

New army chief General Sanders urges Britain to prepare for total war with Russia

“The British Army must be prepared to engage in warfare at its most violent.”

Robert Stevens
28 June 2022

The new head of the British Army, General Sir Patrick Sanders, gave a blood-curdling speech Tuesday, insisting that the UK and its NATO allies must prepare to wage war against Russia.

Sanders’s keynote address to the Royal United Services Institute’s (RUSI) annual “Land Warfare Conference” was broadcast live on Sky News. Also in attendance was Defence Secretary Ben Wallace, United States Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth, Germany’s Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Alfons Mais, and Oleksandr Danylyuk, former secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine.

Sanders warned that Britain faced its “1937 moment”, referencing Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery who wrote that year, two years before the outbreak of the Second World War, “There is no need to continue doing a thing merely because it has been done in the Army for the last thirty or forty years—if this is the only reason for doing it, then it is high time we changed and did something else.”

Sanders said, “For us, today, that ‘something else’ is mobilising the Army to meet the new threat we face: a clear and present danger that was realised on 24th February when Russia used force to seize territory from Ukraine, a friend of the United Kingdom.”

Sanders added, “In all my years in uniform, I haven’t known such a clear threat to the principles of sovereignty and democracy, and the freedom to live without fear of violence, as the brutal aggression of President Putin and his expansionist ambitions.”

This cynical outburst is made by a veteran of every crime carried out by British imperialism for over three decades. Sanders commanded operations in Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan. It was

transparent justification for his demand to strengthen the armed forces to wage offensive wars. What would be required from now on was an “increased focus on readiness and combined arms training and a broader institutional renewal that creates the culture required to win if called upon. This process, given a name Operation MOBILISE, will be the Army’s primary focus over the coming years.”

In Orwellian doublespeak, Sanders said the UK must “mobilise to meet today’s threat”, i.e., wage war, in order to “prevent war in Europe”. This meant arming Ukraine to the teeth in NATO’s proxy war against Russia.

Sanders boasted, “Defence has worked at a phenomenal pace to bring together a coalition of partners to provide materiel, intelligence and training to sustain Ukraine in its fight against the Russian invaders... this year alone we have supplied 9500 anti-tank missiles, of which over 5000 were NLAW. We have already provided UK-based training for 650 AFU soldiers, and in the coming months, the British Army will deliver battle-winning skills to a further 10,000. It’s just started.”

The UK must gear up to do whatever is necessary to win. “The Russian invasion has reminded us of the time-honoured maxim that if you want to avert conflict, you better be prepared to fight... And to make it crystal clear—This means focusing on winning the war, working with these allies, against this threat and in this location.”

In reference to the NATO summit Wednesday in the Spanish capital, Sanders declared, “And we will see the first orders issued in Madrid tomorrow.”

With the help of RUSI, “we will double-down on combined arms manoeuvre, especially in the deep battle, and devise a new doctrine rooted in geography, integrated with NATO’s war plans and specific enough to drive

focused, relevant investment and inspire the imagination of our people to fight and win if called upon.”

Defeating Russia would require a mass mobilisation of personnel as “war in Ukraine also reminds us of the utility of Land Power: it takes an army to hold and regain territory and defend the people who live there. It takes an Army to deter. And this army, the British Army, will play its part alongside our allies.”

In “conjunction with our NATO allies and partners,” the UK must “meet strength with strength from the outset and be unequivocally prepared to fight for NATO territory.”

In such a conflict, “we would likely be outnumbered at the point of attack and fighting like hell. Standoff air, maritime or cyber fires are unlikely to dominate on their own. Land will still be the decisive domain... Success will be determined by combined arms and multi-domain competence. And mass. Ukraine has also shown that engaging with our adversaries and training, assisting and reassuring our partners is high payoff activity.”

By now overwhelmed by bloodlust, Sanders concluded, “The British Army must be prepared to engage in warfare at its most violent.”

Looking at his audience he saw, “the faces of friends from previous campaigns where we have shared hardship and laughter, failures and victories. We have shed blood together. We remember those we left behind. And it is this, our willingness to shed blood to protect our common values and each other’s territory, that will see us prevail.”

Sanders references conflicts such as Iraq and Afghanistan that claimed over a million lives. This is nothing compared with the death toll that would result from the total war with Russia he now advocates and plans.

Key sections of Sanders’s speech were warnings to the government that to mobilise for war means a ramping up of human resources and weaponry. “As we face a new reality, a race to mobilise, we must be honest with ourselves about Future Soldiers [the British Army transformation programme] timelines, capability gaps and risks—and now our own diminished stockpiles as a result of Gifting in Kind to the brave soldiers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.”

Hinting unmistakably at the possible necessity of instituting a draft, he insisted, “We should not be afraid of necessary heresies. Defence is only as strong as its weakest domain. And technology does not eliminate the relevance of combat mass.”

Sanders’s claim that his plan has been necessitated by

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is a transparent lie. His entire speech only puts flesh on that delivered at a RUSI conference in 2018 by General Sir Nicholas Carter, the Chief of the Defence Staff until November last year.

He proposed that the British Army needed “to be able to deploy overland by road and by rail. And our Strike concept seeks to project land capability over distances of up to some 2,000 km.”

This would involve aping the Nazi invasion of Russia in 1941, carried out over a 2,900-kilometer front, with Carter saying, “For example we are copying what the Germans did very well in 1940 when all of their prime movers, in terms of their tanks and armoured vehicles, had trailers; and by doing that, it reduces your logistic tail.”

Defence Secretary Wallace’s presence alongside Sanders was meant to reinforce his own demands this week for a 20 percent hike in military spending to 2.5 percent of GDP. He told the conference, “It is now time to signal that the peace dividend is over, and investment needs to continue to grow.” At last week’s G7 summit in Germany, Prime Minister Boris Johnson stated that Britain’s commitment to spend 2 percent of GDP on defence was “a floor not a ceiling.”

This is only what the Tories are prepared to say in public. Military conflict with Russia and China would require defence spending on a truly vast scale combined with, as Sanders made clear, a militarisation of society that demands the waging of class war against British workers and the destruction of fundamental democratic rights. That is why striking railworkers have been denounced as “Putin’s stooges”, as the government prepares legislation to allow the use of agency workers as scabs and “minimum service” provisions that would effectively outlaw strikes in essential industries and services.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact