

Managing Defence in the Wider Security Context training programme in Suva: opening speech by Paul Welsh

Ladies and Gentleman,

I welcome all of you to the Managing Defence in the Wider Security Context training programme.

This course follows on from two successful training programmes that we funded on Strategic Leadership where we brought together men and women from across a range of government departments and agencies. And it is good to see from the participants list from this programme that we again have diverse representation.

The Deputy High Commissioner, Paul Welsh opened the Managing Defence in the Wider Security Context training programme.

Although the words Defence and Security are in the title of this course, I have no doubt that many of the ideas, principles and models covered in this week are of relevance to all of you, not only those of you working directly in the defence or security sectors. The delivery of these courses in Fiji and elsewhere is a demonstration of Britain's commitment to the Pacific region, of our common values and our deep rooted relationships. I thought carefully about what I might cover this morning that would be relevant to the diverse range of participants. I have decided to pick out a few issues that I believe are of interest to all public servants. The first thing is strategic context. As policy formulators, managers and leaders, we all need to be aware of the external influences and drivers that affect our work and the work of our departments.

We need to lift our heads and scan the horizon to spot potential problems and opportunities. These might be political, economic, social, environmental or legal – to name just a few. Let me give you an example. Let's imagine that I am a Police Superintendent in Manchester in the North of England.

I have been asked to plan the policing operation for a large demonstration in central Manchester next Saturday. The demonstration is expected to attract up to a quarter of a million people for a rally in support of Ukraine. It will be essential that I approach this task with a good understanding of the strategic context. I need to think about the political background to this rally. I know that people are coming to protest for and in peace. But I know that emotions are running high and that there is widespread anger towards Russia as the perpetrators of the aggression against Ukrainians.

I need to be ready for emotions spilling over, not likely into violence but into acts that might disrupt the running of the city.

I also need to be politically smart in the way that we police the event. Public and political opinion is overwhelmingly supportive of Ukraine.

I need to be reactive to that prevailing political and social mood by policing the rally in as facilitative way as possible.

I also need to have an eye on public perceptions. I need to think about media coverage, the world's eyes.

If I end up with a popular protest in support of a high profile cause turning violent and police having to intervene, that's going to be bad news for me and my police force.

I need to think about the law. My force's actions are governed by human rights law and the right to freedom of assembly.

We take a human rights based approach to policing. I need to balance that with my responsibility to guarantee people's safety. I could go on. But I think you get the idea. As a senior police officer, I need to scan what is a complex strategic horizon and understand how a range of factors could affect my task, for good or for bad.

Another issue I wanted to focus on is collaboration. How do I work with a range of partners and stakeholders to formulate policy or deliver services. As with strategic thinking, this is about recognising that very often we will need to work in partnership with colleagues from different parts of our organisation, other government departments, with civil society or sometimes with other countries. Collaborating and partnering is essentially a recognition that rarely can we deliver our priorities alone. As an example of this I refer to a programme that we have in the British Government called the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund or CSSF.

This is a cross government fund which supports and delivers activity to prevent instability and conflict that threaten UK interests. It uses a whole of government approach to national and international security challenges. It brings together staff from the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Defence, the Development Ministry and the National Security Department.

It was designed out of an understanding that our policies and interventions are improved if we combine various skills, experience and disciplines. And that to win the competition, you need to bring in a range of players, from a range of teams. The third issue that I'd like to touch on is accountability and transparency. As public servants in a democracies, good governance means that we have an obligation to explain decision making and to justify our conduct. We report to politicians, the elected representatives of the people. But we are ultimately accountable to citizens. As civil or public servants we are serving the people.

There has over many years been a gradual erosion of public trust in western democracies and there is an increasing demand in many countries for more direct and explicit accountability relations between governments and citizens, civil society and the media. This has for example led in many

countries, including my own, to the introduction of Freedom of Information legislation where members of the public are entitled in law to request information from public authorities. This is not always comfortable for public servants. But to my mind, it comes down to an essential truth of democratic governance; we are not spending our money, we are spending public money. We do so with public consent and are accountable to them for the way we spend that money.

I wanted to finish by saying something about Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Let us be clear, this is not a conflict that has happened by accident. Russia's invasion of Ukraine was an unprovoked, needless and premeditated attack against a sovereign democratic state. The Russian government's actions are reprehensible and illegal. They are in direct contravention of the United Nations Charter – the UN Secretary General himself has been clear about this. Thousands of innocents are being killed, millions are feeling their homes. And if I were to set Russia's invasion in the context of some of the issues that will be covered in this course, I ask myself a few questions.

To what extent has Russia thought about the strategic context of its invasion?

Did it think about its obligations in international law?

Did it think about the mass humanitarian devastation that would inevitably follow?

Did it think about the huge act of economic self harm that it would do to itself?

Did it ask itself what its own people wanted. Did it feel accountable to them or to anyone?

If they had exercised strategic judgement and awareness, we might avoided the tragedy that is now unfolding.

So Ladies and Gentleman. I will leave it there.

I hope that you will find this week's training to be informative, inspiring and that you will open your minds to new ideas. I hope the you will develop friendships and working relationships that you can take back your departments.

I hope that you enjoy yourselves.

Vinaka