

THE RT. HON. LORD ROBERTSON OF PORT ELLEN KT, GCMG, honFRSE, PC



Lord (George Islay MacNeill) Robertson is Senior Counselor at the Washington DC based Cohen Group (USA). He was NATO Secretary General from 1999-2003 and UK Defence Secretary from 1997-1999. He was Member of Parliament for Hamilton and then Hamilton South from 1978-1999.

He was born in Port Ellen, Isle of Islay, Scotland and educated at Dunoon Grammar School and the University of Dundee (MA Hons in Economics in 1968).

From 1969-1978 he was Scottish Organiser with the GMB trade union and senior negotiator in the Scotch Whisky Industry. From 1979-1993 he held senior parliamentary Opposition roles including 11 years on Foreign Affairs and was Chief Spokesman on European Affairs (he was named Parliamentarian of the Year in 1992). In 1993 he was elected to the Shadow Cabinet and served as Principal Opposition Spokesman on Scotland (the Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland).

He was appointed the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Defence in 1997. In October 1999 he took up appointment as the 10th Secretary General of NATO and Chairman of the North Atlantic Council and was elevated to the House of Lords.

During his time at the Ministry of Defence he oversaw the 1988 Strategic Defence Review which radically reconfigured Britain's military. His time also coincided with the conflict over Kosovo and its liberation.

In NATO he invoked Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty – the first time in the Alliance's history and chaired the first ever NATO Russia Council. With Javier Solana of the EU, he delivered the Ohrid Agreement which ended the 2001 conflict in what is now North Macedonia. He chaired the NATO Summit in Prague in 2002 which enlarged the Alliance with seven new countries, three of them formerly part of the Soviet Union.

Lord Robertson was appointed to Her Majesty's Privy Council in 1997. In 2004 he was personally appointed by the Queen as one of the sixteen Knights of the Thistle (KT) and awarded the GCMG (Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St Michael and St George). He was Chancellor of that Order 2011-2021. He was awarded the US Presidential Medal of Freedom, America's top civilian honour, in 2003, and has been awarded the highest national honours from many countries. He was elected an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2003 and has fourteen Honorary Doctorates. He is Honorary Professor of Politics at the University of Stirling and Visiting Professor at Kings College, London. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Defence Studies.

He is Chairman of Western Ferries (Clyde) Ltd., and Vice Chairman of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. He was Special Adviser to BP from 2006-2021, Deputy Chairman of the Board and Chairman of the Audit Committee of TNK-BP (BP's £50 bn market cap Joint Venture in Russia) from 2006-2013. He was Chairman of BP Russian Investments Ltd from 2017-2020. He has also served on the Boards of Cable and Wireless plc, where he was Executive Deputy Chairman 2004-2007, the Smiths Group plc, Monaco Telecom SA and the Weir Group plc.

He is an Elder Brother of Trinity House, Chairman of global road safety charity the FIA Foundation and a Trustee of the British Forces Foundation. He is on the Councils of the International Institute for Strategic Studies and the Centre for European Reform as well as the International Advisory Board of the Atlantic Council of the US. He serves on the Advisory Board of the UN Road Safety Trust Fund. He served as Joint President of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 2001-2011 and now serves as a Senior Adviser. He Chaired the Ditchley Foundation from 2009-2017. He chairs the Ohrid (Friends of North Macedonia) Group. He served as Honorary Regimental Colonel of the London Scottish (Volunteers) from 2000 to 2016.

He is married to Sandra, has three grown-up children, five grandchildren and lives in Dunblane, Scotland. He plays golf and takes photographs (he has published two books of photographs, including "Islay and Jura: Photographs by George Robertson"). He has earned a Licentiate Distinction of the Royal Photographic Society.
