

## FPA Remembrance Day Briefing: Does the UK do enough to honour its soldiers?

at Thu Nov 5 14:01:03 2009



In the week before Remembrance Sunday the FPA welcomed the **Royal British Legion, Help for Heroes** and **Combat Stress** to brief journalists about their efforts to honour British servicemen and veterans.

The Director General of The Royal British Legion **Chris Simpkins** discussed the charity's "Honour the Covenant" campaign which arose from the Legion's concern that "the government wasn't honouring (its armed forces) on behalf of the nation". Working with the MoD, Mr Simpkins said how pleased he was that ministers had modified some policy areas and that as an apolitical organisation, the Legion would provide "external scrutiny" to track the government's response to these changes.

Mr. Simpkins explained the charity's benefits and money advice service, which in 18 months has secured financial compensation for 5,300 personnel and their families.

Combat Stress's Director of Fundraising **Robert Marsh** voiced his concern about how the charity would deal with servicemen returning from the Afghanistan conflict.

He explained that on average there was a 14-year delay between servicemen leaving the armed forces and approaching Combat Stress for help with mental health problems.

Of the 170,000 servicemen currently fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, 9,000 could be expected to come on to the charity's books. Currently treating 4,000 veterans already, Robert Marsh was concerned that these additional numbers would "completely swamp the modest resources we have".

He had grave concerns that the introduction of the Armed Compensation Scheme, and its lack of provision for Article 21 funding under the old War Pension scheme meant that their funds from Government would soon "dwindle to nothing". Combat Stress was actively looking for new sources of money to treat the "hidden wounds" of war.

**Bryn Parry**, Co-Founder and CEO of Help for Heroes then spoke about the "purely emotional" reasons for launching the charity in 2007. In two years they had raised a staggering £30 million. He believed that the charity had unlocked a suppressed desire among the public to honour their soldiers, but they hadn't known how. Help for Heroes, he said, now provided that very channel.

The three speakers agreed that Britain was becoming increasingly aware of the need to honour its servicemen. Chris Simpkins felt that regardless of the legality of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, people had made an "intelligent distinction between the experiences of servicemen...and the political decisions...that put them in harm's way." He was confident that all mainstream political parties were committed to the cause, but stressed that the acid test would be how policies would actually be implemented.

-- Radhika Dandeniya

[[Click To Download Audio File](#)]

---

[www.foreign-press.org.uk](http://www.foreign-press.org.uk)