



House of Commons
Defence Committee

The Integrated Review, Defence in a Competitive Age and the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report

Third Special Report of Session
2022–23

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The Defence Committee

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Third Special Report

The Defence Committee published its Second Report of Session 2022–23, [*The Integrated Review, Defence in a Competitive Age and the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy*](#) (HC 180) on 28 July 2022. The Government response was received on 2 November 2022 and is appended below.

Appendix: Government Response

The Government welcomes the Committee's report. As stated in the Defence Secretary's letter of 27 September 2022 to the Chair of the Committee, the Report focuses on a series of documents which have developed since their publication. Indeed, as the Committee's report recommended, the former Prime Minister commissioned an update to the Integrated Review (IR), which has impacted on the Government's ability to respond to the Report's recommendations.

Therefore, to meet the Government's desire to comprehensively respond to the report whilst not impacting the ongoing consultation to update the IR, we have only been able to publish the Government's Response to the recommendations at this point.

The response is set out below. The Committee's conclusions and recommendations are highlighted in bold, with the paragraph numbering in brackets referring to their location within the report. The Government's Response to each follows in plain text.

Conclusion/recommendation 1

It is difficult not to feel a sense of déjà vu as we see British military ambitions which are not entirely matched by resources. Open conflict has returned to Europe, and it is disappointing to see that the Government is not preparing for the impact of inflation and insufficient industrial capacity on the production of defence equipment as it looks to meet the new challenges. (Paragraph 8)

The first duty of Government is the defence of the UK and our interests. The main purpose of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is to protect the people of the United Kingdom, prevent conflict, and be ready to fight our enemies.

Following the Government's commitment at Spending Review 2020 (SR20) for an additional investment of over £24 billion in Defence, the Command Paper outlined a vision to reform and renew our Armed Forces for an age of global and systemic competition.

The Command Paper outlined how Defence must prepare for more persistent global engagement and constant campaigning, to respond to threats and adversaries at speed. Defence will strengthen its deterrence, become increasingly adaptable and integrated with new and existing partners, and improve its ability to intervene and fight decisively.

This involves modernising and integrating our forces, underpinned by the commitment to spend over £85 billion on equipment and support over the next four years. Following the commitments made at SR20 and efficiency savings made internally, the 2021 Equipment Plan was published, with the NAO stating that the plan was not 'unaffordable' for the

first time in five years. Although we note that the macro-economic situation has created an environment less favourable to delivering on Defence's planned programme, the department has been placed on a strong footing to respond to these challenges.

We note that the delivery context for Defence has grown more challenging following the increase in inflation. The Department continues to minimise its exposure to short-term economic shocks, including through forward purchase arrangements. The potential impact of these factors upon the department's budget remain under continuous review and are part of the regular discussions we have with the Treasury.

Further, the department is working with partners to refresh its relationship with industry, as part of Defence's contribution to the update to the Integrated Review (IR). Our ambition is to work with partners to upskill our sovereign industrial base, maximising domestic growth and creating employment opportunities across the Union.

The Government's recognition of the need to remain threat-led has been realised by recent events. The IR and Command Paper set out a year ago that Russia poses – to quote – “the greatest nuclear, conventional military and sub-threshold threat to European security”; the IR also emphasised the need to strengthen NATO, which is critical to preserving our security and prosperity in the Euro-Atlantic region.

Our response to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine has shown the UK at its best, united with our allies to deter Russian aggression on NATO's eastern flank and reasserting the UK's continued commitment to NATO membership as a cornerstone of our security at home and overseas. However, we are not complacent and recognise that the context in which we are operating is shifting. The implications of global events, from Covid-19 to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have created an economic and security environment less favourable to delivering the IR's vision and desired capabilities.

We continue to monitor and analyse the situation in Ukraine, and beyond, to ensure our strategic approach remains threat-led and in line with the agile planning and delivery mechanisms developed following the IR. We will continue to review our capabilities and readiness levels accordingly, as noted in our wider response and realised through the Government's decision to update the IR.

Conclusion/recommendation 2

The Integrated Review and the Defence Command Paper, the Government identified and understood the implications of the range of complex and cascading threats faced by the UK. However, the impact of both the Afghan withdrawal and the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine are being seemingly dismissed as insignificant and there appears to be no intention to re-visit the conclusions of the documents. UK Defence thus appears as arrogant and unwilling to learn lessons. Events of the last year have demonstrated that the Government was unprepared for (and in the case of Afghanistan, failed to appropriately respond to) international crises. No strategy should be set in stone nor subject to constant revision. However, there is a need for Government to be able to respond to major events—which it was manifestly not prepared for—rather than downplaying the potential implications of such geopolitical shocks. (Paragraph 21)

Conclusion/recommendation 3

There is a need for a New Chapter update to the IR and the Defence Command Paper which takes into account the events in Afghanistan and Ukraine. The document should then set out how the analysis of the strategic context has changed and what decisions in the Command Paper the UK Government is reviewing. (Paragraph 22)

Conclusion/recommendation 4

UK public is aware of the threats which the UK faces but does not appear to trust the Government to act in the national interest. Whilst investments in new technology are vital, it is also clear that, the days of “big tank battles on the European landmass” are not over and so a review of the decisions made in the Integrated Review and Defence in a Competitive Age, and the timelines committed to, is important for the UK’s defence and security and for the public’s trust. (Paragraph 30)

The Government published the IR and Defence Command Paper last year in March 2021. The IR set out a vision for the UK up to 2030: a stronger, more secure, prosperous and resilient Union, acting as a problem-solving and burden-sharing nation with a global perspective, and creating new foundations for prosperity.

The IR said that 2021 would be a year of British leadership, setting the tone for the UK’s international engagement in the decade ahead. The Government succeeded in meeting this ambition - including through the UK’s G7 presidency, the Global Partnership for Education summit, the 26th UN Climate Change Conference, the Carrier Strike Group deployment, and much more - and the UK is seeing the benefits of the momentum generated as a result.

But alongside these successes, we recognise that the first year of the IR also presented significant challenges to the UK’s objectives and interests. In most cases these were foreseen - and planned for - in the IR’s outlook on the national security and international environment to 2030. But some manifested more rapidly and acutely than predicted.

Specifically in response to the recommendations in the Committee’s Report, Defence has been steadfast in our support to Ukraine, through lethal and non-lethal aid and training of Ukrainian Armed Forces personnel, while simultaneously boosting our NATO presence along the Eastern flanks. Having to date committed £1.3 billion of Treasury funding for military aid to Ukraine, the UK was the first European country to provide weapons to Ukraine and we have sent over 6,900 anti-tank missiles, 120 armoured vehicles, as well as multiple launch rocket systems and anti-air missile launchers. Over six months into the conflict, we continue to assess the threat posed by Russia, and beyond. Where appropriate we will adjust in response to Russia’s threat now, however in some cases, we should wait as the situation develops.

Russia’s aggression has also reaffirmed that NATO remains the cornerstone of UK and Euro-Atlantic security. The conflict has reinvigorated NATO, helping the UK shape a new NATO Strategic Concept closely aligned to the IR’s vision. Formulating Defence’s contribution to this model will be our key force driver, while Defence will work across government towards a long-term sustainable strategy to support Ukraine and maintain our leadership role in NATO are immediate priorities.

Defence has also played a significant role to support the Government's Indo-Pacific tilt, including through committing to collaborate on industrial initiatives with key partners in the region. This includes the vital AUKUS Agreement with the US and Australia, as well as our partnership with Japan to develop FCAS. In 2021 the Carrier Strike Group completed its landmark deployment, and HMS Spey and HMS Tamar were deployed to the Western Pacific, marking the first Royal Navy permanent presence in the Indo-Pacific region for more than 25 years.

Our commitment is a long-term one, underpinned by integrated engagement across Government to ensure we safeguard UK economic and security interests that open societies and values are protected. Central to this will be Defence's ability to counter China's competitive behaviour in the region.

We agree that no strategy should be set in stone. Each day Defence is using lessons learned from ongoing conflicts and events over the last year to adapt its strategic thinking and adapt our approach. This ensures that Defence's capabilities are optimised to respond to threats both today and in the future. Following the publication of the IR and the Command Paper, the Department has adopted an approach of having an adaptive strategy, underpinned by agile planning and delivery mechanisms developed following the IR.

We note the Committee flags that the importance of tanks in conflicts has increased again. Whilst tanks and other Armoured Vehicles remain central to the Army's warfighting capability. Ukraine shows us that combined arms operations are most successful when forces are appropriately trained and integrated. The conflict has also shown that the value of tanks is dependent on the enabling capabilities behind them to ensure delivery to the frontline. This underpins the importance of investing in multiple capabilities, and the update to the Integrated Review will not reverse the Department's commitment to the modernisation of the Armed Forces or see a return to heavy armour.

To that end we support the sentiment of the recommendations made in conclusions 2,3 and 4.

We believe the IR and Defence Command Paper hold true, but we are not complacent and recognise that the context in which we are operating is shifting and Defence will have to adapt accordingly to deliver the IR's vision. Indeed, since the IR was published, we have witnessed Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine create the greatest security challenge ever experienced by NATO.

Defence is supporting the update to the IR. We welcome this opportunity to strengthen our capabilities and prioritise our activities to ensure the UK remains ready to deter adversaries and win the new era of strategic competition.

We will use this opportunity to outline a framework for a modernised Armed Forces, better integrated across domains and aligned more closely with allies. Taking lessons learned from the last year, we will build resilience and promote prosperity both domestically and across our global partner network.

Conclusion/recommendation 5

The Government needs to ensure that the public is aware of the link between the cost of living and global instability: the rises in energy and food prices are both directly

attributable to the conflict in Ukraine. The Government needs to ensure that they are effectively communicating this to the public, particularly given the increasing cost of UK support to the Ukrainians. (Paragraph 31)

The MOD has played a full part in the UK Government response in support of Ukraine. This has included supporting messaging to make clear the causal link between the cost of living and global instability through the provision of regular and transparent communication: daily Defence Intelligence updates on the situation on the ground in Ukraine; opportunities for Ministers to make public statements through media rounds, briefings to media and opinion leaders on key issues, providing oral and written Ministerial statements to Parliament.

This approach is representative across Government. Since Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine Prime Ministers, Chancellors and all Ministers have publicly condemned Russia's actions and refuted misinformation, underpinning the Government's commitment to regular and transparent communication.

Conclusion/recommendation 6

Foreign policy decisions and consequent actions by UK Defence need to be supported by the UK public. The lack of organisation round the withdrawal from Afghanistan damaged the Government's standing. However, so far, engagement with the public on the Russian offensive in Ukraine and British support for Ukraine has been regular and transparent. We welcome this approach: the Government needs to build on this. (Paragraph 32)

We agree with the Committee on the importance of public engagement. The MOD captures lessons from all operational communication activity, including the withdrawal from Afghanistan, and works with the National Security Communications Team to ensure that these are reflected in wider Government communications. The UK public has consistently supported the MOD's contribution to supporting Ukraine, with 74% approval for sending additional weaponry and supplies to Ukraine in March. This has remained high (71% in June), illustrating that the HMG narrative and comms effort on Ukraine is enabling continued public support for further assistance to Ukraine (YouGov poll 2022). MOD Communications has contributed to this through the provision of regular and transparent communications.

Conclusion/recommendation 7

Defence in a Competitive Age and the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy are ambitious papers, aimed at modernising UK defence and ensuring it has equipment suitable for the Information Age. Whilst the conclusions of Defence in a Competitive Age ought to be revisited in light of the conflict in Ukraine, the commitments made in the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy ought to be implemented fully. We recognise that this will take time—we urge the MOD to ensure that the changes are seen through. (Paragraph 44)

We welcome the support from the Committee in ensuring the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy (DSIS) is fully implemented.

Over 50 activities were announced in the strategy and significant progress has been achieved in several key areas, as outlined by the then-Minister for Defence Procurement, Jeremy Quin in an update to Parliament on 18 May 2022. The Department is working hard on changing ways of working and challenging long-standing patterns of thinking, to reflect the new strategic approach and policy. As the Committee recognises, some commitments, particularly those involving legislative and behavioural change, will take longer. The Procurement Bill, which includes reform of the Defence and Security Public Contract Regulations, is at Committee Stage in the House of Lords and we expect Royal Assent in early 2023. The Bill also includes the powers needed to deliver the reforms to the Single Source Contract Regulations set out in the Command Paper published in April 2021.

However, the Department is not limiting its ambitions to the commitments laid out in the strategy. The DSIS principles of transparency, communication, and a longer-term view of MOD priorities are being embedded into everyday practices and subsequent publications, including most recently the Defence Capability Framework which provides greater transparency on the Departments future plans.

Government will continue to work closely with industry, academia and international partners to deliver the full range of commitments it sets out and ensure that the UK continues to have competitive, innovative and world-class defence and security industries. Within the MOD, the Minister for Defence Procurement is committed to keeping a close eye on implementation and along with the Secretary of State will be taking stock with Ministers from the other key government departments.

Conclusion/recommendation 8

The reason that lack of publicly available information of the Government's defence and security priorities presents a problem is that for integration—highlighted by the MoD as absolutely vital for the UK's security—to be effective, the NSC must set clear priorities, backed with sufficient resources. If we (and the general public) are not aware of the priorities or the progress made on them, we cannot say with certainty whether we are being adequately protected by our Government. (Paragraph 53)

We would dispute this recommendation. The IR set out the vision for a Global Britain and outlined the Government's overarching priorities. Further the Command Paper outlined Defence's contribution to delivering these priorities up to 2025. However, as the Secretary of State has stated, as the threat changes, we need to change with it. Defence is committed to ensuring its priorities are sufficiently resourced, however as we have stated, we will have to adapt to a more challenging delivery context.

As highlighted in our wider response, the Government has proposed a number of mechanisms to inform both Parliament and the public of the Government's vision for foreign policy, defence and security and progress on the delivery of the IR.

Conclusion/recommendation 9

The lack of prioritisation means that it is impossible to determine which of the threats highlighted the Government perceives to be greatest. It also results in the military seemingly being the answer for every question whilst not being appropriately resourced for the task. (Paragraph 54)

The UK Armed Forces, in concert with our Allies and partners, are configured to respond to all types of threats and warfare. The IR and Defence Command Paper set out the priorities for the Government and outlined a path for how to achieve the capabilities required to reach our objectives. The vision published in the IR and Command Paper informs the development of classified departmental strategies and plans, which provide a framework for the strategic outcomes and priorities which the Department must achieve, with an increased focus on delivery across Defence.

Further, prioritisation is guided by our assessment of the nature and severity of the threats faced. To counter and address future threats and challenges, Defence will work with cross Government partners and with the appropriate authorities and capabilities to conduct activities within the integrated operating framework: protect, engage, constrain and warfighting. This will comprise conventional and hybrid capabilities, as well as nuclear deterrence, that can be employed seamlessly across the operational domains: land, air, maritime, space, and cyber & electromagnetic.

Defence will continue to ensure our strategic approach remains threat-led and in line with the agile planning and delivery mechanisms developed following the IR. Our capabilities and readiness levels are therefore regularly reviewed accordingly.

We recognise that as we find ourselves in a new era of strategic competition, we must ruthlessly prioritise to ensure we are investing in the strategic capabilities and alliances we need to stand firm against coercion from authoritarian powers like Russia and China. We must therefore prioritise modernisation to match the threat, deter aggressors and ensure our service personnel have the right equipment to succeed across domains and on the battlefield if called upon.

Conclusion/recommendation 10

We are further concerned by the use of the UK Armed Forces as a 'backfill', employed to carry out civilian tasks by Departments which are seemingly unable to respond to crises themselves. This is compounded by the MOD's failure to respond to the 18 recommendations made by the Reserves Review. (Paragraph 55)

The MOD contributes to UK resilience in a number of key areas, including relating to potential staffing difficulties that may occur in sectors such as law enforcement, prisons or firefighting. These contingency plans and arrangements are agreed in advance with responsible Departments and are predicated on the fact that military support is only to be called upon at times of acute difficulties or shortages where aid from elsewhere in Government or from the commercial sector is not available. These arrangements ensure that military support is a last resort, where other solutions are not viable and ensure that the Armed Forces are called away from their core duties only when strictly necessary. The Ministry of Defence would not sanction arrangements where the military are fulfilling civilian tasks, unless other solutions have been exhausted beforehand.

In addition to standing arrangements covering a number of critical functions, the arrangements for ad hoc support to other Government Departments for resilience or crisis taskings is governed by the tried and tested principles for Military Assistance to the Civil Authorities (MACA) as set out in the published guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/operations-in-the-uk-a-joint-doctrine-publication>.

The following core principles must be satisfied in order for military assistance of this kind to be considered:

- there is a definite need to act and the tasks the Armed Forces are being asked to perform are clear;
- other options, including mutual aid, commercial alternatives and the voluntary sector have been discounted;
- the civil authority lacks the necessary capability to fulfil the task and it is unreasonable or prohibitively expensive to expect it to develop one; or,
- the civil authority has all or some capability, but it may not be available immediately, or to the required scale, and the urgency of the task requires rapid external support from the MOD.

The Department maintains a network of liaison officers deployed across Whitehall and in all regions of the UK to work with Departments, arm's length bodies, local resilience fora and other responders to help them develop potential requests for military support, including consideration of alternative non-military solutions, to ensure that these principles are followed.

Defence's network of regional commanders and strategic Liaison Officers engage with departments and authorities considering requests for military assistance at the outset. This not only helps to shape the type of assistance that may be provided but manages expectations where Defence support is not the most appropriate answer. Requests are usually refused when Defence personnel do not have the appropriate skills for the task, when there is sufficient capacity to satisfy the task within the civil authority, commercial, or voluntary sectors, or where the task requires the use of assets or personnel which are critical to essential Defence outputs and cannot be released.

Work is underway across Defence to transform the systems, policies and processes by which we draw on and leverage the critical contributions made by our reserve forces, informed by the headmark, vision and recommendations set out in the Reserves Forces 2030 Review. This important work is being taken forward by individual Front Line Commands, in partnership with a central Reserves Forces 30 implementation programme, and alongside the Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation.

The Government will provide an update on this work, and a response to the Reserves Forces 2030 Review, following consideration of the implications of the UK's commitment to the NATO new force model and how this may in turn affect reserve transformation programmes.

Conclusion/recommendation 11

We recommend that the MOD publish annual figures for the assistance provided to other Government Departments and to public authorities. This list should include the number of personnel deployed, the length of deployment, the task they were deployed for, the cost of the task and the remuneration received by the Department. Furthermore we recommend that the MOD commit to publishing its response to the Reserves Review in the Autumn. (Paragraph 56)

The MOD publishes much of the requested detail related to the provision of military assistance to other government departments and public authorities, including the number of military personnel deployed to those operations, in its annual report and accounts. A copy of Defence's annual report and accounts for 2021–2022 can be found on Gov.uk.

In 2021–2022 the MOD delivered 264 operations as MACA, deploying 7,790 military personnel. This figure is down from 487 in 2020–2021.

The MOD will consider the extent to which it is possible to provide a more detailed breakdown of MACA operations in line with the recommendation above, such as providing their duration associated cost, which vary based on the precise nature of the requirement.

As noted in our response above, the Government will provide a response to the Reserves Forces 2030 Review, following consideration of the implications of the UK's commitment to the NATO new force model and how this may in turn affect reserve transformation programmes.

Conclusion/recommendation 12

Alongside the Permanent Secretary's acknowledgement that some of the risk judgements made within the Integrated Review process might need to be revisited in light of events in Ukraine, it is clear that the capability gaps which the Defence Command Paper saw as acceptable are now no longer palatable. Furthermore, the move to such a position relies on technological innovation and the adoption of digital capabilities (such as Ajax and the Digital Backbone, as noted above). (Paragraph 72)

The IR has set the Armed Forces on a course of transformation to meet the threats of the future. As part of this process equipment will be retired, and, as appropriate, replaced. There is also the constant process of monitoring and development of technology to ensure that our threat assessment remains appropriate. However, as the Secretary of State has stated, as the threat changes, we need to change with it.

We believe that modernisation must remain Defence's driving focus and be at the heart of delivering an Armed Forces fit for the future able to deter threats from adversaries. However, we also must not lose sight of the needs of the Armed Forces today, and we will therefore look to mitigate nearer term readiness risks and increase interoperability with partners. As we have already stated in response to conclusions above, the Government will conduct an update to the IR to ensure we are sufficiently investing in the strategic capabilities and alliances. This work will consider how to mitigate near-term risks.

As noted in our wider response, Defence Digital are leading a programme to modernise skills, process and technology in support of our goal to continually deliver game-changing digital and data technology to the front line. We have made good progress in the early stages of this program and need to ensure we retain support and investment to stay the course through to 2025 and beyond.

Conclusion/recommendation 13

The MOD faces a number of challenges following decisions made in the Integrated Review: the likelihood of a capability gap, as equipment is retired before its replacement is introduced; a reduction in the British Army's heavy armour and mass at a time when tank battles are raging in Ukraine; and a reliance on not yet tested, let alone proven,

technology, to counteract that reduction in equipment and numbers. There are also valid questions about whether the resources allocated to the task of moving the UK Armed Forces into the information age are adequate—a number of our witnesses seem to believe not. (Paragraph 77)

As previously stated, at the heart of the Command Paper was a vision to set the Armed Forces on a course of transformation to meet the threats of the future. As part of this process equipment will be retired, and, as appropriate, replaced. Decisions to sunset equipment are supported through the constant process of monitoring and development of technology which occurs in the department, to ensure that our threat assessment remains appropriate.

To counter and address future threats and challenges, Defence will require a cross-Government integrated force, with the appropriate authorities and capabilities, to conduct activities within the integrated operating framework: protect, engage, constrain and warfight. This will comprise conventional and hybrid capabilities, as well as nuclear deterrence, that can be employed seamlessly across the operational domains: land, air, maritime, space, and cyber & electromagnetic.

Investing in cutting-edge technology and skills in the UK is vital to both our security and prosperity – the defence landscape is evolving rapidly, and our enemies are operating in increasingly sophisticated ways to further their own interests. To meet the threats of tomorrow, the UK must invest in the defence of tomorrow and that requires investment in our R&D. We are committed to spending £6.6 billion over the next four years on our R&D to accomplish this, allowing our Armed Forces to be better prepared to meet new and emerging threats.

We have had to take some difficult choices to modernise our equipment and prepare to be more persistently engaged and integrated across domains. This has also allowed us to modernise our existing capabilities and develop future technologies and innovation. Our investment will maintain and modernise our existing capabilities, for example Typhoon Radar 2, to ensure our existing capabilities are matched to the evolving threat.

Through the IR, and SR20, Defence was trying to balance the capability risk, the financial risk and the operating concepts, to deliver the best capability we can for our Armed Forces to meet the threats we face today and in the future within a defined funding envelope. We made capability decisions in the Defence Command Paper including to invest in space and cyber which were underpinned by a set of risk judgments about the capability the UK could field in the middle of the decade as we transition and recapitalise our force, especially in the Land domain.

Britain has always achieved mass through its alliances e.g. NATO. Mass can also be achieved by the concentration of forces. The real challenge is concurrent deployments. That is why greater investment in alliances and bilateral relationships (NATO, JEF, etc.) can facilitate with concurrency.

As stated in our wider response, we believe that modernisation must remain our focus and be at the heart of delivering an Armed Forces fit for the future, however we also must not lose sight of the needs of the Armed Forces today, and we will therefore look to mitigate

nearer term readiness risks. In line with the agile planning and delivery mechanisms developed following the IR and as part of the Government's decision to update the IR, Defence will continue to review our capabilities and readiness levels accordingly.

Conclusion/recommendation 14

It is clear that, even if the Government decides to proceed with the decisions taken in the IR and the Defence Command Paper, the timeline of changes ought also to be reviewed given the potential for capability gaps which leave the UK Armed Forces vulnerable. We are especially concerned about the proposed cuts to personnel numbers and the effective reduction in mass, particularly since that we are seeing Defence being used more and more often as an emergency measure to relieve exceptional pressures on public services and perform such tasks that otherwise might be expected to be carried out by others. In this context, we welcome the decision by the new Chief of the General Staff to describe the cuts as "perverse" and, as a first step, the Secretary of State's seeming acknowledgement of the need to review the decision. (Paragraph 78)

The IR has set the Armed Forces on a course of transformation to meet the threats of the future. This, and the Defence Command Paper, made it clear that we must focus on capabilities rather than troop numbers.

Through Future Soldier, the Army will have a whole force of over 100,000 comprising of 73,000 Regular Service Personnel and 30,100 Army Reserve. However, the number of people required to deliver the same effect has reduced through history with the integration of emerging technology and we expect this trend to continue. Therefore Future Soldier also recognises those technologies that will provide both competitiveness and offset through evolved digitisation of the Army; long range intelligence, surveillance, targeting and fires capabilities; air defence capabilities against crewed and uncrewed threats; aviation systems; next generation combat vehicles; enhanced lethality programmes; and greater use of technology to enhance the training of our soldiers.

Throughout the Army will continue to recruit the diverse talent that it needs to harness these technologies and capabilities effectively and maintain a competitive advantage now and in the future. Tanks and other armoured vehicles will remain central to the Army's warfighting capability but mass is not the only factor; the war in Ukraine has shown us that combined arms operations are most successful when forces are appropriately trained and integrated.

Therefore we continue to monitor the security environment in Eastern Europe closely and the Army keeps its plans under review accordingly: under Op MOBILISE it is currently analysing where it is appropriate to accelerate its modernisation programme to maximise the readiness of our forces. Throughout the Army's capabilities will be increased through increased integration both across the UK's Armed Forces and alongside those of our partners and allies who would respond should Russia initiate a further conflict.

There are currently no plans to reverse the Army's reduction in regular personnel. However, as the Secretary of State has stated, as the threat changes, we need to change with it. Minded of affordability and as a dynamic institution, the Army regularly assesses the balance of people, capability, and activity in line with the threats and available resources.

Conclusion/recommendation 15

There is a danger of overstretch. The Government needs to ensure that the military is properly resourced with both equipment and personnel to carry out the tasks required of it. To do this, we recommend there be a wholesale re-examination of the decisions on capabilities and timeframes within the Defence Command Paper and the decisions taken in it following events in Ukraine. (Paragraph 79)

The UK Armed Forces, in concert with our Allies and partners, are configured to respond to all types of warfare. The Force Structure agreed in the IR, and associated increased investment in non-traditional domains, was set to meet forecast future threats and challenges as part of an Integrated Operating Framework. Moreover, this Force Structure will continually be reviewed and assessed through periodic Force Testing to ensure that the balance remains relevant to the current and future operating context and threats we face.

As we have said, we believe that modernisation must remain Defence's driving focus and be at the heart of delivering an Armed Forces fit for the future that is able to deter threats from adversaries. However, we also must not lose sight of the needs of the Armed Forces today, and we will therefore look to mitigate nearer term readiness risks and increase interoperability with partners.

Further, our capabilities and readiness levels are regularly reviewed accordingly, specifically to learn the lessons from recent conflicts. We therefore support the sentiment of the Committee's recommendation and would assure the Committee that this work is underway, including as part of the Government's ongoing review of the IR.

Conclusion/recommendation 16

Integration is key to the effective implementation of the Integrated Review and the Defence Command Papers. It is clear this requires a long-term commitment, with decisions consistently re-evaluated as progress is made. It further requires a cohesive, effective and dedicated Government which is able to work collaboratively towards a common goal. (Paragraph 92)

To aid better integration, the Government has adopted an approach to drive the IR's objectives within the existing core business of all relevant Departments, agencies and bodies. In most cases departments and organisations have adapted their internal structures to ensure that the IR's objectives are being delivered as part of - and complementary to - their wider plans and programmes.

At a senior governance level, the National Security Adviser has appointed a number of Senior Responsible Officers (SROs) to lead work across government on a range of 'sub-strategies', which set out more detailed policy and implementation plans for individual geographic and thematic priorities of the IR. These include both public-facing and classified strategies. The SROs are tasked to: develop and implement strategy in an integrated and adaptive manner; ensure that Ministers can shape the approach throughout the strategy development process; bring expertise and challenge into HMG's strategic thinking; embed a strong understanding of capability requirements; and adopt a programmatic

approach to delivery. The sub-strategy structure is currently under review to ensure that the Governance framework for the IR in year two is designed to efficiently implement the conclusions of the first annual stocktake.

Each sub-strategy currently includes a number of individual 'IR deliverables', which are key projects, policies or programmes that are directly linked to achieving the IR's objectives. Each deliverable is also owned by an SRO, who provides an update on progress each quarter to the Cabinet Office. These updates are then reviewed by the NSS and other central teams to inform quarterly IR implementation reports to the Prime Minister, which summarise the successes and challenges faced within the previous quarter and recommend relevant actions.

The Government has also begun a reform process to upgrade its culture and capabilities to improve decision-making, performance and impact. This includes investing in new technologies; and implementing a cross-government 'Mission Critical' culture change programme.

Conclusion/recommendation 17

If Afghanistan was intended to be an example of effective policy integration in action then it leaves a lot to be desired. It is even more worrying given that the NSC apparently gave the political direction required to bring together a 'whole of-systems' approach. If the NSC set the appropriate direction then it leads to two pertinent questions: why did implementation of the policy, agreed by Ministers, fail? And how can the Government ensure that integrated, cross-Government policy decisions—made by those Ministers who have been elected by the UK public and accountable to them and this Parliament—are fully implemented in future? The fact that these Departments are carrying out individual lessons learned exercises, rather than a single integrated exercise, is concerning. Furthermore, the Government has failed to take disciplinary action against any senior individual for any (of the many) mistakes made during the withdrawal from Afghanistan. (Paragraph 93)

Throughout the two decades of our military engagement since 2001, UK policy on Afghanistan has been made across Government, co-ordinated by the Cabinet Office, working to Cabinet Ministers in the relevant Cabinet Sub-Committee. The creation of the National Security Council and National Security Secretariat in 2010 were in part a response to the perceived need for strengthened central co-ordination of UK international engagements involving the interests of multiple Departments—particularly those, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, which included long-term UK military deployments. Since 2010, the National Security Council has been the principal Ministerial decision-making body on Afghanistan policy, supported by the National Security Secretariat, which has led policy co-ordination, and has overseen its implementation, at senior official level.

These NSC meetings considered the prospects for the peace process envisaged under the Doha Agreement, and how the UK could help maximise the chances of its success, as that outcome was judged to be likely to best serve UK long-term interests. In parallel, they also set in motion contingency planning for a range of scenarios, reflecting the outcomes judged most likely by the JIC. Planning for a possible military withdrawal named "Operation CATTALO" started in March 2020, including provision for Embassy closure and withdrawal of people and equipment if required. Standing plans for a military-led

civilian evacuation were reviewed and updated from Spring 2020, alongside planning for potential military withdrawal. This became known as Operation PITTING in January 2021, and this planning was further accelerated following the April 2021 decision to withdraw NATO troops.

To support this work between January and October 2021, there were 11 NSCs or Ministerial COBRs on Afghanistan, usually chaired by the Prime Minister and attended by Cabinet Ministers from across Government. There were three NSC (Officials) meetings. There were 14 official-level COBRs chaired by the National Security Adviser and 28 chaired by the Deputy National Security Adviser.

Conclusion/recommendation 18

The Government should publish the actions agreed by each of the Departments as a result of the lessons learned exercises which examined the response to the Afghanistan crisis, together with a time frame for implementation. (Paragraph 94)

We note the Committee's recommendation. The Government outlined the lessons learned and exercises undertaken following the withdrawal from Afghanistan in its Official Response to the Foreign Affairs Committee's report into the withdrawal from Afghanistan, published 29 July 2022. Specifically, the MOD, including the Defence Secretary, also outlined its position publicly to the Defence Committee as part of its inquiry into the withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Conclusion/recommendation 19

We welcome the uplift to the MOD's budget in 2020 and the four-year budget commitment. However, inflationary pressures and an increase in the scale of threat means that it is no longer enough. At the same time, serious concerns persist around a number of procurement programmes. The Department now needs a strategy to regain both Parliament's and the public's trust in its procurement abilities. We are concerned that a real terms fall in sustainment funding (RDEL) up to 2024–25 will erode the Armed Forces' ability to maintain and train on military equipment. We recommend a further, long-term increase to the budget but the MOD must ensure that money is not wasted. (Paragraph 103)

The Government understands the rationale behind this conclusion. The defence and security of the UK will always remain the Government's number one priority.

At the last Spending Review Defence received £24 billion over 4 years - cementing our position as the biggest defence spender in Europe. UK defence spending is projected to reach 2.3% of GDP this year due to additional UK defence industry investment and £2.3 billion of support for Ukraine - clearly exceeding the 2% of GDP target. At the time, this provided a firm platform for Defence to deliver the commitments set out in the Command Paper up to the next Spending Review.

Further details regarding the Government's spending plans are currently due to be announced in the Autumn Statement on 17 November. It would not be appropriate for the Ministry of Defence to provide these in advance.

Conclusion/recommendation 20

There are significant challenges to integration but none that concerns us as much as the MOD's procurement difficulties. For instance, the MOD has made it clear that in order to achieve integration and utilise new technologies, it needs an effective digital network. Without that network, few of the suggested benefits are accrued. Yet its track record in large and complex programmes is abysmal. We recommend that the Government identify those programmes which are critical enablers and ensure there is additional scrutiny of them. Furthermore, it needs to identify international partners with whom it can collaborate on the technologically advanced equipment that the UK Armed Forces require. (Paragraph 104)

While we recognise that Defence procurement is inherently complex and challenging, we do not accept that the Department's track record of delivering large and complex programmes is abysmal. The MOD manages a portfolio of complex programmes and must contend with a constantly shifting threat environment. Delays may result from a number of diverse factors including that many of these programmes operate at the cutting edge of technology, while it is also sometimes necessary to adjust military requirements in light of evolving information on threats.

Although some of our major equipment programmes have faced difficulties, there have also been many successes in providing our Armed Forces with the capability that they need. For example, the P-8A Poseidon programme was delivered to time and within budget; less than four years from the November 15 SDR statement to delivery of the first aircraft (October 2019). The final aircraft was delivered in January 2022. The Type 31 frigate programme has also been transformative for the naval shipbuilding sector, introducing a second pipeline of shipbuilding in Scotland. It is the first competitive warship procurement in a decade, with the Ministry of Defence achieving award of contract in timescales unprecedented for a procurement of its size and complexity.

In addition, Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), as a key delivery agent, is responsible for over £100 billion of the Defence Equipment Plan (EP) over the next 10 years, has delivered £8.3 billion of EP efficiencies for its customers since 2016/17 (of which £5.9 billion has so far been independently assured). Indeed, over the last six years, DE&S has delivered efficiency savings for its customers that have exceeded its operating expenditure budget.

We continue to work hard to address the challenges that face complex Defence acquisition programmes, including with our suppliers, and remain focussed on delivering the right capability that is safe to operate, at the best value to the taxpayer.

The Infrastructure and Projects Authority already provides additional scrutiny of the department's major programmes, which are critical to the delivery of Defence's priorities and are outlined in Defence's Annual Equipment Report.

Defence is also committed to working with international partners to collaborate on the joint development of next gen equipment, for example through the FCAS programme and through AUKUS.

The publication of the DSIS saw a step change in the relationship between Government and industry, allowing for a clear assessment of strategic needs, future priorities, and the realities of the market. This new relationship is supported through fundamental reforms of

the regulations that govern defence and security procurement and single source contracts, driving increased pace into acquisition. This ensures that we incentivise innovation and productivity and consider long-term value for money.

These changes should enable better communication and understanding between the MOD and Industry in the early stages of a procurement.

Further, Defence Digital manages and delivers a very large and complex digital services portfolio that successfully supports and underpins Defence's military and business operations. The overall delivery track record cannot be characterised as 'abysmal'. We have an inherited legacy environment that is overly aged and fragmented and is not well suited to meeting the needs of the information age. In response, we are leading a programme to modernise skills, process and technology in support of our goal to continually deliver game-changing digital and data technology to the front line. We have made good progress in the early stages of this program and need to ensure we retain support and investment to stay the course through to 2025 and beyond.

Conclusion/recommendation 21

The lack of a definition of what it means to be integrated makes it somewhat difficult to measure the success of the Government in achieving its objectives. However, we will continue to evaluate the implementation of the Integrated Review, the Defence Command Paper and the DSIS throughout the life of this Parliament. (Paragraph 105)

Defence's commitment to integration in the IR and Defence Command Paper can be defined in two ways.

Primarily, integration can be defined more broadly, through Defence's promotion of greater interoperability and the ability to use capabilities across multiple levers and stakeholders. In line with the wider commitment for integration set out in the IR, Defence is committed to the development of frameworks with allies and cross Government partners to promote deeper cooperation and information sharing.

Across Government, this has manifested through embedding the IR's objectives into existing core business and priorities across Government departments. Secondly, integration refers specifically to Defence's commitment to achieve full Multi-Domain Integration, through the modernisation of our communications and information systems. Multi-Domain Integration is the posturing of military capabilities in concert with other instruments of national power, allies and partners; configured to sense, understand and orchestrate effects at the optimal tempo, across the operational domains and levels of warfare. This will increase Defence's effects across all Commands and increase efficiency and coherency across Defence's domains.

Conclusion/recommendation 22

We welcome the Government's commitment to the publication of an annual review on the implementation of the Integrated Review. However, given that the implementation is the key, consistent evaluation of the implementation of the strategies throughout this Parliament is vital. This Committee, alongside our colleagues on the Public Accounts Committee, the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy and the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee, plays a vital role in ensuring

that Government decisions, and their implementation, are regularly scrutinised. Since the Integrated Review papers were published, we have published a Report on Naval procurement and are currently holding inquiries examining Defence Space policy, how the UK works with the US and NATO, the tilt to the Indo-Pacific, aviation procurement and the impact of climate change on Defence. (Paragraph 106)

We recognise the important role the Defence Select Committee, alongside other Parliamentary Committees, plays in holding Government to account. The National Security Adviser (NSA) had hoped to provide the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy (JCNSS) with a report of progress against the IR, including the government's priorities for the next phase of implementation, before the summer recess. Unfortunately providing this update was not possible due to the circumstances at the time, however the NSA committed to sharing an update with the JCNSS.

Conclusion/recommendation 23

As well as an annual report on the implementation of the IR, we recommend the MOD produce an annual evaluation of what has been achieved in their implementation of Defence in a Competitive Age and DSIS. This evaluation should include case studies which demonstrate implementation (examples of integration with other Government Departments, allies and partners, and defence industry). It should also include an account of how certain events have led to a review of thinking and any subsequent decisions made which change previously agreed outcomes. This will allow Parliamentary Committees and the UK public to scrutinise the implementation of the Integrated Review, Defence in a Competitive Age and the Defence Security and Industrial Strategy. (Paragraph 107)

We welcome this conclusion. The Government is committed to ensuring both Parliament and the public are informed of the Government's vision for security and defence. Building on the Government's commitment to publicise the findings of its annual report on the IR, Defence will seek to explore ways to engage with Parliament following the publication of the update to the IR.