

On Monday 25th February 2013 the First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope addressed the Armed Forces All Party Parliamentary Group in the House of Commons for the last time before he hands over to Admiral Sir George Zambellas in April. He dealt what the Royal Navy is doing, shared a few of the challenges, and reflected on some enduring realities of the Royal Navy.

[RN Operational Activity]

Firstly, we are making significant progress on operations, he said.

In Afghanistan, the security gains being made by our Armed Forces (nearly 900 of whom are sailors and marines) are helping transform the country's future with the ANSF now responsible for the security of at least 75% of the population.

The focus must now be on ensuring that sufficient momentum remains to make such progress irreversible, and allow an ordered withdrawal of Western Forces.

Meanwhile, peace at sea does not keep itself.

Once again, the Royal Navy is maintaining its global reach from the Atlantic to the Antarctic, and from the Caribbean Sea to the Arabian Gulf.

Indeed, with the Middle East region arguably the maritime centre of gravity, we have continued to operate with the 26 other navies in the Combined Maritime Forces as well as within the EU's Op ATALANTA and NATO's Op OCEAN SHIELD frameworks to ensure that confidence in vital global maritime trade remains high.

It's a good example of where persistent maritime presence is paying dividends.

Nearly two years ago, over 20 vessels and 500 hostages were being held off the Somali coast. Two weeks ago, by contrast, the figures were a fifth of that. Furthermore, through determined efforts by international navies and by the shipping industry, attacks and pirating of vessels in the Somali Basin and Indian Ocean over the last year are down by 75%.

And the trust being established and maintained between countries and navies is evermore tangible.

Take the Response Force Task Group's highly successful COUGAR 12 deployment last Autumn to the Mediterranean.

Whilst there, providing contingent capability, the RFTG also developed the Combined Anglo-French Joint Expeditionary Force and exercised with US and Albanian Forces, NATO's oldest & youngest members.

Meanwhile, in the Atlantic, the highly capable Type 45 destroyer HMS DAUNTLESS was on her 7-month inaugural deployment on Atlantic Patrol Task (South) reassurance duties providing capability at readiness within range of our South Atlantic Islands.

And yet the transit to the region also presented a variety of opportunities to support the UK's recently endorsed cross-Government International Defence Engagement Strategy.

The Ship's Company hunted drug runners in support of the Lisbon-based Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre for Narcotics and participated in exercises with Atlantic-facing NATO and EU partners.

Not to mention the help they provided 7 West African navies to develop their own ability to keep the Gulf of Guinea safe to improve the security of trade and energy extraction, and their vital fishing stocks.

Extending the hand of friendship to navies around the world especially in the vicinity of some of the world's most fragile states is what navies

instinctively do in the margins of operational activity.

Indeed, last year, Royal Navy warships and nuclear-powered submarines visited 90 countries, engaging with almost half the world's nations.

Such activity continues to help underpin international security.....as, of course, does the UK's strategic nuclear deterrent.

But no assessment of last year's activity is complete without mentioning our Armed Forces' support to Her Majesty The Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations and commitment, for many at short notice, to the security of the Olympics and Paralympics, the largest peacetime operation undertaken since World War 2.

As Lord Coe put it, The military contribution was one of the defining features of our games.

[Transforming Defence]

Progress is equally evident as the Royal Navy plays its part in Transforming Defence.

A multitude of change programmes designed to deliver Lord Levene's vision of holding to account and greater value for money are well-advanced.

This means that the single Services are becoming empowered with resource and responsibility. Consequently, the transfer of ownership of capability delivery for today's Navy is passing from Main Building to a restructured and even leaner Navy Command Headquarters in Portsmouth.

Elsewhere, improvements to our already remarkable rates of force generation are underway especially now that the planning and execution of maintenance and operating cycles are nearer the waterfront. Force generation is also on an upward trajectory as equipment support areas across Defence are brought closer together with Industry.

[Maritime Equipment Programme]

The Royal Navy can take pride too in the considerable progress made to deliver the Fleet of Future Force 2020 the size and shape of the Royal Navy articulated in the SDSR.

Already crewing up in Rosyth, the QUEEN ELIZABETH aircraft carrier will next year be brought out of dock in order to commence sea trials in 2016 and to allow assembly of the PRINCE OF WALES to begin.

First of Class Flying Trials for Rotary Wing will commence towards the end of 2017. And in just 5 years from now, highly capable fifth generation F-35B Lightning jets will be flying from HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH before the first operational deployment takes place towards the end of this decade.

Doing so will restore the nation's strategic capability that was utilised every year, apart from 1989, between 1945 and 2010.

And the infrastructure work for the carriers, in terms of jetties and dredging in Portsmouth is also hugely impressive as the City and Naval Base prepare to operate the sort of tonnage from the harbour not seen since the 1950s.

Later this week, the second of the 7 ASTUTE submarines, HMS AMBUSH, will be commissioned. And next month, the white ensign will be flying from all 6 Type 45 destroyers 3 of which have, on operational deployments across 3 oceans, already surpassed expectations in many areas.

Furthermore, regenerated Viking all-terrain vehicles are coming back on line to provide protected mobility for our Royal Marines. By 2016 all maritime helicopters will have either been replaced or upgraded and in the same year we will receive the first of fleet tankers on a 6-monthly drumbeat.

In

the next decade our Type 23 frigates will, having served for nearly twice their original 18-year design-life, be replaced by Type 26 Global Combat Ships. Whilst the 13 Type 26s are not yet on order, the debate has matured considerably over the year as numbers, capabilities & resources are squeezed into line.

Finally, to give us the sustained global reach required, we can expect to receive new Solid Support Ships and, albeit mindful of the ongoing Alternatives Study, bring the Successor Deterrent Submarines into the Fleet subject of course to confirmation in the next Parliament.

So it is a formidable future maritime equipment programme, totalling 33Bn over 10 years, and there is good reason for optimism as the maritime element of the SDSR's equipment ambitions are delivered.

[Challenges]

Notwithstanding that, challenges of course abound, especially when money is tight. Let me share 2 of these challenges with you.

First, perhaps an obvious point but one which risks being overlooked is our ability to manage coherency.

Internally to the MoD, because of the numerous programmes and initiatives across a Defence-wide change agenda including Army 2020, our support arrangements in the DE&S, naval base ownership, the New Employment Model for our people and so on. Communication of course is key here.

And externally too. We need to manage coherency because as other nations' militaries adjust their capabilities and readiness, as well as us, we all need to keep talking in order to understand the implications of others' austerity upon our own intent and especially so in a more dependant culture.

I say that because it's worth bearing in mind that, since 2008, the majority of smaller European countries have cut their defence budgets by as much as a third.....and medium-sized states by 10 to 15%.

France's, Germany's and the UK's have all been reduced by around 7.5% with further implications likely for us following the Autumn statement.

Meanwhile, as the US pivots towards the Pacific, it too is cutting its military cloth by 10% with potentially another significant reduction depending on the outcome of sequestration.

So coherency with other nations is critical.

The second challenge concerns striking the right balance between efficiency and effectiveness ie delivering value for money.

The British tax payer rightly expects nothing less.

In recent years, the Royal Navy has been ruthlessly driving efficiency right across its business.

Today there's little distinction between the frontline and the non-frontline such is the direct impact that those working in our lean HQs have on operations.

Where possible, we have de-latched people from platforms (on our Mine Counter Measure Vessels in the Gulf for instance) to maximise time on task. The platforms are kept on station for around 2 years whilst we rotate the crews every 6 months.

And we are working even harder to find innovative solutions, like optimising the training pipeline such that every warship and nuclear submarine is a classroom as well as an operational platform and expression of UK sovereignty.

All very laudable, but if we are to truly

deliver value for money, we must be careful that our pursuit of efficiency is not at the expense of the very operational effectiveness that we seek to enhance.

[Enduring Realities]

I've talked a little about what we have been doing and of some of the challenges. Finally, let me reflect, as I move on, upon some enduring realities.

43 years ago Cadet Stanhope joined a Navy in which there was social prejudice and little fiscal conscience. But for all the very positive cultural and organisational change that has taken place since then, the continuity of the operational requirement is telling.

1970 celebrated the first year of CASD. This year we will record the 44<sup>th</sup> year of unbroken continuous at sea deterrence. It remains the backbone of our NATO collective defence umbrella and, as we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Polaris Sales Agreement, our security relationship with the US.

In November 1970, under Op Burlap, we provided assistance to, the then, East Pakistan coastal areas following extensive flooding from cyclones. In November 2012, RFA ARGUS delivered 200 DFID Shelter Kits to Jamaica following Hurricane Sandy.

In the Gulf in 1970, Frigates were searching suspect vessels to prevent arms smuggling. Today, under Op KIPION, the British presence in the Gulf continues with 8 RN platforms & 1200 personnel. Indeed last year, on a 7-month deployment to the region your ship, HMS WESTMINSTER, protected energy and trade routes by capturing pirates and seized illegal drugs with a street value of £17M, destined to fund international terrorism.

In 1970, Royal Marines were, with the other Services, undertaking regular roulements on the streets in Northern Ireland. And as I speak, 40 Commando, along with Service colleagues is, for their third 6-month tour, conducting COIN operations on the streets in Helmand.

But what does all this tell us?

First, that effective security and defence is a team effort within the MoD and within Whitehall.

It tells us that our security apparatus is best when we remember that we are more than the simple sum of our parts.

Which Defence must keep at the forefront as it continues the logical debate through the next SDSR.

The second thing that strikes me is that Defence must embrace change or risk being consumed by it.

The pace of social, technological and geopolitical developments has only accelerated over the last 43 years.

None of us know with any certainty what the world will be like in 2056, 43 years from now when our two new aircraft carriers will still be in service.

So we must continue to plan for change, just as we have always done and reflected in, for example, the adaptability being built into our new platforms.

And we must continue to apply the same principle to the management and employment of our people.

Ensuring that yesterday's regulations don't become tomorrow's constraints. For in our increasingly dynamic and unpredictable world, success will not be rewarded to the inflexible.

Finally, the Royal Navy's relevance endures as does the need for credible contingency able to deter, able to respond.

Over my career the Service has been consistently busy serving the national interest...often in response to the unforeseen.

<p class="ListParagraphCxSpMiddle">Excluding activity underwater◆◆about which, even in this forum, I can◆t mention◆◆the Service has conducted some 800 operations◆◆on which 245 RN and RM personnel have made the ultimate sacrifice.</p> <p class="ListParagraphCxSpMiddle">In 1970, with a Navy of 86,000, we were involved in 16 operations.◆ Last year, with a Navy of 32,000, it was nearly double that.◆ It reminds us of:</p> <p class="ListParagraphCxSpMiddle">an increasing requirement for maritime forces;</p> <p class="ListParagraphCxSpMiddle">our enduring utility;</p> <p class="ListParagraphCxSpMiddle">and the significant steps taken ◆ many by my predecessors ◆ to advance our efficiency.</p> <p class="ListParagraphCxSpMiddle">But it also reflects the unpredictable and varied nature of operations◆◆with maritime forces consistently demonstrating the flexibility and the choices they provide Government with.</p> <p class="ListParagraphCxSpMiddle">I reflect on nearly 4 years as First Sea Lord and take heart that◆◆amongst the perennial debates over the balance between ambition and resource, between long and short term imperatives, and between current operations versus future requirements◆◆there are many compelling truths that serve the Royal Navy well and which this year◆s Battle of the Atlantic 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary will celebrate.</p> <p class="ListParagraphCxSpMiddle">Your Royal Navy, by which I mean all the Fighting Arms ◆ tasked with the protection of the merchant fleets of this Island nation ◆ remains operationally focused◆◆our people supremely capable◆◆and above all, your Royal Navy can be confident that as interests and opportunities in the maritime assume an even greater future relevance, so it will return to being a genuinely balanced force with full spectrum capability in the years ahead.</p> <p class="ListParagraphCxSpLast">It always has been and ◆ with your support ◆ it always will be.</p>