



6 August 2024

Dear Jennifer Martin-Kohlmorgen,

**STRATEGIC DEFENCE REVIEW**

On 16 July, the Prime Minister launched a Strategic Defence Review (SDR), to be overseen by the Secretary of State for Defence, to ensure the United Kingdom is both secure at home and strong abroad – now and for the years to come. The UK faces threats that are growing and diversifying: war in Europe; conflict in the Middle East; states across the world that are increasingly acting in ways that challenge regional and global stability as well as our values and interests; terrorist groups; hybrid attacks; and instability caused by climate change.

We, the external Reviewers, have been commissioned to examine the strategic and operational context for UK Defence. The Review will determine the roles, capabilities and reforms required by UK Defence to meet the challenges, threats and opportunities of the twenty-first century, deliverable and affordable within the resources available to Defence within the trajectory to 2.5%.

The Review is to be Britain's Review – not just the Government's. The Reviewers will consult widely with Defence, the Armed Forces, other Government departments, veterans, industry, and academia, in addition to Members of Parliament of all parties. Your engagement will be important to the success of the Review. The Review will ensure that Defence is central both to the security, and to the economic growth and prosperity, of the United Kingdom. It will be delivered at pace and report in the first half of 2025.

To conduct the Review, we have developed 24 propositions, and we are writing to invite you to submit responses to any of the propositions, set out at [Annex A](#). Your response is requested no later than 30 September 2024 and should be sent to the SDR Secretariat ([SDR-Secretariat@mod.gov.uk](mailto:SDR-Secretariat@mod.gov.uk)) who are supporting the Reviewers.

The preferred word limit is 2000 words per proposition with a maximum of 4000 words. Essential supporting detail can be included in an annex. If you would like any additional guidance or you would like to discuss the propositions, please contact the SDR Secretariat.

After responses to propositions are received, the Reviewers will lead a Review & Challenge process. This will include sessions to consider the written proposition and enable authors to discuss their views with a small group. Those with specific expertise may be asked to take part in this process, including chairing or taking part in the sessions.

Thank you in advance for your support and engagement in the Strategic Defence Review.

Yours Sincerely,

**RT HON LORD ROBERTSON OF PORT ELLEN**

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## ANNEX A - STRATEGIC DEFENCE REVIEW INITIAL PROPOSITIONS

The Reviewers invite contributions on an initial list of propositions, set out below. The Reviewers are open to discussion about the intent and content of any of these subjects and to ideas for additional propositions.

The preferred word limit for any one proposition is 2000 words and the maximum is 4000 words. Where it is felt this limit will fail to do justice to a subject, advice should be sought from the Secretariat. Essential supporting detail can be included in an annex, mindful of the strategic level focus of the review. Propositions will necessarily and by design overlap, this is in part to expose choices, establish competing views, and identify balance of investment issues to the Reviewers.

1. Describe the strategic, threat, and operational context for UK Defence 2024-2050.
2. Propose, in order of priority, the roles UK Defence must be capable of fulfilling 2024-2040.
3. Propose in order of priority what defence capability (as a function, not defined as equipment or organisation) UK Defence requires to deliver the roles required of it 2024-2050. This should distinguish between:
  - The capability required for enduring, standing commitments and tasks, or to be held at high readiness.
  - The capability required on mobilisation in times of crisis.
4. Describe how existing UK Defence capability and the current 10-year programme match the demands of the roles and capabilities identified for 2024-2040, highlighting and prioritising critical gaps. Identify areas that require urgent attention to ameliorate immediate strategic level risks or vulnerabilities, including in logistic support and medical capability.
5. Propose how UK Defence's contribution to NATO should be enhanced as a driving requirement of capability and activity, including through prioritising defence export potential.
6. Describe how the current support to Ukraine is integrated into UK Defence programmes and activities and propose measures in priority order to sustain and enhance this support to at least 2027 and beyond.
7. Propose how the reciprocal intelligence support between UK Defence, 5 EYES and UK National Security Agencies can be enhanced and modernised, with particular emphasis on the rapid adoption of more digital technology, with recommendations.
8. Describe what advancing UK Defence from a multi-domain to an integrated force concept means and identify the key characteristics of each, including the relationship with non-kinetic means and resources.
9. Describe and recommend how the UK Defence homebase is made secure and resilient in confrontation, crisis and conflict, including in enabling full mobilisation and campaign endurance when needed.
10. Propose how UK Defence rapidly becomes a global pacesetter in how Digital Age technology evolves equipment, organisation and method across all aspects of capability, identifying the first major steps to be taken in each domain, how quickly this can be achieved, and recommend what legacy capability currently in service and in the extant future plans should be modified or dropped.
11. Propose how UK Defence builds and sustains a relationship with technology providers and industry (major primes and SME) that enables the technology choices that will drive globally pace-setting modernisation and transformation.
12. Propose how UK Defence acquisition and support (for all classes of equipment) continues to modernise to: maintain pace with key technology, enable the transition to an integrated force, advance interoperability in NATO, and deliver agile, cost-effective acquisition and support at optimum value for money.

13. Propose measures in priority order that establish how UK Defence transitions to the optimum balance of regular, reserve, civil servant, and industry people across all standing tasks and commitments and on mobilisation. Recommend the recruitment, education, training and retention measures required to achieve this.
14. Strategic Command is invited to propose the digital enablement required by an Integrated Force across all domains and to recommend and prioritise the steps to accelerate this transformation to place UK Defence as a global pacesetter in this area.
15. Strategic command is invited to propose how individual and collective education and training across all elements of Defence delivers the character and skills required by an Integrated Force for the challenges and requirements of 2024-2040, recommending the optimum division of responsibility between all elements of UK Defence and allies/partners for delivering this and identifying how the rapid and continuous application of new technology enables this.
16. The Royal Navy is invited to propose how the maritime (including littoral) domain is developed to contribute to an Integrated Force, recommending measures that accelerate modernisation and transformation and identifying existing capabilities and programmes that do not support this.
17. The British Army is invited to propose how the land domain is developed to contribute to an Integrated Force, recommending measures that accelerate modernisation and transformation and identifying existing capabilities and programmes that do not support this.
18. The Royal Air Force is invited to propose how the air and space domains are developed to contribute to an Integrated Force, recommending measures that accelerate modernisation and transformation and identifying existing capabilities and programmes that do not support this.
19. Strategic Command is invited to propose how UK Special Forces are developed as part of an Integrated Force and in support of UK National Security and resilience.
20. Propose how Defence Medical Services ensures the levels of primary, secondary and tertiary medical support are in place for standing tasks and for mobilisation for the demands of operational context of 2024- 2040. Identify the optimum mix of Regular, Reserve, civil servant, NHS and industry capability required and recommend urgent and essential measures to ameliorate major extant risks in priority order.
21. Describe the current utilisation and condition of all aspects of Defence Estate and recommend how to accelerate restoring all Married and Single Living accommodation to standards recognised as acceptable by the Services. Make recommendations in priority order for estate rationalisation and disposal at best value to Defence and identify how to improve and modernise support to Defence estate.
22. Propose how to improve financial management and administration across Defence, meeting HMG standards of accountability and identifying how more rapid adoption of digital technology will modernise culture, organisation and ways of working.
23. Propose how UK Defence can build relationships with allies, partners and alliances as a strategic strength for the UK.
24. The Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force are each invited to review their culture, organisation, training and institutional habits, describe how they reinforce modern war fighting imperatives, and recommend where changes are required as part of the modernisation of defence to be captured in this Review.

## **ANNEX B - Strategic Defence Review 2024-2025: Terms of Reference<sup>1</sup>**

### **Background**

1. The UK faces threats that are growing and diversifying: war in Europe; conflict in the Middle East; states across the world that are increasingly acting in ways that challenge regional and global stability as well as our values and interests; terrorist groups; hybrid attacks; and instability caused by climate change.

2. Therefore, on 16 July 2024, the Prime Minister launched a Strategic Defence Review (SDR) to ensure the United Kingdom is both secure at home and strong abroad – now and for the years to come.

### **Purpose**

3. The SDR will determine the roles, capabilities and reforms required by UK Defence to meet the challenges, threats and opportunities of the twenty-first century, deliverable and affordable within the resources available to Defence within the trajectory to 2.5%. The Review will ensure that Defence is central both to the security, and to the economic growth and prosperity, of the United Kingdom.

### **Scope**

4. The SDR will consider all aspects of Defence, involving and receiving inputs from other Government Departments, agencies and industry, in areas where they support UK Defence. Other areas of national security policy are outside the scope of the Review.

5. The following themes cover the key issues the review should consider. The Reviewers will have discretion to consider other issues that arise during the course of the review.

- The strategic and operational context, including the threat picture and the current baseline state of UK Defence.
- The major features of the force structure needed to create the necessary integrated multi-domain Defence capability of the future.
- The opportunities for modernisation and transformation, and greater productivity, including through the rapid and consistent application of Digital Age technologies.
- The UK's international partnerships and alliances, and how these can be strengthened in the cause of collective security and deterrence.
- The approach to be taken to acquisition and support in order to deliver the required capabilities in a timely way, and how to secure the best possible value for money and rapidly changing technology.
- The approach to recruiting, educating, training and retaining the people needed for One Defence, including Regular, Reserve, Civil Service and industry. This is to include how Service life can be improved for those who commit to serve their country in uniform.
- The Defence Estate including how it can be modernised and streamlined to support both defence outputs and wider HMG objectives on housebuilding and net zero.
- The state of the defence technological and industrial base, and the contribution of Defence to the government's Growth Mission.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-defence-review-2024-2025-terms-of-reference/strategic-defence-review-2024-2025-terms-of-reference>

6. The Review will identify where reprioritisation of roles, capabilities, activities, and support may be made in the current Defence programme, to allow new investment, achieve better value for money, and secure greater economic gain for the UK, and will make recommendations.

### **Parameters**

7. The Review will be conducted with the following parameters in place:

- The Government has a total commitment to the independent UK nuclear deterrent. The SDR will consider the efficiency and effectiveness of the nuclear programme.
- NATO will remain the cornerstone of UK Defence. The SDR will look at enhancing the UK's contribution to the Alliance and sustaining a "NATO first" defence policy, while protecting vital UK sovereign requirements and strategic reach.
- The first duty of Government is to keep the country safe and protect its citizens. The SDR will examine the Defence capabilities and options to reinforce UK homeland security.
- The United Kingdom's support for Ukraine is steadfast and will endure for as long as it takes for Ukraine to succeed. The SDR will consider ways in which this support can be maintained in the short, medium and long term.
- All Defence personnel – in and out of uniform – are at the heart of Defence's plans.
- The SDR will identify ways to maintain the UK's defence ties to the Indo Pacific region, the Gulf and the Middle East. The UK is committed to the delivery of the AUKUS partnership with the US and Australia.
- Within these parameters, the Review will consider the need for prioritisation of objectives, and therefore investments and activity, to set out a deliverable and affordable plan for Defence.
- As set out in the Labour Party's Manifesto, the Government "will set out the path to spending 2.5 per cent of GDP on defence." This will be dealt with at a future fiscal event.

### **Arrangements for the Review**

8. The Prime Minister has commissioned the Defence Secretary to oversee the Review, which will be headed by three external Reviewers. The lead Reviewer will be Lord Robertson of Port Ellen, with General Sir Richard Barrons and Dr Fiona Hill CMG as the other two Reviewers.

9. The Reviewers will select a small Defence Review Team (DRT) to support their work. The DRT will comprise senior experts from inside and outside Defence, working closely with other Government Departments, notably HM Treasury.

10. The SDR will be supported by a dedicated Secretariat provided by the Ministry of Defence, within the Main Building in London. The Ministry of Defence will support the Reviewers with full transparency and candour; the SDR will be the Department's top priority after operations.

11. The Reviewers will consult widely, including with Parliament, the Defence community, academia, and industry. Allies will be engaged regularly to seek their views. The Reviewers will call for concise contributions, which will then be subject to a review and challenge process.

12. The Reviewers will report regularly on progress to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for Defence and will make their final report to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and the Defence Secretary – with recommendations – in the first half of 2025.

13. The Secretary of State for Defence will subsequently report the SDR to Parliament.