



Defence Basing Review

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The Strategic Defence and Security Review made a number of recommendations for the reconfiguration of the Armed Forces which offered opportunities for the future rationalisation of the defence estate. Among those changes were the decisions to reconfigure the Army into five multi-role brigades, structure the RAF around fewer fast jet platforms and re-deploy British forces personnel currently based in Germany, back to the UK.

Since October 2010 the MOD has subsequently been conducting a basing review to examine all of these issues. The conclusions of that review were announced in the House on 18 July 2011. On 10 November 2011 the MOD announced both the timeframe for the restructuring of the UK Divisional HQ and the first tranche of moves as part of the Defence Rebasing Programme, which will take place in 2012 and early 2013.

This note sets out the headline recommendations of the Defence Rebasing Programme and the decisions that have been made to date.

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1 Decisions in the SDSR

The Strategic Defence and Security Review, which was published in October 2010, made a number of assumptions about the size and structure of the UK's armed forces by 2020. Under the Future Force 2020 vision, military capability was to be reconfigured in order to be flexible, adaptable and expeditionary. The future force structure would provide the ability to deploy highly capable assets quickly, but also prepare a greater scale and range of capability if required.

In order to meet the aspirations and objectives of Future Force 2020, a number of changes to the configuration of each of the Services were outlined, several of which have implications for the defence footprint in the UK. Specifically:

- To enhance the focus on front-line capabilities, the four regional divisional headquarters will be replaced by a single UK support command and at least two of the Army's 10 regional brigade headquarters will be closed by 2015.
- The Army will reduce by one the number of deployable brigades and reconfigure into five multi-role brigades, consisting of approximately 6,500 personnel each including reconnaissance, armoured, mechanised and light infantry forces, which will be self-supporting.

- Half of the remaining forces in Germany (approximately 20,000 Service personnel in total)¹ will return to the UK by 2015, with the aim of withdrawing all forces by 2020.
- By 2020 the fast jet fleet will be based around two platforms: the Typhoon and the Joint Strike Fighter. The Harrier GR9 fleet would be retired by April 2011; while the Tornado fleet will be maintained, albeit reduced to a size based on 18 force elements, as opposed to 40.² The Tornado fleet will retire progressively once the Typhoon force has the capability and force size to take on the offensive support task.
- The Nimrod MRA4 maritime patrol aircraft programme will be cancelled. That decision, along with the withdrawal of Harrier fleet, and the reduction in the size of the Tornado fleet, means that RAF Kinloss and two other bases will no longer be required by the RAF.

In light of those decisions the MOD initiated a basing review, the conclusions of which were announced in the House on 18 July 2011 in both an [oral](#) and [written ministerial statement](#).

2 Future Rationalisation of the Defence Estate

In his written statement to the House, the Secretary of State made clear that the decisions on military basing had been taken on the basis of:

What is best for the defence and security of the UK and what makes overall military sense. We looked at what was best for those serving in our armed forces, and their families. We also recognised that defence decisions have broader regional, economic, and social consequences. Finally, the resulting plan must of course be affordable and offer value-for-money for the taxpayer.³

The majority of the moves outlined are expected to take place after 2015, with some exceptions. The MOD has also sought to reiterate that more detailed planning is now required on the timeframe for the effective drawdown of troops in Germany and which units will locate to which sites. On that basis the following timings set out in the statement were provisional.

2.1 RAF Basing

- The SDSR already confirmed that RAF Kinloss would no longer be required as a Main Operating Base for the RAF. Kinloss was therefore expected to close as an airfield on 31 July 2011, close as an RAF station in March 2013 and be handed over to the Defence Infrastructure Organisation by March 2014.

Under the re-basing plans announced on 18 July RAF Kinloss will transfer to the Army. Some of the personnel returning from Germany will be based at Kinloss from 2014-15. It is unclear at present whether the Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centre and one of the RAF's Mountain Rescue Teams, which are both based at Kinloss, will remain once the site is transferred to the Army.

¹ A total footprint of approximately 43,000 personnel including dependants and civilian staff

² Force elements are defined as those aircraft that are required to sustain ongoing operations, in addition to a number held in readiness to deploy in the event of a crisis. That reduction will begin in April 2011 and conclude by March 2015 to coincide with the drawdown of operations in Afghanistan and the build up of the Typhoon force (Ministry of Defence, [Business Plan 2011-2015](#)).

³ HC Deb 18 July 2011, c66WS

- RAF Leuchars will be closed as an RAF station. The Typhoon force which is due to be built up at the station over the next few years and comprise the northern element of the UK's Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) capability will transfer to RAF Lossiemouth. Those aircraft will be re-deployed from 2013.⁴

Leuchars will also transfer to the Army. Two major units and a formation HQ will re-deploy to the site from Germany. On current plans the HQ is expected to move to Leuchars before 2015, followed by the two units between 2015 and 2017. As a result the number of military personnel based at Leuchars will increase from the current level of 1,200 to more than 1,300.

- RAF Lossiemouth will be retained and will be home to both the Tornado GR4 and the Typhoon. In 2005 the previous Government announced that RAF Lossiemouth was the preferred location for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter when it enters services towards the end of this decade. This latest statement does not make it clear whether this is still the case given the intention to re-deploy the Typhoon to the base and the decision in the SDSR to procure a reduced number of the carrier variant of the aircraft as opposed to the standard take-off, vertical landing (STOVL) version.
- RAF Marham will remain as a base for the Tornado GR4 aircraft.
- RAF Cottesmore, which was earmarked for closure in December 2009 with the drawdown of the Harrier fleet,⁵ will also transfer to the Army. The RAF will vacate the base in 2013 and the Army is expected to move in the following year.

2.2 Army Basing

- The five multi-role brigades (MRB) which are envisaged under the SDSR will be located in and around Catterick and Salisbury, which already have a strong Army footprint (3 out of 5 brigades), in Eastern England, largely at the former RAF base at Cottesmore and in Scotland, largely in Kirknewton, south west of Edinburgh.

The MRB in Eastern England and Scotland will be largely formed from units returning from Germany. As outlined above the RAF will vacate Cottesmore in 2013 and the first Army units will begin to move in, in 2014. Other units will also move into former RAF and existing Army bases including North Luffenham in Rutland in 2015-16, Bassingbourn in Cambridgeshire in 2016-17 and Woodbridge in Suffolk in 2017-18.

The MRB in Scotland will be based largely in the central Lowlands. The key sites to be used are located at Kirknewton which will be developed into a major army base, and Glencorse. The first units are expected to move in to Glencorse in 2015 and Kirknewton in 2016-17. Other units will also move into existing sites at HMS Caledonia (2015-16) Albemarle barracks in Northumberland and Arbroath, following the re-deployment of the Royal Marines currently based there to South West England in 2015-16. As outlined above, Army units will also re-deploy to RAF Kinloss and RAF Leuchars.

It is expected that approximately 6,500-7,000 Army personnel currently in Germany will be based in Scotland, and as a result the overall defence footprint in Scotland will increase by over 2,000 posts.⁶

⁴ The first of three Typhoon squadrons was stood up at RAF Leuchars in September 2010 and assumed the QRA role in March 2011.

⁵ See HC Deb 15 December 2009, c801

- The single UK Support Command, which will replace the current divisional HQ, will be based in Aldershot. HQ 2nd division in Edinburgh, HQ 4th division in Aldershot and HQ 5th division in Shrewsbury will subsequently be disbanded in 2012.

Savings at the brigade level will now be made through structural changes to each of the ten regional Brigade HQ's and to HQ London District, together with their supporting structures, rather than closing individual brigade HQ as identified in the SDSR.

- 19 Light Brigade, which is based in Northern Ireland, will be disbanded by 2013.⁷ Units returning from Germany will move into the vacated bases in Aldegrave in 2015.
- Units returning from Germany are also expected to re-locate to Pirbright Barracks near Woking in 2013; while 2 additional signals regiments will re-locate to Stafford between 2015 and 2018.⁸
- 160 Wales Brigade will remain in Brecon.

2.3 Location of Defence Technical Training

- St Athan will be retained, along with the 300 technical training posts currently located there, while its usage will be increased.
- Defence technical training, involving 1,500 posts, will move to the former RAF base at Lyneham, which is earmarked for closure as an RAF station in 2012. That move will be achieved in 2013-14 and will result in the withdrawal of the MOD from Arborfield in Berkshire, home to the School of Electronic and Aeronautical Engineering, and Bordon in Hampshire, which is home to the School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering. Personnel at Arborfield and Bordon had been earmarked to move to St Athan as part of the Defence Training Review. That project was scrapped however in 2010.

2.4 Disposals

As a result of these changes, a number of MOD sites will be surplus to requirements and will, therefore, be disposed of:

- Craigiehall Camp (home to HQ 2nd Division), Redford and Dreghorn Barracks (home to the 3rd Battalion, The Rifles and the 1st Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, Royal Scots Borderers respectively) in Edinburgh by 2014-15. The units based at these sites will be accommodated at other locations.
- Waterbeach Barracks in Cambridgeshire (home to 25 and 39 Engineer Regiments). The units based at this site will be accommodated at other locations.
- Arborfield garrison and Bordon garrison will be released for sale by 2014-15.

⁶ HC Deb 18 July 2011, c655

⁷ 19 Light Brigade was formed on 1 January 2005 from the 're-rolling' of 19 mechanised Brigade.

⁸ Under Operation *Borona* 1 Signals Brigade and 102 Logistics Brigade are due to re-deploy from Germany to RAF Cosford, near Stafford, by 2014.

3 First Tranche of Army Moves in 2012

On 10 November 2011 the MOD announced the *first* tranche of moves that will take place in 2012 and the first half of 2013 as part of its Defence Rebasing Programme.⁹ First tranche moves will include 1,800 personnel returning from Germany, Army units relocating from Cyprus and the re-location of units based in the UK earlier than previously planned, including those personnel moving into Kinloss and Cottesmore.

Further decisions on the re-location of personnel after 2013 have yet to be announced.

3.1 Personnel re-locating from Germany and Cyprus

Germany

As outlined above, approximately half of the 20,000 personnel currently serving in Germany are due to be re-located back to the UK by 2015, and the remainder by 2020.

Over the course of 2012 and the first half of 2013 1,800 of those personnel will be re-located back to the UK:

- 7 Regiment, Royal Logistics Corp will move from Bielefeld to Cottesmore by summer 2013, a year earlier than planned. This will enable HQ British Forces Germany to move from Rheindahlen to Bielefeld. Approximately 450 Service personnel and their families will move to Cottesmore.
- 43 Close Support Squadron, Royal Logistics Corp will move from Gütersloh to Abingdon in Oxfordshire by the end of January 2012, in order to collocate with its parent regiment, 12 Logistic Support Regiment. This move will involve approximately 120 Service personnel and their families.

The MOD has estimated that the rebasing of troops from Germany will save £250m per year; while £650m per year will be contributed to the UK economy.

Cyprus

In July 2012 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment will move from Cyprus to Cottesmore instead of Trenchard Barracks in Celle as originally planned. This will involve some 620 Service personnel and their families moving into Cottesmore. Originally the Army has been expected to move into Cottesmore in 2014.

2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment will also move from Cyprus to Elizabeth Barracks in Pirbright in July 2013 as opposed to Münster station. Approximately 620 Service personnel and their families will move into Pirbright.

The number of troops based in Cyprus will remain unchanged however as both battalions are due to be replaced by other infantry battalions.

On the basis of these moves Trenchard Barracks in Celle, and Münster Station will be handed back to the German authorities enabling the closure of Rheindahlen Military Complex.

⁹ [MOD Press Release](#), 10 November 2011

3.2 Personnel re-locating within the UK

39 Engineer Regiment (Air Support) will move from Waterbeach, near Cambridge to Kinloss in summer 2012; two years earlier than previously planned. 25 Engineer Regiment, also based at Waterbeach will be disbanded by 31 May 2012. Two of its squadrons, 34 Field Squadron and 53 Field Squadron, will become part of 39 Engineer Regiment and will also move to Kinloss. In total some 930 Service personnel and their families will move to Kinloss.

HQ 12 (Air Support) Engineer Group will also move from Waterbeach to RAF Wittering in summer 2013. 44 Service personnel and their families will move to Wittering.

On the basis of these moves Waterbeach Barracks will be closed by December 2013 and sold.

4 Project Avanti – HQ Restructuring

On 10 November 2011 the MOD also announced the timeframe for the restructuring of the Army's Divisional and Regional HQ.¹⁰

Under Project Avanti the Army is replacing its three UK Divisional HQ in Edinburgh, Shrewsbury and Aldershot with a single HQ Support Command in Aldershot. Savings are also expected to be made at the regional brigade level through the restructuring of the 10 regional brigade HQ's and to HQ London District.

The new Support Command will begin operation in January 2012, when HQ 4th Division in Aldershot is due to be disbanded. HQ 2nd Division in Edinburgh and HQ 5th Division in Shrewsbury will both disband in April 2012. Some tasks are expected to continue, however, until August 2012 when HQ Support Command will become fully operational.

Despite the closure of HQ 2nd Division in Edinburgh the Army will retain a General Officer Commanding (GOC) Scotland, in addition to a small number of staff, in order to maintain the level of senior representation in Scotland required to oversee the rebasing changes. In the longer term HQ 1 (UK) Armoured Division, currently based in Germany, is expected to re-locate to Scotland by 2020 and will take over the GOC Scotland role.

The ten regional brigade HQ's and HQ London District will begin restructuring in January 2012 and should be completed by 31 March 2013.

The MOD estimates that the restructuring proposals under Project Avanti will save £19m in terms of civilian and military post reductions. However, it doesn't go on to say how many post reductions these changes will incur.

¹⁰ HC Deb 10 November 2011, c19-20WS