

**AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION**

I was privileged to be in the audience on 24 February at the International Institute of Strategic Studies when Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff, gave a lecture on “Delivering Defence Today and Tomorrow: The Maritime Contribution”. 1SL’s fellow Chiefs (the Heads of the Army and Royal Air Force) have also given similar addresses. These should not be seen as an inter Service ding dong as portrayed by some sections of the press but rather as contributing to IISS’s laudable efforts to stimulate national debate on the future of UK Defence. You will see that 1SL makes mention of his colleagues’ speeches and endorses points each of them have made. I also invite readers to note two of Admiral Stanhope’s main points: the need to strive for greater utility from the forces and capabilities we do have and that maritime forces benefit from unique attributes that can help us do exactly that. I hope Shipmates get as much benefit from reading the speech as I did from hearing it.

**1SL GREEN PAPER SPEECH: IISS 24 FEB 10**

**“DELIVERING DEFENCE TODAY AND TOMORROW: THE MARITIME CONTRIBUTION”**

Good evening and thank you for making the time to join me this evening. I’d like to thank the International Institute for Strategic Studies for this opportunity to add my voice to the ongoing debate about the future of security and Defence in this country.

I am going to spend the next 30 minutes or so making a number of observations which build on the Defence Green Paper published earlier this month, and which resonate with the many well-informed observations made by my fellow Service Chiefs. Like them, I welcome the Green Paper, which makes a valuable contribution to the ongoing national debate about Defence in language that appeals **less to emotion and more to reason**.

There are two points that I’d like you to take away from this evening.

**The first** is the need to strive for greater utility from the forces and capabilities we do have and **the second** is that maritime forces benefit from unique attributes that can help us to do exactly that.

So let me address my first point. **We must strive to maximise the utility of all of our Armed Forces.**

You all know very well the dilemma which Defence faces – support to the Main Effort in Afghanistan, while meeting other standing commitments, at the same time as preparing for an uncertain future against a back drop of significant public debt.

As the Green Paper recognises, if we are to resolve that dilemma, our Armed Forces need to be much more adaptable and better able to operate alongside

others, military and governmental, UK and multinational. To my mind, that means, among other things, a continued emphasis on joint operations at every step of our development of military capabilities: doctrine, training, equipment, support, you name it.

Moreover, our forces must progress those capabilities necessary for wide **employability** across a spectrum of tasks which contribute as much to “Building Security” as they play into traditional notions of “Defence.” **UK Armed Forces are and will continue doing more than conducting combat operations.** Just as we are now, we can expect in future to remain involved in operations spanning the entire spectrum of military activity, including - but not confined to - combat operations.

Let me be clear here - our credibility and therefore effectiveness in these other tasks rests fundamentally upon our ability to fight and win in war. This must remain the bench mark against which we train and invest in technology, to procure and develop high-end military capability.

Competition between powerful states is already a feature of our post Cold War world, as we shift from the uni-polar dominance of the United States to multi-polar influence and power. Competition for resources can only exacerbate the situation. We would be wrong to assume that states will no longer wage war, just as it is short-sighted to ignore the likelihood of such wars engaging the UK’s global interests, whether directly or indirectly.

But our forces need to be able to do much **more than simply achieve kinetic effect** if they are to contribute effectively to UK security and defence in the uncertain world of tomorrow. Afghanistan and Iraq have reminded us of the limitations of destructive force when it comes to achieving mission success in complex environments. **We should be prepared for a wide range of operations, and be prepared for them to make long-term demands on our military resources.**

**Our Forces must be deployable – and able to stay deployed** - for as long as it takes to build the security needed to create the conditions for peace and stability. That must in future include more than being held in readiness and then deploying to respond to a crisis. We need to recognise that reactive operations may in some circumstances be too little, too late. We should be aiming to develop Armed Forces which are deployed to the areas where we most value stability, able to reassure, build trust and capacity, through engaging in conventional deterrence activity.

**My second point is derived from that analysis. It is that maritime forces benefit from unique attributes** which allow them to be used, not only

operationally to fight, on land, sea and in the air, all over the world, but also strategically to contain and prevent conflict from happening in the first place.

Such wide utility is a consequence of the global reach and enduring presence that are the characteristics of such forces. They can deliver a range of effects on behalf of a Government seeking choice in its means of response to a developing threat to UK interests, whether a warship acting alone or as part of a multinational joint task force.

This country's Naval Service is **inherently flexible and able to integrate with our sister services, allies and other partners.**

None of this is easy. It takes considerable time, training, resource and effort to achieve, and we are always looking for ways to improve our effectiveness and interoperability, but it does bring powerful results. Maritime forces are constantly engaged in shaping and setting the conditions which facilitate the work of others. They can **also** enhance the contribution of others. I firmly believe that maritime forces **have a vital role to play in** contributing to the delivery of the Defence mission in the unpredictable world of tomorrow.

The Chiefs agree that the future operating environment will be complex, unpredictable and dangerous. There are implications for the types of military capability we think we will need, and the future size and shape of our Armed Forces.

For all the Services, I envisage that will mean an emphasis on agility over sheer weight of numbers, and the ability to more effectively tailor forces and capabilities for a specific mission.

I also think that our dependence on information dominance will become more critical to success, with intelligence gathering focussed increasingly on delivering insights about how to affect the will or behaviour of adversaries - and others - in the battle space.

That in turn relies on the ability to fuse data from many different sources, under-pinned by deeper cultural understanding.

Perhaps, if we can increase warning times through greater information dominance – and by that I mean everything from ISTAR capability to maintaining an enduring presence in regions of interest to the UK – we can make informed decisions on the readiness at which we hold our forces, even in the uncertain world of tomorrow.

There has been talk of a paradigm shift in how we do business, and suggestions of another revolution in military affairs. I favour evolution over revolution, but I agree that we need to look again with a critical eye - and imaginatively - at how the military is used to support the country's security and defence. Again, this is already common ground. To my way of thinking, the issue is **how we can better focus the way we use our Armed Forces to achieve strategic goals.**

Our soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen are professional, committed and incredibly capable - but that capability comes at a cost.

It follows that we should be prepared to use these high calibre individuals – all of them – not only in fighting wars where to do so becomes necessary to protect the national interest, but also much more widely in setting the conditions for stability, with an emphasis on supporting a conflict prevention strategy. It is about promoting the interests and values which our society stands for, as much as protecting those interests and values.

As I suggested when I spoke in the City last month, that means that we need forces that are more flexible: **able to adapt** to new conditions, more **widely employable** and more **widely deployable**. We need to make sure we have the right people, optimised for the front line, but with a broad range of competencies to be used imaginatively when required. They need to be able to operate as effective contributors to the work of the other Services, Government Departments and our multinational partners.

And we will need to better understand the situations we are deploying them into, regardless of our preconceptions about an operation. That way, we can better shape the outcomes at the operational level in order to support the political ends that are the foundations of strategic success.

Let me give you a few examples of how maritime forces contribute to what Defence can do at the strategic and operational levels.

In so doing, I hope to show you that **maritime forces possess the attributes of flexibility and interoperability that are at a premium in Defence thinking and which are the themes underpinning the Green Paper.**

Consider the events in the late spring of the year 2000. I then had the privilege of commanding HMS ILLUSTRIOUS, the aircraft carrier, which had embarked onboard 7 Fleet Air Arm Sea Harriers and 6 Harriers from the Royal Air Force. In early May, ILLUSTRIOUS and her air group, along with HMS OCEAN and her Amphibious Ready Group, were diverted from tasking in the Mediterranean to Sierra Leone, following an urgent request from the UN for

assistance in bolstering a fast-deteriorating security situation in Freetown. There, the Government was under threat from insurgents of the Revolutionary United Front and the West Side Boys. The US and France, the **only** other nations with the Rapid Reaction Forces able to deploy serious military muscle globally, had declined to help the UN. This was, after all, a Western military intervention in a civil war in Sub Saharan Africa, not to be undertaken lightly.

In fact, the British military intervention there was a success. The mandate was unambiguous, and the intervention was focussed in its aims and its scale. The initial insertion by air of a spearhead battalion from the Parachute Regiment was very quickly backed up with combat power from the sea in the shape of a Naval Task Group.

The carrier-borne strike capability, in the shape of the Harriers, provided an airborne presence in support of the joint force ashore, and the Amphibious Group's Support Helicopters were able to deliver and re-supply the troops, alongside the air bridge into Lungi airport. Our Royal Marines were on hand to relieve the initial spearhead element as the mission developed.

In Sierra Leone, a country with close links to the UK, the intervention of a major power was the catalyst to change the situation on the ground, create a pause in the fighting, preserve the Government and set the security conditions to allow the UN to continue its mandate. The UK's standing was enhanced as a result.

The Combined Joint Task Force for that operation was commanded by my close colleague, David Richards.

As Chief of the General Staff, David shares my understanding of the benefits of a balanced force, just as he has seen first hand how that range of capabilities offers strategic choice to Government, as well as increasing the military options available to Force Commanders.

My points are these:

Firstly, all 3 Services had their part to play in countering this particular insurgency – just as they do in Afghanistan - and all contributed to the ultimate success of the mission. Mission success and a balanced suite of military capabilities tend to go hand in hand.

Secondly, all conflicts are inevitably different, as are the scope and duration of the UK's engagement in each conflict.

Thirdly, a capable navy with a global presence not only supported the operation, but also shaped it. Maritime power played its part in allowing a relatively small force of ground troops to achieve superiority in critical areas of our choosing.

If you want agile forces, able to be tailored for a specific mission, if you want them to be sustained and supported from a position of security, then maritime forces can make an important contribution. Where you are operating in territory that has a coast, or is accessible from the sea, the sea control and sea denial that maritime forces deliver are a pre-requisite for operational success.

I want to stress that, because it resonates with a similar point made by the Chief of the Air Staff when he spoke here a few weeks ago. He warned that we should guard against the presumption that air superiority is a given. I agree. Equally, we should not assume that sea control can be easily achieved or maintained, particularly against State adversaries with advanced sub-surface capabilities, or indeed in areas where asymmetric swarm attack by less sophisticated opponents may be the major threat.

To prevail, to establish the sea control needed for success, we will continue to need the ability to meet these sorts of threats with confidence and the right equipment and training.

In considering the utility of maritime forces, I could also mention Iraq in 2003, when the Royal Marines were landed from the sea into the Al Faw peninsula as the spearhead force there. Or the initial attacks in Afghanistan in the wake of 9/11, when our submarines launched cruise missile attacks on Al Qaeda positions, while delivery of initial entry forces came courtesy of our carriers at sea. And you will know by now that the Naval Service has been an enduring presence, in Iraq and Afghanistan throughout, **where their adaptability is widely recognised.**

The Royal Marines are as much at home in the Green Zone as they are in boarding teams in the Gulf; Fleet Divers are conducting bomb disposal operations alongside their Army engineer colleagues; and the Fleet Air Arm is using its maritime surveillance capabilities to track and target the Taliban, no longer free from detection as they move across the deserts. 40 Commando returns to Afghanistan in a month's time, as does 3 Commando Brigade next year.

The Naval Service commitment endures, even in this land-locked country.

In all those examples, there has been and remains an important role for sea based air power and our versatile amphibious forces. In fact, since the end of the Cold War, these important maritime capabilities have never been more in demand, testament to the enduring utility that these forces bring, whatever role is demanded of them.

When crises demand a response which includes a military contribution, maritime forces will inevitably be intelligence gathering from the early stages, conducting reconnaissance covertly and improving situational awareness for other forces. We will usually be the first to arrive and the last to leave. We can provide a protected sea base from which to operate. We can provide mobile launch platforms for our forces. We can limit the political and military liability of operations by protecting and controlling the maritime flank. We can integrate with other maritime and littoral forces. We can get land forces where they need to be, and then support them: combat air support, helicopters, logistics, medical, you name it. And we are there to recover those forces, too.

And our presence in the first place, engagement without entanglement, may be a sufficient enough demonstration of intent and deterrence to prevent the need for final engagement.

Developing my theme on adaptability, I should also say something about the **Naval Service's ability and track record in working in partnership with others**, whether in the joint arena or within coalitions, whatever the mission.

The Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary routinely operate alongside other agencies and partners, both nationally and internationally. It is what navies do. We have direct links with 35 nations in all the UK's main regions of interest, and we operate and exercise with many more, within established alliances like NATO, and beyond.

Our contribution to the EU Naval Force mission to protect World Food Programme shipping from piracy sees us operating alongside navies from India to China, Pakistan to Singapore. You won't see military cooperation like that outside of the maritime domain.

In the Gulf and Caribbean, we work with law enforcement agencies, national and multinational, to intercept illegal drugs and other smuggling. **HMS IRON DUKE and HMS CUMBERLAND, working with our partners, last year intercepted drugs worth more than £70 Million.** The US and France, among other key allies, are close alongside us in all of this maritime security activity, which is fundamentally aimed at preserving regional stability, preventing conflict and ensuring the free passage of trade.

Working in partnerships also has an important domestic dimension for us. The Royal Navy continues to safeguard the integrity of UK Territorial Waters, to provide counter terrorism support to the Home Office, to protect shipping, ports and offshore energy platforms, undertake inspection and enforcement action on behalf of the Marine and Fisheries Agency and conduct Search and Rescue operations around our coast. We are one of many contributors to the concept of UK maritime security, a team game which involves many stakeholders. We are improving our military support to security in the process, especially in the context of homeland defence: I have seen, first hand, the success of initiatives such as the programme of integrated exercises with other UK agencies, which have underpinned the development of robust, responsive Command and Control arrangements to ensure our security against a range of sea-borne threats to our national infrastructure.

While the unique access and persistent presence we can offer doesn't change, just as the oceans are an enduring strategic feature of the world we inhabit, the Naval Service remains committed to change. We are leveraging technology and innovation to deliver against our growing range of tasks, while preserving and developing the capabilities we will need for tomorrow.

At the same time, we are working with all of our partners, military and non-military, from the UK and further afield, to better understand what they might require of us in the future.

In the Navy's experience of operating within a multinational and inter-agency framework, it is about working together all the time to build trust and effective cooperation. That is not something you can do overnight with spearhead forces. It is about having your forces deployed, out on the beat, having an effect. That, of course, is also what navies do.

However, there is still much to do, and we don't pretend to have all the answers.

A key issue, as I have already mentioned, will be our understanding of how Defence can contribute to conflict prevention as part of its role in a wider Security construct.

In this, I would say that the key questions we will be facing as a consequence, both within each of the Services and from a collegiate perspective, are likely to reflect three issues:

Firstly, what do you want to defend and what are the Standing Commitments for Defence?

This is the fundamental strategic policy issue for Government. Clearly, those ambitions and commitments will dictate not only the capabilities that Defence will require, but also the scale and readiness at which those capabilities will be held.

Secondly, we need to have a clear idea about what we as a country would aspire to do on our own.

We should not assume that our interests will always be synchronous with the interests of others, even allies of long standing. There may be occasions where we have no choice but to act alone, particularly where the threat is to exclusively UK interests. The answer to that question will dictate the breadth of the military capabilities we should have, or which we should be able to access.

Third, where the UK is operating as a coalition member, how do we want to influence our partners?

Should we rely on the mass of forces we can offer to support a mission or Campaign? Or can we influence outcomes and the planning or conduct of an operation in more effective ways? For example, through the provision of niche or high-skill military capabilities? And do we aspire to lead coalitions in the future?

The issues, as you can appreciate, involve more than simply making a choice between land forces or carrier-based air power. It's not about tanks versus jet fighters. It is about deciding where the balance of investment should lie, judged against this country's vital national interests, and the ambition this nation sets, both for itself, and for Defence.

Less newsworthy, but no less fundamental, is the need to improve efficiencies in how Defence does its business. If we are to maintain the operational capabilities so necessary for success – and I am convinced that is where we need to focus - we have to look again at the structure, processes and manning of the support mechanisms, the teeth to tail ratio.

This is not easy to do, but it seems to me essential that those areas highlighted in the Green Paper are fully scrutinised in any future Defence Review.

For example, key reforms in how we plan for and procure the equipment required to deliver the capabilities we will need must be a given, as the Bernard Gray Report<sup>1</sup> has already made clear.

The Defence Review, when it comes, must stay focussed on maintaining and developing military capabilities – and I am equally clear that we must seek to maintain a balance of capabilities across our forces. In the challenging resource climate we face, this balance and the dilemmas therein, highlighted by the Green Paper, deserve and will receive close scrutiny, I am sure.

From the maritime perspective, the ability to defend our nation and interests across the globe relies on a force structure that can provide the essential framework through which our range of capabilities can be delivered and supported. Expeditionary operations, as I have illustrated, are facilitated by our ability to flexibly deliver air power, tailored to the mission, from the sea.

But we also need to deliver effect onto the land in other ways, if we are to reserve to ourselves real choice in the means and methods of responding to situations affecting our security and interests – amphibious forces, submarine-launched Land Attack Cruise Missiles and the enablers that ensure the conditions for success on operations; submarines, frigates, destroyers, support shipping and mine counter measures vessels. When not involved in conflict, these forces are kept very busy across the world, protecting and promoting the UK's interests on a daily basis.

Regardless of where or how we fight, our focus must inevitably always be the same: defence of the realm, security of our people and the protection of the national interest. In the final analysis, we need to be prepared for whatever the future might throw at us. The Navy is prepared, and is delivering, every day. I believe that maritime forces also have a vital role to play in delivering this country's defence and security into the future, in delivering choices for the Government, as much as in delivering firepower when required.

As I said a moment ago, I don't have all the answers. The Green Paper outlines a number of questions that have moved forward the debate about Defence and which will prompt further analysis and work. I look forward to continuing to work closely with my fellow Service Chiefs in addressing those issues. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Review of Acquisition for the Secretary of State for Defence: an Independent Report by Bernard Gray , October 2009.