

Stop-Press! Scribblings

UP FRONT WITH THE NEWS that interests communicators, Scribblings, the Pen & Sword Club Journal, will adopt a three-part format in future. Starting with this December 2020 edition there will be three sections

Stop-Press: bringing the very latest news just before publication.

Mainstream: The thrust of the Journal covering the political, military, procurement, strategic and tactical and cyber and media warfare debates: plus, club updates and member activity.

Review: Lessons learned, updates on past operations and conflicts, historical facts relating to the profession and a look back on media operations and psy ops in past decades.



Boris Johnson pledges £16bn military spending spree

By Lucy Fisher, Defence Editor, The Times November 19 2020

BORIS JOHNSON has pledged to end Britain's "era of retreat" with the largest investment in the military since the Cold War and plans for a new space command and artificial intelligence agency. The prime minister will reveal a four-year funding settlement for the Ministry of Defence today, worth an additional £16.5 billion. This is aimed at transforming the armed forces and bolstering global influence. It will address a shortfall of up to £13 billion in the military's existing ten-year equipment plan, while funding investment in a series of novel technologies and initiatives.

A long-delayed national cyberforce will be established alongside the new space command, which will be capable of launching its first rocket by 2022. The cyberforce, a joint unit between the MoD and GCHQ, will help to protect Britons at home from cyberattack but will also deploy offensive capabilities against adversaries.

Efforts to improve Britain's satellite defences will be pioneered by the space command.

This week a senior military commander raised concerns about Chinese and Russian moves to develop anti-space weapons and warned that an attack on navigation satellite signals would cost Britain £1 billion a day. The AI agency is expected to develop autonomous weapons systems.

At least £1.5 billion of the additional cash will be allocated to military research and development, taking the total to £5.8 billion. It will focus on advances in drone and aviation technology that could offer civilian as well as military applications.

- **Tempest, the UK-led programme to develop a sixth-generation fighter jet, will also receive a tranche of the money. The various projects will create up to 10,000 jobs, Downing Street said.**

Rishi Sunak, the chancellor, who had pushed for a single-year agreement because of economic uncertainty, signed off the deal after intense wrangling with the prime minister in a meeting on Tuesday. Mr Johnson said last night: "I have taken this decision in the teeth of the pandemic because the defence of the realm must come first."

The settlement reflected the need to upgrade military capabilities "across the board" amid an international situation "more perilous" than at any time in the past three decades, he said. "This is our chance to end the era of retreat, transform our armed forces, bolster our global influence."

Defence analysts said that the settlement was more generous than anticipated but some warned that hard choices would still be needed. Although the money is agreed, details of the government's strategy for foreign, defence, development and security policy will be finalised in the new year. The integrated review, which draws the strands together, is expected to be published at the end of January.

- **In a signal of what is to come, No 10 warned that the threat from adversaries had evolved since the Cold War and Britain's enemies were operating in increasingly sophisticated ways. Downing Street said: "Rather than being confined to some distant battlefield, those that seek to do harm to our people can reach them through the mobile phones in their pockets or the computers in their homes."**

The money is in addition to a manifesto commitment to a real-terms increase in the defence budget of 0.5 per cent above inflation for every year of this parliament. In total the MoD budget is forecast to rise in cash terms by £24.1 billion over the next four years, compared with last year's budget.

Upgrading the military will form a pillar of Mr Johnson's plan to "build back better" from coronavirus by creating jobs and will underpin a drive to defend free societies around the world. It is also designed to cement Britain's status as the largest defence spender in Europe and the second largest in NATO. This raises Britain's chances of remaining the favoured military partner of the United States, ahead of France.

Malcolm Chalmers, deputy director-general of the Royal United Services Institute, said of the settlement: "It is a remarkable tribute to the persuasive powers of the Ministry of Defence. It's particularly striking that the government is prepared to make such a significant investment in defence at a time of great fiscal uncertainty."

Francis Tusa, editor of Defence Analysis, said that it risked "rewarding bad management". "The black hole is not a Treasury problem, it's an MoD problem — and they need to deal with it," he said. Programmes may need to be cut and personnel numbers fall to fund the modernisation, he added.

Boris Johnson's intervention helps secure spending victory for UK military chiefs

By Helen Warrell and George Parker, *Financial Times*, November 18 2020

UK DEFENCE CHIEFS are to be awarded a multi-year budget settlement to help pay for drones and other new military technology after prime minister Boris Johnson intervened to negotiate with the Treasury on their behalf.



The new funding agreement is the result of weeks of tense discussions between Downing Street, the Treasury and the Ministry of Defence.

It comes after Chancellor Rishi Sunak's decision last month to cancel his comprehensive spending review and instead award government departments a one-year settlement while he assesses the full economic impact of coronavirus.

The settlement could be as much as £16.5bn extra over four years, according to people close to the discussions. The defence budget is just under £41.5bn for the period 2020/21. The government is expected to set out details of the settlement shortly.

Mr Johnson secured a last-minute exemption for defence a week after he promised US president-elect Joe Biden that Britain was determined to remain a valuable military ally. The spending package is expected to be a big boost for the Royal Navy, which Mr Johnson regards as a highly visible representation of his foreign policy, with a crucial role in protecting trade routes.

Mr Johnson's emphasis on "a maritime strategy" has delighted the Navy, which will step up its role around the world and in patrolling domestic waters, where the search for illegal migrants and defusing potential fisheries disputes could be among its duties.



The deal he agreed with Ben Wallace, defence secretary, on Tuesday is seen as relatively generous at a time when other departments are facing tough spending controls. Senior government officials have warned that new forecasts for the public finances will be "dire".

Treasury officials confirmed there had been "robust discussions" with Mr Wallace and that the settlement was "obviously a lot of money". However, they said the deal had

been "collectively agreed" with the prime minister and defence secretary.

Military chiefs have repeatedly argued that a one-year settlement could increase waste by allowing continued funding of programmes that are due to be cut in the longer term and would prevent more ambitious investments in new space and cyber operations. The MoD has also lobbied hard for dedicated funds to pay for upgrades to its Trident nuclear deterrent.

The department's financial problems have been compounded by a £13bn hole in its 10-year equipment plan, which it says cannot be plugged without a settlement that is guaranteed over several years. The prime minister's election manifesto promised to increase core defence spending by at least 0.5 per cent above inflation every year of the parliament.

Mr Wallace, who is a long-term political ally of Mr Johnson, appears to have argued successfully that his department should receive special treatment. "They have an underrated alliance — it's proving rather stronger than you might think," said one person close to the budget discussions.

The chancellor reluctantly agreed that a multi-year settlement was justified on the basis of securing jobs for people working on military projects and to ensure there was no disruption to projects that were already in train.

Mr Johnson told Mr Biden on November 10 that he looked forward to working with him when he becomes president. Downing Street said the two leaders were committed “to building on this partnership in the years ahead, in areas such as trade and security — including through NATO”. The prime minister is keen to make the case for a strong role for a “global Britain” after the end of the Brexit transition period on January 1.

Meanwhile, Mr Sunak is looking to save money by “temporarily” cutting the government’s commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product on overseas aid to 0.5 per cent, saving about £4bn a year. Downing Street denied there was a connection between the savings to the aid budget and the uplift in defence spending.

Does the MoD deserve special treatment in the midst of a pandemic?

By Daniel Johnson, The Article November 19 2020 . Daniel is the founding Editor of The Article. For two decades he was a senior editor, editorial writer and columnist for The Times and the Daily Telegraph, before leaving to set up Standpoint magazine, which he edited for 10 years. He contributes regularly to Daily Mail, Wall Street Journal, Commentary, New Criterion, National Review and other papers, magazines and websites.

THE PRIME MINISTER has overruled the Chancellor of the Exchequer on defence. After weeks of arm-wrestling, Downing Street is forcing the Treasury to allow military spending to rise by an additional £16 billion over the rest of this Parliament. This is on top of the annual increment of 0.5 per cent promised in the Tory manifesto, so that the total increase over four years will be £24 billion. No other department has been singled out like the Ministry of Defence; the rest must content themselves with a one-year settlement only.

“I have taken this decision in the teeth of the pandemic,” Boris Johnson declared, “because the defence of the realm must come first.” Fine words — but what will this money, the largest sustained rise since the Cold War ended, be spent on? The MoD is notorious for living beyond its means, for procurement disasters and extravagant projects which then have to be cancelled.

- **The Royal Navy’s Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers and Dreadnought submarines, the RAF’s F-35 and Tempest aircraft, the Army’s next generation of tanks: all these and other defence programmes are ruinously expensive. With Covid-19 by no means under control and the budget deficit already ballooning, how can Downing Street justify making an exception for the MoD?**

The answer is that the world has changed. New fronts have opened up and the UK is more vulnerable to attack than at any time in history. The main focus of expenditure over the next four years will, we are told, be on the establishment of new branches of defence: a National Cyber Force, an Artificial Intelligence Agency and a Space Command.

This will be the biggest shakeup for at least 30 years, but the catastrophic consequences of the pandemic have forced the Prime Minister to acknowledge both the fragility of our digital economy and the gravity of the threats to which we are exposed. The transformation of British defence capabilities is long overdue and marks a decisive break with the long period of retrenchment that has lasted since the 1990s.

Commented [Mike Pete1]:

In many ways, this shift in priorities resembles the early years of the Cold War, when Britain was forced to adapt to a nuclear age while simultaneously withdrawing from imperial commitments “east of Suez”.

The new agencies should attract the kind of talent that Britain possesses in abundance, thanks to our world-class universities and entrepreneurial business culture. The impressive response of scientists at Porton Down to the Russian chemical attack on Salisbury was a reminder that the UK is still widely respected in such fields. “In the end the PM got it,” one MoD official was quoted as saying. “Britain needs to step up post-Brexit.”

While other European countries are also worried about defence against cyber- attacks, new types of drones and missile assaults on communications satellites, the EU has been slow to adapt to a more dangerous environment. Defence budgets have been sacrificed to maintain lavish social programmes and despite the reality check of the Trump era, reliance on the US is still Europe’s default position. Of the major Continental powers, only France seems serious about security, but its focus for the moment is on terrorism.

- **By contrast, the Government's decision to make a reality of “global Britain” by protecting ourselves against states who wish us harm means that the incoming Biden administration will want to work closely with us. The US is already stepping up its defence against potential threats, especially those emanating from China.**

The re-establishment of the First Fleet to assist the Seventh Fleet in policing the Pacific and Indian Oceans will address the conventional threat from Beijing. But the Pentagon and other US agencies have also woken up to the multiple threats to the West in space and cyberspace, not to mention biological warfare in the wake of the pandemic.

The much-heralded integrated review of defence and foreign policy is due to be published in January. This week’s decision by Boris Johnson to put our money where his mouth is may be derided on the Left as Churchillian posturing.

But one of Churchill’s greatest gifts was his ability to harness the latest technologies for the defence of the realm.

He was not only our greatest statesman, but our most notable scientific innovator on land, at sea and in the air. On nuclear weapons, Winston was decades ahead of the game. Needless to say, our present Prime Minister is no Churchill, but he could do worse than to take lessons from the master on the value of foresight in defence. As the Scouts’ motto has it: Be Prepared.

Former Nottingham Post reporter is PM's new communications director



Former Nottingham Post reporter James Slack replaces Downing Street’s outgoing communications director Lee Cain.

Mr Slack, who has been the Prime Minister’s official spokesman since 2017, has confirmed he would be replacing Mr Cain when he leaves in the new year. After starting his career at the Mansfield Chad in the 1990s,

Mr Slack joined the Nottingham Post and went on to work for the Daily Mail before beginning his career in politics. He served as Theresa May’s official spokesman when she led the country.

'Everyone is entitled to his own opinion but not his own facts' - A View from America.



Long term member of The Pen & Sword Club, Charlie Miller, who now lives in Chicago, provides Scribblings with his on the spot analysis of American politics and the media.

After two decades working for Boeing as International Communications Vice President, Charlie retired recently.

Best known for his breaking news scoop of the death of Princess Diana while working as defence editor for The Press Association, Charlie left journalism to become Head of News at BAE Systems.

"WE'RE LIVING IN A :AND OF MAKE-BELIEVE – and trying hard not to let it show." Almost 50 years after the Moody Blues sang those words, it is playing out here in the United States with force. Former President Barack Obama was brutally honest when he described America as more divided today than it was when he came to power in 2008.

At the heart of this division lies the brutal battle between conventional mainstream media and a variety of right-wing propaganda machines propagating "big lies"—viral conspiracy theories. These are the big lies that tens of millions of people are willing to embrace or, at the very least, accept as they seek to follow a specific way of life in their land of make-believe.

Viewed from afar, it is easy to blame Donald Trump. He has certainly deployed many of the propaganda and communications principles that have been compared to those of Hitler and Goebbels – make the Big Lie; appeal to emotions and avoid abstract ideas; consistently repeat two or three simple ideas; constantly criticise opponents; vilify one special enemy, be it John McCain, science or NATO.

And yet from the vantage point of a foreigner living and working in the heart of the U.S., it is clear that the 45th President of the United States did not miraculously appear from nowhere. His rise to power was predicated on adopting and eventually embodying the views and desires of a significant part of the electorate that was feeling ignored and believed its way of life was being eroded.

- **It is only when you live here that you start to comprehend the depth of feeling, the fear, and the disgust at the term "socialism," which some equate to "godless Marxism." And then there are the disturbing issues around race and immigration. For many friends and colleagues in the U.S., Make America Great Again (MAGA) was only ever a thinly-veiled euphemism for Make America White Again.**

Given that background, the Trump propaganda machine found it easy to target and vilify both socialism and Hillary Clinton in the vicious 2016 presidential election campaign. Millions of people have willingly subscribed to the view that Clinton was part of an evil Democratic cabal running paedophile rings.

That lie has gained yet more traction with the creation of QAnon, the far-right conspiracy theory group that avidly uses social media to allege that the paedophile ring is not only running a global child sex-trafficking ring but also plotting against the President who is fighting the cabal.

Commented [Mike Pete2]:

Spurred on by the White House and supported by extensive online disinformation hinting at conspiracy, millions more have subscribed to the belief that Joe Biden is a socialist.

- **And yet, none of this is a surprise to the traditional media. They look back at how the first day of the Trump administration was marked by its first big lie. Press Secretary Sean Spicer looked straight into the TV cameras and told the world that the President's inauguration had "the largest audience ever to witness an inauguration, period, both in person and around the globe".**

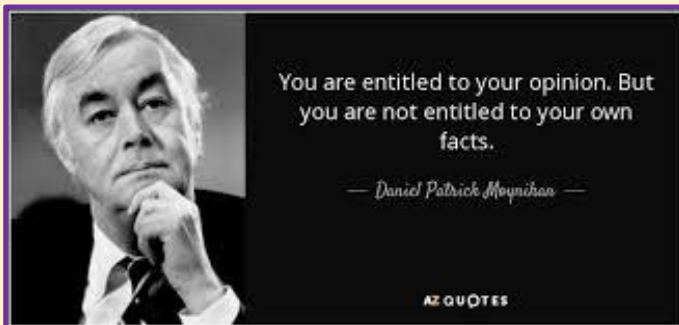
It was a stupid lie, easily crushed by TV footage and a plethora of photographs, yet it presaged the administration's approach to communications—keep telling the big lie and large numbers of people will eventually believe you. That lie is repeated constantly and consistently even today.

But this unremitting lying has sharply divided American society, seriously damaged trust in government, fractured families and undermined the rule of facts and evidence, which are now pawns in partisan politics.

- **Of course, manipulation of facts and evidence by politicians is as old as politics itself. Today, the difference is the ability of fake news to spread like wildfire through social media and search engine algorithms.**

It is a disturbing fact that during the presidential campaign more people engaged with false stories on Facebook than with traditional media outlets where facts are closely checked. Indeed, Stanford University found that fake news items in favour of Donald Trump were shared 30 million times as the campaign unfolded. In the large Hispanic communities of Florida and other southern states, the internet was used extensively to play on the fears of Cubans and Venezuelans comparing the Democrats to Castro and Maduro. A vote for Biden would bring in the type of ultra-left-wing regime they had fled.

At the time of writing, we are witnessing the refusal by millions of people to accept the outcome of what has been officially declared as a fair election, leading many to fear that fake news is largely responsible for undermining the public's trust in the democratic institutions and creating widespread chaos.



Can the chasm in American society be bridged? Can the polarized world of the internet and its hotbed breeding ground for conspiracy theories and fake news be tamed? As Obama points out, these false stories are much more popular than the truth or any discredit, especially

when promulgated by public figures. He adheres to the growing opinion around the world that tougher regulations and standards are required for all forms of media to ensure the sanctity of truth and a common set of facts.

The late Democratic senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan famously said: "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion but not to his own facts." As Obama says, action is needed, yet the solution will also need to confront the issue of why so many people eagerly turn to online conspiracies and adopt them as their own as they create their land of make-believe.



US success in test destruction of intercontinental missile - Blunting the Korean nuclear threat!

*By Michael Evans, The Times November 18 2020.
Michael is a P&S Club Vice President.*

THE US has for the first time shot down an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) from a warship in a test over the Pacific Ocean, a success that potentially blunts North Korea's nuclear threat. The breakthrough demonstration was performed by USS *John Finn*, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, the US missile defence agency announced.

Commented [Mike Pete3]:

The successful destruction of the unarmed ICBM by the warship's SM-3 block 11A missile will give new confidence to the US that any long-range ballistic missile fired by North Korea towards Hawaii could now be targeted by land-based and sea-based interceptors. In October North Korea unveiled its largest ICBM, which was judged to be capable of reaching all of the continental US.

Vice-admiral Jon Hill, head of the missile defence agency, said the test had shown that Hawaii could be defended from an ICBM attack by the US navy in conjunction with the ground-based interceptors in silos at Fort Greely in Alaska.

It was the sixth test of the latest Standard anti-ballistic missile, SM-311A, from a warship. Previous tests have failed to knock out an ICBM. In one incident a sailor on board a guided-missile warship taking part in a test mistakenly triggered the self-destruct system.

Until the successful test by the US navy, only the ground-based interceptors at Alaska and at Vandenberg air-force base in California had managed to hit an ICBM.

The US navy test involved a dummy ICBM being fired from the Ronald Reagan ballistic missile test site on Kwajalein atoll in the Marshall Islands in west-central Pacific.



It was part of a Pentagon programme to develop a layered defence network of anti-ballistic missile systems to protect the US homeland.

The warship involved is equipped with the Aegis computerised battle-management system that tracks and targets incoming ballistic missiles. Aegis-equipped warships armed with Standard missiles already have a key role as part of America's overall anti-ballistic missile network.

However, the Aegis ships in operation for many years have

until now defended only against short-to-intermediate range ballistic missiles during their mid-course phase. Aegis is fitted to the US navy's Ticonderoga-class cruisers as well as Arleigh Burke-class destroyers.