# **Defence – A Way Forward**

## Admiral Robin HOGG

Robin Hogg has a lifetime of experience working in the Royal Navy and remains passionate about its future role in defending the country.

In retirement, he has continued to share and lecture about his keen interest in military defence matters, the challenges this involves, the influence of global politics and political leaders, together with the development of modern weapons of warfare.

After a brief, historical review, he went on to highlight the threats posed to the UK by unexpected events, e.g. the recent disruption of Gatwick and Heathrow Airports by drones appearing randomly in aircraft flight paths.

Drones and other forms of unmanned robotics are now playing an increasing role in today’s warfare e.g. the assassination of one of the leaders of the extremist Islamic, group ISL nicknamed ‘*Jihadi John’.* This style of intervention leaves the responsibility for decision making during hostile confrontation ill-defined and significantly alters the nature of world conflict; whereas in the past, clear leadership during a crisis e.g. Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher during the Falklands War, permitted clear accountability.

As a nation, we are no longer prepared for military intervention, perhaps with the exception of Trident. This limits the strategic options available. While the imposition of sanctions has long been recognised as having a significant impact, they are slow to take effect and impractical for dealing with immediate threats.

Future interventions are likely to require a far more specialised and coordinated expertise, together with a combined response involving the 3 military disciplines, the Home Office and MI5. The increasing importance of IT in modern warfare would necessitate the recruitment, training and deployment of specialist technology personnel. How will this be implemented and funded? The current global manufacturing of weapons of destruction reduces any element of surprise and could limit access to their production during active conflict.

At the same time, there is a cultural loss of memory and practical experience of warfare amongst the general population. The heroic image of military personnel is hard to sustain, recruitment reduced, a lifetime career in the military services less likely. The more familiar picture nowadays enhanced by the media is of individuals returning from active service damaged in both body and mind, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, problems of addiction and mutilating life-changing injuries. Perhaps then, it is not surprising that ‘Joining Up’ to defend one’s ‘Queen and Country’ and compulsory military service have less overall appeal and the Military Services in general attract less overall funding.

Robin left us with many unanswered questions. How will our future be affected by Brexit? Will the international exchange of intelligence cease or be sold to the highest bidder? Have we lost valuable practical skills, as well as knowledge in matters of warfare? Will divisive leadership styles diminish the desire for World Peace?

Dr Susan Overal MRCGP - on behalf of Plymouth Medical Society 11th January 2019