



Russian Trolls and Propagandists have turned disinformation into a terrifying art form: Defence Minister tells Journalists sign up to defend your country: Israel & Iran and the media

ALL FOOLS DAY lasted a long time last month, writes Mike Peters. And Russia's once vaunted psy ops expertise and reputation collapsed in the spate of unbelievable statements and less than diplomatic outpourings as the Kremlin struggled to explain away the Salisbury nerve agent incident. Did anyone in Russia's extensive bureaux of disinformation, deception and propaganda really think that it was a good idea to cast the blame on the UK Government for that incident and for the use of poison gas in the Syrian village of Douma?

Full Index: [Page 4](#)

Who thought up the nonsense that the nerve agent deployed against the Skripal family probably came from Porton Down. Indeed, as the Russian propaganda effort grew more shrill, more inaccurate, mendacious and, frankly, foolish those defending the Russian position might have well recalled the old adage.... if you are in a deep hole – stop digging.

Russia did not come out well on the international stage. Initially British politicians were slow in releasing information and there was a suggestion that UK communications were inactive and not so good; but there comes a time when any professional public relations practitioner will stress caution and allow the other side's argument to collapse in confusion. As that much respected journalist Andrew Neil, right, tweeted: *If you are going to tell a lie: make it a big one.* The Russians tried but were hoist with their own petard.



In the midst of the Salisbury debate came the US decision to respond with force to the use of poison gas in Syria. This too produced another strange reaction from the Kremlin who set about blaming Britain for setting up the whole story. The suggestion that Britain could plan and activate such an elaborate stitch up caused another bout of humour with one British civil servant tweeting that the Ministry of Defence has problems ordering sufficient quantities of pens, pencils and stationery let alone arranging such an elaborate deception in the face of the world's media. Of course, the big question was never satisfactorily answered by Russia: why would Britain want to do that?

In the end the furore died away but there were many who while consuming the acres of newsprint and hours of broadcasting echoed the favourite phrase of comedy character Victor Meldrew: I just don't believe it!

The main beneficiaries have been those who study the use of disinformation and deception. There has been some deep thinking about information ops and the way we manage and deploy psy ops. The media has been full of learned debate on the use of social media and examinations of the Russian and Chinese practise.

Fake news is one of today's media problem and will continue to tax minds on how to present accurate and verifiable facts to the public. Fake news has always existed but quality journalism has a history of survival.

Scribblings commends MP Bob Seeley, right, for his work exposing how Russian trolls and propagandists are turning disinformation into a terrifying art form and watches with interest the sterling work of MP Johnny Mercer in defending the interests of current and retired servicemen.



It will be interesting to hear the results of the seven investigations launched by OFCOM into the impartiality of Russia Today news programmes following the Salisbury incident. Indeed, Scribblings is waiting for the reaction to the another survey which indicates that the UK is still rated at only 40th in world press freedom rankings.

Journalism is becoming increasingly dangerous and the European Union has called for a broader inquiry into the the murder of a Maltese journalist while the death of Times war correspondent Marie Colvin in the Middle East is still questioned. In early May the BBC broadcast an insight into the dangers facing war correspondents fronted by Lyse Doucet.

In the Middle East the complexities of the Israeli and Iranian scenario grow. While the day-to-day exchange of conflicting messages flows, Scribblings reports on how both sides handle their media audiences. Israeo takes a high end cognitive approach while Iran attempts control of the foreign press with threats.

The good news this month, however, is that new Secretary of State for Defence, Gavin Williamson is on message with the increasing use of media operations. UK Press Gazette reported, just as the month was ending, that Mr. Williamson was encouraging journalists to sign up and join the Media Reserves. They should join in the defence of Britain against fake news, he told the media.

This welcome development was taken further in the House of Commons magazine when Sebastian Whale reported that the minister has come out of the shadows and echoed UK Defence Journal who earlier claimed the Minister is starting to make a name for himself.

Nothing is ever easy in the Ministry of Defence, though. The shortage of new recruits and the claim by the National Audit Office that the armed forces are understaffed has kept the pot simmering if not boiling. Army recruitment advertising is still a hot topic and the media are waiting for the first statistics generated by the recent controversial campaign.

Scribblings heard this month that a meeting of senior serving and retired officers has discussed the reported difficulties faced by potential recruits in making progress through the red tape of recruitment. Everyone present had a story to relate that revealed fraught personal experiences of trying to help eligible young people to join up.

The Ministry's money problems are still to be resolved but Defence Minister Williamson is being given credit for his actions while the trade press calls for more spending and a demand for the Government to "stop twisting the figures"

RAF 100 is off to a good start and attracting media attention. The opening of the Lincolnshire memorial to Bomber Command was well attended but there are concerns emerging for the future not only of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight but of the Royal Navy's Yeovilton based Heritage Flight. Both are being suggested as targets for the financial axe. Such moves will be unpopular.

On the home front the Pen & Sword Club learned this month of the return to Army Media circles of Paul Smyth on promotion to Lieutenant Colonel after a successful tour as HQ Company Commander and then Second in Command of 7 Rifles. He is joined at Andover by James Horspool, also on promotion, and Lt Colonel Anita Newcourt.

Colonel Angus Taverner is the subject of this month's Where Are They Now feature by Gerry Bartlett. Former Media Operations Group Commanding Officer, Angus, has moved south from Scotland and is now living, and still working, in Oxfordshire.



London District Head of Media and Communications, Susi Coulthard, also made the news last month. Susi's dynamic approach to publicising the Armed Forces and story-a-day approach to social media has been recognised by the Assistant Chief of the General Staff's award to mark her "extraordinary dedication and professionalism" in projecting the Army's image and brand.

Sadly, Scribblings reports the passing of Wing Commander Alex Dickson, after a bravely fought battle against cancer. Alex commanded 7644 Squadron RAFVR and deployed around the world while setting the unit on the path to the high standard of media operations professionalism that it exhibits today.

What's to read?

- Journalists told to sign on
- Rise of Gavin Williamson
- Stop Twisting the numbers
- Bob Seeley exposes disinformation
- Ofcom investigates RT
- Quality news beats fake anytime
- Russia Accuses UK on Douma
- Fisk Doubts Gas Attack
- Douma was a Stunt?
- Syrian Medics intimidated
- Bad Journalistic Behaviour
- Experimenting with future war
- Porton Down blamed
- Media Manipulation Explained
- IDF War on Consciousness
- IDF Cognitive Effort
- How Iran Controls Press
- China spends \$6bn on propaganda
- New RN Pacific Presence
- More Typhoons for Germany?
- Typhoon upgrades on time
- H&K upgrades British rifle
- Only one Joint Warrior
- Threats to promotion
- Oh! Dear, How Sad, Never Mind
- Forces are Understaffed
- Build more ships in UK
- RAF 100 flying programme
- UK's tallest war memorial
- Bombing Berlin Broadcast
- BAE Says Thanks
- China's new carrier
- UK press freedom low
- EU demands death inquiry
- Marie Colvin death riddle
- USMC troublesome film
- Fighting Fake News in UK
- India curbs Fake News
- Where are they now?
- Lyse Doucet on Syria
- Tribute to Alex Dickson
- Dieppe & Enigma
- Disaster at Dieppe
- Dieppe media cover-up
- The Deadly Trade
- Fighting Captain
- Kith & Kin in Bandit Country
- Nazi Drug Addicts
- War and Drugs
- Artists fool Hitler
- Truth & Lies at Entebbe
- Churchill derided
- The Re-enactors
- We may all be dead by 2050

Defence Secretary says journalists should join up to defend Britain against threat of 'fake news'

By Sam Forsdick : Press Gazette: April 30 2018

DEFENCE SECRETARY Gavin Williamson has said journalists should join up to help defend the country against the spread of disinformation and foreign state propaganda. Williamson told The House, Parliament's own magazine that journalists, as well as IT and cyber security specialists, have skills that "are more relevant today than anything else".

According to Politics Home, the Tory MP said: "Britain's enemies will use Twitter, will use every angle they can do to change the narrative- people who've traditionally thought about joining reserve forces, we want them to come in – but actually, it's looking to different people who maybe think, as a journalist, well what are my skills in terms of how are they relevant to the Armed Forces?

“Actually, they are more relevant today than anything else, having those skills, whether it be journalists, those people with amazing cyber and IT skills, those people with the ability to really understand about getting messages across.

“Warfare is evolving so much and it’s about trying to get a different generation, a different type of people to start thinking: ‘I’ve got something to add to my reserve forces.’” Williamson said he is looking for recruits who “really understand about getting messages across” and can help stem the spread of fake news “in this disinformation age”.

Williamson previously compared Russian bots, which spread fake news online, to Nazi propagandists, saying: “We have to make sure that narrative is countered.”

Williamson’s plea follows a National Audit Office report that found the number of British military personnel was currently at 5.7 per cent below requirement, which the NAO said was “the largest gap for a decade”.

A parliamentary inquiry into fake news is currently being led by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee. Earlier this year the Prime Minister announced a rapid response unit to battle the proliferation of “fake news” online.

Out of the shadows: the rise of Gavin Williamson

By Sebastian Whale: The House Magazine: May 3 2018

Before his appointment as Secretary of State for Defence last autumn, Gavin Williamson built a reputation as an effective, and ruthless, backroom operator. His rise from PPS to David Cameron to government Chief Whip to the MoD has been shrouded in intrigue, and there is speculation that he is being lined up as Theresa May’s favoured successor. Is the 41-year-old MP for South Staffordshire really the modern-day Machiavelli some claim? Sebastian Whale talks to Williamson, and those who know him, to find out.

Gavin Williamson was appointed Defence Secretary in November 2017. Credit: Paul Heartfield

“I’m not sure if it’s something you’ve ever thought about, joining the reserves?” asks Gavin Williamson, his green eyes locked firmly on my own.

“I haven’t, no,” I reply, somewhat caught off guard. He pauses. “Why not?” “It’s never crossed my mind, really.”



“Don’t you think you could serve your country?” he shoots back. The smile that has been a mainstay of our conversation starts to fade. “I do, but I guess it’s a time and capacity thing,” I explain.

“So, it’s always something for other people to do?” The grin has completely disappeared now. This must be how errant Tory MPs felt after being summoned to the Whips’ office, I wonder.

“Perhaps,” I concede.

“I’m quite happy to sign you up today,” he says later in our conversation, this time with the smile back on his face. “That’s very kind of you, I’ll have a think about it.” We laugh, though I am uncertain whether it is all a joke. I start to worry that social awkwardness is going to see

me leave the Ministry of Defence with a new career and a difficult call to make to my mother. Heading outside for pictures, I ask Williamson whether he would become a reservist. “Oh, I think I’m a bit too old,” he replies.

It is quite audacious of Williamson to take such a line of questioning. With no military experience to speak of he was appointed Defence Secretary in November 2017 after Michael Fallon resigned over allegations of sexual harassment. Prior to the role, he had never spoken at the despatch box nor run a government department. Never mind having never been a reservist.

But that’s not stopped a meteoric rise to one of the most powerful positions in government, eight years into a parliamentary career. And with much of the journey taking place in roles often unseen, there is much intrigue surrounding this tarantula-owning, 41-year-old from Scarborough.



Gavin Alexander Williamson was born on 25 June 1976 to Labour-supporters Ray and Beverly. His father worked at the local council and his mother at a job centre. Raised in North Yorkshire, he attended Raincliffe School, a state comprehensive, and the Scarborough Sixth Form College. He graduated from the University of Bradford with a BSc in Social Sciences.

Williamson began a career in manufacturing soon after graduating. He worked as managing director of fireplace manufacturer Elgin & Hall until 2004, before going on to become managing director of Aynsley China, a Staffordshire-based pottery firm. In 2001, he married Joanne Eland, with whom he has two children.

Williamson became active in the Conservative party from a young age. He was the penultimate chairman of Conservative Students before its abolition in 1998. He was elected a county councillor in 2001 in North Yorkshire and held leading roles in Conservative associations in the Staffordshire Area, Stoke-on-Trent and Derbyshire Dales.

He first stood for parliament at the 2005 election aged 28, standing in Blackpool North and Fleetwood, where he finished more than 5,000 votes behind Labour MP Joan Humble. Williamson moved to Derbyshire later that year. It was here that he first came across Patrick McLoughlin, then the Conservative Chief Whip and MP for Derbyshire Dales, where Williamson was serving as vice-chair of the local Tory party association.

“I was quite impressed and he was very much a doer and a campaigner,” McLoughlin tells me as we sit down in his parliamentary office overlooking the Thames. McLoughlin says there was no need to try and cajole Williamson into standing for parliament once more. “I don’t think Gavin needed any encouragement,” he adds with a smile.

Williamson was selected as the Conservative candidate in South Staffordshire for the 2010 general election after the incumbent, Sir Patrick Cormack – now Lord Cormack – announced he was retiring from the Commons. They got to know each other in the run up to May vote.

On election day, Cormack was tasked with running the loudspeaker out campaigning after Williamson lost his voice. “It was one of the most difficult things I’ve ever done because I had to keep remembering to say, ‘vote for Gavin Williamson’, not myself!” the Tory peer recalls.

Williamson was elected with more than 53% of the vote. A party was held in the constituency soon after with George Osborne as guest of honour and speaker. Cormack and Williamson have retained close relations ever since. After a period of ill health in 2011, the newly elected MP offered to drive Cormack down to London each week. “He is energetic, active, intelligent, personable,” says Cormack. “I think I have as good a relationship with my successor as any other Member could possibly have.”

During his maiden speech, in which he called for the UK to recreate the “Victorian spirit of ingenuity and inventiveness”, Williamson declared himself to be a “straight talker”, like his constituents. “It is nice to have it blunt from others,” he said in June 2010. In October 2011, Williamson took on his first of four roles as parliamentary private secretary (PPS) by working for Hugo Swire, before being taken on by the minister’s boss in the Northern Ireland Department, Owen Paterson. The following year he began working for McLoughlin, who after seven and a half years as Chief Whip had been made Secretary of State for Transport.

McLoughlin had encouraged David Cameron to take Williamson on as his PPS. “David decided not at that stage. So, I said ‘well in that case I’ll have Gavin,’” he says. The role, which requires you to be the eyes and ears of a Secretary of State in the Commons, was a good fit for Williamson. “He would take it as a challenge to try and make sure that you got as many questions on the order paper at oral questions as possible,” McLoughlin recalls. “He was a good, hard worker. He worked well with Ben Mascal, who of course is now in No 10, and Julian Glover who was then my special adviser.”

In 2013, David Cameron did hire Williamson as his PPS, to replace Sam Gyimah, who had been appointed a government whip. His approach to the position, however, drew the ire of some of his Conservative colleagues. One says he irritated MPs by going about the job in an “over-zealous” often “less than subtle way” as though he was deputy chief whip.

Williamson stayed in the role right through to Cameron’s resignation following the EU referendum. He was given a CBE for political and public service in the subsequent resignation honours list.

He ran Theresa May’s bid to become Tory leader after reportedly privately vowing to stop Boris Johnson from taking on the reins. The gamble

paid off. Williamson was rewarded with the position of Chief Whip in May’s first Cabinet. He became famed for keeping a pet tarantula called Cronus on his desk, named after the Greek god who came to power by castrating his father before eating his own children to ensure they would not get rid of him, which he branded a “perfect example of an incredibly clean, ruthless killer”.

Unsure of the fate that has befallen Cronus, I ask Williamson whether he has been replaced. “You can never replace a pet,” he replies. “But he is very happily spending this time in Staffordshire following Easter and no doubt will be back down in the Commons at some point when I next bring him down.”

Gaining a reputation as an effective Chief Whip, Williamson reflected on his approach to the role during the 2017 Tory party conference. “Personally, I don’t much like the stick, but it is amazing what can be achieved with a sharpened carrot,” he said. Last year’s snap election brought an added dimension to the not inconsiderable challenge of being the government



Chief Whip. Williamson played a key role in brokering the £1bn confidence and supply deal with the DUP to prop-up the Conservative minority government, further endearing himself to No 10. Having already helped marshal the Article 50 Bill through the Commons, he faced the challenge of passing more Brexit legislation while looking to temper emboldened Tory Remainers and facing precarious parliamentary arithmetic.

“In extraordinarily difficult circumstances, he clearly was absolutely on top of the business and planning how to deal with it,” says one Tory MP. “He was quite effective in persuading people to stay with the government.”

In November 2017 Michael Fallon resigned as Defence Secretary amid allegations of sexual harassment. Few considered Williamson, who had no ministerial experience to speak of, in the running to succeed him. But the day after Fallon’s resignation was announced, the Yorkshireman was appointed the new Secretary of State at the MoD. The news received immediate, often colourful, criticism. Some suggested that Williamson had effectively carved out the job for himself and knifed his predecessor in the process.

Tory MP Sarah Wollaston tweeted at the time: “There are times when offered a job that it would be better to advise that another would be more experienced & suited to the role.” Another Conservative backbencher tells me: “It was taken slightly badly that it looked like a Chief Whip who rolled the pitch for his own appointment to a new job.” But Patrick McLoughlin does not harbour such concerns. “I was delighted for him and I think it’s a tough job and I think he’s up to it.”

Lord Cormack, who watched on as Williamson took his first Defence Questions in the Commons, agrees. “I was very pleased for him and I’ve been impressed by the energy with which he’s approached the job. I was very surprised.”

Williamson wasted no time playing to the Tory faithful and to the more hawkish of the British tabloids. In bullish comments, he vowed to hunt down and kill British jihadists who had travelled to Syria, prevented Army dogs from being put down and entered a slanging match with the Treasury for more spending on defence. This reached a crescendo when Theresa May was, according to the Mail on Sunday, forced to stop a row between Philip Hammond and Williamson in the Commons, which had been brewing following weeks of briefings in the papers.

In the end, a feared fresh round of defence cuts was put on ice and Williamson was given more time to make the case for further spending as part of an MoD-led review announced at the start of this year.

General David Richards, right, a former Chief of the Defence Staff, has taken note of his eagerness. “I’m very pleased with the interest he has shown and his determination to do better by defence. But, the jury is out. He loses nothing by doing his job which is to push the case for more spending on the Armed Forces,” he says.

“But it’s whether or not he succeeds that will determine one’s judgment. And so, my worry is that despite his strong support, there is essentially a lack of political support within government for defence and the Armed Forces.”

Nia Griffith, the Shadow Defence Secretary, agrees. “I think that we have to wait and see exactly how he makes out in the job. He’s obviously tried to suggest that he will be able to get more money from the Treasury and he’s made quite a lot of noise about that. But I think we are all waiting to see what actually transpires and whether he does win those arguments within the government and within the Cabinet,” she tells me.

Williamson’s rise up the parliamentary food chain has led many to conclude that he covets the top job at Number 10. Conservative MPs speculate that Theresa May wants him to succeed



her. But colleagues are said to be “puzzled” by this, I am told, given that the Defence Secretary is not “particularly popular”. One jokes that picking a non-starter for a potential replacement could keep May in Downing Street a little while longer.

Does McLoughlin, who has followed his political career with interest, think he would be a good PM? “Look, the Commons is littered with future great prime ministers. So, who knows? What he will want to do, because he will take it very seriously, is he will want to do the job of Defence Secretary as best as he can. The future is the future.”

Since the turn of the year, Williamson has turned his attention to Russia. In January he warned that the country wants to cause “so much pain to Britain” that it could launch an attack killing “thousands and thousands and thousands”. The Salisbury attack, where former spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia were the subject of an attempted assassination by Novichok, a chemical agent, produced Williamson’s most memorable intervention.

During the aftermath of the expulsion of 23 Russian diplomats from Britain, Williamson instructed the Kremlin to “go away and shut up”. The backlash was instant. One Tory MP tells me: “That did speak to his lack of experience. It seemed to indicate somebody who just hadn’t really done enough media or the public gaze and hadn’t learned how to calibrate things... It did look ridiculous at the time. Of course, Gavin, he’s older than he looks but because he looks very young, I think it kind of compounds some of that. People are always looking for an opportunity to say he’s out of his depth or he’s too inexperienced.”



Griffith, pictured left, adds: “I wouldn’t rate that as the sort of comment I would really want to hear from a Secretary of State representing this country. I would like him to up his game from that to a more dignified, diplomatic and substantiated response, really. It’s very, very important that we maintain a position in the world in which we are respected.”

Others however are more sympathetic. “I wouldn’t disagree with what he said. You just move on from it. Sometimes in politics you get things wrong. It’s inevitable. The problem is that if you’re a minister, almost every word is minutely analysed. I can think of a few times the Chancellor of the Exchequer has said things he’s had to row back on. So, there’s nothing new in that,” says McLoughlin.

Sitting in Williamson’s “beige” office at the Ministry of Defence, as he puts it, he reflects on the mass expulsion of Russian diplomats across the world in response to the events in Salisbury. “I think that sent an incredibly powerful message. It was saying that Russia does stand alone and what it was trying to do in terms of splitting us away from our allies, actually singularly failed.” He insists that the UK is strengthening its Armed Forces to deal with state-based threats from the likes of Russia. He points to investment in new Type 26 frigates and the recent £132m spent on a new facility for the UK’s new fleet of submarine-hunting Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft at RAF Lossiemouth as examples.

Lord Richards, however, has concerns about the government’s approach on defence and the “parlous” state of the UK’s Armed Forces. “It’s got to be substantial amounts of money that the government must spend on the Armed Forces over the next ten years if they’re to provide or achieve the influence on a day-to-day basis that we need in the post-Brexit era, and secondly, if they are to equip themselves efficiently and effectively in battle, which is our ultimate requirement of them.

“If there is any doubt about that, then the chances of conflict are increased because our opponents will call our bluff or seek to call our bluff. Some of what I’m seeing suggests that we are getting perilously close to that.”

Williamson is keen to look at another battlefield that has opened with Russia in what he calls the “age of disinformation”. It is here that our conversation turns to the reservists.

He believes journalists and people with IT and cyber skills could have a role to play in the reserve forces in combatting propaganda from Britain's enemies.

"In this age where there's so much disinformation, where Britain's enemies will use Twitter, will use every angle they can do to change the narrative – people who've traditionally thought about joining reserve forces, we want them to come in – but actually, it's looking to different people who maybe think, as a journalist, well what are my skills in terms of how they are relevant to the Armed Forces?" he explains.

"Actually, they are more relevant today than anything else, having those skills, whether it be journalists, those people with amazing cyber and IT skills, those people with the ability to really understand about getting messages across. Warfare is evolving so much and it's about trying to get a different generation, a different type of people to start thinking 'I've got something to add to the reserve forces.'"



On this fake news agenda, Williamson also has a message for MPs who appear on the Kremlin-backed RT, which is being investigated by Ofcom following its coverage of the Salisbury attack. "I can't understand why people would be wishing to go on what is effectively a Russian propaganda channel that's obviously propagating the lines of the Kremlin. Ultimately people have to make their own choices, but it's certainly not something that I would advise," he says.

Amid myriad time pressures, our conversation is kept to below 20 minutes. With Williamson's eyes peering towards the clock, we move on to Syria. What happens if Assad drops chemical weapons on his own people once more, as he did in Douma last

month, and what is the government's position on regime change? Williamson says the "brilliantly-carried out strikes" by the RAF last month sent a message that "actions have consequences".

"The future of Syria is not going to be won by anyone through the violence and the fighting that we've seen in Syria. It can only be through a negotiated settlement. What we really need to see happen, you need to see players such as Russia, you need to see players such as Iran who have a great deal of influence on the Syrian regime, start to bring pressure to bear to say, 'actually, a solution has to be found here'."

But do we want regime change at the end of it? "What we want is a peaceful Syria and you need Russia and Iran to start actually playing their part to put pressure on the regime to make sure that that happens." Williamson makes a beeline for the door as I repeat the question.

I don't elicit much from my time with Gavin Williamson. I experience a range of his character traits that others put to me; his sense of humour, elusiveness, unique interpersonal skills, the persuasiveness, a slight air of intimidation as he questions why I don't want to serve my country. "Probably he comes across as being one of those people you can't really know very well. I think the joviality does seem like a mask," says a Tory MP.

In the days after our meeting, I attend a speech by Williamson at the Churchill War Rooms. The event is an opportunity for the Defence Secretary to layout his vision for the UK Armed Forces post-Brexit. Seeking to evoke the spirit of the former prime minister, Williamson talks of Britain's influence across the globe.

After the speech, Williamson mingles with the assembled guests, made up of military officials, journalists and politicians. "Hi Gavin," I say as he walks by. "Oh, hello again," he replies, shaking my hand. His patented broad smile starts to contract once more. "Have you signed up yet?"



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The Government must stop twisting the numbers – it's time to properly fund the British Armed Forces

By UK Defence Journal guest contributor Max Glynn, an undergraduate student studying Ancient History at King's College London. May 8, 2018

THROUGH ALMOST 400 YEARS of service, the British Armed Forces have proven their outstanding merit time and time again. Whether intervening against genocide in the Balkans, breaking the seemingly invincible powers of Napoleon or Hitler, or defending British sovereignty in the Falklands. Our armed services have always gone above and beyond the call of duty in their defence of this nation and its interests. Yet in recent years there has been a worrying decline in the Government's willingness to invest in our armed forces.

Despite the Royal Navy requesting 13 of the new Type 26 Global Combat Ship, only eight are to be ordered, with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) now filling the gap with five smaller, less capable Type 31e frigates. More worryingly the size of the army has been greatly reduced with fewer soldiers available now than at any time in the past century. Yet, despite continuous cuts since 2010 it was only last December that Phillip Hammond suggested that the British Army 'only needs 50,000 troops'.

If this were to happen it would make the army smaller than it has even been. Stern opposition from Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson and the threat of a major rebellion in the Commons caused the Government to abandon any plans for further cuts. But nevertheless, for the party that is supposedly the "most patriotic", it is hard to defend the willingness to slash defensive spending to save money.

The downward trend in defensive spending has been long and arduous: during the Falklands war in 1982, defence spending stood at 4.8% of GDP, in 1991 that Figure had been reduced to 3.6% and by 2009 it was 2.5%.

When it dropped below the NATO guideline of 2%, the Government changed how the budget was calculated by incorporating factors such as Army pensions, a move that was both deceptive and cowardly. Sadly, however, a move such as this by a British government is nothing new.

Politics has consistently got in the way of the Armed Services from doing their job. A good example of this was the development of the SA80. Introduced in 1985, it earned the nickname of the 'Civil Servant' as it 'wouldn't work and couldn't be fired'. Whilst newer versions of the general-purpose bullpup assault rifle have improved its effectiveness, the aggravation caused to the common soldier is burdensome.

Many experts on modern military weaponry have commented on this phenomenon, with most coming to the conclusion that the British Government had invested too much money into the development of the rifle and, therefore, to spare the blushes of the civil service and ministers who pushed for this rifle, the Government opted to continue its use rather than replace it with more effective foreign assault rifles.

Do not misunderstand this as a suggestion that our Armed Services are not capable – far from it. By all accounts the British Armed Forces remain one of the world's most effective and elite fighting forces. Considering that the Top Four countries (India, China, Russia and the United States) all possess military forces with over one million personnel this only proves that Her Majesty's Armed Forces possess a quality of servicemen and women that most countries can only dream of. Yet the Government's unwillingness to provide the necessary number of men and women with the necessary funding is nevertheless alarming.

One of my Father's favourite sayings from his 30 years of service as an Army Officer was the idea of 'train hard, fight easy'. Essentially, failure to prepare is preparing to fail. A grim example of this is the Snatch Land Rover. This vehicle was heavily outdated and ill-suited to the desert environment of Afghanistan and Iraq. A minimum of 36 unnecessary Army casualties were caused in Iraq alone due to this oversight, the Blair administration were even warned about this, yet the Government 'knew better' which led to unnecessary casualties. How can we expect our military personnel to put their lives on the line for their country if we do not provide them with adequate funding?

Aside from the defensive aspects there are other highly pragmatic reasons for the government to open the purse strings. Economically increasing defence spending creates high-paying jobs and encourages investment in the United Kingdom. In November 2015, after David Cameron announced an additional £2 Billion for the Armed Forces, there was a surge in the price of BAE Systems shares, and the Pound increased in value. Businesses were excited by the opportunities military funding could provide.

Military-backed research from the US Défense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) has shaped the modern technology market with the internet, GPS and even Siri owing their existence to DARPA's research.

Diplomatically speaking, increasing defence spending also makes sense as it shows commitment to our allies whilst providing a superior bargaining position over our adversaries. Following Cameron's November 2015 announcement, for example, former President Barack Obama tweeted that the US had 'no stronger ally', whilst the establishment of UK military advisors to aid and train Ukrainian Forces helped to expand Western influence and safeguard their democracy from Russian aggression.

Bertrand Russell said it best: 'War does not determine who is right – only who is left.' War should always be the last resort as its impact and cost far outweigh any benefits. Yet, due to the unjust nature of our world, sometimes war is necessary, with military intervention being the only tangible way to solve a crisis.

If we as a nation willingly bury our heads in the sand in the face of increasing world tension then we are simply sowing the seeds of our own suffering. Neville Chamberlain failed to prepare Britain for war against Hitler, leading to a six-year conflict that claimed the lives of over 60 million people. Had our country been better prepared than Germany may well have failed in 1940, ending the war and saving countless lives.

Ultimately, if the Government doesn't stop twisting the numbers, and if it continues to properly fund our Armed Forces – reflecting our position as a global power – then Britain may well pay a grave price in the future.

How Russia's trolls and propagandists have turned Soviet disinformation into a terrifying art form

By Bob Seely, MP: The Daily Telegraph: April 16 2018



Information warfare is more important than ever – and Russia is beating the West hands down. Says Bob-Seely, the Conservative MP for the Isle of Wight and a member of the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee.

RUSSIA'S DISINFORMATION onslaught has cranked up another notch since US, UK and French air strikes this weekend on Syrian chemical weapons targets. According to the Pentagon, there's been a 2,000 percent increase in Russian troll activity online.

In Britain, Whitehall is warning of Russian revenge cyber-attacks. This latest twist follows weeks of Kremlin conspiracy theories ranging from the bizarre to the frightening. Last week Moscow accused the UK of staging the Douma chemical attack. In the UK and elsewhere in recent weeks, Russian officials have offered a dozen plus scenarios for the poisoning of

Col Sergei Skripal and his daughter. Personally, I found myself denounced as a Nazi on the BBC last week, despite urging caution in Syria.

While we might mock Russian diplomats' ludicrous lies and their resemblance to comedy villains from central casting – more Austin Powers than James Bond – there is method in Moscow's madness. The Russians take the theory and practise of (dis)information seriously. Moscow's use of humour is no laughing matter, but part of a considered plan. Their hysterical ranting is designed to create confusion, uncertainty and fear. It is a form of violence against the mind.

The influential Atlantic Council think tank has examined the news battle on social media. It found four of the six most read pieces on Twitter and Facebook about the Skripals were from the Russia-owned RT (formerly Russia Today). Only two of the articles were from the "mainstream" UK media. Meanwhile, at the UN, the internet's conspiracy idiots, aided by Russian bots, are only too happy to retweet the ramblings of Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia.

Not only has Moscow prepared for this new cold war with the West for two decades, but it has a century of expertise in the opaque arts of psychologically-based subversion. It has developed well-known techniques: maskirovka (masking of intent), disinformatsia (disinformation) and kompromat, the collection and use of compromising material to blackmail or destroy a person's reputation. The KGB/FSB has allegedly been collecting on Donald Trump since the late 1980s.

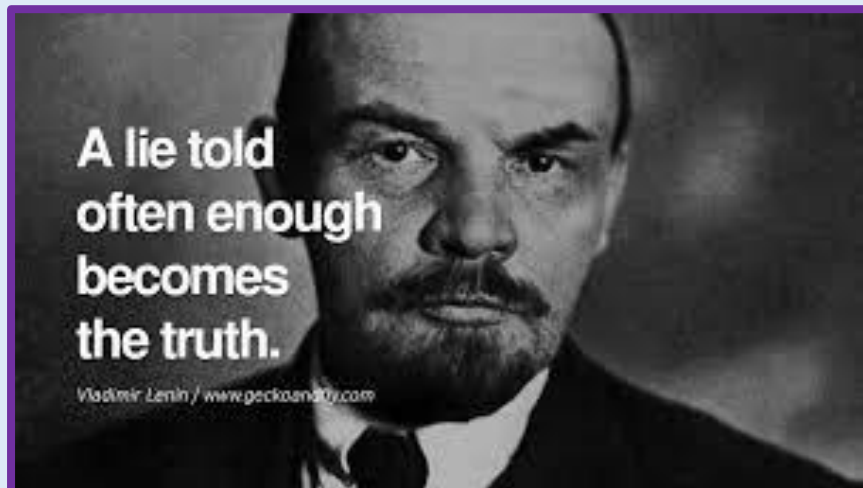
Soviet founder Vladimir Lenin and his fellow Bolshevik revolutionaries obsessed about propaganda. Manipulating information was often their only weapon, not just in the poisonous maelstrom of Russian revolutionary politics but also during the wider struggle for power. The Bosheviks mastered it with brilliance.

In his 1902 tract What is to be Done, Lenin stressed the role of propaganda to instil a new mass consciousness. In his 1905 Lessons of the Moscow Uprising he talked of using information not only to win over supporters but also as a weapon to divide and undermine

opponents. The Bosheviks believed in the physical and psychological destruction of their enemies.

In his 1920 work, *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, Lenin stressed the need to manipulate others in, “practical compromises, tacks, conciliatory manoeuvres, zigzags, retreats and so on.”

Once in power, the new Soviet regime used newspapers and new mediums such as film to spread its message at home. Abroad, they developed intricate espionage plots. One such was Operation Trust.



Operation Trust.

Between 1921 and 1927 the Cheka secret police planted stories in the Western press of secret, anti-Soviet groups operating in the USSR in order to lure émigré enemies of the Bolsheviks back. Once returned they were arrested and executed. The British “ace of spies” Sidney Reilly, who spawned the expression “life of Riley”, was one such

victim. From 1928 the Comintern, the Communist International, began exporting revolutionary propaganda to colonial Socialist movements. Foreign radio broadcasts began in German in 1933 and in English shortly after. By 1942, the USSR was broadcasting in 17 foreign languages and by 1962 in 60. All this to support the “inevitable”, scientific victory of the Socialist revolution.

The Soviets developed complex information/subversive operations against the free world. They linked the use of forgeries with disinformation, propaganda, espionage, blackmail and front organisations in complex operations. This form of warfare has been variously called Active Measures or the Ideological Struggle. It was designed to demoralise societies and destroy trust in democratic institutions.

The Soviets were aided by “useful idiots” and “fellow travellers”; CND leaders, trendy bishops and a certain type of academic or politician who found flirting with treachery a turn-on. Perhaps some still do. Today, those covert tools sit in a full spectrum of Russian state power, used holistically and with a short command chain. Russia’s military doctrine sees the first characteristic of modern conflict as the “integrated use of force, political, economic, informational and other measures of a non-military character,” implemented with popular uprisings and special operations.

In this form of warfare, trolls, hackers and political “technologists” are as important as soldiers and tanks – although the state needs both. But information is a key weapon in this new conflict. The target is, in part, our perception of reality.

By comparison, Western states have been poor at information operations, probably for good reason. We are a little uncomfortable seeing information, consciousness and truth as something to be manipulated without an objective base in reality. Moscow has no such qualms. It is one of several states which use the freedom of open societies to undermine open societies. It is becoming a global problem.

Modern Russian information operations are designed not only to demoralise but also to incite. For example, in the US 2016 presidential elections the US Congress was told that two Russian social media “front” groups planned to organise pro and anti-Muslim rallies at the same time and same place in Texas, a state with high gun ownership. The agenda was quite clear: to create confrontation and bloodshed.

Moscow's info ops also encourage moral relativism. The message is: believe what you want, those who control the media control the truth. While this may have some relevance – the Guardian and the Sun do have different news agendas – taken to the Russian extreme nothing is believable. This is not rational scepticism, but nihilistic cynicism.

With the Douma chemical attack, as with Skripals' poisoning and the 2014 MH17 plane disaster, the Kremlin is casting out a jumbled mish-mash of multiple theories to fog the truth. Can you really be sure of anything? Moscow is asking? Once you accept this premise, then it is a simple link to the pick-and-mix of Kremlin conspiracies. Believe what you want, because there is no truth, only power. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's feeble moral relativism plays into President Putin's plans.

This depressing debasement is representative of Russia's violent and corrupt political culture. The sneering arrogance of Russian diplomats who are happy to tell knowingly absurd lies is the outward face of the Russian security establishment's contempt for liberal civilisation and the despised Gay Europa. There are complex reasons for this and Western states are not blameless, but "resets" by both the US and UK have not worked.

Most of us, however, don't see the greatest long-term threat. The main target for the Kremlin's info ops are the Russian people. The purpose is to prevent any possible spread of democracy. Putin believes the Colour Revolutions in Eastern Europe were a CIA plot, and if revolutions can happen in Kiev, they can happen in Moscow.

The Russian people are, on a daily basis via state media, being taught to distrust and dislike us. This has been going on for years. President Putin's propaganda is, in Orwellian terms, creating an enemy – us – in order to make his people more malleable – to him. The danger is that the Russian state is talking itself into ever-deeper hostility, which threatens to become self-fulfilling.

PressGazette

FIGHTING FOR JOURNALISM

Ofcom opens seven investigations into impartiality of RT news programmes following Salisbury nerve agent attack

By Charlotte Tobitt : Press Gazette: April 18 2018

THE UK'S BROADCAST REGULATOR has opened seven investigations into the due impartiality of Kremlin-funded TV station RT (formerly Russia Today). Ofcom said its decision follows a "significant increase" in the number of RT programmes warranting concern in the past month, in the wake of the poisoning of ex-Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia.

The pair were found unconscious in Salisbury on 4 March. The UK Government has condemned the incident as an "unlawful use of force" by Russia against the UK. Russia has denied any involvement in the nerve agent attack, but UK MPs have called for Prime Minister Theresa May to take action against RT.

In a parliamentary debate last month, Labour former minister Chris Bryant asked: "Can we just stop Russia Today just broadcasting its propaganda in this country?" In response, on 12 March, Ofcom said it would consider the implications of the incident and subsequent events for the broadcast licence of RT.

It has now been monitoring the RT service "intensively" for the past month and found potential breaches of due impartiality on two news programmes on 18 March and 30 March.

The five other potential breaches were on two editions of Sputnik, the weekly show presented by George Galloway, two editions of Crosstalk, the channel's flagship debate programme hosted by US journalist Peter Lavelle, and Worlds Apart with Oksana Boyko, all between 17 March and 16 April.

The regulator said it will announce the outcome of its investigations as soon as possible. The seven new investigations are further to an existing probe relating to former First Minister of Scotland Alex Salmond's chat show and "audience tweets" used during the programme.

Ofcom has provisionally found the tweets were not sent by audience members, in a potential breach of rules on due accuracy. Until recently, Ofcom said, the overall compliance record of TV Novosti, which holds the licence for RT, had not been materially out of line with other broadcasters. TV Novosti has had a total of 15 breaches of the broadcasting code since 4 May 2012, including eight breaches of the rules on due impartiality, which Ofcom said was "not an unusually high number".

If Ofcom finds the broadcaster is not "fit and proper", it could revoke RT's licence until the channel remedies the issues which made it unfit to broadcast.

RT provides a Russian perspective on UK and global news for UK audiences and has an average audience of 3,400 at any given point during the day. It has an average weekly reach of 1.06 per cent of adults, according to figures from the Broadcasting Audience Research Board.

In response to the MPs' debate last month, RT released a statement saying: "It is regrettable to see RT so quickly proposed to be sacrificed as a political pawn, in one fell swoop doing away with any concept of press freedom in the UK. "RT serves a valuable role in completing the picture of news for its audience, and it has received multiple awards for its journalism."

It added: "We are proud to have a better record with Ofcom than most other UK broadcasters, and any curtailment of RT will ultimately be to the detriment of the British public.

"It is they who have been turning to RT for years for coverage of vital yet neglected stories and voices, including those of the many MPs and other UK public figures who have been shut out of public discourse by the mainstream media."

THE CONVERSATION

Fake news has always existed, but quality journalism has a history of survival

By Jackie Harrison :The Conversation :May 3 2018. Jackie is Professor of Public Communication, University of Sheffield and is affiliated with UNESCO as a UNESCO Chair in Media Freedom, Journalism Safety and the Issue of Impunity.

DONALD TRUMP'S insistence that any challenges to the actions and utterances of the president are "fake news" is particularly chilling because it resembles a tactic used by authoritarian regimes seeking ways to silence independent reporting. Malaysian authorities looking for new ways to criminalise critical news reporting now include fake news charges. In Egypt – dubbed "one of the world's biggest prisons for journalists" by the Committee to Protect Journalists – being accused of spreading fake news can come with serious sanctions

for national news journalists. In March 2018, it was an accusation used increasingly as a means to intimidate and deter foreign media in the run up to the presidential election.

While attempts to diminish the civil standing of journalism within the US has not led to censorship by bullet (though there are reports of attacks and arrests of journalists, exclusion from press calls and seizure of equipment), they are still destructive in their intention to undermine the crucial playing out of dissent and agreement within the civil sphere. Obstructing independent and dissenting journalism is a serious problem in an era where a growing number of news providers see their audiences as partisans rather than citizens.

RSA/YouTube.

Audiences who invest in highly partisan news that disconnects itself from truth telling, objectivity and investigative rigour respond positively to the endless pledges of loyalty by news providers, which in turn generate trust from them. These news providers seek to represent and confirm rather than challenge their audience's beliefs and values. Such is the diminishment of public discourse and the proliferation of what author of the 2017 study *Post Truth*, Matthew D'Ancona calls "incommensurable realities", where "prudent conduct consists in choosing sides rather than evaluating evidence".

These days the scale and speed of the way highly partisan news and falsehoods circulate is unprecedented. So far the evidence in the USA has suggested that it is mainly pro-Trump supporters that visit fake news sites.



In his new book *The People vs Democracy*, political theorist Yascha Mounk warns that the populists who have exploited new technology effectively and without constraint have "been willing to say anything to get elected – to lie to obfuscate and to incite hatred".

Equally ominous are the findings of an MIT study which noted that resistance to bias and fakery requires real effort, simply because there is a huge appetite for news that is fun, accessible, that reinforces prejudices, is easy to consume and is amusing to share.

And while "robots accelerated the spread of true and false news at the same rate... false news spreads more than the truth because humans, not robots, are more likely to spread it". Or as a story in the *Atlantic* put it: Falsehoods almost always

beat out the truth on Twitter, penetrating further, faster and deeper into the social network than accurate information... [perhaps because] false stories inspired fear, disgust, and surprise... [while] true stories inspired anticipation, sadness, joy, and trust. Partisan and fake news is nothing if not exciting.

For many it's beginning to seem as if fake news is more of a threat than ever and that "the bad" seems to be edging ahead – but so far it hasn't won. Quality journalism still displays "civil resistance" and a history of survival is on its side.

The historical reality is that news providers who try to provide truth-telling news have always done so in a hostile climate. And how toxic it is, is just a matter of degrees. Benign and malign news is unchanging in its co-existence, disagreement and fundamental rivalry.

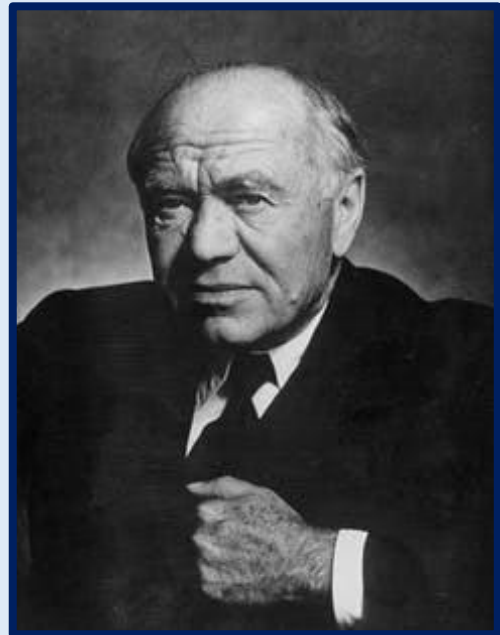
What remains true then and now is how fraudulent news activities succeed so well in engaging their audiences, being shared and recycled in no small part because they so destructively masquerade as genuine news. Truthful news was just as difficult to verify in the era of the invention of the Gutenberg printing press.

As author Kenan Malik points out, in 1672 Charles II had to issue a proclamation “to restrain the spreading of false news”. In Germany the word “Lügenpresse” (lying press) has been used as a political insult by both right and left since the mid-19th century and has been employed as an anti-democratic slogan and a xenophobic slur.

The proprietor of the Daily Express, Lord Beaverbrook. Dutch National Archives, CC BY-SA

Almost a century later in 1931, Stanley Baldwin (then UK prime minister) said of Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Rothermere, proprietors of the Daily Express and Daily Mail respectively, that their newspapers employed “direct falsehoods, misrepresentation, half-truths, the alteration of the speaker’s meaning by publishing a sentence apart from the context”.

Nevertheless, quality journalism has a history of survival. Why? Because the public, according to most audience surveys, persistently value accurate, sincere and objective news – news that they believe displays editorial integrity. And they do so because they conform to a deeply held need for a fair-minded and comprehensive understanding of events. In other words, the public regard quality journalism as a civil necessity.



The co-existence in the media of what is regarded as desirable and undesirable is inevitable and inescapable. Journalism that is uncomfortable, truthful, critical and interpretative does so because it has a civil disposition. We need it. And this, as ever, is what is at risk.



Russian military say chemical attack in Syria was staged and directed by – guess who?

By George Allison: UK Defence Journal: April 13, 2018

THE RUSSIAN MILITARY has announced that they believe an alleged chemical attack in Syria was staged and directed by Britain. We were going to put a pun in the headline but honestly, this is ridiculous enough on its own.

Activists in the country had said a chemical attack by the Syrian government killed more

than 40 people in the town of Douma and this drew international outrage. However, Russian Defence Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov, pictured above, has now said: “We have evidence that proves Britain was directly involved in organising this provocation.”

Russia has often accused opposition fighters of staging or spreading rumours of chemical attacks, but the involvement of Britain is a new claim.

Chemical weapons have previously been used by Bashar al-Assad’s force. Human Rights Watch has documented 85 chemical weapons attacks in Syria since 2013. For example, investigations by the United Nations and the OPCW have concluded that the Syrian government has previously used chemical weapons in the Khan Shaykhun chemical attack.

The Syrian government and Russia claimed the Khan Shaykhun chemical attack came from a rebel operated chemical weapon workshop, however their claim was disproved by OPCW investigations.

Yesterday, Russia's Foreign Ministry hit out at reports that the UK has ordered a British submarine to move within striking distance of Syria. , a British nuclear submarine has been ordered to move "within missile range of Syria", as strikes against the Assad regime are put on the table.

Prime Minister Theresa May said that London will join any punitive strike against the Syrian regime. May added that she will not be seeking a vote in parliament to authorise British participation in any forthcoming strike against Syria. British nuclear submarines of the Trafalgar and Astute class are armed with 1,000-mile range Tomahawk cruise missiles.



Russia's ambassador to Lebanon Alexander Zasyarkin had earlier said any missiles fired at Syria would be shot down and the launch sites targeted, a step which could trigger a major escalation in the Syrian war. "If there is a strike by the Americans then the missiles will be downed and even the sources from which the missiles were fired" he told Hezbollah's al-Manar TV."

Now, Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, above has suggested that a missile attack would be a grave error that the Prime Minister would have to apologise for later. She said the "young men" on board the submarines have no idea "what fate they are preparing for" and "what fate Theresa May prepares for them."

After visiting Douma, western media begin to question 'gas attack' narrative

Russia Today: April 17 2018

AFTER SPEAKING with eyewitnesses on the ground in Syria, even mainstream media are beginning to cast doubt on the West's narrative of an alleged gas attack in Douma, as medics tell French, German and UK media it never happened. Agence France-Presse (AFP), the world's third largest news agency, and the Independent, a British online newspaper, have each published stories that question whether chlorine or any other chemical was used against Syrians in Eastern Ghouta on April 7.

In a French language video report, AFP spoke with Marwan Jaber, a medical student who witnessed the aftermath of the alleged attack. “Some of [the victims] suffered from asthma and pulmonary inflammation. They received routine treatment and some were even sent home,” Jaber told AFP. “They showed no symptoms of a chemical attack.

But some foreigners entered while we were in a state of chaos and sprinkled people with water, and some of them were even filming it.”

'Oxygen starvation, not gas': Veteran UK reporter Robert Fisk doubts MSM narrative on Douma 'chem attack'

Jaber's testimony is consistent with claims made by a Douma doctor who spoke with veteran UK journalist Robert Fisk, pictured below. Although Dr. Assim Rahaibani did not personally witness what happened in the medical clinic, he said that “all the doctors” he works with “know what happened.”



According to Rahaibani, intense shelling had created dust clouds that seeped into the basements and cellars where people lived. “People began to arrive here suffering from hypoxia, oxygen loss. Then someone at the door, a ‘White Helmet’, shouted ‘Gas!’, and a panic began.

People started throwing water over each other. Yes, the video was filmed here, it is genuine, but what you see are people suffering from hypoxia – not gas poisoning.”

Writing in the Independent, Fisk noted that locals he spoke with “never believed in” the gas attack stories – and that tales of President Bashar Assad's chemical atrocities had been spread by armed Islamist groups who had imprisoned and enslaved thousands of people in Ghouta before the town was liberated by Syrian forces in April.

Meanwhile, a report aired by the German RTL Group-owned channel n-tv says it's unclear whether the attack took place at all, given that most of the locals told them on camera they didn't smell any chemicals at all, one local told them he remembers a “weird smell” and was fine after a glass of water, and one man, who didn't want to show his face, insisted there was a “smell of chlorine.”

However, a local doctor told the channel: “Saturday, a week ago, we treated people with breathing problems, but chlorine or gas poisoning – no, those are different symptoms.”

All of these stories published by different outlets corroborate testimony from two men who appeared in the “gas attack” footage spread far and wide by western media and governments. Interviewed by the Russian military, the two men said they were unknowing accomplices in the gas attack ruse. “We were working and did not pay attention to who was filming us,” the first eyewitness said. “They were filming us, and then a man came in and started screaming that this was a chemical attack...People got scared and started spraying each other with water and using inhalers. Doctors told us that there was no chemical poisoning.”

Doctors and medical workers questioned by the Russian Centre for Reconciliation confirmed that there had been no reports of patients suffering from chemical poisoning in Douma during the timeframe of the alleged gas attack.

The French and British media reports seem to contradict statements made by Paris and London, which have both stated unequivocally that the chemical attack did take place – and that Assad was responsible. French President Emmanuel Macron said before Saturday's missile strike against Syria that he had proof that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad had used chlorine to attack civilians in a militant-held enclave of Eastern Ghouta.

For her part, British Prime Minister Theresa May insisted that a “significant body of information including intelligence indicates the Syrian Regime is responsible for this latest attack.

Britain Accuses Russia of "Despicable" Stunt After "Staged" Gas Attack Claims



BRITAIN AND FRANCE have angrily accused Russia of a "despicable" stunt after Moscow brought a series of alleged witnesses to what it claims was a "staged" Syrian gas attack before the international chemical weapons watchdog.

Russian and Syrian officials held a briefing at The Hague headquarters of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) where they produced a number of Syrians who, they said, appeared in a video of the suspected attack on the rebel-held town of Douma on 7 April.

The Kremlin claims the incident - which led the US, Britain and France to launch punitive missile strikes against a series of Syria regime targets - was faked by the White Helmets search and rescue group.



Britain's ambassador to the OPCW, Peter Wilson, who boycotted the briefing along with other Western allies, said it was a deliberate attempt by the Russians to undermine the work of OPCW inspectors who are trying to establish what happened in Douma. He strongly condemned the Russian

description of Syrians who appeared in the video footage as "unwitting comedians" and said reports of widespread intimidation of witnesses to the incident were a matter of "real concern".

Britain has said up to 75 people died in the incident which it and other Western powers blame on the regime of President Bashar Assad. Mr Wilson said: "The OPCW is not a theatre. Russia's decision to misuse it is yet another Russian attempt to undermine the OPCW's work, and in particular the work of its fact-finding mission investigating chemical weapons use in Syria. "Describing chemical weapons victims as 'comedians' is despicable. "

Syrian medics 'subjected to extreme intimidation' after Douma attack

By Martin Chulov in Beirut and Kareem Shaheen in Istanbul: April 18 2018

THE HEAD of the largest medical relief agency in Syria claims that medics who responded to the suspected gas attack in Douma have been subjected to "extreme intimidation" by Syrian officials who seized biological samples, forced them to abandon patients and demanded their silence. Dr Ghanem Tayara, the director of the Union of Medical Care and Relief Organisations (UOSSM) said doctors responsible for treating patients in the hours after the 7 April attack have been told that their families will be at risk if they offer public testimonies about what took place.

A number of doctors who spoke to the Guardian this week say the intimidation from the regime has increased in the past five days, a timeframe that coincides with the arrival in Damascus of a team from the Organisation for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW),

which aims to determine whether chemical weapons were used. All the medics insisted on anonymity, citing the fear for their lives and those of their families.



"There has been a very heavy security presence on the ground ever since the attack and they have been targeting doctors and medics in a very straightforward way," said Tayara, a Birmingham-based physician, now

in Turkey where he is supervising the departure from Syria of some of the Douma medics. "Any medic who tried to leave Douma was searched so vigorously, especially for samples. At one medical point, seven casualties were taken away. The Russian military police were heavily involved. They were directing things.

"They were looking through their WhatsApp messages and phones. The doctors were treated abusively and have been threatened ever since. Their families have been threatened that they will pay a price and they themselves have told they will be arrested, and much more if they give any evidence, or interviews about what happened in Douma."

Testimonies of first responders and witnesses are crucial to building a picture of what took place in Douma around 7.30pm on 7 April when, in the middle of a prolonged series of airstrikes, medics in the area say they were overrun by patients, many of whom displayed symptoms of exposure to a nerve agent.

"We hadn't seen anything like that in Douma," Tayara said. "We knew what chlorine did, but these were convulsions, foaming and something that had affected the central nervous system." He said he thought the death toll was higher than previous estimates of between 40 and 70.

A former senior officer in the Syrian military chemical weapons programme, Brig Zaher al-Saket, who deserted in 2013, said Douma residents he worked with had buried close to 50 bodies in an undisclosed site in the area, hoping that they could be eventually recovered and used to confirm suspicions that some form of nerve agent was used in the attack.

The OPCW has been racing against the clock to collect samples from the site of the attack, a three-storey house in Douma, in which scores of people died in a basement. Jerry Smith, who helped supervise the OPCW-led withdrawal of much of Syria's sarin stockpile in 2013, said samples of nerve agent rapidly degrade in normal environmental conditions.

A cylinder of the type used by the Syrian military to drop chlorine remains on the roof of the building, multiple witnesses have said. The Russian military and Syrian officers have had



access to the house since last Thursday, raising fears that the site may have been tampered with. However, Smith said it was likely that residual samples of nerve agent would remain for at least another week, even after an attempted clean-up.

Medics and survivors who have remained in Douma, and others who have fled for northern Syria, ridiculed competing claims that the attack either did not take place, or did not use gas. In the hours after the attack, the main opposition militia surrendered. Since

then, tens of thousands of locals have been exiled to northern Syria, and the Syrian military has taken full control of the area.

Abu Walid, a survivor of the attack, whose pregnant wife and only son died, said: "I saw my son coughing. I told him pull it together and run up the stairs. I grabbed my wife and ran after him. Next thing I recall was someone opening and closing my eyelids and dousing me with water. For five hours I lost consciousness and had no idea where I was.

“They told me a chemical attack took place, they told me I lost my wife and son and everybody else was martyred. I told them I wish you didn’t rescue me.”

Some doctors have appeared on Syrian television to deny that anything took place in Douma. A doctor who spoke to the Guardian said: “Our colleagues who appeared on television were coerced, because some hadn’t served in the military or completed their degree, and for other reasons, some had family in Damascus. They decided to stay in exchange for being reconciled with the regime. But the regime used them.”

Another medic who treated victims said: “Anyone who has knowledge of what happened cannot testify. What was being said is that the medical centres would be destroyed on top of those working in it.

“The testimony of people under pressure cannot be relied on. Imagine if you spoke out while under the control of those that you were speaking out against, what will your fate be?”

Another doctor said: “We were receiving threats since the siege began, prior to the chemical weapons attack. When the attack took place, things became much more dangerous. They’re wiping out evidence that would prove the crime, and they are forcing doctors and residents who are witnesses to say that nothing took place.”



Russian TV news reporters condemned for 'appalling behaviour' after sneaking in to film at Salisbury hospital caring for Sergei Skripal

By Freddy Mayhew : April 11, 2018

POLICE WERE CALLED to the hospital where former double agent Sergei Skripal is being treated for exposure to a toxic nerve agent after a Russian TV news crew snuck in to film a report. Officers from Wiltshire Police said they asked two men, who they believed to be news reporters, to leave Salisbury Hospital after receiving a call from security staff at just after 5am this morning.

No arrests were made, but a spokesperson for the hospital condemned the “appalling behaviour” of the Russian journalists in a statement shared by the National Union of Journalists. They said the reporters had approached staff “in the middle of the night with no warning and without asking for any permission”.

Online footage, shared on the Sun and Mail Online websites, shows the pair were from Russia’s Ren TV station and tried to speak with two medical staff while also filming in the hospital’s corridors. At one point the reporter says a sign on a door to the ward where Skripal is being treated for exposure to chemical agent Novichok, was the “only protection from this lethal substance”, according to The Sun. The paper says the sign actually reads: “Caution: Slippery floor surface.”

The hospital spokesperson said: “Our staff, who have been rightly lauded for their recent efforts, working tirelessly to give all of our patients’ high-quality care, deserved better. We would like to reiterate that any attempt to harass, intimidate or cause distress to any of our staff or patients is absolutely unacceptable and will not be tolerated. We understand the worldwide interest in this story and we have been very open and accommodating to members of the press from around the world. Yesterday, for example, we allowed journalists on site for over six hours, yet these individuals made late night attempts to trespass and harass NHS staff. We are a busy hospital and make no apology for putting the needs of our patients first.”

The National Union of Journalists has also condemned the incident and said it would be “alerting” the Russian Union of Journalists, an affiliate of the International Federation of Journalists, about it. NUJ general secretary Michelle Stanistreet said: “Journalists need to act responsibly and sensitively when covering stories at hospitals.

“The NUJ’s code of conduct says journalists must not intrude into anybody’s private life or cause grief or distress, unless there is an overriding public interest. I glad to hear that the vast majority of reporters covering the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal from Salisbury hospital have acted responsibly, but the behaviour of the Russian reporters who gained access to the hospital without permission and spoke to staff cannot be condoned.”

Wiltshire Police told the Sun: “Wiltshire Police were called by security staff at Salisbury District Hospital shortly after 5am this morning. Officers attended and spoke to two men in the reception area, who were believed to be news reporters. They were asked to leave the hospital and did so. No arrests were made.”

Ren TV is owned by National Media Group, run by former Russian gymnast Alina Kabaeva, who a known supporter of Vladimir Putin.



Russia is experimenting with the future of war

By Roger Boyes: The Times: April 4 2018

THE MASTER OF REDUCTIO AD ABSURDUM diplomacy, Sergey Lavrov, suggests the Salisbury poisoning attack was an attempt to distract a nation from its Brexit misery by deploying the British security services, “known for their abilities to act

with a licence to kill”. The Russian foreign minister’s sneer masks the nervousness of the Kremlin:

Russia fears that the East-West showdown over the attempted killing of the Skripals has not ended with tit-for-tat expulsions but could soon turn into international demands to open up for scrutiny its research laboratories. Moscow is a signatory to the chemical weapons convention yet flouts its rules. It should be held to account. That is why Russia insists it be allowed to talk to the recovering Yulia Skripal.

Not out of consular compassion but rather an eagerness to find out what chemical weapons inspectors are up to in Salisbury, the state of the investigation and the precise condition of the victims. Only then can they map out their response.

Not much has leaked out about the novichok nerve agents since they were used against the former Russian spy and his daughter a month ago. Novichoks are a broad class of agent unlike specific toxic substances such as sarin, which is still being used by the Kremlin-backed Assad regime in Syria, and VX, which was used in the bizarre assassination of the half-brother of Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader.

One thing, however, is clear. Novichoks are designed to dodge the narrow terms of the multilateral chemical weapons convention. That means Russia faces fewer restraints on production, retains an ability to disguise provenance, and has added to its arsenal a weapon ideally suited to the Russian practice of hybrid warfare.

The taboo on manufacturing and deploying chemical weapons has been systematically eroded during the Putin era. One French government estimate found that chemical weapons were used in Syria 10 times between October 2012 and last April.

Most of the attacks happened after the August 2013 sarin assault in eastern Ghouta, which killed more than 1,400 people.

At that time Putin, seeking to prevent a US punitive strike on Assad's position, offered Barack Obama a deal: he would help to ensure that his client dictator surrendered Syria's chemical stocks and sign up to the 1997 chemical weapons convention.

In fact, Russia allowed Assad to hide some of the regime's facilities. In the United Nations Russia has obstructed investigation into repeated incidents to such a degree that Syria now feels it can act with impunity. It is misleading then to describe the Salisbury poisoning as a return to the Cold War. In fact, it might well be a sign of the future of war, with the unfettered use of nerve agents taking its place alongside cyberattacks, electronic warfare and the use of disguised troops.



Novichoks are useful in another important respect: they blur the distinction between terrorist groups aiming to spread public fear and state-organised disruption of an adversary. There is a nominal difference between, say, a cult releasing sarin on the Tokyo metro to paralyse a city (as happened in 1995) and a rogue leader such as President Assad gassing his own citizens in a densely populated urban centre to win control of his capital. One is seen as a suicidal and irrational act, the other a cruel, illegal but rational decision to save a dictator's skin.

HG Wells, in his 1895 story *The Stolen Bacillus* tells of an anarchist who injects himself with the bubonic plague with the aim of infecting as many people as possible. The point of the parable: it's not the actual virus or the agent that is the core of the problem, nor even the desire to spread fear, but rather the thought that has gone into the delivery, the suppression of moral checks.

In 2004 George W Bush set Homeland Security the job of developing possible scenarios for a new attack on the civilian population. Remarkably, they do not assume the attacker is a fanatic intent on suicide.

Attacks could be carried out either by a terrorist cell akin to the one that mounted 9/11 or a hostile power. Almost half of the imagined assaults involved the use of nerve agents, chemical or bacteriological weapons. The so-called National Planning Scenarios appeared briefly on a defence department website only to be taken down when European security officials complained they would end up demonstrating how vulnerable western societies had become.

According to one scenario, the UA (universal adversary) drives a lorry through five cities and spreads clouds of anthrax. Spleen fever breaks out, hospitals are overrun. About 300,000 people are infected; an estimated 13,000 die.

Another possibility: the release of plague virus in transport hubs including a railway terminus and the toilets of a major airport. Within days the virus crosses the Atlantic. Or: sarin is released into the ventilation system of a large apartment block; a bomb is exploded close to a large tank of a liquid chloride; anthrax is inserted into a meat processing factory.



Russia will doubtless take offence at any suggestion that it is capable of such barbaric acts. And yet: thallium, polonium-210, Novichoks, the shielding of Assad's serial sarin abuses? When the Kremlin seeks to trivialise the Salisbury incident, it is not strengthening its case for being on the right side of the civilisational frontier. A country that under Putin has breached so many international norms needs to try harder to understand why trust has been squandered.

Salisbury poison 'made at Russia's Porton Down'

By Catherine Philp, Diplomatic Correspondent: The Times: April 6 2018



The Shikhany research base, 500 miles from Moscow, is thought to have produced the novichok poison. The facility also contains shops, hospitals and schools

A RUSSIAN MILITARY research base has been identified as the source of the nerve agent used at Salisbury in a British intelligence briefing for its allies, The Times has learnt. It was used to chemical was manufactured at the Shikhany facility in southwest Russia.

The briefing led to the expulsion of more than 150 Russian diplomats from 28 countries. Also included was information suggesting that Shikhany, Russia's equivalent of the defence laboratory at Porton Down, was used during the past decade to test whether novichok could be effective for assassinations abroad. The weapons-grade nerve agent was used to poison the former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, a month ago.

The stockpiles detected at Shikhany were far smaller than would be used in a battlefield weapon, suggesting their use in targeted killings. Hamish de Bretton Gordon, right, the former commander of Britain's Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Regiment, who has seen the intelligence, called it very compelling. "The



intelligence Britain has clearly points to Russia and Shikhany," he said. "No doubt the Russians are scrubbing it down as we speak." Mr de Bretton Gordon said that there was nothing to support claims that novichok could have come from elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, such as Ukraine or Uzbekistan.

Yesterday Ms Skripal spoke publicly for the first time since the poisoning, saying that her strength was "growing daily" in a statement released by the Metropolitan Police on her behalf.

Officials were working to determine the authenticity of a phone call broadcast by Russian state television said to be between Ms Skripal, 33, and her cousin, Viktoria. The woman said to be Ms Skripal claimed in the call that her father, 66, was also recovering, contradicting hospital reports that he is critical but stable. Russia repeated a demand yesterday that it be given consular access to the Skripals.

Britain is understood to be anxious not to reveal its sources over the briefing but intelligence services are growing frustrated at Russia's upper hand in the propaganda war. They have lobbied Downing Street to release more of the intelligence that helped to convince allies of Moscow's guilt. Whitehall sources said that the intelligence sharing with allies had been unprecedented.

Alexander Yakovenko, the Russian ambassador to London, insisted yesterday that his country had never developed the novichok agent. "This is a creation of some other countries and some scientists," he said. In a 90-minute press conference he veered from sarcasm to giggles to praise for the embassy's notorious Twitter feed. One journalist took Mr Yakovenko to task, saying: "You keep smiling and joking. That suggests you are not taking this seriously."

"That's just my style," Mr Yakovenko retorted. "Don't read too much into it. Russia is taking this very seriously."

Britain and Russia clashed at the UN last night after Moscow called an emergency session of the security council. Vassily Nebenzia, the Russian ambassador to the UN, said: "We have told our British colleagues that you're playing with fire and you'll be sorry." He demanded that Britain produce further evidence of his country's involvement.

Karen Pierce, the British ambassador to the UN, said that Russia was like "an arsonist turned firefighter but in this particular instance the arsonist wants to investigate his own fire". She told Mr Nebenzia that when Britain said it was "highly likely" that Russia carried out the attack "it is a reflection of our judicial process and should not cast doubt on our certainty". "We do not have anything to hide but we fear Russia has something to fear," she said.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind, a former foreign secretary, told the BBC that Russian diplomats were using sarcasm and colourful language as a diversion tactic. In his address to the security council Mr Nebenzia recited from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and compared the poisoning to the detective drama Midsomer Murders.

Four things you need to know about Russian media manipulation strategies

THE CONVERSATION

By Vera Tolz and Precious N Chatterje-Doody : April 5, 2018. Vera is Sir William Mather Professor of Russian Studies, University of Manchester. Precious N Chatterje-Doody is a Post-Doctoral Research Associate, Reframing Russia for the Global Mediasphere, University of Manchester

THE CRISIS EMBROILING the West and Russia over the apparent use of chemical weapons in the English cathedral town of Salisbury can tell us a lot about how the Putin administration is becoming more and more adept at manipulating media coverage of events to gain advantage, both at home and abroad.

The furious accusations levelled against Moscow by the UK government in recent weeks appear to be helping boost Vladimir Putin's position at home. Cycles of hyperbole and mistrust tend to play well for Putin at home. The "categorical" statements by members of the British government which, so far at least, have not been supported by the public release of hard evidence, have provided further ammunition to the Kremlin's narrative.

And despite having a low regular viewership, Russia's international media operations are discussing the "anti-Russian hysteria" in detail, hoping to generate support among particular sections of the public in the West.



Russia's media operations – and this leaves them ill-prepared to respond to the media manipulation strategies of what is now a growing number of neo-authoritarian regimes worldwide. In a globalised media context marked by declining trust in "legacy" media and increased multi-platform media competition, such regimes are devising intricate ways to use state-funded media to bolster their own legitimacy. Here are four things you need to know about Russian media manipulation.

1. This is not a neo-Soviet propaganda

Prominent American media scholar Sarah Oates has described Russia's media system as "neo-Soviet", influenced more by the legacy of Soviet-style propaganda than contemporary political and communication trends. But this is a significant simplification which underestimates the Russian media's capabilities.

The Russian leadership felt the need to cultivate a new media strategy following mass protests against Putin's regime in 2011-12. Limited censorship of the internet in Russia has meant that audiences have access to alternative sources of information and viewpoints – which the state-controlled media are obliged to acknowledge in some way. Politically sensitive issues and criticism of the regime are increasingly being permitted to be articulated within the lesser-watched domestic "soft news" genre, such as the range of interviews and debates broadcast during Russia's recent presidential election campaign.

Of course, international audiences and regulators expect free speech – but domestic audiences also see it as an indicator of trustworthiness and legitimacy. Russian state-controlled television channels remain the main news source for Russian citizens – and despite a significant drop in viewers' trust following biased coverage of the Ukraine crisis, around half of domestic viewers still regard television as a reliable source of information.

2. Politicised content reborn as entertainment

My research – as yet unpublished – suggests that since Putin’s third presidential election in 2012, there has been a dramatic increase in political messaging on state-controlled Russian television. Specifically, “soft news” programming has significantly increased. This global media format includes talk shows and televised debates – and is known for its ability to engage politically inattentive audiences by producing output with strong emotional tags.

Viewers may not remember the exact details of what they saw and heard, but they remember how they felt about it. These programmes provide a relatively safe format to stage manage the plurality of opinion that audiences expect.

These tactics were clearly on display during Russia’s recent presidential election campaign. The main domestic television news programmes were dominated by positive coverage of Putin. By contrast, talk shows and televised debates included sharp criticism of his regime – as well as explicit discussions of electoral fraud which had been circulating on the internet and social media.

But the stage-management of these debates actually had the effect of neutralising criticism of Putin. Because debate formats tended to encourage conflict and they quickly degenerated into swearing, interruptions and even physical abuse. Participants looked bad – discrediting themselves and each other. Only Putin, who did not participate, came out unscathed. Similarly, when the state-owned Russian international television network RT (formerly Russia Today) aired an uncut English-language interview with liberal opposition candidate, Ksenia Sobchak, her combative manner undermined her credibility. This diluted the impact of her outspoken attack on Putin’s regime.

3. Conspiracy is king



Global media consumers show great interest in disruptive or dramatic events and in topics that generate significant public concern, such as migration and terrorism. Many are also drawn to conspiracy theories, which seem to impose order upon the chaos of reality.

Reporting of the Skripals’ poisoning provides a good illustration of how Russia’s media frames political coverage to meet these demands. Far from censoring the UK government position, state-funded media have skilfully deflected (indeed, reflected back) the circumstantial evidence used by the British to incriminate Russia.

Domestic television and RT have offered viewers gripping conspiracy theories about the poisoning. For example, the decision to reinvestigate the suspicious deaths of 14 former Russian citizens in the UK for possible Russian involvement was reported on in Russia. The coverage included lengthy discussions of possible involvement by the UK intelligence services.

4. Grist to Russia's mill

Dubious statements made by UK foreign and defence secretaries have given the Russian media a useful tool to discredit the UK's position. RT extensively covered the negative reactions from other UK politicians' and social media users to these statements, while Russia's domestic media referred to them as an example of the West's unrestrained hostility.

It is becoming increasingly clear that Russia's neo-authoritarian regime puts global media trends to its own uses and adopts these trends on its own terms. How effective the Russian state-controlled media are in shaping public perceptions domestically and abroad requires further study. But it is already clear that conventional approaches to analysing censorship and propaganda cannot help us understand the Kremlin's media strategy – the reality is much more complex.

Russian troll threats and techniques revealed

By: Deborah Haynes, Defence Editor: The Times: April 2 2018



Suspected pro-Russian Twitter accounts tried to "influence" an online poll that questioned evidence in the Salisbury attack. KACPER PEMPEL/REUTERS

PRO-KREMLIN TROLLS on Twitter "dismiss, distort, distract and dismay" in battles that are playing out over social media after the Salisbury attack, an analysis shows today. Ben Nimmo, an expert on Russian disinformation, studied the activity he generated after calling out suspected pro-Russia trolls on Twitter last month. He quickly became the focus of abuse, including one Russian-language account threatening to kill him with the novichok nerve agent that was used against Sergei and Yulia Skripal.

"Such trolling is an inseparable part of life for those who report on pro-Kremlin disinformation," wrote Mr Nimmo of the Digital Forensic Research Lab of the Atlantic Council, a US think tank. "The current case, however, illustrates the techniques frequently used in such attacks, which can be described as 'dismiss, distort, distract, dismay'."

The researcher posted comments on Twitter about strange activity he had noticed around an online poll on March 17 related to the Salisbury attack. A seemingly genuine Twitter account called @Rachael Swindon posed the question of whether Britain's evidence in the Skripal poisoning was adequate to blame Russia. The poll returned a majority in favour of "no".

A look at the activity around the poll, however, revealed that many of the accounts that retweeted — and most probably voted — in the survey were either Russian-language or posted pro-Kremlin content, Mr Nimmo said: "This appears to be an attempt by pro-Russian users to influence the online poll and thus to create the appearance of greater hostility towards the UK government than UK users themselves showed," he said.

Mr Nimmo posted his observations on his own Twitter feed, calling out certain suspected troll accounts that had amplified the poll. He documented the responses in an analysis on pro-Russia trolling, which is published today.

"Dismissal is the simplest form of trolling as, by definition, it avoids analysing the evidence," he wrote. "The distortion technique requires more attention to detail, both in the creation and the rebutting. It is therefore a rarer technique."

On distraction, Mr Nimmo said: "The third troll technique is to distract from the subject by accusing their critics of other misdemeanours. In this case many Russian-language accounts levelled accusations of being 'propaganda'."

As for dismay, he said that trolls target a perceived opponent with threats or warnings, however implausible. This, in his study, included death threats. One Russian-language account, @MarKizZ17, "promised a less legal retaliation: death by the novichok nerve agent. Another user replied to suggest a long-range Kalibr missile", Mr Nimmo wrote.

While some pro-Kremlin trolls act independently, Russia is accused of running a "troll factory" in St Petersburg. Automated Twitter accounts are also used to pump out streams of pro-Kremlin messages.

The Times revealed last month that British officials believe that Moscow unleashed an extensive disinformation operation after the Salisbury spy attack, with thousands of suspected robotic accounts spreading doubt and conspiracy on the internet. The Kremlin denies any involvement in trolling.



The Israeli army's war on consciousness

The IDF Spokesperson's Unit describes its work as part of the army's operations arm, speaks of 'media operations,' and defines 'tarnishing the name of Israel's

enemies' as one of its main goals. By Michael Schaeffer Omer- Man : +972 Magazine: April 12, 2018

IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS we at the IDF Spokesperson's Office have come to the understanding that we are actually conducting media operations, IDF Spokesperson Brig.-Gen. Ronen Manelis told a room full of Israeli journalists earlier this week. "The IDF's digital platforms are operational tools in the operational arm of the IDF."

In the chief spokesperson's words, the military is engaged of "a war over consciousness" — changing what and how people think of Israel, its army — and if you're an Arab, what you think of your own leaders, government, and society.

+972 Magazine

“We actually define different goals for each audience, different platforms, and most fundamentally, different messages,” added Manelis, whose background is as an intelligence officer. “We come up with an operational strategy. We conduct media intelligence about who we are trying to reach with what message.”

For Arabic-speaking audiences, the chief spokesperson explained, those operations are meant “to create deterrence and to blacken (tarnish) the enemy — either by explaining that our enemy is really bad and to tarnish his name and to

say don’t join them, or to deter them against Israel.”

By effectively taunting Arabic-speaking audiences, including Hamas leaders, with pointed and controversial messages and posts on social media, the IDF is able to game social media algorithms so that audiences who would otherwise have no interest in interacting with Israel, let alone its army, are exposed to its propaganda, Manelis explained, giving the example of a recent Twitter face-off with senior Hamas official Moussa Abu Marzouk.

Manelis also boasted how IDF op-eds and articles published on social media in Arabic are at times reproduced almost in full by mainstream media in countries like Lebanon and have even elicited direct responses from Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. (Manelis also claimed that the army has successfully placed or published information in “two or three opposition sites” in Lebanon in recent months.)

For non-Arab international audiences, the goal is to “legitimize Israel’s freedom of operation,” Manelis continued, which in non-military terms parlance means neutralizing and countering public, political, and diplomatic pressure on Israel over its day-to-day military actions in the



occupied territories including the decade-long siege on Gaza, the recent shooting of unarmed Palestinian protesters along the border, of fishermen at sea, carrying out air unprovoked airstrikes in Syria and Lebanon, and quite possibly one day, a pre-emptive attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities.

Left: IDF soldiers participate in a cyber defence course. (IDF Spokesperson)

Do the IDF Spokesperson’s “media operations” include the use of disinformation? Reached by telephone on Thursday, Lt.-Col.

Jonathan Conricus, head of the IDF Spokesperson’s Unit’s international media branch, didn’t deny that the Israeli army engages in information warfare and deception.

But those types of operations are carried out by the intelligence branch, Conricus explained, not the spokesperson. The spokesperson’s office engages solely in public affairs and public diplomacy and deals “in the truth and only the truth,” he said.

It must be said, however, that the army has on no few occasions indeed put out information that later turned out to be false. We also know from former chief spokesperson Avi Benayahu that the IDF Spokesperson’s Unit has used deceptive and manipulative tactics, like sending military officers to appear on international television as if they were civilian commentators.



The IDF's Cognitive Effort: Supplementing the Kinetic Effort



By Gabi Siboni & Gal Pertl Finkel: INSS Insight No. 1028: Tel Aviv March 1 2018

THE ISRAELI DEFENCE FORCE has intensified its cognitive-related activity recently and engaged in a significant build-up process in this realm. This has included developing a cognitive operations doctrine and engaging in developing technological tools, training human resources, and building organizational frameworks supporting the doctrine. The use of overt capabilities by the IDF Spokesperson's Unit enables direct discourse with many target audiences in enemy states on the social media, as well as with terrorist elements.

This is affected using the various capabilities developed in the IDF designed to create legitimacy in international target audiences, influence the enemy, and even maintain deterrence. The current development of technology in the social media, whether overt or covert, constitutes a strategic asset for Israel alongside traditional kinetic assets.

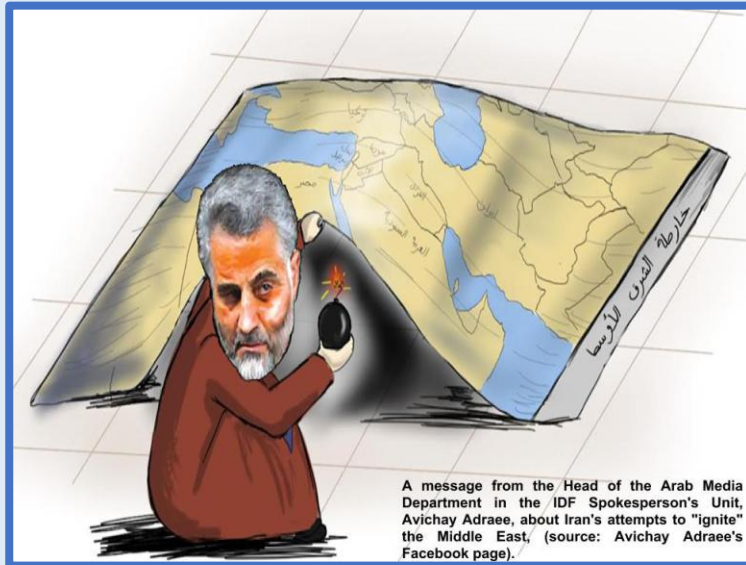
In late January 2018, IDF Spokesperson Brigadier General Ronen Manlis published an article in the Arab media, warning Lebanon's citizens of "Hezbollah's hooligan-like behaviour, the establishment of terror infrastructures and plants for manufacturing weapon systems under the very eyes of the Lebanese government, and the undisturbed military deployment within the civilian population."

Manlis added that Lebanon's citizens had better not "let Iran and Hezbollah exploit the naiveté of Lebanon's leaders and establish plants to produce precision missiles, as they have lately attempted."

The IDF is fully prepared for any eventuality, and "as we proved in previous years - and those who need to know are aware of this - our security red lines are clear-cut, and we prove this every week."

Manlis's article provided a glimpse into a range of IDF overt and covert activities in the realm of cognitive operations, with the aim of delivering messages to target audiences in Lebanon, the region, and the world at large: namely, that build-up efforts by Iran and its proxy Hezbollah are clear to Israel, that Israel has the ability to act against them, and that therefore Lebanon's citizens would be better off not to sanction these efforts, as they designate the civilian population as human shields in a future campaign.

The IDF engages in additional cognitive-related efforts vis-à-vis Hezbollah in Lebanon. Avihai Edrei, in charge of the social media in the Arab world in the IDF Spokesperson's Unit, conducts a heated online discussion in order to confront Hezbollah with various target



audiences in Lebanon. In advance of Lebanon's forthcoming elections, scheduled for May 2018, the Lebanese news website IM Lebanon published an article reviewing IDF activity in the Lebanese social media. Under the headline "Whom Are You Laughing At?"

Edrei addresses Nasrallah directly, "Who commanded you to send youths to die in Lebanon? What interest did you have to be dragged in to a war that Lebanon has no part in, if not just the interest of Iran?"

Confronting Nasrallah further, he charges, "Why did you, along with the Iranians, assassinate

Badreddine?" It is hard to assess the impact of this activity on Hezbollah, but it appears that this activity has resonated in the Lebanese press and has potential for influence in the long term.

The IDF has recently intensified its cognitive-related activity and has engaged in a significant build-up process in this area. This has included developing a cognitive operations doctrine and engaging in developing technological tools, training human resources, and building organizational frameworks supporting the doctrine. In addition, the cognitive realm has been incorporated into IDF exercises. To be sure, the importance of the effort is not new and has long featured in the annals of war. "The importance of suppressing the fighting spirit of the adversary is no less important than the actual killing of its soldiers," declared Carl von Clausewitz, emphasizing that the kinetic activity in the battlefield must be combined with activity designed to influence the enemy's mindset.

Technological development enables a wide range of focused means of influence vis-à-vis various target audiences, and in effect creates another combat arena beyond the classic kinetic combat arenas. Armies and states find themselves having to contend with enemy efforts of influence that utilize the technological realm and social media in order gain achievements without resorting to the use of kinetic means or employ both types of tools together.

This phenomenon requires armies and states to work both on the defensive plane, in order to counter enemy efforts, as well as on the proactive and offensive plane, in order to achieve objectives by influencing enemy target audiences, including decision makers, commanders, combatants, and domestic and world public opinion.

Cognitive efforts can be divided into three categories:

- (1) Covert efforts, whereby the attacked target is not aware that an effort to influence it is underway. In such operations, the messages are conveyed in a way preventing the target audience from identifying that it is subject to an influencing operation. An example might be messages transmitted by disguised elements.

(2) Undercover efforts (also termed “operations under a false flag”), whose target, whether an organization, public, or country, is aware of the activity against it, but those behind it hide behind a false identity. An example is the campaign for the election of the Governor of Florida in 1994. Activists of Democratic candidate Lawton Chiles telephoned about 70,000 elderly voters, identified themselves as representing Republican candidate Jeb Bush, and told them that he intends to cut national insurance and medical aid to the elderly, subjects of critical importance to them.

(3) Overt efforts, such as the messages in the article by the IDF Spokesperson to Lebanon, or IDF activity on the social media in Lebanon.

The common denominator of all types of cognitive efforts is that most of the activity takes place in the overt realm, conveying messages to the target audiences in the classic media (the press, television and radio) and via the internet, the social media, forums, blogs, and website advertisements. The overt effort bears with it most of the ability to influence and change public opinion, with respect to a large public or at the decision-making level.

The activity in the overt realm necessitates certain skills, primarily an understanding of mass psychology and the ability to analyse target audiences. In this context, the development of operational capabilities in armies in general and in the IDF in particular can benefit from the civilian world. Campaigns to influence various target audiences are the bread and butter of every advertising and public relations office marketing products or campaigning for politicians.



In the IDF, as in other armies, an ongoing debate concerns who should lead the influence operations. There is a traditional tendency, stemming from the “soft” nature of these operations and the closeness to psychological warfare, to associate them with the intelligence operations sphere.

This is partly due to the fact that in the past these operations had to be based on focused intelligence; thus, the activity was directed to the covert intelligence field.

However, in view of the fact that most of the operations take place in the overt realm and the skills needed involve activities in the public realm vis-à-vis various target audiences, it would be best for the IDF if those specializing in the field led these operations.

Moreover, developments in recent years and the transfer of the operational arena to the overt realm necessitate building capabilities on a large scale, tapping all the operational capabilities of armies in general and of the IDF in particular for operating in the overt media.

The use of overt capabilities by the IDF Spokesperson’s Unit enables direct discourse with many target audiences in enemy states on the social media, as well as with terrorist elements. This is affected using the various capabilities developed in recent years in the IDF, designed to create legitimacy in international target audiences, influence the enemy, and even maintain deterrence. The current development of technology in the social media, whether overt or covert, constitutes a strategic asset for Israel alongside traditional kinetic assets. There is considerable potential for activity in the overt sphere, including in the operational context, while in tandem manoeuvre and fire operations in the physical realm are intensified.

The cognitive battle consists of three efforts: preliminary (before the confrontation), concurrent (during), and following the confrontation and complements the principal campaign in the physical realm.

The cognitive battle for the must be guided by an overall principle that incorporates all the relevant entities and authorities in the country, including the army, defence entities, and legal, financial, and diplomatic elements; it requires ongoing tasking of intelligence, both gathering and assessment.

It is necessary to develop tools and capabilities for operating in the cognitive field, including responses to existing threats, ability to interdict evolving threats, and ultimately proactive attack capability to achieve objectives vis-à-vis various relevant target audiences. Therefore, IDF activity in the social networks used by the enemy bears considerable operational potential for Israel.



How Iran tries to control news coverage by foreign-based journalists

Reporters with Borders (RSF) condemns attempts by the Iranian judicial system and intelligence services to influence the Persian-language sections of international media outlets by putting pressure on Iranian journalists based abroad and, on their families, still in Iran.

HOW DOES THE IRANIAN intelligence services pressure Iranian journalists who are working abroad? BBC World Service director Francesca Unsworth shed some light on this when she reported on 15 August 2017 that the assets of more than 150 BBC Persian staff, former staff and contributors have been frozen in Iran, preventing them from conducting financial transactions there.

This is one of the many methods use by the Iranian authorities since the Islamic Revolution in 1979. However, because of a more conciliatory foreign policy since Hassan Rouhani became president in 2013, the regime has limited its use of direct harassment in favour of more subtle threats. Nowadays, the families of foreign-based journalists are "politely" summoned to interviews with intelligence officials but the message is still the same: the journalists must "stop collaborating with enemy media" without delay.

In the past year, RSF has learned of ten families of journalists who have been summoned to such interviews, usually with intelligence ministry agents. In all, at least 50 journalists based abroad have been threatened in some way in the same period. At least 16 of them have received death threats.

It is not just BBC Persian employees who are targeted. All international media outlets with Persian-language services are concerned, regardless of the country in which the media are based. Journalists with Radio Farda (Radio Free Europe's Persian-language section), with such state-funded broadcasters as Voice of America, Deutsche Welle and Radio France Internationale, and privately-owned broadcasters such as Manoto TV and Radio Zamaneh have also been threatened by Iran's intelligence services or judicial system.

The pressure is sufficiently intimidating that most of the journalists and media representatives contacted by RSF asked not to be identified. A few did however agree to be named. Radio Farda director Arman Mostofi said four of his station's journalists have been the targets of a total of about ten death threats, all of them anonymous. "These threats are obviously not signed," Mostofi said. "They sometimes take the form of a comment beneath an article. The journalist may subsequently be contacted in another way but it's exactly the same message that will be transmitted. Sometimes the message includes information that only members of the intelligence services could know."



Iranians sit in a coffee shop as a TV screen broadcasts election results, in Tehran, Iran, 20 May 2017

The threats are often explicit. Fahimeh Khezr Heidari, the presenter of a Radio Farda programme called Taboo that has "funny stories and ethnic jokes," often receives threats aimed at getting her to stop the programme. In mid-February, she found the following message posted in the comments section: "Ms. Khezr Heidari, Monday will be a horrible day for a member of your family because you did not take our last warning seriously. Thank you, my corrupt sister."

Radio Zamaneh editor in chief Mohammadreza Nikfar said most of his journalists are often the targets of phishing attempts, in which people may be tricked into letting others take over their online identities. But he gave examples of other forms of harassment as well.

"The family of one of our journalists was summoned by intelligence ministry agents," he said. "After showing articles by him that had been posted on our website, they said: 'Tell him to stop collaborating with Radio Zamaneh.' Another journalist, a former prisoner of conscience, has been threatened several times by telephone. They tell him his family will suffer the consequences if he does not return to Iran."

Since 2012, at least five journalists have been arrested after returning to Iran and have been given sentences ranging from three to twelve years in prison. The pressure is clearly real but it is hard to gauge its effectiveness and its impact on the attitude of the journalists concerned and their reporting. But it does have an impact, according to a former journalist with an international media outlet's Persian-language section, who asked not to be identified.

"When your father calls and an intelligence ministry agent takes the phone and says, 'your father is here and we're talking about you,' and you know that your family is being harassed and is in danger of being arrested, how can you write freely?" he asked. "After members of my family had been summoned for questioning, I could no longer work as I had before."

Radio Farda's Mostofi insists that the station's *raison d'être* is "not giving in to pressure and resisting self-censorship." He said he warns journalists about the threats they face and tells them they don't have to continue.

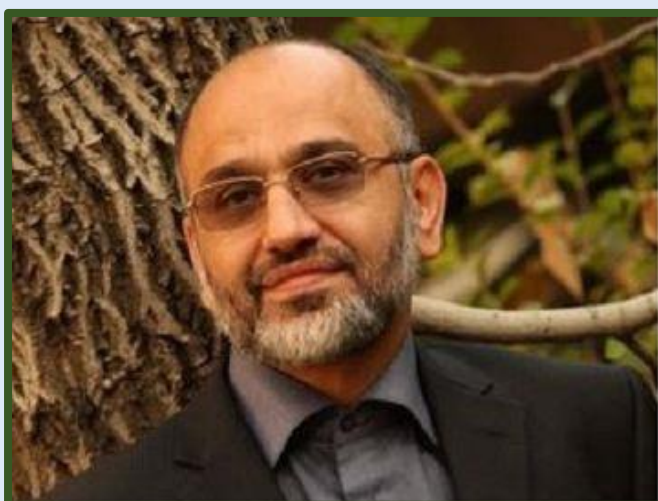
"But 99% of the time, the journalists are determined, and decide to continue their work."

A journalist with Manoto TV, a privately-owned station based in London that is very popular in Iran, said she gets threats all the time. She said that so far this year she has received a death threat and her family in Iran has been summoned twice for questioning.

Harassment of families is a constant threat, even if it is evolving, as the editor in chief of an international media's Persian-language section explained. "The pressure on families has declined this year in Tehran but has increased in the provinces," he said. "The only difference is that the interviews are now more courteous. The agents address families politely. But even if courteous, they still represent a threat."

Even when they do not have refugee status, most journalists living abroad are exposed to the possibility of being prosecuted on a charge of "collaborating with enemy media" or espionage and of being given a long jail sentence, which prevents them from returning to Iran. Spouses often encounter problems when visiting Iran. Many have had their passports confiscated on arrival and, to recover them, they have had to go to the intelligence ministry, where they are typically questioned about their partner's work, their relationship and sometimes their private life.

Parents who want to visit their foreign-based offspring have similar difficulties. When they obtain permission to travel, they are subjected to extensive interrogation on their return. "While staying with me, a member of my family was instructed to take photos of my house, my street and, if possible, my workplace and my colleagues," a London-based Iranian journalist said. Another said: "I've had to stop writing under my real name ever since my wife was arrested during a trip to Iran."



The regime also harasses the sources in Iran that are used by international media, so that they are denied access to information. Such sources include Mehdi Khazali, left, the editor of the blog Baran, who was arrested by plainclothesmen in Tehran on 12 August.

Tehran prosecutor Abass Jafari Dolatabadi announced on 28 August: "Using a woman as an intermediary, Mehdi Khazali sent false information about the government to counter-revolutionary websites based abroad and to VOA." In recent months, Khazali had openly criticized the head of the judicial authority, Sadeqh Amoli Larijani,

in interviews for VOA and DorTV. His family said he began a hunger strike on his first day in detention. In 2011, he was given a 14-year jail sentence.

Amadnews, a website that often publishes confidential information about corruption involving government officials, has become one of the leading targets of the government's attacks and threats in the past two years. The website's founder, Roholah Zam, the son of a reformist official, currently lives in France but his family in Iran has been subjected to the most appalling persecution. Two of his sisters and his brother-in-law were detained for four months last year, and his youngest brother, Mohamad Milad Zam, was arrested at home on 26 August and was taken to an unknown location.

Amadnews editor Sam Mahmoudi Sarabi and some of the site's contributors were threatened repeatedly in late August. A single tweet announcing a story about Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei recently elicited death threats against him. In the past six months, ten journalists have been arrested in Iran by the justice system's intelligence service for allegedly collaborating with the site.

China's \$6 Billion Propaganda Blitz Is a Snooze

Beijing's propaganda works at home, but it can't compete globally.

By Hilton Yip, Foreign Policy Magazine: April 23, 2018



IN A WORLD ON THE BRINK chaos, China has decided that what people everywhere need is more good news — as long as it's about China. The country is creating a giant media outlet called Voice of China, combining the three state television and radio broadcasters aimed at overseas audiences: China Global Television Network, China Radio International, and China National Radio. The hope is that by combining resources and output, China will have a broader platform to spread its message overseas.

But will Voice of China succeed in boosting China's international image, especially given the dubious performance of previous global state media pushes?

Chinese President Xi Jinping has made no secret that he has very high hopes for China as a new superpower on the world stage, having broken away from his predecessors' low-key approach. Like Xi's "Chinese Dream," "Voice of China" is a calque, directly copied from a U.S. model — in this case, "Voice of America." But despite the country's economic, industrial, and technological might, China has a serious problem with its international image. The Chinese Dream doesn't sell abroad, at least in the developed world — and the censorship and restraints that have always held back Chinese media abroad have been redoubled in the age of Xi



A man walks past a roadside poster of Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, on Oct. 24, 2017. (Greg Baker/AFP/Getty Images)

That's why the Chinese leadership has put significant effort into improving China's soft power globally, with state media playing a key part. Voice of China is the latest move in a global \$6.6 billion media expansion campaign involving TV, radio, and newspapers that started in 2009 during the presidency of Hu Jintao, Xi's predecessor

The merger of the three state media broadcasters was also part of a significant government overhaul in March to streamline departments and centralize control, re-emphasizing the Chinese Communist Party's ultimate authority. Voice of China will also be directly overseen by the State Council and managed by the Communist Party's Central Publicity Department. It's a long-running idea; there are reports in Chinese media from 2001 about a proposed merger of these three organizations, though nothing apparently came of it until now.

Besides the groups set to merge as Voice of China, the country's giant state media machine includes newspapers such as the English-language China Daily, the party's flagship newspaper the People's Daily, and the Global Times, owned by the People's Daily, which is a nationalist tabloid with both English and Chinese-language editions. (I was an editor for the Global Times in Beijing between 2013 and 2015.) All these outlets have expanded significantly since the global media campaign launched in 2009. Large numbers of foreign professionals, such as myself, were hired at media outlets in Beijing, while China Central Television (CCTV) launched bureaus in Kenya and the United States. The English-language edition of the Global Times was launched in 2009.



In theory, the global push has been successful. CCTV is broadcast in 140 countries in multiple languages, while China Radio International broadcasts in 65 languages. CCTV even rebranded its foreign-language news channels as China Global Television Network (CGTN) at the end of 2016. The rebranding also included the launch of a CGTN app and increased social media presence on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, all banned in China. China Daily puts out

international editions in Hong Kong, the United States, and Europe.

In contrast to the staid People's Daily and China Daily, the Global Times' English edition has attracted lots of attention — but not necessarily for the right reasons. Its aggressive editorials pull no punches excoriating any country or foreign politician whom China has an issue with, such as calling U.S. President Donald Trump “as ignorant as a child” or branding the United Kingdom as fit only for travel and education. In March, one feisty editorial urged China to prepare for a “direct military clash” in the Taiwan Strait.

However, despite almost a decade of overseas expansion, China state media are still widely — and largely correctly — seen as being editorially biased and full of propaganda, and they still struggle to attract large audiences. That's not going to change. In fact, it looks likely to get worse. Voice of China was formed with the goal of “propagating the party's theories, directions, principles and policies” as well as “telling good China stories,” according to a Chinese Communist Party document released by Xinhua, the nation's official news agency, on March 21.

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Herein lies the problem. The redoubling of efforts to push the party's theories and principles abroad is at odds with boosting China's overseas image. In this age of widespread internet use and the popularity of social media and non-traditional forms of media, people have become more averse to clumsy state-run propaganda than ever.

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“The creation of Voice of China is about centralizing control and consolidating resources, [in the belief] that this will allow China to project its voice more effectively. But the challenge for China’s leadership will be how to project voices that somehow resonate with people around the world while maintaining a unity of voice,” says David Bandurski, co-director of the Hong Kong-based China Media Project and a fellow of the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin. “This is an internal contradiction China has struggled with for years in its external propaganda. And it’s possible that this consolidation could only worsen the problem.”

It’s also basically impossible to use media to promote China overseas while domestic journalism languishes. Not only is media in all forms heavily censored in China, but journalists also have been the target of a crackdown in recent years. As a result, there is growing disillusionment in the profession as journalists are allowed to do little more than parrot the official line.

A reporter’s eye roll on live TV during the National People’s Congress in March was a perfect example. By rolling her eyes at another reporter asking a long-winded question during a press conference, a Chinese journalist seemed to speak for many in the country who are tired of the charade that local media has become. The reality in China is that any journalist who dares ask a government official critical questions would almost definitely face serious punishment.

The eye roll media storm was followed by censorship, a predictable response from the authorities, and then an official ban on video parodies. Investigative journalism has been severely curtailed, while reporting has become increasingly censored. Beijing’s expulsion of at least tens of thousands of migrant workers last November and December, for instance, saw limited and heavily restricted domestic news coverage.



State media outlets, even the firebrand Global Times, are the ones most subject to these restrictions. At times, Global Times journalists were once able to put out relatively daring pieces on issues like local corruption, rural poverty, and gay and lesbian discrimination.

But these are increasingly rare — and are drowned out by bombastic nationalistic editorials and news stories on problems in foreign countries or toned-down domestic news reports. Sensitive topics like Taiwan, Tibet, or Xinjiang are delicately reported on, and the official party line is adhered to. From personal experience, even innocuous quotes such as those from a foreign executive about pollution in Beijing are removed completely.

Voice of China might take its name from Voice of America, but the two will likely be worlds apart. A quick look at Voice of America’s website shows stories covering news such as the gun reform rally on March 24 in which tens of thousands of Americans marched on their capital. That story would be impossible to run in China. For instance, the CGTN website features news sections such as “China Cares,” “China Breakthroughs” and “Tradition of China.”

CGTN pales even when compared to Russian state media, themselves no slouches in the propaganda game. Despite the strong anti-Western sentiment of RT's reporting and programs, they at least feature some newsworthy content. This is something CGTN can hardly do, with stodgy news reporting and bland programs dominating its line-up. Russian state English-language TV network RT, formerly Russia Today, has gained attention for its strident anti-West reporting and interviews. It often features controversial figures such as Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Nigel Farage, a former leader of the British far-right UK Independence Party, and Edward Snowden, whereas even informed viewers struggle to recognize CGTN's guests.

RT doesn't mind whether it goes to the far-left or the far-right. But Chinese state media, reporting, and punditry can only act from a very narrow, officially approved scope, and the risk of the political extremes is too much. Instead of fascists and radicals, then, Chinese media is left with elderly politicians and business executives. Producers and reporters can be punished or fired for reporting on topics or expressing views that go beyond the official stance.

Even in the relatively liberal era of the 2000s, it was common for reporters to be fined significant sums of money or even lose their jobs for making "political errors." So, while CGTN's studios might seem slick and their overseas bureaus as numerous as those of their Western counterparts, the actual content is a mix of brutally tedious propaganda and bland documentaries. The audience is always the bosses in Beijing, not the average viewer overseas.

Yet there is one area of international media where China might actually dominate — overseas Chinese-language media. But rather than using state media to make inroads, China has simply bought up existing media outlets or obtained the loyalties of their owners. Around the world, from Australia to Hong Kong to Europe, many Chinese-language media outlets are owned by individuals or companies with strong links to the Chinese Communist Party. Overseas Chinese communities are increasingly exposed to media coverage that is heavily pro-China and toes the party line in refraining from reporting on sensitive news events in China.

Among Chinese communities with little exposure to wider media, the CCP's efforts might be paying off. But when it comes to reaching a global audience, no amount of repackaging and rebranding can succeed if the product itself is unchanged. As long as China's leadership cannot differentiate between propaganda and journalism, the Voice of China will stay unheard.



Britain's New Pacific Presence

By George Allison : UK Defence Journal: April 25, 2018: The full article was written by Cleo Paskal, an Associate Fellow, Chatham House, London and Director, The Oceania Research Project (protorp.org).

LAST WEEK THE UK announced it was establishing diplomatic representation in nine countries: Lesotho, Swaziland, the Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu. From an Oceanian perspective, this might be a game changer.

There has been concern in capitals around the globe that the region is drifting towards China. Some analysts believe that politicians in Australia and New Zealand, the major Western nations tasked with "strategic management" in the region, have prioritised a narrow domestic economic agenda over regional prosperity and security, opening the door to Beijing in the process – often to the dismay of their defence and intelligence communities.



HMS Albion sails with French vessels in the Pacific

This opening up seemingly accelerated once the semi-autonomous New Zealand Aid was integrated into Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2009), and the Australian Agency for International Development came under the control of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2013). Some aid funding started to be more directly linked to economic advantage for New Zealand and Australia, as opposed to creating domestic security in the Pacific.

For example, large amounts of Australian and New Zealand aid have been earmarked for “harmonising” the legal systems of countries signed on to the PACER Plus free trade agreement, despite the fact that the deal is regionally divisive and seemingly of little value to Pacific nations, which already have quota- and tariff-free access to Australia and New Zealand markets via the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement.

PACER Plus is overtly designed to enshrine Australia’s and New Zealand’s economic primacy in the region. The New Zealand Government National Interest Analysis of the deal said it would “preserve New Zealand’s position against major competitors from outside of the region in the years to come”. One of these “competitors” is the U.K.

That focus on trying to grab as much of the economic pie as possible, even if it makes the pie smaller, has hobbled regional economies and made them more open to Chinese engagement. That has resulted in the loss not only of political leverage for Canberra and Wellington (and by extension their strategic partners), but also, ultimately, of economic leverage as well. The policy hasn’t been working for anyone except China.

There were recent reports, denied by the parties concerned, that China was interested in a “naval base” in Vanuatu. A standard component of Chinese expansion has been an interest in ports. There is talk of a port development in Samoa, and a slipway in Tonga.

These projects are usually presented as commercial in nature, but there are concerns they could become dual-use (commercial and military). Additionally, given China’s penchant for exporting domestic corruption, there is the possibility they will become triple-use (commercial, military, and criminal), and function as conduits for drugs and human trafficking.

However, especially given the denials coming from Vanuatu, there are questions about how the naval base story was broken, and whether it would be used as a pretext for intervention. It would be good to have another set of friendly eyes analysing the situation.

Enter the U.K. In the post-Brexit era, the U.K. will be looking to make itself more valuable to its various partners. One area in which it already has a very deep bench is intelligence and strategic analysis. Two of the diplomatic missions the U.K. is reopening, in Tonga and Vanuatu, were only closed in 2006. There are people in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other circles with strong knowledge of the region and good contacts.

The U.K. also had existing representation in Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea. With six posts in the South Pacific, the U.K. will have better coverage in the region than the U.S. (excluding its Freely Associated States), France, Germany, India, or just about anyone else except Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Taiwan, and China.

Within the region, the U.K. is seen as a benign, if not actively friendly, partner. Tongans, Samoans, and ni-Vanuatu can receive six-month visitor visas on arrival in the U.K., unlike the costly and onerous process involved in visiting Australia or New Zealand. In the U.K., the Tongan King has a higher diplomatic status than any Australian or New Zealand politician. The generational relationships between traditional leaders in the Pacific and royals and others in the U.K. offer a permanent backchannel built on long-standing trust.

British Army combat rifle to be upgraded by Heckler and Koch

By George Allison :UK Defence Journal: April 12, 2018

MINISTER GUTO BEBB has announced that the British Army's standard combat rifle is to be upgraded. The SA80 A2 will be upgraded into the A3 model under the Mid Life Improvement (MLI) project, which will ensure the rifle has the enhancements needed to remain in service until 2025 and beyond say the MoD.

According to the announcement, there will be an initial investment of £5.4 million for the project, which will be carried out by Heckler and Koch at a Nottingham Factory owned by the company which also functions as UK headquarters of Heckler & Koch.

Defence Minister Guto Bebb said: "This multi-million-pound upgrade will give our Army a lighter, more hardwearing, better-camouflaged combat rifle so our soldiers can perform on the frontline of some of the most dangerous locations across the world. This investment is also a boost to Nottingham's highly-skilled gun-makers who proudly support our troops in their task to protect our country in the face of intensifying threats."



According to the MoD, changes to the rifle include: A more durable hardwearing coating in a "Flat Dark Earth" colour offering better camouflage in a range of environments. The A3 is 100g lighter than the A2 and has a more streamlined fore grip making the weapon easier to handle.

The A3 rifle has a bracket to secure new innovative low light sights which can clip on or in front of the day sight without the need to remove it. These sights are smaller, lighter and require fewer batteries whilst operating just as effectively in low light/night conditions.

Director Land Equipment at the MOD's Defence Equipment and Support organisation, Major General Colin McClean said: "The SA80 is a battle proven weapon used by the UK Armed Forces on operations all over the world. The upgrade will build upon the rifle's state-of-the-art features enhancing accuracy and consistency. The Mid Life Improvement project will ensure that our troops have the right equipment at the right time."

The MLI project will see 5,000 weapons upgraded initially with the intent to upgrade more weapons in the future. The fielding of the first tranche began in February.

Eurofighter outline why they believe Typhoon is 'the Perfect Choice for Germany'

By George Allison: UKDJ: April 25, 2018

EUROFIGHTER CEO VOLKER PALTZO confirmed that Eurofighter Jagdflugzeug GmbH has jointly submitted with Airbus Defence & Space their response to the German Government for the replacement of their Tornado fleet, arguing that Eurofighter is the perfect choice for Germany. Volker Paltzo said: "I am confident that Eurofighter Typhoon can provide a cost effective and attractive solution for Germany, which will deliver every capability and perform every mission the German Air Force needs.



Eurofighter Typhoon is the logical choice for Germany: As well as providing all the capabilities the German Air Force needs, it also guarantees German sovereignty across many aspects, such as mission and maintenance data (there are no black boxes on Typhoon). It is also the least risk solution: Germany knows, uses and understands our aircraft." Looking to the future, the Eurofighter CEO also positioned Eurofighter as the natural bridge for any future European fighter programme.

"Eurofighter will remain the dominant fighter aircraft in Europe for the next thirty to forty years. The technologies we are developing for Eurofighter today will go hand in hand with those technologies we expect to see on a future European fighter programme – manned or unmanned.

Eurofighter provides the best route to develop the technologies that will be incorporated onto a future European combat air system and will be the natural partner to such an asset in the decades to follow its entry into service."

Volker Paltzo also confirmed the consortium's confidence in securing additional sales of the Eurofighter at home and abroad: "Looking to the future, Eurofighter partner companies and their national governments are actively involved in campaigns across Europe involving in excess of 300 more potential aircraft. I want to underscore that every Euro spent on Eurofighter within Europe stays in Europe. It is reinvested in the European economy, in European jobs, and in European communities. So, if Europe wants a strong defence and a strong industry to deliver it, then Eurofighter is the best choice for Europe."

In conclusion, Paltzo said: "Eurofighter is the right choice for Germany, the right choice for Europe, and the natural partner for – and stepping stone to – a European FCAS programme. We can be proud of what Europe has, can and will achieve in the future."

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Recently Dirk Hoke, Chief Executive Officer of Airbus Defence and Space, has warned the German government against the purchase of the F-35. "As soon as Germany becomes an F-35-member nation, cooperation on all combat aircraft issues with France will die," Hoke said in an interview with Welt Am Sonntag. The local news site says that the Bundeswehr is looking for a successor model for the Tornado fighter-bomber. One candidate is the F-35 but "that does not suit the CEO of the Airbus armaments division".

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Airbus manager Hoke sees a historic opportunity in the competition with France on the fighter jet. "Europe needs to define its sovereignty more clearly, and to clearly state that we need to maintain independence in defence and space" he said.

The German Air Force recently issued a formal request for information about the F-35, as well as three other jets with the F-35 being their 'preference'. The other jets are the F-15 and F/A-18E/F. Germany is replacing its 85 Tornado jets, which will go out of service around 2030.

The F-35 is the "preferred" choice the list of aircraft the Luftwaffe is looking at according to a "senior service official" speaking anonymously under the Chatham House Rule, who told Jane's 360: "The Tornado replacement needs to be fifth-generation aircraft that can be detected as late as possible, if at all. It must be able to identify targets from a long way off and to target them as soon as possible.

The German Ministry of Defence is looking at several aircraft today, including the F-35 – it is commercially available already, has been ordered by many nations and is being introduced into service today, and has most of the capabilities required."

Typhoon Fighter Jet Upgrades "On Time and On Budget"

Forces News April 30 2018

FORCES NEWS has been told that the upgrade programme for the Typhoon fighter jet is "on time and on budget." New missiles have been added including laser-guided Brimstone missiles. The aircraft need to be ready by the end of the year in time to replace the Tornados which are due to go out of service.

The Typhoons are the RAF's frontline jets, which have been used in missions over Iraq and Syria. Currently, the fighter jets are being enhanced to attack targets on the ground with Brimstone missiles. Test flights are being carried out on a daily basis at RAF Warton where the new capabilities are being added.

Chief test pilot, Steve Formoso says the Brimstone is a "small precise missile with a laser-seeking head. We can target individual vehicles, individual tanks and even just the tank turret in a very discrete small area."

The upgrade also includes air to air meteor missiles which allow pilots to fire on targets that are beyond their visual range. Air to surface storm shadow missiles with a deep strike capability has also been added. Project Centurion coincides with RAF 100

The upgrades are to make sure Typhoon fighter jets can replace Tornados and carry out more roles. Mr Formoso added: "A Typhoon will do the bombing role but it's also capable of being used in the air to air environment, so shooting other aircrafts down or doing quick reaction alert."

Andy Flynn is in charge of the project and says they are "on time and on budget. It's been going on since 2013 and everyday has counted - we are on plan to meet the chief of staff's milestone of Typhoons taking on all the capabilities of the Tornado."

"You see a mixed fleet of Typhoon and the F35 working really closely together and they will have their own specialties and different missions they will have to perform. From an industry perspective, we're just ensuring that the RAF gets the best available capabilities that allow them to have a choice and to give the Command the choice to be able to go out and perform all the missions it needs to do."

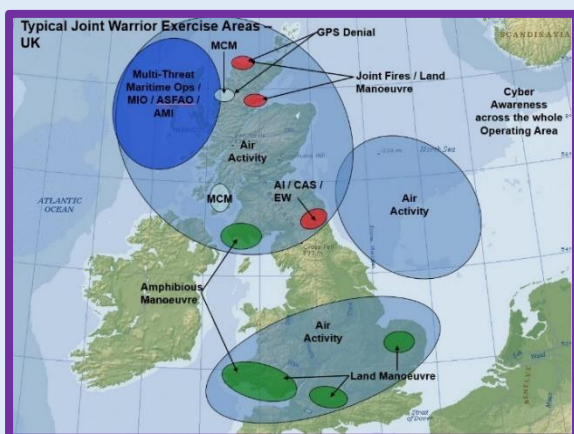
Test trials are being carried out to ensure the capabilities of the Typhoons are met. It's not just the new weapons but the systems that control them are also changing. The chief test pilot said the new system allows him to have more control over the aircraft.

"The fly control system allows me to do absolutely anything I want with the aircraft - so it's always giving me the maximum amount of performance without me having to worry about limits on the aircraft itself "I can get myself into a position where I can shoot down another aircraft a lot quicker." The plan is to get all of the Typhoon fighter jets ready by the end of the year.

Largest military exercise in Europe kicks off in Scotland

By George Allison : UKDJ: April 20, 2018

MORE THAN 11,600 personnel from 17 nations will take part in Exercise Joint Warrior this month. Joint Warrior is a UK-led multinational exercise that involves numerous warships, aircraft, marines and troops from allied nations around the world. The exercise traditionally takes place twice per year, the first in April and the second in October. Last April's exercise was the biggest in terms of scale in the exercise's history with more than 50 ships, 70 aircraft and 13,000 personnel were involved.



Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said: "Joint Warrior prepares our troops in the best way to meet the intensifying threats our country faces by providing a major opportunity to exercise with our allies.

Our Armed Forces are the face of global Britain, and training side by side with troops from 16 other nations means we are stronger and more capable when it comes to keeping our countries safe and protecting our way of life."

Captain Joint Tactical Exercise Planning Staff, Captain Paul Pitcher RN, said: "This exercise gives the UK participants a chance to train with

our allies and partners, honing our skills and developing our tactics. It is hugely important in making sure that we can fuse all elements of our capabilities, enhancing our ability to conduct joint operations now and in the future."

It will culminate on Salisbury Plain Training Area on the 3rd May in which JEF forces, including troops from the UK Parachute Regiment, the Danish Jutland Dragoon Regiment, the

Lithuanian “Iron Wolf” Brigade and the Latvian Mechanised Infantry Brigade, will conduct urban combat operations with air support provided by Apaches, Chinooks, Wildcats and Tornados.

The normally bi-annual exercise is running from the 21st April to 4th May and incorporates all three UK services as well as forces from 16 other nations including Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the US.

Recently however it emerged that only one Joint Warrior exercise will take place this year due to concerns of overstretching forces as they undertake ‘other commitments’. The second of the two Joint Warrior exercises will not now take place as we understand that the armed forces are taking part in two other major exercises, leaving no capacity to commit appropriate forces to the second part of Joint Warrior. It is understood that two Joint Warrior exercises are still expected to be held in 2019.

British Army Officers Told Promotion Depends on Improving "Inclusive Culture"

Forces News April 9 2018

ARMY OFFICERS could miss out on promotions if they don't do enough to promote an "inclusive culture" in their units. All British Army personnel will be judged in appraisals for how they have promoted or contributed to that "inclusive culture". The joint policy was agreed by the Defence Board in November 2016 and has now been rolled out across all Army personnel.

Appraisals are used to determine people's suitability for promotion and are carried out annually by serving personnel's reporting officers. The Army has also recently launched their 'This is belonging' 2018 recruitment campaign, which was seen as an attempt to encourage people of all backgrounds, regardless of ethnicity, gender or sexual preference, to join up.

A compulsory objective has now been added to all appraisals under the heading of Diversity and Inclusion. The objective for officers, warrant officers and NCOs is to: "Promote an inclusive culture within area of responsibility, working to increase understanding and engagement through education and initiative." For other ranks, it is set as: "Contribute to an inclusive culture, treating others with fairness and respect in accordance with Service values and standards."

A MOD spokesperson said: "We added this objective because we are committed to promoting a modern, diverse and inclusive workplace. "A key part of this is ensuring that everyone in Defence takes the lead."



Celebrating diversity, lovely boy? Oh dear, how sad, never mind!

By Richard Littlejohn: Daily Mail : 10 April 2018

THE NEW HEAD of the Army (*sic*) has warned his subordinates they won't get promoted unless they demonstrate their commitment to 'diversity'. Officers and NCOs have been told in no uncertain terms that their priority is to increase the 'inclusiveness' of their units. General Sir Nick Carter, who takes over in June (*as Chief of the Defence Staff*), is threatening to

reprimand anyone who fails to embrace colleagues of different faiths, genders and sexual orientation.

It's part of an initiative called 'The Compulsory Objectives Scheme', which is designed to attract more lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and ethnic minority recruits. Commanders will be expected to produce annual reports rating each individual soldier's efforts to boost inclusion and diversity.

Sergeants and corporals, in particular, will be expected to make their barracks more 'caring and understanding', otherwise they can forget about promotion. Never mind The Long and The Short and The Tall. The 21st-century Army is determined to cast its net even wider.

Bless 'em all, bless 'em all, The gay and the trans and halal, Bless all the drag queens And soon-to-be-mums, Bless all the lesbians And their cross-dressing sons . . .

OK, so you'd expect me to mock. Someone's got to do it. Admittedly, the sentiment behind encouraging as many recruits from different backgrounds to join Her Majesty's Armed Forces is admirable.

Marking subalterns and NCOs on their commitment to diversity, though, is a bridge too far. It can only ever be subjective, a matter of interpretation. And it shouldn't be the basis for refusing someone promotion. But this goes way beyond making the Army a more comfortable environment for minorities. It is just the latest example of the lengths to which the 'diversity' zealots will go to punish anyone who doesn't conform to their political dogma.

The military has strict rules against bullying. All service personnel, regardless of their background, should be treated with equal respect. Marking subalterns and NCOs on their commitment to diversity, though, is a bridge too far. It can only ever be subjective, a matter of interpretation. And it shouldn't be the basis for refusing someone promotion. Soldiers should be judged on their character, courage and abilities, not on their ethnic heritage, religious persuasion or sexual proclivities. Or their political and moral beliefs, either.



As one infantry officer put it: 'We don't give a stuff whether someone is gay or straight, black or white, Muslim, Christian or atheist, so long as they can do the job.' Precisely.

I've never had a problem with gays in the military. It's what people do on the battlefield which matters, not what they get up to under their duvets. The same goes for heterosexual relationships. Provided sex doesn't get in the way of military discipline, who cares?

Operational effectiveness and maintaining morale are all-important. Sometimes, however, the demands of the diversity lobby can conflict with the smooth running of our fighting forces.

For instance, there is no obvious reason why women shouldn't serve on Royal Navy ships and submarines. But when the first female sailors put to sea a few years ago, naval wives protested at the dockside. They were worried that despite strict non-fraternisation rules, human nature would always prevail. Boys would be boys and girls would be girls. And so, it has proven. The Navy admitted this week that it has had to airlift 17 pregnant women sailors off ships since 2012, at a cost of more than £7,500. The women were serving on a variety of vessels, including four of our six guided-missile destroyers.

Given that we still haven't got any planes to fly from our two expensive new aircraft carriers, perhaps we should turn them into floating maternity wards. Those Navy wives saw this coming a nautical mile off, like an Exocet. Yet their concerns were disregarded.

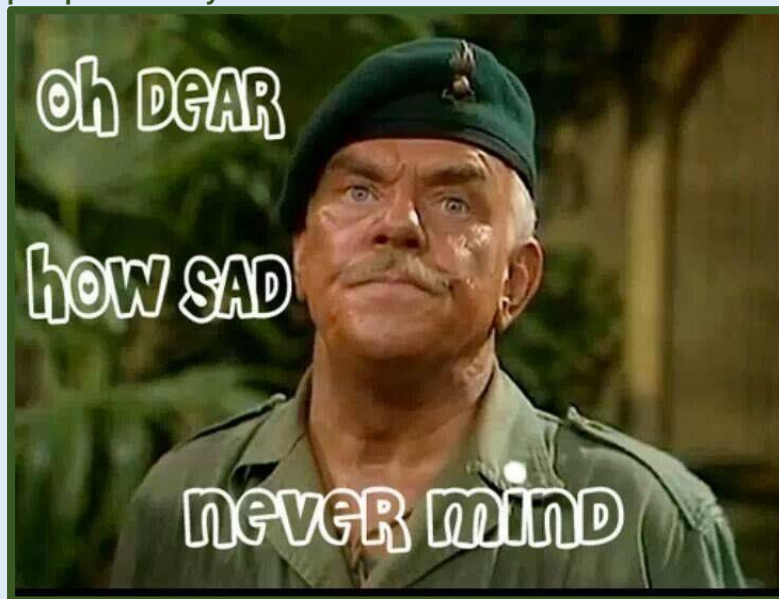
Similarly, any Army NCO who in future raises a quizzical eyebrow about the wisdom of letting women share male barracks, or self-styled trans-men who define as women being allowed to use female shower blocks, will be treated as a heretic and find himself back in Civvy Street in double-quick time.

That's the real problem. If the 'Compulsory Objectives Scheme' is anything to go by, the Army is losing sight of first principles.

It exists primarily to defend the realm, not to promote diversity. It's a fighting machine, not a branch of Haringey social services. As the ex-U.S. presidential candidate Mike Huckabee said in 2015: 'The job of the military is to kill people and break things. I can't see how paying for transgender surgery for soldiers makes America a safer place.'

At the time, I wrote here that if he'd said that in Britain, he'd have been arrested for hate crime. That's certainly the way things are going. 'Celebrating diversity' now trumps everything else when it comes to our public services and institutions. After capturing central and local government, the law and the police, it was inevitable that the Guardianistas would go after the Armed Forces.

The military is already hamstrung by ambulance-chasing 'yuman rites' spiv law firms. Now it's trying to recruit minorities, who may not even want to join the Army in the first place. That's fine as an aspiration, but not when it has to be enforced by the threat of ruining the career prospects of any dedicated officer or NCO deemed insufficiently enthusiastic about our new state religion, Diversity.



Still, it might lead to the rehabilitation of the TV comedy *It Ain't Half Hot, Mum*, about an Army concert party, which is rarely repeated because it is considered homophobic and racist. Maybe it was just ahead of its time, with cross-dressing Gunner 'Gloria' Beaumont, and constant references to homosexuality.

Although its brilliant creators David Croft and Jimmy Perry are no longer with us, perhaps an enlightened modern scriptwriter could administer a few tweaks, which could bring

it bang up to date. The Indian punkah-wallah could be promoted to the platoon's equalities officer. Gloria could be the Army's first transgender captain.

One of the lines to which many critics objected in the original was when Battery Sergeant-Major 'Shut-Up' Williams, played by Windsor Davies, told his troops: 'Never in my life have I seen such a display of blatant poofery.' Add in the footnote 'Well done!' and you could argue that he's celebrating diversity. Give that man a well-earned promotion!

British Armed Forces "Significantly Understaffed" Report Reveals

Forces News: April 18 2018

BRITAIN'S ARMED FORCES are significantly understaffed in critical areas such as intelligence and engineering, Whitehall's spending watchdog, the National Audit Office, has warned. A report published by the NAO states that as of January this year the country's full-time military was operating at 5.7% below the current target. With more than 8,200 regulars needed to meet the requirement, the NAO highlighted how this is the "largest gap in a decade".

The NAO stressed that alongside the gap in personnel numbers across the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, there are "much larger shortfalls in critical skills". With 102 "pinch-point" trades, the watchdog said there are not enough trained regulars to carry out operational tasks without cancelling leave or training within these areas. According to the NAO most of these so-called pinch-points were in six areas including engineering, intelligence, logistics, pilots, communications and medical.

This includes a lack of some 2,400 engineers - with the largest among Royal Navy weapons engineers - a shortfall of 700 intelligence analysts, and a need for 800 pilots, especially in the RAF.

With the impact of the shortfalls becoming "more severe over the past year", just six are expected to be resolved over the coming five years, with 23 becoming worse, the NAO said.



The report said the reliance by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) on a base-fed workforce model, where young recruits in lower ranks are developed and trained over time, has not enabled capability gaps to be closed quickly enough.

With constantly evolving threats facing the UK, the NAO said the "increasing risk of cyber and electronic attacks will change the capabilities and skills that the armed forces will need in

future. "The new demands will add to the pressure to increase capability in some trades that already have shortfalls," the report added.

Meg Hillier, chairwoman of the Public Accounts Committee, said: "In these uncertain times, it is more critical than ever that Britain has well-staffed armed forces with the technical know-how to handle threats to national security. "But the NAO report shows that the armed forces are woefully below compliment, especially in crucial areas like intelligence and engineering."

With a 24% shortfall in the number of regulars recruited to the armed forces between 2016 and 2017, the number of regulars leaving the military voluntarily is on the up, the NAO said. It said the percentage of those choosing to leave the armed forces has increased from 3.8% a year in March 2010 to 5.6% in December 2017. In a bid to tackle the shortfalls, which the NAO said "result mainly from recruitment and retention problems", the MoD spent more than £664 million on these areas in the last five years.

But Ms Hillier said the MOD "needs to take a long hard look at its current approach. Without more innovative methods to attract and retain staff, the UK risks continuing with big gaps in capability and overstretching already hard working and crucial service personnel," she said.

NAO chief Sir Amyas Morse said ensuring the armed forces have the right number of skilled personnel is "not a new challenge" facing the MOD.

"But given the complexity and development of new, modern-world threats, it is a challenge that will only continue to grow," he said. "The department needs to fundamentally change its approach to develop skilled personnel and address the long-established shortfalls that persist."

A MOD Spokesman said recruiting and retaining talent is a "top priority" and there are a range of schemes used to attract and keep skilled personnel. He said: "The military has enough personnel to meet all its operational requirements, including being active on 25 operations in 30 countries throughout the world. In the past year we have recruited over 13,000 people into the armed forces."

New military ships 'must be built at yards like Cammell Laird after Brexit'

Union says £1bn contract could secure thousands of UK jobs. Cammell Laird make joint bid with BAE Systems to clinch 1.25bn warship contract . By Alistair Houghton Liverpool Echo April 19 2018

UNION LEADERS say the Government would be betraying Brexit if it gave a £1bn military shipping contract to overseas shipyards and ignored UK firms like Cammell Laird. The GMB says that after the "blue passports fiasco", the Government should reverse plans to put a tender for three new support ships to overseas bidders.

The union says overseas shipyards are "eying up" the Fleet Solid Support order. But it says there is "no excuse" for sending the work outside the UK and that it could secure thousands of jobs. The new Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) vessels will be needed to serve the Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has said the order will go out to international tender at the end of the month.



GMB research published today shows up to 6,700 jobs could be created or secured in the UK if the RFA order went to a domestic shipbuilder. It says another 4,700 jobs could be secured in the supply chain.

Survation polling, commissioned by the GMB, found 74% of people want the new Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) ships built in the UK. The Government's policy is to build Royal Navy ships in the UK, but that RFA orders can go to international tender. The GMB says RFA ships should be classed as military vessels and therefore should be built here.

Birkenhead's Cammell Laird, which employs some 1,200 people, is one of the key players in UK shipbuilding and has done lots of work for the RFA. Earlier this year it finished the first year of a second five-year contract with the RFA, with a £41m refit of three ships. It is now working on its biggest ever refit job with the RFA, with the 12-month overhaul of Fort Victoria securing work for 200 people.

Ross Murdoch, GMB national officer for shipbuilding, said: “The Government looks set to repeat the blue passports fiasco by putting another order of national significance out to tender abroad.

“Ministers are not bound by normal EU rules on competitive tendering when it comes to military ships. There really can be no excuse for sending our shipbuilding contracts overseas.

Cammell Laird built 106 naval vessels, averaging an astonishing one warship completed every 21 days during the Second World War. Three of the most eulogised wartime warships were built at Lairds: HMS Ark Royal (III), HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Rodney. The yard’s largest ever workforce of 12,000 men also completed repairs on 2,000 merchant vessels and 120 warships, including nine battleships and 11 aircraft carriers.

“We have a highly skilled shipbuilding workforce in the UK that is more than capable of making these ships at a fair market price. We face being sold down the river if the work goes to artificially subsidised international competitor shipyards instead. At a time when global tensions are rising, the Government should use this order to ‘buy for Britain’ and rebuild our defence shipbuilding manufacturing capabilities.



Cammell Laird boss John Styvret.

“Shipbuilding workers are disillusioned by orders flowing overseas while highly skilled jobs at UK shipyards are being cut. It would be a gross betrayal of the spirit of the ‘red, white and blue Brexit’ that Theresa May promised if this crucial contract is awarded outside of the UK and jobs here are lost as a result.”

The union says shipbuilding firms from Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, South Korea and Spain attended a recent MoD industry day on the Fleet Solid Support order, according to documents it obtained under the Freedom of Information Act.

An MoD spokesman said: “All our warships are built in the UK and with the Type 26 frigates securing 4,000 Scottish jobs and 20 years of work on the Clyde, and industry preparing to bid for the new Type 31e class, we are witnessing a renaissance in British shipbuilding. “We are launching a competition for three new Fleet Solid Support ships this year and strongly encourage British yards to take part.”

In February, Cammell Laird came to a deal with the Unite and GMB unions to end an industrial dispute that had led to two days of strike action. Welcoming the deal, shipyard boss John Syvret said: "This means we can now focus all our efforts on driving the upward trajectory of the company, delivering existing contracts and positioning Cammell Laird to win new long-term contracts. We now have good visibility of our cost base and can aggressively pursue important commercial and UK Ministry of Defence contracts."

Cammell Laird is currently building polar research ship the Sir David Attenborough, whose remote-control submersible will be known as Boaty McBoatface. It also recently won a £10m contract to build a new ferry for Red Funnel.



The 2018 RAF100 Aircraft Tour is a public display of iconic aircraft in city locations around the country. The tour will include a range of aircraft covering the RAF's history, from WW1, to WW2, to the Cold War, to the modern age. You will be able to get up close to a selection of aircraft in the following cities:

17-20 May: Cardiff, 6-9 July: London, 10-12 August: Newcastle, Northern Ireland

25-27 August: Birmingham, 1 August-2 September: Glasgow, 14-16 September: Manchester.

There will also be an educational zone focussed on aviation and aerospace activities, designed to encourage interest and participation from young people.

With unique access to the preparations and logistics of moving the aircraft into place, the RAF100 website and Royal Air Force social media channels will showcase some of the behind-the-scenes activity so make sure you follow on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Bomber Command heroes who led raids on the Nazis gather at UK's tallest war memorial

By Lara Keay: Daily Mail: April 2 12 2018

BOMBER COMMAND VETERANS from around the world came together to unveil the UK's tallest war memorial, which is the same height as the wingspan of a Lancaster bomber.

Over 300 veterans travelled from near and far for the official opening of the 102ft monument at the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln today.

The emotional opening ceremony remembered the 57,821 young men and women who died working for the Second World War Bomber Command and whose names are engraved on the memorial. Among the war heroes was Len Manning, 93, who was just 19-years-old when he served as a rear gunner on a Lancaster Bomber within 57 Squadron.

His plane was shot down by a German night-fighter over northern France on his third ever mission, targeting a railway goods yard. He said: 'I was burnt and the parachute was burning. I finished up with the resistance for three months until I was liberated by the Americans, having had lots of skirmishes.

'If a plane was shot down they [the Germans] knew exactly how many were in the crew.' He said his first ever mission was just a fortnight earlier, and his second was in daylight hours before the night mission. Four of his crew of seven were killed when the plane went down.

He said that after he landed he did not know where he was, walked eight miles and collapsed on the doorstep of a farm.

'Fortunately, they took me in as they were members of the resistance,' he said. Mr Manning, who lives near Sudbury, Suffolk, said of the opening of the centre: 'It's nice to see all the old boys.'

Lincolnshire earned the title of Bomber County as 27 stations, a third of all those in the UK, were based there. The International Bomber Command Centre also boasts an information centre where visitors can learn the story of Bomber Command. The command played the central role in the strategic bombing of Nazi Germany during the Second World War, targeting airbases, troops and industrial complexes connected to the war effort.

RAF Bomber Command controlled the RAF's bomber forces from 1936 to 1968 and was responsible for the strategic bombing of Germany during the Second World War. When the command was founded in 1936 it was only intended to be a deterrent, but the reality when war broke out three years later was very different.

Bomber command crews suffered incredibly high casualty rates. A total of 55,573 died out of 125,000 (44.4 per cent mortality rate), 8,403 were injured and 9,838 became prisoners of war. Most who flew were very young and the vast majority were still in their late teens. Crews came from across the globe – from the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and all corners of the Commonwealth, as well as from occupied nations including Poland, France and Czechoslovakia.

It took astonishing courage to endure the conditions they faced. Flying at night over occupied Europe, running the gauntlet of German night fighters, anti-aircraft fire and mid-air collisions.

Bomber Command controlled the RAF's bomber forces from 1936 to 1968 and was responsible for the strategic bombing of Germany during the Second World War. But it was not until 1942 that the Bomber Command gained a real sense of direction, with the introduction of Air Marshal Arthur 'Bomber' Harris. Harris was appointed as commander in chief of Bomber Command in February 1942, with instructions to start attacking German industry, much of which was located in large cities.

His objective was to destroy Germany's industrial might and create a collapse in the morale of the civilian workforce, breaking Germany's will to fight on. Times were hard. Victory seemed distant, and chivalric notions of war fighting had been burned away in the fire of the Blitz. U-Boats were roaming the Atlantic, sinking merchant shipping in an effort to starve Britain into submission. The prospects of success were uncertain.

Morale among British workers had largely held firm in the teeth of prolonged attacks by the German Air Force. Harris, however, firmly believed that through a combination of improved aircraft like the Lancaster and Halifax, better training and navigational aids, and a ruthless will to press the attack, Bomber Command could knock Germany out of the war.

Bomber command crews suffered incredibly high casualty rates. A total of 55,573 died out of 125,000 (44.4 per cent mortality rate), 8,403 were injured and 9,838 became prisoners of war.



The scale of the attacks shocked Germany, but the country continued to fight. Further attacks did have a devastating effect on the Nazi war economy. Albert Speer, the German armaments minister, believed that a series of raids like that on Hamburg in August 1943, repeated in quick succession, might well have compelled Germany to surrender. But that wasn't the case.

Other more specialised operations also took place. The famous 'Dam Busters' raid of May 1943 shocked the world with its audacity, as Guy Gibson's 617 Squadron launched a daring raid on the dams surrounding the Ruhr Valley. Other attacks, like that on the battleship Tirpitz the following year, eliminated the German navy's last major surface ship.



Raids in 1944 and 1945 against German 'V weapon' launch sites were also a crucial defensive measure, helping to limit attacks from flying bombs and rockets on British cities. Bomber Command switched its attentions to tactical objectives in early 1944, helping to pave the way for D-Day, the allied invasion of occupied Europe.

It played a vital and highly effective role attacking infrastructure around the invasion beaches. Attacking railways, roads and other transport links created chaos behind German lines, preventing the defending forces from massing to repel the landings.

The closing months of the war saw arguably the most controversial operations, such as the raid on Dresden in February 1945. In four huge raids by the RAF and United States Army Air Force, a firestorm destroyed the city centre and killed thousands of civilians.

It took astonishing courage to endure the conditions they faced. Flying at night over occupied Europe, running the gauntlet of German night fighters, anti-aircraft fire and mid-air collisions. Pictured: Bomber Command crews prepare for the raid on Heligoland

The planners of the raid argued the city was a vital communications hub and needed to be targeted. The critics said that Germany was well beaten and the bombing was needless. The truth is that it was a time of total war, and ideas about the boundaries of conflict were very different than those we have today. . Bomber Command did not win the Second World War independently - but the war could not have been won without their efforts.

The RAF's attacks forced Germany to divert invaluable men, guns, aircraft and equipment to defend its airspace, effectively opening a second front long before D-Day. The young men of Bomber Command faced dangers that today we can barely imagine, all in defence of our freedom. Their sacrifice and extraordinary courage should never be forgotten.

Almost half of the 125,000 who served as aircrew lost their lives. The average age of those serving was 23. Bomber Command saw more men killed in one catastrophic raid on Nuremberg than in the entire Battle of Britain.

Organisers of today's event said the opening of the International Bomber Command Centre is likely to be the last formal gathering of those from the Second World War, the youngest of whom is aged 92.

Berlin burning seen from 19,000 feet was the most beautifully horrible sight I have ever seen': 1943 bombing broadcast

By Simon Gaskell Wales On Line

THE STORY OF A War time correspondent from Wales who made broadcast history with a recording during the 1943 bombing raid of Berlin was featured in a BBC documentary. Swansea-born Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, right, who had joined the BBC in 1936, flew with the RAF across the North Sea, over occupied Holland and to the north east of Germany to Berlin, where Hitler was based in his Fuhrer's headquarters

Over the course of eight "terrifying" hours he watched as the RAF bombed the German capital incessantly, later describing the scene as like watching somebody throwing jewellery on black velvet. Vaughan-Thomas's story was recounted by Stephen Evans, the BBC's Berlin correspondent on BBC Radio 4.

The programme told how Vaughan-Thomas and a BBC engineer got onto a Lancaster Bomber after the corporation had been contacted with a dramatic offer. The air force was willing to send a two-man radio crew on the upcoming bombing raid and the BBC, who were expanding their wartime output, chose Vaughan-Thomas for the job. Historians say the offer may well have been a "policy decision" taken at the very top



Vaughan-Thomas accepted, knowing he might never return and on the evening of September 3, 1943, he recorded for the BBC, live from the craft. In interviews with Vaughan-Thomas played during the programme, he said it was a paradoxically "beautifully horrible" experience. He said: "It was certainly the most terrifying eight hours I have spent in my life because I didn't know what was coming. Berlin burning seen from 19,000 feet was the most beautifully horrible sight I have ever seen.

"It was like watching somebody throwing jewellery on black velvet, winching rubies, sparkling diamonds all coming up at you." In a separate interview, he added it was something he would never forget. "It's absolutely written on my mind indelibly the whole story of that raid," he said.

Vaughan-Thomas had attended Swansea Grammar School with Dylan Thomas and was taught by his father, the programme heard. While he worked briefly in the National Library of Wales in Cardiff, he was given a job at the BBC as an outside broadcast assistant and went onto distinguish himself as one of the greatest ever war correspondents. He was at Belsen and at the Normandy landings, reporting as it happened.

The recording over Berlin showed his remarkable courage – literally under fire – and his description of the bombing and the views from the plane are notably rich. Despite becoming one of post-war Britain's most prominent media-intellectuals, regular commentator and journalist, this flight alone and those hours in the plane, clearly remained a defining time in his life.

Vaughan-Thomas was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1974 and raised to Commander (CBE) in 1986.

He died in Fishguard in 1987. His son David Vaughan-Thomas is quoted in the programme, saying: "Whenever I walked in any room with Wynford there would be a cry of: 'Wynford'. And people would gather round him and they would be the ones saying tell is the story about whatever and, of course, he would."

Another episode in Wynford Vaughan Thomas epic coverage during WW" will appear in the June edition of Scribblings. This time with his feet firmly on the ground WVT described the Anzio Landings and the potential for a public relations disaster.



IN SUPPORT of RAF100, BAE Systems is communicating 100 unique and compelling stories and reflections from 1st April to mid-October. Together these insights support the RAF and demonstrate the company's support for RAF100 in particular. Scribblings will carry further illustrations of the heritage of the company and the RAF throughout the year.

These are key facts around the technological edge that BAE Systems provided the RAF over the last 100 years (and will continue to in the future), as well as the instances where colleagues past and present have gone beyond to provide the kind of imagination, invention, service and support the RAF needs in order to carry out their own role.

Typhoon

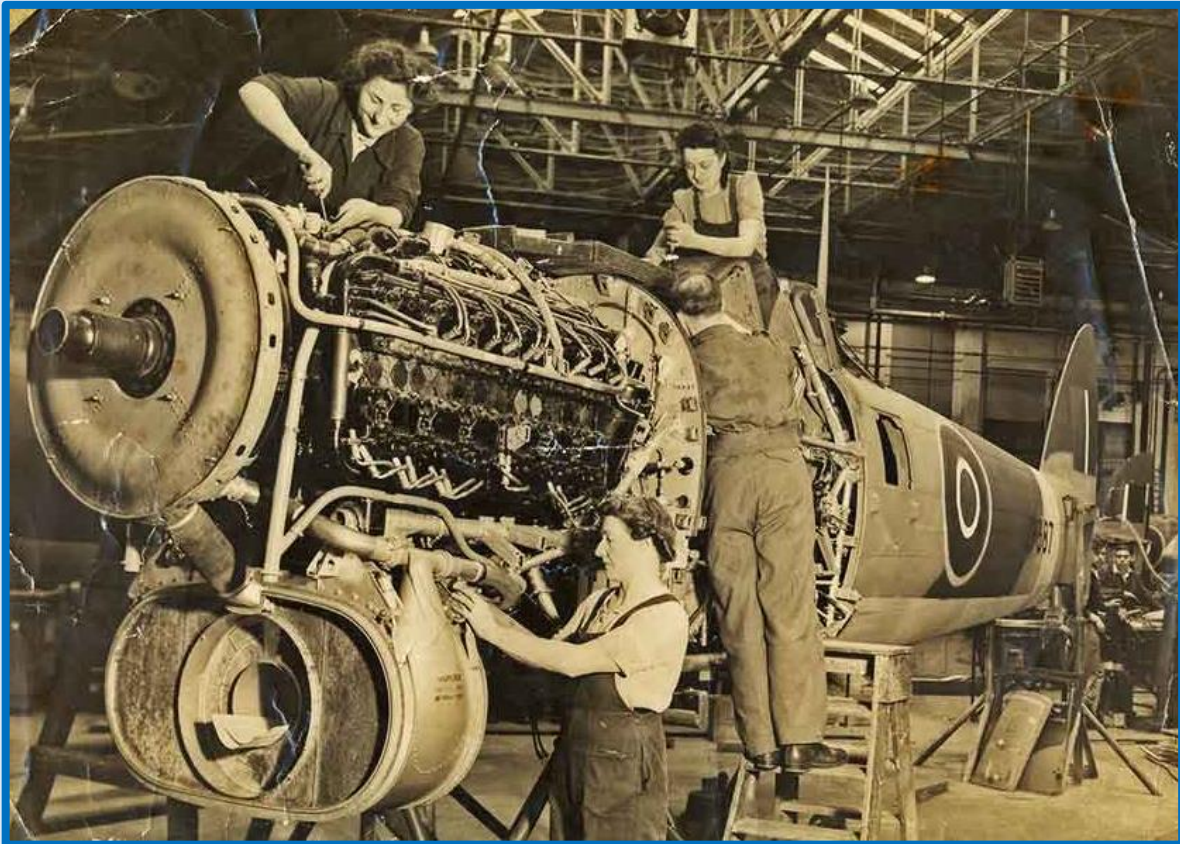


Closing the (Falaise) Gap, courtesy of Robert Taylor

Affectionately known as the 'Tiffie', the Hawker Typhoon was intended as a high-speed, high-altitude interceptor fighter for the Royal Air Force to replace one of the heroes of the Battle of Britain, the Hawker Hurricane. The Typhoon was designed by Hawker Aircraft to accommodate newer designs of engine principally the powerful 'H-block' Napier Sabre 24-cylinder sleeve-valve engine.

It made its first flight in February 1940 but, with the war still raging in Europe, it was demanded that all manufacturing be concentrated on five RAF aircraft, the Hurricane and Spitfire fighters and the Whitley, Wellington and Blenheim bombers.

That meant development work on Typhoon was postponed until 1941 when production was transferred from Hawker Aircraft, which built 15 production versions of Typhoon, to Gloster Aircraft, which built more than 3,000 aircraft.



It was in Gloucestershire that aircraft manufacture saw many women working alongside men to produce the aircraft required for the war effort, a scene replicated on shop floors across the country. The 'Typhoon Ladies' of yesteryear are the inspiration behind the BAE Systems team of female engineers and manufacturers who work alongside their male counterparts on today's Eurofighter Typhoon, the RAF's front-line fighter which defends the UK around-the-clock. To this day, the 'Tiffie' is forever associated with the ground attack role it carried out during the liberation of Europe in the Second World War.

Supersonic 'Bee'

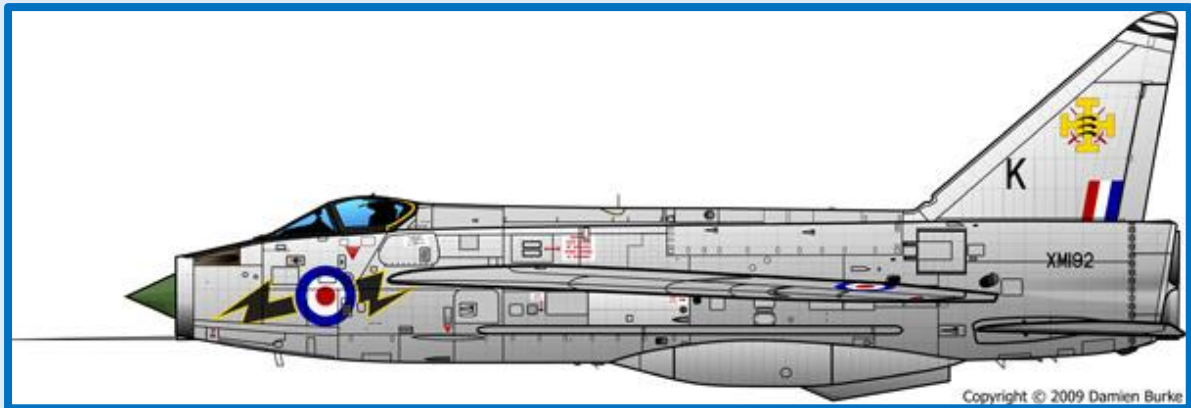
WHEN ROLAND BEAMONT- "Bee" Beamont - entered the English Electric offices in Preston, Lancashire, on his first day as the company's Chief Test Pilot in 1947, he walked past a full scale wooden model of an aircraft. The design he saw modelled turned into the Canberra, a jet bomber which remains one of the most successful military aircraft of all time and a ground-breaking piece of engineering.



Beamont arrived having recently left the Royal Air Force as a much-decorated pilot having flown more than 500 sorties during the Second World War, including in the Battle of Britain, and played crucial role in developing the Hawker Typhoon to be the Allies most potent ground attack aircraft.

He had also played a key role in the campaign against the Nazi V-1 flying bomb, or “doodlebug”, during the conflict and was reputedly one of the first to undertake “wing tipping” of a V-1.

Beamont took Canberra on its first flight in May 1949 and he could not have realised the remarkable aircraft would continue in service with the RAF until 2006, five years after his death. Three years after its first flight, Beamont piloted the Canberra on the first one-day double crossing of the Atlantic in just over 10 hours, and this would be one of a long list of high points in a remarkable career.



A year after his arrival at English Electric, he became the first British aviator to reach the speed of sound, albeit in an American XP-86, and in 1954 he achieved the first truly supersonic British flight in the P1. A, which would go on to become the Lightning. Beamont's admiration for the P1. A was unrivalled. He described it as "a brilliant thing, an aircraft which flew through the sound barrier as if it wasn't there."

On April 4, 1957, he took the P1. B to twice the speed of sound, another British first, and fewer than two years later, the Lightning entered service with the RAF.



He tested TSR.2, the Cold War strike and reconnaissance aircraft developed by the British Aircraft Corporation, of which English Electric had become part, before the project was cancelled by the Government in 1965.

When Beamont retired from test flying in 1968, more than two decades after his career began, Beamont had flown 167 different types of aircraft during more than 5,000 hours of flying and 8,000 flights, of which more than 1,000 were supersonic.

In 1971, he became director of flight operations for Panavia, the joint venture set up between the UK, Germany and Italy to develop the Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MRCA), which was subsequently named Tornado, and retired eight years later following the maiden flight of the first production Tornado.



Following his retirement from aviation, Beamont went on to write numerous books on the subject which he had played such a major role in shaping. Beamont died in November 2001 aged 81.



China's New Aircraft Carrier Is Already Obsolete

But it's still a powerful signal of Beijing's ambitions in a post-U.S. Asia.

By Sam Roggeveen, Foreign Policy Magazine: | April 25, 2018: Sam is a

senior fellow at the Lowy Institute in Sydney. He is the founding editor of the Interpreter and was previously a senior analyst in Australia's peak intelligence agency, the Office of National Assessments.



China's sole aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, arrives in Hong Kong waters on July 7, 2017. (Anthony Wallace/AFP/Getty Images)

CHINA'S FIRST HOME-BUILT aircraft carrier, which was seen Monday being towed from berth, will begin sea trials imminently. When the new vessel enters service some time in 2019 or 2020, China will become the world's second most powerful operator of aircraft carriers, with a grand total of two. It is a position from which it will never be dislodged.

Yes, France, Russia, and Brazil operate a carrier each; Italy has a couple of small carriers; and the United Kingdom is rebuilding a respectable two-ship fleet, as is India. Other countries,

such as Japan and Australia, operate several helicopter carriers, though not fixed-wing aircraft. But China won't stop at two, nor will it remain satisfied with the inferior Soviet-derived design that was seen Monday. (The first carrier of the People's Liberation Army Navy, or PLA Navy, is a Soviet-era ship purchased half-finished from Ukraine.)

There are rumours that China's next ship is already being built, and although it will be smaller than the U.S. Navy's Nimitz-class and probably not nuclear-powered, in most other respects it will resemble an American supercarrier. The follow-on ships will be better still.

No nation other than the United States has that kind of ambition, and it will give China unquestionably the second-most powerful navy in the world — though admittedly one still a very, very long way behind the U.S. fleet.

But there's a mystery at the heart of China's ambitious aircraft carrier program, because over the course of its immense naval modernization effort of the last two decades, China has put so much effort into making aircraft carriers obsolete.

China has acquired dozens of submarines, fleets of strike aircraft, and missiles that can be fired from the air, land, sea, and under the sea, all with one purpose: to make it excessively dangerous for large surface ships to operate near China's coast. China has even invented an entirely new class of weapon — the anti-ship ballistic missile — that has been dubbed a "carrier killer."



So why is China's navy, the very institution that has made America's carrier fleet in the Pacific so vulnerable, now investing in its own carrier fleet? It has surely occurred to the Chinese that the United States will respond to the PLA's carriers just as China has done to America's. In fact, it's already happening. The U.S. defence Department is now testing a stealthy long-range anti-ship missile that is almost certainly a reaction to the dramatic growth of China's surface fleet.

So, is China making a big mistake? Is the aircraft carrier program a folly driven by the navy brass, with no clear strategic purpose? We shouldn't dismiss that possibility. In fact, that may be exactly how China's carrier program started. In early 2015, the South China Morning Post published a series of articles revealing the extraordinary pre-history of China's carrier program. In the mid-1990s, a small group of entrepreneurial PLA Navy officers enlisted the help of Hong Kong businessman Xu Zengping to purchase the hull of a half-finished Soviet-era carrier from Ukraine on the public pretence that it would be rebuilt as a floating casino.

Incredibly, the officers told Xu that this initiative had no official backing from Beijing. They were making a potentially transformative arms purchase on their own initiative. The carrier program has clearly grown since those beginnings and has much further to grow still, so it is safe to assume that the Chinese leadership has now embraced it and has a specific plan in mind for its growing fleet. What could that plan be?

China is a great power with a huge economy. In fact, a recent Australian government report estimates that by 2030, the Chinese economy will be worth \$42 trillion versus \$24 trillion for the United States.

No country of that size would accept that it should remain strategically subordinate to another great power in its own backyard, and China certainly doesn't. Beijing already wants to lead in Asia, and that means having a powerful military with the ability to project power over long distances.

For China to become Asia's strategic leader, it will need to push the United States out. So maybe the carrier fleet is a frontal assault on the core of U.S. power in the Pacific, an attempt to build a force capable of ending America's naval dominance with a fleet that could overwhelm the United States in an arms race or, if necessary, defeat it in a Midway-style battle.

But even for a country as big as China, building a fleet of that size and capability is a formidable and massively expensive challenge. At the current pace of modernization, it could take decades to build such a fleet, particularly if the United States and its allies respond by improving their own capabilities. And that's not to mention the heightened risk of a catastrophic great-power war.



So, here's an alternative explanation: China's carrier-centered navy is not designed so much to challenge U.S. maritime supremacy as to inherit it. China may be betting that the United States won't need to be pushed out of Asia, at least not by a frontal challenge to its naval power. Rather, the United States will slowly withdraw of its own accord because the cost of maintaining that leadership is rising so dramatically. Consider America's defence commitment to Taiwan.

Before China's massive investment in anti-ship capabilities, the United States could safely sail its carrier through the Taiwan Strait, and its ability to defend Taiwan remained unquestioned. Now, the United States would be at serious risk of losing one or two carrier battle groups in any confrontation over Taiwan. The cost of defending South Korea has risen steeply, too, with North Korea close to deploying a nuclear-tipped missile that can reach cities on the continental United States, if it hasn't already.

As the costs of U.S. military leadership in Asia rise, questions about why the United States needs to maintain that leadership become louder. America's military presence in Asia made sense in the Cold War, but it is much harder to justify now.

If China inherits U.S. leadership in Asia, it won't need a fleet as big as America's. Some experts predict China will build just six carriers, quite enough to cement its leadership in a post-American Asia. And that's when China's carrier fleet will really come into its own, for although aircraft carriers are increasingly vulnerable to sophisticated anti-ship weapons, America has demonstrated that they are incredibly useful when you have command of the oceans.

That's why China's new fleet is such bad news for the small Southeast Asian nations in particular. In a post-American Asia, larger powers such as South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and Australia have a fighting chance of resisting Chinese coercion if they invest more heavily in their own defence capacities. That isn't an option for smaller powers, particularly as they enter China's economic orbit via initiatives such as the Belt and Road.

The Chinese aircraft carrier about to put to sea is no match for the U.S. Navy, but that should bring little comfort to the United States and its Asian allies. Indeed, China may be betting that it will never have to confront the U.S. fleet and that it can prepare for the day the Navy sails back to home shores.

PressGazette

FIGHTING FOR JOURNALISM

UK holds at 40th in 'alarming' World Press Freedom rankings making it one of the worst for journalists in western Europe

By Charlotte Tobitt

THE UK REMAINS 40 out of 180 countries on the 2018 World Press Freedom Index amid a “climate of hostility towards the media”. It was named one of the worst countries for press freedom in western Europe, while deaths in Europe “deteriorated” the safe environment for journalists.

The annual index, compiled by Reporters without Borders (Reporters Sans Frontières), again sees Norway and Sweden remain in first and second place respectively, with North Korea last under Kim Jong-un (pictured).

The UK fell two places last year amid threats to press freedom from the Snooper's Charter, Espionage Act and Section 40. It has dropped 18 places since the index began in 2002, when it was ranked 22nd. Speaking at an event to launch the 2018 index, former BBC News director James Harding said the report was “extremely alarming”, while Guardian editor Katharine Viner said the UK's drop in the past 16 years was “quite shocking”.

Threats this year include proposed amendments to the Data Protection Bill, currently passing through Parliament, that would leave newspapers paying both sides' legal costs in data protection cases, win or lose.

Despite a Government pledge to repeal Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act, which would also force publishers to cover all legal costs in libel and copyright battles, it remains hanging over the heads of editors. RSF's UK bureau director, Rebecca Vincent, said the UK's position between Trinidad and Tobago in 39th place and Burkina Faso in 41st place was “frankly embarrassing” and a “questionable neighbourhood” to be in.

She said: “Maintaining our ranking is nothing to be proud of and puts us in the embarrassing position of having one of the worst records on press freedom in Western Europe. This is unacceptable for a country that plays an important international standard-setting role when it comes to human rights and fundamental freedoms. We must examine the longer-term trend of worrying moves to restrict press freedom and hold the UK government to account.”

Viner said: “It’s clear that everywhere the situation around press freedom is getting worse, both in terms of rhetoric and violence.” In the UK, she added, journalists face “suppression and restriction from both governments and commercial interests”.

Viner also raised concerns over the Data Protection Bill, saying it would “obviously be devastating to news organisations working in the public interest. The need to campaign for press freedom is necessary here in Britain just as it is needed in so many other countries,” she added.

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Harding said journalists in Europe need to “stand up for” the free press together, as “state news” has become more of a problem than “fake news”. “We have seen a change in accepted behaviour from politicians in the way they intimidate the press and the way the state encroaches on the freedom of the media,” he said. “It isn’t something that’s happening that far away – it’s within the family of nations that care so deeply in the freedom of the press.”

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RSF raised concerns over the implementation of the Investigatory Powers Act, dubbed the Snooper’s Charter, which it said has “insufficient protection mechanisms” for whistle-blowers, journalists, and their sources. Meanwhile both the Conservative and Labour parties restricted journalists’ access to campaign events ahead of June’s general election, and online threats sent to BBC political editor Laura Kuenssberg resulted in her being assigned bodyguards for the Labour party conference in September.

In December, the offshore firm at the heart of the Paradise Papers story, Appleby, launched breach of confidence proceedings against the Guardian and the BBC – the only two publishers to face legal action over the investigation despite it involving 96 media organisations in 67 countries. RSF described a “continued heavy-handed approach towards the press – often in the name of national security – and a climate of hostility towards the media” as it revealed the updated index today.

A spokesperson for the News Media Association, which represents national, regional and local publishers, said the fact the UK was “languishing” in 40th place was disappointing but not surprising. “We have seen repeated attempts by the House of Lords to hijack legislation, such as the current Data Protection Bill, to enforce state-backed press regulation which would have a chilling effect on investigative journalism,” the spokesperson said.

“This is a grave threat to press freedom and could lead to the closure of newspapers. We call on all politicians to protect media freedom and safeguard a vibrant press in the UK.”

RSF said there has been an overall decline in press freedom in democracies around the world this year. Malta fell 18 places to 65th in the index after the assassination of journalist and blogger Daphne Caruana Galizia which, the group said, had “lifted the veil on the judicial harassment and intimidation to which journalists are routinely subjected in the island state”.

Slovakia fell ten places to 27th place, following the murder of a 27-year-old investigative reporter, Jan Kuciak, who had been investigating corruption and the mafia.

RSF said the “traditionally safe” environment for journalists in Europe had begun to “deteriorate”, also citing verbal attacks against the media from international politicians on the continent and further afield.

The US under President Donald Trump – who has called reporters “enemies of the people” – has fallen two places in the index to 45th.

RSF secretary-general Christophe Deloire said: “The unleashing of hatred towards journalists is one of the worst threats to democracies. Political leaders who fuel loathing for reporters bear heavy responsibility because they undermine the concept of public debate based on facts instead of propaganda. To dispute the legitimacy of journalism today is to play with extremely dangerous political fire.”



EU politicians demand broader inquiry into Daphne Caruana Galizia murder

Malta police chief urged to pursue those ‘with a motivation for silencing’ journalist: By Juliette Garside, Stephanie Kirchgaessner, Daniel Boffey and Jennifer Rankin in Brussels The Guardian : April 18 2018

POLITICIANS ACROSS EUROPE have demanded that Malta’s chief of police broaden the investigation into the killing of Daphne Caruana Galizia so that it pursues more aggressively those “with a motivation for silencing” the anti-corruption journalist. Their intervention comes following Tuesday’s launch of the Daphne Project, a collaboration between international media organisations, including the Guardian, that came together in response to her murder and have pledged to continue her work.

The publication of a first wave of stories by the 18 media partners, including the New York Times, Le Monde and Süddeutsche Zeitung, caused an uproar in Malta, and provoked widespread concern over the slow progress of the inquiry.

A fearless anti-corruption journalist, Daphne Caruana Galizia’s reporting came to international attention with her exposes in the 2016 Panama Papers project. On 16 October the following year, the Maltese reporter was murdered by a bomb placed under the driver’s seat of her car.



The Maltese investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia was killed by a car bomb in October. Photograph: Darrin Zammit Lupi/Reuters

The Daphne Project was created to continue her investigations. It is a collaboration of 18 media organisations in 15 different countries, including the Guardian, Reuters, Le Monde and the New York Times.

The project is the first to be led by Forbidden Stories, an international network of journalists who stand ready to take over when colleagues are silenced through imprisonment or murder. The project will publish a series of fresh revelations, setting out the dangers that alleged political corruption and poor controls on money laundering inside Malta pose to law and order in Europe.

Describing the assassination of Caruana Galizia as horrifying, Dunia Mitotic, commissioner for human rights at the Council of Europe, said: “Six months after her killing, it does not appear that the Maltese authorities have made any tangible progress to identify the masterminds.”

The Portuguese MEP Ana Gomes, who led a parliamentary delegation to investigate the rule of law in Malta following Caruana Galizia’s assassination on 16 October, published a video message addressed directly to Lawrence Cutajar, Malta’s commissioner of police. She said the inquiry needed to look at people who had “a motivation for silencing Daphne”.

“Everyone knows that the police investigation needs to be widened to include suspected individuals who could have commissioned the assassination,” Gomes said.

Three men are in custody and awaiting trial for planting and triggering the car bomb that killed the journalist near her home in northern Malta. The suspects, George and Alfred Degiorgio and their associate Vincent Muscat, have pleaded not guilty. Police are still hunting whoever may have commissioned the attack.

Among a series of other developments: Some supporters of Malta’s ruling Labour party rounded on Caruana Galizia’s husband and three sons, with a call for citizens to march in protest at their “provocation”. The family have claimed that elements in government are hampering the police investigation.

The magisterial inquiry into the murder case made a surprise on-site inspection in the northern village of Bidnija, where the journalist was killed. The three accused men, accompanied by armed officers and lawyers, looked on as the magistrate was shown key locations by the officer leading the homicide inquiry.

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The European commission president, Jean-Claude Juncker, came under fire from an influential MEP for his allegedly “intimate” relationship with Malta’s prime minister, which he said had in effect given the country licence to act with impunity. The opposition MP and former leader of Malta’s opposition, Simon Busuttil, was targeted by police, who summoned him for questioning after he allegedly allowed his personal car to be used to carry political posters.

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Caruana Galizia ran a popular political blog in which she took on businessmen and politicians from both of Malta’s leading parties. By the time of her death, she was defending 47 individual libel suits. In an interview 10 days before her death, published on Tuesday by the Daphne Project, Caruana Galizia detailed decades of politically motivated threats and harassment. These included an arson attack on her home, attacks in the media and the freezing of her bank accounts. A recording of the interview has been sent to the EU justice commissioner, Věra Jourová.

“Why are the Maltese police authorities not considering this interview as a lead in the investigations?” Gomes asked in her video address. “I request, Mr Commissioner, that the recording of this interview be preserved and be followed as a lead in the police investigations.”

Sophia in ’t Veld, the Dutch MEP and deputy leader of the liberal group in the European parliament, added: “There is still deep concern across Europe about the tragic murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia. I’m personally horrified by reports that the investigation may be being hampered and justice denied to her family members. We need reassurance that the government of Malta really wants to get to the bottom of who was responsible for ordering Daphne’s assassination. If we have to raise this issue again in the European parliament and elsewhere, we won’t hesitate to do so.”

As political tensions within Malta escalated, Busuttil tweeted that he had been summoned to appear at Valletta police headquarters at 3pm on Thursday. He is to face questions about the use of his car while posters were put up to mark the six-month anniversary of Caruana Galizia's murder. Speaking to the Guardian, he described the action against him as "beyond Orwellian", adding that it was "straight out of a police state".

Juncker came under fire from one influential MEP for an allegedly "intimate" relationship with Joseph Muscat, which the parliamentarian said had in effect given Malta a "blank cheque" to act as it pleased. Sven Giegold, a German MEP and frequent critic of the Maltese government, said: "There is a systematic problem of a breach in the rule of law and this is being covered up by the commission. Even after the death of Daphne it is still being covered up, and I find that outrageous."

A European commission spokesperson did not respond directly to personal criticism of Juncker but rejected suggestions of covering up violations of the rule of law in Malta. "The commission expects an independent and thorough investigation of Daphne Caruana Galizia's murder. We have made this point at all levels, with different interlocutors, and our position is known and allegations that claim differently are simply false," the spokesperson said. "We urge the responsible authorities to continue the ongoing investigation up and until the persons responsible for this crime have been found and justice is served."

For security reasons, Caruana Galizia's sons have been advised to stay away from Malta. All three live and work abroad. Their father remains at the family home in Bidnija, where he is under 24-hour police guard.

In Bidnija on Wednesday, the three accused were led to the scene of the crime. With their hands cuffed, they followed proceedings as Insp Keith Arnaud of the Malta homicide squad accompanied the magistrate to the ridge of a hill. Investigators allege that the former gun battery, which has clear views of Caruana Galizia's home and the road below it, was used as a lookout point by Alfred Degiorgio in the weeks preceding the attack.

Arnaud has given evidence that he collected a fresh cigarette butt from the scene just after the bombing, and that lab tests found traces of Alfred Degiorgio's DNA. The magistrate, Claire Stafrace Zammit, has ruled that there was enough evidence for the three to stand trial but has not made a decision on whether an application for bail should be granted.



'Marie deserved the truth': Assad regime deliberately targeted

and killed journalist Colvin, investigation claims

Marie's sister Cat Colvin tells The Independent: 'The case shows there was a well-planned effort to target journalists above everyone else in Syria: journalists, then the people leading rallies, then normal participants. It's just horrifying'

By Bethan McKernan, Beirut: April 9 2018

THE REGIME of Syrian president Bashar al Assad deliberately targeted a building used by journalists during the siege of Homs in 2012, resulting in the deaths of reporter Marie Colvin and photographer Remi Ochlik, according to a landmark legal case brought by the Colvin family.

A cache of evidence compiled over the six years since Ms Colvin's death has been presented in court, including video from her final moments, nearly 200 confidential military documents and testimony from a Syrian defector. The investigation alleges that the Syrian government tracked the American journalist's movements in order to silence her reporting on the civil war. The plaintiffs are suing the Syrian government for \$300m and calling on the federal court in Washington DC to issue a public judgement against the Assad regime, condemning it for its alleged crimes.

Speaking to The Independent, Ms Colvin's sister Cat Colvin said the Centre for Justice and Accountability (CJA) had put together "a really powerful package of evidence". "It has been emotional to read it," she said. "The case shows there was a well-planned effort to target journalists above everyone else in Syria: journalists, then the people leading rallies, then normal participants. It's just horrifying," she said, adding: "Marie deserved the truth."

Marie Colvin, a veteran foreign reporter for The Sunday Times, was on assignment with award-winning French photographer Remi Ochlik in February 2012, documenting the first major siege of the bloody war. Rocket fire on the house they were staying in Homs' Baba Amr neighbourhood killed them both and also injured British photographer Paul Conroy, French reporter Edith Bouvier and Syrian interpreter Wael al Omar. At least nine other civilians died in the bombardment.

The lawsuit included as evidence 1teneyewitness accounts of the attack as well as dozens of pages of Syrian intelligence and military documents and faxes which were smuggled out of the country by opposition activist group the Commission for International Justice and Accountability (CJA). Lawyers for Ms Colvin's family argue that an August 2011 fax, allegedly sent from Syria's National Security Bureau, instructed security bodies to launch military and intelligence campaigns against "those who tarnish the image of Syria in foreign media and international organisations".

Other documents showed that the Central Crisis Management Cell, a special war cabinet created by Assad to oversee the crackdown on the democratic opposition, had tracked Ms Colvin's movements from Lebanon and over the border into Syria – evidence which the family's lawyers say showed she had been targeted for assassination by the highest levels of government.



Defence Department halts F-35 deliveries amid disagreement with Lockheed

By: Valerie Insinna: Marine Corps Times: April 11 2018

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has suspended acceptance of most F-35 deliveries as manufacturer Lockheed Martin and the F-35 program office debate who should be responsible for fixing jets after a production issue last year.

"While all work in our factories remains active, the F-35 Joint Program Office has temporarily suspended accepting aircraft until we reach an agreement on a contractual issue and we expect this to be resolved soon," a Lockheed spokeswoman confirmed in a statement, adding that the company remains confident that it can meet its delivery target of 91 aircraft for 2018.

News of the delivery pause was first reported by Reuters. The dispute is rooted in a quality control issue that caused F-35 deliveries to stop from Sept. 21 to Oct. 20. At the time, corrosion was found in fastener holes of F-35As being repaired at Hill Air Force Base in Utah.

Lockheed and the JPO were able to agree on a corrective action plan, one source said, and Lockheed was able to complete planned deliveries of the F-35 for 2017.



An F-35 Lightning II flies alongside an F-16 Fighting Falcon at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, in 2015. (Air Force)

But sometime after that, a dispute over who should pay for the fix resurfaced and the defence Department opted to take another production pause, a source said, declining to comment on how long deliveries have been suspended.

“Per the direction of the program executive officer, F-35 deliveries have been temporarily paused while the government and Lockheed Martin reach an agreement on a contractual issue regarding repair work to remediate the known aircraft fastener hole primer quality escape,” said a statement from the F-35 joint program office.

“This is not a safety of flight issue but rather a contractual resourcing issue that needs to be resolved. The government has implemented this pause to ensure the war fighter receives a quality product from industry. We look forward to a swift resolution of this issue.”

Production of the aircraft is ongoing at Lockheed’s line in Fort Worth, Texas, and at final assembly and check out facilities in Nagoya, Japan, and Cameri, Italy. A source noted that some customers have accepted planes due to war fighter demands.

According to Reuters, two aircraft have been delivered to the defence Department since it imposed the suspension. Meanwhile, a repair bill for more than 200 jets is on the line. The corrosion issue is just one of several production problems that has plagued the F-35 over the last couple years. Vice Adm. Mat Winter, the F-35 joint program executive officer, spoke Wednesday at the Navy League’s Sea Air Space conference but did not disclose the fact that deliveries had stopped.

This Marine-Made War Documentary is so Raw the Corps doesn’t want you to see it!

By JAMES CLARK, Task & Purpose April 5, 2018: James is a staff writer for Task & Purpose. He is a former Marine combat correspondent and a veteran of the War in Afghanistan.

“OKAY BUDDY, how ya doing today?” a Marine asks as he stands over the body of a dead Afghan man. “You look like you just got fucked.” A cameraman with 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment stands nearby, rolling tape. He zooms in to show the man’s mangled right hand, where a round impacted before entering his torso.



Jacob Miles Lagoze after he was hit by grenade shrapnel in Kajaki, Afghanistan in 2011. Courtesy photo.

It's sometime in 2011 in Kajaki, Afghanistan. A scout sniper team has been cleared to take the shot, suspecting the target of being a spotter for Taliban fighters in the area. When the patrol arrives to inspect the body, they find that the now-dead man was a local shopkeeper, and he was unarmed. It's unclear whether the man, whose killing was cleared under the rules of engagement, was an observer for the Taliban, or an innocent bystander.

"Yup, he lived for a little while, then it went in and fucking hit where his liver woulda been," a member of the squad says. After the Afghan National Army soldiers attached to the patrol suggest moving the dead man out of sight, the body is rolled up in a rug. "It's not good for people to see this," one U.S. Marine says.

After the patrol, Lance Cpl Jacob Miles Lagoze, the combat cameraman who filmed the scene, returned to the patrol base to file his daily footage. As a Marine, Lagoze enjoyed the kind of unlimited access journalists rarely get.

TASK & PURPOSE

But as a member of the military, and part of the Marine Corps' combat camera field — which gathers footage

for historical documentation — he was charged with portraying the war, and the Americans who fought it, in a certain light. It wasn't until he'd been a civilian for a few years and enrolled in Columbia University's film program in New York that he thought to look back at the hours of footage he'd collected.

"When I got back, I didn't really know what to do with it," Lagoze, who left the service in 2013, told Task & Purpose. "I had this footage on my computer, sort of like a weird diary, with a lot of fucked up shit — dead civilians, wounded Marines — that never got released."

He spent two years putting it all together, and the result is *Combat Obscura*. The hour-long documentary is raw, visceral and candid — offering a rare glimpse of what deployed life was actually like for the Marines and sailors of 1/6. It's pieced together without a clear narrative arc or voice-over explanation that might tell viewers how to feel about what they're seeing. It offers no judgments, raises many questions, and provides few outright answers.

"Who are these kids, where do they come from, what is their moral compass at times?" Lagoze asks. "I mean, there's some rough boys in the Marine Corps, so being able to give people this insider's perspective is really important to moving forward in understanding this conflict, and what these young kids are out there doing, and what that experience is like."

Lagoze knows this unfiltered footage will anger the Corps, and possibly draw the ire of some of the Marines he served with, but he says that exposing the reality of that war is worth the risk. And the risks are substantial: The Navy is conducting an investigation into the documentary over concerns about criminal activity it depicts, and the Marine Corps is trying to determine whether or not the service has proprietary ownership of some of the footage used.

Combat Obscura isn't about "painting these guys as heroes or victims" or "painting this war as an ultimately good thing in the long run," Lagoze said, adding that it's about "showing an honest to God depiction that doesn't cater to either side of the political spectrum, and humanizing these guys and showing, ultimately, the futility of this whole experience."

The result is one of most genuine looks at what the Forever War was like for those who waged it. Gunfights mingle with moments of extreme honesty, sadness, humour, confusion, rebellion, and boredom. In one moment, we see young grunts engaged in heavy combat, carrying wounded comrades to casevac choppers as rounds clap overhead. In the next, they smoke pot from an empty Pringles can that they've MacGyvered into a bong. Later, they pack hash into cigarettes while on patrol.



In other words, Combat Obscura is the flipside of the carefully vetted, promotional videos Lagoze was creating every day as part of the Marine Corps' vast public relations operation.

The documentary was compiled from footage shot during a seven-month deployment to Kajaki, a swath of hamlets and farmland along the Helmand River where I, too, deployed in 2011 as a combat correspondent attached to 1/6, and sometimes worked alongside Lagoze, taking photos and writing news stories. The film includes clips from Justin Loya, another combat cameraman attached to the unit, as well as helmet-cam footage from infantrymen in the battalion.

Veterans: What do you think of the deployment life shown in Combat Obscura? Does it resonate with experiences of yours? Do you have a story to tell, or concerns to share? Give us your unvarnished thoughts in the comments below or by emailing us.

Lagoze's warts-and-all approach evolved slowly. In early cuts of the film, he found himself leaving out some of the more troubling scenes. Eventually, he realized he was "self-censoring" the footage — keeping out "the stuff that I felt civilians wouldn't understand." Lagoze decided that what was really missing from our understanding of the war was precisely the material that viewers might find hard to watch.

"When I finally said 'fuck it' and stopped trying to explain the shit and show it for what it is — how gritty and ugly it was — it brought a much more honest feeling about the whole thing, and my memories of it," he said.

The documentary premiered March 1 at the True/False film festival in Columbia, Missouri. While the audience loved it, the Marine Corps did not.

Because the footage was shot while he was on active duty, Lagoze sought clearance last summer from the Pentagon's defence Office of Prepublication and Security Review to use it. The defence Department's media review process determined that no classified or privileged information was in the footage they reviewed, according to a DoD statement Lagoze provided to T&P.

However, because of what's shown in *Combat Obscura* — Marines smoking hash, for one — and how the video was obtained, the query was passed to the Corps for a service-level review. "It was pretty eye-opening and provoking, to say the least," Lt. Col. Christian Devine, the director of the Marine Corps Entertainment Media Liaison Office, told Task & Purpose.



Devine explained that because of the "possible nature of some alleged criminal activity that's captured on the segments that we saw," the Marine Corps promptly flagged the footage for review by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, which launched an investigation. On March 6, NCIS declined to provide Task & Purpose with any details on that investigation due to its ongoing nature.

Devine insists the film contains footage that was never approved for release by the service and that only a rough "technical cut of the documentary" was provided for review. The service has also raised the issue of ownership, arguing in a December statement Lagoze provided to T&P that the footage "was filmed using Marine Corps equipment" and therefore might legally belong to the military.

"All of the video content that was captured in the video segments that we saw were obviously from different cameras, but a lot of the content that he captured — the casevac, and the patrols — we believe those were captured on government equipment," Devine told T&P. "And for him to now use that content and make his own documentary, that's where we were kind of pulling layers of the onion back, in order to discover: Who actually owns that content?" The service hasn't answered the question definitively yet. Lagoze's case, it turns out, is unprecedented.

"It brought up a lot of questions about the role of the individual service member capturing content and making their own documentary when they're in a combat zone," Devine explained. "We never had to answer this before. This is new territory."

Lagoze insists he has every right to screen his film. "They're not really saying I can't show the movie," Lagoze said. "Obviously they would prefer it not to be shown, but their only legal argument is that they have proprietary ownership because they say I shot it as a combat cameraman with Marine Corps equipment." Lagoze declined to say how much of the documentary was filmed using service gear.

Whatever the Corps decides, Lagoze remains determined. "Documentaries don't make any money in general... but it's definitely worth the fight," he said. "I did my due diligence. I sent it through the review process through the Pentagon, just to make sure there was nothing classified."

While his decision to submit this for review has triggered the scrutiny his film and its subjects are now under, Lagoze remained hopeful that the Marine Corps would eventually see the film for what it is — an honest portrayal of deployment to a distant and austere patrol base. "It's not some kind of anti-military thing," he said.

When you're a 20-something enlisted Marine at the bottom of the totem pole, waging a counterinsurgency campaign that's a split between combat and nation-building in a Taliban haven, tidy narratives can be hard to come by. And the questions "What are we doing here? Why? And to what end?" don't receive ready answers, if they're even asked. The day-to-day largely equates to stepping off on patrol and thinking let's see if we'll get shot at today.



"I'm not trying to simplify or explain that situation," Lagoze told T&P. "I really want to give it the complexity that it deserves, because war is obviously a lot of different things." In that spirit, *Combat Obscura* can seem confusing to many viewers. It's meant to be.

Afghanistan "wasn't simple or black and white," Lagoze, who received the Purple Heart after he was wounded by a grenade

during a firefight on that deployment, told Task & Purpose. "It was funny, it was strange, it was terrifying, and really, just to be able to show it in its full absurdity, I think, is the most powerful way to show it. The vast absurdity of the whole experience dwarfs any narrative you try to create around it."

In an agonizing scene near the end of the documentary, a Marine is shot in the head and mortally wounded. When the movie abruptly cuts to a Navy corpsman's ode to Afghanistan, sung to the tune of "Jingle Bells," the viewer has no idea what to think — especially when you consider that Lagoze was ostensibly deployed as part of the service's public relations apparatus, what he calls "this weird perpetuation of propaganda."

"I'm not pissed off about it; that's not why I'm making this movie," he said. "But being a cameraman and being out there, you've got such incredible access, at the same time that you're filming the complete polar opposite, which is the PR stuff. But you have all this other stuff that the guys want you to film."

But combat cameramen ultimately work for the Corps, not themselves or their buddies downrange, Devine, the Marines' entertainment liaison, told T&P. "We have an active duty, military member, a combat cameraman, who is ordered to go and support the unit in combat to document their actions in combat," he said, "and at the same time, puts together his own personal documentary about the combat experience in that unit that is not in concert with our core values whatsoever, and what we expect our Marines to be doing in combat."

One thing they don't expect is for deployed Marines to be getting stoned in a warzone — an offense for which the penalties are severe. Loya, the other combat cameraman on that deployment whose footage is included in the film, was separated by the service in 2012 with a Bad Conduct Discharge after testing positive for cannabis while deployed to Kajaki.

Getting high downrange was "really just another kind of rush, I guess," Loya said. "It was just such a crazy place to find yourself in life — on deployment, in a warzone — and so why not?"

Since Loya is now separated from the Marine Corps, he can't be disciplined further. But neither, it turns out, can any of the other Marines smoking substances in *Combat Obscura*. "Unfortunately," Devine told Task & Purpose, "we are past the statute of limitations for pursuing disciplinary or criminal action" — even though the Corps got NCIS involved.

That said, the service isn't about to let the documentary pass without comment. "The criminal activity captured in the documentary is inexcusable and selfish, and endangered the security of the Marines in that unit," Devine said, adding that "the depiction of any DOD personnel or equipment in the film should not be misconstrued as a service endorsement of Mr. Lagoze's documentary."

While the Marine Corps might not like it, Lagoze wants viewers to be able to make their own judgments about the young servicemen in his film, knowing full well that they don't fit the tidy stereotypes of American combat troops. "People seem to have a very formulaic idea of the uniform," Lagoze said. "On the right, you're a hero, a sacrificial lamb, you're god's gift to America, and on the left, it's that you're probably just naive and too dumb to know what you're signing up for."

Now that the documentary is done, Lagoze said he hopes "that people stop looking at us like we're victims... or part of the greatest generation or something. It was a lot more muddled and complex than that. I think it will be kind of hard for people to watch," he said. "But sometimes that's kind



Fighting Fake Defence News

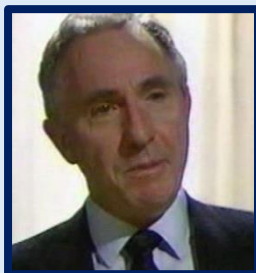
From Sir Humphrey's Blog. April 10 2018
Former MOD, former Reservist Officer.
Proud to have served across Defence.

IN AN ERA of 'fake news' it is easy to question what you read and wonder whether there is any truth in. This is particularly true of Defence reporting, which due to the very nature of the subject, where you have a multitude of complex issues wrapped in secrecy, vested interests, subtly different views depending on where you sit in the system all combining to make it hard to accurately report accurate objective facts.

Despite this, the UK has got a plethora of very good journalists who write on defence matters and have acquired a good reputation for knowing their stuff. One only must look at broadcasters and writers like Jonathan Beale at the BBC, Alistair Bunkall at Sky, Larissa Brown at the Mail, Deb Haynes at the Times and David Willetts at the Sun.

There are good specialist publications and writers / commentators out there too, such as defence & aviation specialists like the team at Shepard Media or the many smaller publications and consultants like the UK Defence Journal, Gareth Corfield at the Register or Phil Ingram.

All of the above names are worth reading and following because they write and broadcast about defence, often with very different interpretations on subjects, but they do so knowledgably and truthfully based on the interpretations, material and sources that they have available to them. They also all engage regularly and openly on Twitter, making it possible for commentators and the public to engage with them and share views and thoughts.



Humphrey doesn't always agree with their articles and will happily write blogs to challenge and counter their views, but without doubt all of the above represent good examples of sources of journalism that is worth thinking about and will be truthful. This matter because not all articles out there are true, not all articles can be trusted and at times can be bordering on misleading. In a world where Fake News is an increasing challenge to deal with, it is vital that the press in the UK play a leading role in producing accurate accounts of what is going on.

On Sunday 8 April the Express ran a story claiming that major defence cuts were due that would see the Royal Navy keep ALBION and BULWARK but lose up to six other ships in the process. It also suggested that the Army faced cuts of 7000 personnel and that the RAF would apparently be mothballing its entire fleet of Chinook helicopters (some 60 strong).

The article was full of errors that were inaccurate, from basic terminology errors (e.g. referring to the Royal Marines as the 'Commando Regiment') or getting the name of the First Sea Lord wrong (who is Admiral Sir Phillip White?). It then suggests that 'sources at the Army Board' that is 'headed by General Sir Nick Carter' were providing information to the report. This is quite impressive given that the Army Board exists as a ceremonial meeting once per year and is chaired by the Secretary of State Gavin Williamson MP and not CGS.

The most concerning issue though is that the article extensively quotes a 'leaked MOD memo' that talks about the state of refits of some RN ships such as HMS NORTHUMBERLAND and manpower problems for ships like HMS PORTLAND.

The problem is that this isn't actually a leaked MOD memo. It's a letter sent from a former Royal Navy rating to his local MP (Susan Jones) who quoted from it during a debate in the House of Commons a few months ago. In other words, the so-called 'leaked memo' is nothing more than a constituency letter from a private citizen.

What is the Truth?

The reason this sort of thing matters is that people form opinions based on what they read in the press. The UK media remains highly trusted as an objective source of advice and information and people assume that what is published there meets high standards. People will worry when they read information that they believe to be true suggesting that the nations defences are in dire risk.

It is absolutely right and proper that Departments are held to account and that their activity is scrutinised and highlighted where risks exist. Impropriety, lying or misleading the public should be called out and should be used to hold Public Servants to account. But surely the same should apply to Journalists too? This story is arguably fundamentally misleading its readers by suggesting that a letter to an MP is in fact a 'leaked MOD document' which is a totally different thing.

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It is one thing for the public to read a genuinely leaked MOD memo that states openly the manning situation and worry. It is also entirely right for journalists to publish material – their job is to make the headlines. But when you make up information, packaging up a random letter and pretending that it is something completely different from what it is, isn't that called lying to the public?

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The frustration is that there are plenty of people out there who don't know much about Defence, but who will believe this utter garbage. They will assume it is true and they will not realise that they are being lied to by the media. If you trust that the people you read are telling the truth, then you will not question what you read. Moving forward there seem to be two key things that can be done. Firstly, there is a responsibility on defence commentators to engage constructively with Defence Journalists and broadcasters. Use the access through Twitter and social media to foster constructive debate and information. Don't come up with silly ideas like the 'defence reporting hall of shame' or other nonsense.

Like many niche areas such as health or public transport, Defence is a difficult subject to understand or to report on accurately due to its complexity. We also live in a world where we can add real value in building understanding to the media, particularly in a time when stories break in seconds and then everyone is scrabbling to play catch up. This is where building good relationships helps steer people, inform them and get good commentary and reporting out there.

Work with the media, engage positively with them and tell them about the subject you are passionate about – there is enormous scope to use social media as a real force for good. Every reader of this blog can help shape debate and provide information and advice. Secondly, where there is reporting which crosses the line from what you deem to be ‘poor’ to being in breach of the Regulators code, then don’t be afraid to make a complaint about it. For instance, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) has a very clear editorial code which includes a section on accuracy stating: “The Press must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information or images including headlines not supported by the text’

It is a personal decision whether you feel that suggesting that a letter from a private citizen to their MP that was then cited as a leaked MOD memo is inaccurate or misleading. If you do feel that this is the case then a complaint can be made to IPSO who will, if appropriate, launch a Standards Investigation into the article in question.

We are lucky in the quality of our journalists overall, and while many articles on this blog over the years have been produced as a result of reading a specific media piece, it is about looking at an alternative view and not suggesting that the authors are lying or misleading their audience. In the very small series of cases where this does happen, the public should consider whether to take steps to see a correction made. Ultimately no one should profit from fake news.



How the Indian Government Polices Journalists to Curb 'Fake News'

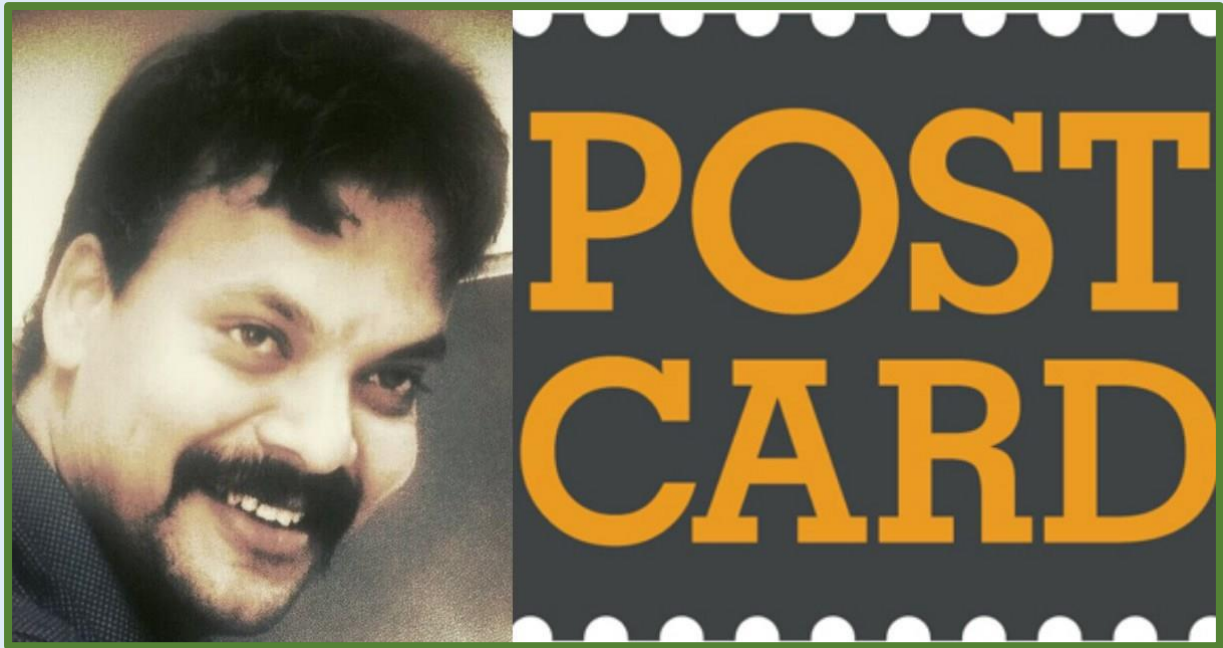
India’s push to regulate “fake news” lays bare the poor state of press freedom in the country. By Priyanka Borpujari :The Diplomat: April 07, 2018

LAST WEEK Vikram Hegde, co-founder and editor of the website Postcard News, was arrested for spreading “fake news” about Muslim youth attacking a Jain monk in India. His website has been found to be a right-wing propaganda machine. Earlier this week, India’s information and broadcasting ministry announced new guidelines that would essentially punish journalists for publishing fake news. According to the proposal, the media accreditation of a journalist, provided by the central government’s Press Information Bureau (PIB), could be suspended upon any complaint against a print or television journalist.

The editor of a fairly young news website, The Wire, wrote that this proposal would “place media organisations at the mercy of trolls, bureaucrats, and politicians and strengthen the already visible trend of self-censorship when it comes to politically sensitive stories.”

The PIB accreditation gives journalists easy access to government offices and events. The guidelines said that complaints against print journalists would be examined by the Press Council of India (PCI), while the News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) would look into complaints against television reporters.

However, the PCI comprises government and industry members, and gets its funding from the government. Most of the news channels in India have refused to recognize the NBSA. Currently, journalists working for digital media are not eligible for accreditation under the ministry’s existing guidelines, since websites don’t need a registration or a license: newspapers and TV stations, on the other hand, need such a license.



The exemption of journalists in the media presents an interesting dynamic: some of the best work in journalism in India in recent years has been produced by digital media, while at the same time, there is the mass production of fake news peddled by Hindutva-oriented websites, which are often circulated by WhatsApp.

But will the armies of trolls also be booked? And would the government and its ministers accept its own misdemeanours in this space? One BJP minister, who defended the arrest of the Postcard News editor, is a member of PCI. In 2015, PIB had published a photo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi surveying the floods in Chennai from an airplane. However, that was a doctored photo. So, what is the government's own definition of fake news?

Less than 24 hours since the guidelines were announced, Modi intervened and overturned the guidelines. Instead, a committee was constituted to frame rules for and regulate news websites – a committee without a single representative from news websites.

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With freedom of the press in India shrinking considerably and anyone questioning the might of the current BJP-ruled establishment meeting deadly consequences, the new guidelines led to an uproar among Indian journalists, as they wondered aloud if only select journalists would be targeted. It's another matter that getting the PIB accreditation is in itself a process that thrives on nepotism. India slipped three places last year to rank 136th among 180 countries rated in the World Press Freedom Index from Reporters Without Borders.

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Section 66(A) of the existing Information Technology Act has been exercised with a strong hand, leading to the arrests of several people. It prohibits the sending of information of a “grossly offensive” or “menacing” nature through computers and communication devices and has been used by several states to arrest people over posts on social media that officials claimed “seditious,” “communally sensitive,” or abusive.

But how would the government regulate the unhindered uploading of information — let's say video — on platforms like YouTube and WhatsApp, given the assumed democratic nature of the internet? And yet at the same time, the menace of fake news — whose intensity was realized when a mob attacked and killed seven people last year — cannot be ignored.

And that's where the trust deficit in the media comes in. For one, the reader's editor at The Hindu recently wrote that he has “stopped using the term ‘fake news’ as it legitimizes outright lies and manufactured hatred. Lies, propaganda, and partial truths cannot be linked with the word ‘news’.”

And overturning the paradigm of what is termed news would require an ecosystem of journalism where ethics are back in the game, and wherein self-regulatory bodies are acknowledged and taken seriously by the news media. That would mean reigning in news channels like Republic TV and India Today that were the top contenders in 2017 for dishing out the maximum number of fake news pieces.

While on one hand the Indian government aims to digitally connect 239,000 village units by 2020, the PIB is also working toward tracking the movements of journalists in government offices by replacing their accreditation cards with radio-frequency identification-enabled (RFID) cards.

Last week's bedlam with the proposed clampdown was well suited to a government that has been playing divisive politics: it divided journalists along the lines of determining who is a real journalist and who isn't, purely on the basis of accreditation. The larger issue of press freedom was lost amid the cacophony of accreditation being lost and questioning the reputation of journalists who haven't received one.

The policing of the internet goes against the democratic space that the medium provides. Clearly, it is this process of amplifying hitherto silenced voices that the Indian establishment fears.

Disclosure: I neither have accreditation nor a press card as a freelance journalist. In spite of being an award-winning journalist for 12 years, I am unable to apply for PIB accreditation because its requirement is a minimum of 15 years of experience

New Facebook controls aim to regulate political ads and fight fake news

Moved intended to stall spread of false information and 'prevent future abuse in elections.' By Alex Hern The Guardian: April 8 2018

FACEBOOK IS STEPPING UP its efforts to fight fake news and political misinformation, with new controls intended to ensure authenticity and transparency among advertisers and publishers on the site. CEO Mark Zuckerberg wrote in a post shortly after the moves were announced:



"These steps by themselves won't stop all people trying to game the system. But they will make it a lot harder for anyone to do what the Russians did during the 2016 election and use fake accounts and pages to run ads."

He also threw his company's support behind the Honest Ads Act, a US Senate bill: "Election interference is a problem that's bigger than any one platform ... This will help raise the bar for all political advertising online."

The measures build on a plan, announced last October, to require American political advertisers to undergo an authentication process and reveal their affiliation alongside their adverts.

Now, the company says, that process will be rolled out worldwide – and also extended from covering solely political ads to the fuzzier category of "issue" advertising. "Today's updates are designed to prevent future abuse in elections," the Facebook executives Rob Goldman and Alex Himel said in a blogpost, "and to help ensure you have the information that you need to assess political and issue ads, as well as content on pages".



Political advertisers will be required to reveal their affiliation alongside their adverts on Facebook. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

All the vetted ads “will be clearly labelled in the top left-hand corner as ‘Political Ad’”, Goldman and Himel said. “Next to it we will show ‘paid for by’ information,” to let users know the source of the message.

Facebook added: “We are working with third parties to develop a list of key issues, which we will refine over time. To get authorised by Facebook, advertisers will need to confirm their identity and location. Advertisers will be prohibited from running political ads – electoral or issue-based – until they are authorised.”

The change will help tackle concerns such as those raised around the Irish abortion referendum, in which there has been widespread Facebook advertising from groups with little transparency around their funding, motive or even location.

Facebook removes more than 100 accounts linked to Russian troll factory

It also more directly addresses the misinformation tactics of the Russian “troll farm”, the Internet Research Agency, which was disclosed last year to have bought a number of Facebook adverts in an attempt to sway the US election. However, many of those adverts carried little political content, instead primarily aiming to inflame the debate by, for instance, linking the Black Lives Matter group to police murders, or promoting counter-protests against the Westboro Baptist church.

Facebook’s latest move comes a month after Elizabeth Denham, the UK information commissioner, suggested social networks may be forced to reveal detailed information about how and why users were targeted for political advertising. “Our intention is to be able to pull back the curtain and to be able to explain and expose for the public, for parliamentarians, for civil society, what happens with their personal information in the context of political advertising and political messaging,” she said. Despite Facebook’s forthcoming changes, that desire remains unmet.

Separately, the social network will also be rolling out the same authentication process to the administrators of “large” Facebook pages.

The company would not say how big a page had to be to qualify as large but confirmed that when a page reached a certain size, its moderators would have to prove their name and location were truthful, or risk losing their rights to post to the page.

That new requirement will launch alongside a set of features intended to preserve user trust in Facebook publishers: for instance, the history of a Facebook page will now be visible, and users will be notified if a page they have liked changes its name. The change aims to stop a common tactic whereby a page boosts its likes through viral content, before changing its name and aim in order to capitalise on its following.

“This will make it much harder for people to administer a page using a fake account, which is strictly against our policies,” Goldman and Himel said. “We will also show you additional context about pages to effectively assess its content. For example, you can see whether a page has changed its name.”

The move is likely to prove controversial among users, many of whom are still pushing back against Facebook’s general “authentic name policy”, which bans people from using pseudonyms on the site.

Eight things I now understand about the Syrian war after being a reporter there

By Jenn Selby: iNews: April 30 2018



LYSE DOUCET, award-winning journalist and Chief International Correspondent for the BBC, has been on the ground watching the Syrian conflict evolve with increasing alarm over the past seven years. In a new two-part documentary series, Syria: The World’s War, Doucet and her team attempt to explain the twisted conflict and examine how a peaceful protest for change in 2011 led to the biggest humanitarian crisis of our time.

More than half a million dead, thousands displaced, and a once prosperous and vibrant society reduced to rubble, dust and war, the film sees a bloody civil war become a proxy battleground for more than 75 countries, including the world’s largest superpowers.

Doucet collates the accounts of key politicians, activists, rebels and civilian witnesses to piece together what happened, how it happened, and the global impact it has had. Never has journalism played such a vital role in establishing the truth, yet never has reporting from the front lines carried a greater risk. Here, she tells i the key things she has learned out in the field – and why some stories are worth risking your life for.



Syria as people knew it no longer exists. There has now been so much history over the last seven years, Syrians say - and they catch their breath when they say it - that Syria as they knew it doesn't exist anymore. 'The war in Syria

has taken on a momentum no-one could have predicted and there are now many players'

"We saw things that were unprecedented and unspeakable. But also, the incredible bravery of protestors to take to the streets in a way they hadn't done before. The courage of the Syrian people, and activists like Noura, who I interview during the documentary, who risk it all to fight for their freedom.

"The war in Syria has taken on a momentum no-one could have predicted and there are now many players. It has truly become the global war of our times."

There isn't a corner of the country that hasn't been touched by war – but there are still vibrant areas of beauty too

"People often ask me as a reporter covering Syria, 'Where do you stay? Where do you eat?' The images you get of the country are of ruin and of danger. And all of that exists in Syria. Driving through the streets, after seven years of conflict, it still takes your breath away. There are piles of rubble, skeletal buildings twisting upwards into the sky. 'Syria is also a place you can go and sit in manicured parks, smell the jasmine it's so famous for in the air, go to cafes with some of the best food in the region, visit nightclubs which are open until the early hours'

"But Syria is also a place you can go and sit in manicured parks, smell the jasmine it's so famous for in the air, go to cafes with some of the best food in the region, visit nightclubs which are open until the early hours. "Still, every corner has been touched by war. Everyone has a story of suffering and pain. So, as a reporter, yes there are hotels to stay in, yes there is food to eat, and yes, there is also the dangers of the battlefield and the increasing risk to journalists from groups like the Islamic State."

Journalists are at increasing risk in Syria, and you have to think long and hard about whether stories are truly worth risking your life for

"In our profession, the gold standard is to 'be there'. There is nothing better than having a conversation with someone face to face in the dust of the battlefield to try and make sense of a situation. "Syria really is the first war that has been fought on social media. As such, never has there been so much information but so much misinformation as well. It is down to us to try to get as close as possible, amid all this, to something we can call the truth.

That said, there is a greater urgency and intensity on journalists with every year of the conflict that has past. Especially with the rise of Isis, we've seen journalists beheaded, journalists captured... you have to think long and hard about whether those stories are worth it. But in Syria, war was worth taking a risk for. It is the greatest humanitarian crisis of our time. It has led to the biggest refugee crisis of our time."

Some of the things reporters witness in Syria are so horrific, it is often hard to make any sense of it at all

"The team and I came across an idyllic village scene in Syria. There were sheep in the fields, the sun was shining. And yet this was also the scene of something completely awful. 'We found only one woman who whispered to us what had happened there in 2013. The village was stunned into silence'

"Charred bodies lying in the yard where they had been set alight, the bottle of gas and the match that lit it still lying there in front of me. I could see the red bullet holes where the victims had been shot in the head. How can you make sense of something that seems so senseless? Who could be full of such hatred?

We found only one woman who whispered to us what had happened there in 2013. The village was stunned into silence. But someday there will be a reckoning. Someday the truth will emerge.”

The only true weapons journalists have to arm themselves with in Syria are the strength of their questions “They are the absolute driving force. The sharper, the better, the more questions you can ask, the better the answers.

“The Syrian war has been a defining moment for journalism. The fact so much of it has played out on social media has really challenged us all. First of all, we must interrogate, question, every piece of information we receive. Who sent the material? Why did they send it? We must question what we are told.

‘There is a huge responsibility on all of us to get to the bottom of it has also seen us getting away from that binary style of thinking, that some people are right and some sides are wrong. We tend to want to find the strongest narrative possible – why the war was playing out the way it did. The truth is, the consequences of this war go far beyond Syria’s borders. There is a huge responsibility on all of us to get to the bottom of it.”

Being a female war correspondent in a place like Syria has far more benefits than you might imagine

“Ever since I started covering conflict, in places like Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Syria, I’ve always found it an advantage rather than a disadvantage to be a woman – especially coming from Canada. ‘Some of the best reporters on Syria are young Syrian women’

“I wasn’t treated like men, but not like women in their countries either. It was easier for me to gain access and talk to some people that the men just couldn’t reach. It is easier for us as women to talk to husbands and brothers and negotiate access to female interviewees.

“Syria is a particularly interesting case. When I started reporting the war, many people on the government side were women. And many of the activists, those on the opposition sides, were women as well. So, at one time everyone I was interviewing was a woman. Some of the best reporters on Syria are young Syrian women. They speak the language, they know the culture, they can go where many can’t.”

The most dangerous part of the Syrian war is yet to come

“What we’re seeing now, there is little likelihood that Assad will be defeated by rebels on the battlefield. Civil war became proxy war, and those tensions are escalating. The bombing of America, France and the UK actually made very little difference to the conflict on the ground other than to make a point about the use of chemical weapons in Douma. This is a very dangerous time’

“When Israel bombed Hama recently, the bombs were so powerful they measured as an earthquake on the Richter scale. It is not a question of if - it is a question of when there will be greater conflict between Israel, Iran and Hezbollah. The concern is now that the Syrian crisis is not just escalating but it is proliferating – and it will take a great act of diplomacy to get out of it. This is a very dangerous time.”

Despite all of this, Syrians still cling to hope of a future for the region



"We know what peace in Syria should look like. That doesn't exist right now and Syrians outside the country fear they will never be able to go home again. Syrian culture, food, music and more is being kept alive in communities around the world as well as in parts of Syria itself"

"Syria as they knew it doesn't exist anymore. But Syrian culture, food, music and more is being kept alive in communities around the world as well as in parts of Syria itself. The conflict isn't over. It will get worse before it gets better. But Syrians still remain in hope for a Syria that has a place for all Syrians no matter what side they are on."

WHERE ARE THEY NOW! - an occasional feature by Gerry Bartlett

Out of Uniform, maybe, but idle – no way!

COLONEL ANGUS TAVERNER, one of the most successful Media Operations Group (MOG V) Volunteer unit Commanders in our history, is now "completely out of uniform" and has been living in Oxford with his wife, Kitty, for the past two years. But, needless to say, uniform or no, Angus is still keeping in close touch with senior officers at the Dubai - based Policy Research Centre, in his role as the Centre's Director of Global Affairs.

His uncannily natural and pleasant association with the probing, "no holds-barred" Press, TV and Magazine operatives, who swoop upon us at every conceivable opportunity, is down to his thorough military training, insistence on accuracy, his painstaking research, and beguiling sense of both honesty and fair play, come what may.

Angus left school in 1976 and started work as an apprentice estate agent with Savills of London, in The Strand, at a salary of £1,500, a year, and a pressing need to sit for Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors examinations.



After nearly four years, Angus decided: "This is not for me," and promptly walked into the nearby Strand, London, Army Recruiting Office, in August 1979, to find out about the possibilities of becoming an Army Officer. A friendly ex-Army Savills' employee in the Recruiting Office, invited Angus to lunch "and a run-down on a career in the Army," which resulted in the beginning of Angus' Short-Service Commission in January 1980 and, subsequently, a Regular Commission in the Royal Artillery.

He did well with promotion to ADC and to Adjutant, before going to Staff College, Camberley, in 1988. Subsequently, he was posted to 47 Regiment, RA, for two years, to command a Battery.

He missed Army life enormously, and in late 1993, joined the Territorial Army as a Staff-Officer Watch Keeper. In April 1995, at the height of the Bosnian War, Angus was working as a TA Staff Officer/Watch-Keeper with 24 Airmobile Brigade in Ploce, on the border between Croatia and Serbia

Once in Bosnia, in 1995, Angus became extremely interested in Press activity and media operations – to the extent that he took-over, when Major Gerry Bartlett, the then 24 Airmobile Brigade Press officer, came to the end of his Bosnian tour.

His sheer ability and ready contact with the world's press, soon became obvious and he made an excellent job of Press Officer, to Brigadier Robin Brims, Commander 24 Air-Mobile brigade, when the previous incumbent returned to England in October 1995.

About his years as MOG V Commanding Officer, from 1998 to 2001, Colonel Taverner said: "I am enormously proud of how all of the MOG V staff and officers responded to what I was trying desperately to achieve. "I am very grateful that their response was so positive."

Out of uniform, maybe, but idle – no way! Angus is still travelling abroad frequently – and particularly, to Dubai, Washington and Brussels – mostly in his role as Director of Global Affairs at the Dubai-based "think tank," the Dubai Policy Research Centre – also known as 'R'Ruth' which means research in Arabic.

Having commanded the MOGV Pool for three exciting and successful years, Angus went into full-time Reserve Service at the Ministry of Defence, dealing with many serious media ops doctrines and Joint Warfare publications – duties which he thoroughly enjoyed and in which he excelled.

The MOD appointed him SO1 Director News Policy and Plans, with a glittering array of senior Services officers under his command. Colonel Taverner and his team worked hard and long, planning for future media operations, writing detailed doctrines, and were instrumental in the birth of the Defence Media Ops Centre at RAF Halton.

Looking back over his long and successful military service, with the Royal Artillery of which he is so proud, as innovative and decisive commander of the MOG V Pool, his doctrinal work for the MOD and his close involvement with British Reserve Forces generally, Col. Taverner is proud of his many achievements and the many men and women he commanded.

But he has an especial "soft spot" for our Media Ops Group which gave him so much. "Frankly," he told me, "My close involvement with, firstly, the TAPIO Pool, and then MOG V, from the time I was a Watch Keeper in Ploce, totally changed my life."

Editor's Note. Lieutenant General Robin Brims will be the guest speaker at the Pen & Sword Club lunch in November 2018.

A Tribute to Alex Dickson

IT IS WITH GREAT REGRET that Scribblings reports the death of Group Captain Alex Dickson, who commanded 7644 Squadron RAFVR. Former presenter and managing director at Radio Clyde, Alex was a great friend of the TA Pool of Public Information Officers and Media Operations Group (V) and participated and helped organise joint training between the three Reserve public relations units in their early days. Alex is particularly remembered for his participation in a major Scotland based exercise when he surprised all his colleagues by his choice of different headdress each day. He was forever known as "the man of many hats." On behalf of all members of the Pen & Sword Club, Scribblings extends its sympathies to his wife Anna and his son Simon. As a mark of respect, The P&S has extended Honorary Membership to Mrs Dickson.

Clyde Built: A Great Journalist and Volunteer

From: The Times Obituaries: April 16, 2018

ANY ROOKIE Radio Clyde broadcaster hoping that their on-air faux pas would slip under the boss's radar was likely to get a phone call: "Have you anything to confess?" No matter that it had been 3am, Alex Dickson always had his finger on the pulse and knew what was happening at the heart of the radio station he helped to create.

His attention to detail and accuracy were the hallmark of a man with a fierce work ethic and an obsession with being, and nurturing, the best in the business. The maxim "Standards, commitment, value for money" was pinned on his office wall and Scots Law for Journalists was the newsroom bible. A hard taskmaster who set high standards, he assembled a formidable team, leading from the front with a booming voice and a lexicon of frequently deployed catchphrases such as "Are you being good?" and "What's the gen?"

However, his managerial style hid a caring nature. This apparent dichotomy resulted in a legacy of first-class journalists, soaring audience figures and a successful station. In snow and ice young recruits were dispatched with scrapers to help motorists to clear windscreens, appeals went out to help the elderly and the Cash for Kids charity that he founded raises more than £1.7 million each year for underprivileged children — not a bad achievement for a boy who started work at an Edinburgh dairy.

Dickson had dreamt of becoming an RAF pilot, an ambition thwarted by his inadequate eyesight. After the dairy job he moved to newspapers, blagging his way into the Scottish Daily Mail as a doorman's assistant. He became an office boy, cub reporter and fully-fledged journalist, once befriending John Lennon, who gifted him a handful of sketches drawn during the Beatles' Scottish dates in 1964.

Poached by Scottish Television as a newsreader in the early 1970s, he was spotted by Lord Gordon of Strathblane who recruited him to run the newsroom when Radio Clyde launched on Hogmanay 1973. A giant of a man, known to reporters as Chiefie, he had a knack for spotting talent and taking a chance on those who wanted to better themselves.

He set up a journalists' training centre within Radio Clyde and nurtured names such as Bill Turnbull, Ben Brown and Jackie Bird. On one occasion he was challenged to a duel by a reporter he had sacked for fabricating and broadcasting a colourful commentary of a Clydebank ship launch that had not taken place.

Dickson went on to take charge of programming, steering the station to dominance in the area, and for many years presented three book programmes a week. He always insisted that interviewees, including Douglas Bader, Charlton Heston, Sophia Loren and Alastair MacLean, come to Radio Clyde, never contemplating a down-the-line interview. He retained his passion for flying, having gained a private pilot's licence. He was a qualified gliding instructor in the 1960s and became the most senior officer in the RAF Volunteer Reserve, reaching the rank of group captain and adviser to the RAF's director of public relations.

Dickson commanded 7644 Public Relations Squadron for 16 years. Made an OBE of the order's military division, he also received the Queen's Volunteer Reserve Medal and was appointed the squadron's honorary air commodore. In his seventies he gained an MA and MPhil in military history from Glasgow University.

Once offered the opportunity to go to London as BBC Radio 2 controller, he declined, preferring to stay in Scotland with his wife, Anna, with whom he had a son, Simon, who became a television executive at Channel 4 and who co-owns the production company making the BBC Two series Hospital, the last programme his father watched.

Dickson retired as managing director of Radio Clyde in 2000, having posted the station's best listening figures since its launch.

When Paul Coia nervously told him that he had been offered a job in London as chief announcer and the opening voice on Channel 4, his boss replied: "You must go. It's too good an opportunity to miss. But show them the quality of broadcaster we make up here. Be proud you're Clyde built." Alex Dickson, journalist and broadcaster, was born on December 10, 1935. He died on April 9, 2018, aged 82



Two minor beaches on the flanks – Puys and Pourville – were to be captured, while an attack 30 minutes later was scheduled on the main beach by two Canadian infantry battalions, the Essex Scottish Regiment and the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry.



Of the 5,000 Canadians who landed at Dieppe, 907 were killed, 586 wounded and about 2,000 were taken prisoner. “When you look back at it, war is horrible,” Ron Beal of the Royal Regiment of Canada tells Global National. Beal was an infantryman when he landed on Blue Beach 70 years ago. “It is absolute hell and we prayed that it would never happen again. Bletchley Park, located just north of London, was the centre of British code-breaking in the Second World War. Scientists and mathematicians would intercept and crack enemy radio messages by breaking into ciphers and codes used to keep top-secret information private.

For the Allies, the Bletchley Park operation was crucial to move supplies and win the Battle of the Atlantic. According to O’Keefe’s research, British naval officers used Operation Jubilee to target the German-made Enigma code machine, an electro-mechanical piece of equipment that used a series of rotors for the encryption and decryption of secret messages.

Unlocking such a device, says O’Keefe, would mean knowing enemy intentions – information that could potentially reveal German intent, capabilities, hopes, and fears. “It’s like reading your opposition’s e-mail or, better yet, reading your opposition’s poker hand and knowing exactly how to play or use your forces,” says O’Keefe. “The Allies relied on this in almost every decision they made in the Second World War.”

While the British were successful breaking into the three-rotor Enigma machines, everything changed on February 1, 1942, when the Germans introduced the four-rotor Enigma device – instantly blacking out Bletchley Park. According to files, British naval intelligence believed that in order to crack the four-rotor Enigma machine, a pinch raid was necessary. A successful pinch would mean secretly stealing parts of the machine, code books and setting sheets.

Ian Fleming and the 30 Assault Unit

During the Second World War, Ian Fleming – the legendary author of the James Bond spy series novels – acted as a personal assistant to Britain’s head of naval intelligence, Admiral John Godfrey. He, along with other naval intelligence specialists, created the No. 30 Commando or the 30 Assault Unit (30AU) – a team of special commandos that were put into the Dieppe operation under the unit name No. 40 Royal Marine Commando.

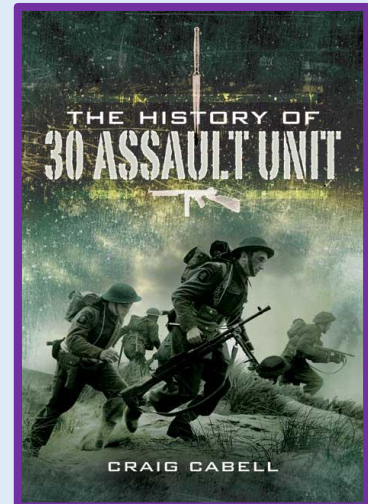
According to the newly-discovered files, while Fleming and the 30 AU were looking to hit various German vessels that were in Dieppe's harbour, their primary target was the German headquarters, located at Hotel Moderne near the main harbour in Dieppe.

A search plan revealed that British naval intelligence considered Hotel Moderne to be the German naval headquarters and control centre. They believed the hotel room would house Enigma coding machines and a safe with enough material regarding German war operations for the next six to eight months.

On August 18th, the 30AU was put on the British ship HMS Locust, whose mission was to breach the inner channel and deliver the Royal Marine Commando into port. Despite several attempts to reach the harbour, the unit was later sent in on landing craft that also failed to reach the main beach. Meanwhile, Fleming was located on the destroyer HMS Fernie with instructions to return to British port with any material the 30 AU unit obtained. No pinched material reached HMS Fernie and Fleming and the ship returned to Britain empty-handed.

Had the pinch raid been successful, Beal believes it would have had a substantial effect on the war. "There are families out there that think their sons died for nothing," says Beal. "Now they'll know there was a real purpose and that purpose could've shortened the war."

Several months after the failed operation in Dieppe, the minds at Bletchley Park broke the code of the four-rotor Enigma machine. "We can never look at Dieppe the same way," says O'Keefe. "But now we know that there was somewhat a silver lining to Canada's darkest day."



Consortiumnews.com

Consortium News is an alternative independent news source established in 1995. It is considered the first alternative investigative journalism internet news source. Consortium News covers stories deeply and has been responsible for uncovering scandals and important information that was not found/covered by the mainstream media. They are factual and evidence based, but present information with a slight left of centre.

Truth Still a Casualty at Dieppe

IN 1942 BRITISH COMMANDERS dispatched mostly Canadian troops on a raid against German coastal defences at the French city of Dieppe. The attack was a fiasco, losing more than half the landing force, but well-connected British officers spun the defeat into a public relations victory, writes Don North

In many World War II history books, the reassuring story about the Allies' raid on the French port of Dieppe on Aug. 19, 1942 which saw entire units of Canadian troops decimated by German fire is that it provided valuable lessons about amphibious tactics that turned the later Normandy invasion into a success. But now 76 years later, a closer reading of the historical record makes clear that the disaster at Dieppe was less a learning experience on how to conduct amphibious assaults than a template for how to spin a debacle, to protect the reputations of powerful military and political figures.

The principal architect of the Dieppe fiasco was Lord Louis Mountbatten, a close relative of the British Royal family and a favourite of Prime Minister Winston Churchill who had appointed him to the important post of Chief of Combined Services.

Known to his friends as “Dickie,” Mountbatten was famous for his vanity and unbridled ambition. It was often said of him that the truth, in his hands, was swiftly converted from what it was to what it should have been.

With Churchill’s blessing, Mountbatten pushed through the Dieppe raid over the objections of many officers in the Allied military establishment who felt it was ill-advised. Given the fact that British and other Allied troops had barely escaped from Dunkirk two years earlier, the idea of landing the mostly Canadian force on the beaches of Dieppe, have them destroy some German coastal defences, hold the town for two tides, and then withdraw might indeed have seemed rather foolhardy.



But Mountbatten, pictured left, pushed for the raid as a dramatic blow against the Germans whose forces had shifted east to strike at the Soviet Union. The landing at Dieppe about 100 miles east of the D-Day beaches of Normandy would be the first large-scale daylight assault on a strongly held objective in Europe. It also would be the greatest amphibious landing since Gallipoli during World War I, another bloody disaster, and it would be the first time in history tanks would land on beaches held by the enemy.

But Dieppe was to be another first as well. It would be the first big propaganda exercise of modern warfare. At the time, military-public relations were a new-fangled notion, foreign to most senior British and Canadian officers. However, Lord Mountbatten’s eager PR team took an opportunistic view. Included on his staff were two American publicists from Hollywood, Major Jock Lawrence and Lt. Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., son of the film star.

Twenty-one war correspondents and photographers were allowed to accompany the raid. What they in fact witnessed was a

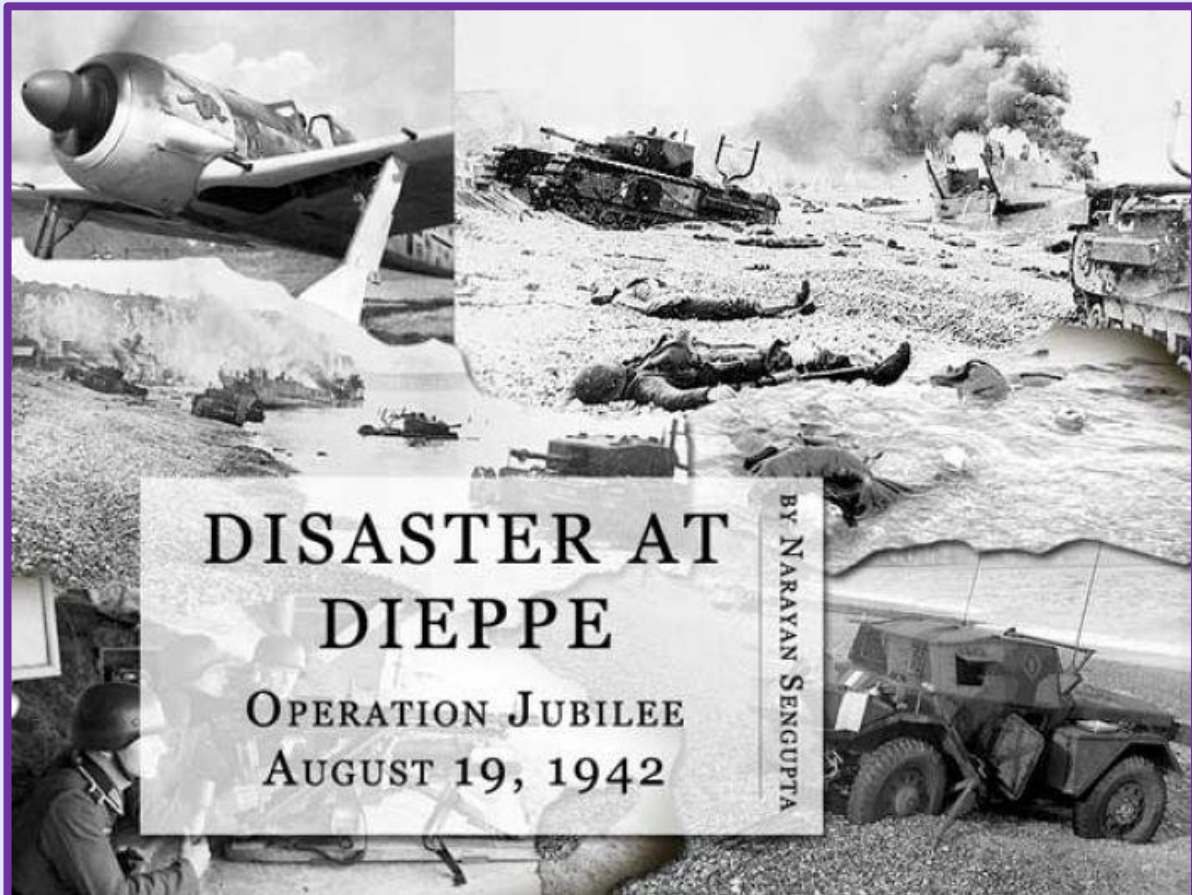
tragic and costly fiasco. What they wrote, after their copy was vetted by Mountbatten’s censors, was largely fiction. For instance, the Toronto Star’s headline on the first news of the raid on Aug. 22 read: “LIKE FIREWORKS SAYS ROYAL’S SERGEANT OF BATTLE AT DIEPPE.”

The story then added: “In the grimmest and fiercest operation of the war since British troops swarmed out of Dunkirk, the Canadians’ assaulting Dieppe gave the German elite coastal defense men a sample of the courage the Dominion’s fighting men display when they are assigned to battle.”

Years later, Mountbatten himself would frame the more pleasing conventional wisdom about Dieppe, declaring: “I have no doubt that the Battle of Normandy was won on the beaches of Dieppe. For every man who died in Dieppe, at least 10 more must have been spared in Normandy in 1944.” Mountbatten’s self-serving analysis has remained a common lens through which to see the Dieppe raid, putting a rosy glow around the horrific losses. More than half the landing force was killed, wounded or captured without accomplishing a single major objective.

The late British historian Robin Neillands was one who cut through the propaganda that has fogged a clear understanding of the Dieppe fiasco. In his 2005 book, *The Dieppe Raid*, Neillands wrote, “Many of the lessons of Dieppe were quite fundamental, there was no need to learn them again at such a terrible cost. The Dieppe commanders failed to remember that loyalty should flow down as well as up; their loyalty was due to the nameless soldiers in the landing craft as much as to their superiors and dictates of the Service.

“There were people dying on those stony beaches; they deserved better of their commanders. Those who seek glory in war will not find it on the beaches of Dieppe. Those who seek tales of valour need look no further.” Neillands concluded: “When the Canadians and the Royal Marine Commandos went ashore, they were going to their deaths — and most of them probably realized that fact as their landing craft took them into the assault.”



Two of the Attackers

I learned the truth of Dieppe from two veterans of the Canadian Royal Regiment who landed at “Blue Beach” that fateful August morning. Private Roy Jacques first told me the real story: “There were 5,000 of us from the 2nd Canadian Division, 1,000 British commandos and 50 U.S. Army Rangers. In less than ten hours battle, after hitting the beach, 1,380 of us had been killed. I was captured along with 2,000 others, mostly wounded by the Germans, and spent the rest of the war at Stalag Stargard.” Jacques survived the war and later became a respected journalist and news director of CKWX in Vancouver.

Another veteran of Dieppe was Private Joe Ryan of Toronto, also of the Royal Regiment. In 2007, I accompanied him for a return trip to Dieppe for the 65th anniversary of the landing. As we walked the landing beach and visited the Canadian cemetery, he told me: “That’s my beach, Don. The tide was about the same as it is now when we ran across those damn rocks tripping and falling. See that old German pillbox is still there overgrown with weeds.”

In the cemetery, Ryan pointed and said, “There’s the grave of my signalman. Rolly Ward and I hit the beach together, but Rolly didn’t get up again. I took his watch and brought it back to his mother who never did believe he had been killed at Dieppe.”

Ross Munro of the Canadian Press had been in the same landing craft as Ryan but did not venture onto the beach where piles of the dead were mounting. Ryan expressed disdain for Munro and the other journalists.

“Those newsmen were drunken bastards and we wouldn’t have anything to do with them,” Ryan said. “Munro was a coward who never left the landing craft.”

I tried to convince Ryan that Munro had a good view of the embattled beach from the landing craft and was able to survive and return to England with his eyewitness story, which he could not have done if killed or captured by the Germans.

However, Munro and the other reporters were subject to draconian censorship by Mountbatten’s command and their published reports bore little resemblance to the facts on the bloody beaches. (Munro was author of the Toronto Star article cited above.)

Breaking PR Ground

While Mountbatten’s battle plan at Dieppe proved woefully inept, his P.R. plan was groundbreaking, even anticipating how to spin failure before the raid began. Proof that Mountbatten’s command planned to use Dieppe as propaganda whatever happened on the beaches can be found in the Combined Operations files in the archives at Kew near London.

Using the code name for the Dieppe raid, a memorandum entitled “Jubilee Communique Meeting” makes clear that Mountbatten planned to cite “lessons learned” before any were actually learned: “In case the raid is unsuccessful the same basic principles must hold.

We cannot call such a large-scale operation a ‘reconnaissance raid.’

We cannot avoid stating the general composition of the force, since the enemy will know it and make capital of our losses and of any failure of the first effort of Canadian and U.S. troops.

Therefore, in the event of failure, the communique must then stress the success of the operation as an essential test in the employment of substantial forces and equipment.

We then lay extremely heavy stress on stories of personal heroism — through interviews, broadcasts, etc. — in order to focus public attention on bravery rather than objectives not attained.”

The press releases, which were issued following the raid, followed Mountbatten’s P.R. prescription almost verbatim. “Vital experience has been gained in the employment of substantial numbers of troops in an assault, and in the transport of heavy equipment,” one communique read.

The image shows the front page of 'The Hamilton Spectator' newspaper, dated Friday, August 22, 1942. The masthead at the top reads 'The Hamilton Spectator' in a large, bold, serif font. Below the masthead, there is a section titled 'LET YOUR DOLLARS FIGHT' with a small illustration of a soldier. To the right of the masthead, there is a section titled 'DAY'S TEMPERATURES' with a small illustration of a thermometer. The main headline is 'HEAVY TOLL OF R.H.L.I. AT DIEPPE' in large, bold, black letters. Below the headline, there is a sub-headline 'Nine Officers, Eight Men Already Listed as Dead'. Above the headline, there are nine black and white portraits of military officers, each with a caption below it. The captions are: 'MAJOR MORRIS WALDRON Killed in Action', 'CAPT. C. E. MATCHETT Killed in Action', 'CAPT. THOMAS J. BROWN Killed in Action', 'LIEUT. IAN H. V. WRIGHT Killed in Action', 'LIEUT. L. G. COONELL Killed in Action', 'LIEUT. R. A. BAILEY Killed in Action', 'MAY. WILLIAM J. BOWETT Killed in Action', 'LIEUT. R. A. BAILEY Killed in Action', and 'LIEUT. R. A. BAILEY Killed in Action'. Below the portraits, there is a section titled 'Ancaster Family Informed Sons Casualties at Dieppe' with a small illustration of a soldier. To the right of this section, there is a section titled 'Others of Gallant Fighting Unit Missing After Action or Wounded; Casualty List Is Not Complete' with a small illustration of a soldier. The page is filled with text and illustrations, and the overall tone is somber and informative.

Classified papers in the British archives released 30 years after the battle show that Mountbatten may have even duped Churchill and his War cabinet into believing Dieppe was a success. One report from Mountbatten read: “The raid had gone off very satisfactorily. The planning had been excellent, air support faultless, and naval losses extremely light. Of the 6,000 men involved, two thirds returned to Britain and all I have seen are in great form.”

The actual fate of the invasion force wasn't so cheery. Historical records show that 3,623 of the 6,086 men who made it ashore were killed, wounded or captured a loss rate of almost 60 percent. Mountbatten even convinced Churchill to replace his original critical account of the raid in his war history, *The Hinge of Fate*, with a more positive one written by Mountbatten himself, according to Brian Loring Villa, a professor of history at the University of Ottawa who wrote *Unauthorized Action: Mountbatten and the Dieppe Raid*.

In 1974, in a speech to British war veterans, Mountbatten even accused the Canadians of changing his original plan to a frontal attack, Villa reported. T

throughout his life, Lord Mountbatten continued to work assiduously to enhance his place in history, especially regarding his leadership of the Dieppe raid. Despite some dissenting voices, he was largely successful, or at least he spared himself from any searing condemnation.

Few Regrets

For his part, war correspondent Ross Munro went home to Canada after the war to become the Editor of the *Vancouver Sun*. He had few regrets about how his intrepid war reporting was so

distorted by Mountbatten and Churchill's censors: “You get very deft and skilled at telling the story honestly and validly despite the censorship. I never really felt, except maybe on the Dieppe raid, that I was really cheating the public at home.”

Photo: Courtesy of Alamy

Three years after the war ended, without the interference of censorship, Munro wrote a book *Gauntlet to Overlord*, in which he described the Dieppe



landing from his perch aboard the ship that had also carried Private Joe Ryan to the beaches of Dieppe: “They plunged into about two feet of water and machine-gun bullets laced into them. Bodies piled up on the ramp. Some staggered to the beach and fell. Looking out the open bow over the bodies on the ramp, I saw the slope leading up to a stone wall littered with Royal casualties. They had been cut down before they had a chance to fire a shot.

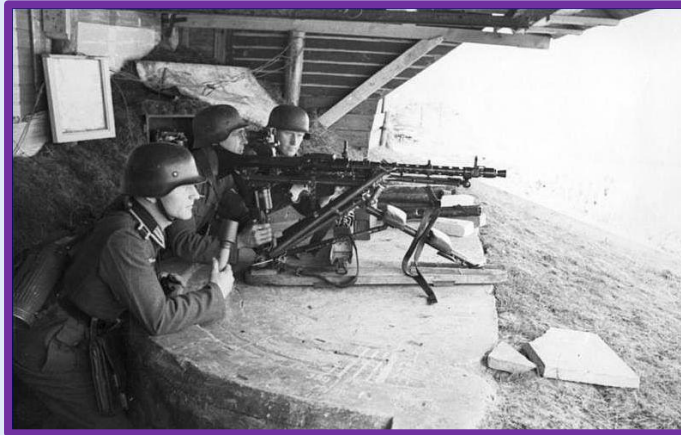
“It was brutal and terrible and shocked you almost to insensibility to see the piles of dead and feel the hopelessness of the attack at this point. The beach was khaki-coloured with the bodies of the boys from Central Ontario.”

Munro concluded that the raid was a complete tactical failure, that everything that could have gone wrong did go wrong, that “looking back, it seems to me to have been an incredibly risky task with only a gambler's chance of success.” But Munro still bought Lord Mountbatten's positive spin, writing that “losses must be seen in the light of valuable experience gained. The battle of D-Day was won on the beaches of Dieppe.”

In an article on the 40th anniversary of the Dieppe raid, Frank Gillard of the BBC, one of the correspondents at Dieppe, expressed regret for his coverage:

"I am almost ashamed to read my report, but it was that or nothing. It was a day of wrangling, first with one censor and then with another, until our mutilated and emasculated texts, rendered almost bland under relentless pressure, was released 24 hours after our return.

"It was all so stupidly frustrating. There was sheer folly at Dieppe, but that was at the planning level. Those who had to execute these misguided orders against impossible odds showed gallantry and heroism of the highest order.



"Given half a chance, we could have presented Dieppe in terms that would have evoked pride along with the sorrow. But PR handling of Dieppe was as great a disaster as the operation itself."

German Accounts

Ironically, the Dieppe story was more accurately written from the German side. A reporter for the *Deutsche Alleghenies Zeitung*, who was visiting a nearby Luftwaffe air base, wrote of the Allied assault: "As executed, the

venture mocked all rules of military logic and strategy."

Even Hitler's Reich Minister of Propaganda, Dr. Josef Goebbels, in a radio interview monitored by the BBC, sounded rational compared to British claims of victory at Dieppe, assertions that Goebbels correctly mocked as propaganda: "We have no doubt it is possible with this kind of news reporting to deceive and lead astray one's own nation for a time, but we do doubt that one can alter any of the facts by such methods."

Later, American author Quentin Reynolds, who covered the Dieppe raid for *Colliers Magazine*, explained some of the thinking inside the Allied press corps: "The correspondents of the Second World War were a curious, crazy, yet responsible crew. For the sake of the war effort, and because the war against Hitler was considered a just one, they did what was required of them."

Still, today's murky judgment about Dieppe is summed up at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, Ontario, where a citation on the wall says: "Some insist that the lessons learned at Dieppe contributed to the success of later allied landings including Normandy. Others insist that the raid was poorly planned and an avoidable blunder."

But the larger problem about this imprecise narrative is that history is to the human race what reason is to the individual. Both extend our ability to think past the narrow present, and if they are distorted for whatever reason future misjudgements are invited. Truth can often be painful, especially for the foot soldiers and their loved ones who wish to cling to the positive spin of terrible events. My friends Roy Jacques and Joe Ryan went to their graves last year comforted by Mountbatten's false claim that those who fought and died at Dieppe paved the way for victory at Normandy two years later.

They can be forgiven, as can be the relatives and friends of those who died at Dieppe who desperately searched for meaning in the sacrifice and loss. It can take great personal courage to make hard and truthful judgments in wartime. When I visited the Canadian cemetery, Alain Menue of the Dieppe memorial association, moved among the grave stones marked with a maple leaf and the date August 19, 1942, laying wreaths and flowers: "We in Dieppe remember their sacrifice. Even though there are few lines now in the history books about the battle. It is important to remember the defeats as well as the victories."

Cautionary Tale

In that sense, Dieppe is a cautionary tale against false patriotism. Glorified history can make war more palatable to the public, which can encourage its use again, often too readily and without regard to the real human consequences.

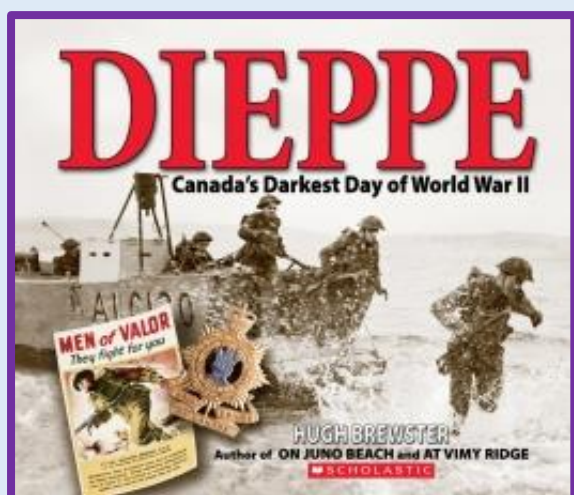
One lesson that today's readers can extract from the actual history of Dieppe is to read news articles about war with a measure of scepticism and to understand that the powerful will do what they can to spare themselves from accountability for their miscalculations and hubris.

Perhaps British poet Rudyard Kipling put it best in writing about another pointless military mission in World War I, where his own son perished: "If any question why we died, tell them because our fathers lied." In eulogies to fallen soldiers, there is a tendency to mark unnecessary deaths as justification for still more unnecessary deaths.

The Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard issued a report noting that "the war without end is a war with hardly any news coverage" and adding: "TV coverage averages 21 seconds per newscast. One critic quoted says the lack of sustained American TV reporting of Afghanistan is the most irresponsible behaviour in all the annals of war journalism."

The lesson from Dieppe may be that if the "first rough draft of history" as reported in the news media is distorted, it can live on indefinitely unless there is aggressive scholarship to counter it. The question from America's open-ended wars after the 9/11 attacks may be: what happens when journalists are not even there to write the first draft?

Don North, who was born in Canada, has been a war reporter since covering Vietnam beginning in 1965. North has known and interviewed dozens of veterans of the Dieppe raid and researched it in the British and Canadian war archives. This article is based on a chapter from the manuscript of his book *Inappropriate Conduct* which deals with war reporting in World War 2.



'In Case the Raid Is Unsuccessful ...'

An extract from: *Selling Dieppe to Canadians* by Timothy Balzer, University of Victoria, and Canadian military historian.

IN HIS STUDY OF German and British propaganda, Professor Michael Balfour discusses three types of falsehood in propaganda applicable to the Dieppe raid: 'the deliberate lie,' 'suppressed truth,' and the 'slanting of news.' Outright lies were the least common element...

.... Given the deception involved, it is unsurprising that the public relations campaign had very mixed results among Canadians. No poll clearly demonstrates contemporary public opinion about Dieppe. A Canadian Institute of Public Opinion (CIPO) poll about Canadians' trust of war news, published on 19 September 1942, showed that 56 per cent of Canadians trusted war news, while 36 per cent did not, but in Quebec, the majority were distrustful..... Typically, CIPO polls, while claiming to be current, were conducted three to eight weeks prior to publication. Both the newspapers and Public Opinion Quarterly give only the date of publication. Since the polling likely occurred before Dieppe, the most that can be concluded from this poll is that the majority of English Canadians trusted war news.

The expectation in a liberal democracy is that government officials and agencies should not lie to the public, for that would undermine confidence in the system itself. In wartime, this line blurs, as there are often valid security reasons to withhold or even falsify information. However, even then it usually benefits the government to release as much accurate information as possible. If official information is unreliable, people distrust it, and a critical public policy tool becomes weakened. Balanced against the long-term benefits of wartime openness in publicity is the temptation for short-term gain by covering up or misrepresenting unpleasant items. Nonetheless, there is always the risk that the truth will emerge, doing damage to reputation and public trust.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that while some Canadians accepted the official story of Dieppe, others did not. The military felt pressured to put out an official explanation of Dieppe, because of the 'feeling of slight uneasiness in the minds of the Canadian people about Dieppe.'⁷⁷ This was an understatement; the military would not feel pressured to respond to 'slight uneasiness.' Some contemporaries noted public questioning of the official version of Dieppe.

Gillis Purcell of the Canadian Press advised McNaughton not to be concerned with newspaper criticisms of Dieppe, even though they were 'a reflection of comment on the street.' A Winnipeg Free Press editorial also condemned talk on the street, criticizing those who claimed that the British deliberately used the Canadians for this 'stunt' to avoid casualties themselves. However, this distrust of the official version of Dieppe was not limited to 'the street.'

Mackenzie King, after reading aloud the white paper, wondered 'if the information gained could begin to equal the heavy losses.' There was too great a disparity between the events at Dieppe and the overly optimistic story sold to the Canadian public.



The bitter parliamentary debates of 1943 on Dieppe and the cloud of suspicion that developed about the raid continues to this day, suggesting that this was the case with the Dieppe publicity.

The entry of Canada's Army into continuous action beginning in July 1943 in Sicily certainly focused public attention on other matters. However, questions about Dieppe lingered: as Stacey wrote in 1948, Dieppe remains 'the most hotly discussed operation of the war.' Controversy became the dominant tone in Dieppe historiography. Yet there was little long-term damage to English Canadians' trust in war news in general, as 62 per cent of Canadians expressed confidence in it in 1944, although a majority in Quebec still mistrusted it.

How unusual was the publicity for the Dieppe raid? Allied military authorities deliberately concealed failure from the public on other occasions. Navies in particular were unwilling to publish news of sinkings that might otherwise remain unknown to the enemy. For example, the

Americans did not fully report losses at Pearl Harbour until one year after the attack, and the Royal Navy did not admit the sinking of the light cruiser Curacao in a 1942 collision for almost three years.⁸³

The Royal Canadian Navy similarly delayed reporting shipping losses in the St Lawrence River. The timing and contents of the news releases were 'manipulated according to defence needs.' While naval defeats might be kept secret, it was impossible to conceal large-scale military disasters such as Hong Kong, Singapore, and Tobruk, with the loss of key defensive positions and many prisoners. The Dieppe raid's lack of an obvious overall goal and purpose and its hit-and-run nature, never intended to hold a position, meant that success or failure was more difficult to measure. The temptation to conceal failure was therefore greater.

Was this level of deception typical of Second World War Canadian Army publicity? Carl Vincent's discussion of the Hong Kong news shows that the government handled most of the publicity, although it depended on scanty British reports based on Japanese sources and included deceptive British claims about a planned relief of the garrison by the HMS Prince of Wales. While Hong Kong sheds little light on Canadian military publicity, it is clear from the confusion in the aftermath of Dieppe that policy coordination with its allies was underdeveloped.

Eventually, beginning in the Italian campaign, the Canadian Army handled its own field press censorship rather than relying on the British. Censored stories were wired directly to Canada, often beating official military press releases that had to work their way up the chain of command through CMHQ in London, occasionally with embarrassing results for Ottawa. The Canadian Army continued to manage its own publicity and war correspondents in Northwest Europe.

However, opinions on the severity of Canadian field press censorship in that campaign vary. According to Gillis Purcell, some correspondents believed that field censorship frequently was used to avoid embarrassment to generals and the government. Conversely, Richard S. Malone, commander of the army's European public relations unit, claims that Canadian military censorship was imposed on only two occasions for considerations other than security during the Northwest Europe Campaign, although he claims it was much more common earlier in the war.

However, Claude Beauregard convincingly argues that Canadian military censors, following the lead of their Allies, were concerned not only with protecting military secrets but controlling the entire public perception of the war, sometimes resulting in 'political censorship.' Correspondents because of strict military controls and restrictions produced only the desired official version of events. These evaluations of military information policy suggest that Dieppe was not the only occasion on which the Army's publicity was misleading.

Canadian authorities faced a great obstacle in being more candid about Dieppe; they were part of an alliance. As a junior partner in a larger coalition, Canada has always experienced tension between the ability to act independently and the need to show solidarity with more powerful allies. Had Canada parted from the British pattern of falsehood that characterized the Dieppe publicity, it could have embarrassed the British and strained the alliance. Short-term gain and alliance solidarity trumped an accurate account of Dieppe for the Canadian public.



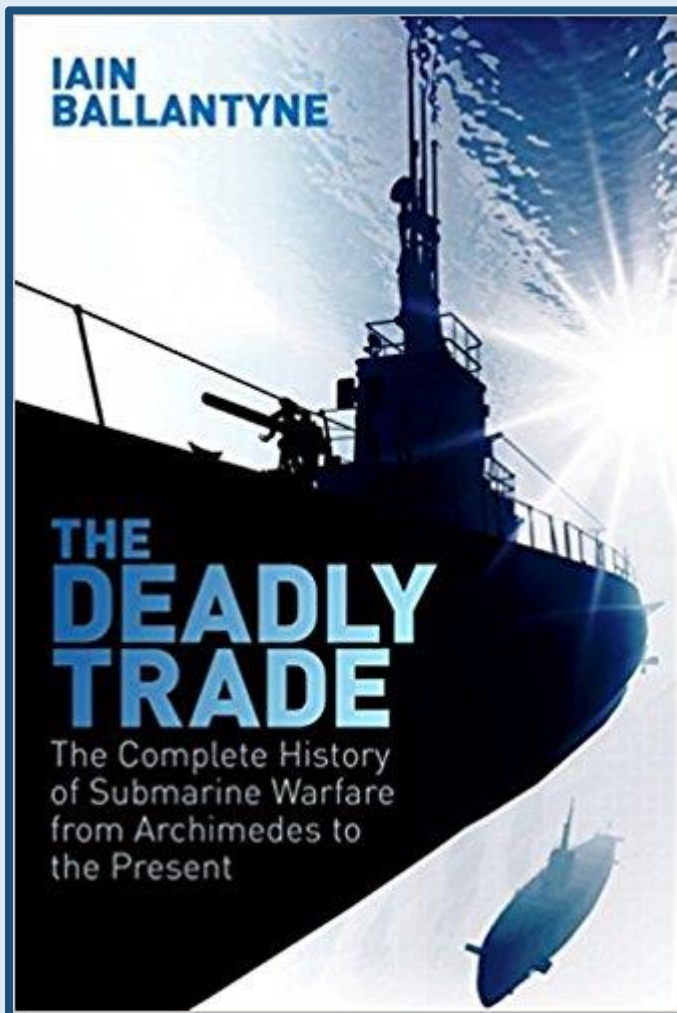
Lord Mountbatten certainly achieved his goal of protecting his and his organization's sterling public reputations. Despite much public criticism of the raid in the Canadian newspapers, little muck was aimed at him. In time, it no longer became necessary for Mountbatten to maintain the fiction about the tactical successes of the raid, and..... like the white paper he had once condemned, he portrayed the raid as a costly tactical failure that taught lessons that contributed to later success in Normandy. This metamorphosis is understandable since Mountbatten's goal of protecting Combined Operations HQ's and his own reputations seemed more important to the original publicity than the actual events of the battle themselves.

During the Dieppe raid, smoke obscured the view of the battle for Gen. Roberts, who commanded the landing forces from HMS Calpe.

That restriction, coupled with a communications breakdown, kept the commander from having an accurate idea of what was happening on the beaches. The Canadian public also faced a smokescreen when it was told about Dieppe.

Stories of heroism, claims of success, and the lack of a timely overview of the raid obscured the reality of disaster. Like Roberts, Canadians squinted through the smoke to get brief glimpses of what had happened to their boys on the beach. For weeks, they had to guess at what had transpired, and even when the white paper was released, questions remained unanswered. Those who had lost family, who had to suffer for months waiting to hear the fate of the missing, certainly deserved a more open and honest explanation of what had happened and why.

Current and Historic Book Reviews by Gerry Bartlett and Malcolm Davidge



“Considered ineffectual, originally derided and loathed in equal measure – their crews viewed as no better than pirates – submarines have evolved into the most powerful and terrifying vessels at sea, with some carrying enough nuclear weaponry to destroy humankind.” Author, Iain Ballantyne.

The Deadly Trade

A complete history of submarine warfare from Archimedes until now.
Reviewed: By Major Gerry Bartlett

AT THE HEART of this fascinating and compelling 700-page book, lurks danger and power as 54-year-old Iain Ballantyne, acclaimed British naval writer, reveals some of warfare’s murkiest secrets.

Fascinating, colourful characters include an American who devised “plunging” boats to attack the British – then switched sides to help the Royal Navy defeat Napoleon;

a former monk who created submersible boats to assist the cause of Irish liberation; and a spy who,

during the American Civil War, hid Confederate submarine secrets in her bonnet.

As an Army man with a secret fear and loathing of the sea and ships generally, I was surprised to feel the book taking me over, somehow sparking the imagination and demanding total attention as, like other readers, I was plunged into epic convoy battles, “when hopes of victory were placed upon the shoulders of daring young submarine captains – many of whom perished alongside the men they commanded.

“Learning of efforts by the British to seize Enigma material from U-boats, how Germany's so-called Grey Wolves were not always brave or invincible, and the role of American submarines in bringing Japan to its knees.”

Iain Ballantyne's formidable and addictive book, also covers the Royal Navy's X-craft attacks on Tirpitz, Nazi plans to bombard New York with primitive cruise missiles, “and episodes when the Cold War era turned hot - with, not least, the sinking of the Belgrano.” In a touching postscript, the author says: “We have voyaged across the vast span of submarine warfare history to a point where vessels that men once dreamed of in order to explore the wonders of the deep, now carry cargoes of nuclear annihilation.

“The new rivalry between Russia and the West – including the construction of ballistic missile boats – does seem like a re-wind to the bad old days. The under-sea warriors of today and tomorrow will, like their fore-bears reckon they can beat the odds and so will nations that deploy them on war patrols.

“To borrow and adapt the Spanish philosopher-poet George Santayana's famous phrase, it is likely only the dead have seen the last of submarine warfare. Humanity will have to put its faith in ‘the better angels.’ The submarine, for good or ill, seems destined to play a major part in world events, and indeed its activities could yet decide the fate of all humanity.”

Strong, authoritative and perhaps upsetting stuff from author, Iain Ballantyne, whose new book literally drips with overwhelming tales and interest on practically every one of its 700 pages. It is practically impossible to single-out any particular chapter of this un-put-downable book as particularly fascinating, since they all are – in equal measure.

But one which captured my interest particularly, was one entitled ‘Best of Enemies’ in which the author tells readers that during the Second World War, the allies “swept not just enemy submarines from the seas, but also eliminated entire Navies.



From the inventories of the defeated fleets “they cherry-picked a few vessels as war booty – submarines primarily though taking other ships too, with the Russian even commissioning an ex-Italian battleship into service.”

This is a fascinating chapter but one I should now leave and let buyers of this inspiring book enjoy at their leisure. Well done Iain, I am not surprised that countless readers thoroughly enjoy your books.

In 2017 Iain was awarded a Fellowship by the UK's Maritime Foundation. One of its top annual awards, it recognised his immense contribution to the maritime causes since 1990. The Deadly Trade, by Iain Ballantyne, published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson, hard-back £25/ eBook £12.99. ISBN 978-1-4091-5851-6.

Fighting Captain: The Story of Captain Frederic Walker CB DSO * RN**

Author: Mr. Alan Burn. Published by: Leo Cooper 1998 (later reprints have been issued) Reviewed by: Malcolm Davidge

FREDERIC (JOHNNIE) WALKER was the most prominent and arguably most effective anti-submarine specialist of the Allied navies in World War 2. This book provides an overview of Walker's service career but concentrates on his World War 2 experiences until his untimely death in 1944.

The author, Alan Burn served with Captain Frederic Walker on HMS Starling during the Second World War and provides a close, and indeed personal, view of his commanding officer.

As well as praising many of Walker's personal and professional attributes, he also makes some criticisms and in this regard the book can be said to give a broader view than Terence's Robertson's 'Walker RN', published in 1956.

Walker's fine leadership and technical skills are described in the foreword by Admiral of the Fleet Sir Terence Lewin, who served in the Second Escort Group as a junior officer.

Walker's pre-war career is covered in some detail, including his 'pass-over'. I particularly liked the remark attributed to Walker that: 'I prefer to take orders from the Captain, not his wife' which, if reported accurately, neatly encapsulates the personal and professional relationship between Walker, his Captain (and his Spouse!).

Convoy actions to Gibraltar, Atlantic and Russia, are analysed in detail and Burn makes the point that at one stage Walker had a Rear-Admiral's operational command of three escort groups, two escort carriers, close convoy escorts and associated air assets.

But, he also points out, Walker had limited support staff which obviously increased the strain on him. What does attract favourable comment is Walker's ability to delegate and trust. For example, he selected a young reserve officer to be the First Lieutenant of HMS Starling, below, a role which carried higher than normal responsibility as she was the 'lead ship' for the group. Also recorded is Walker's insistence that full credit be given to the 'thousand tars' from the various ships companies of the Second Escort Group.

Walker's deep Christian beliefs, love of family and work ethic is stressed including his sorrow over the loss of a son in action in the submarine service. Burn also discusses Walker's ruthlessness in dealing with the enemy; safely escorting convoys without loss was not the way he perceived success. Only killing the enemy was important.

Burn does express in almost embarrassed tones, that HMS Starling missed operational work-ups at Tobermory (under the legendary 'Monkey' Stephenson) for tenuous reasons, whilst the remainder of the Group were put through their paces. Burn also states that HMS Wild Goose in particular achieved a higher operational standard than HMS Starling, for a short period, which caused some embarrassment.

Stylistically, the text suddenly jumps from the Third Person to the First Person and back to the Third Person. For example, describing the experience of the author's fiancé and her family's experiences during the Liverpool Blitz which is of limited relevance. Whether this was a deliberate editorial 'ploy' or the result of sub-editing is not obvious.



In the edition reviewed, the maps are insufficiently detailed although the photographic supplement is good. It also has to be said that print quality of the edition is not to Leo Cooper's usual high standards.

In summary, Burn's book provides good material on both the personal and professional life of Walker. The military historian will draw much from the various actions and the development of tactics, in particular. Notwithstanding my observations regarding style etc, the work is a good read.

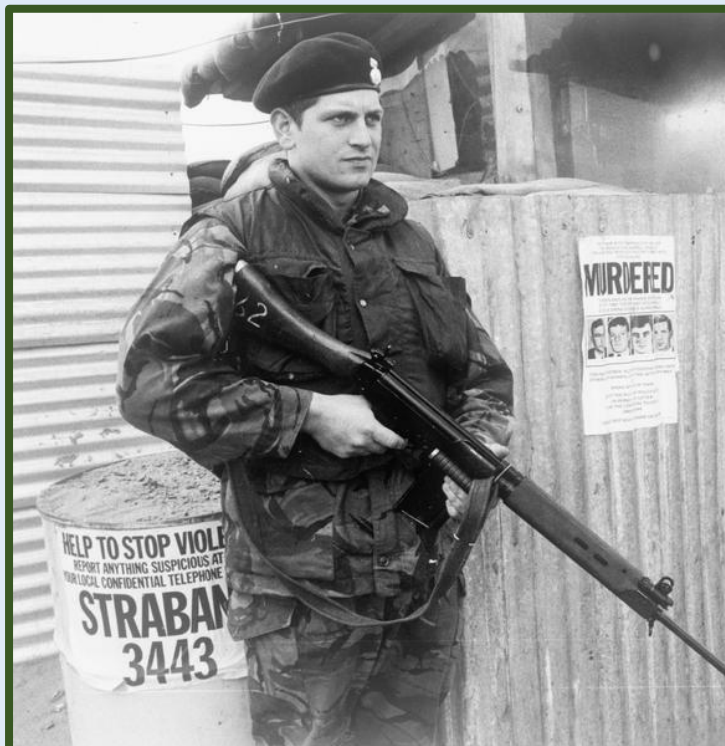
Counter-Insurgency Against Kith and Kin: British Army Combat and Cohesion in Northern Ireland

By DR EDWARD BURKE. Edward is Assistant Professor in International Relations at the University of Nottingham.

‘An Army of Tribes: British Army Cohesion, Deviancy and Murder in Northern Ireland’ is published in paperback by Liverpool University Press

TODAY'S OFFICERS in the British Army who served in Northern Ireland during Operation Banner (1969-2007) did so at the end of the campaign, when a capable, well-resourced Royal Ulster Constabulary / Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Security Service (MI5) took the lead in steadily eroding the capability of the Provisional IRA (IRA) and dissident Republican terrorist groups.

Sustained fire-fights or contacts with IRA Active Service Units were almost unheard of. Many soldiers' tours were dull and uneventful. This was a world away from the much more violent early period of the conflict when the British Army suffered more operational fatalities in one year – 134 in 1972 – than in any year during the recent campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq.



A sentry at a British Army border checkpoint watches the activities of passengers while vehicles are stopped and searched by 1st Royal Welch Fusiliers at the Camel's Hump, Strabane in October 1973, via the Imperial War Museum.

During my research for a book on small unit cohesion in Northern Ireland – comparing operational watchkeepers' log-books, other unit reports and interviewing soldiers who served in Northern Ireland during the exceptionally violent years of 1971-1973 – I observed that the Army would often use hundreds, and occasionally thousands, of rounds of ammunition, in exchanges of fire with IRA units along the border.

In Belfast and Londonderry engagements with the IRA tended to be 'short and sharp' affairs.

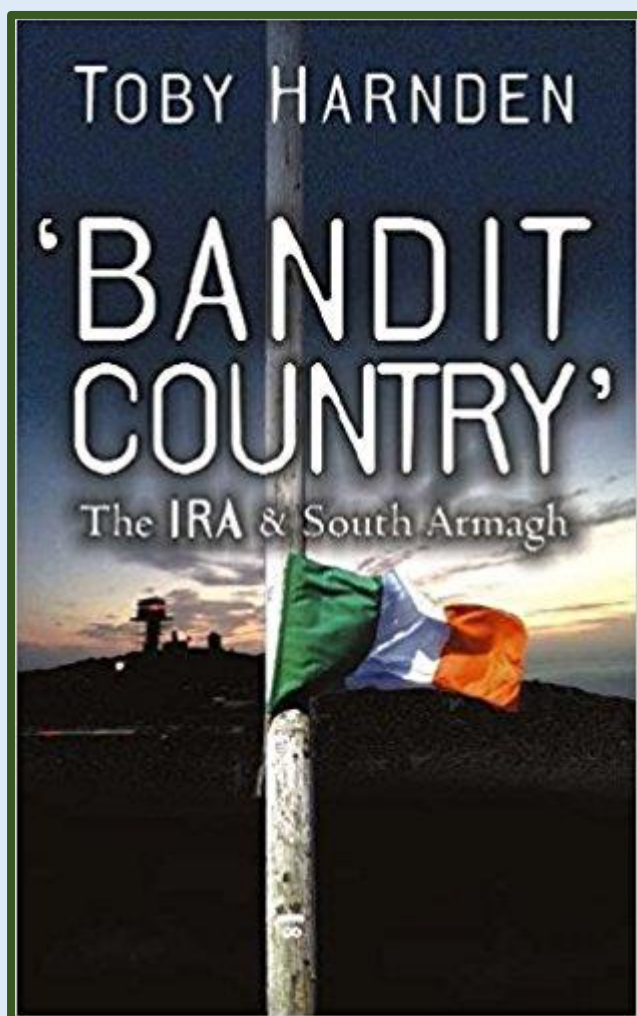
Substantial British reinforcements usually arrived within seconds in urban areas and the IRA felt outmatched and at risk of encirclement in such circumstances. However, in rural Tyrone or Armagh the IRA was more confident of holding their own against isolated units of British soldiers.

Most attacks still took the form of 'shoot and scoot' but in 1971 and 1972 a number of prolonged fire fights also took place. In such an operational context it is possible to come to some revealing conclusions on the experiences of soldiers in combat 'at home' in the UK.

Contact: Automatism and Leadership under Fire

A relatively typical border engagement for a newly arrived unit in South Armagh in 1972 was as follows: Patrolling near the village of Coleville in South Armagh on 8 August 1972, soldiers serving in 2 Section, 6 Platoon, 1st Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, were approached by a local woman. She told Sergeant Jimmy Kilcullen that there was a burning butter lorry blocking the road.

The IRA knew that the Argylls were new to the area; they also rightly suspected that the preceding unit, drawn from the Duke of Wellington's Regiment, had not briefed their successors on patterns of attacks (The poor exchange of intelligence between rotating units was typical of this period, particularly for those serving in 3rd Infantry Brigade along the border. The IRA dusted off plans every four months, launching the same type of operation – frequently in the same location – they had used against the previous unit).



The Argylls had stumbled upon a 'classic' South Armagh ambush, except the IRA, expecting the burning lorry to be reported to B Company HQ in Crossmaglen, had not anticipated a patrol coming from the other direction.

The IRA volunteers waiting in a concealed fire point now hurriedly improvised upon seeing Kilcullen's section arrive at the burning car. Private Jimmy Chestnut later recalled that a local man asked them to look at something in the ditch near the burning car,

We were all crowded around this oil drum when someone shouted that it was a bomb. We scattered, maybe getting sixty feet from it, when there was an almighty explosion.

Everything stood still; we were on the deck watching this cloud of dirt and rubble slowly rising. It was quite a sight. A falling rock snapped the pistol grip of one rifle and one man was knocked unconscious – we thought he was dead. We got up and stood around shocked and confused. Then the ground started kicking up around us and the Sergeant shouted that we were under fire.

Despite the days of pre-deployment simulated explosions and ambushes on ranges in south-east England, some of the

soldiers of 6 Platoon became disorientated. One soldier recalled watching a telegraph pole shoot into the air like a javelin by the force of the explosion; he couldn't believe his eyes.

Two key individuals helped the Section snap them out of their potentially fatal torpor. Sergeant Jimmy Kilcullen shouted at the soldiers, literally telling them that they were under fire, so that they remembered their training drills, took cover and returned fire. Kilcullen was also the first to return fire.

Meanwhile, Corporal Alec Henderson, another Aden and Borneo veteran, shouted at Chestnut to follow him and proceeded to 'advance towards fire', using the infantry's fire and manoeuvre drill, moving along a wall, returning fire and covering each other, until they reached a farm building where they believed the firing was coming from. 6 Platoon reported that they returned 20 rounds to the 150 rounds fired at them by the IRA unit and the shooting stopped.

The Argylls made a mistake in approaching the ambush site with such a lack of caution and by crowding around the suspected device. Some soldiers were also struck by a sense of stunned disbelief when they came under fire from a 'real enemy' for the first time. However, they were quickly snapped out of their stunned disbelief by their NCOs. By moving towards the firing-position, they forced the IRA unit to retreat and got their unit out of the 'kill zone'.

One soldier recalled Sergeant Jimmy Kilcullen constantly hammering home the fundamental message of why his sections needed to 'fire and manoeuvre': 'If we come under fire, you locate the fire. Advance towards the fire and clear it. If you sit down, you die.' Others reported that the intense familiarity with this infantry drill was critically important – responses learned in training kicked in: 'All you think about is the next ten metres.' An Argyll officer later noted that,

People can function when they are kicked into it. Heat of the moment stuff is never a problem for soldiers ... The big problem is that they will do too much, they will loose off all their ammo at the general area. It's a common reaction. The instinct for the first-time soldier in an ambush is that, 'I'm frightened, I'm going to frighten him more.' Well-trained soldiers, who've done it before – they're the ones who 'get down, crawl, observe, sights, fire.' It can happen in a flash. Good NCOs get others to do that. Not blaze away."

The importance of NCO leadership is repeatedly apparent in accounts of other fire fights experienced along the border during 1971 and 1972. However, occasionally the tactical desire to 'locate the fire' could have negative political repercussions, such as when soldiers pursued an IRA sniper half a mile across the Irish border on 14 September 1972.

The Problem with 'Cold Kills'

Too much familiarity or affinity could be a threat to military performance; too little could lead to atrocity. It was a difficult balance. The sociologist Erella Grassiani, in her work on Israeli military operations in the Occupied Territories, had noted that it is particularly difficult for soldiers to take life when they are operating among a civilian population in a low intensity operation: 'Seeing these people as "individuals" can make it harder for the soldier to carry out work ...'



A separation of identity became a professional necessity. According to one officer involved in sniper training in Northern Ireland: I found the problem was to get guys to shake off the view – ‘Am I really right to be doing this between WH Smith and a Marks and Spencer’s’.

And, meanwhile, seeing granny pushing grandchild down the road in a pram. This makes a big difference. All the other places, wherever we had been had been peasant countries where you are in a different country, where natives are natives. Here they are not natives, they are your kith and kin. The topography is exactly as you recognise it at home. Yet you have a rifle in your hands. You are faced with a situation and your first instinct is, ‘This can’t be happening.’ And that takes training and time; it made Ireland such a unique operation.

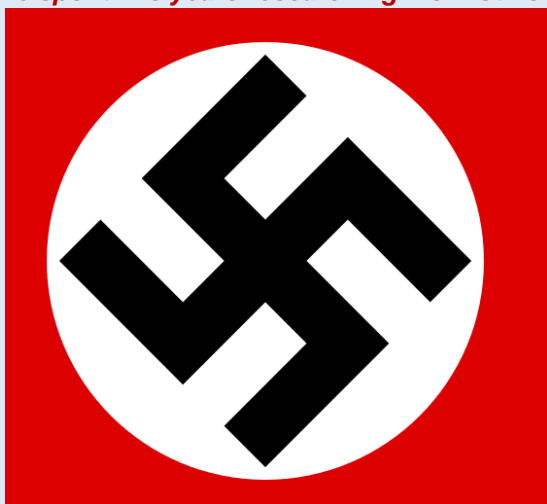
In such circumstances, the separation of the Irish from ‘us’ becomes more than about casual dislike; moral distancing is also a professional necessity. Even so, the same officer reported his consistent disappointment that, after days of planning and execution, snipers in concealed positions would not be able to shoot IRA volunteers, even though it was legitimate to do so under the Army’s rules of engagement.

Embarrassed, soldiers would often claim a hit, perhaps even convincing themselves that their shooting had been more accurate, and it would be assumed that the IRA had ‘spirited’ their wounded across the border. British Army small unit combat leadership and training worked. Under fire soldiers generally responded well, using drills to repress fire, move out of the ‘kill zone’ and work as teams to advance towards firing points.

Nevertheless, when it came to initiating contact, shooting a suspected IRA volunteer, some soldiers hesitated. The cultural similarities between Britain and Northern Ireland meant that a deliberate process of emotional distancing became a practical, informal, but also potentially dangerous, response to the need to take life.

A fresh light on the Nazis' wartime drug addiction

An extract from Deutsche Welle, the German international broadcaster by Norman Ohler. Born in 1970, Norman is an award-winning German journalist and writer of novels and film scripts. He spent five years researching his first nonfiction book. He delved into archives in Germany



and the US, and he spoke to eyewitnesses, military historians and doctors. "Der Totale Rausch" hit the stores in Germany in September 2015 and was released in English under the title "Blitzed - Drugs in Nazi Germany" in October 2016.

DURING WORLD WAR 2 Nazi leaders not only relied on drugs for their soldiers, but Adolf Hitler himself may have been hooked on opiates. Historian Norman Ohler's book on the issue has been published in English.

The German title "Der Totale Rausch" (which literally translates as "Total Rush") by Norman

Ohler is a play on words using the Nazis' references to "total war," most famously made in 1943 by Josef Goebbels in a Berlin speech. As part of a series of questions, answered by the crowd with a chorus of "ja," Goebbels said Britain believed that the Germans were ready to surrender, before asking "wollt ihr den totalen Krieg?" or "do you want total war?"

Ohler has spent recent years researching the Nazi leadership's own appetite for a total rush, for themselves and their soldiers. He told DW that "drug abuse in Nazi Germany was quite shocking."

DW: Total Rush - or Blitzed, which is the book's English title - what gave you the idea for the book?

Norman Ohler: A Berlin underground DJ, a good friend of mine, once told me that the Nazis took loads of drugs. I'd never heard about that before. But it struck a chord; I felt it rang true, got curious and started going to the German federal archives and US national archives in Washington, D.C., and Maryland.

The first thing I wanted to see were the personal notes of Hitler's personal physician Dr Theodor Morell - and to my delight these notes were quite elaborate, describing how he treated Hitler over the years, including things like "injection as always" and "Eukodal," which is a strong opiate.

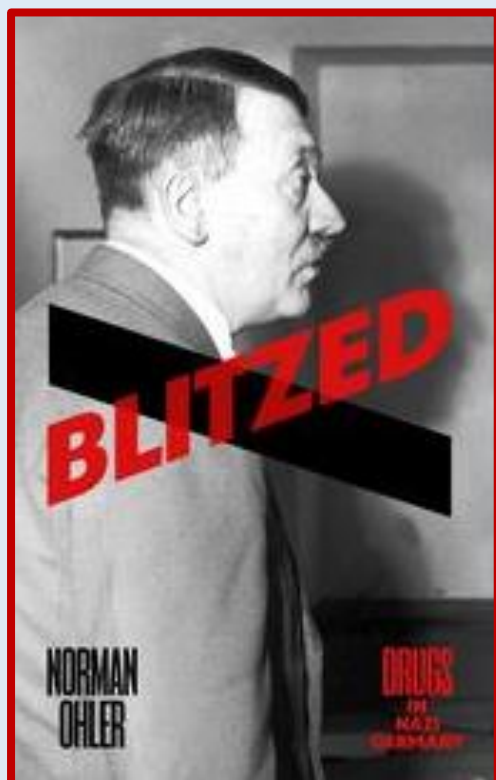
Was that the same drug the soldiers were given?

No, the soldiers used Pervitin, a German product patented in 1937 that contains methamphetamine, which is known today as crystal meth. It was freely available as a medicine until 1939. In Berlin, it became a drug of choice, like people drink coffee to boost their energy. People took loads of Pervitin, across the board. The company wanted Pervitin to rival Coca Cola. So, people took it, it worked and they were euphoric - a mood that matched the general mood before the war.

Then the army discovered Pervitin?

The army realized there is a drug out there that might be of interest to soldiers because Pervitin keeps you awake for a long time... for the first couple of days, you don't need to sleep. It was used for the first time when Germany invaded Sudetenland and then Poland, and then when Germany attacked France in 1940, a Blitzkrieg strategy. Before that attack, the German army ordered 35 million tablets of Pervitin for the soldiers advancing on France.

Pervitin was used heavily in the German army. Hitler didn't use Pervitin; he was into steroids - animal hormones got injected into his bloodstream. And later he used Eukodal, a pharmaceutical cousin of heroin. Hitler loved Eukodal. Especially in the fall of 1944, when the military situation was quite bad, he used this strong drug that made him euphoric even when reality wasn't looking euphoric at all. The generals kept telling him: "We need to change our tactics. We need to end this. We are going to lose the war." And he didn't want to hear it. He had Dr. Morell give him the drugs that made him feel invulnerable and on top of the situation.



Was this common knowledge in Germany?

No one knew what Morell gave Hitler. Morell didn't tell anyone and Hitler for sure didn't. But a lot of people suspected there was something weird going on. There were some attempts to make Morell uncover what he gave Hitler, but he refused. It was a secret between those two men.

But the soldiers openly took Pervitin?

That soldiers were taking Pervitin was not a secret at all. In the beginning, the army didn't realize Pervitin was a drug; they thought it was just like drinking coffee.

But in 1941, it was outlawed and declared an illegal drug. In the army, distribution was then kept under wraps, but the records of the war against Russia aren't as clear as those from the war against France, where we can see how many tablets were distributed. I spoke to a medical officer, who was in Stalingrad, and he said he still issued Pervitin in Stalingrad, but it didn't basically make a difference.

Did other armies take such stimulant drugs as well?

They found out about the German drugs eventually, and the British used amphetamines. Basically, the Germans used crystal meth and the Brits used speed. Many of the American soldiers who joined the war effort went through Britain to get to the war theatre and received amphetamines in Britain.

The Americans took the drug to keep up with these crazed German soldiers. It took root in the American military: if you look at the Korean War in 1950, it was an amphetamine war where all the pilots were doped up. The Germans started with drugs in the military, but other countries followed suit.

LSD, for instance, was invented by a Swiss chemist, and American intelligence tried to use it, also based on German experiments in the Dachau concentration camp, where a doctor by the name of Plötner used mescaline to develop new interrogation techniques. When Americans liberated the concentration camp, they took these studies and used them in Project Artichoke and applied them in the 1950s to discover who was a Soviet agent and who wasn't.

What came as the biggest surprise to you during your many years of research for this book?

I found Hitler's excessive drug abuse to be the most astonishing.

A brief history of war and drugs: From Vikings to Nazis

From World War II to Vietnam and Syria, drugs are often as much a part of conflict as bombs and bullets wrote Barbara McCarthy for Al Jazeera

Hitler was a junkie and the Nazis' narcotics intake gives new meaning to the term 'war on drugs'. But they weren't the only ones. Recent publications have revealed that narcotics are as much a part of conflict as bullets; often defining wars rather than sitting anecdotally on the side-lines of them.

In his book *Blitzed*, German author Norman Ohler describes how the Third Reich was permeated with drugs, including cocaine, heroin and most notably crystal meth, which was used by everyone from soldiers to housewives and factory workers.

Originally published in German as *Der totale Rausch* (The Total Rush), the book details a history of abuse by Adolf Hitler and his henchmen and releases previously unpublished archived findings about Dr Theodor Morell, the personal physician who administered drugs to the German leader as well as to the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini.

"Hitler was a Fuhrer in his drug taking too. It makes sense, given his extreme personality," says Ohler, speaking from his home in Berlin. After Ohler's book was released in Germany an article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* newspaper posed the question: "Does Hitler's insanity become more understandable when you view him as a junkie?"

"Yes and no," Ohler answers.

Hitler, whose mental and physical health has been the source of much speculation, relied on daily injections of the "wonder drug" Eukodol, which puts the user in a state of euphoria - and often renders them incapable of making sound judgments - and cocaine, which he started taking regularly from 1941 onwards to combat ailments including chronic stomach spasms, high blood pressure and a ruptured ear drum.

"But we all know he did a lot of questionable things before that, so you can't blame drugs for everything," Ohler reflects. "That said, they certainly played a role in his demise."

In his book, Ohler details how, towards the end of the war, "the medication kept the supreme commander stable in his delusion. The world could sink into rubble and ashes around him, and his actions cost millions of people their lives, but the Fuhrer felt more justified when his artificial euphoria set in," he wrote.

But what goes up must come down and when supplies ran out towards the end of the war, Hitler endured, among other things, severe serotonin and dopamine withdrawals, paranoia, psychosis, rotting teeth, extreme shaking, kidney failure and delusion, Ohler explains. His mental and physical deterioration during his last weeks in the Fuhrerbunker, a subterranean shelter for members of the Nazi party, can, Ohler says, be attributed to withdrawal from Eukodol rather than to Parkinson's as was previously believed.



Nazi leaders Adolf Hitler and Rudolf Hess during the Congress of National Labour in Berlin, 1935 [Photo by © Hulton-Deutsch Collection/CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images]

The irony, of course, is that while the Nazis promoted an ideal of Aryan clean living, they were anything but clean themselves. During the Weimar Republic, drugs had been readily available in the German capital, Berlin. But, after seizing power in 1933, the Nazis outlawed them. Then, in 1937, they patented the methamphetamine-based drug Pervitin- a stimulant that could keep people awake and enhance their performance, while making them feel euphoric. They even produced a brand of chocolates, Hildebrand, that contained 13mg of the drug - much more than the normal 3mg pill.

In July 1940, more than 35 million 3mg doses of Pervitin from the Temmler factory in Berlin were shipped to the German army and Luftwaffe during the invasion of France. "Soldiers were awake for days, marching without stopping, which wouldn't have happened if it weren't for crystal meth so yes, in this case, drugs did influence history," Ohler says. He attributes the Nazi victory in the Battle of France to the drug. "Hitler was unprepared for war and his back was against the wall. The Wehrmacht was not as powerful as the Allies, their equipment was poor and they only had three million soldiers compared with the Allies' four million."

But armed with Pervitin, the Germans advanced through difficult terrain, going without sleep for 36 to 50 hours. Towards the end of the war, when the Germans were losing, pharmacist Gerhard Orzechowski created a cocaine chewing gum that would allow the pilots of one-man U-boats to stay awake for days on end. Many suffered mental breakdowns as a result of taking the drug while being isolated in an enclosed space for long periods of time.

But when the Temmler factory producing Pervitin and Eukodol was bombed by the allies in 1945, it marked the end of the Nazis' - and Hitler's - drug consumption.

Of course, the Nazis weren't the only ones taking drugs. Allied bomber pilots were also given amphetamines to keep them awake and focused during long flights, and the Allies had their own drug of choice - Benzedrine.

The Laurier Military History Archives in Ontario, Canada, contain records suggesting that soldiers should ingest 5mg to 20mg of Benzedrine sulphate every five to six hours, and it is estimated that 72 million amphetamine tablets were consumed by the Allies during World War II. Paratroopers allegedly used it during the D-Day landings, while US marines relied on it for the invasion of Tarawa in 1943.

So why have historians only written about drugs anecdotally until now? "I think a lot of people don't understand how powerful drugs are," Ohler reflects. "That might change now. I'm not the first person to write about them, but I think the success of the book means ... [that] future books and movies like *Downfall* might pay more heed to Hitler's rampant abuse."

German medical historian Dr Peter Steinkamp, who teaches at the university of Ulm, in Germany, believes it is coming to the fore now because "most of the involved parties are dead. When *Das Boot*, the

German U-boat movie from 1981 was released, it depicted scenes of U-boat captains completely hammered drunk. It caused outrage among many war veterans who wanted to be portrayed as squeaky clean," he says. "But now that most of the people who fought in World War II are no longer with us, we may see a lot more stories of substance abuse, not just from World War II, but Iraq and Vietnam too."



Of course, the use of drugs dates far further back than World War II. In 1200BC, pre-Inca Chavin priests in Peru gave their subjects psychoactive drugs to gain power over them, while the Romans cultivated opium, to which Emperor Marcus Aurelius was famously addicted.

Viking "berserkers", who were named after "bear coats" in Old Norse, famously fought in a trance-like state, possibly as a result of taking agaric "magic" mushrooms and bog myrtle. Icelandic historian and poet Snorri Sturluson (AD1179 to 1241) described them "as mad as dogs or wolves, bit their shields, and were strong as bears or wild oxen".

More recently, the book *Dr Feelgood: The story of the doctor who influenced history by treating and drugging prominent figures* including President Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe, and Elvis Presley, by Richard Lertzman and William Birnes, alleges that US President John F Kennedy's drug use almost caused World War III during the two-day summit with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in 1961.

The Vietnam War

In his book, *Shooting Up*, Polish author Lukasz Kamienski describes how the US military plied its servicemen with speed, steroids, and painkillers to "help them handle extended combat" during the Vietnam War. A report by the House Select Committee on Crime in 1971 found that between 1966 and 1969, the armed forces used 225 million stimulant pills.

"The administration of stimulants by the military contributed to the spread of drug habits and sometimes had tragic consequences, because amphetamine, as many veterans claimed, increased aggression as well as alertness. Some remembered that when the effect of the speed faded away, they were so irritated that they felt like shooting 'children in the streets'," Kamienski wrote in *The Atlantic* in April 2016.

This might explain why so many veterans of that war suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. The National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment study published in 1990 shows that 15.2 percent of male soldiers and 8.5 percent of females who experienced combat in Southeast Asia suffered from PTSD.

According to a study by JAMA Psychiatry, an international peer-reviewed journal for clinicians, scholars, and research scientists in psychiatry, mental health, behavioural science, and allied fields, 200,000 people still suffer from PTSD almost 50 years after the Vietnam War. One of these is John Daniel ski. He was in the Marine Corp and spent 13 months in Vietnam between 1968 and 1970. In October, he released an autobiographical guidebook for sufferers called Johnny Come Crumbling Home: with PTSD.

"I came home from Vietnam in 1970, but I still have PTSD like a lot of other people - it never goes away. When I was in Vietnam in 1968 in the jungle, most of the guys I met smoked weed and took opiates. We also drank a lot of speed out of brown bottles," he says, speaking by telephone from his home in West Virginia.



"The army guys were getting stimulants and all sorts of pills in Saigon and Hanoi, but where we were, we just drank the speed. It came in a brown bottle. I know it made people tweaky and they would stay up for days."

"Of course, some of the men did some crazy stuff out there. It definitely had something to do with the drugs. The speed was so hardcore that when the guys were coming back from Vietnam they were having heart attacks on the plane and dying. They would be in such withdrawals - the flight would be like 13 hours without the drugs. Imagine fighting in Vietnam and then going home and dying on the way home," Danielski says. "The amphetamine increases your heart rate and your heart explodes," he explains.

In his Atlantic article, Kamienski wrote: "Vietnam was known as the first pharmacological war, so called because the level of consumption of psychoactive substances by military personnel was unprecedented in American history. When we came back there was no support for us," Danielski explains. "Everyone hated us. People accused us of being baby killers. The veteran services were a shambles. There was no addiction counselling. That's why so many people killed themselves when they came back. Over 70,000 veterans have killed themselves since Vietnam, and 58,000 died in the war. There's no memorial wall for them."

"Is there a connection between drugs and PTSD?" he asks. "Sure, but for me the hard part was the isolation I felt when I came back too. Nobody cared. I just became a heroin addict and alcoholic, and only went into recovery in 1998. Services have improved now, but ex-army men who served in Iraq and Afghanistan are still killing themselves - they have an even higher suicide rate."

The war in Syria

More recently, Middle Eastern conflicts have seen an increase in the rise of Captagon, an amphetamine that is allegedly fuelling Syria's civil war. Eleven million pills were seized by Turkish officials at the Syrian-Turkish border, while 1.5 million were seized in Kuwait. In a BBC documentary called Syria's War Drug from September 2015, one user is quoted as saying: "There was no fear any more when I took Captagon. You can't sleep or close your eyes, forget about it."

Ramzi Haddad is a Lebanese psychiatrist and cofounder of an addiction centre called Skoun. He explains that Captagon, "which is made in Syria", has been around "for a long time - over 40 years. I have seen the effects the drug has on people. Here it is getting more popular in the refugee camps filled with Syrian refugees. People can buy it from drug dealers for a couple of dollars, so it's a lot cheaper than cocaine or ecstasy," Haddad says. "In the short term it makes people feel euphoric and fearless and makes them sleep less - perfect for wartime fighting, but in the long term it brings on psychosis, paranoia and cardiovascular side effects."

Calvin James, an Irishman who worked as a medic in Syria for the Kurdish Red Crescent, says that while he didn't encounter the drug, he has heard that it is popular among fighters with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant group fighters, known as ISIL or ISIS. "You can tell by people's demeanour. On one occasion we came across a member of ISIS who was in a people carrier with five children and he was severely injured. He didn't seem to even notice and asked me for some water, he was extremely psyched up," says James. "Another guy tried to blow himself up, but it didn't work and he was still alive. Again, he didn't seem to notice the pain so much. He was treated in hospital along with everyone else."



Gerry Hickey, an Ireland-based addiction councillor and psychotherapist, isn't surprised by recent findings. "Delusion is part of the course and opiates are extremely addictive because they make people feel calm and give them a false sense of security. So, of course, they are perfectly suited to foot soldiers, naval captains and more recently terrorists," he says.

"Cabinets like to anaesthetise their armies during wartime so that the business of killing people becomes easier, while they themselves take drugs in order to keep their grandiose narcissism, megalomania and delusion in check. It wouldn't surprise me if suicide bombers are drugged up to the gills," he adds. "The thing about drugs is, that people not only lose their minds after a while, but also their physical health deteriorates after long-term use, especially as soon as addicts hit their 40s."

If Hitler was in a state of withdrawal during those final weeks of the war, it wouldn't be unusual for him to be shaking and cold, he explains. "People in withdrawal go into a massive shock and often die. They need to have other medication in that time. It takes three weeks of readjustment. I always get a little dubious when people ask, 'I wonder where they get the energy,'" he reflects. "Well look no further."

When an Army of Artists Fooled Hitler

SHORTLY AFTER THE D-DAY INVASION on June 6, 1944, two Frenchmen on bicycles managed to cross the perimeter of the United States Army's 23rd Headquarters Special Troops and what they saw astounded them. Four American soldiers had picked up a 40-ton Sherman tank and were turning it in place. Soldier Arthur Shilstone says, "They looked at me, and they were looking for answers, and I finally said: 'The Americans are very strong.'"

Patriotic pride aside, the men of the 23rd were not equipped with super-human strength. They did, however, have inflatable tanks. Shilstone was one of 1,100 soldiers who formed the unit, also known as the Ghost Army.

They were artists and illustrators, radio people and sound guys. Handpicked for the job from New York and Philadelphia art schools in January 1944, their mission was to deceive the enemy with hand-made inflatable tanks, 500-pound speakers blasting the sounds of troops assembling and phony radio transmissions.



Over the course of the war, they staged more than 20 operations and are estimated to have saved between 15,000 and 30,000 U.S. lives. The illusion was never broken and not even their fellow soldiers knew of their existence.

This painting depicts two Frenchmen looking shocked upon seeing four American soldiers lift a 40-ton tank. (Arthur Shilstone)

Kept secret for 40 years, the story of the Ghost Army first broke in Smithsonian magazine in the April 1985 issue, when then-illustrator Shilstone shared his part in the war. Now, Shilstone and 18 other members of the 23rd are part of the new PBS documentary, “The Ghost Army.”

When he first began researching the story, director Rick Beyer says he was amazed. “First you think, maybe I’m misunderstanding or maybe it was just one time,” says the director. It’s a scepticism he’s since encountered on the road, including at a presentation for seniors at the Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts. “There was one guy, while I was setting up and he was just convinced that the whole thing was bullshit.” He told Beyer he had served in General Patton’s Third Army and never knew of any Ghost Army. But Beyer continued with his screening. Afterward the same man approached him and said, “This is the most amazing story I ever heard!”

“It’s a great example of how many fantastic, amazing, sort of mind-bending stories there still are 70 years later coming out of WWII,” says Beyer.

Deception has long been a part of war, the Trojan Horse being perhaps the most famous example. But what set the 23rd troops apart, says Beyer, is the way they integrated so many different strategies to create a multimedia roadshow capable of being packed up for another show the next night. To shore up potential holes in the line, the unit would set up its inflatable tanks and roll in the giant speakers with a 15-mile range to give the impression that a huge army was amassing. Coupled with decoy radio transmissions, the deceptions proved largely successful.

From the beaches of Normandy to the Battle of the Bulge, the Ghost Army saw a lot of action, but their biggest stunt would come near the end of the war. With the American Ninth Army set to cross the Rhine river deeper into Germany, the 23rd had to lure the Germans away. Posing as the 30th and 79th divisions, 1,100 men had to pretend to be more than 30,000.

Mixing real tanks alongside the inflatable ones, the troops appeared to be assembling a massive attack. Their fake observation planes were so convincing, American pilots tried to land in the field next to them. When the offensive finally made its move across the Rhine, with General Dwight Eisenhower and Prime Minister Winston Churchill watching, they were met with little German resistance. The riverbanks were left for the taking and the Ghost Army earned a commendation for its success.

Because the men had to keep their true purpose a secret, they regularly pretended to be other units. They’d mark their trucks with chalk or sew fake badges to throw off potential spies in the cities where they spent time off duty.

Set apart from other troops by their secret mission, the artists also brought an unusual perspective to war. Upon finding a bombed-out church in Trévières, several of them stopped to sketch the structure.

When they stopped in Paris and Luxembourg, the men recorded everything from the beguiling women biking by to the scenic rooflines and street scenes. Beyer accumulated more than 500 of these sketches during the eight years he spent on the documentary, many of which were included in an accompanying art exhibit at the Edward Hopper House in New York.

“In war stories,” explains Beyer, “it tends to be about the guys on the line under fire or the generals planning strategy in the headquarters. What you don’t get always is the sense of what the experience is like for the people.”



“Whether it’s visiting a bordello or sketching a bombed-out church or trying to comfort the orphaned Polish children in a [Displaced Persons] camp on a dreary Christmas in Verdun when you’ve just retreated from the Battle of the Bulge,

those sorts of stories are part of the G.I. experience also and I wanted to convey this humanity as part of the story,” says Beyer.

The Ghost Army returned to the United States in July 1945, thinking they would join in the invasion of Japan. But after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings and Japan’s surrender, the unit was deactivated on September 15, 1945.

Many of the members of the special unit went on to have careers in the arts, including painter and sculptor Ellsworth Kelly and fashion designer Bill Blass. Unable to tell their wives, family and friends about what they had done until the information was declassified, their stories didn’t make it into the official narratives of WWII. Beyer says there’s more still to discover, “There are things that are still hidden away about it.”

In the meantime, Beyer hopes his documentary can help counter the traditional assumption that British deception, most known for Operation Fortitude, which sought to divert German attention away from Normandy, was elegant while American efforts must have been clunky. “It shows how creative and imaginative American deception units were,” says Beyer.

Retired commander of NATO General Wesley Clark agrees in the documentary, saying, “The essence of winning is the defeat of the enemy’s plan.” And with imagination and creativity, that’s precisely what the Ghost Army was able to do.

THE GHOST ARMY was an Allied Army tactical deception unit during World War II officially known as the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops (Operation Quicksilver).

The 1,100-man unit was given a unique mission within the Allied Army: to impersonate other Allied Army units to deceive the enemy. From a few weeks after D-Day, when they landed in France, until the end of the war, they put on a “traveling road show” utilizing inflatable tanks, sound trucks, fake radio transmissions, scripts and pretence.

They staged more than 20 battlefield deceptions, often operating very close to the front lines. Their story was kept secret for more than 40 years after the war, and elements of it remain classified. The unit was the subject of a PBS documentary The Ghost Army in 2013. Inspiration for the unit came from the British units who had honed the deception technique for the battle of El Alamein in late 1942, as Operation Bertram. The unit had its beginnings at Camp Forrest, Tennessee, and was fully formed at Pine Camp, New York (now Fort Drum), before sailing for the United Kingdom in early May 1944. In Britain they were based near Stratford upon Avon, and troops participated in Operation Fortitude, the British-designed and led D-Day deceptions of a landing force designated for the Pas-de-Calais.

Some troops went to Normandy two weeks after D-Day, where they simulated a fake Mulberry harbour at night with lights which attempted to draw German artillery from the real ones. After this the entire unit assisted in tying up the German defenders of Brest by simulating a larger force than was actually encircling them.

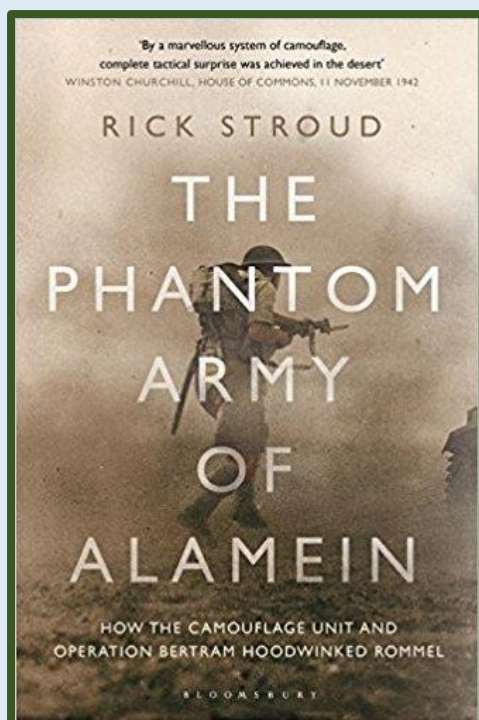


As the Allied armies moved east, so did the 23rd, and it eventually was based within Luxembourg, from where it engaged in deceptions of crossings of the Ruhr river, positions along the Maginot Line, Hürtgen Forest, and finally a major crossing of the Rhine to draw German troops away from the actual sites.

Ghost soldiers were encouraged to use their brains and talent to mislead, deceive, and befuddle the German Army. Many were recruited from art schools, advertising agencies and other occupations that encouraged creative thinking. In civilian life, ghost soldiers had been artists, architects, actors, set designers, and engineers.

Although the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops consisted of only 1,100 soldiers, the contingent used equipment pioneered by British forces such as dummy tanks and artillery, fake aircraft, and giant speakers broadcasting the sounds of men and artillery to make the Germans think it was upwards of a two-division 30,000-man force. The unit's elaborate ruses helped deflect German units from the locations of larger allied combat units. [citation needed]

The unit consisted of the 406th Combat Engineers (which handled security), the 603rd Camouflage Engineers, the 3132 Signal Service Company Special, and the Signal Company Special.



The visual deception arm of the Ghost Army was the 603rd Camouflage Engineers. It was equipped with inflatable tanks, cannons, jeeps, trucks, and airplanes that the men would inflate with air compressors, and then camouflage imperfectly so that enemy air reconnaissance could see them. They could create dummy airfields, troop bivouacs (complete with fake laundry hanging out on clotheslines), motor pools, artillery batteries, and tank formations in a few hours.

Many of the men in this unit were artists, recruited from New York and Philadelphia art schools. Their unit became an incubator for young artists who sketched and painted their way through Europe.

Several of these soldier-artists went on to have a major impact on art in the post-war US. Bill Blass,[6] Ellsworth Kelly, wildlife artist Arthur Singer, and Art Kane were among the many artists who served in the 603rd. The 3132 Signal Service Company Special handled sonic deception. The unit coalesced under the direction of Colonel Hilton Railey, a colourful figure who, before the war, had "discovered" Amelia Earhart and sent her on her road to fame.

Aided by engineers from Bell Labs, a team from the 3132 went to Fort Knox to record sounds of armoured and infantry units onto a series of sound effects records that they brought to Europe. For each deception, sounds could be "mixed" to match the scenario they wanted the enemy to believe. This program was recorded on state-of-the-art wire recorders (the predecessor to the tape recorder), and then played back with powerful amplifiers and speakers mounted on halftracks. The sounds they played could be heard 15 miles (24 km) away.

"Spoof radio", as it was called, was handled by the Signal Company. Special Operators created phony traffic nets, impersonating the radio operators from real units. They were educated in the art of mimicking a departing operator's method of sending Morse Code so that the enemy would never detect that the real unit and its radio operator were long gone.

To complement existing techniques, the unit often employed theatrical effects to supplement the other deceptions. Collectively called "atmosphere", these included simulating actual units deployed elsewhere by the application of their divisional insignia, painting appropriate unit insignia on vehicles and having the individual companies deployed as if they were regimental headquarters units. Trucks/Lorries would be driven in looping convoys with just two troops in the seats near the rear, to simulate a truck full of infantry under the canvas cover.

"MPs" (military police) would be deployed at cross roads wearing appropriate divisional insignia and some officers would simulate divisional generals and staff officers visiting towns where enemy agents were likely to see them. A few actual tanks and artillery pieces were occasionally assigned to the unit to make the "dummies" in the distance appear more realistic.

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Bill Blass was one of them. So was Ellsworth Kelly. And Arthur Singer. And Art Kane. Before these men embarked on the artistic careers they would become known for, they served together during World War II.

But they were a particular kind of soldier, serving in a particular kind of unit: Blass and his brothers in arms were recruited from art schools and ad agencies. They were sought for their acting skills. They were selected for their creativity. They were soldiers whose most effective weapon was artistry. Because their job was to fool Hitler.

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Blass and his cohort were members of the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops, an elite force whose specialty was "tactical deception." They're now better known, though, as the "Ghost Army" -- a troop of soldiers that doubled, in Europe's theatre, as a troupe of actors. (The unit was the brain child, one report has it, of Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.) The 23rd were, essentially, the Trojan Horse builders of World War II.

Except that their wooden horses took the form of inflatable tanks. And rubber airplanes. And elaborate costumes. And radio codes. And speakers that blared pre-recorded soundtracks into the forests of France.

These props -- "advanced technology" as advanced technology -- were amazingly effective, doing what all good theatre props will: setting a believable scene. The Ghost Army, some 1,100 men in all, ended up staging more than 20 battlefield deceptions between 1944 and 1945, starting in Normandy two weeks after D-Day and ending in the Rhine River Valley. Many of those performances -- "illusions," the men appropriately preferred to call them -- took place within a few hundred yards of the front lines.

And they relied on what the Ghost Army termed, awesomely, "atmosphere" -- creating the overall impression of an omnipresent military force. Soldiers in the Ghost Army were Potemkin villages, personified.



They pretended to be members of fellow units (units that were actually deployed elsewhere) by sewing divisional patches onto their uniforms and painting other units' insignias onto their vehicles. The Army would dispatch a few of its members to drive canvas-covered trucks -- sometimes as few as two of those trucks -- in looping convoys that would create the impression (sorry, the "illusion") of an entire infantry unit being transported. As Jack Masey, who was recruited into the Ghost Army at age 18, remembered:

"We were told we were going to be using inflatable equipment to try and fool the Germans into thinking that we were a real army, when we were in effect, I suppose, a rubber army."

The rubber army used its dramatic streak to its advantage. It staged a series of, basically, "traveling shows": elaborate plays designed to intimidate and/or confuse the Axis. Its members put their theatrical skills to use, engaging in "playacting," designing "soundscapes," and creating "set-dressing." They were dispatched to spend time at French cafes near the war's front to spread gossip among the spies who might be there -- to, as one Ghoster put it, "order some omelettes and talk loose." Some actors in the Ghost Army would also play the parts of Allied generals, dressing up as the officers and visiting towns where enemy spies would be likely to see them.



A "rubber convoy," deliberately ill-camouflaged (Rick Beyer via Seattle Post-Intelligencer)

The Ghosters' role was, in some sense, to cause chaos and confusion. And they played it not just with the help of visual trickery, but also with what they called "sonic deception." With help from engineers at Bell Labs, a team from the unit's 3132 Signal Service Company Special travelled to Fort Knox to record sounds of armoured and infantry units onto wire recorders (the predecessors to tape recorders) that were cutting-edge at the time. In the theatre, they then "mixed" those sounds to match the atmosphere they wanted to create, playing their faux soundtracks with powerful amplifiers and speakers that were mounted on halftracks -- a combination so effective that the sounds could be heard up to 15 miles away.

The unit's Signal Company Special also created what it called "Spoof Radio," in which its actors impersonated the radio operators from real units. The Ghosters mimicked, as well, departing operators' idiosyncratic methods of sending Morse Code -- creating the illusion, for Axis armies, that the Allied unit was in the vicinity when in fact it had already departed the area. The Ghost Army's sonic illusions, in this case, were so convincing that they fooled Axis Sally, the radio propagandist, into reporting that an entire Allied division was preparing for battle in a spot that actually contained, at the time, no troops at all.

All of which went to serve the Allies' ultimate illusion: that their military force was bigger and more powerful than it actually was. (Part of the effectiveness of the Ghost Army came from the fact that it would employ real tanks and artillery pieces along with the fake ones, to make the dummies in the distance seem to blend in with the others.)

The Ghost Army, today, is estimated to have saved tens of thousands of soldiers' lives with its deceptions, and to have been instrumental in several Allied victories in Europe. It accomplished all that by, among much else, taking "the art of war" wonderfully literally.

The Ghost Army's story was a matter of military secrecy until its declassification in 1996. Now, though, it's the subject of a documentary, the straightforwardly titled Ghost Army. Director Rick Beyer sees the antics of the unit as a sign, in part, of how much we still have to learn about World War II.

"It's a great example," he told Smithsonian magazine, "of how many fantastic, amazing, sort of mind-bending stories there still are 70 years later coming out of WWII. It's hard to imagine a more mind-bending story, though, than the Ghost Army's tale of military magic. "I used to refer to us," one of its soldiers says, "as 'the Cecil B. DeMille warriors.'"



At the movies with Mike Peters

Truth and Lies about Entebbe

April 4 2018

THE NEW FILM *7 Days in Entebbe* is based primarily on a book by the historian Saul David about the daring Israeli raid to rescue hostages held at a Ugandan airport in 1976. In a recent interview, David has suggested that the operation—which resulted in the deaths of the terrorists and many of their helpers, three of the 106 hostages, and the raid's commander Yoni Netanyahu—was something other than a stunning success.

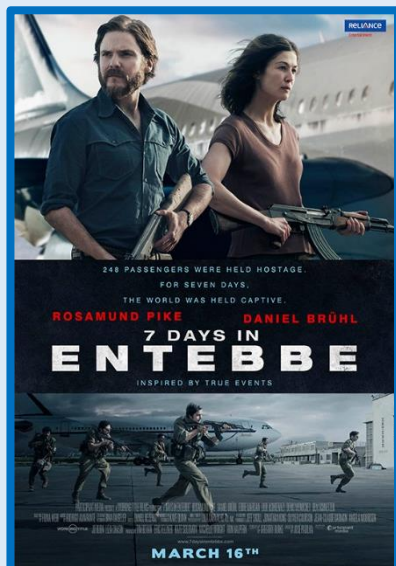
ADVANCING
JEWISH
THOUGHT

Mosaic

Richard Kemp, the former commander of British forces in Afghanistan, comments: In trying to second-guess [Yoni] Netanyahu's actions at Entebbe, David shows that even the most assiduous academic cannot necessarily perceive the reality of close military combat. He says: "Ultimately, the operation succeeded thanks to luck more than anything else."

This is blatantly wrong. But David should not be surprised that luck played a part. Anyone who has experience in battle knows how crucial it is. . . .

Combat is all about creating luck and getting on top of chaos. As we say in the British army: no plan survives contact with the enemy. That is because, unlike any other human activity, while you try to achieve your task, the enemy is trying to kill you.



I have never known any military operation to unfold without foul-ups—often, many of them. . . . One such crisis occurred at Entebbe when a Ugandan soldier challenged the raiding force as they approached their target. A seasoned commander, Netanyahu knew immediately what he had to do—eliminate him.

Yet to David, this was a “key error.” The reason? The Ugandan’s actions were a “routine challenge” and he would not have opened fire. This is absurd. The variables were so great and the stakes so high that no commander would take that risk—even if it meant losing surprise.

Above all, to suggest, [as David does], that Netanyahu’s death during the operation meant his impact was negligible is to misunderstand the nature of combat leadership. The influence of the most effective and inspirational commander, as Netanyahu undoubtedly was, does not end even when he is no longer among his men.

Modern criticism of Winston Churchill is fake history - it's based on quotes taken out of context

By Andrew Roberts: Andrew’s new biography, *Churchill: Walking with Destiny*, will be published in October by Penguin



THE MOVIE *Darkest Hour*, in which Gary Oldman won an Oscar playing Winston Churchill, has garnered many plaudits, and deservedly so. It introduced a new generation to Churchill and the inspiring story of 1940, reminding them of how Britain stood alone for a year against the might and fury of Nazi Germany.

But it has also produced a vicious backlash against Churchill and all that he stood for, and unleashed an avalanche of vitriolic abuse, much of it ahistorical and ignorant. It says more about our modern “fake history” culture than anything about Winston Churchill.

Churchill the monster?

A sub-editor on the *Indian Express*, Adrija Roychowdhury, wrote an article in the paper accusing the “unpopular racist” Churchill of, among other things, praising Mussolini, preferring Nazis to Communists, deliberately using the Bengal Famine to commit genocide, and using poison gas against Iraqi tribesmen.

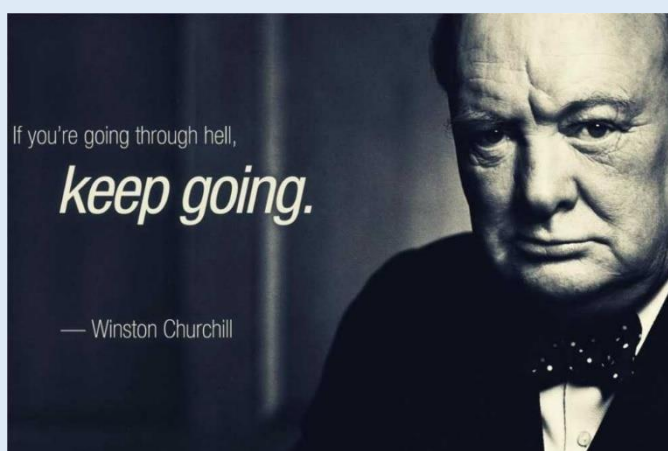
This strain of hysterical, ultra-politically correct, historically inaccurate abuse of him is indicative of a collapse in our modern political discourse. These ancient tropes, long exploded by serious Churchill historians such as Sir Martin Gilbert and Richard Langworth, tend to be based on truncated quotes ripped out of context.

Thus, Churchill praised Mussolini for repaying Italy's war debts to Britain; he never once said he preferred Nazis to Communists; he did all he could to relieve the terrible Bengal Famine subject to the exigencies of the Japanese holding Burma and their submarines infesting the Bay of Bengal; and it was tear gas – not poison gas – that was used in Iraq.

Then we had a Channel 4 programme, Churchill's Secret Affair, in which it was alleged – without any proof whatsoever, beyond ancient hearsay – that Churchill had cheated on his beloved wife Clementine with the sexy Lady Castlerosse.

Eye candy

This was picked up in every newspaper, not least because it gave editors the opportunity to print photos of Doris Castlerosse's great-niece, Cara Delevingne. The allegations were based on a remark Churchill's private secretary, Sir Jock Colville, made before his death in 1985, but at no stage did Channel 4 admit he did not become Churchill's private secretary until after the alleged affair and that Churchill never spoke to him about it.

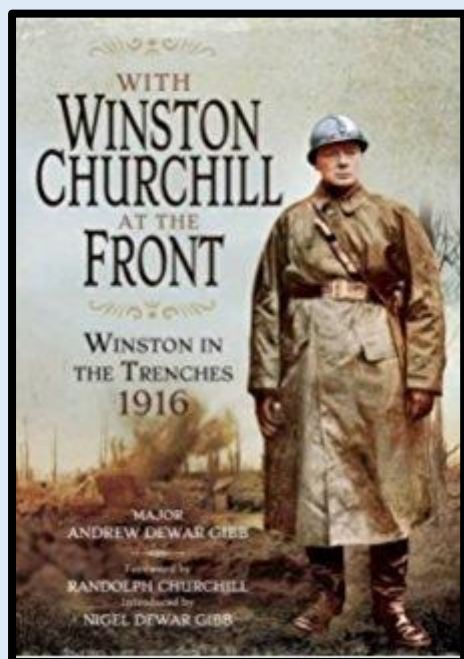


The Toronto Star, once a serious paper of record, meanwhile ran an article by its race and gender columnist Shree Paradkar about Churchill, “the barbaric monster with the blood of millions on his hands”, and how he “lacerated the world with tragedies”.

This perpetuated the myth that because Churchill made some remarks about Indians that today we would find racist – but which for a late-Victorian aristocrat were unexceptional – that he wanted to commit genocide.

Yet Churchill was a man who was willing to risk his life on numerous occasions to defend northern Indian tribes, and who constantly gloried in the increase in the population of India as a reason to commend the British Raj as a success.

In an article in the Washington Post entitled “Hollywood Rewards a Mass Murderer”, the ultra-nationalist Indian politician Shashi Tharoor claimed that Churchill “was one of the few British officials in favour of bombing Irish protesters, suggesting in 1920 that airplanes should use ‘machine-gun fire or bombs’ to scatter them.”



He was able to quote those five words of Churchill's but didn't bother with the rest of the paragraph which shows that it was armed IRA murder squads that Churchill wanted to attack, not innocent Catholic demonstrators.

Hysteria

Of course, Winston Churchill made many mistakes in his nearly two-thirds of a century in the public eye between first standing for parliament in 1899 and finally leaving it in 1964. He can rationally be criticised from both the Right and Left for several serious errors of judgement, such as continuing with the Dardanelles Campaign for far too long, returning Britain to the Gold Standard, supporting King Edward VIII during the Abdication Crisis, and so on. These debates can be carried on temperately and with reference to the facts.

Ancient tropes, long exploded by serious Churchill historians, tend to be based on truncated quotes ripped out of context but this new strain of hysterical, ultra-politically correct,

historically inaccurate, and in all too many cases intellectually fraudulent abuse of him is indicative of a collapse in our modern political discourse, more unhinged internet trolling than reasoned criticism. Fortunately, each of these assaults has been repelled with facts, figures and accurate, contextualised quotations.

Next month the Oxford Union will be further dignifying the Churchill-abuse by debating the disgraceful, egregious motion “This House is Ashamed of Winston Churchill.” Expect more hysteria.

For Yorkshire’s chuffin’ Nazis, ze war is over



By Valentine Low The Times April 6 2018

IT IS MORE THAN 70YEARS LATE but in a remote corner of North Yorkshire the war is finally over. Every autumn for a number of years a station on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway has been transformed into a German-occupied town in wartime France. Re-enactment enthusiasts have strutted around in Nazi uniforms, guns on their shoulders and SS flashes on their helmets as if D-Day had never happened and Hitler’s dream of a Greater Reich was still alive today.

Now organisers of the Railway in Wartime event have decided that all those Nazis are not such a good idea after all. The transformation of the village of Levisham into “Le Visham” has been going on for 12 years as part of a larger Second World War re-enactment weekend attracting thousands of people to the railway, which runs between Pickering and Whitby.

Passengers on steam and diesel trains enjoy a number of different scenarios at stops along the line, including the recreation of a wartime street at Pickering and Home Guard demonstrations staged in Goathland. Grosmont, meanwhile, has had an RAF theme, with a replica Spitfire and plotting room.

In Levensham last year there was a Café du Bois and re-enactment displays, and rather more people in coal-scuttle helmets than would normally be considered healthy. Now the railway, which is a charity, has withdrawn its invitation to the German re-enactors after a spate of negative publicity.

The Yorkshire Post has called the annual event “a weekend of pure nostalgia”. However, it has begun to attract unwelcome headlines. One year a family complained after seeing men in SS uniforms act out the beating up of a civilian. Last year an article in The Northern Echo questioned the need to relive the war. “We dwell too much, in a celebratory way, on the Second World War,” it said. An article on Mail Online highlighted the controversy of Nazi uniforms in wartime re-enactments.

In a statement, the railway cited its need to protect its family image, saying: “Expectations currently reflected in the recent Equalities Act mean that the charity must avoid causing offence to any section of the public.” It added: “With this in mind, as we plan for this year’s Railway in Wartime event, we had to consider last year’s national media articles.”

Lee Hayward, 44, a history enthusiast and past visitor to the event, said: “This is a disgrace. I have some photos of the ‘German occupied’ Levensham a few years back. My kids were fascinated and educated. It was tastefully done with dedicated, forward-thinking people taking part. To be asked for my papers, in German, when I got off the train was a real palpable shock. The German soldier shouted it at us.

“It immediately transported myself and whole family into what it must have been like living in occupied France and made us grateful of the sacrifice made for the freedoms we currently have.”

Janet Sanderson, a North Yorkshire county councillor whose ward includes Levensham, said: “It began as a bit of fun and now we have people attending who travel from war re-enactment to war re-enactment. To some people it could be offensive, though it wasn’t to begin with. You do get comments from some such as, ‘My father fought in the war, what right does he have to wear that uniform?’”

The German forces have not, it must be said, put up much resistance. The re-enactors said they were very saddened by the news that they were not wanted but agreed to go away and wished everyone good luck for the future.

One re-enactor, Neil Robertson, made clear that they did not sympathise with any Nazi cause. He said: “The re-enactment community and the station volunteers are saddened by the board’s decision but respect it.”

Editor’s Note: Among the many re-enactor groups in the UK are two covering the British Army’s Film & Photographic Unit of WW2. AFPU 44 Living History has its own website. Another AFPU group can be found on Facebook.

Scientists think we all may be dead by 2050

By Harriet Marsden in Discover

ACCORDING TO RESEARCH around the future of Artificial Intelligence, the human race could vanish within our lifetime. At last, some good news, then. Jeff Nesbit, former director of legislative and public affairs at the National Science Foundation and author of more than 24 books, has examined the latest thinking on AI capabilities. He concludes that the human race could cease to exist by 2050 - or that we become immortal.

Nesbit explains the theory known as ASI, or 'artificial super-intelligence', which posits that AI will evolve into a supercomputer which learns so quickly that it surpasses human intelligence and solves all problems. On the one hand, you have the hopefuls like Ray Kurzweil imploring

us not to fear artificial intelligence, pointing instead to the older and more pressing threats like bioterrorism or nuclear war.

In fact, Kurzweil argues that mental capabilities are enhanced by AI, and he points out that global rates of violence, war and murder have declined dramatically. He also argues that AI has helped to find cures for diseases, developed renewable energy resources and, cared for the disabled, among other benefits to society.

Kurzweil puts the date of 'human level AI' at 2029, which gives us just enough time to "devise ethical standards".

Then there's Rollo Carpenter, creator of the Cleverbot software, which has gained high scores in the Turing test - that is to say, many people have mistaken it for human when communicating with it.



Picture: iStock/Getty Images

I believe we will remain in charge of the technology for a decently long time, and the potential of it to solve many of the world problems will be realised. He explains that the ability to develop algorithms necessary for achieving full artificial intelligence is still a few decades away and explains: We cannot quite know what will happen if a machine exceeds our own intelligence, so we can't know if we'll be infinitely helped by it, or ignored by it and side-lined, or conceivably destroyed by it.

Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk, pioneer of digital money and electric cars, has told students in an interview that we are "summoning the demon" with AI. Speaking at the AeroAstro Centennial Symposium at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Musk made the following remarks: If I had to guess at what our biggest existential threat is, it's probably that [artificial intelligence]. So, we need to be very careful.

With artificial intelligence we are summoning the demon. In all those stories where there's the guy with the pentagram and the holy water, it's like - yeah, he's sure he can control the demon. Doesn't work out.

In a 2015 open letter, Musk and Professor Stephen Hawking wrote on the idea that AI could allow development of autonomous weapons, which would revolutionise warfare - and not for the better.

Autonomous weapons are ideal for tasks such as assassinations, destabilising nations, subduing populations and selectively killing a particular ethnic group. Starting a military AI arms race is a bad idea and should be prevented by a ban on offensive autonomous weapons beyond meaningful human control.

Hawking, who is able to communicate via a technology that uses a basic form of AI, also had this cheery proclamation for the BBC: The development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race.

He, too, considers the possibility and potential dangers of ASI, explaining that AI could take off on its own and re-design itself at an ever-increasing rate. Humans, who are limited by slow biological evolution, couldn't compete, and would be superseded.

But all of them agree on one thing - sometime in the next 30 years or so, a supercomputer will replicate the human brain and evolve into super-intelligence, or ASI.

Tim Urban, author of 'Wait, But Why?' blog, outlines the future: While most scientists I've come across acknowledge that ASI would have the ability to send humans to extinction, many also believe that used beneficially, ASI's abilities could be used to bring individual humans, and the species as a whole, to...species immortality.

Great set of choices, that.....

All stories featured in Scribblings are the opinions of the authors. Comments and enquiries to Mike Peters at michaelpcoms@btinternet.com