

Defence Secretary oral statement on the Defence Command Paper

As a young officer, thirty years ago almost to the day, I was summoned to the drill square to have read aloud key decisions from the government's defence review, 'Options For Change'.

We did not know it then but the world was set for massive change. The fall of the Soviet Union, the rise of China, the global impact of the internet and emergence of Al Qaeda were some way off, which meant no one was really prepared for what happened when they did.

They were all some way off and yet no one was really prepared for what happened when they did.

I was part of an Army that, on paper, fielded three armoured divisions in Germany, but in reality could muster much less – it was, in truth, a hollow force.

That is why – while I know some colleagues would rather play top trumps with our force numbers – there is no point boasting about numbers of regiments when you send them to war in Snatch Land Rovers, or simply counting the number of tanks when our adversaries are developing ways to defeat them.

That is why we have put at the heart of the Defence Command Paper the mission to seek out and to understand future threats, and to invest in the capabilities needed so that we can defeat them.

Because in defence it is too tempting to use the shield of sentimentality to protect previously battle-winning but now outdated capabilities. Such sentimentality, when coupled with over-ambition and under-resourcing leads to even harder consequences down the line. It risks the lives of our people, who are truly our finest asset.

It would, of course, similarly endanger our people if we simply wielded a sword of cuts, slicing away the battle-proven on the promise of novelty, without regard for what is left behind. Old capabilities are not necessarily redundant, just as new technologies are not always relevant – we must employ both 'sword' and 'shield'.

Because those of us in government charged to defend the country have a duty to protect new domains, as well as continuing investment in the traditional ones, but always adapting to the threat.

History shows us, time and time again, that failing to do so risks irrelevance and defeat. As the threat changes we must change with it, remaining clear-eyed about what capabilities we retire, why we are doing things, and how they will be replaced.

The Prime Minister's vision for the UK in 2030 sees a stronger, more secure,

prosperous and resilient Union, better equipped for a more competitive age, as a problem-solving and burden-sharing nation with a global perspective. To become so requires Britain's soft and hard power to be better integrated.

In this more competitive age, a 'Global Britain' has no choice but to step up, ready to take on the challenges and shape the opportunities of the years ahead, alongside our allies and friends. Let us be clear, the benefits and institutions of multilateralism, to which we have all become so accustomed, are an extension not an alternative for our shared leadership and our hard power.

UK diplomacy should work hand in hand with the UK Armed Forces abroad. We will invest in our defence diplomacy network in order to strengthen the influence we can bring to bear.

And at this point I wish to pay tribute to all our civil servants, whose professionalism and dedication is every bit as vital to UK security as all the other components in that enterprise.

Likewise, in the past we have been too tempted to fund equipment at the expense of our service personnel's lived experience. That is why over the next four years we will spend £1.5-billion on improving Single Living Accommodation and £1.4-billion on Wrap Around Childcare over the decade. _

The Government's commitment to spending £188-billion on defence over the coming four years – an increase of £24-billion or fourteen per cent – is an investment in the Prime Minister's vision of security and prosperity in 2030.

Previous reviews have been over-ambitious and under-funded, leaving forces that were overstretched and under-equipped.

This increased funding offers defence an exciting opportunity to turn our current forces into credible ones, modernising for the threats of the 2020s and beyond, and contributing to national prosperity in the process.

It marks a shift from mass mobilisation to information age speed, readiness and relevance for confronting the threats of the future.

These principles will guide our doctrine and force development.

The Integrated Operating Concept, published last year, recognises that changes in the information and political environments now impact not just the context but conduct of military operations.

The notion of war and peace as binary states has given way to a continuum of conflict, requiring us to prepare our forces for more persistent global engagement and constant campaigning – moving seamlessly from operating to war fighting if that is required.

The UK Armed Forces – working with the rest of government – must think and act differently. They will no longer be held as a force of last resort, but become more present and active force around the world.

Our forces will still be able to warfight as their primary function, but they will also have a role to play before and after what we traditionally consider 'war'; whether that is supporting humanitarian projects, conflict prevention and stabilisation, or UN peacekeeping.

But technological proliferation, use of proxies, and adversaries' operating below the threshold of open conflict means that the United Kingdom must also play a role in countering such aggressive acts. So the steps to sustaining UK leadership in defence must start with ensuring we are a credible and truly threat-oriented organisation, and we must do so in conjunction with our Allies and friends.

These reforms today will ensure that we continue to meet our NATO commitments on land and enhance our contributions at sea.

As the second biggest spender in NATO and a major contributor across all five domains, we have a responsibility to support the Alliance's own transformation for this more competitive age.

So, today I am setting out in this Defence Command Paper the threats we are facing, our operating concept for countering them, and the investments in our forces that are required to deliver the nation's defences.

That threat demands that we make the following investments and adjustments to the services.

The Royal Navy

- we have also been a maritime nation for many many centuries and it is vital that we have a navy that is both global and powerful.
- the Royal Navy – because of our investment in the Type 26, Type 31, and Type 32 – will by the start of the next decade have over twenty Frigates and Destroyers.
- we will also commission a new Multi-Role Ocean Surveillance Ship which will protect the integrity of the UK's Maritime Zones and undersea Critical National Infrastructure.
- we will deploy new automated mine hunting systems, which will replace the Sandown and Hunt classes as they retire through the decade.
- the interim Surface to Surface Guided Weapon, will replace the Harpoon missile and we will upgrade the Air Defence weapon systems on our Type 45s to better protect them from new threats.
- we will invest further to improve the availability of our submarine fleet and start development of the next generation of subsea systems for

the 2040s.

- the Royal Marines will develop from being amphibious infantry held at readiness, to a forward-based, highly capable maritime 'Future Commando Force', further enabled by the conversion of a Bay Class landing ship to enable Littoral Strike.

British Army

Our land forces have been, for too long, deprived of investment and that is why over the next four years we will spend £23-billion on their modernisation.

- the British Army will reorganise into seven brigade combat teams, two heavy, one deep strike, one air manoeuvre, and two light, plus a Combat Aviation Brigade.
- in addition, a newly formed Security Force Assistance Brigade will provide the skills and capabilities to build the capacity of partner nations.
- in recognition of the growing demand for enhanced assistance and our commitment to delivering resilience to those partners we will establish an Army Special Operations Brigade built around the four battalions of the new Ranger Regiment. This new regiment will be seeded from 1 SCOTS, 2 PWRR, 2 LANCS, and 4 RIFLES.
- our adversaries set a premium on rapid deployability, so we will enhance the existing 16 Air Assault Brigade with an additional infantry unit, supported by upgraded Apache Attack Helicopters. Together they will create a Global Response Force for both crisis response and warfighting.
- the 3rd Division will remain the heart of our warfighting capability, leading in NATO with two modernised heavy brigades. In order to ensure we are more lethal and better protected they will be built around a modern armoured nucleus of 148 upgraded 'Challenger 3' tanks, AJAX armoured reconnaissance vehicles, and the accelerated introduction of Boxer armoured personnel carriers.
- as I have repeatedly said, recent lessons from conflict in Libya, Syria and the Caucuses have shown the vulnerability of armour. So we will increase both manning and investment in Electronic Warfare regiments, Air Defence, and Uncrewed Aerial Surveillance systems, all complemented by offensive cyber capabilities.

- the Army's increased deployability and technological advantage will mean that greater effect can be delivered by fewer people. I have therefore taken the decision to reduce the size of the Army from today's current strength of 76,500 trade trained personnel to 72,500 by 2025. The Army has not been at its established strength of 82,000 since the middle of the last decade.
- these changes will not require redundancies and we wish to build on the work already done on utilising our reserves to make sure the whole force is better integrated and more productive.
- there will be no loss of cap badges. As I have said earlier the new structures will require fewer units. And therefore the 2nd Battalion the Mercian Regiment will be amalgamated with their 1st Battalion to form a new Boxer-mounted battalion.
- to administer the new infantry we will reorganise the regiments to sit in four infantry divisions.
- each will comprise of a more balanced number of battalions and give the men and women serving in them a wider range of choices and opportunities in pursuing their careers and specialties.
- in order to ensure that there is a balanced allocation of recruits we will introduce 'Intelligent Recruiting' for the infantry and each division of infantry will initially feed the four new Ranger battalions.
- the final details of these administrative divisions, along with the wider Army restructuring, will be announced before the summer and no major unit deletions will be required.

Royal Air Force

- today's Royal Air Force is now deploying world-leading capabilities, P8, Rivet Joint, A400M and the latest Typhoons. The F35 – the world's most capable combat aircraft – is now being deployed to frontline squadrons. In recognition of its battle winning capabilities we will commit to grow the fleet beyond 48 aircraft.
- the E3D Sentry, two generations behind its contemporaries, will be replaced by a more capable fleet of three E7 Wedgetail in 2023. These will be based at RAF Lossiemouth, transforming the UK Airborne Early Warning and Control capabilities, as well as contributing to NATO.

- as the transport fleet improves availability we will retire the C130-J Hercules in 2023, after 24 years of service. Twenty-two A400Ms, alongside the C17s, will provide a more capable and flexible transport fleet.
- our counter terrorism operations are currently supported by nine Reaper RPAS ('drones') which will be replaced by Protectors by 2024. These new platforms will provide the enhanced strategic ISR and strike capabilities that are so vital for all our forces.
- all forces evolve and the increasingly competitive and complex air environment means we must set the foundations now for our sixth-generation of fighter.
- the Typhoon has been a tremendous success for the British aerospace industry and we will seek to repeat that with £2-billion of investment in the Future Combat Air System over the next four years, alongside further development of the LANCA UCAV system. We will continue to seek further international collaboration.
- all services recognise the importance of Unmanned Aerial Systems, which is why we will also develop combat drone swarm technologies.
- but in order to ensure our current platforms have the necessary protection and lethality we will also upgrade the Typhoon radar and introduce Spear Cap 3 deep strike capabilities.

UK Strategic Command

- the lessons of current conflict demonstrate that however capable individual forces may be they are vulnerable without integration.
- UK Strategic Command will, therefore, invest £1.5-billion over the next decade to build and sustain a 'digital backbone' to share and exploit vast amounts of data, through the cloud and secure networks.
- to ensure our workforce are able to exploit new domains and enhance productivity the Command will invest in synthetics and simulation, providing a step change in our training.
- the National Cyber Force will lie at the heart of defence and GCHQ's offensive cyber capability and will be based in the North West of England.

- keeping ourselves informed of the threat and ahead of our rivals means that Defence Intelligence will be at the heart of our enterprise. We will exploit a wider network of advanced surveillance platforms, all classifications of data, and enhanced analysis using Artificial Intelligence.
- strategic Command will partner, alongside the RAF, to deliver a step-change in our space capabilities. From next year we will start delivering a UK built Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance satellite constellation.

Space is just one area in which the MOD will prioritise more than £6.6-billion of research, development, and experimentation over the next four years.

These investments in our future battle-winning capabilities will be guided by the Science and Technology Strategy of 2020 and a new Defence and Security Industrial Strategy, published tomorrow.

Our special forces are world leading. We are committed to investing in their cutting-edge capabilities to ensure they retain their excellence in counter-terrorism, while becoming increasingly capable of also countering hostile state activity.

To conclude, if this Defence Command Paper is anything it is an honest assessment of what we can do and what we will do.

We will ensure defence is threat-focused, modernised, and financially sustainable, ready to confront future challenges, seize new opportunities for Global Britain and lay the foundations of a more secure and prosperous United Kingdom.

We will, for the first time in decades, match genuine money to credible ambitions. We will retire platforms to make way for new systems and approaches.

And we will invest in that most precious commodity of all – the people of our armed forces.

To serve my country as a soldier was one of the greatest privileges of my life: 'serving to lead', contributing to keeping this country safe, upholding our values, and defending those who could not defend themselves.

Putting yourself in harm's way in the service of your country is something that fortunately few of us are ever required to do.

But we all have a duty to ensure that those who do so on our behalves are as well prepared and equipped as possible.

So the success of this Defence Command Paper should not be judged on the sophistication of its words, but the implementation of its reforms.

And, ultimately, on the delivery of its capabilities into the hands of the men and women of our armed forces.

It is they who keep us safe and will continue to do so in the years ahead. It is to them, their families, and all those across defence that we owe it to make this policy into reality.

The work to do so has only just begun.