



BRIEFING PAPER

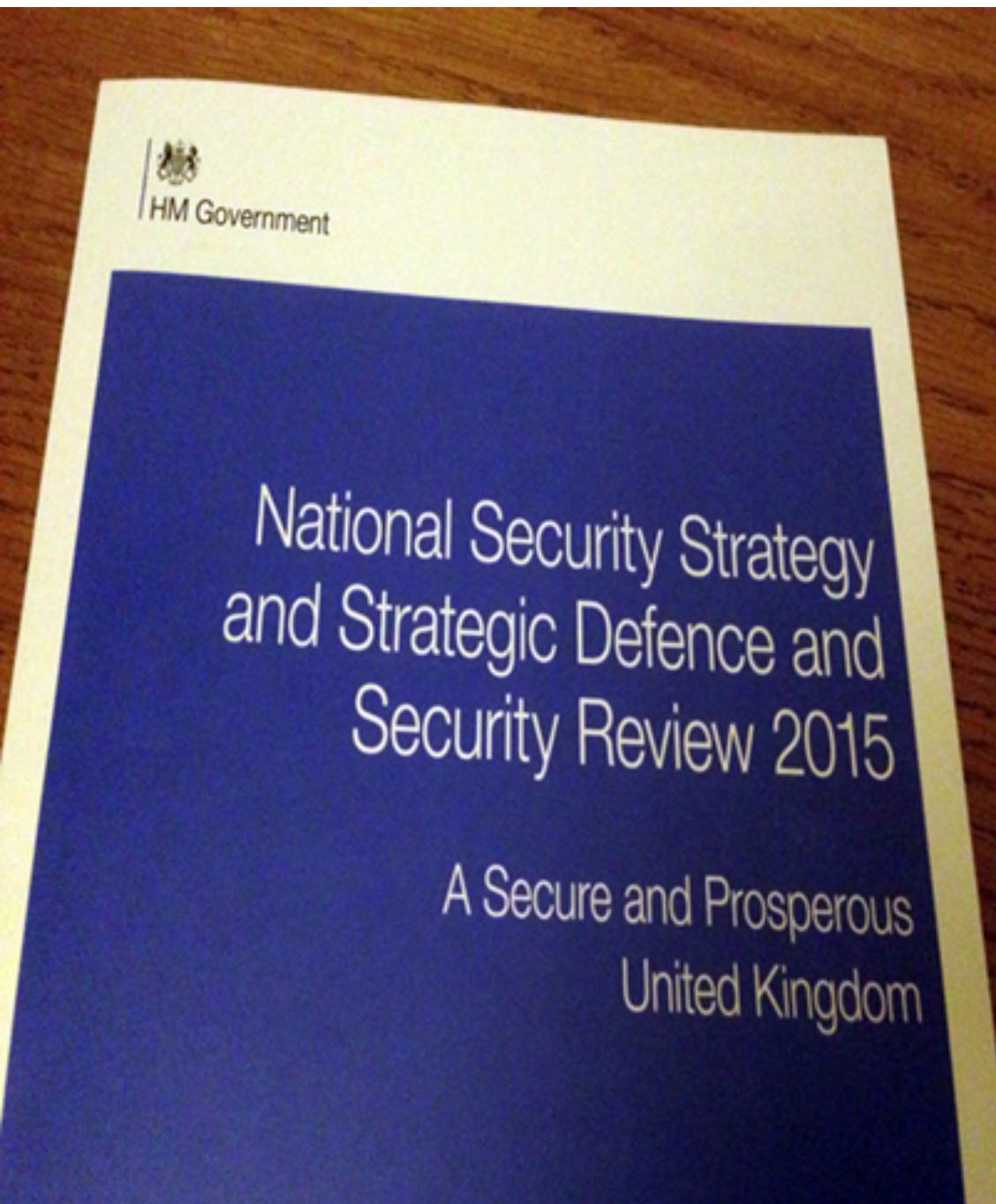
Number 7462, 22 January 2016

The 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review

By Louisa Brooke-Holland,
Claire Mills

Inside:

1. Key points at a glance
2. The military tasks
3. The Defence Planning Assumptions
4. The National Security Risk Assessment 2015
5. People and equipment
6. The nuclear deterrent
7. Assisting civil authorities
8. Defence engagement
9. Defence industry and skills
10. The MOD and the National Security Council
11. Reaction



Contents

Summary	4
1. Key points at a glance	7
2. The military tasks	9
3. The Defence Planning Assumptions	10
4. The National Security Risk Assessment 2015	11
5. People and equipment	13
5.1 Joint Force 2025	13
5.2 The Royal Navy	14
5.3 Army	16
5.4 Royal Air Force	17
5.5 Ballistic Missile Defence	18
5.6 Joint Force Command	18
5.7 Offensive cyber capabilities	19
5.8 Personnel	19
5.9 Defence estate	21
5.10 Defence budget	21
5.11 Analysis of equipment decisions	22
6. The nuclear deterrent	27
7. Assisting civil authorities	30
8. Defence engagement	31
9. Defence industry and skills	34
10. The MOD and the National Security Council	36
11. Reaction	37

Summary

The Government published the National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015 on 23 November 2015. It sets out the Government's approach to national security.

This briefing paper focuses on the armed forces and how the forces will be configured to support the overarching national security strategy. In other words, how will the armed forces be configured, manned and equipped to respond to the threats and priorities identified. An accompanying Library Briefing Paper takes a broader look at the national security strategy: [The 2015 UK National Security Strategy](#) (CBP-7431).

The Prime Minister states in the foreword that:

We cannot choose between conventional defences against state-based threats and the need to counter-threats that do not recognise national borders. Today we face both and we must respond to both.

A new force structure

The SDSR outlines a new force structure, building on the Future Force 2020 model unveiled in its 2010 predecessor. Renamed Joint Force 2025 it will provide, if required, an expeditionary force of 50,000 personnel. When not deployed at this scale the armed forces will be expected to undertake a large number of smaller operations simultaneously. The SDSR says Joint Force 2025 will be underpinned by significant policy changes for the recruitment and retention of personnel; a stronger international focus on defence and a defence innovation initiative.

The Navy will be able to provide a maritime task group will be based around the new aircraft carrier entering service during this Parliament. The Navy will however only receive 8 rather than 13 of the new Type 26 frigates and will instead develop a new, lighter frigate.

The Army will develop two new Strike Brigades equipped with new Ajax armoured vehicles. These Strike Brigades, together with two armoured infantry brigades, will provide the core of a war fighting division optimised for high intensity combat operations.

The RAF will fly an expanded combat aircraft fleet supported by transport and surveillance aircraft.

The armed forces' role in projecting soft power globally is interwoven throughout the document. Defence engagement becomes a core task of the MOD and new defence staffs in key locations will be established.

More money for equipment

An additional £12bn is to be added to the equipment budget over the next ten years. The MOD had only two months prior to the SDSR published its annual defence equipment plan out for the next ten years to 2025. This new money brings the ten year equipment plan to £178bn.

Special Forces gain from this increase, with a doubling in money spent on equipment supporting them. This includes investment in Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance aircraft.

However the SDSR also announced a £6bn increase in the overall cost of the Successor programme, the programme to replace the submarines that form part of the UK's strategic nuclear deterrent (Trident). This means the Successor programme is expected to cost £31bn over its 20 year acquisition timeframe, with a contingency of £10bn.

Major equipment decisions

This SDSR, unlike its 2010 predecessor, focused on what the armed forces would gain rather than what would be cut. The most significant announcements include the procurement of nine new Maritime Patrol Aircraft, extending the life of the Vanguard (Trident) submarines, an accelerated buy of the new Lightning II aircraft enabling more aircraft to be embarked on the new carriers when they enter service, and a reduction in the expected number of Type 26 frigates alongside a commitment to an overall fleet size of 19 frigates and destroyers. A new Shipbuilding Strategy will be published in 2016 which will provide some clarity on the build plans for the Navy's new frigates and patrol vessels.

The Chief of the Defence Staff described the choices made in what capabilities to invest in as "a careful balance of counter terrorist capability, hard power investment: and a clear recalibration to better meet some of the more diverse challenges of the age."¹

Small increase in personnel for the Navy and RAF

After a period of redundancies and reductions in size, there will be no further cuts to the Regular armed forces. The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force will receive a small increase of 700 personnel between them. The MOD will continue working on making the armed forces an attractive choice for both recruits and to retain those already serving. The plan to increase Reserve forces will continue.

The MOD's civilian headcount will be cut by almost 30% by the end of this Parliament.

Reaction

The overall reaction to the SDSR was broadly positive and the increased spending on equipment welcomed. The new MPA, additional combat squadrons and new Strike Brigades drew particular attention, as did the changes made to the Successor programme, including the cost increase and programme management. However concerns about manpower, particularly for the Royal Navy, were widespread. Defence enthusiasts also noted the lack of detailed information about how and when specific capabilities will be implemented.

Contrary to 2010, on this occasion the Government opted to publish the NSS and SDSR in one document. The 2010 SDSR was widely perceived to be a Treasury-led, cost-cutting review that resulted in major personnel and equipment cuts.

¹ Chief of the Defence Staff, RUSI Christmas speech, 16 December 2015

A note about this briefing paper

An at-a-glance section outlines the most significant announcements in the NSS/SDSR that affect the armed forces. The following three sections then briefly identify the military tasks given to the Ministry of Defence, the MOD's planning assumptions and the risks identified in the national security risk assessment that directly involve the MOD.

The People and Equipment section briefly lists the main equipment/manpower decisions in the document, ending with a more detailed analysis of some of the most prominent programmes.

The strategic nuclear deterrent (Trident) Successor Programme is afforded a section of its own.

The remaining sections run through military support to civil authorities, defence engagement (relations with allies) and Government relations with the defence industry. Parliamentary and media reaction to the NSS/SDSR is provided at the end.

Associated Library briefings

- [The UK National Security Council](#), CBP7456
- [The 2015 UK National Security Strategy](#), CBP7431
- [A brief guide to previous British defence reviews](#), CBP7313
- [The 2015 SDSR: a primer](#), CBP7235

Government documents

- [The National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015](#), Cm 9161
- [Ministry of Defence SDSR 2015 factsheets](#)

1. Key points at a glance

Box 1: National Security Risk Assessment 2015

- International Military Conflict remains a tier one risk, described as UK involved in a conflict between state and/or non-state actors
- Instability overseas moved into tier one from tier two in 2010
- Tier two risks: attacks and pressure on allies, including conventional and/or hybrid attacks; a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapon attack; weapons proliferation and hostile foreign action
- A military attack on the UK, Overseas Territories or bases is considered a tier three risk

Box 2: Joint Force 2025

- A new Joint Force 2025 capable of deploying, by 2025, an expeditionary force of around 50,000 personnel including a land division, a maritime task group, and air group and a Special Forces task group.
- Capable of undertaking a large number of smaller operations simultaneously
- Commitment to a 'full-spectrum approach'

Box 3: People and equipment

- Commitment to no further reductions in the regular army below 82,000 and a slight increase of 700 personnel for the Navy and Air Force
- Additional £12bn in spending on defence equipment, totalling £178bn over the next ten years
- Two new Army Strike Brigades of 5,000 personnel equipped with the new Ajax armoured vehicles
- Accelerated procurement of new Lightning II combat aircraft and two new Typhoon squadrons; extension of life for current fleet of Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) aircraft; doubling of fleet of armed Remotely Piloted Aircraft
- Eight rather than 13 Type 26 frigates and a new, lighter frigate to be designed with the potential to increase the overall frigate fleet size in the longer-term
- Maintain strategic nuclear deterrent but extend life of current Vanguard submarines with new Successor now expected to enter service in the 2030s; Estimate of the overall cost of Successor submarine programme increased from £25bn to £31bn with additional £10bn contingency
- Doubling investment in Special Forces equipment, providing an additional £2bn
- New shipbuilding strategy to be published in 2016
- New terms and conditions for personnel including the phasing out commitment bonuses
- New comprehensive families strategy to be launched
- Civilian workforce to be cut by almost 30,000, to 41,000, by end of this Parliament
- 30% reduction in the built estate and a Footprint Strategy to be published in 2016
- Develop proposals to ensure the Armed Forces are not subject to "unjustified legal claims" when operating overseas

Box 4: Allies and partners

- Defence engagement will become a funded, core MOD task for the first time
- NATO is the bedrock of national defence and decisions on equipment reflect NATO's priorities
- Establish British Defence Staffs in the Middle East, Asia Pacific and Africa, locations to be confirmed
- Withdrawal from Germany by 2020 remains on track
- New Gulf Strategy to be published with a permanent and more substantial UK military presence

Box 5: Defence industry and skills

- UK one of the largest customers of defence and security products and services in the world
- Defence and security industries employ over 215,000 people and support a further 150,000
- Refresh the defence industrial policy, principles set out in 2012 White Paper remain applicable
- The new Single Source Regulations Office, set up by the Defence Reform Act 2014, will oversee the Successor submarine programme and the Type 26 frigate programme
- New shipbuilding strategy to be published in 2016 and the acquisition of the Type 26 frigate will form a central part of that strategy
- Make it easier for SMEs and non-traditional suppliers to bid for contracts
- Support for exports to become a core task for the MOD, overseen by a new senior post
- £50 million to increase the number of cadet units in schools with a target of 500 by 2020
- Train at least 50,000 apprentices in defence between now and 2020.

2. The military tasks

The 2015 SDSR sets the armed forces eight missions, described in the 2010 documents as military tasks. The eight missions are:

- 1 Defence and contribute to the security and resilience of the UK and Overseas Territories
- 2 Provide the nuclear deterrent
- 3 Contribute to improved understanding of the world through strategic intelligence and the global defence network
- 4 Reinforce international security and the collective capacity of our allies, partners and multilateral institutions
- 5 Support humanitarian assistance and disaster response, and conduct rescue missions
- 6 Conduct strike operations
- 7 Conduct operations to restore peace and stability
- 8 Conduct major combat operations if required, including under NATO Article 5.

For comparison, the 2010 SDSR identified seven military tasks:

- defending the UK and its Overseas Territories
- providing strategic intelligence
- providing nuclear deterrence
- supporting civil emergency organisations in times of crisis
- defending our interests by projecting power strategically and through expeditionary interventions
- providing a defence contribution to UK influence
- providing security for stabilisation.

3. The Defence Planning Assumptions

The 2015 SDSR changes the 2010 Defence Planning Assumptions. These are guidelines that help the MOD plan its force structure to deliver the military tasks given to it. So they outline the size of operations the military expects it might be required to undertake, the type of operation, where they may occur (distance from permanent bases) and who they may be conducted with. The 2010 SDSR envisaged an expeditionary force of 30,000 personnel. The 2015 SDSR now envisages the UK being able to mount an expeditionary force of 50,000 personnel by 2025 if required.

Box 6: 2015 SDSR assumptions

By 2025 able to mount an expeditionary force of 50,000 drawn from:

- a maritime task group centred on the carrier strike capability provided by a Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carrier (10-25 ships - 4,000 to 10,000 personnel)
- a land division with three brigades including a new Strike Force (30,000 to 40,000 personnel)
- an air group of combat, transport and surveillance aircraft (4-9 combat aircraft squadrons, 6-20 surveillance platforms, 5-15 transport aircraft, 4,000 to 10,000 personnel)
- a Special Forces task group
- Joint Forces (2,000 to 6,000 personnel)²

When not deployed on this scale, the armed forces will be able to undertake a large number of smaller operations simultaneously, which might include:

- A medium-scale operation, often drawing mostly on just one Service e.g. the current counter-ISIL mission in Iraq
- Multiple additional operations including counter-piracy and counter-piracy, or the enduring naval presence in the Gulf
- A wide range of defence engagement activities

For comparison: the 2010 SDSR outlined a smaller expeditionary force of 30,000, consisting of three brigades. Or alternatively an enduring stabilisation operation at brigade level (6,500 personnel), one non-enduring complex intervention (2,000 personnel) and a non-enduring simple intervention (1,000 personnel) OR three non-enduring operations if not already engaged in an enduring operation.³

² Detailed numbers are taken from the accompanying booklet [SDSR 2015: Defence Key Facts](#)

³ A non-enduring operation is defined as lasting less than six months while an enduring operation lasts for more than six months and require rotation of units over a period of time. A stabilisation mission is a longer-term mainly land-based operation to stabilise and resolve conflict situations, normally in partnership with others.

4. The National Security Risk Assessment 2015

The National Security Risk Assessment 2015 places the domestic and overseas risks the Government assesses the UK to face into three tiers. The placement in the tiers is based on a judgement of the combination of both likelihood and impact rather than a simple ranking of importance.

Box 7 highlights those risks that directly relate to the armed forces, with the caveat that all the risks could involve situations in which the armed forces might be utilised.

Box 7: National Security Risk Assessment 2015

- International Military Conflict remains a tier one risk, described as UK involved in a conflict between state and/or non-state actors
- Instability overseas moved into tier one from tier two in 2010, explicitly mentioning instability in the UK's extended neighbourhood - the Middle East/North Africa and Ukraine.
- Tier two risks: attacks and pressure on allies, including conventional and/or hybrid attacks; a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapon attack; weapons proliferation and hostile foreign action
- A military attack on the UK, Overseas Territories or bases is considered a tier three risk

A direct military threat to the UK is unlikely over the next five years but there is a "greater possibility" of international military crises drawing in the UK, including through the UK's treaty obligations.

The NSS/SDSR notes the growing use of asymmetric and hybrid tactics by states may blur the lines between civil disorder and military conflict, making it harder for the UK to respond effectively. It gives as examples economic coercion, disinformation, proxies, terrorism and criminal activity.

The resurgence of state-based threats is discussed in chapter 3 and 4 of the document and there is a shift in language from the last SDSR. In 2010 the Government believed "no state currently has both the intent and the capability to threaten the independence or integrity of the UK."⁴ The 2015 document instead states that "there is currently no immediate direct military threat to the UK mainland." However the document then notes the increasingly frequency with which Russian aircraft and maritime activity near UK airspace and territorial waters are testing the UK's responses. The document adds on Russia:

Though highly unlikely, we cannot rule out the possibility that it [Russia] may feel tempted to act aggressively against NATO Allies.

The Treaty Obligations mentioned above are discussed in Library Briefing Paper [France and Article 42\(7\) of the Treaty on the European Union](#), CBP-7390. The paper briefly examines the UK's obligations under Article 42(7), invoked for the first time since it was introduced by France in

⁴ 2010 SDSR para 3.2

response to the Paris attacks, and NATO's Article V, which provides that if a NATO member is a victim of an armed attack, each and every other member of the Alliance will consider this act of violence as an armed attack against all members and will take the actions it deems necessary.

Instability overseas has been promoted to Tier One from Tier Two in 2010. In the 2015 document it is defined as "major instability creating threats to the UK and our interests". Instability in the UK's extended neighbourhood is explicitly identified, namely to the south in the Middle East and northern Africa and to the east in Ukraine.

Library briefing paper [The 2015 UK National Security Strategy](#) discusses in greater detail the changes made to the Risk Assessment between 2010 and 2015.

5. People and equipment

Summary

The regular armed forces will see no further reductions and, for the Royal Navy and RAF, a small increase in personnel numbers. The MOD civilian headcount will however be cut by 30%. An increased equipment of £178bn over the next ten years signals greater investment in a wide-range of equipment across all the services including ending the gaps in maritime patrol aircraft and carrier strike created by the 2010 SDSR.⁵ The Army will develop two new Strike Brigades and there is a clear emphasis on rapidly-deployable forces. Future Force 2020, from the 2010 SDSR, becomes Joint Force 2025.

This chapter summarises the announcements and decisions made in the NSS/SDSR that directly affect the armed forces. The final part of this chapter takes a more detailed look at some of the major equipment procurement decisions for those interested.

5.1 Joint Force 2025

The 2010 SDSR laid out a new structure for the armed forces called Future Force 2020. This reconfigures the armed forces into three broad elements:

- The Deployed force – those engaged in operations
- The High Readiness force – units ready to respond to a crisis
- The Lower Readiness Force – forces returning from or preparing for operations⁶

The 2015 SDSR lays out a new Joint Force 2025, building on Future Force 2020. The capabilities included in this force are provided in the box below.

The Chief of the Defence Staff said Joint Force 2025 will “require both flexibility and agility to operate across domains and threat diversity.” Thus the potent 50,000 force designed to demonstrate the ability of the UK to deal with large scale conflict, but also be able to the armed forces more quickly to manage a greater variety of threats or crises at smaller scale.⁷

“The Joint Force 2025 we have designed is genuinely better equipped, more capable, more deployable and more sustainable than ever before.”

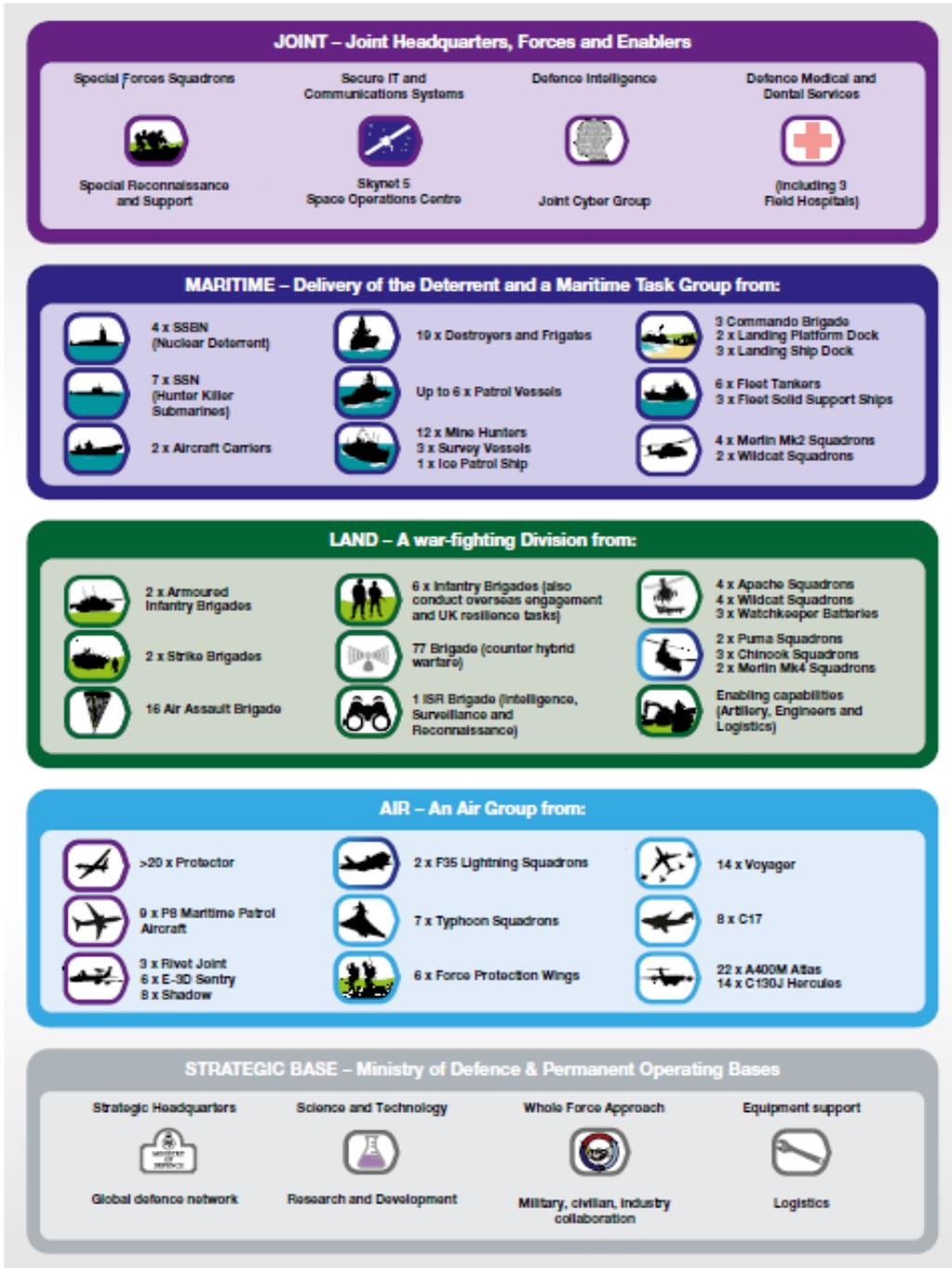
Defence Minister [Earl Howe](#)

⁵ The 2010 SDSR cancelled the Nimrod MRA4 maritime patrol aircraft programme leaving the UK without a dedicated MPA. Carrier strike is the capability provided by combat aircraft launched from an aircraft carrier.

⁶ See [Factsheet 5: Future Force 2020 – Summary of size, shape and structure](#)

⁷ Chief of the Defence Staff, RUSI Christmas speech, 16 December 2016

Box 8: Joint Force 2025



5.2 The Royal Navy

Additional Lightning II aircraft are to be bought in the early 2020s to provide carrier strike from the two new Queen Elizabeth aircraft carriers. Up to 24 aircraft may be embarked from the carriers, up from the 12 envisaged in the 2010 SDSR.

The SDSR recommit to the current fleet number of 19 frigates and destroyers into the 2030s. This currently consists of six Type 45 destroyers and 13 Type 23 frigates. The latter will progressively leave service from 2022 to 2036 and will start to be replaced from the mid-2020s with the new type 26 frigates.

However it also announces a significant change in the frigate programme. Until now the Government was expected to order 13 of the Type 26 frigates currently in the demonstration phase. This is to be reduced to eight, providing an anti-submarine capacity.⁸

At least five of a new class of lighter, general purpose frigates will be designed and built. The MOD said the Review concluded "the remainder of the Navy's future frigate requirement would be better met by a new class of lighter, flexible, general purpose frigates than by the five general purpose Type 26 ships previously planned."⁹ The SDSR also raises the possibility that more than five of this class could be built, allowing the overall fleet size to increase, and they may attract export orders that have not materialised for the Type 26s.

Two new Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs), in addition to three already under construction. The three under construction are to replace three of the four OPVs currently in service, meaning the Navy will have six rather than the current four OPVs.¹⁰

A new Shipbuilding Strategy to be published in 2016. This will confirm the arrangements for the build programme of the Type 26's and the new OPVs.

Three logistic ships will be bought to support the fleet, in addition to the four new Tide-class tankers already under construction that will enter service from 2016. The new logistics ships will enter service from mid-2020s.

An additional 400 personnel. Answering questions about the crewing of the new carriers, Earl Howe said these additional personnel, the retirement of HMS Ocean in 2018, and a rationalisation and reprioritisation of personnel across the naval service, "will ensure that sufficient people are trained and available to man and operate both carriers."¹¹

The SDSR itself did not mention HMS Ocean, although the accompanying factsheet confirms she will retire as planned in 2018. The Navy will retain two Landing Platform Dock ships, which are amphibious assault command ship able to deploy and recover Royal Marines by helicopter and boat. These are currently HMS Bulwark and HMS Albion.¹² The MOD has said the amphibious capability provided by HMS Ocean will be provided by a Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier, which will be enhanced to support an amphibious capability, together with existing amphibious ships. A carrier will be able to carry up to 900

⁸ PQ 17879, 10 December 2015

⁹ PQ 17879, 10 December 2015

¹⁰ PQ HL3909, 25 November 2015

¹¹ HL Deb 23 November 2015 c510

¹² PQ 17860, 4 December 2015

Embarked Military Forces, compared to 690 on HMS Ocean, and a flexible mix of helicopters.¹³

The last of the seven Astute-class submarines is expected to enter service in 2024.¹⁴

The SDSR did not mention the mine-counter measure vessels, except to give a fleet number of 12 in the Joint Force 2025 diagram. The fleet current numbers 15, a mix of Hunt and Sandown class vessels, and they are expected to begin to leave service in the 2020s.¹⁵ However the SDSR 2015 factsheet provides more information, specifically that three of the oldest Sandown class ships will be decommissioned by 2025. It also mentions the current collaboration with the French on developing a Maritime Mine Counter Measure Demonstrator.

5.3 Army

The Army's current structure will be reorganised to provide two rather than one brigade that is ready to fight all of the time. These two brigades will be an armoured infantry brigade and one of the two new Strike Brigades that will be created. The Strike Brigades will be equipped with the new Ajax armoured vehicles¹⁶ and new mechanised infantry vehicle. Together with 16 Air Assault Brigade's very high readiness force, the brigades will "improve our ability to respond to all likely threats." With appropriate warning, the Army will be capable of deploying a warfighting division of three brigades.

The Chief of the Defence Staff said this represents a refocusing for the Army on divisional level of command and manoeuvre and a 'clean break' from an army optimised for enduring campaigns at the Brigade level.¹⁷

The number of regular soldiers will remain at 82,000, fulfilling a Conservative party manifesto pledge.

The life of Challenger 2 main battle tanks will be extended.¹⁸

Warrior armoured fighting vehicles, Apache attack helicopters and Chinook support helicopters will be upgraded – these plans are already in progress.¹⁹

¹³ PQ 19049, 15 December 2015

¹⁴ PQ HL4049, 8 December 2015

¹⁵ [HL Deb 7 December 2010 cWA24](#)

¹⁶ The Government ordered 589 new armoured vehicles for the Army in a £3.5bn contract placed in September 2014. Known originally as Scout, the family of vehicles have since been renamed Ajax. There will be six variants: reconnaissance (Ajax), reconnaissance support (Ares), command and control (Athena), equipment repair (Apollo), equipment recovery (Atlas) and engineering reconnaissance (Argus).

¹⁷ Chief of the Defence Staff, [RUSI Christmas Speech](#), 16 December 2015

¹⁸ The life extension programme is expected to extend their life to 2035. It is currently in the concept phase.

¹⁹ The Warrior Capability Sustainment Programme is underway and will extend the out of service date from 2025 to 2040. The Apache Capability Sustainment Programme is exploring options to replace the Army's current AgustaWestland/Boeing Apache AH-64D (known as Apache AH Mk1 in the UK) attack helicopters which are needing replacement due to obsolescence.

Two innovative brigades comprising a mix of Regulars and specialist capabilities from the Reserves will be created to contribute to strategic communications, tackle hybrid warfare and battlefield intelligence.

Some infantry battalions will be reconfigured to provide an increased contribution to countering terrorism and building stability overseas. They will conduct defence engagement and capacity building, providing training, assistance, advice and mentoring to partners.

5.4 Royal Air Force

The fast jet fleet will be expanded with an additional Lightning II squadron and two additional Typhoon squadrons.

The Government has explicitly committed to buying 138 Lightning II aircraft over the life of the programme. 42 aircraft will be in service by 2023 with 24 available to be embarked on the new aircraft carriers.

Two Typhoon squadrons will be added to the current five front-line squadrons and Typhoon will remain in service until 2040 rather than the pre-SDSR expectation of 2030. Typhoon is being enhanced under the Typhoon Future Capability Programme to provide an air-to-surface capability, including a new Active Electronically Scanned Array radar, as it was originally brought into service as an air-defence aircraft.

Tornado will retire in 2019 as planned.

Nine new Boeing P8 Maritime Patrol Aircraft will be based in Scotland. This restores a capability the UK cut in the 2010 SDSR. The Prime Minister said he expects three to be in service by the end of the Parliament. The MOD separately said it expects to have an initial operating capability by 2020.²⁰

Continued investment in complex weapons like Storm Shadow and Brimstone missiles.

More than 20 new armed remotely piloted aircraft, known as Protector, will be bought to replace the ten Reaper aircraft currently in service. The current Reaper fleet cannot fly in UK airspace and the Protector aircraft are expected to be UK certified MQ9 Reapers.²¹

Extension of Sentinel's life into the next decade. The Sentinel R1 long-range airborne surveillance aircraft was to have been withdrawn from service after the end of operations in Afghanistan according to the 2010 SDSR. However the MOD decided in 2013 to extend its life until 2018.²² The 2015 NSS/SDSR extends it further into the 2020s, with the SDSR factsheet giving a specific date of 2021.

Rivet Joint will remain in service until 2035. The first of the three new Rivet Joint surveillance aircraft (also known as Airseeker) entered service in 2014. Shadow, which provides ISTAR and supports Special Forces, will continue in service until at least 2030, having originally been

²⁰ DEP2015-0948, 3 December 2015

²¹ This programme was previously known as Scavenger. The Main Gate is expected to be in March 2016. The Chief of the Defence Staff specifically mentioned UK certified MQ9 Reaper aircraft in his RUSI Christmas Speech 2015.

²² HC Deb 6 February 2013 c235W

expected to be withdrawn when combat operations in Afghanistan ended. Jane's Defence Weekly reports that two Shadow aircraft are to be bought to make a total fleet of 8 aircraft.

The number of crews for Sentry, Shadow and Rivet Joint will be increased, according to the SDSR 2015 factsheets.

An air transport fleet of 14 Voyager aircraft (air-to-air refuelling), 22 A400M Atlas heavy-lift aircraft and eight C17 Globemaster long-range, strategic, heavy-lift aircraft. The C-130J Hercules will be upgraded and its life extended until 2030. The Government had previously said the Hercules fleet will be drawn-down when there are sufficient A400M Atlas in service.

A Voyager aircraft will be adapted to provide, when required, transport for the Royal Family and senior Ministers. This will deliver "better value for money than the current use of charter aircraft."

The UK will continue to work with France to develop the Unmanned Combat Air System programme and to collaborate on complex weapons. The MOD is jointly funding with France a two year study a future unmanned combat aircraft that is due to end in 2016.

5.5 Ballistic Missile Defence

The Government will "investigate further the potential of the Type 45 Destroyers to operate in a Ballistic Missile Defence role." This brief mention of BMD reflects the trials made by the UK Missile Defence Centre since 2013 to explore the potential for the Type 45 Destroyers to deploy a Theatre Ballistic Missile Defence (TMBD) capability.

Part of this trial has been testing the Sampson multi-function radar²³, part of the Sea Viper air defence system, in detecting and tracking ballistic missile targets. In September 2013 the Type 45 HMS Daring successfully detected and tracked two medium-range ballistic missile targets at a US testing range in the Pacific.

In October 2015 an at-sea demonstration of a ballistic missile interception was also conducted by NATO warships as part of Exercise Joint Warrior. The demonstration was the first of its kind in European waters and was intended to test and evaluate interoperability between participating warships.

The Government will also commit "significant funds" to the NATO Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) network and support research and multinational engagement through the UK's missile defence centre.

5.6 Joint Force Command

Joint Forces Command was established under the Coalition Government as a response to the recommendations by the Defence Reform Review. It reached full operating capability in 2013. Joint Force Command brings together 20,000 military and civilian personnel focused on joint

²³ The Sampson E/F-band multi-function radar can simultaneously detect and track hundreds of separate and varied targets at ranges of up to 400km.

capabilities. These include C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance), Special Forces and cyber capabilities.

The NSS/SDSR states the MOD will build on the success of the JFC. Specifically, it will lead the MOD's work to improve its understanding of our security environment, using new information technology and greater analytical power to exploit big data, social media and open source and classified material. Investment in cyber and space capabilities are also mentioned under JFC, as is strengthening the command and control systems to make them work more easily with NATO allies, especially the US and France, and across Government. Lastly it will facilitate greater access to experts in the UK to improve deployed logistical and medical capabilities.

5.7 Offensive cyber capabilities

The armed forces will be given advanced offensive cyber capabilities, drawing on the National Offensive Cyber Programme which is run in partnership between the MOD and GCHQ.

The SDSR explicitly states that cyber defence is part of NATO's core task of collective defence and could lead to an Article 5 response.

The SDSR factsheet provides slightly more detail, stating that a new Joint Cyber and Electromagnetic Activities Group will "optimise the direction and coordination of operations in the cyber and EM environment." A Defence Cyber Operations and Resilience Centre will be part of the group and "increase our understanding of the threats and reduce our vulnerabilities in the cyber domain."

5.8 Personnel

The size of the regular army will not be reduced below the current target of 82,000. The target of 35,000 Reserves is retained. The Royal Navy and the RAF will be increased by a total of 700 personnel in total. The Library publishes regular updates on personnel numbers. The most recent is: [Defence employment: social indicators page](#), 16 November 2015.

The SDSR 2015 Defence key facts booklet provides the following data for 2020:

Military full-time trained strength and civilians	1 October 2015	2020 target
Royal Navy/Royal Marines	29,710	30,450
Army	80,430	82,000
RAF	32,250	31,750
Total full time trained strength	141,390	144,200
Civilian	56,860	41,000
Total personnel	192,260	185,200

The MOD said in response to a Parliamentary Question that the new military personnel numbers provided for in the SDSR will begin to come into effect in 2016 and will be achieved by 2022 for the Royal Navy and 2018 for the Royal Air Force.²⁴

The number of civilians working for the MOD will be reduced by 30%, to 41,000, by 2020. The MOD has yet to expand on exactly how these reductions will be achieved. In the short-term this may involve restrictions on recruitment while in the longer term the MOD has said there are already a number of change programmes underway and individuals are already aware if they are affected.²⁵ The SDSR factsheet suggests previously agreed changes, including the withdrawal from Germany and outsourcing logistics will reduce the number by around 10%. It also suggests a redundancy programme is unlikely.

The MOD has committed to recruiting at least 10% Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic personnel and at least 15% women for the armed forces by 2020.

A final decision on women undertaking the full range of combat roles will be made in 2016.

The 'Whole Force' approach, encompassing regulars, reserves, MOD civilians and contractors, will continue to be developed. The MOD will make it easier for people to move between the different elements of the 'Whole Force' over their career.²⁶

The SDSR makes no explicit mention of the 'New Employment Model', work on which began in the previous Parliament, to update the current package of terms and conditions of personnel. Under the previous Parliament changes were made to Service Families Accommodation charging and a Forces Help to Buy Scheme was launched.

²⁴ PQ 17875, 3 December 2015

²⁵ PQ 17735, 30 November 2015

²⁶ The concept of the Whole Force was introduced in the 2011 Defence Reform Review by Lord Levene.

However it does discuss the terms and conditions of service and makes the following commitments:

- A new accommodation offer to help more Service personnel live in private accommodation and to meet their aspirations for home ownership will be made.
- Introduction of a new pay model, which will be simpler and better targeted. Commitment bonuses will be phased out and savings reinvested.
- A new offer for new joiners, which targets resources on the people needed the most.
- Launch of a comprehensive families strategy for the armed forces, doing more on spousal employment, healthcare and children's education, and improve access to financial services.

The SDSR factsheet also discusses a Flexible Engagements System to allow regular personnel to vary the nature of their service and enable flexible working.

The Ministry of Defence published a new [Pay Model](#) for the armed forces on 7 January 2016. It published an [Armed Forces Families' Strategy](#) on 14 January 2016.

5.9 Defence estate

A reduction of the built estate by 30%, releasing public sector land for 55,000 new homes to support wider prosperity objectives. The target date for achieving this goal is 2040. A Footprint Strategy examining the defence estate across the UK will be published in 2016. The MOD expects to generate £1 billion through the disposal of sites in the financial years 2016-17 to 2020-21.²⁷

5.10 Defence budget

The significant announcement to the defence budget in the SDSR was the addition of nearly £12 billion to the defence equipment plan for the next ten years. £178 billion will now be spent on defence equipment through to 2024/25 rather than the previously given figure of £166 bn.

The Ministry of Defence has published a ten year equipment plan on an annual basis since 2011. The current plan was published on 22 October 2015 and laid out a ten year budget for the equipment plan out to 2024/25 as £166 billion.²⁸

Philip Dunne, when asked what will be procured under the £178 billion plan, said:

In the SDSR we set out our plans for additional investment in Armed Forces defence equipment and support. This includes improving Special Forces' capabilities, procuring three new Fleet

²⁷ PQ 19189 and 19187, 15 December 2015

²⁸ Defence Equipment plan 2015. The contingency provision is to allow for cost increases in the core programme; the unallocated headroom is for projects not yet in the committed core programme

Solid Support ships and investing in a fleet of nine Boeing P-8 Maritime Patrol Aircraft.²⁹

The accompanying SDSR factsheet gave slightly more detail, namely that the MOD will be drawing the £11bn it plans to invest in armed forces capabilities from: £9bn in savings (of which £7bn are efficiency savings alongside £2bn of re-prioritised spend) and £2.1bn from the Joint Security Fund.

It is unclear whether the MOD will publish a revised equipment plan before the next plan is due to be published, which is towards the end of 2016.

The Defence Key Facts booklet published by the Ministry of Defence flagged up the £34.4 bn spent on defence in 2014/15, making it the 5th largest defence budget in the world, according to figures it sourced to the IISS Military Balance. That £34.4 bn is broken down as:

- 25% military personnel
- 6.7% civilian personnel
- 14.2% military equipment
- 19% equipment support costs
- 13.6% infrastructure costs £9.3% property and other equipment costs
- 5.3% inventory
- 2.9% R&D
- 4% other

A separate Library briefing provides a summary of the [Spending Review and Autumn Statement 2015](#) presented to Parliament on 25 November 2015. Library Briefing Paper [Defence Expenditure](#) provides some figures on defence spending, as of 16 November 2015.

5.11 Analysis of equipment decisions

This section builds on the summary of equipment decisions made mentioned above. It provides, for those interested, more detailed analysis of the decisions relating to the MPA, combat aircraft and the Navy's surface fleet.

Maritime patrol aircraft

Nine new Boeing Poseidon P-8 maritime patrol aircraft are to be ordered. Their role is to provide maritime surveillance, anti-submarine and anti-surface ship warfare and will carry torpedoes as well as range of sensors to track foreign submarines. They will help protect the UK's strategic nuclear deterrent (Trident) and the new aircraft carriers. They will also provide maritime search and rescue and surveillance capabilities over land. They will be based at RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland.

The UK has been without a maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) since 2010. The previous MPA, the Nimrod MR2, was withdrawn from service in March 2010. The intention was to replace it with the Nimrod MRA4 but

²⁹ PQ 17722, 30 November 2015

this programme was cancelled by the 2010 SDSR. The programme was estimated to have already cost nearly £4 billion by then and the MOD estimated its cancellation would save over £2 billion over the next ten years. Ministers have said it was a difficult decision to make but that pressure on the defence budget, the project's repeated delays and cost overruns, and the future support costs, contributed to the decision not to bring it into service. The decision attracted much criticism and it was the subject of a Defence Committee enquiry in 2011. Bob Stewart MP has described it as "the worst gap in our current military capability."³⁰

The Coalition Government (2010-2015) ruled out acquiring a new maritime patrol aircraft before 2015. However Defence Ministers in the Coalition and the current Government made it clear maritime patrol is a capability was being examined ahead of the next SDSR.

The decision to procure a new maritime patrol aircraft is therefore not entirely surprising. What is likely to attract attention is the decision to procure the Boeing Poseidon P8 aircraft, considered one of the more expensive options available in what is a crowded maritime patrol aircraft market.³¹ To retain relevant skills, service personnel have been embedded with allied nations maritime patrol capabilities, under the Seedcorn Initiative. This includes flying the P-8 in the United States. The P-8 is in service with the US Navy, replacing the P-3C Orion. Australia is also buying the P-8.³²

The SDSR states the investment in the P8 will enable the UK and US to provide protection to each other's aircraft carriers and further improve interoperability in anti-submarine warfare, as well as providing efficiencies in basing and support. When questioned by MPs about the decision to buy the P8, the Prime Minister said "sometimes it is right to choose what is available rather than to start all over again from scratch."³³

The cost and method of procuring the P-8s (e.g. on a leasing basis or via a Foreign Military Sales agreement) has not been disclosed.

The Government has said it expects the P-8 will have a significant impact on the UK economy because the P-8 is based on the Boeing 737, the supply chain for which already includes UK industry, and the UK also manufactures subsystems of the P-8. UK industry may bid for training and support contracts and RAF Lossiemouth will benefit from hosting the fleet. The Government said that "Boeing estimates that in total, its entire P-8 programme could generate over US\$1 billion to the UK supply chain and economy."³⁴

They will be brought into service without significant modification to avoid delaying their introduction into service. The MOD says there are

³⁰ HC Deb 12 March 2015 c475

³¹ "On patrol: shore-based fixed-wing MPAs", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 3 June 2015; "Taking wing: maritime patrol aviation comes back onto the UK's radar", *Jane's Navy International*, 20 May 2015

³² "[Navy Issues Boeing \\$1.49B P-8A Contract Includes Australia's First 4 Planes, 9 for U.S.](#)", *US Navy Institute News*, 28 August 2015

³³ HC Deb 23 November 2015 c1068

³⁴ PQ 17838, 3 December 2015

no current plans to integrate Storm Shadow (a long-range air-launched missile) and Stingray (an air launched torpedo carried by the Nimrod aircraft) onto the aircraft although the MOD has said future capability enhancements once the aircraft is in service with the RAF may include UK weapons.³⁵

Combat aircraft

The SDSR reaffirms the plan set out in the 2010 document to operate two fast-jet combat aircraft from 2020: Typhoon and the F35 Lightning II. Tornado aircraft are due to retire in 2019 and the SDSR said they will continue to operate until they are replaced by Typhoon.

Typhoon

The RAF's combat aircraft Typhoon were brought into service air defence aircraft and provide air defence for the UK and the Falkland Islands. They are based at RAF Coningsby and RAF Lossiemouth and provide the Quick Reaction Alert force, responding to any unidentified aircraft approaching UK airspace. Typhoon have also been deployed to the NATO Baltic Air Policing Mission in 2014, 2015 and will do so again in 2016.

Typhoon first entered service in 2005 and is being procured in three tranches. Tranche 1 aircraft are due to retire in 2019. The Typhoon fleet was then expected to number 107, made up of tranche 2 and 3 aircraft (which are being progressively delivered to 2018), which would continue in service until 2030.³⁶

The SDSR announced two additional Typhoon squadrons. The RAF currently have five front-line Typhoon squadrons, meaning the RAF will eventually operate seven frontline squadrons consisting of around 12 aircraft per squadron. The 24 aircraft for the new squadrons are likely to be drawn from the pool of aircraft that would have been expected to retire.³⁷

Enhancements to Typhoon are already underway to provide it with a ground attack capability under the Typhoon Future Capability Programme. The SDSR committed to a new Active Electronically Scanned Array radar for Typhoon.

Lightning II

The SDSR stated the planned total buy of the new F35 Lightning II aircraft: 138.

The original planning assumption when the programme began was for 150 aircraft. By 2007 this had dropped to 138 aircraft. The Coalition Government committed to 48 aircraft in July 2012 but refused to be drawn on the total fleet size until the 2015 SDSR.

³⁵ PQ 19430, 15 December 2015

³⁶ Major projects report 2015 and the equipment plan 2015 to 2025, *The National Audit Office*, 22 October 2015, HC 488-II 2015-16

³⁷ "SDSR 2015: Typhoon service life extended and numbers increased", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 23 November 2015

The Chancellor of the Exchequer revealed the Government will buy 42 aircraft by 2023, with 24 available for frontline squadrons operating from the new carriers. Previously it was expected there would be 8 Lightning II aircraft available for deployment on the new carriers by 2023.³⁸

The F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter is the new combat aircraft for the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy. It is a fifth generation multi-role fighter with stealth capabilities. It has an initial operating capability from December 2018 from land and from sea, providing carrier strike from the Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier, from 2020.³⁹

The SDSR announced an additional Lightning II squadron. The first squadron to stand up is 617 squadron which will move from the US to the UK in 2018 and declare an initial operating capability (land). A second squadron, 809 Naval Air Squadron, has already been announced but has not yet been formed. It is not entirely clear from the SDSR whether the additional squadron it mentions is 809 squadron or an additional squadron on top of these two.

The UK and US will be able to fly aircraft from each other's ships and work together on operating Lightning II from the land and at sea. The US intends to base two squadrons of F-35s at RAF Lakenheath. The US Air Force will operate the F-35A version of the aircraft, unlike the UK which will fly the F-35B.

The Times suggests the first tranche of 24 jets will cost £2.4bn and the final cost for all 138 aircraft to be around £12 billion.⁴⁰ The Government has given no such estimate.

Tornado

Prior to the SDSR there had been speculation that the MOD might extend the life of its remaining Tornado aircraft, due to retire in 2019. In 2015 the MOD opted not to disband, as planned, one of the three remaining front-line squadrons and extended its life until 2017.⁴¹ The SDSR makes no mention of Tornado beyond that it will continue in service until they are replaced by Typhoon. However the SDSR factsheet announces that is extending once again the life of the third squadron to 2018 and then retire the remaining two squadrons as planned in 2019.

Frigates and patrol vessels

The 2010 SDSR made a number of cuts to the Royal Navy's fleet. At the same time, the Navy is in the process of a major recapitalisation project involving two new aircraft carriers; six new destroyers; new type 26 frigates; three new offshore patrol vessels; new Astute hunter-killer submarines and the expected replacement of the strategic nuclear deterrent (Trident).

³⁸ "Osborne pays out for 138 stealth jets", *The Times*, 22 November 2015

³⁹ "SDSR 2015: UK commits to full F-35B procurement, fast tracks initial deliveries", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 23 November 2015

⁴⁰ "Osborne pays out for 138 stealth jets", *The Times*, 22 November 2015

⁴¹ [Defence Secretary announces Tornado extension](#), MOD News, 4 August 2015

This NSS/SDSR significantly changes the expectations for the Type 26 frigate. Instead of 13 new frigates, to replace the current Type 23's on a one-for-one basis, only eight frigates will be bought. These will be configured for an anti-submarine role. Instead, a new class of general purpose frigates, lighter and more flexible, will be designed and built. At least five will be procured to maintain the commitment to a fleet of 19 frigates and destroyers (there are six of the new Type 45 destroyers) and the SDSR raises the possibility that this fleet size could be increased in the 2030s. The new class will also offer "increased export potential." The Prime Minister also suggested the general purpose class of frigates might be more exportable than the "ever more expensive and ever more complex ships" the UK has built and therefore might be more appealing to countries like Australia and New Zealand.⁴²

Two new Offshore Patrol Vessels will be built, on top of the three ordered in 2014. The latter three were ordered to fill the gap between the end of peak work the Aircraft Carrier programme, the Type 45 destroyers and the start of work on the Type 26 programme, under the Terms of Business Agreement with BAE Systems. These will replace three of the four OPVs currently in service, resulting in a fleet of up to six patrol vessels. The three under construction will enter service in 2018 and 2019.⁴³

The build and delivery dates for the Type 26s and the two new Offshore Patrol Vessels has yet to be agreed. The MOD will publish a Shipbuilding Strategy in 2016 which may provide more clarity on the timings.⁴⁴ The SDSR factsheet suggests the Type 26 will begin to enter service in the mid-2020s.

The SDSR does not mention HMS Ocean and the MOD has confirmed it will retire in 2018 as planned. The SDSR does say that a Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier will be enhanced to support the amphibious capability of the Royal Marines. Analysis by Jane's Defence Weekly suggests it will be the second carrier, HMS Prince of Wales, which will be enhanced with the expectation that it could support littoral (coastal) manoeuvre operations from 2023.⁴⁵

⁴² HC Deb 23 November 2015 c1078

⁴³ PQ 17858, 3 December 2015

⁴⁴ PQ 17858, 3 December 2015

⁴⁵ "RN faces LPH gap as Ocean retirement date is confirmed", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 27 November 2015

6. The nuclear deterrent

The 2015 SDSR reiterates the position set out in 2010: the UK's commitment to a minimum nuclear deterrent, assigned to the defence of NATO, and delivered by a fleet of four SSBN operating a continuous at-sea deterrent. Submarines on patrol will deploy with eight operational Trident missiles and carry no more than 40 nuclear warheads. The UK's nuclear stockpile will also remain as previously set out: no more than 120 operationally available warheads and an overall stockpile of no more than 180 by the mid-2020s.

In line with previous defence reviews, the 2015 SDSR also maintained a position of ambiguity on the precise details of when, how and at what scale the UK may consider the use of its nuclear weapons capability, although it reiterated that the UK would only use nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances of self-defence. It also re-emphasised the declaratory policy set out in 2010, confirming that "the UK will not use, or threaten to use, nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon state party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons". This assurance would not apply, however, to any state in material breach of the NPT.

The Successor programme

A programme to replace the UK's strategic nuclear deterrent is currently underway. Although commonly referred to as "the renewal or replacement of Trident", the Successor programme is about the design, development and manufacture of a new class of four ballistic missile submarines to replace the current Vanguard class SSBN. Replacement of the Trident II D5 missile itself is not part of the Successor programme. The UK is currently participating in the US service-life extension programme for the Trident II D5 missile, which will be carried aboard the new SSBN.

The Successor programme is currently in its assessment phase. A decision on taking the programme forward, referred to as Main Gate, was earmarked, in the 2010 SDSR, for early 2016.

The 2015 SDSR has made a number of changes to the Successor programme; whilst also providing an update on costs and the expected in-service date of the new SSBN.

Management of the programme

As one of the largest government investment programmes going forward, new organisational and managerial arrangements for the defence nuclear enterprise and specifically for delivering the Successor programme will be established.

- A new team within the MOD, headed by a commercial specialist, will be established to oversee all aspects of the MOD's nuclear enterprise. Details are expected to be announced in 2016.

- A new delivery body, which will remain subject to oversight by the MOD, will be established to deliver the procurement and in-service support of nuclear submarines.
- New commercial arrangements between Government and industry will be put in place for the Successor programme (see below).

Main Gate

Instead of a traditional single 'Main Gate' (i.e. the point at which the main investment decision is made on a programme), the programme will now be subject to stages of investment.

The next phase of the programme, which the 2015 SDSR refers to as "risk reduction and demonstration" will begin in 2016.

Updated costs and in-service dates

The SDSR also updated the overall expected costs and schedule of the programme.

A further £600 million will be invested in the current Assessment phase which will now total £3.9 billion and include the purchase of several long lead items for the fourth submarine.

The expected cost for the manufacture of four SSBN, including inflation over the 20-year lifetime of the programme, will now be £31 billion. A contingency of £10 billion will also be set aside. In its Initial Gate Report in May 2011 the MOD had said that the cost of procuring the submarines was expected to be £25 billion at 2011 outturn prices.

The first Successor submarine will now also enter service in the early 2030s, as opposed to 2028, as set out in the 2010 SDSR. That review had already extended the service-life of the Vanguard class by four years, if an original 30-year lifespan is assumed.⁴⁶ This latest announcement will now require the further extension of the service-life of the Vanguard class by approximately 3-4 years. This will result in an overall lifespan of the Vanguard class of approximately 37-38 years.

The MOD has stated that "the revised cost and schedule reflect the greater understanding we now have about the detailed design of the submarines and their manufacture".

Parliamentary approval

SDSR 15 states that the MOD "will hold a debate in Parliament on the principle of Continuous At Sea Deterrence and our plans for Successor". It does not, however, provide a timeframe for doing so in the absence of the traditional 'Main Gate' on this programme going forward.

Nor does the SDSR specifically commit to a vote, although the Prime Minister stated in Parliament during a subsequent debate on the SDSR that "we will be moving ahead with the four submarines and at the appropriate moment we will hold a vote in this House".⁴⁷

⁴⁶ HMS Vanguard entered service in December 1994 and was expected to be withdrawn from service in 2024.

⁴⁷ HC Deb 23 November 2015, c1057

Annual reports on the progress of the programme will continue to be provided to Parliament.

Further discussion of the programme to replace the UK's nuclear deterrent and the decisions set out in the 2015 SDSR, is available in Commons Library Briefing, CBP7353, [Replacing the UK's Nuclear Deterrent](#).

7. Assisting civil authorities

10,000 military personnel will be available on standby to assist the civil authorities in the event of a terrorist incident. The MOD later said that some units are placed on standby on a rolling basis, while others have specific geographic responsibilities which they meet from their available manpower. Military personnel will be drawn from all three Services, with the majority being supplied from the Army.⁴⁸

The SDSR also says that to improve the response of the armed forces further, and to further assist civil authorities, military planners will be placed in key government departments to give the military a wider and more formal role in supporting national resilience contingency planning.

The Government will regularly review the National Risk Register and associated contingency plans to identify areas where the Armed Forces can contribute more.

Under the Royal Prerogative the missions and tasks appointed to the armed forces are determined by the Defence Council. Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) has long been identified, under the Royal Prerogative, as one of the standing home tasks of the armed forces. It is mentioned in the first of the eight military missions set for the armed forces in the SDSR.

The deployment of the Armed Forces for domestic purposes is governed by a legal doctrine that has evolved over a number of decades, both as the result of legislation (Section 2 of the *Emergency Powers Act 1964*, and the *Civil Contingencies Act 2004*⁴⁹), provisions in common law and the establishment of Service regulations as set down in the *Manual of Service Law*. All MACA requests must be made to the Ministry of Defence by the relevant government department and all require ministerial approval, except in those circumstances where life is considered to be immediately at risk.

⁴⁸ PQ 17848, 4 December 2015

⁴⁹ This repealed the Emergency Powers Acts 1920 and 1964, with the exception of section 2.

8. Defence engagement

Defence engagement is listed in chapter 6 of the SDSR, under the broader heading of 'Project our Global Influence'.

While defence engagement is not new, it is to be a funded, core MOD task, for the first time. This means defence engagement will be prioritised alongside other core tasks.

Defence engagement is defined as MOD and armed forces non-combat activities with international partners which contribute to stability, security and prosperity.

Specific measures include:

- A new Defence Attaché and Loan Service Centre in the Defence Academy
- An armed forces defence engagement career stream, making better use of Reservists
- Establish British Defence Staffs in the Middle East, Asia Pacific and Africa in 2016
- Increase institution and capacity building with partners
- Increase the training offered to international partners

The location of the British Defence Staffs has yet to be finalised, the MOD said in early December.⁵⁰

Allies and partners

The UK must work with others, not because we cannot work alone, but because the threats and opportunities are global.

The NSS/SDSR runs through the regions of the world. This section highlights measures that involve the armed forces.

The SDSR singles out NATO countries, European partners, Australia, New Zealand and Japan, as alliances it will invest in.

NATO

NATO is described as the bedrock of national defence and "the heart of the UK's defence policy." It says the decisions taken in the NSS/SDSR are informed by NATO's political guidance. Specifically, the investment in Special Forces, cyber, Maritime Patrol Aircraft, ISR aircraft and ballistic missile defence "show our commitment to meeting NATO's highest priorities."

The SDSR cites the UK's commitment to lead the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force in 2017 and contribute to the force every year of this Parliament. It also cites the provision of Typhoons for the Baltic Air Policing Mission and the contribution to NATO exercises to reassure Allies against the threat from Russia.

The UK will join the German-US Trans-Atlantic Capability Enhancement and Training initiative in the Baltic states and Poland.

⁵⁰ PQ 17946, 4 December 2015

UK and US

The SDSR outlines the UK's contribution to the special relationship with the US: the UK's European and global reach and influence; the strategic location of our Overseas Territories; military interoperability and the UK's ability to undertake war-fighting independently or as a lead nation in a coalition.

Interoperability with the US will be strengthened through regular planning and training together. F-35 Lightning II aircraft will be able to fly from each other's ships and the US decision to base two squadrons of F-35As in the UK will enable the UK and US to work together on operating them from land and sea. The investment in the P8 Maritime Patrol Aircraft is also cited as an opportunity to provide protection to each other's aircraft carriers and improve interoperability in anti-submarine warfare.

UK and France

The UK and France have "built an exceptionally close defence and security relationship" through the 2010 Lancaster House Treaty. Further strengthening of that relationship will include:

- The Combined Joint Expeditionary Force, operational in 2016, providing a combined reaction force of up to 10,000 personnel.
- Work with the French Navy to ensure the two countries exploit the shared opportunities with the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers come into service.
- 16 Air Assault Brigade to continue to develop strong links with its French counterparts.
- Continued close working together of air forces.
- Working together on how the military can further contribute to domestic security in our respective countries.
- Expanding equipment collaboration, including through:
 - the development of a joint Future Unmanned Combat Air System programme
 - a Maritime Mine Counter Measure demonstrator
 - procurement and development of missiles
 - and maximising common supply chain efficiencies.

UK, European allies and the EU

The withdrawal of UK forces from Germany by 2020 remains on track.

The UK is leading collaboration of the Joint Expeditionary Force involving Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (this should not be confused with NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force or the UK/French Combined Joint Expeditionary Force).

Working with partners in the Northern Group (Poland, Sweden and Finland) to promote more effective defence cooperation in northern Europe.

The SDSR cites the UK command of the EU's CSDP Operation Atalanta (counter-piracy off the Horn of Africa), as well as Operation Sophia and Operation Althea as examples of successful Common Security and

Defence Policy Operations. The UK says it will continue to foster coordination and cooperation between the EU and other institutions, principle NATO, to build Euro-Atlantic security.

Rest of the world

Strong relationships with Australia, Canada and New Zealand are mentioned.

A new Gulf Strategy will outline the UK's future relationships with Gulf countries. The UK will build a permanent and more substantial UK military presence, including the new naval base in Bahrain, HMS Juffair, which is already under construction. A new British Defence Staff will be established in the Middle East.

The UK will retain its training areas in Kenya, supported by the British Army Training Unit Kenya.

The UK will double the number of military personnel it contributes to UN peacekeeping operations. A new cross-Whitehall joint UN peacekeeping policy unit will be established "to maximise our military and civilian impact."

9. Defence industry and skills

The defence and security industries and skills is discussed in chapter six of the NSS/SDSR is entitled 'Promote our Prosperity'.

The NSS/SDSR states that the defence and security industries:

- Employ over 215,000 people
- Support a further 150,000
- 6,500 apprentices
- A collective turnover of £30 billion including defence and security export orders worth £11.9 billion

The UK is one of the largest customers of defence and security products and services in the world.

The Government will "refresh" the defence industrial policy and take further action to help "drive the UK's defence and security industries to grow and compete successfully." The principles set out in the 2012 White Paper *National Security through Technology* remain applicable.

The Defence Reform Act 2014 changed the way the MOD undertakes single source, non-competitive procurement with the establishment of the Single Source Regulations Office as an independent regulator. The first major projects to be overseen by the SSRO will be the Successor submarine programme and the Type 26 frigate programme.

The SDSR restates the exceptions it makes to its broad policy of buying products/services off the shelf:

- Highly classified or sensitive technologies, or those governed by export control or treaty restrictions.
- Capabilities necessary to maintain interoperability with important allies, but which they cannot or will not provide to the standard required by our armed forces.
- Capabilities where there is strategic, military and economic benefit for the UK from long-term collaboration with other nations.

A new national shipbuilding strategy will be published in 2016. The acquisition of the Type 26 will form a central part of the strategy.

The MOD will adopt a more vigilant and systemic approach to ensuring the industry's supply chains are robust in certain sectors, such as those supporting the nuclear deterrent and high-grade cryptography.

Take steps to enable SMEs and non-traditional suppliers to bid for defence and security contracts more easily:

- Develop the Defence Group Partnerships to make it easier for international partners to access all that British industry has to offer, ensuring that we are the preferred international partner for defence collaboration and innovation.
- Simplify procurement processes
- Appoint a senior official in the MOD with responsibility to reducing the barriers faced by SMEs, increasing outreach and consultation.

Participate in future international collaborative programmes where we have the right technology, skills and industrial capabilities and where we can reduce costs and share technology to mutual benefit, strengthening defence partnerships.

Further measures to enhance support to the defence and security export sector include:

- Establishing a team in UKTI to support the negotiation and delivery of government-to-government deals by departments.
- Make support for exports a core task for the MOD, with responsibility for managing all strategic defence export campaigns, overseen by the Defence Secretary and a new senior post.
- Ensure that future export potential is factored into our own equipment procurement decisions from the outset.
- Priorities government resources on those campaigns where it can make the most difference and where industry is willing to invest its own resources.

Regarding skills, the Government will spend £50 million to increase the number of cadet units in schools, increasing the number to 500 by 2020.

Train at least 50,000 apprentices in defence between now and 2020. Create a new defence apprenticeship scheme with industry called Trailblazer. This will deliver a new systems engineering Masters apprenticeship scheme to attract new engineers into advanced systems engineering as well as up-skilling existing engineers.

10. The MOD and the National Security Council

The Secretary of State for Defence is a permanent member of the National Security Council. The SDSR announces plans for new policy-making and delivery Joint Units in 2016 to consolidate national security expertise across Government. The MOD will host one of these Joint Units – the Arms Control and Counter-Proliferation Centre. The units are:

- A **Euro-Atlantic Security Policy Unit**, hosted by the FCO, which will bring together diplomatic and defence expertise to develop and implement UK policy for NATO and for EU Common Security and Defence Policy; provide strategic direction to our Brussels delegations; and provide national representation to NATO and relevant EU committees.
- A **joint unit for International Counter-Terrorism Strategy**, hosted by the Home Office, consolidating existing expertise within the Home Office and FCO.
- An **Arms Control and Counter-Proliferation Centre**, hosted by the MOD, which will consolidate in a single location the expertise and policy-making currently in the MOD, FCO, and Department of Energy and Climate Change.
- An **Exports Controls Unit**, hosted by BIS, to provide coordinated cross-government operation of export controls.
- A **Gulf Strategy Unit**, hosted by the Cabinet Office, to coordinate UK engagement with the Gulf in order to deliver the NSC's long-term strategy and maximise benefits to the UK.
- A **UN Peacekeeping Unit**, hosted by the FCO, consolidating existing MOD and FCO expertise to formulate UK policy on UN peacekeeping missions.

A Library briefing paper is available on the [National Security Council](#) (CBP7456, 11 January 2016).

11. Reaction

The overall reaction to the SDSR was broadly positive. The additional spending on new equipment was welcomed with the new maritime patrol aircraft and more combat aircraft squadrons. The increase in the cost of the Successor programme also prompted interest, as did the Army's new rapid reaction force, and the increase in number of service personnel made available for civil emergencies. That the review was an improvement on its predecessor was widely agreed. However a common theme is concern about manpower: the cuts to the civilian workforce and the pressure on the Navy which gained only a few hundred sailors. The lack of detail in the SDSR about specific capabilities means that, as is to be expected, defence enthusiasts will be closely monitoring how and when the pledges made in the Review are implemented.

Parliament

Parliamentarians responded to the Prime Minister's statement to the House on 23 November 2015.

Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the Opposition, focused on the welfare of armed forces personnel both during and after service, asking about pay and pension arrangements. He raised Labour's own impending defence review and questioned the need for the strategic nuclear deterrent and continuous-at-sea patrols, why the Government had chosen the P8 Maritime Patrol Aircraft "with virtually no UK defence content when it is in service" and plans for the frigate fleet. Maria Eagle, then Shadow Defence Secretary, separately wrote an article for the Independent arguing the SDSR was merely an attempt by the Government to fix the mistakes made on defence since 2010.⁵¹

Angus Robertson, Westminster leader of the SNP, gave his party's support for the counter-terrorism measures and the two new strike brigades. He welcomed the new Maritime Patrol Aircraft and that they will be based in Scotland. He argued defence in Scotland has been "decimated" with the closure of two of three air bases and cuts to units and manpower. Trident was described as a "super-expensive vanity project" that does not deter terrorism, cyber-attack or conventional attacks.

Nigel Dodds, the deputy leader of the DUP, welcomed the 2% commitment and additional money for the security services, and picked out in particular the new maritime patrol aircraft.

Tim Farron, leader of the Liberal Democrats, issued a statement after the debate:

Only this government could create a 'rapid reaction force' and will take 10 years to react.

⁵¹ ["The Army shed 20,000 soldiers on David Cameron's watch - and the Defence Review shows he will continue to fail us on security"](#), *The Independent*, 24 November 2015

The Government's Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) has some good points, especially the new maritime patrol boats and extra frigates.

The world is more dangerous and uncertain since the last SDSR and that is why we need more flexible forces and greater coordination with allies in Europe. For all the Prime Minister's bluster, that piece of the jigsaw is sadly missing.⁵²

Dr Julian Lewis, the chair of the Defence Committee, which published its own report on the SDSR a few days previously, welcomed the "plugging of gaps such as naval aviation and maritime patrol aircraft" and the emphasis on flexible and versatile armed forces.

The Defence Committee held a one off oral evidence on the SDSR on the 24 November 2015 with academics and experts.⁵³

Media and think-tanks

The media were briefed in advance about the NSS/SDSR and therefore much of the front-page coverage about the document occurred on the day of the statement. The main focus of the press was the additional £12 billion in equipment spending, the new Strike Brigades and aircraft. The following day the media focused on the increase in costs on Trident and the extension to the life of the current Vanguard submarines, the 10,000 troops that could be deployed in the event of a Paris-style terrorist attack and additional resources for Special Forces.

Deborah Haynes in *The Times*, alluding to the cuts made in the 2010 SDSR, said the "94-page document spent a lot of effort trying to fix holes created by the 2010 overhaul."⁵⁴ Jonathan Beale made a similar point for the BBC, saying equipment axed in the last review "is being replaced with knobs on."⁵⁵

Con Coughlin, writing in *The Telegraph*, applauded the decisions to restoring "capability gaps that were created by the SDSR" but, like others, expressed concern about staffing levels, particularly for the Navy and Air Force. He concluded:

The Government deserves credit for repairing the glaring holes that had arisen in our national defences. At the very least it will send a clear signal to our enemies and allies alike that Britain is serious about protecting its interests and fulfilling its international obligations to make the world a safe place.⁵⁶

Lewis Page, the author of *'Donkeys and Dinosaurs: Waste and Blundering in the Military'*, wrote:

This SDSR shows that the Government, understandably, remains determined to crush the adversaries of today on the physical rather than digital battlefield. That is not as forward thinking as it

⁵² "Farron on Defence Review", *Liberal Democrats voice*, 23 November 2015

⁵³ Strategic Defence and Security Review – oral evidence, Defence Committee, 24 November 2015, HC 626 2015-16

⁵⁴ "Delay of five years for Trident submarines a 'huge' gamble for Britain", *The Times*, 23 November 2015

⁵⁵ "Defence review: 10,000 troops could tackle terror threats", *BBC News website*, 23 November 2015

⁵⁶ "David Cameron is repairing the holes in Britain's defences", *The Telegraph*, 23 November 2015

could be. But it represents a marked improvement. It is often said that Britain's military is set up to fight the battles of yesterday, tomorrow. Now we will fight the battle of today, tomorrow.⁵⁷

Richard Norton-Taylor, writing in the Guardian's defence and security blog, described the NSS/SDSR as "a useful essay in that it spells out all the potential threats Britain will be exposed to and how our forces will – or should – be able to deal with them." He also suggested the document is long on promises and short on specifics.⁵⁸

The Economist suggested the SDSR was a step towards restoring Britain's reputation as a serious military power. Although it expressed similar concerns to others about the Navy's manpower.⁵⁹

General the Lord Dannatt, former Chief of the Defence Staff, was broadly complementary about the SDSR, describing it as an "honest attempt to rectify the error" of the 2010 review. While welcoming the additional combat aircraft squadrons and maritime patrol aircraft, he worried that the focus on the carriers risks creating the wrong type of Navy with the wrong type of craft. He questions the impact on service personnel and whether the new terms of service will prove an incentive rather than a barrier to recruitment.⁶⁰

Former senior military figures gave their view in the Letters page of The Times. Vice-Admiral Sir Jeremy Blackman, former deputy Chief of the Defence Staff, outlines some of the big questions left unanswered by the SDSR, including whether sufficient manpower has been provided; if enough has been done to repair service morale; is the maritime force structure sufficient to give credibility to the nuclear deterrent and is there sufficient logistic support to sustain operations over time. Finding people to man the aircraft and carriers is problematic, and morale will need attention. But, from the headlines, this review offers a coherent way ahead and is accordingly welcome.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Graydon welcomed the document for providing a coherent way ahead, but worried about morale and manpower for the Carriers and aircraft.

Andrew Brookes, Chief Executive of the Air League, similarly worried about personnel: "ordering the latest gee-whizz combat kit will be insufficient without serious investment in quality personnel, training and logistic back-up that has been seriously hollowed-out over recent years."⁶¹

Further reaction is available in the Guardian's live blog of the statement: [Politics live](#), 23 November 2015.

RUSI, the London-based defence think-tank, has published a range of commentary pieces exploring both the overarching message of the

⁵⁷ "The SDSR means we will be better able to fight today's enemies", *The Telegraph*, 23 November 2015

⁵⁸ "huge question marks over Cameron's pair of £6bn aircraft carriers", *The Guardian defence and security blog*, 23 November 2015

⁵⁹ "Britain reasserts itself as a serious military power", *The Economist*, 23 November 2015

⁶⁰ "SDSR: Lord Dannatt's reaction", *The Telegraph*, 23 November 2015

⁶¹ [Letters page](#), *The Times*, 23 November 2015

NSS/SDSR and what it means for individual Services. These are available on its website: Rusi.org/SDSR2015

Malcolm Chalmers describes it as a “steady as she goes” review that “provides a welcome element of stability in defence planning after five years of substantial reductions.” He notes that one possible consequence of the 30% cut in MOD civilian staff could be that some tasks currently fulfilled by civilians could be militarised, thus reversing the policy direction pursued in recent years.⁶²

Peter Roberts argues the SDSR will leave the Royal Navy a weaker force:

Here is the nub of the issue with this review: the focus on equipment exposes a deeply held belief that technology and equipment will deter adversaries and provide a competitive edge for naval forces. Yet there is little evidence to support such a theory. It is people, their ideas, knowledge, skills and tenacity that deliver success on operations, not a shrinking number of high-performance platforms. Neither the SDSR nor Comprehensive Spending Review provides any acknowledgment of this fact – and it certainly is not going to be funded.⁶³

Elizabeth Quintana welcomes the extension of life for the RAF’s Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) fleet of aircraft but finds the choice of the P-8 MPA surprising because of the MOD’s decision to single-source the capability rather than run an open competition. She also points out that increasing the number of Typhoon squadrons does not mean a corresponding increase in platform numbers.

Christopher Tuck of the Defence Studies Department at King’s College London identified five questions raised by the “muscular and ambitious” review. These are:

- 1 Can it solve the perennial problem in British grand strategy of the mismatch between resources and commitments?
- 2 How capable will the new military structures be?
- 3 Will the new non-military tools at Britain’s disposal actually be as effective as hoped?
- 4 Does it actually provides the strategies necessary to link together effectively the government’s objectives and the means that the new SDSR has laid out?
- 5 How well does SDSR bridge change and continuity?

He concludes:

Overall, SDSR15 is an ambitious assertion of Britain’s global roles and interests. But the extent to which the UK has actually the expertise and resources to tackle conflict and build stability overseas is difficult to discern. SDSR15 asserts that the UK’s objective of economic development and prosperity overseas ‘improves peace, security and governance’. This is an assumption that may not be shared by others. We may focus on the benefits of a ‘rules based international order’ but other actors may

⁶² M Chalmers, “[Steady as she goes](#)”, *RUSI commentary*, 23 November 2015

⁶³ P Roberts, “[Neglecting platforms and people: the impact of the SDSR on the Royal Navy](#)”, *RUSI commentary*, 23 November 2015

disagree profoundly on our assumptions about what those rules should be and how they should be implemented. In the acid test of some future crisis, the government may find that contested ideas of soft power are much less effective than actual military capability at giving the UK genuine influence in the world.⁶⁴

Dr Tim Benbow, director of the Strategy and Defence Policy Research Centre, focused on the SDSR's impact on the Navy in his commentary. He suggested it presented a mixed picture for maritime capabilities. While welcoming the new capabilities – the maritime patrol aircraft, accelerated acquisition of Lightning II aircraft and commitment to the frigate programme and new store ships for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary – he expressed concern about manpower. He described resolving the manpower challenge is the principle headache for the Royal Navy.⁶⁵

Further commentary is available on the [Defence-in-Depth](#) website. Members of the Department also held a seminar which can be heard [online](#).

Forces TV conducted a poll on the Review. 63.7% said the SDSR was a good deal for the armed forces while 36.3% were against.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ "[SDSR 15: Five questions](#)", *Defence in-depth website*, 16 December 2015

⁶⁵ "[NSS/SDSR 2015: the maritime issues](#)", *Defence in-depth website*, 24 November 2015

⁶⁶ [Forces tv](#), 27 November 2015

About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publically available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email hcinfo@parliament.uk.

Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).