

LOGNET
Innovating, Developing & Delivering
The Defence Support Network

on

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Transcribed from the Audio Recording

NEIL JONES:

[Yes? 01:05:09], thank you very much indeed. It's always a little bit disconcerting when you stand up here and the first person that leaves the room is your two-star boss, so I'm not sure whether it's necessarily anything I'm going to say. What I will say is being a serving Royal Air Force officer it's really nice to be back in a five-star hotel. You know, I feel that I am on safe territory here, which is definitely a good thing. So as mentioned, I currently work up in the UK Ministry of Defence and I work on the fourth floor there for Rear Admiral Kyte.

I am the Assistant Head of Operations and Plans there and so what I do is looking on a global basis but not just overseas, looking at the UK as well. I'm the man and it's my team that are providing that military logistic advice that goes in to ministers that therefore gives that political direction and therefore allows the military to drive forward in whichever direction we are told to go and I've been there for two years now. I'm just about coming to the end of my tour. When I arrived I came from Operation Ruman, which was the UK's involvement in the Caribbean relief some two years ago.

I have been through two phases of Brexit and I'm now just working through COVID-19 and the UK military response to that as well. We're also looking at locusts in East Africa so to say that it's been a biblical time has been sort of nothing short of an understatement, but whilst using that as a flippant example, what it just hopefully gives you is some idea as to the breadth and scope of activity that we are looking at globally on a regular basis and ACDS Log Ops, who I know spoke yesterday and hopefully you have met so far throughout the conference, he is absolutely the logistic conscience for the Deputy Chief of Defence staff for the military strategic operations and that is Lieutenant General Doug Chalmers. He is effectively the Ministry of Defence's operations officer and for that reason, whilst we are absolutely embedded within CDSL's new empire, the defence logistics ops and plans team, we're ideally situated to provide an update on today's operation environment.

To put it simply, we are the J4 or the fourth floor and so therefore understanding the environment is absolutely essential, as all of you out there, experts as you are, would understand in any venture and so therefore what I'm hopefully going to give you in the next sort of 15 minutes is just a real light touch on how we deliver against that current logistic architecture in that current operational picture. It's going to be relatively short and due to security classification it's going to be wave-tops but it would give you some idea as to the flavour as to the places that we currently have our eye on, and so it will be a real quick overview and therefore hopefully just give you a quick flavour on the potential impact on industry.

I know you have had an introduction to Agile Stance but I will just give you a little bit more detail as to what it is, the UK military and particularly within the logistic community how our focus is really moving towards that exercise, not just through this year but in terms of the campaign how that is going to stretch out over the next four years. That will spin into and hopefully start to answer some of the operational lessons that we have identified but also some of the operational lessons that we are living on a daily basis and then finally I will touch on a quick advert as to how we believe in the operations world industry can engage. So where is it that we are currently looking? Well, as you would expect, we are pretty much looking everywhere and what you can see up on the screen is just to give you a real generic idea as to how and what lens we look at the world through.

It really is quite generic though but what that allows us to do, as I'm sure you would appreciate, it allows us to focus resource, therefore, planning and capability as well, but you can see on the screen and rather than reading every single bullet point on there, there's just a couple of themes which I'd like to bring out and that's the ones that are cross-cutting themes. Burden sharing with partners across all areas is absolutely key to buy back favour. Future basing and operational lay-

down requires significant infrastructure support. Also on top of that one of the main areas which we need to consider, particularly as we are looking at this sort of geographically and you can see the four areas there which we cover, is also trying to identify how one actor in that particular region can play across other regions as well and what impact does that have on our operations and more importantly what impact does that have on us in terms of logisticians in terms of the way that we support.

Now, mapped over on the top of this as well is current planning that's ongoing at present and, as I'm sure we all aware, the COVID-19 issue affects us all and so therefore when mapped across those four geographical areas that's the current workload that we are working towards and looking at at the moment and not just support to operations but the support to the UK as well and so therefore the workload that that's driving in MOD main building is certainly causing an awful lot of focus at the moment, as you would expect. Let's move on to the current strategic environment and the specific themes which you can see there. Where are we focused? Again I'm not going to run through every single bullet point on the screen but I will look to bring out some key points as we move around the board.

So looking at Europe, the NATO readiness initiative and the key thing there is making sure that we as a nation can out-load at the speed of relevance, and understanding the role and requirements of other nations as we are trying to deploy is absolutely essential, not just into the location or the theatre that we are choosing to move into and operate but also how that will affect the UK main base as we are looking to deploy our forces out and deploy them forward. Africa, the geographical challenge, the sheer size and scale of that particular continent absolutely causes us logistic challenges on a daily basis, as does the support from partners looking to work collaboratively with other nations to provide shared logistic support but that brings its own challenges as well when their priorities change.

Working alongside our closest ally in a lot of these theatres, the United States, if their focus or their priorities are changing then what impact is that having on our operations and that is particularly having a concern operating in that particular location at present, and particularly as we look to work alongside the French a lot more in terms of logistic support, again collaborative working is absolutely key and essential and a focus for us. Moving on to the Middle East, constantly under review and an absolute refresh of our lay-down, noting that there is a whole raft of legacy logistic support, not just locations but infrastructure out there which the UK has had since effectively the end of Gulf War I and certainly the build-up at the end of Gulf War II as well. So therefore there there is always a constant review in MOD main building.

It's from a logistics perspective, are we best configured or are we operating for peacetime efficiency [by? 01:12:44] operational optimisation and there is always a challenge in terms of the support that we offer out there. Particularly in terms of locations that we are operating from whether we are choosing to hub-and-spoke or whether we are directing to logistically support direct into specific locations presents a challenge and presents a constant review. Then finally looking across at Asia, it's the main area that I would draw out there is, is our time in Afghanistan over? I mean, clearly, as you've seen on the news, the drive is that the coalition of forces out there will be looking to realign, withdraw, recover but against what timescale and what legacy will be left out in that location, of course the challenges that that presents to us as logisticians is if we are to recover them how will we recover from that landlocked country which is a strategic distance away from the UK.

So themes across all of the operational theatres are the same. It's the support from the strategic base, not just in terms of the logistic support that we have forward but how do we maintain that support from the UK. Linked into that, once we have identified the support that we need and we require how do we physically get it there and there are experts amongst us in the audience that live this on a daily basis in terms of the strategic, not just airlift that we have and the limited numbers of that, but the strategic sealift as well, and then when you map on top of that in terms of the range and prioritisation issues that we face on a daily basis, and with the new capabilities that we are introducing like the new aircraft carrier and the carrier strike group capability that the UK now possesses.

We will clearly be looking to operate that not just one but potentially two strategic distances away from the UK. You can understand the challenges that that now maps onto the map that you can see in front of you. So highlighting the issues there and of deploying of supporting the deployed space I believe that Agile Stance was mentioned to you yesterday and this is absolutely something which is a key focus for us on the fourth floor in terms of trying to deliver against and maintaining that strapline that I have already mentioned is the speed of relevance. Now, Agile Stance is a campaign plan to develop and practice the UK command and control of the mobilisation deployment of forces assigned to the NATO readiness initiative and this initiative will run out, as you can see on the screen there, until 2024.

The first iteration is running this year, exercise agile launch, and that will see a series of events taking place throughout this year covering all aspects of UK defence, and that includes regular reserves, civilian staff and industry as well, and it is key to understanding our ability to mount and project operations of pace and scale and it was specifically directed by the UK Chief of Defence Staff last year that it is to be a priority exercise for 2020. Linking out then or travelling forward

over the next five years, Agile Stance will demonstrate the UK's ability and intent to deploy rapidly a combat credible military force to Europe in support of NATO's core tasks, to reinforce our allies and strengthen NATO's credibility.

Central to Agile Stance will be the operational analysis, will capture lessons and data from the activity and will form a mission exploitation event early next year, currently planned for January '21 as well as development of a synthetic operating model to enable greater use of simulation in the future. CDLS, who you heard yesterday, has already provided his priorities for Agile Stance and this campaign and exercise will look further than just the military organisations and structures but as highlighted on the screen it will also look on structures of the strategic base well back into infrastructure and support and we will therefore be looking at our support contracts and the relationship with our industrial suppliers as highlighted by Brigadier Moore yesterday.

So what brought us to this and what are we currently seeing and what are we currently experiencing? I would contend to you with the expertise that we have in this audience there shouldn't be anything on the screen that comes as any surprise to any of you, but defence is constantly learning lessons, particularly in the support field. To complement a long list of studies including the [DOC? 01:17:32] audit quoted on the screen, recent operational experiences such as the Caribbean response in 2017 and recent exercise deployments for exercise Trident Juncture, Saif Sareea 3 and Tractable have all highlighted the challenges for configuring the strategic base to support an out-load at pace and scale.

You've got the definition up there on the screen, I won't read it out but two key areas which I would sort of bring out to you and is something which we live on a daily basis on the fourth floor, is the availability and configuration of high readiness units and stocks needed that therefore require to be rehearsed at pace. The final bullet point there, sustainment planning is not tested due to the duration of exercises or the self-sustained concept and that's a challenge that not just we in the UK but all of our allies face on a regular basis and those are the key areas that it is hoped that Agile Stance will look to get after. Finally, my final slide is just a little bit of a pitch really because we in defence are constantly looking to innovate and use best practice from across defence to work better.

Later this morning you will receive briefs on defence logistics, three priority concepts that you can see up there on the screen so I certainly won't eat their sandwiches. I would however like to highlight a couple of routes to market for industry to develop your concepts and demonstrators if there is potential to benefit defence and I've highlighted three specific areas. The first is the Defence and Security Accelerator, the DASA, which is a DSGL-led venture. It finds and funds

exploitable innovation to support UK defence and security quickly and effectively and it supports UK prosperity. DASA has a team of regionally based innovation partners who are available to give advice to suppliers with their ideas and how they can best engage with DASA.

The Open Call competition exists to offer suppliers the opportunity to present their ideas to defence and wider security stakeholders. The Open Call is looking for innovative ideas to improve the defence and/or security of the UK and your idea could either be a concept, technology, product or service and bids are sought at various levels of maturity. Our emerging innovations category is for less mature innovations and our rapid impact innovations category is for innovations that are still to be developed. The final two points that I will raise on there is about DSTL and their project called "Searchlight" which is looked to expand their supplier ecosystem specifically with small start-up businesses and those based north of the Midlands. This is bearing fruit with 17 percent uplift in its suppliers and £41m in DSTL funding has already been directed at small/medium enterprises.

Finally the Army Industrial Engagement Framework is the British Army's articulation of the relationship it seeks with industry. It describes the Army's desire to enjoy a closer, more collaborative partnership with industry. This close cooperation will be the mechanism by which the British Army capability remains at the forefront of technological changes. Interaction with the framework is via the nexus, by the link on the screen or if you don't have time to copy it down now then you can certainly Google it later.

So in the very short time that I had, that's been a real canter through with a focus that I've given in terms of the operational locations that we are looking at, the lens that we look at it through, the challenges that we face on a global basis, but certainly what's drawing our eye at the moment and the focus particularly on the UK strategic base is the challenges that we are facing in terms of the COVID-19 issue that we have at present [and some? 01:21:38] defence is committed to operations and exercises around the globe.

We believe that we remain world-leading and continue looking to improve ourselves whether by changing structures in the strategic base or by continually innovating with you, our industry partners. Rather than take questions now because I know that Damian is coming on immediately after me and should hopefully complement some of the sort of themes which I have introduced, if there are any questions I will hold it over until Damian has finished. Damian.

[Recording ends]