

Fresh thinking on defence and security

Innovative new think tank launches 10 October 2011

For immediate release: Today sees the launch of Open Briefing, a new independent think tank that brings together some of Britain's most innovative thinkers on security and international relations.

Open Briefing is the world's first civil society intelligence agency; an accessible platform for insight and analysis on key defence, security and foreign policy issues. They provide open source intelligence assessments and independent security briefings, so that a better informed civil society can properly engage with peace and security debates and influence positive policy developments in these areas.

Open Briefing is the brainchild of their Executive Director, Chris Abbott. Abbott is an author and consultant on national and international security issues, whose previous work has been praised by a wide range of public figures including Desmond Tutu, Brain Eno and Anita Roddick.

Speaking at the launch, Abbott explained the rationale behind Open Briefing:

"Policymakers rely on access to timely and accurate information upon which to base their decisions. In the spheres of defence and security, this information is largely secret and held back from the public domain. This leaves the process open to political manipulation and creates a public unable to engage properly with these issues or hold policymakers to account. Open Briefing exists to interject in this dynamic."

Open Briefing has institutional partners in London, Brussels and Washington and has attracted the support of a group of senior researchers, activists and journalists, who constitute the organisation's advisory board. They include the journalist and broadcaster Isabel Hilton; the founders of Iraq Body Count, John Sloboda and Hamit Dardagan; and the internationally renowned security expert Professor Paul Rogers. Speaking at the launch, Professor Rogers explained why he was involved in the organisation:

"Open Briefing is an excellent project with great possibilities for empowering the peace movement and wider civil society. It is typical of Chris Abbott that he should develop it. Moreover, he is one of those rare people who could take it forward and realise its considerable potential."

Abbott added:

"Open Briefing is a think tank that is a little bit different. We apply an adapted intelligence cycle to drive our activities. We emphasis the evaluation of sources and focus on those sources not being covered by the mainstream media. We recognise the fundamental role human psychology plays in defence, security and foreign affairs. And most importantly, we promote a fact-based worldview, guided by rigorous research. We do all this in a way that is accessible to everyone from policymakers to concerned citizens."



open briefing
the civil society intelligence agency

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Open Briefing is organised around seven regional desks and four issue desks, which focus on resource security and climate change, political violence and dissent, nuclear issues, and UK national security. Open Briefing also provides various think tank services in addition to these intelligence desks. These include policy-orientated publications, special projects on important emerging issues, and dossiers of user-generated information on unfolding events.

More information is available from their website at www.openbriefing.org.

Notes to editors

1. To arrange an interview, please email Chris Abbott at **chris.abbott@openbriefing.org** or call **07979 428 312** or **020 7193 9805**. Please note, Chris is based near Penzance in West Cornwall; it may be possible to arrange an interview with a member of the advisory board in London if necessary.
2. More information is available from **www.openbriefing.org**. A media pack containing further information and high-resolution photographs and logos is available on request.
3. **Chris Abbott** is an Honorary Visiting Research Fellow in the School of Social and International Studies at the University of Bradford and Honorary Sustainable Security Consultant to Oxford Research Group (ORG). Abbott is also a freelance writer and consultant on national and international security issues, and the author of two popular books on security and politics. See **www.chrisabbott.info** for more information.
4. The full **advisory board** is: Hamit Dardagan, co-founder, Iraq Body Count; Ian Davis, founding director, NATO Watch; Isabel Hilton, founder and editor, China Dialogue; James Kemp, project manager, Oxfam GB; Nick Mabey, chief executive and founder director, E3G; Paul Rogers, Professor of Peace Studies, University of Bradford; and John Sloboda, co-director, Every Casualty programme, Oxford Research Group.
5. Open Briefing's **institutional partners** are Oxford Research Group (London), International Security Information Service, Europe (Brussels) and Foreign Policy in Focus (Washington).
6. The first Open Briefing publication, **As the Dust Settles**, was published two weeks after the attacks in Oslo and Utøya. It seeks to explain the processes that led to the collective failure in media reporting after the attacks and proposes a series of questions that journalists and experts might ask themselves in the aftermath of suspected terrorist attacks in future.
7. Open Briefing is currently running two special projects. **The psychology of security** project draws on the lessons of psychology, anthropology and political science in order to better understand failures in defence, security and foreign affairs policy-making and develop strategies to avoid such failures in future. The **achieving sustainable security** project is concerned with identifying and exploring the integrated security trends that will likely lead to widespread future instability and developing preventative responses to those threats.