



Defence Committee

Oral evidence: [Future Force 2020](#), HC 512

Wednesday 5 November 2014

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 5 November 2014.

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Members present: Rory Stewart (Chair); Richard Benyon; Mr James Gray; Mr Dai Havard; Dr Julian Lewis; Mrs Madeleine Moon; Sir Bob Russell; Bob Stewart; Ms Gisela Stuart; Derek Twigg; John Woodcock.

Questions 97 - 219

Witnesses: **Admiral Sir George Zambellas**, **General Sir Nicholas Carter**, **Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford** and **General Sir Richard Barrons** gave evidence.

Chair: Welcome, everybody. We are very lucky today to have with us Admiral Sir George Zambellas, who is the First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, General Sir Nicholas Carter, who is Chief of the General Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford, Chief of the Air Staff, and General Sir Richard Barrons, Commander Joint Forces Command. Welcome and thank you very much for coming.

This is going to be a short, intense session, so we ask that you keep answers relatively brief, so that we can bring all colleagues in. We know you are very busy people, so thank you for giving up two hours of your time to come in to the Committee. I now hand over to my colleague, Colonel Bob Stewart, to begin our questions.

Q97 Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): I feel like I'm a naughty boy in front of you guys. May I start by asking you, as three Chiefs of the services, mindful that Napoleon, who some say was the best general in the world, said that morale was "the sacred flame" and that "morale is to the physical as three is to one" and we are talking about Force 2020, when our forces are going to be so much smaller, what is your view, starting with the senior service, of the morale of your respective services at the moment and how it will be changed by 2020?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: With the investment in the future of the Navy, the commitment to the future deterrent by way of the early stages of its development, the twin-carrier approach declared by the Prime Minister at the NATO summit in Wales, the 45s and the new Astute class, we have an equipment-based journey ahead which has lightened the future of the service. They feel extremely confident that the strategic investment in the maritime is being seen to be of value and it has raised morale considerably. In the front line, you will find that daily.

Q98 Bob Stewart: So morale is going up in the Royal Navy?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: It is.

Q99 Bob Stewart: What about the Royal Army?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: I like the “Royal” bit. A straightforward answer is that armies like to be used. In the case of the Army 2020 proposition, the idea of defence engagement is important to us, because it sees young officers and NCOs having the chance to be overseas, training individuals, doing the upstream capacity building and all of that. We have a well resourced training programme which is proving to be very constructive. It is a training programme that needs to evolve from what we have been doing for the past 10 years in terms of counter-insurgency and campaigning. My sense is that, with those sorts of ingredients in our future programme, morale will remain at the right level.

Q100 Bob Stewart: So it’s okay, and it will stay so or improve a bit?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: I think utility, being respected and loved by the nation and having the opportunity to train effectively will keep it where it needs to be.

Q101 Bob Stewart: And Sir Andrew, the Royal Air Force?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: I agree with George, in the sense that the equipment programme between now and 2020 is huge. I would argue that it is one of the largest recapitalisations of equipment the Royal Air Force has undergone in modern times. That, in itself, brings excitement, it brings equipment people are proud to operate, to use, to engineer, to fly, and that in itself is a bright future.

The Royal Air Force is a service that is being very heavily used at the moment. I am always reluctant to put a morale factor on an air force, because there are undoubtedly elements I could take you to where morale is good, and there will be other places where it is very good. If you look at what the service has done over the past four years in terms of change, and some of the drastic changes we have had to make to force structure, undoubtedly in the past four years we would have talked about places where it was not good. We have weathered the storm. Like my two fellows, I would say that morale in the Air Force is good for what we have been asked to do where we are, and we expect that the next six years will continue to deliver exciting change.

Q102 Bob Stewart: So all three Service Heads say that morale is okay; it might improve but it is not bad at the moment. Can I ask Sir Richard, who actually uses the forces provided by the three Service Heads, what is morale like, as we have withdrawn from Afghanistan? What is your assessment of what it will be like on future operations?

General Sir Richard Barrons: As you indicated, Joint Forces Command is composed of people from the three services, so everything my brothers have said applies. We have the added spice that we are a really new organisation—two years old—so feel we are on the front foot. Regarding the appetite for operations, if you look round the world as it is today there are plenty of things that military people should be concerned about, so people feel, as they come out of Afghanistan, that professionally their services are going to be needed.

Q103 Bob Stewart: My final question is to all of you—it’s a quick yes/no—do people still join the Royal Navy, the Army, the Royal Air Force to go on operations?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: They are on operations.

Bob Stewart: But do they join for that?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: Yes.

Q104 Bob Stewart: It is a motivator for young men and women to join our armed forces—the chance of serving on operations overseas?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: As both my colleagues have indicated, if you don't use people on operations you get a drop in morale. Indeed, there are extreme examples of how surprising behaviours emerge. For example, when the Navy found itself leaving the Gulf in *Illustrious* to go to the Philippines to help with the hurricane there, it took the people on that ship away from their families over Christmas, which you would expect to cause a dip in morale, but in fact, the voluntary outflow rates for that ship fell from 12% to 2% as a result of the operational activity. So activity works for morale.

General Sir Nicholas Carter: The straight answer is yes.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: Yes.

Bob Stewart: Morale goes up when we are on operations. That was my last question.

Q105 Sir Bob Russell: Bob Stewart referred to Napoleon, and of course, next year is the 200th anniversary of his greatest defeat. The British Army now is about the size it was at the time of the battle of Waterloo, so do we have the forces necessary around the globe to do the things that the Government wish them to do?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: As far as I am concerned, looking forward, the size of the British Army is adequate for what the Government currently require of it.

Q106 Sir Bob Russell: Adequate for what is currently required of it. Do I assume from that that there is not much room for additional deployment, should other things happen?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Not necessarily. We have now withdrawn from Helmand and the British Army has some people committed, but not in the numbers we have been accustomed to over the past five to 10 years. It is always a question of what you want the Army to do, and then from that you can determine its shape and size. The current assumptions we are working to provide us with what we need.

Q107 Sir Bob Russell: I will just concentrate on the Army at the moment. There have been suggestions about the number of cuts. We have had a load and more have happened and it has been suggested that there might be more to come between now and 2020. Have you had any indication of any truth in such observations of a further cut in the size of the British Army?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: No, I haven't.

Q108 Mr Gray: My question is perhaps for all four, but particularly General Nick. I want to focus on the Reserves. Since the Army restructuring was first announced, there have been two interpretations by different Secretaries of State. Liam Fox indicated that he wanted the Regular Army down to 82,000, cutting 20,000 and replacing them with 30,000 Reservists, but that the two should be contemporaneous. That was changed under Philip Hammond to, "Oh,

never mind, we'll just go ahead with the cuts now and the Reserves can be built up after that." Since then, there have been repeated reports on difficulties in recruiting sufficient Reservists. Could you tell us the state of the latest thinking on the Reservists-Regulars balance, coupled with the total numbers? It applies to the other services, too, but if you do not mind, we should focus on the Army.

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Yes, although I would say up front that all the services use Reserves in a different way. I will describe how the Army will use its Reserves in the future. In essence, when we did Army 2020, we took the view that we would need to use the Reserves in two or three different ways. The first was that we acknowledged absolutely a big lesson learned from Afghanistan, and from Helmand in particular, that specialisms are often better found in the Reserve. Medics are the classic example of that, but you can think of cyber and other areas where we would draw from. The full-time part of the Army and that element of the Army are inextricably linked. We need to use those specialists in any set of circumstances that you can imagine.

There is another set of circumstances where there are capabilities, of which logistics is an example, where it is a relatively straightforward task that does not need a great deal of collective training. Those capabilities could therefore be in the Reserves at certain readiness. There is a much larger element of the Reserves—the bit we have been trying to explain slightly differently, I sense, over the course of the last eight weeks since I took over as the CGS—which is the more general Reserve, and that is typically where the combat arms and the combat support are. Their commitment is to training, but the obligation only really cuts in when there is a sense of national emergency.

That is important, because in trying to recruit a Reserve, a Reservist has to try to balance an equilateral triangle of his aspirations, those of his family and those of an employer. If that becomes an isosceles triangle, it becomes very difficult either to retain the Reservist or to recruit him. What we have tried to do is explain to those people who make it possible for people to join the Reserve that the obligation is to training and that training is broadly 27 days a year—it could be more or less, depending on someone's commitment—but actually you are there, in obligation terms, in the event of a national emergency. That is not to say that a Reservist cannot volunteer to come forward and operate, exercise and deploy with Regulars. The point is that he has a choice. That is important in understanding what motivates Reserve service.

To pick up your point on whether or now we are making a difference, the target this year is around 3,200. Already, at the six-month point, we have got to 2,100, and it is my sense that we will increase the numbers beyond the target in this year, which is better than where we were last year, but it is a long project. It is not something that will be solved overnight, because we have had the last 10 or 15 years when we have not invested in the Reserve in the way that we are now investing in the Reserve.

Q109 Mr Gray: We will come back in a moment to how we use them, but sticking with the numbers, it has been pretty plain up to now that by 2018 we should have 82,143 Regulars and 30,000 Reservists. Is that still the target?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Yes, it is.¹

¹ Note by witness: the actual figure is 82,617

Q110 Mr Gray: Will we achieve it?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Yes, we will.

Q111 Mr Gray: If that is the case, why have you slightly changed the tone of how we will use these people? Surely what you have been talking about, in a way, is having a total Army of 112,000 with the mix between Regulars and Reserves fluxing, if that is a word.

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Yes, I guess. Part of the design principle of Army 2020 was that we have two divisions in the British Army. The one that is at lower readiness is the one that has more Reserves in it. We wanted to try to partner our combat and combat support units together with a smaller Regular component operating with a Reserve component, so that between the two the whole would add up to rather more than the sum of the parts. That would provide us with the resilience and the ability to expand accordingly. That principle still applies.

We also acknowledge that, as we look forward to our future career structure, the distinction between full and part-time service will blur, because the nature of our profession is such that we want people to be able to go out and garner experience in the outside world and bring it back to add value inside the military profession, and vice versa. My sense is that 112,000 soldiers is a good way to talk about the output of an Army, rather than being very specific about those who are employed on a full-time basis and those who are employed on a part-time basis.

Q112 Mr Gray: Finally, can we go back to what you said a moment ago about how we will use Reserves and your perfectly sensible description of how they would be used in a time of national emergency? Leaving aside the specialists, you described the teeth arm type-Reserves as being used in a time of national emergency, but not normally for ordinary operations. Surely that is quite different from what was described in Army 2020, where we talked about one Army and everything being interchangeable and all that. It is not a U-turn—that is not the right expression—but it is a change of direction or emphasis.

General Sir Nicholas Carter: I think a change in emphasis is a fair way to describe it. We have put a toe in the marketplace and we have discovered that the sort of thing that I am describing is more likely to succeed. I would stress that if a Reservist can spare the time there is an opportunity for him to ploy in a formed unit with Regulars and we are doing that in Cyprus at the moment. We are doing it in Afghanistan at the moment, albeit platoons only, but we would like to aspire to companies, sub-units, squadrons—that sort of level of employment.

Q113 Mr Gray: Absolutely final question for now, Chairman. Going back to Bob Stewart's question, given that that is the case don't you think that the morale in the Reserve Army will decline as a result? People join in order to be deployed and in order to get involved. If they are merely, like the old TA were, a sort of Dad's Army that hangs around until such time as we have an emergency, won't recruiting go down?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: No, I am sorry; I probably did not explain it clearly. If an individual can volunteer and has the time and his employer and family can condone it, then he can go on operations. What we are saying is that we are not going to mobilise you if you cannot volunteer, which I think is an important distinction. The opportunity

remains, and it is broader than it has ever been. What I would also say is that the package that is available to Reservists is really quite impressive now.

Q114 Mr Gray: I think CNS wants to comment on Reserves. You caught my eye did you not?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: Only to say that I think the whole Reserve story operates differently in different services. One of the things that you will have detected is the challenge we have of manpower in the Navy. The Reserve inflow is on track. They are integrated—it is working—but I am sure there is more work to be done as we work closely with industry to try to achieve a better partnership between those who supply equipment and those who operate, and as we try to get the best balance between experience and availability from the kits. The technical side of Reservists is something that we feel very strongly will increase in value in years to come.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: I would say that in the Royal Air Force it was already increasing pre-SDSR10. We already had plans to increase the Reserve. It is that specialist nature of the Reservists and how we generate airpower. If you go to Brize Norton of a weekend you will find a shift of Reservists in their man-training days. They have not been deployed; they don't need to deploy—the same with image analysts. There are different models across the three services.

Q115 Derek Twigg: Is Future Force 2020 really based on austerity cuts rather than the real defence and security needs of the country? I don't mind who answers that first.

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: I will start. Future Force 2020 is designed to be a balanced, agile force. That is the fight. We have adjusted, are adjusting and are taking tough decisions to make sure that we can achieve that which is the Government's intent. We need the resources to do that. We know that the expectation by this Government is that we will have flat real investment in the defence finances, plus 1% real over for the equipment programme. That is necessary to help us achieve Future Force 2020, but the Chiefs are in agreement that we are broadly on track to deliver what the Government aspires to achieve, which is an agile, flexible force.

Q116 Derek Twigg: That is not the question I asked. I asked whether it is all about austerity culture or about the real defence and security needs of the country.

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: I think it reflects the national security strategy that was written for the 2010 defence review which makes it quite clear that the uncertainties ahead, which have turned out to be precisely where we are, reflect those strategic flexibilities.

Q117 Derek Twigg: It might reflect the strategy, but does it have enough resources to be able to carry it out?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: Yes, I think we are broadly on track.

Q118 Derek Twigg: Because we heard earlier from General Carter that it was adequate. You used the word "adequate".

General Sir Nicholas Carter: I did absolutely use the word “adequate”. From the Army’s perspective the number is adequate for what the Government requires of us at the moment.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: But it would be wrong to assume that the finances did not come into that, in the sense that ambition with resource had to be balanced. I think if you look at some of the changes we have to make, most of which we have now put right, we look forward to SDSR15, as planned, answering some of the risks that we are still carrying from that 10 review. All four of us are acutely aware that you cannot have adequate defence without taking into account the resources available to you.

General Sir Richard Barrons: And I think it is worth adding that Future Force 2020 includes the opportunity, represented by our Joint Forces Command, to rebalance, to enable us, and to produce as agile, coherent and balanced a force as we can. That opportunity did not exist before 2010.

Q119 Derek Twigg: You are all convinced that Future Force 2020 fully meets our security and defence needs in the foreseeable future?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: As I said, broadly.

Q120 Derek Twigg: I am not asking broadly, I am asking a very simple question: do you or do you not?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: Yes.

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Yes.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: Notwithstanding some of the risks that were carried from SDSR10 which SDSR15 will answer, the obvious one was maritime patrol.

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: And the financial caveats I have already spelled out.

Q121 Derek Twigg: The possibility of future cuts was referred to in the previous question. *The Sunday Times* ran an article about cuts of 7.5%. Going back to General Carter’s comment that the current situation is “adequate”, what will be less than adequate?

General Sir Richard Barrons: I will pitch up on this. It is very difficult for me to judge on something that hasn’t happened yet.

Q122 Derek Twigg: We know that discussions must go on between yourselves and Ministers about what you can and cannot live with. So far, you have said that it is “adequate”, you can live with it; I am asking what wouldn’t be.

General Sir Richard Barrons: In my case, our discussions are about where I am today, with a view to the delivery of my contract, as it were, for this year.

Q123 Derek Twigg: We are talking about Future Force 2020.

General Sir Richard Barrons: Yes; that is the path we are on and right now, today, my conversations are, “Yeah, I can do that”.

Q124 Derek Twigg: The question I asked was, what would become critical if you didn't have it. At what point would it be less than adequate?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: If we didn't receive the resources that are mandated for the journey ahead, which this Government have declared already.

Q125 Derek Twigg: Would that mean, therefore, that not having defence spending falling below 2% of GDP would be critical?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: The current assumption is described as flat real plus 1% on equipment, and all of us are working on that assumption for the delivery of FF2020.

Q126 Derek Twigg: But if it were to fall below 2%, would that be critical, a major problem? It would not then be adequate?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: No, but provided the assumption is flat real plus 1%, which is a slightly different way of looking at it, then that is what Future Force 2020 is based upon.

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: But we do welcome the 2% ambition, providing it is seen through in the years ahead.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: Assuming GDP goes up and not down.

Q127 Derek Twigg: But if further cuts were proposed above what you have had so far, I am asking each of the services, what would be your view?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: That is straightforward. If we do not have the resources that we expect to get in the journey ahead for Future Force 2020, then we will return to the Government and say, "We now cannot do what we are mandated to do, what you wished us to give up". That, frankly, is something that is going to be tested vigorously in the comprehensive spending review next autumn. The journey that we judge ahead is based on the current mandated ambitions and promises.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: And, importantly, any change to that assumption next year would not be an issue for each individual service, but a broad defence question: all four of us would take part in the discussion as to how you rebalance the books.

General Sir Richard Barrons: Part of the answer must be, how does the world really turn out and what part do you want us to play in it? So the current recipe, we're on, and if the world is different in the future, then we would look to the Ministry of Defence to tell us what we are required to do next.

Q128 Mrs Moon: I want to start with a compliment. I think that the way our armed forces exited from Afghanistan and the excellence of the preparation, the care with which equipment and personnel were withdrawn—

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: Are withdrawing. We're still there.

Q129 Mrs Moon: The care with which equipment and personnel are withdrawing is excellent. There were a lot of doomy naysayers saying there would be a high risk to life and

equipment and I have to say, for the record, that we have done extremely well and you should be commended for it. All the personnel involved should be commended.

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: If we may take your kindness, we need to pass it on to Chief of Joint Operations, Lieutenant General Capewell, who had to oversee that personally for many months. We have basked in his delivery.

Q130 Mrs Moon: It is something that, as a country, we can be very proud of.

Most of my questions, Sir Andrew, are to you. Do you feel that the RAF has the right equipment to take on IS? Do we have the right number of platforms? You have got only seven squadrons. Do you have suitable numbers of personnel to prepare and support operations? What is the risk of overstretch, particularly if we extend into Syria?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: Thanks very much.

Mrs Moon: Thanks a bunch, I think is the expression.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: I think there are about four questions in there. Let me make it clear from the start, the Royal Air Force is not fighting ISIL on its own. The campaign against ISIL, as vicious and nasty as it is, has got to be a comprehensive approach. It has to be an international approach and has to bring in all lines of operation; the military one is merely a small part of what will, I am sure, be an eventual solution.

We started with humanitarian aid and the Hercules, being supported by ISTAR from Tornado. That has since migrated into Tornado with actual strikes in Iraq against ISIL targets both preordained and fleeting. That was supported by Voyager, and the Hercules are still delivering aid and support into Iraq.

Alongside that is an international campaign with about 60 countries, which is the latest count, playing into that space. From my viewpoint of what the Royal Air Force doing and the UK doing, because there are other elements from both my sister services, we are doing what we have agreed with the Government that we can do, that is sensible to do with the resources that I have available, given, as I have just pointed out, we have still have got Tornadoes and Reaper in Afghanistan. We still have Sentinel operating over Afghanistan, and the Strategic and Tactical Air Transport Force is still very much involved in delivering the UK forces from Afghanistan in the way that they have sustained it for the past 12 years or so. So there is still a significant effort there.

We have only recently got the Tornado GR4s back from deployment to Africa. With the capacity available within the aircraft of first choice, which has got to be Tornado at present because of the nature of the capabilities it brings both in reconnaissance and attack, I am comfortable with the recent announcement that we will keep, for up to another year, the third Tornado squadron that was due to go out of service early next year. Then the Tornado GR4 force will be sustainable for the commitment we have got in the battle against ISIL through next year.

Alongside that you will see that we are switching target with the likes of the Reaper force from Afghanistan, and the air vehicles are being moved into the Iraq campaign as we speak. We have already started flying operations, as I am sure you know. From my viewpoint, it is my job as CAS to ensure that we are in balance, that we are not expecting

too much of our equipment or people, as the overall international campaign from a military viewpoint matures, and as that broader comprehensive campaign against ISIL matures in the international community.

Q131 Mrs Moon: Why have we needed the Tornado extension? Is it because we have delays in Lightning II? Is it because of the operations in Iraq?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: No, there are no delays in the growth of the Typhoon force and its migration from what it is at the moment an air defence force into a multi-role force, with improved air-to-ground capabilities, over the next six years through to the end of the decade and beyond. Lightning II comes into service very much at the back end of the decade. That is a migration of technology and capability that is part of that very exciting future we discussed earlier. If you look at what the Typhoon is capable of in the air-to-ground role at the moment, and given that Tornado is available with three squadrons now, it is a sensible and pragmatic decision to keep that squadron for at least another year.

Q132 Mrs Moon: Where are the shortfalls? What keeps you awake at night?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: Shortfalls?

Mrs Moon: In capability.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: I am looking forward to SDSR 15 coming up with a solution to the MPA issue. I do not think that is an issue for me; it is for George, too. That was a known risk that came out of SDSR 10. Given the scale of the transformation of the Royal Air Force from where we started this decade to where we will be at the end, it is ensuring that my people are being asked to do sensible things over a sensible time frame to deliver that bold and exciting new future.

Q133 Mrs Moon: So what keeps you awake at night?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: Nothing keeps me awake at night.

Q134 Mrs Moon: Can I ask you, if we fell below the 2% of GDP, what would be the impact on the RAF?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: I don't know. As we have already discussed, it would be totally wrong to look at any reduction in expectation of the future in terms of finances purely from a single service viewpoint. That would be a decision for Defence to take to ensure that we go forward, as we have out of SDSR 10, with a balanced capability in all three environments, delivering the exciting new joint enablers—now we have a champion for the first time in that domain—to ensure that Defence goes forward together.

Q135 Mrs Moon: You will be aware of the Argentinean plan to buy 24 Gripen. Are you planning to be able to respond to that if needed, given the number of Typhoons we have down in the Falklands?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: As a veteran of the '82 war I am quite proud of the fact that this country has maintained a military presence in the South Atlantic to initially deter and, if necessary, remove any aggression towards those islands. I cannot see that changing in the longer term.

Q136 Mrs Moon: You're confident that we could ramp up quickly to respond to a crisis, perhaps protecting the air bridge?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: I think if you look at the capabilities that the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy are feeling today, we are better placed now than ever before to do exactly that.

Q137 Ms Gisela Stuart: The main inquiry is Army 2020, but given the news yesterday about Libyan trainees having to leave early and the events surrounding that, it would be remiss of the Committee to not raise it. Would any of you care to give us an update as to what has gone wrong, why it has gone wrong and how we are putting it right?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Shall I have a go?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: I think they're yours.

Ms Stuart: Collective responsibility is a wonderful thing, isn't it?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: The straight answer is that all of those who are trainees at Bassingbourn at the moment are connected to what is going on at home, and for them, seeing their country in the state it now is—of course, it has got worse during the course of the last two or three months—has been quite destabilising. Trying to control them and get them to focus entirely on training and all that we are asking of them has been quite challenging. I think none of us is particularly surprised that a few of them have found it really difficult.

What is encouraging, though, is that the large majority have actually embraced the training experience in a way that has been really positive and they have proved to be good trainees. We set out with the ambition of trying to train them into being a sort of battalion group of around 300, with three companies of 100 or so inside it, and some of that has been achieved. We have achieved all of the effect that we expected to achieve, but a few of them have found it challenging.

Q138 Ms Stuart: Leaving the base and committing sexual offences is not my definition of finding things challenging.

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Sorry, I was talking more about the training. I absolutely agree with you that those who have gone off and done what they are alleged to have done are completely beyond the pale.

Q139 Ms Stuart: Would you reflect that the perimeter fences ought to have been more effectively controlled?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: The Bassingbourn site is not a prison camp; it is extraordinarily difficult to control in that sense. From our perspective, we have done everything we can to motivate them to be entirely focused on training. Indeed, we have run an extremely tough walking-out policy in conjunction with the Home Office, which has helped us in all of this. The upshot of it is that it is absolutely regrettable that this has occurred.

Q140 Ms Stuart: On reflection, you may wish to use a slightly stronger word than just "regrettable", but let's leave that for the moment. Given that training the Libyan forces on

UK territory was one of the key elements of the Government's long-term strategy, where do we go from here?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Well, I think to be fair to me as the service chief who provides the trainers, I was not involved in the making of the policy that suggested that Bassingbourn was the right solution to all of that. I suspect that it would be more appropriate for that question to perhaps be directed at the centre of Defence rather than me as the service chief.

Q141 Ms Stuart: So if the Prime Minister rings you up and says "This didn't quite work, what do you suggest we do now?" what will you tell him?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Again, I don't think I am that well qualified to advise. What I do is provide troops to these sorts of tasks. I am not involved in the policy judgments and decisions that are made inside and about Libya.

Q142 Ms Stuart: We have got the four Service Chiefs in front of us. A major decision has been made in terms of Britain's foreign policy and how we respond. It involves the training of Libyan troops. We now have to send them back early, when their training is not complete. Who do I ask what we do next if it is not you?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: I think the problem in Libya is essentially a political problem.

Q143 Ms Stuart: No, no. These trainees come over to the UK. They are in a UK military base. They are supposed to be performing a training programme. Some of them go AWOL and commit sexual offences. Some of them are now seeking political asylum. Something has gone seriously wrong. May I suggest, given that you were organising this, it somehow happened under your watch?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: I don't deny that. We are working very closely with the police force up in Cambridge to try to get to the bottom of exactly what happened. The answer to all of that will be resolved quite soon, I am sure.

Q144 Ms Stuart: Are you aware that some of them have sought political asylum?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Yes.

Q145 Ms Stuart: And would you think that would be appropriate?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: No, probably not.

Q146 Ms Stuart: Just to clarify: 300 are going back early. How many are left or are all of them going, and is that the end of it now? What are the next stages?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: We have done as much training as we can in the circumstances. We are sending people back to Libya who are better soldiers than they were when they started the training.

Q147 Ms Stuart: So all of them will in the end go back? When will they all have gone back? What is the time scale for that?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: I am not sure of the precise timeline.

Q148 Ms Stuart: Days, weeks, months?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Within days.

Q149 Ms Stuart: Have any of them completed their training?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Yes, insofar as we can achieve the outputs as we see it at the moment.

Q150 Ms Stuart: Out of the 2,000 who came, how many have completed their training?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: This is the first lot of what was ideally going to be 2,000. We have only had 300 in that first go.

Q151 Ms Stuart: How many of those would you say you are now sending back trained as much as they could be?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: I think that probably 80% to 90% of them have had a very good training experience. They will go back to Libya as better people and better soldiers.

Ms Stuart: Okay.

Q152 Sir Bob Russell: As this hearing of Future Force 2020 is now taking contemporary issues, could I follow up Bob Stewart's question on morale and ask you gentlemen about the announcement slipped out in the last fortnight about increasing the rents for the family housing of members of Her Majesty's armed forces? What is that going to do morale, bearing in mind that the Government have also stopped the modernisation programme of houses, which apparently will now have rent increases?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: As an ex-AMP, and therefore PPO, I don't think you can take—well, first it is the media, and a lot of that will be inaccurate, I am sure.

Q153 Sir Bob Russell: There is a written statement by the Minister.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: Indeed, it is part of a broader new employment model, which includes changes to our pay system, changes to our accommodation model, changes to our terms and conditions of service to bring the offer—the lived experience in all three Services—into the modern age. In many areas we have slipped behind modern practices and modern methods of delivery. So this is one part, taken out of context in terms of how the media have used it, of a re-modernisation of the offer.

Q154 Sir Bob Russell: In housing that has not been modernised?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: In terms of housing in many areas where it has been modernised, I think it is fair to say behind where all three of us, if not all four of us, would have wished to have been with the modernisation problem of not just service families' accommodation but also single-living accommodation and in some areas technical accommodation. Without doubt this will remain an area of great interest to all three single Service Chiefs through the PPOs. But as I say, it would be wrong to take the

accommodation model out of context when it is being considered as part of a broader package.

Q155 Richard Benyon: Can I return to points that James Gray was making and ask about Operation Fortify and the Reserves? I have spoken to a commanding officer of a Reserve battalion who shares your optimism. If you break down the figures, there are 650 MPs in Parliament and each of our constituencies has to provide 15 or 16 new Reservists for you to achieve your goal. The problem seems to be at a lower level. In terms of recruitment, the units have a really important job to keep the Army in the public eye and to attract people to do an interesting part-time role, one that could skill them up to benefit them in other aspects of their lives. The problem seems to lie in the bureaucracy. If an individual thinks they would like to join the Reserves and then has five or six months of form filling and other processes to go through, a whole lot of other extraneous aspects of their lives could kick in—they could lose a job, gain a job, get promotion, get married, whatever it is. What is being done to narrow that gap so that the bureaucracy does not hold back the excitement and interest that the Reservist is seeking?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: You make an important point. We should be in no doubt that the sort of people who are joining the Reserve now want to get some gratification quickly. The first decision I made on the very first day when I took over this appointment was that the medical process should be adjusted. When a recruit turns up now at the assessment centre, where hitherto he would have had a medical and waited weeks or often months for the medical documents to catch up with him, we are enlisting people the moment they have conducted the medical. That means that in theory the pipeline from the moment he shows interest to the moment he is enlisted into the Army is 31 days. It is important to try to keep it within a calendar month. Since we did that, the record so far is that an individual has come through into the Army in 46 days.

I acknowledge that hitherto the bureaucracy has been very difficult and has made it almost impossible for people to get the gratification they need instantly, but now we have changed that. It is much more straightforward, with greater capacity at the assessment centres. My expectation is that, through a process of cohort analysis, which we are doing at the moment, by Christmas we will have many more people breaking the 46-day record that we have so far achieved.

Q156 Richard Benyon: Is there any aspect of this that affects you?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: I recognise the frustration with bureaucracy, without doubt, and in a similar way I am looking to streamline, but take into account that we have a duty of care in terms of the individuals and the way they are processed and trained. So streamline and reduce the time from showing interest to getting through training, but at the same time ensure that training is adequate and the experience is appropriate.

You cannot cut corners with medical standards, because you have a duty of care to the individual. Similarly, there is the likes of security and all the other bits and pieces. Although I share your hate of the bureaucracy, some of it is required. The important thing for us and our systems is that we are being as lean and mean in getting these people through as quickly as we can.

Q157 Richard Benyon: And part of the offer comes from people seeing the armed forces, not only what they do on our television screens but at local level—what in my day we called keeping the Army in the public eye. I am sure that applies to all three services. Are there enough resources going into that kind of activity to attract people and show them that it is a meaningful opportunity?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: This is an opportunity for extraordinary imagination and getting other people to spend their money. An example is that the Navy uses a public forum to give visibility to the service wherever it can to reduce its own costs of investment in recruiting. We have found, for example, an air show at Yeovilton might attract 34,000, and is a great forum for visibility of the service in all its forms, but the Bournemouth air festival attracts 1.2 million, so why would you not invest massively in that and bring the sea and shore together? We are doing that increasingly. All of us take every opportunity we can. A lot of this, though, is about the personal relationship between geography and the services. Inevitably, you get the centring of investment around the dockyards, and that is the natural recruitment area for most of the maritime services, anyway.

General Sir Nicholas Carter: You are exactly right when you say it is a local phenomenon. What we tried to do under Fortify, which we re-launched on 25 July this year, is that I got in every single commanding officer in the British Army, Regular and Reserve, and made very clear what we were trying to achieve. I also made it clear that they had the opportunity to unlock potential at the local level. They have the money to do that as well—each commanding officer has been given £1,500 to keep the Army in the public eye, to use your term. They now have the opportunity to see whether they can press the marketplace to deliver more. I acknowledge that that may have an impact on where people are drawn from and the infrastructure that they have available to them, but until you have really tested the market, it is quite difficult to know where you are going to draw people from.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: I have been quite bold on the geographical side. For reasons that are all well understood, the Air Force is an awful lot smaller than it used to be and the geographical footprint is an awful lot smaller than it used to be. We are going back to some of those areas where we used to be and setting up new auxiliary Air Force squadrons to attract people who traditionally would not have had somewhere to attach themselves to for Reserve service.

Q158 Richard Benyon: Thank you. May I ask a completely different question? Two weeks ago, I was in Mali, and I was talking to the commander of MINUSMA, the UN operation there, General Thibaut. He was saying that, in order to fulfil his mandate, there was one thing he really needed: 30 or 40 French-speaking staff officers. In the context of a wider conversation with him, we started to home in on the fact that the jihadist threat across large parts of the Maghreb, the Sahel, and dipping into West Africa, largely affects francophone countries. As we draw down from Afghanistan, is any work being done, particularly in the aftermath of the 2010 Lancaster House agreement, to skill-up so that we can work with a large number of French speakers in an area that is, to put it mildly, becoming more interesting?

General Sir Richard Barrons: The answer to your question is yes. Of course, we cannot do this out of thin air, but it is absolutely recognised that an important future role for defence is how we are able to interact in UN and other operations where language is a core

skill. We may have been guilty in the past of just speaking English slowly and loudly and hoping that that would work, but that is clearly not going to cut it in future, so the way we train people through staff college, where language is now an option, and the way we select people with an eye to producing a career stream focused on defence engagement, will all help. I have an ambition that in future we will expand our investment in engineering students at places such as Welbeck to include a language cohort in those languages that will matter to us. I see that as part of the professional armed forces in the future.

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: For what it is worth, we do acknowledge how staggeringly poorly we have managed to anticipate the needs of future conflicts and the language in support of that. That is why there has been such an investment and a desire to try to do better on that. It is about understanding the people you are fighting among or trying to support. We really do acknowledge that there has been a poor performance in language skills in the past.

Q159 Dr Lewis: We have two precedents for the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review: the one that was done in 1997-98 and the one that was done in 2010. To an outsider, they look very different. The first was done over a protracted period of months and had a lot of consultation; the second was done very soon after a change of Government and appeared to produce some surprise decisions. Do any of you have strong feelings as to which model is the better to follow?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: As a relatively junior officer, I was right in the centre of the 1997 defence review. I think you are right that it was a very thorough piece of work. It had, if you like, the strategic advantage of taking a very careful post-cold war look. We were at a turn-key moment in strategic positioning. The element that I remember distinctly from it, if one puts to one side the intellectualism that went into it, was that we identified the need for joint enablers as a key part of empowering a balanced force, and as a result of the resource performance and pressures and decisions in 1997, they did not come to the fore. That is why we welcome the creation of the Joint Forces Commander who will be able to argue for and facilitate that particular investment strategy next time around.

Q160 Dr Lewis: If I were to ask you for a desired time scale for how long the next process should take, would it be a relatively short period, such as in 2010, or would you rather it took longer?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: If I may, what is the purpose of the review? If it is a light-touch confirmation of where we are going, an assurance that Future Force 2020 is on track, a revisit—a refresh—of the threats and the changing world that we live in since the last one, then one would take it down one route. If, as it has been suggested, it needs to be a more significant review, driven by potential changes to the resource picture, then one might take a different view. I think it is a little unfair at this distance to ask us which one of these two versions we might take. Purpose driven.

Q161 Mr Gray: The difference between the two reviews that Dr Lewis is talking about is that in 1997 there was no national security strategy and in 2010, of course, there was. Should the NSS be done at the same time as the SDSR or prior to it? Equally, should the spending review be simultaneous or separate?

General Sir Richard Barrons: Just in terms of managing the work, if we do these things sequentially, it is probably easier to manage. It is practical to do them concurrently, but you are going to have to be harder and sharper on it. My view on how long it will take is that I really don't mind. I want to know the ground rules when we start and I want the process done properly. You could spend a long time doing something that did not work out at all well or you could do something very quickly that was really sharp. It is quality, not anything else, that I am interested in.

Q162 Dr Lewis: One thing that has certainly changed since 2010 has been the revival of a tension between the West and Russia over Ukraine and a change of tone about the possibility of the need to deter state-on-state warfare.

During the cold war, I think I am right in saying that we spent between 4% and 5% of GDP on defence. We are now entering a phase when we are not back in a cold war, but we see the need to send a signal to Russia that it should not behave towards a NATO country in the way they are behaving in Ukraine. Given that, and given the ongoing and new threats we face from organisations like al-Qaeda and ISIL—and may we please stick to the percentage of GDP formula, because that is the one everyone understands—are you really satisfied that 2% of GDP, if we were to continue to spend it, would be enough in the face of those threats?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: In the first instance, it is a strategic judgment by Government about how much they want to spend across the whole of the security and defence field. You can imagine that we very much reflect the views that you have expressed over the breadth and complexity of that security challenge; it now includes cyber and other paths. You referred to the 2%; referring to the answer given by the Chief of the Air Staff, which is, “What will the GDP be?” if we are rising out of an economic recovery situation, it could be a very helpful figure. Is it genuinely 2%? What is the true 2 of the figure? I think that is for the Government to consider, decide and then resource the challenge.

Q163 Dr Lewis: Slightly with tongue in cheek, can I ask whether it is still the case that the Chiefs of Staff have the right to demand to go and see the Prime Minister if they feel that, for example, spending on defence has been cut to such a level that the country cannot be adequately defended? As I see a number of you nodding, under what circumstances might you think that line had been crossed?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: We have the collective responsibility to advise the CDS within our domains on the performance of our services. If there was the collective position that the resource failed to meet our professional responsibility as judged by us, then the CDS would represent that view.

Q164 Dr Lewis: Finally, taking away the question of the Treasury reserve, from which operations are supposed to have been funded, and assuming that we did then continue to meet the NATO target of 2% of GDP on defence, may I ask each of you, what would that mean for each of your services in terms of what you could do in addition to current plans?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: It is a very speculative question, if you will forgive me for saying so. We have a journey that is planned ahead for Future Force 2020. It is based on flat real, plus 1% for the equipment programme. If we are unable to achieve those

figures—I do not believe that there is any threat in the remainder of this Parliament, but for the future—we will quickly find ourselves in a position where we cannot deliver Future Force 2020. We will have to come back to explain why, and also what we must give up to deliver our individual responsibilities.

Q165 Dr Lewis: Do you have any other comments?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: It is not a question for the single services. We are now as one, like never before. We have TLB responsibilities but, in terms of that broader delivery and defence capability, you cannot look at your own stovepipes. First, because Richard is here. This is a whole new game; we are grown-up enough to see that and work to it.

Q166 Dr Lewis: So we won't expect any last-minute surprises, shall we say, between the services, as happened with the 2010 cuts?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: I think you will find those did not come as a surprise to the services.

Q167 John Woodcock: Just to probe a little further, in terms of the change in the overall threat assessment between 2010 at the last review and now, there is, at the very least, a resurgent Russia. We had not fully calculated that. You could arguably say that the job in the Middle East for which a UK armed force is required is greater. Taking those two things alone, the requirement for the armed service budget would surely be greater. Should you be arguing for that—privately or otherwise—in advance of the 2015 review?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: There are some indicators already that there is a challenge ahead. The Prime Minister declared the continuous carrier capability at the NATO summit in Wales. That is a demand on resources and commitment, a strategic responsibility of delivery and a high-level output for the country. That was not part of the 2010 ambition. The Chief of the Air Staff mentioned the need, across defence, for the MPA question to be reconsidered—we hope—very positively. There are plenty of challenges ahead. The issue for us is how we will expose those tensions for resource as we get to the next defence review and comprehensive spending review. But they are certainly there; we know that they are coming.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: There is almost a suggestion there that we are not capable of delivering to NATO. The cornerstone of what we do, and within our mandated tasks, are those reaction forces for NATO that all three services deliver to. The broader issue here is how NATO stands up to the likes of a resurgent Russia, what our part in it is, and therefore what the British Government's appetite is for a greater or smaller contribution towards that broader peace. In exactly the same way as ISR contributions are discretionary in the sense of, "What scale do you need to be?" we as Service Chiefs will populate that discussion. At the end of the day, it is a political decision of what you wish from us, what we are capable of now and what we would be capable of if you were to give us additional resource or additional capabilities.

Q168 Bob Stewart: From previous comments, I know that the Chief of the Naval Staff and the Chief of the Royal Air Force will totally endorse the idea of a maritime patrol aircraft.

Could I ask General Sir Richard Barrons to make his assessment of the fact that we do not have a maritime patrol aircraft when we need one?

General Sir Richard Barrons: Yes, of course, and it does sit in my lane. As the owner of C4ISR, I will produce the proposition that looks at this whole business of the mix in the future. It will be delivered by my brothers. We know the decisions that were taken in 2010. We have seen the world unfold as it has since then, and some things are being done to mitigate that. I have work in train that is looking at where we are now and our needs in the future. I would expect to advance a proposition across the ISR space as part of a review next year. The MPA question will be in there. There are some technical issues here, in that there are some things that you could do now in that space and there are some things that technology may deliver perhaps in 2025 and onwards. So part of this judgment will be, “What is it we must do now and how do we do that without closing the door on some better technology in the future?” Then you have to ask, “What is it you want an MPA to do?” because the very sophisticated business of detecting and killing submarines is one thing, but having an aircraft that is multi-mission capable is another. Part of the work my team is doing is asking what we should advocate for. That will absolutely be something that I will look to advance as an argument.

Q169 Bob Stewart: The Ministry of Defence has had an underspend for the last two years, apparently, and that underspend could well be spent on maritime patrol aircraft capability. It is a statement. I don’t want you to answer. In fact we won’t go down that line. But the fact of the matter is that I suspect all four of you would suggest—I will ask for a nod—that a maritime patrol aircraft in some form that you would devise is required after the next SDSR.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: Bob, let me start. Don’t let George and me fool you into the idea that we are after an aircraft. I thought that General Richard had explained quite carefully: this is a maritime patrol capability. If that involves an aircraft, as a professional airman I would say almost inevitably it would have to be a multi-mission aircraft, not just a maritime patrol aircraft, and they are there. The important thing is that this country is lacking in maritime patrol capability, which was acknowledged at the last SDSR to be addressed next year. There is work ongoing in Joint Forces Command to look at the options for that. What we must not do is jump at something that is here and now because it could rapidly be out of date and the wrong solution to the threat, which is changing.

Q170 Bob Stewart: You were quite right to tell me off slightly, but I just wanted to highlight the matter, so that it came to the fore in this forum that maritime patrol aircraft in some form or other is something that we should be looking at.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: A solution to the maritime patrol capability gap, not necessarily maritime patrol aircraft as such.

Q171 John Woodcock: Admiral, what you diplomatically said before about the second carrier was that the Prime Minister rocked up in Newport. He announced a whole new carrier. He hasn’t said anything about the money to pay for it and that is a real problem unless he comes up with it. Is that fair?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: I would never say he rocked up anywhere. What he did was he made a strategic statement of intent.

Q172 John Woodcock: Without any money.

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: As for the amount of money for the second carrier, as you probably know, because it is being built, the operating costs are relatively small. The smart thing that occurred is taking it from an availability that is not guaranteed to 100%, to availability that is guaranteed to 100%. That touches two key elements of strategic responsibility. The first is that this is a very big commitment towards NATO. Making that statement at the NATO summit was a significant moment towards reinforcing our commitment to NATO, a point made by the Chief of the Air Staff about NATO and Russia. Secondly, it allows us to make contributions elsewhere in the globe where the carrier capability would be an essential part of a balanced force, either for UK national only utility or in partnership with our allies and co-operative nations. The Prime Minister made those two points as well. He said it was either for our use or in alliance with others.

Q173 John Woodcock: Can you just expand on that a bit? What kind of operation could we do that we cannot currently do?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: Right now the Carl Vinson is in the Gulf. It is being protected by HMS Defender, a British air defence destroyer. We are operating together. That aircraft carrier is creating 108 sorties per week to achieve both surveillance and strike in Iraq and Syria. It is not dependent on host nation support, which has limited the availability of early strike missions in the Gulf from some of our partner nations out there as the issues of diplomatic clearance were achieved. So the availability, in similar circumstances, of 100% available British carrier means that the American carrier could be used elsewhere. That is part of our strategic partnership with the US, which might see the American carrier being deployed in the Pacific or another part of the globe. That is really the nature of joined-up strategic behaviour, which allows us to do just that. The price of doing so, in ship terms, is relatively modest, including manpower. The price in jet terms, which is a key output that the Chief of the Air Staff and I are working towards, is still to be fully quantified, depending on how many jets we take from that ship, but there is no point in having the carriers without jets.

Q174 John Woodcock: So that is a key gap in capability that 2015 is going to have to address, otherwise what's the point?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: No. The 2015 SDSR will address that and the political ambition and financial issues of more delivering from the sea, more carrier strike in the shape of F-35, than we presently have.

Q175 John Woodcock: When you said no, what was different between what I said and what you said?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: In the sense that the second carrier provides that 100%. It doesn't provide two ships.

Q176 John Woodcock: No, I understand that, but you still have to revise upwards, do you not?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: Not if your ambition for aircraft at sea hasn't changed.

Q177 John Woodcock: But why would you have 100% with no change in your ambition?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: Because we have not yet announced any additional requirement for those aircraft. Out of SDSR 15, if we have an ambition to increase the carrier strike capabilities—

Q178 John Woodcock: One follows from the other, otherwise it's going to look a fairly—

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: It may.

Q179 John Woodcock: Might I put it to you that you are being rather circumspect with me?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: No.

Q180 John Woodcock: Of course it may and it may not, but you are the Chief of the Air Force—

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: The announcement so far is for 100% capability of an aircraft carrier, either at sea or at readiness. Not 100% carrier strike at sea or at readiness.

John Woodcock: No, and that is a big issue.

Q181 Dr Julian Lewis: Just a smidgen on that, if the unexpected happened and we had the potential for deploying both carriers, are you telling us that there wouldn't be provisional planning to be able to deploy both carriers?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: I am sure the Government will consider that when they get to the Defence review, but why wouldn't you? Why wouldn't you reinforce the strategic opportunity? I made the point earlier that if you look at the output of the American carriers, they have typically 48 to 50 serviceable aircraft on the deck ready to go to achieve the strike missions. We can factor that differently for the performance of the F-35. It is a different fighter, a different aircraft, but fundamentally we will need enough jets to make those carriers credible as strategic assets.

Q182 John Woodcock: So, fairly or unfairly, the process leading up to this has been characterised as a period of having a carrier without adequate planes on it. Unless you address the issue of increased number of planes, you could perpetuate that.

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: We have no intention of perpetuating a gap for any longer than we have to.

Q183 John Woodcock: Yes, but we are going to have the temporary gap as you get up to one anyway. If you have 100% capability but do not revise upwards, you would have an enduring gap going forwards.

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: I think that goes back to the earlier comment I made. If you take the strategic opportunity to exploit the full availability of two carriers then you are going to have to make adjustments to your outputs. It is not, by the way, just the jets, but the enablement of the facilities on board that makes that work.

Q184 John Woodcock: What is the scale of that uplift if you were to get to that point, either in monetary terms or other things that you might have to sacrifice? That is a significant commitment that hasn't yet been addressed.

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: I think the biggest cost is the increase in jet cost, not the increase in ship costs.

Q185 John Woodcock: I get that, but try to quantify it.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: It is not time yet. That will be SDSR 15 work.

Q186 Sir Bob Russell: I would like to follow up an intriguing question that Dr Lewis put to you a few minutes ago. When did you or your predecessors last meet the Prime Minister to express any concerns? What were those concerns?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: My last meeting with the Prime Minister was about six months ago. We had a very frank discussion about the challenges relating to manpower in the service, which are now very well understood. I think in the context of the strategic challenge across the UK, Europe and the world, frankly, for technical manpower, he is very sympathetic to the difficulties that we are facing. He has expected from my service innovative manpower behaviours in recruiting and retention to try to solve those problems. I am happy to give you some idea of them, but that is roughly where we are.

General Sir Nicholas Carter: I have obviously been the CGS for only eight weeks, but I have had an introductory call with the Prime Minister and during the course of that we discussed progress on the Reserves proposition.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: A regular drumbeat of meetings, not formal. But of course a Prime Minister who takes great interest in the capabilities that the Royal Air Force has available to him and their sustainment. If you look at the most recent issue, it would be Madeleine's question on GR4 Tornado and sustainability in the present effort.

General Sir Richard Barrons: The Prime Minister was kind enough to ask us all to lunch at Chequers, I think in March, as I recall. We had a discussion over a number of hours where we talked about capability and operations. We were then marched over the hills and, during the course of that discussion, I felt that I was able to talk at some length about the transformation of opportunities in the information space and the things that I am responsible for.

Q187 Mr Havard: Afternoon, gents. I am playing a bit of a sweeper role here, so I will bounce around a little bit on subjects. On the question about skills and engineers in the Navy, will you say something specific about that? The availability of particular skills keeps popping up in the press and everyone will have a similar issue. Where are we with that? How much of it is blowing smoke and how much of it is real?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: Regrettably, no smoke. Let me give you some facts and figures. Of the 23,000 servicemen in the Navy—the 7,000 others are marines—just about half are technically qualified. It is a highly technical service and that is a product of the design and operation of our ships. That group of people are highly desirable outside the service. The pressures on the individuals, largely through work-life balance, getting more

and more out of the platforms over the years, pushing outwards all the time, has created the difficulties that we now face.

In conjunction, we have had to make sure that the support—the availability of spares—is there so that people feel that when they do go alongside and want to repair a ship, the spares are available. That is a big issue.

The chemistry is complex, but fundamentally it boils down to the fact that if you push people and work them very, very hard, as we have done, you find in a highly attractive workplace that you can lose them. The way around that is to take a series of really quite bold actions, and I am grateful for the support that I have had to do that, such as: depressurising the programme where we can do so without losing operational output, and we are doing that; inviting those navies that are in anti-phase to us, such that they have equipment coming and excess manpower, to bring their engineers to us; using Royal Marines to do more engineering within the Navy, allowing naval engineers to be released to the ships; and, for example, we have even reached out to our friends in the US coastguard, who have kindly sent over their first group of people. We asked them whether they would like to do some engineering with us. We gave them four places for a trial and 240 applied. So there is a lot of reaction—

Q188 Mr Havard: That says something about their morale, does it?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: No, no. The irony is, it is to do with the attractiveness of the future equipment programme and the authority and status of the Royal Navy that makes them want to come across to do this. So we are fighting this battle today.

Chair: Could I ask the services to give very brief answers, please? We have a lot of ground to cover.

Q189 Mr Havard: Can I ask about information ideas and so on? The discussion has been about the general putting together of Force 2020, but as that moves forward, it will need to have Defence Intelligence and, as you look at hybrid warfare and so on, there is increasing pressure about information warfare, strategic communications and those areas. The commentariat would tell you these things have been hollowed out. Is that right? What is being done to re-address any capability shortfall we will see? How will that be done within the new Force 2020 structure? Is this all coming to you, Richard?

General Sir Richard Barrons: Not all of it, but I certainly underpin it. If we start with Defence Intelligence, the first thing is that there has, under the hand of the present Chief of Defence Intelligence, been a transformation of how the DIS operates. We are making much better use of those resources that we have. Part of it is rooted in our ability to move people around, and part of it is our improved ability to connect to a wider network. If you want to understand an issue like Russia, we would want core expertise, but we would also want access to other folk.

In the whole arena of information, we should acknowledge that we are broadly on the approach march into the information age. The debate that is coming in intelligence, command and control, and operations is how those advances, which will be led by the commercial sector, are adopted in the military space. How do we adopt big data and the internet of things? How do we do big data analysis at the heart of how we plan operations

or conduct intelligence? All those things will produce wholly different ways of doing business. That will mitigate, in some respects, a lack of numbers, but it will also make us much sharper. That is the sort of thing Joint Forces Command is focused on.

General Sir Nicholas Carter: From a single service perspective, we have learned a huge amount from our experience in Iraq, and particularly in Afghanistan. What we have learned is the importance of “understand”, rather than just pure intelligence. That is where some of this defence engagement takes us; it is about trying to develop people who have the cultural background and the language—the point Richard Benyon made—so that we are actually ahead of the game and we know the question we should be asking. That is really important.

The other thing that is important is that we understand the nature of an integrated approach now. It is not simply about a kinetic solution to a problem; a whole range of different solutions need to be synchronised to achieve an effect. That is something we learned the hard way in Afghanistan, and it is something we now apply to our doctrine and the way in which garner information.

Q190 Mr Havard: Following on from that, can I ask about defence engagement? You have talked about a lot of it in terms of the Army, and it has tended to centre on the Army, but it is really something that goes across the forces. What is happening with the concept of defence engagement? Is it being adopted properly? Is this going to be the thing, or is it just the Army’s thing, and the others are being dragged into it?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: I find it slightly amusing that it has been discovered in the way it has.

Q191 Mr Havard: You’ve been doing defence diplomacy for a long time, you’ll tell me.

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: A few hundred years. But the question is how it’s done. Nowadays, we are invited to understand that the way out of recession is a trade-led performance of the UK. That means a global footprint, and that means using military soft effects, as they are called, in support of strategic objectives. I can only speak for my own service, but we would look to co-ordinate across defence for a combined defence engagement strategy that maximised the total value across defence of Navy, Army and Air Force.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: It is happening all the time. The Typhoons are just on their way back from Malaysia as part of Five Power Defence, but they’ll have touch points on the way out. I look to last year’s middle east deployment by the Red Arrows. We hold them dear at home, but they are hugely successful elsewhere, with thousands of people turning out and blocking the roads of all the Gulf states they went around. We are doing it all the time.

Q192 Mr Havard: It seems to me that, conceptually, that is the guts of the whole change up to Force 2020, but it is not fully, clearly understood in the public discourse about what Force 2020 is supposed to provide. Am I wrong about that?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: Not wrong, but could I suggest that we are very focused on the war-fighting abilities that are at the heart of our strategic responsibility? Then, the

additional opportunities and skills that emerge through defence engagement are there to be maximised and tapped into. So, we don't exist for defence engagement.

General Sir Richard Barrons: There is a sort of looseness of language around this. People talk about the return to contingency, as if, when Afghanistan is over, we will all be sitting on our suitcases waiting. The fact is that defence is, every day, very heavily committed. The Navy and Air Force, as has been described, are making a huge contribution, and the Army is refreshing how it now interfaces with the UN and other operations. In my own case, we have an intellectual strength in the staff college and the medical services that people want to buy into. So this return to contingency is actually about defence engagement, contingencies you planned for and then reacting to the unforeseen. It would be better if we had that.

Q193 Mr Havard: That neatly brings me to my next set of questions, which is about regeneration. Where are we in terms of regeneration? You are regenerating now to fit into a sequence on this journey that is apparently going to take you to 2020. That involves all sorts of considerations. It is still not wholly and fully described, it seems to me, so where are we in terms of being able to do greater joint training? What is happening with the regeneration argument while you are trying to sequence into a new structure?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: Regeneration is something that the Navy does in a rolling and continuous programme. It doesn't have a start and stop; it doesn't have a then and now; it's a constant process of delivery, and we then need to sequence in to those who are regenerating after a sustained period of operations to maximise the joint value, and that is controlled by General Barrons.

General Sir Nicholas Carter: From an Army perspective, as we have exited the Afghan campaign, it is necessary now for us to rebalance from what had been essentially counter-insurgency skills to ones that are perhaps more general war-type skills and to rebuild readiness in a way that we haven't had to worry about for the last 10 years.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: One focus really, and scale—Red Flag next January. We have been participating in regeneration exercises right through this piece. The scale of that has been reduced simply because we have been involved in other things; that will simply grow. I mentioned Malaysia already. That, if you like, is part of a regeneration package.

Q194 Mr Havard: How is our relationship? I scrutinised this treaty with France as well, as you probably know. Where does it leave us in terms of the argument about joint expeditionary forces, very high readiness forces and so on? The future is JEF, isn't it? There's a JEF for this, a JEF for that and a JEF for the other. How many times can you commit the same people to do largely the same thing under a different flag?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: As often as it is sensible to do so. And, of course, they are building blocks to the other pieces. If you take the JEF and the three—or all four—environments here, working on a national basis, that has benefit to the combined JEF with the French. Working with the French has benefit to our contributions to NATO. So it is wrong to try to compartmentalise these as being of no value elsewhere, because each builds to the next and the broader the context, the more value you get from it. The

important thing as we go forward is to understand the value to each environment and each nation of the various exercises that we partake in, such that we can prioritise appropriately.

General Sir Richard Barrons: Part of my role in this is to reconstruct the higher end of the Defence Exercise Programme. As we stand now, we are doing a reasonable job of scheduling those exercises which are about the CJEF with France with those joint exercises which we need to do ourselves and combined with other partners in the JEF arena. This is quite a long march; we won't see major change until about 2017, but between now and then, we will meet those obligations we have made with France.

Mr Havard: So everybody seems to expect the whole of 2020 to come in 2015, but it's not going to. It's 2020 and you're on that journey. I have a question and it's a bit techie. You are now all budget-holders, yet you don't sit on the main board. You are going to be the procurers, so you can make Bernard Gray as efficient as you want in terms of buying things, but you've got to tell him what you want bought. How are you going to fit all of that planning process together to make real decisions about procurement for the future?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: We have designed our machine to do that: we responded to the challenge from Sir Peter Levene and got ourselves an intelligent customer process to take on those responsibilities. It has not been done in a rush because, as I have got the largest, and most strategic and complex programmes, some of that is being retained by the centre of defence while we continue to prepare. In fact, some of them are so large that they may always be retained by the centre of defence. But the answer to your question is, as far as my TLB is concerned, we have changed our shape to meet those responsibilities and opportunities.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: Exactly the same. As we have redistributed the wealth out of the Ministry of Defence Main Building, we have taken on those specialist staffs; they are now working and that relationship with DE&S is growing every day.

Q195 Ms Stuart: Some commentators are suggesting that the Americans no longer regard us as a credible global ally. Is that your experience or not?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: From an Army perspective, that is absolutely not the case. In fact, I cannot remember a time in my career when our relationships with the Americans were closer. I went over there in my last appointment to give the annual Kermit Roosevelt lecture and I was briefed by their Army staff, which consists of eight three-star generals, overseen by a four-star general, all of whom I knew very well. I knew all of their Christian names, and we were able to talk in a constructive way. To me, there is no distinction between the two armies at the moment. We work very closely together, and they have great respect for what we do.

Q196 Ms Stuart: It was more a case of our capacity. Increasingly, we are not a full spectrum of capabilities, and, therefore, they may find us simply not having the capacity to be the ally that they would wish us to be.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: George and I had the privilege this year of sitting with Combined Chiefs with the US—the third time, I think, since World War Two. The level of understanding of where we are has never been stronger and there are still some very niche capabilities that the British military brings to the fight, as it were. I am in no

doubt that the US military, at the very senior level, fully understands the quality of the British servicemen, regardless of service.

Q197 Ms Stuart: Same for the Navy?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: Not quite the same. The Royal Navy and Royal Marines have a very close relationship with the US Navy and US Marine Corps. It is a quadrilateral relationship, but because, as you correctly identified, the scales are so different, the entry-level value in the relationship is to do with quality and credibility. In the complex, demanding domain of submarine and underwater, it is absolutely about how good you are, not that you have the same amount as the Americans. That is why a statement of intent is signed between the Secretary of State for Defence and the Defence Secretary in the US for the carrier delivery ambition. It is about maintaining strategic value transatlantically, where we can, at the top end of business. That is fundamentally where the strengths lie.

Q198 Chair: We have a brief period left before an expected vote at 4.15 pm, at which point this sitting will close. To come to the topical moment, would somebody tell us what our mission is in Iraq?

General Sir Richard Barrons: We are very clear that we are making a contribution to a coalition military operation in the full expectation that the military line of effort is not decisive. We are providing niche support—it is actually really quite small scale—based on the Government's direction, and we expect that contribution to be small but to endure for some time.

Q199 Chair: What is the definition of the coalition mission? What is the mission of the coalition to which you are contributing?

General Sir Richard Barrons: The objective of the coalition is to remove ISIL from Iraq.

Q200 Chair: What is the theory underpinning that? How is ISIL to be removed from Iraq?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: There is an absolute acknowledgment that the military aspect of that campaign needs to be nested in a much broader political strategy. The key to this is about removing the causes that gave rise to the phenomenon in the first place. The military element is essentially going to be about containment and about reassuring those that are playing in the coalition in regional terms to try to buy the time for the political strategy to cut in and make a difference.

Q201 Chair: I want to talk about what that means, who is driving that and who owns that political strategy. It is fine having a theory that you are buying time for someone else, but who for? Who is this person? Where are their resources? What are they doing to achieve that objective?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Again, the United States have led the pulling together of those who are taking part. Ultimately, in Iraq, it will be led by the Iraqis and the Iraqi Government. It is more complicated in Syria, as you know, but in essence, it is how you pull all of that together to achieve that political effect.

Q202 Chair: And who is responsible for pulling that together? Who owns that? You seem to be saying that what you are doing is necessary but not sufficient, that it is some other piece

and that somebody else is drawing it all together. Who is that somebody else? Who wakes up every morning and says, “My job is to deliver that other piece of the picture.”?

General Sir Richard Barrons: In terms of the people who we are connected to, the coalition commander in Kuwait is co-ordinating the military effort, including that vital act, over time, of restoring the capability of the Iraqi Army, so that it is able to remove ISIL from its territory. That is a long-burn programme. In the US, our interlocutor is General John Allen, who has a cross-Government role there. I think you would have to ask the Foreign Office here about how it sees itself fitting into a wider political strategy. Underpinning it, I think everybody is clear that this is not going to move further forward faster until you get a much more inclusive Government in Baghdad, to which everyone can then bind in behind.

Q203 Chair: To summarise, you are saying that the military strategy will only work if the Iraqi Government sort their act out. Is that right?

General Sir Richard Barrons: It will be very much harder if they don’t.

Q204 Chair: So you could do it without the Iraqi Government sorting their act out. Is that what you are saying?

General Sir Richard Barrons: In our case, absolutely not because we are making a small, niche contribution.

Q205 Chair: I come to the Admiral. Would I be correct that the theory assumes that the military strategy will only work if the Iraqi Government sort their act out?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: You have to have a centrepiece of strategic political authority, around which you can coalesce a regional solution or a reaction to the horrors on the ground. If you don’t have a reinforced and authoritative Iraqi Government, it becomes an intervention without political focus. It becomes an over-militarised solution, so we need to pursue the politics first. As the General just said, that is precisely where we are.

Chair: The Division has come four minutes early. You are able to stay until 4.30 pm; that is fantastic. If those colleagues who are available aim to be back in eight minutes, we will restart.

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

On resuming—

Q206 Chair: If I can return to the issue of Iraq, when the bell went we were trying to pin down whether the idea is that the military strategy only works if the Iraqi Government sorts its act out. This sounds very similar to the kinds of things that have been said in other places. I am trying to work out what the chances are of the Iraqi Government sorting its act out. What is your answer to that question?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: I think the trouble is you are not really addressing it to the people who are going to be able to answer it. It seems to me it is fundamentally a question for somebody from the Foreign Office to answer, or even from Downing Street. The only

way that we can play into this debate, in a sense, is the way that we have done, which is to observe that the challenge is essentially political, and that all the military can really do is help bolster the Iraqi capability, provide training and assistance, in due course, from across the coalition, and provide a bit of my friend on the left's input in terms of helping to contain it.

Q207 Chair: So if the answer was, hypothetically, that it was extremely unlikely that the Iraqi Government was going to sort its act out—so if you were to hear, from the Foreign Office or from some other expert, that for the sake of argument this was an Iranian-backed Shi'a Government, not dramatically different from the Government that preceded it, and extremely unlikely to emerge as a credible, effective, legitimate force in Sunni areas: if that was the advice you received, what purpose would a military strategy serve, in the absence of sorting out that political gap?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: A military strategy can never work on its own. It has always got to be nested in a joined-up political strategy that is going to appeal to the people of the country in which it is operating.

General Sir Richard Barrons: I sense we are locked in violent agreement. I sense you are asking us questions which we would normally refer to our employers in the Ministry of Defence; but the situation we are in today is that that set of circumstances you describe has not yet occurred, and there is a ball in play. That is where we are today, doing a number of very small things as part of this coalition.

If the circumstances you describe were to occur in the future, I would expect to be having a different conversation.

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: I think probably the missing ingredient is the sense of regional responsibility. At some point in the speculative scenario you have painted, it becomes increasingly a matter for regional resolution.

Q208 Chair: And in terms of resolution, from a military point of view, are we talking, ultimately, about some kind of counter-insurgency warfare strategy driven by, for example, the Iraqi Government? Ultimately, is this whole thing leading up to somebody clearing, holding and building the Sunni triangle? Is this where this whole thing is supposed to go? What is the overall game plan?

General Sir Richard Barrons: Isn't the point you made the key one—that if the majority Sunni population in northern Iraq buys into a campaign from the Government in Baghdad, we are in one place; and if you try to clear northern Iraq, with the Sunni population absolutely opposed to those operations by what it saw as a Shi'a-led Iraqi Army, you are in an incredibly difficult place? You would recognise that that is an argument that has been around for a while.

Q209 Chair: Sir Andrew, just try to help me conceptually here. If the objective was to find, degrade and ultimately destroy Islamic State, but in order to achieve that objective you needed all these different building blocks in place and it looks like those building blocks are not in place, what do we make of that objective?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: I think you are trying to simplify, if I may say, an extremely complicated and multi-layered situation, regionally. And I wouldn't wish to say

that what we are doing militarily at the moment is going to lead to the ultimate delivery of peace. It is a very small part of containment of a threat, alongside a counter-insurgency campaign—if you want to call it that—already happening on the ground, using the Iraqi defence forces.

So, in terms of, “Have we got a campaign plan from here to success?” I think this is a situation where the international community, the Iraqi Government and all the other players within it are developing the plan as they go. If you look at the early piece, this is containment; this is writing down, where we can, the ISIL machine. We are certainly looking to limit its freedom of manoeuvre, to provide space for other aspects of the campaign to take place, whether that be military force on the ground with the Iraqi defence forces, or the willingness of those who are presently being intimidated into certain behaviours by ISIL to turn sides or turn against it.

From my own viewpoint, this doesn’t lend itself to the traditional, “This is where we are. We’ve thought it all through. This is where we’re going to and this is the end state we’re looking for.” This is a case of those many people—you were looking for: who owns this? Well, the answer is that there are probably about 20 different players who own different elements of the comprehensive approach that needs to be applied in Iraq, in Syria and right around the region, because of the multifaceted and multi-natured nature of the ultimate solution, and all the moving parts that need to go into place.

Q210 Mr Gray: So that is mission creep?

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: That is one for my employers to decide, in terms of mission creep. I think that in terms of what the military have been asked to do for the time being, bearing in mind what I said—we started with humanitarian drops on to a mountain, and we then started to get permissions to deliver physical effect on ISIL and its various capabilities. Where does this go next? Well, there are many answers to that question, but most of them are not for me or us; they are for the British Government and the role that they want to play in an international piece, in terms of influence in the region.

General Sir Nicholas Carter: I think also, to be fair, in terms of setting up the military element of this, there have been some sensible principles applied to it, namely a minimum international presence, that the operation must be sustainable and that there must be a regional solution to the coalition. And if you work those principles through—the way in which the military are involved in this—that is a pretty sensible way of looking at it at the moment.

Q211 John Woodcock: May I put it to you, General Sir Nick, that your answer to an earlier question about it being for the Foreign Office to determine the political solution and building up the state actually shows the deficiencies of the working between the armed forces, FCO and DFID? And is that not what your relatively new defence engagement strategy is supposed to overcome, allowing the forces to play a more effective role in regions such as this?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: We’re absolutely certain, to answer the specifics of defence engagement, that if it is nested in a whole-of-Government approach and you utilise all the instruments of national power, our contribution to it will be much more effective. That is absolutely the direction of travel, and I am also certain that it will be a feature of the next SDSR.

General Sir Richard Barrons: If your question is about where you synthesize a Government's policy appetite—advice they get from the Foreign Office—with the role that might be played with development, the military instrument and others, the answer is in the National Security Council.

Q212 John Woodcock: It is not simply a case, is it, of other Departments providing the environment in which you can work more effectively? Do you not accept that the forces themselves can play a more effective role in building the groundwork themselves?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Yes, we can play into it and it comes back to the point about the soft end of military power being applied to achieve that sort of effect.

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: I still think there is an issue of understanding exactly what's going on. An incredibly complex set of dynamics is still unfolding, tribally, regionally and culturally, with all the regional players yet to commit to a series of acts or behaviours that might improve the situation. I go back to reinforcing the aspiration made earlier that the need to understand must be exploited mercilessly until we are in a position to act.

Q213 Bob Stewart: Following on Admiral Sir George's point—and I totally agree with it—a number of senior generals, who have left the armed forces and are therefore no longer constrained, have been going on, and not just them, but academics and newspaper correspondents, saying we should do nothing until we know the end game. Why don't we know the end game? Frankly, after that description by the Chief of the Navy, we can't have a clue what the end game is. We must just deal with it. Do you disagree with all these senior officers, retired, who keep saying we need an end game, because I do? We can't have an end game. There has never been an end game with any of our conflicts. We had an end game in Ireland when I went there in 1970 and we were told by the Foreign Secretary that we would be out by Christmas: that classic silliness. That was the end game then, and look how long it took. We never have an end game.

Chair: Dai has a specific question about section 7.

Q214 Mr Havard: We think we sort of know what has been said so far about what we deployed and what we are using and what we are doing. Today, the Secretary of State made another announcement about what might happen in a future package and making extra offers for certain things: assigning advisory personnel to headquarters, increasing counter-IED training and so on.

One thing in that package is training and we were discussing this with other people the other day. The Jordanians have a very interesting view of what might happen with training. Can you say something about how, if we are not going to be sending armed forces ourselves and we are trying to enable these people, we are going to do this and where are we going to do it? The experience of Libyans in Bassingbourn does not help us in this debate today, but where are we going to do it and how?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: I think we would focus on helping the Iraqi security forces to do a better job of commanding, controlling and planning in headquarters. That is one aspect of what we might do. They also need help in certain specialist areas, which is why the Secretary of State will have announced counter-IED. I guess there may be other areas

of expertise that would be to their advantage. But I sense it will not be down on the ground training infantry because that is something—

Q215 Mr Havard: That is why I asked the question. In the package today—this is in relation to Kurds in particular—the Secretary of State refers to offering them infantry skills, which is slightly different.

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Yes, that may be different where the Kurds were operating, but certainly our experience of training indigenous forces, whether in Afghanistan or Iraq earlier, was that the bit where you really need and can add serious value is in helping them lead, plan and execute in headquarters rather than perhaps down on the ground.

Q216 Mr Havard: Is that when they failed, when they ran away?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: I don't know, to be fair. I suspect that that may be for other reasons, but certainly if you can plan, execute and give the sort of orders that make sense on the ground, that is hugely helpful.

Q217 Chair: I am aware that you all need to leave. Are you able to take a last question from Madeleine Moon if we limit it to two minutes? I apologise for that.

General Sir Nicholas Carter: It depends whether it is an easy one.

Q218 Mrs Moon: I am concerned about our actual ability to ensure that there is not a spot campaign where we do a bit over here and a bit over there, and firefight the latest crisis. Is there someone, somewhere pulling this together, so that where there has been a fire and we have helped dampen it down, we don't just move on to the next fire, but the forces on the ground help to build capacity, so there becomes a safer network rather than constantly moving around in different bombing campaigns in different parts of the country? Is that happening?

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Strategically, one would take Iraq as one critical spot in the world, but I assume you mean inside Iraq?

Q219 Mrs Moon: I do.

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Yes.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford: The two big US headquarters are co-ordinating through the Iraqi Defence Force. So the bombing campaign is being controlled from the US Airforce CAOC—the Combined Air Operations Centre—which also, by the way, looks after air support into Afghanistan. That is how big their region is. That is all being orchestrated and co-ordinated and there is a plan. That is being fused by what is going on the ground, via the US Army headquarters, into the Iraqi headquarters. It is not neat and tidy, but the existing capacity of the US military in the region is being used to facilitate this multinational delivery because of the very size and scale of it, which would overmatch the Iraqi military's ability to deliver.

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: I think it is about trying to get strategic investment aligned against a time scale that allows people to do the job properly, and not withdrawing early or reducing the commitment because it is politically palatable to do so. It is about

understanding first and then committing properly. That is one of the hardest things to do, because in shaping a set of investments militarily, sometimes you don't know how long it is going to take, and that is quite untidy. Because the dynamics on the ground and the changing politics mean that you can't define precisely how long an operation is going to take. You certainly can't select the end state, as Mr Stewart has described it.

The nature of military utility here is very difficult. I think as Chiefs that we are very clear that the politics has got to lead us. We have to ask the Iraqis what they want to do, how they want to solve the problems, how we can help them, and then respond to that signal and ask the regional players to take the weight as well.

Mrs Moon: I have heard from women in the region that there is a fear that their communities receive help when they are at risk. The help is very good and solves the problem but then it moves on. The risk is if you come back into your community, the problem comes back. I want to ensure that that is not happening, that we are actually staying and holding.

Chair: Enormous thanks to you all. Just before you head off, are there any last comments on Future Force 2020 that you have not got off your chest and are important for the Committee to understand? Any last thoughts or reflections, bits we may have missed?

Admiral Sir George Zambellas: Thank you.

General Sir Nicholas Carter: Thank you for the opportunity to discuss it with you.

Chair: Thank you all for your time.