regulation can't come from the platforms themselves, as their progress will only ever go so far. It needs to come from governments and global governing bodies who look at the wider societal impacts and unintended consequences.

When we finally do start having the much need discussions, dialogue and debate around building a better social future we need to ensure social media itself is not painted as the problem. It's not the technology's fault humans have issues we're still struggling to address. We need to continue to remember that social media has democratised information and access in ways that were previously impossible. It's given a voice to those who had never been heard, helped topple governments and shed light on atrocities and helped us all remember our friends' birthdays.

We can't lose the new connective tissue social media has helped bring to the world. It's too important. That's why we need to start talking about the real issues. Content isn't the problem; it's how easily it spreads around the world.

## **'Silent majority' want 'neutral and detached' news**

**Left-wing voters lead decline in trust in  
UK news media, says Jim Waterson, The  
Guardian Media News Editor, June 16,  
2020: Overall trust down 20 points since  
2015,**



THE BRITISH PUBLIC'S trust in the media has fallen off a cliff in the last five years, particularly among left-wing voters, research suggests. Just 15% of left-leaning voters now say they trust most news most of the time, down from 46% as recently as 2015, Oxford University's Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism found.

The precipitous decline has coincided with enormous growth of social media audiences, rounds of cuts at almost every major news outlet, and strong criticism of media coverage of issues such as Brexit and Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour party.

"Trust in the news has fallen over 20 percentage points since 2015," concluded the authors of the Reuters Institute's annual digital news report. "Even the most trusted brands like the BBC are seen by many as pushing or suppressing agendas, especially over polarising issues like Brexit."

Not all outlets have been equally affected by the collapse in trust. Broadcasters' reputations have taken a hit, but they continue to score relatively highly, while the Guardian is now the most trusted non-financial newspaper among the general public. However, the figures suggest there has been a substantial negative shift in attitudes towards the wider media industry among Britons. As a result, Britain now ranks below the likes of the US and Hong Kong when it comes to public trust in the media.



The research also suggests it may be time to reappraise which news outlets are considered to be the biggest in the country, in an age where print newspaper sales continue to collapse and even Rupert Murdoch's News UK – the owner of the Times and the Sun – is moving towards a digital-focused operation.

Rather than the traditional ranking of outlets by print newspaper sales, the report points towards the emergence of a group of four major British news outlets with mass online audiences: BBC News, the Guardian, MailOnline and Sky News.

The BBC remains the most trusted national news outlet, but support among the most politically partisan consumers – on both the left and right – has fallen by 20 percentage points since 2018.

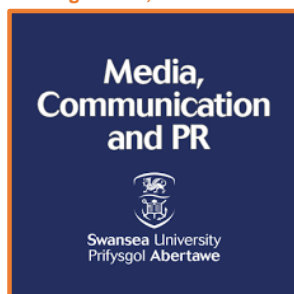
The study found there was a “silent majority” of Britons who still strongly wanted the news to be presented in a “neutral and detached” manner, backing BBC news bosses who discourage their reporters from expressing personal political views on social media.

## **Coronavirus: BBC emerges as the UK's clear favourite information source in new audience survey**

By Richard Thomas, *Swansea University*, Justin Lewis, *Cardiff University*, Marlen Komorowski, *Cardiff University*. July 2, 2020 in *The Conversation*.

Richard is Senior Lecturer, Media and Communication, Swansea University. Justin Lewis is Professor of Communication, Cardiff University, Marlen Komorowski is Impact Analyst at Clwstwr & Senior Research at imec-SMIT-VUB, Cardiff University

NEWS MEDIA have been especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic, as good quality information has literally become “a matter of life and death”. New Ofcom data confirms that we are increasingly reliant on the internet and that it has become ever more important for accessing “news, information and civic processes”.



But given this shift online, which news brands have been the go-to defaults during this period of government guidance, stark daily statistics, and intensified scrutiny?

Between April 28 and May 5, we surveyed 1,268 people with a mix of demographics, including a wide range of age groups.

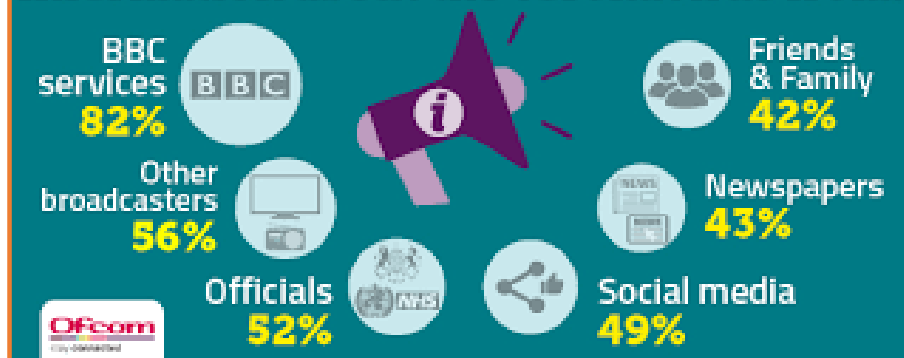
This was part of a project by journalist Shirish Kulkarni that is an element of Clwstwr, a programme supporting innovation in news and screen in Wales supported by researchers from Cardiff and Swansea universities. The results of the survey have not been published in a peer-reviewed journal and should be taken as indicative.

Respondents were asked to name their three top news providers – and while COVID-19 was not mentioned specifically, the question was posed during a seven-day period when the number of UK COVID deaths increased from 25,319 to 28,446. Where our respondents were getting their news about the pandemic will, we imagine, have influenced their responses.

Inevitably there were some vague answers such as “newspapers”, “TV”, “the internet” and so on – and all such responses were assigned as “other”. In all, these accounted for just over 4% of the 3,520 individual choices.

Variations on a theme were coded generically – for example, the Mail Online was coded as the “Daily Mail”, while Good Morning Britain was coded as “ITV”. Gateways to news brands – such as Facebook, Twitter or social media – were omitted from this part of our analysis, since we were more interested in who the main news providers were, rather than the route that consumers had followed to get to them.

## People in the UK get news and information about the coronavirus from:



*BBC the clear favourite among survey participants. Thomas et al, Author provided*

We conclude that legacy news brands have remained extremely resilient across the crisis, even despite ongoing debates about the quality of their scrutiny of the government's pandemic policies.

- The headline finding is that the BBC is the UK's overwhelming news provider of choice.
- Indeed, more generally during the COVID-19 crisis, viewing figures for television news have been boosted, not least since the daily news conferences became central to the UK public's understanding of the how the pandemic developed.
- While the BBC accounted for almost one-third of all selections, the next highest – the Guardian – was chosen by around one in seven, meaning that the corporation was the top selection by a significant margin.

Aside from discussions addressing the editorial positioning of these top two, this seems a considerable validation for journalism where – in theory at least – quality and public service are prioritised over profit. the more extreme editorial approaches of the Daily Mail and The Sun are less popular within our sample, indicating perhaps, that in times of crisis, all ages might be drawn towards more moderate, considered journalism.

- The BBC of course, is consistently cited by Ofcom as the UK's most consumed news source. But where our findings diverge from Ofcom's research is that far from showing that younger audiences might be losing touch with the BBC, we suggest that the corporation remains resolutely popular with the under-24s.
- Moreover, the report said, there was no evidence that younger audiences were "increasingly using social media and services such as Apple News or Upday".

Indeed, the combined mentions of "social media", "Twitter", "Facebook", "Instagram", "Apple" and "Upday" account for only 5.5% of choices, around one-sixth of the number choosing the BBC.

The popularity of the BBC across all age groups is another reminder that the UK prime minister, Boris Johnson, will need to tread carefully towards any licence fee reform.

Sky's emergence as a clear second-choice broadcaster validates its transition – from the point of view of audiences at least – from previously dominant associations with "football, films and American dramas".

But while our findings spell good news for broadcasters, other news providers and parts of the audience have much less to celebrate.

News brand	Percentage of total responses
BBC	32.3%
The Guardian	13.9%
SKY	9.0%
ITV	5.1%
Daily Mail	4.1%
The Independent	2.7%
The Times	2.4%
Daily Telegraph	2.0%
Channel 4	1.6%
CNN	1.3%
The Sun	1.3%

US news channel CNN (1.3% of choices) was just as popular as all UK local news media combined – a stark reminder that local news often struggles for oxygen within a crowded market.

Only two of the top 11 news brands (BBC and ITV) are obliged to provide news from across the whole of the UK. Healthcare is devolved and it seems reasonable to assume that people most need access to news specific to their own regions, lives, and families.

While our findings reflect that even despite the steady migration towards digital, legacy brands remain strong, they also reflect a more generic approach from news audiences that result in a deficit of more pertinent, local information.

## Eclipse of The Sun: Daily Mail says it has overtaken print sale of News UK red-top for first time in 42 years

*Press Gazette, June 19, 2020*

THE DAILY MAIL has claimed victory in a 42-year circulation war with The Sun. The paper said tonight that it has overtaken The Sun's monthly print circulation for the first time in that period to become the UK's best-selling daily newspaper. The Daily Mail is the UK national newspaper with the highest publicly-released monthly ABC circulation figure, with sales of 980,000 per day in May (down 17% year on year).



Last month The Sun stopped publicly releasing its ABC figures. But the Daily Mail said it has seen The Sun's figures and revealed that it has overtaken the News UK red-top.

In March (the last month The Sun released an ABC figure) it was selling 1,210,915 versus 1,132,908 for the Daily Mail in second place.

The new figures reveal that the Mail has managed to hold on to more print readers than The Sun during the challenging period of lockdown caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Industry agreements mean that the Mail cannot reveal The Sun's exact circulation figure.

Daily Mail editor Geordie Greig said: "I am immensely proud and delighted that the Daily Mail has become Britain's biggest-selling newspaper, an historic moment in our history."

“It is testament to the relentless drive of the Daily Mail’s journalists who continue to set the news agenda with skill, courage and conviction.

“Our brilliant reporters, columnists, feature writers and top editors are unrivalled, and I am equally delighted and humbled that our readers have backed us so magnificently and loyally by buying the paper to make us Britain’s bestselling paper.”

A spokesperson for The Sun said: “We care most about the measurement that reflects our readers and our industry in 2020. The latest PAMCo data – the best measure of total brand audience across print and digital – shows record reach for The Sun. We engage 39.8million people monthly, fuelled by our agenda-setting journalism and exclusives, and underlining our position as the UK’s biggest and most popular news brand.”

## The public don't trust media - but they need journalists and the courts to hold Boris to account - Press Gazette

*By Carolyn Pepper and Michael Skrein, media Litigation Partners at Reed Smith*

FROM ACCUSATIONS of bias to blaming the media for public upset over the Barnard Castle trip, attacks on the media are rife. Worryingly, the Oxford University Reuters Institute’s 2020 Digital News Report indicates that globally only 38% of people trust most news most of the time, a sobering statistic. But in the UK the figure is only 28%.



Trust in the news here has fallen over 20% since 2015 and 12% in the last year alone. Only 39% of people in the UK trust the news they choose to consume themselves and the UK ranks 32nd out of the 40 countries surveyed in the report for media trust.

What is causing this erosion of trust and why does trust in the media matter?

< Carolyn Pepper

The report suggests that divided societies appear to trust the media less, possibly because the news media carry more views that people disagree with.

Why is trust in the media so important?

The current pandemic appears to provide an important example of the key role of the media in informing the public.

Without the broad reach of the media, far fewer people would have been able to access government advice and the lockdown rules are unlikely to have been as widely observed as they were.

There is, of course, another key reason why the role of the media is so important. It has been apparent over the last 40 years that where a UK government has a strong majority, in the absence of rebellion by its own MPs (which itself is often as a result of media pressure), there are two key-ways to hold government to account.

One is through the media and the other is through the courts.

Both have been used effectively over the past weeks and months. Media interest was probably vital to the success of Marcus Rashford’s campaign for free school meals and to the withdrawal of the NHS surcharge for migrant health workers.

Without the courts, unlawful conduct on the part of a government often cannot be restrained. Even though the Prime Minister said that the Supreme Court had (by 11 Justices to 0) been wrong on the prorogation of parliament, the government had to abide by the Court’s decision.

It is not by chance that the government is proposing to curtail people's ability to obtain judicial review. Both the media and the courts have in recent years been branded "Enemies of the People". This must erode confidence in them.

What are the alternative ways to hold strong majority governments to account? One alternative could be social media which is of course an effective way of disseminating information, but it is not subject to editorial discipline.

So, given the key role played by the media, what can be done to regain trust? One answer might be more "neutral" news. However, if the conclusions of the Digital News Report are correct, that may not be enough. And neutrality does not hold governments to account.

Somehow, the discourse needs to change. Our society must learn that the media, and the courts, are the friends and protectors, and not the enemies of the people.

## Radio 4's Today programme downgrades editor role

*By Anita Singh, Telegraph Arts and Entertainment Editor June 26, 2020*

BBC RADIO 4's flagship Today programme, Sandra Sands, right, is to lose its editor, downgrading the role to an "executive editor" with less power to set the agenda.

The job specification was quietly changed earlier this year. It means that one of the most prized jobs in news broadcasting will now be "toothless", according to one insider, with major decisions made by upper layers of management.



In a change of strategy that will please No 10, the number of live interviews with politicians conducted by Today's roster of presenters will be cut. Instead, the programme will often take a pooled interview, carried out by a BBC news correspondent such as Laura Kuenssberg and shared between a number of shows across radio and television.

The changes are part of the corporation's plans to centralise its newsgathering operation in an effort to save £80 million, by reducing the number of stories produced by the BBC and the number of journalists deployed.

However, the result is that the autonomy of individual shows will be reduced. Today staff fear it will weaken the programme, which was the subject of a No 10 boycott at the beginning of the year.

- "This used to be considered a plum job. But an executive editor will be essentially toothless," a source said. One staff member said: "Using centralised interviews will weaken the Today programme, no question about it. Ministers won't need a boycott - they'll be able to say that there's no need to appear on the programme because they've already done their one BBC interview of the day and that can be shared around."

Another insider said: "An editor should be free to choose the stories that go on the programme and decide how they are going to be covered. To reduce that role is ridiculous."

The second round of interviews begins next week. The BBC has struggled to attract candidates from outside the organisation. Internal applicants are said to include Owenna Griffiths, editor of Radio 4's PM; Richard Frediani, executive editor of BBC Breakfast; Adam Cumiskey, chief programme producer on Newsnight; and John Neal, editor of The Andrew Marr Show.



Another female candidate pulled out of the process after it was made clear how little power the role now carries.

The advertisement for the executive editor role stresses the need for “collaboration” with other BBC editors. It is understood that candidates have also been asked in interviews how they will manage redundancies, as part of the culling of 450 jobs in the news division.

The outgoing editor, Sarah Sands, handed in her notice in January, a day after the centralisation plans were unveiled by the BBC’s head of news, Fran Unsworth, right.



Announcing the changes, Unsworth unveiled graphs and pie charts demonstrating the new “commissioning points” that will help to set the news agenda as part of “a modern newsroom that is built for the future and not the past”.

Changes to the newsgathering operation are part of an £80 million cuts programme. Unsworth said the BBC’s priority was to aim news coverage at under-35s, and to plough more resources into online. The Today job spec says the successful applicant “will be tasked with maximising the impact of Today journalism, increasing the listening time of existing listeners and attracting new audiences”.

It asks for “resilience, confidence, assured leadership with excellent communication skills, an enthusiasm for collaboration with other editors, and a commitment to managing and developing a first-rate team.” The job offers “a flexible 35-hour working week for work-life balance”. The appointee will take up their role in September. Today remains Radio 4’s most popular programme, with around seven million listeners.

## VIEWS THAT FALL ON DEAF EARS

*By Howard Wheeldon, July 21, 2010, Howard is an international commentator on aviation, defence and financial matters and a member of the Pen & Sword Club with strong military connections.*



.... Thank you for what I can only describe as being a quite phenomenal response to yesterday’s commentary piece - The Madness of Losing Experienced Military Disruptors – and that unsurprisingly struck a chord with so many of you).

This morning I note a tweet from House of Commons Defence Select Committee chairman Tobias Ellwood in which he said “talk of sending our [aircraft] carriers towards China on the day Huawei is banned is reckless. We need a full foreign policy reset on China – using the INTEGRATED REVIEW to confirm the right defence posture to support that reset”.

Mr Ellwood went on to quote the Chinese writer, philosopher and military strategist Sun Tzu who is credited with having written ‘The Art of War’, an influential work on military strategy that

has for thousands of years impacted on military thinking “Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat”. To that I would add another quote from Sun Tzu “The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting”.

Former British ambassador to the USA Sir Christopher Meyer tweeted another interesting report this morning questioning “what on earth does the BBC website think it is doing leading the news with a negative quote on Huawei from the Chinese ambassador but without attribution?”

To that I would add that it is most often ignorance that makes foreign policy fail and that, as far as the UK is concerned, that appears to be the one thing of which there is no shortage! I fully support the views expressed above by Mr Ellwood and Sir Christopher, but I fear both views will fall on deaf ears.



With Sir Mark Sedwill on his way out as both Cabinet Secretary and National Security Advisor, no replacement yet announced for the former and yet, in the case of the latter position, the confirmed appointment of a non-civil servant in the form of Brexit negotiator David Frost to the NSA post from September,

it seems that for the next two months at least it is the PM's senior advisor Dominic Cummings who now controls most of the political strings without civil servants to bother him.

*Tobias Ellwood, Chair of the Defence Select Committee.*

I have nothing against Mr. Cummings and indeed, I welcome a radical shake up of how government operates through the civil service structure provided of course that what eventually emerges is stronger than what we already have.

Until the Integrated Review of foreign policy, defence, security and international development is finally published – perhaps before the end of the year but most likely early next year – we are swimming with policy that is not born as it should be, from strategy. While US foreign policy has been led by tweets it seems that UK foreign policy is led by leaks!

Whilst I would love to be able to applaud any decision to send Royal Navy ships to any part of the world to help defend our interests and those of our allies, until and if we have decided a strategy in relation to what it is we want to be in the world and where we should hold tight on making what are after all, tactical announcements.

- As to the BBC? It seems to me that the BBC is all but readying itself to press the self-destruct button. Each and every announcement government makes must, it seems, be challenged by observations to the contrary.
- In the name of accountability, they have wrecked excellent programmes such as ‘Today’ that rightly challenged government with a policy that demands an always negative stance be taken on whatever government does.
- News is less about reporting what has occurred than by what the BBC has chosen to create. Now we know why a few years ago they changed the emphasis to BBC News and the BBC has learned!

For a public service broadcaster to be so blatantly politically biased as the BBC has allowed itself to become over the past year is simply unacceptable and must be stopped.

At the very least, it is time that the government took action to remind the BBC in regard of due impartiality to news, particularly that section of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code relating to Due Impartiality and Due Accuracy and Undue Prominence of Views and Opinions.

## Labour calls for Ofcom to review RT's operating licence

*Press Gazette, July 23, 2020. Labour has stepped up its calls for the broadcast watchdog to review the operating licence of Russian news outlet RT.*



LABOUR'S shadow culture secretary Jo Stevens, left, wrote to regulator Ofcom in the wake of the Commons Intelligence and Security Committee report into the role of the Russian state in UK politics.

Stevens told the BBC: "It is not for the Labour Party to say whether or not RT should be banned.

"We want Ofcom, as the independent regulator, to look at the role of RT in the light of the Intelligence and Security Committee report.

"Ofcom has an ongoing duty to be satisfied that broadcasting licences remain fit and proper to hold their licences.

We are talking here about a state-owned broadcaster that has basically breached the Ofcom code over 20 times since it's been airing in Britain.

I know RT will say that we are trying to clamp down on free speech, but I absolutely reject that accusation."

Labour highlighted RT reporting of the Novichok attack in Salisbury as a concern. Last year Ofcom fined the broadcaster £200,000 over "serious and repeated failures" to report with due impartiality on issues including the Novichok poisonings and the Syrian conflict.

RT deputy editor in chief Anna Belkina defended the broadcaster. She said: "Ofcom itself has stated that RT's record is in line with that of other broadcasters in the UK. "And, in fact, we have breached the code fewer times than a lot of the British channels. We have not had a single case, a single breach, in the last two years."

- Asked if RT accepted there was evidence of the Novichok attack in Salisbury, Ms Belkina said: "There are still many questions around the incident and what took place. Some evidence has been presented, but also there has been evidence that refutes it as well. And we carry those points of view as we carry the British Government's point of view. We are an independent news outlet, publicly funded, just like the BBC."
- Pressed on whether RT had ever criticised Russian President Vladimir Putin, she said: "There is criticism of things that are going on in Russia on RT daily."

The long-delayed ISC report set out the role played by RT and Sputnik in spreading disinformation and attempts at broader political influence overseas. -----

An Ofcom spokesperson said: "We have an ongoing duty to remain satisfied that all broadcast licensees remain fit and proper to hold a licence, which includes considering any relevant new evidence as appropriate."

## Labour letter calling to revoke RT's license is 'devastating' proof of UK war on free press

By Afshin Rattansi, RT, July 23, 2020

A LETTER from a high-ranking Labour MP demanding regulators carry out an "urgent" review of RT's media license amounts to political interference and further proves an ongoing assault on the free media, said RT's Afshin Rattansi.

The letter, sent by Labour's Shadow Media Secretary Jo Stevens MP to the regulator Ofcom, called for an immediate review of RT's license and a meeting with the agency's head, Dame Melanie Dawes.

As justification, Stevens cited Tuesday's parliamentary report on alleged 'Russian influence' in UK politics, even though it offered little to no evidence for any such meddling.



Also, on rt.com Free press? Labour letter demands RT UK's license gets REVOKED in light of 'damning' Russia report that gave NO examples or proof

"We have this leaked letter, arguably proof that Sir Keir Starmer wishes to curb the free press and most notably attack an independent, so-called, media regulator," said Ashraf Rattansi, host of RT's Going Underground, referring to the Labour leader.

- We now have the words of... Starmer's Shadow Department of Culture, Media, and Sports Secretary in a private letter sent to this independent regulator saying, almost telling her urgently, 'I need to see you.' To do what? To interfere with an independent regulator. Devastating.

Slamming the letter as an attempt to bully the media watchdog, Rattansi also noted the move may amount to a breach of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which codifies the "freedom to hold opinions without interference."

After the release of Parliament's 'Russia report' on Tuesday, Starmer soon weaponized its thinly backed conclusions, calling on Prime Minister Boris Johnson to crack down on RT for what he deemed "serious distortions" in its coverage and to "look again at the licensing." Rat-tansi said the party has overstepped its bounds.

"Keir Starmer has crossed a line here. He is attempting, perhaps, to interfere with an independent media regulator – politically," he said. This is a leader of the opposition at the dispatch box, where he has parliamentary privilege, talking to the prime minister about wanting to ban RT.



## Times Radio launch-day verdict: A cautious thumbs-up for Rupert Murdoch's alternative to Radio 4 - Press Gazette

LAUNCHING A NEW national talk-based radio station in the midst of a national pandemic lockdown could not have been easy. But News UK pulled it off yesterday with barely a hitch. And on the whole it fulfilled its brief to be a more thoughtful and less hectoring home for current affairs-based coverage.

Our snap poll amongst 290 Press Gazette readers suggests that on the whole it was pretty well received. We asked readers last night whether they had listened to Times Radio and what they thought of it.

Some 290 voted and 37.6% said they had listened. Of those 15.2% said they liked it, 14.5% said it was OK and 7.9% said they didn't like it. On the whole, this seems like a pretty good result for day one.

The station's big opening day "scoop" was the "first sit-down broadcast interview" with Boris Johnson since lockdown began. The revelation element of this slot was rather spoiled by the in-depth interview with Johnson which appeared in the Mail on Sunday the day before in which he revealed plans for billions in infrastructure projects and declared he was "fit as a butcher's dog" and fell to the floor to do press-ups.

Stig Abell and Aasmah Mir, as billed, adopted a less confrontational style of interview than you would expect to see on Radio 4's Today. The result was arguably easier on the listener but failed to produce anything which would require Times editor John Witherow to clear the front page (or any page in today's edition).





Johnson's picture does appear on the front of today's Times, but the accompanying story about £5bn in spending for a Rooseveltian "New Deal" is based on a speech he is due to give today.

Witherow himself was an early interviewee. One of the great things about the BBC is that it can be very good at holding itself to account. Abell gave Witherow the very lightest of grillings. Talking about the current crisis in the global news business, Abell said: "The industry has itself to blame" – pointing to the fact that, according to one survey, 18% of people don't trust journalists.

Witherow said: "Yes, it is to blame. Trust is absolutely critical for our reporting."

And there the discussion ended. One would have thought that two high-profile execs at News UK – the company responsible for the hacking scandal – might have a more interesting discussion about trust and journalism than that. Abell himself was, after all, a senior figure at former press regulator the PCC and Witherow was a senior exec at News International as the hacking scandal unfolded.

Asked what his biggest mistake was, Witherow said it was losing a libel action against Michael Foot over a story which – he said – later turned out to be true. Mmm.

It felt that Times Radio will struggle to compete with Today in the morning slot. As one commenter told Press Gazette on Twitter: "It felt like Radio 5. A bit more informal than R4 but without the reporting network and rather uncritical of the government. I turned back to Today after half an hour."

Another Press Gazette reader said: "It was OK, at least between 7am and 9am when I listened in. But they need to read out fewer stories from The Times if they want to sell newspaper subscriptions, as it was a great way of catching up with the paper's content for free."

Another said of Matt Chorley's mid-morning political programme: "A lively and engaging show. Especially liked the interviews with the two former chancellors, and some American History professors about Trump. Will tune in again."

On shows like Chorley's it felt like Times Radio's thoughtful approach to news offers a serious alternative to LBC and a safe haven for those who switch off Radio 4 during softer spots in its schedule like The Archers or Gardener's Question Time.

The high-points of Times Radio for me were from former BBC stalwarts like John Pienaar, Aasmah Mir and Mariella Frostrup.

Many complained about being unable to tune their smart speakers to it, with some instead being directed to a station of the same name in Malawi. But the fact that Times Radio is one of

the few stations that the ageing digital radio in my shed/office can pick up augurs well for the station's reach on DAB.

Will Times Radio succeed and provide the first serious competition for Radio 4 since its launch in 1967? One has to say that the path to pan-media greatness for News UK proprietor Rupert Murdoch has been littered with failures. He launched The Sun, but also the massively loss-making The London Paper; he reinvented broadcasting with Sky but failed to reinvent the newspaper with The Month (a much-heralded but short-lived CD-ROM edition of The Sunday Times).

Murdoch's last attempt to launch a newspaper-based radio station, Sun Talk in 2009, lasted just 18 months. Times Radio appears to be a more serious attempt to make inroads on the BBC's dominance of the UK airwaves and is certainly showing early promise.



## Inside Cozy Bear, the shadowy Russian hacker group accused of stealing British Covid vaccine

By Hasan Chowdhury and James Cook, The Telegraph, July 16, 2020

TO CYBER SECURITY EXPERTS well versed in the dark arts of hacking, it will come as no surprise that the blame for an attack on a UK coronavirus vaccine project has been pinned on a Russian group known as Cozy Bear. With close links to the Kremlin's foreign and domestic intelligence agencies, Cozy Bear, also known as APT29, is among the world's most infamous hacker groups, which over the past decade has been linked repeatedly with a string of high-profile attacks.

In 2015, it was implicated in an attack on the Pentagon that brought down the Joint Staff email system and its internet, while the following year it was widely blamed for an attack on the servers used by the Democratic National Committee.

"APT29 has been successfully compromising systems now for over a decade across the globe," says Tony Cole, chief technology officer at Attivo Networks. "The pandemic has given them a new and additional target to steal research."

The Oxford University and Imperial College hack on Covid-19 vaccine research has all the classic hallmarks of a Cozy Bear attack, including the use of “spear phishing” using emails targeted at specific groups and specialist malware designed to quietly harvest data from an infected device or server.

- But who is behind the organisation and what are its aims? Back in 2014, Dutch security services caught a unique glimpse of the perpetrators. In an effort to investigate Russian hacking attempts, Dutch officials managed to break into the security camera system of a Moscow university building close to Red Square. It was here, inside a computer lab in the university building, that Dutch security personnel got their first glimpse of the hacker now known as Cozy Bear as they were preparing to carry out an attack on the US government.

The Dutch security services had stumbled upon an intelligence jackpot: The university security cameras allowed them to peer over the shoulders of Russian hackers to watch their screens, and even to identify the members of the group.

These findings are backed up by expert analysis of the malware tools used by the hackers. One hacking tool used by the group, named Hammertoss, was found to only have been active during office hours in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Researchers have also found that the cyberattacks stopped during Russian national holidays, indicating that the hackers had been given time off work and left their malicious software dormant.



The Russian government has for years recruited thousands of promising young computer programmers who could use their expertise for hacking into computer systems in other countries.

In 2014, Cozy Bear hackers broke into an American research organisation. They spread a

video titled “Office Monkeys LOL Video.zip” which appeared to be an innocent-looking video of monkeys wearing shirts and ties. When amused employees of the organisation shared the video, in the background the file actually spread malware inside networks that gave hackers access to secret files.

Cozy Bear was also involved in the 2016 hack of the US Democratic National Committee. Cozy Bear hackers had sat on the private network for over a year but were unaware that a rival Russian government hacking group, Fancy Bear, had also broken into the servers in search of valuable data.

And in 2017, the Cozy Bear and Fancy Bear groups launched attempts to steal secret files from Dutch government departments. The hackers were particularly interested in the country’s upcoming general election, and the hacking attacks forced the Dutch government to count votes by hand to avoid the risk of election interference.

## What techniques do they use?

The group has an arsenal of cyber tactics at its disposal to exploit vulnerable people. Its basic strategy typically involves initially casting a net far out into the internet with thousands of emails designed to lure in unsuspecting people online.

In a tactic known as “spear phishing”, it poses as a trusted sender of a company or organisation that a person might be a customer of, for example. The aim is to deceive them and make the target think the email is legitimate. It’s a simple but effective trick that often forces users into sharing credit card details, passport information and more.

According to the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), the group targets what’s known as “publicly available exploits” in the early stages of its attacks. In practical terms, that means software and hardware that has seen increasing use since the start of lockdown as millions of people have been forced to work from home.

“They’re using known vulnerabilities in some Citrix equipment and other firewalls and routers and things like that and exploiting those to get into the network,” says Professor Alan Woodward, below right, computer scientist at the University of Surrey.

The broad targeting “potentially gives the group access to a large number of systems globally” as part of its initial grab for log-ins and other sensitive credentials.

Once these systems of global interest are compromised through its initial strategy, it can make more targeted attacks with its roster of sophisticated malware too.

One type of malware, known as “SoreFang” among security officials at the NCSC, latches onto HTTP code typically carrying internet traffic in and out of IT systems to extract information from victims.

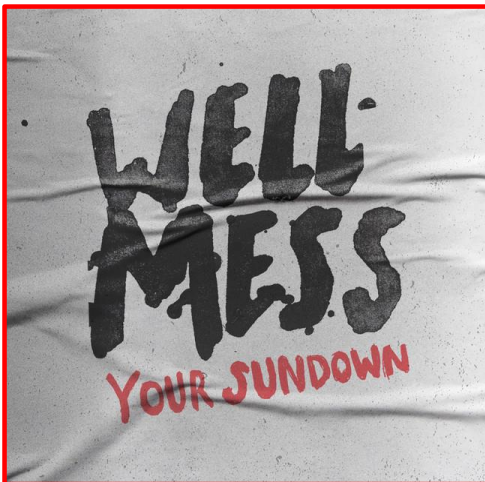
Another set of custom-made malware, known as WellMess or WellMail, has been in use since at least 2018, that employs computer code to upload and download files in a compromised system at will. WellMess is a piece of software used by the Russian hackers that security experts have seen being used since it was first found on the computer networks of Japanese companies in 2018.

Hackers place the WellMess software on a target computer network to act as a portal to smuggle out stolen documents. They can also use WellMess to transfer new instructions into their malicious software, helping them to change which networks are targeted and which files are sneaked out.

WellMail is another piece of malicious software which hackers can plant on to computer systems to smuggle commands on to computer systems and then to remove data from networks.

The software, which has never publicly been named or examined before the revelation of the Russian hacks on coronavirus research, sends hackers information on the username of whoever is logged in to a computer.

### Have they been successful?



In May, the NCSC issued a public warning about top level hackers eyeing up vaccine researchers in an attempt to steal critical information from them.



On Thursday, the NCSC refused to say whether the Russian hackers had actually made away with any research information on the coronavirus vaccine. But what's clear is that the group has been successful in the past, breaking into research organisations and government systems alike.

Though the attack on Oxford researchers makes them just another in a long list of Cozy Bear's victims, the university could be kicking itself over the ordeal.

For months, research organisations have been put on notice over the fact that a target may well be on their heads during the public health crisis, as experts pointed to evidence of government-funded hacking groups from the likes of China, Iran and Russia mobilising as far back as February.

Healthcare workers and researchers were urged to change their passwords to avoid being caught up in so-called “password spraying” strategies that see hackers attempt to use commonly-used passwords for the log-ins of staff at organisations with prized information.

For now, it is unclear how much information was taken, or if anything was taken at all. But as Woodward makes clear: “They potentially could have got all of it.”

## What are the key tenets of China's propaganda regime?

*By Atharv S Desai, The Dispatch, June 2020 who argues that the real strength of contemporary Chinese propaganda is its ability to obscure sources and intentions*

CHINA HAS UNLEASHED an international propaganda offensive, and demonstrated its ability to obscure truth while changing narratives, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Beijing is efficiently exploiting the platforms of journalism and social media to further its cause. Along with the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) traditional approach to cultivating China's positive image globally, this new strategy, drawing on Russian media warfare tactics, is to “sow doubt, dissension, and disarray” to cause public information anarchy.



However, unlike Russia's covert strategies, the CCP employs more direct tactics of flooding mainstream global media coverage with pro-China messaging, and garnering support from 'neutral' global institutions, to back Chinese narratives. The real strength of contemporary Chinese propaganda—such as sophisticated message delivery, subtlety, and the professionalism of its information manipulation—is the obscuring of sources and intentions driving propaganda. To exhumate the subversive nature of these activities and go beyond the technical aspects its information warfare, this commentary analyses five key tenets of the Chinese propaganda regime.

### Information Dominance

Under President Xi Jinping, CCP's United Front Work Department (UFWD) has been tasked with using the 'magic weapons' of political propaganda activities to further Chinese strategic,



economic, and political interests. This is grounded in a long-held view on the power of effective propaganda.

As an autocratic one party-state, China's strategy of using information to achieve political goals is rooted in traditional CCP approaches. Information warfare is a part of PRC's ambitious 'Three Warfares' strategy. Contemporary Chinese military literature has extensively explored the idea of 'information dominance' as a favourable pre-combat strategy for victory in modern warfare.

This concept encapsulates CCP's propaganda strategies, ranging from China's ongoing global media expansion, cyber warfare, to social media disinformation campaigns.

### Exploitation of Democracy

For communist China, the concept of liberal democracies may be a political anomaly, but its attributes are useful for Chinese strategic exploitation. This sort of exploitation appears to be taking place on three fronts. One, to further its discursive agenda inside countries with democratic systems, China has been promoting narratives that discredit responses by these governments to COVID-19. Two, China's authoritarian capitalism is aiming to weaken the liberal transnational project. Such encroachment against liberal internationalism ranges from China's so-called 'cheque-book diplomacy' to the pandemic-related 'face-mask diplomacy'. Finally, the "covert, corrupt and coercive" elements of Chinese propaganda are threatening free press and democratic governance in a number of countries.

While the freedom and openness of liberal democratic systems have provided China an opportunity to influence their institutions, the reverse is not true. China continues to strictly guard—using a wide range of tactics such as censorship and surveillance—against efforts by external actors to engage with Chinese civil society organisations.

### Foreign Lobbying

Following Mao's vision to "Make the Past serve the Present and Foreign actors serve China," Xi aims to develop pro-China pressure groups abroad to promote the country's interests. One aspect of this doctrine is to co-opt foreign academic, media, policy, and political institutions. This is illustrated, for example, by the gradual increase in the number of all-expense paid scholarships and quasi-scholarship trips to China.

Cultivating a class of China supporters—especially among freelance professionals—to act like 'third-party spokespersons' is another part of this doctrine. Such paid supporters range from professional PR organisations and corporate lobbies to pro-China policy and opinion-makers.

### 'Borrowed Boat' Strategy



The 'borrowed boat' strategy refers to the use of well-known and widely read foreign media platforms to publish coverage that lends credibility to Chinese narratives. Through this, the CCP is aiming to insinuate its official narrative in foreign mainstream media, through things like paid advertorials. China's state-run English-language newspaper, China Daily, has signed deals with about 30 international newspapers to cross publish its official inserts, called China Watch. Chinese news

agencies are also providing free content to partner media organisations abroad in their attempt influence foreign coverage of domestic developments.

Cultivating an information order that produces pro-China content without paid advertorials is the advanced version of this strategy. China's extensive investments in media outlets of the

Global South are extension of this cheque-book diplomacy. These investments are structured in a way that obscures its majority shareholder—state-run Chinese media.

## Media for Intelligence

The most potent threat of Chinese interventions in foreign media arguably comes from the very nature of Chinese espionage and national security laws. As per as 2017 National Intelligence Act, both governmental and non-governmental Chinese organisations would have no choice but to “support, assist and cooperate with state intelligence work.”

There are several examples to support this claim. For instance, Mark Bourrie, a Canadian journalist working with Xinhua news agency was asked to submit a confidential report on the closed-door discussions between the Dalai Lama and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. This highlights how China is using media platforms to collect sensitive information useful for its intelligence operations. According to a 2017 report by the US China Economic and Security Review Commission, Xinhua is involved in intelligence agency-like functions, such as information-gathering and producing classified reports on domestic and international events for Chinese leadership.

Chinese propaganda activities are not merely for image-building, or PR campaigns. While campaigns for political influence are a common tool of public diplomacy, the insidiousness of China's global outreach and its skilled exploitation of the press threatens to damage the integrity of sovereign democratic institutions and pose more serious challenges in the future.



## British Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft takes part in first NATO exercise

*By George Allison, UK Defence Journal, July 13, 2020*

NATO exercise Dynamic Mongoose has seen personnel from 120 Squadron join ships, submarines and aircraft from six nations to hone anti-submarine warfare and anti-surface warfare skills with the new Poseidon MRA1 aircraft in the North Atlantic, say the RAF in a news release.

The RAF say that on one sortie, using the sophisticated sensor suite fitted to the aircraft, an RAF Poseidon launched simulated attacks within 10 mins of taking over contact from a US Navy Poseidon. This sortie, they say, also offered the 120 Squadron crew the opportunity to practise communications, command and control with NATO allies and directed simulated attacks on a submarine by naval vessels.

The Poseidon Captain flying the mission was quoted by the RAF as saying:

*“We worked closely with other Maritime Patrol Aircraft in the area to track several simulated targets, relaying this information back to the Task Group on the surface. Commonality between platforms along with shared tactics, training, and procedures means that when we do this for real, we are able to quickly locate, identify, and track targets beneath the waves.”*

Vice Admiral Keith Blount, Commander of NATO's Allied Maritime Command said:

*"Exercises today seize opportunities for NATO and Allied nations to sharpen war-fighting skills by focussing on high-end capabilities. Dynamic Mongoose will ensure we remain prepared for operations in peace, crisis and conflict."*

Officer Commanding 120 Squadron, Wing Commander James Hanson said:

*"Participation in Dynamic Mongoose offers the trained crews of CXX Squadron a chance to hone their skills cooperating with ships, submarines and aircraft from a number of NATO partner nations, as well as the Royal Navy. The exercise offers my crews a great opportunity to be tested against highly professional opposition in the exercise environment, and I know that the crews have relished the chance to show what they can do with our extremely capable aircraft."*

## Spain to receive new Eurofighters under Project 'Halcon'



By Gareth Jennings, Janes. com. July 10, 2020

SPAIN LOOKS SET to increase its Eurofighter fleet under Project 'Halcon', with a contract for an initial 20 aircraft anticipated to be signed-off in 2021. (Eurofighter)



The proposed deal that the government is currently negotiating with Airbus, announced on 9 July, will involve an initial 20 Eurofighters being delivered to the Spanish Air Force (Ejército del Aire Español [EdAE]) to replace Hornets based on the Canary Islands.

The deal, which Airbus told Janes is expected to be signed in 2021, would be the first part of a wider plan to retire the service's Hornets with the latest-standard Eurofighters between 2025 and 2030, dubbed Project 'Halcon' (Falcon).

As previously described to Janes, these Tranche 3+/Tranche 4 Eurofighters (company officials have used both designations) would be of the latest Tranche 3 standard and will also feature an active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar and other modifications. For Spain, the AESA would be 'Radar 1', development of which is being led by Hensoldt and Indra.

This new Eurofighter procurement and the retirement of the Hornets is part of a wider modernisation plan for the EdAE's combat fleet that is called Road Map 2035+.

The EdAE currently fields 73 Eurofighters, comprising 19 Tranche 1, 34 Tranche 2, and 20 Tranche 3 aircraft, as well as 91 EF-18A and EF-18B Hornets. The Road Map 2035++ seeks to manage these fleets out to, and beyond, the introduction of the New-Generation Fighter that Spain is to develop alongside France and Germany as part of the wider Future Combat Air System (FCAS)

## British Army Receives New Ares Armoured Vehicles



*Named after the Greek god of war and part of the Ajax family, it will replace the CVR(T) vehicles after decades of service, says Forces News. July 28, 2020*

A BRITISH ARMY regiment has received six of the service's new armoured combat vehicles. Arriving at the Household Cavalry Regiment at Bulford, Wiltshire, the Ares reconnaissance personnel carrier is part of the Ajax armoured vehicle family manufactured by General Dynamics.

In February 2019, the Army was given two of the vehicles, to be used for training purposes, according to General Dynamics. Ares is set to replace the Army's Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance (Tracked) [CVR(T)] vehicles - a family of light-tracked vehicles which includes the Scimitar and the Spartan.

The CVR(T) vehicles have given four decades of service across multiple battlefields, such as the Middle East and the Falklands. x

The new Ares model borrows its title from the Greek god of war of the same name. Designed to tackle 21st-century threats, it is a fully digitised platform containing technology "normally seen on attack helicopters", according to Ares Instructor Corporal of Horse Sam Abbott

"This is your battlefield winner now," he added. "This is going to be at the head of the strike brigade, and this is going to see more, hear more, destroy more."

In total, there are six variants of Ajax which fulfil nine roles and the name can be applied to all of them, but specifically to the turreted version. The group's features include 'Eyes' - an all-weather ISTAR (intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and recognition) capability, and 'Ears' - vehicle-mounted 'Acusonic' acoustic shot detection systems.



"This is the newest vehicle that the British Army has," said Lieutenant Colonel Mark Berry. He added that Ares is like a "giant armoured computer" and offers the service a "completely different capability. "[Ares] is the troop-carrying variant and we will be employing it for armoured reconnaissance," Lt Col Berry said.

"It's got amazing sensors, which really extend the soldier across the battlefield and allow him or her to see and feel and understand the battlefield in a way that we've never been able to before. This is fully digitised, an extraordinary platform, that essentially becomes an extension of the soldiers that operate it."

The variants which make up the Ajax armoured vehicle family:

- Ajax (turreted, reconnaissance and strike through a 40mm cannon).
- Ares (reconnaissance and Armoured Personnel Carrier).
- Argus (engineer reconnaissance).
- Athena (command and control).
- Atlas (equipment support recovery).
- and Apollo (equipment repair).

Ajax Programme Director, Colonel Justin Kingsford said the arrival in Wiltshire marked an "exciting moment for the Army. The vehicle was also hailed as part of the latest fighting family in the armoured vehicle world. Ajax will allow us to manage battlespace information faster from a modern digitised platform, with increased lethality through the new 40mm cannon," Col Kingsford added. "Better mobility, alongside enhanced protection levels and increased reliability underline the transformational nature of the capability."

## UK's Future Commando Force: a radical and 'lethal' new unit to fight threats across the globe

*By Dominic Nicholls, Telegraph Defence and Security Correspondent June 26, 2020*

BRITAIN'S COMMANDO FORCES are to undergo a radical transformation to face future threats across the globe, the Royal Navy has announced. The days of British troops charging across enemy held beaches are, hopefully, over. However, complex and technically advanced threats from adversaries have demanded a new way of projecting force.



As modern weapon systems can hit ships hundreds of miles out from an objective, just getting to the fight is now a problem in itself.

Major General Matthew Holmes, the Commandant General of the Royal Marines (CGRM), says the Future Commando Force will be a more "lethal, survivable and sustained" amphibious capability. A persistent forward presence based on ships seeks to offer global access and "pose greater dilemmas to our adversaries," General Holmes says.

The new "tactical" white ensign, to be worn on the left shoulder, reaffirming that the Royal Marines are part of the Royal Navy. The new uniform will be the first time the ensign has been worn by Royal Marines since they were formed in

Two Littoral Response Groups (LRG), each of a few hundred commandos and supporting elements, will deploy on roughly six-month cycles to respond to crises ranging from humanitarian disaster to conventional warfare. It is envisaged one LRG will be permanently east of Suez, with the Royal Navy facility in Bahrain acting as a staging post.



The second Group will focus on NATO's northern flank, working closely with Norwegian amphibious forces, and the Mediterranean.

The three Bay-Class Landing Ship Dock Auxiliary ships, crewed by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, will be the likely hosts, initially at least, with additional medical and aviation facilities developed in the near future.

General Holmes says there will be "tangible differences" in how Britain's commando forces operate from next year. Initial developmental work will take place through 40 Commando, based in Taunton, Somerset.

Royal Marines want to be forward deployed on operations, General Holmes says, "unequivocally". The Future Commando Force concept is being developed just as the US Marine Corps wrestles with similar ideas.

In 'Force Design 2030', released in March this year, the Commandant of the US Marine Corps is similarly seeking to adapt his force for future threats with an emphasis on the Indo-Pacific region, longhand for China.



## How the Army is using the arts to ask tough questions

*By Lt Colonel Wendy Faux, Agenda, The Herald, Scotland, July 27, 2020*

ASK PEOPLE about the relationship between the Army and the arts and many will think of the paintings of historical battles that hang on gallery walls. But it extends much further and deeper – a prime example is Army@TheFringe. which we have run in association with Summerhall since 2017.

It enables performing artists to present shows that raise issues about life in and out of uniform, and normally takes place at the Hepburn House drill hall which we transform into an Edinburgh Fringe venue.

As head of the arts for the Army (perhaps you didn't know we had one) I believe it's essential for us to work with, and support, independent artists. In fact, it's more important now than ever given the number and scale of concerns we all face in today's world, from racism and inequality to love, hate, peace and war.

The arts have an unrivalled capacity to make us think and feel about our world – what it was like in the past, how it is now and where it's heading. By encouraging us to ask questions of ourselves, and others, they can promote debate and lay the foundations for positive change.

When Covid-19 forced the cancellation of the Fringe we decided to move online and refocused in order to offer some support to the artists we were already working with and to the wider performing arts sector. The result is Army@TheVirtualFringe – three weeks of free screenings, workshops, rehearsed readings, discussions and live-from-home performances.

Some give a foretaste of productions we aim to stage next year. But many will see writers, performers, set designers, photographers, musicians and others sharing ideas and expertise with performing artists hoping to put on shows elsewhere at the Fringe – or indeed anywhere.

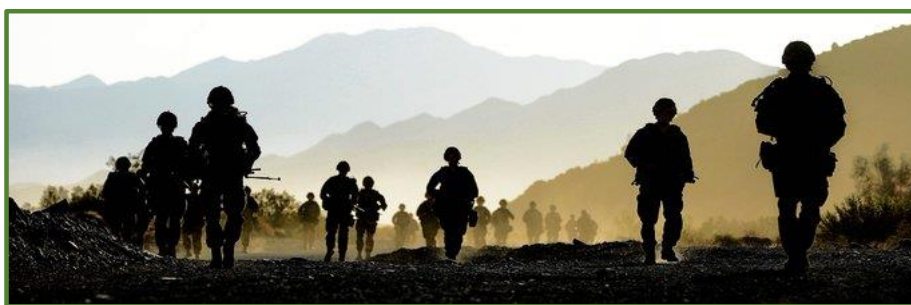
With the mountainous difficulties faced by the sector right now we hope this kind of skills sharing will contribute to the efforts so many people are making to help the performing arts rebuild. And for the public we hope that what we are offering will, alongside other recently announced initiatives, provide some continuity and fill a little of the gap left by the absence of the Fringe.

We also want to give something back to an arts community which has shown so much interest in Army@TheFringe and has come to us with productions of the quality of 5 Soldiers, The Troth and Unicorns, Almost.

As a photographer myself I try to capture images that have an authenticity and express something new or different about people or situations. That's very much the essence of Army@The-Fringe and other initiatives through which the Army engages with the arts. They support work that is powerful, informed and independent. In some cases, they do that by inviting artists who want to create work about the Army to come "behind the wire" and give them access to the kind of people and experiences that interest them.

At other times they provide a showcase for veterans who now work in the arts and whose work reflects lived experience. Both result in an authenticity that make productions all the more affecting and persuasive whether they are addressing how families cope with death or injury, the courage of gay soldiers in coming out, women's struggle for equality or the experiences of black and overseas personnel.

The result is agenda-setting art that asks tough questions about our lives and our Army – something that matters greatly for a healthy, open society.



## Mutiny on the Bounty? Thoughts on news that the Bounty may be scrapped.

*By Sir Humphrey, The Thin Pin Striped Lin. July 24, 2020*

THE ARMED FORCES PAY REVIEW Body (AFPRB) has issued its annual report, recommending an across the board pay rise of 2% for the armed forces, both regular and reserve, as well as a rise in a range of allowances. These reports are always well worth a read, not just for the headline numbers, but also for wider details that provide insight into the state of the modern armed forces. For example, that the MOD has some 25,000 service personnel (some 19% of the regular force) held at five days' notice to move on tasks.

Also, of interest was the discovery that of the senior officer cadre (1\* and above), just 4.5% of the workforce are female. This is a particularly concerning statistic as women make up some 10% of headcount overall, suggesting there remains a significant shortfall of female representation at the very highest levels of the service. One area that was particularly interesting though was the comments by the AFPRB on the concept of the 'Bounty' which is paid annually to volunteer reservists, along with discussions about the relationship between regular and reserve forces.

The Bounty payment is awarded annually to reservists who meet all mandated training tasks of them (usually but not always linked to providing somewhere between 20-30 days per year in a variety of ways, from annual training to attending drill nights). The payment is tax free and paid in an annual lump sum that increases over 5 years and is currently worth almost £1900 at maximum level.

Traditionally the Bounty was seen as an inducement to encourage reservists to take part in training and provide assurance to their units that they possessed sufficient headcount at a trained level as and when required. It was a valuable way both of ensuring attendance and in trying to monitor overall readiness and training levels.

Interestingly the report notes that in the last year only 65% of reservists qualified for a bounty payment – or roughly 21,000 of the 32,000 in the reserves. This means that only two thirds of the UK reserve forces met the minimum required level of training required to qualify for payment in the last year.

- There are a multitude of reasons why a reservist cannot always meet their full commitment – a busy work life, the arrival of a new child, real world family pressures and so on. Trying to balance off these complex drivers of work, family and the reserves isn't always easy and can at times see the reserves firmly parked as the lowest part of the trinity.



Also, people deployed on FTRS and operations may not necessarily qualify (although the rules are complex and ever changing) and there are ways when people are active for the regular military, but do not necessarily get their payment.

This is recognised and there are a variety of ways that waivers can be offered and means to get people worth retaining the payment if they are worth it without abusing the system. But it is still mildly concerning that the reserves can only count on two thirds of their headcount as being of the minimum trained standard to support the regular forces.

- The AFPRB go on to note that there will be a review due in 2021 of the reservist Bounty, and also wider remuneration for the reserves – It contains the potentially mildly concerning phrase “*When looked at from a fresh perspective, the TB (Bounty) could be seen as an unusual way to reward and incentivise voluntary service*”...

This indicates that there may be thinking afoot to look again at whether the Reserves will continue to accrue this allowance, or if their pay package will be amended to cover other allowances instead.

From a top level perspective, the potential savings of scrapping the Bounty and moving to allowances or other payments may allow considerable savings – in very broad handfuls the payments last year would have cost some £40m to the 65% who did qualify, so hardly small change.

There is also a long-standing concern in some quarters of the reserves, recognised in the report itself about the disparity in pay. Reservists do not get paid X Factor (the allowance to reflect disturbances to regular service life), despite many reservists being available, often at very short notice to support work at home and on operations short of mobilisation.

This can be a sore point, particularly when coupled with the fact that reservists do not qualify for the same extensive range of allowances and payments open to the regular forces. There is

at times perhaps a perception in some quarters that the reserves are seen as voluntary labour, and do not qualify for the same reward or recognition as regulars.

While this may be overly harsh, there is perhaps a case that Reservists do feel that there is a special set of asks placed on them – namely to be able to support work, military and home commitments and balance off all three in different ways, and at different times. Being a reservist means accepting that the military can, and does, intrude on your real life and expect you to deploy at short notice, putting real life on hold.

It is frustrating to hear the view 'well that's what the regulars get' when the regulars do get an entirely different package of pay and allowances – surely if you want equal treatment, you should pay your people in the same way?

- But similarly does the Bounty drive negative behaviours of itself? There is plenty of support for the view that the payment rewards those who turn up to the right events, not necessarily the right training, and that if a face fits and is seen as a 'good egg' then it may get the payment, even if not necessarily worthy or operationally capable.



By driving the behaviour that requires people to chalk up X days, people can, and do, look for any opportunity to get time in – the traditional Jan-Mar dash for days, as people seek to get any training in, no matter how tenuous, to get over the Bounty line is arguably not the best use of public funds – surely training should be relevant, not done purely to get Bounty.

There is also a wider challenge of people needing to promote and finding that career courses are not running, so that they are unable to attend the right training event, or cannot get the time to do it if rescheduled at the last minute (as often happens) and find themselves with a deficit of days – at times like this, the sense of not getting Bounty qualified may be enough to drive otherwise motivated people away.

The challenge is to find a way to assure overall levels of readiness and be able to generate a core cadre of people able to take on short notice challenges if required – for example the COVID mobilisation this year, or standing to in order to support operational tasking.

This probably does require a deeper look at how you not only compensate people, but also how you pay them a rate which ensures that the military get their time and attention. If you are in a busy job, particularly if you are a higher rate taxpayer, then the reserves is not only not particularly lucrative, but it also may be lower down your priorities to be available for at short notice. How do you pay, or reward, people to make them want to be available when needed?

This isn't as simple as saying 'give Reservists X Factor' but it does require some thinking around how you can essentially manage a force of 30,000 people, the readiness state you want to hold them at, and how badly you need their services – for example, the need for medics may be much higher than the need for some other trades.

Bounty may not be the right answer, but if it is taken away it is likely to cause many people to reach the conclusion that it is not worth staying. For people on the average UK salary (approximately £29,000), Bounty payments make up a very significant additional part of their annual income.

For some families, Bounty is the difference between going on holiday or staying at home. For others it's about the ability to pay car insurance or other big costs. It is seen to many as a way of putting money by to pay families back for their support – being used to pay for nice things to say thank you to a family that puts up with regular weekend absences and time away from home.

Lose this tangible factor and suddenly people may decide that it isn't worth it in the same way. The loss of Bounty would potentially cause many people who have stayed in, in part because the money makes a difference, to walk away.

Whatever solution replaces it has to make financial sense too – for higher rate taxpayers, replacing Bounty is essentially going to mean they need much higher daily rates of pay to compensate to ensure they are not out of pocket after tax, or payment of additional allowances – this could cause real friction between those on lower tax bands who perceive others as earning more than them.



Given all of this, Bounty does work as a unifier for the force as it represents a single equitable payment that can be seen as both reward for time offered, and compensation in lieu of the various deeply complex allowance packages that exist for regulars. While it may seem old fashioned, it perhaps causes less admin and hassle than trying to work

out the vast range of disparate allowances a unit of reservists may qualify for in its place – and far less divisive too.

Perhaps the bigger question comes back to one of what is it that the Armed Forces want their reserves to deliver? In a world where the volunteer reserve makes up some 20% of overall strength, they will be an increasingly important source of bodies to support military operations.

But is the model of volunteer reservists credible in an age of complex operations, lengthy pre-deployment training and where even the most junior soldiers require a lot of professional skills and experience that can quickly fade away?

Perhaps the future of the reserve is a combination of one that offers opportunities for high readiness, highly trained professionals like doctors or engineers, coupled with opportunities for former regulars able to do their old jobs. It can then offer a bulk pool of people able to mobilise at longer notice for 'stuff' but recognising you bring them in for the body, not for their skills necessarily, and then use them as a contingent reserve for UK operations and military in the public eye duties.

The biggest problem of all may be that modern military operations are so complex, that the roles are so time demanding and the capabilities and skills required so challenging, that the ability to be a spare time serviceperson and be credible just is no longer there. Is it time to ask whether someone can be a credible soldier in their spare time in the modern operating environment?

Whatever model you settle on though requires a means of ensuring that reservists are properly compensated for the time they offer. Failure to do so may mean that there could very well be a munity on the Bounty...

## No, the flag painted onto the VIP Voyager aircraft isn't backwards

WITH THE REVEAL OF IMAGERY showing a new paint job for the aircraft used by the Prime Minister, many have expressed concern that the flag has been painted on backwards. The job of this specific Voyager aircraft, say the MoD, is to provide a secure, cost-effective and suitably profiled transport for Government Ministers and the Royal Family.



So, for context, a Union Flag is said to be 'distressed' or 'backwards' if the broader (wider) diagonal white stripe is not at the top on the side of the flag nearest the flagpole. You can read more about that [here](#).



To many, it appears that the Union Flag painted on the tail is the wrong way around, following this convention. Image shows ZZ336 with the flag the "incorrect" way.

However, the Royal Air Force said: "The design is correct in all respects and carefully follows the correct protocol for displaying the Union Flag on an aircraft. The convention is for the flag design to appear as though it is flying from a flag placed on the nose of the aircraft, as it travels through the air. When viewing the starboard side (right hand side), this can give the mistaken impression that the design is backwards, or upside down, when in fact the observer is simply viewing the reverse side of the flag.

A keen eye will notice that this convention has been consistently applied on all flags represented on the aircraft, including on the Union Flags on the two forward-most aircraft doors. This protocol is not unique to the UK, a simple on-line search for images of the United States' Air Force One starboard side will show that an identical convention has been followed."

## Brits School U.S. Troops in Tea-Making, But They Prefer Coffee

By [Jim Garamone](#) , Department of Defense News, July 6, 2020

THE TWITTERVERSE is atwitter....as Brits teach Americans how to make a proper cup of tea. It's the fallout from a TikTok video that shows an American woman brewing a cup of tea in the microwave. The British army, navy and air force jumped in to educate their military cousins across the pond, letting them know that brewing tea requires a kettle, tea bag, milk and sugar .Microwaving is a faux pas, and even the order you put things in the hot water matters. The tongue-in-cheek tweet featuring a British soldier offers to explain how to brew tea while suggesting that it's not worth going into an all-out revolution over.

While U.S. service members applaud the British for their willingness to impart their tea-making wisdom, it may be unnecessary. Military service members of the United States of America do not — as a rule — drink tea. Service members do, however, drink coffee, and they will go to great lengths to ensure they have their morning cups of go-juice. Coffee and service members is a tradition as time-honoured as the services themselves.

In garrison, forward operating bases, and even combat outposts, there's always coffee available somewhere. Service members can grab a foam or paper cup, pour in the coffee and fix it the way they like it. At larger bases, there's even a choice of liquid creamer and fake sugar available.

For service members in the field, rations — or meals ready to eat — even come with instant coffee, powdered non-dairy "creamer" and sugar. There's also a flameless heater that gets the instant coffee hot enough to burn the mouth. But if they're desperate, soldiers just dump the coffee granules into cold water, shake it and slam it down.

The U.S. military makes every effort to get coffee to the troops. During the Civil War, getting a hot cup of coffee was a real morale booster. Young William McKinley delivered hot coffee to his unit under fire at the battle of Antietam, Maryland — which he noted as he rose in politics, eventually being elected U.S. president in 1896.

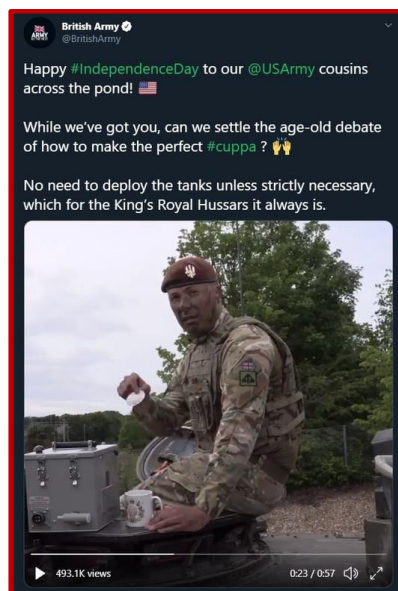
Civil War soldiers didn't have all the accoutrements that today's coffee snob has. At every break in a march, the troops would build a fire, heat water and use their musket butts to crush the beans. They would dump them in the water and let it steep.

According to a Navy legend, the phrase "cup of Joe" was coined after Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels outlawed booze on board ships in 1914. Coffee was the strongest drink a sailor could have. During World War I, cooks tried to deliver hot coffee to the troops manning the trenches.

During World War II, troops from Iwo Jima to the Battle of the Bulge dug through their rations for a caffeine fix. At the dedication of the Korean War Memorial in Washington, one Korean War vet described "sock coffee" that his Marine platoon made up by the Chosin Reservoir. They took a sock, filled it with coffee grounds, and dunked it in a canteen cup with boiling water. "We tried to get a clean sock, but we didn't care," he said.

During the Vietnam War, troops used pinches of C-4 plastic explosives to heat the coffee in their ration packets. In 2003's Operation Iraqi Freedom, Americans sent lots and lots of coffee to the troops. In one instance, a platoon got 10 bags of Starbucks coffee, but it was whole-bean, rather than ground.

Someone mentioned how the troops during the Civil War had done it, and the tradition continued. The troops soon liberated a huge pot from the Baghdad International Airport, filled it with water and put it over a fire. They put the coffee beans in a plastic sandbag and used their weapons and bricks to crush them. Then they dumped the result into the boiling water. The coffee was so strong, it would walk over to you if you whistled. It was just what they needed.



What's good, bad and ugly at the cinema?

ACCURACY, coupled with entertainment, valid action and no amateurish mistakes is what military folk like in their films. So, it has been pleasing to see that Tom Hanks' new venture, Greyhound is receiving good reviews for its authenticity. Forces News followed the right lines in asking for expert opinion for its review of this tale of the poorly reported but vital Battle of the Atlantic. Club Vice President, Commodore Alistair Halliday RN adds flavour to the comment.

The Telegraph's Tom Fordy captures attention with his coverage of the film plus his fuller description of the fight against the U boat menace, and the cruel sea, that lasted throughout the Second World War. As reported elsewhere in this edition even Ed Morrow, one of the best of the American journalists who backed Britain during the dark days of the war was amazed at how little information was released by the Royal Navy ( the Silent Service) and the War Office throughout the conflict.

Three films feature in our movie reviews (See Part 2) in this edition. Greyhound takes the lead as the new film on our screens – in this case via Apple TV – while Scribblings picks up on one of the disturbing inaccuracies included in A Bridge Too Far and the blatant anti-British menu served up, by Mel Gibson in The Patriot.



Tom Hanks', as we might expect, shows the United States involvement in the Battle of the Atlantic. The US Navy role, like that of the Royal Canadian Navy, in bridging The Pond, came early and was much valued.

The Arnhem movie – together with some recent books - has become something of a cult with constant repetition on our television screens, with many of us wondering why we Brits are gluttons for punishment with our acceptance of the propaganda that

this was a British mistake arising from a mistaken viewpoint of Field Marshall Montgomery.

The principle of Operation Market Garden – the combined airborne and armoured thrust that could break into German and bring an earlier end to the war- was not only endorsed by the Allied Governments and by General Eisenhower but, perhaps, just as importantly, was being pushed hard by American and British airborne leadership which was eager to get back into the fray and deploy a large and expensive asset. That Monty get the blame is, perhaps, his own fault because of his outspoken personality. But shrinking violets do not come wearing red tabs.

As for The Patriot, Scribblings leaves the criticism, the inaccuracies and the anti-British sentiments the film highlights, to others,

Social media throws up many quirks. One of the more interesting is Quora – a forum for those who want information, mainly it seems, about warfare. Some of the questions posed are naïve in the extreme, others open up genuine debate and are answered by those who have personal and extensive knowledge of their subjects. Readers of Scribblings will probably ignore the oft – repeated, ill-judged and silly questions about what was the best fighter aircraft of the war and try and compare a Spitfire Mk 1 with a 1943 variant of the Fw 190 and the 1945 marque of P51 Mustang and are surprised by the answers.

In July one Quora question about A Bridge Too Far caught our attention. What happened to the young Intelligence officer who tried to draw the attention of his General to photographs of German armour at Arnhem. The informative reply came from a relative of the officer concerned, Brian Urquhart. David Rendahl, himself, a former British Army intelligence analyst replied:

*That would be my great-uncle Lt Colonel Brian Urquhart. He is still alive at the age of 101 and lives in New York where he retired after a long post-war career with the United Nations.*

Immediately after the battle he was promoted and given command of one of the Nazi-scientist hunting teams. He then became one of the first under-secretaries establishing the UN as we know it today.

He never liked his association with Arnhem, it was but one battle in a long career. I asked him once about a soldier's life, which I was then contemplating. The story he told concerned his orders to arrange the repatriation of Cossacks to Russia on special trains.

He had his men seal the windows shut with barbed wire and watched as the first were hung from trees by the NKVD before the last were disembarked. Women and children among them, who tried to cut their throats on the barbed wire he had insisted on. He became very bitter after that. He asked if I could handle orders like those.

The majority of his career was as a diplomat who firmly believed the UN should be the only holder of nuclear weapons, controlled by an internationalist military force whose mission was to preserve humanity. For the man who unlocked the gates at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp it's not hard to connect with his idealism. Or decipher his contempt for Generals.

It's also worth pointing out the inaccuracies in his portrayal in many of the books and films. He didn't get into an argument with Lt General Browning about tanks at Arnhem - majors don't argue with Lt Generals he told me - he informed the chief of staff - a brigadier - and a few of the brigade majors, that he believed German panzer units had been positioned nearby.

Brian got this information from Enigma code breaking, he was the only ULTRA cleared officer on the Airborne staff - the main reason he didn't fly in with Corps headquarters. That information probably included how few tanks there were - but also how many veteran troops and battle-hardened commanders were stationed nearby.

In 1944 he couldn't tell the brigadier, his colleagues or Browning even, where he got his information or its provenance. It's possible he exaggerated resistance reports and tertiary aerial photos to make his case. Photos like we see in the films have never been found. So, it wasn't quite as clear cut.

When he was interviewed by historians after the war, he had to continue the cover story for ULTRA. When Cornelius Ryan interviewed him for a Bridge too Far in the late 50s, ULTRA was still top secret. Ryan printed Brian's cover story of aerial photos and Attenborough conflated them with the Tiger II's - that turned up days later from the Czech border.

The final assessment, that these panzer divisions weren't fully operational, and the tanks, if any, were junk, was actually the correct one. 1st Airborne would only meet one SP Gun on Day 1, a few partially armed training tanks, armoured cars and half-tracks before day 3. They destroyed most of them.

It was the proximity of command staff and their brilliance in improvisation and counter-attack that ruined the mission. Foot infantry with MG42 and 81mm mortar stopped 1st Airborne getting to the bridges not panzers. The real threat of panzers at Arnhem was more obvious and a bit further away.

Another great uncle, Major William Conran RE, was an engineer on XXX Corps staff. He had been sent there to maintain the roads leading to Arnhem. He and Brian separately pointed out the biggest issue with Arnhem.

It was sold as a strategic location from where a quick right turn took you into the Ruhr valley with all its factories. Both pointed out it was therefore only a quick left turn from the Ruhr to Arnhem, and being the centre of German war production, there had to be tanks and materiel hanging about there.



*This was the reason for the three-day time limit on reaching Arnhem, any longer and they would be facing extermination by Panzer, mortar and artillery bought in from the Ruhr. Which is exactly what happened, the main armoured threat came days later and was mainly STuG assault guns, the perimeter was assaulted more by mortar fire than anything.*

*If a Major Royal Engineers could work out the threat to Arnhem from a Michelin guide it wasn't Brian's failure to convince the Airborne staff that led to disaster.*

- *Dirk Bogarde, who played Browning in the film, was also on staff at 2nd Army at the time and always said he thought Browning received undue criticism. I think Ryan agreed but needed US heroes to sell his book to Hollywood, while Eisenhower was in the White House and Ridgeway was Chief of Staff. It could be why he gave Browning the famous, possibly apocryphal, line 'we may have gone a bridge too far!'*

*One last titbit of truth came from both Uncle Bill and Brian. The mission had to go ahead regardless of the threat and was a success. The number one problem for SHAPE in September 1944 was opening up the approaches to Antwerp. The logistics issue.*

*To use Antwerp and control the approaches you needed to control everything up to the south bank of the lower Rhine at Nijmegen. I remember Uncle Bill showing me on a map. He drove his bladed hand up the single road to Nijmegen, with the back of his hand against the German border and Siegfried line. He then spread his fingers along the various rivers into the estuaries of Scheldt, Zeeland and South Holland, as if to grab the land between.*



*Those low-lying lands and boggy ground between Arnhem and Nijmegen make a perfect geographical feature to stop behind and prepare a defence of Antwerp. Without control of Noord Brabant, German forces would have been in artillery and strike range of the Allies primary logistics hub.*

*Monty and Eisenhower had had a blazing row, only the week before about his failure to take the Scheldt estuary, which turned into a row about the narrow front vs wide front approach into Germany. It nearly cost Monty his job.*

*No allied forces were going forward that autumn without opening up Antwerp. Air Marshal Tedder and Admiral Ramsay both told Eisenhower to sack Monty after his outburst.*

*Market Garden was the very next offensive to be launched and had to solve the Antwerp problem. Monty's decision to push on to Arnhem may have been one last attempt at his single front argument.*

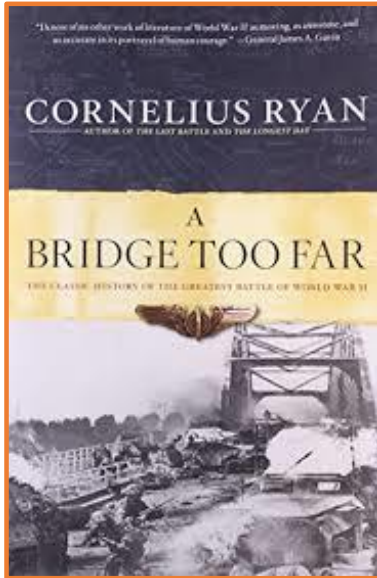
*You only needed Arnhem if you wanted to springboard into Germany, but you needed everything up to Nijmegen if you wanted to do anything at all. That's why Monty got all those resources for Market Garden, it contained a vital mission for everyone.*

*Two majors on staff admitted as much to me. The sacrifice of two light infantry brigades at Arnhem was probably not necessary - but a small price to pay for Noord Brabant, which was vital and accomplished. Without the Arnhem operation all those tanks and mortars and infantry would have gone to Nijmegen, which was I believe the most important bridge - up or down.*



*I would bet, If Arnhem had been captured and held that Eisenhower would have cut off Monty's supplies right then and established himself strongly in Noord Brabant. But it never got that far*

*because Ridgeway's US Airborne forces failed to grab their bridges in time and isolated the 1st Airborne for too long.*



*\*ULTRA was the clearance level to know about the breaking of the enigma codes. I would point out Brian never told me this, it came to light in recent historical accounts. There was a problem with the publication dates of Bridge Too Far. Which was published in 1974 well after Eisenhower had died. I wasn't clear. Cornelius Ryan's first book was 'The Longest Day' published in 1959, with Eisenhower's close support. They had known each other a bit during the war and Ike and Ridgeway (then US Army Chief of Staff) introduced him to the major players for interview.*

*Longest Day almost immediately went into Hollywood on publication, and both books are clearly written with a screenplay in mind. Many of the interviews on which he based Bridge Too Far were done with Ike's patronage in the late 50s early 60s. Ryan was dying of cancer for most of the early 70s when he struggled to finish Bridge Too Far.*

*The book had a very long gestation and a screenplay was knocking around Hollywood when John Wayne was slated to reprise his 1962 role from The Longest*

*Day. Interestingly the book was only published after Browning had died. I do not know of any major attempts at litigation between Browning and Ryan, but I do know many felt there should have been. I was trying to draw a link between historical research and biting the hand that feeds you.*

**Scribblings, and the movie round up, continues in Part 2>>>>>>>>>**