

## **Honored veterans, General, ladies and gentlemen.**

It's a great privilege to be at Vemork to mark the seventieth anniversary of Operation Gunnerside. Both Lieutenant Colonel Matt Skuse, the Embassy's Defence Attaché, and I are honoured by the invitation and grateful to be able to participate. In my case, I'm substituting for Jane Owen, the British Ambassador, who is flying to Harstad because Philip Hammond, the United Kingdom's Secretary of State for Defence is visiting Norway later today.

General Sunder referred to the 41 engineers and aircrew who lost their lives in Operation Freshman. Most of those men are buried in the cemeteries at Stavanger and Sola. And last November I attended the services of remembrance - at both cemeteries - to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the Freshman mission. The services were all the more moving because of the presence of several of the relatives and descendents of the 41. One lady had even travelled all the way from Australia, just for it. So marking the success of the Gunnerside mission today, reminds me that the ultimate sacrifice made by those 41, was not in vain.

The UK Special Operations Executive later evaluated Operation Gunnerside as the most successful act of sabotage in all of World War II. The bravery and courage of those involved in the Operation – and as General Sunde mentioned the sheer physical ability to press on regardless - were clearly reasons for its success. At a political level, another reason for the success was the strong wartime relationship between Norway and the United Kingdom. The Operation provides at least three indications of the strength of this relationship.

The first was effective procedures. Good strategic intelligence was needed to identify Heavy Water as a vulnerable link in the Nazi push for the atomic bomb. Good tactical intelligence was also needed in order for a small team to deliver so effectively. Much of this information came from Norway; and was fed into the

Norwegian community in wartime Britain. It speaks volumes for the then relationship that this information was collated and analysed so efficiently. And this happened very quickly – a speed which is impressive even by today's standards!

The second indication of the relationship's strength might be described as the empathy that existed between Norway and the UK. The initial decision - for the first two attempts to stop heavy water production - being by commando actions and not by bombing were, in the greater part, driven by a desire to avoid civilian loss of life in Norway. Britain, even with its back to the wall, listened to Norwegian concerns, and respected them.

And the third indication was a trust in tactical ability. At a time when Britain trusted so few other nations - that the Linge Company was picked for the task shows that Britain trusted Norwegian troops. An early and entirely correct judgment on the capability of Norwegian Special Forces.

And while the strength and depth of the Norway UK relationship during the war was unique, the relationship still flourishes. At a defence level, something that we witness later today when our Defence Secretary visits Norway. It's a tangible indication that the cooperation and support seen 70 years ago during Gunnerside, continues. And the Defence Secretary's visit is also good for me personally, as it's given me the opportunity to be here today to mark and celebrate the extraordinary actions of those involved in Operation Gunnerside and all those involved in stopping Nazi production of heavy water at Vemork. Thank you.