

Fallon: Defending our people and our values

Sir

Michael Fallon MP, Secretary of State for Defence, speaking today at Conservative Party Conference in Manchester said:

(Check against delivery)

“This week we set out plans for a Global Britain that stands up for our people and for our values.

This city needs no reminding of the threats from extremists who want to destroy our way of life.

When

I became Defence Secretary, Daesh terrorists were at the gates of Baghdad, enslaving women, beheading British hostages, and throwing gay people off buildings. And when the democratic Government of Iraq appealed for help, Britain answered the call.

At

our conference three years ago, I announced the first successful RAF airstrike.

As

of last night there have been 1,600 airstrikes.

The

Army has trained 60,000 Iraqi forces.

The

Royal Navy has been guarding the United States carriers in the Gulf.

Daesh

is being defeated.

The

black flags have been torn down.

Three

million people have been freed from its murderous rule.

So

we should be very proud of the contribution of our Armed Forces to this

success.

And

I am delighted to tell you that a new medal will be awarded to those servicemen and women who are doing so much to fight the evil of our time.

I'm

sure you'll agree with me they deserve nothing less.

Conference,

terrorism is not the only threat to our security.

Russian

aggression with the highest level of submarine activity since the Cold War, thousands of troops exercising on NATO's borders.

North

Korea firing ballistic missiles over Japan.

Cyber-attacks

on our national health service and on our Parliament.

So

we are stepping up our response.

Today

our armed forces are on operations in more than 25 countries, they're helping to stop Afghanistan become a haven for terrorists. They're training Ukraine's Armed Forces to defend themselves against Russian aggression. They're in Nigeria helping to tackle terrorists and they're supporting United Nations peacekeeping in Somalia and South Sudan and we are leading in NATO – our Army deploying in Estonia and Poland; RAF Typhoons protecting the Black Sea skies; and the Royal Navy leading NATO's maritime task groups. And our Armed Forces are also ready for anything.

Look

at our response to the most powerful hurricane ever to hit the Caribbean.

RFA

Mounts Bay was already on station to provide immediate assistance – helping our people, the people of the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Turks and Caicos.

Within

a week we had deployed 600 service personnel, 3 helicopters, and one Foreign Secretary. We even flew French supplies from Normandy to Guadalupe.

From

Asia Pacific, to the Middle East, to Europe we are deepening our defence ties with allies and partners. And we have no greater ally, Conference, than the United States.

In
Defence Secretary Jim Mattis we have a true friend of our nation with whom I
work closely with on Russia, on North Korea, and on the campaign against
Daesh.
And here at home our Armed Forces are patrolling our skies and seas, every
hour
of every day.

Every
one of them deserves our gratitude.

Conference,
there is no better statement to the world of our ambition for Britain than
our
two new aircraft carriers. Weighing 65,000 tonnes, they each provide four
acres
of sovereign territory, deployable around the globe, to serve on operations
for
the next 50 years.

Made
in Britain, built in six ship yards, assembled in Scotland, they are a
tribute
to British engineering, British technology, British skills – the pride of our
nation.

And
yes, there will be fighter planes on them.

We
already have 12 F35 jets with 120 pilots and ground crew training up in the
United States, before the first Squadron arrives at RAF Marham next summer.
And
what does Jeremy Corbyn have to say in response?

He's
asked "why do we have to be able to have planes, transport aircraft, aircraft
carriers, and everything else to get anywhere in the world?"

Well,
you don't get very far without them. He wants to slash defence spending. He
wouldn't authorise drone strikes on terrorists. He would abandon our NATO
allies.

We
must never put the security of our country in the hands of a man whose warped
worldview puts him side of those who threaten us. We are backing up our
ambition with the fifth biggest defence budget in the world.

A
budget that our manifesto committed to increasing by at least half a per cent
above inflation in every year of this parliament. Of course you'll always

find
retired Admirals or Generals who like more.

What
matters isn't just numbers: it's power: stronger, smarter defence. We're now investing £18 billion a year – by the way that really is £350m a week. In the last three years we've started building seven new ships and submarines for the Royal Navy. Now I want to see more of our ships out there patrolling the seven seas.

So
today, Conference, I am announcing £800 million of support contracts that will produce faster turnaround and improve the availability of the Royal Navy's world class warships. The Army is getting new attack helicopters, and new armoured vehicles built in Wales.

For
the RAF, 16 new transport aircraft have joined our fleet, and 9 maritime patrol aircraft will start arriving in Lossiemouth. Under Theresa May's leadership, we are also renewing our nuclear deterrent, building four Dreadnought class submarines.

North
Korea's illegal testing underlines just how irresponsible it would be to scrap the deterrent that protects us. It is all very well Jeremy Corbyn saying he would never use nuclear weapons but Manchester and London are closer to Pyongyang than Los Angeles. Being prepared, in the most extreme circumstances, to use nuclear weapons is what separates a Prime Minister from a pacifist.

As
we grow our defence budget we must continue to modernise the way we work.

To
modernise how we equip our Armed Forces, everything from ration packs to medical kit, will save £600m.

Improving
how we run our test and training sites will deliver £300M of further savings.

And
as those threats intensify we are now looking across government to make sure we are doing enough, spending enough, to properly protect our country against

all
of them – cyber, hybrid warfare, rogue states, terrorist attacks. Spending 2
%
of GDP on defence is the minimum NATO commitment. We meet it but we should
aim
to do better still.

One
of the privileges as Defence Secretary is meeting the outstanding people who
make up our Armed Forces. Many of them started as cadets. This morning I
visited
Albion Academy in Salford, one of 150 new cadet units we have already set up.
They are instilling values of resolve and service, discipline and loyalty –
from which we can all learn.

So
today I am announcing the creation of a further 30 new cadet units in state
schools.

I
also want to attract more ethnic minority and female recruits.

I
set a target for 10 per cent of recruits in future to come from a black,
Asian,
or minority ethnic background by 2020 – seven per cent now do.

They're
joining some who have already reached the ranks of Brigadier, Commodore, and
Air Commodore. We are also on track to meet our target that 15% of new
recruits
should be female – but I want to do even better.

So
I'm opening up every single role in our Armed Forces to women so that talent,
not gender, determines how far you can go.

And
I will expect the next Chief of the Defence Staff – he or she... – to champion
more diversity in the leadership of our Armed Forces.

I
will also lead a new Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board to look after
our
servicemen and women better when they leave. Often the worst scars are the
ones
we can't see, so we will deliver mental health services better tailored for
veterans.

Conference,
I'm tackling other injustices too

Thanks

to our evidence, thousands of false legal claims against our Armed Forces have been dismissed, the solicitor involved has been struck off, and I've shut down the Iraq Historic Allegations Tribunal.

And I am working with James Brokenshire to make sure that investigations into killings during the Troubles focus on terrorists, not those who protected our people.

And I will ensure that our former servicemen are fully supported throughout.

Conference, under this government we will go on increasing defence spending. Our magnificent armed forces will keep us safe.

But as citizens of a truly Global Britain we have a wider, deeper responsibility. We must defend our values too.

Britain, this great country, stands as a beacon to the world for our commitment to freedom, democracy, tolerance, and the rule of law.

We face terrorism and aggression from those who hate not because those values are losing but because they are winning – values that have lifted millions around the globe out of oppression and poverty.

With the fifth biggest defence budget in the world, we have the means. So we must always be ready to answer the call from further away, from fragile democracies, from the very poorest, from the hardest hit.

That means deploying our ships, our planes, and yes, our troops on the ground where we and our allies are asked to help.

Standing up for what we believe in – that is Global Britain.”

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