SPEECH TO THE PROGRESS GROUP – 17 JUL 08
THE MILITARY TODAY AS A FORCE FOR GOOD - A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS?

May I first of all this evening thank you for inviting me to join you tonight and for your very warm introduction. It is a great honour for me to have been invited to come to speak to you today and I am grateful for your taking the risk of allowing a serving soldier to deliver this address tonight.

I have chosen to speak this evening to the title of: 'Military Force Today – 'A Force for Good' or a Contradiction in Terms?' And in picking that title I am inevitably setting up the debate as to whether the application of violence, the threat of violence or the actions of those trained and willing to apply violence can in any way be considered as a 'Force for Good' in the contemporary security environment – or is that term, a 'Force for Good', almost, by definition, a contradiction in terms?

That said, being who I am and doing what I do, you will not be surprised by the conclusions that I draw, but I hope that in developing the arguments leading up to my conclusion, I will provide some food for thought on what continues to be a most important issue – touching, as it does, on matters of life and death – and one which is often overshadowed by short term political debate, the scrutiny of the media and the expanding influence of national and international law.

Now, having set myself a fairly broad canvas, I don't see this as the moment for an exhaustive analysis of the principles of liberal interventionism, the Just War tradition or their associated linkages with how the military today can be a 'Force for Good'. Rather, I would like to explore some of the necessary conditions for the military to be such – in the strategic environment of today and tomorrow. And I would like to conduct the discussion within 2 specific roles of my current position: firstly as a single Service Chief of Staff, contributing military advice to the Government of the day; and secondly as the current head of the British Army, endeavouring to provide some leadership and direction to my constituents who, of course, are the members of the Army and their families. And I hope to be able to highlight some of the unique circumstances of what it means to be a soldier.

GENESIS OF 'A FORCE FOR GOOD' – POST 11/9

But before I do so, I think a little background on the genesis of the term 'Force for Good' would be appropriate – although I suspect that many here tonight will be intimately familiar with it. Born of the late Robin Cook's so-called ethical dimension in foreign policy in 1997, the term 'Force for Good' first appeared in the defence lexicon in the 1998 Strategic Defence Review, and so caught the Government's eye, that it now headlines the Defence Vision – namely, that in defending the United Kingdom and its interests, and in strengthening international peace and stability, our Armed Forces shall be a Force for Good in the world.

Indeed, at that time, despite what many saw as the aberration of the first Gulf War in 1990-91, there appeared to be the prospect of an era when swords could indeed be beaten into ploughshares, peace dividends taken and a belief that the likelihood of war – hot or cold, declared or undeclared – had receded. Former Warsaw Pact countries joined in the apparently unstoppable move to global democratisation; Nelson Mandela saw off apartheid in South Africa; and by the end of the millennium well over half the world's

governments were democratic – and, in theory at least, pacific by definition. This apparent declining prospect of inter-state war, coupled with the growing economic interdependence of nation-states, meant that moral consciences were more readily pricked by the ubiquity of the international media, and so led to a marked increase in military interventions.

The British mantra of the early 1990s was summed up in the hopeful desire to 'Go First, Go Fast, Go Home.' Indeed, this post-Cold War optimism of the early 1990s seemed to have been reinforced practically by the conduct and outcome of our military interventions in the Balkans, East Timor and Sierra Leone. Security had replaced Defence as the currency of engagement for military forces. The swords had not yet become ploughshares but in an innovative way more akin to becoming pruning hooks, they were being used to try to contribute to prosperity and stability and not merely to threaten or destroy.

So, while the Force for Good concept of the 1990s had its detractors, interventions at that time seemed to follow the principles of Jus *ad* Bellum – and there is an implicit link between the two. After all, if the cause is not right, how can the use of military force be of any good?

CONTEMPORARY SECURITY CONTEXT – POST 9/11

But the optimism of the 1990s and the New World Order was apparently shattered by the reality of 9/11 and the contemporary security situation is far from that that of just a decade ago. However, I would argue that the audit trail to where we are now had already been marked out from as long ago as 1979, 10 years before the Cold War ended - 1979 the year of the Russian intervention in Afghanistan, the year in which Ayotollah Khomeini in Iran turned on the flamethrower of Islamic anger and jihad against the West, and the year that the then newly elected Polish Pope John Paul II began to suggest that religion and nationhood mattered more than Lenin or Stalin would have cared to admit - it was also the year of the Mecca uprising and the year that Osama Bin Laden ceased being a Saudi playboy and found a new vocation in promoting Holy War.

So, I would suggest, we now find ourselves in merely a new phase of never ending human conflict. Today's world is: Disordered; it is Proliferated; and it is still very much Adjusting to new dynamics. Of course, we could get hung up on a discussion about whether we are currently facing a global insurgency or simply a wide-ranging terrorist campaign, but in many respects that is irrelevant. At its most basic level, we now face a trans-national campaign of orchestrated violence with a broad political aim – against a background of climate change, globalisation and an increasing competition for resources.

One might think, therefore, that given this high octane strategic environment, the use of military force would be more broadly understood and accepted as a necessary means of supporting democracy, combating extremism or of intervening for humanitarian reasons. In fact, however, the spotlight has been re-focussed onto the relevance and applicability of the underlying principles of the Just War Tradition and liberal interventionism, with the glare of that spotlight inevitably sharpened by debate over the legitimacy of military action in Iraq and Afghanistan. The argument continues, therefore, that if the principles or bases of intervention are potentially unsound, then so too potentially are any claims for the use of the military to be 'A Force for Good'.

LIBERAL INTERVENTIONISM AND THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

However, as David Miliband argued in his speech earlier this year on the Democratic Imperative, our national interest and moral impulse for supporting movements for democracy must not be obscured by divisions over these controversial conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan – one unpopular, the other misunderstood. He would argue that the basic motivation of liberal interventionism remains as strong as it did in the 1990s, and is rooted in the democratic ideal. However, there are a number of tools available to us as a responsible and interested player on the world stage, to turn the ideal into reality, and I fully support that the last resort of these is armed force. Indeed this is a key principle of Jus *ad* Bellum which, alongside Just and Proportionate Cause, Right Intention and Right Authority must be examined at length by our governments before committing the country to war. Indeed, the Government's Governance of Britain White Paper, and the war powers element contained in it, while controversial, in some ways could provide a useful framework in this regard. But this is not my theme today.

CHIEF OF STAFF – REASONABLE PROSPECT OF SUCCESS

Rather, for me, from the first of my two perspectives – as a Single Service Chief of Staff – my focus is on the principle of Reasonable Prospect of Success. Semantics aside, 'Success' in contemporary operations is very much a moving target and has, rightly, replaced the binary notions of 'winning or losing' and 'victory or defeat' – both of which assume a line in the sand, or a date on the calendar at which conflict ends and peace begins; this is not the case now, if it ever was. What has changed is the distinction between the different types of warfare. We can no longer be prescriptive about taking part in either Major Combat Operations or Stabilisation Operations, the boundary between them has become increasingly blurred – the antithesis of the beloved binary response. I cannot envisage a conflict where there will be no role for stabilisation operations, but equally stabilisation is highly likely to involve combat as it does today. But more importantly I do not subscribe to the view that major combat operations are a thing of the past. I am quite clear that as an Army, we must play our role within national defence as well as provide security. The man who looks ten years out and says he knows what the strategic situation will look like, is, frankly the Court Jester. Look how foolish those who claimed the end of history in 1991 look now. Defence is about an insurance policy as well as the ability to conduct current operations – and we do not throw away our home insurance policies just because crime statistics are down in our neighbourhood.

Therefore, we quite rightly draw our military objectives from those of the political, or strategic, endstate. And I would doubt if there are any informed commentators or professional soldiers in modern democracies who would contend that military means alone can achieve political success – right thinking people would agree that our military actions are indeed an extension of the political process, and the political aim is both continuous and dominant throughout as Karl von Clausewitz made clear.

And so to meet this, we have derived what we in the military have termed a Comprehensive Approach – an approach that sees the security line of operation – that which the military does – as but one of several lines of operation or activity, all directed to achieving a single, essentially political end-state.

I would suggest that this is not a new concept: success in 1945, and the subsequent restoration of Germany and Japan to the wider family of nations, did not come about by military means alone but by the harnessing of all strands of national power – military, economic, diplomatic – as well as of numerous other interested parties, whether supra-national bodies or NGOs. And, from a narrower, British point of view, during the post-war years of withdrawal from Empire, many of these skills were in some ways vested in the Armed Forces to foster and develop, but the prime responsibility for the economic and administrative strands of conflict resolution were properly devolved to other National, or International Organisations or NGOs.

So, I would suggest that the conflicts of today and tomorrow require that we re-learn the lessons of our fathers and grandfathers, somewhat overlooked in the stasis of the Cold War, and this applies as much internally to the military as it does to the other strands of political power, both national and international.

COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH – MILITARY LEVEL

To be more specific, at the global, strategic level, this generation's principal challenge – the contest with the negative dimensions of Islamist terrorism - is being played out not only in Iraq and in the wadis and villages of Afghanistan and on the streets of some of our cities in Britain, but in the hearts and minds of many people across the Globe. That this wider conflict cannot be resolved by military means alone is self-evident. Instead, today's security challenges – in the language of the Government's recent National Security Strategy – require approaches that are Multilateral, or international, Partnership based, involving public, private and voluntary sectors, and Integrated across Government. Only then can military means be seen as a 'Force for Good', and not as something that exacerbates the problems we face, either here or abroad.

And, at the tactical and operational levels of military engagement, on the battlefield itself, this is also true – we need to take a broad perspective to our military responsibilities. The military must be prepared to act on behalf of Other Government Departments, International Organisations, NGOs and the like until such time as the battlespace is secure for them to move in and develop key lines of operation such as governance, economic development and law and order. And Other Government Departments must be comfortable with the military acting on their behalf until the security situation permits them to engage themselves. That said, we don't want to do what others could and should do, but we are willing to do it until they are able.

The reality of the early months of the Second Gulf War in 2003 showed the unity of all military operations with simultaneous but different activities taking place in adjacent parts of the battlefield, or even adjacent city blocks – war fighting, humanitarian relief and peace support operations – the genesis of the so-called "Three Block War". While we must never forget that combat is combat no matter what the wider context – and for the soldier in combat, his prime concern must be, to put it bluntly, to win the firefight – nevertheless we must also always look to the political outcome in all that we do. Remaining blunt, that firefight might kill a group of insurgents, but it may also alienate the civilian population if we get it wrong – all soldiers must be fully conscious of the consequences of their actions. And so, we need soldiers who can help deliver Civil as well as Military Effects as we strive for that outcome, within areas as diverse as governance, town administration, finance and

banking, law and order and sanitation – until such time as the relevant other agencies can step into the breach, in a coordinated and genuinely Comprehensive Approach.

This should not be seen as the military taking over the role of other departments – it should be seen as them adding value to their role. I am completely comfortable with putting my soldiers under command of the FCO or DFiD in order to help them deliver their effects. Indeed, it is clear to me that we must start to develop in Defence niche capabilities against what is now being called Military Assistance, Stabilisation and Development tasks – MASD – and this is a new, emerging Military Task.

For the Army Stabilisation is now becoming the most demanding and the most likely type of operation over the next ten years and therefore I have directed an Army study to look at the feasibility of forming permanent cadres of stabilisation specialists. These small units would specialise in the training and mentoring of indigenous forces – the type of tasks conducted by our Mentoring and Training Teams in Afghanistan and Iraq. But I see these organisations as being far more. My vision is that they would form the spine of our enduring cultural education and understanding. I can envisage a multi-disciplined and inter-agency organisation that would be capable of both fighting alongside local forces, and delivering reconstruction and development tasks in areas where the civil agencies cannot operate. I believe we should develop a career path that would see an officer spending a tour with indigenous forces, followed perhaps by an attachment to DFiD overseas, or a local council at home or a police force in Africa or elsewhere. Perhaps, this is where we start to embed our deep language and cultural training, not just for our current areas of operation, but potential future conflict zones. This is the stuff of our grandfathers and great uncles but, we are in a continuum, not in a new paradigm – so these skills are still very relevant.

Now, of course, as I said at the outset, campaign success is not a binary matter – of victory or defeat – it is a much more nuanced business. It is as varied as the spectrum of conflict in which we are called to operate. Adopting a Comprehensive Approach, structuring and training ourselves for today's complex challenges is itself not sufficient for success – but what is clear to me is that it is absolutely necessary if we are to ensure that the use of military force is relevant to government policy requirements and to have any chance of our military actions being seen as a Force for Good.

HEAD OF THE ARMY – CONDUCT OF MILITARY OPERATIONS

But I would like now, metaphorically, to take off my corporate Chief of Staff hat, and put on my more parochial hat, that of being Head of the British Army and look at my second theme – a separate and perhaps more important ingredient ensuring that the military today is a Force for Good – and this is the moral dimension to military operations – the critical dimension which, if we get wrong, would put paid to any notion of being a Force for Good. Now, even if the principles and legitimacy on which military force is deployed are sound – and that will only rarely be agreed universally – what will meet with universal accord is that if we do not apply that military force in a right and just manner, then we risk undoing any possibility of being this 'Force for Good'.

Thousands died at Srebrenica and tens, probably hundreds, of thousands died in Rwanda because the military means were not made available in sufficient quantities to support the political intent. "Never again" was the reaction, and this response has led to a growing

acceptance of the responsibility to protect human rights wherever they are threatened. Responsible policy-makers and military commanders need the mutual confidence that what they set out to do remains not only legal, but is morally and ethically sound, and that the means provided are sufficient to do the job.

It is not for me to speak for policy-makers; but from the perspective of the military commander these ethical issues are personal and urgent. Responsibility for a plan or a series of operations can never be delegated. Activity can be delegated to subordinates but never responsibility, and that is a key burden for the deployed commander. From my own experience on operations in Bosnia, Kosovo and Northern Ireland, I know that whereas physical courage is a basic requirement for a soldier - and Lance Corporal Johnson Beharry VC and Corporal Bryan Budd VC both come to mind - it is the moral courage to do the right thing, and to insist that the right thing is done, that is the harder challenge.

And so, from this second perspective as professional head of the Army, it is my responsibility to ensure that our soldiers – at all levels – are properly prepared for the physical and ethical challenges that they will face in today's, and tomorrow's conflicts. War is a human activity, a contest of wills – and in it people are ultimately the top and bottom line. Operations 'amongst the people' are not new, but in the age of global media, and global perspectives, no Officer or soldier will be far away from the public gaze – and the people watching may be in any country in the world. Sensitivity to culture, local beliefs and aspirations, and the soldier's personal demeanour and approach, are all vital parts of campaigning today.

And so, educating our people to understand their moral responsibilities is a key challenge for military leadership and it is to this theme that I now turn.

VALUES AND STANDARDS

I would suggest that in past generations it was assumed that young men and women coming into the Armed Forces would have absorbed an understanding of the core values and standards of behaviour required by the military from their family or from within their wider community. Such a presumption today cannot be made.

The competing pressures of an evolving society – where individualism dominates and the utility of armed force is openly debated – and of an increasingly complex operating environment, all combine to make the intellectual and moral preparation of our soldiers as important as their physical training. Our young soldiers must distinguish, in a split second, between a potential suicide bomber, dressed in civilian clothes, and an innocent bystander; they must be able to extract information from captured enemy forces in a timely manner to avoid future loss of life, but they must do so within the rule of law; they must be able to kill and show compassion at the same time; they must be loyal to their country, their Regiment and their friends without compromising their own integrity.

Furthermore, it is not simply a matter of dealing adequately with these ultimate ethical challenges, but of doing so without compromise. Those who have chosen to attack our way of life have shown that they are prepared to use the most inhumane of tactics – where human beings themselves become the weapon, whether voluntarily, as suicide bombers, or through force – and in this they have shown that they will not compromise. We may

have a technical advantage over our enemy, we may have superior training, we may have the support of the people (to a greater or lesser degree), but if we compromise our moral values, then we will lose what is essentially a conflict of values and ideas.

I would go as far as to say that when a political decision is reached to send a military force on a discretionary intervention there is a conscious or sub-conscious acceptance that in deploying to a less fortunate part of the World, we do so having publicly adopted a position on, or close to, the moral high ground. But when officers or soldiers act in a way contrary to our traditional values and standards and fail to respect the human rights of those they have gone to help, then we risk falling from the high ground to the valley, often in a very public way. The challenge now for the military leadership is to educate and train our young people of today – each one a potential individual decision-maker – so that all concerned understand the rationale behind our British Army core values of Selfless Commitment, Courage, Discipline, Integrity, Loyalty and, critically, Respect for Others, and apply these values to their conduct. And, like any ethical creed, these must be learned and followed for their own good, and not just as a means to another end.

I would contend that without an individual moral understanding from all concerned within a military endeavour, from policy-maker to private soldier, then the outcome will be in doubt in both war and peace. But where we get it wrong, when there are lapses in behaviour and conduct then they must be confronted. Events such as those perpetrated in Abu Ghraib or during the detention of Baha Mousa by our own forces are not only tragic, but also inexcusable. And I take no pride in the conduct of those of our people – however few – who took it upon themselves to deliberately abuse Iraqi civilians during 2003.

It is right and proper that we investigate every alleged instance of wrongful behaviour, but there is a marked distinction between actions undertaken or decisions made in the friction of combat and those committed elsewhere. Those in the chain of command, from top to bottom, have a duty to support all individuals for whom they are responsible throughout this process, until such time as an individual is found guilty of an offence, but ultimately individuals must accept responsibility for their own actions. The peculiar conditions and atmosphere of military operations underlines why it is imperative that potential offences on operations are tried within a military criminal judicial system according to the burden of civil, military and international law – itself a more rigorous criteria than in civilian life.
Now, although every one of the few cases of abuse by British soldiers of civilians is an instance too many, I am conscious that the overwhelming majority of soldiers continue to apply the correct standards, in the most difficult conditions, where physical hardship is compounded by the complexity of the decisions placed before them, and that this reflects well on the Army which must be seen to adhere to the highest standards of behaviour. Long may this continue, but while our values are very much down to individuals to uphold and maintain, I have no doubt that leadership has a key role to play in inculcating them in our people. It is only through our leaders setting an example, educating and passing on these values that we can hope for our soldiers, born of a society where such a code may seem outdated, to uphold them when it really counts.

LEADERSHIP

Actually, I think that a set of circumstances that I once became involved in sums up the criticality not only of personal acceptance of moral responsibility for one's actions, but also of the part to be played by the leader in setting the right ethical and moral tone during

operations. This came home to me most starkly in July 2000 when I gave evidence for the Prosecution at the trial of Radovan Krstic before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague. General Krstic had commanded the Drina Corps of the Bosnian Serb Army at the time of the capture of Srebrinica and the subsequent massacre in Eastern Bosnia in July 1995. He was about the same age as me, had a professional military background in the Yugoslav National Army that had begun at the same age as mine had in the British Army, and in 1995 was commanding a formation very similar in size and organisation to 3rd (United Kingdom) Division which I was then commanding. His mistake – on 13th July 1995 – was to accept a mission from his superior and develop a plan that led directly to the massacre of 7000 to 8000 Muslim men and boys. He had accepted ownership of the operation, became responsible for the plan, mistakenly based his defence in Court on having delegated his responsibility, and was convicted and sentenced to 42 years imprisonment for a variety of war crimes.

When we say glibly, "the buck stops here", for Radovan Krstic it stopped for him in spades on the day he was convicted! That said − and as an aside − I know, he knows, and the Court also knows that his real failure was a complete collapse of personal moral courage. Had he refused to accept the Mission from General Ratko Mladic, or talked his superior out of the idea, then he would not be in prison now, and upwards of 8000 people would still be alive. The risks of the morally correct line were obviously high, but on the day he failed the test.

It is, therefore, incumbent on our leaders not only to look downwards, to the needs of their people, but also to have the courage to stand up to their superiors who may not know, or may not wish to know, the implications of the orders they have given. At the same time, our officers and non-commissioned officers must act as role-models for their subordinates, living out our core values day by day and devoting time and effort to explaining them.

THE ORGANISATION

All of our values and standards and our particular approach to leadership our bound up in the requirement to have an organisation that is ultimately about taking life and potentially putting one's life on the line in the service of the nation. Our particular ethos and culture is therefore dominated by this fact – a point that I think is sometimes missed by people – our liability is unlimited.

Also I think that there are sections of our society that misunderstand our organisation and how it operates. If I might be so bold as to make sweeping generalisations – I often get the impression that there are those who will almost automatically subscribe to the "Lions led by Donkeys" view of the Army. I often see questions from certain politicians on the number of public school educated officers or other attempts by some to identify some form of social division amongst our rank structure – I am afraid, I think they rather miss the point. In my view the Army as an organisation actually espouses many recognisable socialist ideals – in a very much philosophical rather than party political way.

What do I mean? Well, I would contend that we are the very epitome of the welfare state. Even the most junior officer is indoctrinated with the belief that they must manage and care for all aspects of their soldiers' lives. If a soldier gets into debt, his platoon commander will speak to the company concerned to organise payments – the Regiment will ensure welfare payments to make sure that people are always able to live. We provide everything from

marriage guidance to social care to a roof over peoples' heads. A recent media article criticised us for having so called "hunger vouchers", which are given out when a soldier has run out of money. Now perhaps it is a bad turn of phrase, but the idea is that even if a soldier spends all of his money on beer and cars, we will not let him go hungry. We will feed him and help him to manage his pay better.

From the very first day of training as a leader whether as an NCO or especially as an officer our culture is one of service and a duty to look after those who serve under your command. We cannot ask people to do the things they really do not want to do whilst under fire unless they know that the man or woman commanding them cares deeply for their welfare. It is perfectly encapsulated by the Sandhurst motto that every officer lives by which is "Serve to Lead".

My final point in this area is that we are blind to a man's educational or social background. Visit any operational theatre and you will find those from a supposed privileged background sharing the same floor space, the same food, the same dangers as a man from some of the poorest estates in our inner cities. I used to share a trench on exercise with Private Jack Warner – Durham miner before he joined the Army. We are bound together by a common purpose and shared experience that transcends all social divisions – it is a social model without equivalence elsewhere.

CONCLUSION

Now, with one eye on the clock, I am aware that this been a fairly rapid canter through a raft of subjects, but in doing so I hope to have uncovered some themes which are occasionally overlooked in the debate over the application of military force. I am in no doubt of the importance and positive value of the use of military force in the context of a Just War, conducted within its legal and moral framework and under the intense scrutiny of the media. Indeed, I would not have been a soldier for almost 40 years if I felt differently. But it is beholden on me, as Chief of the General Staff, to offer military advice to the Government of the day including, although not exclusively, on the prospect of success in a given venture. Central to this is ensuring that within a Comprehensive Approach to campaigning, we have all the necessary strands of power and lines of operation in place to deliver overall success, itself defined by a political endstate - but within that, the Army must be resourced and structured to deliver the whole range of military and civil effects until a sufficient degree of security is achieved to allow civil agencies to deliver civil effects themselves.

At the same time, in conflict and war, our soldiers must uphold the highest of values and standards. Failure to do so would not only in itself be wrong and so undermine the principles of the Just War tradition and liberal interventionism, but would also play into the hands of our enemies, for some of whom compromise is not an option. Robust and exemplary leadership is central to this.

So, finally, I would submit that today's conflict is a contest of ideas and values. It is a battle for hearts and minds on a global scale; it is a battle for hearts and minds not just amongst the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, but amongst the people of London and Washington and elsewhere – amongst the decision-makers and the ordinary people. But as soldiers, the moral high ground is, and must be our vital ground – and only by holding it can we truly be a 'Force for Good', and not reduced to a contradiction in terms.