



## DEBATE PACK

CDP 2017-0231 | 17 November 2017

# UK amphibious capability in the 21st century

**Westminster Hall**  
**Tuesday 21 November 2017**  
**9.30am – 11.00am**  
**Debate initiated by Ruth Smeeth**

The proceedings of this debate can be viewed on [Parliamentlive.tv](http://Parliamentlive.tv)

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

Compiled by:  
Tim Robinson

Subject specialists:  
Claire Mills  
Louisa Brooke-Holland

### Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Press Articles</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Defence Committee evidence sessions</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>PQs</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Other Parliamentary material</b>	<b>27</b>
5.1	Debates	27
5.2	Early Day Motions	27
<b>6.</b>	<b>Further reading</b>	<b>28</b>

# 1. Background

Just before the summer recess the Government launched a review of [national security capabilities](#), led by the National Security Advisor.<sup>1</sup> The review is understood to include the defence capabilities of the armed forces. It is unclear when the review will be published or in what format.

In October various media began to report rumours the Ministry of Defence is considering reducing the armed forces' amphibious capability.

Amphibious capability at its most basic means the ability to land military forces from the sea. In the UK armed forces, the Royal Marines are the specialists in amphibious warfare using a variety of vessels supported by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.<sup>2</sup> Specialist support to the Royal Marines is provided by the [Commando Helicopter Force](#), [29 Commando Regiment](#) Royal Artillery and [24 Commando](#) Royal Engineers.<sup>3</sup>

There have been reports the MOD intends to reduce the number of Royal Marines. The former Commander of Joint Forces Command told the Defence Committee it was "madness" to "cull some of the finest infantry in the world".<sup>4</sup> The Defence Secretary refused to rule out cuts to the Royal Marines when asked directly by the Shadow Secretary of State for Defence.<sup>5</sup>

The Royal Navy has three amphibious assault ships: HMS Ocean, a dedicated helicopter carrier, will leave service next year. HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark can deliver troops via helicopter and/or specialist landing craft from the landing dock in the belly of the ship. Albion and Bulwark are expected to remain in service until 2033 and 2034 respectively.<sup>6</sup> However, only one is currently available for operations. HMS Bulwark is in port in a state of 'low readiness' and is not expected to return to service until 2021. Media have reported rumours Bulwark and Albion may be retired early as part of the capabilities review.

UK Maritime Power doctrine states the role of Bulwark and Albion:

The Royal Navy's specialist amphibious shipping can tactically offload, sustain and recover the landing force without recourse to harbours or airfields, in hostile, or potentially hostile environments. They provide the launch platforms for assaults and

---

<sup>1</sup> Commons Library briefing paper [The defence capability review: equipment](#), provides a short introduction to the front-line of the armed forces.

<sup>2</sup> The Royal Marines also use a range of specialist vehicles including amphibious vehicles.

<sup>3</sup> This is not an exhaustive list, other elements of the armed forces also support amphibious operations.

<sup>4</sup> General Sir Richard Barrons, former Commander Joint Forces Command, Joint Defence Committee, National Security Capability Review, HC 556, oral evidence, 14 November 2017, q9.

<sup>5</sup> HC Deb 23 October 2017 c6; see section 4 PQs.

<sup>6</sup> These dates were reaffirmed by the Government most recently in PQ106959, 16 October 2017

raids by landing craft and helicopters. The amphibious shipping<sup>7</sup> has the necessary command and control facilities for up to a brigade size operation, and are capable of landing a company group surface assault, heavy equipment (such as armour) and landing force vehicles and equipment.

In addition the three Bay-class ships of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary can deliver troops from sea via landing craft, although on a lesser scale to Albion and Bulwark.<sup>8</sup> The new aircraft carriers will be able to deliver troops from sea via helicopters but they do not have the same capability to place troops ashore using landing craft in the same manner.<sup>9</sup>

Lord West, former First Sea Lord, has [warned](#) that if rumours are true – to cut 1,000 marines and sell Bulwark and Albion – “this would mean the end of a UK amphibious capability and effectively end the Royal Marines.”

---

<sup>7</sup> Currently provided by HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark landing platform dock (LPD) ships

<sup>8</sup> Lieutenant General Mark Poffley, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Military Capability, defence committee, Work of the Department 2017, HC 406, oral evidence, 25 October 2017 q61 (in section 3 of this debate pack)

<sup>9</sup> Lieutenant General Mark Poffley, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Military Capability, defence committee, Work of the Department 2017, HC 406, oral evidence, 25 October 2017 q57 (in section 3 of this debate pack)

## 2. Press Articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

### **British forces no longer fit for purpose, former UK service chiefs warn**

The Guardian  
14 November 2017  
Ewen MacAskill

### **Lord West: If the Royal Navy loses these capabilities, our nation would live to regret it**

Politics Home  
30 October 2017  
Lord West of Spithead

### **Scrapping assault ships risks Nato role, military told**

The Times (subscription required)  
30 October 2017  
Deborah Haynes

### **Warning NATO Operations at Serious Risk If Britain Sells Warships**

Sputnic News  
30 October 2017

### **Falklands Landings**

Letters to the Daily Telegraph (via Press Reader)  
28 October 2017  
Commander Michael Clapp, Commander Julian Thompson and Lt-col Ewen Southby-Tail

### **The Royal Navy should mothball out-of-date HMS Albion and Bulwark**

Letters to the Daily Telegraph (via Press Reader)  
27 October 2017  
Dr Mark Campbell-Roddie

### **Government 'holds secret talks about flogging Royal Navy warships to Brazil and Chile'**

Daily Mirror  
25 October 2017  
Chris Hughes

### **Admiral quits as Royal Navy considers scrapping two Plymouth ships**

The Herald  
9 October 2017  
Gayle McDonald

**At Your Service: What Have HMS Bulwark & Albion Been Used For?**

Forces News  
6 October 2017  
John-Paul Tooth

**Royal Navy could lose 'fight on beaches' ships in planned cuts**

BBC News  
5 October 2017  
Mark Urban

**HMS Ocean arrives in Caribbean carrying 60 tonnes of aid and 650 personnel as officials say Hurricane Maria is 'now near' British overseas territories**

Mail Online  
22 September 2017  
Rod Ardehali

**Why is the Royal Navy scrapping HMS Ocean?**

Sunday Times (subscription required)  
24 September 2017  
Rosie Millard

**The decommissioning of HMS Ocean without replacement: Strategically nonsensical?**

UK Defence Journal  
17 August 2017  
Oliver B. Steward

**FLAGSHIP FOR SALE Royal Navy's flagship helicopter carrier HMS Ocean could join Brazil's fleet as defence chiefs confirm it is up for sale**

The Sun  
9 April 2017  
David Wooding

**UK Amphibious Capabilities – Today and Tomorrow**

ThinkDefence.co.uk  
6 April 2017

### 3. Defence Committee evidence sessions

#### Oral evidence: National Security Capability Review, HC 556

[Extract]

Tuesday 14 November 2017

Witnesses

- General Sir Richard Barrons KCB CBE (Rtd), Former Commander, Joint Forces Command;
- Admiral Sir George Zambellas GCB DSC DL, Former First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff.

[...]

Q8 **Johnny Mercer**: Quickly, if I can come to you, Sir George, on amphibiosity. I know we are going to talk more in detail on the other issues, so I don't want to go into them now.

It is simply not credible. If the Government is going to come to the House of Commons or the nation and say, "We need to re-look at how we are configured to face a threat, but we are going to save money at the same time, perhaps in the area of amphibiosity," it is very difficult to sell that to the man in the street and retain credibility.

What is your view, in your position, about proposals looking at reducing that thing? We have just talked about the reliances we have from NATO and our role in these organisations that keep us safe. What is your view on proposals essentially to get rid of this country's capability when it comes to amphibiosity?

**Admiral Sir George Zambellas**: If you take as a premise, what certainly the three of us know, that defence has been under-resourced for years, the challenge that is being set to the Chiefs of Staff now is try to make further savings.

As is the style of these things, each service chief has been invited to find or to consider areas where they might make reductions. I imagine the First Sea Lord has a choice between having his left arm cut off or his right arm cut off. Nobody in the world of complex warfare, especially for an island nation that delivers force from the sea, thinks that a reduction in the sophisticated end of amphibiosity is a good idea.

The question is how it is to be done. If you look back in history, just briefly, nobody ever tried to look forward to the concept of opposed landings, yet they have occurred time and again, most recently, of course, with the Falklands. The truth is that you have to risk-mitigate in every possible way the idea of projecting force from the sea. That is what we are going to do as an island nation across the whole of defence.

The other thing that has changed fundamentally since years gone by is the weight of protective mobility, the physical weight. The idea of lifting everything from a huge deck 150 miles inland is not practical, even with an unlimited number of Chinooks, unless you can reduce the weight of the vehicles that society and politicians now expect to be provided for people.

My view is that any capability review of our cross-defence performance—an integrated performance with all three services—really needs to consider very carefully why you would want to reduce amphibiosity at the expense of something else when the proper answer is that you should increase and solidify the quality of amphibiosity using investment in new equipment and new capability, and you should preserve the outstanding capability of the Royal Marine in the inventory of fighting forces across defence.

**Q9 Johnny Mercer:** Thank you. I have a final one for Sir Richard. I absolutely agree with you that we have a duty in this place. It is very difficult in the military to bang your own drum about the capabilities, but essentially you see the threats we are up against. Right arm off or left arm off—it is not the time for that at this particular moment. What would your message be to those of us who have to go and advocate for a Government who are persistently talking a good game on defence when we see differences with the reality on the ground in places such as Plymouth? What do we need to do to ensure that we do our duty by the people who vote for us and by our servicemen and women?

**General Sir Richard Barrons:** The first thing is that you have to say that the policy of denial has run its course. You are now confronting a choice where you can either stop denying that defence is unable to deliver the things it is required to deliver, or you are going to watch it fail. It will either fail operationally, which would be a tragedy, or it will fail institutionally as people simply leave and capability does the same.

The point that George made about amphibiosity is extremely good, and there are two lines of madness. Are we really saying that we do not want the capability to put a force ashore over a beach—that we want to confine ourselves to ports? Are we really saying that we never want to be able to take British people out of a trouble spot except through a port? Are we really saying that we want to remove that capacity for humanitarian assistance? If we are saying that, we are ignoring how the world really operates. The second line of madness is the idea that if the Navy needs to adjust manpower and find more sailors, the obvious thing to do is to cull some of the finest infantry in the world—the Royal Marines. If the Navy needs more manpower, surely in defence there is a better way of finding it than culling your elite infantry, which in any case supplies people to our outstanding special forces. It is just folly.

[...]

**Q48 Mr Francois:** Gentlemen, we have already touched briefly on amphibiosity, but this is something of real interest to the Committee, which we may want to look into in more detail in the near future as well. How important for our amphibious capability are the two Albion-class landing platform dock ships? I ask that because when we took

evidence from Sir Michael Fallon, he was trying to suggest that we could still have a good amphibious capability with the two new carriers. Could you explain to what extent the carrier is useful, but also to what extent it cannot do what an LPD can do?

**Admiral Sir George Zambellas:** With great respect to the previous Secretary of State for Defence and his knowledge and expertise on amphibiosity, I think that they are very different platforms. The carriers are large areas of deck that are not capable of launching any form of water-borne heavy equipment. The Albion and Bulwark are specifically designed to do that, as indeed is Ocean. They are very different platforms designed for very different reasons, and they exist for a purpose. I am surprised that all of a sudden that purpose is not obvious.

Q49 **Mr Francois:** What about the capability of the Bay-class ships?

**Admiral Sir George Zambellas:** The Bay class have always been part of the augmentation of the total lift capacity—you wanted the detail—which is described in the linear meterage of how you support a deployable force. So, you have to have enough capacity within the vessel to store the equipment, you have to have enough deployability to get it off the vessel using hovercraft, landing craft and so on, and you have to have enough deck space to complement the helicopters above. The combination of the Bay class and the Albion class has allowed the total linear meterage of the amphibious force to be just about enough to do the job. That job, by the way, in most of the professional assumptions, includes ships taken up from trade, as we saw in 1982.

Q50 **Mr Francois:** How important is our amphibious capability in sustaining defence co-operation with our allies, for instance with the Dutch, and the United States Marine Corps as well?

**Admiral Sir George Zambellas:** There is a changed relationship with the Dutch. It would not be fair for me to say that what exists now is what existed in the back end of the cold war—that is not appropriate—but the Dutch have been phenomenal strategic and operational partners for years, regularly transferring officers and men across the boundary between the two nations and adjusting their own force structure to allow a complementarity within that particular specialist field. That is less true with the United States Marine Corps, because it is so big that the nature of what you might call operational partnership is not as obvious as it is in the European and NATO context for Europe. That said, the US Marine Corps and the Royal Marines are astonishingly close partners in combat. If you go back into the detail of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, you see they were natural partners side by side in a number of operational theatres and are respected, despite the huge difference in size between them.

Ironically, it is the development of expertise within the US Marine Corps that allowed the Royal Marines to begin to think differently about how they should achieve their mobility from the sea. It has also driven a particular challenge into our thinking because the Marines are able to buy and operate aircraft such as the V-22 and we are still struggling to have enough Chinooks to be able to deploy to sea to do the job, if indeed they are being marinised in the first place.



The differences can become stark, but the complementary characteristics are extremely valuable as well.

Q51 **Mr Francois:** Lastly, on the Royal Marines, I believe they are regarded as tier 2 special forces. There are rumours, as General Barrons referred to earlier, of options to reduce the size of the Royal Marines. As a former First Sea Lord, what is your view on that?

**Admiral Sir George Zambellas:** We have to be very careful about how we characterise expertise in special force operations. I agree with what General Barrons said that they are a premier league fighting force and hugely respected. To respond specifically to your point, what is interesting is that if they only constitute in infantry numbers 4% or 5% of the totality of defence infantry, and yet are producing 40% or thereabouts of the special forces that flow into UK defence, there is something about their qualities that is exceptional.

[...]

**Oral evidence: Work of the Department 2017, HC 439 [Extract]  
Wednesday 25 Oct 2017**

Witnesses

- Rt Hon Sir Michael Fallon MP, Secretary of State for Defence
- Lieutenant General Mark Poffley, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Military Capability
- Peter Watkins CBE, Director General Security Policy, Ministry of Defence

[...]

Q49 **Johnny Mercer:** Secretary of State, I want to rest your voice, if that is okay, and go to General Poffley and to Peter. We are going to talk about the Royal Marines briefly. The Secretary of State clearly will always go on military advice. You are the military advice. General Poffley, in your view, how important is the amphibious capability to both UK defence and the wider industry we have been talking about today?

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** I think it goes without saying that the country places great value on having an amphibious capability. It is part of a suite of options that policy makers can use, and it is quite clearly one of our major contributions as a tier 1 military nation. The construct of it and its evolving nature clearly will change with the operational environment, and that has been a continual case. In terms of the industrial base that lies underneath it, clearly it maps very neatly into the work we have done on the national shipbuilding strategy, and as the sponsor group of the national shipbuilding strategy looks at the forward programme of our maritime expenditure, clearly the amphibious capability fits prominently inside that, as befits the significance of that role.

Q50 **Johnny Mercer:** Looking backwards—discounting Afghanistan but certainly looking at Iraq and what we have done previously—would it be fair to say that the ability to secure access to the beach-head, that unique capability that we have, not only has been uniquely relied on by our NATO allies such as Norway, the Netherlands and the US, but has been a fundamental part of operations? I would say to you that it is not part of a suite of measures we have; it is one of the most vital things we have in our military today. I am talking about that ability to secure the beach-head and project force on to the land. Having aircraft carriers and so on is all great, but you have to be able to get ashore. This is therefore more than just one of a suite of capabilities; it is one of our major capabilities, and recognised as such by our allies.

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** I think that is reflected in the fact that we, in the 2015 SDSR, made significant provision inside the QEC programme to modify both the Queen Elizabeth and the Prince of Wales to accept an ability to deploy amphibious troops ashore. Indeed, we have increased the capacity over that provided by HMS Ocean in that role by some 200 personnel, so—

Q51 **Johnny Mercer:** Forgive me for cutting you off; time is quite short. Why now are we looking at two ships, with a life expectancy of 30 years, that are recognised command-and-control nodes and that enable this vital part of UK defence? We say it is speculation, and I absolutely agree that some of it is speculation. However, in Brazil and Chile they are already making plans, as reported today, to take these ships on, so clearly something is going on in the Department. Why are we looking at these two core capabilities when you yourself have just said, and if you look back over history, that capability to have and project force is absolutely vital?

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** As a point of clarification, I am not aware of any overture being made by either of those countries with regard to the LPDs.

Q52 **Johnny Mercer:** Well, how did they find out about it? It's not us; it's not me.

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** You would have to tell me. I am not aware of any overtures by either of those countries for those platforms. With regard to whether we are looking at those platforms, we look across the spectrum of capabilities, as we are doing in the capability review—

**Johnny Mercer:** Absolutely—

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** And of course you would not expect us not to look at this particular capability.

Q53 **Johnny Mercer:** The fact that we have to be very careful around money and defence now is not up for debate. I absolutely support you in that endeavour, and you look at some areas of the military, such as the 17 soldiers for every clerk, and the 30,000 vehicle platforms. I am not going against the fact that you have to look continually at the threats and configure your military to that, but what I am saying is that

if there is a fundamental misunderstanding of amphibious warfare, and a decision is taken to remove that from the options that are available to the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister—maybe they don't want to deploy one of the big aircraft carriers, but the options available to the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister are going to reduce significantly should those two platforms go. I worry that that strand of amphibiousness, which has been so important for this nation, not only over the past 50 or 30 years but over the last 10 to 15 years, and just this summer in humanitarian operations, is not going to have as much emphasis placed on it as it should have.

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** I can assure you that all the Chiefs are actively engaged in a debate on not just this capability but a broad range, including the areas you have suggested, to make sure that we are actually setting the priority right. It is the First Sea Lord who will provide that expert advice into the chiefly committee, and indeed the Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff is a serving Royal Marine who is quite clearly competent to be able to provide some counsel into that forum.

**Q54 Chair:** If it weren't for financial considerations, nobody would be thinking of pensioning off these ships at this stage, would they?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Well, in the 2015 review we made it clear that Bulwark would enter a period of low readiness from last month and Albion would take over the role, so we were not anyway planning to deploy them together. You have just heard General Poffley tell you that the Queen Elizabeth carriers will be able to carry more personnel, will have larger armouries and will be able to carry more helicopters than those ships. They will actually give us a better littoral capability than we have at the moment with Albion and Bulwark.

**Q55 Chair:** No, I am sorry, Secretary of State, but there is no way that a Queen Elizabeth-class carrier can substitute for the capabilities of the Albion and the Bulwark as a landing platform dock. You did not answer my question: were it not for financial considerations, we would not be considering withdrawing these ships, would we? The Minister for Defence Procurement wrote to me as recently as 25 January, because I had heard a rumour about this mad scheme and had raised it on the Floor of the House of Commons. She wrote, "There are no current plans to decommission the ships early, and I can reassure you that their out of service dates are 2033 and 2034 respectively." This is really all about there not being enough money in the defence budget, isn't it?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** No, it is not. That is speculation. No proposals to get rid of either Albion or Bulwark have reached my desk in any shape or form. At the moment, that is simply speculation. What we said in the 2015 review was that the carrier capability adds, in certain respects, to our littoral capability. I hope that is understood.

**Q56 Chair:** I absolutely understand.

**Sir Michael Fallon:** A carrier can take 900 men and women and can take more helicopters. Neither Albion nor Bulwark were involved in the Caribbean.

Q57 **Chair:** How many landing craft can a carrier take?

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** There is an absolute distinction here on how you deliver troops ashore between the landing platform dock, which clearly has the capacity to deliver from rotary but most significantly has the ability to deliver through landing craft, and the carrier, which does not have that capability. I think we made that clear.

Q58 **Chair:** If you want to make a landing in the dead of night, quietly, on a part of the coast where you wish to take people by surprise, do you think a fleet of troop-carrying helicopters is a substitute for silent landing craft coming in off purpose-built ships with built-in command centres, designed for that special purpose?

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** It will be the judgment of the First Sea Lord and the Chief of Staff's committee as to whether they think, first, that that is an appropriate operation in the contemporary and future operating environment, and secondly, that it is something we would prioritise over other things.

Q59 **Chair:** We have had this exchange before. You talk about the contemporary and future operating environment, but the truth of the matter is that we do not have the faintest idea what crises will arise in the future. Some of them will require this sort of silent insertion of troops over a beach, which cannot be substituted by helicopters. I come back to the question again: obviously, the answer should be to have both capacities, and were it not for a question of money, that is what we would be doing, isn't it?

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** We will examine both the capability of delivering troops from surface vessels and from rotary in the context of the prioritisations we make in the capability review.

Q60 **Chair:** Surface vessels that can launch landing craft from a dock?

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** Indeed.

Q61 **Chair:** You would not compare, for example, the capacity of the Bay-class ships to do that with the capacity of the Albion and the Bulwark, would you?

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** In terms of scale and number of landing craft I would not, but the capacity to deliver the same types of landing craft, albeit on a lesser scale, is provided for in the Bay-class RFAs.

Q62 **Chair:** Yes, I know, but the scale is the operative question.

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** This is about a judgment on the likelihood of deploying at scale in circumstances such as you have described. That, again, will be a judgment that the Chiefs will make.

Q63 **Johnny Mercer:** General, if I understand you correctly, are you essentially making the assertion that the command and control and the nodes that Albion and Bulwark were designed to provide in the 30 years they have got coming are not replicated in the QE-class carriers?

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** That is not replicated in the QE-class carriers.

Q64 **Johnny Mercer:** That is one of our specific capabilities that our allies rely on us for. Have you seen the Americans' comments on that yesterday? The C2 ability of those two platforms is one of our strategic assets and complements to NATO, isn't it?

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** They certainly bring a very capable C2 suite. Whether you could replicate it through other means—

Q65 **Johnny Mercer:** What other means?

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** Well, you would need to provide a platform of a similar type, if it is C2 of that type that you wish.

**Johnny Mercer:** Right. So we are talking about providing another platform. If, theoretically, these platforms were to go, are you thinking along the lines of retaining capability so that we can go elsewhere?

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** If I may, this is purely speculative, because at the moment we are not having the conversation yet about the level of prioritisation.

**Johnny Mercer:** Of course. I understand that.

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** There is a range of different possibilities for all parts of the capability suite that could go forward. Clearly, Albion and Bulwark provide some very specific capabilities that, if they were not there, would either need to be replicated in a different form, or one would have to accept that you are making a compromise in that part of our operational portfolio.

Q66 **Johnny Mercer:** My concern is that when we look at options for conducting operations abroad, the military arm goes to the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister with these options, and without those two specific assets you are significantly withdrawing that range of opportunity you can give people.

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** And that will be a consideration that the Chiefs make when they consider any form of prioritisation of the capability suite.

Q67 **Chair:** And the only reason they are having to consider this prioritisation is because they have not got enough money.

**Sir Michael Fallon:** No, it is because we have to consider the way in which, as I have said several times, the threats have intensified. We have to spend money on dealing with the threats from cyber as well as finding resources to storm beaches. It is for the Chiefs to weigh these priorities up and then give me the right military advice when the decision comes. The threats have intensified in other domains apart from storming beaches.

Q68 **Chair:** So if there was enough money you would not have to consider sacrificing one thing in order to meet the other. The question I

want to put to you is this. Traditionally it was always said that the Chiefs of Staff, if they were worried about the state of the defence of the nation, retained the right as a body to demand to see the Prime Minister for the sake of obtaining more resources, or at least sounding a warning that the country was not adequately resourced to defend itself. Do the Chiefs of Staff still retain that right?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Well, they don't—they have every opportunity to make representations to me through CDS.

Q69 **Chair:** That wasn't my question.

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** Technically they do have the right.

**Sir Michael Fallon:** Technically they do.

Q70 **Johnny Mercer:** That is the concern here. Some of us are from that generation where you could argue that the Chiefs of the General Staff have not been prepared to say, "We can't do X, Y and Z", and some of us have paid a very heavy price for that. So the concern now is that we present a set of options. It is simply not credible to say that an amphibious nation like ours, a maritime nation, can do away with a capability that is so heavily relied upon. Do you understand the impact that will have on not only NATO, but the United States, and on our standing as a military nation, if we say, "On that amphibious capability, you can go and buy a roll-on/roll-off ferry from P&O tomorrow, paint it green and roll the troops on"? On that specific capability around Albion and Bulwark and the amphibious capability of the Royal Marines, do you understand the effect that will have strategically?

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** I understand that it will have a strategic effect if you were to take it in isolation, but I don't believe that we will take it in isolation. There will be a series of considerations that are made and the aggregate strategic effect will be that that really defines us as a tier 1 military nation.

Q71 **Mr Francois:** General, we cannot know the future, but we can know the past. Do you accept that in the 1981 strategic defence review lots of very bright people in the Ministry of Defence did lots of very hard staff work and came up and recommended that we got rid of Fearless and Intrepid? Then a year later, during the Falklands war in 1982, if we had not had those ships, we might not have been able to carry off the remarkable operation that we did. So you could say that history has already rung a very loud warning bell for us on this. We went through a review, we made a mistake and, luckily as it turned out, we did not have to pay for it. Does anybody in the Ministry of Defence have a strong sense of history?

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** I can assure you, having lived through a number of campaigns that I did not expect to be on personally, I absolutely take the point you are making. However, we have looked in some significant detail at the future, and of course we will look to make the best provision, given the budget across a portfolio of capabilities.

Q72 Mr **Francois**: “Given the budget”?

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley**: That is always going to be the case. In the case of an infinitesimal budget, I can guarantee you I would still have a bunch of folk outside my door looking to spend more money on a series of priorities.

**Sir Michael Fallon**: Mr Watkins was in the Department in 1981, so it might be useful to hear from him.

**Peter Watkins**: You are right, of course, about the history. We cannot change the history, but I would just like to underline what the Secretary of State has said a number of times: the threat environment that we are now living in is changing extremely rapidly—more rapidly than we have seen over the past 30 years—so we do have to take account of how we think the future will develop as well as learn the lessons of the past. Also, just to add to what Mark said, when we get to the prioritisation debate, I will be heavily involved in that from two aspects. First, on the point I have just made, I will be working with my colleagues in Defence Intelligence to come up with our best set of what the future operating environment and strategic environment will look like, but I will also be working very closely with our NATO partners to ensure—we do this as part of an alliance, not on our own—that overall we have the best capabilities. We have capabilities that complement theirs, and their capabilities complement ours.

Q73 Mr **Francois**: But if the threat is intensifying—the Secretary of State mentioned increased submarine activity by the Russians in the north Atlantic, and we all know about the importance of the high north, which this Committee has been looking into specifically—do we want to delete an entire area of capability?

**Peter Watkins**: It is intensifying and changing. That is my point.

Q74 **Chair**: But it is not changing in any way that you could ever predict that we would never need quietly to insert ground forces over a beach without having to ferry them in on noisy helicopters. The record of all these past conflicts is that they usually arise with little or no warning at all. Why should we be any better at predicting the future now than we have been in the past?

**Peter Watkins**: I think the General has already talked about different means of doing this. This is something we will look at when we get into the prioritisation debate.

Q75 **Chair**: So why did the Minister responsible for procurement say, as recently as 25 January, that she could reassure me that there were no plans to delete these ships and that they were due to go out of service in 2033 and 2034?

**Sir Michael Fallon**: There is no plan to delete these ships.

Q76 **Chair**: Will you keep it that way?

**Sir Michael Fallon**: What we have been describing to you is the capabilities review against the background of a rising budget, which we

will assess as we get nearer the conclusion of the review. We will assess that, and we will do it—this is the answer to Mr Mercer. We will do it—we will do it—on the basis of military advice.

**Q77 Johnny Mercer:** I absolutely know that you will, but Mr Watkins, are you saying—you have been in the Department since 1981, which unfortunately is the year I was born—that in the past 18 months or two years the threats have changed at a greater pace and taken on a more diverse nature than they have at any time in our history as a nation, and that that is leading this review, not the budget? My argument is that if those threats are diverging, as everybody can see, you need more money, not to take this route. Anyone can say, “Oh, the threats have changed, so we’re going to change the way we do business.” You had a defence and security review two years ago, and now you are coming and saying, “These threats have changed so wildly, and we just had no idea it was going to happen. We’re going to have to really have a look at everything.” Do you see how it is quite hard to sell that credibly to the men and women who serve?

**Sir Michael Fallon:** As I said right at the beginning, in just two years we have had our own mainland attacked by terrorists—

**Johnny Mercer:** I don’t dispute that, but we used to conduct long-range, medium-level operations on a regular basis.

**Sir Michael Fallon:** We’ve had cyber-attacks on this Parliament. We’ve seen Russian aggression.

**Johnny Mercer:** I accept that. We were at one stage conducting two medium-level operations, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and you could arguably say, “The military has never been that stretched before, so let’s have another review and see what we can get rid of.”

**Q78 Chair:** Do you accept, Secretary of State, that if the threats can change one way in two years, they can change another way in another two years? The answer is that you need to keep as much of the whole range of capabilities as possible, and if that means that your rising budget needs to rise by rather a lot more, then that is surely what we need to do.

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I have told you what my ambition is. We have a rising budget, and I want to see it go on rising, but every so often the military do have to review exactly what is needed, and they do have to prioritise.

**Chair:** Ruth has been champing at the bit, waiting patiently. I just want to flag up the fact that we may have to adjourn for a period for a vote, but we will try to keep that as brief as possible. I gather you wanted to come in, Mr Watkins.

**Q79 Johnny Mercer:** Did you want to answer the question about the two-year period, and whether things have changed much more than they have at any time in our country’s history to drive the review?



**Peter Watkins:** I was going to say that we think that we identified the main threats and risks correctly in 2015, as the Secretary of State said. What we did not precisely get right was the velocity at which they are changing. Some of them, in particular cyber and space and so on, are changing very rapidly, which means that we have to prepare ourselves as a defence organisation for a broader range of threats and risks than before. That is my point.

Q80 **Ruth Smeeth:** Retaining our position as a tier 1 military has been mentioned several times. This is all speculative, but we are due to lead with our amphibious capability the NATO IFFG in 2019—as the lead country. We are due to support the Netherlands’ lead, which means using Albion, in 2020. Our very position in NATO and what we contribute towards NATO operations is, at this point in our deployment plans, built around the use of Albion.

We have also signed, in 2017—the Secretary of State will remember that Anne-Marie Trevelyan and I hosted the lunch—the bilateral agreement with the US marine corps on the relationship between our marines and theirs. We have a bilateral US-French relationship in terms of amphibiosity, and one with the Netherlands. In a post-Brexit environment, this is about our contribution to the world. Can you confirm that that will be retained if we lose Albion and Bulwark?

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** It is absolutely true that we retain the ambition to be able to work alongside a number of nations in the littoral, and that our contributions currently, in the platforms and on the dates that you described, are a major part of that going forward. Again, that is the sort of information that would be fed into the consideration when this comes before the chiefs to confirm whether this is a sensible proposition—if indeed it even emerges as a proposition. At the moment, we are having a rather theoretical conversation about a series of propositions that have been speculated on in the newspapers. At the moment, we have yet to reconcile that part of the debate inside the Ministry of Defence.

Q81 **Ruth Smeeth:** Speculated on in the newspapers to such a point that it is in the trade press today that Chile and Brazil are seeking to buy Albion and Bulwark.

**Lieutenant General Mark Poffley:** As I mentioned earlier, I am not aware of any overtures by either of those countries to the Ministry of Defence.

Q82 **Phil Wilson:** To draw out a point that I think has come out of our discussion about Bulwark and the Royal Marines and what we can do without amphibious forces, it seems that our military strategy is not threat-led. Actually, it is budget-led; we will only deal with the threats as long as we can afford to.

**Sir Michael Fallon:** It is a rising budget—the fifth-biggest defence budget in the world. The threats are intensifying and we have to make sure that that budget has the best possible impact.

**Peter Watkins:** Looking at the way our strategy has adapted over the last three years, since the Russian intervention in Crimea, I do not think one would say that this is a threadbare approach being dragged along by the money. We have made significant adjustments. We have contributed substantial forces to a whole range of assurance measures, and so on.

We are now contributing to a very wide range of NATO activities and missions. Mention has been made of one in 2019, but I could mention a whole raft of others we are doing this year and next year involving other naval forces, air forces and land forces—enhanced forward presence in Estonia, for example, and in Poland. What you are seeing is a strategy that has adapted to meet a new challenge, and one that has intensified and broadened in the way that we have said, so I do not agree with your characterisation.

Q83 **Phil Wilson:** That is fair enough. It just seems to me that we are faced with all those threats—all the threats you have mentioned I accept and agree with—and it seems wrong that we are allowing arguments about what happens with Bulwark and such to get to the point where there is speculation, and there doesn't seem to be any rebuttal of it. What happens is, people feel as though the defence of the nation is being constrained by the budget—everything seems to be cash-led. We know there has got to be a budget, but if we keep saying that the threats are multiplying, we cannot then say that we can do this by getting rid of our amphibious forces or the means of delivering to a beach. A lot of it is about perception. If the budget is not an issue, we should say that; we should not let it grow. We could be doing away with a whole host of our capability.

**Peter Watkins:** To add to what I have said, one of the steps NATO took after the events in Crimea was to make public the target of 2% of GDP for defence spending. That was in NATO documentation already, but it was made public and Heads of State and Government at the Wales summit signed up to it, and we have delivered that. We are meeting the NATO benchmark.

Q84 **Graham P. Jones:** When you have South Ossetia, Abkhazia and, by proxy, Nagorno-Karabakh, I do not understand why Crimea suddenly came as a surprise and a juncture at which you change policy or outlook. I am confused by that, because Russian aggression in the Balkans had been going on prior to that.

**Peter Watkins:** There had been a developing pattern of behaviour—you are right to point to Georgia—but the intervention in Crimea was the first time since the Second World War that a piece of sovereign territory was seized by another nation by force. It was a significant change in the security landscape in Europe.

Q85 **Mr Francois:** Mr Watkins, I was not in the Ministry of Defence in 1981, but I did get to Georgia in 2008. I hope that counts for something.

Secretary of State, I am going to come on to land systems in a moment, but I will offer an observation rather than ask you a question. I think you

have seen, in the mood of all sides of the Committee, the very real concern about our amphibious capability. That is only a precursor to the kind of debate there would be if such an option were to be proceeded with. Can I offer the observation humbly? In terms of what you would say, the game is not worth the candle.

**Sir Michael Fallon:** I note your observation.

**Chair:** If you want to fight for a bigger defence budget, we will be right by your side.

[...]

## 4. PQs

### Littoral Warfare

09 Nov 2017 | HL2655

**Asked by: Lord West of Spithead**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have recently re-assessed the global strategic environment; and if not, whether the national requirement for amphibious capability will remain as predicated in the 1998, 2010 and 2015 strategic defence reviews.

**Answering member: Earl Howe | Ministry of Defence**

We keep developments in the global strategic environment under constant review. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is playing a full role in the Government's National Security Capability Review, which will help to ensure that the UK's investment in national security capabilities is as joined-up, effective and efficient as possible.

As part of this review, we have undertaken to look again at the full range of capabilities available to the MOD, to ensure that we continue to have the right capabilities in the right places to address current national security challenges.

### Warships: Sales

06 Nov 2017 | 110854

**Asked by: Luke Pollard**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has had any discussions with the Governments of Chile or Brazil on the purchase of (a) HMS Ocean, (b) HMS Albion, (c) HMS Bulwark and (d) any Type 23 frigate.

**Answering member: Harriett Baldwin | Ministry of Defence**

The potential sale of HMS OCEAN has been discussed with both the Government of Brazil and the Government of Chile.

There have been no such discussions with either Government in respect of HMS ALBION, HMS BULWARK or in-service Type 23 frigates.

We sold three Type 23 frigates to Chile in 2006.

### Warships: Decommissioning

30 Oct 2017 | 109639

**Asked by: Wayne David**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Government has indicated to the Governments of Brazil and of Chile that HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark may become available for purchase.

**Answering member: Harriett Baldwin | Ministry of Defence**

The Government has not indicated to either the Government of Brazil or of Chile that HMS ALBION and HMS BULWARK may become available for purchase.

**Amphibious Vehicles****26 Oct 2017 | 108804****Asked by: Conor McGinn**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to enhance the Royal Navy's amphibious forces as set out in the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review.

**Answering member: Mark Lancaster | Ministry of Defence**

The Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015 made provision to augment the Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carriers and maximise their ability to support amphibious operations. Prior to the carriers being brought into service, other Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships will continue to provide support to amphibious operations.

**Navy: Amphibious Vehicles****23 Oct 2017 | 108601****Asked by: Kevan Jones**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what representations the Government has made to the Government of (a) Chile and (b) Brazil on the sale of the Royal Navy's Albion-class LPDs.

**Answering member: Harriett Baldwin | Ministry of Defence**

No such discussions have taken place.

**Navy: Amphibious Vehicles****23 Oct 2017 | 108598****Asked by: Kevan Jones**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to maintain the Royal Navy's surface offloading capability in the event of the withdrawal of specialist amphibious ships.

**Answering member: Mark Lancaster | Ministry of Defence**

The Ministry of Defence is contributing to the Government's National Security Capability Review. That review is focussed on the continued implementation of the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, and ensuring the United Kingdom's investment in national security capabilities is as joined-up, effective and efficient as possible. No decisions have been made regarding specific capabilities.

## **Amphibious Ships**

**23 Oct 2017 | 630 cc15-16**

### **Asked by: Helen Goodman**

What recent assessment he has made of the role of amphibious ships in the Royal Navy. [901312]

### **Answered by: Mark Lancaster | Ministry of Defence**

The tremendous work of RFA Mounts Bay last month in the Caribbean in response to Hurricane Irma demonstrated the versatility of amphibious ships in the Royal Navy.

### **Asked by: Helen Goodman**

It did indeed, but people in County Durham will be very alarmed that there appears to be a question mark over the future of HMS Bulwark. She is one of the newest amphibious ships; she has been the fleet flagship; and she has been used to rescue migrants in the Mediterranean. Surely, would not a decision to decommission her early be a false economy?

### **Answered by: Mark Lancaster | Ministry of Defence**

I, too, have read the speculation in the press, and it is just that. As we have discussed at Defence questions today, a national security and capability review is taking place. It is very important that we have that review, which is about trying to bring together our capabilities with our investment. Equally, the hon. Lady will recognise that, while that capability review is ongoing, it would be entirely inappropriate for me to pluck out individual capabilities and comment on them.

### **Mr Speaker**

I see the Minister of State is enjoying the benefits of family encouragement. This is something that we enthusiastically welcome.

### **Asked by: Sir Roger Gale**

In welcoming my hon. Friend's assurance that the future of our amphibious capability is under active and positive consideration, may I say, as one who has been privileged to spend a little bit of time on HMS Bulwark, that she is a magnificent fighting ship? She punches well above her weight. She has served this nation very well, and to remove her from service would be an absolute tragedy.

### **Answered by: Mark Lancaster | Ministry of Defence**

I recognise my hon. Friend's support, and indeed the support of colleagues from across the House who feel strongly on this matter. We enjoy an amphibious capability; of course, it is not just Albion and Bulwark. Albion is about to step up into the high-readiness role for the next five years and Bulwark will be going into the low-readiness role, but there are also the three Bay class ships and we will be investing in amphibious capability for the Queen Elizabeth class as well.

### **Asked by: Luke Pollard**

As the Member of Parliament who represents the dockyard and naval base where Albion and Bulwark are base-ported, may I ask the Minister to speed up this review? There are lots of people who are very

concerned about their jobs and the local economy if Albion and Bulwark and the Royal Marines are scrapped?

**Answered by: Mark Lancaster | Ministry of Defence**

Once again, the hon. Gentleman seems to be unnecessarily adding fuel to the speculation—indeed, perhaps even scaremongering—among his own constituents, which I do not think is particularly valuable. What I will say is that the review will be completed in a timely manner, but it is important to get it right.

**Asked by: Wendy Morton**

Will my hon. Friend confirm that, in taking decisions about our amphibious capability and other issues, he will always be guided by the military advice on what capabilities we need?

**Answered by: Mark Lancaster | Ministry of Defence**

That is a very fair point. Indeed, at the moment, no advice has been put on Ministers' desks about the outcome to which the review is leading, but it will be based firmly on military advice.

**Strategic Defence and Security Review**

**23 Oct 2017 | 630 c6**

**Asked by: Mary Creagh**

HMS Bulwark helped to evacuate 1,300 British citizens from Lebanon during the 2006 crisis. Given the Foreign Office's recent problems evacuating citizens caught up in Hurricane Irma, will the Minister argue for his Department or the Department for International Development to lead on future evacuations? Will he guarantee today that the Government will maintain the fleet's littoral capacity, which is currently provided by HMS Bulwark and HMS Albion?

**Answered by: Mark Lancaster | Ministry of Defence**

One of this Government's strengths is in how we successfully work together between Departments. We saw the comprehensive approach working very effectively during recent weeks in the cross-Government response to Hurricane Irma in the Caribbean. That is exactly the approach we should be taking.

**Defence Funding**

**23 Oct 2017 | 630 c6**

**Asked by: Nia Griffith**

The reality is that the Government's chaotic mismanagement has led to gaping holes in the MOD's budget. As we have heard, there is real concern about cuts to our amphibious capabilities. Will the Secretary of State say categorically that there will be absolutely no cuts to the Royal Marines?

**Answered by: Sir Michael Fallon | Ministry of Defence**

The Royal Marines are part of the Royal Navy. With the latest Astute submarine, Audacious, launching back in the spring, the steel cut in July on HMS Glasgow, the first of our new frigates, the sailing of HMS

Queen Elizabeth, and the naming of HMS Prince of Wales, HMS Forth and HMS Medway, nobody should be in any doubt that this year has seen the Royal Navy growing in power and numbers.

### **Defence Funding**

**23 Oct 2017 | 630 c5**

#### **Asked by: Dr Julian Lewis**

Does the Secretary of State recall that several years after we took the peace dividend, in the mid-1990s, we were still spending 3% of GDP on defence? Will he assure us that no inadequacy in the defence budget will lead to the loss of HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark, which are scheduled to leave service in 2033 and 2034, as the defence procurement Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin), wrote to the Defence Committee to say only in January?

#### **Answered by: Sir Michael Fallon | Ministry of Defence**

On the latter point, I have referred to the purpose of the capabilities review, which is simply to make sure that the equipment programme that we set out in 2015 is on track and is spending our money in the best possible way to deal with the threats, which have intensified since then. On the first point, about finance, the defence budget was £34 billion when I became Defence Secretary. It is £36 billion today and it will reach £40 billion by 2020.

### **Leaving the EU: Defence Co-operation**

**23 Oct 2017 | 630 c4**

#### **Asked by: Stewart Malcolm McDonald**

Crucial to our relationship with EU and non-EU allies is the work of the Royal Marines in northern Europe. The fears that we have heard elsewhere about the future of HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark, which are key components of the UK-Netherlands amphibious force, are not being felt only on these shores, and the same is true of the decision earlier this summer to cancel the vital winter training in Norway. What assurances does the Secretary of State have today for our allies in northern Europe that those programmes are not in danger?

#### **Answered by: Sir Michael Fallon | Ministry of Defence**

We work very closely with our northern European allies, not least through the Northern Group and the joint expeditionary force, of which many of the other northern countries are members. The Royal Marines are a key part of that co-operation.

### **Falkland Islands**

**16 Oct 2017 | 107112**

#### **Asked by: Luke Pollard**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of how the Falkland Islands could be recaptured in the event of invasion without the use of Royal Navy amphibious capabilities provided by HMS Albion, HMS Bulwark and HMS Ocean.



**Answering member: Mark Lancaster | Ministry of Defence**

The Ministry of Defence remains committed to Defence and Security of the Falkland Islands and as such, protecting the right to self-determination. We undertake regular assessments of potential military threats to ensure that we retain an appropriate level of capability in the Falklands and a robust plan to rapidly reinforce, to address any such threats.

**Navy****16 Oct 2017 | 106959****Asked by: Luke Pollard**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans the Government has to sustain UK amphibious capabilities to 2025.

**Answering member: Harriett Baldwin | Ministry of Defence**

We continuously review the capabilities we require. The National Security Capability Review is focussed on the continued implementation of the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, to ensure the United Kingdom's investment in national security capabilities is as joined-up, effective and efficient as possible. No decisions have been made and any discussion of specific platforms or capabilities is speculation.

On current plans the out of service dates for these vessels is provided below:

Ship	Out of Service Date
HMS OCEAN	2018
HMS ALBION	2033
HMS BULWARK	2034

**HMS Prince of Wales****20 Oct 2017 | 107125****Asked by: Luke Pollard**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether HMS Prince of Wales has been designed to operate in littoral waters.

**Answering member: Harriett Baldwin | Ministry of Defence**

The Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carriers have been designed to operate as part of a Maritime Task Group in both the Carrier Strike and Littoral Manoeuvre roles, offering a significant basing option for the projection of air and amphibious power.

For operational security reasons, we do not comment on specific capabilities, as this would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

## Engagements

11 Oct 2017 | 629 c328

### **Asked by: Gary Streeter**

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Royal Marines, supported by a specialist amphibious fleet, have served our country with great distinction for many, many years? Does she share my concern that one of the proposals currently being considered by the Royal Navy is to downsize the amphibious fleet? In an uncertain world, is this not both short-sighted and dangerous, and will she please intervene?

### **Answering member: Theresa May | Prime Minister**

First, I absolutely agree that we can commend and applaud the contribution that the Royal Marines and our amphibious fleet have made to the defence of this country and, indeed, the defence of others. It is absolutely right that, as we look at how threats are changing, we look at how we should best spend the rising defence budget to support our national security. We have committed to spending 2% of GDP on defence every year of this Parliament. We are spending £178 billion over the time between 2016 and 2026 on equipment for our armed forces. Naturally, we do not always discuss the specific operational details, but if I might just say to my hon. Friend, I understand that the claims he has referred to our pure speculation at this stage.

## 5. Other Parliamentary material

### 5.1 Debates

#### **Defence Capability**

**19 Oct 2017 | 629 cc396-420**

### 5.2 Early Day Motions

#### **Royal Navy's amphibious assault capability**

**EDM 391 (session 2017-19)**

**12 October 2017**

**Luke Pollard**

That this House notes the recent speculation that the Government is considering scrapping the two Devonport-based Royal Navy amphibious assault ships, HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark; further notes that scrapping these warships would mean removing the Royal Navy's entire world-class amphibious assault capabilities; observes that these defence cuts risks severely reducing the role of the Royal Marines in future conflicts; highlights that this would create a significant capability gap for the UK; acknowledges speculation that equipment, programmes and personnel in the Army and Royal Air Force are also being considered for cuts in the Government's capability review; calls on the Government to end speculation around HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark and the strength of the Royal Marines by pledging to safeguard these Royal Navy warships and the Royal Marines; and further calls on the Government to reaffirm long-term commitment to the UK's world-class amphibious assault capability.

## 6. Further reading

### **UK maritime power (JDP 0-10)**

**Ministry of Defence**

**10 October 2017 (updated 2 November 2017)**

It outlines the enduring utility of maritime power and how the maritime environment is crucial to the rules based system within which the UK operates. It further explains the principles that underpin the way in which UK maritime forces operate to offer scalable and responsive options, without commitment, to our government in support of our national interests.

The doctrine:

- defines maritime power
- explains the attributes of maritime forces
- explains the use of maritime power through the concept of sea control and the principles of maritime manoeuvre and maritime power projection
- sets out the 3 main roles of UK maritime power: warfighting, maritime security and defence engagement;
- explains the maritime contribution to joint action and the full spectrum approach.

### 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](#).