

Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach: Keynote Valedictory Address as Chief of the Defence Staff

Speaker Key:

SP Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach

DG Dean Godson

DH Deborah Haynes

AW Alan West

DB David Bond

AB Alex Baleno

MM Lord Marlesford

JI John Ingham

PD Philip Dunne

MF Mark Francois

AR Amber Rudd

BG Ben Glaze

JB Jonathan Beale

JS Jeffrey Sterling

LB Larisa Brown

DW David Willetts

JK James Kidner

SP What I'd like to do is just talk about what we're doing and why we're doing it, and then look at the future.

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One of the things I'm going to share with you to begin with is the importance of standing commitments to the UK Armed Forces, which doesn't make copy and rarely hits the media, but they are very important to the defence of our nation and keeping the British people safe. Ranging, of course, at the top, from the continuous at sea deterrence, patrols undertaken by the nuclear submarines, and those submarines are in the process of being renewed in the shape of the Dreadnought class.

Of course, I include the Maritime Security Task, undertaken by the Royal Navy, supported by the Coastguard, to keep us sea safe, and more importantly, to provide that shield of maritime counter-terrorism, and the task undertaken by my own service, the Royal Air Force, in terms of the air defence of Great Britain.

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And of course, as everybody knows now, I think, it's the 100th birthday of the Royal Air Force. I think most people are aware of that. And I have served in it for 44% of its existence.

And so that task, it might surprise one or two of you just how often QRA is scrambled. Sometimes, because of airliners who stumble around. But sadly and often, frequently—I'll come back to Russia—because of visits by long-range Russian aviation.

In addition to those standing tasks of keeping the country safe, of course, is the standing joint command act, and over... I was there yesterday to thank them for all they've done during my tenure as the chief of the defence staff. And they do a lot to connect the UK military to the people of the country in time of need.

That could be the abilities I've just discussed next door. We're putting troops on the streets and extremists [?], requested by the prime minister. But most importantly, again, it doesn't make copy, it's also important to reflect, we take the troops off the streets. And so it is a demonstration of how the UK Armed Forces are connected to national security at the local as well as, of course, at the international level.

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We do aid the civil community in many other ways, and of course, there are always ways of improving those procedures. And again, they're not very exciting, but it's also about reassuring the public that the Armed Forces is there as this sort of insurance policy, ranging from the nuclear deterrence to support from regular and reserve forces.

Right now, the principal way in which we deliver collective security, and I do not see it changing, is through our membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. We're a leading member, and we intend to remain so.

As I hand over to Nick Carter next Monday, we've got almost 10,000 members of the UK Armed Forces committed to NATO operations and major exercises. And demonstrating leadership on the sea, with the commander of the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 in the Mediterranean.

And on the land, with the—many of you may have visited; some of you, I know have—the armoured battle group, forward deployed in Estonia, with our friends and partners in Estonia, as part of the Enhanced Forward Presence mission of NATO. And in the air, with Typhoons undertaking air policing task, again, in

support of the alliance. The prime minister has also asked us to step up in support of the United Nations, not just because of P5 membership, but also, it's the right thing to do.

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And actually, I have to say to you, on the record, about how proud we all should be of the performance of the UK Armed Forces in South Sudan, on a difficult mission, where we're providing much needed infrastructure support to the mission through the Royal Engineers, classic case of mission command delivering huge effect, and the Royal Army Medical Corps and personnel for the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force supporting the military field hospital, which supports the UN mission.

In addition, we've got a big slug of British staff officers in Somalia, and we've stepped up across the globe, particularly in the role, which is very important, of prevention of sexual violence in conflict, where, you may not be aware, of a number of British women, British officers, who are the gender advisors for many UN missions. So we have stepped up.

We've also created the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force. Now, eight member nations. And we look forward to that becoming an important way in which we can work together with our friends and partners, largely, in this case, from Northern Europe, acting as a NATO-facing organisation, or in response, as we've already demonstrated, to an outbreak of deadly disease.

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In the case of the Ebola mission in Africa, there's two things about that, distant as it may be from the headlines today. The first is, some of you who've served before might find it unthinkable, but we've placed the UK Armed Forces under the command of DFID, and we were supporting DFID on the operation.

And secondly, the Joint Expeditionary Force, which is, in those days, embryonic, and I was the vice-chief of the defence staff, we borrowed equipment, including capital ships and aeroplanes, from our JEF partners. So the JEF is not just a paper tiger. It is a real thing.

Last but not least, we have a number of very important bilateral military relationships around the world. A point about that, which I have made before, which I'll repeat unashamedly, is at times of political difficulty or turbulence, military-to-military relationships are really important and can often be load-bearing.

So all that comes to about 30 named operations around the world, and they're all important, and they're all slightly different. So why are we doing all that? Well, I don't think there's ever been a time when the rules-based international system has been under quite so much threat and risk of both change or... Not just evolutionary change, but change, forced change, and also been challenged.

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And we see that as far as North Korea. We, of course, wish the leaders were in their summit for denuclearisation. We see it in the Middle East. Now, you as an audience know very well what's going on in the Middle East, but there are many elements of those conflicts which warrant a little bit more attention.

So in the conflict in Yemen, of course, we sympathise with the plight of the Yemeni people. We also need to remember that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has received over 100 ballistic missiles fired at it from Yemen. And so this is high technology delivered by a non-conventional, non-uniformed armed force. We also see even in the fringes of Europe, in Eastern Ukraine, we also see the use of large-calibre weapons, not necessarily in the hands of state actors.

We also see the consequences of the information media campaigns and fake news around the world, which leads to cries of hybrid, which have often taken place on this platform, and do something about it.

I was in Finland a few weeks ago. I went to the joint NATO-EU Hybrid Centre of Excellence, which was interesting for a number of reasons. First, it's a very good centre, with some very clever people, including people from the UK. And they've identified a number of techniques that the Russians are using. 16 they've identified so far. And the other thing, if emulation is ever a source of flattery, the Russians have set up, just over the border from Helsinki, their own hybrid centre of excellence.

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So it's real. It's not made up. The cyberattacks are real. It's not just think tanks and others making them up. For me, a better word to describe all of that is subversion, subversion of the rules-based international system and the sovereignty of states through the activity of all sorts of actors. Working out, through trust and verification, what is going on I think is a key challenge for both multilateral and national militaries of defence.

What we might conclude from that is, as I travel across to be the chairman of the Military Committee of NATO, is, actually, we need collective deterrence, as well as collective security.

And that is a good lead-in to what I'm about to say about the future. On the one hand, I don't think I need to justify why we have a Modernising Defence Programme, because there's nothing wrong with a national security strategy of 2015. It's just that the threats we identified in 2015 have got more complicated, complex, volatile, and in some cases, dangerous, and therefore, it's appropriate that we should look at that threat. Picture and decide what it means for us. That is the simple background.

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In addition to that, we need to look at our capability mix. The Joint Force 25, which is our flagship for the future, which is, in broad terms, a maritime task group, incorporating both submarines and the Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers, with a naval task force, a divisional-level army group or army formation, rather, with strike brigades, and an expeditionary air group, as we're seeing, actually, deployed around both NATO and the anti-Daesh campaign at the moment.

That all has to be supported increasingly by cyber capabilities, and we're looking at ways to do that. We're not yet ready to make an announcement. That has to be, in the British view anyway, not just a major defence business. It should be a whole of government business.

We also need to look at space in a more constructive way, and make sure we have space-based capabilities and understand space-based issues. And again, I think that has risen up the structural agenda for the future, and we need to think about that carefully.

And then as we see the proliferation of missiles, what does it mean for us? Well, we need to be very serious in both research and in future capability about ballistic missile defence.

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All of that requires a capability which is affordable. And actually, many of the programmes and projects I've mentioned are already in being and well-known. Some will need a question of reprioritisation. All of that must be supported by our whole force, which is fit for the world we're now in, rather than fit for the world of nostalgia.

I've said it before, but I'll say it again: the whole force matters, not just to me as the chief of the defence staff, but to the Armed Forces. It is a blend of regular, full-time service, of course, the majority of the things I've talked about, supported by regular reserve on call-out, volunteer reserve, auxiliaries in other parlance, sponsored reserves, contractors, and of course, civil servants, who are not overhead in their part of our capability.

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary, by UK conventional definition, are civil servants. Actually, the navy can't operate, I think the rest would agree, without the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. Many of our civil servants are a vital part of the capability that the UK offers, and therefore, seeing them just as sort of overhead is definitely not true.

And I see that integration, that blend and mix, with different terms and conditions. And we're being held to account by many committees on this. Flexible

engagement may seem like a baby shift in the legislative framework for the UK Armed Forces, but over time, we have to reflect the society we serve, and that has to be... We have to be able to offer people flexible terms and conditions.

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And that whole force is more than just those elements I've outlined. It also needs to be skilled for the world, as the threat picture resolves itself. I think of the superb young people we attract to the intelligence arms of the Armed Forces.

I say for the third time, it's never been picked up by the media, that, actually, Defence Intelligence does not get anywhere near the credit it deserves. Defence Intelligence is often the enabling function, that understands the wider world, and the threats that the wider world generates. It's filled with very impressive people from the Armed Forces and civil servants, and actually enables the rest of the UK intelligence community.

Beyond that, some of the people in British military uniform are the best cyber operators in the world. I'm not just saying that as a claim before I go. That is what is said to us when we take part in multinational and international cyber events. And so we are getting some of this right. We then need to blend it together, experience with youth, with proper recognition for these people, and we need to be prepared to do things that some people in the room might find uncomfortable.

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I am quite relaxed about having a cyber force who don't deploy overseas. I'm quite relaxed about that because their work is here. I'm quite relaxed about medical conditions being relaxed because they're not deploying overseas, and we need to think about this in a different way.

We also need to accept that we're doing quite a lot right in education. We generate for the United Kingdom every year more apprentices in the Ministry of Defence than any other part of government, but it's not recognised.

I would add to that that the nation's challenges include engineering, big time. Digital engineering, nuclear engineering, aerospace engineering, ship, marine engineering, submarine engineering, and of course, vehicle engineering. So I cannot see a future where engineering doesn't need more prominence in the nation, and from my perspective, more prominence in the Armed Forces.

That needs us to think differently. And where think tanks and other opinion formers such as you can help is, actually, let's think about career development in a different way. It's okay to go from regular military services engineer into industry, be recognised for it, promoted, come back into the military, and then go back to industry. It's okay to go from the military with engineering experience, whether it's Royal Engineers, marine engineers, aerospace engineers, and go into teaching, and then come back.

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Because if we don't do something different, we will continue to struggle for engineering capability to support the force I've outlined this morning. And I know it's the same in other countries because... We have to do this.

I would add to that list, languages. We have to, particularly... Not because of Brexit, but particularly, the way the world has turned out, we have to do better at giving people language skills. It's done in the Ministry of Defence. It has to, though, feed from an enthusiasm for languages in schools and in society. But I do really call today not just for STEM, but almost for STEAM. So including arts and social sciences and languages as part of the skills offer for the future.

And as we evolve, of course, our alliances, whether international, through the United States, or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, need to adapt, too. The focus should be on outputs of those multinational organisations, not just about inputs. The focus should be about how we adapt and evolve together.

Do we make enough of the NATO schools, colleges, and education facilities? Do our own schools, and colleges, education facilities, do enough internationally with our partners? Are we looking at the world in a structured way, not just a very myopic way? This is not just an idea. This is actually a requirement if we're going to understand the world as it's revealing itself to us.

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So we need very good intelligence, unashamedly, very strong intelligence capability, to generate information and knowledge, and create a centre of advantage for the future. Otherwise, all that investment, which is 18 billion a year, 180 billion over ten, is not any use if we don't have the intelligence to employ it properly, and the skills in the force to use it properly.

We also—I think this is part of it, Dean—have to understand the need to create a narrative for defence in the country. I think the young people of Britain aspire to lots of places, as well as the Armed Forces.

I accept fully that morale is variable where you go, and I know I'd be quizzed on that, but I accept it fully. But do you know what? When I visit our forces in operations, morale is always, invariably, excellent. There are always some complaints. My father's was a regimental Sergeant Major and he always said, if the British soldier is not moaning, you're in big trouble.

But seriously, morale is an issue we have to tackle. We have to tackle the narrative, to make ourselves attractive to the next generation, without falling into the trap of trying to recruit child soldiers and being attacked for that. We have to make ourselves attractive and be available to make a modern, updated offer to the people of this country. Otherwise, that Joint Force 25 investment will be in vain.

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And so, actually, the narrative of support, the narrative of service, the narrative of duty, is a very important narrative. And we're not all heroes. And I think there's, sort of, there's an issue with that in the current discussions. We're not heroes, all of us, or all of them. But, actually, the absolute majority of the UK Armed Forces are very proud of their service, whether it's regular reserve or whether it's as a veteran.

And they're not all physically or mentally damaged by that service. I'm saying this to the Armed Forces I go around on my farewells this week. The very small proportion of people who have mental issues are now being given strong support through a number of packages that we've introduced this year and in previous years, building to a mental health support offer, and a physical health support offer, which, actually, I think many other nations not only are interested in, are learning from.

Rehabilitation this year, thanks to the generosity of the late Duke of Westminster, we're opening a new facility late this year, which will be the best military rehab centre in the world. No doubt. And that means we can not only get people back to work more quickly, but it means that we've got a physical and mental health offer for our Armed Forces that is second to none.

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And so if you put all that together, it's easy to see how you could be slightly cynical or overwhelmed by both the threat and risk picture, whether it's through financial concerns, Brexit concerns, other concerns. I'm not. We've got brilliant people. They're out doing great work. They're our best ambassadors. And they need the right equipment, which we've got in the equipment programme. They need the right structure in which to operate, and the right support from the country that should be more proud of them. Thank you.

DG Chief of the Defence Staff very kindly agreed to answer questions. Usual house rules: no questions too outrageous, and just have to state your name and organisation. Lady there.

DH Thank you. Deborah Haynes, from *The Times*. I imagine some other fellow journalists in this room will be feeling quite miffed about your comments, as I'm feeling, to do with the media coverage, and you sort of talk about the lack of coverage of standing tasks. That's because the Ministry of Defence does not give us access.

I've been asking since 2010 to visit the Trident community, for example, to be able to tell the public about the work that our submariners do. I know that Sky News and The Telegraph were given access to the QRA, and as a result, got good coverage about that.

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You as CDS have not given a single newspaper interview about your strategic vision for defence during your time in the job, which, frankly, is the first time a CDS has not done that. I think it's, you know, it's pretty unfair for you to come out and say that.

My question is about the NATO summit. You've obviously got that coming up. You've got a new NATO job. How worried are you that the whole rift between the US and the EU over steel tariffs, and also the, you know, the sort of the friction between Britain and the rest of the EU over, for example, the Galileo project and security, could overshadow this summit? Thank you.

SP There's a number of points there. I think the NATO summit is very important for the United Kingdom, speaking as a UK chief of the defence staff, and I don't think we've got anything to be shy about, because we do spend 2% of GDP on defence and 20% on equipment, which are the NATO guidelines, and everything we do is within the NATO guidelines.

In terms of the content of the summit, that is for NATO to discuss with the leadership, and of course, it will be a summit about the alliance. It won't necessarily be about all the issues that you raised in your question.

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As for my own position and my own access, I have given a number of press conferences during my time as the chief of the defence staff, and of course, I do my annual on-the-record address at the Royal United Services Institute, which I think you attended in both years. And I think our people are our best ambassadors, and you speak to them.

As for visits, we do enable visits, and we do provide media facilities in support of those visits. I think there was a media facility in Faslane last year, when the NATO team visited, including the secretary general.

So I do think we have to engage. I wasn't criticising the media. I was simply observing that the whole narrative of defence needs to give more prominence to the standing tasks, and that was my point. And the standing tasks are that which is the invisible blue out to keep the British people safe.

What I do ask you is to reflect on whether we've got the right interest level of how NATO is at the heart of UK defence, and how NATO delivers collective security to the UK, and how we paint that picture of UK leadership in NATO. And that, I think, is also about visits from journalists such as yourself to those NATO operations and missions exercises to continue to paint that picture.

DG Thank you. Questions.

AW Admiral West. In 1941, the Cabinet set up the Political Warfare Executive, which, by 1945, was huge.

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Its job was to establish hybrid warfare against the Axis, part of which was black propaganda. By 1945, it was, without a doubt, the most successful hybrid operation of any of the combatants in the Second World War.

Are we drawing on this, or is Putin drawing on this? And if we're drawing on this, how are we going to develop it, and particularly the black propaganda aspect of it, which, of course, I know from my time as CDI, we were not allowed to do propaganda? How are we going to be able to move that forward in what is clearly a very changed area?

I suppose the other thing I would say is that, we talk about hybrid as if it's new. It's not new. There's nothing new under the sun, is there, really? But I'd be interested in knowing that.

SP Thanks. And I think it's an interesting question. We're all rooted in history and geography, and indeed, everything you say, historically, is 100% correct. When we did go on that visit to Faslane, actually, one of the highlights of the day was Peter Hennessey's discourse on how the nuclear deterrent evolved. So I think the evolution of that form of thinking warfare probably does need more analysis in places like this or in other academic institutions here representing.

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I mean, as for the use of words and... Clearly, it's about, as my deputy has remarked publicly, information advantage. It's a safe formulation for what you've described. There's a role for the alliance there. There's a role for clubs, such as the Joint Expeditionary Force within the alliance there, like-minded nations. In the nation, there's definitely a role.

Again, something I don't think gets enough credit, perhaps, is the way in which we, as you know very well—in fact, you were one of the leaders for it—to try and integrate Armed Forces capability inside intelligence agencies, and now, vice versa, by the way, so that we've got a genuinely secret offer for the government of whatever hue.

It's important work. We're not going to talk about the detail. But it's about 1,000 of our servicemen and women, and it is a great deal of investment. I'm thinking, as we're speaking here, about our fusion centre at Witham, and one or two other places, where we contribute. We're not just taking from the agencies. And of course, all blended together through the Joint Intelligence Committee, which is very ably led at present.

So I do think we've got the structures right. Whether we could do more with other countries is my quest. Whether we can do more with open sources to make sure we're up to speed with what's going on in the world, from trusted and verified open sources, I'm appealing to our friends in the media to help us with

that, because I do think that's something which doesn't come naturally to that community.

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It's something where other countries, Estonia springs to mind, where they have a centre of excellence for this work, and I don't think we should be sniffy about that, if other people have got ways of doing it. This is a classic area where I do think modern and future technology, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, could be an even greater... We can take even greater advantage of in the future.

DG Gentleman over there, in the middle, towards the back. Yes. Name and organisation, please.

DB Yes. Thank you, CDS. This is David Bond, from the Financial Times. Although there seems to be agreement from the UK and the EU member states about the need for a shared defence deal after Brexit, the EC seems to be sticking to its redlines on things like Galileo, as we've seen, but also the EDF, and, perhaps, secondments, military secondments from the UK to Brussels. How worried are you about there not being a defence and security deal after Britain leaves lock? And what's your message to Brussels on that point?

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SP Personally, I've participated in every EU Military Committee event for chiefs of defence since I took over as CDS, so I have been present in Brussels for all this discussion, where it's appropriate to be at that level of committee work as defined in Brussels.

And I recognise what you say, but I don't agree entirely with it, in that I'm not going to enter the political arena. I would simply make two observations. The first is, at times like this, the military-to-military relationships matter more than ever. And so the role and the work of the EU Military Committee is the vital ground as we prepare for the Brexit.

And the history and geography of our nation doesn't change because of Brexit, and therefore, we have to find ways of working together with our European friends and partners. The Joint Expeditionary Force, by the way, is exactly that sort of way, and it's actually a good indicator of UK leadership for the future because it embraces many nations to our north, including both NATO and EU members.

And I don't know what the end game will look like. I will repeat what I said a few weeks ago in Brussels, in summary, to answer to your excellent question, which is: we have to find a way to keep the door open as structures evolve for third-party access. That's not just for the UK, but in this case, speaking as the UK chief of the defence staff, it is for the UK.

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We have to find that way, through our membership of military committees and other organisations, to keep the door open for continued access. And then it'd be for others, as the situation evolves, to determine that that looks like.

DG Can I just exercise chairman's privilege one second? You originally brought together, CDS, by... When you were head of Joint Forces Command, on the whole issue of the rise of lawfare, which eventually became two of our well-known publications, *The Fog of Law* and *Clearing the Fog of Law*. I just wondered, you've come to the end of your period in office here, just what your assessment is as to what progress has been made in that area, what the residual problems still are?

SP It is a good question. I don't think we need to be too frightened of the law. We abide by the law, both international and domestic, and we have extremely well-rehearsed procedures, which are judged externally and scrutinised to do so. We have legal branches in support of us on operations, who are well-prepared officers, men and women, from all three forces.

And so I don't think we should be frightened. I think your think tank has led the way in this description. And of course, international law, in particular, continues to evolve.

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And so we have to make sure our approach reflects both the evolution of international law and we abide by our civil law. And of course, it's also about discipline, in the end. You could dress it up with many clever phrases, but at the end of the day, I have the highest confidence in the discipline of the UK Armed Forces to abide by and follow the law.

DG Lots of questions. Gentleman there. I'm going to say, in the bow tie. Name and organisation.

AB Alex Baleno, King's College London, Department of War Studies. You spoke very eloquently about the importance of military-to-military operations in times of uncertainty. And in the last 30 years, outside the context of Europe, Japan was highlighted as one of Britain's key partners in the world. In light of global Britain, and the future and past, of Brexit, and the re-engagement with the world, how do you see that relationship evolving?

SP Which relationship?

AB Japan.

SP Well, I think we've gone from strength to strength. I have had meetings with—several meetings—with the Japanese chief of the defence staff, and both in Japan and in United Kingdom. We have a ministerial engagement. We have regular, now, visits and exercises. So I think it's stronger than it's ever been.

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And I was a part of this story when I was an officer following Admiral West as the chief of defence intelligence. So I think we have a strong bilateral relationship, which can take us further, in particular, with exercises and working together. What I've been struck by in that experience is, of course, actually, a very similar perspective on the world from the other side of the globe, similar latitude and so on, and therefore, I think there is more we can do together. It's a simple answer, actually. And a strong relationship.

DG Anyone else from this side? Gentleman there. Sorry, if we can just wait for the microphone. Sorry, wait for the microphone so we can... Others can hear.

MM Mark Marlesford, House of Lords. What progress is being made on changing the rules so that a fairer proportion of the cost of humanitarian operations by the Ministry of Defence is borne on the DFID budget? For example, wouldn't it have been sensible to have arranged that HMS Ocean could have been kept, which is a huge asset for humanitarian purposes?

SP Well, it is a subject which I've engaged on a number of times. I think the technical language behind your question, my lord, is, what proportion of... Can we access through overseas development aid funding, as opposed to non-overseas development aid funding? It's a live issue. It's case by case.

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We have argued and won from a Ministry of Defence perspective from time to time. I think referring to the way in which that is interpreted is a fair question, which will take away for another day and another place. But just to assure you that, actually, for many of our defence engagement missions in Africa and elsewhere, we work very closely with the Department for International Development to make sure that we do what you suggest. As for HMS Ocean, that's over. I'm afraid that past tense now.

DG Gentleman in the middle. Yes.

Jl John Ingham, Daily Express. I just wondered if you're in favour of a statute of limitations to prevent veterans being prosecuted decades after incidents, particularly if they've been cleared by earlier investigations? Thanks.

SP Thanks for the question. I mean, it's a very topical issue. That question as posed is a political decision. My position as chief of the defence staff is very clear. We in the Ministry of Defence will continue to support veterans with legal and other support, and that is absolutely an unequivocal and clear position.

If you ask me as Stuart Peach, as I depart as chief of the defence staff, I'm deeply uncomfortable about some of this, as to the way in which it could be interpreted, indeed, be viewed. And so I am uncomfortable with what's happening. It is for the

government to decide things like statute of limitations and how the law is understood and framed.

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But as chief of the defence staff, I'll just reiterate that all I'm allowed to do within my terms and conditions is to ensure, which I give you my word, that we do ensure that our veterans are properly supported if they are called forward for due process.

DG Other gentleman back there, in the middle.

PD Thank you. Philip Dunne, MP for Ludlow. CDS, during your time in office, you've been a champion of trying to introduce greater agility into the procurement process in order to drive through the innovation that you've been talking about this morning. Do you think, as part of your legacy, there's been enough progress made in ensuring that the MoD can bring forward new capability quick enough, before it becomes legacy on introduction?

SP Thank you, Philip. It's a good question. I mean, obviously, I'm disappointed in some parts, and I'm pleased in others, so whatever that's called these days. It used to be called a curate's egg, whatever it's called now. And so I think we've now introduced much better oversight for requirements going forward. I'm pretty pleased with that.

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And that does scrutinize some of the more outlandish requirements we used to set, which gets at the heart for your question about ensuring that things don't become legacy on arrival.

Secondly, I've given very clear direction on arrival to the new chief exec at DNS to work much more frequently, even aggressively, with small and medium concerns, and get more sort of oxygen of innovation from smaller companies, through the system.

Thirdly, I do think the Modernising Defence Programme is an absolute opportunity to reduce some of the bureaucracy that we've invented ourselves. It's not invented internationally, and it's not been actually copied by many other nations. So I do think we can definitely review the number of checks and balances that, over the years, we've accrued, accreted and decided upon.

DG Gentleman there. Front row. Second row. Yes.

MF Thank you.

DG Name and organisation.

MF Thank you. Mark Francois, from the House of Commons Defence Committee. Stuart, thank you for an excellent speech, and good luck in the new job. Can I just push you a bit further on this issue of investigations of veterans?

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And I do say because a number of us on the Defence Select Committee are now extremely concerned about how this is playing out in practice, and the idea that, you know, what a young man did in a ditch in Crossmaglen in 1971 is now going to be played over and pulled over nearly 50 years later, partly at the behest of Sinn Fein. So is there any more, as the head of our professional Armed Forces, that you can say about that, and about what political support you'd like to see your political masters give to try and stop those people being scapegoated?

SP Well, I think I've already made my position clear. I'm quite uncomfortable about this. It isn't just one place, either. Actually, of course, the way we... Through common law, the way this could play out makes me discomfited as well as uncomfortable about the plight that veterans might find themselves in.

But all I am allowed to say or do is what I've said, which is, 100%, it's called the Operational Legacy Support Team, which is hardly an existing title, but at least it's a thing, and it exists, and they are there to do that support. And my message is, all veterans need to reach out to the Ministry of Defence should they feel they need that support. It's a simple message.

DG Lady in the middle row.

00:38:48

AR Thank you very much. Amber Rudd, member of parliament for Hastings and Rye. Last year, we had five terrorist attacks, and in at least two of them, the Armed Forces played a crucial role, both in terms of backfilling for the police, where we went from a level of severe to critical, and in terms of expertise from the SAS. I think this is unusual, internationally, for having that successful relationship, where the Armed Forces move with such confidence into those roles.

Could you tell us, as you leave, whether you think we have the right processes in place, and whether you think there's anything we should be doing to improve on that relationship, which is so important for addressing terrorist attacks?

SP Thank you. Of course, the way in which we respond to terrorism is in support of the government, and we completely understand, because of our history, policy primacy. And therefore, the heart of our offer, through the Armed Forces to government, is that understanding. And in other countries, for reasons of history, that's sometimes a bit difficult.

The important point in your question, from my perspective as CDS, is the ability in government, through the appropriate governance process, such as Cobra and others, to National Security Council if necessary, to decide to employ the Armed Forces in that role. I would argue, as I depart, it's equally important to decide to recall the Armed Forces from that role. One or two of our allies have ended up being quite fixed by a permanent presence.

00:40:25

So I think our procedures and processes are pretty good. We can always learn. Each time, just to reassure you, anything happens, and tragically, it has happened recently, during my time, we do have a thorough lessons process, and there are always little ways in which we can improve.

I'm pleased that the army's standing joint command down in Andover works very well, and I was there yesterday, and I'm pretty happy with that. For the maritime environment, the Navy Command links at Northwood work very well with both the Coastguard and other interested parties. With the air force, at High Wycombe, very strong procedures for the air defence of Great Britain from whatever threat it faces.

So, actually, I think it's a pretty good model. And of course, it's something that I do talk about with other countries, albeit their context is different. So we can always learn. I think, sometimes, what I would say is a personal lesson is, when we move away from the police we always deal with, which, obviously, tends to be the major cities, then it gets a little bit less common, and maybe we need to exercise in a slightly wider way.

And when we get away in parts of government, from areas of government we're comfortable with dealing with on a daily basis, then, again, departments of local government and so on, and municipal level, then, obviously, it can be overfaced.

00:41:51

So one of the things I discussed yesterday with the army is making sure we have a method by which through the regional command structure, we can engage with skill down at the appropriate level for the incident, wherever it may take place. So I do think there's a geography to what I'm saying in answer to your question, which is, we need to sort of have a slightly bigger picture than we're just used to, focused on London.

DG Gentleman there, just in front of the camera. Name and organisation, please.

BG Thank you. Ben Glaze, from the Daily Mirror. You've spoken about the importance of engineering, and also the importance of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary to Royal Navy operations. I'm just wondering whether you think the new fleet support ships to the RFA should be built in this country?

SP That's a decision taken by some of the processes that Mr Dunne has just asked me about. It's not a decision taken by the chief of the defence staff. But the serious question is, of course, we've spent a lot of money on building ships in this country, and we have a national shipbuilding strategy, and we have... The classic is the Type 31 future general purpose frigate competition, running as I speak, which is open to try and breathe some oxygen through that strategy into our system. So that's my answer. I mean, it is a fair process.

00:43:11

And of course, I would also say that the Royal Navy... I was down with the Royal Navy to say farewell. The recapitalisation programme for the Royal Navy is very, very impressive. And of course, it includes future support ships. But I do stand by my strong support for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, and all the other civil servants that support both the fleet and the Armed Forces.

DG Gentleman on the right there, in the back. You've been waiting patiently.

JB CDS, I just wanted to ask you...

DG Name and organisation.

JB Yes, sorry. Jonathan Beale, BBC. I wanted to ask you about, in your new job, obviously, relations with Russia will be key. You know, we've seen what many believe to be an attack by Russia in this country recently. You have highlighted the threat from Russia.

I just wondered if you felt uncomfortable with some of the rhetoric being used against Russia at the moment? What sort of language do you think, what sort of tone should this country adopt when dealing with Russia, given that, you know, when you go to NATO, the message is that the door is open, and you want discussions, you want a relationship of some kind.

00:44:25

SP Well, the NATO-Russia Council, in its existence... I'm speaking today, Jonathan, as the chief of the defence staff UK. Inappropriate for me to speak today as the chairman-designate. So the NATO-Russia Council is an existing body, and it continues to meet. It's then for the secretary general to determine which of its senior officers engages with the Russians. I'm not prescribed from doing so, so I look forward to that opportunity.

And I simply observe that Mr Churchill's dictum of, jaw-jaw is better than war-war, is appropriate. And we do need a sense of balance in the conversation, and we need to study Russia as much as talk about Russia. And as the chief of the defence staff UK, I can assure you we have stepped up both the number of Russian linguists and the amount of understanding of Russia, and I think that you would welcome that from the tone of your question.

So we have to engage from a position of understanding, and that we must continue to prepare the Armed Forces to do.

DG Gentleman there. Name and organisation.

JS Lord Sterling, P&O. CDS, ever since...

DG Could you hold the mic nearer?

00:45:42

JS Ever since you were vice defence, and your present role, although you're wearing light blue everybody has always respected you've looked after defence in the round.

Coming up to the NATO meeting on 11 and 12 July, there are many of us in both houses, and many people have done a lot of research, feel that if we don't make it very clear then that we are re-engaging, we'd probably need a bigger force, bigger capability, which will be highly respected in Europe following Brexit, our American friends, and of course, the Commonwealth, that in actual fact, that's the moment to remind people that Britain is back, we need more money.

SP Thank you for the question. I'm very proud of the role that the UK plays in support of the NATO alliance. We have almost 10,000 members of the Armed Forces on NATO operations, major exercises. We continue to play a leading role. The Modernising Defence Programme outcome is a matter for the government to announce, and how that is played. I would simply observe that the UK is a leading defence player in Europe, and whichever way you cut the numbers, we remain in that position.

DG Time getting short. Just a couple of more questions. Lady at the front. Name and organisation.

00:47:05

LB Thank you. Larisa Brown, from the *Daily Mail*. The defence secretary, his ministers, and the service chiefs, have all made a strong case for why the Armed Forces needs more money. And I was just wondering, do you think they should be prepared to resign if the present government doesn't give them more cash? And also, you talked about medical conditions being relaxed. Could you just sort of expand a little bit on what that would look like, and why you think that's necessary? Thank you.

SP I was being specific about cyber, and I was being specific about people who help us with these new missions, such as cyber, who do not deploy. So these are for people who sit in places where it's appropriate to do that work, maybe with support of the agencies who sit in non-deployable roles and positions, and I think it's something we need to look at.

And the point of my remark was, it's the skills we're after, and that's the point, and that's what we need to focus on, it's people's skills. And of course we need the Armed Forces to be fit and deployable, and of course, they are the regular force, and the reserve force, and sponsored reserves. And as to the other half of your question, that is a matter for them. And of course, as you say, this is an ongoing process, as I've just answered Lord Sterling.

DG Just we'll take a last question. There's a clutch. Gentleman there.

00:48:41

DW Hi. David Willetts, from The Sun. I'm just wondering, as you leave this post, is there any area, personal area, of unfinished business that you may have any sense of regret over, when you came into the CDS job, that you wanted to solve or you wanted to fix, that maybe hasn't gone to plan, or something that you feel... Yes, any sense of personal, maybe, potential, regret?

DG And one other gentleman there. Yes. Gentleman there. And that's the last.

JK James Kidner, from Improbable. We're a technology start-up, doing large-scale simulation. You touched on this in your talk, the challenge of balancing narrative with nostalgia. I have university-aged children, and I've encouraged them that a career in the Armed Forces is a good thing. Can you give me some tips on how to point them in that direction, that isn't too nostalgic and fatherly?

SP Is that it?

DG Yes.

SP Okay. Well, one of the things is that my frustration, which I don't think I'm lying if I say it publicly, is that the bureaucracy is like a super tanker. It takes a long time to turn. But as I said in answer to the question from Mr Dunne, actually, we have changed some of the committee structure stuff, and I won't see the benefit, but the super tanker is turning.

00:49:56

A particular frustration of mine is, we should be able to drag technology to the front line more quickly. There are some fantastic science and young people in defence who have great ideas, and I am frustrated it takes a long time to turn them into things on the battlefield. And I would do all I can and continue to try and push for that in the future, to try and speed that up; partly, as I said earlier, bringing more oxygen to small companies.

In terms of attractiveness. So it has to be fun as well. And that's one of the reasons I made the point about, we're not all heroes, and we're not all broken by service, because we don't want to put people off. But we have to make the offer attractive. Adventure training is not illegal, you know, just as civil servants are not overheads. So, actually, we have to make... Service in the Armed Forces has to be fun.

One of the interesting things is, of course, although we don't have large garrisons overseas now, perhaps, other than Cyprus, we do have a lot of overseas activity. Perhaps, we need to make a bit more of that. And certainly, I know the Royal Navy will sort of lead the way there. The Royal Navy is still very much a global-facing service.

Valedictory Address as Chief of the Defence Staff | A speech by Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach for Policy Exchange, 5 June 2018

So, really, it's about making the offer attractive so that the generation that we need to recruit for the future, the force I've tried to highlight inelegantly this morning, finds that an attractive place to be.

00:51:26

And I am old enough to acknowledge that it doesn't necessarily need to be for 40 years. That is an absolutely rare experience. And also, and I really do emphasise this because it is a change which, I think, some find... Some of the retired community find difficult, we have to accept that people can go in and out, and there's nothing wrong with that. There seems to be a sense that it's wrong. I don't think it's wrong at all. And that may make us more attractive to engineers and to other people who have got curious minds for the future.

So let's make that step to make us more attractive. I'm tempted... There's too many journalists to say what I'm really tempted to say to David Willetts' question, because there's something about... Wasn't there a famous Hollywood producer, when he was asked the same question, said, I wish I was taller? That's what you'll now all tweet.

DG Thank you. I'm sorry if I disappointed anyone. But on behalf of Policy Exchange, everyone here, I just wanted to thank you for your willingness to engage in dialogue, your willingness to articulate your vision, and I'm sure everyone will join you and wish you all the very best as the first British chairman of NATO Military Committee over a quarter century.

00:52:43

SP Thank you.

00:52:52