

From: "Paul Mason" [REDACTED]

To: "HEALEY, John" [REDACTED]
HARRIS, Dan [REDACTED]

Date: 4/15/2022 2:04:32 PM

Subject: Update from C Donnelly

Hi John/Dan ... I dunno what you got out of the MOD yesterday but here's Donnelly's view of things. Very briefly:

There's no urgency in HMG over moving to the kind of wartime footing needed to prosecute this conflict successfully.

He sees no evidence that Wallace is doing a big rethink on spending, forces, posture, readiness. The only person in Govt thinking strategically about Ukraine is Boris, and he seems unable to Marshall forces and and communicate properly.

Donnelly thinks Ukraine can defeat Russia. He says what they need are not tanks - the Europeans don't have enough to make a difference. They need artillery - inc 155mm which they can learn to use fast - asymmetric weapons - anti-air, anti-tank, IEDs and drones and above all training for thousands of volunteers who can't be used because untrained. We should be training them en masse both in Lviv and Eastern Europe.

He says there's nobody in MoD really listening to this. the IR has polluted decision making. Says Wallace is doing his best but has no strategic education because he wasn't high enough in the military to get it. Needs better advisers.

Also - in confidence - stuff the security ppl needs to do (activation of certain secure spaces in Whitehall, forms of surveillance) not being done because they can only be done on a wartime footing.

On what happens if Putin goes for a tactical nuke, CD thinks the West should not respond with nuclear weapons but by going into Ukraine, Black Sea and (en route Latakia) and destroying the whole Russian army and navy in its path.

He says very few in U.K. wanting to think about this - and the problem is with deterrence you need to communicate what your escalation ladder might be in order to deter.

All very grim. All we can do is get as many front bench politicians and committee chairs up to speed on what the options are, keep communicating with Wallace to give him room for manoeuvre, and signal in the speech a direction of travel that puts some of this right.

I think, if not done already, Keir's team and you should ask someone senior either from academia or military to brief them on current thinking on nuclear deterrence.

Finally on the sinking of the Moskva he points out that Russian ships are designed for firepower not survivability - they fire all their weapons and then die, is the doctrine. Hence other Russian naval platforms will be vulnerable, despite the age of Moskva.

Hope that's useful

P

My aim is to develop a Labour narrative on defence that allows us – in advance of the Integrated Review's publication – to set out the principles from which we will respond and the main tests by which we will assess it and challenge Ministers.

Our Labour defence narrative must be congruent with any broader approach to foreign policy but I don't want our work to be derivative or delayed by the shadow FCO team. We will need to frame our narrative – with different language and emphasis – for both external public and internal Party purposes.

Outputs and next steps

As discussed, I think the next steps and outputs need to be:

- Scoping briefing (action: PM based on your earlier note and this spec); end of w/b 18 January
- Discussion to develop/confirm our core arguments (action: PM, with JH and his office team); early w/b 25 January
- Speech, three articles and core Labour narratives for external/internal use (action: PM, with JH/team); from w/b 1 February onwards

An intervention in the next two weeks along these lines should be accompanied by briefings and engagement with Labour MPs, think tanks and influencers, to create a "script" from which the response emerges.

The aim of this intervention is to create the following example headlines:

- Labour: our commitment to NATO is unshakeable
- Starmer to Labour's left: our commitment to Trident and NATO is non-negotiable
- Labour: 2.2% of GDP should be a floor, not a ceiling for defence budget
- Labour tells Johnson: no skimping on defence
- Healey tells Webster: your defence budget is a fiction; fill the gaps in funding now
- Labour on the IR: a missed opportunity but we can build on it
- Starmer to Johnson: work with Labour for a radical upgrade of our armed forces to meet Russian threat

From: JOHNSON, Kim [REDACTED]
Sent: 26 February 2021 11:50
To: HEALEY, John [REDACTED]
Subject: UK nuclear Weapons

Hi John, I have read the article today and I'm concerned that we have shifted position without any debate or discussion with the wider PLP, do you have any plans to communicate with MP's/Lords

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/feb/25/labour-to-state-non-negotiable-support-for-uks-nuclear-weapons>

many thanks

kim

Kim Johnson
Member of Parliament Liverpool Riverside Constituency

paulmason [REDACTED]

2/28/2021 5:32 PM

Re: FW: UK nuclear Weapons

To : HEALEY, John (2nd Mailbox) [REDACTED]

The accusation that we have shifted position is a MorningStar/CND line - however all that's changed is a) we now mean what we say and b) we are shutting down the possibility that Labour could go Unilateral/anti-NATO... I am keen to have this argument out overtly with the CNDers... we cannot win an election with them constantly chiselling away at our line...

BTW Here's the (confidential) response from Chris Donnelly, one of the UK military's most respected (retired) Russia experts: I want to set up a meeting with me, you and him...

{{JH's speech was really excellent. Got in all the right points without cutting himself off from any future reactions to surprise events. There is a lot here I can help on. Acquisition is crucial, and needs a new, determined approach. The most sensible future for the Army is to become a mainly reserve force with more, not less local regiments and big kit mothballed, thus avoiding squabbles over which regiments are cut etc. The RN could have lots more ships if it accepted to do things differently. It all requires a culture change; not easy, but possible with the right political leadership. Currently, the best thinker at the top who really gets all this is the CAS, ACM Mike Wigston. But as others fight loudly to get Nick Carter's job, the press haven't picked him up.

Let me know how best I can help}}}

On Friday, January 21, 2022 6:07 PM, HEALEY, John (2nd Mailbox) wrote:

Good evening, Chris.

Ben Wallace has indicated that the UK would be open to supplying further 'defensive' weaponry to Ukraine, to follow the short-range anti-tank missiles this week.

Are you able to give me any indication or advice on what sort of weapons or systems might be considered or requested?

cdonnelly [REDACTED]
Re: UK military support for Ukraine

1/23/2022 3:41 PM

To: HEALEY, John (2nd Mailbox) [REDACTED]

looking into this, John, i find that there are quite a few appeasers, defeatists, and pro-Kremlinites out there claiming that nothing will help the Ukrainian Army, and we would be wasting our time. my network strongly disagree, but stress that a lot of thought needs to be put in to ensure we get the desired effect with our help.

On Sunday, January 23, 2022 9:10 PM, HEALEY, John (2nd Mailbox) [REDACTED] wrote:

Good evening, Chris. Thank you! Both for this email and for the attention you've given in preparing it. This is indeed very helpful, and clear. It's a framework for understanding better the UK military assistance provided or pledged so far: the short-range anti-tank missiles delivered last week (category 1, with no additionality to Ukraine defence against the Russian attacks most likely to be mounted – long-range, air, avoiding fighting in cities); bi-lateral naval support agreement for longer term (category 2). Category 3. It seems to me that long-range strike capability is at the heart of this. Not just the imminent Russian attack threat on Ukraine but the primary problem for Russia that Ukraine is increasing its conventional deterrence capabilities, in particular developing long-range missiles domestically and expanding its defence cooperation with NATO. This is the long-term security risk to Russia posed by Ukraine. Interference in Ukraine has failed and proved counterproductive, boosting Ukrainian determination and support to link-up with the West (NATO/EU membership). If diplomatic route does not deliver then Putin only has military options, and may consider the costs of inaction now would be greater than the costs of military escalation.

From: [cdonnelly](#) [REDACTED]
To: ["HEALEY, John \(2nd Mailbox\)"](#) [REDACTED]
Date: 1/24/2022 10:37:24 AM
Subject: RE: UK military support for Ukraine

thanks John!

it is really important to keep in mind that military issues are very much secondary in Putin's concern about Ukraine.

the real threat is Ukraine choosing to become a western-style liberal democracy. putin's entire kleptocratic team fear their own people, not NATO, and a Ukrainian example of being free to choose a different path would be the most likely thing to cause spontaneous popular uprising.

NATO is the easiest propaganda target by far and it provides the backbone for the west's economic muscle. Putin senses US weakness and that he might be able to break that backbone. He can't compete with the muscle.

Putin's actions are quickly making Ukraine into an implacable enemy. Ukraine has the skills to make its own advanced weaponry if it can get organised and get rid of corruption and Russian subversion. Ukraine needs long range weapons that work (it already has long range aircraft) to defend itself against the Russians, whose land-based weapons outrange Ukraine's by 30km. these weapons are no more "offensive" than are tanks. they would still be falling on what is legally Ukrainian territory, not on Russia. they just level the playing field.

but, they would therefore make Putin's quick victory more difficult. if that is provocation, so be it. they will certainly claim it, but then they are doing that already.

10/6/2022 11:07 AM

[REDACTED]
FW: tactical nuclear weapons

To: [REDACTED]

Ideas gratefully passed on
XX

From: Evans, George

Sent: 06 October 2022 09:43

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: tactical nuclear weapons

Hi Chris,

Just wondered if you had any thoughts on what Labour should say publicly about the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons by Putin? John Healey has asked what their talking points should be.

Chris Donnelly:

Comments on Russian nuclear use v1

1. We need to be cautious about talking this problem up. We cannot completely dismiss the possibility that Putin will use a nuclear weapon, but
2. the main reason for Putin's threatening nuclear use is to intimidate the West into capitulating, to stop our support of Ukraine. So, if we talk up the issue in an alarmist way as many commentators are currently doing, we create an echo chamber and do Putin's disinformation job for him.
3. Putin's constant reference to nuclear weapons also serves to distract our attention from his escalation of the war by different means, such as economic warfare, sabotage, perhaps also by using chemical or biological weapons of mass destruction.
4. The best way to deter any blustering bully is with a show of firmness and solidarity and a credible promise of retribution. Our response would not need to be with nuclear weapons. NATO can destroy Russian forces in Ukraine with conventional weapons.
5. This whole situation demonstrates the value of the UK strategic nuclear deterrent. It also demonstrates how important it is to have a sufficient conventional military capability to be able to respond effectively without using nuclear weapons.

From: [PM](#) [REDACTED]

To: [REDACTED]

Date: 1/28/2024 8:54:54 AM

Subject: Re: (No Subject)

Chris hi. A longer reply: [REDACTED]
likewise I am glad you are doing something on the strategic lessons of Ukraine...in confidence I am hoping to work for John Healey soon - I've been working pro bono on a report into defence industrial strategy which I think you will like when you see it: Patrick Sanders is right, and right to ring the alarm in public ... I have to be careful what I say in public from now on if I become John's adviser - I know that Tory Radakin sees me as an outsider for John. I am in favour of a big expansion in the reserves and a cultural change to make it happen - with conscription as a last option; equally important is how we take control of the workforce: we can no longer spend 5 years training engineers only to see them go straight into the city, or into business data analytics... we need a carrot and stick approach to get them into defence and nuclear jobs: only 15% of engineering grads are women - so we're missing out on all that talent.

The critical thing for me is armed forces culture - it has to change. Ukraine sources tell me every unit - right down to subunits - now demand drones and anti-drone EW: that means recruiting tech nerds and putting them at or close to the front line. One drone, one kill is a massive force multiplier on the 81mm mortar.

So we need to create new kinds of units. I would experiment using reserves: women only artillery? Muslim-only units? We've got to make the armed forces look like Britain.

I firmly believe Gen Z will fight. But motivating them is a big cultural challenge and something I want to focus on with JH.

I am still trying to become an MP, and have volunteered to stand against Corbyn in Islington, but Labour are very factional and I'm in the wrong faction. I'll keep trying.

1/29/2024 2:28 PM

RE: (No Subject)

To: PM

It would be wonderful if you could work for JH, even more so if it were as his PPS. We definitely need you in parliament.

You will see from what I have written in the attached paper how close some of my thinking is to yours. The armed forces have gone down the route of integration rather than separation. The problem they would face with women only units is that so many jobs require a lot of brute strength even today. Artillery is one such. Women make excellent vehicle drivers but very few are strong enough to change a truck wheel or a tank track. I think that integrating women into the system and the complete integration of LGBT people has actually gone very well. But there are about a dozen cases of sexual harassment pending. This is not a lot considering the scale of the issue but the publicity given to these cases could derail what I think is actually a good attempt. Please do make comments on my draft; that will be very helpful indeed!

Keep me in touch with how things develop in your struggle

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From: Chris Donnelly [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2024 11:47 AM

To: HEALEY, John [redacted]

Cc: HARRIS, Dan [redacted]

Subject: FW: new paper

Hi John!

I am attaching a paper which does not address the Ukraine war directly, but is extremely relevant to how we deal with Russia. The lead author is my colleague Duncan Allen; I completely concur with his analysis and assessment.

I am also copying our head of reports, Laura, who will ensure that you get our reports as I may be away from my desk for a while over the next few weeks

With all best wishes

Chris

From: ["HEALEY, John"](#) [REDACTED]

To: ["Chris Donnelly"](#) [REDACTED]

Date: 2/5/2024 8:19:03 AM

Subject: RE: new paper

Good morning, Chris. This is a really excellent paper. Thank you for sending it through, and thank you to your colleague Duncan Allen for authoring it.

These arguments – well referenced and rooted at each stage – need to be taken to the heart of UK (and especially US) leadership thinking.

11/8/2024 12:27 PM

Trump's door bell rings.....

To: PM

The US election results have depressed me even more, not least because I see no realisation in our government and in many others that we will not have “business as usual, but with a few more bumps and personal unpleasantnesses”. Trump will be out to change things in a big way. Of course this could include serious danger for Ukraine. It will certainly mean a very big shake up for NATO, and Rutte doesn't look like he'll be good enough to cope with that. With the French and the Germans in political meltdown, the survival of NATO may well depend on the UK and Poland working together, With the nordics in support.

UK's National Defence and security will need fundamental restructuring, as will the industrial and procurement systems essential to support it.

Do you think anyone in government realises this? I can't see any sign of it from where I'm sitting, although as I don't get down to London nowadays it may just be that I'm out of touch. But “hoping for the best” somehow doesn't seem an adequate alternative to strategic thinking and timely preparation.

From: [PM](#) [REDACTED]

To: [REDACTED]

Date: 11/8/2024 11:33:32 AM

Subject: Re: Trump's door bell rings.....

Attachments: [\(29\) Trump victory poses tough strategic choices for UK.pdf](#)

Hi Chris. I think John Healey does. Starmer does not have any political Geostrategists in his team and that's something I could remedy if they would let me but they don't.

Sorry you have been unwell - and yes it is depressing.

The way forward has to be building a pro-Defence / UK strategic interest lobby in the PLP and parliament - I'm working with Progressive Britain to try and do this, starting by activating Labour Friends of Ukraine.

The attached document was well received by JH and has provoked interest among Labour decision makers - so I'm working with the authors of the letter on a follow up.

One issue is: does UK try to use JEF as the convenor of a Euro-centric NATO push for rearmament? My sense is the Europeans want something more focused on the EU.

What's the three things I should push in face to face contacts with Labour?

11/8/2024 2:57 PM

[REDACTED]
(No Subject)

To: PM [REDACTED]

The most important thing to get across to the PLP is that our national governance system is dysfunctional and, until it is fixed, the government will be unable to develop and implement the policies and strategy we need to face what's coming. If that is not done, this government will be as impotent as the last one was and this SDR is a waste of time.

Secondly, almost all our defence structures, including industrial, are peacetime constructs. They need fundamental reform to make them permanently adaptable, which is what war absolutely requires.

Thirdly, If we simply increase spending before we conduct the above 2 essential reform programmes, the money will prevent the reform from happening and we will be completely screwed