



# FOR BRITAIN MOVEMENT

## **For Britain Defence Policy**

### **Introduction**

Britain's Armed Forces should be the pride of the nation. Instead they are over-extended, financially straitjacketed, overmanned at the top but undermanned at the bottom, often badly equipped with overpriced kit and poorly configured for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The UK is involved in too many deployments and small wars. Teeth arms have been shamefully run down in recent years by both Labour and the Tories, with the numbers of soldiers, ships and aircraft down to levels last seen decades or centuries ago. The number of senior officers has not followed suit. At the same time, turf wars between the three services have meant that the main purpose of our shrunken Armed Forces has never been seriously re-imagined from stopping a Warsaw Pact tank armada.

Our strategic commitment to NATO and the Trident nuclear deterrent must be maintained, but For Britain will not get involved in foreign wars or deployments unless they are in the clear interests of the British people. We will follow the recent recommendation of the House of Commons Defence Committee and restore defence's share of national expenditure back to what it was in 1995 at 3% of GDP.

We will stop the horrendous over-manning in the upper ranks, perform efficiency audits, and stop BAE Systems' dominance by procuring the best kit in the world at a reasonable price. Showing respect for our soldiers, sailors and airmen is vital and we will give them the support they deserve, both when serving and after they leave.

## **Guiding Principles**

- No more unnecessary commitments
- Plug the gaping holes and restore defence expenditure to mid-1990s levels
- Stop the waste and mismanagement
- Re-imagine the role of Britain's Armed Forces for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- It is vital to respect and support our soldiers, sailors and airmen

## **The Current State of our Armed Forces**

Britain's Armed Forces are at a historically low ebb because of repeated defence budget cuts under both Labour and the Conservatives. We have

- 78,000 soldiers, fewer than at any time since before the Napoleonic Wars<sup>1</sup>
- 227 main battle tanks but 485 horses<sup>2</sup>. The planned replacement of the Challenger 2s in one of our three tank regiments with the Ajax fighting vehicle will leave us with fewer MBTs than Serbia<sup>3</sup>
- 72 Typhoon fighters, fewer combat aircraft than in 1914<sup>4</sup>. Our aged Tornado strike aircraft will all have been decommissioned by early 2019. Only 12 F35s have so far been ordered to replace them.<sup>5</sup>
- No maritime patrol aircraft despite the increase in Russian activity
- 19 surface combat ships, fewer than at any time since the Royal Navy was formed by Henry VIII
- Our two new aircraft carriers are not yet operational. When they are, with one carrier planned to be constantly available, it will take almost the entire Royal Navy to form our (only) carrier battle group.

## **The 3% GDP Target**

For Britain will increase defence expenditure to properly fund our Armed Forces. We will restore defence spending to 3% of GDP, as recently recommended by the Defence Select Committee.<sup>6</sup>

## **Tackling Inefficiency in the Services and Defence Procurement**

Inefficiency and waste in the Services and defence procurement is perhaps the worst among all the State's many functions. This is not due to unique inefficiency there, but unrestrained bureaucratic empire-building over decades. The State's monopoly on force means that, even more than the NHS, this is the one area where there can be no competition from other 'firms' to show up inefficiency. Reality checks caused by major deployments only happen every ten years or so: the Falklands War in 1982, the Gulf War in 1990-1 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

A background of repeated defence cuts, but with those making the decisions never cutting themselves, has left us with

- More Generals and Brigadiers (229) than main battle tanks (227)
- Two Admirals for every surface warship (38 versus 19) and 13 Captains (240 total) for every destroyer or frigate
- More Air Commodores and Air Marshals (118) than combat aircraft (72)<sup>7</sup>

Clearly the ongoing waste is extraordinary. For Britain will institute a full audit of the operations of the Armed Forces and defence procurement, on the lines used successfully by Leslie Chapman to reduce expenditure by 20-45% without lowering the services offered<sup>8</sup>.

Tales of mismanagement and waste in the UK's defence procurement systems are legion.<sup>9</sup> Over and over again, Britain's soldiers, sailors and airmen end up with sub-standard, malfunctioning equipment, years late, at three or five times the cost of what we could have bought world-class equipment off the shelf for years earlier.

For Britain will end the effective private monopoly of BAE Systems over British defence procurement. British defence procurement should go to competitive tendering but with a constant ambition to place contracts with British based firms where it makes financial and military sense. Our Armed Forces and taxpayers deserve nothing less. We will stop selling arms to Saudi Arabia.

## **Reconfiguring the Armed Forces for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

No-one knows what the next major war Britain is involved in could look like. What we can be reasonably confident about is that it won't involve a Russian tank armada rolling into Germany. Showing solidarity with Britain's NATO allies remains important, as does maintaining the Trident nuclear deterrent. However the threat of a Russian land invasion is not what it was 30 years ago, except in the Baltic states. Nevertheless Britain's armed forces have not seen a wholesale reconfiguration. Instead they have kept the same basic shape due to inter-service turf wars, while being repeatedly trimmed to save money.

The most technically difficult military task that is reasonably likely would be to go a long way off and overcome military opposition from a medium-weight state. For Britain therefore proposes to reconfigure our Armed Forces to be able to do that:

- This would be a combined arms mission, but effective inter-service parity has meant the only viable financial settlement has been 33% of the money for each. We will subordinate the three services to a single authority who is not required to treat them even-handedly, and stop each of the three service heads having the right of direct access to the Prime Minister
- Main battle tanks, and self-propelled artillery to keep up with their advance, are very expensive but have little role in any foreseeable conflict. De-emphasise them in favour of armoured infantry, elite light infantry and special forces
- Buy two full size carriers. US carriers of 100,000 tons carry 60 aircraft; our 65,000 ton carriers will carry 12, surging to 36 in wartime

- Buy the world's best fighter/attack aircraft to catapult off them. With no catapults, the Queen Elizabeth class's 12 short take off and vertical landing warplanes will have severely limited payload and endurance
- Buy fixed-wing early warning radar aircraft. We only have helicopters for this role, which have a much lower ceiling and limited endurance
- Buy anti-submarine helicopter carriers instead of frigates. This, combined with reconstituting our maritime patrol capacity, will also demonstrate the UK's commitment to securing the North Atlantic for NATO
- De-emphasise destroyers and frigates. They are an "Admiral factory"<sup>10</sup> and we have more than enough Admirals already. Fighters controlled by high-flying radar can defend the fleet better and much more cheaply than destroyers' horizon-limited radar and missiles. Anti-submarine helicopter carriers can counter submarines better and much more cheaply than frigates with their single ASW helicopter.

## **British Society's Commitment to the Military**

For Britain is a patriotic party. Showing respect and gratitude to our veterans, as they do in the US, is important not just for our veterans' sake but for our own nation's self-respect. We will

- Take all personnel on operational duty overseas out of Income Tax
- Create a dedicated Minister for Veterans to head a Veterans Administration, co-ordinating all services
- Create a dedicated military hospital. Britain is the only major country in Europe without one
- More than 11,000 Ministry of Defence homes across the UK are empty, costing the taxpayer more than £25m a year in rent and maintenance<sup>11</sup>. Homeless veterans should be temporarily housed in these empty homes. In addition For Britain will ensure enough hostels for homeless veterans are available to take all ex-forces personnel off the streets
- Guarantee a job offer in the police, prison service or border force to all who have served for 12 years. For Britain will tripling Border Force funding

- Properly support the Army Reserve (TA) while recognising they are not a replacement for regular Army units. Restore funding for cadet forces
- Create a community service scheme which is compulsory for all young people not in employment, education or training, including an option for military service
- Ensure the legal system can no longer pursue veterans for alleged crimes committed decades ago. Immunity from prosecution in Northern Ireland, having been given to one side, should be given to all, particularly those who were there to uphold UK law.

## **Conclusion**

Britain's Armed Forces are in a poor state. This is not the fault of their personnel, but due to repeated Tory and Labour spending cuts, a lack of appetite to increase efficiency in operations and procurement, and a failure to re-imagine the Armed Forces due to inter-service rivalry.

This must be remedied urgently. While maintaining our commitment to NATO and the nuclear deterrent, we will cut back on unnecessary commitments around the globe. We will restore defence spending to 3% of GDP, tackle the awful waste in operations and procurement, re-purpose our Armed Forces for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century's wars, and look after our personnel and veterans as they deserve.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rt.com/uk/415681-williamson-defence-cuts-army/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.forces.net/news/tri-service/leading-charge-twice-many-horses-tanks-british-army>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/737015/Army-cuts-UK-fewer-tanks-Serbia>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.express.co.uk/news/history/939602/100-years-of-raf-royal-air-force-centenary>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/692929/RAF-axe-tornado-aircraft-fighter-bombers-planes-royal-air-force-cuts>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/defence-committee/news-parliament-2017/uk-us-nato-indispensable-allies-report-published-17-19/>

<sup>7</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/412939/PUBLIC\\_1425405075.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/412939/PUBLIC_1425405075.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Your-Disobedient-Servant-Penguin-special/dp/0140523316/>  
<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Waste-Away-Leslie-Chapman/dp/0701126299/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Lions-Donkeys-Dinosaurs-Blundering-Military-ebook/dp/B01ANXHVNMM/>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.216

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-46402777/empty-houses-mod-homes-standing-empty-across-uk>