

SCRIBBLINGS



Journal of the Pen & Sword Club

*News, Views, Comment, Opinion and Analysis of interest
to the military media operations community*

March 2018

Editor: Mike Peters

Cover picture: HMS Queen Elizabeth has left Gibraltar after her maiden overseas stop, she will now conduct further helicopter trials. She was escorted by HMS Scimitar and HMS Sabre from Gibraltar Squadron and also the Gibraltar Defence Police and Royal Gibraltar Police.

The aircraft carrier will continue clearance trials with Merlin and Chinook helicopters for the next few weeks in the Eastern Atlantic and is currently accompanied by HMS Somerset. HMS Queen Elizabeth is expected to start fixed-wing flight trials with three or more F-35Bs off the eastern coast of the US around September this year. To prepare for operating from HMS Queen Elizabeth, Royal Navy sailors have also trained alongside their US Navy counterparts on the flight deck of the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp. Last year, the Royal Navy sent six sailors to integrate into Wasp's flight deck operations to prepare them for their upcoming Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers.

" F-35 trials aboard the USS Wasp weren't just an operational test for the United States Marine Corps, with much of the data produced being used to inform the USMC's declaration of initial operating capability but also for the United Kingdom. UK personnel were fully embedded in the USS Wasp trials and will use the data gathered from this event, future trials and operational deployments to support the UK's flying trials aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth in Spring next year.



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BEWARE THE IDES OF MARCH!

WHO KNOWS what the traditional cold and blustery winds of March will bring. In the UK Ministry of Defence they are probably bracing themselves for another tough month on the Press Desk for there is no sign of any respite from the media and its examination of the UK's military woes. In Africa and Syria more conflict looms and two members of the Pen & Sword Club, both respected journalists and authors, are suggesting war on a bloody scale is imminent. Beware the Ides of March, writes Editor Mike Peters.

The short span of February was filled with interest and concerns for the media operations community. The inevitable backlash to the Chief of the General Staff's justified and well-expressed pleas for more cash came and stirred partisans and detractors to go into print and on air.

The saga of Capita (now openly being referred to as CRAPITA) and stories of 300 days to process a new recruit into the Services continued while Twitter resounded to personal experiences proving just how long it now takes to get into uniform. To rub salt into the wounds of the month some media outlets have been speculating on whether or not there is a massive Russian threat while also ignoring the Red Army boastings of new and devastating kit to be delivered in 2018. And what looked like a deliberate leak of a 100-megaton nuclear torpedo.



Coupled with this, Britain looks on in incredulity amid the media's unravelling of the problems of the Bundeswehr and the findings that some Russian analysts are not so happy with Red Army procurement. But are those Russian stories fake news?

Germany, it is said, has so few operational tanks and other equipment that it cannot fulfill its NATO role on the borders with Russia, and its once mighty Leopard tank - sold on to the Middle East - has literally taken a pounding from anti-tank missiles in that theatre. The Luftwaffe is said to have grounded its Tornados because they cannot operate due to excess bio diesel in their fuel and that the state of maintenance of other aircraft is dire while and none of their vaunted U-boats can put to sea.

Twitter also erupted in laughter as stories emerged from Germany that its" pilotless" drones do not have enough pilots. And all this while the European Union launches plans for its own defence force....and the United States, not so, quietly seethes.

The Royal Navy reels – and the Royal Marines groan - as the MoD admits the sale of HMS Ocean for the proverbial song. The alleged gross price of £85 million is probably much less and the actual cash benefit is starting to look a bit silly. The few millions of cash in hand for the MoD does not look so good when it is compared with the few hours the sale price will buy if it were in the hands of the National Health Service.

For professional communicators the MoD line-to-take on this story has also looked weak. For some time, besieged press officers have been foisted with a long-discredited line – *no decisions have yet been taken*. This just confirms the leaks are true!

Hopefully new Secretary of State Gavin Williamson will also get a grip on this side of the house and give the Ministry press team lines-to-take with more meat-on-the-bone and start putting trust back into dealings with bona fide defence journalists.

France too compounds the military angst with President Emmanuel Macron deciding to bring back conscription which has also brought unexpected comment on whether Britain too should

bring back National Service, albeit with a greater element of non-military roles for the country's young men and women.

I do not think that will go down well in UK Government. Mandatory military conscription, it has been suggested, is the French equivalent of Donald Trump's wall - a pet project that becomes a political albatross.

Did we detect a change in the MoD's publicity stance during February? Social media apparently carried more photos – many of them excellent - from media ops cameramen and women of all three services - and there was more copy to support the evidence that, while the MoD plays, the lads and lasses out on the ground, in the air and on the sea are putting what they do to the public.

Scribblings' editorial desk scans the media every day and still hopes for more detail of just how much is being achieved with so little and despite the restrictions on dealing with the media. Particularly pleasing this month is Soldier with a great front cover of an infantryman in Estonia while Navy News and RAF News are also both flying the flag.

There are lessons to be learned, in my opinion re-learned, in letting the Armed Forces tell their stories. Our favourite naval blogger, Sir Humphrey, this month flogs the Navy's leadership for not trusting its media operators and reveals the effect on sailors of "the all-embracing fear that someone might say something which may be possibly misconstrued "as an outdated concept.

Interestingly the United States Marine Corps revealed this last month that it is still recruiting and training combat correspondents even though the US Navy has decided to cut two of its combat camera teams.

In the UK there appears to be good news in this direction. Although, sadly, the much-respected Media Operations Group (Volunteers) has gone there is a move to increase Army Media & Comms Reserve strengths.

The evidence is there, across the board, that telling potential recruits, the public, the tax payers, the parents who let their youngsters join up that there is a necessary, worthwhile task being fulfilled. We need to know what servicemen and women are achieving on behalf of their country. The cry is more news, more photographs and more detail... let's see and hear it.





General Sir Gordon Messenger: military must wake up to information war



By: [Deborah Haynes](#), Defence Editor March 1 2018,

THE NEED TO WIN the information war concerns General Sir Gordon Messenger more than the latest model of tank, fast jet or warship. Hardware still has a role, but the vice-chief of the defence staff wants to see an evolution in the military mind-set about the importance of using data to help defeat and destroy an enemy.

“We have to wake up to the idea that our ability to turn data into information advantage, our ability to respond faster through clever decision-making which is enabled by the flow of information, is actually frankly as important if not even more important than whether our tanks out-range an anti-tank missile,” General Messenger, 55, told *The Times*.

“I am not saying you don’t need physical capability, you absolutely need physical capability but unless you are able to operate within an environment where you can achieve information advantage . . . then you are not going to be able to maximise the benefit of that and the winner of the next big fight is going to be the one that can manipulate and achieve advantage in the information domain.”

“Information advantage” includes working out ways to fuse video footage from drones; social media feeds; databases; audio tracks; and all the other forms of secret and open source information together to get a better understanding of what is happening and inform decision-making faster.

Similarly, being able to protect networks from hacking, electronic warfare and other forms of hostile interference is key, along with developing methods to disrupt and jam an enemy’s flow of data and their ability to use GPS signals, for example, to aim weapons.

“If you can target a system or a sensor that the enemy has through a variety of means — electronic warfare, offensive cyber, lasers, which is another area we are seeking to develop national edge in — then you are able to write the rules of the battlefield,” General Messenger said. “If you don’t and you don’t know what is going on and you can’t trust your sensors and you’re not able to talk to everyone that you need to or you fear that you’re being second guessed by your adversary then you are going to lose.”

Times Defence Editor, Deborah Haynes is the guest speaker at the Pen & Sword Club March 13 lunch at the Cavalry & Guards Club.



Asked what capability gaps in Britain’s arsenal concern him the most, the vice-chief said: “The area where I think we should focus on most is on that information space.” This stretches to how soldiers operate on the ground, with the need for the concept behind a new specialist information army unit, called 77 Brigade, to be spread out across the military.

“I think what we have to do is elevate some of the principles of that into the broader DNA of defence,” General Messenger said. This could even include training troops to use Twitter.

The emergence of information as a weapon is akin to the evolution 100 years ago when tanks started make horses redundant. In the same way, General Messenger said that some cherished military equipment that is fielded today will become less relevant. He declined to say what, but said that this discussion — which has already thrown into question the future of HMS *Albion* and HMS *Bulwark*, the navy’s two amphibious assault ships — will form part of a defence review that has started.

The UK is playing catch up in the information space as countries such as Russia and China develop their own electronic warfare and cyberweapons. General Messenger is quick to say, however, that Britain should not “lionise” the Russian armed forces and talk down its own strength. “Russia has invested in certain capabilities, it has gone quite narrow and deep in the sorts of capabilities that it has invested in, but there are still plenty of places where we can overmatch them,” he said.

“When you include the multiplying effect of doing so in a NATO force with 29 nations each bringing their own niche areas of strategic advantage I think that is quite a compelling story.” At the same time, he said that Britain’s credibility among its NATO allies as a military power could be put at risk if defence is not adequately funded.

General Messenger is a front-runner alongside General Sir Nick Carter, the head of the army, to become the next chief of the defence staff, replacing Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, who steps down in June to become the next chairman of the NATO military committee. He said that he did not think a decision had yet been made on the appointment.

Asked why he would be the best choice General Messenger said with a smile: “Why do you think I would be the best choice? “He then added: “I am one of the contenders but there are plenty of other people who would be perfectly fine at doing it.”

Are We About to Witness the Bloodiest War Ever?

*By: Christopher Lee, Defence Analyst, former BBC journalist. and Royal Naval Reserve Media Specialist
Feb 20 2018*



THE CONGO WAR (1998-2003) left more civilians dead than Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Syria. The death count was in the millions. The bodies were shovelled aside and the war continued along to another atrocity. It is on its way back. It began when the Congo was ruled by Mobutu Sese Seko who was, tacitly or directly, supported in power by countries like the UK because he promised to halt Soviet advances into the continent.

He ruled cruelly and ruthlessly from 1965 to 1997 as he stripped his nation of every asset and most of the financial revenues.

Next door, in 1994, Rwanda became a state of unspeakable genocide as the people were literally, raped, dismembered and the supposedly fortunate ones slaughtered. Millions were left in the ditch of African uncompromising killing. The killers, threatened with retribution drove into Congo. The Rwandans followed them and replaced Mobutu as leader with one of their own, Laurent Kabila.



Kabila, an opportunist, and insecure in his leadership – a dangerous villainy – abandoned the Rwandan king makers and so the war, with Angola and Zimbabwe protecting Kabila, stormed on in an unrestricted madness of terror, slaughter and retribution largely fuelled by the unimaginable riches of the Congo. It was a war for revenge, gold and diamonds. The war continued and denied perhaps half of 26 provinces of any security and any hope of peace.

And now? The discontent and insecurities are showing and historically when they do, the strong men seek an opportunity to escape invasion or to take part in invasion going the other way. The riches are still there. The plunder is still a daily service of pluralist unlawfulness.

Kabila was shot in 2001 and his son Joseph Kabila took his place. His presidency ran out last year. He refused to go and he is ignoring that constitutional nicety and looks like refusing to hold elections as scheduled this year.

Africa is an adventure playground of the mocking of democracy as a western weakness. This is all the stuff of a new warfare without much hope of the UN preventing it. If we are on the road to war, then there has to be a go-between, someone who can be seen as neutral and with whom it is in African terms smart to seek peace.

That man is the new leader of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa. He is a man of enormous trust. But President Kabila has a different definition of trust than most.

The United Nations Security Council and the African Union has to find strength for Mr Ramaphosa. Mr Kabila is not looking for a Nobel Peace Prize. He will cling to his own prize, Office. The other option is a reversal to warfare without rules other than winning.

Big Power war in Syria on the brink

By: Michael Evans, Author of *First with the News* February 20 2018

AS EVERY DAY GOES BY in Syria the danger of a big-power war gets closer and closer. It could be the US against Russia, or Turkey against Syria or Iran against the US or even, heaven forfend, Turkey versus the US. The risks are getting greater by the day, by the hour.

The new confrontation is at Afrin, which the Turkish army is determined to cleanse of Kurdish "terrorists" for which read militia who are now bizarrely being backed by pro-Syrian regime forces who want to keep out the Turks. President Erdogan is acting like an Ottoman emperor, ruthlessly attacking anyone who he believes is linked to the PKK, the Kurdish separatists who have been at war with Turkey for 40 years.

To Erdogan all Kurds are PKK and therefore Turkey's enemy. His army began attacking Afrin in January in Operation Olive Tree but now faces Assad's troops as well as Kurdish forces. Well, this is Syrian territory and the Turks have "invaded", so you could argue that the Turks are out of order. But in Syria there is no order, so Erdogan launched his offensive in order to protect his borders from "PKK" militia.

Erdogan is now warning the Syrian regime to back off, just like he warned the US two weeks ago to back off from the town of Manbij which he wants to return to its "rightful owner" (you got it - Turkey). A bust-up between the two NATO partners now seems unlikely after an intervention by Jim Mattis in Brussels when he talked to his Turkish counterpart, but you never know with Erdogan.

However, the incident on February 7 when 100 pro-regime Syrian forces including dozens of Russian "freelance contractors/mercenaries" were killed by US airstrikes and artillery has reminded everyone, Erdogan too one assumes, that when the Americans fire in anger they don't mess around. Moscow has definitely got the message. Putin and co are so desperate to absolve themselves of any knowledge of or responsibility for the deaths of Russian citizens that it's obvious the blast from the sky and from the ground will make the Ruskies think twice before contemplating a similar venture where the Americans are involved.

But with Russian fighter jets and Spetnaz special forces around, there is always the danger of a huge miscalculation. Then suddenly it's official Russian forces against the Americans. Then what?

As for Iran and its trained and armed Hezbollah acolytes, there is always the risk of a bloody confrontation, even though the US is insistent that its sole purpose in Syria is to rid the place of Isis. Nothing else matters, except when it does of course, like on February 7 when, for no logical reason, the pro-regime, Russian infested, 300-500-troop battle group turned up near a stronghold occupied by the US-trained Syrian Democratic Forces with their American advisers in tow and opened fire with everything they had.

Putin, Assad, Erdogan, and everyone else with ambitions in Syria's future took due note. Not a bad thing in this crazy world.



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Blackburn Buccaneers Buzz Beirut & Belize

(and Big Buccs at Vegas Red Flag, by Mike Peters)

CAPTURING MEMORIES of 35 years ago, in February 1983, when the British Army went into Lebanon on Operation Hyperion and investigating an idea for a story on non-kinetic warfare your Editor had an editorial moment.... does a loud low-level fly-by have any military or media value?

A strange question you might think but standing on the roof top of a high-rise in down town Beirut as a Blackburn Buccaneer skimmed the roof tops in a very noisy show of force I think I can safely say that, at the time, I thought it a bl**dy good idea. More on British Forces Lebanon (BRITFORLEB) later in this issue.

This month, Scribblings looks back in the air photo files and the nostalgia for this nuclear capable, legendary aircraft that started its career with the Royal Navy and finished with the Royal Air Force.

Three instances of the Buccaneer's zero feet capability spring readily to mind. I was there, as they say when the RAF boosted our morale in the war-torn streets of Beirut. And I recall that the Navy did the same in Belize in 1972 when HMS Ark Royal launched a long-range mission out of the Atlantic to buzz Belize City and make it plain to the Guatemalans that Britain meant business in protecting that country.

The third instance of the awe-inspiring performance of the Buccaneer is Red Flag, the United States annual air combat training exercise held each year at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada, just outside La Vegas, when to use a well-known American military phrase the mighty Bucc "knocked their socks off."

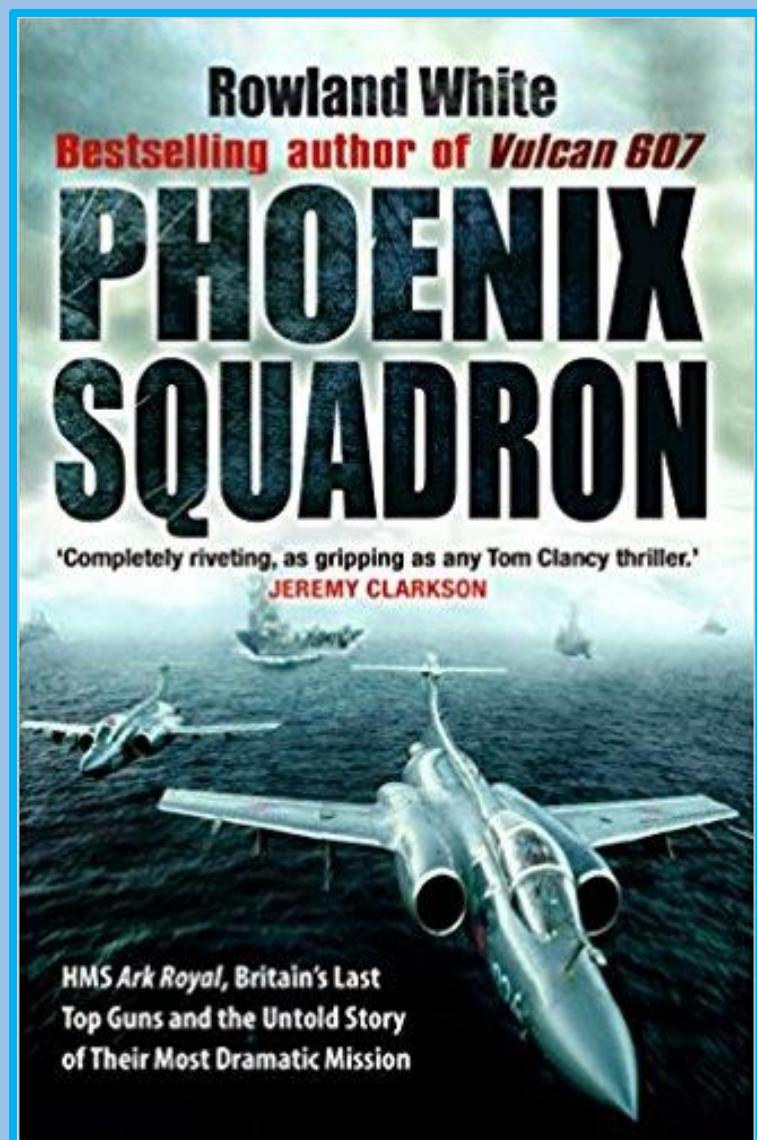
It was in January 1972 that the Royal Navy's 809 Squadron was despatched on an urgent and technically demanding mission to deter Guatemalan aggression against British Honduras (now Belize). The story is related by Rowland White in his book *Phoenix Squadron: HMS Ark Royal*. He wrote that *when intelligence reached Whitehall that British Honduras was threatened with imminent invasion Britain's response was immediate and unequivocal.*

Ark Royal offered the only effective means of preventing the little Central American country being overrun by Guatemalan forces. The ageing carrier endured a high-speed, 1,500-mile dash across the Atlantic towards the Gulf of Mexico and a position from where it could execute an audacious, record-breaking plan. Two stripped down Buccaneers flew out to "buzz" Belize City letting the Guatemalans know the Royal Navy was on its way.

Red Flag 1977 in Nevada was the first time that the RAF had been invited to participate in the large US multi-threat environment exercise in which large packets of mixed aircraft are pitted against realistic simulated EW, AAA and SAM defences.

Britain sent a Vulcan and Buccaneer detachment well practiced in the tactics of hard aggressive low-level flying. One famous incident has passed into flying legend. There is a news clip showing "a Buccaneer coming around a rock in the Nevada desert" when the commentator "completely lost it." It started as "Here comes one of the British Buccaneers" and ended up as "LOOK AT THAT MOTHER GO".

The BBC news magazine programme "Nationwide", which featured Red Flag, and the Buccaneer driver having what is loosely described as a "flying like a god" day.



Another report's footage showed a Buccaneer pilot using "absolutely very inch of airspace available. The wingtip vortices were milk white and there was a sandstorm in his wake. The optical tracking USAF guys, were simulating a SAM site, and they had to keep the crosshairs on the Bucc for five seconds to score a kill.

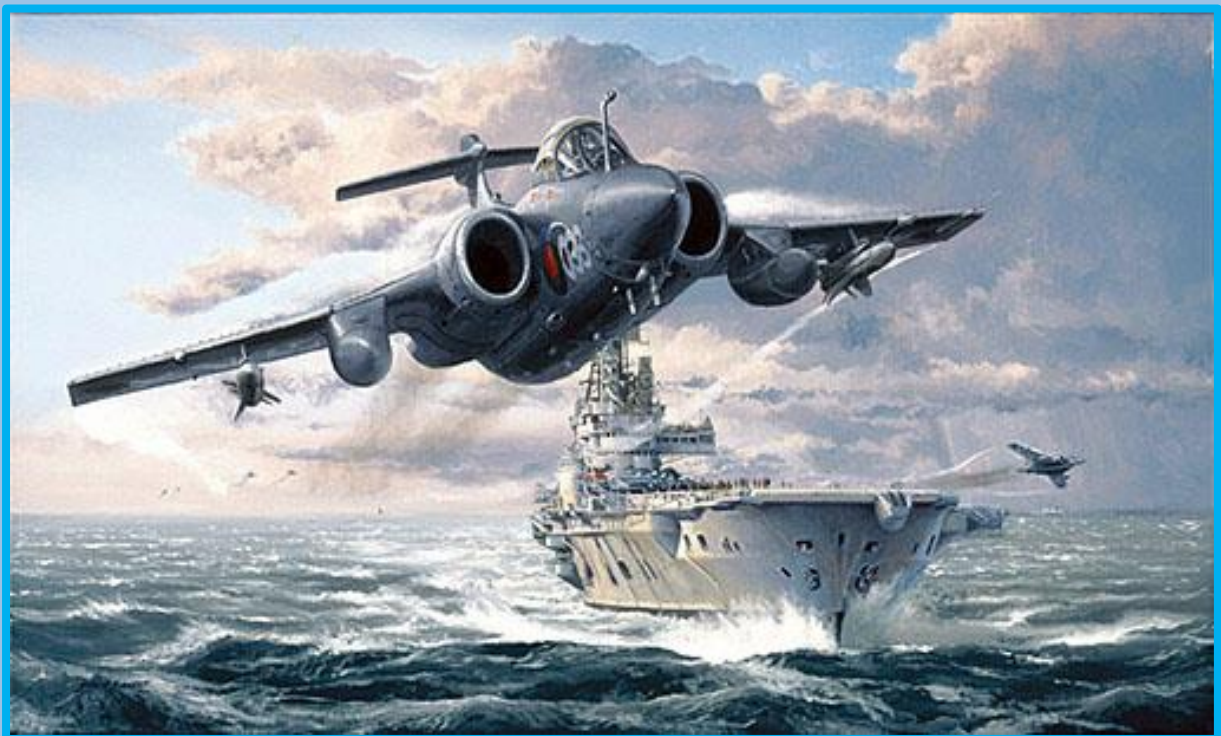
"I remember the excitement in the control room, with various comments like "God Damn" and "That guy can fly" but the one that sticks in my mind, is the operator in charge of making the kill, towards the end, just screaming at the top of his voice "GO BABY GO BABY GO BABY GO"

In RAF circles, the two Buccaneer low flying operations over Beirut were known as "once in a lifetime chance to fly between buildings in a capital city and over an international airport at not much above taxiing height! The RAF Cyprus detachment 'T' shirt had the motto "Real men fly through Beirut not over it".

ukdj.

Fortuitously for Scribblings, Oliver Steward of UK Defence Journal used the month of February to raise another Buccaneer relevant question and asked.....

Could keeping HMS Ark Royal have prevented the Falklands War?



RETAINING HMS ARK ROYAL, would have been beneficial in the Falklands War and perhaps even prevented it. Having another capital ship, which was an Audacious class aircraft carrier equipped with McDonnell Douglas Phantom FG.1 alongside Blackburn Buccaneers, would have been a huge asset, and potentially could have made a difference in the Falklands War and perhaps even have prevented it.

I think the simple answer to the headline is yes, as there would have been greater air cover and range to protect the ships in the fleet, with Argentina well aware of this fact they may not have invaded. This is very much a what if question, that has possibly been posed by other

scholars. The Royal Navy was in a middle of another round of defence cuts which would have meant some of the capital ships including HMS Invincible would have been sold.

Interesting when you look into the political and strategic aspects that as early as 1966, the UK Defence White Paper had planned to scrap the British Aircraft carriers in the early 1970s, leaving Britain without an aircraft carrier capability. However, a new government re-examined the case and found that only shore-based aircraft was not sufficient to provide the defence needs of our global interests which were 'East of the Suez'.

Sadly, the political issue of saving money in spite of our defence needs was one which led to the ultimate decision to scrap Ark Royal, without a replacement fixed-wing aircraft carrier to fulfil her role and functions. It is worth noting that HMS Ark Royal, did have a sister ship in HMS Eagle.

The ship entered HMNB Devonport, and was subsequently decommissioned on the 14th February 1979. Finally, the scrapping of HMS Ark Royal took place in 1980, and this marked an end to the Royal Navy's ability to project conventional fixed-wing air-power. However, another interesting fact was that breaking up of Ark Royal took until 1983. A question remains, could she have been brought back to service on time?

During its last tour of duty, the aircraft complement of the Ark Royal was as follows: 14 Buccaneer S2s, 12 Phantom FG1s, 4 Gannet AEW3 (pictured below), 1 Gannet COD4, 7 Sea King, and 2 Wessex helicopters. This is quite something and definitely would have been an effective deterrent.



During its history, while HMS Ark Royal underwent many refits and innovations, it did suffer from technical issues due to the age of the vessel as it was built in 1944. However, sadly the aircraft carriers which replaced her were not able to be equipped with traditional aircraft. It is one of those what-if scenarios that can be debated, would it have stopped the war?

There were also plans to sell the Australians the HMS Invincible, but after the Falklands war, and the government seeing the utility of this ship it was decided to cancel to sale. This is the case of accountancy over strategic necessity. This ship was invaluable during the Falklands conflict and should not be forgotten in its role as a key capital ship.

This is seen in the case of the Centaur class aircraft carrier HMS Hermes which did see successful action in the Falklands, and it could arguably be the case, that its very survival along with the HMS Invincible was the reason the War in the Falklands was victorious for the British. HMS Hermes, was converted to a helicopter carrier, and then to a vertical take-off and

landing aircraft carrier – suitable for the Harrier jump jets which were invaluable to military efforts during the Falklands War.

My argument here is that with the ability to launch fixed-wing aircraft which HMS Ark Royal would have been able to, would have shifted the balance of power more favourably to the British Royal Navy, and provided even greater aircover while possibly deterring the war in the first place.

While it needs to be said that the HMS Invincible along with the HMS Hermes, did a very effective job at providing air relief and cover to the task force, a third more capable aircraft carrier would have tilted the odds even more in our favour. It was a mistake for the Ministry of Defence, despite the technical and mechanical difficulties which beset HMS Ark Royal, to have scrapped her unnecessarily

A Forgotten Intervention: BRITFORLEB

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, in February 1983 a small force of British soldiers arrived in Beirut, with a handful of Ferret scout cars, to join a United States led Multi-National Force(MNF) in the war-torn city that was once regarded as a “jewel of the Mediterranean.”

The 80 members of C Squadron Queen’s Dragoon Guards and a handful of “loggies” were there to fly the flag for Britain and support the peacekeeping initiative as eyes-and-ears on the ground. The city was in ruins after the battles of the previous year, and looked like Stalingrad in 1943.

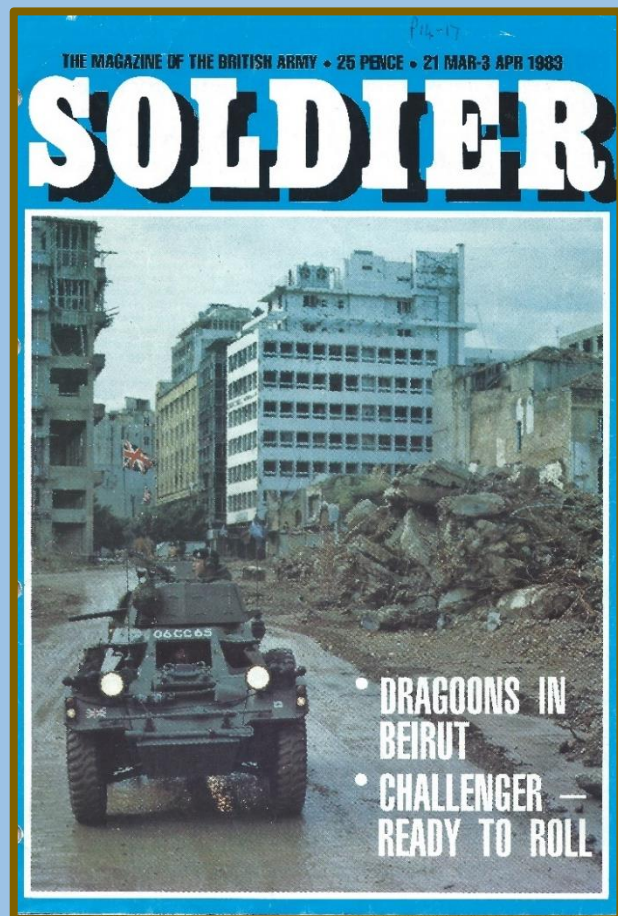
Backing them up was a flight of Buccaneer strike aircraft at RAF Akrotiri in nearby Cyprus which was to repeat the technique of low, loud and lively flight demonstrations over the city.

Deploying with the 100 plus strong British Forces Lebanon (BRITFORLEB) was a two-man news team which based itself on the Force’s headquarters in a disused high-rise in the suburb of Hadath. Their job was to tell the story of British experience of hearts-and-minds operations to our allies in the MNF, to highlight the value of the Force to the international media and give the Dragoons in Beirut the publicity they deserved.

The Beirut based press corps was much in their minds. This hard-nosed bunch of journalists were experts in news gathering amid the politics and battles of the Middle East where Beirut had been described by a BBC reporter as a “crocodile infested swamp” for his profession.

The press team’s additional mission was to help repair the Ministry of Defence’s fractured military/media relationship following the Falklands War of 1982. Britain’s media was still smarting from a perceived reluctance on the part of the Armed Forces and the Government to engage in the South Atlantic and Whitehall.

Much misinformation, indeed disinformation, was circulating about the ability, indeed willingness, of British forces to open up about their latest mission. Did the news team succeed? Subsequent Letters of thanks, a large cuttings portfolio and five pages of coverage in Soldier said ...yes!



OPERATION HYPERION AND BRITISH PEACEKEEPERS IN LEBANON, 1982-1984.

By: DR GERAINT HUGHES, Defence-In-Depth Research from the Defence Studies Department, King's College London

THE ROUND TABLE, the Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs, published a special edition on 'The Commonwealth and Peacekeeping', produced to mark over 60 years of peacekeeping operations since the establishment of UNEF after the 1956 Suez Crisis. This edition contained articles on Gender and Peacekeeping, on Oceania's role in UN and other operations, as well as chapters focusing on Bangladesh, Ghana, Malawi, Rwanda and the United Kingdom's approach to this type of military operation.

While researching the latter, I included a brief description of the British Army's involvement in the US-led Multinational Force in Lebanon (MNF) from August 1982 to January 1984. This small-scale engagement of British troops has been overshadowed by the far more dramatic experiences of the US and French contingents, culminating in the Hezbollah suicide attacks on the US Marine and French barracks in Beirut on 23rd October 1983.



One commonly quoted statistic is that the British armed forces have been involved in combat operations since 1945, with 1968 as the sole year in which UK military personnel were not in harm's way. The British public are generally aware of conflicts such as the Falklands (1982), Gulf 1990-1991, Northern Ireland (1969-1998), Iraq (2003-2011) and

Afghanistan (2001-2014), but there are other military interventions which involved British troops which have disappeared from popular memory.

Hyperion is one of these forgotten missions, partly because the British contingent to the MNF (BRITFORLEB) was far smaller than the US, French or Italian contributions. The UK had at most 115 personnel committed to this ill-fated operation in Lebanon, compared to the 1,800 US, 1,657 French and 1,291 Italian troops on the ground. Aside from a 1986 article by John Mackinlay, a brief discussion in John Pimlott's coffee-table book on post-war British military operations, and a couple of snide comments in Robert Fisk's account of the Lebanese civil war, there is very little discussion on BRITFORLEB and its deployment.

In April 1975 Lebanon became embroiled in a protracted, complex and often brutal civil war involving militias from its main confessional and ethnic communities, Palestinian armed groups in exile, and the armed forces of both Syria (in 1976) and Israel (in 1978 and 1982). Lebanon also became a battleground for a proxy war waged by other regional actors, notably Iran (which established Hezbollah), Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Libya, and the focus of a UN peacekeeping mission in the South from 1978.

Western intervention was preceded by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, with the Likud government's aim being to destroy the Palestine Liberation Organisation's base in the South of the country, and to impose a Christian Maronite regime in Beirut that would make peace with Israel. This policy collapsed on 14th September 1982 when the pro-Israeli President, Bashir Gemayel, was assassinated in a car-bombing in the Lebanese capital. Gemayel's militia, the Falange, assaulted the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila

the same evening, massacring up to 1,700 civilians while the Israeli Defence Force cordoned these camps off.

The massacres shocked and embarrassed Ronald Reagan's administration, not only because of Israel's indirect culpability, but because a US-led intervention (MNF-1) had overseen the evacuation of PLO fighters from Beirut. After a furious interagency dispute pitting the Secretary of State George Shultz and the Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, Reagan



decided to commit US troops to bolster the Lebanese government – now led by the dead President's brother, Amin Gemayel – and sought the backing of European allies for this second intervention (MNF-2). Italy and France (the latter being the colonial authority from 1920 to 1943) readily offered their support. The question was whether Britain, the USA's main ally, would do the same.

American requests for support in Lebanon posed a dilemma for the British Prime Minister, Margaret

Thatcher. She was firmly committed to the maintenance of the 'special relationship' with the USA, and had forged a close political partnership with Reagan. However, Thatcher shared the MoD's reluctance to become embroiled in the Lebanese conflict. The British armed forces were overstretched by their commitments with NATO and Northern Ireland, as well as with the task of garrisoning the sovereign base areas of Cyprus and (following the war with Argentina) the Falkland Islands.

She was also concerned about the safety of any British soldiers deployed to Beirut in the middle of a multi-faceted civil war, and was able to fend off US requests for assistance for at least three months.

Thatcher came under pressure from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and from the Foreign Secretary Francis Pym, to send troops to augment the MNF. Pym stressed that Britain owed its superpower ally for backing it against Argentina during the Falklands War, and argued that any backing for the Gemayel government would be warmly welcomed by 'moderate' pro-Western Arab rulers. While the latter argument made little impression on the Prime Minister, the importance of the 'special relationship' made it difficult to keep rejecting the Reagan administration's requests for aid.

On 15th December 1982 she agreed to send a Squadron of 80 soldiers from the 1st Queen's Dragoon Guards – assigned to the UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus – to Beirut. BRITFORLEB was sent to the Lebanon in early February 1983, being the first British soldiers to serve in that country since the April-May 1941 war against Vichy France. This small force was based in the East Beirut district of Regie Hadath, and in November they were relieved by a 115-strong unit from the 16th/5th Royal Lancers.

Like their MNF comrades, the British contingent faced a volatile situation on the ground. Its troops were frequently shot at, and a flight of Buccaneer strike jets was placed on stand-by at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus, ready to provide air support if needed.

The prospect of BRITFORLEB coming under a sustained attack from one of the warring factions was unsurprisingly a constant concern, amplified by the Hezbollah truck bombings against the US Marine and French airborne barracks in October 1983. Two days after the attacks General Sir Frank Kitson, the UK Land Forces Commander, flew into Beirut to review the security situation of the British MNF contingent. He had planned to fly to the US base in

the city to express personal condolences to Colonel Timothy J. Geraghty (the commanding officer of the US Marine contingent), but his helicopter was diverted mid-flight after reports that a second suspected truck bomber was inbound sent the Marines on alert.

The decision by the US, French and Italian governments to evacuate MNF in February 1984 clearly came as a great relief to Thatcher and her ministers, as it meant that BRITFORLEB could be extracted from Beirut along with their allies (on 8th February) without suffering any fatalities.

One factor that probably saved British lives was the fact that the UK government – like Italy's, but unlike the USA or France – was determined that it would remain impartial. The security of the US and French MNF contingents was compromised by the fact that both the Reagan administration and Francois Mitterrand's government became embroiled in the civil war by effectively aligning with Gemayel; the fateful step being the shelling of Druze positions in the Shouf mountains by the US Navy on 5th September 1983.



BRITFORLEB Ferret Scout Cars on patrol in East Beirut. The British contingent was a neutral actor in the Lebanese civil war, as the Thatcher government sought to avoid intervention.

Both the USA and France were also the targets of proxy warfare by Iran – the former because it was the Islamic Revolution's 'Great Satan', the latter because it was aligned with Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war – hence the Hezbollah suicide attacks in October 1983. In contrast, British officials recognised the fact that Gemayel's government existed in name only, and that as far as Shiite, Sunni and Druze factions were concerned both it and the Lebanese Armed Forces were just another faction in the civil war.

BRITFORLEB remained above the fray, and its headquarters in Regie Hadath became a useful location for brokering local ceasefires. The lack of an overall command structure for the MNF meant

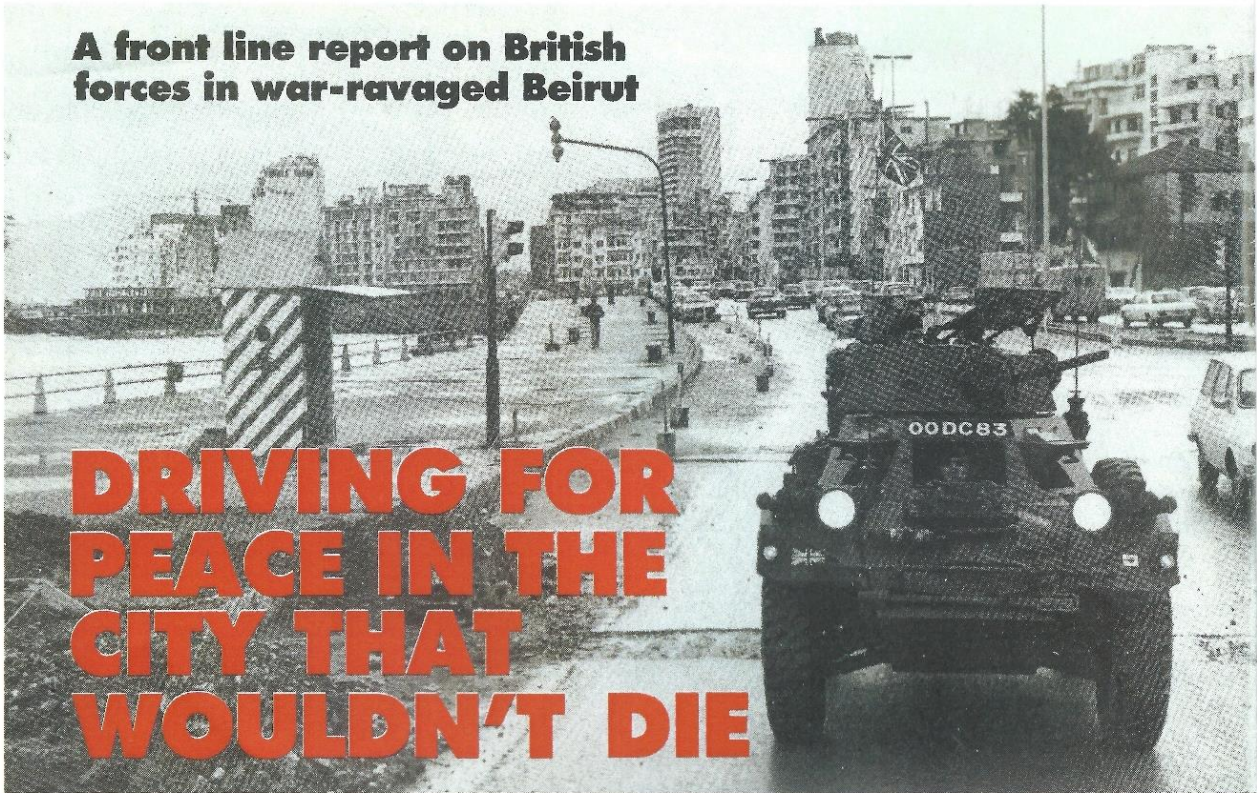
that the Thatcher government alone shaped the British contingent's role and rules of engagement, the latter being very much limited to self-defence. British soldiers serving on Operation Hyperion faced a complex civil war with multiple potential hostile actors, and often came under fire. The Hezbollah suicide attacks on the US and French contingents in October 1983 illustrated the extent of the threats they faced.

Operation Hyperion was a limited liability mission. The commitment of BRITFORLEB was made reluctantly, and the decision to send British troops to East Beirut was made solely to cement Anglo-American relations (and, to a certain degree, to preserve the goodwill of allied Arab regimes) rather than on any presumption that the MNF could impose peace upon Lebanon. The Thatcher government's calculations were realistic, if pusillanimous, and even if the troop commitment was small the soldiers involved faced considerable risks to themselves.

Yet in retrospect, it is also significant that with the MNF the UK sent only a token military contribution to an American-led mission, in contrast with recent operations in Afghanistan (2001-2014) and Iraq (2003-2011) where Britain has presumed to act as the USA's lead ally on the ground, without ensuring that operations in Helmand and Basra can be sustained.

With BRITFORLEB, the government at the time was wary of overstretching the armed forces as a whole, and of undermining more strategically vital commitments, and did the bare minimum to keep the UK's superpower ally happy. Sound criteria, perhaps, for their successors in considering any future discretionary military operations overseas.

**A front line report on British
forces in war-ravaged Beirut**



**DRIVING FOR
PEACE IN THE
CITY THAT
WOULDN'T DIE**

Above: A QDG Ferret patrols the Corniche
on the seafont — once the 'Millionaire's
Playground' of the Middle East.

Below: Other parts of Beirut have
not escaped so lightly.



'WELCOME INGLEEZEE, Welcome!' Shouts, cheers and a few tears of joy and relief greeted the arrival of BRITFORLEB (the British Force in the Lebanon) as the Ferret scout cars of C Squadron 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards made their first patrol of the war torn city of Beirut as part of the multi-national peace keeping force.

Less than 100 strong, compared with the thousands of American Marines, French paras and Italian mechanised infantry that now help the Lebanese Government in its efforts to bring peace to the once-beautiful city, BRITFORLEB is, nevertheless, a welcome sight to a people who have seen full scale battles and massacre devastate their country.

The Union Flag and the guidon of the QDGs have been greeted enthusiastically wherever the 18 scout cars of the force have shown their presence in the first weeks of active recce patrolling.

While the people of Beirut see the force as an indication of Britain's commitment to restoring peace and government authority to the Lebanon, their fellow peace-keepers in the multi-national force recognise that they now have "eyes and ears" and a mobile presence on the ground.

Based in a deserted block of flats in Hadath, the south east suburbs of Beirut, the British contingent with its sappers, signallers and support troops is still busy making its battered base into a home from home.

Without doors or windows and with a limited water supply and power the building has been transformed in a few days of hard work. This part of the city is relatively unscathed but only half a mile away the destruction caused by last year's armoured battles as the Israelis advanced into the city is marked by shell-scarred high rise blocks. In the centre of Beirut, along the line that divides Muslim west and Christian east, the ravages of the 1976 civil war are more in evidence.

"Staggering . . . its unbelievable," said Corporal Shaun Ridding after he had driven Force Commander, Lieutenant Colonel John Cochrane of The Royal Irish Rangers, on a tour of the city. "We just didn't expect it to be like this. Northern Ireland just can't compare with it. Whole areas of the town are in ruins."

Like all the contingent Shaun expressed admiration for the stoicism of the people of Beirut. Amid the ruins life goes on surrounded by tanks and guns.

For days at a time the continuing war in the Shouf — the mountains around the city — rattles into life as heavy calibre

continued on page 16

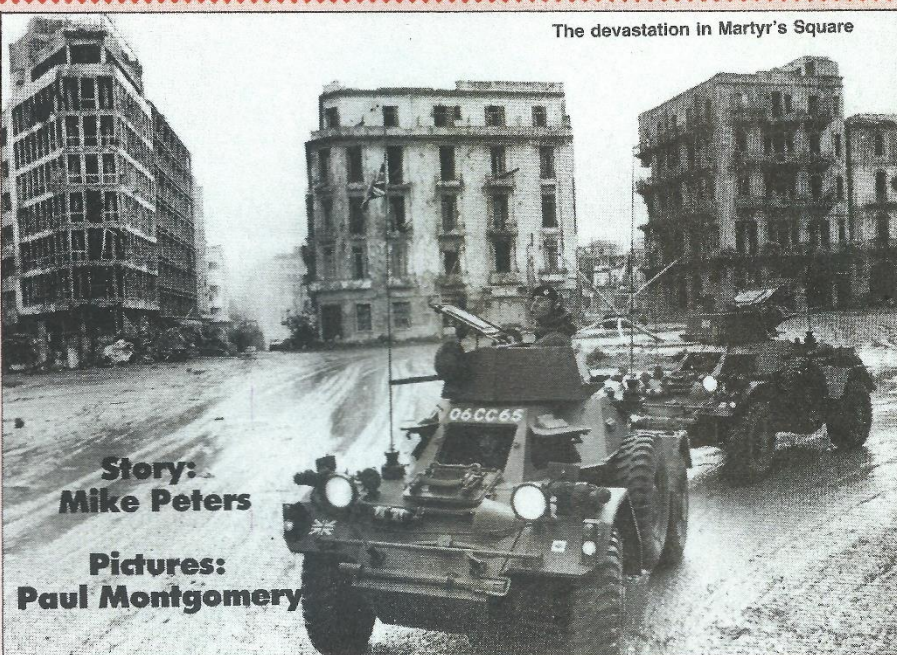
Beer costs two pounds a can . . . even a letter home costs a pound for the British contingent in the Lebanon. But relax says paymaster SQMS Pete Bridgen (left), there are six Lebanese pounds to one Sterling.

"It causes no real problems now," said Pete, "but there were some raised eyebrows at the start.

"Everyone gets a weekly payment of 100 Lebanese pounds which works out at £16.66 and I'm dealing in a monthly budget for the force of 150,000 Lebanese pounds (£25,000). You put it in perspective at two Lebs to a Mars bar."



MORE POUNDS PER POUND



The devastation in Martyr's Square

Story:
Mike Peters

Pictures:
Paul Montgomery

SAPPERS COUNT THE STEPS TO SUCCESS

"I counted them all up and I counted them all down," that's the memory of the 41 steps to the top of the British base at Hadath that will stick in the memory of Staff Sergeant Nick Brown from 62 Cyprus Support Squadron, Royal Engineers.

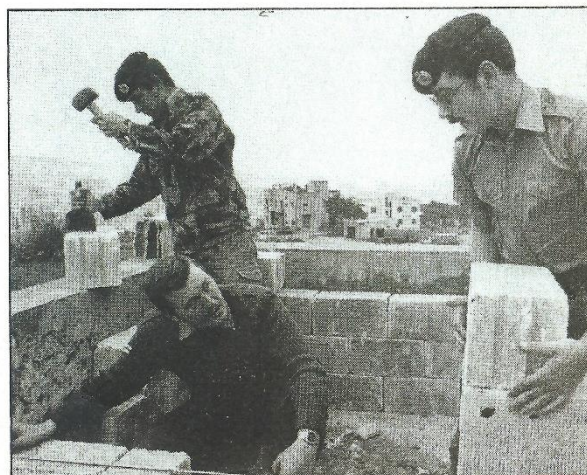
Nick and his 11 sappers have good cause to remember the four flights of stairs because they carried 1500 building blocks each weighing 30 lbs into the building to block off windows and build sangars before the main body arrived.

Sand and cement came in shoulder-humped bags as they set about making the shell of a building alongside the state tobacco factory habitable.

"We've had to modify the plumbing to suit our needs, fix the electrical power, make doors and windows and construct defensive positions," ex-

plained Nick whose small band returned to Cyprus after a two week stay in Beirut. Nothing was too much trouble for the

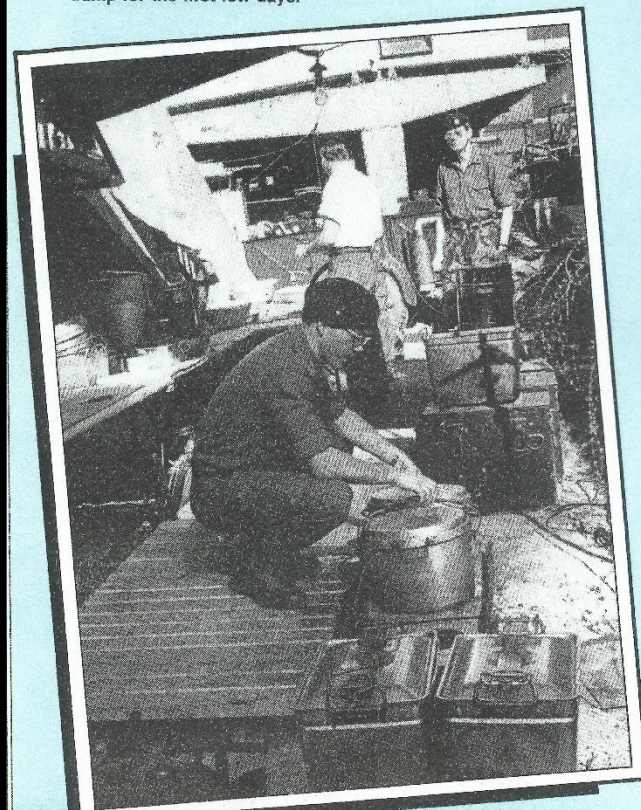
sappers — when the cooks said they didn't have enough space they rattled up a 150 square foot extension in a day.





▼ Cooking up lunch in the temporary cookhouse at Hadath is L/Cpl Francis Bath, AAC. The force has a kitchen now but cooks had to improvise in a shattered car dump for the first few days.

Hand of friendship — Sgt Brian Pritchard meets a French para on duty with multi-national force.



machine guns spray the hills and artillery shells and rockets whistle overhead.

Standing on the top of their Hadath Base, Staff Sergeant Bob Waller of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps supply depot in Cyprus said: "It was like a fire-works display one night. A jeep with a .50 calibre machine gun came out of the buildings about half a mile away and fired a belt and then drove away. Straight away another man jumped out and let fly with an RPG-7 into a building. Later a few stray rounds hit the building so we left the sentry to his sanger."

▲ The British contingent is scheduled for a three month stay in Beirut before it returns to its United Nations duties in Cyprus, explained Colonel Cochrane who twice a week sits in on a meeting of Lebanese ministers to discuss MNF matters.

"The Lebanese are extremely grateful that Britain has provided a contingent to the MNF. There

is no criticism of the size of the British force because they are conscious it is a demonstration of the United Kingdom's commitment to help the Lebanese Government to bring peace to the area."

Alongside the British position the Israeli Army has set up a company position to cover the Old Sidon Road used as a main supply route to their forces. APCs and a Centurion train their guns on the road but there are no problems between the two forces.

Said Col. Cochrane: "The Israelis retain use of the road and they have had problems with attacks on their vehicles. As a result they have deployed off the road near us to secure the area. Our relationship is restricted to ensuring there is no accidental clash and the safety of our troops. I have met them several times and their attitudes have been correct at all times."

The British contingent have



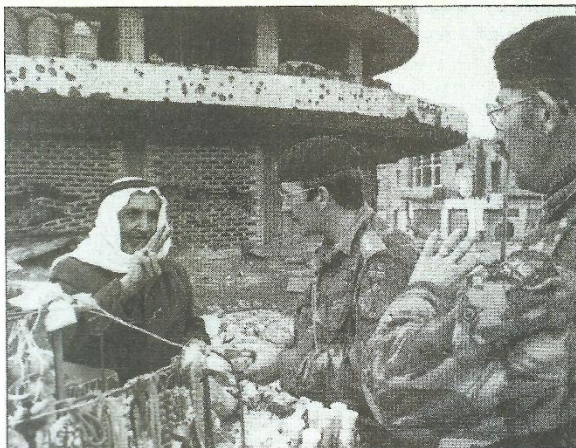
MAKING SURE OF A GOOD DEAL

Nowhere has the British welcome to Beirut been more amply demonstrated than through the experiences of the three Royal Army Ordnance Corps members of BRITFORLEB, admitted Captain Mike Southworth (centre).

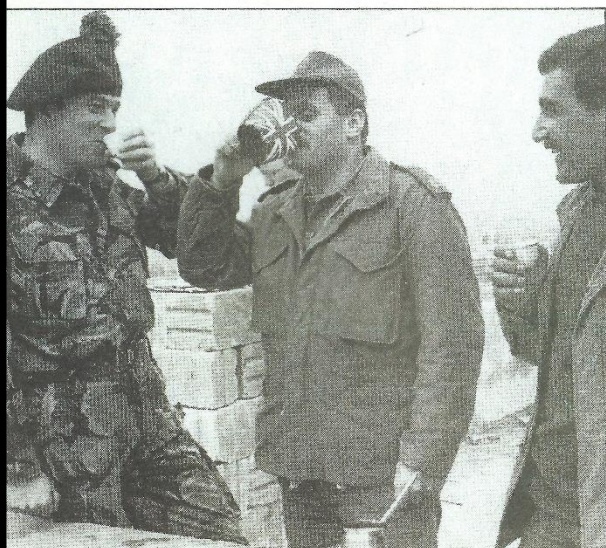
"We had an order for 1000 running metres of wood for defence stores. We asked a price; the wood needed to be resawn to our requirements and then the businessman concerned gave it to us free of charge as a gift to the British."

The supply operation has gone really well, he said. After signing demands in UK he flew to Cyprus to find that high speed at Bicester and Donnington had produced the goods on the island almost as he arrived.

Local purchase has kept the RAOC lads busy. "We're on 110 volts and need to buy adaptors and plugs to step up the power. Curiously enough the Americans are having to buy adaptors to step down," said Captain Southworth whose forays into the markets have produced huge quantities of the local pitta bread — a popular item on the menu.



Time for a cuppa. Left: Pfc Joe Fioretti, US Marines, tries some British tea watched by Tpr Graham Owen. Below: Lt Col John Cochrane, Commander BRITFORLEB, enjoys a coffee with Lebanese officers.



REME READY

"We'll repair anything as and when it breaks down," confirmed Staff Sergeant Nigel Anstey who leads the Light Aid Detachment at Hadath.

"I've got five different trades among my eight men and while we really only look to do first line repairs we can improvise. A petrol pump sheared and we spent seven hours making the bit to go inside, for example. The drivers here are good at fault reporting and that's helping us. To date we've no problems but with the state of the roads I think there will be plenty of work on suspensions in the future."

'Crisis Tourism Office' — a bit of grim humour in a city with little to laugh about.

other close neighbours in the United States Marine Corps amphibious unit that guards the international airport. But the meetings have become more than exchanges between members of the MNF. Marines have helped 'hump' defence stores, provided billets for the advance party and even shared their rations in the

early days of the British force.

The Stars and Stripes on American jeeps frequently find their way into Hadath and the Marines have even taken to a cup of British Tea. "But then anything tastes better than C ration coffee," said Pfc Joe Fioretti of the 24th Marine Amphibious unit. ■

GETTING THE WORD ACROSS

Five of the ten strong Royal Signals detachment with BRITFORLEB are veterans of the Falkland Islands conflict and they're finding the communications game in Beirut just as busy — if different. Drawn from 30 Signals Regiment at Blandford and supported by 262 Signals Squadron from Dhekelia, the signallers have established links with the United Kingdom via the Cyprus bases.

Said Lieutenant Mark Campbell, the detachment commander: "There seems to be little frequency discipline here. There are so many people on the air in this city we pick up everything from taxi drivers to Israeli tanks."

French, Italian, Arab and the varied accents of English — from the southern drawl of the United States to a Brooklyn twang — are now mixed with the predominantly Welsh voices of the Queen's Dragoon Guards.

Military chiefs aren't crying wolf.

Putin's threat and the parallels with 1914 are all too real, writes MAX HASTINGS

January 23 2018



ONCE UPON A TIME when Britain ruled nearly half the world and the Royal Navy dominated the seven seas, our forefathers took it for granted that this country was the target of jealousy and hatred. Thus, we built dreadnought battleships and sent soldiers to garrison far-flung shores, to protect our national riches.

Today, however, this country has shrunk, its people ask only to be left in peace to get on with our lives and watch The Crown on Netflix. To some, it thus seems monstrously unfair that we should have to spend tens of billions of pounds defending ourselves against foreign foes to whom we wish no ill. We have got used to the menace posed by Islamic fanatics. But why should we have to go head-to-head with the Russians, of all people?

What is the head of the British Army thinking of, delivering a speech in London last night in which he warned that President Vladimir Putin's nation presents 'the most complex and capable security challenge we have faced since the Cold War'?

General Sir Nick Carter has warned that President Vladimir Putin's nation presents 'the most complex and capable security challenge we have faced since the Cold War

General Sir Nick Carter, probably the ablest Chief of the General Staff so far this century, declares that 'the parallels with 1914 are stark'.



He also warns, with the direct sanction of his political boss, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson, that Britain's Armed Forces are today in no state to face the threats; nor will they be, unless the Treasury finds money to plug the yawning chasm in the defence budget.

Some cynics will say the service chiefs are playing a familiar game of crying wolf, warning of a 'Red Peril' in Moscow as they have done so often before, in order to secure expensive new weapons and platforms with which to posture on the international stage.

Yet anybody who knows anything about defence and national security on both sides of the Atlantic understands that General Carter's depiction of the Russian threat, and of our weakness in the face of it, are all too true. Indeed, General Carter's speech was one of the toughest by a military leader for many years, and he used some chilling language.

A very senior American officer said to me in the summer: 'The British Armed Forces are no longer big enough to command credibility either in Washington or with our enemies.'

General Carter also warns that Britain's Armed Forces are today in no state to face the threats; nor will they be, unless the Treasury finds money to plug the yawning chasm in the defence budget

In 2018, the RAF's centenary year, its fast-jet resources are strained to the limit to sustain a tiny contingent operating over Syria and Iraq. The Royal Navy is crippled by its mad commitment to two giant aircraft carriers — we lack the cash to arm these with anything more

than a token force of aircraft. The Army and Royal Marines, already relatively small and under-recruited, are threatened with further severe cuts.

All this is because, with the NHS and welfare budgets almost devouring the State, a weak British government flinches from responding realistically to the challenges to our national security. The Treasury lavishes resources only on the intelligence services, because terrorists represent a daily threat to ordinary British people on our streets.

Yet, as General Carter said last night, terrorists cannot destroy our society, whereas the Russians pose a major threat to the West's stability.

Nobody supposes that Putin's soldiers are about to launch an amphibious assault on East Yorkshire. But the Russians have mastered an extraordinary range of cyber, fake news, military and guerrilla tactics to destabilise the Western alliance and threaten its most exposed regions, such as the Baltic states.

The clear distinction between peace and war is gone: the world henceforward must exist in an uneasy and permanently perilous limbo between the two.

The Russians have mastered an extraordinary range of cyber, fake news, military and guerrilla tactics to destabilise the Western alliance. Above, Russian ships are seen in the English Channel in 2017

The Russians — like the Chinese and North Koreans — have, says General Carter, 'become masters at exploiting the seams between peace and war'.

One reason for taking the 1914 comparison seriously is that the Great War broke out not because either Germany or Russia wanted a big war, but because both miscalculated.

Carter points out that 'whether we like it or not', in the eyes of the Russian people, we Westerners 'have been made to appear as the enemy'.



The Russians have shown again and again that they respect strength and exploit weakness. Thus, we must protect our capabilities — or, though General Carter was too tactful to say this baldly — rebuild them from the sorry decay into which they have fallen.

We must convince our European allies, of whom only the French have war-fit Armed Forces, of the need to work much more seriously together. It is weakness that makes Russia dangerous: its population is shrinking and its economy would be a basket case but for oil and gas. Putin needs enemies — including us — and, frankly, also conflicts, in order to sustain his own power-base at home, and browbeat his way to the respect he demands, in the spirit of every street bully.

Lest anyone suppose that either I, or General Carter, am making all this up, consider the overwhelming evidence of Russian meddling, not only in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, but in almost every aspect of the information struggle that has become part of all our daily lives. The Russians' annexation of Crimea; their shooting down a civilian airliner; the war in eastern Ukraine — these are stark facts.

Carter concluded last night: 'These threats are now on Europe's doorstep —and the character of war is making it much harder to recognise the true intentions of our opponents, and thus distinguish between what is peace and what is war.'

I am not nostalgic about Britain's Armed Forces. We should not keep tanks or jets, guardsmen or frigates, merely to ornament reviews and look pretty at Trooping the Colour. But the rundown of our Armed Forces by successive governments represents a scandal. Successive prime ministers have been deeply irresponsible to allow it to happen.

Nations that wish to avoid fighting wars can only hope to do so by possessing defences that deter prospective aggressors, as today ours do not. One reason for taking the 1914 comparison seriously is that the Great War broke out not because either Germany or Russia wanted a big war, but because both miscalculated.



Pictured, British troops in France during the First World War"

The only plausible means of dissuading Putin from his adventurism on both the physical and electronic frontiers of the U.S. and Europe is that he should believe aggression will cost him, as today he does not. 'We have to invest,' says General Carter —

and that means in men, weapons, ships and planes, the total cost of which is still a tiny fraction of Britain's social spending.

Some cash should, of course, be diverted from the bloated overseas aid budget, but there must also be new money. Nobody who takes an adult view of Britain's safety, of our self-respect in the world, should begrudge this.

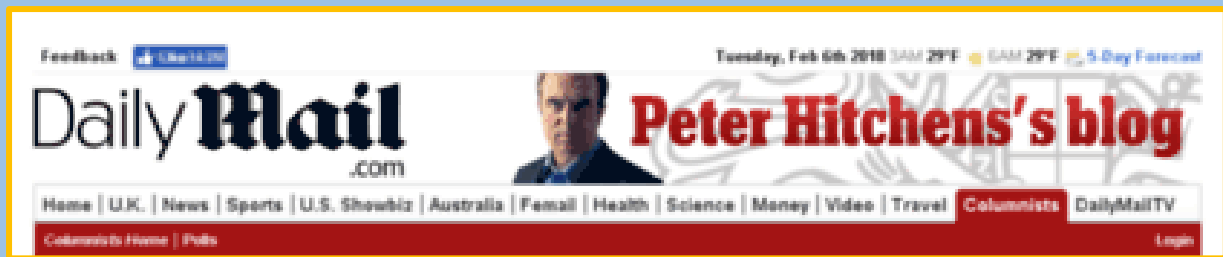
Some of the Defence Secretary's colleagues at Westminster curled their lips cynically after last night's speech, attributing to Gavin Williamson's naked ambition his willingness to allow General Carter to speak so honestly about the cash crisis facing the Armed Forces. But Williamson's predecessors, Philip Hammond and Sir Michael Fallon, brought shame on themselves by seeking to conceal from the nation the scale of the defence cash crisis, rather than try to solve it.

Both the new Defence Secretary and his army chief have acted honourably by telling us the truth. Now, it is up to the Government to act to repair our ailing forces, and to the British people to back them in doing so.

IT WAS INEVITABLE! Within hours of the Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Nick Carter making the case for more resources for the British military, that his very public and reasoned plea for more resources would be challenged. That the UK media was interested was very obvious from the top of the headlines on broadcasting channels to a flood of column inches on the news pages sparked the analyses that followed from all sides of the argument.

The message was out and there were supporters and detractors on all sides. With such a major story there was little need for the Ministry of Defence media & communications team to do much more than wait for the reaction.

Scribblings garners a cross section of the coverage and adds the stories that show Russia is expanding and re-arming its military.



Is there Really a Russian Threat to Britain?

I can't blame the Army for trying to save itself from the current mad round of cuts, but could there be anything more ludicrous than a warning that we need to beef up the Army because it can't cope with an attack on Britain by Russia? Likewise, we could not cope with an attack on Britain by Klingons (who don't as far as I know exist), or, come to that, by the Chinese People's Republic (which does exist). But these attacks are not likely, let alone imminent. I say, please plan for what is realistically likely, rather than frightening people with bogeymen, and so perhaps creating the preconditions for a war which, if you had not been so silly, would never have happened.

General Sir Nick Carter, head of the army, was all over the media this morning warning of the Muscovite threat. What is he talking about? Years ago, the great conservative satirist Michael Wharton (who wrote under the name 'Peter Simple' in the old Daily Telegraph, a very different newspaper from the one that now bears that name) invented a war between Sweden and Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavia was then a country in the South-East of Europe, not having been dismantled to suit the convenience of the EU. It was also about as far as one could get from Sweden, while staying in the European landmass. I forget what grievance had sparked this fictional conflict. One day I shall write a Wikipedia entry on the Suedo-Yugoslav war (I wonder how long it will take them to notice) which will doubtless explain all these things.



But the real lasting joke was of course that the two enemies could never find each other. They had nothing to fight about, no common border, no territorial dispute. It could have lasted for decades without an actual shot being fired. Much the same is true of our relations with Russia. We have no land or maritime border. We have very little mutual trade or any other connection which might lead to war. We are far away from each other.

Silly media reports contrive to suggest that Britain is ceaselessly 'confronting' or 'escorting' Russian ships or planes which fly through international waters or airspace near our islands.

But read them carefully. They often seem to suggest that Russian planes have violated our airspace. As far as I know, this has not happened.

Likewise, Russian naval vessels have a perfect right under the International Law of the Sea, to pass through the North Sea and the Channel (I have checked the laws on this) provided they undertake no hostile action. Indeed, it would be hard to see how else they could get from their home ports to Atlantic or Mediterranean destinations unless they took these routes.

As I have pointed out in myriad posts on this indexed, archived and searchable blog, Russia is not a very significant country, even though it takes up a lot of space on the map. Its GDP, the best measure of economic importance, is roughly the same as that of Italy, a country which rightly does not trouble us.

Its nuclear weapons are unusable (like ours). Most of Russia's conventional army and air force is deployed to defend its home territory, because (unlike us) it has no natural physical borders in the shape of seas or mountain-ranges, and is vulnerable to invasion (see recent history). Its second most important city suffered countless deaths by starvation thanks to a siege by German invaders within living memory.



Many widely-believed myths about Russia are not true. Russia did not start the recent conflict between Russia and Georgia. The EU's own Tagliavini report concluded that this was begun by Georgia. Russia has long regarded NATO eastward expansion as hostile and expansionist, and sought to counter it through diplomatic warnings at the highest level. These were ignored. NATO expansion was not the consequence of some desire by the peoples of the region. The Baltic States, for instance, gained their independence from Moscow in 1991 and maintained it for many years without any threat or danger, without needing to join NATO.

Expansion was in fact the result of expensive lobbying of the US Senate by American arms and manufacturers in the 1990s, exposed by the New York Times at the time. It was specifically warned against by George Kennan, architect of the containment of the USSR, who came out of retirement aged 93 to say it was dangerous folly.

Russia's response only became military when NATO countries openly backed the violent overthrow of a non-aligned government in Ukraine in a lawless putsch, and its replacement (contrary to the Ukraine constitution and with armed men present in the Kiev Parliament building) by a pro-NATO regime. Russia's response has in fact been highly limited and cautious.



Russia has as legitimate a claim to Crimea (largely populated by Russians who were prevented from voting on their future by the Ukrainian government in 1992) as Britain has to the Falklands, and at least as good a claim as NATO Turkey has to North Cyprus. Russia's troops were stationed in Crimea quite legally in accordance with international treaties. Russia is undoubtedly using covert and undeclared forces in Ukraine, but it should be pointed out that Western countries have done the same or similar things, notably in the Middle East and SE Asia. It is at the very least likely that NATO countries have also taken (and continue to take) covert action in Ukraine, and in my view laughable to suggest that they have not.

But the important thing is that the conflict was initiated by Western, not Russian action. Russia's principal policy since 1989 (dictated by economic weakness which still persists) has been to retreat without violence from the countries it previously occupied. It did so on the basis of what it took to be promises that NATO (an alliance against whom, by the way?) would not expand into the areas from which Russia had withdrawn.

I have no purpose in writing the above except that it is the truth and that (having witnessed some of it) I hate war and wish to ensure that we do not wander into one through stupidity and ignorance. I also have some experience and knowledge of the region, having lived in Moscow from 1990 to 1992 and travelled in the former USSR reasonably extensively.

I regard Vladimir Putin as a sinister tyrant, repeatedly say so in unequivocal terms and have no relationship, direct or indirect, with the Russian state or any of its organs. If we are truly so worried about Russian internal politics,

it is odd that we were entirely complacent, and even supportive while Boris Yeltsin was using tanks to bombard his own Parliament back in 1993. The fact was that Yeltsin let the west push him around, whereas Putin does not. That, and not Mr Putin's internal regime, is the reason for the change in posture towards Russia. Beware of this stuff. History shows that those who pick fights with Russia are seldom glad that they have done so once the combat is over.

Britain already throws money at defence. Ignore this Russian red herring

The fearmongering over cyber-warfare with Russia isn't about actual threat, it's about vanity, history and MoD greed

By: Simon Jenkins, The Guardian Jan 22 2018

THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING. The terrorists are at the door. Feel afraid, feel very afraid. Give us the money. Every year at budget time, the defence lobby waves shrouds and howls blue murder. With yet another defence review in the offing, the army fears it will lose thousands of soldiers, while the navy and the Royal Air Force fear the (long overdue) merger of the paratroop and marine brigades and the loss of more frigates.



Britain's defence budget is one of the largest in proportion to population in the world, the largest in the EU and the second largest in NATO. This is unrelated to threat and entirely related to history. That is why each year no one asks what the nation needs, only whether it can "do with" less than the year before.

How much is the UK government spending on cyberwarfare? The British government is projected to spend £1.9bn on cybersecurity between 2016 and 2021. This is for all departments, including the MoD, the surveillance agency GCHQ and GCHQ's front window, the National Cyber Security

Centre.

But the MoD is way behind in spending on cybersecurity, its involvement minuscule compared with GCHQ and the NCSC. The MoD proudly announced in 2016 it was building a new cyber-defence operations centre at its Corsham base in Wiltshire but the amount, £40m, is tiny compared with overall departmental spending.

The army has only itself to blame. When Labour came to power in 1997 and the coalition formed in 2010, there was a chance to listen to collective defence wisdom and accept that Britain discontinue its aircraft carriers and Trident nuclear deterrent. They would eat money and serve no reasonable defence purpose, least of all now in the age of unmanned power projection.

The navy and the RAF lobbied furiously, and a sceptical army said nothing. Downing Street capitulated to a massive distortion in equipment defence spending, largely at the army's expense.

Last year, Britain's second aircraft carrier was launched, bringing their cost close to £7bn, wildly over budget. Trident was extended. A sign of Trident's lunacy is that the Treasury proposes to remove it from the defence budget altogether. It will go with HS2, overseas aid and Olympics legacy under the heading "vanity project".

Britain's three services should long ago have merged into one, so that defence could be viewed in the round, not as a derivative of mutual lobbying. Defence should be seen from threat upwards, not history downwards. Such is the anarchy that British taxes are now financing the country's "defence" in no fewer than 80 overseas outposts around the world, chiefly as mercenaries to American interventionism.

The row over defence spending has nothing to do with defence, but with an arbitrary target, unrelated to threat, for it to consume 2% of the nation's wealth. Labour's spokesman, Nia Griffiths, who should be challenging this, merely attacks the government for damaging "Britain's international credibility". What is she talking about? Germany has no need of drone squadrons and nuclear missiles for its credibility.

A sure sign of the decay of the defence debate is the abstract language in which it is conducted. Defence is now a mish-mash of right-wing virtue-signalling, international credibility, influence, greatness, friendship and showing the flag. Tell that to the NHS.



Crouching Lion, Weary Titan: Lessons from World War I and British Grand Strategy

By: Professor John Bew February 7, 2018 *John Bew is Professor of History and Foreign Policy in the War Studies Department at King's College London and is a leading a project on Britain's place in the world for the think tank Policy Exchange.*

IT WAS IN 1902 that Halford Mackinder, the Oxford geographer and so-called father of geopolitics, remarked that geography had given Britain "a unique part in the world's drama," allowing it to become the "mistress of the seas" by amassing immense naval power. By the opening of the 20th century, however, a growing number of Britons were concerned that the world's dramas might be visited upon British shores in the form of a hostile army running amok through England's green and pleasant lands.

The seemingly impregnable self-confidence of Victorian Britain began to ebb, replaced by a growing feeling of vulnerability in an increasingly hostile world. It is hard to read David Morgan-Owen's *The Fear of Invasion: Strategy, Politics and British War Planning, 1880-1914* without an eye to some of the current debates about national security priorities on both sides of the Atlantic.

The United Kingdom is in the grip of a fierce political fight about defence spending, as the country seeks to put some meat on the bones on its post-Brexit "Global Britain" foreign policy.

Britain's military hierarchy is worried about the creep of complacency regarding the threat posed by Russia and other adversaries: In a Jan. 22 speech, General Sir Nick Carter, RIGHT, the chief of the general staff, warned: "The risk we run in not defining this clearly, and acting accordingly, is that rather like a chronic contagious disease it will creep up on us, and our ability to act will be markedly constrained – and we'll be the losers of this competition."

He compared the situation with that before World War I, when some of the principal protagonists were guilty of "sleepwalking" into conflict.

Carter's intervention had the desired effect, though it is not quite clear how long the dam will hold. While the Ministry of Defence has won a temporary reprieve from the latest round of cuts, it is inevitable that some efficiency savings will follow in the coming months. The sword of Damocles hovers, though it is as yet unclear where it will fall. There are rumours of threats to the Royal Marines and of a reduction in the size of the British army to one not seen since the days before the Napoleonic War.

It is, of course, axiomatic to observe that decisive action on national defence requires tough choices between different types of capabilities. But the lessons of history also suggest that the right path is only clear in hindsight. Morgan-Owen's important book reminds us of the fundamental importance of civilian political leadership to strategy making and war-planning. He offers a study of the failure of this leadership in the years leading up to World War I, and a

timely lesson about the dangers of a strategy based on fear of new threats, rather than on an appreciation of one's own strengths.

Morgan-Owen goes light on the term “grand strategy,” which – as authors in these pages have recently pointed out – does not always enlighten such debates. Even at the height of their empire, the British largely eschewed the temptation to commit any great grand strategic principles to parchment, the way American national security strategies did during the Cold War. Yet nor was it strictly true, as the late Victorian historian John Robert Seeley famously remarked, that “we seem, as it were, to have conquered half the world in a fit of absence of mind.”

The British did indeed develop clear strategic habits for most of the 19th century when it came to projecting their influence and securing their interests abroad. Specifically, Morgan-Owen writes, the key to British military strategy during this time lay in “the aggregate of quasi-independent naval and military efforts which could interact in both complementary and contradictory fashions depending of the circumstances and context.” In fact, to this reviewer, one of the successes of this book is precisely that it combines detail with what might be called a “grand strategic perspective.”

Morgan-Owen not only talks about the balance between land forces and the navy, but also shows a deep appreciation of the domestic and international political context in which they operated.

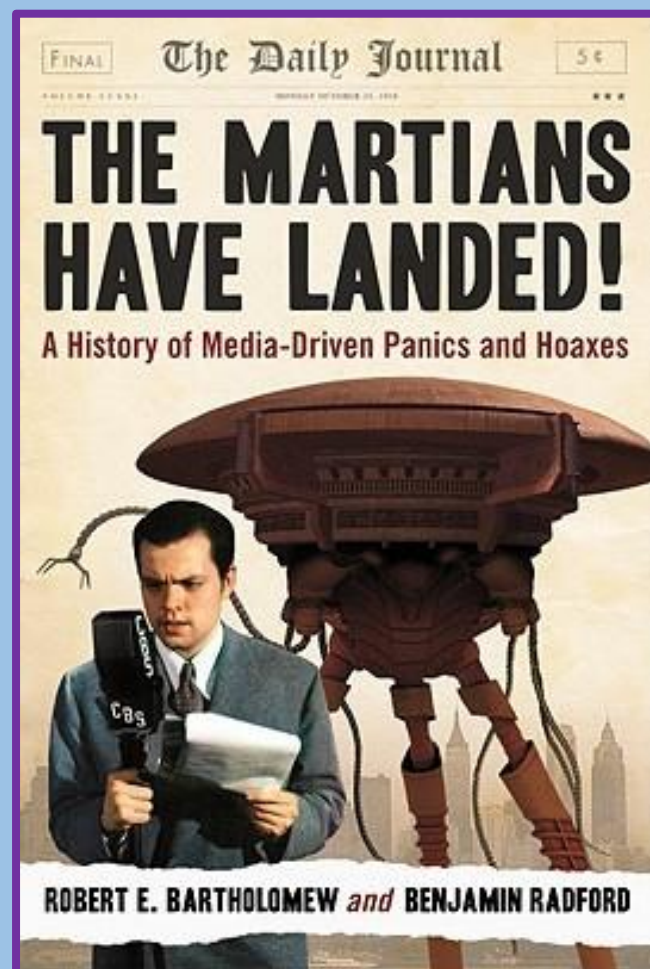
The book opens with what is, broadly speaking, a matter of historical consensus. It is that the British made a number of damaging missteps in terms of military planning in the period before World War I, which put them at a severe disadvantage by the time full hostilities began. Of these, the most damaging were the failure to prepare effectively for a great power conflict or to coordinate the strengths of the navy and the army to maximum effect. More precisely, the way

in which Britain chose to fight the war – concentrating large land forces in the battlefields and trenches of the European continent – arose from a gradual shift in British strategic habits that was not sufficiently debated or robustly tested before it became the new commonplace.

The main driver for this was fear. Morgan-Owen describes how a growing sense of threat to the British Isles in the late 19th century (first from the French, then Germans, and for H.G. Wells fans, even Martians) seeped into the public consciousness through alarmist newspaper reporting and popular culture. This, in turn, began to unduly influence British diplomacy and military planning.

Heightened concern about the vulnerability of the homeland clouded judgement and began to corrode the offensive capabilities by which Britain had gained an advantage so many times in the past. Thus, the weary titan came to adopt an increasingly defensive crouch.

Ultimately, Morgan-Owen's work is a study of failure in strategic leadership at the political level, and his critique gathers force as it enters the countdown of the ten years before 1914.



The receding influence of the Admiralty becomes an ever more important theme.

The navy's primary role in any future conflict was to be the protection of the south and east coast from enemy invasion. Thus, the main part of the fleet would sit in the English Channel and North Sea to compensate for the expeditionary force likely to be sent to the Continent (leaving home soil insufficiently protected). In this way, British war strategy saw one of its traditional strengths – the use of the navy to strike a blow in other theatres on the “periphery” of British influence – severely blunted by 1914.

There was much to be said for building a bigger army given the much larger land forces of other major European powers. Morgan-Owen's point, however, is that the defensive focus became lopsided. It meant, in effect, that Britain was already committed to fighting a certain type of war of attrition – literally stuck in the mud in the trenches – before the war began. By the first year of the war, the consequences of this approach were becoming increasingly clear in the bloody stalemate in which Britain found itself on the Continent.

It was the same frustration about the nature of the battle on the Western front that led Winston Churchill, as Lord of the Admiralty, to try to break the stalemate with his Gallipoli campaign. Gallipoli was a disaster, which cost Churchill his place in the cabinet. But his reputation as a strategist somehow survived.

This was because many continued to believe that the strategic conception of the mission had been sound, and that those sent to the beaches at Gallipoli were let down by poor planning by the generals.



Among those who served there was Clement Attlee, who later became Churchill's deputy in World War II. “I have always believed that Mr. Churchill was right in his strategic appreciation which found expression in the Dardanelles campaign,” Attlee later remarked, “and I still think that the slogging tactics of [Field Marshall Lord Douglas] Haig on the Western Front were wrong.”

For many since, Haig, as the commander of the British Expeditionary

Force, has been blamed for his stubbornness in persisting with the failed tactics on the Western front. Yet Morgan-Owen provides important context here. Haig was no dogmatist about prioritizing the army over the navy as the primary instrument of British power.

In fact, as Haig himself recognized as a Major-General in 1906, and as Morgan-Owen quotes, “To be successful in any way we must as our first objective win command of the sea...in order to reap the fruits of sea power we must apply military force at some decisive point on land.” The truth of all British war planning was, for Haig, that “command of the sea and control of the shore are closely connected.”

It was in maintaining the equilibrium between these two dimensions where the true challenge resided – and on this, coherent political leadership was lacking. “Viewing military and naval strategy as independent forces competing for political endorsement also plays down the agency of politicians in shaping the plans of the two services,” writes Morgan-Owen. The culprits-in-chief are the members of Asquith's Liberal Government, who enjoyed a large majority after the landslide of 1906. But even before that, the author points out, it was the Unionist government of Arthur Balfour that encouraged the War Office down the path of planning for expeditionary warfare against another great power.

Morgan-Owen goes as far to say that “Britain’s political leadership did not articulate or endorse a coherent vision for how it envisaged bringing a future Great Power conflict to a conclusion before the outbreak of the First World War,” due in part to a cautious and status quo mindset (on the domestic and international fronts).

The Committee of Imperial Defence, formed in 1902, was the “only forum in which issues of combined naval and military strategy could be discussed in detail between military professionals and the senior decision makers in the Cabinet.” Decisions were taken on a case-by-case basis, with no “coherent top-down attempt at coordination,” meaning each tactical manoeuvre became a set-piece debate, leading to polarization.

That is not to say that the War Office and Admiralty did not make mistakes or engage in political skulduggery to support their own agendas. But it was the job of the politicians, with whom ultimate decision-making power rested, to mediate more effectively between the services. An effective grand strategy, in other words, would have not only considered the different components of British hard power but linked this to the search for diplomatic alliances that characterized the years before 1914.

One thing that could have featured more in *The Fear of Invasion* is the increased competition that the British Empire felt on every front, as the Pax Britannica made way to an era of great-power competition.

Here, with the story of a weary titan of a century ago, American ears may perk up. It was as supremacy slipped from British hands that fear for the homeland increased, the reliability of allies was doubted, the costs of empire were questioned, politicians became consumed with the reversal of national decline, and treacherous forks in the road approached where once the path had seemed smooth.

There may also be lessons for today’s Britain too, against the backdrop of the ongoing political struggle over defence spending. Lord Peter Hennessey, one of the foremost historians of U.K. foreign policy, describes Brexit as one of the great strategic shifts in Britain’s place in the world since 1945, comparable to the dismantling of the empire or the Suez crisis of 1956. “Never in our peacetime history have so many dials been reset,” he said shortly after the 2016 referendum.

Wherever one stands on that debate, there are likely to be real costs as the U.K. seeks to counter the impression that it is somehow in retreat or stuck on a path to further decline. The foreign policy of Brexit Britain is neither doomed to failure nor fated to succeed. But it requires leaders to take on a greater decision-making burden, and accompanying risk, than British foreign policymakers have grown used to in an era defined by the hegemony of their closest ally.

OK: So, what major weapons will Russia's military get in 2018?

By: Nikolai Litovkin January 19, 2018

IN THE COMING YEAR the Russian Defense Ministry plans to spend \$46 billion on a number of hi-tech weapon systems, including fifth generation fighter jets - and even S-500 air defence complexes. The economic crisis has taken its toll on Defense Ministry spending - only \$300 billion will be splashed on the country’s rearmament program up until 2025, as opposed to the previously billed \$900 billion.

New era weapons such as T-14 Armata tanks, Su-57 fifth-generation fighter jets, and RS-24 “Yars” intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) will be added to the army’s ranks, and money



will be spent on the development of new weapons such as hypersonic missiles, autonomous robotic systems, and even deadly lasers.

What can the Ground Forces expect?

The main focus remains on strategic missile systems as nuclear weapons serve as Russia's main deterrence from any potential conflict. In 2018 Russia will get 11 RS-24 "Yars" ICBM complexes. These 50-ton monsters are armed with nuclear warheads and at least three multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (500 kilotons each). Russia also plans to test another 12 "Yars" missiles to check all the engineering modifications made to the weapon's navigation systems are in order. At the same time, the Ground Forces will be boosted with around 3500 new light and heavy armoured vehicles.

This includes new generation T-14 Armata tanks. Tanks remain one of the main weapons in modern warfare despite the drastic increase in the use of precise weapons in minor conflicts. At the end of 2017 Russia's Defence Ministry ordered several new era T-14 Armata tanks. Yet it's unclear how many the country's Uralvagonzavod machine manufacturer will deliver.

According to the company, the price of each new tank (250 million rubles, \$4.4 million) can be minimized. The basic version of the T-14 tank uses a 125 mm gun. However, according to the weapons manufacturer, this combat vehicle can also be fitted with a 152 mm cannon.

Russia's RS-24 Yars mobile inter-continental ballistic missile system

Russia's Missile Forces plan to replace the RS-12M Topol-M (SS-27 Sickle) mobile intercontinental ballistic missile systems with new RS-24 Yars ICBMs



The diagram illustrates the RS-24 Yars missile system. On the left, a vertical cross-section of the missile is shown with labels: 'Number of MIRVs at least 4', 'Yield 150-300 kT each MIRV', 'Number of stages 3', 'About 23 m' (height), 'Ø About 2 meters' (diameter), and 'Solid propellant fuel'. To the right, a mobile launcher vehicle is depicted, labeled 'Developed on the basis of the RS-12M2 Topol-M ICBM'. Text boxes provide additional details: 'The system has been developed by the Moscow Institute of Thermal Technology', 'First tested on May 27, 2007', and 'Main feature: the missile is equipped with a multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV) warhead'. A note states 'Most technical characteristics of the new missile remain secret'. The RIA NOVOSTI logo is visible in the background.

RIANOVOSTI © 2010 www.rian.ru

The T-14 tank is capable of shooting up to ten rounds per minute and can hit targets at a distance of seven km. In comparison, the American Abrams tank can only fire three rounds per minute, and has a range of just 4.6 km.

In addition, each new Russian tank is equipped with its own radar system, which gives it specific advantages in terms of aiming and firing control. As a result, the T-14 can also hit aircraft and intercept enemy rockets and missiles. In addition, each new Russian tank is equipped with its own radar system, which gives it specific advantages in terms of aiming and firing control. As a result, the T-14 can also hit aircraft and intercept enemy rockets and missiles.

Yet, according to Russia Beyond's military source, the purchase of T-14 systems was smaller than expected. He said this was due to the economic crisis, but couldn't reveal the exact number of new generation tanks that Russia will get.

What the Aerospace Forces will get

The Air Forces will get six modified Tu-160 and Tu-95MS strategic bombers, as well as six Su-34 bombers and up to 30 Su-30SM fighter jets. The army will start testing the new 4++ generation MiG-35 fighter jet and will sign the first contract for a batch of Su-57 fifth-generation fighters (for 2019).



Ka-52 battle helicopter is one of most powerful additions to the Air Forces. Sergey Pivovarov/Sputnik

The Aerospace Forces will also get four divisions of the notorious "Pantsir-S1" air defence systems and ten divisions of the S-400 "Triumph" air defence complex. Some of these machines will be stationed in Crimea.

According to Russian news agencies, the Defence

Ministry may also sign a contract on purchasing missile loading machines for S-500 "Prometheus" air Defense system. 2018 is shaping up as a big year for Russia's military and you would definitely like to know how Russian tank army will look like in 15 years.

Meet the Terminator...

THE BMPT "TERMINATOR" is a post-Cold war armoured fighting vehicle (AFV), designed and manufactured by the Russian company Uralvagonzavod. This vehicle was designed for



supporting tanks and other AFVs in urban areas. The BMPT is unofficially named the "Terminator" by the manufacturers. It is heavily armed and armoured to survive in urban combat.

This AFV is armed with four 9M120 Ataka missile launchers, two 30 mm 2A42 autocannons, two AG-17D grenade launchers, and one coaxial 7.62 mm PKTM machine gun.

The BMPT is built on the chassis of the T-72 main battle tank which is used in large numbers by the Russian Army and

has been manufactured under license by many other countries. The BMPT was designed based on combat experience gained during the Soviet war in Afghanistan and the First Chechen War. Multiple prototypes of a tank support combat vehicle were created prior to the design of the current BMPT. The Object 199 "Ramka" was the prototype later to be known as the modern BMPT with the official producer being Uralvagonzavod.

A small number were delivered to the Russian Ground Forces for evaluation beginning in 2005. The Russian Defence Ministry finally ordered the BMPT in August 2017. Deliveries of more than 10 vehicles are to begin in early 2018. The version, unofficially referred to as the "Terminator-3," incorporates the chassis, hulls, and components of the T-90A tank.

When used in urban terrain, each main battle tank is deployed with two BMPTs. Outside of urban warfare that ratio is reversed with one BMPT protecting two main battle tanks. This results from the complexity of fighting in urban terrain and the need for a versatile anti-personnel platform that can engage multiple targets at once and on different height levels.

The introduction of such a vehicle makes urban fighting less stressful on MBTs and can relieve them of some of the workload so that they can concentrate on their main objective of engaging other MBT and hardened targets.

The BMPT's armour protection is equal to that of an MBT and its powerful armaments allow it to engage virtually every enemy formation while operating in a common battle formation. Due to the multiple weapons systems found on the BMPT, this vehicle is able to fire at multiple targets simultaneously. These features significantly help increase the combat effectiveness of tank units and decrease their losses

The armament includes: four launchers for the 130 mm 9M120 Ataka-T anti-tank guided missile (ATGM); two 30 mm 2A42 with 850 rounds; two AG-17D 30 mm grenade launchers with 600 rounds; one 7.62 mm PKTM machine gun with 2,000 rounds; Anti-tank guided weapons

The BMPT uses the Ataka missile to defeat heavily armoured vehicles like tanks. The Terminator has four Ataka ATGM launchers as a set of primary armaments to defeat enemy tanks and infantry.

Only one missile is carried for each of the launchers without any additional ones stowed away. Two ATGM launchers are located on each side of the turret. T



These launchers have an elevation of up to +25°; the minimum elevation is -5°. Laser beam riding SACLOS is the method of guidance used by the Terminator's ATGMs. The 9M120 Ataka missile has anti-tank, anti-personnel and anti-aircraft variants; the first two being the most commonly used by the BMPT.

A Uralvagonzavod spokesperson told a select audience at the exhibition that "the key advantage that the BMPT-72 gives to all the countries that operate T-72 tanks is that they can promptly and at minimal cost upgrade their armies to an ultra-modern level, and enhance capacity, mobility, protection and armament without purchasing new high-cost machines." In addition, the conversion process of the obsolete vehicles can be undertaken at the customer facilities.



What happened to Russia's new armoured vehicles?

By Alex Mladenov, Krassimir Grozev in Sofia February 16 2018

ALMOST THREE YEARS after the high-profile public debut of Russia's new armoured platforms – the Armata, the Kurganets-25 and Bumerang families – their large-scale procurement for the Russian military still appears to be a distant prospect.

In May 2015, when the new armoured vehicles became the stars of Russia's Red Square Victory Day parade in Moscow, they were touted as almost complete products, ready to be launched into production. At the time, observers noted that these vehicles would give Russia a significant technological edge over NATO forces.

But this now appears to have been presumptuous. The vehicles have suffered from funding problems, technical issues and conceptual changes that have caused serious delays to the development effort, and the follow-on launch into production and fielding into regular service.

According to Andrey Frolov of the Moscow-based Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies (CAST), the previous State Armament Programme in Russia (2015-2020) prioritised air force and navy modernisation, while land forces renewal had secondary importance. This changed with the new State Armament Programme, covering the period until 2025, which called for massive investments in purchasing new-generation armour equipment for both land forces and airborne troops.

But, as Frolov hinted to Shephard, the development funding so far allocated by the Russian MoD for new armour programmes has proved insufficient for a normal development tempo. He pointed out that the Armata, Kurganets-25 and Bumerang are brand-new, with new systems, armaments and structures, and do not rely on off-the shelf technology solutions.

This, in turn, has caused difficulties and delays during the developmental phase because it has also required exhaustive testing at system and sub-system level, in addition to the end-production testing effort.



At the same time, as Frolov noted, the financial situation of the companies dealing with the development of these new-generation armour platforms is varied. Some of the companies are experiencing financial difficulties or have suffered from poor management, which has only served to compound issues. Furthermore, the initial technical specifications of the Russian MoD were very stringent and subsequently had to undergo several amendments that caused an adverse effect on programme schedules.

The Armata heavy tracked platform, developed by Uralvagonzavod (UVZ), is the flagship of the Russian armour recapitalisation effort. It covers a family of three combat vehicles using a common tracked platform – the T-14 MBT, T-15 heavyweight IFV and the T-16 armoured recovery vehicle.

The T-14 has been described as a revolutionary combat vehicle with unmanned turret and crew accommodated in an armoured capsule in the hull for better protection. The tank has all-new sophisticated passive and active protection systems and is equipped for network centric operations. Officially, the T-14's development effort is proceeding forward on schedule, and this has been claimed by the Russian Land Forces commander-in-chief, Col Gen Oleg Salykov in November 2017.

He also reconfirmed previously released information that an experimental batch of 100 vehicles is set to be delivered for field testing with that effort slated for completion by 2020. Russia's TASS news agency reported in February 2018 that Russian officials had confirmed an order for two battalions of T-14s and a battalion of T-15s, possibly the test batch vehicles. In mid-January, TASS also reported that the T-14's full-scale production is set to begin after 2020, which tends to indicate that it would not start before the conclusion of field testing efforts. There is no information yet on any specific problems encountered during the T-14's testing.

There is even more uncertainty surrounding the T-15 IFV, with elements such as the turret configuration still unknown. It has been demonstrated so far only with the Bumerang-BM turret armed with a 30mm cannon and ATGMs, but it had been expected that the production-standard vehicles would feature a more powerful armament.

The Kurganets-25 medium-class tracked platform, developed by Traktornye Zavody, appears to have the most criticism levelled against it among all the new generation platforms in development. It was used as the basis for the B-11 IFV and B-10 APC, both criticised by Russian military officers during 2015 for their significant size, much larger than today's BMP-2 and BMP-3 used by the Russian Land Forces. A redesigned platform was expected to begin testing in 2017 but there is little evidence that this test effort has started.

In the spring of 2017, Russia's deputy minister of defence responsible for procurement Yuri Borisov said that Kurganets-25 production had been postponed until 2021. In August that year, the project's reputation suffered a serious blow when one of the retired designers of the successful BMP-1/2/3 IFV family, Danil Ralin, had claimed in front of Russian media outlets

that the Kurganets-25 was a flawed project and should be abandoned.

Meanwhile, little is known about the development and testing of the Bumerang wheeled 8x8 platform developed by VPK. So far it has only been shown in the IFV version, dubbed K-17. It was announced during its public debut in 2015 that the K-17's production is set to be launched after 2019.

Official Russian military sources, however, proved reluctant to confirm or update this timeframe in 2016 and 2017.



Photos were publicly released in 2016 showing the K-17's testing effort in progress, with the vehicle sporting some serious design alterations compared to the initial version shown in Moscow during the 2015 V-Day military parade.

The Bumerang wheeled 8x8 platform in its 'K-17' IFV configuration, when serial production of this vehicle will commence remains a mystery. (Photo: Vitaly Kuzmin/Wikimedia Commons)

According to Frolov, this development and testing effort of Russia's new platforms has proved to be a protracted and expensive undertaking. As a result of these delays, the Russian military has had no other choice but to continue placing large-scale orders for upgraded versions of Soviet-era armour, which is cheaper and free from the technical complexity of the new generation platforms.

In the recent years, the Russian MoD has invested heavily in upgrading its existing armour inventory such as the T-72 MBT and BMP-2 IFV and continues to place orders for newly-built T-90 MBTs and BMP-3 IFVs.

These hefty investments in proven designs are a likely sign that the army's next-generation armour platforms, including the Armata, Kurganets-25 and Bumerang families, are still being regarded by the Russian military leadership as distant prospects.

A 100-megaton monster torpedo or fake news?

BBC reports on a Russian state TV "leak"

THE KREMLIN SAYS secret plans for a Russian long-range nuclear torpedo - called "Status-6" - should not have appeared on Russian TV news. The leak happened during a report on state-run Channel One about President Vladimir Putin meeting military chiefs in the city of Sochi. One general was seen studying a diagram of the "devastating" torpedo system. Launched by a submarine, it would create "wide areas of radioactive contamination", the document says.

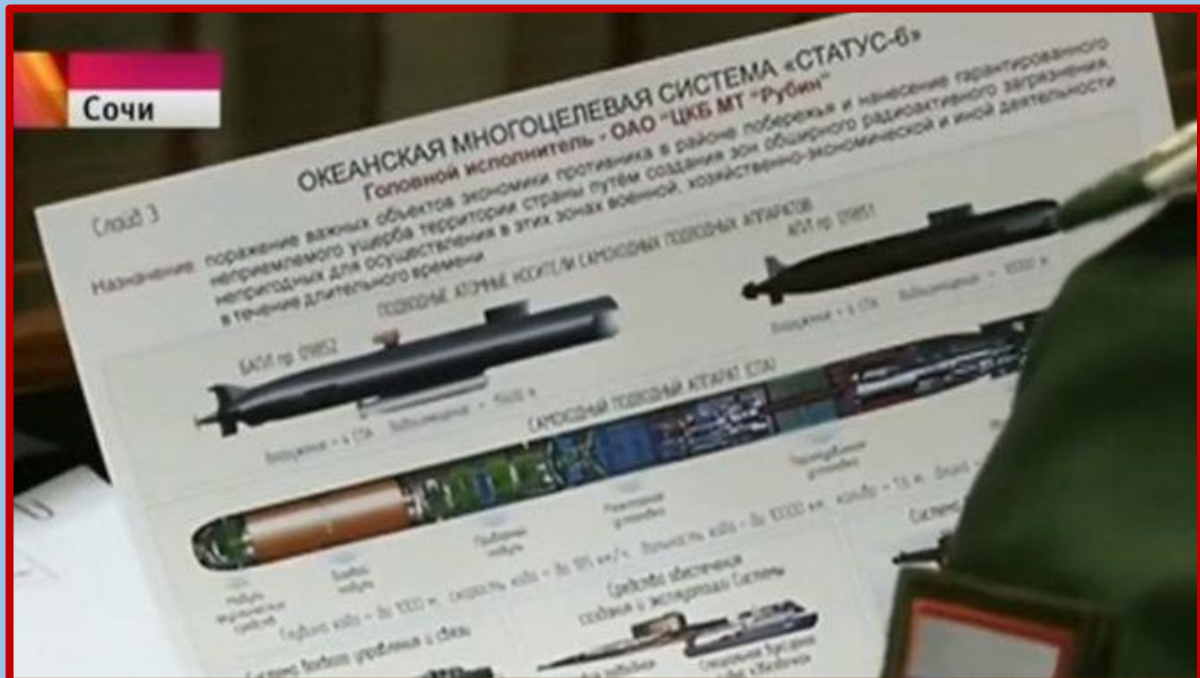


Image copyright Russian state TV Image: Technical details of the torpedo were clearly visible in the brief shot on state TV

The "oceanic multi-purpose Status-6 system" is designed to "destroy important economic installations of the enemy in coastal areas and cause guaranteed devastating damage to the country's territory by creating wide areas of radioactive contamination, rendering them unusable for military, economic or other activity for a long time", the document says.

"It's true some secret data got into the shot, therefore it was subsequently deleted," said Mr Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov. "In future we will undoubtedly take preventive measures so this does not happen again."

The US Defence Department said it had seen the report, but would not comment further. "We are aware of the video footage, but defer to the Russian navy as to its authenticity," a Pentagon spokesperson told the BBC. However, the Russian government newspaper Rossiiskaya Gazeta later reported details of the weapon, without showing the diagram, and speculated about a super-radioactive cobalt device. So, the leak may not have been accidental.

On the diagram the giant torpedo's range is given as "up to 10,000km" (6,200 miles) and depth of trajectory is "up to 1,000m" (3,300ft). It was developed by Rubin, a submarine design bureau in St Petersburg. It would, apparently, be launched by nuclear-powered submarines of the 09852 "Belgorod" and 09851 "Khabarovsk" series. Rossiiskaya Gazeta called the torpedo a "robotic mini-submarine", travelling at 100 knots (185km/h; 115mph), which would "avoid all acoustic tracking devices and other traps".

Some commentators in Russian media suggest leak of giant torpedo plan was deliberate. Such a torpedo was envisaged in 1950s, during Cold War, by nuclear physicist Andrei Sakharov - later a famous dissident and peace activist. Just before the torpedo diagram came into view in the state TV report, Mr Putin could be heard telling the generals that the US and its NATO allies were forging ahead with a global anti-missile defence system "unfortunately ignoring our concerns and our offers of co-operation".

He said the Western defence project was "an attempt to undermine the existing parity in strategic nuclear weapons and essentially to upset the whole system of global and regional stability". In June Mr Putin said Russia would put more than 40 new intercontinental ballistic missiles into service this year.

The US is developing the sea-based Aegis Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system to counter the perceived threat of short- and medium-range ballistic missiles from Iran or another so-called "rogue" state. Under the plan, air defence missiles will eventually be sited on land in Romania and Poland.

Mr Putin dismissed that NATO argument, pointing to the international deal, agreed this year, imposing limits on Iran's nuclear programme. "References to an Iranian or North Korean nuclear missile threat are just used to conceal the true plans - their real goal is to neutralise



the strategic nuclear potential of other nuclear states... above all, of course, Russia," Mr Putin told the generals in Sochi, a Black Sea resort. He said Russia would continue developing strategic offensive systems capable of penetrating any anti-missile defence.

According to state-run Rossiiskaya Gazeta, the destructive power attributed to the new torpedo's warhead would fit the description of a cobalt bomb. That would be a type of thermonuclear warhead with a

layer of cobalt-59, which on detonation would be transmuted into highly radioactive cobalt-60 with a half-life longer than five years.

Such a weapon would guarantee "that everything living will be killed", the paper said - there would not even be any survivors in bunkers. A cobalt bomb has never been tested because of the devastating radiation it would unleash. "But it can be considered as a means of deterrence - like the Perimetr system, which is on combat readiness, which guarantees retaliation with all of Russia's nuclear forces even if command posts and the country's leadership have been annihilated".

Russian military experts told BBC Russian Service that a warhead of up to 100 megatons could produce a tsunami up to 500m (1,650ft) high, wiping out all living things 1,500km (930 miles) deep inside US territory says Konstantin Sivkov, of the Russian Geopolitical Academy

Robotic torpedo shown could have other purposes, such as delivering deep-sea equipment or installing surveillance devices. The Russian defence ministry has a special division for deep-sea research says Konstantin Bogdanov, on the Lenta.ru website

This is no secret for the US, whose military is also working in the area of robotic submersibles for hunting and destroying submarines says Viktor Murakhovsky, reserve colonel, editor of Arsenal of the Fatherland magazine.

Russia downscales plans to modernise only aircraft carrier due to budget cuts

By: George Allison. UK Defence
Journal February 21, 2018

PLANS TO MODERNISE
the Admiral Kuznetsov have
been downscaled due severe
cuts to the Russian defence budget, according to Russian media reports.



A source told the Interfax news website that the budget will likely be reduced by fifty percent from the proposed \$800 million. "Instead of previously planned approximately 50 billion rubles for the work, it is planned to allocate about half of the previously announced amount" the source said. The budget cuts will primary affect the modernisation of the carrier, whereas repairs will be carried out in full, according to the source.

The remaining funds will be used to upgrade the carrier's propulsion systems including replacing four out of the Admiral Kuznetsov's eight turbo-pressurised boilers while overhauling the remaining four.

In November 2016, a MiG-29K crashed in to the sea before trying to land on the carrier, according to Russian officials the crash was a result of technical malfunction but it was later revealed that the jet had run out of fuel waiting to land while the crew was attempting to repair an arresting wire that broke. In early December a Su-33 crashed into the sea after attempting to land on the carrier. According to a Russian report, the jet crashed at its second attempt to land on the aircraft carrier in good weather conditions. Initially it was suspected that the jet missed the wires and failed to go around, falling short of the bow of the warship, but later it was revealed that the arresting cable failed to hold the aircraft, and was damaged in the attempt.

Following the two incidents, the Kuznetsovs air wing was transferred to shore at Khmeimim Air Base near Latakia to continue military operations.

The Admiral Kuznetsov serves as the flagship of the Russian Navy and is their only aircraft carrier. The initial name of the ship was Riga; she was launched as Leonid Brezhnev in 1985. She was originally commissioned in the Soviet Navy and was intended to be the lead ship of her class but the only other ship of her class, Varyag, was never completed or

commissioned by the Soviet, Russian or Ukrainian navy. This second hull was eventually sold to the People's Republic of China by Ukraine, completed in Dalian and launched as Liaoning.

It seems the Russian carrier is primarily a vessel for show and not blow. It appears so, unless this is fake news to make NATO's job of encouraging increase surface ship spending more ponderous? I do think it has a very interesting deck layout and would seem to be able to recover and launch at the same time.

No chance mate, even the Americans don't launch and recover fixed wing aircraft at the same time, you need the deck space for emergencies and space to park the landing aircraft once they are clear of the wires. Harriers could land then taxi to the next spot and take off again, but only one aircraft at a time, and it was very rare.

Budget cuts under the Russians? After the cold war it was a common sight but not one I thought I would see under Putin. Honestly don't know why they bother keeping an aircraft carrier. Russia will never be known for its navy and a relic like that wouldn't last two seconds against a battlegroup. They used to have a solid strategy, acknowledging their weaknesses and concentrating on stopping a naval invasion through the black sea/arctic and raiding shipping.

But then again aircraft carriers are status symbols and Putin can't just scrap it no matter how much of an embarrassment it was in the Mediterranean. He's based his entire reputation on rebuilding Russia's military and pride.

....and what about China

1,700 Planes Ready for War but...

.... the PLAAF and PLANAF's combat aircraft are old second-generation fighters of limited combat value against peer opponents, save perhaps in swarming attacks. Another 28 percent include strategic bombers and more capable but dated third-generation designs. Finally, 38 percent are fourth-generation fighters that can theoretically hold their own against peers like the F-15 and F-16. Stealth fighters, below, account for 1 percent.



However, the technical capabilities of aircraft are just half the story; at least as important are training, organizational doctrine and supporting assets ranging from satellite recon to air-refuelling tankers, ground-based radars and airborne command posts.

The People's Liberation Army Air Force of China and its sister branch, the PLA Naval Air Force, operate a huge fleet of around 1,700 combat aircraft—defined here as fighters, bombers and attack planes. This force is exceeded only by the 3,400 active combat aircraft of the U.S.

military. Moreover, China operates a lot of different aircraft types that are not well known in the West.

However, most Chinese military aircraft are inspired by or copied from Russian or American designs, so it's not too hard to grasp their capabilities if you know their origins.

The Soviet Union and Communist China were best buddies during the 1950s, so Moscow transferred plenty of technology including tanks and jet fighters. One of the early Chinese-manufactured types was the J-6, a clone of the supersonic MiG-19, which has a jet intake in the nose. Though China built thousands of J-6s, all but a few have been retired.

However, about 150 of a pointy-nosed ground-attack version, the Nanchang Q-5, remain in service, upgraded to employ precision-guided munitions.

Sino-Soviet friendship ended in an ugly breakup around 1960. But in 1962, the Soviets offered China a dozen hot new MiG-21 fighters as part of a peace overture. Beijing rejected the overture but kept the fighters, which were reverse-engineered into the sturdier (but heavier) Chengdu J-7.

Production began slowly due to the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, but between 1978 and 2013 Chinese factories turned out thousands of the pencil-fuselage jet fighters in dozens of variants. Nearly four hundred still serve in the PLAAF and PLANAF.

The J-7 is a 1950s-era hot rod in terms of manoeuvrability and speed—it can keep up with an F-16 at Mach 2—but it cannot carry much fuel or armament, and it has a weak radar in its tiny nose cone. Still, China has worked to keep the J-7 relevant.

The J-7G introduced in 2004 includes an Israeli doppler radar (detection range: 37 miles) and improved missiles for beyond-visual range capabilities, as well as a digital “glass cockpit.”

These aircraft would struggle against modern fourth-generation fighters that can detect and engage adversaries at much greater ranges, though hypothetically mass formations could attempt to overwhelm defenders with swarm attacks. Still, the J-7s allow China to maintain a larger force of trained pilots and support personnel until new designs come into service.

China's B-52

Another Soviet-era clone is the Xi'an H-6, a twin-engine strategic bomber based on the early-1950s era Tu-16 Badger. Though less capable than the U.S. B-52 or Russian Tu-95 Bear bombers, the air-refuellable H-6K remains relevant because it could lug heavy long-range cruise-missiles hit naval or ground targets as far as four thousand miles from China without entering the range of air defences.



The H-6 was originally tasked with dropping nuclear weapons, but the PLAAF no longer seems interested in this role. Xi'an is reportedly developing a new H-20 strategic bomber, though there's little information available so far.

In the mid-1960s, China began working on genuinely home-designed combat jets, leading to the Shenyang J-8 debuting in 1979. A large twin-turbojet supersonic interceptor that could attain Mach 2.2 and resembled a cross between the MiG-21 and the larger Su-15, the J-8 lacked modern avionics and manoeuvrability.

However, the succeeding J-8II variant (about 150 currently serving) improved on the former with an Israeli radar in a new pointy-nose cone, making it a fast but heavy weapons platform a bit like the F-4 Phantom. Around 150 are still operational.



Equipment shortages impair German military ahead of key NATO mission

By: Andrea Shalal, REUTERS February 19, 2018

BERLIN (Reuters) - Germany is coming under mounting pressure to tackle equipment shortages in its military that fellow NATO nations fear is eroding German readiness as it prepares to take the command of a NATO rapid response force. Member states take turns heading NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) in eastern Europe, which has grown in importance amid concerns that Russian military activities, including support for separatists in eastern Ukraine, have surpassed levels seen during the height of the Cold War.

German lawmakers and NATO allies have grown frustrated about the slow pace of progress on the military preparedness of Europe's most populous country and economic powerhouse, with some key weapons systems only available 40 percent of the time.

"German readiness levels are a serious concern," a NATO diplomat, who asked not to be further identified, told Reuters.

Defence ministry spokesman Jens Flodsdorff said on Monday equipment still needed for VJTF would arrive by mid-year and the German military could carry out all its duties when it assumes rotational control of the force at the start of 2019. NATO's VJTF includes 5,000 to 7,000 soldiers that can be deployed within days in the event of a crisis.

But Flodsdorff said the ministry was concerned about shortages of tanks and other military equipment, such as body armour. The ministry aimed to reverse this trend, caused by a years-long decline in defence spending, by 2030, but this would take time, he told a regular government news conference.

"Will the Bundeswehr (German armed forces) be able to carry out its missions in line with its NATO obligations? Yes. But that doesn't mean that we can be satisfied with the overall readiness of the Bundeswehr."

Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen pledged to address the gaps when she took office over four years ago and military budgets are now rising again, albeit slowly, but media reports of further shortages continue to surface regularly.

“The Bundeswehr’s problems aren’t new, but it is shocking that nearly nothing has improved after four years of Ursula von der Leyen serving as defence minister,” said Tobias Lindner, a defence and budget expert for the opposition Greens.

He said the Greens had asked von der Leyen to give lawmakers an overview of readiness at a committee meeting on Wednesday, instead of them learning about specific problems from the media on a near daily basis. There was no immediate comment from the Defence Ministry.



TANKS, BODY ARMOUR ALL MISSING

Critics questioned Germany’s ability to head the VJTF next year after an internal ministry report leaked last week revealed serious deficits in the equipment of the German brigade that will lead the task force, mainly due to a lack of spare parts.

The conservative daily Die Welt reported that the brigade had only nine of 44 Leopard 2 tanks, and three of the 14 Marder armoured personnel carriers that it needs. It is also missing night vision goggles, support vehicles, winter clothing and body armour, according to German media reports.

Henning Otte, defence spokesman for Chancellor Angela Merkel’s conservative bloc in parliament, said the new governing coalition deal with the Social Democrats included specific measures to improve military procurements. “We have to ensure that equipment gets to troops faster,” he said.

Shortfalls also afflict the German navy and air force. At the moment, military officials say none of Germany’s six submarines can be deployed, only five of 16 A400M military airlifters are ready for use, and it will cost 500 million euros (\$618 million) to ready hundreds of new Puma tanks for combat.

The already troubling readiness rates of other weapons - including the Eurofighter, Tornado and CH-53G heavy transport helicopters - have also stagnated or worsened over the past year, according to multiple sources familiar with the issue.

Defence Minister Frank Bakke Jensen of Norway said his country was tracking the situation in Germany closely, given ongoing disquiet about Russian military behaviour but he had been assured that the submarines would be working again soon.



German Tornado fleet grounded due to ‘too much bio-diesel’ in fuel

By: George Allison, UKDJ February 20, 2018

ACCORDING TO LOCAL MEDIA the fuel used by the German Tornado fleet appears to have been mixed with ‘too much bio-diesel’. News site Frankfurter Allgemeine reported that this was noticed during a routine check last Monday:

“The tolerance values are minimally exceeded,” said Colonel Kristof Conrath of the Tactical Air Force Squadron 51. “It’s not that the aircraft would fall from the sky. For safety reasons, all tanks of the aircraft must be flushed.”

It is understood that this breakdown is particularly annoying for the Luftwaffe, as training of new Tornado pilots is already three months behind. This comes after we reported that The German military is under-equipped to take on its upcoming role as leader of NATO's Russian-aimed Very High Readiness Joint Task Force.



The Bundeswehr is due to take over leadership of NATO's multinational Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) at the start of next year, but doesn't have enough tanks, a leaked Defence Ministry document said.

Specifically, the Bundeswehr's ninth tank brigade in Münster only has nine operational Leopard 2 tanks — even though it promised to have 44 ready for the VJTF — and only three of the promised 14 Marder armoured infantry vehicles.

The paper also revealed the reason for this shortfall: a lack of spare parts and the high cost and time needed to maintain the vehicles. It added that it was also lacking night-vision equipment, automatic grenade launchers, winter clothing and body armour.

The German air force is also struggling to cover its NATO duties, the document revealed. The Luftwaffe's main forces — the Eurofighter and Tornado fighter jets and its CH-53 transport helicopters — are only available for use an average of four months a year — the rest of the time the aircraft are grounded for repairs and rearmament.

Entire German submarine fleet out of action

By: George Allison February 16, 2018

“IT'S A REAL DOIASTER for the Navy, it's the first time in history that there will not be any submarine operating for months,” warns the president of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Parliament, Hans-Peter Bartels, in an interview published on Sunday in the Berlin weekly Bild am Sonntag. The problem, he explained, has worsened over time due to the German military not replacing out of date equipment.



The German Navy lost its last submarine in October, as the rudder of its last Type 212A was severely damaged in a collision with a rock off the Norwegian coast while the rest of the fleet was out of service. It is also understood that none of the new frigates, the Type 125s, are able to enter into operational service due to defects and a similar situation is faced by auxiliary ships, Berlin and Bonn, which were sent to dry dock for a year and a half of repairs.

In 2015, it was revealed that only 29 of Germany's 66 Tornado jets are airworthy. Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen then stressed that only six of the operational Tornado jets would be needed for the proposed German mission in Syria. German chief of staff General Volker Wieker said: “The state of our flying systems remains unsatisfactory”

A defence ministry report obtained by German media blamed the problem on the “lack of availability of various spare parts”.

The readiness of Germany's armed forces has long been the subject of criticism. Technical problems grounded German military aircraft delivering weapons to Kurds fighting IS in northern Iraq and medical aid to West Africa during the Ebola outbreak. Defence cuts

announced in March 2003 resulted in the decision to retire 90 Tornados from Luftwaffe service. This led to a reduction in its Tornado strength to four wings by September 2005.

In January 2004, the then German Defence Minister Peter Struck announced further major changes to the German armed forces. A major part of this announcement is the plan to cut the German fighter fleet from 426 in early 2004 to 265 by 2015. The German Tornado force was reduced to 85, with the type expected to remain in service with the Luftwaffe until 2020.



Germany's Leopard 2 Tank Was Considered One of the Best (Until It Went to Syria)



By: Sebastien Roblin, The National Interest January 27, 2018

GERMANY'S LEOPARD 2 main battle tank has a reputation as one of the finest in the world, competing for that distinction with proven designs such as the American M1 Abrams and the British Challenger 2. However, that reputation for nigh-invincibility has faced setbacks on Syrian battlefields, and placed Berlin in a uniquely awkward national-level dispute with Turkey, its fellow NATO member.

Ankara had offered to release a German political prisoner in exchange for Germany upgrading the Turkish Army's older-model Leopard 2A4 tank, which had proven embarrassingly vulnerable in combat. However, on January 24, public outrage over reports that Turkey was using its Leopard 2s to kill Kurdish fighters in the Syrian enclaves of Afrin and Manbij forced Berlin to freeze the hostage-for-tanks deal.

The Leopard 2 is often compared to its near contemporary, the M1 Abrams: in truth the two designs share broadly similar characteristics, including a scale-tipping weight of well over 60 tons of advanced composite armour, 1,500 horsepower engines allowing speeds over 40 miles per hour and, for certain models, the same forty-four-calibre 120-millimeter main gun produced by Rheinmetall.

Both types can easily destroy most Russian-built tanks at medium and long ranges, at which they are unlikely to be penetrated by return fire from standard 125-millimeter guns. Furthermore, they have better sights with superior thermal imagers and magnification, that make them more likely to detect and hit the enemy first—historically, an even greater determinant of the victor in armoured warfare than sheer firepower. A Greek trial found that moving Leopard 2s and Abrams hit a 2.3-meter target 19 and 20 times out of 20, respectively, while a Soviet T-80 scored only eleven hits.

The modest differences between the two Western tanks reveal different national philosophies. The Abrams has a noisy 1,500-horsepower gas-guzzling turbine, which starts up more rapidly, while the Leopard 2's diesel motor grants it greater range before refuelling. The Abrams has achieved some of its extraordinary offensive and defensive capabilities through use of depleted uranium ammunition and armour packages—technologies politically unacceptable to the Germans. Therefore, later models of the Leopard 2A6 now mount a higher-velocity fifty-five-calibre gun to make up the difference in penetrating power, while the 2A5 Leopard introduced an extra wedge of spaced armour on the turret to better absorb enemy fire.



German scruples also extend to arms exports, with Berlin imposing more extensive restrictions on which countries it is willing to sell weapons to—at least in comparison to France, the United States or Russia. While the Leopard 2 is in service with 18 countries, including many NATO members, a lucrative Saudi bid for between 400 and 800 Leopard 2s was rejected by Berlin because of the Middle Eastern country's human-rights records, and its bloody war in Yemen in particular. The Saudis instead ordered additional Abrams to their fleet of around 400.

This brings us to Turkey, a NATO country with which Berlin has important historical and economic ties, but which also has had bouts of military government and waged a controversial counterinsurgency campaign against Kurdish separatists for decades. In the early 2000s, under a more favourable political climate, Berlin sold 354 of its retired Leopard 2A4 tanks to Ankara. These represented a major upgrade over the less well protected M60 Patton tanks that make up the bulk of Turkey's armoured forces.

However, the rumour has long persisted that Berlin agreed to the sale under the condition that the German tanks not be used in Turkey's counterinsurgency operations against the Kurds. Whether such an understanding ever existed is hotly contested, but the fact remains that the Leopard 2 was kept well away from the Kurdish conflict and instead deployed in northern Turkey, opposite Russia.

However, in the fall of 2016, Turkish Leopard 2s of the Second Armored Brigade finally deployed to the Syrian border to support Operation Euphrates Shield, Turkey's intervention against ISIS. Prior to the Leopard's arrival, around a dozen Turkish Patton tanks were

destroyed by both ISIS and Kurdish missiles. Turkish defence commentators expressed the hope that the tougher Leopard would fare better.



Army recruitment system 'unacceptable', says defence secretary

By: Jonathan Beale, Defence Correspondent 19 February 2018

DEFENCE SECRETARY Gavin Williamson has labelled the Army's recruitment process "unacceptable" after it was revealed applications take an average of 300 days to be completed. More than 100,000 people applied last year but only 7,441 were successful.

Army recruitment is overseen by private contractor Capita, and Mr Williamson said the firm and the government were "working hard to speed up the process". The regular Army is currently 4,000 soldiers short of its target strength.

Beale, said the Army had been spending millions of pounds on high-profile recruitment campaigns designed to reach its 82,000 target. But while those seem to be attracting record levels of interest, that hasn't yet translated into filling the depleted ranks, he added.

Mr Williamson said he wanted "recruits who meet our world class standards [to] start their training as soon as possible".

Computer systems used in recruitment for the Army, Navy and RAF have recently been upgraded for the first time in 20 years. But while the lack of new recruits has been blamed in part on sub-standard recruitment processes, the quality of candidates has also been an issue.

An Army spokesperson said "large numbers" of people had been turned away because they were not "medically or physically up to it". Two thirds of those who failed to meet the required medical standards had breathing problems, back injuries or leg injuries.

The Ministry of Defence said "a national recruiting call centre on its own has not worked," so it is now "returning to a more traditional system where potential recruits get help from professional recruiters and inspiring soldiers in their local areas".

A spokesman added: "We know it's been taking too long and people have gone elsewhere, which is why we're also making every effort to smooth the selection process and make further improvements to the time it takes to get new recruits to the start of their training." Capita is yet to respond to the BBC's request for comment.

300 days to process and complete a recruit's application?

By: Howard Wheeldon, February 20 2018

AT LAST, less than a month after the Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Nick Carter gave an approved speech to RUSI in which he claimed that the UK's ability to respond to military threats from Russia will be eroded without further investment, today we hear that the Secretary of State for Defence, the Rt. Hon Gavin Williamson, has labelled the Army's recruitment process as being "unacceptable" after it was revealed that applications to join-up are currently taking an average of 300 days to be processed and completed.

In addition, we are told that of the more than 100,000 who applied to join the Army last year only 7,441 applicants were successful in joining-up. Worse perhaps is that of the number of those who were successful in joining up there are always a small number that have

subsequently already departed the Army for whatever reason this might be such as deciding that the Army was not for them after all or that perhaps they were found to be short on fitness and unable to complete initial training by their peers.

The problem of Army recruiting has been known about for at least five years if not longer just as has the ridiculous target set in SDSR 2010 for Army regulars and volunteer Reserve numbers been deemed by many defence specialists and commentators as being impossible to achieve on the present basis of the 'offer'. Back then the Coalition Government envisaged a Regular Army of 95,000 full-time personnel and numbers of Reserves put at 30,000 - although the former number was to be further reduced in 2012 following publication of the 'Army 2020 plan' to 82,000.

Howard, right, a member of The Pen & Sword Club, is a regular contributor to Scribblings and an international commentator on defence and aviation.



The broad estimate today is that the Army is currently short of around 4,000 personnel if current official targets are to be met although the reality is that as there are almost bound to be instances of double counting in respect of those that have joined and then chosen to leave, the shortfall may well be much higher than this. Following publication of SDSR 2015 I note that General Sir Nick Carter said that “credibility of the Army would be based on its capacity to field a warfighting division”.

He said at the time that SDSR 2015 had identified a figure of 50,000 to deliver an expeditionary force and that the 80,000-odd [Regular] soldiers that we have at the moment, give or take 3,000 or 4,000 here or there, and the Reserve that we have, provide us with the essential capacity to be able to deliver a division like that.

The trouble is that the Army has never been able to sustain full time personnel numbers at 80,000 and worse is that it has come nowhere near to achieving the proposed number of Reserves targeted. Indeed, suffice to say that the Army has not even come anywhere near to employing sufficient numbers of new joiners that are required to fill the gap of those that have left in their droves under the Hammond and Fallon regimes.

At that time General Carter argued that the MoD had “carefully calculated” the capacity of the Army to deliver a warfighting division although he conceded that the margins were “quite tough” and that “any consideration of critical mass should focus on the target end strength of 120,000 personnel” rather than attempt to distinguish this between Regular and Reserve personnel numbers adding that “if you take the whole number that I have described and you bring readiness criteria into it—how quickly you would expect us to field this thing—the plain fact is that that provides you with the ability to do a one-off divisional intervention, probably in a multinational context, and then it probably provides you with the opportunity to reorganise and to keep something behind thereafter while also watching your back in the UK, but there is not much margin for error thereafter”.

The MOD has in the past blamed the contractor responsible for Army recruitment for part of the problem and while I am in no way about to defend the contractor in question it is important to remember that the bottom line is that the MOD is responsible for how it has chosen to transact recruitment of all UK armed forces and also, together with the Army, responsible for the failure to retain sufficient numbers of trained Army personnel.

Since SDSR 2010 around the time that it was first contracted out, Army recruitment has been overseen by Capita. Secretary of State Gavin Williamson is reported to have said that both the firm [Capita] and the government were “working hard to speed up the process” of employment. Although he said nothing on the equally important issue of failure to retain sufficient numbers of personnel, the poor quality of housing, offer on pay and pensions that

are all reasons why personnel have chosen to vote with their feet and leave, Mr. Williamson says that wanted "recruits who meet our world class standards [to] start their training as soon as possible.



The length of time and the ridiculous amount of process involved for armed forces employment beggars belief. One tiny medical blemish on a person wanting to join even if it has no significant bearing on what the person concerned my ever be asked to do leads to disappointment. As far as I am aware until very recently medial based requirements were still based on what was being used in the 1950's and maybe further ago than that. We are however told that computer-based systems

used in Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force personnel employment have recently been upgraded for the first time in 20 years.

Clearly not all are fit to join the military but while I accept that a number of would-be joiners will sometimes, in this day and age, be deemed as being inappropriate to join-up – for instance if they are medically and physically unfit or failed at schooling – it is equally clear that some blame must also be attached to what is without doubt a sub-standard recruitment process. The MOD has apparently admitted that the national recruiting call centre process has not worked and that it intends to go back to old fashioned but proven principles together with using professional recruiters.

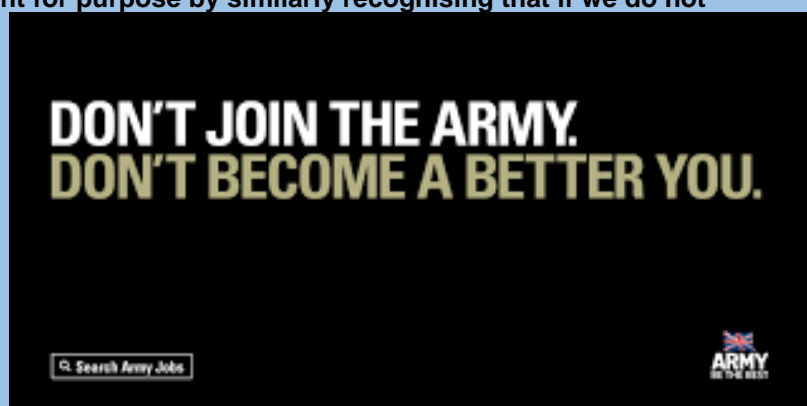
That is all well and good of course but the bottom line is that even if the Army was able to recruit the number that it currently requires [this takes no account of the possibility that currently targeted numbers may be further reduced in the upcoming defence review, very little is being done to ensure that the Army, along with the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, can retain those that it cannot afford to do without.

Whilst it is very pleasing to see that the Secretary of State for Defence has accepted that the present recruitment system is not fit for purpose and has, unlike his immediate two predecessors, listened to what those around him have been saying for years, the wider problem is that for far too long the Government and the MOD has failed to invest in its people and in motivating and incentivising them to stay.

I live in hope that the Secretary of State for Defence will follow his recognition today that the Army recruitment process is unfit for purpose by similarly recognising that if we do not provide a solution very quickly to the wider problem of retention, to understanding why it is that far too many of our trained military personnel - be these soldiers, sailors or airmen - have chosen in the recent past to leave and worse, that are still doing in their droves.

The solution for the Government and MOD to the vexing problem of retention

may be a costly one but it is relatively simple – invest in your people, invest in married and unmarried quarters, ensure that the homes they live in are more than just fit for purpose, invest in their families and provide more support to those left behind following deployment, invest in the educational, medical and other forms of support facilities, in nurseries and educational facilities be these for professional purposes or for those of sport and leisure.



Do all or a big part of this and you will find that even in this very competitive world in which skills do not come cheap, provided the offer and pension commitments match, the issue of retention will disappear.



National Service back in France and Sweden: will it work in Britain?

In the aftermath of the Second World War over two million British men were conscripted to serve in the armed forces. Some went abroad, some watched friends die in combat. Others stayed at home and painted coal white. But despite delivering such varied experiences, National Service shaped the outlook of a generation of young men. So, wrote Colin Schindler, in his book *National Service: From Aldershot to Aden: tales from the conscripts 1946 -62*. According to recent polls over half the people in the United Kingdom support a return to National Service.

In France, President Emmanuel Macron thinks it is a good idea and set the Paris headlines alight in February by announcing that conscription will be re-introduced to the Republic. Sweden too has gone down the same route and in the UK the polls are indicating that a majority of people think it's a good idea.

Britain's young people have shown a spirit of adventure by volunteering to help overseas. Will they, however, accept two years of National Service in the 21st century. Perhaps the military option may not appeal to all but a form of National Service for men and women which could involve serving and learning in other organisations such as the National Health Service, in the teaching profession or a wide variety of public roles in local and central government could prove attractive.

Emmanuel Macron Wants YOU for the French Army

By: Robert Zaretsky, Foreign Policy | February 21, 2018, 3:21 PM

IN FRANCE. the ideal of serving the republic is as old as 1789 and the revolution that created it. It is only fitting, then, that Emmanuel Macron, whose campaign book was titled *Revolution*,



made obligatory national service a centrepiece of his run for the presidency. Now that he is president, however, Macron's proposal resembles nothing so much as U.S. President Donald Trump's promise to build a wall on his country's southern border — a self-inflicted political albatross that the president won't, or can't, let drop.

There's a reason the proposal resonated during the election campaign. The French Revolution's founding document, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, insisted upon not just rights of man, but also the duties of the citizen. "Aux armes, citoyens!" was the most primordial of duties to the republic. After 1815, this revolutionary institution came and went, as successive monarchies suppressed the mandatory call to arms, while successive republics salvaged it.

This long and checkered history came to a close in 1997, when then-President Jacques Chirac ended obligatory national service, whether under military or civilian auspices. Confronted by the hostility of traditional republicans on the left and right, Chirac proposed to replace it with a "rendezvous citoyen" — the requirement that all young men and women spend time learning to "prepare for the nation's defence." Such rendezvous have been happening ever since, though their duration has been reduced from five days to one. (They are regarded by participants about the same way that Americans view jury duty.)

From the martial clarity of "La Marseillaise," the ideal of serving the republic was thus reduced to a kind of civic mayonnaise, undemanding and uninspiring. As a result, earlier this month, President Macron acted on his campaign vow and sought to fortify it with a bit of fibre.

During his campaign, Macron had vowed to reinstitute, in his words, a "service militaire universel." French men and women between the ages of 18 and 21, he declared, should be given "the experience, however brief, of military life." Though Macron seems most at ease when he is extolling individual initiative, the issue of national service allowed him to signal his recognition of the primordial role of the state in the French republican imagination.

And though he never served himself, having been born in 1977, just weeks shy of the cut-off date for mandatory service (he nevertheless received an educational deferment), Macron described the service program as filled with benefits. Overseen by the army and gendarmerie, it would reinvigorate a collective sense of republican duty, offer common ground for youths from different social, economic, and geographic backgrounds, and "in times of crisis, allow the state to provide a complementary reserve for the National Guard."

Since becoming president, Macron has maintained his vow. He seems to believe the program has become critical to his reputation as a man of his word, though he does accommodate necessary tweaks. Just as Trump now concedes that his wall does not necessarily translate into 2,000 miles of translucent ramparts, Macron no longer describes this obligatory service as military. Last month, in a speech to the country's military leaders, Macron swapped out the adjective "militaire" for "national." But, he quickly added, the promise would be fulfilled: "I want to reassure all of you that this project will be acted upon and seen safely to port."

By the time the universal national service program limps into port, however, it risks being repossessed by the banks. While candidate Trump insisted that Mexico would pick up the tab for the wall, candidate Macron never mentioned the price tag. For good reason, it turns out: Parliamentary and governmental reports have since cited costs that range from the boggling to the staggering. Predictably, the lowest annual estimate, hovering around 3 billion euros, is found in a report commissioned by Macron's prime minister, Edouard Philippe. In contrast, in



a Senate report last year the price estimate for 800,000 young conscripts ballooned to 30 billion euros, while a member of the National Assembly's finance committee estimated that renovating the infrastructure alone for this program would be between 10 and 15 billion euros.

The projected costs are all over the place partly because the project itself is all over the place. Last week, a parliamentary commission that included members of Macron's party, La République En Marche!, outlined a kind of national service lite. The length of service would be divided into three phases, beginning with an intermediate school course in "civic and moral education." At the age of 16, all students would attend a weeklong affair dedicated to "defence and citizenship." Students can fulfil this requirement at various places, ranging from the local fire station to undefined "fraternity schools."

The final stage, for all youths between 18 and 25, is a so-called "l'incitation à l'engagement" — which translates to "a plea to get involved." As the name suggests, young men and women would be urged, not compelled, to join already existing civic organizations. The reasons are several: Not only did the commission want to avoid a popular uprising, but it also wanted to avoid a clash with the European Court for Human Rights, which as one commission member noted, might rule that such a law would constitute "forced labour." Also playing a role, no doubt, was the resistance of military leaders, who fear their budget will be raided to pay for Macron's pet project. The brass didn't take kindly to Macron's proposal last year to freeze the military budget. Publicly expressing their worries about inadequate means to finance a growing list of military operations, they eventually forced him to backpedal.



The minister for the armed forces, Florence Parly, above, is now intervening to game the outcome. At a press conference last week, she asserted the national service would not be "facultatif," or optional, with only the less than reassuring proviso that "the gendarmes won't knock at the door of those who refuse to serve." One of Macron's closest collaborators, Interior Minister Gérard Collomb, quickly underscored his colleague's declaration. "If the president has one quality," he remarked, "it is perseverance." While the government is still debating the final nature of the program, Collomb announced, the president "has reaffirmed that it he wanted it to be obligatory."

As the confusion mounted among his ministers, a Jovian intervention erupted from the Élysée. To a group of reporters, Macron reaffirmed that the universal national service would, indeed, be mandatory. At the same time, however, the president adopted his signature "at the same time" ("en même temps") approach. The length of service might be as short as three months, he observed, or as long as six months. Moreover, it could be served with a civic organization or, if one preferred, in the military. In any case, Macron declared, these details have yet to be ironed out.

In a public statement, FAGE, France's largest student union, denounced Macron's "demagogic proposition which aims to 'set right' a generation thought to be the source of every social ill: radicalization, delinquency, abstention, apathy and subversion." Citing studies that reveal record levels of civic participation among the young, the statement concluded that Macron's plan was a campaign gimmick "profoundly disconnected from the needs of France's youth." As for the military, its representatives agree that it is the government's priorities that need to be set right. The previous minister of veterans' affairs, Jean-Marc Todeschini, sent a warning shot across the government's bow: "The armed forces do not have the capacity to assume the cost of universal national service." No matter how thick the rhetorical fog, the phrase "service obligatoire" stands out.

Despite the swelling scepticism, Macron maintains he is undaunted. With a Napoleonic flourish, he declared: "Many say [the national service program] is impossible to achieve ... which in fact reinforces my conviction that it is a necessity." Perhaps. But, of course, the man who said "impossible" is a word found only in a fool's dictionary eventually met his Waterloo.



NS PROPOSAL WOULD CAUSE QUITE THE STIR in BRITAIN !

15th February 2018

NATIONAL SERVICE has only been in place in the UK at two points in modern times. The first was during the First World War and the second ran from 1939 to 1960. It is often referred to as Conscription and it began in the First World War when the British government passed the Military Service Act in 1916.

This specified that single men aged 18 to 40 were to be called up for military service unless they were widowed with children or ministers of a religion. It then changed to include married men in 1916 and the age limit was eventually raised to 51. In 1939 single men aged 20 to 22 were called up in a limited form of conscription as part of the Military Training Act. But upon the outbreak of the Second World War they were absorbed into the army and all men from 18 to 41 years old were called up. By 1942 all British men between 18 and 51 years old and females aged 20 to 30 were liable to be called up.



After 1945 peacetime conscription came into place and from 1949 healthy males aged 17 to 21 years old were expected to serve for 18 months and remain on the reserve list for four years. In 1950 when the Korean War broke out the service period was extended to two years and eventually National Service ended from 1957. The last National Servicemen left the armed

forces in May 1963. Theoretically the country could bring back National Service - but it would cause quite the stir. It no longer exists for Brits but there have been calls to bring it back

Sweden has introduced military conscription – perhaps the UK should consider its own form of youth force



“At the moment, too many working-class boys are underperforming, lacking in motivation, technical and social skills. In short, many are unemployable. It may be time for a radical solution “

By: Janet Street Porter, The Independent

ALL OVER EUROPE compulsory military service has gradually been phased out, but – given recent terrorist attacks and an increasingly aggressive Russia – could it be time for a rethink?

Sweden has followed Norway, announcing plans to introduce military conscription for both sexes: 13,000 recruits will be called up each year, from which 4,000 will be selected for service. Currently, most EU countries rely on volunteers, and there are few penalties for refusing to serve when asked.

Public opinion started to change following the Russian annexation of Crimea and the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris in 2015. In Switzerland, a referendum in 2013 revealed that 73 per cent favoured conscription; there, young people have a choice between joining the military or the civil protection force.

In France, polls show 80 per cent of the public would like compulsory military service to return (it ended in 2002), whereas in Germany only 36 per cent are in favour. The arrival of millions of refugees and an increasing number of attacks on civilians by groups claiming to be acting as part of an “army” in the name of radical Islam have placed new strains on security services, particularly in France and Germany.

In some EU countries, youth unemployment is so high that compulsory service has been proposed as a solution. Perhaps the UK might consider a different form of youth service – not military – which relies on volunteers, properly funded and lasting one or two years. It could be residential, but that’s not essential.

National Service: Conscription in Britain, 1945-1963



Professor W. Purdue reviews Richard Vinen’s, major work on National Service. It was, he says, a British institution that changed lives but has been largely ignored by historians.

FROM THE END of the Second World War until 1963, the prospect and then the reality of conscription into the armed forces – national service, as it became known in 1947 – dominated the lives of young men in their teens and early twenties. More than two million conscripts would serve in the armed forces in this era, but who remembers national service now? You would have to be in your seventies to have done it, although members of the next generation will have listened to fathers’ recollections.

Oddly, it has almost been erased from national memory. Many histories of modern Britain devote only a few paragraphs to it, with an experience that lasted for up to two years of the lives of most men relegated almost to a footnote in comparison with the attention paid to the National Health Service and changes in the educational system. Richard Vinen's study seeks to put national service into its rightful place at the centre of British post-war history.

Richard Vinen is a British historian and academic who holds a professorship at King's College London. Vinen is a specialist in 20th-century European history, particularly of Britain and France.

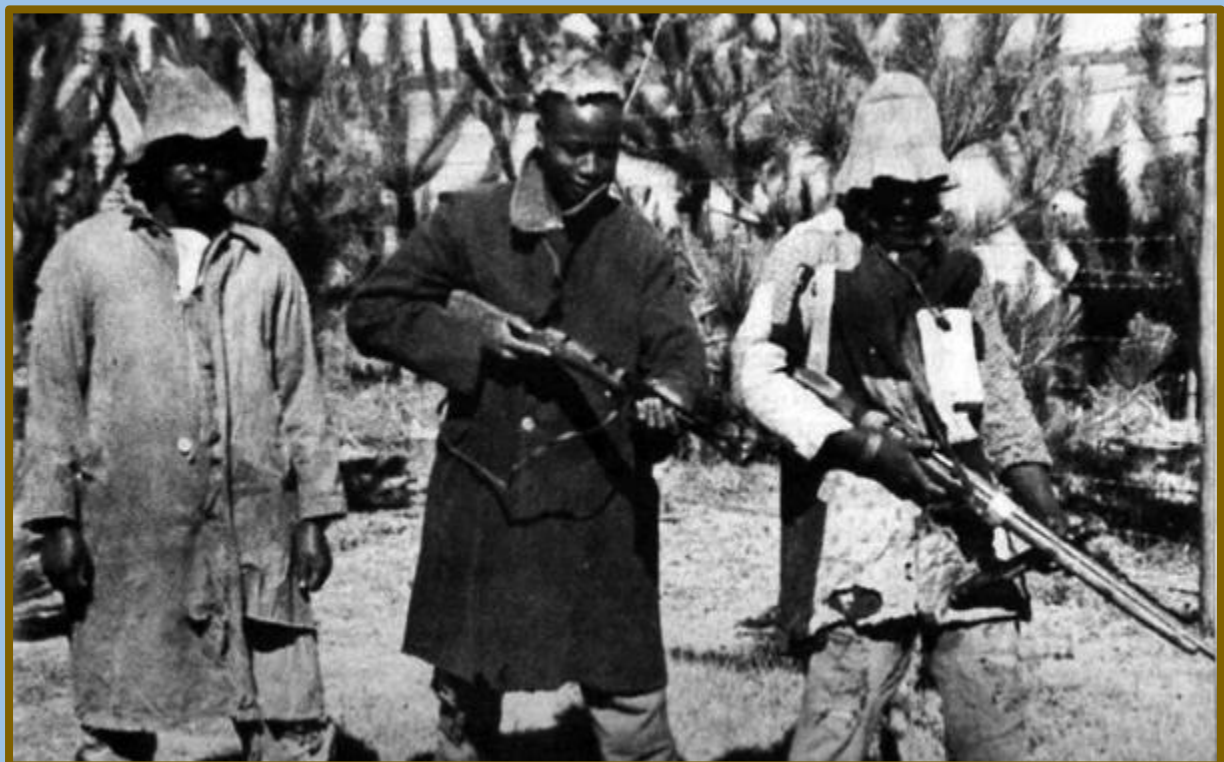
His book received generally positive reviews. On 13 May 2015, he was presented with a Wolfson History Prize and Templer Medal for the work.



Conscription was long held to be illiberal, foreign and un-British. Before 1914, Britain, alone among major European powers, persevered with a small “regular” volunteer army, with conscription introduced only reluctantly after three years of war. Yet when the Labour government introduced the National Service Act in 1948 there was little opposition.

Two world wars had accustomed Britons to a conscripted army and a powerful state, and the UK emerged from the 1939-45 conflict as a society that was both highly cohesive and obedient. To those who spent their two years in shoddily built army bases in Britain doing duties that often seemed designed simply to keep them busy, national service may well have felt like a waste of time, yet some found it a rewarding experience.

As Vinen points out, most accepted their service as an inevitable rite of passage that either punctuated or delayed the transition to adult life. An exception was the cohort of skilled workingmen who, already earning good wages at 18, found service life on about £1 a week a step back from adulthood.



The experience of national servicemen varied enormously. Several thousand experienced the sharp end of military life and found themselves engaged in fierce fighting in Korea and in the jungles of Malaya, dealing with the Mau Mau in Kenya or the EOKA in Cyprus, or landing at Port Said during the Suez operation. In comparison, garrison duty in Hong Kong or attachment to the British Army in Germany provided foreign travel with only potential risk. For a minority, there were interesting and career-enhancing assignments: at RAF Fighter Control, in military intelligence, or learning Russian in a pseudo-Soviet village on a Scottish island where no other language was spoken, while the services' enthusiasm for sport meant that the accomplished sportsman could spend most of his time playing football or tennis for his regiment.

The majority of national servicemen were allocated to the Army, where nearly 1.25 million served between 1948 and 1960, with the RAF taking about two-thirds as many men. In comparison, the Royal Navy, always highly selective in its recruitment and of the view that two years was insufficient time in which to train effective seamen, accepted fewer than 44,000 in the same period.

The Army and the RAF retained large numbers of regulars, and records of those killed in action in this period show that casualty rates were far higher for regulars than for national servicemen, suggesting a reliance on units composed largely of regulars for combat operations. But, as Vinen notes, many casualties were the result of causes other than being "killed in action", with exercises and flying accidents resulting in the deaths of many regulars and conscripts alike.



Drill or square-bashing, especially in the first weeks of service, led by the formidable figure of the sergeant or sergeant major giving the orders, were ordeals for many, but most soon realised that although such exercises had a military purpose they were, in essence, high theatre in which the sergeants were the impresarios. Some, including Sergeant Majors Ronald Brittain and Charles Copp, became well-known figures nationwide. By the time national service ended, it had become a British institution and the

subject of the affectionate satire of the first *Carry On* film, the title of which was, appropriately, the most often heard officer's command, *Carry On Sergeant*.

A great strength of Vinen's study is the way it relates the period in which national service operated to contemporaneous social change. The consumer society of 1960 was very different from the "austerity Britain" of the late 1940s. The coming of Teddy boys and rock 'n' roll heralded the first manifestations of youth culture, and the interrelationship between service and civilian society became more distant as the services retained their traditional ways. Perhaps the cultural explosion of the mid-1960s owed something to the release of a generation from the restrictions of army life, although it is debatable whether national service had much effect on British social development. Vinen is much preoccupied with class, but spends rather too much time on the extremes of its spectrum.

After all, few will be surprised to learn that there was a great gulf between the officers of smart regiments and privates in the Pioneer Corps. More interesting are the relations between grammar school boys and skilled workers, and those between those groups and the lower working class, when all found themselves sharing a barrack room. It is sometimes claimed that national service made the classes mix; although this was true, they didn't necessarily like each other when they did. Nearly 10,000 national servicemen became officers, but this replicated change in society, where upward mobility was increasing even as relations between social strata remained much the same.

Oral history, autobiographies and novels are rich sources for the historian of national service, and this study makes effective use of them. As Vinen cautions, memories are not always reliable guides, as they are often later adjusted to what people believe they should have felt at the time. Nevertheless, a fascinating dimension is added via interviews with men who later became public figures. Their recollections can be far from predictable: a Conservative parliamentary candidate recalled that it imbued him with the “considered hatred I still retain for the army”, while a working-class man who served as an NCO in the RAF remembered his two years as “a wonderful experience”.

Was post-war national service necessary? Vinen shows that without its national servicemen, the UK’s great power status could not have been maintained into the post-war years. The retreat from Empire, which many have seen as too hasty, might otherwise have turned into a headlong shambles, while the Cold War necessitated the maintenance of formidable military forces. Britain was far from alone in finding conscription essential.

The US introduced “the draft” in 1940 and maintained it until 1973, later retaining a contingency and selective draft. Most European states, including Spain, Italy and Portugal, had conscript armies, as did West Germany from the early 1950s, and France did away with conscription only in 1997. Vinen says little about the practice in other states, and a comparative dimension might have put Britain’s national service into a wider context.

By the early 1960s, the UK and its senior military officers were glad to return to professional and volunteer armed forces, and since then there has been no serious suggestion that national service should be restored. This pioneering study reminds us, however, that for nearly 20 years after the Second World War, Britain remained a nation in arms.

By Professor Richard Vinen, Allen Lane, 640pp, £25.00.ISBN 9781846143878,Published 28 August 2014



Australia’s trust in media at record low as ‘fake news’ fears grow

Edelman Trust Barometer shows people are far more willing to trust traditional news media than Facebook and Twitter

By: Amanda Meade. The Guardian Australia. Feb 6 2018

TRUST IN THE MEDIA in Australia is at a record low of just 31% and consumers say they struggle to tell the difference between fake news and facts, according to a global survey of trust and credibility in institutions. The Edelman Trust Barometer is an 18-year annual study of attitudes across 28 countries towards four pillars of society: government, non-government organisations, business and the media. Australia and Singapore were the only two countries to have declined in trust across all four institutions this year: Australia’s trust in NGOs is 48%, business 45%, government 35% and media 31%. Only Turkey, on 30%, scored lower on the question of trust in the media.

However the news is not all bad for the Australian media as the public appears to recognise the difference between traditional media outlets and social media, and is far more willing to trust the journalism in newspapers and online media than Facebook and Twitter.

The diminishing trust in media overall is driven by the public's growing distaste for social media and the way it spreads fake news, according to the head of Edelman Australia, Steve Spurr. "We are starting to see this year for the first time, very clearly from my point of view, that the public sees the difference between the different types of media they consume," Spurr told Guardian Australia. "They understand where they go to consume and why."

It's a similar picture in the UK, where only 24% of the population trust the likes of Twitter, Facebook and Instagram when looking for news and information. Spurr said fake news and the role it played in the election of Donald Trump in the US had put the concept of false information spread on Facebook and other social media platforms front and centre of the public's consciousness.



"Sixty-five per cent say they are not even sure how to tell what is true and what's not true and 57% are worried about fake news being used as a weapon of propaganda," Spurr said. "It shows that people are really listening and observing what is happening in those debates and now they are sad about how that impacts them." When you break the findings down they reveal a growing level of respect for journalism and trusted mastheads among the public, although there is a wariness of media outlets using clickbait to drive up profits.

Australia's trust in traditional news media and journalism has rebounded from 46% in 2017 to 61% in 2018. The global average for trust in journalism is 62%, so Australia is on par with the rest of the world.

Trust in online media has also increased, from 37% in 2017, to 43% in 2018. The global average is 55%. Spurr said the public valued simple well-told stories, news that didn't focus on celebrity and investigative journalism.

"Year on year, the gloss has come off social media," Spurr said. Trust in social media has dropped from 28% last year to 23% in Australia, just below the UK, where it is 24% – and well below the global average of 40%.

Interestingly, trust in search engines has also dropped significantly, from 58% to 47%. "The media is chasing too much sensationalism and celebrity," Spurr said. "The public want the media to be a watchdog on the other institutions but what they are seeing is the Australian media sacrificing accuracy to break the story early. Seventy-one per cent of them believe that Australian media are more interested in attracting an audience than telling the public what they really need to read.

SMALL WARS
JOURNAL

Psychological Warfare in the Arab-Israeli Conflict"

By: Joseph Davis, SW Journal February 23, 2018

PSYWAR--what is it good for? While not publicized, Psychological Warfare, the most potent weapon leveraged by both sides in the 1947 to present Arab-Israeli conflict, finally gets the attention it deserves. Author and researcher Ron Schleifer offers a play-by-play analysis highlighting the successes and failures at each milestone of this fight, and does so at a pace in which the time-strapped reader can digest with deep understanding.

Shleifer starts with the three principles of psychological warfare: the target audience, the message, and the means of delivery, which are important as he continues to reference them as he dissects each phase. From there, he chronologically reviews the historical milestones beginning with pre-state Israel's exploitation of media to influence international opinion against the British Government's enforcement of their Palestine anti-immigration policy following World War II.

Surprisingly, and only because there isn't much to report, he makes a quick touch-and-go on the Arab-Israeli Wars from 1948-1982 before landing in the unprecedented PSYWAR conducted by Hezbollah against Israel in southern Lebanon. Schleifer ends with the Second Intifada of the Palestinians waged in the early 2000s. The Israelis, slow to adopt that war's lessons, were completely out-matched by the Palestinians in the use of the internet and exploitation of foreign news media.

Finally, he offers two vignettes: The 2008 Israeli PSYWAR Operation "Cast Lead," which shed a light on the inadequacy of their psychological operations; and the 2010 Mavi Marmara Affair which provides striking similarities to the British anti-immigration enforcement half a century earlier.



Schleifer is a senior lecturer at Ariel University in Israel and the Head of the Ariel Research Centre for Defense and Communications. He has spent 25 years researching and writing about psychological warfare in the Arab-Israeli conflict. One would expect that he would take a partisan position regarding his own country, yet he is repeatedly critical of Israel's actions, or lack thereof. Never failing to look at an event from all sides, he thoroughly evaluates the performance of Israeli and Arab political-military organizations, points out successes and failures in strategy and execution, and frankly describes what could have been done to be more effective.

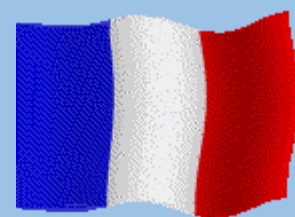
The sequential style and analytical structure of the book allows any reader to readily follow the timeline of events and the progress of the psychological warfare campaigns. The book provides a superb illustration of the power of a well-orchestrated PSYWAR campaign conducted in tandem with military action. Given the significance of this perpetual hostility and its consequences that reverberate throughout the region, it is easy for the reader to become absorbed in the details and find value in the lessons presented.

Schleifer repeatedly demonstrates how a militarily inferior force--first, the Israelis, then, the Palestinians--was able to turn a tactical loss into a strategic success through the deliberate execution of a psychological warfare. Additionally, he shows how the Israelis, once adept at influence operations against the British, later fall short of understanding its impact and have paid the price for their ignorance.

Psychological Warfare in the Arab-Israeli Conflict is a valuable history lesson useful for both strategic analyst and the battlefield planner alike. It offers insight into the background of the decades-long wars and sheds light on the nature of the continued geopolitical struggles of the Middle East. Above all, any military professional who takes up this book will understand what PSYWAR is good for. *Psychological Warfare in the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. By Ron Schleifer. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014. 218 pages. \$95.27 (Paper). ISBN: 9781137467021 (e-book)

France to combat fake news with rapid response law

By: Christopher Carbone for FoxNews.com. February 2018



A NEW JUDICIAL procedure would be established to stop the spread of fake news, said France's culture minister as she introduced a new anti-fake news law. "The measures that we will be working on from now until March are to create a law about 'confidence in information' that will permit us to act very quickly when a

fake news story goes viral, particularly during an election period,” said Françoise Nyssen in an interview with Journal du Dimanche on Sunday.

The new measure will establish responsibilities for media platforms and require that they cooperate with the government and be transparent about their content. It will also establish a procedure to allow for the “rapid blocking of the dissemination of fake news once it has become manifest,” she said.



French President Emmanuel Macron first proposed a law to counter fake news in his 2018 New Year’s speech to the press. His comments were seen as a reference to Moscow-backed RT and Sputnik.

RT and Sputnik both have French-language websites and, during a joint press conference with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in May, Macron

accused them of publishing “defamatory untruths” and “deceitful propaganda.” Since then, RT, formerly known as Russia Today, has launched a French-language TV channel, putting regulators on their guard.

During the French presidential campaign, Macron saw thousands of internal documents leaked online, which he slammed as an attempt at “democratic destabilization” similar to what had happened in the U.S. presidential election. France joins a growing number of European countries that are fighting back against fake news and Russian-sponsored propaganda. German legislation puts social networks at risk of significant fines if they do not remove fake news and hateful posts promptly.

Speaking on Sunday, Nyssen said that there will be strong sanctions if there is an unwillingness to comply with the obligations of cooperation and transparency imposed by the law, reports France 24. And she wanted to reassure that she respects the freedom of the press.

“There is no freedom of the press, though, when there is bad money chasing good, that’s to say when fake news chases true information,” she told the French news outlet, adding that the country will also “act strongly in the area of media education.”

China launches salvo against “network navy” of trolls who spread fake news

More than 200 arrests, thousands of accounts and websites seized for “illegal speculation.”



By: Sean Gallagher February 6, 2018

WHILE FACEBOOK AND TWITTER have been fighting the scourge of organized efforts to use social media to misinform and use their platforms as part of “influence campaigns,” China is battling its own Internet troll and “fake news” problem, according to a report from Liu Yi Zhan of China’s Xinhua News Agency. But while Facebook and Twitter can only ban accounts, Chinese officials can throw those who participate in “illegal Internet speculation” in jail.

Since last May, more than 200 people in China have been arrested, and thousands of others have found themselves confronted by police. Social media accounts and “illegal” websites

have been seized as part of a campaign against organizations literally called "wǎngluò shuǐjūn," or Network Navy (網絡水軍—literally, "network water army").

These Internet sailors have plied the websites, forums, and social media services of China for the last decade, running public relations and marketing campaigns in support or in opposition to one entity or another. For the most part, these operations have been on behalf of Chinese companies trying to promote themselves—or make their competitors look bad.

Network navies are loose organizations of hundreds or thousands of people recruited through sites targeted at "leisure workers"—people seeking extra money by doing tasks similar to Mechanical Turk jobs in their spare time. The organizers of these groups have typically marketed the services of their workers to companies looking for "grassroots" marketing help—or, more accurately, fake grassroots ("astroturf") campaigns—on social media services such as WeChat, the Weibo micro-blogging site (China's answer to Twitter), Dianping (like Yelp), and RenRen (a Chinese Facebook clone).



But according to officials at China's Ministry of Public Security, they have also engaged in the creation of spam email campaigns, fraudulent news sites, and social media trolling campaigns to shape public opinion and punish individuals who have run afoul of whomever pays them.

"The Network Navy has generally engaged in fabricating false information, libel attacks, illegal promotion, and other illegal activities and seriously infringes the personal and property rights of citizens," a police officer Liu of the Guangzhou Police's Network Police Detachment told Xinhua.

Network navies generally offer services that include boosting clients' websites on search engines for specific keywords along with general brand promotion and marketing. But they can also generate "press releases" and set up channels for getting those fake news releases onto major Chinese mainstream media sites—sites designated by the Chinese government as approved news sources. They will deliver followers on social media sites and amplify messages.

And for a greater fee, they will spread negative opinions (or "slander") about targets, acting as what officials called "cyber thugs"—a "pushing hand" to spread news and achieve an emotional impact—and a corresponding marketing effect. Liu of the Guangzhou Police told Xinhua that network navy salespeople usually can double the price for "content-sensitive posts," making them highly profitable.

Another profit centre for network navies is the deletion of negative posts on social media sites by aggressive use of sites' moderation flagging, hacking, or paying off insiders with administrative access to various platforms to delete the posts. Usually these services target consumer complaints against a particular company. T

he cost of getting a post deleted ranges from 300 to 3,000 yuan (about \$50 to \$500 US). One website operator told Xinhua that he made about 4,000 yuan (\$636 US) a month deleting comments, mostly consumer complaints, about product quality.

The first major arrests in the counter-network navy campaign came in July 2017, when law enforcement officers from 21 local jurisdictions carried out a coordinated campaign against a network of alleged network navy piece-workers recruited through a "project" on Sandaha,

(literally "three dozen," the name of a Chinese poker game). The site claims to be the "largest online promotion service trading platform in China," recruiting pieceworkers for Internet marketing programs. Police arrested 77 suspected members of the Shuijun Project and seized nearly 4 million yuan (about \$640,000 US) as well as computers, mobile phones, flash drives, and bank cards.

Since then, there have been more than 40 more coordinated operations by Chinese police agencies and over 100 million yuan (about \$16 million) in cash seized. But the raids haven't made much of a dent yet—a CCTV reporter found over 2,300 network navy "shops" online, selling "news service" access.

Sean is Ars Technica's IT Editor. A former Navy officer, systems administrator, and network systems integrator with 20 years of IT journalism experience, he lives and works in Baltimore, Maryland.



How to communicate the positive case for the Royal Navy?

FOR ALL THE TOP LEVEL WORRY the one thing that has been genuinely delightful to see in 2018 is the way that individual Royal Navy ships have really grasped social media this year.

While it isn't uniform in its application, there has been a real step change in how some ships are now actively broadcasting and informing on their activities in a manner unthinkable even a few years ago, writes one of Scribblings' favourite bloggers, Sir Humphrey.

This positive engagement with social media is to be welcomed and proves that rather than spending days or even weeks (in some cases) drafting bland anodyne press releases that get staffed from ship to HQ and beyond for ever more senior levels of approval to talk about something that will never be covered, a quick tweet with an image will reach a cast of thousands and get people talking about RN activity.

As an example, some RN ships websites last 'latest news' update was nearly two years ago, despite them being on active duty since then – how can the public understand or be



sympathetic to the cause of the RN when the system will not officially talk about its activities in an easily accessible way?

By contrast, the weekend just gone saw highly informative tweets from HMS Queen Elizabeth talking about her visit to Gibraltar, with a package of photos and footage that showcased her arrival and departure. The sheer level of retweeting and reach these images generated helps serve as a reminder of the strong public interest in her.

It is a measure of Queen Elizabeth's importance that they have a designated 'tweeto' who has led on social media engagement. The first incumbent has just left post, on promotion from Senior Rate to Officer, a well-deserved promotion for an individual who has made an enormous impression on the country of their new flagship.



Similarly, the survey flotilla are doing an excellent job of advertising their activity and also the role their people play. HMS Enterprise does a superb job of combining gentle humour, information and imagery to really explain the role played by their ship in both survey work and wider MCMV operations. HMS Protectpr's tweets showcasing their visit to Antarctica have shown a wider look at the life without limits that their sailors lead.

It is also encouraging to see the work done in home waters, by smaller ships highlighting their presence and training, as well as the efforts of the Fleet Air Arm and Royal Marines. Across the spectrum it feels as if there has been a step change in the level of social media presence by many units.

The MoD has long had a curious approach to social media, on the one hand wanting to get more coverage, but on the other being reluctant to support its use or do so except under very tight and carefully controlled conditions. To make the most of social media requires doing the opposite of what seems to have been the RN press handling strategy in recent years, which can be summed up cynically as 'run away, hide, avoid engagement for risk of difficult questions and then spout utterly bland lines that reek of defensiveness and a fear of bad headlines'.

Social media offers huge opportunity, but to be effective and timely, there must be significant trust placed in social media officers to tweet appropriately. It is perhaps ironic that it feels as though the armed forces trust their people to take human life but seem reluctant to let them near a twitter account for fear of what they could do without appropriate approval from a designated 'grown up' - at times it feels as if the system regards it as probably less career ending to negligently discharge 140 rounds, than it is to issue 140 characters.

But when properly used and with appropriate direction and guidance, social media like twitter offers a superb chance for the Royal Navy to really show how hard it is working, how capable it is and how it can influence audiences across the planet with a reach far beyond a press release that is unlikely to make it further than specialist media.

The public have embraced social media, they love learning about the Navy and this is a perfect combination to help sell the RN. HMS Queen Elizabeth has almost 39,000 followers on twitter – more people follow that one ship than serve in the Naval Service right now.



The problem for the RN is that the last few years of approaching the internet as something which is dangerous means it has left a void that has been filled by commentators and rumour. It is fascinating to watch how the lack of a credible RN presence has been replaced by twitter accounts like 'Carrier corrections' (@Carrier Correct) which spends its day challenging the falsehoods and myths like 'carrier with no aircraft', due to the lack of the RN having an account to do this job.

What must be hoped is that as more ships become better at advertising their presence and activity, the next step will be to have a more robust rebuttal policy, getting the RN to actively take on and correct errors, not express views, merely correct falsehoods, and stand up for itself online.

How Does Defence Communicate Better?

Similarly, it must be hoped that the MoD will change its approach to personnel writing about their activity in Defence. At present anyone in the MoD running a blog which openly states their role, or which talks about their identity and job runs the risk of disciplinary action.

The all-embracing fear that someone may say something which may possibly be misconstrued runs so deep that rather than embrace people who are proud of their work, want to talk about their life and role, but occasionally offer productive, objective criticism means that the MOD is actively shutting itself off from building a community of bloggers and writers who could reach out and sell its message for it.

It is perhaps an irony that there are many people out there who write about Defence because they are passionate, and they care deeply for it. There are many more frustrated service personnel and civil servants who want to do the same but can't for fear that they will lose their jobs - the reason this blog temporarily stopped in 2014 was because Humphrey was given an offer he felt he couldn't refuse.



NEWS RELEASE

From: Public Relations Officer
RFA ARGUS
BFPO 433
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02 October 2007

ROYAL NAVY, ROYAL MARINES and the ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY CONDUCT MAJOR MEDICAL EXERCISE

Over 180 of the Royal Navy's Medical Staff are taking part in a major medical exercise in the Solent today onboard Royal Fleet Auxiliary ARGUS. Recently emerging from a major refit, The Royal Navy's Primary Casualty Receiving Facility (PCRF) contains one of the UK's largest High Dependency medical care facilities.

The PCRF Complex within ARGUS is a fully equipped 100 hundred bed hospital facility offering services including an Operating theatre and Intensive Care through to Physiotherapy and a Pathology laboratory. Commander Tom McAuslin, Commanding Officer of the PCRF, says "it offers a level of care to the deployed service personnel on a par with that of the NHS".

Both Regular and Reserve personnel man the facility. Normally they work in the Ministry of defence Hospital Units (MDHUs) ashore. MDHUs are integrated military units within NHS hospitals, allowing our personnel to maintain their clinical skills between deployments. MDHU Derriford and MDHU Portsmouth have supplied the majority of the staff, with smaller numbers coming from MDHU Northallerton and the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine (RCDM) in Birmingham.

A wide variety of expertise is embarked including Intensive Care nurses, Consultant Surgeons and Anaesthetists through to Dermatology specialists. In addition, members of the Royal Marine Band Service (RMBS) are onboard to provide the PCRF with stretcher bearers. Major Burcham, Officer Commanding RMBS, is delighted that his

This approach is in sharp contrast to allies, where serving military personnel can write, and are actively encouraged to do so. All that happens is they add a disclaimer that their views are their own and do not reflect those of the organisation they work for. This has led to an emergence of top quality thinkers and talent, often at junior levels of the armed forces being able to emerge as thinkers and communicators for their organisation. A good example being the US Army Officer T.S.Allen who has written prolifically on a range of issues, yet were his UK equivalent to do likewise, it would be considered career suicide.

One must hope that 2018 not only sees a resurgence in twitter accounts for the UK armed forces, but active encouragement by senior officers for their people to write openly and honestly about their roles, careers and thoughts on the challenges facing Defence. There is a constant mantra of 'empowerment' chanted throughout the MOD, talking about downwards delegation and trusting people to do their role without referring upwards. Loosening the social media constraints, letting

people tell their story, and simply asking for a disclaimer noting that views stated do not represent official views of the MOD would help empower staff to go out and talk about their experience more.

It is faintly ridiculous that the only blogs and twitterati fighting the MOD's corner are not allowed to be those serving. There should be nothing wrong with encouraging people to write accurate blogs that defend Defence, not force them to sit in frustrated silence watching the service they love being eviscerated online yet knowing that to defend it is to commit a disciplinary offence.

2018 has shown that the Royal Navy has an incredible story of success to tell. Yes, it has challenges, yes there are issues, but these are not insurmountable. What is now needed though is for the Service and the MOD to take the next step of trusting its people, empowering them to stand up for their Service and talk loudly and proudly about the amazing success story that is the modern Royal Navy. Be loyally loud, be truthfully proud, but most of all be out there- a simple mantra for all budding social media officers for showing the world just how good the Royal Navy really is.

The Bath Chronicle

Army Reserves asked to complete unpaid training due to 'army-wide cuts'

By: Sam Ferguson, Bath Chronicle 13 FEB 2018

ARMY RESERVE MEDICS who have served in Afghanistan and Iraq have hit out at being asked to complete training without full pay. The troops of 243 Field Hospital in Keynsham are made up of mainly NHS medical professionals, who give up their spare time to serve in the Reserves.



As Reserve medics, they should be paid the same as regular soldiers for the time they dedicate to the armed forces. This includes weekly “drill nights”, training weekends, exercises and tours of active duty where they serve alongside members of the Regular Army.

But the medics of the Keynsham field hospital were only given two days’ notice that they would not be getting full pay for a two-and-a-half-day training exercise that took place last month. The troops were told they would only be paid for a day-and-a-half’s training because of “army-wide cuts”, and would have to complete a day of training without getting paid if they chose to attend. To add insult to injury, those who reported for duty found the “survival training” exercise they had signed up for was being held in the unit’s car park, rather than on an army training area.

During the training, the medics were not told why they were training in a car park, but a spokesman for the British Army later said: “The decision to conduct the training in the Army Reserve centre was taken because it was the most suitable venue to teach these low-level skills; finance was not a factor. The spokesman added: “Notification that one day of the training weekend would be unpaid was sent out as early as possible and personnel were able to choose whether to remain or leave.”

Under the Future Reserves 2020 plan outlined in 2011, the British Army is aiming to have 120,000 troops by 2020. The plan includes 35,000 Army Reservists, who are expected to make



up roughly 30% of the total army. A former member the Army Reserves who served for more than 10 years as a combat medic approached the Chronicle to explain what had happened, on the condition of anonymity. He said: “The exercise was on the weekend of the January 13. It would have been for about 50-60 people from all over the South West, but I don’t know how many for sure.

“Two days before it was due to be held, they told the people going that they wouldn’t be able to pay them fully for their time because of ‘army-wide cuts’. “It looked like they didn’t even have enough money for a training area. They held a ‘survival training’ exercise in the car park of the barracks in Keynsham. It’s just embarrassing really. A lot of my friends are still in the Reserves and they are absolutely furious. The problem is they’re not allowed to talk to anyone about it – especially the press. They were told specifically not to approach the press about this.”

Our source explained that the majority of the unit are long-serving reservists, and have completed tours of Afghanistan, Iraq and Kosovo. As well as their part-time roles in the Army Reserves, the nature of the unit means that most of the soldiers are full-time NHS workers, who struggle to get time off work to complete their army training. They give up their time in the understanding that they will receive fair compensation.

Our source said: “In a nutshell, this isn’t the first time this has happened. “When I was in it happened five or six times over the last 10 years. At least once every two years something like this would happen. They’ve run out of money and they can’t pay any of the soldiers to train. The problem with the military chain of command is that you can’t break ranks and approach anyone in a position of power.

“In this instance it was medics who have all gone to Afghanistan and who all work in the NHS. They’ve received operational medals from Kosovo, U.N operations, Afghanistan and Iraq. They’re doctors, nurses and health care specialists, all NHS workers, and they give up their spare time to serve their country as Army Reserve medics. But it happens broadly all across the Army Reserves.

“No one in the unit can go to the press because a lot of them rely on the money. They get a yearly bonus for completing enough training days and they also don’t want to create problems for themselves or create any issues for the unit. “But they arrange that time off months in advance with the NHS to make sure they will be able to attend, and to be told a couple of days before it begins that they won’t get full pay isn’t right.”

The training courses that are put on for the Reserves are usually staffed by full-time regular Army soldiers, who would have received their normal pay for the time they dedicated to the course. The unnamed ex-combat medic said: “The regulars that were running the weekend certainly got paid to do it. They are usually full-time soldiers who have come to the end of their careers and don’t care about what they are doing. The reserve soldiers were expecting to get two-and-half-days’ pay, but they only got paid for a day and a half instead.

“You’ve got people giving up their free time, booking it off work and then getting told they are getting half pay. Then they turn up, and it’s taking place in a car park. It creates bad morale in the unit that is training for war and could be asked to serve at a moment’s notice.”

Serving Reservists are expected to complete between 19-27 days training a year, depending on their unit, to qualify for an annual tax-free lump sum ‘bounty’ which increases after each year of service.

The Government’s guide for reservists pay reads:

“You get paid for all the time you spend training and your daily pay goes up every year and with each promotion. For every ten days in training you will also get one day of paid holiday.”“You can also receive up to £2,300 joining incentive when you join the Army Reserve (conditions apply) and an annual tax-free bounty (subject to completing a certain number of training days and achieving certain minimum training standards) of £440 in year 1, £972 in year 2, £1,502 in years 3/4 and £1,742 in year 5 and beyond.” The Army Reserves section of the British Army website also assures applicants that they will “get paid for the time spent training, and a bonus payment for completing a certain amount of training days each year.”

A spokesman for the British Army said: “Notification that one day of the training weekend would be unpaid was sent out as early as possible and personnel were able to choose whether to remain or leave. “Personnel are not expected to carry out unpaid training but when they choose to and are on duty, they are eligible for travel at public expense and receive normal allowances. The decision to conduct the training in the Army Reserve centre was taken because it was the most suitable venue to teach these low-level skills, finance was not a factor.

“We are investing £1.7 billion in the reserve over a 10-year period and they are a usable and integrated part of the armed forces. The Army Reserve is a success and continues to increase; as of October 1, the total strength of the Army Reserve was 30,330.”



Future US Marine Infantry Units May Have PSYOP Capabilities

By Hope Hodge Seck, Military.com February 13, 2018

THE INFANTRY UNIT OF THE FUTURE is sophisticated, with electronic warfare capabilities, robust intelligence and reconnaissance capabilities, and the ability to conduct local influence operations. And the future is now.

When Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Robert Neller named an experimental infantry unit, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, in early 2016, much of the concept was built around hardware: testing out unmanned systems, vehicles, and weapons for use by the force. But, more than a year

later, many of the recommendations coming out of the experiment have to do with enhancing the skill set inherent in the infantry battalion, not just the gear the unit carries.

Brig. Gen. Christian Wortman, the commanding general of Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, told reporters at the Pentagon that some new capabilities expected to arrive for infantry battalions include an increased sniper platoon, to enhance surveillance and reconnaissance; tools to manage and monitor the signature the unit creates; and new positions focused on information and effective communication with adversaries and local populations downrange.

"At the battalion level, we gave [the Marines] some tools to support military information operations, to be able to support our influence efforts in a contested [area of operations] and to work to gain the support of local populations and discourage the efforts of potential adversary forces," Wortman said.



Military influence support operations, or MISO, is a field better known to the public by a name the Army still uses: psychological operations, or PSYOP. The terms cover a range of activities from direct communication with local civilians by use of leaflet or radio broadcast, to deception strategies aimed at the

enemy -- all intended to influence emotions, motives, and decision-making in favour of a particular objective.

"At the battalion level, we want them to be part of the equation for effectively engaging local populations, engaging adversary forces," Wortman told Military.com. "The means of delivery have changed a lot. Being able to reach people on their phones with texts or other types of capabilities to deliver messages, those are the types of tools that we want to be able to provide down to the battalion level," he continued. "It just hasn't been part of the battalion fight up to this point."

In experimentation, the unit was given "enhanced situational awareness tools," including radios that can interface with tablets equipped with battlefield visualization software designed to enhance awareness of what's happening in the region with friendly forces, enemies, and any local civilian population, Wortman said.

Recommendations for unit improvement after the experimentation included adding an information environment operations officer and an information management officer, as well as an additional forward air controller at the battalion level. All of these changes in some way reinforce a key takeaway of the Marines' infantry experiment: that the service is in "an age of strategic competition," requiring key capability changes to better accomplish the mission.

"We're locked in to a competition for the support of the local population. And in a counterinsurgency kind of environment, there's a premium on gaining that kind of support," Wortman said. "But even in an age of strategic competition, we want to ensure that we've got the right tools to reach out to civilian populations so they understand the nature of our operations ... So, we want to have tools to support the strategic message at the tactical edge so that we're able to reinforce that and communicate that effectively."

...the Sputnik view!

8 By: VANO SHLAMOV, Sputnik Radio February 14 201

The US military is planning to arm US Marines with PSYOP (psychological operations or local influence operations) capabilities despite a checkered history suggesting war fighters may be best off sticking with warfighting. The US military's record of using PSYOP tactics hardly inspires confidence: last fall, it was forced to apologize for distributing "highly offensive"

leaflets in Afghanistan that displayed a Muslim prayer printed on top of a dog, an animal many Muslims view as unclean, with a large lion chasing the dog, the Los Angeles Times reported. "It's an insult to Islam," said a spokeswoman for the provincial government where the leaflets were dropped.

A US general addressed the situation at the time by saying "the design of the leaflets mistakenly contained an image highly offensive to both Muslims and the religion of Islam. I sincerely apologize."



But instead of recognizing the troops may not be cut out for PSYOP tasks and could actually do more harm than good, the military is doubling down. Speaking at the Pentagon Thursday, US Marine Brig. Gen. Christian Wortman explained to reporters that Marine units have been given more "military influence support operations" tools, known more broadly as PSYOP tools.

"At the battalion level, we gave [the Marines] some tools to support military information operations, to be able to support our influence efforts in a contested [area of operations] and to work to gain the support of local populations and discourage the efforts of potential adversary forces," Wortman said.

Without going into specifics, the general said the tools would include "being able to reach people on their phones with texts or other types of capabilities to deliver messages: those are the types of tools that we want to provide news down to the battalion level."



Navy scraps two combat camera teams

By: Mark D. Faram , Navy Times February 7 2018

Faram is a senior writer and covers personnel, cultural and historical issues for Navy Times. He joined the Navy Times in 1992. From 1996-2000 he was a staff photographer for all the Military Times,

before returning to writing in 2001. A nine-year active duty Navy veteran, Faram served from 1978 to 1987 as a Navy Diver and photographer

DUE TO BUDGET CONSTRAINTS, the U S Navy is eliminating its two combat camera units. by Oct. 1 in an effort to cut costs and eliminate billets, Navy Times has learned. Around since World War II, combat camera units have long had the dual mission of documenting fleet operations for historical purposes and after-action reports and — perhaps what they are best known for — telling the Navy's stories to the public through iconic imagery.

"Due to budget constraints...difficult decisions were made in order to ensure the resourcing of critical mission areas that support Navy's expeditionary operations," said Lt. Lauren Chatmas, spokesperson for the Navy at the Pentagon. Other expeditionary mission areas took precedence over COMCAM. Therefore, as an overall cost savings measure, the decision was made to provide this capability to the fleet from the existing Navy Public Affairs Support Element command."

A source familiar with the situation told Navy Times that the final decision to disband combat camera occurred during the FY19 budget process. But the writing has been on the wall on the

wall since FY17, when combat camera funding was cut by 60 percent. Those funding cuts corresponded to a significantly declining workload.

“Historically, the units may have viewed their mission as strictly visual documentation,” the source said. “In today’s environment, adaptability and versatility are at a premium for commanders in the field. So, in a fast-moving and complex digital world where technology has evolved, the communities they served have found alternative ways to meet their needs.”

There was an opportunity to preserve the units in 2017 by reorganizing into a single Navy unit, but an inability to agree to terms of the consolidation prevented that effort from getting off the ground. Between the two combat camera units, one of which is based in Norfolk and one in San Diego, the cuts will eliminate four active-duty officers, 50 active-duty enlisted and 31 reserve enlisted billets.

A majority of the expiring billets are from the mass communication specialist rating, but up to eight billets that are normally filled by other ratings will also be cut, such as logistics specialist, gunner’s mate, internal communication technician, intelligence specialist and yeoman.

....but Marines still recruit Combat Correspondents



WHILE THE NAVY cuts back on combat camera teams, the United States Marine Corps continues to recruit for its ubiquitous role of Combat Correspondent. CCs provide a unique perspective on what it's like inside the Corps and are tasked to gather information for news and feature articles and conduct public relations efforts. Considered a key role by the Corps these specialist Marines are viewed as the only way to document, for a civilian audience, what happens in combat. As well as gathering news for print publications and television news programmes they undertake media liaison, answer queries from civilian media representatives and conduct community relations. CCs also produce print articles and photographs and edit internal newspapers and magazines.

Marines seek young, tough recruits

By: Lolita C. Baldor, The Associated Press February 2018

WASHINGTON — For the first time in 30 years, the U.S. Marine Corps will air an ad during the Super Bowl, using an online-only spot Sunday to target a young, tough, tech-savvy audience for potential recruits looking for a challenge. The high-powered, battle-heavy, 30-second ad shows Marines deploying from ships in amphibious vehicles, dropping bombs from aircraft and hurling a shoulder-launched drone into the air (the video above is a 60-second extended version).

“It’s not just the ships, the armour or the aircraft. It’s something more. It’s the will to fight and determination to win found inside each and every Marine that answers a nation’s call,” the announcer says, as the camera follows a squad of Marines storming off helicopters into a mock firefight while explosions erupt around them.

The goal, said Maj. Gen. Paul Kennedy, head of the Marine Corps Recruiting Command, is to reach young men and women who have faced and conquered challenges in their life, probably played physical sports such as wrestling or rugby, and have a bit of that fighting spirit.

Network television viewers of the game won’t see the Marine spot. But those watching through online streaming services — which charge a fraction of the advertising price — will see it twice.



“I’m not trying to enlist fathers or mothers, I’m trying to enlist 18- to -24-year-olds,” said Kennedy. “And they tend to be cord cutters. They take in entertainment differently and they tend to do it on a device rather than a television.”

The Marine Corps would not provide the exact cost because the specific pricing is proprietary. But the online ad represents a savings of nearly 85 percent over the broadcast price. Thirty-second slots are going for more than \$5 million for broadcast airtime alone. And the online ad — which can be viewed on www.marines.com — is expected to reach more than 20 million viewers.

As the military services struggle to meet recruitment goals in these times of low unemployment, they are competing for many of the same young people — physically fit high school graduates who can score 50 or higher on the military’s aptitude test.

The Marine Corps is on target to meet its recruitment goal of about 38,000 for the budget year ending Sept. 30. But recruiters have historically found that the months of February through May are the toughest for finding new enlistments. By this time, many high school seniors have decided what they will do or what college they will attend.

So, Kennedy is hoping the ad will reach some who may still be open to serving in the Marine Corps. Targeting the streaming broadcast has now become a more effective option as viewership online grows, he said, and is the best way to reach more young people while

spending less money. “I don’t have unlimited funds,” he said. “And this is probably the most-watched event, as we move into the toughest months of recruiting.”

The visuals in the ad, he said, go to the heart of what Marines do, deliberately focusing on the fight rather than some of the intangibles such as the potential for paid college tuition, bonuses or other incentives. The images are designed to attract people who are tough and resilient — key words the Marines use repeatedly to describe the force.

The battle scenes were filmed on the West Coast with Marines participating in a military exercise called Dawn Blitz in order to show more realistic scenarios. The ad also shows Marines deployed on the USS Essex, an amphibious assault ship, which was off the California coast for training, to mimic a deployment near the shores of an adversary.



‘Grunt’ eye-witness reports from front line bloody battles

By James Clark
Politics & Culture Reporter, City on a Hill Press, California

IT’S 1951 AND SOMEWHERE NEAR THE 38th parallel, the border between North and South Korea, lies the village of Ch’on Do Ri where a valley cuts a swathe between two mountaintops. The snow has begun to cake the forward slope where United States Marines are embedded in the labyrinthine trench system. Their breath rises in white clouds that mingle with campfire and cigarette smoke which mirror the plumes rising from the North Korean line.



The company's 1st Sergeant crouches concealed amongst the sandbags, a 50 Calibre sniper rifle held tightly in his hands. At his side is a Private First Class (PFC), who rests safely in cover, but just beyond them there is a gap in the wall. A third man sits back, his attention riveted on the other two. Suddenly the palpable tension reaches its peak and the PFC springs forward, revealing himself to the enemy. The burst of shots, empty and hollow, echo across the vast divide between the two entrenched forces.

After his mad dash the Marine drops back into cover, breathing heavy with exhaustion, but still in one piece. The PFC's plan worked. Realizing that the enemy was always on the lookout for an easy kill, he volunteered to draw their fire for the 1st Sergeant, an expert marksman who would use the flash from their enemy's rifles to pinpoint their location.

As the tension begins to lift, the scratchy etching of pencil on paper becomes more noticeable. Still crouched nearby, the third man holds a notepad onto which he's frantically detailing the event. On his right breast pocket is his last name in capital letters; PAXTON. He is a Marine, and a combat correspondent.

Jack Paxton, the Executive Director of the United States Marine Corps Combat Correspondent Association (USMCCCA), shed some light on what one is getting into by enlisting. He joined the USMC in 1950 and served as a combat correspondent in Korea and Vietnam, retiring from the USMC as a Captain in 1969. Paxton who grew up during WWII, said he missed it by two years.

"Growing up in WWII, the American people understood the situation and really relied on the servicemen and revered them a great deal." Paxton said, "I saw that dress blue uniform and said, 'That's for me.'" While interviewing Marines in Korea, he found no shortage of unique experiences. Combat correspondents are Marines who are trained as journalists and assigned to cover stories about the lives of the men and women that serve in the armed forces.



Although war reporters are typically civilians, the term combat correspondent is reserved for Marines in the public affairs division. Marines with a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) 4341 receive training in basic military writing, broadcast journalism and photography at Defense Information School (DINFOS) Fort Meade in Maryland.

However, when Paxton arrived in Vietnam the duties of combat correspondents had shifted. "The mission of public affairs in those days changed a bit. We ostensibly went to Vietnam to cover stories and do the same things we did in Korea, and found ourselves inundated by civilian correspondents." Paxton said, describing the move from military reporting to media escort, one of the tasks assigned to today's combat correspondents.

"When I first got [to Vietnam], we had five hundred media reps and our mission became to help them as much as we could. We would take them into combat, and were working as escorts more than anything else." Paxton said, adding that he got to work with the civilian media and with internationally renowned reporter, Eddie Adams, in particular.

Keith Oliver, the head of DINFOS, enlisted in the Marines and served just over 30 years, working in the public affairs division before retiring as a Colonel. Although not a part of the military, war reporters are oftentimes regarded with respect by enlisted and officer alike, a sentiment that Oliver shared. "Bullets are flying and here's this guy with his typewriter out. He'll get the story home, however he can." Oliver said. "You get to work with some professionals who really know their stuff. These guys are pros, they may have earrings and long hair, but they can write!"

Paxton described how the roles of combat correspondents have shifted back somewhat to what they were before Vietnam. "You see an awful lot of stories from [combat correspondents] on training the Iraqi police force." Paxton said, adding that reporting on Marines working in unusual situations is a key part of being a combat correspondent.

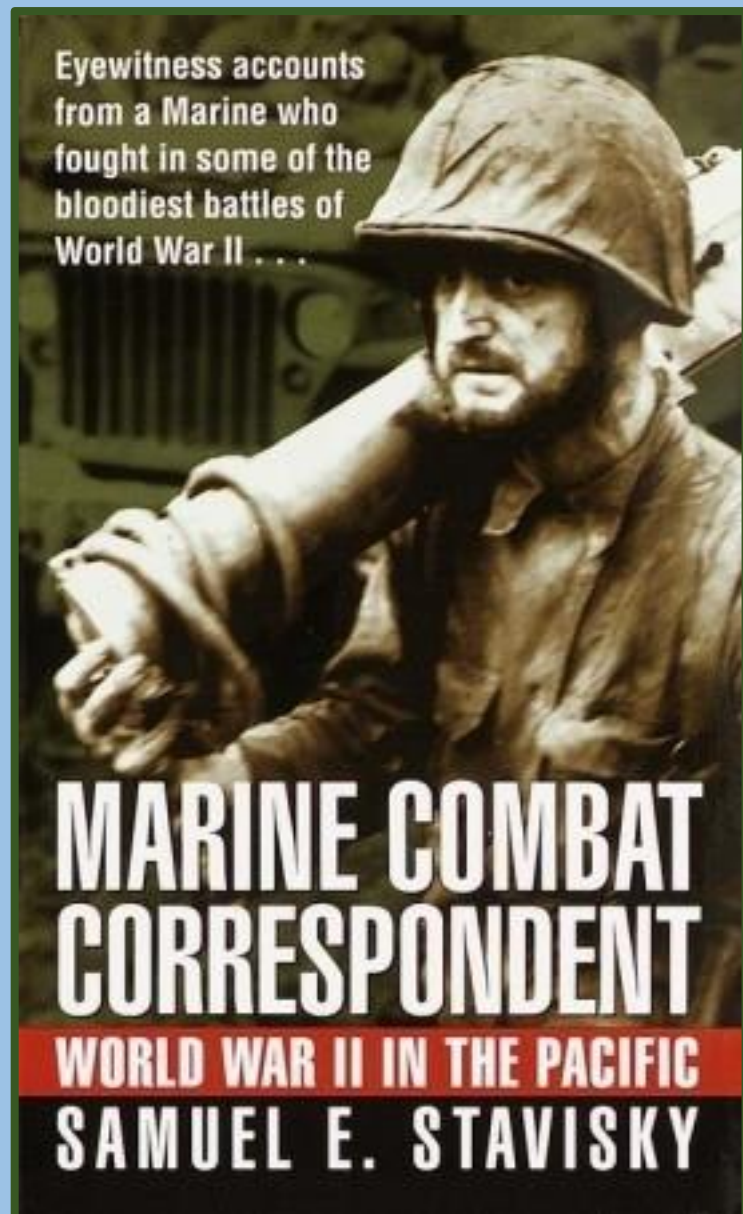
There seems to be a call for more coverage of the daily lives of servicemen and women, or, the hometown perspective, which is something that doesn't appear too frequently in the civilian media, Paxton said.

Tim Heffernan, an assistant editor for Esquire magazine which featured many stories by war reporters Michael Herr and John Sack during the Vietnam War, gave his two cents on how today's reporting compares to that of the Vietnam era.

"After reading any of the great reporters from Vietnam you begin to see that their main struggle wasn't to cut through the official bull or work up the guts to hit the frontlines," Heffernan said. "It was to figure out how to impress upon a too credulous nation the fact that the war was going very, very badly — and very differently from how its leaders were presenting it."

There are various ways each journalist achieved his aims, Heffernan said, whether it was through sheer volume of evidence as Pulitzer Prize winning reporter, David Halberstam did, or wild license in the case of Michael Herr, who is widely known for his book, "Dispatches", or bottomless empathy in the case of John Sack.

Unlike the stories from civilian war reporters who generally report for large cities, articles from combat correspondents often find their way to the small Middle American towns from which



many Marines come. These focus on this hometown perspective and often scrutinize the day to day difficulties and tasks facing servicemen and women through critical human-interest pieces, something Heffernan regarded as an effective way of galvanizing social involvement.

Oliver talked about the opportunities he had as a combat correspondent to report accurately, honestly, and directly to smaller Middle American towns. "I could talk about a Marine and his life in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, but I'm also getting out unfiltered information," Oliver said. "It puts the responsibility on the combat correspondent not abuse his power; you've got to be dictated by honor."

Reaching out to the friends and family of servicemen and women or those who from the same area is necessary for civic participation in the war effort and for generating awareness of what it's costing us.

"We are definitely not a nation at war; we're a military at war," Oliver said. "Unless you have family or friends at war, most people aren't involved. That's where public affairs is important, to spread the word. Not to try to persuade people, but to share what's going on."

Isabel Macdonald from Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) felt that some viewpoints, such as those of servicemen and women who are critical of the military are often underrepresented in the media.

"What we've seen is that when those perspectives are critical of the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan they've been shut out from the media," Macdonald said.

One such event was "Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan," which took place at the National Labour College in Silver Spring, Maryland. It featured testimony from U.S. veterans who served in those occupations, giving accurate accounts of what is really happening day in and day out, on the ground.

In the testimony, the rules of engagement in Iraq are addressed by veterans of the war. Clifton Hicks and Steve Casey spoke of their experiences in a "free-fire zone" where there were supposedly "no friendlies," although neither man ever saw any enemy combatants, but did witness the large-scale destruction of an apartment complex.

However, the uncensored testimonials about Iraq and Afghanistan received little recognition from the greater public.

"We saw this in the Winter Soldier Testimonials when it was ignored by the mainstream media" Macdonald said, but drew attention to the fact that although the Winter Soldier Testimonials received little attention from major news organizations, it still had a substantially larger circulation than its predecessor during the Vietnam War, likely due to direct streaming from Democracy Now! an independent daily news program that broadcasts on 88.9 FM in Santa Cruz.

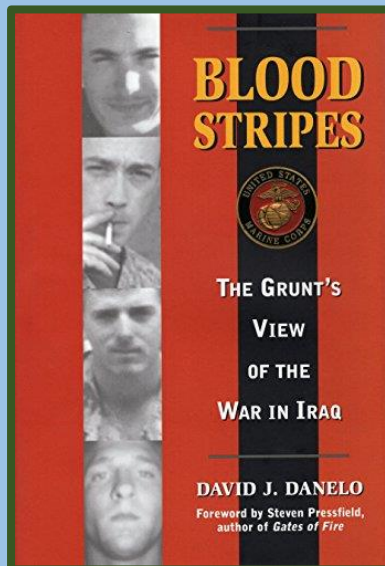


However, Heffernan feels that the military can be under-credited for its willingness to give insights on the situation at hand. "I've had to deal with various branches of military in my work and have been impressed with their openness. I don't think it's as much of a culture as censorship as it's being portrayed." Heffernan said, adding that oftentimes censorship occurs when the commanding officers feel that certain information may constitute a security risk.

However, there have been instances when photos, news footage or stories that depict the current wars in a negative light have been censored, such as the images of filled coffins being unloaded from aircraft returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

As an award-winning photographer who worked with Molly Bingham to create *Meeting Resistance*, a documentary about the Iraq insurgency that offers the rare perspective of those fighting against the occupiers in Iraq, Steve Connors aims to unearth these hidden images. Connors served in the British army for nine years, during which time he developed an interest in photography, and so pursued a career as a photo-journalist and documentarian.

The jump from soldier to reporter has been made by many, and can be made easier for those who have worked as reporters while enlisted or commissioned. "We've got several wonderful success stories out there of Marines who served, got out and now they're magazine editors, photographers, journalists, reporters, etcetera" Oliver said.



Of those Marines who have gone on to be writers or journalists is David Danele who wrote *Blood Stripes*, a story detailing the grunts view of the Iraq war.

Another is Senator James Web received the Navy Cross in Vietnam as an infantry officer, wrote several books about his experiences as a Marine and has been on several trips to cover war.

There are advantages to going the military route Connors said, but warned of the risks of becoming a propagandist.

"You'll have a deep understanding of how the military works, so you'll know what questions to ask, but it's important to get the other [side of the story]." Connors said.

Connors contrasted the extreme differences between being embedded with U.S. or British troops and being with civilians during combat, warning that being on the receiving end of bombardment and shelling is not only terrifying, but eye

opening as it offers a look at what it's like to see war from the civilian perspective.

However, this radical change in one's perception can come at a steep price. According to The Committee to Protect Journalists, an independent, non-profit organization created to promote press freedom, 685 journalists have been killed between January 1, 1992 and April 4, 2008.

Oliver spoke with conviction and near tangible respect about the dangers facing civilian reporters and their willingness to seek out the truth, regardless of the costs. "Most of the media guys would have a lot more medals than Marines do," he said. "If there's trouble in the world, they're there."

The challenges and difficulties that one may face during military service are at times beyond comprehension. Coping with the horrors of war and retaining one's identity and ideals is undoubtedly a struggle of immense proportions. "The important thing is to try to stay sane" Connors said. "Don't get frustrated if your views aren't represented by the organization that you're a part of" Connors said, adding that you need to remember why you're there.

Although war reporters are typically civilians, the term combat correspondent is reserved for Marines in the public affairs division. Marines with a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) 4341 receive training in basic military writing, broadcast journalism and photography at Fort Meade in Maryland. Terris Patterson, a UCSC Graduate student that taught *Fables of Control*, a class that focused on dystopic literature in relation to governmental control, served on active duty in the Navy.

A Canadian immigrant, Patterson served in the Navy as an electrical engineer as a way to pay for college. He served for eight years on active duty from 1995 to 2003 and two years in the reserves from 2003 to 2005. During that time, he took part in the NATO missions Allied Force and Noble Anvil in Kosovo, and was involved in operation Iraqi Freedom while stationed in the Persian Gulf.

During this time, he was involved in situations he never thought he'd be in. "I wound up in places I never should've been, doing jobs I was never trained to do and which were, often, morally at odds with what I joined to do." Patterson said. "I never wanted to shoot missiles or blow shit up,

A tale of two flags - on Iwo Jima



SEVENTY-THREE years ago, on February 23, two American flags were planted on the peak of Mount Suribachi, located on the Japanese island of Iwo Jima. Coming five days into one of the most ferocious battles of World War II, the first flag-raising, by a group of United States Marines, was emotional, and a Marine photographer captured it.

But a U.S. commander thought the flag was too small to be seen at a distance. And so, a few hours later, five more Marines and one Navy medical corpsman carried out orders to haul a much larger flag up to the top. Again, photos were shot, along with a film. No one thought to record this bit of everyday war business in the daily log.

How did this second flag-raising, and not the other, come to stand not only for the heroism shown during the Battle of Iwo Jima, but the core values of the Marines, and indeed of all American combatants in World War 2? The answer is found in the power of certain images, in this case a photograph taken by Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal, right, to capture a moment but also transcend it.



It might be hard today to comprehend how a single image can become iconic, exposed as we are to streams of photographs and videos every day from our news and social media feeds.



But Rosenthal's image resonated with all who saw it and was swiftly reproduced on U.S. government stamps and posters, in sandstone (on Iwo Jima, by the Seabee Waldron T. Rich) and most famously in bronze, as the Marine Corps War Memorial in Washington. The photograph won a Pulitzer Prize in 1945 and is considered one of the most famous images of all time.

Why this photograph, and not the one of the arguably more meaningful first flag placement, which was taken by Staff Sgt. Louis R. Lowery, left? Its dynamic and masterful composition is part of the secret. The flag structures the picture, its diagonal back-leaning position contrasting with the forward motion of the soldiers. They seem to rise out of the ash and other detritus of the battlefield, and there is already something sculptural in their massed bodies, in their muscular legs and arms that strain to hoist up the heavy pole. The leg of the lead bearer crosses the flagpole, adding a further sense of solidity.

There is something deeply reassuring about this photograph in its display of strength and teamwork -- even the last man, who can no longer touch the flagpole, "has the back" of his comrades -- and its communication of a push forward to victory. The fact we cannot see their faces also works to lift the image out of its original context, lending it a universal quality.

In Lowery's photograph, instead, the eye goes to the face of the wary sentinel, who guards the men who have almost completed their installation. The flag flies free and proud, and all of the soldiers are engaged intently in their task, but they are scattered around the frame. There is no one visual "sweet spot" in this image; it would certainly be harder to reproduce as sculpture.

The gun pointed outward reminds the viewer that this is a very dangerous mission. This photo does not reassure us, but rather makes us watchful. Ironically, this picture of a historic moment of planting an American flag on Japanese soil conveys the everyday jobs of war -- guarding, standing around -- while Rosenthal's, of a routine flag substitution, communicates an exceptional and heroic moment.

In truth, both images are necessary to convey the experience of Iwo Jima, which stands today as a notable case of daring strategies of amphibious assault (U.S.) and static Defense (Japanese), examples of tenacity and teamwork, as well as failures of intelligence and devastating losses (on both sides).



What made Iwo Jima such a terrible battleground, even within the context of the many tough campaigns of the Pacific Theatre? Its primary strategic importance for the United States was as an airbase and staging area for assaults on Tokyo, while the 8.5-square-mile island took on symbolic as well as strategic meaning for the Japanese as the first national soil to face foreign invasion.

The violence of this battle reflected the high motivation of most combatants, but also the particular circumstances of the island. Under the leadership of Lt. Gen. Tadamichi Kuribayashi, left, the Japanese prepared an extraordinary underground network of tunnels and caves in the semisoft sandstone, from which they would wage their war. When the Americans landed, Kuribayashi allowed them to advance onto the beach, then opened fire; then, as the Japanese were firebombed out of their hiding places, the beach and environs became a dense killing field, with hand-to-hand combat not uncommon.

The intensity of battle on Iwo Jima epitomized what author John Dower called "the kill or be killed nature of combat in the Pacific." For over a month, both sides endured, and saw, terrible things hourly, and yet their resolve only strengthened.

The Japanese endured inhuman conditions underground, without food, water, and medical supplies, and their no-surrender policy created more unburied corpses in the tunnels as the war went on.



The reason for the battle: a safe landing ground for B29 bombers and their fighter escorts, long range P51 Mustangs, returning from missions over Japan,

The Americans endured their own hell above ground, and the chaos of combat in a constrained space made friendly fire casualties higher than usual. Of approximately 20,000 Japanese soldiers, only about 2,000 survived the battle, while the Americans had over 20,000 casualties and 7,000 dead out of a total mobilized force of 70,000. Iwo Jima took an especially large toll on the Marines. One-third of the 19,000 who died during World War II perished on the island.

It is the very brutality of Iwo Jima that made Rosenthal's polished photograph so necessary and appealing. There is something Olympian about the image on top of the mountain, as opposed to the Japanese in their caves and the Americans their targets on the beach. The subsequent death of three of the flag-raisers in battle only made the photo more compelling as a representation of heroism on the island and as an abstract homage to camaraderie, strength, and determination in battle in general.

It is this perfection that contributed to the unfounded suspicion that Rosenthal's picture had been staged, and a campaign to restore Lowery's photo and the first flag-raisers to greater prominence. By then, the picture had been enshrined in the image bank relating to Iwo Jima and had taken on a life of its own, reproduced in sand, ice, and even Legos.

On this anniversary, we might remember both photos, for together they remind us that war is also waged, and won, in the small moments of mundane labour, in obscure airstrips and staging areas as well as major battlegrounds, and in the steady gaze and aim of the single sentinel. The two flags of Iwo Jima offer a lesson for today about the power of the media to shape our notions of what, and who, deserves to be remembered about war.

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Ruth Ben-Ghiat is a professor of history and Italian studies at New York University and a specialist in 20th century European history. Her latest book is "Italian Fascism's Empire Cinema."

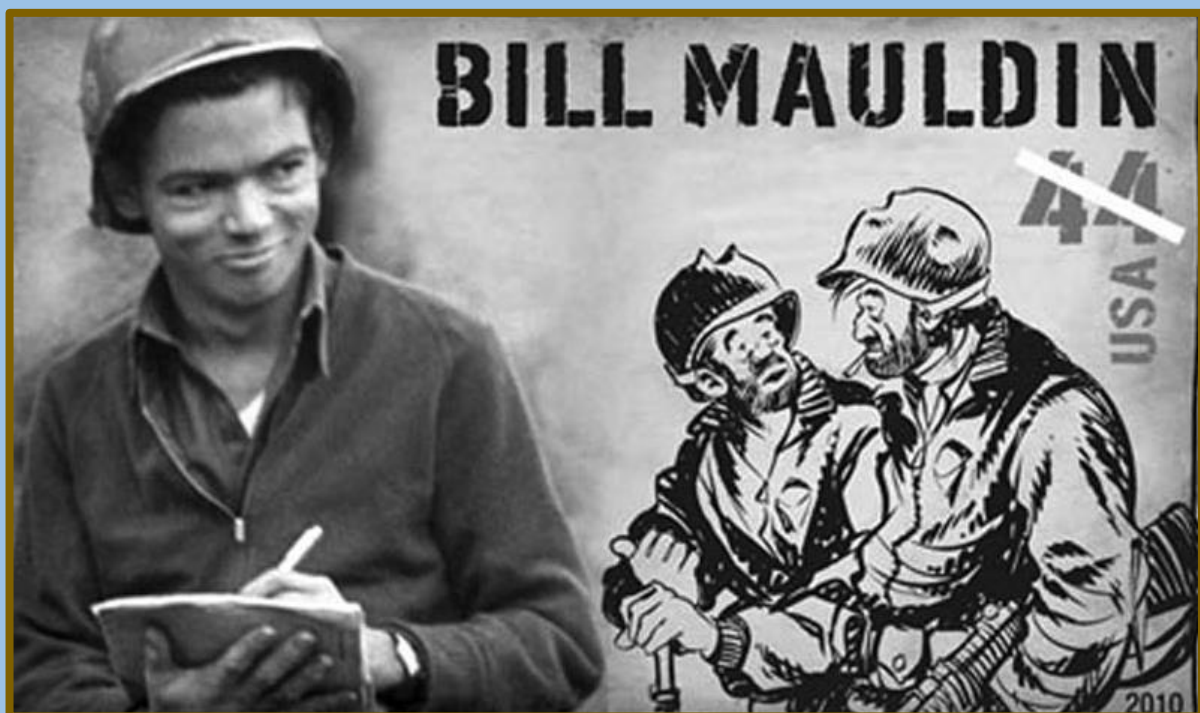
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When Willie and Joe's Creator Bill Mauldin Met "Blood and Guts" Patton

By Dwight Jon Zimmerman

BY 1945, Stars and Stripes cartoonist Sgt. Bill Mauldin was famous, and his creations, the G.I.s Willie and Joe, were popular with troops throughout the European Theatre of Operations – with one singular and vocal exception: Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr.



For the spit-and-polish Patton, Mauldin's unshaven and unkempt fictional G.I.s that were a regular feature in Stars and Stripes and several newspapers in the United States, were "a disgrace" that subverted discipline.

For the spit-and-polish Patton, Mauldin's unshaven and unkempt fictional G.I.s that were a regular feature in Stars and Stripes and several newspapers in the United States, were "a disgrace" that subverted discipline. Mauldin's characters had been a bone of contention for Patton since 1943, when Mauldin, then a member of the 45th Division in Patton's Seventh Army, drew them for the division newspaper during the Sicilian campaign.

An incensed Patton demanded that its commander, Maj. Gen. Troy Middleton, fire Mauldin. Middleton, who knew how to handle his mercurial boss, said he would ... provided Patton put the order in writing. Patton backed down. Stars and Stripes cartoonist Bill Mauldin was unafraid of lampooning anything or anyone in his Willie and Joe cartoons. In this one he is taking aim at Gen. Patton by mocking his requirements for parade ground order even in the midst of combat operations. Star and Stripes cartoon by Bill Mauldin

But that didn't mean Patton had given up the fight. Since that time, Patton had periodically complained to Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower's headquarters, SHAEF, about Mauldin's creations, demanding that they be banned. Things came to a head in late February 1945 when Mauldin, on assignment for Stars and Stripes, visited Patton's Third Army area and promptly ran afoul of the MPs for being "out of uniform." Mauldin had forgotten his helmet. Things quickly went downhill from there. After returning to the Stars and Stripes office, an incensed Mauldin responded with a biting cartoon skewering Third Army and its commander's nit-picking regulations and fines.

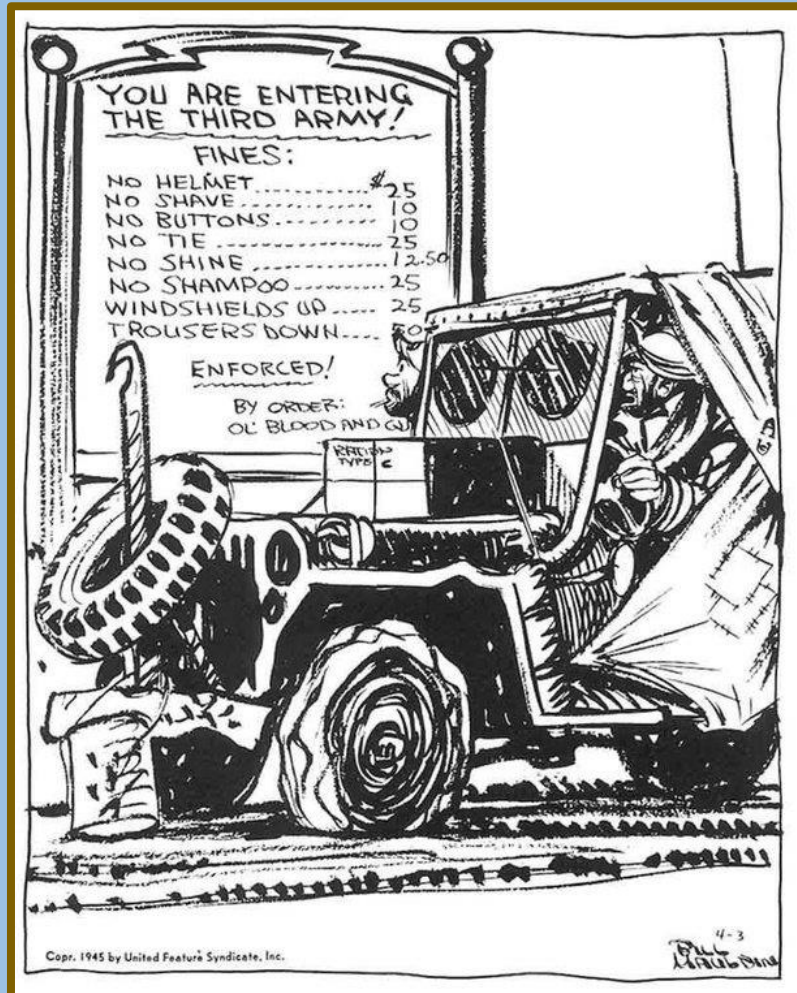
Looking to smooth things over before they got completely out of hand, Eisenhower's Navy aide,

Capt. Harry Butcher, suggested to Patton that he and Mauldin meet and clear the air between them. After threatening to throw Mauldin "in jail for thirty days" if he came back into the Third Army area, Patton agreed that Butcher's idea sounded reasonable and a meeting was scheduled.

After threatening to throw Mauldin "in jail for thirty days" if he came back into the Third Army area, Patton agreed that Butcher's idea sounded reasonable and a meeting was scheduled. Butcher personally briefed the nervous Mauldin on how to look. Butcher recalled, "I told him that when he went to Patton's office to make certain his uniform was neat and tidy and that he was in proper dress for the Third Army area. . . . He must stand at attention and salute smartly. If he did less, the interview was doomed to failure."

A few days later Mauldin, a frightened, baby-faced twenty-five-year-old, was ushered into Patton's office, convinced he was on "a suicide mission." Mauldin promptly snapped to attention and delivered his best parade ground salute.

Gen. Patton's adherence to spit and polish clashed with Bill Mauldin's depiction of the average G.I. National Archives photo Patton, in full medal-bedecked uniform, with more general's stars on his collar and shoulders than Mauldin could count, rose from behind his desk and motioned Mauldin to sit on a nearby chair. Patton then took for himself a large chair beside Mauldin that Patton's pet English terrier, Willie, had vacated.



For 45 minutes, Patton fulminated about “those god-awful things you call soldiers,” complaining that, amongst other things, they look “like goddamn bums.” Glaring at Mauldin, he growled as deeply as his high-pitched voice allowed, “What are you trying to do, incite a goddamn mutiny?”



At one point during Patton’s tirade, which included, Mauldin later admitted, an inspirational military history lesson, Mauldin unconsciously reached out to scratch Willie’s ear. Then he stopped. Mauldin was reaching out with his drawing hand, and he was convinced that a snap of Willie’s powerful jaws would accomplish for Patton what all the general’s letters to SHAEF had failed to do – put an end to Willie and Joe cartoons.

Patton had so dominated their appointment that Mauldin had only a couple of minutes to give his side that, needless to say, left Patton unmoved. They parted, agreeing to disagree. But Patton still could not let the issue lie, and SHAEF again was the recipient of his complaints regarding Mauldin’s creations. Finally, Eisenhower had had enough of this distracting tempest in a teapot.

He wrote an official letter to Deputy Theatre Commander Lt. Gen. Ben Lear that said, in part, “A great deal of pressure has been brought on me in the past to abolish such things as Mauldin’s cartoons. . . . You will make sure that the responsible officer knows he is not to interfere in matters of this kind. If he believes that any specific violation of good sense or good judgment has occurred, he may bring it to my personal attention.”

On April 11, 1945, an amused Butcher wrote in his diary, “It looks to me that General Patton may now admit he has lost the battle of Mauldin.”

Secrets of much-loved wartime cartoonist Giles revealed in new book

Carl Giles’s work in the Daily Express did much for British morale in the Second World War and his spirit of fantasy extended to the stories he told about his own life

By: Maev Kennedy

IN SEPTEMBER 1943, when the readers of the left-wing Sunday newspaper Reynolds News badly needed cheering up – with a long, cold, dark winter ahead and years of war and rationing to come – the paper lost its star cartoonist, Carl Giles, left of picture, in Normandy in 1944. The shock was greater because the lifelong socialist had decamped to the Tory peer Lord Beaverbrook’s Express.



More than 100 of the cartoons that had kept the Reynolds News readers laughing, including many of heroic Russians such as an amiable Joseph Stalin propping up a bar, or a doughty little peasant woman bringing in a clump of roped-up captured German soldiers – have been collected for the first time in Giles’s War, edited by Tim Benson, an expert on the history of the British political cartoon.

He has also discovered that Giles's repeated insistence that he had been headhunted by the Express was a lie: it was the cartoonist who had touted his skills around Fleet Street. "He obviously felt guilty about it, particularly leaving the paper which had given him his break as a national cartoonist for a paper like the Express," Benson said. "He referred to it himself as 'a Judas act' – but he repeated the claim that he had eventually been unable to resist the offers from the Express, and he got colleagues to back up that version of events. But the truth was all there in his archive. It's amazing that he kept the correspondence."

Much of the story was missing from his official biography by Peter Tory, commissioned for the Express. The two men loathed one another and Tory, who died in 2012, described it as his “worst and most boring assignment”. For obvious reasons he left out another of Giles’s job perks. The cartoonist was very happily married to his first cousin Joan Clarke, but also had a mistress – and, according to Benson’s research, it was the Express that paid for the room they regularly took at the Savoy.



Within a year there was an extraordinary development in his career. Turned down for army service because a motorbike accident in his teens had left him blind in one eye, he managed to get sent to the front as a war correspondent cartoonist. He was present at the liberation of the

Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, and said the memories haunted him every day for the rest of his life – including a disconcerting encounter with the camp commander, Josef Kramer, who turned out to be a great admirer.

Benson, who runs a political cartoon gallery in west London, almost abandoned the project when he discovered that although Giles's own archive was safe in the British cartoon archive at the University of Kent, transferred from the V&A, most of the war years Reynolds News was missing from the British Library newspaper archives. He then found a complete set in the JB Priestley archive at the University of Bradford, and the book, published this month by Random House, was on again. The archive revealed another Giles lie: his cartoons had never been cut down to make way for more editorial in the early war years, as he had claimed. Some Giles stock jokes vanished when he moved to the Express, said Benson, as the cracks about bloated capitalists making a handsome profit out of the war were dropped.

Reynolds News readers were heartbroken to lose him, and the archive contains their letters and even a poem: "Laski and Driberg, Brailsford and Bullett/Excellent writers with differing styles/ We read them with profit, enjoyment and fervour/But tell me oh why have you robbed us of Giles?"



Marine feeding kitten in famous Korean War photograph dies at 90

By: Nicole Bauke

A MARINE photographed feeding an orphaned kitten on the front lines in Korea died on Jan. 10 at 90 years old. Frank Praytor, who served as a combat correspondent in the 1st Marine Division from 1951-52, "weaned 'Miss Hap' on meat out of 'C' ration cans" after her mother had been shot.



The picture, which circulated in more than 1,700 newspapers, brought a "moment of humanity" to the war, according to USNI News. Later, the cat saved Praytor — from the brig. Praytor had violated a WWII combat photographer regulation by freelancing a combat photo. But when the commandant got the court-martial papers, he tore them up. "I'm certain 'that cat' played a silent-but-significant role in my being excused from brig time," Praytor wrote in *The Greybeards* in 2009. "After all, I had become a celebrity of sorts and the prize-winning photo made a positive rather than negative impact on the Marine

Corps' image." Praytor began his journalism career in 1947 as a police reporter for the *Birmingham News*, according to *Stars and Stripes*.

"Frank was, first and foremost, a good human being," Marine Chas Henry told *Stars and Stripes*. "That picture of him caring for a kitten lost on the battlefield wasn't just cute; it captured his character." Frank Praytor died Jan. 10. (From the *Photograph Collection (COLL/3948)* at the Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division)

Sorry everyone but the world is apparently going to end this Spring

The
INDEPENDENT

By: Greg Evans, February 11 2018

IF YOU HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING the story of the mysterious Nibiru planet, you'll be aware that it was supposed to destroy Earth several times in 2017. Conspiracy theorists believed that the mythical planet - which is also called Planet X - was going to appear in the sky and bring about the apocalypse in August, September, October, November and December last year.

As you are reading this, it's safe to say that none of those doomsday events actually happened - but theorists now believe it will happen later this year. Christian numerologist David Meade thinks that the end of days will take place in the spring of 2018 and that it's all North Korea's fault.



Picture: Getty Images/iStockphoto

The Express quotes Meade as saying to Pastor Paul Begley in a YouTube interview:

Here's what I believe is going to start in the Spring of 2018.

- I believe North Korea will ascend to become a world-class superpower in March of 2018. I believe the great tribulation will begin after a short period of peace.
- Planet X won't appear until after the tribulation period commences, and I don't think you can pinpoint a month, week and day but I do believe 2018 is high watch and I would be very surprised if a year from now, that we will be talking about anything except Nibiru.
- They point towards to certain events this year that they believe signal an impending apocalypse: Israel will celebrate its 70th anniversary as an independent nation, the Winter Olympics, Donald Trump disarming North Korea and sightings of "twin suns".

Meade stops short of naming a specific date or month for the apocalypse, but he believes that we should all be on the lookout for Planet X from the Springtime onwards. Of course, the likelihood of any of this happening is slim to none as Nasa have confirmed in the past that Planet X definitely does not exist and isn't going to kill us all.

All articles in Scribblings are the opinion of the authors. Comments, Suggestions and Stories are welcomed by the editor.

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