

Defence Viewpoints has an agreement with The Sun newspaper : if we rip them off, we'll admit it. Unlike some other newspapers, apparently. Their interview with General Sir Richard Dannatt, former Chief of the General Staff, was widely quoted without attribution. We thought the direct quotes are well worth repeating, for the record. On troop numbers in Afghanistan The military advice has been for an uplift since the beginning of 2009. If the military says we need more troops and we can supply them, then frankly they should take that advice and deploy up to the level we recommend. If it means finding more resources and putting more energy in, let's do it. If you're going to conduct an operation, you're doing it for one reason ♦ to succeed. Don't let's do it with at least part of one arm tied behind one's back. That said, we have gone from 8,000 to 9,000 this year ♦ albeit with 700 as a temporary surge. On other NATO countries Of course our allies should do more. But it's lame to say we're not going to do as much as we could just because they're not doing what they should. We should get on and do what we think is right. On support generally I've been disappointed with the support we've had in recent years. The reason I argued the case not just internally but then externally is because Iraq and Afghanistan were putting huge pressure on the military. There just doesn't seem to be sufficient acceptance, even in all parts of the MoD let alone right across the Government, that our military needed to be properly supported in all the tasks it was being asked to do. One had to take the Government at times screaming and kicking to agree to some of the things that we felt passionately about. On equipment Have equipment shortages been due to lack of money, lack of industrial capacity or lack of drive? At various times it's been all three. We've got to keep the effort up. Bob Ainsworth is right when he said recently they are concerned about deploying a larger force because they haven't necessarily got equipment for them. But ♦ and this is a criticism I'm afraid ♦ we should have got on with these issues a year ago, and not be playing catch up now. My aim has always been to make sure we've got the right number of people, with the right equipment, conducting successfully the Government has asked us to do. When I left office I was convince that the Prime Minister - who I had three meetings with in my last month ♦ understood the issue and appeared to commit himself to doing something about it. On the McChrystal report Stan McChrystal is a very good man who understands these issues and he needs fully supporting. On leaving the Army I don't miss the almost daily phone calls to tell me soldiers have been killed and injured ♦ and what I miss least is having to write to the next of kin. LATER General Dannatt told the BBC on 7th October that he had recommended troop levels of 9800. The army got "not quite as much as we wanted...get on and do as good a job as we can." When asked if this meant more soldiers had been killed as a result, he said that "You can't say that. There are many factors that result in the tragedy of individuals losing their lives". He described the war as being among, about and for the people of Afghanistan - and for the people of Britain. Final thought: In democracies, Generals propose, politicians dispose. That's why President Harry S Truman sacked General Douglas MacArthur, who wanted to nuke the Chinese during the Korean War. Note: Photo copyright Jude 2009