

2024 Air and Space Power Conference Transcript – Keynote Address

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UK Prime Minister's Special Envoy to the Western Balkans**

LORD PEACH: Thank you. Hello everybody, it is very good to be back in Australia. I can completely associate with the previous speaker, because, despite my dress today, in accordance with the rules of the conference, I am also a pensioner. I can't compete with the previous speaker, I thought was excellent on the frequency of my visits. The last time I spoke to this conference, I think, was 1998. If you want to book me for 26 year's time, I might struggle a bit.

(LAUGHTER) Today, I do want to compliment the Chief of the Air Force and the General in charge of space and cyber on the quality of the speakers so far. I will obviously offer a perspective from the other side of the world but my key word for the conference attendance, whether online or in the room, is connections. Many of the problems we face, regardless of where we sit, are connected. It is a serious moment because, in my opinion, and I think many of you will probably agree, the crises we face are additive, they are adding up. They are not separate. For much of my military career of almost 50 years, we dealt with things sequentially, now we must deal with things concurrently, at the same time. It is a serious time in our world and therefore these conferences matter.

I also am proud to have served - actually nine times in and with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. I admit that bias, as we say in the House of Lords, I declare my interest in support of NATO. I would like to thank Air Chief Marshal Chipman for his outstanding performance as the military general for Australia. Thank you, Rob, you made that difference in that partnership with NATO which I will explore later.

As I begin, imagine the world is a globe, not that terrible chart we see too often. If that world is a globe and just imagine we are sitting in Moscow, looking at that world as a globe, looking to the south and the south-west from Moscow. You have a perspective which is not only different but is also similar and one of the

themes that came through the early presentation this morning, which were excellent, is some things don't change that much, so the fact that Vladimir Putin is using war as policy is something that the Czars did and something the Soviet Union did. Therefore, it is a Russian trend. The geography of those wars is also, I am afraid, too often repeated as a pattern in that history of war as policy. Although many believed, and at times me included in my role in NATO as the chief of the defence staff in the UK, despite frequent visits to Ukraine that the logic was overwhelming, wasn't it, in the generation I represent and you are in, that he wouldn't actually go as far as invading, that he wouldn't actually rip up the international borders by which we run our world, but he did. So, in the context we have heard expertly displayed from the region, it may seem to you as an audience online or in the room a faraway war, but it is a war, and it is being pursued as a policy by the state of Russia. It is therefore important that we reflect on that war, so it is more than we are in an era of state-on-state risk or state on state conflict. There is a war being waged. As a war, it is a war of survival for the state of Ukraine. I commend personally and professionally on behalf of everyone the bravery of the Ukrainian people and its armed forces in defending their nation in a war of survival. Having lived through the era from the beginning, almost to the end, of expeditionary operations and conflicts of choice, this is different. Therefore, it requires the total defence of Ukraine and requires the mobilisation of society, which has consequences, which are interesting in the context of your excellent strategy review which we heard so much about this morning.

It is different in Ukraine but I think, and I will come back to this a couple of times, there are lessons from Ukraine for us all, whether we are airmen, joint officers, soldiers, sailors or marines and I think those lessons don't need to be weighted upon for lengthy stuff, discourses and conferences, they are pretty evident now and there is a lot of expertise in the room who could back that up with detail.

What is also clear as I stand in Canberra, is the rules-based international order system is under attack. It is not being gently challenged. I have spoken to very limited effect in the House of Lords on the preservation of the freedom of

navigation, but I am serious, because many sailors from your nation, from my nation, from other nations here represented have fought for that freedom of navigation. That is under attack by false flags of various types. It is ironic having done over a decade of engagement with the Russian leadership at four-star level before they took Crimea and we stopped engaging, it was ironic how much of those discussions I had and I am happy to answer questions on them, were about, ultimately, freedom of navigation as we believe as an international norm. That is also under attack. You have heard expertly described where and how in the seas around the region.

The norms are under attack, we need to think of ways of working together to defend them. Your own strategy makes very clear that we don't do this alone. It is the same in United Kingdom. We have an integrated review and followed up by policy documents, similar to yours. I have had the privilege of working with NATO to create the first NATO military strategy since 1967. The point about all these strategies, regardless of where you sit in defence or security, is they are a handrail for a future which we can't predict. The fact you have the handrail, you have a form, a box or structure to work in is really the outcome. I think I commend the Australian strategy for that. It gives you that clear handrail for an uncertain future.

Then you need plans to work in concert with allies and you need structure, all explained this morning and you need to train us for the world we are in rather than a fantasy world. One of the big changes we made in NATO was to stop the rather fictional approach we took to exercises for many years after the Cold War. It must be internationally, including our friends here in Australia, clear about the need to exercise realistically.

As we see this war in Ukraine, we can see, feel, even from here in Canberra, the consequences of failure, the risk of failure. The importance of support and that sustainment of support and thank you to those serving in NATO today in the audience, thank you, General, for the consistency of support to Ukraine, which is the demonstrating unity across Europe, of European states and the support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Australia should be rightly proud to be a partner of NATO. It is an important reflection of the value

which NATO, as an organisation, holds Australia and our other Asia Pacific partners. It is also a reflection on the sacrifice you have made in supporting NATO-led operations over decade and I pay tribute to the Australian Defence Force for that and their sacrifices.

In that experience, we understood that really what this is about, it's not a global pitch by NATO for influence, it's a reflection of the values we share and my deep respect and affection for your nation in Australia is shaped by my own experience of dealing with the World War II veterans. I admit primarily wearing this uniform, as Royal Air Force air crew and serving throughout my flying career on Bomber Squadrons but I have got huge respect for those veterans and, as they pass, they show us so much about the resilience of the human spirit, their bravery and courage and, again, those shared values. Those values shine out. Your partnership with NATO matters and what does it mean? NATO is a regional security organisation. It is not a global defence order, but it is a regional security organisation with structure, with a North Atlantic, at every level, up to an including the head of state, who make and take decisions at the speed of relevance needed. It is a portion with a permanent command structure, under the command hand of the supreme allied command of Europe, General Eisenhower and throughout the years ever since. That organisational ability of NATO to command and control is the only organisation in the world that, as it turns 75 in Washington in a couple of months' time, is needed more than ever.

The people who wrote the founding document of NATO called the Washington Treaty, deserve our respect to this day. That document is an amazing short read. It takes you about seven or eight minutes to read. It has stood the test of time. It has enabled the alliance to absorb now 32 nations, through a process which has got form and function and so when a NATO ally makes a promise to NATO, it is a promise, and it is followed up with a request for forces when necessary and activity in support of the alliance objectives.

What NATO therefore offers to partners such as Australia and in the region is convening authority and, my word, I think we need that convening authority now more than ever because Russia is pursuing war as policy. For professional airmen and aviators and space and cyber warriors, we need to think about what that

means for our profession and our own futures. We see the combination of historic aircraft types and use of weapons in new ways, we see it every day and, again, those serving in NATO today will know more about it, those serving in support of our friends in Ukraine will know the detail.

We see thousands of drones, of all shapes and sizes, of all degrees of longevity, some lasting minutes, some longer, some going very long ranges, some delivering high explosives, some delivering electronic effect. But the real big professional lesson for us all, as operators and airmen and aviators, and all the domains, is we're now seeing, for the first time in recent memory, a very real challenge in the electromagnetic environment. If I have one tactical lesson which has strategic reach and impact, it is the age, the era of electronic warfare is back. We operated in that era of crisis management, of expeditionary operations, with relative impunity in the transit, with relative impunity around the battle zones until perhaps being challenged in the last tactical mile. That is not what is happening in Europe, and I predict - predictions are dangerous, but I predict that it would not happen in any future conflicts either. We must understand that we are operating potentially in a denied environment, therefore we need to take measures accordingly. Many of your elements of the strategy, and CFs addressed this morning covered that, so I know you are thinking about it.

It takes many forms, and it is where, not just the importance of the alliance, but also the importance of like-minded allies in whatever format, Five Eyes, AUKUS, of understanding and being led by intelligence, my second thought. We saw the calculated decision by my own country and other like-minded allies to show the world that Putin was serious in 2022 and this was an attempt at deterrence by denial, so this is not a fancy theory, this is real. It didn't work because Putin is pursuing war as policy in a consistent way of Russian history. But it provided a check step and then we saw in the first few days, nights, weeks the way in which the Ukrainians could think like Russians and could operate, therefore, in response to the mortal peril that their country was in. Therefore, as a former intelligence person, with 10 years' experience in military intelligence, I urge everyone to think through your role, regardless of rank and intelligence-led operations. I used to say to the UK command course every year, the higher

command course every year "You should put, as a commander, the same effort into defining your questions from intelligence as you put into your mission and your intent". I stand by that. We need to all do it. In my long experience of intelligence and operations, the best ideas to resolve the enemies, or give the dilemma to the enemy and resolve the situation we are in, are not rank-related. Information intelligence must be shared to the point where it is needed, not by a hierarchy of rank. International sharing of intelligence is tricky. We have had many years of people say, "We all need to share everything". That is not true. Sources and methods need to be protected.

One of the side thoughts I would offer, even in a big wide-open conference like this, is the importance of counterintelligence. I was thinking that when we were talking about dispersed operations, the importance of protecting our data, the importance of protecting our people, with proper vetting and making sure we understand what espionage is in 2024, as well as what espionage was in the past because it doesn't stop. Russia is pursuing the dark arts. Although I - being old and a fully qualified pensioner - will go with new technology that the new generation dreams up and I accept the word hybrid, what Russia is doing is sabotage, subversion, and espionage and not only Russia. The old ways in which we are challenged and the boys, the great generation that fought so bravely in World War II, would have recognised, those styles of operation continue but now there is also all the electronic threats. I would like to emphasise to this conference of the importance of the information in how to tackle misinformation and disinformation, where perhaps younger generations and other allies may not be sharing the same media platform or the same view of the war or the conflict. This is prime territory for those who wish to destabilise, disrupt, and indeed make our own operations lives more difficult. If you talk of this in detail with the Ukrainians, they will talk to you about the sort of effort they have to put in 24 hours a day to counter and challenge misinformation and disinformation.

Russia has always done it, but they now just do it through the social media platforms, telegram in particular and others, and TikTok is very alive and well in this region. This is a really new threat and I was delighted with Mr Moriarty's

description this morning of working across government because you can't just counter misinformation and disinformation on the field of operations, you have to work across governments and with allies to do that and NATO is putting a lot of effort into this, along with our friends in the European Union because we can't do it alone. It is a primary reason for our next generation of thinking which your strategy and your efforts are setting out.

That then leads me to the lessons from Ukraine. I think they are interesting. I think our own approach to command and control has evolved with my 50 years' service, through the cold war, which seems almost devisory at times, but many of the things we did in command and control in the Cold War are still relevant today. I really believe that, and I am also referring to denied environments, electronic warfare, counterintelligence which we did practice in those years. But the empowerment of junior people on the battlefield, the Ukrainians have showed us the way. I think now, in addition to helping Ukrainians where we can, we have a lot to learn from the Ukrainians. As their war for national survival continues, they have a lot to show and teach us when they have got the time and space to do it. One of the things they will teach us, I am sure, will be that empowerment which has to be connected and it must be able to operate in complex operations, a denied environment and do sufficiently well in command and control to understand the mission and intent and deliver it. That's roughly speaking in the Ukrainian battle fields, delivered at brigade level, sometimes a little bit higher and leaving the higher purpose to what is vaguely recognisable as the general staff to integrate maritime, air, cyber and space where appropriate.

The next big thought for me along with electronic warfare is the so what from the denied environment and how that can also challenge your own planning. Yes, we did create that handrail in NATO, you have created one in Australia but then it is not much use without a plan that goes with it. It is with any military plan; it must be able to modify according to the enemy's manoeuvre and intent. As the distinguished speaker from Singapore said, it is not just measuring capabilities, it is understanding intent. It loops back to the critical importance of intelligence. My third big lesson, and it is not just mine and I know that the

various people I know more about it than me, but I was privileged to follow in the footsteps, the first chair of the military committee, it was then the Standing Committee of NATO was General of the Army, Omar Bradley, who is a brilliant general and he always said the same thing, which was "Amateurs talk tactics, professionals talk logistics". That has been demonstrated time and time again, daily and on the battlefield in Ukraine. It has a global resonance in the region, and I am delighted that there was a mention of sustainment and logistics this morning. There is a lot we can do to modernise our approach to logistics. One of the bits of the NATO organisation is rarely mentioned - two bits. The first is the way in which the NATO standardisation office, none of you have probably heard of it, can sit there, and develop NATO standard agreements, so that you are on the first step to interoperability. Noting that sometimes industry is with you, sometimes not. The second step which is equally important and still resonates for me generally, because I have seen the power and effect of it, is NATO has councils of now 32 allies and partners can be included by need. I will mention two. They are important and maybe we will come back to this in the conference. The first is the council of national arm and directors. My word, if 32 directors get together and say "We need a solution to this tactical operational strategic problem and it needs to be interoperable whether it is in space, cyber, maritime, land or air", then 32 are saying the same thing can give a powerful demand signal to industry, through procurement agencies and others and I absolutely align myself with everything Mr Moriarty said about speeding up procurement. We took steps while I was there to do that in NATO.

The second group, which might surprise you me mentioning it, is the NATO Council of Surgeon Generals. That began operating in 1953 and it is now embracing 32 surgeon generals and partners do come in, taking it up to 53. Why is that important? I don't really need to say. During the pandemic, that became a massive database of support and understanding and, more importantly, a practical way of saying what is working. That is what I mean by convening authorities, not a fancy phrase, and what I mean by empowerment is about devolving and trusting to the lowest level that is needed for the operation you are in. I am happy to cover those in questions those lessons.

The other theme of this conference, which I strongly endorse, is risk and how you deal with risk with resilience. If we are in an age of additive crises, then each carries its own risks. I grew up in the Cold War, unashamedly, you can see that from the way I look, flying an aeroplane called the Canberra and then one called the Tornado and we dealt with national security as defined by defence policy and all the documents that went with it, normally in support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. If you said to me then, flying Tornados in Germany in the 80s by the time you retire, national security would embrace climate emergency, energy security, food security and countering economic warfare as practised by the state of Russia, because the war in the Black Sea is not just about the war between Ukrainian navy and the Black Sea fleet, the war in the Black Sea, in my opinion, is much more than that. It is the practice of war through geoeconomics to deny the full potential of Ukrainian agricultural economy. To deny the grain supply so Russia can own more of it and set the terms for its use. To deny the delivery of sunflower oil, which is a strategic commodity, to deny the Ukrainian creation of fertiliser, which is a strategic commodity for the world, which loops me back to how the geoeconomic warfare in the Black Sea can shape the global approach to conflict and the global willingness to embrace and continue to support the rules-based international system. If you have one eye on the grain price and one eye on the price of fertiliser, which is Putin's intent, then you may be less reluctant to go with the latest package of support.

It is not new in our world history, the geoeconomics is often a partner for geopolitics. I think, personally, we spend too much time talking about geopolitics and we don't spend enough time talking about geoeconomics because food security, climate emergency and energy security are so important, and I know Australia thinks about this a lot. We have to make our vehicles, aeroplanes, UAV, and space craft more efficient in their use of fuel. It is an absolute necessity, and we will again not invent that at general officer rank level. It is the boys and girls and men and women when use the equipment who will have the ideas of how to do that, but we must do it. That is not just Ukraine telling us that, we are on these journeys anyway. Ukraine is giving us the urgency.

I said I would talk about connections. One of the problems with war as policy is it becomes ruthless war as policy. When we talk about resilience, I associate myself with everything I heard about resilience this morning and my exemplar for resilience in defence planning is Finland, who practice a concept called total defence. They have honed it over the years. They are very determined and single-minded, and they have really thought through how, when you join the military, you will be part of Finland's total defence concept for the rest of your life until you get as old as me. That is what I am saying. We have to take the people of defence with us on a different type of journey, which embraces regular service, reserve service of different types and a regular reserve service of those who have served, who are now doing great things in the economy and then we have to find ways of bringing industry in, sponsored reserves one way, contract support, more complicated - there are many ways of doing it but I believe it is a necessity to do that and work force planning doesn't capture it for me. This is a whole of society approach. In that information environment being nibbled at and challenging and, worse, sabotaged, destabilised, we must do that at the same time as making the case for defence, which sits behind what was said this morning. We must tell our people why we have to take this additive risk war and policy seriously and apply it in the regional context. The regional context is connected. The battlefield of Luhansk, Donetsk, the Crimea fields far away from Canberra but as you saw in your own history in the world and Second World Wars, wars have a nasty habit of creeping up on you. We have heard there are still states who are busy shipping ammunition to Russia as fast as possible through North Korea for mutual benefit.

We have an evolution in Iran, where, after decades of sanctions and sanctions evasion, they are adept at building and developing equipment, either to support proxy groups they have created - and we see the effect of it on the global map - or to provide much needed cash by selling them to Russia. This is not as structured as any form of multilateral organisation we have touched on this morning, it is unstructured, but it is still having an effect on the battlefield in Ukraine and beyond. We need to take that seriously because of the terrible consequences of conflict under the threshold of war as we are seeing. That common cause is too strong. The Shanghai Corporation Organisation and the

Russian organisation and remember there is a large land mass of Eurasia between the war in Ukraine and the boundary of China and that contested space could be very interesting in the decades to come and there will be expertise in the room who may want to comment on that, and I do not set myself out as an expert. It seems to me, looking from afar, there is a tussle going on between the former Soviet-type influence, type Russia the Soviet Union as portrayed by Vladimir Putin and the coercive approach, perhaps pursued by President Xi. Are those things in tension in that Eurasian land mass? We had an

explanation of the Taiwan problem and the North Korea problem and India and China. Get a bigger map, get a bigger globe, this area. This is where things start to link before I close. This is also an area of greatest challenge for energy security and the climate emergency. I don't see, as Mr Lavrov might have us believe - Mr Lavrov being the Russian Foreign Minister - that it is imminent that Russia will provide with kindness and support the Northern Sea route to the globe. I don't believe that. Will it happen in my lifetime? Maybe. In your lifetime, definitely. Will that be a major strategic reset between the distance of the Indo-Pacific region and the Eurasian region. Yes, it will. It comes with huge risks for the environment, the planet and potentially our way of life. It also, perhaps going back to the earlier speaker, demonstrates why China is so interested in the Arctic, Antarctic and why China takes such interest in one belt and one road in connecting geopolitics which is what I urge us to do as well.

I close on not just paying tribute to the generations that left Australia to cross the globe under great discomfort and fight in every domain, but also reflect on those values and they can be an industry, they could be in universities, they could be in society, linking our education institutions, our defence academies. I was at your excellent defence academy yesterday; it is much less well developed than it could be. Using our defence academies to take the next generation into this complex world is something we need to do and share best practice in that. Our cadet organisation, similarly, and I always think they give us so much energy and potential. The way in which we work together through those shared values through history, despite the geographical distance, is a way through the problems we face, and those problems are very real, and they require urgent attention and

therefore I am delighted to be given the opportunity to speak to this conference. I am delighted to now take - we

have a lot of times for questions. I can't guarantee that I will understand every question and give you the answer you want but I will give it my best shot. Thank you for your attention and thank you for all that the Australian Defence Force is doing. (APPLAUSE)

MICHAEL SLEEMAN: Thank you, Lord Peach, for your inciteful remarks on our shared strategic challenges. We will open for questions. Keep them coming through on the app or raise your hand. At start of your presentation, you spoke about how we didn't anticipate that Putin would invade the Ukraine. You also mentioned we don't do things alone. Did we convince ourselves that he wouldn't invade Ukraine and what else are we convincing ourselves of?

LORD PEACH: Some of us thought he would and there was a decision taken to release enough information intelligence to convince those who didn't believe he would. The Ukrainians believed he would. Those of us who had the privilege of going to Ukraine a lot were hearing that message. It's the fact he has done it, it hasn't led to the nervousness being confined to the battlefield and many of the countries, states in close proximity to Russia are now nervous. I am afraid I have to conclude that was deliberate on the part of President Putin. Therefore, this state of nervousness and anxiety is very consistent with the approach of the Soviet Union and the Czars. If you follow Vladimir Putin's speeches, which is quite interesting, a British Prime Minister once told me when I was the head of military intelligence "Always read politicians' speeches because they will always tell you what they are going to do". In one of his speeches last year, President Putin said his hero was Peter the Great. That makes - if you know anything about Peter the Great and you live in the Baltic that makes you nervous. There is a consistency and an intent,

despite the modern world and our ability to understand the images we see; the President of Russia played with that and continues to do so.

MICHAEL SLEEMAN: I will link that to a question we have coming through on the EventsApp where you spoke about the nervousness of those countries around Russia "How should NATO manage competing narratives between offering membership to states seeking collective security while avoiding the potential perception of NATO being aggressive and expansionist?"

LORD PEACH: An excellent question. The Russians will continue to push the narrative of the latter part of that question, and they have done it, to me personally in the room, many times. It is what they do. The expansion of the alliance has been organic, created by the conditions set after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. They have ebbed and flowed since, but we saw - one thing is clear, it is hard to argue that the move of Sweden and Finland from partner to ally, as a full member of the alliance has been caused by the war in Ukraine. That is cause and effect, with many other now allies, it is more complex, organic and it develops over those decades. The first part of the question is - also provides the answer. What is NATO? It's actually a military alliance offering collective security. Over 1.2 billion people through a simple treaty, under political control of the North Atlantic Council with a military command structure which can do stuff at big scale. I should have emphasised that scale matters in this conference, this conversation and being able to convene large forces and move at scale is part of the NATO deterrence.

We had a good discussion this morning on deterrence. What I would add to the discussion, in order for deterrence to work, it has to be credible, so the second part of my answer to the question is forward presence, which was very much a NATO doctrine of the Cold War, is not irrelevant today. CF, this morning was very much on the edge of talking about forward presence with your northern bases and, therefore, forward presence does not imply a threat to Russia but implies readiness to defend the border which is implicit and explicit in the Washington Treaty. It is a good question and the only correction I would offer is we need to be really careful that we don't swallow the Russian narrative that NATO always does this, and they have broken every rule and promise and so on.

I sat on the NATO/Russia council personally and it is not true.

MICHAEL SLEEMAN: I look to the floor if there are any people who want to ask a question? I will continue with one from the EventsApp. You spoke of war as policy and a strategy of denial. Is that the same game or are we two different competitors playing different sports?

LORD PEACH: It is often in competition, of course it is, almost by that design that you pursue a war as policy. The other thing I would say, and I am being emotional and maybe it is difficult to talk about, but I think in 2012 Putin started to militarise Russian society. That now is in full flow and that is different, by which I mean not just cadet organisations but down at school level, the indoctrination of the Russian people into conflict, into anti-west rhetoric, into challenge and fighting, surviving in the motherland, all that is in the DNA of Russian society. Actually, to an extent that is quite disturbing for the parents and, in my case, grandparents, it is disturbing how deep it goes. That, to me, is a sociological expression of war as policy. It is militarisation of the whole of Russia in all its nine time zones.

MICHAEL SLEEMAN: Any questions from the floor? I will continue.

LORD PEACH: Someone in the front row. I appreciate if there is some issue going on here. (LAUGHTER)

MICHAEL SLEEMAN: A microphone is coming, Sir.

>> You have spoken a lot about Russia, Lord Peach, but I am interested in your perspective on China and the challenge that I think those of us in the west who have to trade with China, but also seek to preserve a rules-based system that has fundamentally supported the western way of operating. How we find the right balance when we face that geoeconomic threat that you have described?

LORD PEACH: It is about deterrence. I think the speaker from Singapore covered it very well. It is also about understanding the PLA, the direct answer to your question. It was difficult for me in NATO, and I think Air Chief Marshal Chipman would remember, I tried hard to put China on the agenda. Not all the allies agreed to have a conversation exactly as you proposed. I think it would be easier now and the conversation is needed now. My own scant knowledge, based on two visits to China, is we need to understand the PLA better, and we need to understand it better in its evolution as well as its recent past. I strongly align with our speakers this morning, that what struck me on my visits was that the PLA didn't have any operational experience and therefore they had all the bells and whistles and they had exploited, through their own intelligence collection no doubt, many western advances in technology. Just as a complete aside, why do we put so much on the Internet about our latest thinking and our latest doctrine and our latest technology? That is an aside. I do think we have to understand the PLA better, that is where we come back to intelligence cooperation. I am sure Australia has got more to tell us than we have got to tell Australia and I am being humble in that statement, and we have to understand, in my view, and I will say it loud and clear, China is busy watching Ukraine's battlefield extremely carefully and will be absorbing lessons that they will apply in their own strategic calculus. It is more than the activity you see on your seas around the region.

The other thing I would say to bring a bit of chill into the atmosphere, there is no doubt that Russia's statements on nuclear operations, rather than nuclear deterrence could be themselves destabilising and that is exactly what my friend and former boss Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary-General of NATO, said yesterday. He said it is irresponsible the way Russia is doing this, and it could have consequences in the region, as Mr Moriarty hinted at. We have to accept China as it is and the heft it now has. I was struck by the subtlety of the regional understanding also. At the same time, I remember, from my time as CDS, UK, when we couldn't quite believe it but there was a Chinese maritime task force in the Baltic Sea which transited all the way from China, demonstrating global reach and was in perfectly acceptable running order. We have to conclude that China is learning from the battlefield. I will never know how those deals are conducted

between President Putin and President Xi, but my suspicion is many of those deals are on China's terms. China is getting stronger, whilst all the difficulties and the ambiguities China's regional approach and beyond are there, I think we have to take this more seriously. We must talk about it more in NATO. That is not the same as saying China is a threat to NATO directly, but we must watch and observe the proliferation of Chinese equipment. I was determined not to mention the Balkans this morning, CF, but it is interesting how much equipment from China is now proliferating way beyond this region and I think that is interesting. You are right to raise it, it is something we need to do more of, and it is something we should do more of in our relationship with Australia.

>> If I can ask you a question in your new capacity in the House of Lords, Lord Peach. When you look at Ukraine, it was very clear to their nation that they faced an existential threat. They mobilised their society and unlocked extraordinary innovation and resilience that was there. It seems, had Russia known that they had that capacity for innovation and that capacity for resilience, that might have had a stronger deterrence effect. As the title of this conference infers, we know we are not at peace, we are thankfully not at war, we are somewhere on that spectrum of competition and the question then is: have we mobilised our societies and our alliances appropriate to our circumstances and, if not, what can we do about that?

LORD PEACH: Well, that is a great question. The quality of the debates in the House of Lords in the UK on these subjects is very rich and the privilege of being there to add to that is obvious. They aren't just about the here and now, it is about, as you imply in your question. For me, if the UK enters a period of another strategy review, then we have to consider what we do, in terms of everything from homeland defence, what I still like, the Finnish model, total defence through to, I think urgently making a better case for defence which is what we try and do in the House of Lords, and particularly through the House of Lords committees, where their reports are often extremely worth reading. That is happening. Is it happening quickly enough? I am afraid in many houses of parliaments around the

world, you are often distracted by the close battle and, therefore, we must fight to get the important strategic thinking back into society. Not allow it to be swamped by a headline generating national service debate, which is part of a conversation, but it is not the conversation. As you imply in your question, CF, it is important that we frame these questions carefully and then also work through what that means for how we develop how the people work for us develop in this security-rich threat environment.

I was at - I don't mind mentioning this and the CS won't mind me mentioning it - I spoke at the 100 anniversary of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force a few weeks ago and I did a lot of research. It was striking how some of the organisational manoeuvres and conversations they were having in 1937 and 1938 - my word we need the same conversation again and it is interesting, we need to think about reserves in a much more structured, disciplined way as we did in the 1930s. Thank goodness we did, because the structures we put in place were expandible. That is my final thought to you, CF, whatever we do now, we have to have the ability to expand in an era where, sadly, threats can be realised, rather than this notion that crept in during the 90s, when I was part of it, I admit that, where we saw technology being a substitute for people and I am not sure that is altogether true now.

We also need to embrace diversity in the work force to bring people with skills, regardless of what we have traditionally expected and I am very clear on that, having helped to create the UK cyber efforts and we just must do that and not just allow - I think you both said it this morning, General, you can't allow the policy that existed, past tense in my view, to get in the way of the need we have to move faster, to develop both capability and enable people and then empower people to allow the brightest and best from the bottom up to change what we do and that is what all wars, including Ukraine's show us, is the men and women fighting the war who guide what is needed. It is not doctrine centres, with all due respect to them and think tanks, it is not them, it is those who are feeling it. They are both very good questions, and they apply in the region.

>> Lord Peach, David Miller from ASPI. Whilst you are on people, much has been

made in the press of the mince meat tactics, the Russian tactics which they used in World War II which results in mass casualties, how does a western philosophy with people who care about casualties, as Ukraine does, deal with that philosophy because there are 120 million Russians - I think about 38 million Ukrainians left. You can do nasty maths, but how does NATO philosophically deal with that as a strategy of war that casualties don't really count for the other side?

LORD PEACH: Yes, interesting. I am going to pick - nice to see you again. I won't have semantic debates about words, but it is more of a way in Russia rather than a strategy of Russia. I think, in my reading and my knowledge, is that they have never really bought into the concept of precision because it costs, and they didn't have the avionics to deliver it and so they continued with the old approach. If they could have followed our use of technology, they may well have done. Then I think that could be glorified as a strategy, but I don't think it is. Secondly, you counter it with accurate counter-fires and fast moves which the Ukrainians have become extremely good at. In Ukraine, they are very fit, and they move very fast. The third thing, my father experienced this on the battlefield in World War II, the World War II battlefield in the Soviet era was very much - it showed us that rockets were real and we chose, in different ways and maybe where we were fighting in our case the retreat from empire and the Vietnam war and so on, we chose not to follow that Russian style. That Russian style is as much about their terrain as anything else and this was the artillery barrage and the approach and it is more, for me, like a World War I type artillery duels and you have the battle of the shells production which is an important debate to stem the flow now. The Ukrainians are becoming adept at trying to avoid the casualties. In recent weeks, I am afraid, the Russians have tried to deliberately create casualties to increase the pressure on the

Ukrainians - in recent weeks, during the month of April. I am not sure it is a strategy, but it is what they do. The viciousness of the tactical battle, as it enters a third year, is all too real. There is still so much that is reminiscent of the infantry fighting of World Wars which, to some eyes, is quite shocking. The other thing which is linked for us in consequence is we must ramp up production and it is not

just speeding up procurement processes, it is actually working with industry to speed up production processes and that final thought is we have to improve interoperability, so Ukraine - imagine being the head of logistics in the Ukrainian armed forces with this complete table full of different types of everything from everywhere, very difficult. They do a magnificent job in managing it. I am not painting them tall, but it is interesting to reflect - final thought, just how much Indigenous weapon production in the Ukraine is going up and it is a lesson for all of us, but it is an impressive performance. The fact that the Ukrainians understand the Russians, it cuts both ways, the Russians also understand the Ukrainians when they began their war and to the Ukrainian and political leaders, the war started long before February '22. I personally witnessed many times on visits to the Ukraine the losses they suffered since 2014 when the Crimea operation began.

MICHAEL SLEEMAN: Time for one more question, Lord Peach. You mentioned in your presentation you don't like the term "hybrid", but you used "sabotage, subversion and espionage". Around that theme, what can we do to raise awareness in a liberal society that these activities are happening, when they, by their very design, are probably not being seen and what can we do about them when we are not at the point of crisis or conflict?

LORD PEACH: Sometimes it is a wake-up call. I was the Chief of the Defence in the UK when, on a Sunday, I got a phone call in the middle of the morning saying there had been a very serious incident in Salisbury, a small town in the south of England. As the day went on, it was pretty obvious this was a small incident but, my word, it had big consequences, spreading nerve agent on door handles in the UK was not something we thought was a friendly act and the subsequent days demonstrated how much it took, by the way, to deal with that, just how much resource we had to put into that. I was also struck, in answer to your question, I was then charged by my Prime Minister and by the National Security Council, which met that day, to go to NATO to brief them and that was interesting, instructive because NATO demonstrated, offered complete solidarity from the start and, if you recall, within days, well over 100 Russian spies, call them what they

are, had been expelled from several NATO allied countries. That was subsequently followed up by a clumsy and potentially devastating Russian attempt at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in the Hague, probably perpetrated by the GRU but with the sharing of intelligence, theme of the morning, we were able to call them out. It is partly about being ready to call them out. It is partly about internally in defence realising that counterintelligence is in a dirty word, partly about ensuring your vetting procedures are up to date and effective, partly about not frightening the people but explaining to the people that hybrid is not a risk-free, it is not a soft option, it can take hard forms and there has been disturbing attacks across Europe. This week NATO has convened quickly and rapidly to call out a great deal of Russian activity and without treading into delicate political waters, it is also true that subversion is not just about defence assets, it is also about political processes. It is not - going back to the question before, it is not unique to Russia. Just what an earth does China do with all the stuff it steals? I have no idea. (LAUGHTER) To be serious, we have to take this seriously. Whilst using the term hybrid is fine and we get together with allies, friends and we work through these problems, but in my own experience, to give you that personal example, when needed, this is when it was almost the alliance at its best, along with its organising ability convening authority, was to show solidarity and act on that solidarity quickly, and so, will the threat ever go away? I am afraid I don't think it will and we need to organise for it.