



General who led shadowy army psy-ops unit is new Economist defence editor

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Economist

The [UK legacy media](#) are having a normal one again. The *Economist* magazine just announced a currently serving British Army general would become its new defence editor upon leaving the military. Turner led 77 Brigade, the army's propaganda unit, from 2020 to 2022.

Current defence editor Shashank Joshi announced Turner as his replacement on 18 June:

I'm delighted that Alex Turner will succeed me as defence editor of [@TheEconomist](#) later this year. Alex, who is currently an army officer, is highly experienced, an accomplished military historian and a talented writer. He will be a fantastic journalist.

<https://t.co/kqgT3E39uz>

Shashank Joshi (@shashj) [June 18, 2026](#)

The magazine [said](#) in a statement:

The Economist has today announced the appointment of Major General Alex Turner as its next defence editor. He joins The Economist from the British Army, where he has served for more than 25 years, spanning service in the infantry to senior leadership roles at the UK Ministry of Defence. He holds a degree in War Studies from King's College, London.

Yes, it's the KCL War Studies weirdos again!

Turner served in the Irish Guards. The Guards regiments (Coldstream, Grenadier, Welsh, Scots and Irish) are the monarch's own Household Division soldiers. Yes, the lads in the big bearskin hats and red jackets.

Naturally, for a Guards officer, Turner went to Eton. The college even [celebrated his service](#) in Afghanistan. But there is more!

Economist - the 77 Brigade propaganda unit

Turner [led](#) 77 Brigade, the army's information activities (pronounced: propaganda) unit, for two years.

77 Brigade was [founded in 2015](#) to:

draw together a host of existing and developing capabilities essential to meet the challenges of modern conflict. It recognises that the actions of others in a modern battlefield can be affected by non-military means that are not necessarily violent.

The 2014 British Army Journal gives a detailed description of the 77th, which was called the Security Assistance Group at the time, "the unit which will be the central point for levers of soft power or persistent engagement".

He isn't the only one. Tory MP Tobias Ellwood is (or has been) [a senior member](#). Former soldier and posh-boy TV explorer Levison Wood also [joined the unit](#).

The unit was found to have worked closely with [the Israeli military](#) in 2024 - after Turner's tenure. However, a 2024 Freedom of Information request by Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) [found](#)

that members of the British Army's 77 Brigade were deployed to various UK-based locations during the pandemic, apparently to track online discourse within the UK, raising concerns about mission creep and the encroachment of military surveillance into civilian life.

AOAV [said](#) that the unit, which was established:

with a mandate to combat international online propaganda operations, appears to have evolved into monitoring British citizens.

The pandemic was during Turner's [reported command](#) of 77 from 2020 to 2022:

From 2020 to 2022 he commanded 77th Brigade, the Army's information activities formation, before assuming the role of Director Army Futures.

Middle East Eye (MEE) [reported](#) in 2019 that one part-time 77 Brigade member was also a senior Middle East executive for Twitter (now X):

Gordon MacMillan, who joined the social media company's UK office six years ago, has for several years also served with the 77th Brigade, a unit formed in 2015 to develop "non-lethal" ways of waging war.

They get everywhere, this lot, don't they?

Here is then-defence chief Nick Carter in 2018 talking about aspects of 77 Brigade's work:

Can this background be squared with a career in journalism? A career which is meant to challenge power and inform the public? That is anybody's guess. Certainly one can be ex-military and a passable reporter (insert [side-eye at his exasperated editor](#)). But a former general who commanded a shadowy project that may have spied on the British public?

It is a change, at least, from the usual second career of senior military men: [advocating for defence spending on TV](#) while the arms firm/firms you are getting paid by chummy legacy media producers. We wish the general well in his new career.

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By [Joe Glenton](#)

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CATEGORY

1. News

POST TAG

1. army
2. defence
3. economist
4. editor
5. general
6. led
7. new
8. news
9. psyops

- 10. shadowy
- 11. unit
- 12. who

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- 1. News

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