



International Relations and Defence Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Defence concepts and capabilities: from aspiration to reality

Wednesday 15 June 2022

10.30 am

Watch the meeting

Members present: Baroness Anelay of St Johns (The Chair); Lord Alton of Liverpool; Lord Anderson of Swansea; Baroness Blackstone; Lord Campbell of Pittenweem; Baroness Rawlings; Lord Stirrup; Baroness Sugg; Lord Teverson; Lord Wood of Anfield.

Evidence Session No. 9

Heard in Public

Questions 63 - 68

Witness

I: General Sir Adrian Bradshaw, Commander UK Land Forces (2013), NATO Deputy Supreme Commander Europe (2014-17).

Examination of witness

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw.

Q63 **The Chair:** Good morning and welcome to this meeting of the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Select Committee, General Sir Adrian Bradshaw, Commander of UK Land Forces in 2013 and NATO Deputy Supreme Commander Europe from 2014 to 2017. General, thank you very much indeed for joining us today to contribute to the committee's inquiry, "Defence concepts and capabilities: from aspiration to reality". This is a long-term inquiry that we anticipate will not conclude until the end of this year.

At this stage I always remind our guest witness and Members that the session is on the record, transcribed and broadcast. I also remind Members that, when we ask our questions, if there are any relevant interests, we should declare them at that moment. As ever, I will ask the first question, which is rather general in scope. Then I will turn to my colleagues, who will ask far more focused questions. I anticipate that at that point they will ask supplementary questions.

The first question is this. What is your assessment of the ambitions for, and the role of, the land forces in the Defence Command Paper? Do you believe that the British Army can fulfil the future need identified in the Command Paper, and does the Command Paper adequately address the future needs of our British Army?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: Thank you very much. There is a lot in that question. What I might do is look at the strategic context laid out in the review first, and then look specifically at the defence contribution to the Integrated Review.

The first thing I applaud in the Integrated Review is the reference to Ffusion Ddoctrine. To set the context, our interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan were marked by an overreliance on ddefence as opposed to a cross-governmental approach. That was quite a failure and led, I think directly, to failures in both of those campaigns. Seeing fusion doctrine up front is excellent. Delivery is another question, but it points to the need for greater integration of ddefence with other levers of national power. I will come to that later when we come to the Defence Command Paper.

There is an appropriate focus there on being in an era of constant competition. What I would point to is that, although we need to focus appropriately on competition, confrontation is the ultimate challenge and we need to be ready for that. I will give you two scenarios to illustrate the difference. In Crimea in 2014, the Russians effected a takeover through a variety of means, including political subversion, cyberwar and economic effects, and managed to annex Crimea in an operation that did not involve breaking into open warfare of the sort we have seen more recently.

In contrast, in 2022, we have seen open confrontation. We need to be ready for both. In the era of competition we have some assets that are

very helpful. The 6th Division and the 77th Brigade, the Security Force Assistance Brigade and the Rangers in their overseas engagement will all be pretty key. They are employed, ~~and~~ if we have the will and resources to use them, ~~to we can~~ get up front and try to tackle problems that are being generated ~~by competitors~~ through hybrid means.

Ultimately, we have to be ready, as I say, for confrontation. In fact, ideally we need to be prepared for warfare in order to prevent it ever happening. It is the fundamental contradiction of my profession. When we are in deterrence mode, what we are generating are forces sufficiently convincing that we should never have to use them. That is a bit of a difficult pill to swallow, I think, for people who are funding ~~incredible and~~ very expensive capabilities that ideally are never used in the mode for which they are preparing. There is an appropriate focus on Russia as the main threat, and obviously deterrence is going to be a big deal ~~forthere.~~ ~~o~~ Our warfighting capabilities, as laid out in the Command Paper, ~~which~~ puts heavy reliance on 3 Div as our warfighting division.

The capability, when you analyse it carefully, is a bit thin. What we have there, I would assess, is the capability to sustain ~~onea~~ battlegroup forward constantly, in deterrence mode, and the ability to reinforce that for a warfighting engagement should it be necessary, provided all the other parts are in place. My assessment is that a great deal of work needs to be done to ensure that the remainder of that force is in a position to deploy forward to wherever it is required, and a great deal of resourcing needs to be put into the logistic enablement of the theatre. This is obviously not just a UK requirement; it goes across NATO. Part of that requirement, ~~however,~~ - falls on us, and I do not see provision specified for it at the moment.

The rise of China is pointed to in a strategic context. Obviously, there is an appropriate focus on maritime capability, the protection of the global commons and the effort being put into AUKUS. From the Army point of view, we have a contribution to make in capacity building and training, and sustaining influence in places where China is trying to develop its ~~own~~ influence. For a number of reasons, in the Global Britain context, to get out there, to get up front of instability and to help instigate good governance, and secure defences with good security structures, along with all the integrated activity that should go along with that in economic development and that sort of thing, is a great aspiration.

We have capabilities in the new defence construct and the new Army construct to address those requirements. My concern is ~~whetherthat~~ we have the willingness to engage up front and ~~whetherthat~~ we actually put the resources into doing it. Some of the ~~Army's new~~ force elements are quite specialised. We have a new Rangers organisation of quite specialist units. I am not completely convinced that we could not achieve some of the same ends with more generalist line battalions, trained to the right level in the skills required for the sort of assistance they are doing but ~~at the same time retainingwith~~ more generalist capabilities. I will probably

come back more than once to the theme of generalist capabilities as opposed to ~~specifics and~~ role specialisation.

There is a focus on Iran and North Korea and proliferation. Clearly, the main effort there is in the political, diplomatic and economic areas, with probably less direct military contribution ideally, unless things go very wrong.

There is a mention of terrorism and a reference to climate change and the sort of instability that comes from that, but there is not nearly enough emphasis on the continuing requirement to get up front of situations where destabilising influences are creating problems that then turn into population movement, bringing pressures on Europe and on the UK. I feel that we, collectively within Europe and within NATO, need to be much more proactive in that respect. As I have already alluded to, that is also helpful in the context of pushing back on the increasing Chinese and, now, Russian influence in the Sahel, for example.

I am not sure that there is sufficient focus on that. Specifically, the problem of Islamist extremism is still very much out there. I am involved in providing lectures to officials at mid-level across government on counterterrorist strategy. I observe that there is still a little bit of reluctance to engage head-on with the problem of Islamist extremism for fear of provoking difficult reactions to some of the language and ideas that are discussed.

The problem really is still out there. I have been involved in a process in the Middle East—the Aqaba Process—sponsored by His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan, which is trying to achieve a more holistic approach to the problem of Islamist extremism. Most recently, we looked at east Africa and Mozambique, with Prime Ministers and presidential-level representation from a number of countries there. The problem is real and it is growing. Those are the sorts of things that I think Global Britain should be prepared to get behind and invest in, not just within defence assets but in a multifaceted approach. That implies a fairly constant level of engagement. At the moment, the capability for that seems to be vested in quite specialist organisations rather than in our generalist capability. I think that is going to put strain on our force organisation.

~~The~~In defence contributions mentioned in - to the Integrated Review, mention - in sustaining ourthe strategic advantage through science and technology. In this field, we have a way to go. We have seen potentially hostile nations make advances in, for example, ~~superfast missiles and~~ hypersonic missiles and in anti-air and area denial capability. We have seen huge resources put in by, for example, Russia. We are not matching that sort of capability in our defence provision across NATO. I think we have far more work to do in the area of science and technology in order to, and in provide appropriateg defensive and offensive capabilities to support our forces.

Concerning the reference in the Integrated Review to In shaping the international order by adherence to international law and norms, obviously within the area of defence we stick by international law.

No. 3 in the list of, the defence contributions_s, is strengthening security and defence at home and overseas. I have to say that sounds a little bit hollow when, in fact, what we are about to do,ing on manpower certainly, is weakening. I give due credit to the two former Chiefs of the General Staff in trying to hold on to as much capability as they can in the face of shortages in budget, but while now we have the frontage covered, the defence capability in Land Command is looking a bit thin. It is lacking in depth.

If you remember, in the Army 2020 plan, General Carter had the unenviable task of cutting numbers of Regular Forces to save money. What we did there was to introduce much greater reliance on Reserve Forces and we stepped back from the 'rule of five', which had governed things for decades before, and which, I believe, still pertains. If you want one unit, one formation, one size of capability, constantly engaged in something, you need five of them in order to sustain that commitment: one is preparing; one is doing the job~~there~~; one is recovering; one is doing the other tasks that are required across defence, of which there are a multiplicity; and one dealing in courses, education and that sort of thing for its people. That is a reality.

What we did was step off that rule and instead put much higher reliance on the Reserves, which is the subject of a future question. Latterly, General Carleton-Smith has had the task¹ of trying to sustain the neural network² for the Army to allow for future growth. There is a realisation that we simply do not have enough manpower to meet all the requirements that might come our way.

The Army contributed, along with the other elements of defence, quite significantly over the Covid crisis. In the context of Coming on to the next point in the defence contribution mentioned in the Review, that of resilience, the Armed Forces' contribution~~that~~ was very much appreciated, but it is important to remember that other commitments at the time were pretty minimal. We were no longer doing Afghanistan or Iraq at scale or Iraq. We were not mak~~do~~ing much more than a battlegroup contribution to~~on~~ deterrence for NATO. I suspect that requirement might increase as a result of the upcoming NATO conference. We were therefore lucky that we were able to draw on defence to the extent that we did to support resilience during the COVID pandemic.

My answer to your question, "Do I believe that the British Army can fulfil the future need?", is that the future need perhaps is not fully articulated in some of the ways that I have suggested. The Army is quite pressed at the moment to sustain the sorts of levels of commitment to deterrence

¹ Note from witness: In the face of the requirement to cut manpower

² Note from witness: (the command structure)

and upfront combatting of destabilisation that are implied in being a member of the P5, the sixth biggest economy in the world, and, frankly, having an economy that relies very much on our access to the global commons. It does not seem to match that requirement.

The Chair: Thank you. You have given us a great deal of detail on which we can build our future questions.

Q64 **Lord Stirrup:** Good morning, Sir Adrian. I should make it clear that the General and I have done much defence business together in the past, although unfortunately it is becoming more and more the distant past.

You have already answered one of the key elements of my question, which is whether the projected future size of the Army is large enough. Quite clearly, you think that it is not. You have set out a whole range of global tasks, ranging from European defence to proactive, forward engagement in areas including the Middle East and, indeed, in the Far East.

Referring only to Regular Forces—we will come to a specific question on the Reserves later—if the projected future size of the Army is not sufficient to meet all those tasks, is the current size sufficient? If it is not, what sort of size of Army do you think would be appropriate to meet that range of tasks and the scale of ambition set out in both the Integrated Review and the Defence Command Paper? Of course, the reductions are predicated in part on the ability of technology to pick up things that people have done in the past. To what extent do you think that that potential has been overplayed in the Defence Command Paper?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: Thank you for that. First, on raw numbers, the Command Paper is not particularly specific about the levels of deployed force it would expect to see engaged ~~addressing~~ the various sorts of problems we might encounter. If we look at what we are facing right now with the threat from Russia, at the moment we are sustaining about a battlegroup forward as part of the ~~NATO deterrence in the East~~ reinforcement. Actually, it has been doubled recently, but that is not, I would argue, a sustainable position with the force level that is projected in the Future Soldier paper, even bringing ~~R~~reserves into the equation ~~it~~.

When you start to bring ~~R~~reserves into a routine deployment such as that, you very rapidly run out of ~~R~~reserves to employ in the cycle. Once used, they have to have a considerable period of rest.³

If you add to ~~our commitment to NATO deterrence~~ that the potential to have to be engaging routinely up front of potential instability in the Sahel, in east Africa and potentially in the Middle East, with a company group here and a battalion there, ~~which~~ that would be a perfectly predictable ambition and appropriate scale of contribution for a nation in our position.

³ Additional information from witness: 'from long term military commitment, during which most return to their normal civilian employment.'

~~On top of that w~~We have an enduring commitment in Cyprus, as you know. If you add into that the emergence of a big problem like Syria and the willingness of the international community, unlike the response we saw in the case of Syria, to anticipate in advance, get up front and ~~to~~ commit sufficient force to underpin peace agreements and diplomatic work to stop a thing like that spiralling out of control, what is the appropriate contribution for a nation like ours for something like that? It is very probably something like a deployable brigade.⁴

When you start to add all that together, it is just not sustainable ~~with for~~ the strength we have ~~outlined in the Future Soldier paper~~. What is the right strength? When I was Commander Land Forces, we were at about 99,000 on paper. Given the current financial climate, one has to be realistic. My difficulty at the moment is that the problem with the current provision is not just the force level but what that force is resourced to do. That ~~also~~ has been massively hollowed out.

The first challenge is to say, "Okay, if this Future Soldier thing is how we are going to do it, the first requirement is to resource it properly". That needs ~~s~~ a lot more than is provided at the moment.⁵

Anyway, my view is that ~~the troop numbers it~~ does not meet the potential level of reasonable deployments in the event of contingencies arising elsewhere. We do not have ~~much anything~~ going on at the moment. I would not want to put a figure on it, but somewhere between where we are and where we were when I was Commander Land Forces would help a great deal in providing the extra force elements in the rotation to be able to sustain the sorts of levels of commitment that we ~~might would be~~, quite reasonably, expecting, ~~t~~. That implies to me ~~80,000 or~~ 85,000 at least.

Lord Stirrup: Would you say a word on the technology versus numbers argument?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: Technology versus numbers? You will remember, Sir, that we have been here before. When we entered the era of precision strike and precision air-delivered weapons, all of that was a significant revolution in military affairs, as it was described then. We took quite extensive cuts on the back of all that new capability, and ~~then~~ found that you still need ~~the~~ manpower. We say it in this document; manpower is the most fundamental thing that defence has—well-trained, flexible people who can turn their hand to all sorts of tasks, who are mission focused and who have a good grounding in how to deal with high-threat situations.⁶

⁴ Addition from witness: "possibly working under a UK Divisional HQ which might also command other multi-national formations."

⁵ Addition from witness: "to pay for training, spare parts, ammunition and countless other requirements."

⁶ Addition from witness: ". In the end it is they who change things on the ground."

What we did was fundamentally to undermine the ability to put men on the ground, at and instead to put much more emphasis on precision strike, and we were found wanting. We are doing that again now, I think based on optimism. I know we are going to get on to this, but I think there is a danger that we are taking a little bit too much out of observing recent conflicts when, frankly, forces have been quite seriously damaged by a combination of new technology and entrepreneurial constructs in situations. ~~T~~that could not be relied on to be the sort ~~of situation~~ that we ~~might~~would face. In fact, I would argue that as a precise consequence of what is going on now in Ukraine it is highly unlikely that we would face the same situation in the future. You are not going to face a Russian force that will do the same thing twice, not if they have any sense. Anyway, there is technology in the pipeline now to provide defences against the sorts of clever munitions that are causing mayhem to Russian armour at the moment. We need to be investing massively in those sorts of things to protect our own manoeuvre capability.

I am sorry, I am moving into other areas. Manoeuvre capability is absolutely essential. I will come on to that in one of my later answers.

Q65 **Baroness Blackstone:** Good morning. You have already mentioned the role of the Reserves. Consecutive strategic reviews of the last 10 or 12 years have placed some emphasis on their size and future role. We now have current plans based on a recent increase to about 35,000. Could you elaborate a bit further on what you said earlier about your assessment of both their role, what they should be doing, and their capabilities?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: I point out up front that I am a very strong advocate of maintaining strong, capable Reserves at scale. I think the Reserves are brilliant. They bring amazing diversity to our Armed Forces because you get people from all sorts of professions coming in and bringing ideas and an entrepreneurial approach to things, looking at things in a slightly different way. I am a very strong advocate of Reserves, and I always have been in the posts that I have occupied.

However, o~~One just~~ has to recognise some realities. As a battlegroup commander, I trained an armoured battlegroup up to the level of being capable to do warfighting manoeuvre in a combined arms context. That is degree-level stuff. It takes time and real resources. We are not doing that now. We simply are not delivering that sort of capability because of the inadequacies of our training at the moment, I am sorry to say.

In order to get to that point, after a two-year build-up, we first did a one-year Foundation Ttraining package,⁷ which involved many weeks of training out in the field and on the ranges, getting people to troop level, squadron level and then battlegroup level capability in the basic stuff. It was about how to move across the ground, how to fire the guns with accuracy, how to engage targets on the move, and how to carry out troop-level and squadron-level manoeuvres. That all takes time. This It

⁷ Note from witness: "Now called 'Combat Ready Training'"

level, however, is within the capacity of the Reserves if their people put in the time to develop their capabilities.

We added to that another year's worth of Mmission-Sspecific Ttraining,⁸ where we brought ourselves up from a foundation level of capability to the ability to work within a brigade context as a battlegroup, with all the moving parts in harmony and orchestrated together to deliver precise effects in precise places. ThisIt takes an enormous amount of time and effort.

We now have some advantages even over the time when I did it. A, although we had very good simulation even then, w- We can now do more sophisticatedquite a lot of trainingthat in the virtual world, but you also have to get out there and do it for real. You have to get out in the mud and the dust, and experience the friction of trying to do things on the ground, with real people developing real muscle memory and learning how to live in difficult conditions, to be oblivious of the weather, the cold and the heat, and all of that. You have to do that. Soldiers, sailors and aviatorsirmen need to get out with their kit doing it for real, -a lot, if they are to be capable.

If it takes two years—it did then, and there is no reason to suspect it would take any less time now; in fact, there are reasons why it might be more difficult to achieve, and I might come on to that—it is unrealistic to expect that Reserve Forces will be able to operate in that mode. Fine. We would not give them demanding manoeuvre warfare rolesthose specific jobs. A Reserve infantry battalion will be more than capable of doing, for example, key point defence. In the context of what the Ukrainian army is doing against the Russians, one could see a Reserve battalion doing a highly capable job of looking after an area of a city, creating an interlocking defence and weaving in all the weaponry within its battalion-level construct, but do not then expect it to get into armoured vehicles and manoeuvre and pull togetherin the harmonised effects of artillery, armour, engineers and all the other pieces-that come-together, and then be able to manoeuvre against a capable enemy. Do not expect it to swap from its giventhat role to another role requiring fundamentally more training, just like that.

To give you an example of the sorts of things that you would expect Regular Forces to do, I took a battlegroup in peace support operations to Bosnia—now Bosnia-Herzegovina—induring the immediate aftermath of the terrible civil war there. It was an armoured battle group equipped with main battle tanks. Why main battle tanks for peace support? Well, they had exactly the right psychological effect to convince the locals that they were facing massive overmatch and that they could, with their pride intact, step back from fighting and say, "Okay, NATO are here. The war is over". It was just what the women and children of their societies desperately wanted and, truth be told, what most of the fightersm wanted as well.

⁸ Note from witness: "Now called 'Mission Ready Training'"

That was ~~our basic mission, but wwhat we did on the surface.~~ Within weeks of being there,⁹ we found ourselves involved in counter-coup operations, which meant taking ~~our~~ people out of armoured vehicles, giving them a baton, a shield and baton guns, getting the snipers out there and combatting a coup ~~attempt~~ on the ground. They fell back to Northern Ireland training. There were enough of them in a regular force⁹ to be able to get everybody ~~else~~ up to speed rapidly and sufficiently to do the job in hand. We did it and, by the way, that ~~same~~ unit was also distributing aid, reconstructing schools and doing all sorts of other stuff.

You have to have generalists who can do that sort of stuff and who have a background in all sorts of military experience to be able to flick from one role to another.¹⁰ The problem with the Army that I see laid down in ~~the Future Soldier paperthis paper~~ is that it is too role specialised. If you take somebody out of a slot and ask them to do something completely different, which is almost guaranteed to be the requirement tomorrow because who can predict it,¹¹ they will not be able to do it. The problem with the Reserves is that they, too, ~~must~~ cannot be expected to ~~transition rapidly between pick up the tab for~~ all of the roles that come ~~our~~their way.

Yes, we want strong and capable ~~R~~eserves within our force construct, and to give them specific jobs. ~~If w~~We give them the training to do those jobs precisely and really well, ~~t.~~ They will do a fantastic job, but when you are looking for generalist capability to flex ~~between different, demanding roles~~, and when you are looking for people to operate at the higher level of manoeuvre, you have to have Regular Forces.

Baroness Blackstone: You are saying that the Reserves cannot just substitute for Regular Forces because they do not have the capacity to move from one thing to another in the way that Regular Forces are allowed to do. Should one conclude from that that the right approach is that the Reserves should be trained as specialists, and that we should identify the areas where they have particular backgrounds and skills? You commented earlier on how diverse they are and how valuable that is. What should happen is that those abilities, experience and expertise should be built on in their training and they should then be ready to take on specialist roles in support of a more generalist regular Army.

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: Precisely that, and it is indeed the approach that is taken to many of the Reserves in this construct. You see, ~~for example,~~ alongside a ~~Regular~~ close support ~~regular~~ artillery regiment, ~~_~~ - a ~~R~~eserve close support artillery regiment. That ~~R~~eserve regiment will do a fantastic job of firing those guns and providing fire support in that precise role.

⁹ Addition from witness: "with the right skills drawn from experience in a broad range of different roles including Northern Ireland"

¹⁰ Addition from witness: "because you never know what the next demending problem will be."

¹¹ Note from witness: "the precise nature of the next big commitment"

You would expect, however, to be able take a Regular artillery regiment out of its specialist role. For example, in the days of Northern Ireland those regiments stepped out of role and retrained to go on the streets in Northern Ireland. If there was a stabilisation job elsewhere, because we are so short of artillery capacity, one might be reluctant to do it, but for the Regular Forces you can see them stepping out of role and, by the way, retraining for resilience tasks. For the Reserves, however, their training time is limited. All the time they have, they will need to dedicate to learning to use the guns. You are not going to have the luxury of retraining them to do other things or letting them fall back on former experience.

I think it is slightly different in the area of infantry, where even the Reservists need a degree of generalist capability to turn their hands to different sorts of infantry tasks. But, as I explained, you would not expect them to step up to combined arms armoured manoeuvre because they are simply not going to have the time to train in that context to achieve the level of capability that has been found wanting, for example, in Russian forces coming into Ukraine. Why is that? Because they have not taken the time to train properly for combined arms manoeuvre. That is the difficulty with Reserves.¹²

Q66 **Baroness Rawlings:** General, thank you very much for such a clear explanation so far. Having chaired the board for nine years, I would expect nothing less from a distinguished King's College London alumnus. Thank you very much for coming here.

In November 2021, the Government published the *Future Soldier—Transforming the British Army* paper that you have been waving around. It was a follow-up document to the Defence Command Paper billed as “the most radical transformation programme for the service in more than 20 years”. What would you identify as the main challenges to the implementation of this vision and the timing? You have already been quite scathing about it. Will it solve any of the inadequacies that you have mentioned without having specialised roles?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: I think I have covered some of the ground already, but you ask about challenges in particular. As I say, I have laid out what I think are some of the potential problems of the four structures that are laid out in *Future Soldier*. In summary, they cover the frontage, but they do not have sufficient depth for the sort of commitments that we will face.

On specific challenges, we have challenges in the equipment programme. Everybody is familiar with the problems that the Ajax programme is encountering. I am not a procurement expert. I have not worked in the procurement field, but I have looked upon it from command positions with a certain amount of exasperation. For years and years we have been trying to procure a new family of land combat vehicles, in particular a

¹² Addition from witness: “they simply don’t have the training time to get to that level of capability.”

reconnaissance vehicle to replace the CVR(T) range that ~~was getting-is-now~~ very old. What we have seen are requirements defined ~~and, things~~ put out to tender, contracts being made, and then a big programme—typically in the air or maritime domain for very good reasons, because they are enormous—taking priority. Everybody understands it, but the land programme once ~~-more~~ gets set back.

The consequence is that you have a delay of two or three years, by which time the requirement has obviously changed ~~as technology moves forward,~~ so you end up going back to ~~industrythe people,~~ rewriting the contracts and getting huge penalties. There is cost on cost on cost, and then, ~~when~~ you do not buy it ~~once~~ again, ~~so~~ you go round the cycle again, and it looks hugely inefficient. Small wonder. It is, massively ~~inefficient~~. The equipment programme is still suffering from those sorts of problems. Actually, this time there were technical problems with the Ajax. A great deal more investment is required in some of the programmes to bring us up to speed with some of the things that our adversaries have. I will not go into all sorts of detail, but hypersonic missiles are just one of the ~~examples I have already mentionedm.~~

We have a real challenge now in developing much more effective ~~D~~defensive ~~A~~aid ~~S~~suites (DAS) for our armoured vehicles to enable them to manoeuvre ~~safely.~~ There are many challenges in the field of technology that I think need addressing urgently. That is one problem: the equipment programme and the degree of research that is required to advance our technology.

Another area that is really serious is that we are not resourcing enough field training. We have cut out Canada from our training areas, the British Army Training Unit Suffield (~~BATUS~~). That was the place where we could indulge in not only training for ~~armoured~~ manoeuvre to a high level of skill, but ~~also~~ experimentation ~~at scale~~. We were set up with laser training technology to replicate all the weapons systems on the battlefield with lasers. We had an ~~amazing~~ array of means of observing the manoeuvre so that we could do in-depth debriefs of training. We have the ability to do that in other places, but ~~not at the right scale, and~~ my fear is that right now we are undergoing another revolution in military affairs in the area of combined arms land warfighting.

We simply do not fully understand what will be possible in the next six or 10 years in the field of land manoeuvre with all the variables just settling down.¹³

We have seen unmanned aerial vehicles used to enormous effect in Nagorno-Karabakh and now again in Ukraine, but we have not seen them used in the context of proper, mutually supporting combined arms warfare, because the victims of that sort of technology¹⁴ have not been

¹³ Addition from witness: "We must therefore get as much of the Army as possible involved in the experimentation, in the process of their normal training, in order to forge new tactics which integrate those capabilities we already have with those we will develop."

doing it right. We have not been able to learn the lessons that we have got to learn in order to see how we integrate these so-called smallmaul bands of determined men with UAVs and newwhacky technology and this entrepreneurial approach⁷ which will be absolutely vital.

How do you integrate UAVs and other new capabilities~~that~~ with the sorts of traditional capabilities that people rather enjoy presenting as legacy and a bit old-fashioned? In fact, they are still hugely capable, provided they are used in the right context and with the right protection. We have to battle-lab all of that, first in the virtual domain, and then get out there on the ground and do it. Okay, we have new training hubs in Kenya, Oman and Germany. There are facilities in Germany that are quite good for that. We could for example go to Hohenfels. We could do some on Bergen-Hohne and on Sennelager, but I am not sure that the infrastructure in Oman and Kenya~~the other places~~ is yet supportive of the work we need to do. Yet we have enormous infrastructure that we have built at vast expense in Canada, which is there ready to go, and yet we are pulling out of a place that is completely secure, in a very stable~~secure~~ part of the world, where we can rely on contracts and all the rest of the support we enjoy~~it~~.

We are not doing the vital work that I think we should be doing, which is cycling different sorts of battlegroups through there¹⁵ and letting people experiment with different sorts of force constructs⁷ to bring in the new technological elements and work out how we are going to warfight. That is a serious limitation that constrains~~with~~ delivering on the promise that is held in this paper.

Baroness Rawlings: You mentioned two challenges. You did not mention the Ranger regiment, which seems to have quite a large part in *Future Soldier*, as well as the Army's Special Operations Brigade. Will they be able to help solve some of the problems in *Future Soldier*?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: Frankly, not the problems I have just outlined. I think that, for very good reasons, the Security Force Assistance Brigade and the Ranger elements have been introduced into our order of battle, in order to lock in force elements and create a rationale for keeping on manpower that can be used flexibly in the future. I am not completely convinced of the need for such specialised force elements~~by it~~. We already have a Special Forces capability that is only just sustainable from the size of the Armed Forces that we have enjoyed in the past. To man the Special Boat Service, the Special Air Service and the Special Reconnaissance Regiment, you are having to draw from R~~regular~~ units all over the Armed Forces some of their most capable people. You are then trying to lift from the same pool the additional people to man a new kind of Special Forces.

You cannot have an Army that is all special. Actually, you can. They are all special, but in a different way.¹⁶ My point is that if a line infantry

¹⁴ Note from witness: "mainly the Russians"

¹⁵ Note from witness: "BATUS, or a similarly well-resourced training environment"

~~regiment or~~ battalion is given the resources and the training, it can do all sorts of special stuff. It can go to a country in Africa and provide ~~S~~security ~~F~~forces ~~A~~assistance. It can train locals in how to do platoon attacks, ~~riot control~~ ~~or~~ and counterpoaching. ~~Our line battalions already~~ ~~They~~ do those things, very well. You do not necessarily need another specialist capability to do that. The thing to do is to keep the general level of expertise high across the whole Army, which is the point I keep coming back to. It is about retaining generalist capability.

What is the Security Force Assistance Brigade? It has locked in the ~~command structure~~ ~~neural network~~ of four battalions for a future time when we seek to resource them properly again. They are being halved in size approximately, or whatever it is. Instead of a company of 60 to 80 people, you have a detachment of 16 to 20 people going out to do a specific role and becoming very ~~role-~~specialised. Actually, what you need in the Army, I am afraid to say, is those battalions fully manned and able to do all the other stuff that might come their way.

Baroness Rawlings: Would you say that strengthening what we have, which would function really well if it had more manpower, rather than a whole new idea of a document that—

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: As I say, people have been wrestling with the problem of how to keep the force structure intact and how to justify the retention of different pieces by giving them specific roles that resonate and that people will support. My point is that those roles can be and have been carried out by high-quality line regiments.¹⁶ Frankly, trying to sustain the feed into the current Special Forces organisation is demanding enough. It was demanding enough during my time as Commander Land Forces, with 90,000-odd. It is going to be very difficult with only 70-something thousand, and then you are trying to sustain another special bit. I think the whole structure is going to creak a bit because there is just not enough manpower to put into these things.

The good news is that 16 Air Assault Brigade is retained at the right strength. It is vital for the sustainment of the SAS, for example, that we keep three ~~P~~parachute Regiment battalions, one of which is ~~the~~ Special Forces ~~S~~support ~~G~~group and two are ~~R~~regular battalions in 16 Air Assault Brigade. That is an absolute red line. If you cut that, you will not sustain the Special Forces. By the way, 16 Air Assault Brigade, as a raiding organisation—a theatre-entry capability and an organisation that can go and execute a NEO—is absolutely vital, but it needs to be retained at that strength. I am glad that it has been, but, as I have indicated, at the same time other bits of the Army have been seriously hollowed out.¹⁷

¹⁶ Addition from witness: "That is in their ability to be able to transition from one demanding task to another rapidly, based on deep and varied experience. What is special about the average British battalion is that they are excellent generalists, who can turn their hand to whatever the mission turns out to be, and then rapidly adapt to it and develop the expertise required to do it superbly."

¹⁷ Addition from witness: "but you need enough of them."

I am sorry; I am diverging a little, but it is a point that I would make. Look at what is going on in Ukraine ~~within~~ artillery. If you look ~~then~~ at the amount of artillery we have, it is pretty finely cut. If you happen to be commanding one of those manoeuvre brigades in 3 Div, you have ~~only~~ one close support artillery regiment, and the possibility of a bit of a ~~R~~reserve one, bearing in mind that, typically, three ~~R~~eservists produce one active soldier on a deployment, ~~although~~ and the requirement in the new model for the artillery in particular is one for one, which is a pretty demanding ask. With one close support regiment, how are you going to provide artillery when you are trying to manoeuvre to pin down the enemy that you have fixed, put prophylactic fire on the sorts of places where people may be firing anti-tank missiles at you and do other tasks for the other battlegroups?¹⁸

~~Things~~It ~~are~~is similarly ~~thin~~ in the air defence area. There are ~~only~~ two air defence regiments ~~for the whole Army~~, one medium and one light. That is spread awfully thin. It was a standing joke in my time in 1 (BR) Corps during the Cold War that the real air defence capability of the British Army was a thing called the louch pole, which was something you put a machine gun on top of and rather optimistically blazed away, because there were not enough missiles to go round, even in those days. Well, it is all looking pretty thin.

The Chair: Thank you. Time is our enemy, but I would like to enable both Baroness Sugg and Lord Anderson to ask their questions. Sir Adrian, may I ask you in answering to be as brief as is possible, given that they are important questions? Colleagues, there will be no time for supplementaries.

Q67 **Baroness Sugg:** Good morning, General. Earlier, you compared Russia's previous actions in Crimea with what is happening now in Ukraine and spoke about the importance of being ready for both of those. What would you identify as the key lessons for the British Army from Russia's attack on Ukraine?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: The first point is about political interference in an inappropriate way in how the military did their business. There was much too much of Putin tinkering from above and, I would say, a lack of openness between the military chain of command and government. Clearly, particularly in the field of intelligence, people were presenting a much more optimistic picture than was real. One suspects that part of that was a fear of authority and wanting to tell people what they wanted to hear.

I am happy to say that that does not pertain in British military culture. It must never be allowed to, but it means that you must not have political pressure to put yes-men in places. That is why I point to the role of the ~~S~~enior ~~A~~ppointments ~~C~~ommittee in the appointment of the heads of

¹⁸ Addition from witness: "Granted, artillery is held in bulk to flex en mass from one priority to another, but in this case we would see formations who do not have the priority almost without support at times."

the armed services and say, "Okay, there is legitimate political input into the selection of the Chief of Defence Staff, but don't let that go down the chain. Let these people be chosen for their readiness to speak the plain truth to authority".

The next point is about large-scale movement. The Russian Army did not execute large-scale movement~~tt~~, let alone manoeuvre, remotely competently. Why? Because the so-called training that they had done in the run-up to this was largely demonstration of capability: firepower demonstrations on script. There was not much evidence of really demanding force-on-force training of the sort I was talking about doing in Canada, where you come up against live opposition, with weapons simulated with lasers, and go for it. You make mistakes and experiment. You do not get castigated for the mistakes, unless they are really stupid. You learn from them, get another go and ~~ydo it.~~ You do it again and again, until you get to the stage where, when you do it for real for the first time and have to get it right, you do get it right, or, at least, you get it right enough to succeed. There was not much evidence of that happening. We must learn those lessons. We must properly resource our training.

What I am talking about is combined arms manoeuvre: getting people up to degree-level capability, resourcing it properly and doing it not just virtually, but in the field. As Clausewitz says, "Everything in war is simple, but the simplest things are difficult". He talked about the friction of war. You have to experience it on the ground, for real, as well as experimenting and making full use of the virtual domain.

There is a lesson about fires. We have seen a great emphasis on fires and long-range artillery—the sheer volume of artillery that supports the forces engaged in this sort of activity. That implies that we might be quite short of that sort of capability. We have also seen the value of fires coming into the theatre of operations from outside. It is incredibly useful to be able to put precision strike missiles on to targets in depth from submarines that are lurking at distance, from ships that are well out of area and properly protected, and from aircraft operating well back. We need to be up with the technology to deliver those things to an enemy, but to stop them delivering to us. We have to put the investment into the technology there.

We have a great emphasis in this paper on depth. There is much play on striking in depth, on the assumption that the close battle will be a lot easier. The point is that if your enemy does his job properly and executes an operation with deception and surprise, you might be in the close battle without having had the opportunity to do damage in depth. That is in fact the scenario that you are likely to face in the Baltic states, because of the short distances and the proximity of Russian forces, so you must have the capability for close battle and manoeuvre.

The key point, I would say, is that we have seen Ukrainian forces doing fantastic things: leveraging modern technology, hooking up UAVs to anti-armour weapons and linhooking them up to the satellites s-linkages so that

they get real-time information. All that stuff is brilliant. We must be leveraging that. We must really go for it. That causes great damage to the forces that are coming in, but it does not throw them out again. If NATO faces an incursion into a country like Latvia, it will be key that we hurl that incursion out, that we defeat it and destroy it in short order, to prevent Russia ~~executing~~doing the ~~typical~~ former Soviet doctrinal technique~~thing~~ of 'Escalation Dominance' and locking things on the ground, having taken the conflict~~things~~ to a level that we are not prepared to match because of the danger of it then spiralling into a nuclear war. To avoid this scenario w~~We~~ must have manoeuvre capability.

That implies all the things I am talking about. It is about protecting our manoeuvre capability, leveraging technology to protect as well as attack, and putting the time and effort into experimenting to get it right. That is what the Ukrainians are currently finding it quite difficult to do. They are getting better at it, but we need to be good at it from the get-go, because we do not have a chance to learn it on the job in a NATO context.¹⁹

The Chair: That takes us to the final question, from Lord Anderson.

Q68 **Lord Anderson of Swansea:** General, how would you assess our own capabilities compared with those of our key NATO allies, in terms of plans and overall capabilities? Moving from that to the coming NATO summit in Madrid, what do you expect to come from that summit? Will we be able to influence that considerably, in your judgment? Will it be a summit to remember, like Istanbul and Newport, or one to be forgotten?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: The capabilities that we currently still bring to NATO are Armed Forces that until now have had the reputation of operating in the first tier of world forces. We have been able to operate alongside, and integrated with, our US colleagues. We have been able to operate at a scale that gives us a degree of influence, which is why in so many cases we provide the second in command to an American commander of a force. That is a huge advantage in influencing nationally in the way that we would wish to do. Bearing in mind that we should have the confidence that our own national policy is altruistic, ethically based and in accordance with the rule of law, it is good to be in a position to ensure that all of that is fed into the coalition equation by having people at appropriately senior level.

That implies the ability to operate at a certain scale and level of competence alongside our most capable peer, the United States. It also implies that we have the experience and depth to be able to put into key positions people who have commanded on operations at platoon, company, battlegroup and brigade level—people who have done real things. That implies that we retain the capacity to contribute to operations at that (brigade) scale, or we will not have commanders who

¹⁹ Addition from witness: "A successful initial strike from the Russians could be disastrous to the unity and credibility of NATO."

have the required depth of experience to be able to contribute in those senior roles. A key strength that we still have is real credibility at the command level in NATO. The ARRC is still respected as one of the foremost, if not the foremost, corps headquarters because of all of that. We should retain that.

On contributing at the appropriate level, I have already said that for deterrence in eastern Europe now, as a sustained capability, based on what we have in this paper, we are a bit pushed to do more than about a battlegroup. We should be aspiring to do more than that, bearing in mind that the requirement for deterrence versus Russia has just gone up. I have said that we need to be able not only to put a tripwire capacity in the east, which signals to Russia and everybody else that this is a NATO engagement, but to do it properly, with the capacity to manoeuvre against a Russian incursion and to defeat it.

Lord Anderson of Swansea: What are your expectations of Madrid?

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw: An expectation from Madrid is a significant up-gunning of deterrence forward, but also a real injection of resources into enabling the theatre. There are so many things to sort out. There is the freedom to get armoured vehicles on a train from one country to another across a series of countries across Europe. That is subject to all sorts of bureaucracy at the moment, which needs to be cut aside. There is the enablement of a theatre, so that every bridge and every route in the areas where we are expecting to operate has already been designated with a load capacity, obstacles are already anticipated and bridges are pre-prepared, with spaces for demolitions.

That should be part of all our thinking in order to sustain a time of peace. It is the irony I pointed to up front: in preparing for war we have the best chance of keeping the peace. All of that work needs to be done. For a Government used to putting money into things that will produce real things and real capacity, it will be a grievous thing to put money into something that is there only in order that it should not be employed, but that is what we are in the business of doing in the field of deterrence.

In the meantime, we must have all of the other capability to get up front of problems elsewhere in the world. I do not think that this summit will go there, but I think NATO should have much more aspiration on contributing to stabilisation in the margins of the NATO area, particularly in the Sahel and the rest of Africa.

The Chair: Sir Adrian, thank you very much. This morning, you have taken us from looking at the challenges in principle to painting a picture for us, mostly as lay people, with one extreme expert, of what the real needs and challenges on the ground are, in specific ways. That was very helpful. Thank you.