

**Address by Winston S. Churchill,
President of the UK National Defence Association,
at the Launch of the UKNDA on 8 November 2007
in the Churchill Museum, London**

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all here this morning for the official launch of the UK National Defence Association.

The UKNDA came into being as a result of the initiative of our Chairman, **Cdr. John Muxworthy, RN**, and a group of other retired officers, distraught by relentless Defence cuts, shrinking the front-line strength and capability of our Armed Forces. Allied to this was their concern at the inadequate support by Government, and the public at large, for our Armed Forces, who serve this country with such distinction, loyalty and bravery. A few months ago they invited me to be their President, a post I accepted without hesitation, as this is something about which I feel passionately.

Such is the concern for the state of our Defences that, within a matter of weeks, we were able to secure as our Patrons three former **Chiefs of Defence Staff** and a former **Foreign Secretary**. May I offer, on behalf of us all, an especially warm welcome to **our Patron present today, General Lord Guthrie**, who will be addressing us shortly. We are only sorry that our other three Patrons, **Admiral Lord Boyce, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Craig** and **Lord Owen** cannot be with us due to other public commitments, but each has sent brief, but powerful message of support. [CUT TO VIDEO CLIPS]

In addition to our distinguished Patrons, we have assembled a **glittering array of Vice-Presidents**, covering all elements of the Armed Forces, together with representatives of all three main political Parties. May I extend the warmest of welcomes to my aunt, **Lady Soames**, who commanded a heavy anti-aircraft battery in the Second World War, as well as to **our military Vice-Presidents** with us today, who include:

Field Marshal Lord **Bramall**

Field Marshal Lord **Vincent**

Marshal of the RAF Sir Peter **Harding**

- all former **Chiefs of Defence Staff**

Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael **Graydon**

Air Chief Marshal Sir Peter **Squire**

- both former **Chiefs of Air Staff**

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Julian **Oswald**

Admiral Sir Jock **Slater**

- both former **Chiefs of Naval Staff**

Admiral Sir James **Eberle**

- former **C-in-C Fleet**

Lt-Gen Sir Henry **Beverley**

- former **Commandant-General Royal Marines**

Viscount **Slim**

- Fmr **Commander of 22 SAS**

Vice-Admiral Jeremy **Blackham**

Maj-Gen Patrick **Cordingley**

- Cdr of *Desert Rats* in Gulf

Lt-Gen Sir Michael **Gray**

Brig Professor Richard **Holmes**

Air Marshal Ian **Macfadyan**

Col Bob **Stewart**

Lt-Gen Sir Richard **Vickers**

Our **Civilian Vice-Presidents** are also of great distinction & drawn from across the political spectrum. Present today we have:

Rt Hon Michael **Ancram**

Professor Jeremy **Black**

Sir Nicholas **Bonsor**

Rt Hon **Baroness Dean**

Sir Richard **Dearlove**

- Former head of MI6

Rt Hon Bruce **George** MP

- Fmr Chm of Def Selec Comm

Rt Hon Dr **Lord Gilbert**

- Fmr Min of State for Defence

Hon. Bernard Jenkin MP	
Paul Keetch MP	
Edward Leigh MP	- Chm, Public Accounts Cttee
Rt. Hon. Michael Mates MP	- Fmr Chm of Def Sel Comm
Patrick Mercer MP	
Hon. Nicholas Soames MP	- Fmr Min of State for A F
Sir Keith Speed	- Former Minister for the Royal Navy
Glenmore Trehear-Harvey	- Intelligence Analyst
Simon Weston	- fmr Welsh Guardsman, bombed in the Falklands War aboard RFA <i>Sir Galahad</i>

Finally I wish to extend a sincere thank to the **Members of the UKNDA Policy & Management Board**, thanks to whom the UKNDA has become a reality.

All our Patrons, Vice-Presidents and rank and file members are united in this endeavour by **two overriding considerations**: first, by our determination to ensure that today, and for the future, our nation shall continue to have a **strong and balanced Defence capability**.

Secondly, by a desire to see that the men and women, who constitute the Armed Forces of the Crown, have the necessary modern equipment to enable them to undertake the dangerous duties imposed upon them by Parliament and the Government of the day, that they and their families have decent living accommodation, and that those who are injured in the course of their duty receive the very best medical attention and rehabilitation, as well as compensation at least on a par with civilians.

The Defence Budget:

25 years ago, at the time of the Falklands war, the UK was devoting just over 5% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) to Defence. By the last year that figure had dropped to 2.2% -- a figure not even sufficient to maintain our frontline strength in peacetime. But we are not at peace: **Our Armed Forces are fighting two high-intensity wars in Iraq and Afghanistan**, which are proving more ferocious and protracted than any we have fought since the Korean War more than 50 years ago.

Although the Government has, for the past 5 years, been increasing Defence expenditure by 1.5% a year above inflation, this doesn't begin to allow the Armed Forces even to maintain their existing capability, given that inflation in the Defence equipment budget is running at 7-10% each year.

Thus every year there is a shortfall in funding for Defence of approximately 5%. Small wonder that, every five years or so, there appears a large black hole in the Defence budget, triggering – under governments of all political persuasions, Labour and Conservative alike – a Strategic Defence Review, heralding new and ever deeper cuts in the strength and capability of the Armed Forces.

Consequences of Under-funding:

The consequences of this under-funding manifest themselves in so many ways. As a result of manpower cuts **more pressure than ever before** falls on those Forces remaining, with tours of active service duty back to back, sometimes just six months apart – instead of the two years they have been promised. It manifests itself in **shortages and inadequacy of equipment**.

At the start of the recent Gulf War, we sent men and women into battle in Iraq without proper protective armour. For many there were no flak jackets, no effective personal radios and, all too often, they were in thin-skinned vehicles or helicopters, which afforded no protection.

So many cases spring to mind – **soldiers who gave up their flak jackets** to their comrades, only to be killed themselves by a bullet from which they would otherwise have been protected; the **six Royal Military Police**, torn to pieces by an angry mob, unable to summon assistance for want of personal radios. Here within the city of Westminster, even parking wardens patrolling in pairs for safety, are equipped with

the latest in high technology, including of course personal radios. Yet we commit our Forces to battle without even such a basic item of equipment.

Let there be no misunderstanding: **the price of Parliament's failure to provide the necessary modern equipment, is all too often being paid by the men and women of our Armed Forces in blood.** Many lives are being needlessly lost, while countless others are shattered by the shameful failure of Parliament to provide our troops with the necessary equipment.

Our Armed Forces have been – and to this day – all too often are required to drive vehicles or pilot helicopters – some 20 years old – which offer little or no protection to those who operate them. Operations in Southern Afghanistan are frequently constrained by the lack of armoured helicopter support for air-to-ground operations, force deployment and casualty-evacuation.

Then, when the wounded – some of them fearfully wounded – arrive home they find that all the dedicated military hospitals have been closed down, and that they are confided to the mercies of the NHS. All too often, for their rehabilitation they have to rely on public charity to provide basic equipment and, when it comes to compensation, they are grossly and inexcusably discriminated against. This is something that must end.

How can Parliament explain or excuse, let alone justify the fact that 25 year old **Lance Corporal Martin Edwards**, who faces a lifetime of care after being severely burned in a bomb attack in Iraq, received just £114,000 under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme – less than one quarter of the £484,000 awarded to a RAF secretary, who suffered a repetitive strain injury to her thumb?

Or take the case of 23 year old **Lance Bombardier Ben Parkinson** of the 7th Parachute Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery, who not only lost both legs in a bomb explosion in Afghanistan a year ago, but sustained 36 other serious injuries. He was awarded just £152,150 a figure that, thanks to a public & media outcry, has been raised to the upper limit imposed by the MoD of £285,000.

But why should these selfless and courageous young members of our Armed Forces be so flagrantly disadvantaged and discriminated against in compensation compared to their civilian counterparts? This is an injustice, so blatant and so unjustifiable that it makes the blood boil of all who love our Armed Forces and admire the dedication and self-sacrifice of those who serve. **The UKNDA is determined that this injustice shall end.**

We are calling for Defence expenditure to be increased from its present level to at least 3% of GDP – an increase of some 35%-40% from its present level. **Given that we are fighting two wars, nothing less will meet the case.** There has been a surge in spending on **Health** and on **Education** – now it is time for a surge in **Defence** expenditure. **If Parliament is unwilling to provide the necessary resources for Defence, then it – and the Government of the day – has no business committing our Armed Forces to war** – not just one war, but two.

Ours is a nation that looks to play its part on the world stage. We are proud of the fact that we are one of the five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, and one of the eight Members of the G-8's most economically powerful nations of the world. We like it that, as a nation, we 'punch above our weight' and have the capacity to project our military power, limited though it may be today, across the globe.

This is all very fine but, if we are to continue in that role, we cannot relentlessly cut the capability and manpower of our Armed Forces, nor can we continue to expect our Armed Forces to pay the price in blood for our under-funding of Defence.

The Threat:

The threat facing Britain and her Allies today and in the medium term comes overwhelmingly from Islamic fundamentalists in **Iraq, Afghanistan** and anywhere else in the world that they can pursue their global *jihād*. **Pakistan**, the sole possessor of the so-called 'Islamic Bomb', rests on a political knife-edge, with the Taliban hovering in the wings, eager to take power.

Beyond that there is the serious menace of a nuclear-armed **Iran**, equipped with missiles that will, within a few years, bring even the cities of Western Europe within their range. It is controlled by an unstable theocratic leadership that brazenly threatens Israel with nuclear holocaust. We see Mr. Putin's Russian Federation newly probing the RAF's alertness with their *Bear* bombers and threatening once again to target the civilian population of Western Europe with their vast nuclear arsenal.

It is evident that we live in an uncertain and dangerous world. Is it prudent, is it wise to go further down the path of Defence cuts, when we are beset by so many dangers? The reason we are pulling out of Basra is not because our job there is done, but because of inadequate military manpower and a lack of resources; and if – heaven forbid – our Forces were to be defeated in Southern Afghanistan it would not be through any failing or lack of courage on the part of our Armed Forces, but by the failure of successive Governments and of Parliament to fund them to secure the objectives to which they have been committed.

In a recent BBC *Newsnight* programme on the subject, **General Sir Jack Deverell** twice made the point that there has been “*very little pressure from the public*” for increased funding for Defence. **This is precisely what the UKNDA hopes to remedy. Our aim is to become a mass-membership organisation.** Some 15 million – or one in four – of our fellow citizens are either serving or have served in the Armed Forces, or have close friends or family who have done so. That is a huge constituency and, if we can mobilise even one in ten of that number, we shall have a powerful and organised body of opinion capable of making its case to Government and Parliament in a way that they would be foolish to ignore.

We are appealing to all those families, who have loved ones or friends serving in the Armed Forces to join us, and thereby help ensure that those in the front-line have the wherewithal to do their job: modern equipment, decent housing, proper medical care and compensation on a par with civilians. **Our immediate aim is to secure 10,000 UKNDA members**, and from there 100,000, and thereby to build a head of steam that will prove irresistible and thereby enable us to safeguard our nation's defences and give our Armed Forces the backing they deserve.

I appeal to you all to join us, and to get your friends and family to join us! Together we can secure our objective.

It is now my great pleasure to introduce to you a man of the highest distinction, **a former Chief of the Defence Staff and Patron of the UKNDA, General Lord Guthrie GCB**. Over to you, Charles!

END