

Plans to cut defence spending in independent Scotland 'irresponsible and short-sighted'

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Plans to cut defence spending as part of a revised blueprint for an independent Scotland are “irresponsible and short-sighted”, a Scottish Conservative MP and former naval officer has said.

In a report published today, former Nationalist defence spokesman Bruce Crawford has said that Scotland could save more than £2bn a year by creating a slimmed-down defence force.

He has said that the Scottish military after independence should be one third smaller than it is at present, with no fast jets, big surface ships, tanks or nuclear weapons.

Scottish Conservative MP for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine Andrew Bowie, who served in the Royal Navy, has condemned the assessment.

He said: “This plan is a very worrying demonstration of what an independent Scotland’s defence posture could look like.

“NATO members and allies across Europe are beginning to increase spending on defence given the re-emergence of the Russian threat, cyber security and the continuing state of flux in the Middle East.

“To propose a plan so substantially short of the 2 percent of GDP minimum demanded by the alliance is frankly irresponsible and short sighted.

“The fact is that, at present, Scotland is served by being a part of the United Kingdom which is internationally recognized as having some of the best equipped and most adaptable armed forces in the world.

“The UK is also a member of the five eyes intelligence network and has strong bilateral alliances with France, the USA and others.

“The people of Scotland chose decisively in 2014 to remain part of the UK – and to continue to be defended by the British armed forces.

“That is something the SNP simply don’t get.”