

6 THE EVENING'S PRESENTATION

DRONES, SMART MUNITIONS, AND CYBERSPACE: THE 21ST CENTURY DEFENCE OF UKRAINE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR AUSTRALIA

Major General (Retd) Fergus (Gus) McLachlan AO

Major General (Retd) Fergus McLachlan retired from the Australian Army in 2018. His senior appointments in the Army included responsibility for Modernisation and Strategic Planning, during which time he created the first Army cyber capability, introduced reconnaissance drones and commenced the creation of a deployable digital command and control system. His last appointment in the Army was as Commander of Land Forces Command. Land Forces Command comprised 36,000 women and men in roles as diverse as helicopter crews, tank and artillery units through to logistics and satellite communications. He saw active service in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Since leaving the Army he has undertaken executive and advisory roles in Defence Industry, Private Equity, Cyber Security and Information Systems companies. He was appointed Adjunct Professor at Monash University where he advises on the application of research in Defence and National Security, and he chairs the Advisory Board for Cyber and Data Security Research at Charles Sturt University. He is a Director of the not-for-profit Aerospace and Space think-tank, The Williams Foundation. He has an undergraduate degree from UNSW, a Master's degree from the University of Canberra, and is a graduate of the Harvard Advanced Management Program and the Cranlana Centre for Ethical Leadership. He was made an Officer in the Order of Australia for his service modernising the Army and was appointed an Officer of the US Legion of Merit for his service in Afghanistan.

On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine in a major escalation of a war that began in 2014. The invasion has caused immense suffering in Ukraine with over 10m people displaced and significant damage to civil infrastructure, as well as food shortages in Africa and the Middle East and energy shortages across Europe. Many commentators expected that Russian forces would quickly overwhelm Ukrainian defences and cause regime change in Kyiv. However, Ukrainian national unity and a courageous and competent military defence have halted and recently reversed Russian gains.

Major General Gus McLachlan described the origins of the war in Ukraine as they form part of a challenge to the 'Rules-based Global Order' that has provided relative global stability for 80 years. He described the impact of modern Information Warfare — a battle in cyberspace and social media - on the maintenance of Ukrainian national resolve and western support. He described the impact on the war of advanced guided weapons such as the Javelin Missile and the HIMARS long-range rocket system and the impact of drones — robotic and autonomous air, sea and land systems — on modern warfare. He described the impact of modern war on Australia's defence planning in light of developing tensions in the South China Sea and around Taiwan.

There followed a *conversation* between the speaker and Colonel (Rtd) Andrew Condon, Industry Professor, Veterans and Their Families, Australian Catholic University. A question and answer session followed.

7 VOTE OF THANKS

The vote of thanks was given by Emeritus Professor Christina Slade, Chair, Program Committee.

8 CLOSE

The President, Dr Susan Pond AM FRSN closed the meeting at 7.58pm.