

UK NATIONAL DEFENCE ASSOCIATION



President: Winston S Churchill

Patrons:

*Admiral Lord Boyce GCB OBE DL
Rt. Hon Sir Menzies Campbell CBE QC MP
Marshal of the RAF Lord Craig GCB OBE
General Lord Guthrie GCB LVO OBE
Rt. Hon Lord Owen CH*

CEO: Cdr. John L Muxworthy, RN

UKNDA Ltd., PO Box 819
Portsmouth, Hants PO1 9FF

MAY 2008 NEWSLETTER

Dear Patrons, Vice Presidents, Board Members, Members and Registered Supporters....

In the absence on holiday of our CEO, Commander John Muxworthy, herewith an interim newsletter compiled by the PRO and Membership Secretary.

Public Relations Officer's Report

April was another busy month on the publicity front, with the focus on publicising the results of our Parliamentary survey. ComRes, the independent research company, polled 159 MPs on both sides of the House of Commons on our behalf. The results were more dramatic than even we had hoped for – with a clear majority of MPs of all parties saying the armed forces are stretched to the limit and calling for a boost to defence funding. On the Conservative benches nine out of ten MPs want an increase (even though the Party leadership have so far been reluctant to make any spending commitments on defence). The poll was covered in the Daily Telegraph and the regional press, and led to our CEO being interviewed on British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) TV.

[The full press release is attached.]

We also responded to press reports on fatalities and injuries in Iraq and Afghanistan arising from equipment failures and lack of equipment, and we commented extensively in the media on the recent spate of coroners' reports highlighting the connection between defence under-funding and avoidable deaths. With military matters so prominently in the news, we launched our "Support our Armed Forces" campaign website and car stickers, and participated in several major meetings and events held by like-minded organisations in Westminster and Whitehall, with the aim of keeping UKNDA very much to the fore on any issues related to defence funding and the Military Covenant.

The past month has also seen a new addition to the UKNDA Board – Scottish businessman Azeem Ibrahim, a former TA Para who has built a hugely successful international business with extensive interests both in the US and the Middle East.

Azeem has written authoritatively on the defence funding crisis in the latest issue of the RUSI Journal and is a formidable champion of the UKNDA cause. We welcome Azeem to the Board and are confident he will prove a great asset to our organisation. The CEO and PRO both continue to receive regular calls from the media seeking informed comment from UKNDA on issues relating to defence and the armed forces, and are in day-to-day contact with defence correspondents on the national and regional press.

The coming month brings ‘more of the same’ but with plans moving rapidly ahead for events later in the year including our AGM, our Grand Reception at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, and fringe-meetings at the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative party conferences – all of which will provide us with a significant PR platform for UKNDA’s “Support our Armed Forces” campaign. The aim is to keep defence at the top of the news and political agenda, and to ensure that UKNDA is a constant source of reliable, informed, authoritative comment.

Andy Smith
PRO – UKNDA

Company Secretary’s Report

Members and Registered Supporters now total 2264, an increase of 127 over the April figure. There remains, however, some 226 Full Members on the database indicating as being “inactive”, ie yet to pay their subscriptions, some stretching back several months. We will be introducing an automatic on-line “gentle reminder” system in the near future, but in the meantime if anyone is unsure of their status do please contact me either on-line (secretary@uknda.org) or by short note to the PO Box address above.

Our web site manager, Andy Coley, is in the final stages of establishing facilities by which Full Active Members will be able to view and amend their own details that are held on the UKNDA database – password protected of course. Similarly, a Members Forum is under development. These will be rolled out in the next few weeks.

The details held on the UKNDA database will be handled strictly in accordance with the 1998 Data Protection Act and, as the Membership and Company Secretary, I am registered at the Information Commissioner’s Office as the UKNDA’s Data Controller.

Support Our Armed Forces car stickers – 2 free for active (ie paid up) members and by purchase by anyone at £1 each or ten for £7. To date 364 have been sent out and we have plenty more. If you wish to make use of this inexpensive way of spreading the UKNDA word, please send a SAE (size 8¼” x 4¼”) to **UKNDA Ltd (Car Stickers). PO Box 819, Portsmouth, PO1 9FF** with your Membership Number on the reverse (if requesting free allowance) and/or the appropriate cheque made out to “UKNDA Ltd”.

David Robinson
Membership and Company Secretary

NEWS RELEASE

26 April 2008: Release time immediate

MPs believe the armed forces are 'stretched to capacity' as survey reveals cross-party support for defence spending increase

Poll shows that a majority of MPs believe Britain's armed forces are under-funded and over-stretched.

A third of Gordon Brown's backbenchers say defence spending should rise.

90% of Conservative MPs defy leadership to call for defence spending increase.

A poll by ComRes for the United Kingdom National Defence Association (UKNDA) shows that over half of all MPs (54%) believe that spending on our armed forces should rise. This includes more than a third (36%) of Labour MPs.

Almost three quarters of Labour MPs (73%) argue that Britain's Armed Forces are currently stretched to capacity and will not be able to take on any additional responsibilities without an increase in resources.

Support for a boost to the defence budget is strongest on the Opposition benches, with nine out of 10 Conservatives (91%) backing an increase, despite Shadow Chancellor George Osborne's refusal to make commitments on defence in advance of the General Election.

Commander John Muxworthy, UKNDA Chief Executive, commented: "This is not a party political issue. MPs of all parties recognise that our armed forces are severely over-stretched and that spending needs to rise to address the chronic under-funding at a time when they are heavily deployed in Iraq and

Afghanistan. Our servicemen and their families are paying a heavy price for official neglect of the Nation's defence.

"Funding for Britain's armed forces must increase as a matter of urgency. The funding decisions taken over the next two years, before and after the General Election, will have a far-reaching impact on the ability of our forces to defend this Nation and its interests."

The survey also showed that at a time when support is growing for an annual 'Armed Forces Day' to recognise and celebrate the role of Britain's army, navy and air force, a majority of MPs from across the political spectrum believes that the public does not yet have a good understanding of the demands placed on our armed forces.

UKNDA this week launches a nation-wide 'Support our Armed Forces' campaign (www.supportourarmedforces.org.uk) to mobilise public support for the armed forces and a renewal of the Nation's Covenant with the military.

-Ends

For further information or interview opportunities please contact:

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Editor's Notes:

1. Support for an increase is strongest in London, the South and the Midlands (63–64%). Nationally, MPs in the most marginal seats are most supportive, with 75% from the marginals calling for an increase.

2. The poll was carried out between 18 February and 14 March. 159 MPs took part in self-completion postal questionnaires, with data weighted to reflect the exact composition of the House of Commons in terms of region and party. Please see www.comres.co.uk for further details.

3. The United Kingdom National Defence Association (UKNDA) was formed in 2007 to campaign for sufficient, appropriate and fully-funded armed forces that the Nation needs to defend effectively this Country, its people, their security and vital interests at home and wherever they may be. Its President is Winston S Churchill, the former Conservative MP, war correspondent, and grandson of Britain's wartime Prime Minister. UKNDA's Patrons include three former Chiefs of the Defence Staff – Lords Guthrie, Craig and Boyce – as well as former Labour Foreign Secretary Lord Owen and former Liberal Democrat Leader Sir Menzies Campbell. UKNDA calls for a total 40% increase in the defence budget, to bring spending on the armed forces up to 3% of GDP.