

29th International Symposium on Military Operational Research (ISMOR)

29 ISMOR – Analysis for an Affordable Future

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In bank holiday week at the end of August nearly 80 analysts from 10 countries gathered in the south of England for the 29th International Symposium on Military Operational Research (29 ISMOR). 23 papers and 4 workshops explored the themes of affordability, support to current operations and systems for an uncertain future. The four day symposium provided an innovative and exciting programme which participants found enjoyable and rewarding.



The 29th International Symposium on Military Operational Research (29 ISMOR) marked the start of a new era, with the previous Chair David Faddy handing over to Peter Starkey. David had run the show since 1995 when he succeeded the event's founder Professor Ronnie Shephard. ISMOR is the premier international conference on military O.R. (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.

This year's programme was exciting, busy and innovative without losing the charm of this wonderful, different kind of a conference. As always, the plenary papers and evening activities ensured that all the delegates had the opportunity to meet and speak with each other, even (let it be admitted) to the extent of sharing the odd drink in the bar.

Innovation and Tradition

This year there were a number of innovations at ISMOR, together with plenty of tradition. As is traditional all the papers were delivered in plenary, but with the innovation of two invited keynote papers delivered to set the scene. First up was Major General Paul Jaques (the British Army's Director General Logistics Support and Equipment). He delivered an insightful view of the user's perspective on the benefits provided by decision support analyses, as well as some thoughts on how not to do it. This set the scene for the event. Simon Jewell (MD Niteworks, a unique partnership of industry and government) provided a tour d'horizon of the front end of defence procurement in the UK.

A further innovation was a full day of workshops, including parallel sessions and poster presentations. These started with a session on the new NATO Code of Best Practice for Judgment-Based OA, published earlier this year. Phil Jones of Dstl facilitated a session that got the analytic juices flowing, challenging syndicates to list all the entities relevant to the question provided, and within 30 minutes identify as many different types of study addressing the question as they could think of.



Dave Sloggett facilitated a very enjoyable and instructive session on piracy, bringing the analytical puzzles and problems to life with many anecdotes, some from his own experience. Meanwhile, John Nelson from American Systems was exploring methods for assessing non-lethal weapons as part of a NATO scientific study. This session was highly engaging, with a great deal of sharing of ideas amongst the analysts in the room.



The Beginning

The first session of the symposium majored on affordability, a topic for which there seems to be no common currency in terms of definition (a common theme throughout the week was that resorting to dictionary definitions of terms usually proved less than enlightening).

Papers from the UK, Sweden, and Canada demonstrated the international concern with tightening defence budgets, seemingly constant major reviews of defence spending, and the need to identify how we can 'do less with less'.

This was followed by the theme of support to and analysis of operations. Papers from Australia,

NATO, the US and the UK showed a variety of approaches to identifying, learning and benefiting from lessons from current operations.

Tuesday ended with an informal evening presentation from Chuck Hawkins, describing his personal take on the how China is using economic and military leverage to integrate North Korea's Hamyong province. A really fascinating and under reported topic, which kept his post-prandial audience enthralled (well, most of us anyway).

The Middle

Of course, ISMOR is not all fun, and on Wednesday afternoon delegates who were not viewing the posters or attending one of the workshops had the option of either proceeding to the Golf Course, where they enjoyed a thorough soaking, or proceeding to the Portsmouth Historic Royal Dockyards, where they did not. All were gathered safely back for dinner, where we were entertained once again by Dave Sloggett, with tales of his experiences in Gold Command at the recent Olympics.

Thursday's session focussed on systems and capability for an uncertain future. A wide range of innovative techniques and approaches were discussed, from the difficulties of defining that uncertain future, through the means of assessing options at the concept stage to the evaluation and enhancement of deployed capability.

Memorial Address

Following a splendid banquet (duck, since you ask), The Ronnie Shephard Memorial address was delivered by Major General (ret'd) Mungo Melvin, a distinguished strategist and military historian recently retired from the British Army. Mungo delivered a stirring address on the lack of real strategic thinking in the British establishment in recent years, and the role analysts might play in reinvigorating that skill.

The End

To close proceedings, Peter Starkey presented the traditional awards. The honour of Best Paper went to Yvan Gauthier of DRDC in Canada, for his paper on the applications of risk analysis to the Canadian forces' domestic operations. Jeffrey Appleget from the Naval Postgraduate School in the USA was commended for his entertaining and enlightening paper describing best practices for irregular warfare data quality control (not half as dry as it sounds). Craig Clark of Decision Analysis Services in the UK received the award for the best new presenter for his paper on getting affordable solutions, or how much to spend and when to spend it.

A special award was then given to David Faddy to recognise his immense contribution to the enduring success of ISMOR over the last eighteen or so years; and another to Gene Visco in recognition of his continuing efforts as the liaison between ISMOR and MORS in the USA. As is traditional, thanks were also given to Trish Follows and Muriel Wilson for ensuring that everything ran smoothly as usual. Trish has been handling administrative matters for ISMOR since it started, and is the only person to have attended all 29!

Nearly all the material presented at the conference is available on the ISMOR website (www.ismor.com). Most papers from previous ISMORs are also available here, via the link to Cranfield University Library.

The Future

Next year is a major anniversary for ISMOR – 30 years of providing a forum for Operational Analysts from around the global to debate matters of moment, of the past the present and the future, and to share a beer or two in

convivial surroundings. The calling notice for next year's 30 ISMOR will appear at the turn of the year. Make a note on your calendar for next year's event – and watch out for more innovation to spice up the tradition.

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