

# Defence and Security in an Uncertain World

**Noel Corrigan**

This article summarises the 28<sup>th</sup> International Symposium of Military Operational Research (28 ISMOR). Its theme “supporting decision making in an uncertain world” proved effective at stimulating debate on the changing requirements for tools and techniques to enable decision makers to cope, and the way the global Operational Analysis community needs to respond to new challenges.

Anticipating inspiration at the end of an awful summer, about 50 members of the global OA community gathered together at New Place in Hampshire for the 28<sup>th</sup> International Symposium of Military Operational Research (28 ISMOR). The Symposium ran from bank holiday Monday (clearly not a holiday for the international delegates) until Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> September. ISMOR is the premier international conference on military OR (Operational Analysis). It is sponsored by Director Scrutiny within the MoD (currently in the person of Dr Syd Morley), and co-sponsored by the Defence Special Interest Group of the OR Society. It is also strongly supported by the Military Operations Research Society of the United States of America.



*New Place in Hampshire, England, home of ISMOR since 2005*

The theme of this years ISMOR was Defence and security in an uncertain world. 28 ISMOR continued the tradition of having a single stream of papers, with a set of syndicate sessions on Thursday afternoon.

## **The main event**

Fewer Delegates than normal attended this year, but that did not affect the quality of the papers presented which were, as usual, thought provoking, entertaining, informative and well delivered. There are many traditions at ISMOR, one of them apparently being that Professor Jim Moffat of Dstl presents a paper on current developments in research on Command and Control. This year he presented jointly with Dr Reiner Huber of Munich University in Germany, on the subject of European Defence Cooperation in an Uncertain Security Environment. He was

followed over the course of the four days by ten papers from overseas contributors, and contributions from Dstl colleagues, the MoD and delegates from UK industry (including Atkins, BAE Systems, DAS and MBDA).

Some of the highlights of the week included Prof David Davis (US DoD) reporting on progress in his current role as advisor to the US Africa Command. Here is working in a military HQ that has a firm understanding of the benefits and approaches of OA, given that it contains large number of graduates of the US Naval Postgraduate school. He also addressed the topic of Value Focussed Metrics – an approach based on Bayesian Belief Networks.

Sam Dudin’s paper on Non-combatant Evacuation Operations was both informative and entertaining. He reported on historical analysis of the characteristics of such operations over the last 30 years, which reveals that the French appear to take a more robust approach to these operations than the UK!

Of major concern to commanders in current operations, the analysis of Counter measures to Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) was covered in a couple of papers. Pete Bailey of Dstl described a mixed method approach to conducting Balance of investment studies for counter IED capabilities. His colleague Simon Crabtree discussed the metrics used to characterise how well UK forces are coping with the IED threat in Afghanistan.

On a similar theme of responding to lethal threats was the paper by Maj. Barak Corem of the Center of System Analysis in the Planning Division of the Israeli Defence Force. This presentation highlighted the role of OA in directly influencing a reduction in the number of casualties suffered as a result of missile attacks.

A sub theme around seminar gaming was addressed in a number of papers, mostly describing case studies of recently completed analyses considering wicked or complex problems. Alex Ihde from Johns Hopkins University considered the use of gaming to identify strategies for use in irregular conflicts. Fred Cameron from the Canadian Defence Research Centre addressed the advantages of gaming over a BOGSAT (Bunch of Guys sitting around a table).

Of particular note was the session describing the role of OA in the preparation for the recent Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR). This root and branch review of the UK's armed forces was published by the government last year and recommended deep cuts to the capabilities of all three armed forces. Papers were presented by Dstl (Alan Robinson) and the MoD (Will Jones and Keith Goodman ably standing in for Pete Stockel) describing the particular analyses that were conducted, and how they influenced the outcome of the review. Lessons identified in the conduct of the analysis were highlighted, and the support continues in preparation for the next SDSR due in 2015.

### **Syndicates**

This year the conference divided into three syndicates that turned their not inconsiderable analytical powers inwards for a bit on navel gazing, considering "the future of ISMOR", or "whither or wither ISMOR". Over the last few years there has been a noticeable downward trend in the number of papers received and the number of delegates attending. Thankfully it is only quantity and not quality that has been affected. In the plenary brief back it became clear that there is no single identifiable cause responsible for this downturn, and nor is it a trend exclusive to this conference.



*IEDs are a key concern to the British Army on current operations. © Crown Copyright*

A number of ideas were suggested as to how the event could be made even more attractive to European delegates. About a third of the delegates were attending for the first time and most indicated that they would like to return.

ISMOR has always been a wonderful, different kind of a conference, where the plenary sessions and evening activities mean that all the delegates meet and speak with each other. Whatever changes are made, this unique atmosphere will be preserved.

### **Extra curricular activities**

Of course, ISMOR is not all fun, and on Wednesday afternoon delegates split into three camps, one party proceeding to the Golf course, another to Portsmouth Historic Dockyards. The remaining people made use of the hotel and conference facilities or took the chance to catch up on work. As is traditional George Rose (UK MoD) triumphed on the greens.

### **Acknowledgements**

Following an excellent dinner in the splendid Jacobean dining room at New Place, David Faddy introduced the Ronnie Shephard Memorial address. This was delivered by David Schrady from the US Naval Postgraduate School, who provided a fascinating review of his long and distinguished career. Dr George Rose then presented the awards for the best paper overall, best non-government paper, best overseas paper and most entertaining paper which went to Prof Dave Davis, Noel Corrigan, Fred Cameron, and Sam Dudin respectively. Thanks were also given to Trish Follows and Muriel Wilson for ensuring that everything ran smoothly as usual, and to David Faddy for his unstinting efforts at organising ISMOR every year since its founder Ronnie Shephard, died.

### **More**

All the material presented at the conference is available on the ISMOR website ([www.ismor.com](http://www.ismor.com)). All Papers from previous ISMORs are also available here, via the link to Cranfield University Library. The calling notice for next years 29 ISMOR will appear there at the turn of the year. Make a note in your diary for next years event – same time, same place, same quality debate, though hopefully even more new faces!