

UN Veterans Association – messages of welcome, 8 June 2011

Henry Bellingham MP, FCO Minister for Africa, the UN and Conflict Issues

I warmly welcome the creation today of the UN Veterans Association UK and I commend the UN Association UK for their hard work in getting it up and running.

The UK is a strong supporter of UN peacekeeping. Thousands of British personnel have worked in peacekeeping missions and every year we contribute towards the cost of this vital activity across the world.

I would like to thank all British veterans for their dedicated service to UN peacekeeping and also thank those who continue to serve in the cause of peace. I look forward to seeing the UNVA take shape and wish it every success for the future.

The Rt Hon Andrew Robathan MP (Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans)

The work of the United Nations is essential to the pursuit of world peace and stability, and this initiative recognises the significant contribution of UK forces.

UK personnel serve the UN in often difficult and dangerous circumstances, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank British veterans and serving personnel for their commitment to UN peacekeeping.

General Sir Michael Rose, Former Commander UN Protection Forces, Bosnia 1994/95

Enabling civilians from all three ethnic communities to survive in a three sided civil war, and at the time helping bringing about a peaceful end to the conflict in Bosnia were the difficult tasks faced by the peacekeepers of the UN in 1994. Although the UN has been criticised by many in the West for not using more military force at that time, events in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan have subsequently shown that solving complex humanitarian problems in situations of conflict cannot be done by using high levels of military force alone. It is a credit to the 23,000 peacekeepers who volunteered to go to Bosnia to help others to live, and who never lost faith in the mission, that today Bosnia is at peace and the perpetrators of that war are now in prison or facing trial in The Hague.

I look forward to the creation of an independent UNVA in the UK so that the achievements of UN peacekeepers everywhere can be better remembered.

General Sir Rupert Smith KCB DSO OBE QGM

I was delighted to read that the United Kingdom now has its own independent branch of the United Nations Veterans Association. Not least from my time as Commander UNPROFOR in Sarajevo in 1995 I am well aware of the quality and quantity of the contribution made by British armed forces to UN operations. In these difficult and complex peacekeeping operations members of the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and the British Army have committed themselves with commendable courage, forbearance and competence. I wish the Association and its members the best of fortune in representing the service and sacrifice of the veterans and in advancing the values of the United Nations.

Colonel Bob Stewart DSO MP, Former British UN Commander in Bosnia 1992 – 93

The United Nations is both the highest authority in the World and its Court of Last Resort. United Nations Peacekeepers are often given the almost impossible mission of trying to stop violence so that normal reason and politics can catch up. In many situations this is almost impossible but it is better to try and do something than do nothing. The World always hears of peacekeeping failures but rarely of its successes because good news does not sell newspapers. Yet United Nations Peacekeepers have had many successes and saved countless lives – often at great risk to themselves. I remain a strong supporter of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and proud to have worn the Blue Beret.