

Defence Committee

Oral evidence: [SDSR 2015 and the Army](#), HC 108

Tuesday 11 October 2016

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Dr Julian Lewis (Chair); Richard Benyon; Douglas Chapman; Mr James Gray; Mrs Madeleine Moon; Jim Shannon; Ruth Smeeth; Mr John Spellar; Bob Stewart.

Questions 145-222

Witnesses

[I](#): Lieutenant General (Retired) Sir Paul Newton KBE CBE, Professor of Strategy, University of Exeter, Professor Timothy Edmunds, Professor of International Security, University of Bristol, and Dr Warren Chin, Senior Lecturer, Defence Studies Department, King's College London.

Written evidence from witnesses:

– [Dr Warren Chin](#)

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Lieutenant General (Retired) Sir Paul Newton KBE CBE, Professor Timothy Edmunds and Dr Warren Chin.

Q145 **Chair:** Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the third session of our inquiry into the SDSR 2015 and the Army. Welcome back to at least one of our panel witnesses, whom we have seen in the not-too-distant past. I would like to ask all three witnesses to briefly introduce themselves.

Dr Chin: I am Dr Warren Chin. I am a senior lecturer in the defence studies department at King's College London. I am mainly based in the Joint Services Command and Staff College and am the land warfare historian for the higher command and staff course.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Good morning. I am Paul Newton. I am a professor of strategy at the University of Exeter. Thanks to the Committee for the invitation and for the support you have given to the Exeter programme. In my bio notes, I make it very clear what my interests are, but I should stress that I am here purely as an Exeter professor, not representing any other institution. I was a member of the Army.

Professor Edmunds: I am Tim Edmunds, Professor of International Security and Director of the Global Insecurities Centre at the University of Bristol.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. We will start off with Colonel Bob Stewart.

Q146 **Bob Stewart:** I am going to start with you, General, if you don't mind. The SDSR 2015 suggested a war-fighting division, consisting of three brigades and a strike force. With your experience as an infantry officer, would you tell the Committee what you think the purpose of a division is and why it is so important?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Certainly. As you know, land operations are different from maritime and air operations. Each have their unique characteristics. Land operations tend to be prosecuted dispersed, widely spread and decentralised, with mission command delegated down to the lowest appropriate level, so getting what is known as the span of command exactly right is important. The duties given to any Commander, from a Lance Corporal in charge of four people in a fire team to a Lieutenant General in command of a corps—the division provides you with that interface between the political guidance coming down through the land component headquarters and what is happening at brigades. Each brigade can look after, for instance, part of a city. It can fight one tactical action. It is a full-on business being a brigade commander in a brigade headquarters. What the division does is look out



HOUSE OF COMMONS

over days, perhaps weeks, and allow the force to integrate most efficiently things like air support, engineers, air defence and so forth.

Q147 **Bob Stewart:** Excuse me Sir, but a brigade could do that, though presumably not at the same level.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Each of these levels of command can stretch itself a bit in either direction, but what the Army is wisely doing is learning the lesson of Afghanistan, where you had brigade commanders in charge of increasingly large, rather bloated headquarters, where they could be directing a tactical action one minute and on the phone to the Prime Minister or the Chief of the Defence Staff the next. A brigade commander might have been a battalion commander in charge of 400 or 500 people only a year or two before, so that is a heck of a leap. Getting the span of command right is not an overhead; it is the way in which you bring genuine agility and professionalism to bear.

Q148 **Bob Stewart:** Thank you for that. Speaking as an ex-Colonel, I thought that was a very good description. Considering the problems the Army is going to face because of its smallness and its lack of capability, what key capabilities do you think a war-fighting division would require? Will we actually have them?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: To me again?

Bob Stewart: Yes. You're the General. I am going to ask you until I stop General's questions.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Right. I'm on General's questions. I know that the Army is thinking hard about what a modern division has to do. When you look at it, you would recognise some of the things that are going to be in 3 UK Division from your time as a battle group commander. One of my students, James Sladden, gave a brilliant talk at the Land Warfare conference this year where he explained that some of the things in modern warfare really look quite similar to those that we were used to in previous eras, such as the return of an air threat or the return of masked artillery, so not everything will be different but some things will be. The Army is looking at those capabilities, including whether they need to deploy the whole divisional headquarters forward or whether a relatively small tactical footprint can be put forward and network back to the main headquarters, which could well be out of the theatre of operations. You still need the ability to fight and win in complex terrains, so the right mix of all arms: armour, infantry, engineers and so on. I would flag up, perhaps we could come back to it later, ground-based air defence. Thinking back to when I was a Captain, I was told by a German General who had fought in the Second World War that if you try to manoeuvre without ground-based air defence it is "an expensive form of suicide". Also, some of the capabilities around influence, to understand influence. I think you will see that the division will take some quite traditional forms and some new ones. Perhaps we could pick this up later, but I see what the Army is doing: it is on a journey. Having focused



HOUSE OF COMMONS

exclusively on counter-insurgency for 15 years, it is now rebuilding the right capabilities.

Q149 **Bob Stewart:** I am sorry to keep pestering you. How big is a divisional headquarters? I always thought, from my limited experience at that level, it was huge. It seems to cover a huge area and I wonder whether some of them might actually be better placed further forward with a rifle in their hands.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Did you ever visit Iraq or Afghanistan and see the size of the permanent headquarters?

Bob Stewart: I did.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: They were truly enormous.

Bob Stewart: That's what I'm thinking of.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: They couldn't move. If you set one of those up in a place where there was a serious air threat from a peer or peer-plus adversary it wouldn't survive. I know that our division and other partner nations are looking at having much smaller, more agile—

Q150 **Bob Stewart:** A rapid reaction thing?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: And able to move and conceal themselves and only having forward the things they need to be able to command and having the rest of it back out of harm's way.

Q151 **Bob Stewart:** NATO's rapid reaction divisional headquarters took two months to establish in the Baltic states when I visited it last. It seems a very large organisation, a divisional headquarters. I'm going to let you off the hook, sir, because I think you've given very good answers on that. Dr Chin, what do you think, as an academic, about senior Generals making comments within weeks—I am referring to Barrons and Shirreff, particularly—of them saying totally the contrary when they were wearing uniform?

Dr Chin: I suppose you would have to challenge the credibility and question the motivation, in terms of why they did what they did when they did it. I suppose that question would probably be most directly focused on Richard Barrons, who it is said was disappointed that he didn't get the post he thought he deserved. However, in his defence, I think you need to triangulate. Is it just Richard Barrons who is making these observations about the parlous state of defence and the British Army and whether it is going to be able to cope with a Russian-style conventional attack in the future? The truth is it is not. Obviously, you have Richard Shirreff, but you also have people like Mark Urban, whose book, "The Edge", spends a great deal of time talking about the fact that we are back in the 1930s, that we have resurgent powers, in the form of Russia and China, and that they are seeking to challenge the established order, which is not really in the interests of the west. Christopher Coker has drawn out a similar narrative in terms of the challenges the UK faces in the existing order that we live



HOUSE OF COMMONS

in, and it is basically a much darker place. Within the context of the war on terror and the peacekeeping era of the 1990s, the four structures that we had, the way we funded them and the alliance of brigade-level formations was, I think, entirely understandable. No one really sought to question that, but with regard to the nature of the threat now, you have to pose the question, "Do the issues that have been raised have traction?" I think in some cases they do. Again, comparing back with the 1930s, the military are financially not in a good place, and that applies right across the board. We understand that. The SDSR made it very clear that at that time that the UK faced two big challenges: the financial crisis and Afghanistan. We managed to ride through both of those and come out of Afghanistan reasonably well intact. The next question, of course, is: where do you go from there? Ultimately, that is dictated by the nature of the external threat that you face. For us, that threat manifests itself in two directions: one to the south of NATO, with regard to Islamic State and the instability in the MENA region; and obviously, and most recently, what has been going on with Ukraine and Russia. I will say this. In terms of the thinking about the division and how that relates to the threat posed by Russia, for me what is most interesting is that the Army seemed to be thinking about this before the crisis actually emerged. I assumed that there was a direct—

Bob Stewart: And these guys were thinking about it—

Dr Chin: The British Army was thinking about—

Q152 **Bob Stewart:** They had their mouths stuffed when they were in uniform, but they unstuffed them when they were out. That is the essence of my question. I understand that, but it is worrying.

Professor Timothy Edmunds, hello; it's very nice to meet you. I am not going to ask my friend, Sir Paul, again. I am going to ask you whether you think our high-intensity division is well suited to deal with hybrid operations.

Professor Edmunds: It is a very interesting question. One of the things I think when I am looking at a division for division strength is this. The division is a kind of answer, and it's a sovereign answer in the sense that it brings together those kinds of capabilities and capacities that Sir Paul was talking about, in a way that is deployable through UK Armed Forces without necessarily bringing NATO partners and so on into that formation. But it's a particular kind of answer to a question that I am not sure is particularly clear. We have talked about what the threats might be. We have talked about Russia and so on. But I think there might be a danger of thinking of those threats in terms of the old Cold War or the old sort of air-land battle of the 1980s. I am not sure a conflict with Russia, should it emerge, would necessarily look like that.

Q153 **Bob Stewart:** It wouldn't, because with hybrid warfare, they would infiltrate through.

Professor Edmunds: Quite.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q154 **Bob Stewart:** That would be slightly different. But it isn't all that different from what we envisaged in the old days of the Cold War—truck drivers driving through and doing recces and all that sort of thing. Essentially, Russia's strategy calls on possible use of tactical nuclear weapons—that will bring me to my last question in a minute—as a first choice as part of their strategy. Is that very different from what we expected when we had the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany facing us across the inner German border in the old days? I am not so sure that it is that different. I know the tendency is always to fight the last war, but I am wondering whether in fact it would be fairly well reflected, if that was to happen, with twists like much more subversion.

Professor Edmunds: If it was to happen, but I think the question to ask is: how, where and when? Clearly, you can look at Ukraine. You can look at the Baltic states, but the Baltic states are a very different case from Ukraine because they are part of NATO. There is the question of nuclear escalation. There is the question of taking on NATO as a whole. So I think ramping straight up to the idea of a major conflict with Russia—it is certainly something that is possible, but I am not sure—

Q155 **Bob Stewart:** If I was them, I would use shock. I would go straight in very fast, because we move at the speed of a striking slug, don't we, actually?

Professor Edmunds: Could it not be a kind of creeping—you talked about hybrid warfare.

Q156 **Bob Stewart:** It would be creeping; it would be creeping with subversion. But when they actually go for it, they will go for it at least advantage to ourselves—in other words, it will take us a long time to deploy.

Professor Edmunds: In order to do what?

Bob Stewart: Well, in order to stop them—

Professor Edmunds: No, what would the Russian strategic aim be?

Bob Stewart: I could think of Russia saying, "Let's just take the Baltic states back."

Professor Edmunds: So, naked territorial—

Bob Stewart: Well, they could do that through Kaliningrad and we would still be contemplating calling in our Reserves.

Professor Edmunds: Okay, but could you defend against a major Russian move on the Baltic states—

Q157 **Bob Stewart:** The only way you can defend is for our troops to be hostage to fortune—by forward deployment of our men, just like we did in Berlin. I am not going to go on, because actually this takes us to my last question. I will switch back to my friend, Sir Paul, and ask him about the nuclear deterrent and its possible use. Let's face it: it is used every day, because actually it is deterring. Let us not go down the thing that



HOUSE OF COMMONS

the nuclear deterrent is not used. It is used every day as a deterrent and the Committee realises that. Can you give your view—now as an academic—as to its usefulness in a possible future war?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: I think its primary use in our strategy is as part of a credible, seamless deterrent. That starts with my fire team and lance corporal and an upgraded Warrior—part of the division being relevant—right the way through to clear signalling, which the Army's part of that would be done through 77 Brigade, so another new, relevant capability, and right the way through to the decision to use the nuclear deterrent. My only reflection would be that if you break any chain in that credibility, then the idea of escalation—the very notion of deterrence itself—starts to come unglued. I would answer it by saying it is credible if you have the steps leading up to it in place, which includes your conventional war fighting capability.

Bob Stewart: A credible deterrent.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: As part of a seamless set of strategic options available to policy makers that they can then signal.

Q158 **Bob Stewart:** Of course, we have got a gap in tactical nuclear weapons, which does not make for a seamless credibility.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: We, the British, or we, NATO?

Bob Stewart: We, the British.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Within the alliance, I think that is probably—

Bob Stewart: Within the alliance we may not have.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: To your point about being present, my understanding is that under enhanced forward presence NATO is going to have people deployed in order to send that clear signalling message that this is the boundary of NATO and article 5 applies that keeps any consideration of using nuclear weapons well off my personal agenda.

Q159 **Bob Stewart:** Well, it's off everyone's personal agenda, sir, as you know, but it is certainly not off the Russian forces' agenda because they actually practise it in exercises, and in exercises in the Baltic, don't they?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: So I believe. That is their doctrine.

Bob Stewart: They do. I am very grateful for that. I am sorry I have been long—but fast as well. Thank you so much.

Q160 **Chair:** Thank you, Bob; you have covered a lot of ground there. Before I call John Spellar, I have just a couple of quick questions. Is there anything that can be done to encourage senior officers who have concerns about the shape and size of the Armed Forces to speak out while they are still in post without perhaps causing irreparable damage to



HOUSE OF COMMONS

their future careers, or is that something that is an inherent problem and of the nature of any power structure when one is part of it and hoping to rise higher?

Dr Chin: I will have a go at answering that and then General Newton will, I am sure, have a very clear and enlightening view. From the perspective of senior officers, from my experience, they do speak to power and say what they believe—so I am told. The question then is why that advice is ignored. It is not just the advice of their seniors within the military; we also have to remember that, quite often, the military claim that they have given advice to politicians and that, too, has been ignored. I can only assume that from the position of the senior person within the military, and indeed the politician, their view is shaped by a much bigger set of constraints and challenges, and they may feel that while the perspective of their subordinate is good in one sense, it is not the complete picture, hence the decision to override. What should the Officer concerned in that position do? Does he have the right of appeal? Probably not.

It is very difficult to pinpoint exactly why that might happen, because I do not think it is necessarily something to do with the structure and organisation of the Army per se, if we are talking about that specifically. I think what you are focused more on really is the culture of the Army and the extent to which it does encourage that critical analysis and the questioning. In theory, it supposedly is—it is there; it is done—but there is a view in the Army now that the current CGS is somebody who is intellectually very, very intimidating, and people find it difficult to argue against him. As a result of that, I think, they themselves are practising a degree of self-censorship.

So on the one hand, whereas Nick Carter strikes me as a man who probably wants debate, wants to actually discuss things and have that critical analysis applied, I am not sure that his subordinates feel that they can do that. As a result, perhaps that is one reason why you are not seeing the airing of these sorts of ideas and views.

Q161 **Chair:** So the suggestion is that people at the top could actually do more to encourage their own subordinates to speak out more within the system; and, in fairness to Generals Shirreff and Barrons, we do not know that they were not speaking out within the system before they retired.

Dr Chin: No, exactly—we don't. I suspect that they probably were, in one form or another, making their views known to both their peers and their superiors. The reason why I raised the question of General Carter is that I think he actually is a General who wants to have debate and wants to encourage people to think and come up with innovative solutions, but because of the nature of the man and perhaps because of the way in which he approaches and discusses things, these things have not necessarily happened in the way that maybe he hopes they would.

Q162 **Chair:** He is, as you say, a very forceful character. We have had him on this Committee and it has been fascinating to hear him in full flow; but



HOUSE OF COMMONS

how would the weight of even his opinion compare, for example, with the view of the permanent under-secretary at the Ministry of Defence? Is that an unfair question?

Dr Chin: For me, probably yes, because I have never had any exposure to that sort of interaction. Perhaps General Newton has.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: I think if the notion is that senior officers do not speak out, then we should probably look at that more closely. About three years ago I attended the RUSI air power conference, where Air Marshal Greg Bagwell announced in very stark terms that the era of uncontested western air supremacy is over; we are going to have to fight for the air. That is quite a statement to make in public. Nick Carter, at the land warfare conference this year, got four—they were part of a larger cohort, but I think it was four—Lieutenant Colonels from the staff college to stand up. This was unscripted—it was not censored before; I was involved in mentoring them, but they decided what they were going to say. Some of their remarks were very critical of the Army, including “There is too much change going on.” Your question gets to the heart of the question: is it possible to speak out and retain the confidence as a strategic adviser to one’s political master? I think that is a very fine line.

Q163 **Chair:** Speak out within the system rather than publicly?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Speaking out within the system, in my experience—it is what it is, but I have worked for people and I have been part of that system where speaking truth to power has not been part of our problem, but we would not speak out in public, because if you do that, which decision maker is going to come back to you next time and say, “Well, what do you think of the options?” You have seen this from the other side of the fence, the other end of the telescope.

Bob Stewart: May I make a comment? It would be very good to see a senior officer resign on principle—I wonder when that last happened—because he or she fundamentally disagreed with the way the Armed Forces were going. It has not happened. If they really felt that strongly, they could put their money where their thoughts are but they don’t, and they haven’t for a very long time. I think that is tragic. That is why we feel resentment when senior officers come out and say everything in contradiction to what they said when they were in uniform. It is very upsetting, and there is a real dilemma, but it is actually a dilemma that the senior officers have got to sort out themselves. They have got to put their principles first sometimes.

Chair: Okay. The same could apply to politicians, of course.

Q164 **Mrs Moon:** I want to go back to Dr Chin and his comment about politicians. We are all politicians on this Committee. Would you say we are a powerful group of politicians?

Dr Chin: No.

Q165 **Mrs Moon:** Why not?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Dr Chin: Because the way in which you can shape and influence things lies primarily in the reports that you produce, which you hope will be able to persuade Governments of a particular view, but ultimately what power do you have to get the Government to accept your view? If they reject it, there is nothing you can do. I have seen that in however many Defence Committee reports, which have been excellent publications in themselves. I have found them very, very useful, but from the perspective of Governments you can see in their response to you, "Yes, thank you very much, that's very nice. Now let's move on to the next challenge". That is a very cynical and rather simplistic view.

Hon. Members: No.

Dr Chin: As long as we all know where we are and why we are doing what we are doing.

Bob Stewart: We knew the answer before we asked it.

Q166 **Mrs Moon:** Is there a danger in a democracy where in theory Parliament is sovereign that Government are becoming too powerful and not listening to Parliament when it scrutinises the actions of Government?

Dr Chin: That is a very deep question which I think applies across Government as a whole, not just within the realm of defence. In the age in which we live and the nature of the society that we exist in— the changing attitudes and decreasing deference shown towards institutions of this country, the way in which the younger generation engage and interact via social media et cetera—yes, I think there is a case to be made for opening up Government and making it more accountable, more transparent, so that people have a clear sense that they have invested in something and that this is not just politics for a particular group, but politics for the country as a whole. Reform of that kind across the board, not just in the context of defence, would be a good thing. That's my view.

Professor Edmunds: The one thing I would add to this, to support some of the things that Paul was saying, is that my sense is that there is no shortage of good advice that comes out of this Committee and out of various other bodies across MoD and all kinds of other areas. There is no shortage of critical advice and new ideas, blue-skies thinking and all the rest of that, but what happens to that when it gets put into that decision-making process seems rather opaque, and of course it faces a whole series of challenges and demands from other areas, whether those be the other services or other parts of the security picture or other parts of the budget and so on, as you well know. So what happens between the advice and the decision at the end is still rather unclear.

Q167 **Chair:** Now, we started off talking about the new structures and divisions and so on. We must get back to this sort of thing. Can I ask whether we have had any feedback from our allies about the plans for a war-fighting division comprising three brigades and the new strike force in the 2015 SDSR? Have our allies given us any feedback of which you are aware?



Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: I attended a conference run by the United States Army a few months ago. They were pleased and impressed with the speed with which certain things had happened. We are not talking about rhetoric; it is reality. 77 Brigade was up and running, it was doing things, it was deploying people. The whole notion of a balanced division able to deploy armoured infantry brigades and strike brigades was being worked up and there was a really good interchange between the two Armies.

If you were to ask people like the Danes where would we plug in if we were to contribute a force that is lesser scale than a division, they would be pleased to see that there is a British framework division in to which they could operate. That all then adds to this business of credible collective deterrents.

Q168 **Mr Spellar:** Moving on from some of the doctrinal issues and getting down to some of the more concrete, do you think the equipment programme for the Army is sufficient to deliver a war-fighting division by 2025?

Dr Chin: Historically, if you look at this over a span of time—at how well the UK has done in terms of procuring major bits of kit—sometimes it has done reasonably well, but more often than not it hasn't. If you look at what the war-fighting division requires, it relies very heavily on a suite of different types of armoured vehicle, which begins with Ajax and then descends into a variety of other names. That seems to be the very heart of what the division is going to be and what is going to enable it to be something fundamentally different from divisions in the past. I have read General Carter's evidence, where he speaks of this idea of being able to control time and space using this division in a very different kind of way. At the heart of that, obviously, is this armoured vehicle.

There are two problems here with regard to equipment capability. The first is the technological sophistication associated with this armoured vehicle. We are not just talking about an armoured vehicle in the traditional sense, we are talking about something which contains within it very sophisticated electronic systems that allow it to conduct networked-enabled warfare so that it can communicate digitally—use a variety of different sensors to create a battle picture for the divisional HQ. In that sense it is very complex.

If you look at its predecessor, the Future Rapid Effect System, it did not fare very well in the procurement system. There are a variety of reasons underlying that, but at the heart of it was this problem of complexity and trying to manage the programme in a way that was affordable and could also create and deliver the capability within the set timeframe. I do not know how far and to what extent General Dynamics have learned lessons from FRES and sought to apply those within the context of what is currently known as Ajax, but assuming they have, you still get into the problem of rising defence costs. That raises another bigger, existential problem across the defence piece generally in that defence costs, like those costs we experience in the NHS, seem to have a peculiar kind of



HOUSE OF COMMONS

inflation which outpaces everything else in the normal economy, but our defence spending plans rest on a different set of assumptions. As a result, you can quickly see how defence budgets get eaten up by rising defence costs. The point was recognised back in the 1970s by David Greenwood when he was writing about British defence policy. That issue persists to this day.

The capability is novel. I think it could provide an important enabler in terms of allowing the division to have a unique contribution within the context of war-fighting against any particular threat, but I would question the affordability piece, I would question the technological feasibility piece, and in truth I do not know whether we have the wherewithal to ensure that this system is brought off the production line successfully. The point I would emphasise here is that all of these factors lie outside the control of the Army. They lie very much with the agencies responsible for procuring this equipment, but most importantly with the manufacturer. That is my best answer to that question.

Q169 Mr Spellar: Taking that on board, do you think therefore that there are unreasonable, and possibly unrealisable, expectations of the Ajax programme?

Dr Chin: I think inevitably there will be because it is almost portrayed as a silver bullet for the problem: how do we fight outnumbered in an airspace which we do not control, in a ground space where our sea lanes of communication may also be in jeopardy because of A2D2? All of these things have come to focus on the use of this technology to give the division a fighting chance. Its ability to disperse rapidly and to concentrate rapidly using these datalinks, so that you can have your divisional headquarters located at a remote site—these things are important in terms of the survivability and the continuing functioning of that formation, but whether you will actually get that capability in the cost specified, whether you will get it within the timeframe specified, and whether, even if you do get it and those two goals are achieved, it will perform as you hope it will, only time will tell. It is only actually when you demonstrate the technology—put it in the training space—that you begin to see problems that might arise with regard to its performance. The bigger question here, I suppose, is why were we relying so specifically on this particular programme to give the division its strengths and advantages with regard to the adversary it is actually facing?

Q170 Mr Spellar: In summary, taking all the absolutely understandable concerns that you have raised and many of the questions that we need to be asking, should we and the Ministry of Defence be very concerned about the progress on these programmes?

Dr Chin: Yes. You only have to look at Bernard Gray's report on acquisition in 2009 to see just how complex, and almost baroque, the procurement process is. We have been talking for the last 70 years about a specific set of problems, but as far as I can tell we have not found either a technocratic or indeed a policy or political solution to the question of how you buy capital-intensive equipment at an affordable price without taking



on a huge amount of risk in one form or another. That is the existential question that MoD needs to address, and every now and then tries to address, but for whatever reason, more often than not it gets pushed into the background and the focus is on the shiny bits of kit themselves rather than the back end of that capability in terms of how it is created.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: I don't see Ajax as the silver bullet. If you look back two years and think how far upgrading the capability has gone in that time, the Warrior programme is being upgraded for the armoured infantry, the Challenger programme is being upgraded; attack helicopters are being upgraded, Chinooks are being upgraded. Those are not rhetorical; they are actual programmes that are happening. Ajax is essential to be able to give close recce, because our capability there is a gap.

Warren makes an important point about not over-specifying. My understanding is that the Army, as it looks at the mechanised infantry vehicle—the sister project to Ajax—is thinking very hard about making sure it states the absolute requirements, rather than an unachievable shopping list of everything.

Q171 **Richard Benyon:** Sir Paul, you mentioned 77 Brigade on a couple of occasions. The CGS told us—he was probably being intellectually intimidating at the time—that “the information age has changed the way we need to fight and operate” and “as a result, we have rewritten the Army’s core doctrine, which is now called ‘Integrated Action’”. Do you think that the establishment of 77 Brigade is an example of the evolution of that new doctrine? Many of us heard the brigade commander speak at the land warfare conference just over a year ago, and we have seen it starting to operate. Is there enough buy-in across the Army and other services to the value of this particular organisation within that doctrine?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: If I think back to my experience when I was a Captain at Staff College, we got one lecture on what were then called psychological operations, and everything else was about how to move heavy metal.

Richard Benyon: I didn't have one.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Are you sure? I think I was there for that one. 77 Brigade and these ideas about integrated action have not been handed down by some kind of intellectual high ground. They come out of the Army’s experience on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan. They come out of the notion of understanding the environment you are in, understanding the mosaic of conflict, understanding the people you are encountering—your adversaries, innocent bystanders or whatever—and then being able to influence those people and being able to talk to them, ideally in their own language.

In terms of buy-in, it will be the officers and the soldiers who have been through Afghanistan in particular who will be looking at 77 Brigade and saying, “Yes, the Army’s addressing that.” I think you would find that



HOUSE OF COMMONS

there are probably more applicants for the jobs in 77 Brigade than in many of the more conventional parts of the Army. So does it have buy-in? Yes it does. It now needs to be enshrined in the doctrine, because the doctrine is your body of knowledge and that is what is taught at the staff college, so it goes into the DNA.

Q172 Richard Benyon: Thank you. I want to talk about another changing aspect of how we do operations and fight wars. I know Madeleine wants to come in on this. I want to ask all three of you about a slightly higher intellectual basis for this. It is 26 years since the first Gulf war, and in that war over 90% of the personnel deployed in theatre were servicemen or women. In recent conflicts, that has dramatically changed, and civilian contractors are now doing so much more.

In a culture post-Iraq/Afghanistan, where politicians and the public are windy about intervention, using contractors across a number of different activities, including what one would define as war-fighting activities, is now taking place. Do you think we need to re-evaluate the whole concept? Our mindset is “mercenaries bad, Armed Forces personnel good” and that is based on the appalling atrocities carried out in places like Africa in the 1960s. Yet if we have ex-British Army forces personnel mentoring the Lebanese army in battle, we can honestly say we do not have boots on the ground because we do not have service boots on the ground. Should we grow up slightly and face facts if we are going to develop the concept of CONDO—contractors on deployed operations? At what point are we talking about civilians in harm’s way and getting contractors to fight our wars for us?

Dr Chin: I would say briefly in answer to that that the contractorisation peace will not go away. It is becoming a more prominent part of operations and if you look at the curve since 1991, we have moved from a very small percentage of the activity in the battle space being conducted by contractor support to a lot more. I have forgotten the actual statistics, but they are quite surprising when you look at the actual datasets.

There is that issue of logistical support and making sure the front-line troops can carry on doing their particular jobs. The question you are raising is really about, I think, whether we should take that one stage further and introduce contractorisation of regiments—using private security companies to fight on our behalf.

Interestingly, the UN considered this at some point and a series of arguments were deployed to demonstrate that on one level it is a good thing because it does reduce the problem of the political interface back home and the worry about casualties, but there were also very big concerns, some stemming back to questions you have just raised about the 1960s and the legacy of mercenary armies and how they conduct and behave with regard to the wider civilian population.

I think for that reason alone the United Nations stepped back from this discussion, but with regard to the idea of using these types of forces, I see myriad problems. For example, let’s say an ordinary infantry soldier in the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Fusiliers is fighting in a particular part of the world, and at the same time the British Government deploys a private security company for a similar function, but the salary of the mercenary is four to five times that of the soldier. What impact will that have on motivation and the soldier's collegiate spirit on the battlefield? Problems like that need to be addressed.

Ultimately, if you think about it in a Weberian sense, the very basis of the state is that it retains a monopoly on the use of force so contractorising and allowing other groups to fight on your behalf is a really bad thing politically. It sends all the wrong messages about the power of the state and its ability to control and do the thing that states should do.

Professor Edmunds: I would agree with that. I would add that there is a strong resistance and a feeling along the lines Warren is expressing within the private security industry itself, precisely because there is that sort of pejorative image of the mercenary that isn't a good one. I think there is reluctance and wariness in the private security industry to become involved in those kinds of war-fighting activities.

I would also say that it is problematic if you are thinking about using them for activities such as defence engagement—you talked about mentoring and so on—because, in a sense, those activities need to take place over time and in the context of building long-term relationships and so on. I think there can be a danger in this sort of rather modular approach of thinking there are time bound and quick fixes for these kind of issues that would encourage you to go down a contractorisation line when I think they are much more longer term and require a more sustained engagement.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: I have nothing to add. I have some remarks about the whole force, but they may come later.

Q173 **Richard Benyon:** The final point is that if we are going to continue down this route of contractorisation—I entirely accept Dr Chin's idea that that genie will not go back in the bottle—we need to be very clear about the calibre and type of people we ask to do these things, even if it is tank transporting, logistics or whatever. They have to be properly regulated, don't they? We saw after Iraq a Klondike gold rush of security firms moving into places like Basra and Baghdad, and not all of them were of the ethical and employment calibre that we would hope to see in that stage.

Dr Chin: No, I agree with you. I am assuming that, in the context of war, the sorts of people you have talked about—tank transports and so on, and it is similar in the air domain as well—are re-roled, aren't they? Their Reserve status kicks in and they are subject to the rules and regulations of Her Majesty's Government and international law. If we could extend that, perhaps it might deal with it, but I have a fundamental concern about any armed group being supported by the British state in the prosecution of state interests which is supposedly attached or seen to be a direct part of the British state. That is a very worrying thing.



Q174 Mrs Moon: I wonder if can go from another angle, which is the whole issue of the reliance on contractors and industrial partners actually on the battlefield to maintain and support. At the same time asking companies, as part of contracts, to provide that service, but also asking them to provide sponsored Reserves. Are we in danger of mixing up the buying of platforms and the buying of support in theatre, with a company being required to produce numbers of personnel to enter the sponsored Reserve? Is there an ethical fudge here that we are in danger of creating? Where do we go with that when we have a Government that is increasingly wanting to place contracts with American companies?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: I think we are already in a position where major contracts are being let that require the company to deliver sponsored Reserves. General Dynamics was mentioned before.

Mrs Moon: I know.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: KBR has actually had quite a long-standing, very successful sponsored Reserve arrangement, proven in Camp Bastion.

The Regular Army is going to be smaller than it's been since the 18th century. Given the scale of ambition—the joint force putting 50,000 men and women into the field with about 30,000 of them being from the Army—the country has no option but to look at other ways of supporting that force. To me, the important thing is that you should know what your dependencies are. I have a chart I can distribute later that is a snapshot the American military did of dependency on contractors in Iraq in 2008. Some 83% of their logisticians were contractors. The interesting thing was that until they did the study they didn't know what those dependencies were.

I think the important thing is that some real energy is breathed into the whole force approach; that what has been a very rhetorical exercise after SDSR '10 becomes very practical. My sense is you manage that risk by all of the stakeholders understanding what they are signing up to. The sponsored Reserve construct is a very open and transparent one. There is no conscription into the sponsored Reserve. A sponsored Reservist applies for a job knowing that he or she is going to be doing, on operations if called upon, the things they are good at doing in peacetime. To me, that seems a pretty logical construct. I don't know if my colleagues have anything more profound to say about the ethics of it. The important thing is it should be very visible to all of the stakeholders.

Dr Chin: The only point I would add to that is in some cases it is absolutely necessary to have that contractor support there, because you cannot create that capability within the Armed Services themselves. The illustration I will give you comes from the Royal Navy. Quite often there are bits of kit on the ship that break down and they do not have anyone with the wherewithal to open the black box up and fix whatever it is, so they need to get somebody out from the company to do that. In the midst of a war-type situation or a national emergency, I can see that there is a



HOUSE OF COMMONS

good reason, from a practical perspective, to have that kind of person available in the sponsored Reserve to carry out those kind of tasks, otherwise your fleet, air capability and a large part of your land capability will die very quickly. As we know, reliability of equipment in the military is not great anyway, so that is a very important enabler. Putting the ethical considerations aside, there is a very good case for maintaining and growing that capacity, unfortunately. Ideally, I suppose, you should be able to grow it within the Armed Forces themselves but, budgets being what they are, you can't.

Q175 Mrs Moon: Then I put to you statements that I have received from defence companies operating in the UK that feel that they have greater capability to develop the sponsored Reserve but they do not find a willingness to take up that capacity from the MoD. What is your response to that?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: This is where the MoD, I hope, can change its culture. I hope it can change the speed at which it implements some of this. The relationship can be quite transactional. When a contract is tendered, the question is: "Can your company provide X number of sponsored Reserves? We'll hold you to account by making it a key performance indicator." What if you had a relationship with UK companies that said: "Let's do some integrated personnel planning. Let's work out what the skills are that you need. Where do they overlap with the skills that the Ministry of Defence needs?"

I will give you an example. According to the asthma foundation more than a million children in this country suffer from asthma—on average, two children per class. That means that they are unlikely to be able to find a career as a Regular soldier in the British Army, but what if their interest in STEM has been developed through some kind of symbiotic relationship with industry locally? What if they are then given a job in a company that can provide them as a sponsored Reserve to do a home-only function in force generation, in training, in supply or distribution of equipment? With a very small Regular Army and making the best use of your deployable Reserves, that seems to me the kind of solution that the MoD should be looking at.

Q176 Mrs Moon: I accept all of that but what happens when we are increasingly placing large contracts, key platforms, in the hands of the Americans? We don't have those sponsored Reserves who are able to do that technical input. We are not having the key enablers, the key skills, because they are American companies.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: I do not claim to be an expert, so I may be wrong, but with KBR and GD, it is the British parts of those companies that are already providing sponsored Reserves. I did a paper on this for the CGS's conference on it. Is the whole force a British force, or is it a multinational corporation force? That is a very important thing to be nailed down. I would like to see some doctrine written on it and stuff that's taught. I would like to see the industry involved in writing

that doctrine, rather than it just being written by military officers who perhaps do not understand how industry works.

Mrs Moon: I am thinking about something like the PA2. That is a key piece of kit that has gone to America. There were British companies that could have bought it, that could have produced it; they could have created an equivalent capability, but there would be no Reserves.

Q177 **Ruth Smeeth:** Building on Madeleine's comments, obviously we have a challenge in terms of recruitment and retention even, given the diminished numbers that we will now have in the Armed Forces. Do you think the pay, terms and conditions are currently sufficient to recruit and attract the right people with the right skill sets and qualities?

Professor Edmunds: I can comment on the Reserve side of things and the introduction of the bonuses for Reserves in terms of transferring from Regular soldiers and completing various phases of training. One of the projects that we are involved in at the moment is a series of interviews looking at how Reserves negotiate their military service with their civilian careers, including issues of recruitment and retention. One thing that comes up quite strongly from those interviews is that the bonus has an important role within that and that terms and conditions more generally were attractive in terms of bringing people to Reserve service. I am not so sure about the Regulars in that respect.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Like several people in this room, I am old enough to have been around when you reach a tipping point, and it can be quite intangible, you can be in an organisation that seems okay on the surface, but then one or two key people leave and it sends a ripple throughout the organisation and then it can go into a downward spiral. As Colonel Commandant of an infantry division, am I seeing that yet? No, but I have got a very close eye on it with the commanding officers, both Regular and Reserve.

We have an economy that is creating opportunities for people. There are no operations in Afghanistan or Iraq for young men and women to join and do. I think they are looking hard at the terms and conditions of service. If you start losing, particularly junior and non-commissioned officers, senior non-commissioned officers, young Captains in large numbers, that is the kind of warning signal that the MoD needs to be all over.

Dr Chin: If you look at the basic logic of SDSR15, the claim that is made by various defence economists who have scrutinised it is that the only way you are going to be able to pay for the capability that comes out of that is by suppressing salaries and changing the terms and conditions of the military personnel involved. That is across the board, not just the Army.

If that is the case, you could have a recruitment or retention problem, but I would argue that would have to be contingent on what is going on in the wider economy. In times of recession, the number of people leaving the Armed Forces generally falls away and you have no retention problems



HOUSE OF COMMONS

and quite often your recruitment difficulties also evaporate and disappear, I have been told.

In times of economic growth, the reverse applies. At the moment, we face a situation where—assuming Brexit does not cause the collapse of the UK economy and we continue to grow—you have an economy which is middling along, where unemployment is falling, labour is becoming scarce, and companies will basically then begin to compete for labour by offering better salaries in terms and conditions, except for MoD, which will be constrained by the financial deal that was agreed with regard to the delivery of SDSR.

In the longer term, when you look at the demographic curve, I think the military and the Government need to look at this quite seriously. Given the shortage of young people, I do wonder how they are going to attract people to the Armed Services if we are looking at an economy which can sustain itself and keep growing, with all the new jobs and opportunities that lie out there. That raises something further away, over the horizon, perhaps, but at the moment, I do not think SDSR in real terms is necessarily going to provide people with the sense that they are being invested in and that their terms and conditions are commensurate with the responsibilities and the long working hours that are normally associated with being in the Armed Forces.

Q178 Ruth Smeeth: To build on all your answers, no one raised the new employment model that the MoD is currently promoting. I would be interested in your views about whether it will enable the CGS to maximise talent or whether it will restrict his ability to get 21st-century skillsets, specifically in digital and cyber and whether we think this is going to be a helpful asset, or whether, given the concerns about the SDSR and financial incentives, we are going to be struck regardless of the model.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: From what I have seen, it is happening already. I am not a propagandist for Army headquarters, but I look at what they are doing and there is a sense of purpose about it that I respect and admire. I guess my glass is half full.

A major study is being done at the moment by a very talented civil servant who has been brought in laterally to be the Director of Reform in Army headquarters. He has not grown up through the services, he has been brought in with particular skills. He is looking very hard, more laterally, at how careers can be reimagined. There are already placements with industry. There are large numbers of Army officers attending undergraduate and postgraduate courses. I think I have four of them at the moment on the programme I run at Exeter, where they are working with a Pakistani Air Force officer and a Chinese naval officer. This brains-based approach, the idea of opportunity and lateral movement, I am not saying they are there, but there are some tangible signs that it is starting to work.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

It is giving the individual a much greater sense of their career plan and their priorities. It is not just a race to staff college and a race to become a senior officer. It is playing to people's strengths.

Q179 Mr Gray: SDSR had various things to say about defence engagement. I have two questions. First, is it working? Is there actually a serious and sensible role for the Army to play in defence engagement around the world? Is that a good thing to do? Secondly, if a decent amount of time is taken to engage in defence engagement, does that not reduce the capability with regard to war-fighting, divisional deployability and all that?

Professor Edmunds: I think defence engagement certainly can work, and it builds on 15 to 20 years' worth of activities in relation to encouraging democratic control of Armed Forces and the reform of Armed Forces in central and eastern Europe and the Balkans, security sector reform activities in Africa and so on. But a series of lessons come out of those experiences that have to be continuously relearned, to do with continuity of engagement, longevity of engagement, co-ordination of activities, sustaining those activities once the immediate project is finished and engaging local ownership in those sorts of processes. It is a viable strategy and set of activities, but it contains a series of potential problems that need to be—

Q180 Mr Gray: Isn't it one of those things that some bright spark thinks up when they are trying to decide what to put in the SDSR. Everybody thinks it is a frightfully good plan, but actually, about five years down the road, everyone has completely forgotten about it; it's parked on a shelf somewhere.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Are you familiar with the special purpose infantry battalions? Has that crossed your radar?

Mr Gray: Tell me more.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: It came out of SDSR15. It is one of the ways in which the Army is adapting. I am colonel commandant to the Queen's Division, which is three infantry regiments. I think we are going to be part of a trial where we will have one of our battalions converted into a special purpose infantry battalion, which will be specially selected and trained to do defence engagement, to be able to go into specific parts of the world and provide relevant training, to build relationships. Where does that link to war-fighting? If we then had to deploy 3 Division into that theatre of operation, we have a network of partnerships already established, and that then becomes part of the understanding we talked about before, of which 77 Brigade is a part.

Q181 Mr Gray: That's interesting. If you deploy 3 Division somewhere else, that will mean the battalion that is now an expert in Lesotho is not available to fight in Iraq.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: No, because they are not double earmarked. These battalions will be manned at about 250 mainly



HOUSE OF COMMONS

NCOs—mainly officers—and they are not in lieu of the war-fighting; they are there to complement it. It is a refinement of the Army 2020 structure.

Mr Gray: But the point I am making is that the more time they spend doing that, the less time they are doing training or taking part in war-fighting.

Dr Chin: I think you need to ask yourself first what purpose defence engagement serves. If it serves a clear purpose, it is likely that it will persist as an activity. Ultimately, the logic of defence engagement grows out of the problems encountered in Afghanistan and Iraq and the desire on not to become locked into protracted counter-insurgency campaigns that are hugely expensive, both in terms of lives lost and wounded but also national treasure—politically, an absolute no-no. At the end of 2014, it was very clear that we were not going to go back down that particular route.

Defence engagement supposedly provides you with a low-risk way of achieving the same kind of effect, which is political stability in regions of the world where you believe there are clear national interests at stake. I have looked at this around the area of counter-terrorism and how the military contributes to counter-terrorism overseas. The defence engagement piece feeds very well into the achievement of that tier 1 threat identified within the context of the national security strategy.

Q182 **Mr Gray:** Why?

Dr Chin: Because you see a linkage. It is a very good question. It depends on who you speak to. Some argue—

Q183 **Mr Gray:** But if the terrorists don't want to engage, what is the point of having a battalion of 250 soldiers sent to Afghanistan, for example? If the terrorists themselves don't want to engage, surely you are not actually achieving anything—

Dr Chin: You're not engaging with them—

Q184 **Mr Gray:** You are ticking a box on a bit of paper that some bright spark thought up, but are you actually reducing the risk of deployment?

Dr Chin: No. Well, you are reducing the risk of deployment; the whole purpose is to do precisely that so you don't become involved in fighting somebody else's war. What you are doing, as the 4th Mechanized Brigade demonstrated in north Africa, is helping states to beef up the capabilities and skills of their army. Defence engagement, from the Army's perspective, is at a very low level. It's on the ground; it's basically training soldiers in how to deal with things like IEDs and booby traps and just being better soldiers in essence.

Q185 **Mr Gray:** This is a similar area but different—national resilience. Do we have such thing as a plan for the defence of the realm?

Dr Chin: In terms of terrorist threat or—

Q186 **Mr Gray:** Does the MoD have—the General perhaps will remember from



HOUSE OF COMMONS

his time there. Do we have a plan for the defence of the realm?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: I left the Army four and a half years ago, so I wouldn't speculate on what the MoD has now.

Q187 **Mr Gray:** Did we then?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: No, because it was a very different mission then. We were focused on succeeding on current operations. That was where our energy was being focused.

Q188 **Mr Gray:** So four and a half years ago, we did not have a plan for the defence of the realm, but it may be that one has been developed since.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: A lot of work is being done, I know, on resilience, reconstitution and regeneration. Where that work has got to, I don't know; I would be speculating.

Q189 **Mr Gray:** Okay, we can inquire elsewhere, but certainly it is useful to know that four and a half years ago we didn't have any such thing.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: To my knowledge.

Q190 **Mr Gray:** Let's go on to a separate issue altogether—Reserves. How are we doing there?

Professor Edmunds: In one sense, going by the numbers that the CGS gave in his evidence to this Committee in June, I think recruitment seems to be picking up. In terms of the research that we have done, we think that there are some real successes of the FR2020 programme in terms of bringing in Reserves, but there are also some vulnerabilities that our interview data are beginning to show.

Q191 **Mr Gray:** The number is still quite low, isn't it? We have 21,000 fully trained out of a 30,000 target. It is still quite low. In their reports, and also Robin Brims's report, they try to make it sound as if it's all great, but actually, 10% less than trained strength is quite a big shortfall.

Professor Edmunds: Yes. There is also a degree of opacity in some of those numbers, particularly regarding trained strength and what that might mean in relation to, for example, deployability. What does "trained" actually mean? Does it mean that that person is deployable, and deployable in what sort of circumstances? That is not entirely clear from the data—

Q192 **Mr Gray:** No. That leads me on to this point. In their report to us, the MoD said—this is a quote—"The deficit of about 3,000 trained Reserves for a year or so will not have significant material impact on operational output." Is that realistic? It is what they said. Does it make sense?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: The Army grows its ability to be ready for war-fighting at different scales of effort. A year or so ago, it could put a taskforce out. Now, I think it's ready to put a Brigade out. By 2025, it should be able to put out a Division. So at the moment, that deficit that you mention is not impacting the readiness. Those people would not be missed, in terms of backfilling Regular units, today. If you



HOUSE OF COMMONS

ask that question in 2025, you might get a different answer if you still have a deficit.

Q193 Mr Gray: So long as it doesn't mean that for now. The words "for a year or so" are included in that quote, to be fair to the MoD. And you are saying that for a year or so it really doesn't matter, but if it goes on longer than that, it might do.

What about the estate? I want to ask about the quite big cuts and selling off of the training estate in the UK first. Do you think that will affect the Army's effectiveness? Secondly—you can answer the questions together, obviously—I want to ask about the overseas training estate. There is talk about selling off—well, not selling off but closing down BATUS in favour of training in, for example, western Europe. What do you think about the whole question of the training estate, both in the UK and overseas?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: The training must be relevant and must prepare your Army for the most likely kind of operation and the worst case you are going to face. What does that look like? It's likely to involve fighting in built-up areas and in woods and forests, among civilian population, with allies, where you have to be able to integrate aviation and so on. What I believe the Army is doing is trying to work out what the fundamentals of its training are and what it must deliver, not what they like doing, what is their habit or what they have grown up doing. There is certainly a need to modernise training and the training estate. Look at what the French have done—the Army has done so because I was in the Army and I made it look at it—investing over €100 million in creating a small town in northern France. CENZUB is the abbreviation. We don't have anything like that.

Mr Gray: We have a couple. There is one in Kent and in one on Salisbury plains.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Entirely different scale.

Mr Gray: The "German village", we used to call it, though it is no longer German.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: That is Copehill Down. The French equivalent is a different order of sophistication. That is the kind of training solution the Army is looking at. Can it afford it? What would it trade-off? How much of its live training and live firing would it trade-off to be able to afford that? Can it come to a commercial deal that it can bring to market to get someone to invest in it? I think that is going to be the subject of a major training review.

Q194 Mr Gray: To look at it a different way, do you think there is a future for battlegroup-sized live firing training across the plains in Canada? Is BATUS a threat?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: A personal view?

Mr Gray: Yes



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: I cannot say whether BATUS is a threat or not, but I am increasingly asking the question of why would want to do battlegroup live firing that is looking like noisy pantomime. It makes us feel good about ourselves when we are in uniform but the safety regulations are such that, as soon as an infantryman gets out the back of a Warrior, it can't fire its main armaments. Things are now fought for safety reasons, and for good safety reasons, but the realism of the training has been diminished. Where should we be pitching it? I think probably to what we used to call a "combat team" of about 200 people. That is much more manageable, and can have greater simulation, so you can do force on force, not formulaic drills.

Q195 **Mr Gray:** Kenya?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Superb training. I think that is an example of defence engagement, because the training we do in Kenya also serves to create capacity in the Kenyan Armed Forces and the anti-poaching organisations and so forth.

Q196 **Mr Gray:** Lots of the UK estate has been sold off, but you do not think that is going to be particularly deleterious to the training capabilities?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: So long as we can invest in making what's left relevant, which is simulation, urban environment and so on.

Q197 **Mrs Moon:** Albania has some particularly spectacular mountains and forests that are particularly good for training. Have you any experience of utilising that opportunity, and what would your comment be on the importance of that being an area where a key NATO ally could offer particular opportunities for training? Also, you didn't mention fighting in the cold. I just wonder about the suggestions that we are going to reduce our training in Norway, particularly in fighting in extremely cold, white weather conditions.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: I personally have no experience of training in that region, but my son, who is a serving captain, has. He found it very demanding and very realistic. The chance to see how other organisations view the world and how they train has an intangible benefit. I know there is a programme of exercises in Bosnia, Romania, and Bulgaria and so on. Again, hopefully that is the Army showing that it is contributing, which sends a message of reassurance to friends and a deterrence to potential adversaries—in other words, making the training productive. On Norway, I do not know the extent to which the Royal Marines still train for Arctic. The trouble is, you could produce a very long list of all of the things we'd like to do. It is about making the choices and being good at enough of them. For me, the priorities would be operating with allies, operating with air forces, urban and forests, and probably somewhere hot, because of the problems in the world.

Q198 **Mrs Moon:** Do we not also need to make an assessment of where the potential risks are?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Based on that, yes, which is why we are training in north-west Europe with allies there, and there was the announcement of a training hub in Oman. Personally, I think that makes good strategic sense and will be great training.

Q199 **Chair:** Successive defence and security reviews have reduced the size of the regular Army to 82,000, albeit supposedly supplemented with 30,000 Reserves. Why are we struggling to reach reduced totals like this?

Professor Edmunds: I think there are a number of reasons for that that go to the changing relationship that soldiers have with society more widely in relation to their careers, to their families and so on. We see this in our Reserves data in terms of the specific pressures that reservists are under particularly when they are deployed. For example, the pressures that come from being out of employment for a particular period. It is not just a question of those skills coming out, it is about those relationships fading as the company they are working in moves on in various ways. Coming back into that can be quite a difficult transition.

It is a similar kind of issue in terms of the pressures that family life can put on reservists. There has been a change over the last few decades in the way that soldiers relate to their family environment with more spouses working, men expected to be doing more and so on. I think that does increase the pressures, certainly on reservists in terms of their deployment.

Q200 **Chair:** But why are we struggling to reach the 82,000 with the Regulars?

Dr Chin: You could argue that the Army has already raised this as an issue in that they are not tapping into a wide enough pool within society as whole. The type of people who join the Army come from a specific kind of demographic and that demographic for whatever reason is becoming less interested in the whole thing. We can talk about changing norms of society but beyond that is the question of how do you go about appealing to ethnic minorities and other groups—bringing them in?

Q201 **Chair:** Are you saying that if we had not reduced the Regular target total to only 82,000, if it had been higher, we would be struggling even more, or is the fact that we are struggling to reach a reduced total something to do with the perception of the Army as being in a downward spiral as far as the nation's priorities are concerned?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: It is probably a cocktail of factors. The end of combat operations in Afghanistan is a factor. Those campaigns, whatever one thinks of them politically or how they were run—all of that put to one side—they were a powerful force for young men and women who wanted to be part of them. So, the end of combat of operations is a factor.

Look at the statistics on how young men and women spend their time. They do not play a lot of sport and there are problems with obesity and so forth. The prospect of joining the infantry and working really hard, that may be more of hard sell than it was previously. Certainly in terms of



tapping into wider and different pools of talent, women in close combat, etc. I think the Army is overdue in taking that route.

Q202 Chair: Let us talk briefly about regeneration. There is nothing new in the situation of Britain have a relatively tiny Army at the outbreak of a conflict and then having to generate huge land forces in the course of that conflict. The CGS told the Committee that he needs to think hard about how to reconstitute and regenerate capability and, if necessary, grow the Army. Does the MoD have a plan and what should we be doing to make sure that, even if our numbers are disappointingly low in peace time, we have the mechanisms in place to be able to regenerate mass in the Army if we ever found ourselves drawn into a major conflict?

Dr Chin: I would challenge the premise of your question. I do not believe that we are going to be fighting wars of mass, even if we are talking about fighting against Russia. I think that the rates of attrition in those wars, the level of destruction involved and the difficulty of replacing those losses, will ensure that the war, if it is fought, will be short. There will not be an ability to reconstitute and develop something in the timeframes that we looked at and saw during the first and second world wars. That template of mass-industrialised warfare has gone. We have reverted back—this observation was made by Michael Howard at the end of the cold war—to something more akin to the Cabinet wars of the 18th century, with the use of small, professional armies that are very expensive. If used in battle and lost, they are lost for good or for many years. It takes a while to regenerate that kind of capability. This reversion is a product of technological change, and changes within societies and across the globe. We simply do not have the wherewithal or the desire to go back to that kind of warfare, but it boils down to the fact—

Q203 Chair: May I just stop you for a second? We never had the desire to go there at all. The phenomenon of experts, with the greatest respect, predicting short wars that would all be over by Christmas 100 years or so ago were often falsified by history.

Are you telling me that there are absolutely no plans in place if the worst happened and we found ourselves in some sort of conflict as a result of our commitments under article 5 of the NATO treaty? Are you saying that we have no plans at all for major regeneration of Armed Forces in the event that such a conflict did not go nuclear as a result of the stalemate at that level?

Dr Chin: I don't know if we do have a plan. It is possible that there is one buried in the vault of the MoD, and that they will brush it off. But look at the size of armies today. We are not looking at armies of several million men any more, in the way that we saw even in 1914—huge armies. The British Army then had to play the game of catch-up, so I fully understand that.

It is very clear that they did not have a plan then, so are we going to legislate and plan on the basis of fighting that kind of scenario? It seems unlikely, but I take your point. My prediction could be completely and utterly wrong. We could find ourselves in the situation of broken-backed



HOUSE OF COMMONS

warfare, where we are still at war but we do not have the capability or kit to do the job needed to carry the war on.

Q204 **Chair:** Excuse me. It is a bit strange really. On one hand, you seem to be saying that we might be getting into some very short conflict. On the other, we might get into a conflict where there had been a nuclear exchange and there is broken-backed warfare after that. But there is a possibility that falls between the two, which is that you end up—heaven forbid—in a substantial conflict with NATO involved against our old adversary Russia. The nuclear stalemate could hold good and then you would end up with a large conventional conflict.

I am not in the business of predicting that. I am just saying that I would have thought that it would be part of the basic provision of any sensible contingency planning to have a blueprint for how we might regenerate mass given that our potential adversaries are certainly in possession of substantial armies to range against our forces.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: In terms of what is in the public domain, my sense is that the Army has recognised that it needs a plan for a plan. It needs to understand where its gaps are, and the mechanics and practicalities of regrowing. But strategy is about choices. At the moment, the agenda of resetting from a counter-insurgency campaign under Operation Entirety—the clue is in the name—to being able to generate a war-fighting Division is consuming the vast majority of the effort. I think progress has been made.

Your scenario is entirely credible. Is it one that they should prioritise over being able to deploy a Brigade to do external engagement or forward presence? It is about capacity and sequencing.

Q205 **Chair:** Yes, but having a contingency plan does not in any way undermine making practical arrangements for something much more modest in the meantime. We are simply talking about having a scheme as to how they would proceed in the event of our predictions turning out, as they usually do, to be unfounded.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: I think that some of your advisers took part in a study day at one of the new centres for historical analysis and historical research that was set up as part of Army adaption. They looked at this about two months ago. It is on the radar but I am not sure how high it is on the list of priorities.

Q206 **Chair:** Okay. If Professor Edmunds has nothing to add, I have one final point. Is there concern that our national defence industrial base is insufficient to provide the necessary industrial regeneration in a realistic timeframe and should the UK be contemplating the recreation of war-fighting forces without a major reappraisal of the underlying national preparedness for a major conflict, even though, as Dr Chin and I have been debating, that may not be by any means the most likely scenario. Who would like to comment on the industrial regeneration point?

Dr Chin: There is a Defence Industrial Strategy, isn't there?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q207 Chair: It is debated whether there is or not. There used to be one, it must be said, under a previous Government. I am not sure that that is entirely—

Dr Chin: I thought the Science and Technology report that the MoD produced back in 2012 provided some inkling of that and recognised that there were particular capabilities that you need. Whether you need the full range of abilities that you suggest, I remember speaking to a former Chief of Defence Procurement back in the 1990s about this question. I said, "What are the capabilities that you believe are absolutely key that need to be under sovereign control? What other capabilities would you be willing to let go?" He said, "In truth, most." He would let most of his capabilities go, we don't actually need them. This was in the post-cold war era.

If we are looking at Iraq and Afghanistan, I think the use of urgent operational requirements demonstrated that you could tap into the industrial base and it could adapt and innovate relatively quickly, if you were prepared to pay for it. I think that was the only negative side to that. But that was in the context of a very small operation—brigade-sized force in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

If you are talking about fighting and supporting a war-fighting Division in a major operation, if you look at the available data, the rates of attrition, the amount of kit you would be losing, I think the defence industrial base would struggle to replace that kit. If you think how long it takes to build a fighter aircraft—the F35 or the Typhoon—these things are rolling off the production line at a rate of about 10 a year. What we are talking about now is no longer mass industrial structure which allows you to generate huge quantities of output. You are relying on a cottage industry of highly skilled artisans who are literally putting these things together.

Even if you tried to create that robust industrial infrastructure that would allow you to support you in a general war, I don't know how successfully you could do it. In many ways, I can see that there is a logic in relying on allies and allowing them to give you that capability in one form or another. The danger, of course, is, as with the Belgians in 1990, they wouldn't give the British the ammunition they needed to fight in the Gulf war. So there are political risks associated with that. I think there are huge problems in creating the kind of industrial base that you are suggesting.

Q208 Chair: It is interesting that you mentioned the F35 because I put this to one of our senior RAF people on that project who explained to me that given the capacity of the F35 production line in America, if all resources were devoted to it, they could actually turn out one of those planes in a matter of days. I was very surprised to hear that because I was making the same point about equipment being so much more complex. I suppose it is a question of whether your backs are to the wall in a real crisis. Any other comments before we move on?

Professor Edmunds: I would add that it is also a question of economies of scale. Thinking about this in purely national terms, somewhere like the United Kingdom with the size of our defence industrial base has many of



HOUSE OF COMMONS

those problems. But potentially there is an economy of scale that you could have by thinking of this more in terms of the European defence industry or the United States, and so on.

Q209 **Chair:** It seems to be your collective view that not much thought is being given to this at the moment, by the sound of it. Am I right?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: I don't think it is particularly high on the list of priorities.

Dr Chin: I thought the House of Lords just carried out an inquiry into the defence industrial base. I could be wrong but two of my colleagues certainly said that they gave evidence to that Committee, which discussed the pros and cons of having a nuclear defence industrial strategy.

Chair: So maybe they are in the same advocacy business as we are.

Q210 **Mrs Moon:** General, I have the women's question—women in close combat roles. How do you think this is going to affect the war-fighting numbers and capability of the Army? Is this something that will move forward slowly? Is this something that you think the Army is ready to actually embrace?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: As I understand it, the plan is for the first women volunteers to be assigned to the Royal Armoured Corps. Again, as I understand it, there are still some pretty intensive trials going on to make sure the training that is done, of men and women, does not break them in training. Here there is a balance to be struck between setting one standard—the standard of being able to close with, and kill, the enemy in close combat, being male or female—and recognising that an infantryman in Afghanistan was carrying about 53 kg to 57 kg. They were carrying their own bodyweight. I could barely lift the equipment that I had to carry on the odd occasions when I went out on patrol. Will there be huge numbers of women who will want to play those roles? I don't know; I would be speculating, but I think we need to make sure we make the equipment as light as possible for all our soldiers so that we do not break them, and make our training intelligent. Is this going to be a profound change to the Army and undermine its war-fighting ethos? No. In 10 years' time we will look back at it and think, why didn't we do it sooner? Maintaining the standard and making sure the male soldiers can pass the fitness standard as well is the important thing—one standard that they can all pass.

Q211 **Mrs Moon:** I was concerned about this one-standard issue. Is it not also right that we take into account the fact that skeletons are different? I am not talking about the ability to do the task, because there is an issue that you don't change the standards of professionalism and you don't change the standard of expectation of what someone can actually do, but to pretend that men and women have the same skeletons is just a passport to failure. Is our task also to look at how we ensure the professionalism, the skills base and the capability to carry out the tasks are the focus, rather than pretending that you ignore that—perhaps, additional training or additional packing of the weight that has to be carried and how it is



HOUSE OF COMMONS

carried? Is that not of secondary importance?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: As I mentioned, we need to apply a bit more science to how we select and train people, because the Army is continuing to injure male and female recruits through the way in which it trains. There are some changes that are happening there. The practicalities are that if you are in a section of eight people and you are trying to break into a building and kill people with a bayonet, at that point you want everyone, pretty much, to be able to do the same task.

Q212 **Mrs Moon:** I agree with you on that; that is not what I am arguing about. I am concerned about the focus on everyone having to do exactly the same training. I will give an example: I attended an RAF training unit where they had realised that they were getting large numbers of failures from women because of pelvic injuries. What they found they needed to do was bring the female recruits in earlier and give them a week of additional training to build up capability, and then they did not have the injuries. There were some complaints from male recruits that that gave the women a distinct advantage, so what they did was say, "Okay, the guys can do it as well." Actually, they got fewer male failures as well.

I am talking about practical responses to issues that could cause people to fail. Instead of just joining in with what we already do—because that is the way we have already done it and we have always done it that way—we look at what might cause failure to people who could be equally as capable, equally as professional and equally as good in the scenario you talk about by making sure the skeletal problems that are in place don't cause us to lose capable individuals.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: In which case we are vehemently agreeing with each other. I am of a generation that turned up at Sandhurst and basically, if it wasn't hurting, you weren't training properly. Well, we now realise that that was a ludicrous way to treat people in training. You give the example of the RAF and I absolutely hope that that is what the Army is doing, as long as we keep in mind that the purpose of the training is not to pass the training, but to be able to conduct the mission against an adversary trying to kill you.

Q213 **Mrs Moon:** Absolutely, and as long as the training actually takes you there and doesn't deliberately select you out.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Yes.

Mrs Moon: That is fine. Then we agree on that.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: We do.

Q214 **Douglas Chapman:** I am tempted after the last question to ask a Brexit question. Someone said we will now rely on exporting jam to the rest of the world and that should make us all feel a bit more comfortable in our beds when we go to sleep at night, I am sure, but we mustn't spread the jam too thinly. My question is about the 2% of GDP and the SDSR commitment on that. Is that the kind of investment that will deliver the sort of Army we are looking to have in 2025? Is there sufficient within



HOUSE OF COMMONS

2% of the GDP budget to make sure of that?

Dr Chin: Again, if we look at this historically, the answer to your question is probably no. If you go back and look at the Nott review in 1981, that happened against a background of a 3% real-terms increase in defence spending, ongoing, which started in 1977 and finished in 1985, yet John Nott recognised that because of the problems he was facing he was going to have to cut capability, hence the decision to slash and burn the Navy as a way of preserving the British Army on the Rhine. It was the wrong decision and the Falklands demonstrated that, but it highlights the problem faced by the MoD. Even if you have additional resources, how much is enough? That is determined by how well you control your costs. If we accept the MoD hasn't been very good at controlling its costs, it might be that from today it becomes a lot better at that. If it could do that, it might allow you to maximise and use that 2%. However, I think you then need to look outside the MoD at what is going on in the wider world.

There are those who argue that Brexit has made SDSR '15 obsolete. I am not one of them. Their argument fundamentally is that the economic conditions in this country over the next five to 10 years will be profoundly different and that we are looking at an economy that at best we will be able to hold on to where it is, but more likely will go into recession. If you are talking about GDP shrinking, that means the 2% is a lot less, so you add that 2% to the rise in defence costs and end up with the balance sheet simply not matching up. The result is a disconnect between what you are spending and what you have available to you. Many argue that that will trigger another defence review not too far down the line.

To compound that, the pessimists, wherever they are, have also highlighted the inevitability of Scotland demanding another referendum so it can declare independence from the UK, which they argue will be successful. That too will have implications for the UK. It is very much a glass half empty scenario, but it highlights just how delicate and fragile this idea of the 2% commitment is and what it can provide.

It is very easy for the Government to keep presenting this and to say, "Look, this is what we are doing. We are spending more on defence." Added to that is £940 million—I could be wrong about this—of efficiency savings that the MoD needs to factor in to generate that 2% saving and the fact that the accounting processes have added other things to that 2% increase that were not part of the calculation of defence spending before. You could argue that all of this is very much smoke and mirrors. That is a very cynical view.

Professor Edmunds: I would add that in some senses, the thing you have to ask about the 2% is what it actually buys you. In one sense, 2% is rather an arbitrary figure, and it is affected by both the defence inflation that Warren talked about and the strength of the economy. You have to be a little bit careful about valorising 2%, because it does not actually say very much about what that gets you. You can see that from the strains in defence that have been apparent over the last five years or so.



Q215 Douglas Chapman: You might have discussed earlier in the part I missed at the very beginning of the discussion the bigger ticket items that are being committed to in terms of the effect on front-line troops and the Army's capability to be a serious fighting force. Should it be asked to do that at some point in the future?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Under the Levene reforms, which I know all the front-line commands welcome, they get the budget and they decide—they make the big choices between manning, training, equipment and sustaining. There are no money trees; they know that. You can't have everything, so it's about choices.

There are lots of things that the Army would like, without a doubt, and there are some serious gaps. We mentioned ground-based air defence being one of them. That has to be addressed if we are going to have a credible war-fighting division. My sense is that the budget is aligned to their priorities. I have mentioned some of those programmes.

Here is the risk: if the big capital projects in other areas do what my colleagues on the panel suggest, historically the Army gets raided—both its equipment programme and its training money. That would be a serious concern for me, because at that point you get into the morale downward spiral—"What the hell's the point of staying? We've got ancient equipment that isn't credible. We're not doing proper training." That would be one of the tipping points I would be very worried about.

Q216 Douglas Chapman: One final thing. In terms of the SDSR, the range of tasks we are asking the military to carry out is enormous in comparison with the resource given. People in this Committee will talk quite openly about the South China Sea and all sorts of things like that. Huge commitments and huge amounts of money are required to maintain any semblance of a force in these areas. Is the SDSR as it stands too ambitious, given the resource we have and what we can plough into it?

Dr Chin: To be blunt, I think every defence review since 1945 has been too ambitious. The only exception to that was probably the reviews in 1967, when we ended east of Suez—and even then we did not really end east of Suez. The aspiration of Governments is to try to demonstrate that even if they are making cuts, these things are presented in a different sort of way. You can understand the reasons for that.

If you look at the last SDSR in 2010, there was a cut—a very clear cut—but there was also a declared commitment that there would be no reduction in what the UK's Armed Forces are expected to do. If we have now moved into a climate where we are talking about an increase in defence spending, that expectation remains as valid, if not more so; in fact, it is amplified by the fact that you are giving more resources, so you expect to get more.

Whether your defence forces generally can fulfil those functions—that is probably most acute within the context of the Navy, which has such a small fleet now. I cannot see it being able to do very much in terms of a war against Russia, if ever such a thing should break out—God forbid that



HOUSE OF COMMONS

it should—with 17 or 18 frigates and a couple of aircraft carriers that you would not dare to put in harm's way because they are so expensive to replace.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Am I allowed to disagree with my colleague? It's called academic freedom. I think 2010 was dangerously unambitious for the Army, because what it said was, "Well, we'd like you to deploy a division, but only at best effort." So it set an aspiration that the UK might do this, but without resourcing it. What 2015 said was, "No, we want you to be able to deploy a war-fighting division. We know you can't do it today, so build it by 2025. CGS, if you have a problem, come back and tell us." So far, my sense is that if that budget does not get raided, it is credible.

Chair: There is a rather useful annex to the report that we produced in April on defence expenditure and the 2% pledge that sets out the percentage of GDP that we spent in every year since the mid-1950s. It is interesting to note that in the decade up to the period of Sir John Nott, which you mentioned, defence expenditure never once dropped below 4.2% of GDP and was often nearer 4.9% or 5%. Times change.

Q217 **Mrs Moon:** I was in Boston last week with NATO. We visited the two centres of academic excellence there and talked about defence issues. The message we got was very clear that 2% defence spending as a ratio of GDP is counterproductive. It doesn't look at capability and it gives an artificial feeling that we are doing okay. It is an aspiration really, just to encourage some nations to spend more. We ought to be more honest that that's all it is. The 2% is smoke and mirrors. What counts is actual capability. Would you agree?

Professor Edmunds: Yes, it is an entirely arbitrary figure in that sense. 2% for Latvia is very different from 2% for the United States.

Q218 **Mrs Moon:** And it doesn't buy the same things?

Professor Edmunds: No.

Q219 **Mrs Moon:** We have the issue of our spending in terms of the defence pound. RUSI suggests that spending on defence procurement in the UK brings money back into the Exchequer, which increases our GDP. You therefore get a circle that is good for our GDP and would enable us to increase our capability. In America we also heard that the US is killing European productivity and research and development by dominating sales through US companies. Whereas in Europe we spend three times more than the US on R&D, we fail to get our products to market. Would you agree that part of getting value for money should also be a focus on UK capability?

Dr Chin: If you go back to 1980-81 and look at the Defence Committee report of that time, they actually recommended that the UK Government should be willing to pay 20% more for any capability produced in this country compared with its overseas competitors because of the indirect economic benefits that stem from that. If you follow that logic, you should



HOUSE OF COMMONS

buy British. The question then is why you don't see more of that. I have not seen the recent data on how much we spend on buying from overseas and on how much we buy from the UK. Back in the 1990s it was about 90% UK and 10% overseas, but that may well have changed. I am assuming that if we are doing this it is ultimately because of very basic things, that the capability being offered by the United States is far superior in many respects to the capability that we can produce here. In some cases, the costs of producing that capability here could be prohibitive.

If you look at Nimrod AEW, in the 1980s we tried to build our own AWACS and failed miserably. We spent 10 years producing this thing, which cost over £1 billion. In the end the Thatcher Government—one of the most patriotic and strongly supportive of the defence industrial base initially—turned their back on it and went for Boeing and bought from overseas. Ideally, as an aspiration, we should think about buying British wherever possible, but unfortunately I don't think that the UK necessarily covers the full spectrum of capabilities, hence our decision to buy Ajax from an American firm. Okay, it is going to be built in south Wales, but you could argue that that's just the metal-bashing end of the spectrum and the value-added is really at the R&D level, so there are all sorts of issues that come out of it.

We are where we are. Unfortunately, from the perspective of the taxpayer, they want to see evidence of value for money. Competition, fixed-price contracting and buying from overseas demonstrates too many people that you are getting the best possible capability at the lowest possible cost. I would add that, if you speak to the majority of people in the Armed Services, most of them say that they don't care where their kit comes from, as long as it works and is the best available to them. If it comes from America, they are happy with that. What they don't want is equipment produced in this country that does not necessarily do the job required of it but, for defence industrial and employment reasons, we have opted to go down that route. It is just a view that I have heard repeatedly from personnel.

Q220 Mrs Moon: To be honest, Britain's defence companies—or defence companies based in Britain—would have no problem with that, as long as there was open tendering and they had the capacity to do so. That is the problem that we have.

Finally, on pensions, perhaps General Newton would be the most appropriate person to answer.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Because I'm a pensioner?

Mrs Moon: No, but pensions have been added in to the 2% that Britain says it is spending on defence. France doesn't do that and it does 2%. A number of countries across Europe do not include pensions but Britain does. Are we in fact just hiding the fact that we are not spending 2% by adding in our huge pensions capability?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: I suppose it is one way of making a headline but, as you have already discussed, is the headline directly related to military capability? It is probably too abstract.

Mrs Moon: Indeed. I was certainly wasn't making a comment about age. I'm the last person to be ageist.

Chair: Before we all grow too old, we had better come to our final questions from Jim Shannon, who has been waiting patiently.

Q221 **Jim Shannon:** Over the past couple of years, the general public's attitude to the Army and the personnel has changed greatly. I'm not saying that just because I come from Northern Ireland. The attitude has changed across the whole of the United Kingdom.

Sometimes I think that is down to the soldiers who gave their lives in Afghanistan returning home through Brize Norton and Wootton Bassett. That very much focused the attention of the general public and our appreciation of the Armed Forces and their sacrifice in what they made. I could see that change personally and also that change in Northern Ireland. Maybe that came through the political change as well. Rather than whispering that they had relatives in the forces, people are now quite openly telling people that.

With that in mind, and regarding the change in the general public and how they see it, the CGS told us that, as part of his legacy, he wanted an Army that is "understood and valued at home, that lives by the values and standards that we espouse, that fundamentally values everyone who serves inside it and that is representative of the country's society". The question is, is that achievable? What would be needed more to make it achievable? In other words, the Army is very much everyday life.

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Is it achievable? I think if you look at issues such as discrimination in the workplace, in any industry there are problems. Is the Army in isolation in the tour of Nick Carter going to be able to change all of those attitudes? That would be unrealistic. Is he personally committed to making this happen, to the very greatest extent of his considerable ability? Absolutely.

Examples of the kind of practicalities are that he broke with tradition by introducing Command Sergeant Majors. Some people said that would interrupt the chain of command. I had some reservations about it, but he has brought these people in as the voice of the soldier but also to make sure that the word on values and standards and leadership is pushed right down into all the ranks, the officers and soldiers. So in quite tangible ways he is creating new levers to try to get the Army to live by these values.

Q222 **Jim Shannon:** A wee last question on what I suppose has been the finality of all the discussions this morning. If there is one area of concern that you would like to highlight about the future of the Army, what would it be?

Professor Edmunds: I think the ability to continue paying for the kinds of forces that we would like to have in the face of the sorts of pressures of



HOUSE OF COMMONS

defence inflation and the expectations that people have in relation to their terms and conditions and so on. We are in a very different world from that of the 1950s or 1960s in terms of what people expected out of the Armed Forces as an employer. The ability to continue to deliver the capabilities you want at the same time as those personnel and equipment costs are likely to be increasing for the foreseeable future seems to me to be the biggest challenge. At what point do you stop? How small is too small?

Lieutenant General (rtd) Sir Paul Newton: Give the Army a fighting chance to reform itself, to make itself fully relevant for the future. That means, apply Levene. Don't treat the Army budget as a piggybank to be raided if and when other areas come under pressure. They have got a plan; they are getting on with it; give them a chance to deliver it.

Dr Chin: I think my big fear is that the Army is going to face a challenge that it cannot actually deal with. The area that I would highlight here—one mentioned by General Newton—is the urban debate. I don't think we have the wherewithal to deal with warfare in the urban setting, taking on board the experience of Northern Ireland as the exception. I don't know how much of that experience has been retained.

I don't know how we are going to deal with some of these huge megalopolises that have emerged across the globe. If a force had to conduct some sort of intervention to carry out action in those areas, how we would do it and what risks would be involved if the entire British Army could be swallowed up in somewhere like Cairo or other city of similar scale and size.

Chair: On that sobering note, we have been going for exactly two hours. Thank you very much, all three panel members. We have covered a vast range of topics in great depth. We are much obliged to you because it will be hugely helpful to our inquiry.