

Good morning IAVC 2024. It's a privilege to be here, in this iconic venue, with well over a thousand visitors, over 100 speakers, and delegations from 47 countries.

Twickenham is the world's largest Rugby Union stadium constructed just 5 years before the outbreak of the Great War. Construction occurred in a political context of competitive blocs and alliances that inadvertently stumbled into war. Within 5 years of this stadium's completion and with the country at war, Rugby Union's home was a grazing ground for cattle, sheep, and horses. The IAVC helps conjure images for what Twickenham's 21st century war-role could be, but it's my job to make sure we don't find out.

*The theme of IAVC 24 is “**Delivering Integrated Armoured Forces for Multi-Domain Operations.**” I'm going to be entirely conventional and address this head on.*

Delivering force for operations is an output, so let me start by focussing on the principal inputs. There are four.

First, the context. There is emerging consensus about today's strategic context. At RUSI in 2022, I talked about a 1937 moment and the need to mobilise.

Not everyone agreed.

I launched the British Army's Operation MOBILISE, it would be our Main Effort, underwriting the priority to support Ukraine. At DSEI last summer, I declared that we are now a pre-war generation. And last week, the Secretary of State for Defence described a move from "a post-war to a pre-war world" with the need to ready the "entire defence eco-system" with NATO as our pre-eminent partner.

I could not agree more.

Our predecessors failed to perceive the implications of the so-called July Crisis in 1914 and stumbled into the most ghastly of wars. We cannot afford to make the same mistake today.

Ukraine really matters.

It is the principal pressure point on a fragile world order that our enemies wish to dismantle. I use that term with care, noting that the definition encompasses those who actively oppose or are hostile to our interests. This war is not merely about the black soil of the Donbass, nor the re-establishment of a Russian empire, it's about defeating our system and way of life politically,

psychologically, and symbolically. How we respond as the pre-war generation will reverberate through history. Ukrainian bravery is buying time, for now.

Ukraine really matters. I cannot overstate it.

Second, Op MOBILISE. Op MOBILISE focused the Army on delivery, making the most of the army we have to help deter Russia. Allied to the Field Army's How We Fight 2026, we have driven profound advances in our thinking, training, equipment, productivity, and our relationship with industry. We are the most productive Army in Europe and the rapid deployment of SACEUR's Strategic Reserve Force to Kosovo evidences the substance of readiness.

This Spring, we will fully vindicate Op MOBILISE and demonstrate our commitment to NATO leadership and Euro-Atlantic security through Exercise STEADFAST DEFENDER.

We will deploy 16,000 troops on 11 NATO-facing training events spanning 10 countries, including 1000 armoured and protected mobility vehicles.

We will deploy HQ ARRC, 3 (UK) Div, 12 Armoured BCT, 16 Air assault BCT, 7 Light Mech BCT as the VJTF(L), and 1 (UK) Div as the Land Component Command ahead of assuming readiness on 1 Jul 24. It will also see

involvement from Joint Helicopter Command and the Army Special Operations Brigade, operating alongside NATO allies.

Messaging allies and enemies alike, this the largest British Army NATO deployment to Europe since 1984 is the 21st century Exercise LIONHEART. Land power accounts for 80% of the entire UK contribution, evidencing the centrality of the Land domain to NATO. In many respects, Exercise STEADFAST DEFENDER marks the summit of Op MOBILISE, embedding a culture of readiness into the fabric of tomorrow's Army.

Third, the NATO Force Model. The British Army's delivery of forces for multi-domain operations must be anchored to NATO. As the Secretary of State noted last week, NATO is our pre-eminent partner and the NFM provides our star to steer by.

For those of you who play Poker, article 5 is our "big blind", the minimum stake to play. As CGS, I must deliver the British Army that NATO needs. And I call-out those who extrapolate our maritime heritage too far, judging that our NATO contribution can be largely limited to the maritime and air domains. Kaiser Wilhelm's memorable and gleeful remark that "dreadnoughts have no wheels" reminds us that the enemy gets a vote. Land will always matter because it's where people live. You can't lead NATO from the flanks and if we

want agency in the way in which our big blind could be spent, we must be able to credibly fight and win wars on Land.

Fourth, the Land Operating Concept. Already widely trailed, it is the capstone, conceptual benchmark for the British Army, a single battle-winning approach that anchors our design and capability decisions. If our “why” is the context and our commitment to NATO, our “how,” in design terms, is the Land Operating Concept, with MOBILISE and How We Fight 26 as an interim bridge.

The Land Operating Concept has already driven the most profound adjustments to the British Army and our Balance of Investment choices. We are reimagining our workforce, discarding the labels of regular, reserve, and civil servant as relics of the last century, pivoting to a whole force mindset.

The illusion of Reserve equivalence has gone.

We need an Army designed to expand rapidly to enable the first echelon, resource the second echelon, and train and equip the citizen army that must follow. Within the next 3 years, it must be credible to talk of a British Army of 120 000, folding in our Reserve and strategic reserve. But this is not enough.

Our friends in Eastern and Northern Europe, who feel the proximity of the Russian threat more acutely, are already acting prudently, laying the foundations for national mobilisation. As the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee warned just last week, and as the Swedish government has done, preparing Sweden for entry to NATO, taking preparatory steps to enable placing our societies on a war footing when needed are now not merely desirable, but essential.

We will not be immune and as the pre-war generation we must similarly prepare - and that is a whole-of-nation undertaking. Ukraine brutally illustrates that regular armies start wars; citizen armies win them. But we've been here before, and workforce alone does not create capability.

This last weekend, The Times highlighted the Army's dwindling numbers. It reminded us that over the last 30 years, the Army has been halved in size; in the last 12 years, we've absorbed a 28% reduction. Recruitment is a challenge common to all western armies and I'd venture it applies to much of the public sector too. Despite that narrative, applications to join the Army are the highest in 6 years. Our nation's youth are as ready to serve, to seek adventure, to find where they belong, and to better themselves as they ever were. I see the very best of them every day, selflessly committed to service in the armed forces. Generation Z serves with distinction today but they, like their peers of any generation, rightly want the equipment that enables them to

deliver lethal capability. Modernisation is non-discretionary, and it is urgent – a burning platform. Its absence is felt in our recruitment numbers. The army's size always generates headlines, but the real story is about capability and modernisation.

So, they're the inputs that frame the delivery of force for operations.

Now let me unpack the output.

*I'll start with **armoured forces**.*

Sometimes the new or novel has an explanatory allure that inhibits appropriate contextualisation. Some perceive a death knell for armoured vehicles in the fleeting, high-pitch buzz of a First Person View piloted kamikaze drone as it delivers a shaped charge into an armoured vehicle.

There are some who predict a 21st century Revolution in Military Affairs by virtue of drones, signalling the obsolescence of the tank, for example.

And yet, Stephen Biddle writes that the loss rate for tanks in Ukraine, even on the Russian side, is lower than at Amiens in 1918 or across the entire

German Army in both 1943 and 1944. Few, however, argued that the tank was obsolete in 1918 or 1944.

Furthermore, Biddle notes that Artillery has inflicted more casualties in war than any other weapon.

Proponents of drones argue that a digitised kill chain is game-changing and yet the numbers don't stack up. The precision and lethality of artillery has improved on a steady, linear rate since 1914. There is no evidence that the linear is curving into the exponential. Finally, those who assert the contemporary dominance of defensive operations and the demise of manoeuvre forget that Russia gained 42000 square miles of ground in less than a month, and that the Ukrainians regained close to 3000 square miles in the summer months of 2022. Switching gears, who would have predicted such swift Israeli manoeuvre through a hyper congested Gaza?

In war, change is typically incremental characterised by measure and countermeasure; revolutions are rare. The tactics of survivability are coming back to the fore. Armour plating is the last bastion, the innermost layer of the so-called onion of survivability. Dispersion, concealment, and deception are as relevant as ever. Our own Land Operating Concept instructs us to treat survival as a deliberate operation.

*So, you'll be delighted to hear that I think the International **Armoured** Vehicle Conference is here to stay. And don't take my word for it. Look at the numbers.*

The British Army has over 1200 armoured vehicles flowing into the British Army over the next 5 years. AJAX is already in the Field Army; with operationally deployable vehicles arriving at scale this year. An AH64 on tracks, it is without equal across NATO, and we will have a total of 589 platforms. The 523 UK Boxer will start fielding in 2025, bringing proven mobility and survivability to our Brigade Combat Teams – but we want more - and we are now setting out the case for the acquisition of additional variants. The first Challenger 3 prototypes are being put through trials in the UK and Germany and I'm delighted that Prototype 1 is already being readied for live firing, on time. The turret simulator is in the hall as part of a joint Land and DE&S stand; it's the most advanced tank turret in the world designed to be integrated onto Challenger 2, but can also be mounted on Leopard 2, and with potential for integration onto other hulls. I encourage you all to visit the Challenger 3 simulator; I might add that DCGS set the high score in the simulator.

But armour is simply part of the equation; the real alchemy of Land power is the integration of armoured platforms into a much broader, combined arms

system. A system of manoeuvre, fires, assault, and support. The British Army's version is 'Combined Arms Manoeuvre', but others are available.

Command and Control is increasingly complicated and only the very best armies can synchronise multi-domain effects to generate tempo and enable manoeuvre. For warfighting at scale only a Corps can do this – across close, deep and rear - enabled by reach-back to the Land Operations Centre provisioned with Component capabilities.

The Allied Rapid Reaction Corps remains 'best-in-class' across NATO, is validated as the current NATO Reaction Force, and sits atop our Land offer to the NATO Force model. A 3 UK-led multinational Corps HQ provides the convening authority akin to a Carrier Strike Group and can integrate multi-domain operations. For NATO, the ARRC is one of very few headquarters capable of taking on the role of a Strategic Reserve across the Alliance. This commitment will build over time and is being jointly developed by leading Alliance members to ensure it is a credible and highly effective capability. The Land Operating Concept teaches us that we need to invest in the enablement of the Corps headquarters with organic and multi-domain C4ISR and very long-range fires. This is new capability, at scale, and accounted for in our balance of investment decisions. We're prioritising investment, above all, in both Corps and Divisional enablement, from rocket artillery to electronic warfare.*

Integration is more than C2 and decision/action capacity across the domains. It is also about systems. The Land Operating Concept's conceptual and intellectual source code is Recce/Strike at every level: the ability to find, orient, and strike from the close to the deep as part of Combined Arms Manoeuvre.

We need systems, both hardware and software to deliver this.

Armoured forces are at the heart of this system because everything from C2, to UAS, combat engineers, artillery, and close combat troops must be survivable. We're investing over a billion pounds in our new Mobile Fires Platform as the long-term replacement for AS90 and the interim ARCHER capability. Pending HMT approvals, the first MFP platforms should start flowing into the Field Army in 2029.

General McConville, the former US Chief of Army Staff was challenged on the utility of the tanks, His line was pithy, but memorable: "you don't need a tank, unless you want to win."

Jack Watling has observed that in Ukraine, the side capable of reconstituting Battlegroup level manoeuvre will seize the initiative. Small bands of determined soldiers armed with drones and anti-tank rockets can defend heroically. But re-taking ground and transitioning to the offensive, requires combined arms manoeuvre at scale and mobility. An article 5 response will

likely require the reversal of losses, the regaining of initiative, and offensive operations. Integrated armoured forces are therefore non-discretionary.

*Now let me stretch “**delivery**” and “**integration**” a little further. Ukraine has cruelly exposed a learnt imbalance in our strategic formulation. Post Cold War, the world’s problems have arguably been relatively small and discrete. Our strategies were typically framed around Ends and Ways alone, with policy focused on resource-agnostic choice around ways. Consequently, it became fashionable to see strategy as being illusory, even superfluous.*

No longer.

*The context has changed, and a lack of strategic **means** will ruthlessly undermine the ends we seek. We must reframe our strategic approach and be clear-eyed that Russia is spending nearly 40% of public expenditure on Defence.*

Last week, the Secretary of State signposted steps towards increased Defence spending and an aspiration of 2.5% GDP. Just prior to Christmas at RUSI, CDS described the next decade as “a decade which will see us recapitalise the Army.” The Army has a generous £44 billion programme over 10 years, but that money is just 18% committed. During an electoral cycle, uncommitted money is vulnerable. The National Audit Office’s report into the

MoD's Equipment Plan reported that the Army was £12 billion short of the funding required to meet the full demands of the Integrated Review Refresh. It noted, nevertheless and unlike other services, that by taking considered risks against capability, the Army's plan is affordable.

We know what we need.

And we know that we need it not only to be the most lethal Army in Europe, but to attract and retain the outstanding talent that has chosen to serve.

We have a credible plan, driven by the Land Operating Concept, and it's affordable, now.

But delivery is being hindered.

Delivery *is now about the pace of approvals and the military/industrial capacity to produce what we need, when we need it, conscious that the enemy might own the timeline.*

And delivery is at risk through financial headwinds. Broader Defence affordability challenges risk undermining an affordable Army plan. These are legitimate choices but there is an opportunity cost. We risk perpetuating a departmental tendency, outlined by the NAO, whereby we assume undue financial risk, and then turn to a hollowed-out Army as Defence's financial regulator.

And there are synergies that we must exploit with the war in Ukraine, making a virtue of necessity and buying back better when we rightly grant-in-kind. Rapid approvals, some long overdue, are a non-discretionary route to a modernised and recapitalised Army that retains its people.

*In parallel, we can mitigate some of the risk through deeper **integration**.*

*For the delegations here today, few, if any of us have the scale and purchasing power to drive sovereign R&D, investment, and supply chains. We cannot afford to go it alone. Strategic partnerships, founded on shared capabilities confer depth, resilience, and mutual benefit. Multinational **integration**, with localisation of production and shared IP is in all our interests and you will find the British Army open for business.*

*As CGS, I've visited more factories than foxholes and seen the profound delivery gains that can be made by **integrating** our workforce, putting*

tacticians next to technicians, particularly in terms of spiral development.

*Collectively, we need to deepen this **integration** and I implore you all to be more demanding partners of the British Army.*

This mobilised and integrated approach is demonstrably successful, helping to rejuvenate an atrophied Land industrial base. The last significant land exports were Desert Warrior to Kuwait and Challenger 2 to Oman in the 1990s. In 2021, UK Defence and Security Exports published statistics that from 2012-2021 land exports accounted for only 4% of total UK Defence exports with a value of around £3.5Bn. Following publication of the Land Industrial Strategy in 2022 and the establishment of the cross-government Land Capabilities Campaign Office, we set ourselves a target of £6Bn/10yrs - effectively doubling our previous performance. In the last six months alone, the Army has already supported £4Bn of export successes and we are seeing land export opportunities grow much faster than expected. Following conversations at DSEI, as well as my recent international engagements our four priority campaigns could well contribute £20Bn of an of an identified addressable global market of £36Bn. In many respects, prosperity is an important but narrow benefit. These exports also underwrite strategic partnerships, founded on shared capability and interoperability.

But these promising, green shoots need light. Land export campaigns and the small and medium sized enterprises who deliver them need protection from

the massive maritime and aerospace campaigns that dominate the political narratives to the exclusion of Land. The relative simplicity and pace of Land exports should be celebrated and promoted. And of course, this isn't a zero-sum game, there is room for everyone; in fact, it's in our interest to off-set the likes of GCAP and AUKUS with complementary Land deals. But experience tells me that without top down support and advocacy, we will miss the opportunity and perpetuate an atrophied land industrial base.

Let me finish where I started, today's strategic context demands an enduring ability to deliver integrated armoured forces.

We are the pre-war generation and Ukraine is the vital ground. Back in 2022, the British Army mobilised in response to this context generating a readiness and productivity dividend that you will see this year across the continent as part of STEADFAST DEFENDER.

But MOBILISE was phase 1 and there are multiple phases to come. Our Land Operating Concept and the NATO Force Model have set the compass and ambition for these phases.

Integrated armoured forces for multi-domain operations are the manifestation of our big blind to NATO. They are our value proposition for this context.

Land power is a continuity, and I don't think we're at a tank/drone crossroads just yet. Our

bold, exciting, and affordable modernisation plan is facing a decade of delivery, but its pace will be dictated by approvals and industrial capacity.

People will flock to a winning proposition; build it and they will come. There is no margin for error or financial compromise herein; the National Audit Office tells us as much.

Integration, in every sense, must be our watchword. Throughout, strategic partnerships and exports confer depth, so enjoy the conference, swap business cards, make deals, and ensure this magnificent venue doesn't need to graze cattle, sheep, or horses again.

Thank you.

24 mins @140